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POWER WORDS AS IMPORTANT MEANS OF CONSTRUCTING OR DECONSTRUCTING LANGUAGE

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*Words, so innocent and powerless as they are,
as standing in the dictionary,
how potent for good and evil they become
in the hands of one who knows
how to combine them.
Nathaniel Hawthorne*

Language plays a great role in how people perceive the world. It is first of all a means of forming ideas that manifest themselves in speech. Words used in a language have an immeasurable power. They have the power to inspire, motivate or persuade people on one hand and evoke emotions and shape opinions on the other. They give out energy as well as convey certain message that can have a peculiar effect on a person. So, words can affect humans in various ways. Thus, the use of power words is not stable and it can change from person to person, from culture to culture, from age to age. The aim of this article is to demonstrate that the use of power words can serve as a means of both constructing and deconstructing a speech. Studying English power words is essential in various fields, including psychology, linguistics, communication, rhetoric, etc. To achieve this aim rhetorical questions, political discourse and emotional words have been analyzed.

Keywords: *communication, power words, rhetorical speech, persuasive speech, emotional words.*

Introduction

Language is a remarkably complex phenomenon, serving as a systematic means of communication through articulate sounds and conventional symbols. As numerous scholars emphasize, the primary function of language is communicative; it is the

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fundamental vehicle through which human interaction occurs. However, effective communication extends far beyond merely selecting words that efficiently convey a specific reference or intent. It equally involves strategically choosing language that achieves a desired effect, thereby influencing one's positioning in relation to others. When individuals interact, they draw upon the semantic resources encoded within their languages to successfully transmit their intended messages (Widdowson, 2007). This process, in turn, reflects the dynamic relationship between the individual, their immediate social group, and society as a whole. Consequently, mastery over *power words* allows speakers to strategically tailor their messages to specific audiences, ensuring their communicative goals are met.

Furthermore, language exists within a perpetual tension between the construction and deconstruction of reality. As J. Alexander (2025) posits, words possess the dual capacity to build, protect, and create, or conversely, to destroy, destabilize, and incite fear. Because of this, language speaks directly to the human psyche. Words do not merely prompt behavioral responses – such as fulfilling a friend's request or obeying an authoritative demand – but deeply manipulate our emotional landscape. Human beings are inherently wired for connection and emotion; we are biologically designed to experience sadness, happiness, and empathy, and words serve as the primary triggers for these internal states.

Therefore, recognizing the distinction between the *power of words* and *power words* is essential for understanding how language influences communication and reflects socio-cultural norms. The concept of *power words* refers to specific, often context-sensitive terms that carry intense emotive or persuasive strength, deliberately deployed to influence or persuade an audience. In contrast, the *power of words* encompasses language as a holistic system – an overarching force that actively shapes human thought, dictates behavior, and exerts a profound influence that extends far beyond literal meaning. The capacity of language to shape political and social realities is vividly demonstrated in the following passage:

Human rights are our ultimate tool to help societies grow in freedom. To ensure equality for women and girls. To advance sustainable development. To prevent conflict, reduce human suffering and build a just and equitable world. (Guterres, 2020)

This utterance carries immense rhetorical weight because it is deliberately structured to construct a specific socio-political reality and convey a profound ideological message regarding fundamental citizens' rights. By strategically deploying evocative phrases such as *ensure equality* and *build a just and equitable world*, the speaker consciously utilizes *power words* to render the speech both emotionally charged and highly persuasive.

Consequently, this example underscores the vital distinction between the two concepts: the *power of words* serves as a broad, macro-level reference to the overarching influence of language on human communication, whereas *power words* function as specific, micro-level lexical units engineered with high emotional and persuasive resonance.

Grounded in this distinction, the present article focuses specifically on the latter, examining the mechanics of *power words* and the precise ways they manipulate and influence discourse during communicative interaction. The methodology of the research involves the examination of both the pragmatic and emotional aspects of *power words* through qualitative and cross-genre discourse analysis. The study focuses on textual data from literature, political discourse as well as contemporary digital communication, particularly social media posts. This enables a comprehensive understanding of how *power words* function in various communicative contexts to influence emotions and enhance persuasive impact.

The contextual dynamics of power words

The pragmatic influence of words is inherently contingent upon the underlying message, the speaker's ethos, and their communicative intent. The deliberate employment of *power words* can markedly enhance both persuasion and clarity in written discourse as well as interpersonal communication. When communicators grasp the inherent rhetorical weight of language, they can more precisely deploy persuasive strategies (Cialdini, 2007). This is often achieved through a combination of structural linguistic devices, such as rhetorical questions and repetition, and highly affective, emotional-expressive vocabulary.

