Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar

CRITICAL LANGUAGE AWARENESS: LANGUAGE POWER TECHNIQUES AND ENGLISH GRAMMAR

JONATHON REINHARDT; ANUJ GUPTA; ROBERT POOLE; AND DILARA AVCI

CONTENTS

Section III. Activities

INTRODUCTION

We are surrounded by media, advertising, and political messaging everywhere – in social media posts, texts, videos, TV commercials, podcasts, news programs, e-mails, print flyers and posters, newspapers, and magazines. To inform, sell to, persuade, and motivate us, the authors and sponsors of these messages and stories use the **power of language**, choosing to word their message in particular ways. Behind their messages lie particular worldviews, **discourses**, and **ideologies** that may or may not align with those of the audience. In making certain word and grammatical choices, they show us their perspective and invite us to share in it. To do this, these authors may use rhetorical or **language power techniques** like metaphor, euphemism, hyperbole, address forms, weasel language, and epithets. These can be enacted with particular **grammatical features**; for example, an epithet may use a noun phrase, hyperbole a superlative adjective, or weasel language a passive form. We need **critical language awareness** to see these connections.

'Tell the Truth' by Claudio Schwarz on Unsplash

While many everyday interactions involve some exercise of power, many media, advertising, and political messages do as well, even though they might seem benign. Although we usually know that we should be a little skeptical of advertising for consumer products, we also need to be aware of **propaganda**, biased information meant to promote a particular point of view, and **disinformation**, deliberately false information meant to mislead, in political and other media discourse. Propaganda and disinformation is spread through media, including social media like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, sometimes in ways that are not obvious.

In free democratic societies all citizens participate in governance by voting, and in liberal democracies, voting and freedom of expression are fundamental rights. However, some individuals and groups may feel that having social and

economic capital — fame and money — entitles them to have a greater say in government policy than those with less capital; it is no surprise that these people often find their ways to positions of political and corporate power, and that they try to promote their ideologies to this end, sometimes using propaganda and disinformation to do so. They may use propaganda techniques and logical fallacies, take advantage of cognitive biases, appeal to emotions like fear, pride, and desire, selectively misrepresent their intentions, or simply lie. As the classical Athenians argued, participants in a democratic society need the skills of rhetoric, grammar, and logic to see through to their intentions and evaluate them clearly. Without this criticality, democracy doesn't work.

What kinds of propaganda are there?

Try this activity and browse the website to learn more.

https://propagandacritic.com/index.php/how-to-decode-propaganda/what-is-propaganda-analysis/

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=4#h5p-4

Developing critical language awareness

Just because the messaging around us may contain bias or disinformation does not mean that we should never trust media sources. Depending on who owns or controls them, some media are more biased than others, and many journalists try very hard to be unbiased and present the objective truth. However, ultimately it is the job of readers or listeners to identify when various power techniques are being used, and whether they are being told the truth. There are several reputable websites for fact-checking like Politifact, Snopes, or Factcheck that can be referenced before believing or spreading anything remotely questionable. When consuming and sharing media-based information, it's also good practice to be

highly skeptical of conspiracy theories, to be aware of your own **confirmation bias** and to recognize when you are in an **echo chamber** — this awareness may help you from spreading misinformation. It's also smart to read your news rather than only viewing or listening to it, because this allows you enough time to stop and re-read, to analyze the language, and to question how, who, and why the message is being presented as it is.

If you have time and interest, learn more about media biases and fact checking websites here:

- https://www.poynter.org/fact-checking/media-literacy/2021/should-you-trust-media-bias-charts/
- https://library.csi.cuny.edu/c.php?g=619342&p=4310783

To recognize when these techniques and appeals are being used and to combat their effects, it can be useful to focus on the exact words that are said, written, or shared. An analytical approach called **critical discourse analysis** is ideal for this task because it examines language in use and connects the **lexicogrammar** and the context of what is said, that is, the how, who, where, when, and why, not just the what. A critical discourse analyst might look at the news headline, "Factory rioters arrested," and question the choice of the term 'rioters' and the use of the **passive voice,** instead of the possible **active voice** equivalent, "Police arrested union protestors". They might consider that this headline was in a conservative blog

report and conclude that the report thus shows an anti-union bias. By understanding the power technique of **weasel language** and how the passive voice can be used to mask agency or responsibility, the analyst can show objective evidence for the bias of the report.

Another useful approach is called **corpus analysis**, an analytic technique that involves examining a large body or database of language use, searching for all the instances of a particular word or phrase, and analyzing its frequency or co-occurrence with other words. Corpus analysis can tell you, for example, how frequently a politician might use the **inclusive we** in their campaign speeches in comparison to their opponent – the inclusive we is an appeal to listeners to think of the speaker as like them, a kind of **plain folks** propaganda technique. The analyst might then hypothesize that the politician's more frequent use of inclusive we in comparison to their opponent's use helped them win an election, since it made the voters feel like the politicians was 'one of them'. While there may be other ways of enacting weasel language or making a plain folks appeal besides employing these particular grammar structures – passive voice and the inclusive we – leveraging your understanding of a linguistic power technique to comprehend a grammatical structure and vice-versa is an excellent way to deepen your knowledge about both. Discourse and corpus analysis can thus help you develop critical language awareness.

NEXT:

Comprehensive & LPT tracks ⇒ **A. Intro to Language Power Techniques**

GF track ⇒ **B. Intro to Grammar Features**

For instructors and independent learners:

How this resource is organized

The approach to developing CLA presented in this resource, *Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar*, is to promote comprehending and analyzing language like a critical discourse analyst. To this end there are sixteen modules: eight **language power techniques (LPTs)** corresponding to eight **grammar features (GFs),** each of which typifies, but is not restricted to, that technique. The modules can be used in several ways:

1. Comprehensive track: The ideal use of the book is A-B-C-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8, etc. with all the corpus activities. The LPT and GF modules are designed to complement one another, and the corpus activities enhance both sequences.

2. LPT track: For writing or rhetoric courses with greater

focus on LPTs, we recommend A-1-3-5-7, etc. as a supplement to writing instruction. The LPT modules have some focus on grammar, but do not go into detail. This sequence can be used with or without the LPT corpus activities, in which case module C should be included as well.

3. <u>GF track:</u> For grammar-only courses we recommend at least B-2-4-6-8, etc., and encourage the inclusion of module C and the GF corpus activities, although the sequence will work without any corpus focus, too. The GF modules have some focus on how its focal feature is used in LPTs, but not in detail.

4. The modules can also be used independently to serve as or supplement instruction on a particular LPT or a GF.

5. The activities in the modules may be used selectively, and can be used as in-class discussion activities or as independent at-home assignments. The online activities provide immediate feedback, but scores are not saved. The GF activities and the corpus activities are on separate pages corresponding to their modules, with each activity linked directly from its corresponding module sub-section.

The book will be released in two parts, in Fall 2022 and in Fall 2023:

<center>Part One (Fall 2022)</center>

Part Two (Fall 2023)

The introduction modules serve as basic introductions to the topics as well as tables of contents linking to all the corresponding techniques and features.

After an outline and list of key concepts, each LPT module begins with general discussion to situate understandings. Each module is split into subsections that may refer and link to

external readings (openly available online pieces); some may be required for discussion/reflection activities and others may be optional. Each subsection concludes with discussion/reflection activities. The second subsection of each LPT module focuses on the associated grammatical features; students can at this point go to the corresponding GF module or wait until finishing the LPT. Each LPT module concludes with general reflection questions a corpus analysis activity.

Each GF module presents information about a part-of-speech or another grammatical concept. Each begins with focus on what the feature is, including morphological information. Using clear examples, different aspects of the feature are then thoroughly explored in subsections, each linked to an interactive online activities using H5P technology and most also linked to a corpus analysis activity requiring access to the [Corpus of Contemporary American English](). The activities are on separate pages corresponding to their modules, each activity is linked directly from its corresponding module sub-section.

Why we need this resource

This resource is meant to develop critical language awareness in advanced high school, community college, or university-level students who need or want to learn why English grammar is relevant and how it can be used in media messaging,

advertising, and political discourse, among other registers. It addresses three crucial issues:

- Students are not regularly taught media literacy skills and awareness of propaganda and disinformation. Although many high school and college/university curricula include some focus on these topics, they are often treated separately from other subjects in education, humanities, and the social sciences and not integrated into courses where they might be. Without direct and consistent focus, students may be more vulnerable to their negative effects.

- Since the advent of process writing, attention to rhetorical skills focused on specific techniques has been gradually removed from the core of composition curricula. Traditional rhetoric approaches focus more directly on integrating these skills while developing, or as a means to develop, reading and writing skills, but as other pedagogical trends have come to the fore, these techniques may be given only sporadic and inconsistent attention.

- Explicit focus on grammar has been removed from many high school, college, and university English and writing courses and curricula, because it is seen as arcane, abstract, and irrelevant. Most grammar textbooks and curricula coming from traditional linguistics and syntax perspectives rarely, or only superficially, relate their

content to critical language use or rhetorical techniques. Research on language and power, critical discourse analysis, and critical language awareness is often situated in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, so it may be unknown in traditional linguistics, English, and composition silos. In applied linguistics, corpus linguistics, and TESOL, attention to grammar has not been abandoned because it simply cannot be, since learners of English as an additional language must learn grammar explicitly. This may mean that the potential of work in these fields to make grammar relevant and less arcane, even to those not learning English as an additional language, goes unrealized.

About this resource

The development and production of this open educational resource has been made possible by a generous donation to the Clarify Initiative, a project led by Prof. Jonathon Reinhardt at the University of Arizona Department of English. Fully funded by the donation, this resource is publicly available through the university's open textbook website.

About the authors

Jonathon Reinhardt is a Professor of English Applied

Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition at the University of Arizona. He teaches grammar and courses in teaching English to speakers of other languages. https://english.arizona.edu/people/jonathon-s-reinhardt

Anuj Gupta is a Phd student in the Rhetoric & Composition program at the University of Arizona. His work focuses on UI/UX research, instructional design, accessibility, emotions in teaching and learning, computational social science and digital humanities. https://www.linkedin.com/in/anuj-gupta-3533541a1/

Robert Poole is an Assistant Professor of TESOL and Applied Linguistics at the University of Alabama. He is an applied corpus linguist and teaches various courses in the MA-TESOL program at his university. https://english.ua.edu/people/robert-poole/

Dilara Avci is an MA student in Teaching English as a Second Language at the University of Arizona. Her research interests are second language writing and materials development with a focus on digital literacies and critical pedagogy. https://www.linkedin.com/in/dilara-tunali-avci-647180b3

Module author: Jonathon Reinhardt
  Last updated: 7 October 2022

This module is part of [Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar](#), an open educational resource offered by the [Clarify Initiative](#), a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

SECTION I
INTRODUCTORY MODULES

A. INTRO TO LANGUAGE POWER TECHNIQUES

A.1 Introduction

What makes us human? What differentiates us from animals? Anthropologists, philosophers, and neuroscientists have contemplated this question for centuries. There are many competing theories, but two of the most compelling ones are language and social structure. Humans are characteristically different from animals because of the complexity of language they have developed in order to communicate. Unlike animal communication systems, human language has particular qualities like displacement (we can talk about times and places not present), arbitrariness (most words are not iconic, e.g. the relationship of the sound of a word is normally only arbitrarily related to what it means), and productivity (we can invent new words and say things that have never been said before). These qualities have played key roles in helping us communicate and coordinate with one another, leading over time to highly complex social structures and nothing less than culture itself.

A.2 Language, Society, & Power

Power is a key ingredient to the glue that binds human societies, although its uneven application or unbalanced use can also contribute to them breaking. In very simple terms, power is simply the ability of an individual or a group of individuals to act as they wish, and exercising power involves acting influencing others in a manner in accordance with those wishes – doing what you want and making others do so too. Exercising power may as simple as a parent making their child go to bed or as complex as an authoritarian government censoring the Internet and restricting its citizens from accessing outside information, as in contemporary China, Russia, or Iran. Some argue that in many modern capitalist societies like the USA, factors like race, gender, and the economic class into which an individual is born have a great impact on how much and what kind of power is ascribed to them, even greater than their personal choices and achievements. What do you think?

Fig. A.1 Photo by Felipe Bastias on Unsplash

All human societies are held together by varying levels of power dynamics, but in democratic and egalitarian societies, a single group of people does not have absolute power over another group of people – in theory anyway. Rather, what exists is a highly complex web of negotiated power relations, where in some moments individuals and groups exert various sorts of power over others while in other moments, they have power exerted over them. Because of differing value structures, the exercise of power isn't always either 100% good or bad; greed and desire for dominance may motivate some to wield power, but power as a means to enable peace and enact justice may motivate others. Sometimes, however, the results of the exercise of power are difficult to predict, and some may be unintended. Power is volatile, to say the least.

A.2 Activity: Is power good or bad?

a. Try this activity and read the article to learn more:

https://elawtalk.com/democracy-vs-authoritarianism/

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=88#h5p-2

b. Lord Acton Smith of Great Britain said in 1907: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority". Do you agree? What is the danger of power?

c. Take a look at the various quotes at this website and choose one that resonates with you:

https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/power-quotes.
Why do you find it interesting or meaningful?

A.3 Power ↔ Language

How is power exercised? Language plays a key role in enabling humans to exercise power over other humans, especially when that power is not physical. Whenever we use language, we essentially encode reality, or a slice of it and pass it onto others. The specific ways in which we do this encoding reflects our value systems and wishes, our positionality. This in turn presents a perspective on reality to whomever we communicate with, whether we intend it to or not, possibly influencing their perception and altering their behavior to align with our perspective — we convince, persuade, align, and argue even if we are not actively aware that we are doing so. Traditional rhetoricians noted that we can influence others by appealing to *logos* – logical reasoning, *pathos* – emotional response, and *ethos* – trust building, but in practice the exercise of power through language is quite complex.

Image A.3 'Disinformation' by visuals on Unsplash

Individuals and groups of people, often through means of governmental, industrial, and media organizations, may exercise power to control others through the use of language. Commercial businesses and corporations, for example, may try to influence consumers to purchase or subscribe to their products and services by means of advertising, much of which uses language. While these agents develop promotional messages using techniques that may appeal to logic, emotion, or trust, they may also use more sophisticated language power techniques akin to **propaganda** – information that deliberately promotes a particular perspective, regardless of its veracity. Historically, propaganda has been used by governments to promote particular behaviors and align individual to group or official perspectives, for example, during wartime to rally a populace around a cause and support a

collective war effort. It may be distributed through physical media like posters, signs, mailings, and flyers; electronic media like emails, texts, social media memes and posts, podcasts, and websites; and traditional media like newspapers, television news, commercials, public service announcements, infotainment, or radio/talk programs. It may be obvious or it may be hidden behind more benign-appearing messaging.

Many have argued that with the advent of the Internet and social media, **misinformation** – false information that is unintentionally spread – is more easily spread than ever, thanks to the phenomenon of virality and because much of the Internet is not fact-checked or edited like most printed materials are. Sometimes that information is intentionally false, which makes it **disinformation,** a.k.a. 'fake news'. Vulnerable individuals may believe this disinformation because it uses propaganda and language power techniques and spread it further. Without necessarily realizing it, they adopt the worldviews and ideologies of the original authors and promoters — political, cultural, and corporate forces who may not have their best intentions in mind.

A.3 Activity: Propaganda, mis-, and disinformation

a. *What do you think of when you hear the word 'propaganda'? Who do you think produces it and why? What makes it effective? ineffective?*

b. Watch this video on 'Fake News' by Global News, a Canadian news organization. After watching, discuss or reflect on the questions that follow.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fQdzVbQlaU

> *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*
> *https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=88#h5p-3*

Questions:

Who spreads misinformation, and why? disinformation? How does misinformation become disinformation? How can we be aware of both, and how can we stop them?

A4. The Techniques

There are countless ways that power is expressed through language use. To narrow down the possibilities, this book focuses on eight specific techniques we call l**anguage power techniques** – ways that language power is expressed or exercised in speech or writing, whether intentionally or not. Being aware of these techniques will not only make you better aware of propaganda and disinformation, it will make you a more responsible and effective communicator, consumer, and citizen.

Metaphor

Metaphor is a technique that involves equating a new idea with an idea that the audience (readers or listeners) already understand, so that they can conceptualize the new idea. While metaphors can be used intentionally, they also already underlie much of our thought processes and are deeply tied to culture. For example, the metaphor of 'anger = heat' underlies language like 'he blew up', while 'busy place = zoo' allows others to understand statements like 'the party became a zoo' when not referring to an actual zoo. They can be used in **cognitive framing**, a technique that allows an idea or ideology to be more easily understood. Grammatically, metaphor may make use of basic sentence structures like subject complements, as well as a variety of other features.

Doublespeak

Inspired by the writings of George Orwell, William Lutz coined the term "**doublespeak**" to refer to a kind of language that seeks to "mislead, distort, deceive, inflate, circumvent, obfuscate" (Lutz 2016: 24). It is created using several linguistic techniques like **euphemism**, **dysphemism**, **jargon** and **bureaucratese**. For example, corporate officials might use a term like "involuntary conversion" as doublespeak to refer to theft or destruction of property when it is in their interest not to upset listeners about that destruction, or the CIA might refer to torture of political prisoners as "enhanced interrogation". Grammatically, doublespeak may make use of nouns and the phenomenon of synonymy.

Pronoun Choice & Address Forms

Pronouns are fundamental grammatical devices that help us reduce the number of times we need to repeat nouns (e.g: replacing 'boy' with 'he', 'him', 'his', or a 'queer person' with 'they', 'them', 'their'), and **address forms** are another basic linguistic device we use to address different people around us (e.g. sir, man, dude, bro etc.). They are simple only on the surface, because their usage shapes complex social relationships by including, excluding, respecting, and disrespecting the people they refer to. For example, we can use the **inclusive we** to refer to ourselves and the audience, or we can use it

exclusively to refer to ourselves but not the audience. We can use 'you' to refer to 'anyone' **generically** or to the person we are addressing, sometimes including others if plural. We can also use 'he', 'she', and 'they', and while a person who may not identify with the male-female gender binary may wish to be referred to with the **singular they** or another 3rd person pronoun, seeking to carve out a space within language use that has historically been denied to them, purposefully not using such pronouns to refer to them then becomes an act of disrespect. By understanding the power of pronouns and address forms, we can better understand how the words we choose shape social relationships and contribute to social realities.

Name-calling & Epithets

Grammatically making use of nouns and adjectives, **name-calling** involves the pejorative use of a linguistic or literary device called an epithet – a commonly-used descriptive name for someone or something that is additional to their actual name. **Epithets** allow the listener or reader to take a cognitive shortcut and see one trait or quality as the primary defining quality of the person. When an epithet is positive, its use can serve to show solidarity or respect, but when it is pejorative its use can result in exclusion and cause the listener or reader to close their mind to other characteristics the person has. Since criticality takes effort, it's easier for the listener to fixate on

a single 'definitive' negative trait. For example, name-calling became associated strongly with Donald Trump's presidential campaign when he started using pejorative names like "low-energy Jebb" and "Crooked Hillary" to "Sleepy Joe" for his political opponents which influenced the American population to fixate on negative portrayals of these politicians instead of fairly judging them based on their past policy records.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a rhetorical technique or figure of speech that exaggerates the facts of an event, idea, or person to an unrealistic degree such that it massively increases their intensity and evokes a strong emotional response in the audience (usually of shock, fear, or surprise, etc.). For example, instead of saying "It was an excellent concert", one might use hyperbole and say "it was the most excellent concert in the history of this planet!". Grammatically making use of adjectives in their various forms, hyperbole is used frequently in literature and pop culture. However, its use is especially powerful when it's used in advertising and political rhetoric to influence people to behave or act in particular ways without their awareness. For example, beauty and health products might use hyperbole to tell its potential customers that they may be the most beautiful, the strongest, or the most desirable person in their circles if they use their product; a beer company

might imply that the most interesting people in the world drink their beer, even though there's no way they could determine who those people actually are.

Storytelling & Censorship

Storytelling is how humans share ideas, humor, beliefs, and histories and relate to one another. Storytelling is also how they deceive and fool one another, by telling lies or false narratives. Stories are told through narratives, which in English use various combination of verb tense and aspect – for example, past tense and progressive aspect are both used in "We were heading to the park when we saw a shooting star". Since shared history and understanding happens through storytelling, some try to "control the narrative" about events as they are shared through media by presenting their version as the sole truth, even though there are always multiple perspectives on it. Others, like leaders of governmental, religious, and educational institutions, may try to control histories through **censorship** particular perspectives and narratives.

Weasel Language

Weasel language refers to language that allows the speaker or writer to be vague, to generalize, and to hide or mask authority on purpose – for example, when a reporter uses passive voice

even when they know the agent, as in 'Rioters were apprehended', instead of 'Police beat protestors'. Weasel language is ideal for propaganda and disinformation because it is sneaky and easy to miss; for example, a news report might say 'A crowd of people demanded' instead of 'A crowd of thousands of people demanded' in order to downplay the size of the crowd, or someone might say 'It is said that..' or 'They say that...' in passing without allowing for the reply 'wait, who is 'they'?' Technically, they're not lying, but are they being entirely honest?

Logical Fallacies

Logical fallacies are false arguments that can be proven wrong through logic; they often involve weasel language and other deceptive techniques, for example omitting information, repeating it, or exaggerating it (i.e. using hyperbole). Propaganda techniques that often involve logical fallacies include slippery slope arguments, causal fallacies, circular arguments, hasty generalizations, red herrings, and bandwagon appeals. Grammatically, logical fallacies often make use of negation and conjunctions, e.g. 'so', 'because', 'therefore', and 'however', that connect two clauses and imply logical relationships between their assertions.

A.4 Module Activity

A. Questions for discussion/reflection:

1. *Which language power techniques are you familiar with? Think of some examples you have noticed or know about.*
2. *Who uses LPTs, in what situations, and why? When have you yourself used them? When is their use expected or acceptable, if ever?*
3. *Why can LPTs have dangerous effects and consequences? What can you do to innoculate yourself and others against their negative effects?*

B. Crossword puzzle

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=88#h5p-66

NEXT:

Comprehensive & GF tracks ⇒ **B. Intro to Grammar Features**

LPT track ⇒ **1. Metaphor** or **C. Intro to Corpus Analysis**

Module authors: Anuj Gupta & Jonathon Reinhardt
Last updated: 10 October 2022

This module is part of Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar, an open educational resource offered by the Clarify Initiative, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

B. INTRO TO GRAMMAR FEATURES

B1. What is grammar?

Grammar comprises the rules of how language is structured. For example, 'dog chase cat' means something very different from 'cat chase dog', because the rules of **syntax** or word order are fundamental in grammar. In English, the **subject**, which is at least a **noun**, usually comes first and is followed by the **predicate**, which consists of a **verb** and sometimes an **object**, which is also a noun. The subject does the action, and in sentences it comes before the verb, which is the action. The thing that follows the verb is the receiver of the action – the object. But it doesn't have to be this way. Because English is a **subject-verb-object** or **SVO** language, when English users hear a noun followed by a verb followed by a noun, they assume the noun before the verb is the subject and the noun after it is the object. Other languages have different rules of syntax. To a speaker of an SOV language like Japanese or Korean, 'dog cat chase' would mean the dog is chasing the cat, and 'cat dog chase' would mean the cat is chasing the dog.

The view we take of grammar here is centered on **language**

use, but it also recognizes that there is fundamental grammatical knowledge that is important for all approaches, whether structural or functional. From our perspective, *to use language is to make a series of word choices from many possibilities to convey intended meaning*. When a language user says or writes something they don't just follow the rules of syntax, they also consider what information to convey (ideational or referential meaning), the relationship between themself and the audience (interpersonal or interactional meaning), and the connection between what they're saying and what is known or already said (textual or discursive meaning). They also take the **context** of where they say it into consideration, as well as broader cultural issues. A situation might be more or less formal, the user might have a particular relationship with the listener, or the user might intend to convey a certain perspective on the information. These impact the **lexicogrammatical** choices that the user makes.

Colloquially speaking, 'grammar' can also mean the **rules of style and usage**, that is, the rules of what is appropriate or inappropriate in different registers of use, like formal academic writing. For example, you might have heard never to end a sentence with a preposition, or to use 'whom' instead of 'who' if it's an object, or to never split an infinitive, or never to start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction like 'and', 'but', or 'or'. The people who preach these rules as standards that shouldn't be violated are sometimes called 'grammarians', and the most enlightened ones understand that there are

differences in rules among different linguistic varieties, that what is expected in one context is not in another, and that standards change over time.

In contrast to people who teach and study how language is used in different ways for different social purposes, linguists think of grammar as something to *describe* scientifically rather than to *prescribe* as more or less appropriate. A linguist recognizes that there are inviolable rules, like SVO word order, and consider a grammatical error to be when those are violated, not when a stylistic error has been made. Learners of English as an additional language may make these kinds of errors, especially when just starting.

Activity B1. Grammar pet peeves and descriptivism

a. What are some of your 'grammar pet peeves', if any? What mistakes do you hear that bother you, or seem inappropriate? Are they really mistakes? When do you think they should or should not be corrected?

b. What is the difference between a descriptive and a prescriptive approach to grammar? Read this

article and discuss/reflect on the question: https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-descriptive-grammar-1690439

What can English teachers, writers, and editors learn from a descriptive approach?

c. Three prescriptive rules of usage mentioned in the paragraph above are actually broken in the paragraph. What are they?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=97#h5p-17

d. Decide if the following are acceptable in some varieties or registers, or if they are true errors.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/
languageawareness/?p=97#h5p-5

An interactive H5P element has been
excluded from this version of the text. You
can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/
languageawareness/?p=97#h5p-18

B2. Registers and corpora

A more exact way to talk about the differences among contexts of use is to recognize the concept of **register**, which is a kind of language used in a particular kind of situation, for example, formal register, academic register, news register, and conversation register. English use really is different in these different registers, and what is appropriate in one is not in another. For example, in academic register you find words like 'moreover', which you rarely if ever find in conversational

registers, and you find more pronouns like 'I' and 'you' in conversational than in academic registers. Written and spoken registers are very different, and over time different kinds of texts reflecting these differences called '**genres**' have emerged with specific social purposes and conventions or expectations – for example, a *personal letter* is written but conversational, and it conventionally has an opening, a greeting, and a closing. Its purpose is to communicate and socialize. To understand genres we have to understand that the author, purpose, and audience of any instance of language use, whether written or spoken, makes a difference in what lexicogrammar has been chosen.

Activity B2. What register is it?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=97#h5p-6

Corpus linguistics is a field in applied linguistics that sees language as composed of registers of use, each with potentially differing grammar rules and tendencies – a tendency being a rule that is followed most — but maybe not all — of the time. Corpus linguists argue that we can't really understand grammar and language if we don't analyze language use, instead of trying to think of examples that may or may not violate the rules we think there are. They collect language use examples as data and create gigantic databases of it called *corpora* (singular: corpus), and then analyze it for trends; they've found that how people use language is not always how the grammarians say they do or should.

> To learn how to do corpus analysis, don't skip **module C,** which teaches you how to use a corpus. Most of the GF and LPT modules have Corpus Analysis Activities to do that will help you better understand the features and techniques.

B3. Parts of Speech

The first step in understanding grammar is to know the **parts of speech**. All words in English can be categorized according

to the part-of-speech (POS) that they are when they are used. Some words are almost always one POS no matter what, but some words can change their part of speech depending on when and how they are used. For example:

- **Did you read that <u>book</u>?** (*book* is a noun)
- **Did you <u>book</u> the flight?** (*book* is a verb)

Every POS category is either an **open** or **closed class**, meaning that we can add new words to the category, or we cannot. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are open class, but the others are closed class. Generally speaking, open class words are also **content words**, meaning they refer to something specific, while closed class words are **function words**, meaning that they play a grammatical function. Some parts of content words, e.g. the endings on some nouns, adjectives, and verbs, a.k.a. conjugations, may also show grammatical function.

- **cat love fish** – (all content)
- **This cat loves fish.** – (with function words and conjugations)

There are 9 parts of speech, each listed below and preceded by its common abbreviation. They are defined very briefly here along with a mention, for the content word classes and

pronouns, of the role each can play in certain **language power techniques**.

N – Nouns

A noun is a content word that names or identifies a person, place, concept, or thing, for example:

<p style="text-align:center"><strong style="color:green">couch potato interrogation swamp tree hugger neutralization</p>

Nouns are used in many language power techniques. They play a prominent role in the use of **euphemism**, **dysphemism**, **jargon**, and other techniques commonly understood as **doublespeak**. Nouns are also key in **name-calling** and the use of **epithets**. They are also the end product of the process of nominalization, a kind of **weasel language**. For example,

- 'Couch potato' is a euphemism for a lazy person.
- 'The Swamp' is dysphemistic doublespeak for the Washington D.C. establishment.
- 'Enhanced interrogation' is doublespeak for torture. (note: 'enhanced' is an adjective)
- 'Tree hugger' is a pejorative term used to name-call an environmentalist.
- 'Neutralization' is a nominalization meaning 'the act of neutralizing something', used as doublespeak for murder

or killing.

V – Verbs

A verb is a content word that describes an action, state, or occurrence, for example:

<div align="center">

shoot build have pay

</div>

A verb explains what a noun is doing, or is being done to a noun. **Auxiliaries**, or helping verbs, which include forms of be, have, and do, as well as **modals**, are also considered verbs, for example:

<div align="center">

is are will

</div>

All forms of verbs, including past tense and participle forms (-ing and -ed) all count as verbs, for example:

<div align="center">

shot paid going

</div>

Verbs are perhaps the most complex part of speech. They can be found in a variety of language power techniques, but they play a key role in **storytelling** and in **weasel language**. As an example of storytelling, President Donald Trump used **future tenses** to make a promise that was coherent with the narrative he was building about illegal immigration to build a wall on the US-Mexico border. During a campaign speech in June 2015 he used 'will' for making the proclamation sound certain and inevitable:

> I **will build** a great, great wall on our southern border.
>
> And I **will have** Mexico **pay** for that wall.

