**Diction: Much More Than Words**

Diction is the choice of words or phrases in speech or writing. While diction may seem very straightforward, careful attention to the use of diction will greatly affect how a message is communicated and perceived.

Diction can be examined on two levels:

**Denotation-** Is the literal meaning of a word. The denotation is looking only at the direct meaning of the word(s).

**Connotation-** Is the emotional implications and associations that a word may carry, in contrast to its denotative meanings. A connotation is perceived by the listener. It is important to vary your diction according to your audience.

Diction may have different forms of connotations:

* **Euphemism**- A positive connotation. Euphemisms are used to say things in an optimistic, sensitive and more discreet manner.

For example: Saying someone has ‘Passed away’

* **Neutral** diction is used to avoid connotations in general. Diction that is neutral is perceived as ‘matter of fact’; therefore the speaker avoids offending or sending the wrong message to the audience.

For example: Saying someone has ‘lost their life’

* **Dysphemism**- A negative connotation. Dysphemisms are used to say things in a more offensive, blunt or disparaging manner.

For example: Saying someone has ‘kicked the bucket’

Can you list other connotations for each phrase?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Euphemism | Neutral | Dysphemism |
|  |  | My guts are about to explode! |
|  | ...house was disorganized. |  |
| She was an angel. |  |  |