Chapter 4 Outline

(Italicized and bolded words are key words)

I. To best understand the content of this chapter, there are some verbal message fundamentals.
   A. **Verbal messages** the part of the message that is conveyed using a language.
   B. **Language** is a symbolic system used by people to communicate verbal or written messages, and it includes the following characteristics.
      1. Each language includes a **lexicon**, or the collection of words and expressions.
      2. A **phonology** is the sounds used to pronounce words.
      3. **Syntax and grammar** are the rules for combining words to form sentences and into larger units of expression.
      4. A **language community** includes all people who can speak or understand a particular language.
         a. A **dialect** is a form of a more general language spoken by a specific culture or co-culture that, while differing from the general language, shares enough commonality that most people who belong to a particular language community can understand it.
         b. A **speech community** is comprised of members of a larger language community who speak a common dialect with a particular style and observe common linguistic norms or scripts.
         c. Our own personal symbolic system is called an **idiolect**. It includes our active vocabularies, our pronunciation of words, and our grammar and syntax when talking or writing.

II. Language has six general characteristics.
   A. Language is arbitrary, since the words used to represent items are arbitrary symbols.
   B. Language is ambiguous, since there cannot be total agreement between the sender and the receiver in any communication.
   C. Language is abstract, since many words we use do not describe a concrete, exact thing.
   D. Language is self-reflexive, since it can refer to itself.
   E. Language is changeable.
   F. Language is revealing.

III. There is meaning in language itself.
   A. The **semantic meaning** of an utterance is the meaning derived from the language itself.
      1. **Words** are the arbitrarily chosen symbols used by a language or speech community to name or signify things.
      2. **Denotation** is the direct, explicit meaning of a word found in a written dictionary of the language community.
      3. **Connotation** is the feelings or evaluations we personally associate with a word.
IV. Language skills may be improved using the following strategies.
   A. By using specific language, ambiguity and abstractness may be reduced.
      1. Specific language is language in which concrete and precise words, details, and examples are used to clear up any ambiguity.
      2. Concrete words appeal to our senses.
      3. Precise words narrow a larger category to a smaller group within that category.
   B. To improve the clarity of one’s communication, one should qualify language.
      1. Qualifying language is language that indicates where a statement applies and does not apply, or indicates appropriate uncertainty about where it should apply.
      2. The misuse of generalizations contributes to perpetual inaccuracies.
   C. To be a better communicator, one should adapt language to listeners.
      1. Use vocabulary the listener understands.
      2. Use jargon, technical terminology whose meaning is understood only by a select group based on their shared activities or interests, sparingly.
      3. Use slang, informal vocabulary developed and used by particular groups in society, only when the listeners understand.
   D. Another way to use language more clearly is to demonstrate linguistic sensitivity.
      1. Linguistic sensitivity is choosing to use language that respects others and avoiding language that others perceive as offensive.
      2. Generic language is language that may apply only to one sex, race, or other group that is used in a way that assumes it represents everyone.
   E. The final way to improve language skills is to improve your emotional vocabulary.
      1. Describing feelings is the skill of verbally owning and explaining the precise feelings you are experiencing.

V. There are verbal meanings within the conversational context.
   A. The pragmatic meaning of the language in a verbal message is the meaning that arises from understanding the practical consequences of an utterance.
   B. A speech act is the action the speaker takes by uttering a verbal message that implies how the listener should respond.
   C. There are some guidelines for improving pragmatic understanding based on the cooperative principle, which states that conversational partners are able to understand what others mean to do with their verbal messages because they assume that their partners are collaborating.
   D. Grice’s conversational maxims are specific rules that cooperating partners count on others to follow. You can use these four maxims and two tips to help develop pragmatic competence.
      1. Tell the truth, the whole truth, and only the truth, also known as the maxim of quality.
      2. Provide the “right” amount of information, formally known as the maxim of quantity.
      3. Relate what you say to the topic being discussed, which is the maxim of relevancy.
      4. Be orderly in what you say; this is the manner maxim.
         a. Face is our public self-image, or how we want others to view us.
         1). Politeness is a language strategy that shows concern for face.

VI. There are four guidelines for improving pragmatic understanding.
   A. Interpret a message within its context.
B. Avoid excessive maxim violation.
C. Consider acknowledging that you are deliberately violating a maxim.
D. Temper clarity with politeness.

V. Different meanings exist within social and cultural contexts.
A. The sociolinguistic meaning of a message is the meaning of a verbal message that varies according to the language norms and expectations of a particular cultural or co-cultural group.
   1. All cultures develop idioms, which are expressions used by members of a language or speech community whose meaning differs from the usual meanings associated with that combination of words.
   2. A direct verbal style is characterized by message language that openly states the speaker’s intention and by message content that is straightforward and unambiguous.
   3. An indirect verbal style is characterized by message language that masks the speaker’s true intentions and by roundabout, vague message content whose real meaning is embedded in the social or cultural context.
B. There are three guidelines for improving sociolinguistic understanding.
   1. Develop intercultural competence.
   2. Practice mindfulness, the process of drawing novel distinctions.
   3. Recognize, respect, and adapt to the sociolinguistics practices of others.

VI. We use language to relate online.
A. Lean media rely heavily on language and other symbols, such as emoticons or emojis, to convey meaning.
B. Telephone, videoconferencing, and face-to-face interactions are rich media because meaning can be conveyed through both verbal and nonverbal behavior.