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Language and Power – How Power Influences Language

– A conversation analyses on the TV – show
"Breaking Bad", 15p.

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Abstract

Power displays itself through talk-in-interaction in social situations; it can also present itself through appearances. Appearance is a personal feature that is immediately obvious and available to others to see. A person's appearance makes a strong statement about ones values, attitude, abilities etc. People display power through different modalities of talk-in-interactions. This study investigates the linguistic tools that people with power tend to use and how a normal everyday person can change their social status by changing and giving out different linguistic signals. Tracing the patterns of what the verbal cues of power is and describes how an everyday character mastered the relationship between language and power.

Key words: Power, Language, Fiction, Conversation Analysis

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1. Introduction

Language is a way for humans to communicate with one another. Power and language have an important relationship, both influential power and significant power since how the language is used will vary depending on different power relations. Hierarchy is one possible influence on whether someone is expressing power in their language or not, a determined mindset could be another factor. However, power has its root through language. Language influences people to act in a certain manner without any visible power. This essay will try to display how power influences humans' linguistic terminology and other expressions.

Languages shape individuals more than people like to think. Interaction through language might create an effect in humans' behavior or in their desire to behave in a certain way. Furthermore, language can affect people via different platforms such as radio, television, commercials, culture etc (Ohme et al 2011). What people see in commercials is usually what people desire subconsciously, and even though culture is not a spoken language per se, it is a way of expression, and every expression is a language of itself (Ohme et al 2011). There are multiple ways and layers of language; body language is also not verbal, but just as important and akin to verbal communication as well. Body language shows our confidence and our social status, changing the body language will change the verbal language, which in turn will change the social structure (Ohme et al. 2011).

For example, politicians use language as a tool of power all the time, as they are the people that impose law, taxes and systems of power. They need to present those ideas to the people in a way that makes their idea eligible (Rawnsley 2011). Influencing the citizen of a city or country so that the people take the politician to the office where they will execute their power to direct our lives and social system (Rawnsley 2011).

Language and power does not only regard politicians. Its usage extends to a daily basis within family members, selling commercials, workplace etc. One thing that language and power displays is that they are two separate things and by combining them, will make the message more efficient. The power in language is furthermore, dependent on what a person does for a living, where he or she is on the social hierarchy. (Rawnsley 2011)

1.1 Structure of the essay

The essay begins with the introduction of what language and power is. How people use it in verbal communications. Followed by it comes a description of the show "Breaking Bad", which is the study for this research. The purpose of describing the show is so the reader can get a better understanding of some events that are relevant in order to follow the discussion and the findings.

Furthermore, an explanation of the data collection and the presentation of the analyses,

followed by it is the aim of this essay.

The findings are revealed through detailed transcribed materials. The part afterwards is the discussion, writing about the findings and the previous research. The last part is where the essay concludes its findings and results

1.2 The Data

Breaking bad is a Television show created by Vince Gilligan. The TV show follows the transformation of the protagonist Walter White transforming from being a regular man working with children, into the gangster “Heisenberg” which is his alter ego. The reason this show works for this research was due to the verbal and physical linguistic changes that Walter White goes through. From a linguistic perspective, Walter White’s transformation can be a useful source for research within the field of language and power.

Each episode is roughly 60 minutes; it aired on the network AMC for five seasons, from January 20, 2008, to September 29, 2013. The genre of the show is crime, drama and thriller. It has won several awards for being one of the best shows to ever air on television and it even has the Guinness book of world records for highest rated television show of all time (Wikipedia, Breaking Bad, 2015).

The five scenes in “Breaking Bad” that were chosen for this essay was selected in order to demonstrate how the use of power influences the linguistic terminology. Although the show is fiction, its linguistic tools are something that people can understand. If the show “Breaking Bad” would use a language that did not resonate with any audience, broadcasting it would be pointless. Therefore, it is possible to draw the conclusion that a language understood and appreciated of a big audience must have features that could be applicable in fields outside fiction. There are five seasons of the show and the seasons this essay has analyzed is season one and season five as these two seasons show the transitions clearly between Walter and him becoming his alter ego Heisenberg.

