

### Influences on the words we use

Interpersonal communication is made more complex by cultural, gender and generational diversity. Further, workplace communication was much more formal a couple of decades ago, so the denotative meaning of words can sometimes be misinterpreted. Workplace idioms like “get your hands dirty” and “dropped in the deep end” further complicate meaning across cultures and generations.

To convey the right meaning, it is important to select words that are specific and precise. Saying someone works in manufacturing gives us some meaning, but saying they are a mechanical engineering technologist is more specific and saying they are an equipment designer is still more precise.

Another way this can be described is when we talk about surface structure and deep structure in language. Surface structure is the collection of actual words and deep structure is the communication that conveys the whole picture beyond the words. This analogy often used in comparison to an iceberg is a part of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), the study of the art and science of communication.

### Activity 2-1

#### Excuse me?

Create a list of words used in the workplace that our grandparents would not understand. The words you choose might be slang words or words that have changed in meaning over the years. Analyze the impact this may have on communication and being understood in today’s workplace.

Share your list in the **Discussion 2-1: Influences on Communication** topic in the Discussions area.