

Chapter 3

Post–Truth (Mis) communication as Enigmatic Mystification and Misuse of Language

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ABSTRACT

It would be erroneous to assume that language can only be used in positive sense and that it cannot be misused to cause instability and unrest in our professional as well as personal lives. On the contrary, language can be weaponised to cause irreparable harm/damage to vulnerable communities, ethnicities, marginalized populations, and deprived chunks of humanity. Language has innumerable forms such as genuine and authentic language, truthful and honest language, ingenuine and false language, and fake and deceptive language. Be that negative or positive aspect of language, it can be tilted either way as per one's will and choice; nevertheless, inauthentic and manipulative language can seldom have acceptability among the masses. The term 'post-truth' stems from fabrication of truth and it has a deep connection with politics. Post-truth may be understood as a situation wherein the objective facts are less influential in shaping opinion, and emotions and personal beliefs are important to connect people. In this chapter, the authors have analyzed language in the age of post-truth.

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INTRODUCTION

The origin of language, a great extent, could be attributed to the survival needs of Homo sapiens as they had to struggle hard to get food and stay safe from the harsh surroundings. Ever since man could use language, he had an advantage over other species not only from survival perspective but also from the viewpoint of his need to interact with others (Bryant). Not that communication has been impossible without language; we have ample evidence to the contrary as birds and animals communicate nonverbally without language. Nevertheless, humans are different from members of other species majorly because of their ability to use words to articulate and vocalize our thoughts. In common parlance, language is a means of communication in a non-verbal, verbal or written manner. One tends to make use of words while s/he uses language be that in a spoken or written manner. The term 'language' also implies a 'system of communication' practiced by a particular community. Language can also be viewed as "a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves" (Robins and Crystal). Besides communication, it is also a means to express our identity, imagination, ideas, emotions and feelings. Since time immemorial, man has been using language in the form of signs, signals and gestures. Prior to the advent of the word, man has been using various nonverbal signs to express his desires and needs. Language as we see it today is an evolved form of self-expression and exchange of ideas.

Language as Communication

As the story of civilization developed, human's narration skills also improved considerably. Language as communication in its highly evolved form has been a serious cause of concern across humanities and social sciences. Language as means to communicate one's inner-self has been core area of concern for linguists and writers. Interestingly, language can be used, misused, abused, over-used and under-used as per volition and choice of the user. In this sense, language can be viewed as a weapon to achieve desired results.

It would be erroneous to assume that language can only be used only in positive sense, and that it cannot be misused to cause instability and unrest in our professional as well as personal lives. On the contrary, language can be weaponised to cause irreparable harm/damage to vulnerable communities, ethnicities, marginalized populations, and deprived chunks of humanity. Language has innumerable forms such as genuine and authentic language, truthful and honest language, ingenuine and false language, and fake and deceptive language. Be that negative or positive aspect of language, it can be tilted either way as per one's will and choice; nevertheless,

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