In the beginning of the series, the show introduces Walter White as an over qualified high school teacher desperately trying to get the kids attention in his chemistry class. He lives in a house with his wife and son. Walters’s wife is expecting a baby that they did not plan, and his son has cerebral palsy. Walter works part time at a car wash to earn extra money to keep up with the payments of doctor visits and his son’s special treatments. Walter, who does not smoke or drink got diagnosed as having lung cancer that was inoperable; the doctor estimated that he had approximately two years left to live. This caused Walter to go into a deep midlife crisis feeling beaten down, exploited, used to a point where he felt no real satisfaction with his life.

After encountering the drug world, he begins utilizing his skills as a chemist in order to make the perfect methamphetamine. Walter’s methamphetamine becomes the best in the drug market and quickly

matches the desire of the streets. His meth receives the name “Blue Sky” due to its high quality and Walter sees this as a way of earning quick money. The motivation for entering the drug business is to make enough money to liberate his family from both hospital debts and other payments. Walter wants to leave them with enough money so that his family can live a life without worrying about payments and being economically independent after Walters’s death.

Since Walter does not know anything about the drug industry, he partners up with a former student Jessie Pinkman after finding out that Jessie sells small amount of methamphetamine, “You know the business, and I know the chemistry” (Walter to Jessie, season 1 episode 1). Walter was trying to avoid as much violence as possible during the start, knowing it was a dangerous business. However, Walt gradually started to see violence as a necessity instead of unfortunate event; he eventually becomes a king in the drug industry ruled by his own greed. In addition, he became one of the most feared kingpins of the underworld.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this essay is to show how Walter’s language changes when he gets power, and to show what type of linguistic verbal changes occurs when he rises in the underworlds hierarchy. Moreover showing how Walter utilizes his body more than before to express his power via communication.

2. Method

In order to analyze the different patterns that Walters’s language shows during different stages of his life, the approach conversation analysis was necessary. The steps are as follows:

- Data collection
- Transcribing
- Analysis

Following the pattern above, this essay will show how the linguistic pattern changes in Walter White’s language as he delves deeper in the underworld. To get a better understanding of the changes, different linguistic approaches were studied. They include qualitative studies, collection of video clips, investigating video clips, analyzing transcripts and then presenting the findings.

2.1 Qualitative Study

Qualitative study is the process of understanding a specific research question in depth rather than getting as much data of it as possible. Since this essay focuses on Walter’s linguistic transformation, a qualitative method felt more appropriate to get a more in-depth view of his transformation and understanding the role of language in his transformation. “Qualitative researchers are interested in

understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context. Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social work” (Sharan, 2009).

2.2 Collection of Data

The data presented in this essay derived from the website YouTube. YouTube is an online website containing vast different audio and video clips about approximately anything. It is a community where people upload video and audio clip so that the people can watch together, comment on the videos to share their thoughts and show their support by liking or disliking a video.

YouTube is one of the most visited websites in the world with more than 1 billion visitors per day (YouTube.com/statistic). Two of the clips were taken from YouTube and the other two were from a website called Daily motion. Which is also a video sharing website but not as popular as YouTube. The clips were then analyzed to see and understand the relationship between language and power. Trying to decipher everything from the body language, voice, stance, etc. this approach was made to see if there was a special way people spoke when in a more powerful social situation than they normally would. The videos were from 2010 and 2014, so the quality of them was recent.

While watching a video, writing down notes as soon as a special behavior took place was a necessity due to not missing any vital information, for example, change in speaking patterns or voice pitch. Since this study is focusing on the relationship between language and power, the focus was on how the linguistic patterns in their everyday interaction occurred.

2.3 Fiction and Reality

In fictional conversations, both the characters and their conversations have reality as its basis. “In fictional conversation, language users or characters in fiction, like the people in daily life, also have their different personalities, thoughts, and psychological activities and so on.” (Zou, 2010).

Hedges, hesitation and a general lack of grammatical skills people display frequently in the show *Breaking Bad*, is similar to real spoken conversations. Therefore, fictional language can have an immense significance (Zou 2010). Analyzing fictional conversations provides a new perspective; revealing the social psychological and physical state of a character (Zou, 2010).

