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ABSTRACT

This course involves an approach to language study dealing with the psychology, the process of abstraction, and the levels of the meaning of language. The objectives of the course include demonstrating an understanding of: (1) the origin and nature of language, (2) the process by which language changes and develops, (3) the abstract nature of the thought and language process, (4) symbology and the levels of meaning of language, (5) the psychology of language and how it affects behavior, and (6) the psychology of language and how it affects culture. It is believed that the course is important because language is a unique tool enabling man to create culture. Since language is a system of symbols and human behavior is a response to symbols, the study of the nature of language is intertwined with the study of human behavior and with the effect of language on the civilization of man. Numerous teaching strategies and a bibliography of student and teacher resources, including textbooks, supplementary material, films, records, filmstrips, and slide-record sets, included. (Author/DI)

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DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Language and Behavior

- 5114.35
- 5115.35
- 5116.35
- 5187.07

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LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR

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English

**Written by Clifford G. Singleton
and
Paul Rice
for the
DIVISION OF INSTRUCTION
Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida
1972**

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**COURSE
NUMBER**

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COURSE TITLE: LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOR

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An approach to language study dealing with the psychology, the process of abstraction, and the levels of meaning of language. Works to explore include: Hall - The Silent Language, McLuhan - Understanding Media, selections by Postman, Pei, Hayakawa, and others.

I. PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

- A. The student will examine the origin and nature of language.
- B. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of the process by which language changes and develops.
- C. The student will demonstrate his understanding of the abstract nature of the thought and language process.
- D. The student will demonstrate his understanding of symbology and the levels of meaning of language.
- E. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of the psychology of language and how it affects his behavior.
- F. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of the psychology of language and how it affects his culture.

II. COURSE CONTENT

A. Rationale

How much is known about language? How does it work? How does it affect man? What does it achieve for man? These are the questions concerning language and behavior to which consideration should be given during this course.

Language is a unique tool; it makes man a human being. By enabling man to preserve and transmit information, language permits culture - the factor distinguishing man from other animals.

What effect has language on behavior? Language is a system of symbols, and human behavior is a response to symbols. Therefore, studying the nature of language is intertwined with studying human behavior. Language plays a role in shaping man's thoughts and in determining his perceptions of his environment. Thus, this course will examine the effect of language in the civilization of man.

B. Range of subject matter

1. Origin and nature of language
2. Semantic change and development
3. Abstraction process involving thought and language
4. Symbology
5. Psychological impact of language on the individual
6. Psychological impact of language on culture

III. TEACHING STRATEGIES

A. The student will become aware of the origin and nature of language.

1. Administer the diagnostic test in problem one of Chapter 4 "What is Language?" in Postman's Language and Reality to determine the students' prior knowledge of language.
2. Have students read Chapters 1-4 of Postman's Language and Reality which introduce the concepts of communication, community, symbolism, and language.

3. Have students read the article "What Do You Know About Your Language?" from Literary Cavalcade, which emphasizes that language is a system.
4. Have students read Chapter 1 "Language Is an 'X'", in Postman's Language and Systems which introduces language as a system.
5. Have students read Life reprint The History of the English Language and outline the significant events in the history of the language.
6. Have students read the essay "Something about English" in Chapter 4 of Postman's Language and Systems for a brief history of the English language.
7. Have students read Life reprint The Origins of Language and explain flaws in the various theories discussed. Also have students discuss the theory they feel is the most logical and substantiate their opinion.
8. Show the film The English Language: The Story of Its Development.
9. Have students propose an original theory of the origin of language. Discuss which would be the most feasible.
10. Have students define linguistics, semantics, lexicography, morphology, syntax, phonology, connotation, denotation, etymology, orthography, paralanguage, and other related words.
11. Have students read the Life reprint The Universal Language and construct an original grammar. In constructing the grammar students should consider the means by which English and other grammars indicate number, gender, and tense.
12. Have students investigate Esperanto and the attempts made to establish a universal language.

13. Have students develop an original vocabulary to which they apply their original grammar. Have students transcribe the "Gettysburg Address" or any other selection using their own vocabulary and grammar.
 14. Have students research how culture and environment affect the development of a vocabulary. Consider the South American Indian tribe which has numerous words for potato or the Eskimos who have numerous words to describe varying conditions of snow.
 15. Have students research the means by which various languages develop a vocabulary. Have students examine the Anglo-Saxon kenning or the extent to which languages borrow words from each other.
 16. Have students read The Derivation of Words: Etymology, a Time Education Program publication which discusses the derivation and coinage of words.
 17. Have students discuss the means by which new words are coined in our culture. Compounds, blends, and acronyms should be considered as well as the impact of journalism, technology, and advertising.
 18. Have students write an original phrase or word to communicate an already existing idea.
 19. Have students write an original myth which explains how a particular word was coined.
 20. Have students research the derivation and meaning of their family name.
- B. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of the process by which language changes and develops.
1. Have students read Chapter 8, "What Kind of a Grammarian Are You?", in Postman's Language of Discovery which discusses the need for structure in language.

