

Section B

Techniques of Language

1. Emotional Terms

Game Book Definition

“Participant in an argument: ‘If you ignorant fools would only shut your traps a while and let me ...’

“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.”

From *Thinking Straighter*

- “... it is easy for a few well-chosen words to predispose us and make us partial to a cause about which we know nothing.”
- “The effect of an emotional term is to ascribe to a person, object, situation or event a quality which will arouse a favorable or unfavorable attitude or response although this quality is not inherent in what has been praised or condemned. It is rather a projection of the subjective feeling of the speaker or writer.”
- “Can’t truth be best served sometimes by frankly emotive language? If my opponent is a fool, a liar, and a coward, why shouldn’t I say so? It is impossible to avoid the use of emotional terms, or expressions of approval or disapproval, when making ethical, aesthetic, or any value judgment, but these should be supported by factual evidence or logical reasoning.”
- “Assuming proof that your opponent is a liar, there may be a virtue in calling him such. There is no single term available that is more neutral. Just do not call him a ‘damned liar.’”

Expanded Definition

If it is not clear whether an example that uses “loaded words” represents a “non-controversial situation” as discussed above, *default to Propaganda* and answer Emotional Terms.

Examples of Emotional Terms

- a. It is sickening what has happened to education in this country. Graduates are pitifully prepared for the modern world. Teachers are disgustingly underpaid.

Comment: The speaker could have said simply, “I’m disturbed by what has happened to education in this country. Graduates aren’t prepared for the

modern world. Teachers are underpaid.” The adjectives “sickening,” “pitifully,” and “disgustingly” add force to the statement without supplying any evidence to support the point being made.

- b. Ad: “Of all the aggressors that conspire to wreak havoc on your skin, none is more destructive than light. We’ve made it safe to live with light with Chanel’s Creme Extreme.”

Comment: “Wreak havoc,” “destructive,” and even “safe” are emotional terms.

In most examples, the emotional terms are adjectives or adverbs. Occasionally, the “loaded” terms are nouns.

Example of Emotional Terms as Nouns

- c. We must stop that *crook* Edwin Jones from being reelected governor. He has proved to be a *tax-raiser* who takes advantage of working people.

Emotional terms often appear in comparisons. However, if most of the emotionally-charged words are *not* part of a metaphor or simile, the answer should be Emotional Terms.

Example of Emotional Terms rather than Metaphor and Simile

- d. Ad: “You’ll love these blankets. They cuddle close to you and comfort you. Soft, warm, good to touch – you’ll put them first on your list of friends for life.”

Comment: The ad compares blankets to your friends and their feel to your mother when you were a child. However, the words “love,” “cuddle,” “soft,” “warm,” “good to touch” are not part of an explicit metaphor or simile. On balance, the ad uses emotional terms more than metaphor and simile.

Examples of Metaphor and Simile rather than Emotional Terms

- e. Ad: “What is a good cup of coffee? It is courage in the morning, refreshment at noon; congeniality with friends along the afternoon’s way; restoration at day’s end. Above all, it means Bills Brothers.”

Comment: A cup of coffee is compared to “courage,” “refreshment,” “congeniality with friends,” and “restoration.” These feeling-laden words make the metaphors more striking. [Note: This example also embodies Passing from the Acceptable to the Dubious in Section D.]

- f. A Diet Dew Drink is an exquisite adventure – a leap from a plane on a skateboard, a churning ride in a kayak in a raging mountain stream.

Comment: The emotional terms support the adventure metaphor.

Examples **d**, **e**, and **f** intertwine two techniques so tightly that players will be challenged to analyze each correctly in a minute or less. So such examples should be *confined to Junior/Senior or not used at all*.

As stated in the Propaganda booklet, emotional terms are allowed in patriotic speeches, church services, poetry, and other situations where a person is not at-

tempting to persuade others. *The example must make clear that a non-controversial situation is involved. Otherwise, the answer defaults to Emotional Terms.*

Example of No Technique rather than Emotional Terms

- g.** U.S. President at Arlington National Cemetery: “On this 4th of July, I ask that each of you remember the sacrifice that each of the brave defenders of America laid to rest here made for this great nation of ours. Many of them blessed our nation with the very last drops of their life’s blood. Remember them always.”

