

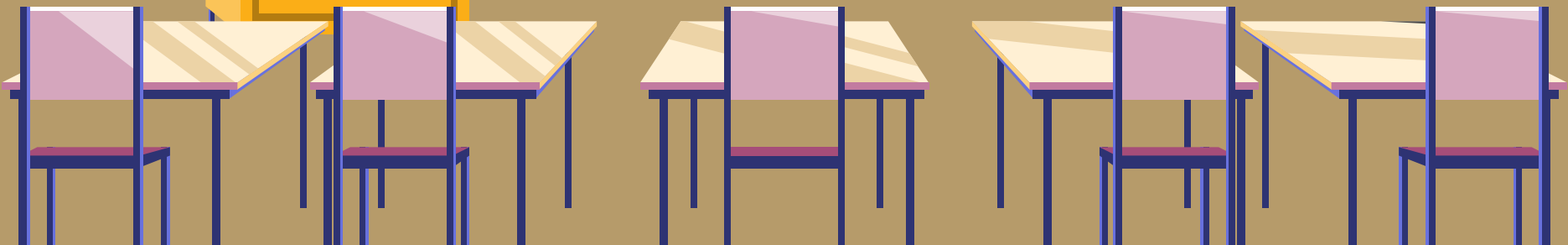
Mind your
language!

N. Gumedé



09:10

“We define our identity always in dialogue”
-Charles Taylor



Language is a means of **recognition**

Abstract

*In recent decades, struggles for recognition have increasingly dominated the political landscape.¹ Recognition theorists such as Charles Taylor (1994) and Axel Honneth (1995) seek to interpret and justify these struggles through the idea that **our identity is shaped, at least partly, by our relations with other people. Because our identity is shaped in this way, it is alleged that feelings of self-worth, self-respect and self-esteem are possible only if we are positively recognised for who we are.** Consequently, for many political theorists, recognition is an integral component of a satisfactory modern theory of justice, as well as the means by which both historical and contemporary political struggles can be understood and justified.*

Taken from McQueen, P. (2015). The Politics of Recognition. In: Subjectivity, Gender and the Struggle for Recognition. Palgrave Macmillan, London https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137425997_2 (link to article).

Language is a means of **recognition**

Recognition

/rɛkəg'niʃ(ə)n/

noun

1.

identification of **someone or person** from previous encounters or knowledge.
"she saw him pass by without a sign of recognition"

2.

acknowledgement of the **existence, validity**, or **legality** of something.
"the unions must receive proper recognition"

Language is power!

"Language is power. When we speak, we exercise the power of language to transform reality." – Julia Penelope

Language is highly idealised and controversial.

Language holds the power to transform the world, which is exactly what it has done over time.

Case study: South Africa

The original European settlers in 1652 spoke Dutch, which eventually evolved into Afrikaans.
(See below links for further reading)

<https://www.litnet.co.za/challenge-language-post-apartheid-south-africa/>

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/language-policy-and-oppression-south-africa>

The Afrikaners' language is the primary symbol of their sense of cultural distinctness. There is even an abstract monument to Afrikaans in Paarl – perhaps the only monument to a language anywhere in the world. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNQ8Y0alo8k> (link to video)

