

CRITICAL LISTENING: MISLEADING COMMUNICATION

Technique	Explanation	Example	Detection Hints
Opinion disguised as fact	A <i>fact</i> is something that can be verified as true or as something that actually happened. An <i>opinion</i> is someone's feelings or judgment. If a speaker does not support information that is given as fact, then it is an opinion disguised as fact.	Fact: George Washington was the first president of the United States. Opinion disguised as fact: Historians agree that George Washington was the greatest president that the United States has ever had.	Speakers must support opinions with facts before you can accept them as valid. Ask questions to discover facts. Verify facts by checking reference sources.
Deceptive connotation	The <i>denotation</i> of a word is its literal meaning. The <i>connotation</i> is a word's suggested meaning and the associations that the word has. Connotations can make a listener feel or think a certain way.	Neutral denotation: His determination surprised us. Unfavorable connotation: His stubbornness surprised us.	If a speaker uses the connotation of a word to distort the truth and sway the listener, it is imprecise communication. Ask yourself if the connotation of any word is used to distort the truth.
Questionable euphemisms	A <i>euphemism</i> is a word or phrase that is used to avoid speaking directly about something that is unpleasant or improper.	Euphemism: The remains of the soldiers were never found. Direct word: The dead bodies of the soldiers were never found.	Euphemisms are used to soften the truth. Ask yourself why a speaker chose to use a euphemism instead of a more accurate term.
Inflated language	<i>Inflated language</i> is language that consists of scholarly, technical, or scientific words and overly long phrases. <i>Jargon</i> , the specialized vocabulary of a profession or a hobby, is an example of this.	Inflated language: No viable alternative exists for diligent commitment to an endeavor. Concise language: There is no substitute for hard work.	Jargon appears to be technical. It may present ideas you could understand more easily if they were stated clearly. Ask yourself why inflated language was used.