Comment: The president is allowed emotional language in this setting but not while campaigning for office or promoting or defending his policies.

2. Metaphor and Simile

Game Book Definition

“Metaphor – ‘Napoleon was a fox.’ Simile – ‘Napoleon was like a fox.’

“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?”

From *Thinking Straighter*

- “We should ... be very careful about using or accepting Metaphors and Similes in arguments purporting to be objective. Usually no justification of the comparison is given. The differences between the two things compared are normally greater and more significant than the similarities. A Metaphor or Simile is no substitute for an explicit description of the similarity.”
- “Personification and Animation are special kinds of Metaphor. To personify is to attribute human qualities to that which is not a person. ... To animate is to attribute the characteristics of life to the non-living. ... Cartoonists use Personification and Animation to simplify, to save time and space, and to make their message more persuasive.”

Expanded Definition

Players do not have to specify whether the technique is metaphor or simile, just as in Section **A** they need not distinguish among Conservatism, Moderatism, and Radicalism.

Examples of Metaphor and Simile

- a. Like ships that pass in the night, you two are arguing without seeing each other’s point.
Comment: Spare us useless similes and mediate our argument!
- b. Ad: “Good servants are hard to come by these days, but your Remington printer is just that – a good servant.”

Comparisons often employ emotional language. However, the answer should be Metaphor and Simile if *most of the emotional terms contribute to a metaphor or simile*. See examples **d**, **e**, and **f** on page **B-3** and especially the statement following example **f**.

Nicknames are often metaphors. If commonly used to identify a famous person of the past or present, nicknames do not constitute propaganda even though the nickname may be a loaded term.

Example of No Technique rather than Metaphor and Simile

- c. “Stonewall” Jackson received his name from his men at the First Battle of Bull Run because he stood like a stonewall against the enemy.

3. Emphasis

Game Book Definition

“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) [that person] 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.”

From *Thinking Straighter*

- “Emphasis in itself is not a fallacy but a valuable device for indicating the importance that one attaches to some idea or ideal and for exactly conveying one’s thoughts to others. ... The fallacy of Emphasis occurs when the original meaning is thereby distorted.”
- “Sometimes the fallacy of Emphasis occurs through ignorance. We may have the mistaken idea that what we are quoting was originally emphasized in a certain way. Or we have no idea as to what, if anything, was emphasized in the original, but we feel that to make sense the original must or should have been emphasized as we emphasize it now.”

Many examples of Emphasis involve a dialog between two people.

Example of Emphasis involving dialog

- a. Johnny is brought before the teacher for passing around notes that make unkind comments about a classmate. The teacher scolds Johnny, saying, “We should NEVER say HURTFUL things about anyone.”
Johnny saw a loophole in the teacher’s scolding and replied: “But I didn’t SAY anything hurtful. I wrote it.”

Sometimes only one person speaks or writes in the example, and the author of the statement being changed by emphasis is referred to in the third person. Also the original author’s statement may be implicitly rather than explicitly referred to.

Example of Emphasis without dialog

- b. The Ten Commandments monument in the courthouse in Alabama is not protected by the Constitution because the First Amendment applies only to free *speech*.

Comment: The First Amendment to the Constitution has consistently been interpreted to apply to all forms of *expression*, such as writings, music, drama, etc.

Emphasis differs from Quotation Out of Context in that Emphasis involves quoting or paraphrasing a source correctly but shading the meaning by emphasizing a word

or phrase not stressed in the original statement. Quotation Out of Context selects only *part* of a statement, changing the intent by omitting a key phrase or sentence.

Example of Emphasis rather than Quotation Out of Context

- c. Teacher to students: “I want all of you to contribute to the United Fund.”
Later a student tells his mom: “Mom, can you give me a dollar?”
Mom: “Why do you want it?”
Student: “Oh, I don’t want it. Our teacher says she wants YOU to contribute to the United Fund.”

Comment: The student may not have quoted the teacher verbatim but still summarizes the point that was made. However, the student changes the teacher’s intent by emphasizing YOU to make it refer to his mother rather than himself.