Among these devices, rhetorical questions are frequently utilized even in daily interactions to fulfill critical communicative functions: engaging the audience, emphasizing core arguments, and driving persuasion (Quirk et al., 1985). By bypassing the need for a direct answer, these questions increase audience involvement and foster a dynamic communicative environment. A subtly crafted question can seamlessly guide an interlocutor toward a specific viewpoint while prompting deep self-reflection. In literary fiction, this technique is frequently used to introduce complex psychological and thematic concepts, as demonstrated in the following excerpts:

For how could one express in words these emotions of the body? Express the emptiness there? (Woolf, 1927)

What could they know of love such as ours? (Wilde, 1979)

Confess? Did it mean that he was to confess? To give himself up, and be put to death? [...] Besides, even if he did confess, who would believe him? (Wilde, 1979)

[...] Who would look for them there, if they were dead still and soundless? (Thomas, 1940)

[...] Was it really true that one could never change?

(Wilde, 1979)

In these literary contexts, rhetorical questions serve as vessels for profound alienation, despair, moral tribulation, and the existential search for justice. The true power of these statements lies not in an inquiry demanding information, but in their capacity to provoke internal conflict. They effectively pull the reader into the characters' inner worlds of uncertainty, ambiguity, and emotional vulnerability.

Beyond the realm of fiction, political discourse heavily relies on these and similar linguistic devices to maximize rhetorical impact, fortify an argument, or emphasize a speaker's ideological position. Political actors use power words and repetitive refrains to capture public attention, evoke deep-seated emotions, and mobilize collective action, as seen in these historic examples:

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. (King Jr., 1963)

Evoking Emotion and Vision

We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. (Churchill, 1940)

Evoking Resilience and Resolve

Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country. (Kennedy, 1961)

Capturing Attention and Spurring Action

Whether utilized by Martin Luther King Jr. to emphasize the relentless struggle for civil rights, by Churchill to project wartime defiance, or by Kennedy to demand civic responsibility, these excerpts vividly illustrate how *power words* transcend literal meaning. Ultimately, they serve as crucial instruments to capture the collective imagination, inspire shared ideals, and galvanize societies.

The rhetorical architecture of repetition

Alongside the rhetorical question, repetition stands as a foundational linguistic mechanism employed across both literary fiction and political discourse. Far from being merely redundant, the strategic iteration of specific words or phrases serves to intensify emotional resonance, build rhythmic momentum, and emphasize core themes. In different contexts, repetition can convey profound despair, articulate hope, or project collective resilience and unity, as illustrated by the following canonical examples:

*Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, / Creeps in this petty
pace from day to day / To the last syllable of recorded time; /
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools / The way to dusty
death. Out, out, brief candle! (Shakespeare, 1623)*

*We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing
grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall
fight in the hills; we shall never surrender. (Churchill, 1940)*

The evocative weight of this device is similarly central to Martin Luther King Jr.'s historic 1963 address, where the rhythmic recurrence of an ideal is used to galvanize collective courage and perseverance:

*I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out
the true meaning of its creed...*

*I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the
sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will
be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.*

*I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a
nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin
but by the content of their character.*

Comparative pragmatics: literature vs. political discourse

Analyzing the implementation of rhetorical questions and repetition across these genres reveals that *power words* function via distinct pragmatic pathways depending on the communicative environment. In the literary works of Woolf and Wilde, the emotional connotation of these devices is deeply introspective. Here, rhetorical strategies serve to externalize private psychological conflicts, existential doubt, and alienation, pulling the reader into a reflective space.

Conversely, within political discourse, phrases like *have a dream* or *we shall fight* shift from the introspective to the macro-communitarian. In the public sphere, these expressions are deployed to unify disparate audiences, project resilience, and mobilize collective societal action. In both realms, however, these emotionally charged lexical units transcend simple description. Instead, they actively stimulate cognitive processes, trigger visceral feelings, and shape audience perception, thereby demonstrating that language does not merely reflect reality – it actively alters it (Kaufer et al., 2004). Consequently, deciphering these rhetorical techniques allows listeners and readers to evaluate the structural intent of a message and fully grasp its persuasive value.

