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LANGUAGE AND LOGIC

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SEMESTER: **1ST**

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LANGUAGE AND LOGIC

We use language in many different ways and for many different purposes. We write, speak, and sign it.   We work with language, play with language, and earn our living with language. Three distinct uses of languages are:

1. **Informative Language Function**: essentially, the communication of information. The informative function affirms or denies propositions, as in science or the statement of a fact. This function is used to describe the world or reason about it (*e.g.*., whether a state of affairs has occurred or not or what might have led to it). These sentences have a truth value; that is, the sentences are either true or false (recognizing, of course, that we might not know what that truth value is). Hence, they are important for logic. For example, consider the sentence, "There are intelligent life forms in other galaxies." It may be the case that there are no life forms of any kind in any other galaxy. If so, the sentence expresses something false. There may be several forms of life throughout the universe, many of which are far beyond us in intelligence. If so, the sentence expresses something true.

2**. Expressive Language Function**: Reports feelings or attitudes of the writer (or speaker), or of the subject, or evokes feelings in the reader (or listener). . Poetry and literature are among the best examples, but much of, perhaps most of, ordinary language discourse is the expression of emotions, feelings or attitudes. Two main aspects of this function are generally noted: (1) evoking certain feelings and (2) expressing feelings. Although such uses don't convey any information, they do serve an important function in everyday life.

3. **Directive Language Function**: Language used for the purpose of causing (or preventing) overt action. The directive function is most commonly found in commands and requests. Directive language is not normally considered true or false (although various logics of commands have been developed). Example of this function: "Close the windows." The sentence "You're smoking in a nonsmoking area," although declarative, can be used to mean "Do not smoke in this area."

 Literal and Emotive Use of Language: Language is often used to express our feelings, emotions or attitudes. It is used either to express one's own feelings, emotions or attitudes, or evoke certain feelings, emotions or attitudes someone else, or both.

When one expresses feelings while alone, one is not expressing it to evoke feelings in others. Most of the common words or phrases of ant language have both literal or descriptive meaning. But very often we attempt to move others by our expressions of emotions, in all such cases language is used emotively. We often do wish to convey some portion of our feelings along with the information. Consider the following utterances:

1. Jai Hind!

2. Cheers!

3. it's disgusting!

4. it's too bad!

5. it's wonderful!

6. Let's win this game!

In appropriate contexts all these can count as instances of language functioning emotively. But in some sentences like the third and fifth one, literal meaning is also attached to it.

Even single words or short phrases can exhibit the distinction between purely informative and partially expressive uses of language. Many of the most common words or phrases of any language have both a literal or descriptive meaning that refers to the way things are and emotive meaning that expresses some feeling about them.

Literal meaning:- Literal and figurative language is a distinction in traditional systems for analyzing language. Literal language refers to words that do not deviate from their defined meaning. Figurative language refers to words, and groups of words, that exaggerate or alter the usual meanings of the component words. Figurative language may involve analogy to similar concepts or other contexts, and may involve exaggerations. These alterations result in figures of speech.

In traditional analysis, words in literal expressions denote what they mean according to common or dictionary usage, while the words in figurative expressions connote—they add layers of meaning. To convert an utterance into meaning, the human mind requires a cognitive framework, made up of memories of all the possible meanings that might be available to apply to the particular words in their context. This set of memories will give prominence to the most common or literal meanings, but also suggest reasons for attributing meanings, e.g., the reader understands that the author intended it to mean something different.

For example, the sentence "The ground is thirsty" is partly figurative: "Ground" has a literal meaning, but the ground is not alive and therefore neither needs to drink nor feels thirst. Readers immediately reject a literal interpretation and confidently interpret the words to mean "The ground is dry," an analogy to the condition that would trigger thirst in an animal. However, the statement "When I first saw her, my soul began to quiver" is harder to interpret. It could describe infatuation, panic, or something else entirely. The context a person requires to interpret this statement is familiarity with the speaker's feelings. Other people can give a few words a provisional set of meanings, but cannot understand the figurative utterance until acquiring more information about it.