Language



Language as a tool to disempower

“Disempowering language keeps us sick and weak.” Carolyn Myss

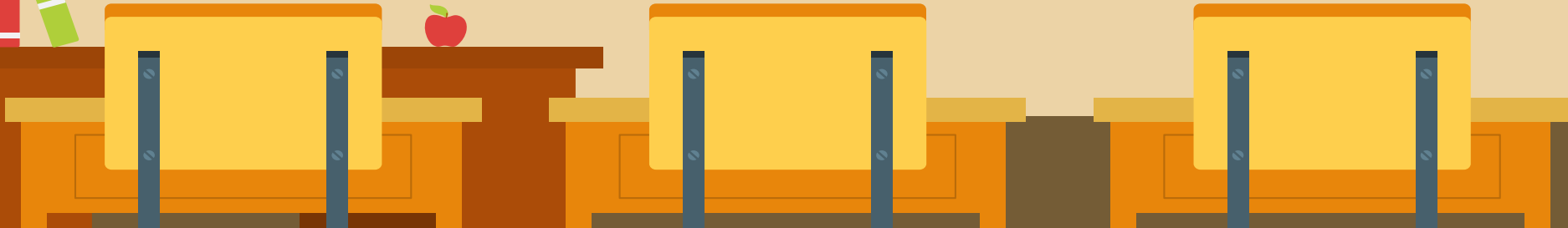
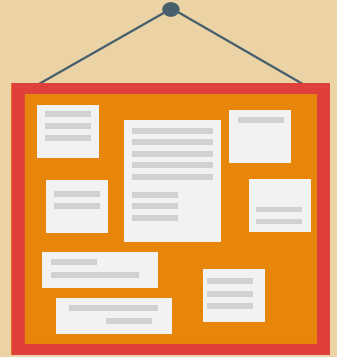
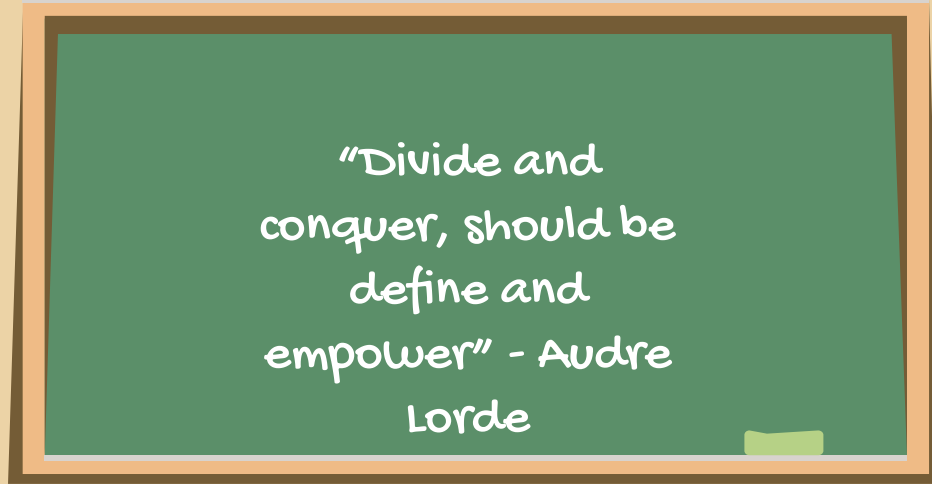
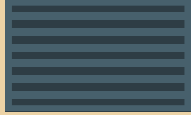
The issue at hand is self-consciousness and the way it is formed through meeting the other.

- What you say and how you say it impacts your experience.
- Disempowering language is power-less. When we think it and speak it, we diminish ourselves and others.
- Language has an impact not only on a mental level, but also at other subtle levels. Your words can convey underlying messages to your subconscious, evoking physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual implications.

<https://www.thecoachingtoolscompany.com/the-seven-wisdoms-wisdom-four-speak-empowering-language-by-fran-fisher-mcc/#:~:text=What%20you%20say%20and%20how,we%20diminish%20ourselves%20and%20others.>

All forms of language are up for interpretation and can be manipulated in many ways by individuals.

Master slave theory (Hegel) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leQsdqcF_YQ (link to video)



Using Language Effectively

“Language is power. When we speak, we exercise the power of language to transform reality.”
– Julia Penelope

There are positive and negative ways of using language.

One thing a speaker needs to think about when looking at language use is **appropriateness**.

By **appropriate**, we mean whether the language is suitable or fitting for ourselves, as the speaker; our audience; the speaking context; and the speech itself.

Appropriate for the Speaker

The language you select should be suitable for you, not someone else. (Don't be fancy).

- **i.e Use simple language.**

It may be difficult for you or the audience to understand the nuances of meaning when you use such words, so using them can increase the risk of denotative or connotative misunderstandings.

