How Language Shows Power in Relationships

Powerful people use language to show and convince others of their power and also to keep power. So language creates power and there is power in language.

Cultural Influence

*A father talking to his son:*

“Sit down. Where are you going?”

“For a walk, Father.”

“To the village?”

“Well-yes-no. I mean, nowhere in particular.”

***Activity 1:*** Who has the power? How can you tell?

Influence of Social Status

*Doctor and patient interaction:*

**Doctor:** you have diabetes? Your pancreas metabolism is impaired and its ability to manufacture insulin, and therefore, your digestive processes cannot utilize your intake of glucose.

**Patient:** (to nurse): what did he say other than i have diabetes?

**Nurse:** diabetes results when an organ in your body called pancreas is not able to manufacture insulin. Without insulin in adequate amounts, your body can’t handle all the sugar you eat daily. The doctor plans to supply your body with insulin it needs so that the sugar you eat will be used up and not wasted.

**Patient:** so why didn’t he say that in the first place?

***Activity 2:*** Who has the power? How can you tell?

Use of Specific Language Features:

*Pronouns:*

I, you, we.

***Activity 3:*** Who might use these words: the powerful or less powerful, and how?

*Modality:*

Can

Could

Have to

May

Must

Shall

Should

Will

Would

***Activity 4:*** Sort these words into 2 columns on who would use them most often (they might be able to go in both) and have a reason ready for why you put them in the column you chose:

*Powerful Less Powerful*

Types of Speech Acts:

Praising

Warnings

Threats

Commands

Requests

Asking

Suggestions

Thanking

Promising

Informing

Pleading

***Activity 5:*** Sort these concepts into 2 columns on who would use them most often (they might be able to go in both) and have a reason ready for why you put them in the column you chose:

*Powerful Less Powerful*