2.4 Transcripts

This study has used transcribed information as the foundation of the research. The scenes that have been transcribed are from the pilot episode of the show “*Breaking Bad*”, the last season, season 5 episode 7 and from season 3 episode 13. These scenes clearly show the transformation of the main character, first in his most weak state and second, in his most powerful state. He is going through a mid life crisis, he

feels beaten down, exploited and unfulfilled. The crisis is semi visible when he teaches his loved topic chemistry and the students rarely pay any attention to him, he is also unable to provide for his family as he much as he wishes (he manages adequately).

In order to understand how low he thinks of himself, some explanations of his recent life events needs explanation: Walter is an extremely overqualified chemist that believes he does not deserve to teach at high school. His former colleges/friends have all surpassed him professionally. Furthermore, he has a kid that has cerebral palsy that his classmates bully often, he recently received news from the doctor that he had lung cancer and his wife is having a baby they did not plan. Thus, making Walter White feel overwhelmed by life and making him go through a midlife crisis.

2.4.1 Transcription Convention

To understand the transcripts in this essay, a glossary below explains all the definitions of the symbols in the transcripts. Linguistic researchers use these symbols when analyzing transcripts and the glossary below only contains the symbols used in this investigation. Gail Jefferson (Jefferson, 2005) developed the transcript symbols and there are many other symbols used, but this glossary only provides with what this paper uses.

- (0.5) The numbers indicates that there is a time gap (pause) between the words, the number after the period is tenth of a second.
- ! The exclamation symbol indicates that the speaker is using an emphatic or animated tone.
- ; The colon indicated that the speaker has stretched a word. Meaning the sound of the word is stretched, the more colon, the greater the stretch.
- ↑ The arrow pointed upward means that there is a rise in the way the speaker addresses a word.
- ↓ The arrow pointed downward means that there is a decrease in the way the speaker addresses a word.

3. Language and its Relationship to Power

“Power can be gained through appearances: People who exhibit behavioral signals of power are often treated in a way that allows them to actually achieve such power” (Smith et al. 2010)

Although the language used in “Breaking Bad” derived from a manuscript, it contains interesting linguistic patterns. The findings reveal how his use of language transformed from the first season the last and the findings will point out what crucial feature creates the difference. Language used

in the right way can persuade the majority of people because power activates abstraction. (Smith et al.2006).

Cheryl Wakslak and other scientists (in the reference list) conducted a test where subjects in seven different experiments responded about what kind of language style was more powerful, concrete or abstract. The subjects perceived abstract language as being more powerful than concrete, the definition of the two language styles is that abstract language is seemed to mirror the ability to judge and thinking in abstract ways in general (Wakslak et al 2014). This is also how Walters's language changes throughout the series. By knowing how and when to use linguistics cues such as silence, posture, eye contact etc, the message will be more clear and powerful. Hence, the powerful messages are not necessarily a result of what people say, the powerful message is in how the message is being delivered (Wakslak et al 2014).

Languages that people considered not powerful are such that involve hedges, discourse markers, fillers etc. overly polite language and verbal hesitations (Wakslak et al. 2014). This does not mean that the person per se is powerless, but the way in which that person delivers a message in a communication context is powerless. However, this usually goes in hand with social status and hierarchy that might exist for example, in a working place, a group of friends, or within a family (Wakslak et al 2014).

In the beginning of the show, Walter struggles to pay his mortgage and as written, he is an overqualified high school teacher; subsequently, this is also the time where his vocabulary consisted of hedges, overly polite language and expressing plenty of hesitation. However, during the course of the show where his linguistic vocabulary changes, the use of hedges and polite speaking significantly decreases and his social status has increased. "Powerful language suggests higher social status and is characterized largely by the absence of these markers." (Areni et al. 2005).

3.1 Silences in Conversation

It is not only the word that a person says that gets the receivers attention, but also the unconscious non-verbal cues that come along the verbal words as well (Johnson et al. 2011). In addition, humans release and receive an invisible energy when speaking to others. (Johnson et al. 2011). The reader can see this in the transcripts when Walter White speaks to the distributor, his silence releases a powerful energy that makes the distributor uncomfortable and even scared to a certain extent. (Season five, episode 7)

Humans tend to position themselves to others in order to serve great messages (Johnson et al 2011). The proximity of the persons, how their angle is when facing them (straight, side, back turned against them etc) all contribute to our intentions and feeling to that persons (Johnson et al 2011).

