

# Engaging in Verbal Communication

## Chapter Four

# Focus Questions

- How are language and thought related?
- What abilities are possible because humans use symbols?
- What are the practical implications of recognizing that language is a process?

# Focus Questions

- How do rules guide verbal communication?
- How can you improve your verbal communication?

# A New Twist on an Old Saying

“Sticks and stones can break my bones,  
but words can *really* hurt me.”

# Language & Meaning

- Language consists of symbols
  - People
  - Events
  - All that goes around us
- Not all symbols are linguistic
  - Nonverbal communication

# Features of Language

- Arbitrariness

- Ambiguity

- Abstraction

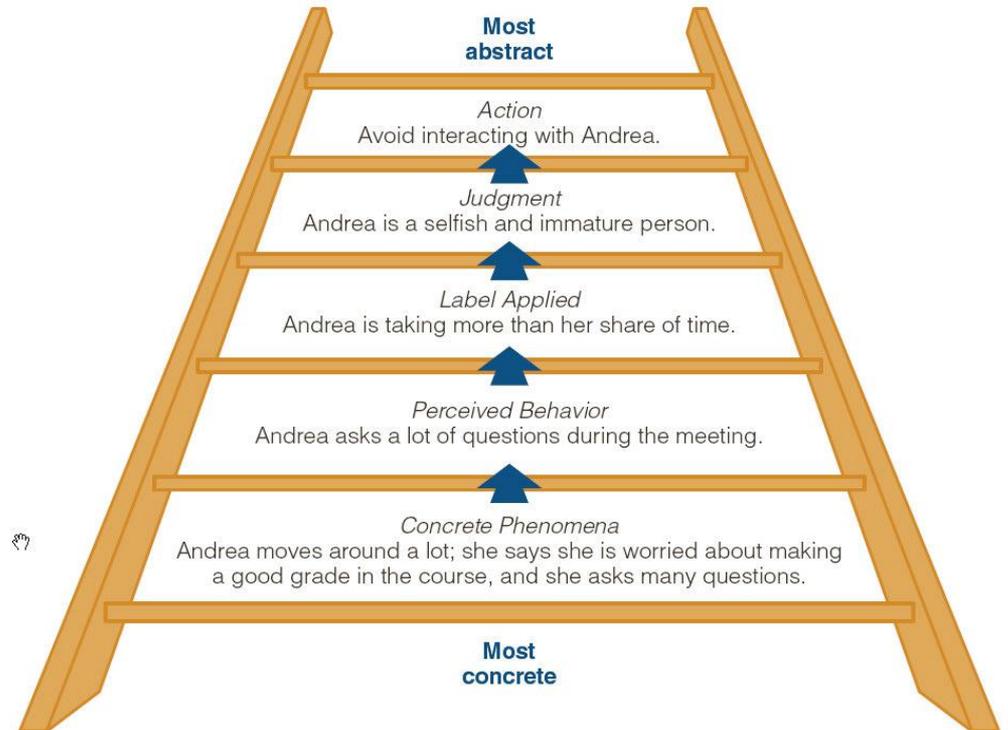


Figure 4.1 THE LADDER OF ABSTRACTION

# Principles of Communication

- Interpretation creates meaning
  - brute facts
  - institutional facts
- Communication is guided by rules
  - Regulative rules
  - Constitutive rules
- Punctuation affects meaning

# Symbolic Activities

- Language defines phenomena
- Language evaluates phenomena
  - Loaded language
  - Reappropriation

# Symbolic Activities

- Language organizes experiences
- Language allows hypothetical thought
  - experiences and ideas that are not part of your concrete, daily reality

# Symbolic Activities

- Language allows self-reflection
- Language defines relationships and interaction
  - Responsiveness
  - Liking
  - Power

**Figure 4.3** SYMBOLIC ABILITIES

1. Symbols define phenomena.
2. Symbols evaluate phenomena.
3. Symbols allow us to organize experiences.
4. Symbols allow us to think hypothetically.
5. Symbols allow self-reflection.
6. Symbols define relationships and interactions.

# Guidelines for Effective Verbal Communication

- Engage in person-centered communication
- Be conscious of levels of abstraction
- Qualify language
  - static evaluation
  - indexing
- Own your feelings and thoughts

# I-Language

- Own responsibility
- More descriptive

**Figure 4.4** *I- and You-Language*

*You-Language*

You hurt me.

You make me feel small.

You're really domineering.

You humiliated me.

*I-Language*

I feel hurt when you ignore what I say.

I feel small when you tell me that I'm selfish.

When you shout, I feel dominated.

I felt humiliated when you mentioned my problems in front of your friends.

# Summary

- A new twist on an old saying
- Language & meaning
- Features of language
- Principles of communication
- Communication is guided by rules

# Summary

- Symbolic activities
- Language defines relationships and interaction
- Guidelines for effective verbal communication
- Own your feelings and thoughts
- I-Language