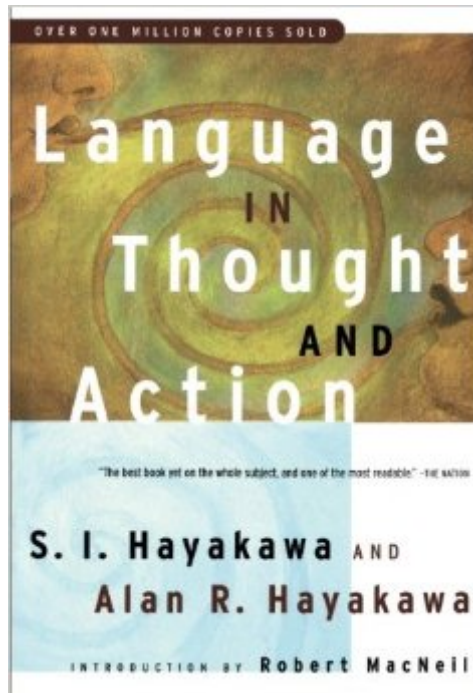


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Language In Thought And Action: Fifth Edition



Synopsis

In an era when communication has become increasingly diverse and complex, this classic work on semantics—now fully revised and updated—distills the relationship between language and those who use it. Renowned professor and former U.S. Senator S. I. Hayakawa discusses the role of language in human life, the many functions of language, and how language—sometimes without our knowing—shapes our thinking in this engaging and highly respected book. Provocative and erudite, it examines the relationship between language and racial and religious prejudice; the nature and dangers of advertising from a linguistic point of view; and, in an additional chapter called “The Empty Eye,” the content, form, and hidden message of television, from situation comedies to news coverage to political advertising.

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Customer Reviews

It's been said that language is what differentiates humans from the apes. But why language? Why not hawaiian shirts? Senator Hayakawa's short book explains why language, and particularly meaning, is so important. It stands alone on its own merits, or as an elegant frame to the debate addressed in Korzybski's monolithic 1933 work, *Science and Sanity*. Ever been in an argument? Ever get hot and bothered, maybe even start shouting, until you eventually realize that your disagreement is over the definition of terms? And did you ever stop to consider that there might be more than two sides to every story - maybe an infinite number? Come along as Hayakawa examines these issues in great detail. The style of the book is so lucid, you'll almost feel as if you're

being reminded of things you've always known. Does the book reveal universal truth? Or maybe just a skillful command of language? I recommend this to any human who uses language to communicate or think. You'll never look at Hillary Clinton's "politics of meaning" the same way again.

This book presents fundamental ways to examine the human relationship to language and thought. Hayakawa presents the building blocks of modern linguistic theories like NLP with precise and illuminating examinations of speech, human emotions, and "common sense." This book is intriguing and at times disturbing. The study of propaganda is mind expanding and illustrative of the dark side of humanity. Think of it as a How-To manual to create a Orwellian 1984-like society. I can't recommend this book more strongly. It will alter the way you think and relate to your own thoughts. Read this book.

Like a previous reviewer, I was required to read this book for an English class, and also like that reviewer I re-discovered it a few years back. Senator Hayakawa's main point is that, since it is language we humans use in order to think, and since language has such an extraordinary power to influence others and ourselves, we should pay heed to how we use it and how we interpret it. In **Language in Thought and Action** Hayakawa discusses ways of better understanding language, and therefore thought, and therefore action, including the use of the "operational definition" and the need to recognize different levels of abstraction. His essay comparing poetry and advertising is, all by itself, worth the price of the book. You'll never again be so smug about your pronouncements or those of others after reading about two-valued logic versus the multi-valued orientation. You'll learn why the words "Tell me more" can make a difference to you. I like this book so much I decided to mail several copies to people I know as surprise gifts, along with a letter explaining my enthusiasm for it. If you use language, if you think, if you act, you should read this book. Update of November 2009: I am now reading this book for a fourth time. You can read a long excerpt at my Web site. Search for Hayakawa.

Mr. Hayakawa's book expounds on his theory, influenced by the ideas of Alfred Korzybski, that language springs forth as a result of the inherent human tendency towards co-operation. He also elaborates on how people are deluded until they understand that words are just symbols used to approximate an experience. An empowering book that will help you filter all those words bombarding your mind.

The 5th edition of "Language in Thought and Action" is not the book that S.I. Hayakawa wrote in the forties. It is an impotent, edited-for-television, politically correct version of the brilliant original for which publisher and editors should be ashamed. For anyone who cares about language and its uses, I recommend that you track down the 1st edition. It's still around. Rowan Wolf

I read the second edition of this great work 35 years ago and it became the center of my educational process. Now when someone uses growl words, or refuses to lower the level of generality or brands a person by associating them with a label, I mentally repeat these basic principles of thought and civilization: The Word is not the Thing. Truth is found by getting to the lowest level of generality and examining things with care, not by inflaming people with symbols and putting people in boxes. This book is not only needed by students, but to help all of us deal with those politicians, marketing strategists and commentators who make their living by getting us to think in terms of shallow, impulsive reactions. We live in a world of thought manipulation. Semantics can help you filter out the noise and learn how to think. Dee doo dah dah dee do dah dah is all I want to say to you (when you twist words to manipulate me....)

I realized in the course of inhaling this book, that a basic grounding in semantics is one of the most important tools available to us, because with it, we can size people up and analyze what they say with an ease and acumen; and even more importantly, we can learn to express ourselves with skill and diplomacy. Hayakawa writes in an engaging and non-pedantic style as he verses us in vital concepts, the use of which, make engaging in discourse so much more meaningful, instructive, and revealing than before: concepts such as the abstraction ladder, the two-value perspective (I'm right and you're wrong), sloganeering, tunnel vision etc. Perhaps the most valuable lesson of the book is what Hayakawa terms "the blocked mind", wherein a person lumps people together as "jews", "women", "communists", "democrats", "blacks", "Arabs", "homosexuals" or whatever, with no regard to their differences. By showing us a new way of thinking, not lumping people together as for instance, "jews", but respecting all people according to their individuality, we can see from the following list in the book, that such labels are mere reflections of the paranoid minds who purvey them. All of the following wildly diverse human beings are or were, "jews": Albert Einstein, Sandy Koufax, Jascha Heifetz, Benny Goodman, Woody Allen, Henry Kissinger and Kitty Dukakas. I have already purchased a copy of "Science and Sanity" by Alfred Korzybski referred to often by Hayakawa, and look forward to deepening my understanding of this vital area of knowledge which

has been so gracefully and skillfully dispensed to me via this book.

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