

**МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ
СУМСЬКИЙ ДЕРЖАВНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ
ФАКУЛЬТЕТ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ ФІЛОЛОГІЇ
ТА СОЦІАЛЬНИХ КОМУНІКАЦІЙ**



СОЦІАЛЬНО-ГУМАНІТАРНІ АСПЕКТИ РОЗВИТКУ СУЧАСНОГО СУСПІЛЬСТВА

**МАТЕРІАЛИ V ВСЕУКРАЇНСЬКОЇ НАУКОВОЇ КОНФЕРЕНЦІЇ СТУДЕНТІВ,
АСПРАНТІВ, ВИКЛАДАЧІВ ТА СПІВРОБІТНИКІВ**

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CULTURAL LEVELS OF SPEECH

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The way you use language tells more about you than any other activity of your life. What you say and how you say it are more revealing of your intelligence, personality, and character than the ways you dress, eat, walk, read or make your living. Knowing how to read and write is a significant accomplishment for everyone, but neither reading nor writing is an essential part of anyone's factual existence. Communicating with others through some sort of speech signals is essential however.

Everyone obviously can read and certainly can communicate with others. Most people spend many school years learning to read, but few of us have ever paid real attention to learning how to speak and write. In infancy we learned to speak, have talked ever since, and now assume that talking is as simple and as natural as breathing. It isn't.

More time, opportunities, money, and friendships are lost through careless, slovenly, inaccurate speech (and writing) than through any other activity of people's lives. Because no one can speak perfectly (any more than he can read perfectly), this condition will persist. And yet everyone can learn to speak and write with greater confidence, fewer errors, and more genuine communication if he will only study his habits and give the problem of communication with others the attention it fully deserves.

In every speaking situation, one's aim should be to use only words and phrases that are appropriate, fit, suitable, and proper. The appropriateness of language is determined by the subject being discussed, the place where talk is taking place, and the identity and relationship of speaker and listener. Each of us employs a different level of usage depending upon whether we are speaking or writing, upon our audience or readers, and upon the kind of occasion involved.

The words we use in talking with the person working at the desk next to us may not be appropriate when we are conversing with a member of our family, with a company official, or with a minister, rabbi, or priest. A word or phrase in correct or suitable usage a decade ago may now be outmoded. An expression appropriate in one section of the country may be unclear and therefore ineffective in another locality. Technical expressions used before a specialized group of listeners may be inappropriate in general conversation.

The best course to follow is to try to choose and use words and expressions that are normally employed by reputable speakers in all sections of the country at the present time. That is, diction is effective and appropriate when it is in *national*, *present*, and *reputable* use. Any word or expression is correct if it meets these three standards; it may also be effective (appropriate although not “correct”) if it does not meet these standards but is used for a particular purpose in a particular situation.

A study of body language is a study of the mixture of all the body movements, both deliberate and totally unconscious ones. Each nationality has its own language of posture and gesture. Words are beautiful, exiting and important, but we tend to overestimate them badly since research suggest that up to 80% of any piece of communication is non-verbal, is everything but the content of the message – the way the person looks, dresses, sounds, is positioned, etc. In our culture where verbal behavior is closely observed and carefully edited, only body movements remain to communicate our message to the rest of the world. People are usually are very open in communicating their inner thoughts and feelings non-verbally. Non-verbal messages are conveyed both though the person as such and though the setting. Tone and quality of voice (pitch, rate, volume, and articulation), silence or speech, way of standing or sitting, eye content, touch, body sounds, body odors, gestures and movements, physique, way of dressing, colours worn, facial expressions and the physical setting are all messages that can be fitted together to provide the receiver with a complete picture of those being observed. Some gestures are universally recognized. For instance doodling, drumming your fingers or taping your fit usually indicate boredom. Shrugging your shoulders means indifference, fidgeting in your chair, biting your lip, picking at finger nails express nervousness, folding your arms, moving the body away, crossing your legs express rejection, and sitting forward in your chair, tilting your head, maybe even occasionally nodding indicate that you are listening and ready to cooperate. When two people are sitting on a sofa and turn their legs towards each other, this indicates that they exclude other persons in the room. Unbuttoning your coat – or even taking it off – open-arm movements and leaning back in the chair are gestures that indicate that you are open for negotiation. Silence, however, may be interpreted as a sign of hostility and cause great anxiety. A person who extends his lower arms and turns his palms out expresses helplessness or resignation.

Still we cannot say that certain gestures mean the same all the time. It is important to remember that, just as the spoken language, body

language can be accurately understood only in the context of the entire pattern of behavior of a person.

In general you should avoid gesturing too much with the hand as many gestures are interpreted in totally different ways in different parts of the world. An innocent move of your hand in a place where many nationalities are gathered may be an unwitting insult and may lead you into embarrassing situations!

Among *cultural* levels of speech may be included illiteracies, narrowly local dialects, ungrammatical speech, slovenly vocabulary and construction, and an excessive resort to slang, shoptalk, and even profanity and obscenity. On a higher level is the language spoken by cultured people over wide areas; such speech is clear, relatively concise, and grammatically correct. In general, these two levels may be referred to as *substandard* and *standard*, with the latter category divided into *informal standard* and *formal standard*.

Functional varieties of speech may loosely be grouped in two classes, *familiar* and *formal*. Included in functional varieties of speech independent of cultural levels are colloquialisms. Such expressions exist in varying degrees of formality: familiar conversation, private correspondence, formal conversation, public worship, platform speech, and so forth.

For every occasion when one needs to speak formally, a hundred or a thousand situations involve informal talk. Here the aim should be to speak naturally and easily, with as much interest and animation as one can summon up. No matter how important what one has to say is and no matter how interested one is in saying that something, he should try to choose words to fit the occasion. In doing so, he should strive to avoid such roadblocks to effective communication as illiteracies, improprieties, grammatical errors, excessive slang, unidiomatic expressions, wordiness, and triteness.

The belief that "anything goes" in the use of language can be embarrassing and costly. Speech and writing that communicate are one thing; speech and writing that do so clearly, interestingly, and effectively are something else. Literacy and competency are different matters. Naturalness and ease in speaking and writing are worthwhile goals, but casualness, ignorance, and lack of concern are destructive attitudes in reaching for them. Certain language standards are important. To be sure, the English language is a changing and growing thing. All its users have, of course, a perceptible effect upon it. There is need, not for those who would halt its progress altogether, but for those who can keep a gentle foot on the brake and a guiding hand on the steering wheel...