CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPEECH

Dynamic Presentations by Amanda Quibell

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In this section...

Each chapter represents a topic for the group presentation.

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VIVID AND SENSORY WORDS MAKE YOUR SPEECH COME ALIVE

Photo by RhondaK Native Florida Folk Artist, used under Unsplash license

"I want pictures in my mind," I tell my students. "Paint me pictures. Give me word pictures." The more I can see, feel, taste, and smell what is happening in the speech, the more I am engaged. This chapter is about how to give your students a sensory experience when you speak. It is about using vivid and sensory words to engage the audience. I want to "show" you what this looks like by giving you several quality speeches to experience for yourself.

The tongue can paint
what the eyes can't see.
Chinese proverb.

Consider This

Which of these two sentences gets your attention?

The glass shattered into tiny pieces
or
the glass broke

If you are like most people, the sentence that says the "glass shattered into tiny pieces" captured your attention and caused you to visualize the breaking glass. You might have even thought of the last time you broke a glass. It works because it used vivid language.

Listen as Matthew Dicks explains what it is like to be homeless and taken in by a family that has a pet goat that chews on his hair at night and then he continues to tell his story of being robbed at gunpoint. Notice how you can "see" his story in your mind's eye.

Watch Live life like you are 100-years old – Matthew Dicks (16 mins) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/vnatyrn6DFE)

In an experiment of investing in the market, researchers tested whether or not language would affect investor judgment. They tested vivid words versus pallid words. In this study, a vivid phrase was "sales *jumped*...analysts viewed this as very *impressive" and the pallid phrase was "*sales *increased*..analysts view this performance as *positive.*" The vivid phrase showed stronger results. In other words, how you tell people to invest can impact the outcome. This is just one of many studies that show the impact of vivid language on thoughts and behaviors.

In other research studies, vivid messages created greater desirability for the product, caused people to have more favorable beliefs toward an idea and even influenced judgments. Why do they work? Vivid messages work, in part, because they hold our attention.

For vividness to be effective, it must do all the following:

a. Emotionally interesting.
b. Vivid enough to produce sensations or visual images.
c. Relatable. It must be consistent with the audience's experiences and knowledge.

d. Related to the central thesis.

At the center of it all, is the audience. The key to making vividness work is audience understanding. For example, A cenote is a pool of water made by a sinkhole that exposes groundwater. This water is usually very clear, very clean, and very cool. Unless you've been to a cenote, you may have no idea what a cenote is and therefore would have no idea when a speaker says the lake water was like the cool, clear, water of a cenote. Instead of evoking images, it only produces confusion. Vividness works when the audience can relate, and they can call up the sensations or visual images.

It is also important that the vivid statements relate to the thesis. Researchers Guadagno, Rhoads, and Sagrins tested why sometimes vividness worked and other times it did not. With testing, they found that vivid words persuaded only when the message was strong and the vivid words regarded the central thesis. When vivid information was introduced that did not relate to the main point, it became a distraction. It seems that vividness enhances persuasion, but only when purposefully used, otherwise it is just a distraction that undermines persuasion. Oh yeah, no surprise here, but vividness can't save a weak argument.

Angelina Jolie Speaks at World Refugee Day

Let's look at a strong speech that uses vividness.

- Stripped of home and country, refugees are buffeted from every ill wind that blows across this planet.
- They guided me into a small dirt house with no roof to keep out the scorching heat, and they dusted off the two old mats that they ate, slept and prayed on. And we sat and we talked, and they were just the loveliest women. And then with a few twigs and a single tin cup of water, they made the last of their tea and insisted on me to enjoy it.
- He had a dusty face, the brightest green eyes I have ever seen but such a sad look but she explained that he's always asking for more food. And it hurts her to say that they have nothing. And she asked if we would consider taking him, would we take her sons so he could eat. And she said it with tears in her eyes with such desperation.
- He sat on the dusty floor; he's been shot on the back and left paralyzed. And he crawled forward to shake my hand, he was no more than fifteen. He had big pretty eyes, big wide

sparkling smile, and after all he'd been through, he's full of laughter and love. Later that night I asked whether he'd not been taken to a hospital or at least given a wheelchair and I was told that the boy's entire family had been killed so there was no one to look after him.

Watch Angelina Jolie speaks out on World Refugee Day (8 mins) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/q6msUKyiYic)

Video source: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. (2009, June 20). *Angelina Jolie speaks out on World Refugee Day* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/q6msUKyiYic

After you read this chapter, revisit this speech. While looking at the transcript, try to make a list of all the vivid and sensory words. Categorize them based on the sense they activate.

Use Sensory Words

One type of vividness comes from sensory words. Research demonstrates that we process those words faster than other words. By sensory words, I'm talking about words that have to do with seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching. For just a moment, imagine you are in Paris and you look up to see the top of the Eiffel tower where the structure touches the sky. Chances are, as you thought about this, your eyes went up. You sensed with your body the words that were being spoken. When you hear or read sensory words that you can relate to, your brain lights up. Your brain lights up in the same area that the actual experience would occur–it is as if you are experiencing the word and not just hearing it. When someone talks about the "sweet, gooey cookie pulled out of the oven, and the sweet aroma fills the air and you look down at the partially melted chocolate chips and are eager to take a bite. " This sentence caused many of you to taste and see the cookie and your brain lights up as if you are eating one. Words that evoke a mental image are the most likely to evoke a sensory image. The more you create "word pictures" that we see in the movie of our minds, the more likely we are to experience it with other senses.

What follows is a chart of the main senses and with examples of the words associated with that sense

The Power of Sensory Words

Tactile words describe the texture of how something feels. You can also use them to describe feelings and abstract concepts.

gritty, creepy, slimy, sticky, rough

Examples of touch words:

- *Two minutes into the interview, I knew his **abrasive** personality would be an issue if we hired him.*
- *With a forced smile, I put on the **itchy** Christmas sweater my grandmother bought me.*

Sound Sensory Words

Words related to hearing often describe the sound.

crashing, thumping, piercing, thundering, squeaking

Examples of hearing words:

- *He had a big, **booming** voice.*
- *The sound of **screeching** tires was soon followed by the **deafening** sound of a car horn.*

Sight Sensory Words

Visual words describe the appearance of something. They may indicate color, shape, or appearance.

gloomy, dazzling, bright, foggy, vibrant

Sight word examples:

- *Her **golden** hair looked **disheveled** thanks to the gust of wind.*
- *He was a **towering** presence.*

Taste and Sensory Words

Taste words are interesting because often they are a metaphor for something else. For example, a "bitter rejection" has nothing to do with taste.

zesty, tantalizing, sweet, stale

Examples of taste words:

- *It's a **bittersweet** situation.*
- *The **scrumptious** jalapeno poppers comforted Karl after his **bitter** rejection.*

Smell Sensory Words

Words related to smell describe — yes, you guessed it — how things smell. Often underutilized, sensory words connected with smell can be very effective.

putrid, flowery, stinky

Examples of smell words:

- *The **pungent** smell was unmistakable: someone in this elevator was wearing Axe Body Spray.*
- *No matter the expiration date, it was clear from its **rancid** stench the milk had gone bad.*

Many of these examples are from smartblogger.com and exchangedmarketing.com.

Notice how Brene Brown describes a situation–She has on white slacks and a pink sweater set and how she dropped her coffee on the tile floor, and it splashed on her. She goes on to say that she blamed her husband. She uses it to make a powerful point about blame and accountability and demonstrates for us the power of how vivid descriptions can draw us in and make us want to listen.