In an interview in March 2016 he used 'going to', which is used for emphasizing the previously planned nature of an action.

> Mexico **is** not **going to build** it, we'**re going to** build it.

Trump's strategic use of verbs for building a narrative with him at its center contributed to his popularity, even though the wall was only 33% complete by the time he was voted out of office, and Mexico did not pay for any of it.

Verbs are also used in **weasel language** especially when in the passive voice, which can mask or deemphasize agency, that is, the actor who actually did or is doing the action. For example, in:

> A dozen protestors **were arrested** yesterday.

In this sentence there is no mention of *who* did the arresting, although we can assume it was the police. We might expect that a reporter who sympathized with those who were arrested might instead use the active voice and choose a less threatening sounding noun, saying instead:

> Police **arrested** a dozen demonstrators.

ADJ – Adjectives

An adjective is a content word that modifies (i.e. describes or

qualifies) a noun, often coming before the noun it modifies, but not always. For example:

<div align="center">This legislation is dangerous.</div>

<div align="center">This dangerous legislation must be stopped.</div>

Adjectives are powerful in **name-calling** techniques. **Attributive adjectives**, or adjectives that come before their nouns, are especially powerful because they lead and can have definitive, delimiting power. For example, the phrase 'a person who is blind' may be preferable to 'a blind person', since in the second, 'blind' defines the person rather being only one of many features that defines them.

The role of adjectives in **hyperbole** is also notable. Hyperbole is extreme exaggeration in a statement to garner an emotional response – fear, shock, humor, or disbelief; for example, a politician might say:

<div align="center">This is the most <u>dangerous</u> legislation I've ever seen.</div>

Although such legislation might be *very* dangerous in the politician's opinion, unless they have objectively rated every piece of legislation they have seen and this tops them all, such a statement is an exaggeration of the truth.

PRO – Pronouns

A pronoun replaces a noun so that it doesn't have to be repeated. For example:

The man ran off. → He ran off.

Examples of pronouns include I, they, he, you, and it. While speaking or writing without pronouns would be impossible, their status as **address forms** that index social relationships makes them very powerful. For example, the inclusive 'we', the generic 'you', and the singular 'they' can be used strategically to make appeals towards respect or solidarity. For example, Barack Obama is attributed as saying:

We are the change **we** have been waiting for.

In this use of the *inclusive* 'we', Obama invites the audience to identify with the group. 'We' can also be used *exclusively*, however, as when Obama said:

We don't ask you to believe in **our** ability to bring change, rather, **we** ask you to believe in yours.

Since 'we' and 'our' are contrasted with 'you' and 'yours', it is exclusive in that it does not include the audience. Audience matters.

to learn more about pronouns

ADV – Adverbs

An adverb describes a verb, that is, how, when, or in what manner the verb is done. Adverbs can also describe adjectives and clauses. They have relatively free word order. An example is happily, as in:

I **happily** accept. or **Happily**, I accept. or I accept **happily.**

Adverbs are used everywhere, but the use of negation is important for making arguments, and is therefore involved in making **logical fallacies**.

DET – Determiners

A determiner modifies a noun by specifying which noun it is. Determiners are similar to adjectives, but they are a closed class. They include words like **this**, **every**, and **the**.

CONJ – Conjunctions

A conjunction connects words, phrases, and clauses. Examples include **if** and **and**; examples of how they connect clauses include:

If you build it, they will come.

They will come **if** you build it.

I like chocolate **and** vanilla.

Because conjunctions imply logical connections between two ideas, they may be involved in **logical fallacies**.

PREP – Prepositions

A preposition shows a relationship, often temporal or spatial, between other words. A common preposition is **with**, as in:

He was covered **with** mud. or **With** whom am I speaking?

INT – Interjections

Interjections are stand-alone words that we use to express emotion or stance, like **well**, **wow**, **hey**, or some four-letter swear words.

NEXT:

Comprehensive track ⇒ **1. Metaphor or C. Intro to Corpus Analysis**

GF track ⇒ **2. Sentence Basics or C. Intro to Corpus Analysis**

Module author: Jonathon Reinhardt

Last updated: 4 October 2022

This module is part of Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar, an open educational resource offered by the Clarify Initiative, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

C. INTRO TO CORPUS ANALYSIS

This module is helpful for learners who want to know more about a corpus analytic approach to language use and critical discourse analysis. We recommend doing it if you are going to do the corpus activities.

Situating questions for discussion and reflection

1. *What things would you describe with one word as opposed to its synonym? For example, 'little' as opposed to 'small'? 'weird' as opposed to 'odd'?*
2. *What buzzwords do you think a politician use more frequently than others do, and what effect does that have? For example, 'freedom', 'we/us/our/ours', 'struggle', 'patriot', or 'justice'?*

3. *What's the difference between 'mistakes were made' and 'I made a mistake'?*
4. *What's the difference between academic writing and casual conversation in terms of the words you would likely, or would likely not, use in them?*
5. *How has the meaning and frequency of usage of certain words changed over time? For example, 'cool', 'groovy', 'gay', 'wicked', 'bro'?*
6. *How did you know or intuit answers to the above questions? How much do you trust your experience or intuition? How would you learn it if you wanted a more objective answer, or had no idea?*

C1. What is a corpus?

A **corpus** is a large, searchable, (often) annotated collection of authentic language use that is collected in a principled manner to be representative of language from a certain domain. This definition has some keywords deserving elaboration. Let's explore each in turn:

1. **Large**: In the 1960s, the first modern corpus—the

Brown Corpus—contained approximately 1 million words representing 15 written genres. Today, perhaps the most widely used corpus is the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) with 1 billion words drawn from registers such as film and television, blogs, fiction, magazines, newspaper, and more. Yet, 1 billion words does not make the COCA the largest public corpus. For example, the iWeb corpus contains nearly 15 billion words while the Google Books Corpus is greater than 150 billion words. Other popular corpora available at English-corpora.org are displayed in the image below.

2. **Searchable**: A corpus of such size as previously mentioned would not be useful if it were not easily searchable. The various search functions made available at public corpora such as the COCA and that are embedded in corpus tools such as Antconc enable researchers, teachers, and students to collect information about certain words, see the contexts in which words are used, examine how the use of a word has changed, and much more. For example, one could quickly do a search to discover whether figure out or discover is used more frequently in academic writing, which adjectives are most commonly used with the noun immigrant, which tense of verb most often appears with subordinating conjunctions when and while, and much more.

3. **Annotated**: A feature of corpora that allows for such

search potential is the fact that most corpora are annotated. The most common form of annotation is a part-of-speech (POS) tag. This means that in the COCA, for example, each of the 1 billion words has been annotated with a POS tag, thereby adding to the search capabilities of the collection. For example, one may want to determine which are the most common nouns following the near-synonyms beautiful and attractive or the most frequent verbs used with the adverbs broadly and largely. Additionally, one may want to search for only examples of when cook is used as a noun, excluding instances where it appears as a verb. While there are other types of annotations that can be added, for the purposes of our text, POS tags are the most relevant and important.

4. **Authentic**: Though authentic is fourth on this list, it is possibly the most important feature of a corpus. Why is authenticity so important? Before the development of corpora, people made claims about language use based primarily on their intuition alone. The problem is intuition is limited and generally inaccurate. Though we may think we know how a word or grammar item is used, research has shown again and again that our intuitions about language use are often incorrect. One reason is researchers could only base their statements about the use of the subjunctive, the frequencies of who or whom, the functions of modals such as may, might,

or could on their individual experiences with language. Thus, they could only formulate claims about language use based on their own limited experience with language. A middle-aged linguistics professor may think a word or phrase is used commonly, but they only know what is used in their small community. This limitation had consequences in all sorts of areas. For example, though less common today, the language presented in textbooks for language learners often felt dated and/or artificial. Today, textbook writers can use corpora when creating materials, allowing them to include the actual language that speakers/writers use.

5. **Principled and representative**: Though there are some technical distinctions concerning these two items, we can combine them for our purposes. These terms indicate that corpora are meticulously designed and created so that users can be certain that their corpus findings are accurate and relevant to their question. For instance, if one wanted to analyze the use of adverbs such as probably, likely, and clearly in legal writing, they would need to have a principled plan to collect texts. Should they include briefs written by lawyers, opinions published by judges, legal textbooks written by law professors, or medical reports written by physicians? Obviously, you would not include medical reports, but depending on the focus of the analysis, you might also want to exclude textbooks too. If you decide to use a

corpus, you should first determine what sort of texts are actually in the corpus. Corpus designers make this information available, so that others can verify that the corpus was carefully designed to be representative of a certain genre or register of language use.

C2. What does corpus study make possible?

The applications of corpus study are numerous, and the previous section highlighted several. Their primary application is that they allow us, whether language researcher, textbook creator, language teacher, or language learner, to gain insights into the actual language that people use. Rather than responding to a question about language with disclaimers such as "Well, I think that…" or "I feel that…", we can simply go to a corpus and find the answer. When we then go to the corpus for the answer, we are able to see numerous examples of how people indeed use a word, grammar item, or phrase. This allows textbook writers and language teachers to present accurate information to readers and learners.

Additionally, corpus study allows us to see things about language use of which we were not previously aware. For example, by analyzing corpora, we have learned that language is rather formulaic, meaning we use lots of "chunks" when we speak and write. Yes, we are aware of "chunks" such as 'on the other hand', 'a result of', and 'I don't know if', but

corpus study has revealed how these "chunks" are the building blocks of language. In other words, we do not necessarily learn and mentally store individual words that we later retrieve one by one to build a sentence; rather, we learn, store, and use "chunks" of language. Corpus study shows us too that the "chunks" I use in one genre or register are different than the "chunks" I use in other genres and registers.

And finally, and related to the previous items, corpus study allows us to see patterns in language use of which we may be unconscious but that function to shape our perceptions of and relationships with the world around us. Considering the critical aims of this book, this is quite powerful. The popular notion suggests that language use is somehow natural and that it simply captures and reflects objective facts about the world. However, the language choices we make do not capture an existing reality but build one for us. Language use and choice are not given; they are purposeful and subjective. For example, there is nothing inherently natural about the pairing illegal immigrant. As Holocaust survivor and Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel states, "No human is illegal". If I instead choose to use undocumented immigrant, I am building a different sort of world. As Carbaugh states, the choice we make is "a symbolic move within a cultural game, a move which creatively evokes a complex of associations, and invites one's interlocutor into a discursive space from which we see, hear, feel, and act" in certain ways. In the case of undocumented/illegal immigrant, the selection of the pre-modifying adjective influences how we

think and ultimately act. For a grammar-oriented example, if I use the passive construction "Mistakes were made", I have selectively chosen to hide who actually made the mistake. The passive is quite different than the active voice alternative: "I made a mistake". If we consider how this may be manipulated for certain ends, consider the following samples from the News on the Web (NOW) Corpus collected from reporting following the May, 2022 killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh:

1. **Israeli police clashed with Palestinian mourners packed around the coffin of killed Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh** (Reuters, May 13, 2022)
2. **13 Palestinians were wounded in the clashes, one of them seriously**. (MSN.com, May 13, 2022)
3. **More than 40 Palestinians were injured in renewed clashes at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on Friday** (Forbes, May 13, 2022)

These instances demonstrate how the selection of verb forms can either foreground, background, or even remove agents and obscure the reality of the events. The selection of a certain pattern is not altogether arbitrary for it captures and reflects one's perception of the event. In the first sample, the agent (Israeli police) responsible for the action is explicitly named in the subject noun phrase of the sentence. The placement of Israeli police in this initial and prominent position serves to

essentially assign responsibility for an action/event. However, in samples 2 and 3, the agent is removed from the sentences through the passive verb construction. In both sentences, the affected is clearly named but the agent responsible for wounds and injuries is not identified. While that information can likely be retrieved from elsewhere in the article, it is revealing that the person/group responsible for the injuries is removed. As these authentic samples illustrate, grammar, in this case the passive verb phrase, allows speaker/writers to package information in ways which influence the interpretation and understanding of readers and listeners. Throughout the modules, we will see examples where the grammar we use is a powerful tool for informing, misinforming, and obscuring in order to persuade listeners and readers to build a certain view of the world.

C3. How does one search a corpus?

Though the activities throughout the modules do not require you to be an expert in corpus linguistics, it will nonetheless be useful for you to understand how to do basic searches within an online corpus. By gaining such skills, you will be able to verify claims about language use and complete corpus activities throughout the modules. Most importantly, you will be able to explore language use of interest to you. In this section, we will explore the 6 primary search options of the COCA. While the functions are demonstrated using the COCA, these basic search options are present in most available corpora.

First, go to https://www.english-corpora.org. You will need to register to use the corpora on the site, but it is free and only takes a moment. Once registered, select "Corpus of Contemporary American English" from the list of available corpora.

a. list

The first search option is rather simple, but we will add a few techniques to increase its power. As we have previously discussed *immigrant* and *immigration*, we will use these words to demonstrate the various search functions in COCA.

Search 1: Frequency

1. Click **list** from the options above the search bar.
2. Enter **immigrant** in the search bar.
3. Click **find matching strings**

This simple search displays how many times a word is used in the corpus.

Search 2: Wildcard

1. Enter **immigra*** in the search bar
2. Click find matching strings

The output produced by the use of the wildcard is quite useful for it allows us to view many forms of our search word. In this instance, the search allowed us to capture all words beginning with immigra. We can use the wildcard in many positions to enhance our searches. For example, we could search *tion to explore all words ending in tion. The wildcard can also fill a slot in a phrase. For instance, we could search "the * of immigration" to determine which words are used to frame immigration.

Search 3: Verb forms

1. Enter **[immigrate]** in the search bar
2. Click find matching strings

The bracket search is most useful for exploring forms of a particular verb. For example, [take] yields the frequencies of take, takes, took, taking, taken and also takin.

Search 4: Synonyms

1. Enter **[=immigrate]** in the search bar
2. Click find matching strings

Entering the equal sign in the search signals that

you would like to explore synonyms of the search word.

b. chart

Search 5: Searching by register and across time

1. Click **chart** from the search options
2. Enter **immigrant** in the search bar
3. Click **find matching strings**

In the output for this search, you can observe in which register (e.g. magazines, fiction, newspaper, etc.) the word most frequently appears. You can also view its frequency of use across six five-year periods from 1990-2019.

It is important to remember that the previous searches using wildcards, brackets, and the equal sign can all be used with the chart search option as well.

c. word

The word option provides rather comprehensive information about any of the 60,000 most frequently used words in the corpus. If you enter and search immigration, you can get a view of the sort of information provided. For instance, the output displays

a chart of the word's frequency in various registers, the various topics in which it appears, its common collocates, and more.

Search 6: Exploring immigration

d. collocates

From our critical orientation, the collocates search is likely the most powerful of the search options, as it allows us to see how a particular word is represented and in which contexts it is most frequently used. Indeed, much research in corpus-assisted discourse analysis analyzes the collocations of keywords, often additionally exploring how a keyword's collocations have changed over time. When analyzing a word's collocates, we are aligning with a key corpus linguistics principle: "You shall know a word by the company it keeps". One way to think about "company" is whether the collocates are generally negative or positive. For example, Tognini-Bonelli demonstrates how the collocates of the near-synonyms largely and broadly are quite distinct. While we intuit these words to be interchangeable, they occur in rather distinct contexts. In this case, broadly frequently appears with positively-loaded adjectives (e.g., similar, applicable, shared, popular, acceptable) while largely occurs with more negative-loading collocates (e.g., responsible, unknown, irrelevant, absent, ineffective). In corpus study, these contextual loadings are referred to as

semantic prosody. Let's search the semantic prosodies of illegal and undocumented.

Search 7: Collocations of immigrant
Search 8: Adjective collocations of immigrant

e. compare

The compare search adds a layer to the collocates function, as it enables you to view collocates for two words at the same time. This function can be quite useful for exploring how two near-synonyms collocates are used differently. Indeed, the function illustrates why the term near-synonym is preferred within linguistics for no words are truly synonymous. To illustrate, consider the adjectives beautiful and attractive. Upon first reflection, it is likely you view these items as synonyms. However, a compare search in a corpus such as the COCA will reveal the rather divergent contexts in which they are used. The image below displays the two words collocates.

Search 9: Compare illegal and undocumented

f. KWIC (Key Word In Context)

The final function is made possible due because the corpus has been annotated for part of speech. The KWIC search is simple function, but it can be quite useful for it assigns a color to each part of speech in the context of the search term. The color

coding can help to identify grammatical patterns around the target search word.

Search 10: KWIC immigrant

c4. How are corpora used in the modules?

Most samples of various grammar items that are present in the modules throughout this course are from corpora. One reason for including samples from corpora is that it allows you to validate claims made about grammar and language use. Rather than simply writing, "Most times people use passive verb constructions to...." or "This adverb is most commonly used in contexts where....", we include authentic examples of the grammar items in use. In other cases, the modules include information derived from corpus analysis. For example, in the section on modal auxiliaries (e.g., may, might, could, would, etc.), you will be presented with corpus data displaying how frequently modals are in spoken language in contrast to academic writing. Generally, these samples have been extracted from large, public corpora such as the previously mentioned Corpus of Contemporary American English. In other instances, the samples are taken from small, specialized corpora we have built of particular domains of language use in order to display the use of a particular grammar feature in a certain genre, register, or discourse domain.

In addition to the use of samples and data, specialized

activities will guide you through corpus searches so that you can experience corpus study for yourself. As noted in section III, you will need to register to use the corpora at english-corpora.org. Registration is free and only takes a moment. We are not expecting you to become corpus experts, but we think you will enjoy doing searches and reaching your own insights about language use.

NEXT:
Comprehensive and LPT tracks ⇒ **1. Metaphor**
GF track ⇒ **2. Sentence Basics**

Module author: Robert Poole
   Last updated: 7 October 2022

This module is part of Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar, an open educational resource offered by the Clarify Initiative, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

SECTION II
MODULES

Part One (Fall 2022)

Language Power Techniques	Grammar Features
A. Intro to Language Power Techniques	B. Intro to Grammar Features
	C. Intro to Corpus Analysis
1. Metaphor	2. Sentence Basics
3. Doublespeak	4. Nouns
5. Address Forms & Pronoun Choice	6. Pronouns
7. Name-calling and Epithets	8. Adjectives & Determiners

Part Two (Fall 2023)

Language Power Techniques	Grammar Features
9. Hyperbole	10. Adverbs & Prepositions
11. Storytelling & Propaganda	12. Verbs I: Tense, Aspect, & Modality
13. Weasel Language	14. Verbs II: Voice & Mood
15. Logical Fallacies	16. Conjunctions, Clauses, & Negation

1. METAPHOR

Watch the video introducing this module ⇒ (coming soon)

1.1 Introduction to metaphors

Module preview questions

When you hear the word "metaphor" what comes to your mind? What examples can you think of? What is the difference between 'metaphorical' and 'literal'? What is 'metaphorical thinking'?

A **metaphor** is a rhetorical device that enables us to connect two disparate words, concepts or things together such that some sort of transference of qualities or activity takes place from one to the other. The most basic forms of metaphor equate an abstract idea with something more concrete, so that the abstract idea can be conceptualized more easily. For

example:

Life is a beach
Love is a battlefield
Laughter is the best medicine

The **literal meaning** of 'life is a beach' is that a life actually is a beach, which is a physical impossibility, so if someone uses the metaphor they intend to compare 'life' with the associations and **connotations** of the word beach, for example, that it is relaxing and enjoyable. A literal interpretation of language means that only the **denotation** of the word – its exact definition – are understood. Literal uses are normally contrasted with **figurative** uses, which tend towards connotations, associations, and metaphors. Fictional characters like Drax the Destroyer from Guardians of the Galaxy, or Data from Star Trek are portrayed as having difficulty understanding figurative uses and take everything literally, presumably because they are not human. Using and understanding metaphors, figurative uses, and connotative meanings is deeply human, which means that we wouldn't expect aliens or animals to do it.

Fig 1.1a The character "Data" on "Star Trek: The Next Generation" had difficulty understanding metaphors (Source)

One of the most famous metaphors in the world that you might have heard is "All the world's a stage" which was created by Shakespeare in his famous comedy "As You Like It" ([1998](#)). In this metaphor, Shakespeare connects two different things together: 'the world' and 'a stage'. He does not imply that the world is literally a stage where actual theatrical performances take place. Rather he implies that some qualities of the stage, like people acting or performing for an audience, can be transferred as a frame or a lens to help us better understand the world. Going through life and all its motions – birth, marriage, parenthood, heartbreak and death etc. are akin to different

performances that we give for other humans, our audiences. Thus they have an unreal, or transitory quality to them and shouldn't, perhaps, be taken too seriously. Through this transference of "stage" onto the "world", Shakespeare enables us to see the world and our place in it in a new light.

Fig 1.1b The Globe Theatre in London, Shakespeare's original stage by Hulki Okan Tabak on Unsplash

Another common example equates humans with animals, for example "he is a pig" and "she is a fox"; in both examples, the common meaning of the terms pig and fox are modified in the act of predication (the act of linking the terms to the subjects he and she). When the metaphor "he is a pig" is used to describe one's roommate, this does not imply that the roommate has four legs, a curly tail, and a snout nose; instead,

it means that the roommate exhibits certain behaviors that can be associated with the animal labeled with the term pig. (Jasinski 2001, p.257).

Key points from 1.1

- A metaphor is a rhetorical device that enables us to connect two disparate words, concepts or things together such that some sort of transference of qualities or activity takes place from one to the other. The most basic forms of metaphor equate a newer, more abstract idea with something more familiar and concrete, so that the abstract idea can be conceptualized more easily.

Activity 1.1: Metaphor Basics

A.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=66#h5p-46

B. Animals are considered symbolic in nearly every culture on the planet. In some cultures, if you see a particular animal at some moment, it has a meaningful connection to something that is troubling you. Read about animal symbolism here: https://skullbliss.com/blogs/news/animal-symbolism

What human qualities are ascribed to animals? Think of 5 adjectives that are invariably associated with 5 different animals and used metaphorically to describe humans.

1.2 What are metaphors, grammatically speaking?

Metaphors can be expressed in many different ways, but perhaps the most prototypical form is:

<div align="center">

NOUN – linking verb – NOUN

</div>

where the first **noun** is the **subject** and the noun following the linking verb is called the **subject complement**. In use, the subject noun is the known concept, and the complement is the new concept. The linking verb bridges the two concepts, and can be thought of as an equal sign.

- **That puppy is a little piglet,** he eats so much. (puppy = piglet)
- **I am an open book.** (I = book)
- **The school has become a prison.** (school = prison)

A **linking verb** is a verb like 'is' (a form of BE), 'appears', 'becomes', 'sounds (like)', or 'looks (like)'. It contrasts with a **transitive verb** because the word that follows the linking verb describes the subject, rather than functioning as the object, that is, the thing that receives the action of the verb. In 'I read a book' or 'The school replaced a prison', 'book' and 'prison' are objects, not subject complements, because the verbs 'read' and 'replace' are transitive.

Other parts of speech like adjectives can be used in metaphors as well, for example as **attributive adjective**

<div align="center">

ADJ – NOUN

</div>

before a noun or with comparative phrases like

<div align="center">

as – ADJ – as or**ADJ–er than a NOUN**

</div>

for example:

- **The US is thought of as a <u>melting pot</u>.** (US = melting pot)
- **She's <u>as brave as a lion</u>.** (She = brave lion)
- **The walk-in freezer is <u>colder than a Chicago January</u>.** (freezer cold > Chicago January cold)

Metaphors do not need to be expressed with subject complements, however, it is simply a prototypical form. **Verbs** can be used in metaphors too, along with other parts of speech, in many different ways, e.g.:

- **We <u>were drowning in debt</u>.**
- **Now <u>hold your horses</u>, young man...**

Key points from 1.2

- Metaphors can be expressed in many different ways, but perhaps the most basic form is: NOUN – linking verb – NOUN, where the first noun is the subject and the noun following the linking verb is called the subject complement.
- Other parts of speech like adjectives can be used in metaphors as well, for example as attributive adjectives ('ADJ – NOUN') before a noun or with comparative phrases like 'as – ADJ – as' or 'ADJ-er than a'.
- Verbs can be used in metaphors too, along with other parts of speech, in different ways.

Activity 1.2: Grammar of metaphors

A.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=66#h5p-58

B.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=66#h5p-48

1.3: Metaphors as a way to think

Because of the way most of us are introduced to metaphors in school, we may think that they are simply garnishes or superficial beautification devices that help make our writing

pretty. This is called the **ornamental view of metaphors**. Think of how many times in your own English classes that your teachers asked you to identify metaphors that a poet uses and reflect on why they have used them. Literary analysts can look at something an author has written and interpret it to mean something that the author may not have even realized or intended; writing and stories can reflect deeper truths about an author, the topics of their stories, and their historical contexts. We may therefore think that only literature students and creative writers need to pay attention to metaphors. In truth, however, metaphors are fundamental to how we think, communicate, teach, and relate to one another.

Fig 1.3a: Ornamental decoration by Element5 Digital on Unsplash

1.3.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

A lot of contemporary psychologists and neuroscientists argue that metaphors are not just ornamental devices but actually central to the very way in which our brains process information. One theory on this notion is **conceptual metaphor theory**, pioneered by cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003).

> If you have time and interest, watch this video to learn more: *Metaphors we live by* Lakoff and Johnson
>
> - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYcQcwUfo8c&t=391s

Lakoff and Johnson assert that "human thought processes are largely metaphorical. ... The human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined" (Lakoff and Johnson 2003:6). Essentially what they mean is that metaphors relate two objects or concepts that may not be naturally associated. By doing this, they condition us to perceive and experience one thing in terms of another. As Jasinski (2001) puts it, "The force (of a) metaphor arises from its ability to help us look at something in a new way" (242). One of the most famous

examples discussed by Lakoff and Johnson, which you saw in the video, is ARGUMENT IS WAR (note that the theory states metaphors using capital letters). When we use language, the many connotations and associations of this metaphor serve to invoke it and reinforce it as a way of conceptualizing the domains.

Conceptual Domain A (ARGUMENT) → Conceptual Domain B (WAR)

- **Your claims are <u>indefensible</u>.**
- **He <u>attacked</u> every <u>weak point</u> in my argument.**
- **His criticisms were right on <u>target</u>. I <u>demolished</u> his argument.**
- **I've never <u>won</u> an argument with him.**
- **You disagree? Okay, <u>shoot</u>!**
- **If you use that strategy, he'll <u>wipe you out</u>.**
- **He <u>shot down</u> all of my arguments.**

(Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p.5)

In the above example, the overarching conceptual metaphor that connects these two concepts (ARGUMENT, WAR) enables the transference of a wide range of adjectives (indefensible, weak point), verbs (attacked, demolished, won, shoot, wipe you out), as well as other nouns (target), from conceptual domain B (WAR) to another domain A (ARGUMENT). This makes us perceive domain A (ARGUMENT) in terms of domain B (WAR) and we start

to believe that argument actually is war. Think about it. It's not objective or natural to think that arguments necessarily need to be combative and aggressive, but many cultures today unfortunately conceptualize them as such because of this underlying metaphor that has conditioned all of us.

Fig 1.3b: Arguing Figurines by Charl Folscher on Unsplash

What if we lived in a culture that thought of arguments as not war but something else? Lakoff and Johnson (2003) challenge us to:

> "Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry

them out differently, and talk about them differently. But we would probably not view them as arguing at all: they would simply be doing something different. It would seem strange even to call what they were doing "arguing." Perhaps the most neutral way of describing this difference between their culture and ours would be to say that we had a discourse form structured in terms of battle and they had one structured in terms of dance" (p.5).

Metaphors even affect our thinking at a deep neurological level. In a study by Lacey et al. (2012), neuroscientists found the use of metaphors activates brain areas that are different from when the same meaning is conveyed in a non-metaphorical way. When participants were presented with two sentences "he had a rough day" versus "he had a bad day", the first sentence, which has a physical, textural metaphor of "roughness", activated the part of their brains which is associated with texture! The second sentence which does not carry any physical or textural metaphors did not cause any such activations. Through this they concluded that using metaphorical language can actually impact people at the neurological level.

Fig 1.3c Dancing Figurines by Nareeta Martin on Unsplash

Key points from 1.3

- Contemporary psychologists and neuroscientists argue that metaphors are not just ornamental devices but actually central to the very way in which our brains process information.
- In conceptual metaphor theory, metaphors relate two objects or concepts that may not be naturally associated. By doing this, they condition us to perceive and experience one thing in terms of another.

Activity 1.3 Dancing arguments and valuable time

A.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=66#h5p-49

B. Imagine that we conceptualized argument as dance and said things like:

- His words synchronized perfectly with his partner.
- Their argument dazzled everyone and filled the audience with joy.
- The rhythm of their argument brought everyone together.

What are some other things people might say having to do with arguments if it were conceptualized as dance?

C. Think about the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY, expressed in sentences like "You are wasting my time" and "I don't have enough time to spare".

1. What other things do people say that reflect this metaphor?
2. How do you think TIME IS MONEY shapes people's perceptions and behavior?

What might be some different metaphors for time or money that would change our understanding of them?

D. Think of another metaphor you see around you. It could be on social media or in the newspaper, or just in the ways in which people speak around you. Think about how it shapes your perception or behavior. What is it? How is it expressed in language use and people's behavior?

1.4: Types of metaphors and their origins

As must be clear to you by now, metaphors are created by joining two words that don't really go along with each other in conventional language. Think of "rose" and "love". There is no natural, intuitive connection between a botanical entity – a flower called Rose or Rosa Polyantha and a human emotion and social phenomenon – love. However, through repeated

use of the metaphor ROSES ARE LOVE in literature, art, and language use we have come to consider them as deeply connected. We can classify such connections based on different parameters – size, depth, and originality.