The affective dimension and situational context

During the communicative process, interlocutors continuously, and often unconsciously, attempt to decode and evaluate the speaker's emotional disposition toward the subject matter. Emotions function as immediate, spontaneous reactions to perceived reality. Because these affective responses can be triggered with immense speed, they frequently bypass conscious deliberative reasoning, manifesting before the individual fully understands the underlying mental processes that generated them (Scovel, 1998; Goleman, 2005).

Proceeding from this cognitive baseline, it becomes evident that the strategic deployment of emotion in speech is inextricably linked to situational factors. The immediate communicative context, environmental pressures, and the relationship between the speaker and the audience play a defining role in how speech is formulated and received. Ultimately, *power words* do not operate in a vacuum; their capacity to evoke immediate psychological and emotional reactions is both catalyzed and constrained by the specific socio-situational landscape in which the communication takes place.

The pragmatic utility of power words in digital spaces

In contemporary digital discourse, the strategic deployment of *power words* within social media platforms (see facebook, n/d; twitter, n/d) serves as a primary mechanism for cultivating immediate affective connections with an audience. Lexical choices such as *amazing*, *incredible*, *gorgeous*, and *sweet* are engineered to transcend routine textuality, functioning instead to evoke profound emotional responses and forge deeper interpersonal alignments (Crystal 2006). Within the architecture of social media, these persuasive expressions act as emotional anchors, as demonstrated in the following examples:

We have reached an amazing milestone in our fundraising efforts! (Bullie, 2025)

What an incredible opportunity to join our team and make a difference in the world! (Nelson, 2024)

Happy New Year my dear, my faithful, my gorgeous, my incredible and sweet professor. Giant kisses, thanks for being in our lives! (Khachatryan, 2025)

Human communication is, fundamentally, a dynamic process governed by the transmission of affect. These emotional currents serve a regulatory function, providing the psychological impetus either to initiate, sustain, or abruptly terminate interaction. Consequently, emotionally charged language operates as a dual-use instrument: it possesses the capacity to both construct cohesive shared meanings and, conversely, to distort or destabilize the communicative baseline.

Deconstructive variability and evaluative judgments

This inherent instability of meaning introduces the relevance of deconstruction theory within linguistic analysis. Deconstruction does not operate to establish an absolute, objective truth, nor does it seek to validate one particular claim to justice over another. Rather, its primary function is to maintain a framework of continuous interrogation, keeping the interpretive space open to alternative perspectives and fluid understandings of justice and meaning.

The radical contingency of emotional language becomes highly apparent when analyzing negative or highly polarized social media commentary:

How rude! How could you forget me? I'm so awesome!

(Harutyunyan, 2023)

That is disgusting; even if he is playing, he can still cause damage as babies are so vulnerable at that age. WRONG!

(Leondi, 2025)

Oh, this is it. I really don't want to read more about that family. I used to like Harper's Bazaar because it meant style. That's gone. It has turned cheap and vulgar. (Reyes, 2024)

Within these digital artifacts, phrases such as *How could you forget me?*, *I'm awesome*, and *cheap and vulgar* defy rigid categorization. Depending on the recipient's subjective decoding, the pragmatic force of these utterances can shift fluidly along a spectrum of irony, humor, bitterness, or profound sincerity. This

interpretive mutability is precisely what a deconstructive lens uncovers: even seemingly direct, emotionally transparent language is never fixed or stable; it remains perpetually vulnerable to divergent reader interpretations.

Furthermore, *power words* regularly operate on an evaluative foundation. Whether expressing aesthetic pleasure, moral revulsion, ethical stances, or socio-political alignments, these words externalize internal value systems. Investigating the cognitive and affective impacts of these linguistic units offers critical insight into the intricate nexus between language and human psychology. It highlights how specific lexical choices actively shape public attitudes, govern interpersonal dynamics, and bias the decision-making process.

Strategic urgency and behavioral mobilization

Beyond pure emotional expression, power words are frequently weaponized in commercial and behavioral psychology to simulate temporal scarcity and induce a sense of urgency. High-velocity directives such as:

- *Limited time offer!*
- *Act now!*
- *Don't miss out!*

These imperatives are designed to bypass prolonged cognitive deliberation, compelling immediate compliance and behavioral mobilization.

Ultimately, the overarching *power of words* remains an undeniable force in human society. As localized instruments of interaction, *power words* possess the capacity to persuade, inspire, and galvanize communities into action. However, this potent rhetorical capability carries significant risk; the irresponsible misuse or manipulation of such terms can systematically erode discourse, precipitating widespread cognitive confusion, semantic dilution, and institutional mistrust. Because our internal cognitive architectures directly dictate our lived realities – shaping our emotions, attitudes, and subsequent behaviors – the ethical implications of language selection are paramount. The words articulated in daily interaction exert a transformative influence, functioning as the definitive catalysts that either build up or fracture the social fabric.