Literal meaning is a property of linguistic expressions. Roughly speaking, the literal meaning of a complex sequence of words is determined by its grammatical properties and the meanings that are conventionally assigned to those words. The literal meaning of a statement should be distinguished from its conversational implicature - the information that is implicitly conveyed in a particular conversational context, distinct from the literal meaning of the statement.

For example, suppose we ask Lily whether she wants to go to the cinema and she replies, "I am very tired." Naturally we would infer that Lily does not want to go to the cinema. But this is not part of the literal meaning of what is said. Rather, the information that she does not want to go is conveyed in an implicit manner. Similarly, suppose we hear Lala says, "Po likes books". We might perhaps take Lala to be saying that Po likes to read. But this is only the conversational implicature, and not part of the literal meaning of what is being said. It might turn out that Po hates reading and she likes books only because she regards them as good investment. But even if this is the case, Lala's assertion is still true.

One important point illustrated by this example is that when we want to find out whether a statement is true, it is its literal meaning that we should consider, and not its conversational implicature. This is particularly important in the legal context. The content of a contract is typically given by the literal meaning of the terms of the contract, and if there is a dispute about the contract ultimately it is normally settled by looking at the literal meaning of the terms, and not by what one or the other party thinks was implied implicitly.

Emotive meaning:- This is a natural function of ordinary language that we often wish to convey some portion of our feelings along with information. Thus the choice of which word to use in making a statement can be used in evoking in particular emotional response. Words have emotive meaning insofar as their meaning is to be elucidated in terms of the expression of feelings or attitudes (not 'opinions') in the hearer and / or the evocation of feelings or attitudes in the person addressed. In so far as an utterance has emotive meaning , it has no TRUTH-VALUE, but it may be sincere or insincere.

The emotive meaning of a term is the attitude or other emotional state that is conventionally taken to be expressed by a straightforward use of it. Thus a derogatory term conventionally expresses some kind of contempt or hostility to some class of people. Terms like 'firm', 'stubborn', and 'pig-headed' apply to more or less the same class of people for more or less the same reason, but convey different appreciations. Other terms like 'super!' or 'wow!' have nothing but an emotive function, but most terms with which we communicate approval or disapproval have descriptive aspects as well. A rose by other name would smell sweet (as Shakespeare wrote), but our response to a flower is likely to be influenced if we are told, as it is handed to us, that it is commonly called "skunkweed." The negative attitudes that are commonly evoked by some words lead to the creation of euphemisms to replace them- gentle words for harsh realities. Janitors become "maintenance workers," and then "custodians." a coloured language is appropriate in other contexts- in poetry for example- but is highly inappropriate in other contexts- in survey research, for example. The responses to a survey will certainly depend in good measure on the words used in asking the questions. Whether we should avoid emotive language, or rely on it, depends on the purpose language is intended to serve in the context. Sometimes, however it is nearly impossible to avoid some emotive content- such as when those in conflict about morality of abortion call themselves either "pro-life" or "pro-choice".

Playing on the emotions of readers and campaign and listeners is a central technique in manipulating in advertising industry. When the overriding aims are to persuade and sell,

manipulating attitudes becomes a sophisticated professional art. Rhetorical tricks are also common in political campaigns, and voice of words is critical. There is a good deal of poetry in everyday communication, poetry without meaning is pretty dull. But when we are primarily interested in establishing the truth- as we are when assessing the logical merits of an argument- the use of words laden with emotive meaning can easily distract us from our purpose.

Emotive words are words that carry emotional overtones. These words are said to have emotive significance or emotive meaning or emotional impact.

The death penalty, which is legal in thirty-six states, has been carried out most often in Georgia; however, since 1977 Texas holds the record for the greatest number of executions.

The death penalty is a cruel and inhuman form of punishment in which hapless prisoners are dragged from their cells and summarily slaughtered only to satiate the bloodlust of a vengeful public.

