



Middle School

National FFA Organization

Lesson MS.35

USING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE AND HUMOR

Unit.

Stage Two of Development—WE

Problem Area.

How Do I Initiate Relationships with Others?

Precepts.

H3: Develop and maintain relationships.

National Standards.

NL-ENG.K12.4 - Communication Skills - Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.



Student Learning Objectives. As a result of this lesson, the student will ...

- 1 Identify appropriate language and humor.
- 2 Describe the effects of using appropriate language and humor.



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Time. Instruction time for this lesson: 50 minutes.



Resources

Merriam-Webster. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1993.

Newstrom, John, and Scannell, Edward. *The Big Book of Team Building Games*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1998.



Tools, Equipment, and Supplies

- ✓ Four large poster boards in varied colors
- ✓ Quarter sheet of paper—one per student
- ✓ Trashcan
- ✓ Post-It notes
- ✓ MS.35.Assess—one per student
- ✓ MS.35.TM.A
- ✓ MS.35.TM.B
- ✓ MS.35.TM.C
- ✓ MS.35.AS.A—one per student
- ✓ MS.35.AS.B—one per student



Key Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson and appear in bold italics:

- ▶ Appropriate
- ▶ Slang
- ▶ Culture



Interest Approach

Explain to your students that they will have the chance to be someone else today, but they need to keep it a secret.



We have the chance to be someone else today, but whom we chose must remain a secret. We may chose to be a politician, a scientist, a parent, etc., but please do not tell anyone who we are. We are going to assume the perspective and character of this person. In other words, behave as he or she would. Please think about who we will pretend to be today.

Pause. Pass out MS.35.AS.A.



Please do not write on this paper yet. We are about to conduct an interview and be interviewed. Let's answer the questions as the person we are pretending to be, except please give your real name so I will be able to tell who worked together. Please select someone to interview and interview them.

Allow five minutes. Survey the room very closely to help some folks begin their activity/thinking.





- I could tell Please return to your seats.

Pause.



Please silently consider your answers to these questions.

Show MS.35.TM.A. Allow 30 seconds for them to view and contemplate.



How did it feel to pretend to be someone else?

Anticipated answers: fun; wasn't sure how to answer some of the questions; phony; unnatural



What new perspectives did you gain by pretending to be someone else?

Anticipated answers: saw the same person differently-smarter, funnier, capable; some things weren't as important anymore-goofing off, impressing people; some things became more important-money, family<



How did pretending to be someone else make you feel about yourself?

Anticipated answers: I felt dishonest, like I was living a lie; I like who I really am better than anyone I could pretend to be



How were your decisions, language, comfort level, and contributions affected by pretending to be someone else?

Anticipated answers: I had to take longer to answer questions because it wasn't truthful; I tried to talk "smarter;" I felt like I had more to contribute in my pretend personality; I used less slang; I used fewer cuss words



Good! Thank you for participating in this exercise. I hope we all gained an appreciation for how others may be seeing us because of their age, job, background, etc. I know some of us may feel like we shouldn't be judged, but the reality of life is that we often are judged. When we apply for a job, we are hired on criteria such as our appearance, skills, and language. When we meet our friend's parents, they are determining whether we are someone they want their children to hang out with or not. Two things that largely affect how people perceive you are your language and your sense of humor. Let's find out what I what I mean.



SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1. Identify appropriate language and humor.

I. Appropriate language and humor

A. Define **appropriate**: especially suitable or compatible; fitting

1. Audience

a. **Culture**: the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group

b. Age

2. Situation

a. Formal

b. Informal

B. Language

1. Technicality

2. **Slang**: language peculiar to a certain group; jargon; informal, nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages (made up words), arbitrarily changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech

Lead a discussion on what is appropriate.



If I said, "this class is acting appropriate," what would that mean?

Listen for several responses. Comment positively on each.



We are thinking very well today. Many of you were right. If we were acting appropriate we would be doing what we are supposed to do and what is good to do.

Let's think about appropriate language. How does our language and what we joke about change with different groups of people? Do we give thought as to what is appropriate or suitable for the group?

Pause for thought. Post four different colored poster-size papers with each of the following written on them: close friends; peers/classmates; parents; boss/teachers



What do we talk about with the following groups: close friends, peers/classmates, parents, and boss/teachers? On the Post-It notes on your table, please write down what you talk about and joke about with each of the following groups posted around the room. Put your Post-Its on the appropriate poster.

Allow two minutes.





How does our language and humor change with these groups?

Anticipated answers: becomes less personal and more formal as you talk to people further from your age group; the more you know the person, the more honest and open you feel

Use a Go Get it Moment to distribute MS.35.AS.B.



When I say, "go get it," walk quietly to the table and pick up this assignment sheet. After we have returned to our seat, silently work through the questions on this activity sheet.

Allow three to five minutes. Discuss their answers from MS.35.AS.B while filling it in.



Please share with me one of the groups you wrote down.

Anticipated answers: friends; family; co-workers; classmates; church youth group; club; customers



Let's take your math class as an example.

Write math class as a group on MS.35.TM.B.

How would you describe their culture? In other words, what are their beliefs? Material and/or physical traits? What social groups do they form? Anticipated answers: teenagers; cliques; hyper; smart

Ethnicity may be mentioned, but explain there is more to culture than just race or ethnicity.



And what ages are they?

Anticipated answers: 13–18



How would we describe the environment in math class when there is a class discussion going on?

Anticipated answers: formal



Why is this discussion formal?

