

The decline of language

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Even in this day and age of computers and cellphones, when people have the world at their fingertips, it is amazing how despite this, the population as a whole has become more and more sheltered. This sheltering is due to the desensitization of language as a whole. Over time people have come to use euphemisms, bland imagery, and pretentious diction to disguise the true meaning of their writing.

This decline in the English language has lead people to become blind to what it truly going on around them. As language becomes less unique and more desensitized, the use of euphemisms has greatly increased. A euphemism is a mild or indirect phrase that is substituted for one that might be too harsh or blunt when discussing an unpleasant or embarrassing topic. In George Carlin's routine on euphemisms, the comedian discusses how language has lost emotional value as people replace direct language with " soft language." An example that Carlin gives of this transformation is how over the years the condition in combat in which a soldier suffers from nervous exhaustion has gone from " shell shock" to " battle fatigue" to " operational exhaustion" to " Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" and then finally " PTSD," losing all sense of humanity. The sterilization of language uses jargon to bury the emotion and value leaving only the shell of the words behind.

The use of euphemisms is just one of the many ways in which language is losing its effectiveness, causing it to lose meaning and importance. Along with the use of euphemisms in the English language, there has also been an increase in the commonality of language, especially in the case of imagery. According to George Orwell in *Politics and the English Language*, imagery has become " stale". The words that once inspired the mind to think of vivid

images and stories have become nothing but common jargon that display the point but not the picture. An example of this imagery might be, “batten down the hatches.” This example compares getting ready for difficult times to how a person might fasten the hatch on a ship before a storm.

In reality, the majority of the human population does not know what a hatch is, let alone “battened” any of them. Similar to how the art of sailing has become a lost form of transportation, the meaning of this phrase has faded away. Moreover, losing the meaningful picture of the intent that once lay behind the saying. Along with using terms and sayings that are outdated, language has also become stale in the repetitiveness. This can be best explained by phrases such as, “don’t judge a book by its cover,” and “white as snow,” both of which still apply to experiences people have today, but in their overuse they have become drab.

As time goes on, and as more people continue to use outdated or overused imagery, language continues to lose more and more of its uniqueness; becoming hollow and somewhat meaningless. Adding to the process of the hollowing out of language, is the lack of precise word choice. In a time where people, especially politicians, as George Orwell makes clear in *Politics and the English Language*, are trying to shield the troubles of the world from the people in order to make their cause seem better, the English language has been tweaked to become vague and misleading. By using “pretentious diction,” as Orwell puts it, and meaningless words, authors are able to cushion statements to the point in which discovering the true meaning is like deciphering hieroglyphics. By disguising the true meaning of words, people are able to vaguely address issues without actually getting to the core,

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tricking the public into feeling as if they have received the explanation they deserve. In dressing up what should be simple phrases and adding fluff, the world is left utterly confused and in the dark, causing them to lose interest in issues that matter, leaving language even more disheveled than before.

The use of euphemisms, bland imagery, and pretentious diction have brought the standards of the English language to a new low. As the quality of language slips through the cracks, people suffer more and more from the lack of clarity and originality. The further and further the people descend into the abyss, the less likely they are to find their way out, leaving everyone in complete darkness with only a small flicker of the adulterated language to guide them.