Fig. 1.4a Roses by Sidney Pearce on Unsplash

A metaphor can be used at a very small **scale**, where it is

applied only in the immediate context of use. Think of a sentence like "The protagonist felt blue", reflecting the metaphor SADNESS IS BLUE. The impact of this metaphor would be restricted just to a fleeting event in a larger narrative, and metaphorical meaning is encapsulated in just the word 'blue' (although it may reflect a deeper metaphor that EMOTIONS ARE COLORS, which the 2015 film 'Inside Out' played on). However, metaphors can also be used at a very large scale and impact a whole culture's understanding of a phenomenon. Think of the phrase 'holy war', which has been used by various religious warmongers across the world (Christian crusades, Islamic jihad etc.) to justify their violent acts as acceptable. This may originate in logical entailments of metaphors like GOD IS ONE and GOD IS HOLY, that other gods must therefore be profane and their worshippers should be destroyed. Some large scale, deep metaphors have become so ingrained into our cultures that we can barely perceive them as metaphors at all. For example, "This is a hard concept to grasp" reflects the metaphor that IDEAS ARE SUBSTANCES; we often compare intellectual concepts to physical texture and think of them as "hard" or "soft". This has been used so extensively over the ages that it becomes difficult for us to realize that it is in fact a metaphor and that at some point long ago it may not have been seen as 'natural' at all.

Some metaphors are very explicit about the two words or things they connect and can be spotted on the surface of a sentence, for example, in "America won the space race with

the Soviet Union". Here it is clear that the word 'space' is being metaphorically connected to the word 'race' and both are present in the sentence itself. However, in some cases the metaphors are **deep**, hidden under the surface of a sentence and not obvious. Often this happens subconsciously. In the famous Biblical phrase: "The Lord is my shepherd", it seems that "Lord" is being metaphorically connected to the word "shepherd", but there is also a more hidden or implied metaphor that the person represented by the word "my", which is a stand-in for all humans, is a sheep. Thus, more explicitly the metaphor is HUMANS ARE SHEEP, and so they are weak, stupid, and child-like, and thus need protection.

As another example, the metaphor hidden under "my partner and I decided to go our separate ways" is difficult to tease out. If we consider the figurative meaning we recognize that what is being spoken about is a breakup, and that a breakup is like going two separate ways. This surface metaphor is enabled by two deeper metaphors that LIFE IS A JOURNEY and LOVE IS A JOURNEY. Another surface form reflecting these same underlying metaphors might be "I can't wait to go down this path with you"; however, we'd have to be careful to whom and how we say it, since it can be interpreted as reflecting either or both metaphors at the same time. When using a metaphor to tell a story or make an argument, mixing them can be confusing because of conflicting associations. The metaphor love is a journey

implies that it has an ending, which conflicts with the metaphor LOVE IS ENDLESS.

Metaphors originate from people trying to explain new things and experiences that their audiences may not understand if they were explained in literal terms; some metaphors are very **original** while others are conventional. Much of the language we use–some linguists say all—has metaphorical origins. The computer mouse, for example, was named a 'mouse' because it looked like one, but now many have evolved to look nothing like mice, and a 'mousepad' or 'to mouse over' would be difficult to comprehend for someone who knew what mice were but not computers. Artists, writers, and thinkers continually generate new metaphors, drawing two or more seemingly unrelated ideas together and challenging us to imagine new ways of seeing and being in the world by connecting them. Perhaps this is why British poet P.B. Shelley said that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," because they continuously replenish language with new metaphors, and metaphorically speaking, maybe METAPHORS ARE LAWS that guide our thoughts.

Fig 1.4b The emoji for 'mind blown' reflects a metaphor that THOUGHTS ARE VOLATILE SUBSTANCES that can explode if mixed unexpectedly with a new thought (Image source: Wikimedia commons)

- If you have the time and interest, read or

listen to this podcast about 'Words That Began as Metaphors', including the word 'metaphor' itself! https://www.merriam-webster.com/word-matters-podcast/episode-73-began-as-metaphors

- If you want to learn how to create metaphors, read this: https://aeon.co/essays/how-to-build-a-metaphor-to-change-people-s-minds

Key points from 1.4

- Metaphors can be of many types and can be classified based on different parameters – scale, depth, and originality.
- In terms of scale, a metaphor can be used either at a very small scale, where it is applied only in the immediate context of use or it can be used at a very large scale, where it can

impact a whole culture's understanding of a phenomenon.

- In terms of depth, a metaphor can be explicitly visible at the surface of the words used to express it or it can be hidden beneath many layers of implied meaning.
- In terms of originality, a metaphor can be conventional, i.e. something that is very common in a language or culture, or it can be innovative, i.e. something that has rarely been used by anyone.

Activity 1.4 Said another way

A.

An interactive H5P element has been

excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=66#h5p-52

B.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=66#h5p-53

C. *How are common colors, seasons/weather, animals, and emotions used metaphorically? Find a song lyric, a poem, or a work of art that reflects a metaphor.*

1.5: Metaphors in advertising and politics

Many metaphors are so deeply ingrained in our cultures and ways of thinking that it is difficult to know when one is simply being used because it is widely understood, or if it is being used for propaganda purposes, that is, with the ulterior motive of influencing opinions, behaviors, or worldviews. The fields of advertising and marketing are well-known for their use of certain 'subliminal' or 'subconscious' techniques to influence consumers' buying habits; since the end of the 19th century, their basic modus operandi has been to create and reinforce metaphors associating their product with basic desires and insecurities towards beauty, cleanliness, safety, health, and success. Watch Edward Bernays' Torches of Freedom to learn how cigarettes were marketed successfully to women in the early 20th century by associating them with power:

🖳 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=66#oembed-1

1.5A: How cigarettes became a symbol of power in films, a video essay by Sana Saeed for her series Pop Americana pubslihed in AJ+ on Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDS11IZP4PE

> If you have the time and interest, read how the flavor of mint was associated with freshness – an association that is in no way natural.
>
> - https://www.vox.com/2014/12/1/7309499/mint-fresh-breath

Jasinski (2001) gives a really hard-hitting (notice how this is a metaphor too!) example of how metaphors have been used to create **propaganda** in the real world, propaganda being understood as biased information that promotes a particular perspective. In 1999, Ron Hampton, the executive director of the National Black Police Association asked the US American public to reflect on how certain political sloganeering may be impacting the high rate of police brutality in the US:

> "This militarization of police work started a long time ago. It began with the use of terms like "war on crime" and "war on drugs." ... When police officers are inundated with this kind of military training and

language, they go out thinking they're soldiers, that they are the Iine between civilization and anarchy. Pretty soon, you're bringing your war to traffic stops and minor arrests" (qtd. In Jasinski 2001, p. 259).

While police brutality is of course a complicated issue with many reasons, could the language use that surrounds police culture be contributing to it? What would happen if fighting crime, illegal drug trade, and drug use were conceptualized using other metaphors than 'war'?

Fig 1.5: The militarization of US American Police represented in an image by Chris Henry on Unsplash

In a study by Stanford psychologists Lera Boroditsky and Paul Thibodeau, several participants were given paragraphs describing the rising crime rates in a fictional city. While some of the participants were given paragraphs that used the metaphor of CRIME IS A BEAST that *preys* on the community, others were given paragraphs that described CRIME IS A VIRUS that *plagues* the community. Then participants were asked which of two ways of dealing with crime they would support for this city: greater policing and cracking down on criminals, or greater social reform. How do you think the choice of metaphors might have impacted the participants' decisions? (Boroditsky & Thibodeau qtd. in Gorlick, 2011)

> If you have the time and interest, read the details of this study to find out what actually happened:
>
> - https://news.stanford.edu/news/2011/february/metaphors-crime-study-022311.html

Metaphors are especially powerful when they generate implications that are coherent with a particular **ideology**, that is, a system of ideas and ideals about the world. When taken

together, these systems of metaphors can be triggered by **cognitive framing**, the use of a familiar perspective or narrative to make sense of and evaluate new information. Politicians and their media arms are often very good at 'spinning' their words and actions into messaging coherent with their ideology through the use of cognitive framing that evoke metaphors. For example, in September 2022 in the US, conservative Florida Governor Ron Desantis had Venezuelan refugees flown to a New England island known for its vacation homes of his liberal political opponents. His actions are coherent with the metaphor IMMIGRATION IS A FLOOD, where immigrants and refugees are unwanted, threatening, and overwhelming. However, liberals in cities like Boston and New York historically populated by immigrants may understand that IMMIGRANTS ARE ORPHANED CHILDREN, reflected in [Emma Lazarus' famous poem about the Statue of Liberty](), and they responded by helping the refugees. These sorts of actions (or 'political stunts' some might say) evoke **competing metaphors** and confirm the beliefs and biases of those who share the same ideologies and cognitive frames. Interestingly, the metaphors evoked by Desantis and the New Englanders fit very well with linguist George Lakoff's cognitive framing theory about US politics, which he sums in his book 'Don't Think of an Elephant'. He argues that if a deep metaphor for the USA is THE NATION IS A FAMILY, then Republicans tend to see GOVERNMENT IS A STRICT FATHER, while Democrats

see GOVERNMENT IS A NURTURING CARETAKER. Note that this means the Republican frame portrays Democrats as permissive mothers, while the Democrat frame presents Republicans as uncaring, negligent, and absent. Do these frames resonate with your understanding of how the two US political parties portray one another?

If you have time and interest, read more about Lakoff's theory here:

- https://commonslibrary.org/frame-the-debate-insights-from-dont-think-of-an-elephant/

Key points from 1.5

- Domains like advertising and politics often use hidden metaphors with an ulterior motive of influencing opinions, behaviors, or

worldviews.

- Metaphors are especially powerful when they generate implications that are coherent with a particular ideology. When taken together, these systems of metaphors can be triggered by cognitive framing, the use of a familiar perspective or narrative to make sense of and evaluate new information. Politicians and their media arms are often very good at 'spinning' their words and actions into messaging coherent with their ideology through the use of cognitive framing.

Activity 1.5 Metaphors in advertising and politics

A.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=66#h5p-55

B. Think of an advertising slogan or campaign for a product that attempts to associate it with a word or an idea that is not necessarily natural (e.g. 'You're in good hands with Allstate'); sometimes it is even reflected in the name of the product (e.g. Dodge Ram trucks). What is the metaphor (or metaphors) behind it? (in the example cases it would be insurance = safety, or trucks = aggression)

C. What is a current social issue you feel strongly about, and how is it conceptualized by news media and politicians metaphorically? For example, is college education a privilege or a necessity? Is it a requirement to be checked off, or an enlightening journey to be taken? What do you hear about college that supports these metaphors?

If you have time and interest, here are some additional readings that might interest you:

1. Erard's ["How to build a metaphor to change someone's mind"](#) (2015)
2. Cobb's ["Why your brain is not a computer"](#) (2020)

1.6 Module discussion/reflection activity

Reflect on the content of this module by answering some or all of the following questions. Provide examples to support your points.

1. *What is a metaphor and why can it be misleading or deceptive?*
2. *How do metaphors shape how we think?*
3. *What grammatical devices go into making metaphors?*
4. *What are some advertising campaigns that*

have influenced you to buy something by using metaphors?

5. Can you think of a politician who has used metaphors to make the public around you do something?

⇒ If you are doing the corpus activities, try the module corpus activity next: Exploring Metaphors in US immigration discourse

1.7 Key Points on Metaphor

1.1 What is a metaphor

- A metaphor is a rhetorical device that enables us to connect two disparate words, concepts or things together such that some sort of

transference of qualities or activity takes place from one to the other. The most basic forms of metaphor equate a newer, more abstract idea with something more familiar and concrete, so that the abstract idea can be conceptualized more easily.

1.2 What is a metaphor, grammatically speaking?

- Metaphors can be expressed in many different ways, but perhaps the most basic form is: NOUN – linking verb – NOUN, where the first noun is the subject and the noun following the linking verb is called the subject complement.
- Other parts of speech like adjectives can be used in metaphors as well, for example as attributive adjectives ('ADJ – NOUN') before a noun or with comparative phrases like 'as – ADJ – as' or 'ADJ-er than a'.
- Verbs can be used in metaphors too, along with other parts of speech, in different ways.

1.3 Metaphor as a way to think

- Contemporary psychologists and

neuroscientists argue that metaphors are not just ornamental devices but actually central to the very way in which our brains process information.

- In conceptual metaphor theory, metaphors relate two objects or concepts that may not be naturally associated. By doing this, they condition us to perceive and experience one thing in terms of another.

1.4 Types of metaphors and their origins

- Metaphors can be of many types and can be classified based on different parameters – size, depth, and originality.
- In terms of scale, a metaphor can be used either at a very small scale, where it is applied only in the immediate context of use or it can be used at a very large scale, where it can impact a whole culture's understanding of a phenomenon.
- In terms of depth, a metaphor can be explicitly visible at the surface of the words used to express it or it can be hidden beneath many layers of implied meaning.
- In terms of originality, a metaphor can be

conventional, i.e. something that is very common in a language or culture, or it can be innovative, i.e. something that has rarely been used by anyone.

1.5 Metaphors in advertising and politics

- Domains like advertising and politics often use hidden metaphors with an ulterior motive of influencing opinions, behaviors, or worldviews.
- Metaphors are especially powerful when they generate implications that are coherent with a particular ideology. When taken together, these systems of metaphors can be triggered by cognitive framing, the use of a familiar perspective or narrative to make sense of and evaluate new information. Politicians and their media arms are often very good at 'spinning' their words and actions into messaging coherent with their ideology through the use of cognitive framing.

1.8 Key Concepts on Metaphors

- **cognitive framing**
- **conceptual metaphor theory**
- **connotation**
- **denotation**
- **depth of metaphor**
- **figurative meaning**
- **ideology**
- **linking verb**
- **literal meaning**
- **metaphor**
- **noun**
- **originality of metaphor**
- **ornamental view of metaphors**
- **scale of metaphor**
- **subject**
- **subject complement**

⇒ Try a crossword using these definitions

⇒ bibliography for 1. Metaphor

NEXT:
Comprehensive & GF tracks ⇒ **2. Sentence Basics**
LPT track ⇒ **3. Doublespeak**

Module authors: Jonathon Reinhardt and Anuj Gupta
Last updated: 5 November 2022

This module is part of Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar, an open educational resource offered by the Clarify Initiative, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
English

2. SENTENCE BASICS

All activities are in [2GA. Sentence Basics Grammar Activities](#)

The purpose of this module is to introduce the basics of sentence grammar in English. Since all the concepts here are foundational, they will be revisited and reinforced in other modules; this module is meant to introduce concepts, not provide a full treatment of them.

2.1 Sentences, subjects, & predicates

A sentence is a complete thought with two parts: a **subject** – the actor or thing that is doing something, and a **predicate** – the doing of the something. At its most basic, a subject is a noun or pronoun and a predicate is a verb plus a **complement** – usually an **object** or a **subject complement**. A **complete sentence** has both a subject and a predicate, but an **incomplete sentence** is missing either one. In standard written English we indicate a complete sentence with a full stop (a period) at the end.

- They live. – 'they' is a pronoun/the subject, 'live' is a verb/the predicate.
- We laugh heartily. – 'we' is a pronoun/the subject, 'laugh' is a verb, 'heartily' is an adverb describing how we laughed, and 'laugh heartily' is the predicate.
- Kids love pizza. – 'kids' is a noun/the subject, 'love' is a verb, 'pizza' is the object, and 'love pizza' is the predicate.

2.2 Clauses

A clause has a subject and predicate and is part of a sentence. To express a complete thought, a sentence can be **simple** with just one clause, or it can be a multi-clause **compound** or **complex sentence**. The clauses in a compound sentence are connected with the **coordinating conjunctions** for, and, nor, but, or, yet, or so, while the clauses of a complex sentence are connected with **subordinating conjunctions** like because, although, or since. While the sentences in 2.1 above are simple, the following are multi-clause sentences:

- We laugh heartily and we dance merrily. – 'we laugh heartily' is a clause and 'we dance merrily' is a clause, combined into a *compound sentence* by the coordinating conjunction 'and'.
- Although they like hot dogs, kids love pizza. – 'although they like hot dogs' is a subordinate clause set off by the subordinating conjunction 'although', and 'kids love pizza' is a clause. This is a *complex sentence*.
- I knew that they were zombies. – 'I knew' is a clause and 'that they were zombies' is a complement clause set off by the conjunction 'that'. This is a complex sentence.
- Having taken the potion, they live. – 'they live' is a clause and 'having taken the potion' is a clause (technically a "subjectless non-finite clause"). This is a complex sentence.

2.3 Phrases and Agreement

Subjects and objects are technically **noun phrases** (NP). They can be a single word or a string of words, each with a '**head noun**'.

- The braindead zombies live. – 'the braindead zombies' is a noun phrase/the subject. 'Zombies' is the head noun.
- Kids love pizza with lots of cheese on it. – 'Kids' is a noun phrase and the phrase's head noun; it is functioning as the subject. 'Pizza with lots of cheese on it' is a noun phrase functioning as the object; its head noun is 'pizza'.

At the minimum, a predicate technically includes a **verb phrase** (VP), that is, the verb(s) and possible complements, objects, and/or adverbials. In the first sentence above, 'live' is a verb, the VP, and the predicate. In the second sentence above, 'love' is the verb and 'love pizza with lots of cheese on it' is the VP and the predicate.

Subjects and verbs must **agree** in person and number for BE verbs (e.g. I am, you/we/they are, he/she/it is) and in number for all third person subjects in the simple present. For example:

- I am. ~~I be.~~
- You were. ~~You was.~~
- She has. ~~She have.~~
- He lives. ~~He live.~~
- The kid loves pizza. ~~The kid love~~ pizza.
- Kids love pizza. ~~Kids loves~~ pizza.

2.4 Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

A **transitive** use of a verb means that it takes an **object** that the verb action is done to. With transitive verbs, the verb plus the object are a **verb phrase** that functions as the **predicate**.

- They **have** money. – 'money' is the object of 'have', and 'have money' is the predicate
- Are you **watch**ing TV? – 'TV' is the object of 'watch', and 'are…watching TV' is the predicate
- We don't **speak** French. – 'French' is the object of 'speak', and 'don't speak French' is the predicate

The 'what' test. If you can ask '**What** (do/be/have/can, etc.) (the subject) (verb)?', e.g. 'What do they have? What are you

watching? What don't you speak?', you know that the verb is transitive, and the answer is the object.

The object pronoun test. Another test for whether a verb is transitive is if it can be followed with an object pronoun, which are: me, you, him, her, it, them, & us, e.g.:

- They **have** it.
- I **like** him.
- Did you **see** them?
- ~~She looked her.~~

Therefore, 'like' and 'see' are transitive here, but 'look' is not.

In contrast, *an **intransitive verb** does not take an object*.

- The bus **departed**.
- We **talked** all night.
- I **slept** a good eight hours last night.

In this case, 'What did the bus?', 'What did we talk?', or 'What did you sleep?' do not make sense. The phrases 'all night' and 'a good eight hours' are answering 'when' or 'how', and so they are adverbs that modify the verb, not objects that receive the action.

Some verbs can be both transitive with an object, and intransitive without one, e.g.:

- We **eat** at 7 pm. ('eat' can be transitive but here it is

intransitive. 'at 7 pm' answers 'when', not 'what we eat')

Other verbs are only used transitively and so must have their object stated, e.g. 'release' and 'carry'.

- Mr. Burns **released** the hounds.
- ~~Mr. Burns released.~~
- Yes, we **carry** it.
- ~~Yes, we carry.~~

2.5 Linking Verbs

A **linking verb** is one that is followed by a **subject complement** that describes the subject. The verb plus the complement are a VP that functions as the predicate.

- My mother **is** a doctor. – 'a doctor' describes the subject 'my mother', so the verb is (be) is a linking verb

'be' is the most common linking verb, when it is not acting as an auxiliary/helping verb. Other common linking verbs include 'seem', 'appear', 'feel', 'look', 'smell', 'sound', and 'become'.

<u>The 'become' test.</u> If you can replace the verb with 'become' and the sentence makes sense, the verb is linking.

Some verbs can be used as either transitive or linking verbs, with very different meanings, e.g.:

- The girl **felt** sick. ('sick' describes 'girl', so 'feel' is linking)
- The girl **felt** the cold air. ('the cold air' is 'what the girl felt', so it is the object of 'feel', which is thus transitive)
- The dog **smells** bad. ('bad' describes 'the dog', so 'smell' is linking)
- The dog **smells** everything. ('everything' is the object, answering the question 'what does the dog smell?'. 'Smell' is thus transitive)

⇒ Go to <u>Activity 2.5</u>

2.6 Sentences in language power techniques

One way to grasp the basics of English sentences is to consider how they are typically structured grammatically in the language power technique of metaphors. A **metaphor** is a rhetorical device that enables us to connect two disparate words, concepts or things together such that some sort of

transference of qualities or activity takes place from one to the other. Metaphors can function as language power techniques when they are used to **frame arguments** and **tell stories**. The most basic forms of metaphor equate an abstract idea with something more concrete, so that the abstract idea can be conceptualized more easily. For example:

<p align="center">Life is a highway.</p>

We use **linking** verbs when stating metaphors, especially forms of 'be' and 'become', since they link the subject with the subject complement. The sentence above could be restated:

<p align="center">**Life is a highway.**</p>

<p align="center">**subject** – **linking verb** – **subject complement**</p>

Compare this with sentences that derive from the metaphor:

1. Life goes quickly.
2. Life brings many surprises.

In sentence 1, the verb 'go' is **intransitive**, and 'quickly' is an adverbial complement that answers how life goes. The predicate is an intransitive verb + adverbial. The verb 'go' cannot be transitive, because you cannot 'go' something. In sentence 2, however, the verb 'bring' is **transitive**, and 'many surprises' is the object, answering 'what did life bring?'. The predicate is a transitive verb + object.

<p align="center">⇒ Go to <u>Comprehensive Activities for 2.</u></p>

Sentence Basics

2.6 Key Points for Module 2. Sentence Basics

- A sentence is a complete thought.
- A sentence is made up of one or more clauses.
- Every clause has a subject and a predicate.
- A subject is the actor or thing that is doing the predicate, which is what the subject does.
- A noun phrase is a single noun or a string of words with a head noun. A NP can function as a subject or an object.
- A verb phrase is a single verb or a string of words beginning with a verb. A VP can function as a predicate.
- The verb of a subject's predicate must agree in person and number with the head noun of the subject NP.
- An object is the thing that the verb does, has, etc. It is part of the predicate.
- A transitive verb needs an object to express a

complete thought.
- An intransitive verb does not need an object to express a complete thought.
- A linking verb is followed by a subject complement.
- A subject complement is something that the subject is or becomes.
- A well-known language power technique that often follows a basic subject – linking verb – subject complement structure is metaphor.

2.7 Key Concepts for Module 2. Sentence Basics

- **agreement**
- **clause**
- **complement**
- **complete sentence**
- **complex sentence**
- **compound sentence**
- **coordinating conjunction**

- **head noun**
- **incomplete sentence**
- **intransitive verb**
- **linking verb**
- **noun phrase**
- **object**
- **predicate**
- **sentence**
- **simple sentence**
- **subject**
- **subject complement**
- **subordinating conjunction**
- **transitive verb**
- **verb phrase**

NEXT:
Comprehensive track ⇒ **3. Doublespeak**
GF track ⇒ **4. Nouns**

Module author: Jonathon Reinhardt
  Last updated: 28 October 2022

This module is part of [Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar](#), an open educational resource offered by the [Clarify Initiative](#), a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

3. DOUBLESPEAK

Watch the video introducing this module ⇒ (coming soon)

3.1 Introduction: What is doublespeak?

In 2001, when debate on the detrimental effects of pollution and global warming was raging in the US American media, a leak of a confidential memo embarrassed the Republican Party. In this memo, Frank Luntz, who had been a long-standing communications consultant and lobbying expert advised then President George Bush and the rest of the party to stop using the term "global warming". He advised them to start using the term "climate change" instead. The idea was that 'warming' implied a subject — someone or something that was doing the warming — while 'change' implied something that was not necessarily controlled by anyone, nor was it necessarily good or bad.

Module preview questions

What differences do the phrases "global warming" and "climate change" have on listeners? Who benefits from the use of these 'alternative words'?

What are multiple ways for referring to an unpleasant, taboo thing (e.g. death, illness, or bodily functions)? Why do you think there are alternative words? When is their use polite? Is it ever dishonest?

Image 3.1. Earth by NASA on Unsplash

If you have time and interest, read this piece by
Oliver Burkeman in The Guardian to learn more
about the memo from Lutz to Bush:

- https://www.theguardian.com/
  environment/2003/mar/04/
  usnews.climatechange

Communications experts, media advisers and political
pundits often help politicians and corporations create new
language to refer to existing concepts that obscures original
meanings and allows for ambiguity. Using these new terms,
they can manipulate how people understand the concepts and
lead them to forget unpleasant or controversial connotations.
Inspired by the writings of the dystopian author George
Orwell, William Lutz conceptualized this as **doublespeak**, a
unique rhetorical strategy involving the use of language that
seeks to "mislead, distort, deceive, inflate, circumvent,
obfuscate" (Lutz 2016, p. 24).

According to Lutz:

> "Doublespeak is language that pretends to
> communicate but really doesn't. It is language that
> makes the bad seem good, the negative appear positive,

the unpleasant appear attractive or at least tolerable. Doublespeak is language that avoids or shifts responsibility, language that is at variance with its real or purported meaning. It is language that conceals or prevents thought; rather than extending thought, doublespeak limits it...Basic to doublespeak is incongruity, the incongruity between what is said or left unsaid, and what really is" (Lutz, 2016, p.23).

The power of doublespeak is that it allows the speaker to disavow or deny that a concept has negative traits or connotations. While it may not involve blatant lies, doublespeak may be deceptive if the listener is not fully aware of what meanings or connotations it is masking. Most problematically, after hearing the term repeated and re-used over time, the listener may become inured to these other connotations.

Key points from 3.1

- Doublespeak is a language power technique that involves renaming a concept in order to obscure its original negative meaning and allow for ambiguity.

- Doublespeak is powerful because after hearing it repeatedly, listeners may forget unpleasant, shocking, and controversial connotations of the original term.

Activity 3.1: If it looks like it and smells like it...

a. Much doublespeak is used to refer to environmental destruction. Read the article about them and complete the matching activity.

https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/articles/entry/eco_euphemisms_confuse_our_understanding_of_environmental_destruction/

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You

can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/
languageawareness/?p=68#h5p-34

3.2 The language of doublespeak

Doublespeak can involve the use of **euphemism**, as well as deliberate ambiguity and reversing the meaning of words. Merriam-Webster defines euphemism as "the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant". A speaker or writer considers purpose and audience when choosing euphemism; in other words, the meaning of a euphemism often depends on social context. Traditionally, euphemisms are used to mention taboo or socially sensitive topics, thus showing respect to the audience and the referent — for example death ('pass' instead of 'die'), bodily functions ('go to the bathroom' instead of 'defecate'), or bad fortune ('was let go' instead of 'was fired'). This diplomatic purpose of euphemism is especially important in political circles, where one has to interact with people who

may be adversarial and the wrong choice of words might worsen relationships.

The opposite of a euphemism is a **dysphemism**, or the purposeful "substitution of a disagreeable, offensive, or disparaging expression for an agreeable or inoffensive one" (Merriam-Webster), for example 'crapper' instead of 'toilet'. It is used to shock, amuse, or show informality and is often used for **name-calling**. A euphemism can sometimes be so preferred that the original term becomes dysphemistic over time.

Euphemisms and dysphemisms can be nouns, adjectives, and verbs as well as phrases. Creating one can involve, for example, transforming a noun which is sentimentally and sensorially loaded either in a positive or negative way (like 'torture' which carries a lot of negative sentimental and sensory associations), into another noun or noun phrase made up of an adjective and a noun (like 'enhanced interrogation', a euphemism) that carries very neutral or positive sentimental and sensory associations. A euphemism or dysphemism is by default a **synonym** of the original term and it may involve **metonymy**, the use of the name of an attribute or part of a thing to mean the whole thing or something related to the concept, or vice-versa; for example, 'adult bookstore', a euphemism for 'pornography store', or 'the old ball and chain', a dysphemism for 'wife'.

If you have time and interest, explore these examples of euphemisms, dysphemisms, and metonymy:

- https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-euphemism.html
- https://examples.yourdictionary.com/dysphemism-simple-terms-examples-ugly-expressions
- https://smartblogger.com/metonymy-examples/

Key points from 3.2

- Doublespeak often involves the deceptive use of euphemism, the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant.

- Euphemism is often used out of respect to refer to socially sensitive and taboo concepts having to do with topics like death or bodily functions; it is not only used in doublespeak.
- Dysphemism is the substitution of a disagreeable, offensive, or disparaging expression for an agreeable or inoffensive one. It is used to shock, amuse, or show informality and is often used for name-calling.
- Euphemisms and dysphemisms may be nouns, adjectives, verbs, and phrases. They are by definition synonyms of the original expression and may use metonymy.

Activity 3.2 Use the euphemisms

a.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=68#h5p-33

b. *Which paragraph above, a or b, sounds more like the writer is proud of the subject, and which sounds neutral? If the writer were jealous of, or didn't like, the subject, how might they use some dysphemisms for her? Rewrite the paragraph to reflect a more derogatory view.*

You'll learn more about nouns in the next module, but if you can't wait, ⇒ 4. Nouns

3.3 The politics of euphemism & dysphemism

While some euphemisms, for example those referring to taboo subjects, are regularly understood and are politically benign, some language use may be seen as euphemistic depending on which side of the political spectrum one falls on. For example, somebody who is anti-abortion might feel that the term "women's health rights" is euphemistic doublespeak for "baby murder", while a pro-choice activist might feel the term "baby murder" is rather dysphemistic. Animal rights activists would not hesitate to call a meat processing plant a "slaughterhouse" in order to highlight the sensory violence that happens in that space, while food corporation executives might even consider "slaughterhouse" a dysphemism. In short, one side's euphemism (an emotionally neutral term) can be the other side's dysphemism (an emotionally evocative term), and vice-versa, while the concept's true meaning is hidden in the power struggle. It is important to remember that usually there is a neutral term that the euphemism or dysphemism is replacing.

Euphemisms are often used in what has been termed **PC** or **politically correct language**, a term used by cultural and political conservatives to argue that when a new, euphemistic term is used to replace an older term that was considered racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory (e.g. 'mail carrier' for 'mailman', or 'special needs' for 'disability'), it is a violation

of the free speech rights of people to use the original terms. However, from a linguistic perspective, the idea that language influences thought and vice-versa gives credence to the notion that changing the words one uses may influence how one thinks, so promoting PC language aligns with the progressive ideal to improve society and promote social justice and equality. Using PC language or not comes down to whether, where, and how one chooses to be polite (a word related to 'political'), in other words, the context of use. A progressive might argue that using PC language is in fact an exercise of their free speech rights, and that using a term deemed PC in conservative circles could result in being ostracized.

To promote their ideologies, conservatives may use **dog whistle language**, a form of doublespeak that covertly signals its meaning only to audiences who are attuned to it; since it may be controversial to state its true meaning publicly, it is euphemistic only to those audiences. For example, 'family values' can sometimes act as a dog whistle to conservative religious voters to mean 'only traditional heterosexual family structures'. Political correctness among conservatives has also been called 'patriotic correctness' (see activity 3.3c below).

Key points from 3.3

- Euphemistic doublespeak can be used to signal, reflect, and promote a particular political ideology or cultural worldview
- Politically correct or PC language is often euphemistic, but whether it's doublespeak or not–that is, whether it's intended to deceive and mislead–is a matter of (often political) perspective.
- Dog whistle language is euphemistic doublespeak that covertly signals meaning only to receptive audiences.

Activity 3.3 Political Correctness

a. If someone uses non-PC language, do you think it is a violation of their free speech rights to ostracize them socially? censor them? prosecute them for hate speech? Take a look at the following examples of PC euphemisms, or come up with a few on your own. Which ones should definitely be used in what

contexts, and which ones could be acceptable in some contexts? What is the difference?

https://purlandtraining.com/2020/08/01/politically-correct-euphemisms/

b. Explore this list of 'liberal euphemisms' as defined by the right-wing site Conservapedia. Which ones do you think that liberals would say are actually neutral terms, and which conservative equivalents do you think liberals would say are dysphemisms?

https://www.conservapedia.com/Liberal_euphemisms

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=68#h5p-36

c. Watch this commentary by Andrew Davis of the Millennial Project on 'patriotic correctness', the conservative equivalent to 'political correctness'. After watching, discuss/reflect on the questions below.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=68#oembed-1

What is Davis' argument? What do you think of his advice to Millennials?

If you have time and interest, watch the late comedian George Carlin's bit about euphemisms, although be forewarned, you might find it offensive! Which of his points do you agree or disagree with?

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuEQixrBKCc

3.4 Where is doublespeak used? How does it work?

Not surprisingly, doublespeak is used frequently in advertising and marketing. Real estate ads, for example, are renowned for their use of euphemisms that border on doublespeak, with descriptions of 'fixer-uppers' in 'up-and-coming' neighborhoods. Cars may be sold as 'pre-owned' rather than 'used', and 'adult entertainment' is used instead of 'strip club'. An important aspect of **consumer literacy** is recognizing when doublespeak is being used to sell you something; consumers should remember this especially when purchasing goods and services that are used or that have to do with something unpleasant or a cultural taboo.

In the political sphere, doublespeak is used to mask intentions and support ideologies or narratives that may be untruthful or unpopular. For example, Russian President Vladimir Putin has referred to his 2022 invasion of Ukraine as "peacekeeping duties", and has made any use of the term 'war' to refer to the invasion as illegal in Russia. He has justified the war as "denazification", when there is no evidence of neo-nazism in Ukraine; in fact, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy is Jewish and the grandson of a Holocaust survivor (and ironically, this has not kept many others around the world from drawing parallels between Putin and Hitler). To the Russian populace, however, making sacrifices in order to rid their neighbor of nazi influence and keep the peace there is

acceptable, especially when there are serious penalties if one believes otherwise.

Image 3.1.1 Protest March in Germany by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

Doublespeak works to influence listeners in several ways. Most obviously, we are more likely to accept an action if it is called something agreeable, whether it actually is agreeable or not. In a study by Walker et al. 2021, 404 participants were asked whether they agree with a particular action or not. Each action in the passage was described either using a euphemism or a dysphemism. For example, participants were asked how much they agreed with Ben's actions in the following sentences: "Ben invited a provocateur to speak at his university" versus "Ben invited a hate-monger to speak at his university". The study

revealed that people more likely agreed with the first, and that "participants' evaluations of actions are made more favorable by replacing a disagreeable term (e.g., torture) with a semantically related agreeable term (e.g., enhanced interrogation) in an act's description" ([Walker et al., 2021](#)).

Doublespeak uses euphemisms, and since many people use euphemisms out of politeness or the desire for social harmony, when we hear them we might assume that the speaker means to be polite and wants to avoid emotional response. Even if we recognize the doublespeak is intentionally misleading, we might not be critical of it, or we might just call it a 'white lie', in order to maintain social harmony. This is dangerous, however, because it can inure us to its distorted, deceitful, and immoral quality.

Hugh Rank (1980) created a model for understanding how doublespeak functions, along with other propaganda techniques like name-calling. He argued that a speaker or writer who is trying to convince or persuade others will *intensify* their own good and their target's bad qualities at the same time they *downplay* their own bad and their target's good ones. To intensify, whether their own good qualities or their opponent's bad ones, they will use repetition, association, and composition. *Repetition* means saying something over and over again over time, whether it is or isn't true. *Association* means leading the audience to connect the good qualities of something to oneself (e.g. a US flag), or the bad qualities of something to the target. *Composition* means using linguistic

and grammatical techniques strategically. To downplay a speaker or writer will use **omission**, **diversion**, and **confusion**, which is where doublespeak comes in to play. A speaker can omit something by just not mentioning it, or they can rename it to avoid saying it directly. They may divert by talking about something else, and they may confuse listeners with the terminology change or by using different or opposite terminology. In short, doublespeak is a way to downplay and confuse people about what they should believe is truth or reality (Rank, 1980 qtd. in Lutz, 2016)

Image 3.4.3 Photo by Brian Wertheim on Unsplash

Key points from 3.4

- Doublespeak is used frequently in advertising and marketing; awareness of commercial doublespeak is key to consumer literacy.
- In politics, doublespeak is used to mask intentions and support ideologies or narratives that may be untruthful or unpopular.
- Because of the desire to stay safe or maintain social harmony, people may ignore or overlook doublespeak even if they know its meaning.
- Doublespeak is especially powerful when used to intensify or downplay a speaker/ writer or their target's good or bad qualities. As a way to downplay, it can be a form of omission or diversion and can contribute to confusion.

Activity 3.4 The power of doublespeak

a. *Find an example of doublespeak used in advertising or in political discourse. What makes it doublespeak, and not just euphemism?*

b. Read this 2021 article in Grist by Kate Yoder: "From doublespeak to alternative facts: How Trump made a mess of the language". After reading, discuss/reflect on the questions below.

https://grist.org/politics/from-doublespeak-to-alternative-facts-how-trump-made-a-mess-of-the-language/

1. *What does it mean that "a word untethered to reality starts to lose its meaning"? How does this happen, and what is its effect?*
2. *How do you think it is possible that people can simultaneously hold two beliefs that contradict each other? What examples can you think of?*
3. *What do you think of the idea that we should 'define our terms' before debating others?*

What is the purpose?

3.5 Jargon

Jargon is "the specialized language of a trade, profession, or similar group, such as that used by doctors, lawyers, engineers, educators, or car mechanics" ([Lutz, 2016, p.28](#)). While jargon is necessary for technical communication in different fields, in some cases it can be used as doublespeak, especially when "pretentious, obscure, and esoteric terminology [is] used to give an air of profundity, authority, and prestige to speakers and their subject matter. Jargon as doublespeak often makes the simple appear complex, the ordinary profound, the obvious insightful. In this sense it is used not to express but impress." ([Lutz, 2018, p.29](#)).

The major distinguishing factor of jargon from euphemisms is that jargon are very specific to particular registers, at the same time they are very low frequency in other registers like everyday conversation or news. For example, "glass" is a high frequency word which is easily understandable by most people, but "fused silicate" is a term for glass used by materials scientists and engineers, who use it to contrast it with other similar terms. They know exactly what it means; the problem is when

jargon is used for audiences that the speaker or writer knows will not understand it fully.

An additional problem is that jargonistic sentences are often written with redundant language, unclear subjects, and multiple embedded clauses. For example, a tow truck driver manual might state: "When the process of freeing a vehicle that has been stuck results in ruts or holes, the operator will fill the rut or hole created by such activity before removing the vehicle from the immediate area" (plainlanguage.gov). If we simplify the sentence by de-embedding the clauses and removing redundancies, it becomes a lot more comprehensible: "If you make a hole while freeing a stuck vehicle, you must fill the hole before you drive away" (plainlanguage.gov).

When multiple jargonistic words are piled on top of each other, it contributes to **bureaucratese**, a register found in governmental and traditional institutions that is also characterized by euphemism and weasel language, or language that obfuscates agency, authority, and responsibility. In order to tackle bureaucratese and jargon in the USA, the US government passed the Plain Writing Act in 2010 which requires all federal government agencies to use plain language that the public can easily understand.

If you have time and interest, learn more about the Plain Language Act here:

- https://www.plainlanguage.gov/

Key points from 3.5

- Jargon is the specialized words and linguistic registers associated with an activity or group that is difficult to understand for outsiders.
- Jargon can be deliberately used as a form of doublespeak, especially when part of bureaucratese, a register used in governmental and traditional institutions that is especially opaque.

Activity 3.5 Jargon

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=68#h5p-35

3.6 Module Discussion/Reflection Questions

Reflect on the content of this module by answering some or all of the following questions. Provide examples to support your points.

1. *What is doublespeak and why can it be misleading or deceptive?*
2. *What are euphemisms and how are they used in general and for the purpose of doublespeak?*
3. *What is the purpose of politically correct language, and why do you think some people are critical of it?*
4. *Why do people overlook doublespeak? How can you be aware of when it is being used strategically to sway you?*
5. *What is jargon and why can it be difficult to understand? How is it used for doublespeak?*

⇒ If you are doing the corpus activities, try the module corpus activity next: Doublespeak in Environmental Discourse

3.7 Key Points on Doublespeak

3.1 What is doublespeak?

- Doublespeak is a language power technique that involves renaming a concept in order to obscure its original negative meaning and allow for ambiguity.
- Doublespeak is powerful because after hearing it repeatedly, listeners may forget unpleasant, shocking, and controversial connotations of the original term.

3.2 The language of doublespeak

- Doublespeak often involves the deceptive use of euphemism, the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant.
- Euphemism is often used out of respect to refer to socially sensitive and taboo concepts having to do with topics like death or bodily functions; it is not only used in doublespeak.
- Dysphemism is the substitution of a disagreeable, offensive, or disparaging expression for an agreeable or inoffensive one. It is used to shock, amuse, or show

informality and is often used for name-calling.

- Euphemisms and dysphemisms may be nouns, adjectives, verbs, and phrases. They are by definition synonyms of the original expression and may use metonymy.

3.3 The politics of euphemism & dysphemism

- Euphemistic doublespeak can be used to signal, reflect, and promote a particular political ideology or cultural worldview

- Politically correct or PC language is often euphemistic, but whether it's doublespeak or not–that is, whether it's intended to deceive and mislead–is a matter of (often political) perspective.

- Dog whistle language is euphemistic doublespeak that covertly signals meaning only to receptive audiences.

3.4 Where is doublespeak? How does it work?

- Doublespeak is used frequently in advertising and marketing; awareness of commercial doublespeak is key to consumer literacy.

- In politics, doublespeak is used to mask intentions and support ideologies or

narratives that may be untruthful or
unpopular.

- Because of the desire to stay safe or maintain
social harmony, people may ignore or
overlook doublespeak even if they know its
meaning.
- Doublespeak is especially powerful when
used to intensify or downplay a speaker/
writer or their target's good or bad qualities.
As a way to downplay, it can be a form of
omission or diversion and can contribute to
confusion.

3.5 Jargon

- Jargon is the specialized words and linguistic
registers associated with an activity or group
that is difficult to understand for outsiders.
- Jargon can be deliberately used as a form of
doublespeak, especially when part of
bureaucratese, a register used in
governmental and traditional institutions that
is especially opaque.

3.8 Key Concepts on Doublespeak

- **bureaucratese**
- **confusion**
- **consumer literacy**
- **diversion**
- **dog whistle language**
- **doublespeak**
- **dysphemism**
- **euphemism**
- **jargon**
- **metonymy**
- **omission**
- **politically correct language**
- **synonym**

⇒ <u>Try a crossword using these definitions</u>

NEXT:
Comprehensive track ⇒ **4. Nouns**

LPT track ⇒ **5. Address Forms & Pronoun Choice**

Module authors: Jonathon Reinhardt and Anuj Gupta
   Last updated: 26 October 2022

This module is part of Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar, an open educational resource offered by the Clarify Initiative, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

4. NOUNS

All activities are in **4GA. Nouns Grammar Activities** and are linked from their corresponding section below.

All corpus analysis activities are in **4CA. Nouns Corpus Activities** and are also linked from below.

4.1 What is a noun?

A **noun** is a person, place, concept, or thing that tells or names 'who' or 'what'. Nouns are the most numerous part of speech, and are an open class, which means we can invent new ones.

The pronoun test. To test whether a word is a noun or noun phrase, you can usually replace it with a pronoun like 'it', 'they', or 'that'.

- **Phoenix** is the capital of Arizona. ⟹ **It** is the capital of Arizona. (therefore, 'Phoenix' is a noun)
- **Phoenix** is the capital of this place. (therefore, 'Arizona' is a noun)
- All you need is **love**. ⟹ All you need is **this**. (therefore, 'love' in this sentence is a noun)

If you can replace more than one word with a pronoun, it is likely a noun phrase.

- **The dogs** love to play frisbee. -> **They** love to play frisbee. ('The dogs' is a noun phrase)
- **The blue house at the end of the street** is our house. → **That** is our house. ('The blue house at the end of the street' is a noun phrase)
- **The money you gave me** didn't cover **the entire bill**. → **It** didn't cover **it**. (both 'the money you gave me' and 'the entire bill' are noun phrases)

⇒ **Go to Activity 4.1**

⇒ **Go to Corpus Analysis Activity 4.1**

4.1.1 Noun morphology

Nouns are typified by certain suffixes, and can be derived from other parts of speech using them. Some common ones include –an, -ee, -ent, -er, -ism, -ist, -ment, -ness, -ship, -tion, and -ity. For example, the verb 'speak' can be used to make a noun meaning 'a person who speaks' using the '-er' suffix in 'speaker', or the verb 'assume' can be made into a noun meaning 'an act of assuming' using the '-tion' suffix with 'assumption'.

4.1.2 Gerunds

Gerunds, which are **VERB – ing** forms, are nouns, for example:

- **Speaking** all day long wears me out.
- My hobby is salsa **dancing**.
- **Running** a marathon takes a lot out of you.
- Day **drinking** is a bad habit.

VERB – ing forms can also be **participles**, used in the present progressive tense and as participial phrases, for example:

- She is **speaking** right now.
- They were **dancing**.
- **Running** around like crazy, the dog was out of control.
- They stayed up **drinking** the night away.

Participles are verbs, not nouns. The pronoun test works to distinguish the two:

- Speaking all day long wears me out. ⇒ **It** wears me out. ('Speaking all day long' is a noun phrase)

- They stayed up drinking the night away. ⇒ ~~They stayed up it.~~

<div align="right">

⇒ **[Go to Activity 4.1.2](#)**

</div>

<div align="right">

⇒ [Go to Corpus Analysis Activity 4.1.2](#)

</div>

4.1.3 Compound nouns

A **compound noun** is a noun composed of two or more nouns. They can usually be switched around and connected with the preposition 'of', 'in', or 'at', or with a relative noun clause (x that/who is the x).

- Baseball player (player of baseball)
- Kitchen drawer (drawer in a kitchen)
- University student (student at a university)
- Capitol building (building that is the capitol)
- Arizona capitol building (capitol building of Arizona)

<div align="right">

⇒ **[Go to Activity 4.1.3](#)**

</div>

<div align="right">

⇒ [Go to Corpus Analysis Activity 4.1.3](#)

</div>

<div align="right">

⇒ [Go to Corpus Activity 4.1.4: Insights into Nouns](#)

</div>

4.2 Noun categories

Nouns can be categorized according to their referential meaning and their grammatical form.

- **concrete** or **abstract** (house vs. home; kiss vs. love)
- **general** or **specific** (a desert vs. this desert; a mother vs. my mother)
- **proper** or **common** (Tucson vs. . the desert)
- **singular** or **plural** (student vs. students)
- **non-count** (mass) or **count** (music vs. song)

4.2.1 Concrete, abstract, general, or specific uses

Concrete nouns are physically tangible things (e.g. house, kiss), while **abstract nouns** are not (e.g. home, love). A concrete noun may also be used metaphorically, in which case it is functioning in an abstract sense.

- The **book** is on the table. (concrete).
- **Love** will keep us together. (abstract)
- Give your grandmother a **kiss**. (concrete).
- It was just a **kiss** of flavor. (abstract)

When used generally, a noun refers to any instance of that

noun, and is indefinite. When used specifically, a noun refers to a specific instance of that noun, and is definite.

- **People** want to have a say in their government. (general use)
- The **people** who founded the city were refugees. (specific use)

⇒ **[Go to Activity 4.2.1](#)**

⇒ **[Go to Corpus Analysis Activity 4.2.1](#)**

4.2.2 Proper nouns

All nouns are common, unless they are names of unique entities, in which case they are proper. **Proper nouns** can be:

- people or heritages (e.g. Tim, Frodo, French)
- geographical places (e.g. Gila River, Arizona)
- commercial names (e.g. Target, Levi's)
- institutions (e.g. University of Arizona, FBI)

Proper nouns are traditionally *capitalized* in Standard American English. Besides proper nouns, the first word of a sentence, acronyms, and the first person pronoun 'I' are capitalized.

Proper nouns are definite without use of determiners, that

is, they don't have to take a 'the' or 'a' if they are singular and count, e.g. We visited Arizona. ~~We visited the Arizona.~~

Some nouns are considered proper even though they are not unique, e.g. months, days, and holidays (e.g. February, Wednesday, Groundhog Day)

⇒ [Go to Activity 4.2.2](#)

⇒ [Go to Corpus Analysis Activity 4.2.2](#)

4.2.3 Singular, plural, and collective nouns

Nouns can be **singular** or **plural**, which regular nouns mark with **-s** (or **–es** if the noun ends with a sibilant sound, e.g. boxes or dishes). **Irregular** nouns have unique plural forms, e.g. children, men, sheep, alumni
008000When acting as a **subject**, a noun (i.e. the head of a noun phrase) must agree in number with its predicate (e.g. The **book is** interesting. The **books are** interesting.) This is called **subject-verb agreement.**

Some nouns are *only singular* (e.g. Research is challenging. Dishware is breakable.), and can be singularized further using **quantifiers** (e.g. This bit of research is interesting. How many pieces of dishware fit into this box?)

Some nouns are *only plural* (e.g. My clothes are dirty. The scissors are missing.) even if they aren't semantically multiple.

They can be singularized using quantifiers (e.g. This bag of clothes is heavy. This pair of scissors is sharp).

Collective nouns are nouns used to refer to groups in the singular (e.g. The team is here. The committee has decided. The jury is out.) Collective nouns that quantify groups of animals and features of the physical world are unique to the animal or feature, (e.g. a flock of seagulls, a range of mountains)

⇒ **Go to Activity 4.2.3**

⇒ Go to Corpus Analysis Activity 4.2.3

4.2.4 Count and non-count nouns

Nouns can be used in **count** and **non-count** senses. Some nouns can be used in either sense, with a change in meaning. (e.g. 'I don't have time. I tried to call you several times'.)

Count uses are *singular or plural*, and may be modified by the determiners '**many**' and '**few**', but not 'much' or 'little'. (e.g. How many kids came to the party? There were few dogs at the park.)

Non-count uses are *only singular*, and may be modified by the determiner '**much**' and '**little**', but not 'many' or 'few' (e.g. Don't add too much salt. Can I get a little help here?).

Mass nouns are substances like food, liquids, gasses, and abstract concepts that are usually non-count and are countable

using **quantifiers** (e.g. I need a cup of coffee). When used in the count sense, they refer to a single serving or item. (e.g. How many beers did you drink? He had three loves in life.)

⇒ [Go to Activity 4.2.4](#)

⇒ [Go to Corpus Analysis Activity 4.2.4](#)

4.3 Noun phrases

A **noun phrase** is a noun, a pronoun, or a noun with modifiers working together.

- Katie
- Ms. Hobbs
- she
- a person
- the Governor of the state of Arizona

<u>**The pronoun test.**</u> An entire noun phrase can be replaced with a pronoun like 'it', 'they', or 'them'. This can be used as a test to identify the boundaries of a phrase. For example:

- <u>That building</u> is <u>the capitol of Arizona.</u>
- <u>It</u> is <u>the capitol of Arizona.</u>

- <u>That building</u> is <u>it</u>.

However, one noun phrase can contain multiple noun phrases. 'The capitol of Arizona' is a noun phrase that contains two noun phrases, 'the capitol' and 'Arizona'.

A multi-word noun phrase has a **head noun** along with **modifiers** – words that alter or specify the meaning of a head word – like determiners and adjectives.

- that building with the copper dome ('building' is the head noun)
- the capitol of Arizona ('capitol' is the head noun)

Image 4.3 The Arizona State Capitol in Phoenix

When these modifiers come before the head noun, they are called *pre-nominal,* for example:

- the university ('the' is a pre-nominal modifier and 'university' is the head noun)
- my little cat('my' and 'little' are pre-nominal modifiers and 'cat' is the head noun)
- the most sensational, inspirational television show (everything but 'show' is pre-nominal and 'show' is the head noun)

When modifiers come after the head noun, like prepositional phrases and relative clauses, they are *post-nominal*. These can contain noun phrases themselves, functioning as objects.

- that **building** with the copper dome ('that' is pre-nominal, 'building' is the head noun', and 'with the copper dome' is post-nominal)
- an old **lady** who swallowed a fly ('an old' is pre-nominal, 'lady' is the head noun, and 'who swallowed a fly' is post-nominal. 'a fly' is an embedded noun phrase functioning as an object.)

A **gerund** phrase can act as a noun phrase; the gerund is the head noun, sometimes with post-nominal modifiers.

- I don't enjoy **shopping** at the mall on Sundays.
- **Watching** TV is my preferred Sunday activity.

4.3.1 Functions of noun phrases

NPs, whether one or multiple words, can function as **subjects** and **objects.**

- Books are relatively cheap. I read books every summer.
- The university is open today. They're closing the university tomorrow.
- My little cat rules the house. I love my little cat.
- Watching TV relaxes me. I enjoy watching TV.

NPs can also be **subject complements.**

- The capitol is the building with the copper dome.
- There was an old lady who swallowed a fly.

Noun phrases can be **prepositional complements**, and prepositional phrases can themselves be noun phrase modifiers. This allows for multiple embedded NPs, for example, in:

- a battle over the future design of the State Capitol

there are three NPs: the State Capitol, the future design of the

State Capitol, and a battle over the future design of the State Capitol

---

4.4 Nouns in language power techniques

Nouns are the most common part of speech and perhaps the most fundamental. One way to grasp the basic nature of nouns is to think about how they are used in **doublespeak**, the renaming of a concept that obscures its original negative meaning, allows for ambiguous interpretation, and may shift responsibility as to its cause. Usually this involves repurposing a **synonym** or a **euphemism**, which is an agreeable or inoffensive expression substituted for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant. While euphemisms can use any part of speech, they are often nouns, compound nouns, and noun phrases, since we can invent new nouns, resurrect old ones, and build noun phrases with adjectives.

- correctional facility = prison
- golden years = old age
- gratuity = tip
- compensation = salary

- supervisor = boss
- homemaker = housewife
- landfill = garbage dump

Doublespeak is more purposefully deceptive than conventional euphemisms, however, and it is often used in politics or advertising to convince audiences that something is less disturbing or harmful than it actually is. For example:

- collateral damage = civilian deaths
- alternative truths = lies
- caramel color = brown dye
- genuine imitation leather = vinyl
- rightsizing = mass layoff

Doublespeak is especially deceptive when it is novel, that is, when it is invented and said to an audience that has never heard it before. Because it softens the meaning of something undesirable, making it more palatable, its use can lead to an audience accepting the thing uncritically.

> If you haven't done it and are interested, visit Module 3 to learn more about doublespeak and euphemisms.

⇒ Go to [Comprehensive Activities for 4. Nouns](#)

4.5 Key points on nouns

- A noun is a person, place, thing, or concept
- Nouns are an open class and the most common part of speech.
- New nouns can be invented and created using affixes.
- The pronoun test can be used to identify a noun/a noun phrase.
- Gerunds are nouns in VERB-ing form.
- Compound nouns are comprised of multiple nouns in sequence.
- Nouns in use can be categorized as either concrete or abstract, general or specific.
- Nouns in use are either proper or common. Some nouns can be used either way.
- Nouns in use can be singular or plural. Collective nouns have plural meanings but can

be used in the singular.
- Nouns can be used in count or non-count ways. Some nouns can be used only one way and some can be used either way.
- A noun phrase can be a pronoun, a singular noun, or a noun with modifiers.
- A multi-word noun phrase has a head noun and either pre-nominal or post-nominal modifiers.
- A noun phrase can function as a subject, an object, a subject complement, or a prepositional complement.
- A well-known language power technique that often uses nouns is doublespeak.

4.6 Key concepts on nouns

- **abstract noun**
- **agreement**
- **collective noun**

- **compound noun**
- **concrete noun**
- **count noun**
- **gerund**
- **head noun**
- **irregular**
- **mass noun**
- **modifier**
- **non-count noun**
- **noun**
- **noun phrase**
- **object**
- **participle**
- **plural**
- **prepositional complement**
- **proper noun**
- **quantifier**
- **singular**
- **subject**
- **subject complement**

NEXT:

> Comprehensive track ⇒ **5. Address forms & pronoun choice**
> Noun track ⇒ **6. Pronouns**

Module authors: Jonathon Reinhardt
   Last updated: 26 October 2022

This module is part of <u>Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar</u>, an open educational resource offered by the <u>Clarify Initiative</u>, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
English

5. ADDRESS FORMS & PRONOUN CHOICE

Watch the video introducing this module ⇒ The Power of Pronouns

5.1 Introduction: Why are pronouns such a big deal these days?

Module preview questions

What is your experience with third person-pronoun choice? Why do you think some people support it while others take issue with it? What rights do you think an individual has with regards to how others name or address them?

In 2016, a big controversy erupted at the University of Michigan. In order to foster an environment of inclusiveness,

administrators at the university gave all the students the right to choose a personal pronoun of their choice and have it reflected in the class roster. All University members would need to address students using their chosen pronouns (Fitzgerald, 2016).

Image 5.1 'Hello my pronouns are' by Alexander Grey on Unsplash

While many students and faculty rejoiced at the progressive step this policy would take which was in sync with their principles of gender social justice, several others felt that this was both absurd as well as a form of repression on their freedom of speech. The controversy started when one student, Grant Strobl, listed his pronouns as "His Majesty" on the university portal and asked all teachers and students to refer to him with it in order to call out what he believed to be the absurdity of this policy.

Since then, numerous such conflicts have emerged on campuses across North America with both pro and against sides making charged arguments in favor of or against people designating their own pronouns.

> If you have time and interest, watch this video to learn Strobl's position. "University allows students to choose their own pronouns. Fox News Report, 1 Oct 2016":
>
> > *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:* *https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=70#oembed-1*

5.2 Pronouns and address forms

A **pronoun** is a specific type of word that represents and

replaces a noun or noun phrase, and there are a limited number of them. If we didn't have pronouns, we'd have to repeat names and nouns every time we spoke and wrote. Instead of having to say something like:

Vaccines? That woman is a doctor so that man should ask that woman about vaccines

we can say

Vaccines? **She** is a doctor and so **he** can ask **her** about **them**.

There are different types of pronouns: **personal pronouns** like 'you' and 'us', **demonstrative pronouns** like 'this' and 'that', and **reflexive pronouns** like 'myself' and 'themselves'. Pronouns can be marked for **number** (singular or plural), **person** (first, second, third), **case** (subject or object), and **gender** (male, female, neuter, neutral), but not all pronouns are marked for the same features.

First person (1P) **personal pronouns** like '**I, me, mine, we, us, ours**' refer to the speaker(s) or writer(s), while the **second person** (2P) pronouns '**you, yours**' refer to the **addressee** – that is, who the speaker or writer is addressing. **Third person** (3P) pronouns, '**it, its, she, her, hers, he, him, his, they, them, theirs**', are used to refer to a thing, concept, or person that has been previously mentioned but that is not being addressed directly. Personal pronouns include the possessive pronouns '**mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs**', but technically the words '**my, your, his, her, its, our,**

their' are determiners, not pronouns, because they modify/precede a noun and cannot stand alone.

Address forms are names or titles we use when we address or refer to other people – they are similar to nicknames, but they can be used universally and are socially recognized. In English we traditionally use address forms like '**mister, sir, madam, ma'am, miss**' as **honorifics** or **respect forms** to show respect towards, or the independence of, the addressee or referent – honorifics can usually be used by themselves, e.g. '**Sir**', or they can precede a name, e.g. '**Mister Jones**'. Address forms can also be neutral, as in the use of given (first) names in the US, and they can also show disrespect, as in name-calling, slurs, and abusive profanity. They can also be intimate, like '**bro**', '**honey**', or '**dear**'. **Intimate forms** are used to show solidarity and make an appeal towards friendship, involvement or rapport. By the way, if you are US American, you should know that it sounds odd in many cultures to use '**pumpkin**' as an intimate form of address. Maybe pumpkins are considered endearing in the US because of Hallowe'en.

Because pronouns are used to refer to other people, when we use them we imply a relationship between us (the speaker or writer) and whomever is being addressed or referred to. Historically, English had two 2P forms: '**thou**' and '**you**'. 'Thou' was used as the **familiar pronoun** for one person, while 'you' was the **formal pronoun** for one or more people, but between the 1600s and 1800s, people stopped using 'thou', and 'you' took over. Interestingly, in standard English

we still say 'you are' and not 'you is', even though we use it to refer to a single person. In Spanish the familiar form of 'you' is 'tu' and the respect form is 'Usted'; many other languages have two 2P pronouns that are distinguished according to their social use.

Like address forms, pronouns not only imply relationships, but also identities. If I use 'he' to refer to someone, it means I ascribe their identity as male. In other languages, even the use of 1P and 2P pronouns can imply the speaker or listener's gender identity, for example, in Japanese, there are different pronouns for 'I', one traditionally used to assert a male identity ('boku') and another used to assert a female identity ('atashi').

If you have the time and interest, take a look at these webpages to learn about:

- the many different terms of endearment used in English and other languages:

    ◦ https://www.fluentin3months.com/terms-of-endearment/

- Japanese personal pronouns:

    ◦ https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/UsefulNotes/

[JapanesePronouns](#)

Key points from 5.2

- Pronouns are a key part of English grammar that allow us not to have to repeat nouns over and over.
- A speaker's (or writer's) choice of address form can show respect, rapport, disrespect, or intimacy between the speaker and addressee.
- As address forms, the pronouns we choose to use reflect our understandings of social relationships and our own identities

Activity 5.2 Pronouns & address forms

a. Identify the pronouns

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=70#h5p-13

b. Read this brief webpage by Thoughtco.com on terms of address and discuss or reflect on the following: https://www.thoughtco.com/term-of-address-1692533

- *How do you address medical doctors, teachers, aunts, uncles, and grandparents? What is considered respectful or disrespectful? How does this compare to others' terms, and how does it compare to other languages that you know? Why do you think that these uses can be different?*

- *Consider the words 'man', 'sir', 'ma'am', 'lady', 'girl', 'boy', 'brother', and 'sister' as address forms. When are they used, and for what*

purpose? Which uses do you consider polite, rude, or offensive?

c.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=70#h5p-14

You'll learn more about the grammar of pronouns in the next module, but if you can't wait, ⇒ 6. Pronouns

5.3 How has the use of pronouns changed over time, and why?

The use of address forms has changed over time; most agree that accepted usage has become less socially rigid over time,

and more formal forms are being dropped by younger generations. While address forms shift generation by generation, it is more difficult to change the use of pronouns over time, however, because pronouns are a closed class. We can't easily add new words to closed classes since they serve grammatical purposes, standing in for full noun phrases and providing discourse coherence by connecting referents. Still, the meanings and uses of existing pronouns in English have shifted over time, sometimes through conscious effort.

For example, in the 1650's during the English Civil War the Quakers were considered radical because they wanted to create an egalitarian society that challenged the hierarchies and formalities established by English royalty and aristocracy. At that time, English society was rigidly divided into classes and elaborate systems of address forms maintained these hierarchical divisions. While we now use "you" as a common 2P pronoun for everyone, irrespective of the person's social status, in those times "you" was

Image 5.3: Quaker Mary Dyer being led to the gallows in Boston, 1660 (painting by Howard Byle, 1907: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:MaryDyerByHowardPyle.jpg)

reserved exclusively to address people of high social status, while "thou" and "thee" were used to address an equal or someone with lower social status ("ye" was plural). If a poor man spoke to a wealthy man, he was supposed to use the formal 2P pronoun "you" to address him, while the rich man would use the familiar 2P pronoun "thou" to address the poor man.

The Quakers wanted to change this system because it violated their beliefs ([Bejan, 2019](#)). George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, said that God "forbade me to put off my hat to any, high or low; and I was required to thee and thou all men and women, without any respect to rich or poor, great or small" ([Bejan, 2019](#)). According to their beliefs, no human was between an individual and God – not the Pope and not the King of England. As captured in the King James Bible, it was considered normal to refer to God with the familiar 'thou' rather than the respectul 'you', because 'you' implied that God was distant, not familiar, as the Quakers believed. Thus, as a form of political protest and religious expression, the Quakers used 'thou' even to the aristocracy! Facing a lot of ridicule and persecution for using language in different ways, some sought refuge in the American Colonies, especially Pennsylvania, which was founded by Quaker William Penn.

Another example of how pronoun use changes over time is the gradual loss of the 'royal we' or 'majestic pronouns'. If you've seen movies about the English royalty, you might be familiar with how people of royal descent refer to themselves using plural pronouns like "we". For example, in 1902, Edward VII of England proclaimed in a treaty: "Now, We, Edward, by the grace of God, [...] have arrived at the following decisions upon the questions in dispute" (source: [Wikipedia](#)). The 'royal we' is no longer used in everyday situations, except perhaps by celebrities and aspiring socialites who want to be considered majestic.

Key points from 5.3

- Address forms and pronoun uses have shifted throughout the history of English, sometimes because of shifts in how younger generations use language differently than older generations, and sometimes intentionally as the result of social protest.
- Unlike many other languages, English no longer has a 2P pronoun system that can indicate unequal social relationships; respect and rapport are shown in other ways.

Activity 5.3: Changing pronouns and address forms

a. Shakespeare wrote in a variety of English called

'Early Modern English', spoken from about 1100 to 1600 CE. We can still understand Shakespearean English because, even though language changes over time, English hasn't changed enough since then so that Shakespeare is unintelligible, it just requires effort. His was the first recorded use of many modern English words, but many other words he used are no longer commonly understood. He also used structures that are no longer used, and he used both 'thou' and 'you' – 'thou' when he wanted a character to express familiarity to the addressee, and 'you' when he wanted an expression of formality. In reality, however, uses were mixed, sometimes by a pair of people when talking, for various reasons. Read about how these pronouns on this webpage by nosweatshakespeare, then discuss/reflect on the question that follows.

- https://nosweatshakespeare.com/blog/thee-and-thou-what-does-it-all-mean/

In modern English we no longer use 'thou'. How do we use language instead to express social distance, respect, solidarity, and rapport? What language besides address forms and

pronouns do we use to imply social relationship status?

b. The titles "Sir" and "Ma'am" have their origins in British aristocracy. Initially used to refer only to knights and royalty, during the colonial era, oppressed subjects of colonies like India were forced to use these terms to broadly refer to anyone from the British community. The purpose of this strategy was to create a hierarchical distance between the colonized and the colonizers so that the two could never be seen as equals. These terms carry on even today in India where people on a lower rung of a social or economic ladder are expected to address people above them using such terms. Many organizations are working to challenge these norms; for example, the Congress party, an Indian political party, recently created a new policy asking all its party members in the Indian state of Kerala to drop the use of "Sir" and "Ma'am" in official communication and instead to use terms like 'chetta' (a Malayalam word which means elder brother) and 'chechi' (a Malayalam word which means elder sister) in order to evoke a sense of familiar relationships between people who belong to different levels of their organizational chart. Read

more about this attempt to sanction new forms of address and discourage others in this report by theprint.in, then discuss/reflect on the question that follows.

- https://theprint.in/india/not-colonial-sir-madam-kerala-congress-wants-official-communication-to-use-malayalam-terms/728965/

Do you think an organized movement can successfully change which terms of address are used? If so, what do you think it takes? Do you think the Congress Party's movement in Kerala will be successful? Why or why not?

5.4 Generic & specific 'you'

The merging of familiar 'thou' and formal 'you' into just 'you' has given the pronoun broad powers. It can be used to address a person respectfully, e.g. "Mr. President, did you sign the bill?", it can be used to address a person intimately, e.g. "I love you", and it can be used to address more than one person together (although some varieties of English use 'y'all', 'you guys', or 'youse' for plural you). Many other languages have two or more different forms for those three purposes, for

example Spanish has 'tu', 'Usted', and 'Ustedes'. Another powerful use of 'you' in English is called the '**generic you**', the use of 'you' to address anyone listening or reading without being specific, meaning 'one', 'everyone', or 'anyone'. Contrasting with the **specific you**, its interpretation is context dependent. For example, in:

- **You** should bring a raincoat if **you** visit Seattle in the spring.
- When **you** turn 40 **you** should get life insurance.

  the advice can apply to anyone, and so the 'you' is generic. But in:

- When **you** turn 40 **you** should get life insurance, Bob.
- **You** should bring a raincoat when **you** visit Seattle this summer.

  the 'you' is referring to a specific person. To tell if a use of 'you' is generic, replace the 'you' with 'one', and if it makes sense, it is a generic use. So,

- **One** should bring a raincoat if **one** visits Seattle in the spring.
- When **one** turns 40 **one** should get life insurance.

  make sense, so the you is generic. However, with:

- **You** are an excellent singer.
- Did**you** finish**your** homework**?**

   it sounds a bit odd to say:

- **One** is an excellent singer.
- Did **one** finish **one's** homework?

   so 'you' in these examples is specific, not generic.

Generic you is powerful because it can be heard as general advice or a proclamation of truth that applies to anyone, so a listener feels as if they are being addressed, as part of an in-group. For this reason it can be found in advertising, for example:

- Red Bull gives **you** wings.
- Visa. Everywhere **you** want to be.
- M & Ms melt in **your** mouth, not in **your** hands.

Dr. Ariana Orvell and colleagues, psychologists at the University of Michigan ([2020](#)), analyzed Kindle data from 1,900 users reading 56 different books and found that readers highlighted passages containing generic you more often than would be statistically probable, as if the readers felt they were being addressed. They argue that this is evidence that generic you can resonate with readers and listeners and help them feel a personal connection with the author and the content, even

when they know rationally that they aren't being addressed specifically.

Image 5.4. An unwitting politician uses the generic you to try to show her political stance and resonate with like-minded followers, but someone who knows pronouns are inescapable catches her with a specific you. When you use social media, keep an eye out for how both generic and specific you are used strategically.

Finally, imperatives (commands) in English that addressed to a single person or a group do not use the word 'you', but they imply it. Commands can therefore be either obviously generic or specific, or ambiguous, which gives them a unique kind of persuasive power.

- Finish your homework and you can play video games. (clearly specific)
- Brush your teeth every night before bed. (clearly generic)
- Just do it. (ambiguous)
- Think different. (ambiguous)
- Make America Great Again (ambiguous)

Key points from 5.4

- The pronoun 'you' has unique power because it can be used both specifically and generically. An ambiguous use can be interpreted either way.
- The careful use of a 'generic you' can cause 'resonance' in a listener or reader, especially in a context focused on general advice and proclamations.
- The deliberate use of a 'specific you', especially in a context like advertisement or recruitment, can make a listener or reader feel directly spoken to and that they need to respond somehow.
- 'You' is the subject, but is not stated, in

commands. They can also be generic, specific, or ambiguous.

Activity 5.4 You oughta know when you're being addressed

a. Canadian songwriter Alanis Morissette is well-known for her hit 1995 album, "Jagged Little Pill". Search for the album online and listen to the lyrics of the songs on the album that include the pronoun 'you' in their titles.

Which "Jagged Little Pill" song or songs use the generic you, and which use the specific you? What is the effect of these uses on listeners? How do you think the songs 'resonate' differently?

b. The well-known Uncle Sam WWII army recruitment and 1940s Smokey Bear posters were designed with the clear goal of influencing behavior. They clearly used the specific you.

SMOKEY

ONLY YOU

What feelings or emotions do you think a viewer would have seeing these? In what context do you think they were most effective?

c. Looking at advertisements or political discourse, find three examples of the use of 'you' and note who is the author or speaker and in what context it is used. Find one use that is clearly generic, one that is clearly specific, and one where it is ambiguous. Remember that commands count, too.

5.5 Inclusive vs. Exclusive We

'You' is not the only pronoun that can be used strategically because it has ambiguous referents. The 1P plural pronoun 'we' and its variations 'us' and 'ours' in English can also be used strategically because 'we' can have an inclusive meaning of 'I the speaker/writer and you the listener/reader', or it can have an exclusive meaning of 'I the speaker and someone else but not you the listener'. Using the **inclusive we** is an appeal towards involvement, for example, if you're talking to someone and you refer to something you did together. However, if someone uses 'we' to refer to something they did with others and you were not part of that group, it is clear it is a use of the **exclusive we** (although its use does not necessarily mean the listener was *purposefully* excluded). Exclusive we is used often in '**us vs. them**' rhetoric (see 5.6 below). The phrase 'let us', contracted as **'let's'** is used as the 1P **imperative** form, and it automatically sounds inclusive. However, someone can use it to give directives and make suggestions to others even if they do not mean to follow the directive themselves; for example, when a professor says 'Let's take the test now', they know very well they aren't taking the test. But it makes them sound like they are involved.

Because of this ambiguity, the use of 'we' or 'us' is potentially quite powerful. Because humans naturally want to belong to a group, English users may interpret 'we' as inclusive, unless they know explicitly that they are not part of the group

being referred to. If you are listening to a politician giving a speech to a group you actively do not identify with or are not a part of, when the politician uses 'we' you may judge it as exclusive and not meant to include you. However, when any politician uses 'we' to refer to a vaguely defined group that might include you, it is difficult to hear 'we' as exclusive of you.

Inclusive 'we' is used by leaders on all parts of the ideological spectrum to appeal to a sense of community, solidarity, and belonging. The Finnish linguist Tyrkkö (2016) found that the use of inclusive we pronouns in political speeches around the world has increased in the past 100 years; this could be due to the rise of democracy and the use of propaganda techniques like **plain folks** appeals, where politicians attempt to appear from an average, middle or working class background, even though they may come from an upper class background.

If you have time and interest, learn more about plain folks appeals at the websites Propaganda Critic and Logically Fallacious.

- https://propagandacritic.com/index.php/how-to-decode-propaganda/plain-folks/
- https://www.logicallyfallacious.com/logicalfallacies/Appeal-to-Common-Folk

A leader can unite and inspire followers by strategically using the inclusive we, and since 1900, US American politicians have increasingly used forms of inclusive we more frequently than 1P 'I' pronouns ([Tyrkkö, 2016](#)). For example, watch the will.i.am video "Yes We Can", based on a campaign speech Obama gave in 2008.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=70#oembed-2

'We' is sung 80 times in will.i.am's song lyrics, and Obama used 'we' 45 times in his speech. If you have time and interest, read the full transcript of the speech:

- https://gist.github.com/mcdickenson/25479c8571b8f86f3a21c8d579102f93

Key points from 5.5

- The pronoun 'we' (along with us and ours) can be used strategically because it has both an inclusive and exclusive meaning.
- Because it is perceived to imply inclusivity, the use of 'inclusive we' can appeal to solidarity and a sense of unity. It can make a plain folks appeal.
- However, the use of 'exclusive we' implies division when used in 'us vs. them' language.

Activity 5.5: Who is accountable?

a. Besides politicians, who else might use 'we' strategically to imply inclusivity, or emphasize exclusivity? Find an example from the real world.

b. Dahnilsyah (2017) analyzed Obama's presidential speeches and argued that he used pronouns in a manner that was "rhetorical, persuasive and manipulative". What lies below is an extract from a speech that Obama gave after a terrorist attack attempt on a Northwest Airlines flight. Read the excerpt and notice the pronouns. How does Obama use 'we' and 'our' strategically? Which are inclusive and which are exclusive? How does this allow him to take, or avoid, individual responsibility? What other effect does it have?

> "**I** believe it's important that the American people understand the new steps that **we**'re taking to prevent attacks and keep **our** country safe. In **our** ever-changing world, America's first line of defense is timely, accurate intelligence that is shared, integrated, analyzed and acted upon quickly and effectively. That's what the intelligence reforms after the 9/11 attacks largely achieved. That's what **our** intelligence community does every day" (Obama qtd. in Dahnilsyah, 2017, p.65)."

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=70#h5p-15

5.6 Us vs. Them

Taking advantage of the in-/ex-clusive ambiguity of 'we', politicians and others can strategically juxtapose them with uses of the third-person plural 'they' pronouns in an '**us versus them**' technique, drawing sharp black-and-white contrasts between the two groups so that they are perceived as 100% oppositional. Because the people 'they' represent are not present during such discourse, they cannot argue otherwise. Offering only two polarized choices and forcing people to choose between the two – implying that "you are either with us or against us" – presents a **false dichotomy**, a propaganda technique that has been used for ages. Because it is simpler to quickly choose between black and white rather than to consider shades of gray or other colors, this 'us vs. them'

strategy works to unite people by not only what they think they are (us), but what they do not want to be (them).

If you have time and interest, learn more about false dilemma and false dichotomies on the wikipedia entry and at the website Propwatch:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False_dilemma
- https://www.propwatch.org/category_results.php?cat_id=1&id=35&k=false+dichotomy&p=propaganda.php

Bobblehead Trump by Sean Ferigan on Unsplash

Political scientists Matos and Miller argue in their research (2021) that Donald Trump strategically used pronouns in this way to promote bonding among his core followers during his campaigns, more so than his opponents did. Using the 'us' vs. 'them' dichotomy, Trump encouraged "outgroup hostility" or hostility against those his followers believed to be "outsiders" in their minds. According to Matos and Miller's study, Trump created an identity story whereby he "framed ingroup attitudes among white Americans by answering three main questions: 'who are they,' and thus, 'who are we,' and 'what's at stake (what do we have to lose)' (pg. 2)". The answer to these questions involved defining "the ingroup (we, us) as "good" and superior in comparison to framing the outgroup (them) as "bad," as criminals and terrorists, as foreigners, and importantly, as people who wanted to take what rightfully belonged to the ingroup. Trump used immigration and the refugee crisis to define the outgroup (pg. 2). Continuously using pronouns in this way creates a powerful cognitive frame which may

promote "groupthink" and prevent individuals from rationally weighing evidence, considering complexity, and making up their own minds. Such skillful rhetoric may make listeners more amenable to what politicians say, as it implicitly appeals to their need to feel part of a ingroup, especially when that ingroup's identity also aligns with culturally-conditioned prejudices.

Key points from 5.6

- First person plural pronouns (we/us/ours) are especially powerful when juxtaposed with the use of third person plural pronouns (they/them/theirs) because it sets up a potential false dichotomy between the ingroup and an absent outgroup that cannot defend itself.

Activity 5.6 Who are we?

a. Anybody can use language strategically to motivate their audience and create a sense of shared, ingroup identity. For example, the following text is from an email from the Arizona Democratic Party soliciting a donation, sent to a registered Democrat. Read the excerpt and identify the pronouns, then reflect on/discuss the question.

> "Our reproductive rights and privacy are at stake. The AZ GOP has cheerleaded every day since the Dobbs decision came out, and they openly support an 1800's near-total abortion ban that requires jail time for doctors. Some candidates want a national abortion ban and even a ban on contraceptives. This is a direct attack on our rights and on our privacy. We can't let the AZ GOP drag us back to the 1800s on health care." (an email soliciting donations from AZ DEMS, received August 29, 2022)

> *How does this solicitation use pronouns to create a sense of 'us vs. them'? What other language choices contribute to a sense of ingroup identity? What language is used to give a sense of urgency and shared goals?*

b. Watch this video on the science behind 'us vs. them' by Dan Shapiro and Robert Sapolsky of Big Think. Discuss/reflect on the questions below afterwards.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=70#oembed-3

What can be done to counter the destructive potential of 'us vs. them' rhetoric and thinking? In what situations, if any, do you think the use of 'us vs. them' techniques are ever justified?

5.7 Gender-neutral third person pronouns

While English has 'it' to refer to non-humans, according to traditional grammarians, users must choose 'he' or 'she' when

referring to humans. The sentence 'Everyone must bring their own lunch' is incorrect according to traditionalists because 'everyone' is singular, and so 'their' should be a singular 'his' or 'her' so that the referent agrees with its antecedent. However, this supposedly traditional rule was actually invented in the 1800s, and before that, English users made use of **singular they** just as they do now.

Image 5.7 'They/them' (Photo by Katie Rainbow 🏳️‍🌈 on Unsplash)

If you have time and interest, read this entry on the Oxford English Dictionary blog about the history of the singular they:

- https://public.oed.com/blog/a-brief-history-of-singular-they/

Other **gender-neutral pronouns** have been proposed for trans, non-binary, or genderqueer people in English, but since pronouns are a closed class and the matter has been politicized in the USA, widespread adoption and acceptance has been difficult. However, other languages with more centralized control and fewer speakers have successfully done so, for example, the Swedish government and academics have adopted 'hen' instead of 'han' (he) and 'hon' (she) as a gender-neutral 3P pronoun for humans, in an attempt to create gender equality.

If you have time and interest, read this brief NPR story about the Swedish movement to adopt a new gender-neutral pronoun:

- https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/03/27/395785965/he-she-or-

hen-sweden-s-new-gender-neutral-pronoun

Key points from 5.7

- The pronoun 'they' has been used for singular referents for centuries in English. This usage has been rejected by strict grammarians who restrict it to plural usage, even though the pronoun 'you' has broadened its usage from only plural referents to also include singular referents.
- There have been many attempts over the past few centuries by language reformers to create new gender-neutral singular 3P pronouns for humans.

Activity 5.7 Why doesn't English have gender-neutral 3P pronouns?

a. Throughout history there have been attempts to invent new gender neutral 3P pronouns for humans in English and promote their use. Read this piece on the history of these attempts:

- https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2021/06/gender-neutral-pronouns-arent-new/619092/

Why do you think past attempts to promote new gender neutral pronouns for English have failed to be successful? Why do you think it might be especially difficult to get people to use new third-person pronouns?

b. Most recently the debate on 3P pronoun use has become highly politicized, with conservatives arguing that forcing people to use new pronouns to refer to others when those others are not present is a restriction of their right to free speech, while liberals argue that we should respect the rights of

individuals to be referred to as they wish. Watch this debate on Canadian Broadcasting between Jordan Peterson and A.W. Peet on the controversy:

📄 *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here:*
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=70#oembed-4

Which arguments do you find most or least convincing for using, or not using, new gender-neutral pronouns? What practices do you follow, and why?

c.

📄 *An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:*

*https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/
languageawareness/?p=70#h5p-16*

5.8 Module Activities

Reflection/Discussion Questions

Reflect on the content of this module by answering some or all of the following questions. Provide examples to support your points.

1. *What are address forms and how do they reflect social relationships and identities?*
2. *What can we learn from the past about the potential future of pronouns in English?*
3. *How can the pronouns 'you','we', and 'they'*

be used strategically? In what contexts does this happen?

4. *How can you be aware of when pronouns are being used strategically to sway you?*

5. *What arguments are there for and against using gender-neutral third person pronouns for humans? Which are stronger and weaker arguments, and why?*

⇒ If you are doing the corpus activities, try the module corpus activity next: Pronouns and inclusive language use: The case of 'you guys' and 'y'all'

5.9 Key Points

5.2 Pronouns and address forms

- Pronouns are a key part of English grammar that allow us not to have to repeat nouns over and over.
- A speaker's (or writer's) choice of address form can show respect, rapport, disrespect, or intimacy between the speaker and addressee.
- As address forms, the pronouns we choose to use reflect our understandings of social relationships and our own identities

5.3 How has the use of pronouns changed over time, and why?

- Address forms and pronoun uses have shifted throughout the history of English, sometimes because of shifts in how younger generations use language differently than older generations, and sometimes intentionally as the result of social protest.
- Unlike many other languages, English no longer has a 2P pronoun system that can indicate unequal social relationships; respect and rapport are shown in other ways.

5.4 Generic 'you'

- The pronoun 'you' has unique power because

it can be used both specifically and generically. An ambiguous use can be interpreted either way.

- The careful use of a 'generic you' can cause 'resonance' in a listener or reader, especially in a context focused on general advice and proclamations.
- The deliberate use of a 'specific you', especially in a context like advertisement or recruitment, can make a listener or reader feel directly spoken to and that they need to respond somehow.
- 'You' is the subject, but is not stated, in commands. They can also be generic, specific, or ambiguous.

5.5 Inclusive vs. Exclusive We

- The pronoun 'we' (along with us and ours) can be used strategically because it has both an inclusive and exclusive meaning.
- Because it is perceived to imply inclusivity, the use of 'inclusive we' can appeal to solidarity and a sense of unity. It can make a plain folks appeal.
- However, the use of 'exclusive we' implies

division when used in 'us vs. them' language.

5.6 Us vs. Them

- First person plural pronouns (we/us/ours) are especially powerful when juxtaposed with the use of 3P plural pronouns (they/them/theirs) because it sets up a potential false dichotomy between the ingroup and an absent outgroup that cannot defend itself.

5.7 Gender-neutral third person pronouns

- The pronoun 'they' has been used for singular referents for centuries in English. This usage has been rejected by strict grammarians who restrict it to plural usage, even though the pronoun 'you' has broadened its usage from only plural referents to also include singular referents.
- There have been many attempts over the past few centuries by language reformers to create new gender-neutral singular third-person pronouns for humans.

5.10 Key Concepts

- **address forms**
- **addressee**
- **case**
- **demonstrative pronouns**
- **exclusive we**
- **false dichotomy**
- **familiar pronoun**
- **first person**
- **formal pronoun**
- **gender**
- **gender-neutral pronouns**
- **generic you**
- **honorific**
- **imperative**
- **inclusive we**
- **intimate forms**
- **number**
- **person**
- **personal pronouns**
- **plain folks**
- **possessive pronouns**

- **pronoun**
- **reflexive pronouns**
- **respect forms**
- **second person**
- **specific you**
- **third person**
- **us versus them**

⇒ Try a crossword using these definitions

⇒ bibliography for 5. Pronoun choice & address forms

NEXT:
Comprehensive & GF tracks ⇒ **6. Pronouns**
LPT track ⇒ **7. Name-calling & Epithets**

Module authors: Jonathon Reinhardt and Anuj Gupta
Last updated: 7 October 2022

This module is part of Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar, an open educational

resource offered by the [Clarify Initiative](#), a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

6. PRONOUNS

⇒ 6.4 <u>Other pronoun types</u>

1. <u>Demonstrative</u>
2. <u>Indefinite</u>
3. <u>Interrogative & Relative</u>

⇒ 6.5 <u>Pronouns in language power techniques</u>

⇒ 6.6 <u>Key points</u>

⇒ 6.7 <u>Key concepts</u>

All activities are in **<u>6A. Pronouns Activities</u>** and are linked from their corresponding section below.

All corpus analysis activities are in **<u>6B. Corpus Activities for Pronouns</u>** and are also linked from below.

6.1 What is a pronoun?

A **pronoun** is a word that replaces, represents, or refers to a single noun or noun phrase, which can be singular or plural.

- <u>That big friendly dog</u> is hilarious. → **She** is hilarious.
- <u>Roxy</u> is hilarious. → **She** is hilarious.
- I love <u>cats</u>. → I love **them**.

- I love <u>big lazy orange cats with stripes</u>. → I love **them**.

Unlike nouns, pronouns cannot be modified by determiners and adjectives.

- ~~That big friendly she is hilarious.~~

If languages didn't have pronouns, we'd have to constantly repeat nouns and noun phrases.

- My dog loves to play ball. My dog is a Golden Retriever. I love my dog.

Instead we can say:

- My dog loves to play ball. **She** is a Golden Retriever. I love **her**.

<div align="right">

⇒ **Go to <u>Activity 6.1</u>**

</div>

⇒ Go to <u>Corpus activity 6.1 What is a pronoun?</u>

6.1.1 Referents, antecedents, & postcedents

The noun or noun phrase that a pronoun replaces is called its **referent**. It is not necessarily in the same sentence, and possibly only understood in the context of conversation. If the

referent comes before the pronoun it is its **antecedent**; if it comes after it is its **postcedent**.

- That's Roxy the dog. She is a good girl. ('Roxy the dog' is the antecedent of 'she')
- When I saw her, Roxy the dog started jumping up and down. ('Roxy the dog' is the postcedent of 'her')

> **Tip:** In Latin, ante means before and anti means against. Remember this by noting that the word 'before' contains e, and the word 'against' contains i, or that ante comes before anti in alphabetical order.

In writing the referent may also be unstated and understood, helping to establish a fictional pretense or an author-reader relationship. Sometimes it's the very first line.

- Call me Ishmael. – Herman Melville, Moby Dick (The reader understands the narrator to be 'me')
- It was love at first sight. – Joseph Heller, Catch-22 (The reader understands that they will eventually understand the postcedent of 'it')

Fig 6.1 Love at First Sight by Nick Fewings on Unsplash

⇒ **Go to Activity 6.1.1**

⇒ Go to Corpus Analysis Activity 6.1.1 Referents, antecedents, & postcedents

6.1.2 Pronoun types

Pronouns are a closed class, which means we can't easily add new ones; there are about 100 of them. There are 7 different types of pronouns in English:

1. **personal**, e.g. I, me, them, him
2. **possessive**, e.g. mine, theirs, hers
3. **reflexive**, e.g. myself, himself, ourselves
4. **indefinite**, e.g anyone, all, few, one, somebody
5. **demonstrative**, e.g. this, that, these, those

6. **interrogative**, e.g. what, which, who, whom, whose
7. **relative**, e.g. that, which, who, whom

Many indefinite and demonstrative pronouns are also **determiners**. When one is acting on its own as a subject or object, it is a pronoun, and when it is modifying/preceding a noun, it is a determiner. Compare:

- This is interesting. ('this' is a pronoun)
- This book is interesting. ('this' is a determiner modifying the noun 'book')

> A **determiner** is a word that modifies a noun or noun phrase. You'll learn more about them in ⇒ 8. Adjectives & Determiners

6.2 Pronoun parameters

Most pronouns can be described according to one or more parameter of **number**, **case**, **person** and **gender**. Pronouns must agree in number, case, person, and/or gender with their referent.

- That was <u>a good movie</u>. I saw ~~them~~ **it** yesterday.
- <u>The King</u> has taken the throne. Long may ~~she~~ **he** reign!

6.2.1 Number: singular or plural

Most pronouns – not just personal ones – are either singular or plural:

  singular: I, you, he, she, it, they*, who, this, that, one
  plural: we, you, they, who, these, those

  Some pronouns, like 'you', 'they', and 'who' can be singular or plural, but they are always conjugated as if they were plural.

