

Tonya

### Rubric for blog posting

Blog:

Title satisfying three good-title requirements (i.e., informative, concise, <i>and</i> eye catching)	90
One of the statements is not sufficiently clear and/or to-the-point	80
One of the statements is not grammatically accurate and/or easy-to-follow	80

Average earned = 83

#### Labeling our world (Ch. 3) ([permalink](#)) - [edithistorydelete](#)

Created on Thursday, 01/27/2011 11:20 PM by [Tonya Kaushik](#)  
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The concept that most interested me this week can be summed up by Edward Sapir's quote, "The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached" (quoted in Bonvillain, 2011, p. 42). This is an insightful comment because Sapir not only says that world cultures are different (which the history teacher in me agrees with) but that the differences have to do with the "labels" cultures use. It's our language, the words we use to identify things, and the choices we make about what things get labeled, that enable us to experience the world around us. Using language does more than provide an "ID badge" for our environment but helps define what is and is not important -- either that or the item does not exist in that culture. I have two comments about this; the first is from my experience as a history teacher, and the second is from a conversation I had this week with a classmate.

Comment [W1]: Use APA.

Comment [W2]: Break this into sentences. Clarify.

One of my favorite topics to teach my modern world history students is the Columbian Exchange. This term refers to the opening up of trade routes across the Atlantic Ocean following Columbus' first journey to the Americas. The Spanish established the first permanent European colony in the New World, and major cultural and linguistic changes followed. The Old World had to adopt or create words for goods coming from the New World such as potatoes, tomatoes, and chocolate. There were no European words for these items because they had never been seen outside the Americas. The English terms, according to Dictionary.com, are derived from Spanish words taken from languages spoken by the tribes the Spanish encountered. (Personally, I love the French word for potato -- *la pomme de terre* -- the apple of the earth. That's a brilliant way to explain how versatile potatoes are. It also helps explain the potato's shape and the fact that it is a root vegetable that grows in the ground.) The New World, in turn, had to adapt to even greater cultural changes than adding a few new words, but it can be argued that the introduction of horses, cattle, citrus fruits, and coffee have had long-term benefits (e.g., the best coffee is Columbian). The First Americans did not have words for the products introduced by Europeans since they only existed on the Atlantic's east coast. Since the Columbian Exchange brought products that were new and exotic, words were needed to label these new things so people on both sides of the ocean could share their experiences. While some of the labels may have been simple translations or "different labels attached," the French term above is an example of how different cultures viewed the same vegetable through different eyes.

Secondly, Khalid and I were talking about this labeling concept yesterday, and he explained how he used to think English was a dumb language because we only have one word for camel. In Arabic, he explained, there are many different ways of naming the animal English speakers call a camel. We laughed about this, because I reminded him that in America, we have more words for cars and automobiles other than just "car." We can call them autos, buses, trucks, vans, SUVs, sedans, pick-ups, 18-wheelers, semis, big rigs, coupes, convertibles, etc., as well as by their brand names (Fords, Chevys, Kias, Toyotas, etc.). It was interesting to experience firsthand a cultural difference regarding the ways we label our world since we had just talked about this topic in class. From the words we use, Khalid and I were able to understand a little bit more about our different cultures. In Iraq, camels are familiar animals, but in the U.S., there are only three places I've ever seen a camel: a zoo, a circus, and at a church's living nativity scene (an outdoor exhibit where participants dress like biblical figures that often includes live goats, sheep, and camels). On the other hand, cars are fairly ubiquitous throughout the country. I own three of them myself.

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