2. Have students read Chapter 9, "What Is 'Right' in Language?", in Postman's Languages of Discovery which discusses who or what determines the rightness or wrongness of vocabulary, grammar, etc.
3. Have students investigate the etymology of a list of words from a list supplied by the instructor by consulting an etymological dictionary such as the Oxford English Dictionary. Suggested words: pretty, nice, hussy, simple, fool, nunnery, fellow, pall-mall, raid, demure, map, plot, trance.
4. Have students prepare a time-line chart of the invasions, events, and influences that have affected the English language.
5. Have students prepare a dictionary of current slang and jargon in which they define the word and explain how it is used.
6. Have students find the equivalent British term for the following American words:

American expression

English expression

theatre seat	stall
apartment	flat
beer	lager
bill (money)	note
silverware	plate
policeman	bobby
dessert	sweet course
run in a stocking	ladder
potato chip	crisp
roast of meat	joint
mail	post
automobile horn	hooter
automobile hood	bonnet
elevator	lift
druggist	chemist

7. Have students write a paper in which they discuss the role of the lexicographer in describing or prescribing the use of language.

8. Have students read Chapter 6, "Formulating a Question," in Postman's Language and Systems which discusses some changes in British and American English and the origin of names.
9. Show the film The English Language: How It Changes.
10. Have students listen to excerpts from the record The Changing English Language and discuss the various changes from Old English to Modern English.
11. Have students study semantic change effected by such processes as amelioration, pejoration, specialization, and generalization.
12. Illustrate the everchanging nature of man and his language by viewing and discussing the films:

This Is Marshall McLuhan: The Medium
Is the Massage, Part I 1-31955

This Is Marshall McLuhan: The Medium
Is the Massage, Part II 1-31957

Students might also examine the language format in Fuller's I Seem to Be a Verb.

- C. The student will demonstrate his understanding of the abstract nature of the thought and language process.
 1. Have students read Chapter 20 "The Process of Abstracting" in Postman's Language of Discovery to introduce the concept that language is abstract.
 2. Have students read Chapter 21 "Levels of Language" in Postman's Language of Discovery in which several levels of language are discussed.
 3. Have students read Chapter 5 "Metaphor and Reality" in Postman's Language and Reality which discusses lineal and visual metaphors.

4. Have students rewrite a series of highly abstract sentences in more concrete terms; have students rewrite a series of concrete sentences in abstract terms.
5. Have students read Chapter 1 "Choose Words Honestly" in Ginn's Writing: Unit Lessons in Composition 3B and write a well-known maxim as "Don't put all your eggs in one basket" in less direct and specific language.
6. Discuss the speaker-listener relationship and the reasoning process which permits communication to take place.
7. Have students complete Problem 3 in Chapter 5 "Metaphor and Reality" in Postman's Language and Reality and discuss that neither the word nor the visual metaphor is the condition represented by the word and metaphor.
8. Have students arrange a group of related words according to their degree of abstraction. Example: school, kindergarten, Yale, secondary school, educational institution.
9. Have students apply figurative language, such as metaphor or personification, to a hurricane, a tree, or a car. Compare Thomas Hardy's "The Convergence of the Twain" with newspaper accounts of the sinking of the Titanic.
10. Invent a new product, devise a use, and select a name. Fold a sheet of paper into an object. Let class decide an appropriate use for object and name it. Use this prototype to demonstrate the abstraction process. For example, a folded paper wedge with a small paper cup attached has become a snaxobyrdybar - a product designed, named, and perceived clearly by those involved. It can be "seen" by the mind at any time thereafter. Suggest reading Hayakawa's "How We Know What We Know," pp. 176-198 in Language in Thought and Action.
11. After reading Hayakawa's "The Tyranny of Words," direct the students to defend the Women's Lib charge that "it's a man's world." In addition, students may present evidence to prove, or refute, the stereotyped role of woman in society.