Anticipated answers: because we are in assigned seats; we are following school rules/procedures; there is a definite hierarchy (teacher is in charge); topic of discussion is math only



Would we say technical or slang language is being used?

Anticipated answers: technical



What makes the language technical?

Anticipated answers: there are certain terms that pertain only to math; the language would most likely make sense and be used during math class discussion



Did we find a relationship between formal and informal environments and technical and slang language?

Anticipated answers: yes, formal and technical go together, and informal and slang go together



So we can see there are many things to consider about the company we are in before we open your mouth to talk or tell a joke.

Use a Little Professor Moment to further identify the concepts embedded in appropriate language and humor (technical vs. formal language, culture, slang)



Objective 2. Describe the effects of using appropriate language and humor.



Now that we are all experts on the subject, let's identify the effects of language and humor.

II. Effects of language and humor

A. Positive effects

1. Shows respect
2. Indicates intelligence
3. Indicates friendliness

B. Negative effects

1. Offensive
2. Hard to recover from it
3. Indicates you are biased
4. Indicates low tolerances on your part

Lead into a discussion of the effects of language and humor.



- Now that we've analyzed some differences among the groups you interact with, let's discover some of the positive and negative effects language and humor can have. We've all heard the old adage that sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me. There is nothing more wrong than that statement!

Pass out quarter sheets of paper to each student.



On this little piece of paper, let's write down something someone has said to us in the past or has said in our presence. It may be something specific or something we found offensive. Please write it down.

Pause. Allow one minute. Pull a trashcan to the middle of the room for the next part.



Now I would like for you to crumple the ugly comment up and aim it at this trash can! Ready - Shoot!

Allow papers to be tossed.



Thanks! We're going to treat those comments just like they should be treated: as trash, to be thrown out and never seen or heard from again. Isn't it a relief to get rid of hurtful things like that?

Pause.



Now that we've remembered something hurtful that poor humor or language caused, let's discover some of the other effects of the language and humor we choose. In your notes, please make a chart with two columns. Title the chart "Effects of Appropriate Language and Humor" and title one of the columns "Positive" and the other "Negative."

Display the top/titles on MS.35.TM.C.





Please write down on the positive and negative, or good and bad things that language and humor can do.

Allow one to two minutes.



Here are some of the things that came to my mind.

Display the rest of MS.35.TM.C.



If you don't have these on your paper, please add them.

Pause.



Please, let's raise our hand if we have something positive or negative that we can add to our transparency.

Collect their input.



Review/Summary

Read the following statements/jokes to them. Ask for a thumbs-up for positive or thumbs-down for negative.



Let's show a thumbs-up if we think the following comments or jokes are positive or a thumbs-down if they are negative.

Hey you!

Good morning!

Why did the dollar jump off the table? It didn't have any cents.

Add your own local comments/jokes that would be appropriate to make the case, such as appropriate teenage magazines, candy wrappers, etc.



Application

►Extended Classroom Activity:

Have students keep track of things people say to them or around them that are offensive. Across from those comments, students should write down something they could have said instead that wouldn't have been offensive or hurtful. Have them consider sharing these with the person who said them.

►FFA Activity:

Have a joke contest at the next FFA meeting or bus ride to an event with the goal of having fun without being offensive.



►SAE Activity:

Ask students to evaluate how they are communicating with people involved in their SAEs, such as the clerk at the feed store or their customers. How could they improve their language and humor to be more friendly and less offensive?

✓ Evaluation

Written test

Answers to Assessment:

1. Culture and age of audience, the formality of the setting
2. Makes you appear fun, smart, mature, and capable
3. Makes you appear to have a limited vocabulary, disrespectful of people's cultures



USING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE AND HUMOR

Answer the following statements.

1. What factors affect the appropriateness of language and humor.
2. What are the positive effects of using the correct language and humor.
3. What are the negative effects of using inappropriate language and humor.



- 1. How did it feel to pretend to be someone else.**
- 2. Were you surprised to see who some of your classmates pretended to be.**
- 3. What new perspectives did you gain by pretending to be someone else.**
- 4. How did pretending to be someone else make you feel about yourself.**
- 5. How were your decisions, language, comfort level, and contributions affected by pretending to be someone else.**



Groups			
Culture			
Ages			
Formal or Informal			
Language—Slang or Technical			



EFFECTS OF APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE AND HUMOR

Positive	Negative
◆ Shows respect ◆ Indicates intelligence ◆ Indicates friendliness	◆ Offensive ◆ Hard to recover from ◆ Indicates you are biased ◆ Indicates low tolerances



THE INTERVIEW

Real Name of Person Interviewed:

Job Title:

Hometown:

Who does his or her family consist of.

What are his or her best accomplishments.

Family:

Personal:

School:

Work:

Most memorable moment:

Strongest feelings shared during the interview:



1. What are three different audiences or groups you may find yourself speaking to during a week.
2. How would you describe the culture of those three groups/audiences.
3. What are the ages in those three groups. How does their age affect how you speak to them.
4. Formal conversation would be in a structured environment such as at work, during a class discussion, addressing a group, at the dinner table. Whereas, informal conversation would be more casual conversation: friend-to-friend or talking to a parent one-on-one. How would you categorize the three groups you've identified. Are they formal or informal.
5. In which of the three groups/audiences would you say technical language is appropriate.
6. In which of the three groups/audiences would you say slang is acceptable.
7. Is there a relationship between formal and informal environments and between technical and slang language. If so, explain.

