

SECTION B: WATCH THEIR LANGUAGE—AND YOURS TOO  
(Techniques of Language)

1. EMOTIONAL TERMS

Example: Participant in argument: "If you ignorant fools would only shut your traps a while and let me . . ."

Meaning: An emotional term is a word or phrase which, however much factual information it conveys about an object, also expresses and/or arouses a feeling *for* or *against* that object. Translated into neutral language the emotionally-charged example given above would read: "I don't agree and if you'll just give me a chance to talk, I'll show you why."

The authors believe that emotional language is appropriate in non-controversial situations. For purposes of the Propaganda Game, *patriotic celebrations, church services, poetry and other literary forms*, and whenever a person is expressing

*personal feeling without attempting to persuade or convince others* are considered to be non-controversial situations.

In playing the game then, emotional terms apply to controversial situations only, although we are aware that many will disagree with this characterization.

2. METAPHOR AND SIMILE

Example: Metaphor—"Napoleon was a fox." Simile—"Napoleon was like a fox."

Meaning: A *metaphor* is a comparison implied but not definitely stated. In the case of *simile* the comparison is explicitly stated by means of such words as "like" or "as."

In controversial situations the employment of metaphor or simile is to be avoided because such figures of speech are apt to suggest likenesses not really intended or not actually present. Napoleon was not actually a fox. He may have been like one, but if so, was it with respect to shrewdness or thievery or both or neither?

3. EMPHASIS

Example: When "We should not speak ill of our friends" is quoted, the original meaning changes if any of the following underlined words is emphasized: "We should not speak ill of our friends." Emphasizing "we" suggests that we should not, true, *but others may*.

Meaning: The technique of emphasis occurs only when another speaker or writer is quoted and one or more words emphasized so as to imply what would not otherwise be implied and thus put into the mouth of the source, meaning(s) he may not have wished to convey.

Oral emphasis is usually secured by means of pitch, tone, or volume of voice. Written emphasis is secured by a variety of devices, such as italicizing and underlining. "Italics mine" (or its equivalent) is the accepted way for a writer to indicate that he is giving a stress to certain words that the original author had perhaps no thought of stressing.

4. QUOTATION OUT OF CONTEXT

Example: Someone quotes the Bible as saying that ". . . money is the root of all evil" but leaves out the preceding words, "the love of."

Meaning: Quotation out of context is a propaganda technique when the effect of quoting a given statement without its context is to distort the original meaning in context.

The context of a given statement is not merely the words that precede and that follow but every accompanying circumstance, whether it be time and place or gesture and facial expression.

5. ABSTRACT TERMS

Example: A speaker defines "neurosis" as "a psychological term for a state of mind involving the nerves," but when he is asked to identify or point to—among a large number of people—a case of neurosis, he is at a loss to do so, showing that he is unable to use the term to make any concrete distinctions.

Meaning: An abstract term is a word or symbol which stands for the qualities (one or more) possessed in common by a number of particular things, facts, or events. The technique of abstract terms occurs when an arguer employs a word for which he may have meaning in the form of other words, *but the arguer is unable to identify the concrete facts to which the word supposedly refers*.

6. VAGUENESS

Example: Someone says to me, "Sit down on that stool," and I sit down on the thing he points to. His meaning is not ambiguous; I understand what he is referring to. But I find the term "stool" vague under the circumstances, and I protest, "But this is not a stool, for it has a little back to it, and so it is a chair." He may reply, "But there is really not enough back there to call it a 'back,' so I call it a 'stool'."

Meaning: To call a word "vague" is to say that marginal situations can and do arise where there is doubt as to whether the word should or should not be used in describing those particular

situations. The technique of vagueness exists where there is uncertainty as to the *scope* of a word.

7. AMBIGUITY

Example: Joe says, "Henry likes pudding better than his wife." And one or more people hearing him are left wondering whether Henry likes pudding better than he likes his wife or if Henry likes pudding more than his wife does.

Meaning: A word or phrase is ambiguous if in the mind of a hearer or reader it has two or more quite different meanings and the interpreter is uncertain as to which was really meant. In argument such a situation would at all times be undesirable.

8. SHIFT OF MEANING

Example: "The fellow who was supposed to arbitrate decided in favor of the company and fined the union. Now anyone who takes sides in a dispute is certainly not impartial. So how can this fellow claim to be an impartial arbitrator?"