Watch Brené Brown on blame (3 mins) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/RZWf2_2L2v8)

Considerations of Using Vividness
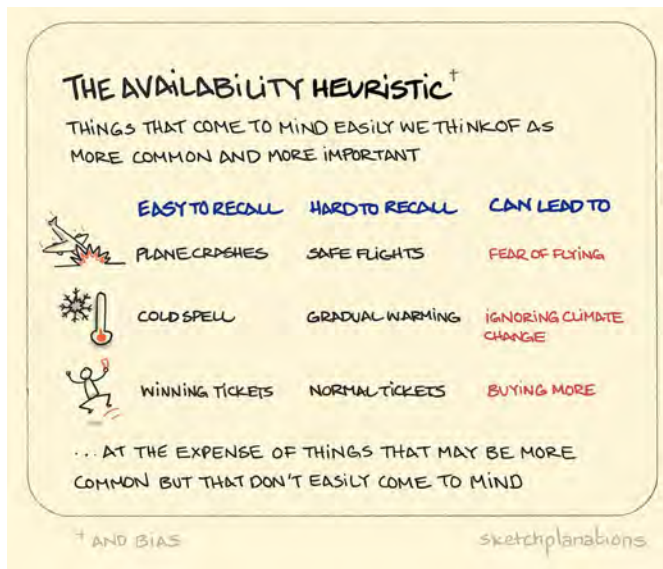
Things that come to mind easily we think of as more common and more important.. at the expense of things that may be more common but don't easily come to mind. For example: Plane crashes are easier to recall than safe flights and can lead to fear of flying. Cold spells are easier to recall than gradual warming and can lead to ignoring climate change. Winning tickets are easier to recall than normal tickets and can lead to buying more. Image by sketchplanations, used under CC BY-NC

The easier that information is for me to think about, remember, and recall, the more that information influences my decisions. Your goal should be to give the information in such a way that people can process that information. The availability heuristic suggests that when making decisions we tend to base those decisions on things that come to our mind easily. If information is recent, vivid, and fits into our thought patterns, it is more available and therefore is more likely to influence our decision-making.

We are likely to think crime is a threat if there has been a recent break-in in our neighborhood. We are more likely to feel afraid if we watch a lot of crime shows or if there has been a featured news story on assaults. Since that information is recent in our mind and the stories were told to us in a vivid manner, we are more likely to pay attention to that information and then bring it to mind when someone suggests taking a self-defense course.

In this next video, the founder of charity water, Scott Harrison tells how he got involved in charity water and what his organization does. Watch this documentary and speech video as he talks about drinking from "scummy swamps." And how he describes how the women are "breaking their backs to get it." (You can stop watching at the statistics part –but I warn you it may be hard to stop). What is the point here? The point is for you to notice how he infuses speech, powerful visuals, and vivid words to persuade us to act and to help others to get clean water.

Watch The Spring – The charity: water story (20 mins) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/bdBG5VO01e0)

If you watched the video, you saw a worm in the water. Some of you likely had a visceral reaction. For many of you, it caused you to sympathize with the cause, for others, it may have gone too far, and you protected yourself by not watching or by making fun of the video.

If you try to take vividness too far, it can backfire on you.   Thoughts that are too uncomfortable, might cause people to suppress the information or deny it altogether. This is particularly true when creating messages that instill fear.

The Extended Parallel Process Model looks at how people respond to messages that create fear as a way to drive positive health outcomes. For example, to get someone to wear a condom, a speaker might activate fear and make them afraid that they will get a sexually transmitted disease. A speaker might share statistics, gruesome stories, and even show slides of infections (flashback to high school health class). The challenge is that people have different reactions to fear-invoking situations–they either minimize their fear–"That's not going to happen to me, I could tell if my partner has an infection" or they minimize the danger and wear a condom. So what makes the difference?

A speaker who is trying to use research and analogies that produce fear has to find the "sweet spot" in order to get the audience to react in a way that produces a positive health outcome. If the danger feels like it is too much, the listener will just panic or deny the danger. Describing things in too vivid of detail can often backfire and cause people to worry but do nothing or deny that the situation is real.

The goal should be to use just enough vividness that it is memorable and to direct examples towards the specific audience, so they are relatable. Most importantly, fear messages work best when coupled with a specific plan of action. If people feel like there is a do-able way to get rid of the fear, and they are capable of doing it, they are more likely to react.

To recap. For an audience to be impacted, the message has to be relatable. It should be vivid enough to be memorable and activate the senses–but not so vivid that it overwhelms the main message. Vivid descriptions should support the central message. If you are trying to persuade an audience and you use vividness to produce fear, you need to offer them specific, manageable ways to act. Vividness is one more tool in your public speaking toolbelt. Use it wisely!

Key Takeaways

Remember this!

- For vivid words to work they must be emotionally interesting, vivid enough to produce sensations or visual images, relatable to the audience, and related to the central thesis.
- Vivid messages are easier to remember and can be more persuasive.
- When using fear appeals, make sure you could the fear with an action that the audience is capable of performing.

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from "Professional Speechwriting: Vivid and Sensory Words Make Your Speech Come Alive" In *Advanced Public Speaking* by Lynn Meade, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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METAPHOR, SIMILE, AND THEME

It's time to take your speechwriting to the professional level. To do that, you need to learn how to effectively use metaphors and similes and you need to learn how to weave those into a theme.

Let's start with some definitions. Similes and metaphors both make comparisons. A simile makes an explicit comparison usually using like and as. According to Merriam Webster, a metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy. You can use a variety of metaphors throughout a speech, but if you stick to one consistent topic, you have a theme. A theme is where you pick a comparison, and you use it throughout your speech. This gives a sense of unity and overall elevates the level of your speech.

Tombstone of a Jewish woman depicting broken candles as a visual metaphor for the end of life. Photo by www.shabbat-goy.com is licensed under CC BY 3.0

What is needed for an effective metaphor?

An effective metaphor uses emotional phrases properly

According to an article in *Psychology Today,* "Metaphors are not just a literary technique; they are a very potent psychological technique." In a study, people were told about climate change using a war metaphor or a race metaphor. Those hearing the war metaphor found the climate change situation more urgent and were more likely to increase their conservation behaviors.

Metaphors have a profound impact on how we think and act on social issues. In the study by Thibodeau and Boroditski, participants read about a crime-ridden city where the criminal element was a beast preying upon innocent citizens (animal metaphor), or was a disease that plagued the town (disease metaphor). When subjects were asked for a solution on how to solve the problem, those who heard about the animal metaphor supported strategies such as increasing police presence and imposing stricter penalties. Those who heard the disease metaphor favored seeking out the primary cause of the crime wave and bolstering the economy. The researchers concluded, "We find that exposure to even a single metaphor can induce substantial differences. People chose information that was likely to confirm and elaborate the bias suggested by the metaphor – an effect that

persisted even when people were presented with a full set of possible solutions." In short, the metaphor influenced how they saw the problem and what type of solution would fit the problem.

Interestingly, while the metaphor influenced their opinions on the issues, they remembered the issue and not the metaphor. The researchers suggested that even when the metaphor is covert, it affected the subject's decisions.

An effective metaphor uses something simple to help the audience understand something complex.

Metaphors take hard-to-understand ideas and compare them to simple-to-understand ideas. Take, for example, the ever famous, "Life is a box of chocolates." It takes something abstract, in this case, love, and compares it to something familiar and understandable, a box of chocolates.

An effective metaphor is one that is understood by the listeners.

A good metaphor works because the audience understands the thing that is being compared. When I told my son, he sounded like a "broken record," he had not idea what I was talking about. One speaker told me that he made a reference to the "one ring to rule them all" to realize that only half of the audience had never seen the Lord of the Rings movies. He said, "I used a metaphor of a movie they had never seen to explain a concept they didn't understand. Any understanding they might have had of the concept was lost because their attention was now focused on trying to understand a movie. "

An effective metaphor fits the cultural context.

