

Impact of Language on Psychological Wellbeing

Rowena Phillips*

*Independent Psychologist

Abstract: *The research article is a symposium of Language and Psychology. The article discusses the impact of language on the mental architecture of a person. The power of words and the use of language is very important for the psychological well being of a person. If understood, it can be used as a transforming intervention technique to bring about psychological well being in the lives of people.*

Introduction

Psychological well-being of the people is of utmost importance for the Psychologists. The awareness level of people is the beginning of well being in an individual and the society. This article is to highlight the significance of Language on psychological well being of people.

King Solomon in his proverbs said, "Death and Life are in the power of the tongue..." (Book of Proverbs, Chapter 18; Verse 21: page 621, The Thompson Chain Reference Bible, Fourth Edition 1964)

There has been much written about the power of tongue or power of words or power of language since last 3000 years. However the psychology which is fairly modern has come to the understanding of importance of language in human behavior and performance.

Language is more powerful than we can imagine. Words can move nations, give and take away life. Language well articulated can be magical and otherwise disastrous. Most of our great reformers have been excellent orators and writers knowing the art of presenting their thoughts and their world of reality, creatively through words.

Martin Luther King the great reformer and orator moved the masses by his inspiring speech of freedom and brought one of the most powerful social and psychological change that redefined how we behave and move towards the developed world.

"From every mountainside, let the freedom ring. When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's Children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, Free at last ! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" - Martin Luther King

What makes these leaders to move and motivate the masses? Is it the faith in them? If Martin Luther King

had not spoken and only had faith that someday sthings will change, would he had become the catalyst of Reformation and Change. History shows that his words inspired the masses. How can words make people do what they would not do in the normal circumstances? Why do words have such a powerful impact on people?

Another example is one of a great leader Mahatma Gandhi. He led the freedom struggle through his words and speeches all across India.

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong."

"An eye for eye only ends up making the whole world blind." - Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi's word gave hope and faith to the peasants and masses of Self rule and independence. People were captivated by his speeches and were ready to fight the army without the weapons. What make people to become bold and fearless from being cowards and fearful? Is it the frail old man or the power of his words? Definitely, it is the power of his word, the power of language.

William Shakespeare's quotes such as "To be, or not to be" form some of literature's most celebrated lines. Other famous quotes such as "I'll not budge an inch", "We have seen better days", "A dish fit for the gods" and the expression it's "Greek to me" have all become catch phrases in modern day speech. Furthermore, other William Shakespeare quotes such as "to thine own self be true" have become widely spoken pearls of wisdom.

Closer in our homes, when the mother or father says, "Do not worry, I will take care of it", how much it impacts the children and they sleep without a worry of tomorrow. What is that gives them comfort and rest in their mind, body and emotions? Is it not just the words or language? It is. Now if the same parents say, "you are good for nothing", what happens to the child? Does the child feels good, strong, accepted, worthy, and confident? No. It does not but gives only the opposite feelings and also creates an identity that dominates the child as he grows.

Another example is when somebody says, "this is going to be so hard", "There is no way I can succeed", "I will never be smart enough, pretty enough, good enough to ...", he/ she will move down towards weakness, low confidence and failure. And if a person says, "This looks challenging and not as difficult as I thought. Let me explore", the person is hopeful and looking for solutions.

Consider these statements, “For disable people” and “For differently able people”. The later statement sounds empowering while the first statement triggers feelings dependence and incapability.

Hence the Language we speak plays an important role in defining our own internal architecture and also in affecting those who interact with us. The Language we use describe our own condition, and are inextricably linked to how we understand ourselves and make sense of our experiences.

“Linguistic is a symbolic mapping that we create of the mental territory. It involves higher cortical functions in the brain which enable us to use symbols to create language and to map things out linguistically. This enables us to encode order and give meaning to our sensory representations, using much more abstract categories.” Dr. Michael Hall, ISNS USA.

Language and it’s representation is very critical to our wellbeing and is a powerful tool used in Psychotherapy to treat dysfunctional thought processes that can cause anxiety, depression, suicidal tendency etc.

Neuro Linguistic Programming, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy, use language, sentences, reframing and rephrasing statements for the mental well being of the patient.

Language – words, sentences.

Non propositional language – poetry, stories, narrative etc.

Most people are not aware of the power of words they use in their everyday conversations. They don’t see how their choice of words may be keeping them stuck or perpetuating unbearable situations in their lives. The power of words can have an amazing impact on the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health of a person ... so choose to be healthy!

The language impacts on the psychology of the person and then is manifested through the physiology and the behavior or performance of the person. The behavior or performance is the outcome of the language he has represented in his mind.

Therefore, there is a connection established between the language represented in the mind, and the body, the emotions or the behavior. This philosophy also helps us study the language, a person uses is his mental representation. The phrases and words that he uses can help us understand his state of mind, his perception, cognition, and social background. Therefore language with the right phrases and right choice of words can act as a strong communication mechanism within inner and external world and mastery in the field will also led to psychological well being of Human Beings and this will led to exemplary results.

Word gives us power, makes us laugh, love, cry or makes us angry, rejected, weak and disappointed.

What we speak creates an environment, an energy that makes us or breaks us. How an appreciation boosts our confidence and how a criticism discourages us. The words we use, the way we speak our language affects our mind, body and emotions. It affects our psychological, social, economical and physical well being and that of our society. Leaders became great because they used the power of language to lead reformation, revolution, change and wars. Ignoring the power of language will be ignoring the power of life and death.