Meaning: In shift of meaning a word appears explicitly or implicitly two or more times in an argument but with different meanings.

In the example appearing above "impartial" shifts meaning. In its first use it means "wholly refraining from judgment; taking no stand on an issue." But in its second use it means "judging after investigation but without previous bias." Obviously, the arbitrator's being impartial in the second sense does not necessitate his being so in the first sense. The implied conclusion ("the arbitrator is not impartial") is invalid.

In an argument between two people a given word may shift in the meaning given it by the two parties. This leads to what are called "merely verbal disagreements" or "merely verbal agreements." Again, if the reasoning depends on the word's being used in the same sense by the two parties, a technique has been used.

## SECTION C: HOW SUGGESTIBLE ARE YOU? (Techniques of Irrelevance)

## 1. APPEARANCE

**Example:** A floor wax nationally advertised on television is shown in the commercial being applied to a floor with the immediate result of a brilliant luster. The viewer does not know that the floor has been buffed and polished for days, and then dust coated just before the wax was applied in the commercial.

**Meaning:** The appearance of a thing (or person) is made the basis of our acceptance or rejection without any thought that this appearance may be a deceptive indicator of value.

## 2. MANNER

**Example:** "He was such a well-behaved man, so understanding, so sincerely helpful. He wanted to help us. I couldn't insult him. So I gave him our savings to invest. He seemed so trustworthy."

**Meaning:** A person's manner of behaving is made the basis of our acceptance or rejection of him without any thought that this manner may be a deceptive indicator of value.

## 3. DEGREES AND TITLES

**Example:** The name on the office door reads "James A. Rydack, Th.B., M.Th.R., As.D., Counselor Extraordinary of the Society of Metaphysicians." A woman about to enter the office says to her husband, "With all those degrees and that title, he must know his stuff."

**Meaning:** We buy or we believe out of respect for degrees or titles attached to the names of those who persuade us.

## 4. NUMBERS

**Example:** From an advertisement: "One million *more* sold this year than last."

**Meaning:** We buy or believe because of the large numbers associated with the product or proposition.

## 5. STATUS

**Example:** Advertisement appearing in the *Hampshire Gazette*, January 29, 1790: "President Washington, when he addressed the two houses of Congress on the 8th instance, was dressed in a crow-coloured suit of clothes of American manufacture. This elegant fabric was from the manufactory in Hartford."

**Meaning:** Persons or objects for which we have a strong sentiment of respect and esteem—or which at least possess some degree of fame or prestige—are introduced into the argument as endorsing that which we are asked to buy or believe.

## 6. REPETITION

**Example:** Radio Commercial: "Get up with GET-UP. GET-UP's got get up. Got it? Get it? Get GET-UP!!!"

**Meaning:** We buy or believe because we have heard or seen the idea or product name so often.

## 7. SLOGANS

**Example:** "WHEATLESS, THE BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS"; "LSMFT" (LUSTY STRIFE MEANS FINE TOBACCO); "WHEN BETTER CARS ARE BUILT, BLUINK WILL BUILD THEM"; "BETTER BUY BARDS-EYE."

**Meaning:** A slogan is a short, meaningful, catchy phrase or sentence intended for general consumption and designed to terminate thought and promote action in favor of the slogan maker. However true the slogan may be, if your action is merely a favorable response to the slogan, the technique is successful.

## 8. TECHNICAL JARGON

**Example:** Advertisement: "Liberty Rubber's new tires contain *durium*, the bonding material that makes these tires wear for years."

**Meaning:** The technique of technical jargon is the use of technical language or unfamiliar words, whether contained in the dictionary or freshly coined, for the purpose of impressing people.

## 9. SOPHISTICATED FORMULA

**Example:** Mrs. Jones: "You know, Ann, I think the Browns must be having trouble. The last two mornings I've seen Tom Brown leave the house, slam the door, and drive off in his car looking awfully mad. I'll bet they're headed for a divorce."

Mrs. Smith: "I don't know, Barbara. Really, they've always seemed to be very much in love."

Mrs. Jones: "Well, all I know is that 'where there's smoke, there's fire.'"

**Meaning:** To shut off or close the argument a popular maxim or old saying is quoted. But every controversial situation must be settled in its own terms, and not on the merits (if any) of some proverb.