



**mind
over
media** België
Hoe worden we beïnvloed?

Lesson plans

Elaborated by



Analyzing
Contemporary
Propaganda

These lesson plans provide activities to extend learning

from the Mind Over Media online platform

www.mindovermedia.eu



Lesson 3: The power of words

Room set-up needs: Projection screen, projector & computer, seats facing the screen with ability to move into groups in various areas of the room

Materials needed: Per group of participants (+/- 4 people) a computer to browse the internet, a few examples of metaphors and euphemisms purposely used to influence thought.

Time Needed: one 50-minute period

Target Audiences: youth, parents, teachers; age 13 and up

Key Theme: Words can influence us in subtle ways. Politicians, journalists, advertisers, ... often purposely try to steer our thinking and behavior with metaphors and euphemisms.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Participants learn to:

- recognize that they are influenced by propaganda and that they influence others by using propaganda techniques
- understand that propaganda activates strong emotions, simplifies ideas, appeals to audience needs and values, and targets opponents
- develop a sense of social responsibility for the appropriate sharing of propaganda
- increase their confidence in expressing their views with images, words and sound
- participate in discussions of controversial topics where people have differences of opinion
- reflect on propaganda's potentially beneficial or harmful nature and impact on individuals and society

Preparations for the instructor:

- Look for examples of metaphors and euphemisms that have purposely been created or used to influence thoughts.
You can find inspiration in the collection '[euphemisms and dysphemisms](#)' in the Archives for Education.

Instructions for the instructor:

A. **Introduction**

- Show a few examples of hyperbolic language used by politicians, like:
 - "We have to protect ourselves from the caravan of refugees"
 - "We are being inundated by a tsunami of refugees"
 - "14 people were arrested this morning. #cleanup"
 - "Jews are germs, who infect and undermine the German nation"

B. **Discuss together**

- Why would politicians use language like that?
- What effect does this have on you personally? In the short/long term?



- What effect does this have on people generally? Do you know people who are influenced by this kind of language?
- Which words are the strongest? What feelings do they elicit?

C. Explain

Summarize the answers briefly and explain that metaphors are a clever way to break into someone's mind and steer their thinking. It's a widely-used propaganda technique.

- E.g. talking about 'protecting from ...' automatically makes you think of danger.
- E.g. describing something as a tsunami sounds very threatening and imminent.
- E.g. describing something or someone as a disease has very negative connotations. It can feed into fear and disgust, and increase the 'us vs. them' feeling.
- E.g. doing something negative, but calling it a 'cleanup', is mostly a way to brush off your own public image.

D. Activity

Give the learners a few examples of metaphors and euphemisms that are purposely used to change minds or actions, or let them search for examples themselves in recent news or in the propaganda examples at www.mindovermedia.be.

Examples:

- Service vehicle – company car – leasing car
- Refugees – migrants – illegals - aliens
- Wage gap – gender pay gap – glass ceiling
- Parental leave – maternity leave
- To suffer from cancer – to battle cancer – to have cancer
- Worker – employee – salaryman – personnel
- Disabled – physically impaired – handicapped – crippled – differently abled
- Social security – social welfare – benefits – financial assistance

Let learners discuss a few examples more closely in small groups.

- Browse the internet.
- What does each term mean? What is the difference?
- Who uses one term versus the other? Are there ideological differences between those groups?
- Are the terms always used correctly? Why would someone choose one term and not the other?
- Assignment: can you rewrite a few statements and make the euphemisms or metaphors more neutral?

E. Present and conclude

- Let learners present their neutral alternatives to each other. You might hold a vote about which new terms the group would really use.
- Have you found a great new term? Could you introduce it further (at school, to journalists, politicians, ...)?