



Loaded language

As I explained in *How to Write Your Undergraduate Dissertation*, with loaded language it is not that we don't understand the meaning of the language being used, just that not all the meaning is being disclosed to us. It has an emotional content or a value judgement, which manipulates our thinking without us being conscious of it. Once you have identified a passage you suspect contains loaded language you will have to reveal and neutralise its impact in order to critically evaluate the substance of the argument. In Chapter 33 we examined five different strategies we can use to do this.

Exercises

- 1 Read Mark Antony's funeral oration in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (Act III, Scene 2) and analyse the various ways in which Mark Antony arouses emotions in his readers. Translate these words into neutral terms to make the address more like an unemotional appeal to reason.
- 2 Read the following report on the Education Department's initiative to set up 'free' schools. Concentrate particularly on the language that is used to justify the education department's decision not to send this contract out to tender.

The education department has approved a £500,000 (\$800,000) grant to the New Schools Network to assist parents wanting to set up semi-autonomous "free" schools. No surprise there: the Network is an established charity and company seeking to help parents who want to establish schools.

It is also, interestingly, run by Rachel Wolf, a 25-year-old former colleague of the education secretary, Michael Gove. The grant was made without being put out to tender, which Ms Wolf readily explains:

"There have been a number of other charities given grants by the Department for Education on precisely this basis without tendering, and for the same reason – that a programme was to be kick-started and there was one obvious organisation to help," she said. A department spokesman said that the Network was the only organisation providing help to groups interested in opening schools. "That's why we believe they are best placed to help us build early momentum in this policy area," he added.

Answer

This is, of course, just one interpretation of the passage – you will have your own. The interesting words used are 'kick-start', 'help' and 'momentum'. They all suggest an engine, a motor car, which cannot be started. Despite trying every other method to get it started, the only thing we can do is to try to 'kick-start' it. For this we will need the 'help' of people to push the car, so that we can let out the clutch and try to turn the engine over so that it fires. However, to be successful we must build up sufficient 'momentum' until we're sure that this is enough to get the engine to fire, when, hopefully, the engine will then run normally.



This suggests, through the use of well selected words only, that the programme had failed to get started using other methods, so in these extreme circumstances the department called on the 'help' of the New Schools Network to get it started, just to build up some momentum. The implication, I suppose, is that once this has been achieved, and in more normal circumstances when the programme is running normally, other organisations will be offered the chance to get involved. However, this doesn't appear to be the situation: this was a new venture, which hadn't been tried before and hadn't failed to start using other means. As you can see, the spin given to it by the use of these words seems to present quite a different picture.