In a study, students were given an argument about whether their university should require a senior thesis. Football phrases such as "handoff," "touchdown," and "fumble" were used. The results suggested that those who liked sports found the metaphor more engaging than those who did not like sports. For the non-sports fan, the metaphor had no more effect than the arguments that contained no metaphor.

An effective metaphor fits the situation.

The right metaphor is one that fits the occasion. Metaphors such as "passed on" and "candle dimmed" are used in eulogy speeches. "Beginning a new chapter" and "starting a new journey" are used for graduation speeches. "Retirement is a blank sheet of paper. It is a chance to redesign your life into something new and different." This quote by Patrick Foley is an example of how retirement metaphors work. Other retirement phrases may be "unshackled" or "beginning a new highway."

Check out this website about international metaphors for death (https://k-international.com/blog/metaphors-for-death-around-the-world/)

The greatest thing by far
is to be a master of metaphor
Aristotle

The big idea here is that it must be the right metaphor for the subject and the audience. Metaphors can help you understand complex ideas and can take everyday ideas and make them more interesting. To some degree, metaphors help you show, not tell. A well-told metaphor can help you create visuals in the mind of your audience. When it comes to this advanced language technique, I like to show, not tell. Let's look at how metaphors have been used in speech, I'll start with examples of metaphors in presidential speeches.

Presidential Metaphors

Presidential speeches
Let's look at a few more examples of how presidents have used metaphors in their speeches.

- We are now engaged in a great Civil War, testing whether this nation or any nation **so *conceived*** and so dedicated can long endure. Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address
- And you have changed the face of Congress, the Presidency, and the political process itself. Yes, you, my fellow Americans, have **forced the spring.** Now we must do the work the season demands." Bill Clinton Inaugural Address
- You can be the new majority who can lead this nation out of a***long political darkness*** – Democrats, Independents, and Republicans who are tired of the division and distraction that has **clouded** Washington; who know that we can disagree without being disagreeable; who understand that if we mobilize our voices to challenge the money and influence that's stood in our way and challenge ourselves to reach for something better, there's no problem we can't solve – no destiny we cannot fulfill. Barack Obama
- America was targeted for attack because *we're the* **brightest beacon** for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that **light** from shining. George W. Bush, Speech after 911 Attacks.

Persuasive Metaphor

Metaphors can be very persuasive. Picking a metaphor that the audience relates to is especially important–most people can relate to pizza so that is the comparison that this TED speaker chose. Al Vernacchio criticizes the use of baseball as a metaphor for sex where there is a winner and loser– scoring, getting to first base, etc. He

suggests instead that people think of sex as shared pleasure, discussion, and agreement–he suggests the metaphor of pizza. It's an eight minute, easy to listen to speech, you won't want to miss this.

Watch Sex needs a new metaphor. Here's one... (8 mins) on TED (https://www.ted.com/talks/ al_vernacchio_sex_needs_a_new_metaphor_here_s_one)

Metaphor in Leadership

Simon Lancaster says metaphors are one of the most powerful pieces of political and leadership communication because they move us towards things or make us recoil. He looks at phrases like the "financial storm" and the "dung heap of capitalism" as ways in which the use of words influences our perception of an issue.
(Watch the four-minute clip where he talks about metaphor. It is cued to start at the part where he talks about metaphor.)

   Watch Speak like a leader – Simon Lancaster (18 mins) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/ bGBamfWasNQ?t=402)

If you have time, watch the whole talk to see how he shares his six rhetorical techniques: Three breathless sentences, three repetitive sentences, balancing statements, metaphor, exaggerative statements, rhyming statements.

Enduring Metaphors

There are metaphors that seem to stick around through the years. You will see these come up a lot in literature, in songs, and in speeches. These are sometimes referenced as archetypal metaphors. According to communication scholar Michael Osborn, "archetypal metaphors are grounded in prominent features of experience, in objects, actions, or conditions which are inescapably salient in human consciousness." Because the human experience aspect is so crucial to these metaphors, you tend to find them in some of the most significant speeches in history. The timelessness of these metaphors increases the likelihood that the speech will outlive its author.
   Here are a few of the most prominent enduring metaphors. I'll give you examples of each.

- Light, Dark
- Storm, Sea, Set Sail
- Disease
- Battle, war
- Seasons, Sunrise, Sunset
- Journey, Road

Seasons, Sunrise, Sunset

Winter in our Hearts

At the dawn of spring last year, a single act of terror brought forth the long, **cold winter in our hearts**. The people of Oklahoma City are mourning still.
Al Gore, Oklahoma Bombing Memorial Address

Winds of Change

The wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact.
Harold MacMillian, British Prime Minister

New Birth of Spring

This year a new **birth** will occur. The physical being that will be its **offspring** will be like the **new beginning** which occurs when the **spring** rains wash away the dead leaves of winter and give life to the summer green which, as an expression of the rhythm of the seasons, blankets our earth. That **new birth** will signal the wonder that we have begun to construct a new social order.
Nelson Mandela, Address to the African National Congress

Light and Dark Metaphor

"If you want a love message to be heard,
it has got to be sent out.
To keep a lamp burning,
we have to keep putting oil in it."
Mother Teresa

Only when it's **dark** enough can you see the stars.
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I See the Promised Land Speech

The **light** has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the **light** that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The **light** that has **illumined** this country for these many years will **illumine** this

country for many more years, and a thousand years later that **light** will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts.
Jawaharlal Nehru, Eulogy to Mahatma Gandhi

The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, **sunlit** uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a **new Dark Age** made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the **lights** of perverted science
Winston Church Hill, The Finest Hour

John Kerry will be sworn in as president, and John Edwards will be sworn in as vice president, and this country will reclaim its promise, and **out of this long political darkness, a brighter day** will come.
Barack Obama, Democratic National Convention

Journey, Travel, Destination

I believe we can give our middle-class relief and provide working families with a **road** to opportunity.

I believe that we have a righteous wind at our backs and that as we stand on the **crossroads of history**, we can make the right choices, and meet the challenges that face us.

Barrack Obama, 2001 Democratic National Convention

Storm, Sea, Sail

Storm

That **storm** sweeps across the human habitat. Like the spring rains, it seeks to drive away the pestilences that continue to afflict the world of living beings, the universal malignancies which seem to have found a home in our diseased society.
Nelson Mandela, Address to African National Congress

Stormy Sea

It's been quite a journey this decade, and we held together through some **stormy seas.** And at the end, together, we are reaching our destination.
Ronald Reagan, Farewell Address

Navigate Choppy Waters

It's been my privilege to launch Baylor upon this exciting journey of Baylor 2012 and lead the university beyond the inertia of the status quo. Now that the **voyage** is well underway, it's time for someone new to **navigate** these sometimes **choppy waters** while continuing to aim for the carefully **charted destination** ahead.
President Robert B. Sloan, Baylor University

Watch Barack Obama delivers powerful eulogy at John Lewis funeral (41 mins) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/KPeqVow2hKQ)

THINGS THAT DO NOT BELONG IN YOUR SPEECH: CURSE WORDS, ISTS, SLANG, AND BAFFLEGAB

Sometimes big words can mean so little.

I'm so sorry. If you were my student the semester after I graduated from graduate school, I really need to apologize. I need to apologize for using my graduate student vocabulary in your freshman course. I need to apologize for telling you about the detailed educational philosophy behind everything I did. I am so sorry I used the words "pedagogy" and "learning objectives" in the lectures about how to give a good speech.