12. Have students investigate the phenomenon of a word's becoming a thing which exerts a strange force in men's lives. Research the etymology of the magic word "abracadabra" (page 62, Words, Things & Celebration) and of the word "triskaidekaphobia."
- D. The student will demonstrate his understanding of symbology and the levels of meaning of language.
1. Have students discuss the nature and use of symbols in their daily routine.
 2. Have students define allegory, image, metaphor, simile, and trope and distinguish them from symbol.
 3. Have students discuss how the body is used to communicate.
 4. In The Silent Language (page 24) Hall states that "what people do is frequently more important than what they say." Have students discuss an experience in which this happened.
 5. The eyes and hands, as well as other parts of the body, can be used for communication. Have students read Chapters 6 and 11 in Body Language.
 6. Investigate kinesics by having students observe the visible cues and unconscious movements used by people as body language. Students could study films, television shows, or slides of people in everyday situations such as in schools, supermarkets, elevators or on sidewalks and streets to discern the signals used to avoid body contact. Is there a noticeable difference in the body language of certain national groups?
 7. Have students play charades or another game devised by the teacher which communicates through movement rather than sound.
 8. Have students investigate symbolic systems such as international road signs, sign language, smoke signals, and

those used in the sciences. Maxwell's "Hobo Symbology" (Symbology) should stimulate discussion.

9. Have students pantomime a situation from a list prepared by the teacher such as losing a dime in a telephone or meeting someone wearing the same dress at a party.
10. Have students examine the photographs in Chapter 3 of Postman's Language and Reality and discuss their symbology.
11. Have students read Chapter 1 "Connotation and Denotation" in Altick's Preface to Critical Reading and discuss the various meanings of words the author suggests.
12. Have students read "Janet Waking" by John Crowe Ransom and state what is explicit and implicit in the poem.
13. Have students read James Thurber's "The Catbird Seat" or Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis" and discuss the levels of meaning of the story.
14. Show a film such as Two Men and a Wardrobe, "A", or The Sword, and discuss the different levels of meaning in the film.
15. Show the film Language and Writing which illustrates the symbolic nature of written language.
16. Show the film Language and Meaning.
17. Have students read several nursery rhymes such as "Humpty, Dumpty," and "Mary, Mary", and discuss the literal and symbolic meanings.
18. Have students read Alice in Wonderland or Gulliver's Travels and discuss the levels of meaning.
19. Have students read and discuss "How Do We Create Symbols" from Kaiser's Communications publication and create a visual symbol.

20. Have students read and discuss "In Search of the Meaning of Meaning" from Kaiser's Communications publication and discuss different meanings of phrases such as "leave me alone".
 21. Have students listen to "The Story of Thaddeus Twistum" from the record Spoken English and discuss how words can be interpreted differently.
 22. Have students read Signs and Symbols from Scholastic's Art and Man series which discusses the symbolic process employed by language. The students could demonstrate their understanding of the concept of symbolism by producing collages, slide shows, or posters which utilize visual images.
 23. Introduce students to the study of cryptography: the use of codes and ciphers, and proceed to develop a cryptic system in class. Reading the selection, "Prologue: The Ibis Mystery," in Wolfe's Secret Writing and investigating the roles of the spy satellites, Samos and Cosmos, could be introductory activities.
 24. Having given the original meaning of the word "symbol" as "emblem and device," have students trace three medical symbols, the eye of Horus, the centaur, and the caduceus, from mythology to the present. Tie in all possible emblems and devices implied by these symbols. The film, Dot and the Line: a Romance in Lower Mathematics, 1-05820, could be viewed to illustrate symbology in another area.
- E. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of the psychology of language and how it affects his behavior.
1. Have students read Chapter 2 "The Power of Language" in Postman's Language and Systems to introduce the idea of the power of language.
 2. Have students read and discuss Chapter 3 "Systems within a System" in Postman's Language and Systems to discover how language exerts power.

3. Show the film The Strange Case of the English Language which illustrates the effective use of language.
4. Have students listen to or read several effective speeches and examine the devices the speaker uses to influence his audience. Suggestions: "I Have a Dream", Churchill's "Dunkirk Address", Edward Kennedy's eulogy on the death of Robert Kennedy.
5. Have students listen to a speech to persuade or to get action (Speech in Action record) and discuss the devices the speaker uses and the contribution of the voice to the power of language.
6. Have students read "The Eve of St. Agnes" and "Alexander's Feast" and listen to the different rhythmical patterns and explain the effect of music and rhythm on the individual.
7. Have students examine several writing samples and attempt to identify the social and educational background of the writer.
8. Have students classify a group of sentences as colloquial, uneducated, or formal usage.
9. Have students suggest connotative meanings for a group of words having nearly the same denotative meanings to emphasize that a given word affects individuals differently. Examples: house, home, edifice, domicile, hovel, residence, mansion, etc.
10. Have students suggest favorable and unfavorable synonyms for a list of neutral words given by the instructor. Examples: automobile, trait, date, food.
11. Have students write a research paper on euphemisms.
12. Have students write a research paper on the active and passive voice and the psychological effect of each.