Example of Quotation Out of Context rather than Emphasis

- d. Political candidate: “President Franklin Roosevelt said, ‘We have *nothing* to fear.’ I believe, like Roosevelt, that our country can solve any problem it faces.”

Comment: Emphasizing *nothing* does not change Roosevelt’s statement. However, omitting his phrase “but fear itself” does make a difference.

4. Quotation Out of Context

Game Book Definition

“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.”

Expanded Definition

The definition above does not require that the quoted statement be *someone else's* statement. This allows a speaker to misquote himself or herself at a later time.

Example of Quotation Out of Context applied to another speaker

- a. Military critic: “Considering that only one test-fire out of 32 was successful, to conclude that the new missile system is a success is quite a stretch of the imagination.” Several days later, in the *Times*, the military critic was reported to have said, “The new missile system is a success.”

Example of Quotation Out of Context applied to one's own statement

- b. Governor: “I favor establishing a committee to develop a bill to create a toll for using interstate highways in our state.”
Governor a week later after a storm of protest against tolls: “All I called for was a committee to look into whether or not we should institute a toll on our interstate highways.”

Ads may quote a well-known statement but replace certain words in order to make a clever point about their product or apply the quotation to a context not intended by the original author. Because of their subtlety and possible lack of familiarity of younger players with the original quotation, *examples like this should be limited to Junior/Senior Divisions.*

Examples of Quotation Out of Context in ads

- c. Ad: “Insure domestic tranquility. Buy your wife a diamond from Samuels Jewelers.”
Comment: This is similar to Status (Section C) in that words from the U.S. Constitution are taken out of context to justify purchasing a diamond.
- d. Ad for a restaurant: “We believe in life, liberty, and the pursuit of fine cuisine.”
Comment: The ad captures your attention with a surprise ending to the famous phrase from the Declaration of Independence.

Quotation Out of Context resembles Emphasis in that neither plays fair when referring to what someone else said. However, Quotation Out of Context involves selecting *part* of what someone said and conveniently omitting the rest. Emphasis does not omit any key component of a statement but changes the meaning by stressing a word or phrase. See examples c and d on page B-7.

Quotation Out of Context is similar to Shift of Meaning because both involve changing the original meaning of a word or statement. However, Quotation Out of Context repeats only part of what someone said whereas Shift of Meaning takes a word or phrase from the original statement and changes its meaning.

Example of Quotation Out of Context rather than Shift of Meaning

e. Mother to son: “If you complete your homework, then you can have one of my fresh baked chocolate cookies.”

Son to father: “Mom said I could have one of her cookies. Could you please get them down for me?”

Comment: The son conveniently omits the part about finishing his homework when he asks dad to get the cookies.

Example of Shift of Meaning rather than Quotation Out of Context

f. Mother to son: “If you complete your homework, then you can have one of my fresh baked chocolate cookies.”

Later mom sees the son eating a cookie: “You couldn’t have finished your homework that quickly!”

Son: “I did all that I could here at home. I have to do the rest in the school library tomorrow.”

Comment: The son shifts the meaning of “complete your homework” to “complete all the work you can do at home.” If he had told mom in advance that part of the assignment required library access, she might have modified her requirement.

5. Abstract Terms

Game Book Definition

“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.*”

From *Thinking Straighter*

“Such terms as ‘freedom,’ ‘religion,’ ‘good,’ ‘beauty,’ and ‘spirit’ are highly abstract and their referents are not as concrete as are those of such abstract terms as ‘dog’ and ‘board.’ In the latter cases the meanings can be carried by a mental image of an external object or action. This is not so easily done, if it can be done at all, in the former cases. So it is that some consider such terms ‘meaningless.’”

Expanded Definition

- The speaker cannot back up the term he used with an example.
- The speaker sidesteps or dodges the question when asked for a concrete example. He may ridicule the questioner or simply change the subject.
- The speaker gives a “glittering generality” but offers no specifics. How can someone be criticized when he offers no specifics?

Abstract Terms examples often take the form of a dialog but not always.