In my defense, most new teachers do this. I can remember having a teacher who was finishing up her dissertation–she baffled me with her brilliant vocabulary and impressed me with her cerebral lectures. I have no idea what she said, but at least she sounded smart while saying it.

In this chapter, I am going to talk about why you should avoid big words and specialty language. In fact, I am going to share with you many other things you should avoid in your speech as you seek to get your point across to your audience.
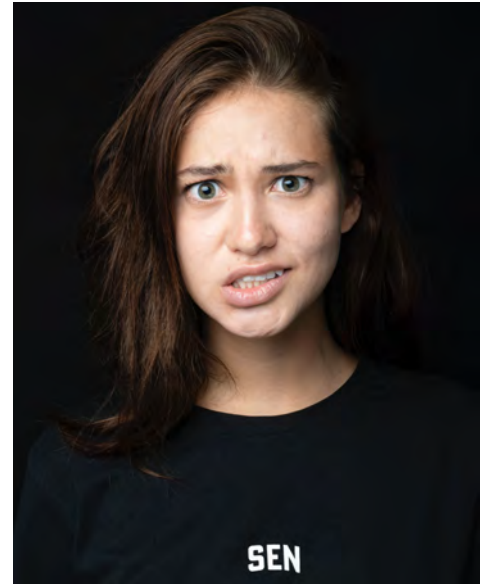
Photo by Ospan Ali, used under Unsplash license

Beware of the Curse of Knowledge

When I was in graduate school I suffered from the curse of knowledge. Actor and communication expert, Alan Alda in his book, *If I Understood You, Would I Have This Look on my Face* says,

> Once we know something, it's hard to unknow it, to remember what it's like to be a beginner. It keeps us from considering the listener. Using shorthand that is incomprehensible to the other person, or referring to a process they're unfamiliar with, we lock them out, and we don't even realize it because we can't believe we are the only person who knows this stuff.

The problem is people are "unable to ignore the additional information they possess," according to economists Camerer, Loewenstein, and Weber. These researchers questioned whether or not it was beneficial

to know more when it came to sales. In short, their finding was that it is **not** beneficial. If you know too much information, it is hard not to use that information and too much information can be overwhelming. It is hard to remember what it was like before you had that knowledge. It is hard to put yourself in the mind of your audience who does not understand. Sometimes, knowledge is a curse.

Go to one of your friends and ask them to help you with a little experiment. Ask them to "guess this song" and then tap out the tune to the "Star-Spangled Banner" with your finger. Did they guess it? Chances are they can't. Try another common song like "happy birthday." Chances are that as the tapper, you are going to get frustrated because it is so obvious and so easy to guess but most people just won't get it.

This is a mock-up of what a graduate student at Stanford did. Elizabeth Newton first asked how likely it would be that the person listening would guess the tapped song. They predicted the odds were about 50 percent. The guessers got it right only 2.5% of the time. What seemed obvious to the tapper was not obvious to the listener. You can see where this is going. To bring it back to the earlier study, a CEO who says she is "unlocking shareholder value" might just sound like random tapping to those unfamiliar with the phrase. Sometimes, knowledge is a curse.

In your speech, you must remember what it was like to not know and use your naivete in your speech. Part of this is to avoid big words, jargon, and slang. Let's break these down one at a time.

Avoid Big Words (unless you need to impress people at an academic conference)

Why use a three-dollar word when a two-dollar word will do? Words like facetious, discombobulation, obfuscate, and cacophony make you sound smart, but they won't make you understood. There is a time and place for your 'big' vocabulary, but it is rarely in your speech.

As with all things, context is key. If you are a graduate student or faculty member at an academic conference, you should whip out all those "three-dollar words." You should also use those big words if you are called to be an expert witness. Dr. Robert Cialdini, a persuasion researcher, says professional witnesses who use big words are more persuasive. Jurors think, "That witness said an important word that I don't understand, he must be smart. I'll trust what he said to be true." Since most of the time, you are not at an academic conference, nor are you called to be an expert witness, you should stick with the simple words.

Side note: If you plan on using a big word you are not familiar with, look up the proper pronunciation of the word. Practice saying the word multiple times and put a pronunciation key in your notes. Nothing kills your credibility like stumbling over big words.

A cartoon that says how to speak plainly. An owl says, "The ascent is proceeding as expected." The bear says, "Up we go."speak plainly by Sketchplanations, licensed under CC BY-NC

Avoid Bafflegab (Eschew Obfuscation)

According to Milton Smith, originator of the term bafflegab said,

Bafflegab is multiloquence characterized by consummate interfusion of circumlocution or periphrasis, inscrutability, incognizability, and other familiar manifestations of abstruse expatiation commonly used for promulgations implementing procrustean determinations by governmental bodies.

In short, it is using fancy words used to sound smart or to deliberately confuse your audience. William Lutz called it this inflated language. Most of the time, your audience is confused and not impressed. My dad used to tell me not to confuse my audience or I would be "up the proverbial tributary of deification without and adequate means of propulsion."

Consider This When Speaking English to a Group of International People

National Public Radio shared a program about the challenges to non-American English speakers. Consider the scenario where speakers from Germany, South Korea, Nigeria, and France are having a productive conversation in English. An American enters the conversation and says, "let's take a holistic approach" and "you hit it out of the park". Suddenly, understanding goes down. Research indicates, when an American enters the conversation, understanding goes down because they tend to use simple words and phrases that can be challenging for nonnative speakers.

Prepone That! Your Accent Is Funny! Readers Share Their ESL Stories

Sergio Serrano is a professor of engineering science and applied mathematics at Temple University. Having lived in North America for 40 years after growing up in Bogotá, Colombia, Serrano shares his experience speaking English in academic settings and dealing with accent stereotypes.

Sergio Serrano has participated in many international scientific conferences across the globe. "In a typical situation, a group of foreign researchers are discussing a complex technical issue with very precise and elaborate formal English," Serrano says, "until an American joins the group."

In our previous article about speaking English, we discussed research that found understanding goes down in a room of nonnative speakers when a native English speaker joins the conversation. The research found that communication is inhibited in part due to native speakers' use of language not held in common, like culturally specific idioms.

But this scenario doesn't fit with Serrano's experiences of English, where nonnative English speakers who learned the language in a classroom are often more educated on grammar rules and complex technical terms than American native speakers.

For Serrano, when an American joins in a conversation among nonnative speaking scientists, the conversation does falter, but not because the American's language is too complex.

"On the contrary, communication ends because [the foreign researchers] cannot explain to the American, in simple language, the advanced topics they were discussing. Yet, the American takes over the conversation."

Complete excerpt from:

McCusker, C. (2021). Prepone that! Your accent is funny! Readers share their ESL stories. **Goats and Soda: Stories of life in a Changing World, NPR.** https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/05/16/995963311/prepone-that-your-accent-is-funny-readers-share-their-esl-stories

Avoid Jargon (well, mostly)

Jargon is the specialized language of a group or profession. If you are part of the group and speaking to an audience made up of people from that group, then you should use jargon, in fact, it would be hard for you not to. If, however, there are outsiders in the audience, you should be sure to define unknown terms or exclude them altogether.

Just for fun, I asked my social circle to come up with jargon they might hear in their specialty, and here are a few of their replies.

- Contras open to double f at the end of that crescendo.
  (Tubas get very loud after the buildup–Marching band directions)
- Make sure you maintain cover when that pinwheel crosses the yard line.
  (Make sure the drumline is lined up front to back as it spins over the football field's yard line–Drum Corp directions)
- Soon, you will ETS and will no longer eat MRE's and wear BDU's. (Soon you will get out of the military and no longer have to eat dehydrated food and wear soldier uniforms–US Army.)
- The scuttlebutt is we won't endex until next week. (Rumor has it this operation won't be over until next

week–Marines)

Double Speak

William Lutz, the American linguist, coined the term doublespeak to mean language that deliberately obscures, disguises, distorts, or reverses the meaning of words.

"Doublespeak is a matter of intent. You can identify doublespeak by looking at who is saying what to whom, under what conditions and circumstances, with what intent, and what result. If a politician stands up and speaks to you and says, 'I am giving you exactly what I believe,' and then turns around and does the opposite, then you've got a pretty good yardstick. She was pretending to tell me something, and it turns out it wasn't what she meant at all, she meant something different," says Mr. Lutz.

Lutz claims doublespeak is distorting the language to the benefit of the speaker. Let's talk about each of these in speechmaking: Jargon, euphemism, bureaucratese, and inflated language.

Jargon: We talked about that already as the special language of a group. If you are an insider, you should use it, but when you are not, you should avoid it altogether.

Euphemism: Words that are used in place of something offensive or unpleasant. When it comes to speechmaking, euphemisms aren't always bad. For example, when giving a eulogy, most people prefer to say, "passed away" or "went on to a better place." That type of euphemism is a form of politeness it moves on to be doublespeak when it is used to mislead. Lutz points to the pentagon using the phrase, "Incontinent ordinance" to mean bombs that fall on civilian targets, and "unlawful arbitrary detention" which means to be held without a trial. He also uses the example from when a bill was proposed asking for money for a "radiation enhancement device" it was talking about buying a neutron bomb.

Inflated Language: Inflated language is designed to make the simple seem complex or to give an air of importance to things, or situations. Instead of using the phrase invasion, the pentagon chose to say they had "predawn verticle insertion." Sarcastic teachers will sometimes tell their students to "eschew obfuscation" (eshew=avoid; obfuscation-confusing and ambiguous language).

Bureaucratese: Lutz nicknames this "gobbledygook." In short, it is piling on of words by either giving a bunch of large words or just a large quantity of words. Alan Greenspan testified before

that Senate Committee, "It is a tricky problem to find the particular calibration in timing that would be appropriate to stem the acceleration in risk premiums created by falling incomes without prematurely aborting the decline in the inflation-generated risk premiums."

Avoid Slang (Most of the time)

Slang is the informal language of a particular group. Because it is seen as "informal," it should be avoided in formal speeches like career speeches, academic speeches, and professional speeches. In less formal speeches, slang can be useful. If you are an insider to the group, slang can build credibility. Studies found that it created a more supportive classroom climate when a teacher used positive slang such as "cool" and "awesome,"

Use slang sparingly and with intent. Slang that is doesn't fit the audience and context may rob you of your credibility and muddle the message's meaning. When it comes to slang when in doubt, don't.

Avoid Cliches (Like the Plague)

Clichés are overused expressions that have lost their meaning over time. Cliches can make you seem too lazy to come up with concrete words and some people find them annoying. If you are writing a formal essay, all experts say to avoid cliches. If you are making a formal academic presentation, avoid cliches. In speeches, sometimes they work, but other times the meaning gets lost.

Cliches are culturally bound so they may be misunderstood. Let's take the cliche, "The devil's in the details." Does that mean details are bad like the devil is bad? Or does it mean the reason there are details is that the devil makes us have them? If you don't know the actual meaning of the cliche it can be really confusing.

> (The devils in the details mean *that the details may take more effort than you think or there may be hidden problems).*

Like everything in this chapter, context and audience matter. Some cliches may be just right for an audience so that is why researching your audience is important.

Avoid Cusswords (Most of the d@#! time)

Photo by krakenimages, used under Unsplash license

To cuss or not to cuss, that is the question?

If you would have asked me that question, ten years ago, I would have advised you that under no circumstances should you ever swear in a speech. I have to be honest here, however, some of my favorite speeches use swear words. Dr. Randy Pausch says curse words in the Last Lecture (https://youtu.be/uFQ-ukyvAMk) and Dr. Jerry Harvey's lecture on Abilene Paradox (https://youtu.be/uFQ-ukyvAMk) just would not be the same without him telling you the cuss word spoken by his grandfather. When speakers say cuss words, they risk losing credibility points with the audience. When there are credibility points to spare, a well-placed swear word may actually make them seem more approachable. If, however, you are a speaker who is on the same level as your audience, you might not want to risk those credibility points.

> Instead of thinking of swearing as uniformly harmful or morally wrong, more meaningful information about swearing can be obtained by asking what communication goals swearing achieves. Timothy Jay and Kristin Janschewitz, researchers who study taboo language.

If you want to swear in your speech, ask yourself "Why? What do I want to achieve?" Your goal as a speaker should be to get your message across to your audience. With that in mind, you should decide if there is someone in your audience who would be offended by your word and if that offense would cause them not to listen to your message. If that is the case, you should leave the swear word out.

What Do You Think of a College Teacher Who Swears?

Researchers looked at what college students thought when their teachers said swear words. The impact on students was influenced by whether teachers were swearing to be funny, swearing at a

person, or swearing about the class content. As you can imagine, students did not like a teacher to swear at students. The other types of swearing caused mixed reactions. When asked, students felt like classroom swearing, made them feel:

- Closer to course content.
- More alert.
- Slightly offended or uncomfortable.
- Like the teachers was trying too hard.
- Like teacher seemed less in control.
- No change in how they felt about the teacher.

Students thought that swearing was part of the instructor's personality tended to cause them to perceive the teacher as verbally aggressive a trait associated with diminished student learning and student satisfaction.

Reflect on a college teacher you had that said curse words in class, did you like them more? Did they lose credibility points? Did you find them more approachable?

The Profanity President: Trump's Four-Letter Vocabulary

Read this excerpt from the New York Times about President Trump's cusswords in speeches. As you read, ask yourself whether you think swearing hurt or helped his credibility. If you were his political advisor, what would you tell him to do?

In a single speech on Friday alone, he managed to throw out a "hell," an "ass" and a couple of "bullshits" for good measure. In the course of just one rally in Panama City Beach, Fla., earlier this month, he tossed out 10 "hells," three "damns" and a "crap." The audiences did not seem to mind. They cheered and whooped and applauded.

"I'd say swearing is part of his appeal," said Melissa Mohr, the author of "Holy Sh*t: A Brief History of Swearing," published in 2013. "It helps create the impression that he is saying what he thinks, 'telling it like it is.' We tend to believe people when they swear, because we interpret these words as a sign

of strong emotions. In his case, the emotion is often powerful anger, which his supporters seem to love." New York Times

You are the political advisor, what would you advise him to do?

Can you think of other examples of swearing in political speeches?

How did reading those presidential swear words impact you?

Avoid the ISTS

Ists do not belong in your speech. Avoid racist, sexist, agist, heterosexist, ableist language. And while you are at it, make sure you know the preferred name for people groups.

The "right" word to use changes over time and changes based on context. When I started to write this chapter, I thought I would make a list of what words to say and what words not to say. It was going to be the definitive list of what to call people. I quickly realized that by the time this book was published, those words might change. So, now I am telling you that knowing the right term is an important part of your speech research.

As a speaker, it is your responsibility to use inclusive language and to choose your words in a way your audience feels included and respectful. It is your responsibility to research your subject and your audience and this includes how to use respectful language.

I found this guide from the University of South Carolina helpful: Inclusive Language Guide from University of South Carolina Aiken. (https://www.usca.edu/diversity-initiatives/training-resources/guide-to-inclusive-language/inclusive-language-guide/file)

Discuss This

Read one of these articles and discuss how it applies to word choice and public speaking.