13. Have students investigate sentence length and the devices of sound and the effect they have on the reader or listener.
14. Have students consider basic aspects of human nature; then, introduce them to Heineman's The Insult Dictionary: How to Snarl Back in Five Languages. The film Neighbors (1-05861) could contribute additional comment.
15. To determine whether or not words fulfill a psychological need, have students investigate such topics as euphemism, genteelism, gobbledygook, slang, jargon, and cliches. Students could also prepare a bulletin board containing both "in" words and new phraseology. Words such as viable, charisma, rap, camp, right-on, kitsch, redux, self-destruct, school-wise, and relevant should stimulate discussion.
16. Have students read "The Unknown Citizen" by W. H. Auden to evaluate the psychological ills resulting from the use of identification numbers in today's world. Project this concept of thought control by reading and discussing "The Principles of Newspeak" in Orwell's 1984.
17. Have students determine if graffiti study (from ancient Rome to contemporary times) illustrates man's use of language to react with his environment. Reading Tolkein's Hobbit could be an extension of this activity. (Hobbit graffiti abounds in Tolkein readers' circles.)
18. Present students with a semantic principle: the self-fulfilling prophecy by having them read Chapter 6, Symbol, Status, and Personality by S. I. Hayakawa. Have students give examples showing that expectations of life have a very real impact on results.

Success breeds success.
Once a failure, always a failure.

19. Have students make a profile of an individual which reflects his personal tastes, attitudes, and values by visiting his

home and noting his color choices, furniture arrangement, clothing, gestures, and his vocabulary. How reliable are these extensional aspects of the self-image in portraying the individual?

20. If human behavior is a response to symbols, have students seek to extend Hayakawa's premise "the fundamental motive of human behavior is not self-presentation, but the preservation of the symbolic self." The following topics may provide a starting point:
- a. Must a lady of fashion own mink?
 - b. Is a "good kid" always mannerly?
 - c. Does a teacher's expectation of his students determine the results?
 - d. Must a football hero be daring and courageous?
 - e. Is a boy who cries a sissy?
 - f. Do brand names insure quality?

Students will find further reading on this topic in Hayakawa's Symbol, Status and Personality or in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman.

- F. The student will demonstrate a basic understanding of the psychology of language and how it affects his culture.
1. Have students examine a photograph or picture about which a value judgment has been made and ask them to rewrite the statement expressing only what is semantically safe. Have students look at photograph on page 28 in Kaiser Aluminum's Communications publication and discuss the questions which follow.
 2. The Sioux Indians have no word for "late" or "waiting". Have students explain the difficulty a Sioux would have adjusting to the American culture where time is so important.
 3. Have students read and discuss Section 4, "Sociological Implication of Language," in Pei's Language for Everybody.

4. Have students read Chapter 3 "Reversal of the Overheated Medium" from McLuhan's Understanding Media which presents the idea that modern culture and its means of communication are creating a phenomenon he calls "implosion."
5. Have students read Chapter 16 "The Print" from McLuhan's Understanding Media which evaluates the printed word in a visual culture.
6. Hall in The Silent Language (page 69) states that territoriality (or space) is a very essential aspect of our culture. Have students explain what kinds of territory we feel are important. When might the phrase "to move in on someone" be used?
7. Have students read Chapter 18 "The Printed Word" from Understanding Media which discusses the printed word as "the architect of Nationalism".
8. Show several television commercials obtained from a local television station to point out how the language of the commercials attempts to affect the behavior of the individual.
9. Have students read Chapters 11, 12, and 13 "Language and Social Values", "Business and Social Values", and "Television and Social Values". in Postman's Language and Reality which emphasizes the ways language affects the individual's culture.
10. Have students read Chapters 1 and 2 "Communication and the Mass Media" and "The Social Importance of Communicators" in Introduction to Mass Communications which discuss the responsibility of mass media to society.
11. Have students read Chapter 18 "The Humorous Perspective", in Postman's Language and Reality which discusses how humor serves to communicate social values.
12. Have students examine several comic strips such as Doonesbury, Quincy, Little Orphan Annie, Steve Canyon, Lil' Abner from the daily newspaper and explain the social values each is attempting to communicate.

