

# Chapter 2

## Delivering Your Message

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### Introductory Exercises

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1. Can you match the words to their meaning?

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| ___ 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.

Answers to Exercise #1:

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

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## Getting started

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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. 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. 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?

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### Learning Objectives

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

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## 1. What Is Language?

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### Key Takeaway

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Language is a system of words used as symbols to convey ideas, which have meaning only when interpreted by the receiver of the message.

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## Exercises

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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.

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## Key Terms

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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

## 2. Messages

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### Learning Objectives

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

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## 2. Messages

- The Primary Message Is Not the Whole Message
  - Parts of a Message
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### Key Takeaway

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Messages are primary, secondary, and auxiliary; and a message can be divided into a five-part structure.

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### Exercises

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

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.

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## Key Terms

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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

- Used to capture the attention of your audience; it may be used anywhere in your message, but is especially useful at the outset

#### 5. Introduction

- Includes a clear statement your topic and establishes a relationship with your audience

#### 6. Body

- Presents the message in detail, making the main points clear, providing support for each point, and using transitions

#### 7. Conclusion

- Provides the audience with a sense of closure by summarizing the main points and relating them to the overall topic

#### 8. Residual message

- A message or thought that stays with the audience well after the communication is finished

### 3. Principles of Verbal Communication

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#### Learning Objectives

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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.
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#### Section Outline

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### 3. 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
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## Key Takeaway

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

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## 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 it says something about them or not. Share and compare with classmates.

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## Key Terms

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### 1. Syntactic rules

- Govern the order of words in a sentence.

### 2. Semantic rules

- 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.

## 4. Language Can Be an Obstacle to Communication

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## Learning Objectives

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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.

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## Section Outline

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### 4. Language Can Be an Obstacle to Communication

- Cliché
  - Jargon
  - Slang
  - Sexist and Racist Language
  - Euphemisms
  - Doublespeak
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## Key Takeaway

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

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## 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.
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.

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## Key Terms

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### 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. Think of the way medical caregivers speak to one another, frequently using abbreviations for procedures and medications

### 3. Slang

- The use of existing or newly invented words to take the place of standard or traditional words with the intent of adding an unconventional, non-standard, 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

## 5. Emphasis Strategies

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### 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.
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### Section Summary

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## 5. Emphasis Strategies

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

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## Key Takeaway

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

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## Exercises

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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.
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## 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

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## 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.
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## 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
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## Key Takeaway

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

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## Exercises

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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 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 profession, 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.

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## Key Terms

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1. Precise words

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