- Seattle city gov't bans the words "citizen" and "brown bag," for obvious reasons (https://dailycaller.com/2013/08/02/seattle-city-govt-bans-the-words-citizen-and-brown-

bag-for-obvious-reasons/)
- Centuries-Old Law Against Cursing In Public Repealed By Virginia Legislators (https://www.npr.org/2020/02/19/807435310/centuries-old-law-against-cursing-in-public-repealed-by-virginia-legislators)
- Supreme Court Sides with Teen Cheerleader in Free Speech Case Over Vulgar Snapchat Post (https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/ct-aud-nw-supreme-court-cheerleader-free-speech-ruling-20210623-kc22wsal3rdyvgx426vv5rtblm-story.html)

Words That Significantly Hurt Politicians

The wrong word at the wrong time to the wrong audience can be problematic for a speaker. For a politician, it can be career changing. Here are a few examples of times politicians got it wrong.

If you are easily offended, you might skip this section.

You People

"Good and decent people all over this country, and particularly you folks, have got bars on windows. Drug use is absolutely devastating to our country and absolutely devastating to you and your people." Ross Perot, presidential candidate.

Basket of Deplorables

"You know, to just be grossly generalistic, you could put half of Trump's supporters into what I call the basket of deplorables. Right? The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic — you name it. And unfortunately, there are people like that. And he has lifted them up." Hillary Clinton, Democratic candidate for the Presidency.

Legitimate Rape

In an interview for KTVI-TC, the question was posed "An abortion could be considered in the case of a tubal pregnancy, what about in the case of rape?" Politician Todd Akin replied. "If it's a legitimate

rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down. But let's assume that maybe that didn't work or something: I think there should be some punishment, but the punishment ought to be of the rapist, and not attacking the child." Todd Akin, Republican candidate for the Senate.

I'm Not a Witch

In an interview, Christina O'Donnel told Maher that she dabbled into witchcraft but never joined a coven. Later she made a campaign video: "I'm not a witch. I'm nothing you've heard. I'm you. None of us are perfect, but none of us can be happy with what we see all around us: politicians who think spending, trading favors, and back-room deals are the ways to stay in office. I'll go to Washington and do what you'd do." Republican Candadate, Christine McDonnell
(Fun fact, political coaches suggest you never repeat the accusation even to say I'm not because it reinforces it and makes it stick in the minds of listeners.)

Extremism

"I would remind you that extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice. And let me remind you also that moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue." Senator Barry Goldwater. (To use the word extremist always carries negative connotations.)

You Ain't Black

Joe Biden: "Well I tell you what, if you have a problem figuring out whether you're for me or Trump, then you ain't black." Joe Biden, Democratic presidential candidate.

Crisis of Confidence

It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation. The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America. The confidence that we have always had as a people is not simply some romantic dream or a proverb in a dusty book that we read just on the Fourth of July… Our people are losing that faith, not only in government itself but in the ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers of our democracy. President Jimmy Carter *(Carter thought he would be respected for the honesty but all the negative words, made people feel bad).*

The Scream That Killed a Political Campaign

Anytime political mishaps come up, the Dean Scream is mentioned. It was the scream that seriously damaged his political campaign. This chapter is really about what words not to say, in this case, it is what sound not to make–beyond words.

Watch 2004: The scream that doomed Howard Dean (1 mins) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/l6i-gYRAwM0)

Avoid Powerless Language (It really makes you sound smart, don't you think?)

Powerless language consists of words or phrases that weaken the language and undermine credibility. Powerless language results in the speaker being seen as less persuasive, less attractive, and less credible.

It is true that in social settings, you should be willing to use powerless language for the sake of cooperation, but in speeches, you should stick with sounding confident and powerful.

Examples of Powerless language

Problem	Definition	Example statements
Hedges	Statements that make a phrase sound less forceful.	• I'm *kinda* surprised at the research I found. • I *guess* I'd like to… • I *think* this point is important because
Hesitations	Words or sounds that are pauses in the speech like uh, um, er.	• Uh, I'd like to talk about… • W-w-w we can all agree. • I wish everyone would, er, uh consider this idea.
Intensifiers:	Words that do not add meaning but attempt to magnify the emotional content.	• I'm not *very* excited about… • The car is *really* expensive. • I'm *super* excited about this new… "Substitute 'damn' every time you're inclined to write 'very'; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be." Mark Twain
Taq questions	Adding questions to the end of the sentence to make an assertion sound like a question.	• I think this is a great idea, *don't you*? It is OK to ask the audience questions. It becomes powerless language when you tag the question on so you don't sound certain of what you are saying.
Disclaimers	Information given before a statement that signals a problem, a lack of understanding, or anticipates doubts	• I'm not sure if I'm saying this right. • I probably shouldn't say this, but… • Don't get me wrong… • I know this sounds crazy but… • I'm no expert but…

Self Critical	Making negative statements about yourself	• Let me start by saying that I'm a terrible public speaker. • PowerPoint is not my thing, but here is a slide I made to illustrate.
Uptalk	Making voice go up at the end of a sentence making it sound like a question	(no example)

Powerless language is not always a bad thing, Dr. Fragale found that when doing group work, powerless language can make you appear more cooperative.

> When people hear someone who is very confident and certain in the way that they speak, others think of that person as really dominant and ambitious and assertive, but they also think of that person as less warm, less collaborative and less cooperative. In groups that require a lot of teamwork, team members are looking for people who have good team skills, who care about other people. Those personality attributes are more important than how dominant or ambitious you are.

Oftentimes, you will have a group project that leads up to a speech. In this scenario, you should use your cooperative speech for working with the team and your assertive language in the speech.

At first glance, this whole chapter looks like it is dedicated to things to avoid. In reality, it is dedicated to getting you to think about one big thing–context. Context matters. Who makes up your audience, what the expectations of the occasion are, and who you are in relation to each will impact how you should design your speech. The most important thing in speechmaking is to figure out how to share your message in a way that the audience can listen to and receive your message.

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- The goal of your speech is to get your message across to your audience, by knowing the context, the occasion, and the audience you can avoid things that will cause them to not want to listen.
- Your credibility can be positively or negatively affected by your choice of words.

- Always be intentional with slang, jargon, and big words. Using them or not using them by choice in a way that connects with your audience.
- Always use inclusive language and adapt your vocabulary in a way your audience will feel respected and included.
- Beware of the curse of knowledge and realize that what is easy for you to understand may not be easy for your audience so adjust your speech accordingly

Attribution & References

Except where otherwise noted, this chapter is adapted from "Things That Do Not Belong In Your Speech: Curse Words, ISTS, Slang, and Bafflegab" In *Advanced Public Speaking* by Lynn Meade, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

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FALLACIES–WARNING! DECEPTIVE, HATEFUL SPEECH COMING YOUR WAY

A fallacy is an error in reasoning. It is a weak argument. To be more specific, a fallacy is an "argument" in which the premises given for the conclusion do not provide the needed degree of support. By becoming aware of the most common fallacies, you can avoid them in your own speech and detect them when others use them.

Fallacies undermine ethical communication.

- They distract us from the real issue.
- They "trick" us into faulty reasoning.
- They deceive us into believing bad conclusions.
- They keep us from having a good discussion of the topic at hand.

Learning to detect fallacies helps you fine tune your bs meter.
"BS-meter" by awp101, licensed under CC BY-NC-SA

The venerable tradition of respectful argumentation, based on evidence, conducted with courtesy, and leading to the greater exposition of truth is a precious part of our heritage in this land of freedom.
James Shannon, the youngest college president in the US.

There are many fallacies. Here aresome of the most common ones that occur in persuasive and political types of speeches.