One of the features that Walter acquired was how to use eye contact. The eyes have possibilities to send messages that verbal communications cannot do. "Eye contact too can convey strong meaning, as can the assumptions we form about what others are thinking." (Johnson et al. 2011).

There are two types of silences, intentional and unintentional silence. Unintentional silence derives from humans' psychological mind, which means that the length and the placing of the silence vary based on the person speaking. Silence could be a sign of respect, fear, kindness etc. Intentional silence on the other hand, is controlled and sometimes used to manipulate people (Kurzon, 1995). "A schema is then put forward that shows the process by which the questioner (the police or the court) interprets the silence of the suspect" (Kurzon, 1995).

3.2 Facial Expressions during Conversations

The extracts from the show *Breaking Bad* aims to demonstrate Walter White in two different social positions during two different times in his life. The latter ones, where he is completely overshadowed by his alter ego Heisenberg demonstrates his ability to send messages with his facial expressions. He uses it during the confrontation with his distributor and in another scene with Mike (excerpt 5). After Walt has utilized his silence to enforce his message, he proceeded with adding a frown to demonstrate power "As pre-beginning elements, these frowns anticipate utterances that involve difficulties associated with negative evaluation, disaffiliation, or epistemic challenge." (Kaukomaa, 2013). Furthermore, Kaukomaa (2013) states that "frowns foreshadow utterances that somehow deviate from the recipient's routine". A person that is frowning does it by looking down at the addressee and it functions as an important facial expression that either indicates a problem or that something is important (Kaukomaa, 2013). Walter uses this when confronting Mike (excerpt 5). Before Walt speaks, he makes a frown and the viewer can sense that what he is about to say has importance.

There is something called turn opening smile, abbreviated "TOS", which usually means that the speaker smiles shortly before verbalizing his or her message (Kaukomaa, 2013). A turn opening smile has a significant contribution to the speaker's words. Although it varies depending on how long it is done, for instance sharing a quick smile or to deliberately share a slow longer smile have different contributions (Kaukomaa, 2013).

Smiling can work as a first step towards the construction of an emotional transaction in conversation. Smiles can generate a shift from a neutral emotional stance to a positive stance. "By reciprocating the smile (and other emotional markers), the recipients share the emotional transition that is initiated by the turn-opening smiles." (Kaukomaa, 2013). The scene where Walter and the distributor spoke to each other displayed this. The distributor reciprocated the smile and laughed which unconsciously made the addresser (Walter), and addressee (distributor), sharing the emotional transition.

“Sometimes the recipients of the smile reciprocate the emotion display at a point where the smiling participant has explicated the grounds for the transition.” (Kaukomaa, 2013).

3.3 The Role behind Persuasion

Walter is able to convey and persuade many different characters to do his “dirty work” for him. One example would be the phone call to Jessie where he persuades him into doing a criminal act that he did not originally want to do. There are also other instances where Walt uses Jessie for his dirty work. There is one particular scene (excerpt 5) in the show “Breaking Bad” where Gus asks Walter why he keeps Jessie around, as he is only a kid and a liability. In which Walter replies with “he does what I say” (season two, episode 11).

The reason to why Walter is able to be persuasive to his peers is due to a mixture of the explained linguistics tools above. By frowning at the right moment and smiling at key moments, he is able to make himself more powerful socially and create a more powerful linguistic glossary.

3.4 Language and Persuasion

In order for one to persuade another person, one must first persuade him or herself into believing what they are trying to say is legitimate and that the reasons behind it are valid (Brinol, 2012). “Self-persuasion can occur either through role-playing (i.e., when arguments are generated to convince another person) or, more directly, through trying to convince oneself (i.e., when arguments are generated with oneself as the target).” (Brinol, 2012). A big way of getting your message across is by focusing and explaining to the recipient what they would gain or lose (Brinol, 2012).

Before pursuing a career in the meth business, Walter was very hesitant that what he did was for a good cause. That cause was the financial security for his family, and he not being willing to die and leave the whole family with hospitals bills to pay for the rest of their lives. He calculated the exact amount of money needed to cover for everything (hospital bills and mortgage) and told himself and Jessie that he was out of the business after he reached that number. This made Jessie believing his reasons were good enough to help him getting started.

