

Words Poorly Used #76 — Communication

As we try to communicate, we frequently learn that communication is difficult. Today, Kilgorette and I had the following push-me-pull-you:

me: And I will straighten the left side of the downstairs

her: <stinkeye>

me: And I will straighten the north side of the downstairs

her: <rolleyes>

me: And I will straighten the horse barn side of the downstairs

her: OK!

Then I meandered off into a nerdy analysis of the foregoing. I used the first reference, “left,” as a very abstract locator that was dependent on Kilgorette knowing either my physical position or my mind position or both. The second reference was much more concrete, “north,” but still an abstraction created by geographers, in whom Kilgorette is not interested (relative to my extreme map-geekhood). We finally had agreed on an abstraction, relative to “the horse barn,” a thing fully within her wheelhouse. She remarked that it was “reality.” Not really. We were located, in two different places where we could not see “left,” “north,” or “the horse barn.” We could have gotten much more concrete by my saying “every space you can see, indoors, from the foot of the stairs, but that still would have referenced our memories of that visual space. We could only get fully concrete by going downstairs, hand-in-hand (not a bad idea!) to look things over to agree on what constituted cleaning the space. O, what a complicated web we weave, even when we seek NOT to deceive!

— Kilgore Forelle