- You ~~is~~ are a genius.

* note that 'they' is not traditionally considered singular by prescriptivist grammarians, although in use it is and has been for centuries

<div align="center">

⇒ **Go to <u>Activity 6.2.1</u>**

</div>

6.2.2 Case: subject or object

Personal pronouns are either **subject** or **object case**, depending on what role they play in a sentence. The interrogative/relative pronoun 'who' was traditionally for subjects, while 'whom' was for objects.

  subject: I, you, he, she, it, we, they, who

object: me, you, him, her, it, us, them, whom

- <u>Elizabeth</u> was the queen. → **She** was the queen.
- <u>The visitors</u> saw <u>the queen</u>. → **They** saw **her**.
- <u>My father</u> is a teacher. → **He** is a teacher.
- <u>The teacher</u> gave <u>the students</u> As. → **He** gave **them** As.

The personal pronouns 'you' and 'it' can be used for both subjects and objects. The other pronouns have different subject and object forms.

- I like you. ~~Me like you.~~ You like me. ~~You like I.~~

Subjects come before verbs and are easier to identify than objects. To test whether a personal pronoun is an object, put it after a transitive verb like 'see' or 'eat', and if the sentence is grammatical, it is an object pronoun.

- I see _____. → I see **you**. I see **her**.
- The dog ate _____. → The dog ate **them**. The dog ate **it**.

'Whom' is the object form of the interrogative (question-asking) and relative pronoun 'who', but it is becoming archaic. 'Whom' may still be expected in formal writing, and it is still hanging on as an object of a preposition. Which sounds acceptable or not?

1. To who is this letter?

2. To whom is this letter?
3. Who is this letter to?
4. Whom is this letter to?

6.2.3 Person: first, second, or third

Personal, possessive, and reflexive pronouns can be described according to the perspective they take:

- **1P – first:** I, me, mine, we, us, ours, myself, ourselves
- **2P – second:** you, yours, yourself, yourselves
- **3P – third:** she, her, hers, he, his, him, it, its they, them, theirs, herself, himself, itself, themselves

When talking or writing about ourselves we use 1P (e.g. I or we). When addressing someone while talking directly to them we use 2P (e.g. you), and when talking about people or things not present or previously referenced we use 3P (e.g. he, she, it, they).

In narrative, point-of-view can be from first, second, or third person perspective. In games, 1P perspectives make the player feel as if they are their character or avatar, while 3P perspectives give players an overview or 'god'-like perspective.

In 2P the player is addressed as 'you'. It is not often found in narratives, but is found in choose-your-own-adventure stories, LARP, and in interactive fiction.

6.2.4 Gender: feminine, masculine, neuter, neutral

Grammatical gender in English is marked in 3P pronouns for 'natural' reference: he, him, his, himself, she, her, hers, herself

'It' is considered neuter, and is used for everything non-human, although pet animals may be called 'he' or 'she'. Traditionally, ships and other large vehicles can also be gendered, 'Aye, she's a fine ship, she is!'

Gender in human singular 3P referents with unknown or irrelevant natural gender can be indicated by 'they', although strict traditional grammarians say it should be 'his or her', because 'everyone' is singular.

- ~~Everyone brings its lunch.~~
- Everyone brings their lunch. (commonly used)
- Everyone brings his or her lunch. (preferred by traditionalists)

6.2.4.1 Grammatical vs. natural gender

The term 'natural gender' has been criticized for legitimate reasons, but it is used in linguistics to contrast with

'grammatical', which is not at all tied to sexual identity or biology. Both natural and grammatical gender are marked in many languages, e.g. Spanish, French, and German, not only in pronouns but in nouns. In Spanish, for example, women and walls are feminine, and men and hands are masculine:

> la mujer, el hombre, la pared, el mano (the woman, the man, the wall, the hand)

Unlike many other languages, modern English no longer has grammatical gender that corresponds to natural gender; English pronouns are marked for natural gender, not grammatical gender. Like other languages, however, Old English (spoken from 500-1000 BCE) had grammatical genders.

If you have the time and interest, learn about how English lost its grammatical genders in this video by RobWords, "Why doesn't English have genders? Well...it did!"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKaVI-IStNE

In languages like Spanish, inanimate nouns may have a grammatical gender that is not natural, for example in Spanish, walls are not considered female, and hands are not considered male, even though they use 'la' and 'el' respectively. Linguists

use the terms feminine and masculine instead, and note that grammatical gender allows for cohesion and agreement across discourse. For example, in German the word for rug, 'Teppich', is masculine.

Der Teppich ist schmutzig. Er ist hässlich. (The rug is dirty. It is ugly.)

Referent pronouns must match the gender of their antecedent, so actually this can be thought of as 'The rug is dirty. He is ugly.' but this does not mean that rugs in German are thought of as male, only grammatically masculine.

In English, the referent of 'it' in a sentence like the following is ambiguous:

- The cat hunted the rabbit and it was bitten.

In English we don't know if it was the cat or the rabbit that was bitten.

Image 6.2 A rabbit (photo by Gary Bendig on Unsplash)

However, in a language like German, grammatical gender disambiguates subject and object, so there is no ambiguity. For example:

- Die Katze jagte den Hasen und sie wurde gebissen. (The cat hunted the rabbit and it [the cat] was bitten.)

- Die Katze jagte den Hasen und er wurde gebissen. (The cat hunted the rabbit and it [the rabbit] was bitten.)

Note that 'rabbit' in German is grammatically masculine whether or not the referent rabbit is biologically male, and 'cat' is feminine whether or not the referent cat is biologically female, although there is a way to say female rabbit or male cat if you need to discuss a particular animal's biological gender.

In English we would need more information from context, but German is unambiguous, because it has grammatical gender. In short, grammatical gender creates cohesion across discourse, that is, it helps people know what is being talked about.

⇒ **Go to [Activity 6.2.4](#)**

6.3 Personal, possessive, and reflexive pronouns

6.3.1 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are marked for person, number, case, and sometimes gender. They are:

- I – 1P, singular, subject
- me – 1P, singular, object
- you – 2P, singular/plural, subject/object
- he – 3P, singular, subject, male
- him – 3P, singular, object, male
- she – 3P, singular, subject, female
- her – 3P, singular, object, female
- it – 3P, singular, subject/object, non-human
- we – 1P, plural, subject

- us – 1P, plural, object
- they – 3P, gender-neutral singular/plural, subject
- them – 3P, gender-neutral singular/plural, object

<div align="center">⇒ Go to <u>Activity 6.3.1</u></div>

6.3.2 Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns can be marked for number, person, and gender, but not for case – that is, they can be either subjects or objects. There are 8 of them:

<div align="center">mine, yours, his, hers, its, theirs, ours, whose</div>

Possessive pronouns correspond to possessive determiners, but remember that as pronouns they replace nouns or noun phrases, while determiners modify a noun.

- <u>My homework</u> is finished. → <u>Mine</u> is finished. ('mine' is the subject)
- The dog ate <u>my homework.</u> → The dog ate <u>mine.</u> ('mine' is the object)

Note that 'his' and 'its' are both possessive pronouns and determiners.

- <u>His story</u> doesn't make sense. ('his' is a determiner modifying 'story')
- <u>His</u> doesn't make sense. (his is a possessive pronoun

acting as the subject)

- A leopard's coat has two-toned spots. <u>Its spots</u> are orange and black. <u>Its</u> are different from a cheetah's. (note: this may be awkward and the third subject might be better expressed with 'they', but it is grammatical)

Image 6.3 "Leopard" (photo by <u>Geoff Brooks</u> on <u>Unsplash</u>

⇒ **Go to <u>Activity 6.3.2</u>**

⇒ Go to <u>Corpus Analysis Activity 6.3.2</u> <u>Possessive Pronouns</u>

6.3.3 Reflexive pronouns

The reflexive pronouns in English are:

myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, *themself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves

* not considered standard

Like personal and possessive pronouns, reflexive pronouns are marked for number, person, and gender, but unlike personal pronouns they are not marked for case. They can be objects but not subjects, e.g.:

- I saw **myself** in the mirror.
- He gave **himself** a black eye.
- ~~Myself went to the store.~~

They can be used as an emphatic **appositive**, e.g.:

- You **yourself** said it
- I **myself** don't believe it

Sometimes a reflexive pronoun used as an appositive can go after the verb, e.g.:

- I went **myself** to check on it

⇒ **Go to <u>Activity 6.3.3</u>**

6.4 Other pronoun types

6.4.1 Demonstrative pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns in English are: this, that, these, those

This and that are singular, and these and those are plural. Demonstrative pronouns can be subjects or objects, e.g.:

- **This** is the way. (subject)
- Don't say **that**. (object)
- What are **these?** (subject complement)
- I want **those**. (object)

Remember that demonstrative pronouns can also be determiners, e.g.:

- These pretzels are making me thirsty. (these is a determiner modifying pretzels)
- These are delicious pretzels. (these is a pronoun, functioning as a subject by itself)

To make things even more confusing, that is also relative pronoun and a conjunction, e.g.:

- I knew **that** he wanted to dance. (conjunction)
- I didn't know the dance **that** she was talking about.

(relative pronoun)
- He knows **that** dance. (determiner)
- **That** is a difficult dance. (demonstrative pronoun)

⇒ **Go to Activity 6.4.1**

6.4.2 Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns are pronouns that specify a quantity of their referent. There are about 40 of them, but the most common ones are:

all, any, each, few, many, none, one, several, & some

They also include the 'SANE-BOT' compounds; these do not necessarily have specifically known referents.

some-/any-/no-/every- + -body/-one/-thing

FYI, the 'SANE-where' words (e.g. somewhere, nowhere, etc.) are considered adverbs, because they describe a place, although they act a lot like pronouns, too.

Like other pronouns, indefinite pronouns can be subjects or objects. Like some demonstrative and possessive pronouns, some of them can also be determiners.

- **Some** people went home. (determiner)
- **Some** went home. (pronoun – subject)
- Did you see **anybody**? (pronoun – object)

Unlike other pronoun types, some indefinite pronouns can

take determiners and modifiers, unlike other pronoun types, e.g.:

- <u>The green **one**</u> that flew away.
- He was a member of <u>the chosen **few**</u>.

Most are singular, some are plural, and some can be either:

- Everything is awesome.
- Several are missing.
- All is well.
- All are here.

The SANE-BOT indefinite pronouns are always singular, they are not determiners, and they do not take modifiers.
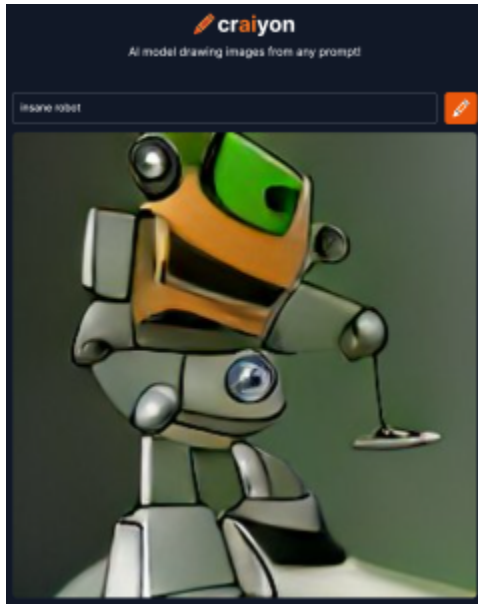
Image 6.4 'Insane Robot' generated on craiyon.com

⇒ **Go to <u>Activity 6.4.2</u>**

6.4.3 Interrogative & Relative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are question words: what, which, who/whom, whose

They can function as subjects or objects; 'whom' is often preferred as the object form of 'who'. Also, 'what' and 'which' can be determiners, e.g. 'what time' or 'which person'.

- What made the noise? (subject)

- What did you see? (object)
- Who made the noise? (subject)
- To whom did you give it? (object)
- Which made the noise, the dog or the cat? (subject)
- Which did you see? (object)
- Whose is this? (subject)
- Whose are you talking about? (object)

Relative pronouns relate a dependent clause to a NP: that, which, who/whom

- Did you see the thing **that** made that noise? (subject)
- The animal **which** we ate was a snake. (object)
- Steve had a drink with some actors **who** starred in Star Wars. (subject)

⇒ **Go to Activity 6.4.3**

6.5 Pronouns in language power techniques

Pronouns are used to refer to people, places, things, and concepts that are known to an audience because the referent has already mentioned or is understood from context. Pronouns can be used strategically because they serve as a kind

of address form, showing the social relationship between the speaker and the referent:

- **informal/formal you:** English no longer has separate pronouns for informal, formal, and plural 'you' (2nd person) like other languages. Instead, speakers use address forms and nicknames as well as other grammatical forms to show respect and rapport or intimacy.
- **generic/specific you:** Because 'you' can be used generically (to mean 'one' or 'anyone') and specifically (to mean the person or people being addressed), it can be ambiguous. Generic you can be used strategically to make the listener feel they are being addressed directly even if the speaker doesn't know them.
- **inclusive/exclusive we:** 'We' can be used inclusively to refer to the speaker and the listener, and exclusively to refer to the speaker and others. Because of this ambiguity, it can be used strategically to make a listener feel they are being included.
- **us & them:** When used in contrast with 'they' referents, the use of 'we' pronouns can polarize listeners and make them feel there are only two choices, 'us vs. them', and that they belong with the 'we' in-group. This can be a powerful propaganda technique.
- **they, he, & she:** English has used 'they' in the singular to refer to gender-neutral individuals in the past, but

because it is primarily used for plural, people have wanted a new singular gender-neutral 3rd person pronoun to refer to humans in addition to gender-specific 'he' and 'she'. It can be considered offensive and rude to not use the pronoun an individual has specified for themself, especially if the speaker does not on purpose.

If you haven't done it and are interested, visit Module 5 to learn more about address forms and pronoun choice.

⇒ Go to Comprehensive Activities for 6. Pronouns

6.6 Key points on pronouns

- A pronoun replaces, represents, and refers to a noun or noun phrase, creating cohesion across discourse and allowing us not to have to repeat nouns.
- The noun a pronoun replaces is its referent — if it comes before the pronoun it is the antecedent, if after, the postcedent.
- Pronouns are a closed class; there are about 100.
- Personal pronouns are the most common; they must agree in number, case, person, and/or gender with their referent.
- Number refers to singular or plural.
- Case refers to subject, object, or possessive.
- Person refers to first, second, or third person.
- Gender refers to masculine, feminine, neuter, and neutral.
- Grammatical gender is not the same as natural gender. English uses a natural gender pronoun system, while other languages do not.
- Many indefinite and demonstrative pronouns can also function as determiners that modify (i.e., describe or come before) a noun.
- Reflexive pronouns cannot function as

subjects.
- Indefinite pronouns can be singular, plural, or both.
- Interrogative pronouns are the wh- question words.

6.7 Key concepts on pronouns

- **antecedent**
- **case**
- **demonstrative pronoun**
- **feminine**
- **first person**
- **gender**
- **grammatical gender**
- **indefinite pronoun**
- **interrogative pronoun**
- **masculine**
- **natural gender**
- **neuter**

- **neutral**
- **number**
- **object pronoun**
- **person**
- **personal pronoun**
- **possessive pronoun**
- **postcedent**
- **referent**
- **reflexive pronoun**
- **relative pronoun**
- **second person**
- **subject pronoun**
- **third person**

NEXT:
Comprehensive track ⇒ **7. Name-calling & Epithets**
GF track ⇒ **8. Adjectives & Determiners**

Module author: Jonathon Reinhardt
Last updated: 11 October 2022

This module is part of [Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar](#), an open educational resource offered by the [Clarify Initiative](#), a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

7. NAME-CALLING & EPITHETS

Watch the video introducing this

module ⇒ Name-calling and Epithets

7.1 Introduction: Presidential nicknames

Module preview questions

Do you use nicknames, or have others used a nickname for you? Why? How do you feel about it? Do you think Trump's strategy was effective? Why or why not?

During his 2016 and 2020 US presidential campaigns, Donald Trump pioneered a unique rhetorical strategy that some argue was a key political tactic and reason for his successes. Watch this video to find out what this strategy was and how he used it to his advantage:

Moos, J. (2016). Donald Trumps' nicknames for his opponents. CNN video report: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6LN_–HjjE

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=72#oembed-1

While one conventionally assumes political debates to be the arena of relatively civilized discourse, Donald Trump shocked his opponents by using high-school-like pejoratives or derogatory **nicknames** for his opponents. Ranging from "low-energy Jebb" and "Crooked Hillary" to "Sleepy Joe", Trump went on a verbal insult rampage through his presidency that polarized the American public. While some started to believe in his characterization of his opponents and grew closer to him for what they believed was honest and authentic talk, others started to feel more and more distant from him because

they believed that he was besmirching the dignity of the office he held. To his supporters these words seemed harmless or only slightly pejorative, while to others they showed the aggressive power of name-calling. By constant repetition, Trump shaped the public's perception of many American politicians and may ultimately have also influenced voter behavior.

Image 7.1 Trump's insulting nicknames (Photo by Darren Halstead on Unsplash)

Activity 7.1 Pronouns & address forms

a. Read these two articles to learn more about the linguistic and narrative features of Trump's unique rhetorical strategy.

1. Allsop, J. (2017). Inside the fairy tale mind of Trump. Columbia Journalism Review, September 27, 2017. https://www.cjr.org/special_report/trump-fairy-tale.php

2. Allsop, J. (2019). The dangerous power of Trump's 'fairy tale' nicknames. Columbia Journalism Review, May 13, 2019. https://www.cjr.org/the_media_today/trump_buttigieg_neuman_nickname.php

What arguments does Allsop make regarding the linguistic power of Trump's nicknames? What about the narrative or cultural power? Should politicians like Trump be allowed to use such nicknames?

b. Read the Wikipedia list of the various nicknames Trump has used for a wide range of politicians, organizations, and cultural figures:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_nicknames_used_by_Donald_Trump

Choose one of the people Trump used multiple nicknames for and consider the impact you think it

might have or had on the public's perception of the person. What perception do you think Trump meant to convey? How successful do you think the nickname was, and why, or why not?

Imagine you were a consultant advising a politician to consider using pejorative nicknames for their opponent. Invent a fake persona for the opponent (do not use a real person) and come up with 3 nicknames for them that the politician can use.

c.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=72#h5p-27

7.2 Name-calling: The pejorative use of epithets

According to [Delwiche (2018)](#), **name-calling** is a propaganda technique that was identified by the Institute of Propaganda Analysis in 1938. It is powerful because it "links a person, or idea, to a negative symbol. The propagandist who uses this technique hopes that the audience will reject the person or the idea on the basis of the negative symbol, instead of looking at the available evidence." It is often used in an **ad hominem** or personal attack, where someone criticizes a quality or association of a person rather than their argument or actions.

Name-calling involves the pejorative use of a linguistic or literary device called an **epithet** – a term or phrase for someone or something that includes a descriptor and the name of the person or thing. Epithets allow the listener or reader to take a cognitive shortcut and see one descriptor as the primary defining trait of the person or thing. When an epithet is positive about a person, its use can serve to show solidarity or respect, but when it is pejorative its use can result in exclusion and cause the listener or reader to close their mind to other characteristics the person has. Since criticality takes effort, it's easier for the listener to fixate on that single 'definitive' negative trait.

Grammatically speaking, an epithet itself is a **noun** (e.g. 'The Bard') or a **noun phrase** consisting of a noun preceded by an **adjective** (e.g. 'Sleepy Joe'), or a noun followed by a

phrase or clause (e.g. 'He Who Must Not Be Named '). An epithet is often a **proper noun**, but may also be a **common noun** if it doesn't refer to (a) specific individual(s). When a definite article (i.e., a **determiner**) like 'the' is used (as in 'The Rock'), it conveys a sense of singularity and implies that everyone should know which one is being referred to (compare 'sun' with 'the sun'). On the other hand, an adjective not preceded by a determiner can sort of bind the adjective to the name (e.g. 'Big John' as opposed to 'the big John, not the little John'). Since proper nouns are capitalized in English, capitalizing the adjective and not using a determiner can serve to make such an epithet seem like a name.

> Learn more about the grammar of epithets and name-calling in ⇒ 4. Nouns and ⇒ 6. Adjectives and Determiners

Activity 7.2: The lexico-grammar of epithets

a.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=72#h5p-28

b.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=72#h5p-29

c. List three epithets that you know of, at least one common and one proper noun.

Key points from 7.2

- Name-calling is the pejorative use of an epithet. Often used in ad hominem attacks, it is a linguistic power technique that links a person with a negative concept or quality.
- An epithet is a descriptive name for something or someone, like a nickname, that may be used in place of, or in addition to, the person or thing's name. It can be complimentary, neutral, or pejorative.
- Epithets are normally nouns – often proper nouns – preceded by an attributive adjective (before the noun), with or without a determiner. They may also use an address form or title like 'Doctor' or 'Miss'.

7.3 The origin of epithets: A fitting name

Epithets that use attributive adjectives before the noun, e.g. 'Happy Jack', focus our attention on the adjective by leading with it. Since it's the first thing we hear, the adjective has definitive power. Epithets with predicative adjectives after the noun, e.g. 'William the Bald' may be powerful when they use definite articles like 'the'.

If you have time and interest, take a look at this list of embarrassing epithets that were given to royal figures, perhaps as a form of revenge by unhappy subjects.

- https://allthatsinteresting.com/royal-titles-nicknames

The use of surnames began in China over 3,000 years ago, and in Europe 1,000 years ago. Often surnames were chosen that reflected a person's geographic origin, occupation, or physical appearance. Before that, it was common practice to specify someone by appearance (e.g. 'tall Peter'), origin (e.g. 'John from the mountains'), or by someone's father's or husband's name (e.g. 'Leif son of Erik'); this is still evident in names like 'Johnson', and in the practice of women taking their husband's family name upon marriage. This patronymic practice has ancient origins; in the Odyssey, Odysseus was often sometimes called just 'son of Laertes', while his wife Penelope was often addressed using simply 'wife of Odysseus'. Feminist scholars would argue that such epithets reflected a patriarchal ideology that anchors an individual's identity to their fathers and husbands, while mothers and wives never serve as such anchors.

If you have time and interest, learn about types of English surnames and research the origin of your own surname (even if it's not English) here:

- https://blogs.ancestry.com/cm/there-are-7-types-of-english-surnames-which-one-is-yours/

Activity 7.3: Descriptive Names

a. *What is the origin of your own given name and surname? How does it reflect your heritage and your identity? How does it not?*

b. *Come up with a few brief descriptions of characters in a story – your own story or from stories you know (e.g. Charles Dickens used very colorful character names). Identify the names and describe why you think their name fits their character.*

C.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=72#h5p-30

Key points from 7.3

- An epithet that includes an adjective, especially an attributive adjective, is powerful because it associates a single quality with a noun, and it leads the noun, so it is the first thing heard.
- Epithets have their origins in given names and surnames, which began as descriptions of physical appearance, geographical origin,

occupation, or as patronyms.

7.4 Why do we name call?

Name-calling has its genesis in primordial human social and psychological practices that structure social reality by creating insider and outsider identities. Humans have traditionally structured societies by creating groups – e.g. tribes, religions, or nations – defined by who its members are. Having a shared understanding of who they are not allows a tribe of people to build greater unity, social harmony, and cooperation among its members. Jasinski (2001, p. 202) notes that "in what seems to be an almost inevitable pattern with deep religious roots, individuals craft a sense of group unity or identification by dividing themselves from others. Those 'others' are then routinely treated as the enemy."

Image 7.4: Group dynamics Photo by [Andrew Moca](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Name-calling contributes to negative **stereotyping**, the human tendency to attribute a single or a few traits to an entire group of people. While based in the natural human predeliction to categorize and identify patterns, stereotyping can be dehumanizing when used to judge or predict behavior, even when positive, because it reduces the complexity of individuals. Name-calling and stereotyping contribute to the construction and maintenance of **tribalism**, the state of being organized into groups defined by common identities and loyalty to the tribe over others. By using a single definitive term to label outsiders, especially a negative term associated with taboo or undesirable qualities, insiders can quickly dismiss

outsiders and the idea that they might have commonalities. In this way, name-calling can nurture tribal loyalty.

> If you have time and interest, learn more about the dangers of tribalism here:
>
> - https://www.argumentninja.com/the-dangers-of-tribalism

Groups have names for themselves and names for others. Lee and Lee (1938) note that nearly all people "call themselves by names that mean 'the people' or 'the real people'. All outsiders they call 'the foreigners', 'earth-eaters', 'cannibals', 'ill-speakers' or some other term they regard as disreputable" (Lee and Lee, 1938: 27). In US American history, European colonists who first encountered Indigenous peoples of an area often asked them not only what they called themselves, but what they called neighboring peoples, and were sometimes told derogatory epithets which stuck. Many Indigenous US peoples have renamed themselves; for example, the Tohono O'Odham were called Papago for many years, which was a Spanish nickname for 'bean-eaters', while Tohono O'Odham means 'desert people'.

If you have time and interest, read this short encyclopedia entry to learn a bit about where Indigenous US American peoples got their names.

https://www.britannica.com/topic/Native-American-Self-Names-1369572

Activity 7.4: Named by Others

a. Listen to this story about why and how the Tohono O'Odham Nation changed their name from Papago.

https://fronterasdesk.org/content/1758158/term-papago-everywhere-around-valley-its-not-one-tohono-oodham-embrace

Do you think that Indigenous places in the US should be renamed with their Indigenous names? Why or why not?

b. Consider how some US Republicans derogatorily call Democrats "socialist" or "communist", while the epithet "capitalist pig" is sometimes used in social democratic Western European circles to criticize US American government and cultural practices. Read the following about the psychology of name-calling as a form of the rhetorical ad-hominem strategy.

https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/bias-fundamentals/202002/do-name-calling-and-ignoring-facts-work

What are some epithets that groups use derogatorily towards other groups to define themselves by what they are not? When does the use of an otherwise neutral term become derogatory and offensive?

c.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=72#h5p-31

> **Key points from 7.4**
>
> - Name-calling has its origins as a means of building in-group social unity and distinguishing in-group members from outsiders.
> - Name-calling encourages tribalism and tribal loyalties by giving group members a reason to dismiss outsiders and reminding them what they are not.

7.5 From Name-calling to scapegoating

Name-calling can lead to scapegoating, which is blaming a person or group that cannot defend itself for a problem they did not actually cause. One of the most infamous examples of this comes from the 1930s and 1940s, where Hitler used this technique to unite Germans and rouse hatred in their hearts against the Jews, **scapegoating** them for Germany's defeat in the First World War (1914-1919) as well as the ensuing economic collapse of the 1930s. Kenneth Burke, a famous

rhetoric scholar, analyzed the rhetoric in Hitler's powerful screed *Mein Kampf* ('My Struggle') and found that Hitler used epithets to paint the German Aryan race as special angelic children of God, implying the Jews to be the opposite – devils. Hitler then framed his name-calling with claims that "by warding off Jews, I am fighting for the Lord's work" ([Hitler qtd. in Burke 1973, p.37](#)), calling them "cunning" and full of "Jewish arrogance" ([Hitler qtd . in Burke 1973, p.43](#)), and even implying they committed 'blood libel', the murder of non-Jewish children for ritual sacrifice, a dangerous myth that survives today.

If you have time and interest, learn more about scapegoating in the video 'What is scapegoating?' by Oxford Academic Press:

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tB4JVWTw698

Image 7.5: Auschwitz Concentration Camp (Photo by Karsten Winegeart on Unsplash)

To compound the scapegoating tactics, Hitler also used metaphor to equate Jews to parasites, writing that "people who can sneak their way, like parasites, into the human body politic and make others work for them under various pretenses can form a State without possessing any definite delimited territory. This is chiefly applicable to that parasitic nation which, particularly at the present time preys upon the honest portion of mankind; I mean the Jews." (Hitler qtd. in Burker, 1973, p. 127). Thus, first by framing Jews as devils and scapegoating them, Hitler helped to scare and unify the German public against them, and then by equating them with parasites whose lack of a state was due to some inherent evil quality rather than the historical outcome of centuries of

discrimination, he ensured support for their elimination from German society. In what is now known as the Holocaust, six million German and European Jews were brutally murdered during the course of the Second World War (1939-1945), millions in concentration camps.

If you have time and interest, read Kenneth Burke's essay on Hitler's rhetoric here:

- [Burke, K. (1973). The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle. Reprinted from The Philosophy of Literary Form. U of California Press: Berkeley.](#)

Activity 7.5 The danger of derogatory epithets

a. A variety of terms have been used to refer to homosexual men in English, most all of which are derogatory. Browse through this piece for some lighthearted ones:

- https://www.advocate.com/comedy/2016/4/05/15-old-timey-names-gay

The origin of the term 'faggot' is that it was a bundle of sticks used as kindling. If it doesn't offend you, search the Internet to find out why the term was used to refer to homosexual men. Watch this video by cut.com on gay men's reaction to the use of the term towards them:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecUdWGCcd74

When do you think that the use of derogatory epithets should be considered protected free speech, and when do you think it should be considered hate speech?

b. The myth of blood libel, the notion that Jews murder Christian children and consume their blood, contributed to the Holocaust, but it has been at the root of anti-semitism for thousands of years. Read about its history here:

- https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/blood-libel

More recently in the US, blood libel is deep

underneath modern conspiracies like Q-Anon, Pizzagate, and the belief that Hollywood stars and wealthy liberal politicians use adrenochrome to stay youthful. Read about how the Internet may be contributing to this perpetuation:

Friedberg, M. (2020). The Dark Virality of a Hollywood Blood-Harvesting Conspiracy. Wired Magazine, July 31, 2020

- https://www.wired.com/story/opinion-the-dark-virality-of-a-hollywood-blood-harvesting-conspiracy/

If you're interested in learning more, watch a presentation (1 hr) on the connection between QAnon and blood libel by S. Kemmerer

- https://centerforinquiry.org/video/qanon-blood-libel-for-the-digital-age/

When politicians and social groups attempt to demonize their rivals, why do you think they frame their arguments with inferences to deeply rooted cultural myths like blood libel? What names and

epithets do they use to enhance their propaganda? What do you think is an effective approach to counter such arguments?

c.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=72#h5p-32

Key points from 7.5

- Name-calling can be used by political, religious, and cultural leaders to build tribal loyalties and scapegoat or blame outsiders for their problems. Historically, leaders and their followers have leveraged the power of name-

calling not only to wage war against their enemies, but to persecute, discriminate against, and even commit genocide against internal minorities.

