



Language

There are five elements of language:

1. Vividness: Your language should be alive, bright, brilliant, and colorful.

Being Colorful – colorful language can paint a picture for your audience that evokes mental and emotional images. For example, a

“car going *down* the street” compared to a “car *creeping* down the street.”

Using Metaphors – a metaphor describes one thing by comparing it to another. You are suggesting an image or likeness. An example is: A problem could be described as *troubled water* or a continuous problem could be described as a *black hole*.

Using Narratives – telling stories is a good way to make your language more vivid. Be sure that stories are clearly relevant to your topic. Don’t burden your audience with trying to make a connection that is hard to find.

2. Clarity: Make sure your audience understands what you are saying.

Be direct. Avoid using a lot of words when a few words will do.

Use simple words. Using too many complex words is confusing to your audience. This doesn’t mean that you should never use esoteric words; just use them wisely.

Use concrete words. These words have meanings that evoke senses of touch, sound, smell, sight, or taste rather than abstract words that are more theoretical and conceptual.

Balance the use of technical language (jargon). Many audiences, even ones coming from the same organization, are clueless when it comes to the meaning of certain technical language. Try to match your content and language to your audience understandings.

3. Relational Language: Words that link the speaker with the audience.

Use words such as *we* and *us* as opposed to *you*, *I*, and *them*.

Create a common ground with your audience and heighten their perception of your credibility.

4. Connotation versus Denotation: Words can have two different meanings.

Connotation refers to the meanings that the words suggest, and **Denotation** refers to the meanings of words in the dictionary.

Example: *House* vs. *Home*. Most of us think of a *house* as a physical structure (denotation) and a *home* as a place where loved ones live together (connotation).

Choose words that will create the impression that you are wanting to create.

5. Conversational: Use words that you are comfortable with. Rely on your vernacular and how you speak on the day-to-day.

A speech is not like a formal paper. You can use contractions (isn't, won't, hasn't, etc.)

Use words that you are familiar with, the exception being when

you are defining or talking about terminology related to your topic.

Hasling, J. (1976). *The audience, the message, the speaker i*(pp. 162- 165). New York: McGraw-Hill.

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