Walter White is also excellent at reading people. He adapts his persuasive messages to match the personality trait of the intended recipient. For instance, Walter tailored his stories to a more dramatic style and adapted his language towards Jessie, who is an emotional person to have more impact. This was an effective way of persuading Jessie (Brinol, 2012).

4. Findings

In order to analyze the variation in Walters linguistic patterns, carefully chosen sequences were transcribed and analyzed. There are five analyzed sequences in total, each from a different period of Walters's life in order to see the variations of linguistic features regarding power in language. The first two excerpts are from season 1 of "Breaking Bad" where Walter teaches chemistry in high school and is working at a part time job at a local car wash. His contract states that he is supposed to work only at the register, not washing cars. However, his boss at the carwash Bogdan, constantly makes him wash cars despite it is not being in his contract. Walter is unable to stand his ground and tell Bogdan that he does not want to do it.

The purpose of the first two excerpts is to show how Walter behaved before manufacturing methamphetamine and altered his linguistic tools to suit his needs, and express power in his talk.

4.1 Back-story - Excerpt 1 and 2.

For the reader that has never watched an episode of "Breaking Bad" before, below, is a brief explanation of the scene:

Walter White is a chemistry teacher and a husband with a pregnant wife and a son. He is struggling to pay their rent, so he takes a job at a local car wash. Moreover, he is suffering from having a midlife crisis, feeling as if life is not treating him fair, he is overqualified and has seen all of his friends surpass him professionally; the student at his class does not pay attention to him. His boss at the local carwash where Walter works part time constantly treats him unfair by giving him excuses which forces Walter to wash the cars even though it stated in his contract that he would only work at the register. However, Walter's boss Bogdan knows that Walter is unable to say no. Walter is too nice and afraid to have any form of confrontation.

Excerpt 1:

1. Bogdan: He's not coming, (0.5)he says he quits(0.5) I'm(!) gonna run the register
2. Walter: Bogdan no (↓)... (0.5) we talked about this
3. Bogdan: I'm shorthanded Walter (!)... (0.5) what am I to do?
4. Bogdan:.....(4.0) Walter??
5. Bogdan: (4.0) what am I to do (!)?

Bogdan looks at Walter and tells him that the person who normally washes the cars is not coming. Bogdan tells him that the person who normally washes the cars has quitted the job and adds right after

that he is going to run the register with a deterrent look (line 1). By his voice, one can sense that Bogdan knows that this will cause a distress to Walter. Bogdan realizes that this will be very embarrassing for him as Walter already is quite ashamed of working at the register judged by Walters's response and lack of eye contact. He shakes his head and adds that it was not the deal with a sort of deterrent look (line 2). In response to this; Bogdan tries to reason with him by saying that he is shorthanded while he looks at him annoyed as if Walter normally does not comply with commands and that there really is not much to do (line 3). Bogdan adds hand gestures to indicate that he truly is helpless. This causes Walter to become very irritated and quite angry as Walter does not want to look Bogdan in the eye or even be near him by the way his body moves. The viewer can understand by his silence that Walter is annoyed and by Bogdan hitting the table with his phone and saying "Walter?" (line 4) which adds insult to injury. Walter takes off his jacket furiously and goes outside without answering Bogdan as he tells Walter again; there is nothing he can do with the same hand gesture and a relaxed body language.

Excerpt 2:

1. Kids: He;;y!!.... (0.5)Mr. White! (1.0)Make those tires shine huh?
2. Kid 2: oh my go;d.... You will not (!) believe (!) who is cleaning teds car.....Mr. White(!)(↑)!!
From chemistry
3. Kid: hahah...haha...

The next example takes place right after the first one; Walter is now cleaning the tires at the car wash. He is not wearing fitted apparel and the heavy step he takes indicates his anger. The way Walter walks and presents his demeanor; the viewer can sense that he is unhappy. Two kids from his class that he is teaching appear and they see Walter cleaning their car while laughing and displaying discriminating smiles. In addition, one of the pupils took a photograph of Walter while he was cleaning his car. As a figure of authority in classroom, he constantly looks at them and tells them what to do and read, and normally the kids listen. Now, Walter is on his knees, cleaning his pupils' tires all the while they are laughing and mocking him. This indicates that the kids hold the power and authority at that moment. Walter is not speaking at all here; he ignores the insulting situation while continuing scrubbing the tires. The kids' body languages are very relaxed and nonchalant when they confront Walter and literally look down on him, this makes Walter look inferior as he is on his knees cleaning their tires and has to look up on them in order to see who it is. Walter has replaced words with body language.