13. Have students draw an original cartoon to communicate a specific social value.
14. Have students write a composition which explains the social value being expressed in a nonverbal cartoon.
15. To determine the importance of language as a tool for social change, have students research topics which may provide answers. Some suggestions follow:
 - a. role of authors (Dickens, Steinbeck) in promoting social change
 - b. role of television in changing attitudes (CBS's "Harvest of Shame"; live newscasts on war in Viet-Nam)
 - c. role of motion pictures in leveling prejudice (Raisin in the Sun, Joe)
 - d. billboards' use of language to change behavior patterns (Beautify America; ecology)
 - e. Madison Avenue's many faces (promoting wine as beverage; enticing men to use cosmetics)
 - f. mass media's hardsell (soap operas; cartoon editorial; television commercials)
16. Have students delve into the nature of man to test the premise of man's uniqueness. Materials that could be utilized are as follows:
 - a. Art and Man series
 - The City
 - African Heritage
 - Signs and Symbols
 - Dürer and the Reformation
 - Photography
 - b. slide - record sets
 - Man and His Environment: 2
 - In Harmony and in Conflict
 - An Inquiry into the Nature of Man: 2
 - His Inhumanity and his Humanity
 - c. sound filmstrips

17. Have students investigate the efforts of organizations, such as NAACP and Project Pole, to counteract derogatory symbols or stereotypes relating to national and ethnic groups.
18. Have students research language as a key to discovering lost civilizations. The role of the Rosetta Stone and the section "Lost Kingdoms" in Scholastic's African Heritage may be investigated.
19. After reading excerpts from Bagdikian's The Information Machine, have students weigh the impact on man and society by the modern means of distributing information. Additionally, students could choose independent study or symposiums to continue in this research area.
20. Have students study the changing American social atmosphere by tracing the path of cultural freedom and cultural censorship in America. Read of England's Dr. Bowdler and then consult Hoyt's Censorship in America.
21. Direct students to conduct a survey of the major historical migrations of peoples to the United States. Consideration and research should then be given to the following points concerning language:
 - a. impact of the "melting-pot image" on immigrants' adaptation of English as standard tongue
 - b. vocabulary enrichment - geographic or periods
 - c. language bias (evidences of prejudicial epithets)
 - d. Black English - a language?
 - e. influence of Cuban immigrants on South Florida's culture
22. Have students read "Simulate a Language," Media and Communication and then proceed to simulate a language. To demonstrate some inhibiting factors in human communication, instruct student groups to build a cultural bias into language. Give each group a dozen extra words which would hold different meaning for perhaps three groups, i. e. warriors, farmers, industrial workers. Let them role-play and try communication with the other groups.

23. Have students use media articles and clippings to keep an on-going bulletin board on the theme of ethnic slurs.
24. As an exercise in climbing the abstraction ladder, have students read selections from Our Language and Our World edited by S. I. Hayakawa.
- a. "Semantic Difficulties in International Communication" pp. 12-34
 - b. "Reality, Possibility and Children" pp. 126-132
 - c. "Language of Pictures" pp. 247-255
 - d. "The Blind Men and the Elephant: Three Ends to One Tale" pp. 295-298.
25. Have students illustrate the ways in which slang words reflect the happenings of the period in which they were used. The use of "Uncle Tom," "uptight," "rip-off," and "cop out" could be a starting point.
26. Have students copy a basic word list of the Indo-Europeans. Either by discussion or by a written paper, the students should assemble information regarding customs, work activities, cultural attitudes, and geography to construct a feasible culture.
27. Have students examine semantics for today's world by reading a variety of articles or viewing various films.
- a. Readings:
 - Littell's Language of Man 3
 - (1) "Excerpt from Huckleberry Finn" pp. 16-17
 - Language of Man 4
 - (2) "Thought Control" pp. 11, 16
 - (3) "The Clash of Symbols" pp. 25, 30
 - (4) "Gobbledygook" pp. 83, 87
 - (5) "Police Have a Slanguage of Their Own" pp. 75, 77
 - (6) "Space-Speak" p. 89

b. Films:

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|---------|
| (1) | <u>The Hat: Is This War Necessary</u> | 1-13835 |
| (2) | <u>One World, Many Tongues</u> | 1-31851 |
| (3) | <u>Language and Nationalism</u> | 1-31855 |
| (4) | <u>The Daisy</u> | 1-05824 |
| (5) | <u>Insydoutsydin</u> | 1-05936 |

IV. STUDENT RESOURCES

A. State-adopted textbooks

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Boston: Ginn Publishing Co., 1965.

Postman, et al. Language of Discovery. New York: Holt,
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V. TEACHER RESOURCES

A. Non-state-adopted supplementary material

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