The first statement is intended primarily to convey information; the second is in-tended, at least in part, to express or evoke feelings. These statements accomplish their respective functions through the distinct kinds of terminology in which they are phrased. Terminology that conveys information is said to have cognitive meaning, and terminology that expresses or evokes feelings is said to have emotive meaning.

Thus, in the first statement the words ''legal,'' ''thirty-six,'' ''most often,'' ''Georgia,'' ''record,'' and so on have primarily a cognitive meaning, while in the second statement the words ''cruel,'' ''inhuman,'' ''hapless,'' ''dragged,'' ''slaughtered,'' ''bloodlust,'' and ''vengeful'' have a strong emotive meaning. Of course, these latter words have cognitive meaning as well. ''Cruel'' means tending to hurt others, ''inhuman'' means inappropriate for humans, ''hapless'' means unfortunate, and so on.

The emotively charged statement about the death penalty illustrates two important points. The first is that statements of this sort usually have both cognitive meaning and emotive meaning. Therefore, since logic is concerned chiefly with cognitive meaning, it is important that we be able to distinguish and disengage the cognitive meaning of such statements from the emotive meaning. The second point is that part of the cognitive meaning of such statements is a value claim. A value claim is a claim that something is good, bad, right, wrong, or better, worse, more important or less important than some other thing. For example, the statement about the death penalty asserts the value claim that the death penalty is wrong or immoral. Such value claims are often the most important part of the cognitive meaning of emotive statements. Thus, for the purposes of logic, it is important that we be able to disengage the value claims of emotively charged statements from the emotive meaning and treat these claims as separate statements.

These observations suggest the reason that people use emotive terminology as often as they do: Value claims as such normally require evidence to support them. For example, the claim that the death penalty is immoral cannot simply stand by itself. It cries out for reasons to support it. But when value claims are couched in emotive terminology, the emotive ''clothing'' tends to obscure the fact that a value claim is being made, and it simultaneously gives psychological momentum to that claim. As a result, readers and listeners are inclined to swallow the value claim whole without any evidence. Furthermore, the intellectual laziness of many speakers and writers combined with their inability to supply supporting reasons for their value claims, rein-forces the desirability of couching such claims in emotive terminology.

Emotively neutral language is preferable when we are trying to get to the facts or follow an argument; our emotions often cloud our reasoning

A good trick for successful arguments is to play down emotive language. "When we are trying to learn what really is the case, or trying to follow an argument, distractions will be frustrating—and emotion is a powerful distraction" . At times, emotive language brings with it unnecessary or inappropriate baggage. Learning to use emotively neutral (or unbiased) language will make your argument more convincing to the reader or hearer.

 Emotively neutral language is preferable when we are trying to get to the facts or follow an argument; our emotions often cloud our reasoning. For assessing the validity of deductive arguments and the reliability of inductive reasoning it is helpful to eliminate emotive meaning entirely. Moreover, if we wish to avoid being misunderstood, language having the least emotive impact is the most useful. When resolving disputes or disagreements between persons, it is usually best to try to reformulate the disagreement in neutral language. Although it isn't always easy to achieve emotively neutral language in every instance, and the result often lacks the colourful character of our usual public discourse, it is worth the trouble and insipidity because it makes it much easier to arrive at a settled understanding of what is true.

Kinds of Agreement and Disagreement

When the statement of one person is positively slanted and the statement of another person is negatively slanted, the persons **disagree in attitude**. In other words, there is an emotional difference between the disputants. Generally disagreements in attitude come about by our approval or disapproval about the matter at issue.

When statements have a different literal significance or a different denotative significance, there is a **disagreement in belief**. A disagreement in belief is a disagreement about the facts of the matter.

Keeping the above in mind, four combinations are possible here:

- **Agreement in belief and agreement in attitude**

  Both parties are in pure harmony. They share the same beliefs and same attitude.

  For eg:- Both agree that capital punishment is a deterrent, and that it should be legal.

- **Agreement in beliefs and disagreement in attitudes.**

  There is agreement over the facts but disagreements regarding the feelings.