7.6 Comprehensive Activities

Reflection/Discussion Questions

Reflect on the content of this unit by answering some or all of the following questions. Provide examples to support your points.

- *What is name-calling?*
- *What characterizes name-calling and epithets grammatically?*
- *Who uses name-calling and why?*
- *What is the power of name-calling?*
- *How can we be aware of when name-calling and epithets are used for nefarious purposes?*
- *What can we do to counteract the power of*

name-calling?

Corpus Analysis Activity – *only for learners also doing [corpus analysis](#)*

- Epithets in military propaganda (under construction)

7.7 Key Points on Name-Calling

7.1 Introduction: Presidential Nicknames

7.2 Name-calling: The pejorative use of epithets

- Name-calling is the pejorative use of an epithet. Often used in ad hominem attacks, it is a linguistic power technique that links a person with a negative concept or quality.
- An epithet is a descriptive name for something or someone, like a nickname, that may be used in place of, or in addition to, the person or thing's name. It can be

complimentary, neutral, or pejorative.

- Epithets are normally nouns – often proper nouns – preceded by an attributive adjective (before the noun), with or without a determiner. They may also use an address form or title like 'Doctor' or 'Miss'.

7.3 The origins of epithets: A fitting name

- An epithet that includes an adjective, especially an attributive adjective, is powerful because it associates a single quality with a noun, and it leads the noun, so it is the first thing heard.
- Epithets have their origins in given names and surnames, which began as descriptions of physical appearance, geographical origin, occupation, or as patronyms.

7.4 Why do we name-call others?

- Name-calling has its origins as a means of building in-group social unity and distinguishing in-group members from outsiders.
- Name-calling encourages tribalism and tribal loyalties by giving group members a reason to

dismiss outsiders and reminding them what they are not.

7.5 From name-calling to scapegoating

- Name-calling can be used by political, religious, and cultural leaders to build tribal loyalties and scapegoat or blame outsiders for their problems. Historically, leaders and their followers have leveraged the power of name-calling not only to wage war against their enemies, but to persecute, discriminate against, and even commit genocide against internal minorities.

7.8 Key Concepts on Name-calling

- **ad hominem**
- **adjective**
- **common noun**
- **determiner**

- **epithet**
- **name-calling**
- **nickname**
- **noun**
- **noun phrase**
- **proper noun**
- **scapegoating**
- **stereotyping**
- **tribalism**

⇒ Try a crossword using these definitions

⇒ bibliography for 7. Name-calling & epithets

NEXT:
Comprehensive & GF tracks ⇒ **8. Adjectives & Determiners (under construction)**
LPT track ⇒ **9. Hyperbole (under construction)**

Module authors: Jonathon Reinhardt and Anuj Gupta
Last updated: 17 October 2022

This module is part of [Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar](#), an open educational resource offered by the [Clarify Initiative](#), a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

SECTION III
ACTIVITIES

1CA. METAPHOR CORPUS ACTIVITY

Using corpora to explore metaphors in US immigration discourse

In US immigration discourse, metaphors connected to water are frequently present and are realized through a variety of words. Indeed, the metaphor has often been subject of critique. For example, in 1999, Professor Otto Santa Ana of UCLA analyzed 107 articles collected over two years from the Los Angeles Times concerning immigration. One of the most frequent metaphors he found in the articles was IMMIGRANT/IMMIGRATION AS WATER in patterns such as "the flood of illegal immigrants", "the latest immigrant tide", "the influx of illegal immigrants", "failing to stem the flow of illegal immigrants", "halt the flood of newcomers", and many more.

It may not be particularly surprising that such metaphors were frequently produced in messages from former president Donald Trump, as his conservative immigration policies and unique rhetoric were widely broadcast. For example, the tweet below employs the metaphor in its criticism of his presidential election opponent Joseph Biden. Tweeted only days before

the 2020 election, Trump suggests that Biden's policies would "open the floodgates to terrorists, jihadists, and violent extremists". Clearly, the metaphor is intended to stoke fear regarding his opponent's possible immigration policies.

The water metaphor regularly appears throughout Trump's messages on immigration. Table 1 displays instances of the metaphor from October 2020. The following table displays additional instances of the IMMIGRANT AS WATER metaphor from Trump's campaign speeches in the weeks prior to the 2020 election. He warns of tsunamis of immigrants that will surely come when Biden opens the floodgates. In his hyperbolic warnings of crisis to come, he states that cities will be flooded with immigrants, terrorists, gangs, and refugees.

Table 1: IMMIGRANT AS WATER in Trump speeches

1. This would trigger a tsunami of illegal immigration from every corner, all over the world" (Trump, 2020)
2. This would trigger a tsunami of illegal immigration, they want to have free health care for all, free education for all, everybody gets a lawyer" (Trump, 2020)
3. They live behind gated walls and they flooded your communities with illegal immigration, deadly drugs, MS-13, savages that assault, rape, and murder, innocent Americans" (Trump, 2020)
4. Opening the floodgates to radical Islamic terrorism" (Trump, 2020)
5. The Biden plan will open the floodgates to radical, Islamic terrorism" (Trump, 2020)
6. They lecture you on the need for open borders that flood your cities with illegal drugs and gangs while they themselves live in walled off compounds…"(Trump, 2020)
7. Biden's deadly migration policies will overwhelm Minnesota, and open the floodgates to terrorists, jihadists, and violent extremists….(Trump, 2020)
8. Every Democrat running for president wants to open the floodgates to unlimited refugees from all around the world, overwhelming your communities and putting our national security at grave risk.
9. If Joe and Kamala are elected, it will trigger a tsunami of illegal immigration from every corner of the world. Tens of billions of people will flood into our country. You're not going to be too happy in North Carolina (Trump, 2020)
10. He knew it was wrong, because it would be so horrible for our country, because everyone's going to flood our country, you get free health care, right?

Table 1 The above sentences were collected at https://factba.se/trump/ using search terms immigration and flood.

The question to ask is whether such patterning of fear-

invoking metaphors affect how people perceive immigrants and immigration as well as the policies and actions they subsequently support. In a recent study published in the Journal of Social and Political Psychology, a team of researchers investigated whether one's use of the IMMIGRATION/IMMIGRANT AS WATER metaphor influenced and even predicted whether one supported the building of a border wall along the US/Mexico border (Jimenez et al., 2021). Specifically, the research team hypothesized "that using the inundation metaphor to understand immigration contributes to support for a U.S.-Mexico border wall as a figurative means to block immigrants". Their findings demonstrated that an individual's use of the water metaphor, or as they refer to it—the inundation metaphor—strongly predicted support for the construction of a border wall. Thus, if one conceptualizes immigration as a flood, then they will then conceive of solutions related to stopping the flow of water. Findings such as these demonstrate that metaphorical expressions influence the ways we perceive and act regarding issues of public policy and open the space for us to reflect upon what other spaces in our lives is our understanding of an important issue shaped by metaphors operating beyond our conscious attention.

Corpus Activity

1. It can be difficult to identify instances of a particular

metaphor in a large corpus because many words can be deployed to invoke a metaphor. This presents a challenge to corpus linguists seeking to analyze metaphors. In table 2, there were instances of flood, floodgates, and tsunamis. What are other words that one may be used use to create the IMMIGRANT/IMMIGRATION AS WATER metaphor? List three words you intuit may be used to invoke the water metaphor.

2. A **collocate** is a word which frequently appears with the target word; in this case, a word having to do with water would be a collocate of *immigrant*. One method to identify metaphors in use with a word such as immigrant or immigration is to search for the frequent collocates of the target word in the corpus. Once you have produced a list of collocates, you can examine the list for words which may be producing metaphorical meanings. Check whether some of the water-related words you answered for number 1 are collocates of the target word. In the COCA or the NOW, do a *collocates search* for **immigra*** so that you capture collocates for various forms of your target word. In the resulting list, are there words that indicate the use of the water metaphor? If yes, make a list of those words. Are there words present which may be producing different metaphorical meanings? If yes, what are they?

3. In COCA, search *** of immigration**. From the list of phrases, identify those which are related to water,

thereby reflecting the immigrants/immigration as water metaphor.

Module author: Robert Poole
   Last updated: 21 November 2022

This module is part of [Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar](), an open educational resource offered by the [Clarify Initiative](), a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

English

2GA. SENTENCE BASICS GRAMMAR ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed for the content in [2. Sentence Basics](#)

⇒ [2.1.1 Subjects in a speech by Joe Biden](#)

⇒ [2.1.2 Predicates in The Great Gatsby](#)

⇒ [2.2 Clauses & sentences in a speech by Donald Trump](#)

⇒ [2.3.1 Agreement in popular memes](#)

⇒ [2.3.2 Phrases about chocolate cake](#)

⇒ [2.4 Transitive or intransitive](#)

⇒ [2.5 Transitive or linking](#)

⇒ [2.6 Comprehensive Activities on Sentence Basics](#)

Activity 2.1.1 Subjects in a speech by Joe Biden

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-40

Activity 2.1.2 Predicates in The Great Gatsby

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You

can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-44

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-45

⇒ Return to [2.1 Sentences, Subjects, & Predicates](#)

Activity 2.2 Clauses & Sentences in a Speech by Donald Trump

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-41

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-42

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-43

⇒ Return to 2.2. Clauses

Activity 2.3.1 Agreement in popular memes

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-50

Activity 2.3.2 Phrases about chocolate cake

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You

can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-51

⇒ Return to **2.3 Phrases & Agreement**

Activity 2.4 Transitive or intransitive?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-54

⇒ Return to [2.4 Transitive & Intransitive Verbs](#)

Activity 2.5 Transitive or Linking?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=605#h5p-56

⇒ Return to 2.5 Linking Verbs

2.6 Comprehensive Activities on Sentence Basics

a. Find an example of a pop song or a poem that uses metaphors in its lyrics, for example, to describe life, love, happiness, sadness, etc. Song lyrics can be found by searching for a favorite singer, band, or song, and for poetry the Poetry Foundation collections offer a variety to choose from. What song or poem did you find? What metaphors are

used in it? What lyrics illustrate them? Analyze the grammatical structure of a few lines and identify subjects, linking verbs, and predicates.

b. Write a paragraph of about 100 words telling a story, describing a dream you had, or recounting a trip you took or event you experienced. After writing it, identify:

- the number of sentences
- the number of clauses
- all the subjects
- all the verbs and whether they are transitive, intransitive, or linking

⇒ Return to 2. Sentence Basics

Module authors: Jonathon Reinhardt and Dilara Avci
Last updated: 1 November 2022

These activities are part of Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar, an open educational resource offered by the Clarify Initiative, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical

language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

3CA. DOUBLESPEAK CORPUS ACTIVITY

Doublespeak in Environmental Communication

As defined in Module 3, **doublespeak** is language that makes the bad seem good, the negative appear positive, and the unpleasant appear attractive. Such language use enables speakers to avoid, shift, or diffuse responsibility as the agents for actions and even the action themselves become lost in **euphemism** and **jargon**. If we were to brainstorm discourse domains where such doublespeak seems common, we would likely list political speeches, public relations statements by an individual or group involved in some sort of problematic incident, or press conferences in which individuals are asked probing questions. For example, in in a 2014 press conference, Uruguayan soccer player Luiz Suarez stated, "…the truth is that my colleague suffered the physical result of a bite on the collision he suffered with me" rather than the clearer "I bit him". What does the statement even mean? In a sense, the blame is pushed to the other individual for initiating a collision. And "suffered the effects of a bite" is certainly not

the same as admitting that you actually bit a person. Such doublespeak allows speakers to frame events in ways that mislead, confuse, and misinform, thereby mitigating themselves from responsibility while presenting themselves or their institution in the most favorable light. As Richard Alexander asserts, "It is a truism of corporate language that word choice and lexical patterning play a significant role in deflecting attention and downplaying real and potential troubles (Alexander 2009: 18).

An additional space where doublespeak seems the norm rather than the exception is in corporate communication regarding the environment and sustainability. In recent years, it has become common practice for corporations to present themselves as defenders of the environment, as contributors to environmental wellbeing and sustainability, as champions for all sorts of environmental causes. Indeed, the discursive work corporations produce would have us believe that they are indispensable partners for environmental protection and conservation. However, though institutions project a concerned environmental ethic, quite often their statements do not match reality. Indeed, this disconnect between word and deed is so common that it has its own term: **greenwashing**. Think gaslighting but for polluters!

To illustrate greenwashing in action, take the case of multinational oil and gas corporation ExxonMobil. According to Client Earth, an environmental advocacy group that monitors the environmental actions of corporations and

governments, ExxonMobil reported revenue exceeding $250 billion in 2020, yet in the preceding decade, it spent less than 1% of its expenditures on low-carbon energy. Meanwhile, the corporation proclaims that it is in alignment with Paris Agreement goals, but its actions have been repeatedly criticized for falling well short of Paris Agreement targets and its own 2025 goals. Nonetheless, each year the corporation releases a sustainability report extolling its efforts to address climate change and its plans to invest in and develop more sustainable energy solutions. The messaging presents the company as an environmental steward; however, their actions demonstrate otherwise. That's greenwashing.

Let's consider a more concrete example of doublespeak and greenwashing in environmental communication. In 2010, the Deepwater Horizon disaster released 134 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, resulting in immeasurable death of marine life and immense devastation of marine ecosystems. During the period when the oil gushed into the Gulf of Mexico and in the months following (April 21-July 23), British Petroleum (BP), the corporation responsible for the disaster, released scores of press releases. In total, there were 35,624 words in the press releases which were subsequently analyzed by Richard Alexander in his article "Shaping and Misrepresenting Public Perceptions of Ecological Catastrophes: The BP Gulf Oil Spill" (2013).

First, let's test our intuition about word use in this context.

1. Imagine you were a public relations representative for BP speaking in regard to the Deepwater Horizon event. Which of the following terms would you most likely use to characterize the event. Rank from most likely (1) to least likely to use (4). Why would you use them in that order?

   ◦ Spill   _____
   ◦ Incident   _____
   ◦ Accident   _____
   ◦ Disaster   _____

2. Answer the same question but with new parameters. In this case, rank the words that you—as an individual citizen, not as a BP representative—would likely use to characterize the event. Again, rank from most likely (1) to least likely to use (4). Why would you use them in that order?

   ◦ Spill   _____
   ◦ Incident   _____
   ◦ Accident   _____
   ◦ Disaster   _____

It seems fair to assume there was some divergence in your two rankings. This reflects your knowledge that word choice can have significant effects on how an event is framed and

ultimately perceived. Of course, we are all aware of this, but we perhaps rarely reflect on variation in our selections, the meanings conveyed, and the effects we aim to achieve.

Revisiting the four choices from above, we can begin with the use and frequency of spill in BP press releases. For Alexander, the use of 'spill' in this context is doublespeak employed to obscure the true ecological devastation of these events. In the BP press releases, spill occurs 208 times and is approximately the 20th most frequent word in the corpus, making it the 4th most frequently used content word (i.e. not a function word such as a, the, in, at, etc.). While we may not cry over spilled milk, as the saying goes, it does seem the release of greater than 100 million gallons of oil into the Gulf of Mexico should be cause for immense concern. From a search of the Corpus of Contemporary American English, we can see that it is true that spill is the most common word used to describe such an event in daily language use. In fact, spill is the 8th most common noun collocate to follow oil in the 1 billion word corpus—that's a lot of spills. Thus, it is not altogether surprising that BP employs the term spill with such frequency.

To the other options–Incident and accident both occur 23 times respectively in the corpus. And the word disaster occurs only once in the 35,000-word corpus! *Spills are of little concern and not worth mourning, and accidents and incidents should not warrant blame and recrimination.* If the Deepwater Horizon was not a disaster, then what could be? Clearly, the manner through which an event is framed and the term by

which it is named has consequences on how listeners/readers perceive an event. Indeed, through the use of certain lexis, BP is able to frame how we understand the event. As these word frequencies indicate, BP prefers terms that downplay the event rather than terms such as disaster that more accurately characterize the event. This is doublespeak in action, as BP carefully selects lexis that minimizes the tragic reality of the event, thereby reducing public outrage, mitigating potential harm to their corporate brand, and limiting possible litigation and penalties. Ah, do not worry, divert your eyes, nothing to see here! It's only a spill, just an incident, a minor accident!

Corpus Activities

(under construction)

References

Alexander, R. J. (2013). Shaping and Misrepresenting Public Perceptions of Ecological Catastrophes: The BP Gulf Oil Spill. Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines, 7(1).

Module author: Robert Poole
   Last updated: 21 November 2022

This module is part of [Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar](#), an open educational resource offered by the [Clarify Initiative](#), a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

4GA. NOUNS GRAMMAR ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed for the content in [4. Nouns](). All corpus analysis activities are in [4CA. Corpus Activities for Nouns]()

⇒ [4.1 Noun or verb?]()

⇒ [4.1.1 Match the suffix]()

⇒ [4.1.2 Gerund or participle?]()

⇒ [4.1.3 Compound nouns and bogus claims]()

⇒ [4.1.4 Corpus insights into nouns]()

⇒ [4.2.1 Identify the abstract nouns]()

⇒ [4.2.2 Proper nouns]()

⇒ [4.2.3 Singular & plural nouns]()

⇒ [4.2.4 Count & non-count nouns]()

⇒ [4.3 Noun phrases]()

Activity 4.1 Noun or verb?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-59

⇒ Return to [4.1 What is a noun?](#)

Activity 4.1.1 Match the suffix

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-60

⇒ Return to [4.1.1 Noun Morphology](#)

4.1.2 Gerund or participle?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-61

⇒ Return to 4.1.2 Gerunds

4.1.3 Compound nouns and bogus claims

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-62

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-63

⇒ Return to 4.1.3 Compound nouns

4.2.1 Identify the abstract nouns

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-64

⇒ Return to 4.2.1 Concrete & abstract nouns

4.2.2 Identify the proper nouns

LOOK WHO WAS INSIDE THE BALLOT ROOMS. KATIE HOBBS. Timed Stamped too.

es at: 10:37:55 AM

11-04-2022 10:07

16:57
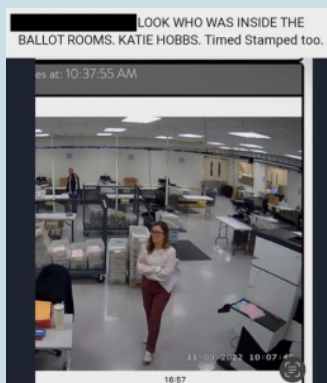
Read the following:

Posts Falsely Claim to Show Hobbs in Arizona Election Tabulation Room
by Komel Patel:

https://www.factcheck.org/2022/11/posts-falsely-claim-to-show-hobbs-in-arizona-election-tabulation-room/

An image shared on social media shows a woman with glasses and brown hair in an arizona ballot tabulation room. The posts falsely identify the woman as democratic gubernatorial candidate katie hobbs, who is the secretary of state, implying that hobbs was illegally influencing the count. The woman pictured is an election observer, not hobbs.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You

can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/
languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-67

⇒ **Return to 4.2.2 Proper nouns**

4.2.3 Identify the subject-verb agreement errors

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/
languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-68

⇒ Return to [4.2.3 Singular, plural, & collective nouns](#)

4.2.4 Count or non-count?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-69

⇒ Return to [4.2.4 Count & non-count nouns](#)

4.3 Which words are in noun phrases?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-70

⇒ **Return to 4.3 Noun phrases**

4.3.1 Noun phrase functions

Read the following passage from 'Never Before Seen Look at Frank Lloyd Wright's Unbuilt Capitol Oasis at: https://franklloydwright.org/oasis-state-capitol-quarterly/

It was April 1957. The entire city of Phoenix was

embroiled in a battle over the future design of the State Capitol. At the center of the dispute was Wright himself, whose unsolicited proposal dominated conversation and media coverage and divided neighbors and family members for much of the year. For the architect, it was a gift to the people of his adopted home state, but following months of public contention, his visionary plans never made it off the drawing board.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=608#h5p-71

⇒ Return to **4.3.1 Functions of noun phrases**

4.4 Comprehensive Activities on Nouns

a. Copy a paragraph or snippet of text from a news story, a random Wikipedia entry, or popular book (consider one of these, the most popular downloads at Project Gutenberg) of 50-60 words. Analyze the text and give yourself the following points. Compare with classmates and discuss whose/which texts had the highest and lowest scores.

- 1 point for every noun
- 2 points for every non-count noun and proper noun
- 3 points for every noun phrase
- 4 points for every NP functioning as a subject complement
- 5 points for every NP functioning as an object
- 6 points for every NP functioning as a prepositional complement

b. Come up with new euphemisms for 5 things that are not normally referred to with euphemisms, and ask another person to try to guess what they mean.

⇒ **Return to 4. Nouns**

Module authors: Jonathon Reinhardt and Dilara Avci
   Last updated: 12 November 2022

This module is part of <u>Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar</u>, an open educational resource offered by the <u>Clarify Initiative</u>, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

4CA. NOUNS CORPUS ACTIVITIES

These corpus analysis activities are designed for the content in [4. Nouns](#) and for use with the [Corpus of Contemporary English](#). If you're not familiar with the basics, be sure to do [C. Introduction to Corpus Analysis](#) first.

⇒ [Corpus activity 4.1 Identifying nouns](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 4.1.1 Noun morphology](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 4.1.2 Gerunds](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 4.1.3 Compound nouns](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 4.1.4 Insights into nouns](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 4.2.1 Concrete & abstract nouns in different registers](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 4.2.2 Proper nouns](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 4.2.3 Singular, plural, & collective nouns](#)

Corpus activity 4.1 Identifying nouns

1. In COCA, search for the word '**cook'** using the list function. When the results appear, click on 'cook' to reveal example sentences. Scan the sentences (ignore instances where Cook appears as a person's name) and identify five instances where 'cook' is used as a noun. What textual cues did you use to help you identify the noun instances of 'cook'?

2. Repeat the process from number 1 but search for the word '**produce**'.

3. For the final task, search for the word '**professor**' and view the example sentences which include it. Focusing upon 'professor' as the head noun, identify the noun phrase of which it is included using the pronoun test.

For example:

- ∘ Felder is a professor of pathology and associate director of clinical chemistry.

In the example, [a professor of pathology and associate director of clinical chemistry] is the noun phrase.

List 5 noun phrases from the COCA data which include 'professor'.

Corpus activity 4.1.1 Noun morphology

1. List five common suffixes used to create nouns.
2. Using the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), complete a **wildcard search** to produce a list of nouns using one the

suffixes. List the five most frequently used nouns which use the suffix.(Note: Insert the wildcard * and then add the suffix).

3. Again, using the COCA, complete a **chart search** for one of the nouns you listed above. In which register is the noun used the most? In which is it used the least? How would you explain this variation between the two registers?

4. Next, complete a **word search**. What are the five most common adjectives that collocate with the noun?

5. In the COCA, complete a search to compare the frequency of the [ment] suffix between academic and spoken registers of language use. Before doing so, what is your intuition about use of the suffix in the two registers? Will it be used the same in both registers? Now complete the search and evaluate whether your intuition matches actual use. How might you explain the difference in its use?

⇒ Return to [4.1.1 Noun Morphology](#)

Corpus activity 4.1.2 Gerunds

As discussed elsewhere, a gerund is lexical item that prototypically functions as a verb (e.g. "The dog is playing with the frisbee") that is now functioning as a noun or noun phrase (e.g. "Playing with the frisbee is fun for the dog."). As we learned to identify noun phrases with the pronoun test, we can see that in the first sample, the test fails ("~~The dog is it with the frisbee~~"). However, the test works for the second ("It is fun..."). This process by which we take one word class, in this case a verb, and transform it to a noun is called **nominalization**. In a sense, we have taken the action/process of playing and turned it into a thing/object for us to reflect upon, analyze, and discuss.

In the COCA, let's complete a search to see which processes (i.e. verbs) are often converted to things (i.e. nouns) in the education section of the academic register. To complete the search, follow the following steps:

1. Enter ***ing_n** in the search bar. Recall that the ***** will allow us to capture all words that end in -ing which the **_n** tag allows us to only pull those words that are tagged as nouns in the corpus.
2. Click the sections option below the search bar.
3. In the first column, scroll down and select **ACAD:Education**
4. Click find matching strings.

Questions:

1. In the resulting output, what are the five most common gerunds in ACAD:Education?
2. Click on the most frequent gerund ('learning') and read several of the sample sentences. What sorts of words surround the gerund that give you clues that it is functioning as a noun?
3. Repeat the search to determine common gerunds in a different register of language use. Before completing the search, guess what five gerunds are likely the most frequently used in that specific domain. How many of your guesses match actual language use?

⇒ **Return to 4.1.2 Gerunds**

Corpus activity 4.1.3 Compound nouns

1. In the COCA, complete a search to discover the most frequently used compound nouns. Use the search syntax NOUN NOUN in the search bar to produce the desired results.

2. Next, complete a search to discover the most frequently used **adjective** + **noun** combinations. Use the search syntax ADJ NOUN in the search bar to produce the desired results.

3. Using the chart function, determine which register (e.g. academic, fiction, magazine, etc.) NOUN NOUN patterns are most common. In which register is the pattern least common? What does the divergence possibly indicate about these two registers?

⇒ Return to [4.1.3 Compound nouns](#)

4.1.4 Corpus insights on nouns

From the discussion of nouns and noun phrases in 4.1, it may seem that nouns simply identify persons, places, and things or abstract concepts such as love and joy. We could perhaps think that nouns do not do much of the rhetorical work of a text–they just name things, right? However, our selection of a noun within a sentence structure can have significant functional importance to our text, as they enable us as language users to frame an issue in a particular way and to signal our stance on an idea or claim.

Let's take the case of academic writing. We often consider academic writing to be an objective and author-distant form of writing in which the author simply conveys facts and measurable truths. Yet, recent research in applied linguistics demonstrates quite clearly the persuasive nature of academic writing as authors attempt to gain consensus, convince readers of the validity and importance of

their findings, and signal their membership in the academic community. While academic writers may not overtly signal their stances on a particular topic For example, usage-based linguists may indeed believe that Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar is flawed and inaccurate. However, they are unlikely to state such opinion explicitly. Instead, they carefully craft arguments that attempt to move their audience to their position. One device academic writers deploy as they do such persuasive work are **stance nouns**.

Some of the more common stance nouns in academic writing are nouns such as fact, belief, notion, claim, possibility, and idea. A writer/speaker's selection of one of these particular nouns signals their relationship toward the proposition or entity under discussion. Here's an example from the journal Applied Linguistics included in Hyland and Jiang's analysis (2015) of stance nouns in academic writing:

- "Our core argument is based on the fact that processing accounts are usually inexplicit in their relation to representations, but since representations..."

Is this statement about "processing accounts" indeed a fact as the author contends? Perhaps it is. However, if you are inexperienced and lacking knowledge in this space, certainly the framing that fact produces leads you to accept it as such. If the writer were to instead use stance nouns such as belief, notion, or claim, the reader would reach quite different conclusions. This highlights how nouns can function to frame ideas, events, etc. in ways that persuade audiences to reach certain conclusions.

Let's take the case of climate change in US discourse to further exemplify this point. Climate change remains a controversial topic in the US despite varied, abundant, and compelling scientific data. One reason climate change remains so divisive is the effective work by climate skeptics to propagate the belief that climate science is unsettled. This work occurs through language. The chart below illustrates the order at which stance nouns collocate with the phrase climate change in contemporary US discourse.

1	ℹ	★	THE FACT THAT CLIMATE CHANGE
2	ℹ	★	THE IDEA THAT CLIMATE CHANGE
3	ℹ	★	THE VIEW THAT CLIMATE CHANGE
4	ℹ	★	THE IMPACT THAT CLIMATE CHANGE
5	ℹ	★	THE ROLE THAT CLIMATE CHANGE
6	ℹ	★	THE POSSIBILITY THAT CLIMATE CHANGE
7	ℹ	★	THE NOTION THAT CLIMATE CHANGE
8	ℹ	★	THE EFFECTS THAT CLIMATE CHANGE
9	ℹ	★	THE CASE THAT CLIMATE CHANGE
10	ℹ	★	THE LIKELIHOOD THAT CLIMATE CHANGE

Yes, most commonly climate change is framed as a fact, but it also frequently appears with stance nouns idea, view, possibility, and notion. A savvy speaker or writer can manipulate how a topic, in this case climate change, is perceived by selecting a stance noun that frames the issue in their desired manner. In this case, a climate scientist would most likely use the stance noun fact to explicitly indicate their position that climate change is indeed real. In contrast, a climate skeptic would likely select idea, view, or possibility to attempt to demonstrate that climate science remains contested.

So, while we think that other word classes do the bulk of the rhetorical work in a text, do not discount the importance of nouns.

Corpus activity 4.2.1 Concrete and abstract nouns in different registers

1. In the COCA, select **NOUN.all** from the POS menu by the side of the search bar. Once selected, the tag **NOUN** will appear in the search menu. Click **find matching strings**. In the output, determine which of the top 10 most frequent nouns are concrete and which are abstract.

2. Complete a similar search but focus specifically on the Spoken register. To select Spoken, click on **Sections** and then scroll to **Spoken** and click it. Again, determine which of the 10 most frequent nouns are concrete and which are abstract.

3. Finally, perform the same search but select **Spoken** and **Fiction.** Once you select the registers, choose **Sorting** below the register options and choose **Frequency**. How would you characterize the extent of similarity/ difference in the two registers preference of nouns? How might you explain the similarity/

divergence?