Examples of Abstract Terms in dialog form

- a. Fred: “Bob, you said a neurotic is a person who has a bad nerve status, but I’m not sure I understand. Is there anyone here you can use as an example to show me?”
Bob: “How can I tell if anyone here is neurotic? I’m no psychiatrist.”
- b. Smith: “Our economy need stimulation. I recommend the Greenspan package.”
Jones: “What exactly does the Greenspan package involve?”
Smith: “Your question shows that you haven’t been following recent economic developments.”

Example of Abstract Terms without dialog

- c. I tell you, loyalty is what we need. By loyalty, I mean good old fashioned loyalty – nothing more and nothing less.

Comment: The speaker seems to anticipate the question of what he means and answers – or rather doesn’t answer – before anyone can speak up.

Abstract Terms can resemble Vagueness. However, the *form* of the example usually determines the technique.

Example of Abstract Terms rather than Vagueness

- d. Salesman: “We’re proud of the wide coverage of our cellular phone service.”
Customer: “Can I call my sister in Jackson with your cellular phone?”

Salesman: "It would take me too long to list all the cities covered by our service."

Comment: The salesman uses the abstract and vague term "wide coverage." When given a specific example of wide coverage, he fails to clarify whether Jackson is included. If the salesman were to respond, "Give me a minute and I'll let you know whether Jackson is covered," the answer would be No Technique.

Example of Vagueness rather than Abstract Terms

- e. Ad: "Buy a BellWest cellular phone and get the benefits of our wide area coverage."

Comment: The ad does not clarify the meaning of "wide area coverage."

If the speaker gives one or more concrete examples for an abstract term, then the answer is No Technique.

Example of No Technique rather than Abstract Terms

- f. Celebrity on a TV talk show: "I became an alcoholic and a drug user and dropped out of films earlier in my career because I came from a dysfunctional family."

"What's a dysfunctional family?" asked the talk show host.

"Well, my father came home drunk at least three times a week, my mother exploded in fits of frustration at least once a week, and my older brother used to beat the tar out of me and my younger sister all the time."

6. Vagueness

Game Book Definition

“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.”

From *Thinking Straighter*

“Adjectives as well as nouns are vague. There is no rule that tells us how much ‘hotness’ a thing must have in order for the term ‘hot’ to be applied to it. Going to the dictionary will not settle the question ... It is only by arbitrarily drawing a sharp dividing line that precision can be attained here.”

Expanded Definition

Vagueness involves using a word that covers a *range* of possibilities.

Example of Vagueness

- a. Mother to daughter: “Now I want this understood clearly, Clarissa. You are not to stay out too late again this Saturday night.”

Comment: “Late” is not an abstract term but can mean any time from 9 pm to 2 am.

Vagueness sometimes takes the form of a dialog.

Example of Vagueness in dialog form

- b. Reporter to software company representative: “When will the new version of the game program be available?”

Company representative: “Soon.”

Comment: The example above could easily be turned into an Abstract Terms example, as follows.

Company representative: “The new version of the game program will be available soon.”

Reporter: “How soon is ‘soon’?”

Representative: “You’ll be the first to know when we have a definite date.”

Sometimes part of the example is specific but one or more vague words are included in another part of the statement. The answer is still Vagueness.

Example of Vagueness with some specific information

- c. From an ad for *Meditablet*: “Four out of five medical doctors surveyed said they advise patients to use *Meditablet* for temporary relief from minor aches and pains.”

Comment: “Four out of five” is exact. However, what do “temporary relief” and “minor aches and pains” mean?

Vagueness resembles Ambiguity in that there is uncertainty in both techniques. However, with Ambiguity, there are *two* possible meanings; with Vagueness there is a *range* of possibilities.

Example of Vagueness rather than Ambiguity

- d. Mr. Hanson, your consulting expenses are way out of line. I agreed to pay “reasonable” expenses, but yours are way too much. I refuse to pay at this level.

Comment: Mr. Hanson knows what “reasonable expenses” are in general. However, there is disagreement about what is a reasonable payment for his services.

Example of Ambiguity rather than Vagueness

- e. The title of the document, which took five years to draft, is “Energy Conservation for a New Century.”

Comment: “Five years” is not vague. However, did it take five years to draft the entire document or just the title?

If the speaker clarifies the scope of a word, then the answer is No Technique.