  For eg:- Both agree capital punishment is a deterrent, but one says that it should be legal, the other illegal.

- **Agreement in attitudes, disagreement in beliefs.**

  In this situation, parties may never recognise, much less resolve, their fundamental difference of opinion since they share common feelings.

  For eg:- Both agree that capital punishment should be legal, however one thinks it is a deterrent, while the other doesn't.

- **Disagreement in beliefs and attitudes.**

  This is a situation of total disharmony. They have little in common.

  For eg:- One states that capital punishment is a deterrent, while the other does not; and one

- states that it should be legal, while the other does not.

When people argue about something, it is because they disagree. If they already agreed, they probably wouldn't be offering arguments for or against anything. Unfortunately, when people are in the midst of a disagreement, it isn't always clear to them or to others just what they are disagreeing **about**. Figuring out where the actual disagreement lies and where potential agreement might exist can be very helpful.

There are two basic ways in which people might agree or disagree: the first is in their beliefs (about what is true or false) and the second is in their attitudes. Disagreement about beliefs is the sort most commonly focused upon. People disagree about whether a certain type of diet leads to weight loss or weight gain, they disagree about whether a particular medical treatment actually helps people or is just pseudoscience, and they disagree about whether drugs should be legalized. All of these disagreements involve people adopting different and mutually incompatible beliefs.

The second type of disagreement, involving attitude, can be just as important as the first. Two people may agree that something is the case, but disagree completely on whether that is good or bad. For example, two people may agree that higher taxes lead to a reduction of some behavior, but while one may approve of this the other may find it to be intolerable.

If two people are trying to resolve a disagreement, they first need to understand exactly what they are really disagreeing about. If people disagree about beliefs, that is something which might be resolved by appealing to facts. When people believe that something is or is not the case, their best course of action is to try to determine what really is the case.

If two people disagree about attitude, however, appealing to facts won't solve anything. After all, people here aren't disagreeing about something which can be proven right or wrong, but rather how particular facts should be valued. In cases such as this, we necessarily turn to more emotional language. While arguing about facts typically requires that we try to stay away from such emotional language, arguing about attitude will require that we focus on it.

Sometimes an interest in "winning" an argument can prevent people from seeing that their similarities may be stronger than their differences. Whether disagreeing about facts or attitudes, it can be very helpful in the long run to try to focus on areas of agreement first foremost. Areas of agreement may provide a foundation to build on so that those who are arguing can work towards a goal they share in common rather than the common goal of "winning" at the expense of the other.

Establishing areas of agreement can also help people find out if their disagreements are deeper than they suspected. Sometimes people will spend a lot of time arguing over what appear to be the "real" issues when, ultimately, disagreement on those issues can be traced back to disagreement over much more fundamental premises. Disagreement over whether God exists, for example, might be traced back to a more fundamental disagreement over whether authority and faith can provide knowledge that is as or more certain than reason and science.

Finally, looking out for areas of agreement can also help determine whether there is a **genuine** disagreement in the first place. Sometimes people think that they disagree about something when they don't. Common causes of this include misunderstanding how someone is using key terms, misuse of key terms, and even natural ambiguity in language itself. Sadly, it is all too common for people to become engrossed in a long debate which never would have occurred had they realized early on that they were using basic terms in completely different ways. Had that been made clear at the beginning, both the debate and the ensuing hard feelings could have been prevented.

This is why it is often so important to stop and define basic premises and terminology before entering into an argument: you can't very easily argue about whether God exists, for example, unless everyone involved as a clear understanding as to what they mean by "God" in the first place. You also can't have a productive argument about whether, say, pornography should be legal or not unless everyone involved is defining "pornography" in the same manner.

In summary, arguments involve — or at least are supposed to involve — people who disagree about some matter and who are seeking to arrive at some form of agreement. If that is the case, then reaching that goal requires a clear understanding about where the disagreements lie and what sorts of disagreements there really are. Understanding those matters will allow the argument to be productive and useful rather than simply a contest over who "argues" best.