1. Stereotypes are attributions that cover up individual difference and ascribing certain characteristics to an entire group of people.
   * What are the problems with this?  A person might cancel a trip to New York City when she learns that "those New Yorkers will rob you blind."  A University of Kansas administration member once advised a young Native American graduate of the KU honors program in political science that “law school is too hard" and "not a good field of study for you."  What if the student believes this stereotyping and abandons their pursuit of a law degree? What has the person missed out on by not going to New York?
   * Avoid by indexing—think  New Yorker1 does not equal New Yorker2
2. Bypassing means having different definitions for one word.
   * a.  Have you ever said “don’t cut my hair too short” only to find that your idea of too short was several inches longer than the stylist’s idea?  Have you ever said, "we never do anything fun anymore?"  How can that affect a relationship?
   * Avoid bypassing by being specific and asking for clarification if you are confused.
3. Polarization is treating something as an “either- or” by denying the middle ground.
   * “Either I get an A or I'm a failure” (well, a B is a fine grade);  “If you love me you'll…”  implies that if you don’t do as asked, you don’t really love the other person.
   * The problem is the lack of middle ground, the absence of a grey area.  This is particularly troubling if the individual is rigid.
   * Remember the middle and the grey.
4. Static evaluation is not allowing people to change with time.
   * For example, if you say “John is stupid” because he failed math in fourth grade you are not allowing for personal growth.  Maybe John got help with math-- and who said you had to be good at math to be smart anyway?  An insurance salesman in a small town thought of his son Matt as “a good boy” and Matt was good until he got into drugs.  Matt’s dad was shocked when his son was arrested for selling marijuana because he still had that little boy picture in his head.
   * How do you like being labeled with old label?
   * You can avoid this problem with the idea of “dating.” In your head, remember to put the date after the idea.  For example, Matt was a good boy in 2000 or John was bad at math in 1998.
5. Biased language—using sexist or other “ist” language or unnecessarily noting race, gender, etc.
   * Saying you want to go out for “Chink food” or calling someone a Feminazi is likely to create conflict.
   * Avoid by indexing.

**How can I communicate with language more effectively?**

1. Paraphrase
2. Avoid biased language
3. Work on the barriers
4. Use specific, concrete and vivid language
5. Use language appropriate to the situation and the participants
6. Avoid marking—say “John is a good student” instead of “John is a good gay student” as though sexual orientation affects intelligence.
7. Remember that language has power.

So, although we use language every day, we often speak without thinking and that can hurt people or cause confusion.  Language is complex and we often fall into traps.  We can, however, improve our use of language by keeping some simple ideas in mind.