Red Herring

A red herring fallacy gets its name from the sport of fox hunting. In foxhunting, riders on horses follow their dogs who are chasing a fox. Riders sometimes keep a fish, –a red herring–in their saddlebags. If they are ahead in the chase, they can stop and drag the fish across the fox's scent and make the trail go a different direction. When the opponents' dogs encounter the fishy smell, it distracts them from their mission of fox chasing.

A red herring fallacy occurs when a speaker distracts listeners with sensational, irrelevant material. Sometimes it happens when the speaker changes the subject and sometimes it happens when the speaker brings up irrelevant information to the topic. Why is this a problem? It is a problem because it sidetracks the argument at hand. It seeks to "win" an argument by diversion. Take this example, "We admit that voting to support school choice is a popular measure. But we also urge you to note that there are so many issues on this ballot that the whole thing is getting ridiculous." The argument at hand is whether or not to vote for school choice but the speaker distracts us by bringing up the point that there are too many issues on the ballot. It may be true that there are too many issues on the ballot, but that doesn't make the school choice something we should vote for or not.

Photo by Nelson Ndongala, used under Unsplash license

Slippery Slope

"Slippery slope" by Andreas Levers, licensed under CC BY-NC

Oftentimes a speaker will argue one bad thing will result in many other bad things. This is done without proving these negative things will happen. A slippery slope causes the discussion to get off track. If you are not careful, you will find yourself arguing the ending claim and miss the real debate. Consider this example. In talking about gay marriage, Republican candidate for Governor, Rebecca Kleefisch went down a slippery slope that led to tables and dogs. "At what point are we going to OK marrying inanimate objects? Can I marry this table, or this, you know, clock? Can we marry dogs?"

Removal of Robert E Lee Statue from Column in New Orleans. May 2017. Photo by Infrogmation of New Orleans, licensed under CC BY-SA

When talking about the removal of public statues, President Trump went down a slippery slope. "This week it's Robert E. Lee. I notice that Stonewall Jackson's coming down. I wonder; is it George Washington next week, and is it, Thomas Jefferson, the week after? You know, you really do have to ask yourself, where does it stop?"

In speaking about the Iraq threat, President George W. Bush said, "I'm not willing to stake one American life on trusting Saddam Hussein. Failure to act would embolden other tyrants, allow terrorists access to new weapons and new resources, and make blackmail a permanent feature of world events. The United Nations would betray the purpose of its founding and prove irrelevant to the problems of our time. And through its inaction, the United States would resign itself to a future of fear."

Discuss This

"Can people be persuaded?' is a very different question from 'Can arguments be won?' People change their minds about things all the time, but I'm not sure that anybody ever wins an argument. Persuasion is not a zero-sum game. It occurs when somebody moves, even slightly, away from one position and toward another. It is entirely possible for two (or more) people to move closer to each other's positions during an argument without either one being able to claim victory over the other.

But we like to win, and we hate to lose, so the fact that people don't usually win arguments doesn't stop most of us from trying. And we all think we know what winning means: It means crushing opponents and making them cry. It means humiliating them in front of a crowd. And it means displaying our power and our rightness for all the world to see and acknowledge. And this means that we often end up trying to win by employing rhetorical strategies that are fundamentally incapable of persuading anybody of anything. And that looks a lot like losing."

Source: Austin, M. (2019). We must not be enemies: Restoring America's civic tradition. Rowman & Littlefield.

1. Would you agree, " I'm not sure that anybody ever wins an argument?" Why or why not?
2. How do fallacies interfere with the ability of one person to move closer to another?
3. Do you agree "we often end up trying to win by employing rhetorical strategies that are fundamentally incapable of persuading anybody of anything?"
4. When people resort to fallacies (attacks, diversions), is it "losing?"

Ad Hominem

We have a Congress
that spent money
like John Edwards
at a beauty shop.

Mike Huckabee (R)
Republican Presidential Candidate Debate

An Ad Hominem fallacy is one where the speaker attacks the person rather than the point. There are four major forms of attacking the person:

Ad hominem abusive: Instead of attacking a point, the argument attacks the person who made the assertion.

> Democrat Alan Grayson described Republicans as "foot-dragging, knuckle-dragging Neanderthals who know nothing but 'no.'"
>
> Charley Reese from the Daily Iberian wrote, "That's what abortion is – killing innocent humans for money. Abortionists are government licensed hit men."

Ad hominem circumstantial: Instead of attacking the point, the person attacks the circumstances. They imply guilt by association.

> Sara Palin, Republican Vice Presidential hopeful implied that Barak Obama was friends with terrorists. "Our opponent though is someone who sees America, it seems, as being so imperfect that he's palling around with terrorists who would target their own country."

Ad hominem tu quoque: The attacker suggests the person is a hypocrite and because they are a hypocrite, you can't believe any point they make.
When Al Gore was traveling to speaking engagement on the topic of global warming, he was criticized for traveling by private jet. As President Obama was talking about gun control, speakers pointed out he was surrounded by secret service agents with guns. The argument itself should be discussed–gun control, climate change–the fact that the speaker may or may not be a hypocrite doesn't mean the issue is right or wrong.

Poisoning the well: The speaker attacks the credibility of a person before they speak to bias listeners against the speaker. This fallacy is based on the belief that the enemy used to put tainted meat down into the town well so all the water that would come out of the well would be tainted and make people sick. The idea is that if a speaker taints a person's credibility, then everything that comes out of their mouth is something harmful. Just because a person had poor judgment in one situation, doesn't mean that they are incorrectly handling the topic at hand.

For a great overview of Ad Hominem, **watch Ad Hominem (Appeal to personal attack) (2 mins) on YouTube** (https://youtu.be/FD50OTR3arY)

Post Hoc Ergo Propter Hoc

Talking to cashiers at fast-food restaurants causes obesity
(the more I talk to fast food cashiers, the heavier I get).
Author unknown

The fallacy here is the assumption that one thing caused another without proof of the link. When you study statistics, you will learn the phrase "correlation does not mean causation" which means just because two things seem to happen together, doesn't mean that the one actually caused the other. Post hoc ergo propter hoc = after this therefore because of this and is a fallacy of false cause. Just because two things are consecutive, doesn't mean that one caused the other. I do still believe that it rains every time I wash my car.

Sports fans have a lot of these– "my team lost Friday because I forgot to wear my lucky hat."

Autism in children is often detected at the same ages as they are getting immunizations leading to the incorrect assumption that one causes the other. "Just the other day, two years old, two and a half years old, a child, a beautiful child went to have the vaccine, and came back, and a week later got a tremendous fever, got very, very sick, now is autistic." Donald Trump

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That's Latin for 'I'm old enough I should see a propterhoctologist", right?
Mark Miller.

Faulty Analogy

Comparing things that are dissimilar in some important way

Former Arkansas Governor, Mike Huckabee (R) said at a Freedom Summit that he is beginning to believe there's "More freedom in North Korea sometimes than there is in the United States. When I go to the airport, I have to get in the surrender position. People put hands all over me. And I have to provide a photo ID in a couple of different forms and prove that I really am not going to terrorize the airplane. But if I want to go vote, I don't need a thing." He was arguing why there needs to be government-required identification when voting but this comparison of airport inspection to a country with severe human rights violations is distracting and not a fair analogy.

"You know Obamacare is really I think the worst thing that has happened in this nation since slavery. And it is in a way, it is slavery in a way, because it is making all of us subservient to the government, and it was never about health care. It was about control." Political candidate Ben Carson (R) at Values Voter Summit in Washington, D.C.

What do you think? Good metaphor or faulty analogy?