4.2 Back Story – Story Excerpt 3

This scene is from season 5, which is the last season of the show. Here, Walters' motto is that he will no longer let life pursue him (letting things unravel by themselves) rather he will be the pursuer (taking action). In this season, Walter is selling pounds of methamphetamine to cartels. He even works for a cartel boss named Gus Fring, who is a very respected and feared man. Because of unfortunate events, Walter and Gus become rivals; Walter is able to eliminate Gus and is now trying to take his rightful place as the new cartel boss. People are very skeptic of his move and some people have not even seen his face before. In this scene, Walter goes to Gus former distributor and tries to collaborate with him, Walter had never showed his face before to someone in the drug business, but decides that this is the right time to do so and claim the business as his own (the drug business).

Excerpt 3:

1. Walt: Now you listen to me (2.0) You've got the greatest meth cook in am - ... no the TWO(!) (1.0) greatest meth cook in America right here, with our skills, you'll earn more from that 35% than you ever would on your own(!)
2. Guy: Yeah (0,5) ... so you say (0,5) Just wondering why we are so lucky (1.0)... why cut us in?
3. Walt: Mike (!) is retiring from our crew (!), so his share of the partnership is available IF (↑) you can handle his end (0,5)....distribution(1,0) ... and if you give him 5 million dollars of the 15 million you brought in today,
4. (*)just think of it as a finder's fee for bringing us together.
5. Walt: (1.0) We have 40 pounds of product ready to ship (arrow up) ... (1.0) ready to go (arrow up).... (1.0) Are you(!) ready?
6. Guy: (20.0) Hah *nervous laugh* (1.0)..... Who the hell are ya?
7. Walt: You know (!).....you all know exactly who I am (↑)....(4.0)say my name (↓).
8. Guy: Do what(!)??....(0,5) I d(-).....i don't have a damn clue who the hell you are.
9. Walt: Yeeeah(!).. you do(↓)... I'm the cook(↑)..... (3.0) I'm the man who killed Gus Fring (↑).
10. Guy: (*) Bullshit....(0,5), cartel got Fring.
11. Walt: You sure? (↓).....(11.0)..... That's right.
12. Walt: Now....(2.0) Say my name
13. Guy: (7.0) You're Heisenberg (↓).....
14. Walt: (3.0) You're GOD(!)(↑) damn right.

Walter White is using his speech patterns completely different, this transformed version of himself. He is quite unrecognizable in the way he carries himself. In addition, he has an alter ego named

“Heisenberg”. Walter now uses his silence as a weapon instead of it being a sign of his weaknesses as in previous excerpts.

In the beginning, Walter was constantly looking down and talking with a low voice when either confronted or asked to do something that he did not want to do (for instance, cleaning tires etc). Here, it is the direct opposite. The moment he arrives in the desert, it is visible that he has a straight posture, not moving and looks directly at the person he talks to with a steady gaze. His eyes barely blink and he uses a very deep and frightening voice. Walter has mastered the art of using language and power in order to spread fear and respect through his messages. He does not turn around to look at the people he refers to anymore. He views himself as being better than they are. To clarify, he just gesticulates with a thumb towards the addressees’ direction so the people he is talking to understand whom Walter is referring to. He even indirectly insults the other distributor by smirking at the distributor to tell him that his 35% would pretty much be useless. These accusations shocks the distributor as he laughs nervously at first but then does get a little bit afraid of Walter towards the end of the excerpt.

As Walter gets more linguistically powerful, it showed in his demeanor how he stares and tilts his head. He uses his face muscles to send a message by never breaking eye contact. Walter remains serious and only smirks if he ever does smile. Very early on in the series, Walter would never makes eye contact with anyone, but if he did so, he would keep it for a brief second with a lot of blinking and then look down and do whatever that person told him to do.

Now, Walter never breaks eye contact, tilts his head in a way that makes it look like his eyes are piercing through ones soul and does not stop looking until he has an answer. Eyes are very powerful in communication, when Walter was at his lowest; he usually kept blinking when confronting someone or kept blinking when someone confronted Walter. This caused the other person to feel more powerful and continuing to put him down, now Walter does the exact opposite, looks at them until they look down and continues to stare at them. His posture has changed completely, he never moves and has his whole body pointed towards the person that has his attention.

4.3 Back story – excerpt 4

This is one of the first scenes in this show; it is from the pilot episode of season 1, and it shows Walter working his daytime job as a chemistry teacher and enthusiastically trying to teach a class. In a sense, this whole excerpt foreshadows what is to become of Walter White as he keeps talking about the constant cycle of change and about growth and decay.

Excerpt 4:

1. Walt: Chemistry is.....(1.0) well technically, (0,5) chemistry is the study of matter.... But I prefer to see it as the study of change....jus....just think about this...electrons....they....change their energy levels.....molecules....molecules change their bonds.....elements they combine and change into compounds....well that's... that's all of life....right??...it's just.... The constant the cycle..... Solution, dissolution. Just over and over and over. It is growth..... and decay, then TRANSFORMATION(!)(↑) . It is fascinating really... hah.....
2. Chad and Girlfriend: *giggles*....hahaha...
3. Walt: Chad!! Is there something wrong with your table?
4. Chad: *moving to his table while dragging his chair with him making the leg of the chair "scratching the floor" very loudly.
5. Walt: Okay, chapter seven ionic bonds.... I..... -*cannot speak because of the sound Chad makes with his chair* *looks at him annoyingly*
6. Walt: *to chad* are you done?.....ionic bonds, chapter six.

This example shows Walter teaching chemistry in high school, something that he is fond of. When he is teaching chemistry, his eyes widen and he constantly makes gesture with his hands as if words cannot stress the importance of what he tries to convey (line 1). The kids however, do not portray the same excitement that Walter does. Their silence show their lack of interest and their body language is closed (looking away, disinterested etc). Chad completely ignores the class and starts talking to his girlfriend (line 2). By the sigh Walter makes, it is understandable to the viewer that the behavior Chad just displayed is something that regularly occurs between these two (line 3). Walter cannot seem to make Chad listen. Chad seems to know about Walter's inability to do anything by the eye contact Chad makes towards Walter. Chad is trying to annoy him even further by dragging a chair to his own seat.(line 4) This is something Walter does not accept but is unable to say anything and just lets Chad finish and proceeds with his lesson (line 6).

4.4 Back – story Excerpt 5

This excerpt is from season 3 where Walt has just started to work for Gus Fring. This scene also confirms that Gus and Walter are at war with each other. The reason for choosing this excerpt was that in this excerpt, Walter decides that he is no longer the hunted and is turning into the hunter. This is also, where he gradually becomes more alike his alter ego Heisenberg.

Walter has understood for some time that Gus is trying to kill him because Walter is a liability to Gus; Walter is weak due to his morals according to Gus. Understanding that he is about to die, Walter makes up a plan with his cooking partner Jessie to eliminate their replacement. This

conversation occurs via telephone communication. Before he received the phone, he was shouting and begging for mercy with almost tearful eyes. He was even asking to betray his friend just so he could have to phone. As Walters tells Mike (Mike is a personal assassin for Gus Fring) to “hold off”, his voice changes completely into “Heisenberg”. The viewer witnesses the transformation from Walt to Heisenberg by the changes that occur in his speech pattern and body language.

Excerpt 5:

1. Jessie: Mr White?...did you do it?
2. Walt: No, I didn't do it....I cant now... its gonna have to be you.
3. Jessie: WHAT?!... no way man
4. Walt: Listen to me, you're closer than we are.... You'll have about a 20 minute lead, they've got me in the laundry and they're going to kill me..... JESSIE DO IT NOW!!! DO IT!!! DO IT FAST!!!!.... DO IT JESSIE, DO IT!!
5. Mike: huh..... just what the hell was that.... Exactly
6. Walt: You might wanna hold off....
7. Mike: oh yeah?... why?
8. Walt: because your boss is gonna need me.... 6353 Onetobo, Apartment #6.....Yeah....

In this example, Walter is talking to Jessie over the phone while Mike leans in to listen. Walter focuses and understands the importance of the situation (line 1). He is very calm and his voice is shaking a little under the duress. Walter talks calmly to Jessie and says that he is much closer than they are (Mike and his college). Mike has his ear close to the phone and stares right at Walter to make sure he does not say anything that should not be said (line 4). However, this changes as he reveals to Jessie where their whereabouts are and what their intentions with Walter is, he screams over the phone to Jessie saying that he should “do it”(line 4). Mike understands that Walter did something that he probably should not have done but does not really know what it is. Looking at him with an open jaw and closing the phone slowly he asks Walter what that was and immediately threatens his life by aiming his gun at him (line 5). In this instance, the viewer witnessed how Walter used his “former self” to his advantage. He acted scared and helpless by avoiding eye contact. He has his shoulders and back straight, he looks straight at Mike with evil eyes and tells him to hold off and that he is of more importance than Mike and his college realize (line 6 and 7). Mike becomes a bit shocked/scared of him as he knows Walter now has the upper hand, he has raised his position in their hierarchy.

5. Discussions

“Power can be gained through appearances: People who exhibit behavioral signals of power are often treated in a way that allows them to actually achieve such power.” (Wakslak et al 2014). At the beginning, Walter was a very kind person that did not have or chase any confrontations at all. He tried to avoid them or make them as small as possible. When Walter tried to avoid a confrontation, he became very kind and happy towards the person he spoke to and drastically changed his vocabulary where it consisted of more hedges and unnecessary utterances. The absence of these markers characterizes powerful language (Sparks, 2005) and in Walters’s speech patterns, as the series progresses, the use of the markers decreases.

The way a message sends does also have significance to the recipient. How people frame their messages can make a difference to how they are received (Johnson et al 2011). When investigating the transcripts, the findings show that Walter never really threaten the distributor, but merely gives him a choice. Although a very one-sided choice, his language was not aggressive, but rather calm. Non-verbal cues are just as powerful as verbal words and can even be extra powerful (Johnson et al 2011).

Furthermore, facial expressions are a vital part in conversations, eyebrows while frowning can alter a conversation significantly based on how it interprets. People use frown as both an insult and demonstration of power (Kaukommaa, 2014), which Walter uses to takes advantage of a situation, other researches about facial expressions and what it can bring to a conversation is true when drawing parallels to Walters’s usage of facial expressions, for instance smiles and frowns. A smile is an unconscious bond shared between two individuals, by acting on the shared smile quickly; people can influence each other during that brief shared second (Kaukommaa, 2014). Although facial expressions is also an essential tool when speaking, the amount of subconscious effects such as the bond that is shared between a smile and how a simple frown can give subliminal signs of power was something that was not expected when researching.

6. Conclusion and Shortcomings

Linguistics changes in humans’ vocabulary can have an immense influence on how people view the world and influences people to act in certain ways. Although not necessarily as dramatic of a change as this show make it out to be (albeit, not impossible). Language and power can alter a person’s circumstance.

As written, the show is derived from fiction, but nevertheless it uses real life linguistic tools in the same way as people do in everyday interaction, otherwise, the show would not have worked or become as successful as it did.

By understanding and educating further into how language and power relates to each other, the social ladder can become simpler to climb (Johnson et al 2011). Moreover, subconscious

connections such as laughter for instance, which connects two people in a subliminal level demonstrates how laughter can be an important tool (Kaukomaa, 2014).

One of the shortcomings that was quite minor but imperative was to determine how realistic the interactions between the characters were. Since this was neither a reality show nor any kind of live show it did hinder some aspects of this essay, namely to try to determine what was natural or unnatural.

Does the way humans use body language carry more significance than our words? The saying “actions speak louder than words” (English idiom, author unknown). can be applicable to this study. Had Walter spoken as the way he did at the beginning, he would probably not be as powerful as he would. However, Walter never did many of the killings in the series; he used people to do his dirty work. Therefore, as stated in the introduction, language controls people more than one would like to think.

To conclude, without knowing the linguistic language tools, there would be no authority given to some people. The way people say things is more importance as to what the person is saying.

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