

AL AKHAWAYN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES

13. Choosing Effective Language

Lecture by Dr. Mohammed Ibahrine
based on
Clella Jaffe's Public Speaking

Structure of the Lecture

- 1. Langue reflects Culture
- 1.1. Words and meaning
 - ✓ 1.1.1 Denotative meaning
 - ✓ 1.1.2 Connotative meaning
 - ✓ 1.1.3 Epithets
 - ✓ 1.1.4 Euphemisms
 - ✓ 1.1.5 Jargon

Structure of the Lecture

- 2. Use Language Ethically: Inclusive Language
 - 2.1 Avoid Language That Privileges One Group over another
 - 2.2 Avoid Stereotyping
 - 2.3 Avoid Creating Invisibility
 - 2.4 Avoid Demeaning Epithets or Slurs
 - 2.5 Avoid Dismissive Language
 - 2.6 Avoid Undue Emphasis on Differences

Structure of the Lecture

- 3. Use Language Effectively
- 3.1 Be Accurate
- 3.2 Be Appropriate
- 3.3 Be Concise
- 3.4 Be Clear
- 3.5 Be Concrete
- 3.6 Be Interesting
- 3.6.1 Alliteration
- 3.6.2 Rhyming
- 3.6.3 Repetition
- 3.6.4 Personification
- 3.6.5 Hyperbole
- 3.6.6 Alliteration
- 3.6.7 Metaphor
- 3.6.8 Simile

Structure of the Lecture

- 4. Language and Pluralistic Audiences
 - 4.1 Adapt to Multilingual Situations
 - 4.2 Adapt to an Interpreter

Associative Statement

- Think of poetry in the Arab culture

Thesis of today's lecture:

- **Thesis:**
- In the study of rhetoric, language falls within the canon of style

1 Language Reflects Culture

- Language
 - ✓ is a verbal code made up of a system of symbols that a community of language speakers uses to share their ideas

1 Language Reflects Culture

- Symbols
 - ✓ Are signs that represent or stand for objects and concepts the community shares

1 Language Reflects Culture

- 1.1 Words and Meaning
 - ✓ Verbal symbols that stand for idea
 - ✓ Words names what our society identifies as significant
 - ✓ Dialect is a variant form of a language
 - ❖ British English
 - ❖ American English
 - ❖ African American Vernacular English (AAVE)
 - ❖ International English
 - ❖ Standard English

1 Language Reflects Culture

- 1.2 Denotative Meaning
 - ✓ Word denote or point to an object or abstract idea
 - ✓ The denotative meaning is what the word names or identifies
 - ✓ When you look up words in the dictionary, you find their denotative meanings

1 Language Reflects Culture

- 1.2 Denotative Meaning
 - ✓ Some words stand for more than one idea
 - ✓ Their meaning is ambiguous in that their context determines how we interpret them
 - ✓ As you plan language for your speech, make sure to use the correct word in the correct context to denote your intended meaning

1 Language Reflects Culture

- 1.3 Connotative Meaning
 - ✓ Although words denote objects and concepts
 - ✓ They also carry emotional overtones or connotative meanings
 - ✓ Words not only stand for ideas but also represent feelings and associations related to the concepts
 - ✓ Language can be emotionally charged

1 Language Reflects Culture

- 1.4 Epithets
 - ✓ Are words or phrases that describe some quality of a person or group (often with negative connotations)
 - ✓ Members of labelled groups often try to lessen the negative power of the epithet by accepting and using the term themselves
 - ✓ They take the power out of these words

1 Language Reflects Culture

- 1.5 Euphemism
 - ✓ Euphemism, in contrast, are words or phrases that substitute an agreeable or inoffensive term for a more direct one that might offend, embarrass, or suggest something unpleasant
 - ✓ Public speakers often use euphemism for controversial actions, ideas and policies

1 Language Reflects Culture

- 1.6 Jargon
 - ✓ Is a specialized, technical vocabulary and style that served special groups (doctors lawyers), interest (feminism) and activities (football, gardening)

1 Language Reflects Culture

- Summary
 - ✓ Language are system of symbols words that stand for ideas and evoke feelings or connotative meanings that differ from person to person
 - ✓ Carefully choose your words, making sure that you use the correct word in context
 - ✓ Pay attention to connotative meanings either positive or negative
 - ✓ Demonstrate that you are rhetorically sensitive by adapting your dialect and your jargon to your audience and the occasion

1 Language Reflects Culture

- Summary
- Language choices have ethical implications because words and phrases can include or exclude, affirm or dismiss individuals or entire groups
- In the last few years, there has been an emphasis on using discriminatory languages
- Inclusive language is an ethical terminology that affirms and includes, rather than excludes, persons or groups of people

2 Use Language Ethically: Inclusive Language

- 2. 1 Avoid Language That Privileges One Group over Another
 - ✓ **Sexist language** subtly influences the way we view the sexes by giving priority to males, their activities, and their interests
 - ✓ **Ageist language** portrays old people in ways that privilege youthfulness and demean or devalue age
 - ✓ **Racist language** privileged one racial or ethnic group and degrades or devalues others
 - ✓ **Nonparallel language** language that does not treat women and men the same is a specific linguistic form that reinforces differences and privileges males