> I grew up castrating hogs on an Iowa farm,
>
> so when I come to Washington,
>
> I'll know how to cut pork.
>
> Joni Ernst (R-IA)

Improperly used comparisons can be a problem. Andina Wise in an opinion piece in Scientific American highlights that discussing military metaphors to fight COVID-19 undermines the practice of medicine. She highlights the wartime rhetoric using words that: Doctors are *fighting* on the *frontlines* without sufficient *ammunition*. They are *battling* the *enemy and doctors from every specialty* have been *redeployed.* They are *at war*. She warns that using wartime rhetoric sends a "precarious message.".

> To adopt a wartime mentality is fundamentally to allow for an all-bets-are-off, anything-goes approach to emerging victorious. And while there may very well be a time for slapdash tactics in the course of weaponized encounters on the physical battlefield, this is never how one should endeavor to practice medicine.

Watch False analogies about cupcakes and obesity (5 mins) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/_1jMqW9HHWs), it includes some powerful and relevant examples of false analogies.

Non sequitur

Non sequitur is reasoning in which principles and observations are unrelated to each other or to the conclusion drawn. Literally means "it does not follow." If I mix red paint and green paint will never make blue paint, that's not logical. Similarly, a non sequitur is not a logical conclusion of the ideas they are combining.

**Snow in 50 states does not mean climate change is fake.
It is not a logical conclusion**

"The liberals, the environmentalists, extremists, the Al Gores of the world
were wrong on science – and today we know it...
I've got a scoop shovel for you if you want to come any place
in the 50 states in America —
for the first time in the history of keeping records,
there's snowfall on the ground in all 50 states.
It's tough to make an argument

when the evidence is all around us
with the snowy white wonder and a crystal cathedral."

Steve Kin, Republican from Iowa speaking at CPAC

Is Veggie Pizza Un-manly?
Serving Up a Non-Sequitur

The more toppings a man has on his pizza,
I believe the more manly he is.
A manly man doesn't want it piled high with vegetables.
He would call that a sissy pizza.

Herman Cain, former presidential nominee
and CEO of Godfather's Pizza

Photo by Nicolás Perondi, used under Unsplash license

Hasty generalization

Drawing conclusions based on insufficient or non-representative observations.

> People often commit hasty generalizations because of bias or prejudice. For example, someone who is a sexist might conclude that all women are unfit to fly jet fighters because one woman crashed one. People also commonly commit hasty generalizations because of laziness or sloppiness. It is very easy to simply leap to a conclusion and much harder to gather an adequate sample and draw a justified conclusion. Thus, avoiding this fallacy requires minimizing the influence of bias and taking care to select a sample that is large enough. Nizkor Project

Steve King assumes Mexicans are drug dealers: "For everyone who's a valedictorian, there's another 100 out there who weigh 130 pounds — and they've got calves the size of cantaloupes because they're hauling 75 pounds of marijuana across the desert." Representative Steve King, a Republican from Iowa making assumptions about immigrants from Mexico.

Herman Cain assumes Muslims are militants: "I would not be comfortable [with a Muslim in my administration] because you have peaceful Muslims and then you have militant Muslims, those that are trying to kill us. And so when I said I wouldn't be comfortable, I was thinking about the ones that are trying to kill us, number one. Secondly, yes, I do not believe in sharia law in American courts. I believe in American laws in American courts. Period. There have been instances in New Jersey. There was an instance in Oklahoma where Muslims did try to influence court decisions with sharia law. I was simply saying very emphatically American laws in American courts." Republican Tea Party Candidate, Herman Cain.

Either-or-thinking (Also Called False Dilemma)

 Framing choices so that listeners think they have only two options and one of them is obviously preferred. I saw someone with a shirt on the other day that said, "America, love it or leave it." It set up only two options. What if someone mostly loves America, but doesn't like the health care system? What if they like America, but see that there is unfair distribution of wealth? What if they think another country has a better political system? Setting it up like there are only two choices when clearly most things have many shades of gray is creating a false dilemma.

"So, it is with conviction that I support this resolution as being in the best interests of our nation. A vote for it is not a vote to rush to war; it is a vote that puts awesome responsibility in the hands of our President and we say to him – use these powers wisely and as a last resort. And it is a vote that says clearly to Saddam Hussein – this is your last chance – disarm or be disarmed." Hillary Clinton (D)

"Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." George W. Bush (R) statement to Congress after 9/11.

We can either tax and regulate cannabis for adult use, reduce violence, and enrich our state, or we can continue a policy that enriches the cartels and has always has a racially biased pattern of enforcement. Ben Jealous candidate during a Democratic primary for Governor

"And the reason is because there really are only two alternatives here. Either the issue of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon is resolved diplomatically through a negotiation or it's resolved through a force, through war." Barack Obama (D)

Strawman

"Strawman" by Kevin Lawver,
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Cropped by Lynn Meade.

"Another well known, and much used, device
is to misrepresent my position
and attack things I have never said."
Rachel Carson

Strawman fallacy is where a speaker belittles or trivializes an argument to refute them easily. The speaker cannot defeat the real issue so they frame the issue as silly –they make a straw doll–a fake argument that looks a little like the real one that is easily defeated. Often the issue they attack has a semblance of the real issue but is different in significant ways.

Consider this example, President Obama introduced a provision that would allow Medicare to pay for counseling on end-of-life issues if the patient asked for it. Doctors could counsel patients about end-of-life care issues such as living wills and hospice care. Senator Chuck Grassley, Iowa Republican said in a town hall meeting. "In the House bill, there is counseling for end of life. You have every right to fear. You shouldn't have counseling at the end of life, you should have done that 20 years before. Should not have a government-run plan to decide when to pull the plug on grandma." Notice what happened, he changed counseling about end-of-life issues into pulling the plug on grandma. In this example, Grassly created the issue into something that sounds ridiculous and is easy to defeat.

Can You Find All the Fallacies?

We've been battling this socialist health care, the nationalization of health care, that is going to absolutely kill senior citizens. They'll put them on lists and force them to die early because they won't get the treatment as early as they need. [...] I would rather stop this socialization of health care because once the government pays for your health care, they have every right to tell you what you eat, what you drink, how you exercise, where you live. [...] But if we're going to pay 700 million dollars like we voted last Friday to put condoms on wild horses, and I know it just says an un-permanent enhanced contraception whatever the heck that is. I guess it follows that they're eventually get around to doing it to us. This is a statement by Representative Louie Gohmert (R-TX) from Texas in an interview with Alex Jones.

1. "Socialist health care" is a strawman
2. "Kill senior citizens" and "force them to die early" is a slippery slope and a Post hoc ergo propter hoc.
3. "One the government pays for your healthcare....tell you...eat, drink...live" is a Post hoc ergo propter hoc.
4. "Condoms on wild horses" is a red herring and a strawman
5. "They will get around to doing that to us" is a slippery slope and post hoc

Key Takeaways

Remember This!

- A fallacy is a weak argument in which the premises given do not provide needed support–it is a weak argument

- Red herring fallacy occurs when a speaker distracts listeners with sensational, irrelevant material.
- Slippery slope fallacy occurs when the speaker argues that one bad thing will result in many other bad things. This is done without proving that these negative things will happen.
- Ad Hominem fallacy here the speaker attacks the person rather than the point.
- A post hoc ero propter hoc fallacy is the assumption that one thing caused another without proof of the link.
- A faulty analogy is comparing things that are dissimilar in some important way.
- Non sequitur fallacy is reasoning in which principles and observations are unrelated to each other or to the conclusion drawn.
- Hasty generalization is drawing conclusions based on insufficient or non-representative observations.
- Either-or-thinking is framing choices so that listeners think they have only two options and one of them is obviously preferred.
- Strawman fallacy is where a speaker belittles or trivializes an argument to refute them easily

Attribution & References

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