The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology: Division of Humanities/Center for Language Education

HUMA 1000: Cultures and Values: **Cover sheet for final essay**

Full name	
Student ID	
Writing workshop section number	
Writing workshop instructor	
Title of essay (please copy and paste from the document on Canvas)	**1. Language can influence our thoughts and values; by changing the way we talk, we can change the way we think. For instance, if we eliminate racist, sexist and other discriminatory terms from our language, we will become a less racist, sexist and less discriminatory society. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?**

Declaration: The attached essay represents my own work. I have read and understood the University's policies on academic honesty and I confirm that the attached work conforms to these policies.

Please type your name:

Response to feedback: note here the comments from your instructor you have responded to (you can copy these from your feedback sheet).

In the introduction, my thesis statement in the draft cannot prepare the reader for further argument. Therefore, I rewrote the last sentence of my essay, making it more related to my following points. In the body paragraphs 1, 2 and the counterargument, I did not refer to course materials appropriately in the draft so I added some examples from the PowerPoint and checked whether the samples are related to my essay. For the conclusion, my draft contains a new idea. I was asked to omit the sentences about China. Therefore, I deleted the new idea about China and added the idea to my counterargument so as to enrich my point of view.

Language is important to our everyday lives because we use language to communicate with others as well as express our feelings and thoughts. All linguistic activities are coordinated in the brain, which controls the production of linguistic cognition. When we talk, our brain is continually processing. Transferring thoughts from one mind to another is the main use of language. Therefore, the language we use can affect others thoughts and values. When we try to eliminate negative words in our talk, people may tend to think positively towards what you say. Therefore, the attitude we take when we are talking really matters and it can affect the way people think as well. This essay stresses the use of language to influence the way we think and our emotion, with an example of the use of positive words that help us think positively. In the other way round, using negative words can adversely affect our emotion and other people's perception of us.

Language and our brain are highly correlated, the words we received or give out are definitely in the process of our brain. This explains why language can control our thought (Thomas*, et al.*, 2004). Try to imagine when you receive positive words, you will naturally feel happy because of positive words, such as 'love', 'amazing', is a kind of praise. Even a single word can have a significant effect on our physical and emotional stress. (Andrew & Mark, 2012). People who give out positive words means that they are agreeing with you. This makes us feel more satisfied and helps reduce our anxiety, especially for teenagers who may feel very stressed and uncertain during puberty. For example, when your teacher or employer praise you for your work and afford, you will feel more confident in your ability. A study is conducted to show how good words may influence us. This experiment is called "The gratitude and appreciation journal". In the study, a large group of participants aged between 35 to 54 was requested to write down three things they want to owe every day and also the reasons for writing the things down. Their degree of happiness is proved to be increasing during the experiment and they feel less depressed (Elena, 2016). This means that using positive words in our language can definitely help us produce positive emotion and make us think more positively.

Using negative words will not only affect the mood of others but also our own emotion. When we give out negative words, we are thinking negatively. Finding the merit of others is a difficult task as mistakes are always easier to be found and it takes almost no effort to find others shortcomings. However, if we allow ourselves to continue focusing on others mistakes, we will adapt to the practice of blaming and complaining about others. The word 'Key' in Spanish is gendered as feminine and gives Spaniards a lovely image. However, in German, the word 'Key' gives Germany a masculine image (Boroditsky, et al., 2003). This truly explains the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, how we perceive and think about the world is determined by the language we speak (Thomas, et al., 2004). The words we say are negative and we would, therefore, be discouraged and think of some negative experiences more often. Moreover, no one like to hear criticism. When we always complain, the frequency of conflicts between you and your friends will increase, and this will definitely affect the relationship. You may, therefore, feel less supportive when you encounter negative emotion. When we always allow negative words and concepts come into our mind, the fear centre of our brain will be activated, affecting the normal function of our brain (Andrew & Mark, 2012). This is one of the reasons why so many people choose to commit suicide. Therefore, if we always add negative words to our speech, our thoughts will be adversely affected.

It is argued that eliminating a deeply-rooted perception from a society is very difficult. For example, removing the gendered stereotypes to create a less sexist, discriminatory and an equal society remain one of the top goals of every democratic nation. It is undeniable that making the general public eliminate racist, sexist and other discriminatory terms from their language are difficult. Nevertheless, it might not be impossible If there is a law to limit people from saying these words. In short term, people will decrease the use of negative words. Reviewing a real example in Taiwan, citizens are restricted from speaking discriminatory curse words as they do not want to pay the fine imposed by law. People in Taiwan then gradually decrease their discriminatory stereotypes and also their racist or sexist behaviours. This shows that when we are restricted from mentioning discriminatory concepts, our stereotypic thoughts and behaviours will also be altered. The language constrained the social categories we create and how we perceive the events and action (Carroll, 1956). Hence, when we speak less about the sexist discriminatory terms, we are then less constrained, and perhaps, there will be more boys wearing dresses in the future. Through limiting the use of racist, sexist and other discriminatory terms from our language, the pressure based on public opinions will reduce and thus, we can have more freedom to do what we want to do. In China, a country used to have a very serious sexist discrimination, is found to have an equal gender social status now. This means it is not impossible to change the mindset of the human through social means.

In conclusion, the words we use is affecting our thoughts. When we use more positive words in communication, people may feel confident and may also have a higher self-identity. On the other hand, using negative words causes more conflicts and thus inducing more negative thoughts. Although our speech is hard to change the concept of the world, when we speak less racist, sexist and other discriminatory terms, we are actually helping those who are suffering from discrimination.

References

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