LANGUAGE IN INTERPERSONAL CONTEXT

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Language often develops its vocabulary relative to the personal-impersonal distinction. We see that in English, although it may be difficult to get a feel for how widespread or universal it is in languages generally. One example is "educate," a word that would not likely be used for training an animal to do tricks; "train" would be the more likely word..

The capacity for speech enhances the social experience. Thomas Mann was willing even to say, *"Speech is civilization."* Language helps define humanness and personhood. Our conversation reveals to other persons what we are, connects us with other people, and sets the direction for our future together. It behooves each Christian to avoid the vulgarisms that dehumanize, depersonalize, and assault other people. Instead, this interpersonal capacity should compliment, thank, and ennoble. What has so much potential for good becomes all the more devastating for evil when misused. No wonder we are justified or condemned by our words (Matthew **12**:37).

The capacity for language communication contributes significantly to the interpersonal experience. Communication facilitates "communion," the sense of personal nearness that people experience with one another. Communication establishes and maintains identity with other people.

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