Conclusion

In sum, the analytical investigation of *power words* and the overarching *power of words* reveals that these linguistic phenomena possess a universal ubiquity, manifesting across diverse genres of human discourse from canonical literature and political rhetoric to contemporary digital media. As highly charged semantic and pragmatic units, *power words* serve a dual function: they act as potent vehicles for

both positive and negative emotional expression, while remaining inherently subject to contextual, situational, and deconstructive variability. Consequently, navigating the complex landscape of human interaction requires an advanced capacity for nuanced interpretation. It is only through the critical, context-sensitive decoding of these terms that interlocutors can mitigate semantic distortion, avoid cognitive misunderstandings, and maintain communicative equilibrium.

Furthermore, analyzing these varied styles of communication underscores the value of maintaining an open interpretive stance toward diverse affective reactions. Whether a message elicits a positive or negative response, these communicative friction points provide profound, often unexpected insights into the psychological and socio-cultural frameworks of the interlocutors involved. Rather than viewing emotional mutability as a barrier to clarity, researchers and communicators should recognize it as an educational space that unveils the underlying dynamics of human connection.

Ultimately, *power words* constitute the bedrock of effective expression, deliberate persuasion, and interpersonal bonding within language. By functioning as both cognitive and affective catalysts, they possess the unique capability to establish deep social relationships, foster empathy, and systematically alter public attitudes. Driven by rhetorical strength and persuasive velocity, these specialized terms can shift paradigms, reframe perspectives, and mobilize collective societal action. On an individual level, the ethical and mindful application of these words carries a transformative, almost therapeutic potential – capable of elevating the psychological well-being of the speaker and transforming the lives of those within their social sphere. Because language is a primary architect of our lived reality, mastering the strategic implementation of *power words* is not merely a rhetorical skill, but a profound social responsibility.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflict of interests in this research.

Ethical standards

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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**«ՈՒԺ» ԱՐՏԱՀԱՅՏՈՂ ԲԱՌԵՐՆ ԱՆԳԼԵՐԵՆՈՒՄ՝ ՈՐՊԵՍ
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ԿԱՐԵՎՈՐ ՄԻՋՈՑ**

Տարեկի Կիրակոսյան

Մեծ է լեզվի դերը մարդկանց աշխարհընկալման մեջ: Լեզուն նախ և առաջ մտքերի ձևավորման միջոց է, որը դրսևորվում է խոսքում և/ կամ դրա ընթացքում: Լեզվում կիրառվող բառերը մեծ «ուժ» ունեն: Նրանք կարող են ինչպես ոգեշնչել, մոտիվացնել կամ համոզել մարդկանց, այն-

պես էլ դառնալ զգացմունքների առաջացման և կարծիքների ձևավորման պատճառ: Այս բառերն օժտված են մեծ էներգիայով, իսկ նրանցով կազմված (դրանք պարունակող) ուղերձները յուրահատուկ ազդեցություն են թողնում մարդկանց վրա: Այսպիսի բառերում պարունակված էներգիան հնարավորություն է տալիս բառերին ուրույն ներգործություն ունենալու մարդկանց վրա: Ըստ այդմ, «ուժ» արտահայտող բառերի կիրառումը կարող է փոփոխվել՝ կախված անձերից, մշակույթից և դարաշրջանից: Սույն հոդվածի նպատակն է ցույց տալ, որ «ուժ» արտահայտող բառերը կարող են և՛ խոսքաստեղծման, և՛ խոսքի խեղաթյուրման միջոց լինել: Անգլերենում «ուժ» արտահայտող բառերի կիրառման ուսումնասիրությունը կարևորվում է այնպիսի գիտակարգերում, ինչպիսիք են հոգեբանությունը, լեզվաբանությունը, հաղորդակցությունն ու հոետորաբանությունը: Հոդվածում «ուժ» արտահայտող բառերի վարքագիծը ի ցույց է դրվում հոետորական հարցերի, քաղաքական խոսույթների և զգացական բառերի վերլուծությամբ:

Բանալի բառեր՝ հաղորդակցություն, «ուժ» արտահայտող բառեր, հոետորական խոսք, համոզման խոսք, հուզական բառեր: