

SELAH - PAUSE AND REFLECT

How Media and Language can influence the way we think?

In our hyper-connected world, language doesn't just live in books, classrooms, or conversations; it flows constantly through our screens. From trending phrases on social media to the headlines we read and the captions beneath our favourite posts, the words and expressions we encounter seep into how we think, feel, and see the world. It's no longer unusual to hear someone talk about being "ghosted," spotting "red flag behaviour," or feeling "the ick." Many of these expressions, once confined to niche online spaces, are now common in everyday conversations. And even if we don't use them ourselves, we hear them in the workplace, at the dinner table, or in passing chats. This shift is more than a linguistic curiosity; it reflects something deeper about how our thoughts are being shaped.

Language as a Lens

The idea that language affects how we think is not new. The concept of *linguistic relativity*, also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, proposes that language doesn't just express thoughts, it actively influences them. It shapes what we notice, how we categorise the world, and what we consider possible.

For example, Russian speakers distinguish shades of blue more quickly because their language has separate words for them. The Kuuk Thaayorre, an Aboriginal community in Australia, doesn't use "left" or "right" to describe

direction; everything is oriented using cardinal points (north, south, east, west). As a result, they are far more spatially aware than the average English speaker.

If the structure of a language can shape perception so profoundly, what happens when the “language” we use daily is not just our native tongue, but the ever-changing vocabulary of the internet and media?

Media as a Second Language

Media, in many ways, functions like another language. It communicates not only through words but through tone, framing, imagery, and even silence. A news story describing an event as a “protest” paints a very different picture than one calling it a “riot.” Camera angles can make crowds look threatening or peaceful. Background music can make a scene feel inspiring or ominous.

When language and media intersect, they don’t just inform us, they subtly train us. We are imitative learners, when we see and hear it enough times, we tend to pick up on these words, and before we know it, we are using them to describe music, our favorite places, people, ideas, preferences, etc. and as we pick up on these terms our way of looking at things changes as well. Every scroll, click, and watch session offers us frames of reference, ready-made labels, and emotional cues. Over time, these begin to colour our interpretations of events, relationships, and even ourselves.

When Online Language Enters Our Lives

Social media slang provides a daily example of this influence. Words like delulu, gaslit, gatekeeping, or emotional damage offer shorthand for complex experiences. Feeling hurt when you were ghosted by your crush? That’s giving emotional damage. When your date doesn’t like Taylor Swift or share your music taste, that’s red flag

behaviour. Think your month-long holiday request will be approved? You're being delulu. These terms can help make feelings easier to name and create a sense of shared understanding.

But there's a flip side. As these terms become widespread, there's a risk of misapplication or overidentification. A disagreement might be labelled as "gaslighting," a simple preference could be called a "red flag," and minor annoyances might be reframed as deep incompatibilities. While these labels can validate our experiences, they can also exaggerate them, narrowing the range of interpretations available to us.

The Constant Shaping of Thought

The influence of language and media is constant. It works quietly, often without our awareness. We may start to adopt certain viewpoints or emotional responses, not because we examined the issue in depth, but because the framing around us limited or directed what we saw.

As relational beings, we naturally learn through imitation. The more we encounter a phrase, a framing, or an idea, the more familiar and "true" it feels. Without noticing, our emotional reactions and even our sense of reality can begin to follow these linguistic grooves.

Perhaps the more important question is: What lenses am I looking through? Which are mine, and which have been handed to me by the news I read, the shows I watch, the conversations I hear? This isn't about rejecting those lenses entirely, it's about noticing them, and, when possible, taking them off for a moment to see what else might come into view.



REFLECTIVE PROMPTS –

1. When I scroll, whose voice am I really hearing, mine or the echo of someone else's?
2. What happens in me when I replace “consuming media” with “being in a relationship with media”?
3. If my words online were a mirror, what part of me would I see reflected back?

Monthly Takeaway

“But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.”- George Orwell

“Although culture is a creation of speech, it is recreated anew by every medium of communication, from painting to hieroglyphs to the alphabet to television. Each medium, like language itself, makes possible a unique mode of discourse by providing a new orientation for thought, for expression, for sensibility.”
— Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*

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- **Supervision** - Supervision in therapy is an essential aspect of ethical practice. Room has introduced individual and peer supervision programs for insight-oriented approaches to therapy. Our supervisors will guide you in the reflective analysis of transference and countertransference, enhancing therapeutic relationships along with deepening theoretical knowledge and skills. The program is open to practicing therapists with a minimum Master's level degree in psychology and will take place weekly for 2 hours.
- **#Sponsor Therapy** - With Room, our goal is to make mental health care more accessible and affordable. In line with those goals, we are accepting sponsors to help continue to provide sessions at affordable rates to individuals who need them.
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