⇒ **Return to 4.2.1 Concrete & abstract nouns**

Corpus activity 4.2.2 Proper nouns

1. In the COCA, select **NOUN.-Prop** from the POS menu by the side of the search bar. Once selected, the tag **NOUN_nn** will appear in the search menu. In Sections below the search bar, scroll and select **1990-1994**. Note 10 frequent nouns that seem to typify the discourse of the period. In other words, what were the topics people were talking and writing about in 1990-1994.

2. Complete the same steps as the previous search but select **2015-2019** as the time period. What are 10 frequent nouns that reflect the topics people were speaking and

writing about in 2015-2019? How do they compare to 1990-1994?

⇒ Return to [4.2.2 Proper nouns](#)

Corpus activity 4.2.3 Singular, plural, & collective nouns

In the COCA, select **NOUN.all** from the POS menu by the side of the search bar. Once selected, the tag **NOUN** will appear in the search menu. Also, select T**V/Movies** from the options. In the output, determine which of the top 20 most frequent nouns are singular, plural, or collective.

⇒ Return to [4.2.3 Singular, plural, & collective nouns](#)

Corpus activity 4.2.4 Count & non-count nouns

1. In the COCA, select **NOUN.all** from the POS menu by the side of the search bar. Once selected, the tag **NOUN** will appear in the search menu. Also, select **Blog** from the register options. In the output, determine which of the top 20 most frequent nouns are count and which are non-count.

2. The following samples are present in the **TV/ Movies** subsection of the COCA.

   1. "We got two Denver omelets, one over-easy; three orange juice, and two coffee. Would you like cream?"
   2. "Can I get two cheeseburgers, no tomatoes, and two french fries? Better make that two coffees."

   It is likely you evaluated the second as more common and/or acceptable. Explain why you

feel the first feels somehow odd or strange? Do you think it may occur one day where the pattern present in the first is preferred over the second? What other noncount nouns do you sometimes add the plural -s-? Search for one of these additional typical noncount nouns but with a plural -s- in the corpus. Are there many instances of its use?

⇒ Return to [4.2.4 Count & non-count nouns](#)

⇒ Return to [4. Nouns](#)

Module authors: Robert Poole
   Last updated: 16 November 2022

This module is part of [Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar](#), an open educational resource offered by the [Clarify Initiative](#), a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and

media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

5CA. ADDRESS FORMS & PRONOUNS CORPUS ACTIVITY

Pronouns and inclusive language use: The case of 'you guys' and 'y'all'

Linguists typically consider pronouns to be a closed class. While we add new nouns, verbs, and adjectives to the lexicon frequently and easily, it is much less common for additions to appear in closed classes such as pronouns. However, change in this class does occur. For example, as noted in the previous discussion, English once had two second-person forms ('thou' and 'you'), but over the years, 'thou' has essentially been removed from language use. More recently, as we strive for greater inclusivity, gender-neutral pronouns (e.g., 'ze' and 'zie') have been introduced as alternatives to the masculine-feminine gender binary and the singular use of 'they' has become increasingly common.

In this section, we will explore the use of two second person plural pronouns: 'you guys' and 'y'all'. Let's first reflect upon

our use of 'you guys' and 'y'all' as second person plural pronouns used to refer to a group of people. Consider the following questions:

1. Do you feel you more frequently use 'you guys' or 'y'all' in your spoken language use?
2. Are they reasons that inform your choice to use either 'you guys' or 'y'all'?
3. Do you feel either of the terms is problematic?
4. Do you feel your use of these two pronouns has changed in recent years?
5. Are there alternatives to 'you guys' or 'y'all' that you use, hear, or feel should be adopted?

It is possible, even likely, that you have heard or read that some view 'you guys' as problematic for it ascribes a masculine identity to all in a group despite how those individuals may identify. If 'you guys' is problematic, which does seem a valid argument, it leaves English language users with a gap in their language system. More simply, if people wish to stop using 'you guys', then what will they or should they use in its place?

If you have time and interest, read **'Guys' is not**

gender-neutral—let's stop using it like it is
by Amy Diehl at Fast Company:

- https://www.fastcompany.com/90629391/guys-is-not-gender-neutral-lets-stop-using-it-like-it-is

One potential alternative to 'you guys' is the term 'y'all', most commonly associated with Southern American English. As the following map demonstrates, the use of 'you guys' and 'y'all' is divided clearly by an isogloss. An isogloss is a term used by applied linguists to refer to the geographical boundary that indicates on one side of the boundary speakers are likely to use the word while on the other the preference is for an alternative term. In this discussion, we will explore these two terms, their use and utility in contemporary language use, and consider whether these terms should be critiqued and removed or praised and promoted.

You Guys Vs. Y'all in the US

Image 5CA.1 Map of You Guys vs. Y'all use in the US by Mapcentral

Southern American English is perhaps the most frequently ridiculed regional variety of US American English. Indeed, speakers with a Southern accent often face some rather harsh stereotypes and judgments. Likely the most recognizable and frequently noted distinguishing feature of Southern English is the "Southern Drawl". This elongation is what prompts the perception that Southerners speak more slowly than speakers from other regions. There is also the production of the "I" sound that diverges from other regions, and word stress

patterns that are distinct as well. Perhaps the most recognizable feature of Southern English is the use of 'y'all'.

'Y'all' is the contracted form of *you* and *all* and serves as a second person plural pronoun for speakers of Southern English. It can commonly be heard as a greeting, "How y'all doing?" or in ways reflective of the region's hospitality, "Y'all doing ok?", "Y'all alright?" or "Y'all need anything?". While 'y'all' has been a noticeable marker for a stigmatized variety, this corpus activity asks: "Is the word 'y'all' having a moment?".

This corpus activity explores whether 'y'all' is actually growing in use in recent years, as it presents a rather inclusive alternative to 'you guys'. Additionally, it seems possible that 'you guys' is falling in use, for it inaccurately applies one gender identity on a mixed-gender group, thereby erasing the preferred gender identity of people in the group.

For the activity, we will collect data on the use of 'you guys' and 'y'all' in the **Corpus of Historical American English**.

- Go to english-corpora.org/coha/, click the Chart search option, and enter 'you guys' in the search bar. Record the per million (per mil) data for each decade in the table below.
- Repeat the search process from step #1 with 'y'all'.

TABLE 1	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
you guys							
y'all							

Before reaching any conclusions and forwarding statements about the use of the two items, let's also collect data on their frequencies of use in the **Corpus of Contemporary American English**. While COHA provides a useful overview, COCA is a much larger corpus, has greater balance across registers (much of COHA is from fiction), and is more narrowly focused on contemporary language use–COCA includes language use from 1990-2019.

- Go to english-corpora.org/coca/, click the Chart search option, and enter 'you guys' in the search bar. Record the per million (per mil) data for each five-year period in the table below. Complete the process once again with 'y'all'.

TABLE 2	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09	2010-2014	2015-2019
you guys						
y'all						

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=1028#h5p-72

A cursory view of the data indicates that 'y'all' does seem to be holding steady across the six time periods captured in COCA in comparison to 'you guys'. Even though Southern English attracts negative judgments, the use of 'y'all' has not declined. It is not possible to declare that 'y'all' has overtaken 'you guys', but this trend will be an interesting one to monitor in the future. It is important to note that COCA does not yet include data after 2019, so it is possible that the next update to COCA will reveal a greater shift. It is possible that the actions such as those described in the next section will influence trends in use.

Y'all means all!

It seems cultural shifts and recent events potentially indicate greater use of 'y'all' and less frequent use of 'you guys' in the coming years. Besides the general pushback against 'you guys', the Southern Poverty Law Center in 2020 launched the "Y'all Means All" movement to promote greater inclusivity and support for the LGBTQ+ community. The civil rights-focused legal advocacy group asked all to pledge "to reject

white supremacy and show your support for our shared vision of uplifting LGBTQ people in the Deep South" (splcenter.org). Across the southern US, "Y'all Means All" stickers, signs, flags, t-shirts and more have started appearing. For example, check out the t-shirt from the clothing company One Rockin.

Image 5CA.2 Y'all means All T-shirt from One Rockin'

It does seem that 'y'all' is having a moment and may indeed grow increasingly frequent. Perhaps it will break through the historically-rigid isogloss that saw its use constrained to the

southern US, and that this one-time marker of a stigmatized regional US English will become commonplace in US American language use. Consider the following questions:

1. If you were to make a prediction, what do you think will occur with the use of these two second person plural pronouns in the next 5, 10, or 15 years?
2. What do y'all think, is 'you guys' sexist?
3. Is 'y'all' the inclusive second person plural pronoun that English needs? What other options are there?
4. Are you more likely to use 'y'all' now than you were before? Why or why not?

Module author: Robert Poole
Last updated: 21 November 2022

This module is part of [Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar](), an open educational resource offered by the [Clarify Initiative](), a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

6GA. PRONOUNS GRAMMAR ACTIVITIES

These activities are designed for the content in [6. Pronouns](#). All corpus analysis activities are in [6CA. Corpus Activities for Pronouns](#)

Activity 6.1 Pronouns in a speech by Barack Obama

a.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-8

b.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-9

⇒ Return to **6.1 What is a pronoun?**

Activity 6.1.1 Referents, antecedents, & postcedents

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-11

⇒ Return to 6.1.1 Referents, Antecedents, & Postcedents

Activity 6.2.1 Is the pronoun singular or plural?

An interactive H5P element has been

excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-12

⇒ Return to 6.2.1 Number: singular or plural

Activity 6.2.2 Is the pronoun a subject or an object?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-22

⇒ Return to

Activity 6.2.4 Gender & agreement

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-20

⇒ Return to

Activity 6.3.1 Personal Pronoun Chart

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-19

⇒ Return to 6.3.1 Personal pronouns

Activity 6.3.2 Possessive Pronouns

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-21

⇒ Return to 6.3.2 Possessive Pronouns

Activity 6.3.3 Is the reflexive pronoun an object or an appositive?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/
languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-25

⇒ **Return to 6.3.3 Reflexive Pronouns**

Activity 6.4.1 Which uses demonstrative pronouns?

Read the two tweets:

A.

My heart is bleeding and in agony for all the lives lost in these senseless massacres. AMERICA WAKE UP OPEN THOSE PRETTY BROWN EYES AND BAN ASSAULT RIFLES! Apparently you are all waiting until it's your children massacred before u act right

B.

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-26

⇒ Return to 6.4.1 Demonstrative Pronouns

Activity 6.4.2 Which indefinite pronouns are singular and/or plural?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-24

⇒ Return to 6.4.2 Indefinite Pronouns

Activity 6.4.3 Which are interrogative and which are relative pronouns?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/
languageawareness/?p=266#h5p-23

⇒ **Return to 6.4.3 Interrogative Pronouns**

6.5 Comprehensive Activities on Pronouns

a. Find the transcript of episode of a well-known television program in English, for example 'Friends', a famous situation comedy from the 1990s. Find 2 examples each of the 7 different pronoun types, and include the full sentence context around it. If the pronoun type can act as a subject or an object, include one of each.

b. Read "A Very Short Story" by Ernest Hemingway (1924) and note how the author uses personal pronouns.

> *What person is it written in? What is the antecedent of 'him' in the first line, and 'he' throughout the story? Why do you think the author omits this referent, as opposed to using 'she' sometimes for 'Luz'? What effect does this have? What would the effect be if it were the other way around, that is, if you used 'Pablo' (or some other name) for 'he' sometimes, and change all uses of 'Luz' to 'she' or 'her'?*

c. Analyze these two texts — both are from email solicitations for donations, one from a conservative US Congressional candidate and the other from 'Rainbow Railroad', a Canadian organization that advocates for LGBTQI+ people. Identify the pronouns and interpret how each message uses them, and to what effect.

Every illegal is a criminal and needs to be deported immediately.

- They don't pay taxes and leech off the system

- They bring crime and drugs

- And worst of all, they HATE our country

This is Texas Congressman ███████ ████, I'm Trump's NUMBER 1 ally and the loudest voice in the House for border security.

Our country is being OVERRUN with illegals and radical-left Democrats are shrugging their shoulders.

They love illegals roaming free in our country because like them, Democrats want to DESTROY the United States.

c1.

c2.

As a champion of our work, you'll be excited to hear that last week, Rainbow Railroad advocated at the Supreme Court of Canada as a part of our mission to bring about systemic change in solidarity with marginalized asylum seekers. LGBTQI+ migrants face unique risks throughout the process of border reception, registration and processing - even in Canada and the US. If you'd like to learn more about our intervention, and why we took this necessary step, you can click here.

On National Coming Out Day, it is important to remember that coming out is a complicated choice that no one should be forced to make. We look forward to a world where being out can be a celebration for all. We are still far from a reality where this is the case - and until then we have work to do.

⇒ **Return to <u>6. Pronouns</u>**

Module authors: Jonathon Reinhardt & Dilara Avci
  Last updated: 2 November 2022

These activities are part of <u>Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar</u>, an open educational resource offered by the <u>Clarify Initiative</u>, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

6CA. PRONOUNS CORPUS ACTIVITIES

These corpus analysis activities are designed for the content in [6. Pronouns](#) and for use with the [Corpus of Contemporary English](#). If you're not familiar with the basics, be sure to do [C. Introduction to Corpus Analysis](#) first.

⇒ [Corpus Activity 6.1 What is a pronoun?](#)

⇒ [Corpus Activity 6.1.1 Referents, antecedents, & postcedents](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 6.2.2 Subject & object pronouns](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 6.3.2 Possessive Pronouns](#)

⇒ [Corpus activity 6.5 Pronoun Variation Across Registers](#)

Corpus activity 6.1 What is a pronoun?

In the COCA, enter PRON in the search bar or select pron.ALL from the dropdown menu next to the search bar. Click find matching strings. You will later explore the different types of pronouns, but from scanning the list of the first 20 on the results list, place the pronouns into groups that make sense to you. Explain briefly why you bundled the pronouns as you did.

⇒ Return to **6.1 What is a pronoun?**

Corpus activity 6.1.1 Referents, antecedents, & postcedents

In the COCA, select the word function from the options above the search bar. Enter she in the search

bar and click See detailed info for the word. On the results page, you will see KWIC lines–these are the color-coded sample sentences where each color represents a particular word class. For the first 15 KWIC lines, determine whether she is an antecedent or postcedent.

⇒ **Return to [6.1.1 Referents, Antecedents, & Postcedents](#)**

Corpus activity 6.2.2 Subject & object pronouns

In [the COCA](#), enter the following search syntax into the search bar: . _pp _vb _pp

Notice that the search syntax places a period in the first slot in order to capture patterns that begin sentences. Following the period is the tag for

personal pronoun, the be verb, and then personal pronoun again.

After clicking find matching strings, look at the common pronoun + verb + pronoun patterns that appear at the beginning of sentences.

1. Are there patterns that begin with me?
2. Are there patterns that begin with him?
3. Are there patterns that begin with her?
4. Are the patterns that begin with us?

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=870#h5p-57

⇒ Return to 6.2.2 Case: Subject or Object

Corpus activity 6.3.2 Subject & object pronouns

In the COCA, enter POSS in the search bar to view a list of possessive pronouns.

Next, complete a search for **his NOUN** in the fiction register. In the sort/limit options space, select relevance rather than frequency. By sorting by relevance, you view which pairs bond together most strongly. In other words, they appear together more frequently than they appear separately, so if you see one, you are likely to encounter the other. From the results page, note 10 pairs that bond together strongly and frequently and record them on a separate document.

Complete the same search with the same settings but substitute **her** for **his**. Note and record 10 more pairs.

To what extent do the nouns possessed by male and female characters in fiction converge or diverge?

⇒ **Return to [6.3.2 Possessive Pronouns](#)**

Corpus Activity 6.5: Pronoun Variation Across Registers

Pronoun variation across registers (downloadable pdf file)

⇒ **Return to 6. Pronouns**

Module author: Robert Poole
  Last updated: 11 November 2022

These activities are part of Critical Language Awareness: Language Power Techniques and English Grammar, an open educational resource offered by the Clarify Initiative, a privately funded project with the goal of raising critical language awareness and media literacy among students of language and throughout society.

LPT KEY CONCEPTS CROSSWORDS

Module 1: Metaphor

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/languageawareness/?p=1077#h5p-65

Module 3: Doublespeak

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=1077#h5p-37

Module 5: Address forms & pronoun choice

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=1077#h5p-38

Module 7: Name-calling & epithets

An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/ languageawareness/?p=1077#h5p-39

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Metaphor

1. AJ+ (Director). (2020, June 19). *How Cigarettes Became A Symbol of Power In Film*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YDS11IZP4PE

2. Antil, A., & Verma, H. V. (n.d.). Metaphors, Communication and Effectiveness in Indian Politics. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 18.

3. Boeynaems, A., Burgers, C., Konijn, E. A., & Steen, G. J. (2017). The Effects of Metaphorical Framing on Political Persuasion: A Systematic Literature Review. *Metaphor and Symbol*, *32*(2), 118–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926488.2017.1297623

4. Charteris-Black, J. (2004). *Corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis*. Palgrave Macmillan.

5. Charteris-Black, J. (2011). *Politicians and rhetoric: The persuasive power of metaphor* (2nd ed). Palgrave Macmillan.

6. Cobb, M. (2020, February 27). Why your brain is not a computer. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/science/2020/feb/27/why-your-brain-is-not-a-computer-neuroscience-neural-

networks-consciousness

7.   Dignam, J. (2020, November 23). *Frame the Debate: Insights from Don't Think of an Elephant!* The Commons: Social Change Library. https://commonslibrary.org/frame-the-debate-insights-from-dont-think-of-an-elephant/

8.   Erard. (2015). *How to build a metaphor to change people's minds*. Aeon Magazine. https://aeon.co/essays/how-to-build-a-metaphor-to-change-people-s-minds

9.   Franceschi-Bicchierai, L. (2021, November 30). We Need to Stop Saying 'Blacklist' and 'Whitelist.' *Vice*. https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7dd3d/we-need-to-stop-saying-blacklist-and-whitelist

10. Gabrielatos, C., & Baker, P. (2008). Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding: A Corpus Analysis of Discursive Constructions of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press, 1996-2005. *Journal of English Linguistics*, *36*(1), 5–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424207311247

11. Gorlick, A. (2011, February 23). *Is crime a virus or a beast? When describing crime, Stanford study shows the word you pick can frame the debate on how to fight it*. Stanford University. http://news.stanford.edu/news/2011/february/metaphors-crime-study-022311.html

12. Jasinski, J. (2001). *Sourcebook on rhetoric: Key concepts in contemporary rhetorical studies*. Sage Publications.

13. Lacey, S., Stilla, R., & Sathian, K. (2012). Metaphorically

feeling: Comprehending textural metaphors activates somatosensory cortex. *Brain and Language*, *120*(3), 416–421. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandl.2011.12.016

14. Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.

15. Martin, E. (1991). The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male- Female Roles. *Signs*, *16*(3), 485–501.

16. Shakespeare. (1998). *As You Like It*. Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1523/1523-h/1523-h.htm

17. Sharp, L., & Richardson, T. (2001). Reflections on Foucauldian discourse analysis in planning and environmental policy research. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, *3*(3), 193–209. https://doi.org/10.1002/jepp.88

18. Skull Bliss. (2020). *Animal Symbolism: What Do Different Animals Represent?* Skull Bliss. https://skullbliss.com/blogs/news/animal-symbolism

19. Sokolowski & Brewster. (n.d.). *Words That Began as Metaphors*. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/word-matters-podcast/episode-73-began-as-metaphors

20. Stormberg. (2015). *How marketers convinced us that we all need mint to fix our bad breath—Vox*. Vox. https://www.vox.com/2014/12/1/7309499/mint-fresh-

breath

21. Then & Now (Director). (2020, February 14). *Metaphors We Live By: George Lakoff and Mark Johnson*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYcQcwUf08c

3. Doublespeak

1. Burkeman, O. (2003, March 4). Memo exposes Bush's new green strategy. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2003/mar/04/usnews.climatechange

2. Carlin (Director). (n.d.). *Euphemisms*. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuEQixrBKCc&ab_channel=poyani

3. Chomsky, N. (2004). *Language and politics* (2. ed., rev.expanded). AK Press.

4. Conservapedia. (2021). *Liberal euphemisms* [Encyclopaedia]. Conservapedia. https://www.conservapedia.com/Liberal_euphemisms

5. EIJ Editor. (2014). *Eco Euphemisms Confuse Our Understanding of Environmental Destruction* [Journal]. Earth Island Journal. https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/articles/entry/eco_euphemisms_confuse_our_understanding_of_envi

ronmental_destruction/

6. Gormandy White, M. (n.d.-a). *Dysphemism in Simple Terms: Examples of Ugly Expressions*. Your Dictionary. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://examples.yourdictionary.com/dysphemism-simple-terms-examples-ugly-expressions

7. Gormandy White, M. (n.d.-b). *Examples of Euphemism: 80+ Common Phrases*. Your Dictionary. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-euphemism.html

8. Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (2008). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media* (anniversary ed., Nachdr.). Bodley Head.

9. Luntz, D. F. (2008). *Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear*.

10. Lutz, W. (Ed.). (1989). *Beyond nineteen eighty-four: Doublespeak in a post-Orwellian age*. National Council of Teachers of English.

11. Lutz, W. (2016). *Doublespeak*. Ig Publishing. https://www.overdrive.com/search?q=4C6658BB-B18C-407C-A1CD-7A16546E0268

12. Malone, T. (2022, July 12). *20 Metonymy Examples That Will Sweep You Off Your Feet*. Smart Blogger. https://smartblogger.com/metonymy-examples/

13. PlainLanguage.Gov. (n.d.). *Wordiness Made Spare*. Plainlanguage.Gov. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from

https://www.plainlanguage.gov/examples/before-and-after/wordiness/

14. Purland Training. (n.d.). *Discover 100 Politically Correct Euphemisms—PurlandTraining.com*. Purland Training. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://purlandtraining.com/2020/08/01/politically-correct-euphemisms/

15. Walker, A. C., Turpin, M. H., Meyers, E. A., Stolz, J. A., Fugelsang, J. A., & Koehler, D. J. (2021). Controlling the narrative: Euphemistic language affects judgments of actions while avoiding perceptions of dishonesty. *Cognition*, *211*, 104633. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2021.104633

16. Yoder, K. (2021, January 20). *From doublespeak to alternative facts: How Trump made a mess of the language*. Grist. https://grist.org/politics/from-doublespeak-to-alternative-facts-how-trump-made-a-mess-of-the-language/

5. Pronoun Choice & Address Forms

1. Baron. (2018). *A brief history of singular 'they' | Oxford English Dictionary* [Dictionary]. Oxford English Dictionary. https://public.oed.com/blog/a-brief-history-

of-singular-they/

2. Bejan, T. M. (2019, November 16). Opinion | What Quakers Can Teach Us About the Politics of Pronouns. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/16/opinion/sunday/pronouns-quakers.html

3. Carlson. (2016). *University allows students to choose their own pronouns—YouTube*. Fox News. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sw5bKqUGc3A&ab_channel=FoxNews

4. CBC News (Director). (2016). *Heated debate on gender pronouns and free speech in Toronto*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiijS_9hPkM&ab_channel=CBCNews

5. Dahnilsyah, D. (2017). The Implied Power through the Use of Personal Pronouns in Obama's Speeches: Critical Discourse Analysis. *International Journal of Educational Best Practices*, *1*(2), 59. https://doi.org/10.31258/ijebp.v1n2.p59-71

6. Delwiche, A. (2018). Plain Folks. *Propaganda Critic*. https://propagandacritic.com/index.php/how-to-decode-propaganda/plain-folks/

7. Fitzgerald. (2016). *Students now may designate personal pronouns on class rosters | The University Record*. University of Michigan. https://record.umich.edu/articles/students-now-may-designate-personal-pronouns-class-rosters/

8. Julian, G. (2022, July 25). *70 Terms of Endearment from*

Around the World (for Those You Love). Fluent in 3 Months. https://www.fluentin3months.com/terms-of-endearment/

9. Logically Fallacious. (n.d.). *Appeal to Common Folk*. Logically Fallacious. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://www.logicallyfallacious.com/logicalfallacies/Appeal-to-Common-Folk

10. Matos, Y. & Miller. (2021). The politics of pronouns: How Trump framed the ingroup in the 2016 presidential election. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 1–19.

11. Neuman, S. (2015, March 27). He, She Or Hen? Sweden's New Gender-Neutral Pronoun. *NPR*. https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/03/27/395785965/he-she-or-hen-sweden-s-new-gender-neutral-pronoun

12. No Sweat Shakespeare. (2013, June 15). *Thee and Thou – What Does It All Mean?* No Sweat Shakespeare. https://nosweatshakespeare.com/blog/thee-and-thou-what-does-it-all-mean/

13. Obama, B. (2008). *Barack Obama's 2008 New Hampshire Primary Speech (plain text)*. Github Gist. https://gist.github.com/mcdickenson/25479c8571b8f86f3a21c8d579102f93

14. Orvell, A., Gelman, S. A., & Kross, E. (2022). What "you" and "we" say about me: How small shifts in language reveal and empower fundamental shifts in

perspective. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *16*(5), e12665. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12665

15. Pennycook, A. (1994). The Politics of Pronouns. *ELT Journal*, *48*(2), 173–178.

16. Propaganda Techniques. (n.d.). *False Dichotomy*. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://www.propwatch.org/ category_results.php?cat_id=1&id=35&k=false+dichot omy&p=propaganda.php

17. Sharma. (2021). *"Not colonial sir, madam", Kerala Congress wants official communication to use Malayalam terms* [News]. The Print. https://theprint.in/india/not-colonial-sir-madam-kerala-congress-wants-official-communication-to-use-malayalam-terms/728965/

18. TV Tropes. (n.d.). *Japanese Pronouns / Useful Notes*. TV Tropes. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/ UsefulNotes/JapanesePronouns

19. Tyrkkö, J. (2016). Looking for rhetorical thresholds: Pronoun frequencies in political speeches. *Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change in English*, *17*. http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/17/ tyrkko/

20. Waters, M. (2021, June 4). *Where Gender-Neutral Pronouns Come From*. The Atlantic. https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2021/06/ gender-neutral-pronouns-arent-new/619092/

21. Wikipedia. (2022a). Royal we. In *Wikipedia*.
     https://en.wikipedia.org/w/
     index.php?title=Royal_we&oldid=1109970794

22. Wikipedia. (2022b). False dilemma. In *Wikipedia*.
     https://en.wikipedia.org/w/
     index.php?title=False_dilemma&oldid=1116413029

7. Name-calling & Epithets

1. ABC News (Director). (2016, August 2). *Donald
    Trump Calls Hillary Clinton "the Devil."*
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59NnKdph5WQ

2. Allsop. (2017). *Inside the fairy tale mind of Trump*
    [Magazine]. Columbia Journalism Review.
    https://www.cjr.org/special_report/trump-fairy-
    tale.php/

3. Allsop. (2019). *The dangerous power of Trump's 'fairy
    tale' nicknames* [Magazine]. Columbia Journalism
    Review. https://www.cjr.org/the_media_today/
    trump_buttigieg_neuman_nickname.php

4. ancestry. (2014). *What Does Your Last Name Say About
    You? – Ancestry Blog* [Media blog]. Ancestry.
    https://blogs.ancestry.com/cm/there-are-7-types-of-
    english-surnames-which-one-is-yours/

5. Burke, K. (1973). Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle. In *The*

Philosophy of Literary Form. University of Calfornia Press.

6. CNN (Director). (2016, April 18). *Donald Trump's nicknames for his opponents*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l6LN_–HjjE

7. Cut (Director). (2015, July 15). *Faggot | Gay Men | One Word | Cut*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecUdWGCcd74

8. DeLapante. (n.d.). *Argument Ninja Dojo* [Media blog]. Argument Ninja Dojo. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://www.argumentninja.com/the-dangers-of-tribalism

9. Delwiche, A. (2018). Name-calling. *Propaganda Critic*. https://propagandacritic.com/index.php/how-to-decode-propaganda/name-calling/

10. Editors. (2016, April 5). *15 Old-Timey Names for "Gay"* [Magazine]. Advocate.Com. http://www.advocate.com/comedy/2016/4/05/15-old-timey-names-gay

11. Fast. (2016). *What is scapegoating? – YouTube* [Academic magazine]. Oxford University Press. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tB4JVWTw698&ab_channel=OxfordAcademic%28OxfordUniversityPress%29

12. Friedberg, B. (2020). The Dark Virality of a Hollywood Blood-Harvesting Conspiracy. *Wired*. https://www.wired.com/story/opinion-the-dark-virality-of-a-hollywood-blood-harvesting-conspiracy/

13. Gilger. (2022, February 22). *The term "Papago" is everywhere around the Valley. But it's not one the Tohono O'odham embrace*. Fronteras. https://fronterasdesk.org/content/1758158/term-papago-everywhere-around-valley-its-not-one-tohono-oodham-embrace

14. Jasinski, J. (2001). *Sourcebook on rhetoric: Key concepts in contemporary rhetorical studies*. Sage Publications.

15. Kelly, E. (2017, December 14). *25 Regal Nicknames That Were Royally Embarrassing* [Media blog]. All That's Interesting. https://allthatsinteresting.com/royal-titles-nicknames

16. kreidler, M. (2021, February 5). *QAnon: Blood Libel for the Digital Age | Center for Inquiry*. https://centerforinquiry.org/video/qanon-blood-libel-for-the-digital-age/

17. McIntosh, J. (2021). 'Because it's easier to kill that way': Dehumanizing epithets, militarized subjectivity, and American necropolitics. *Language in Society*, *50*(4), 583–603. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404521000324

18. Pauls. (2008). *Native American Self-Names | Britannica* [Encyclopaedia]. Britannica. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Native-American-Self-Names-1369572

19. Stalder. (2020). *Do Name-Calling and Ignoring Facts Work? | Psychology Today* [Academic magazine]. Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/

us/blog/bias-fundamentals/202002/do-name-calling-and-ignoring-facts-work

20. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (n.d.). *Blood Libel* [Museum]. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Retrieved November 8, 2022, from https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/blood-libel

21. Wikipedia. (2022). List of nicknames used by Donald Trump. In *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_nicknames_used_by_Donald_Trump&oldid=1120598342