Example of No Technique rather than Vagueness

- f. Teacher: “You students better study hard for this test. It takes a score of 92 or higher to get college credit. Anything lower means no credit.”

Comment: “Study hard” is vague; however, the teacher specifies 92 as the grade to shoot for. Each student can decide how hard to study based on his/her past performance.

7. Ambiguity

Game Book Definition

“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.”

From *Thinking Straighter*

“On most occasions when a word or phrase is ambiguous ..., this failure of communication is quite innocent on the part of the writer or speaker. ... There are, however, situations where deliberate Ambiguity is employed.”

Example of Ambiguity

- a. Newspaper headline: “Doctor compiles list of poisons children may drink at home.”

An example is Ambiguity even if we know the intended meaning.

Example of Ambiguity where the intended meaning is clear

- b. The mayor and his friends parked in a no-parking zone. The cops came and towed the cars away, and they were put in jail.

Comment: Clearly, the cops incarcerated the people, not the cars.

Most of the time, the speaker or writer is unaware of the Ambiguity. However, ad and headline writers use Ambiguity as a clever way to get your attention.

Example of Intentional Ambiguity

- c. Ad for an online shopping site: “With hundreds of digital cameras to compare, you’ll definitely find one that clicks.”

Comment: Every camera “clicks” when you snap a picture. Does it also “click” with consumers?

For the difference between Ambiguity and Vagueness, see the explanation and examples **d** and **e** on page **B-13**.

Ambiguity differs from Shift of Meaning because Ambiguity involves a word or phrase used *once* but with more than one meaning. Shift of Meaning involves *several* uses of a word – or of a word and its homonym - with a different meaning each time.

Example of Ambiguity rather than Shift of Meaning

- d. Ad for Total Fitness Weight Training Products: “We support women’s rights ... and lefts and tops and bottoms.”

Comment: Women’s rights is used *once* and is made ambiguous by the words that follow it: “lefts,” “tops,” and “bottoms.”

Example of Shift of Meaning rather than Ambiguity

- e. Ad for Total Fitness Weight Training Products: “Women have a right to healthy attractive bodies. That’s why we support their rights, lefts, tops, and bottoms.”

Comment: “Right” or “rights” is used first to mean “a privilege.” Then it is used to refer to a side of the body.

8. Shift of Meaning

Game Book Definition

“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?”

“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.”

Expanded Definition

The speaker uses a word with a specific meaning. Later in the example, the same speaker or another speaker uses the same word or a derivative of the word with a different meaning.

Example of Shift of Meaning

- a. The customer complained that the “name-brand” canned fruit was a brand that neither she nor her friends had ever heard of. The manager replied, “Look, lady, it is a brand and it has a name. What more do you want?”

Comment: The customer uses “name-brand” in its commonly accepted meaning (a well-known product). The manager interprets the term literally.

The term that shifts meaning does not have to be exactly the same each time. It can change from singular to plural (or vice-versa) or a word with the same root can be substituted in the second usage.

Examples of Shift of Meaning involving modification of the term

- b. John is a conservative, so I know he’s in favor of conservation.

Comment: “Conservative” and “conservation” have the same root but different meanings.

- c. Congressman: “We have given the Defense Department all the money it has asked for. Yet our nation is becoming more and more defenseless because of the poor quality of its educational system and the alarming crime rates in our cities. Let’s cut the Defense Department budget and spend more on education and the cities.”

Comment: “Defense” as in “Defense Department” shifts to “defenseless” in a more generic sense to apply to education.

In most examples, the speaker is unaware of using a term in two different ways. However, Shift of Meaning can be intentional to make a point in a clever way.

Examples of Intentional Shift of Meaning

- d.** In the Continental Congress, Benjamin Franklin said, “We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall hang separately.”
- e.** TV football announcer: “That new coordinator is supposed to be an offensive genius. So far, however, his play calling has been really offensive.”

Shift of Meaning also applies to using homonyms with different meanings.

Examples of Shift of Meaning involving homonyms

- f.** Student protesting the school dress code: “The Constitution says I have the right to bear arms. So why are you objecting when I show my bare arms in this sleeveless t-shirt?”

For the difference between Shift of Meaning and Quotation Out of Context, see the explanation and examples **e** and **f** on page **B-9**.