2 Use Language Ethically: Inclusive Language

- 2. 2 Avoid Stereotyping
 - ✓ Try to recognize and avoid stereotypes
 - ✓ Common misconception are that older people are closed minded
 - ✓ Less capable mentally
 - ✓ Physically unattractive

2 Use Language Ethically: Inclusive Language

- 2. 3 Avoid Creating Invisibility
 - ✓ Language can make people and groups invisible
 - ✓ Take the use of the “generic he”

2 Use Language Ethically: Inclusive Language

- 2. 4 Avoid Demeaning Epithets or Slurs
 - ✓ When epithets frame negative perceptions of a group, avoid using them

2 Use Language Ethically: Inclusive Language

- 2. 5 Avoid Dismissive language
 - ✓ Language can be applied to people in ways that discount the importance of their ideas

2 Use Language Ethically: Inclusive Language

- 2. 6 Avoid Undue Emphasis on Differences
 - ✓ Do not mention differences unless they matter in the context of the speech language can be applied to people in ways that discount the importance of their ideas

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.1 Be accurate
 - ✓ Be accurate in your word choices
 - ✓ One form of inaccuracy is to use similar sounding, but incorrect, words called malapropos
 - ✓ Malaproposim is cute for children, but embarrassing for adults
 - ✓ Use standard grammar in context that call for standard English
 - ✓ The key is to adapt grammar to fit the occasion

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.2 Be Appropriate
 - ✓ Match your language to the topic, the audience, the situation and yourself as an individual
 - ✓ In public speaking the language should be more formal, containing less slang than you would use in everyday life

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.3 Be Concise
 - ❖ Directness
 - ❖ Brevity
 - ❖ Conciseness
- ✓ are valued in the US, we eliminate verbiage

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.4 Be Clear
 - ✓ The purpose of public speaking is to clarify ideas rather than make them hard to understand
 - ✓ One of the best ways to be clear is to avoid jargon

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.5 Be Concrete
 - ✓ Another important aspect of style, one that can help your listeners form precise understanding, is to choose concrete words
 - ✓ Those that are specific rather than abstract
 - ✓ Particular rather than general
 - ✓ Vague words imprecise terms that have indefinite boundaries

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.6 Be Interesting
 - ✓ A major reason for speaking is to help your listeners see, feel, and remember the information you present
 - ✓ Colourful, vivid language helps keep listener attention and interest
 - ✓ You can make the language of your speech more memorable by using alliteration, rhyming, repetition, personification, hyperbole, metaphors and similes

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.6 Be Interesting
- ✓ 3.6.1 Alliteration
 - ❖ Is the use of words that have the same recurring initial sounds
- ✓ 3.6.2 Rhyming
 - ❖ Are words that end in the same sounds
 - ❖ You can rhyme single words

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.6 Be Interesting
 - ✓ 3.6.3 Repetition
 - ❖ There are two ways to use repetition
 - 3.6.3.1 repeat the same word or phrase at the beginning of clauses or sentences
 - 3.6.3.2 repeat the same word or phrase at the end of clauses or sentences

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.6 Be Interesting
 - ✓ 3.6.4 Personification
 - ❖ Means giving human characteristics to nonhuman entities
 - ❖ These entities include animals, countries, natural objects and processes and social processes

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.6 Be Interesting
 - ✓ 3.6.5 Hyperbole
 - ❖ Is the use of exaggeration for effect
 - ❖ Hyperbole can be effective, excessive hype can lessen the speaker's credibility

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.6 Be Interesting
 - ✓ 3.6.6 Metaphor
 - ❖ Are implied comparisons in which one thing is spoken of as being something else, the words like and as are not used

3 Use Language Effectively

- 3.6 Be Interesting

- ✓ 3.6.7 Simile

- ❖ Are similar to metaphors in that they compare two items that are unlike in most ways but alike in one essential detail

4 Language and Pluralistic Audiences

- 4.1 Adapt to Multilingual Situations
 - ✓ When you speak to a linguistically diverse audience
 - ✓ Do not assume you will be instantly understood
 - ✓ Being mindful of linguistic diversity allows speakers to strategically select language that communicates effectively with listeners from various linguistic backgrounds

4 Language and Pluralistic Audiences

- 4.1 Adapt to Multilingual Situations
 - ✓ Perspective taking means that you put yourself in the other person's shoes
 - ✓ Approach the speech with a positive attitude, expecting to understand
 - ✓ Listen all the way through
 - ✓ Make special efforts to keep your mind from wandering in the middle of the speech
 - ✓ Note-taking helps focus the listening process

4 Language and Pluralistic Audiences

- 4.1 Adapt to Multilingual Situations
 - ✓ Practice *responsibility* in co-creating meaning
 - ✓ Control your negative emotional responses

4 Language and Pluralistic Audiences

- 4.2 Adapt to an Interpreter
 - ✓ Keep your language simple
 - ✓ Provide your interpreter with an outline of your speech so that he/she may check the meaning of any unfamiliar
 - ✓ Speak in short units

Summary

- Language is a tool that humans use to communicate with one another and build complex societies
- We use words to name our cultural memories
- Words stand for objects, actions and ideas a technical vocabulary common to members of an occupation
- Eliminate sexist, ageist, racist and other noninclusive language from acceptable vocabulary