Using **appropriate** language

Appropriate for the Audience:

- **Is the language you are choosing is appropriate for your specific audience.**

Appropriate for the Topic:

- **Is the language is appropriate for your specific topic.**

Concreteness

Replace abstract terms with concrete words that have clear, direct, and precise meaning.

Abstract: *The case sought to establish equality of people of all sexual orientations.*

(Equality can mean a variety of things to different people: What does equality mean in this instance?)

Concrete: *The case sought to legalise same-sex marriage.*

When we use language that is concrete, we attempt to help our audiences see specific realities or actual instances instead of abstract theories and ideas.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVMcrchUpts&t=232s>

Use Inclusive Language

Language can alienate an audience through the use of **non-inclusive language**.

Inclusive language is language that avoids placing any one group of people above or below other groups while speaking. Some common problem areas related to language are gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disabilities.

Gender-Specific Language

The first common form of non-inclusive language is language that privileges one of the sexes over the other.

Generic "He"

The generic "he" happens when a speaker labels all people within a group as "he" when in reality there is a mixed sex group involved.

Use of "Man"

Traditionally, speakers of English have used terms like "man," "mankind," and (in casual contexts) "guys" when referring to both females and males. National Council of Teachers of English developed guidelines for nonsexist language (National Council of Teachers of English, 2002). For example, instead of using the word "man," you could refer to the "human race."

Gender-Specific Language

Gender-Typed Jobs

common area where speakers get into trouble with gender and language has to do with job titles. It is not unusual for people to assume, for example, that doctors are male and nurses are female. Below are some common gender-specific jobs titles along with more inclusive versions of those job titles.

Exclusive Language Inclusive Language

Policeman	Police officer
Businessman	Businessperson
Fireman	Firefighter
Stewardess	Flight attendant
Waiters	Wait staff / servers
Mailman	Letter carrier / postal worker
Barmaid	Bartender

Ethnic Identity

Another type of inclusive language relates to the categories used to highlight an individual's ethnic identity.

Ethnicity refers to shared cultural practices, perspectives, and distinctions that set apart one group of people from another. The most common characteristics distinguishing various ethnic groups are ancestry, territorial possession, language, forms of dress, a sense of history and religion.

One of the main characteristics of ethnicity is language. In South Africa, there are more than ten languages and others are grouped as Nguni and Sotho languages. IsiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati and isiNdebele are Nguni languages. Sepedi (Northern Sotho), Sesotho (Southern Sotho) and Setswana (Tswana) are Sotho-Tswana languages. Venda and Tsonga are the other two official languages in South Africa. English and Afrikaans are also official languages spoken in South Africa.

<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/race-and-ethnicity-south-africa>

Disability

Exclusive Language

Handicapped People

Insane Person

Person in a wheelchair

Crippled

Special needs program

Mentally retarded

Inclusive Language

People with disabilities

Person with a psychiatric disability (or label the psychiatric diagnosis,
e.g. "person with schizophrenia")

Person who uses a wheelchair

Person with a physical disability

Accessible needs program

Person with an intellectual disability

Sexual Orientation

Heterosexism occurs when a speaker presumes that everyone in an audience is heterosexual or that opposite-sex relationships are the only norm.

For example:

A speaker might begin a speech by saying, “I am going to talk about the legal obligations you will have with your future husband or wife.” While this speech starts with the notion that everyone plans on getting married, which isn’t the case, it also assumes that everyone will label their significant others as either “husbands” or “wives.” Although some members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender/transsexual community will use these terms, others prefer for more gender neutral terms like “spouse” and “partner.” Moreover, legal obligations for same-sex couples may be very different from those for heterosexual couples.

<https://buffer.com/resources/inclusive-language-tech/>

Use Familiar Language

The last category related to using language appropriately simply asks you to use language that is familiar both to yourself and to your audience. If you are not comfortable with the language you are using, then you are going to be more nervous speaking, which will definitely have an impact on how your audience reacts to you.

Thank you

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