

THE POWER OF THE HUMAN VOICE

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It takes the human voice to infuse words with shades of deeper meaning. The role of the human voice in giving deeper meaning to words is crucial when one looks at the significance of denotative and connotative meanings of expressions. For example, one person can utter the following words: *I am thirsty*. The surface or general meaning is that the person needs some water. However, depending on the context of the utterance, in terms of the reason for such expression, the role and position of the speaker-on a deeper or connotative basis the same words could mean: *Give me some water now!* In which case: I am thirsty would galvanise the person receiving the order to fetch water as quickly as humanly possible.

The human voice is able to infuse words with shades of deeper meaning because that power of speech can unearth the real intentions, mood, character, identity and culture of the speaker in question. It is easy for a person to write down something and mislead his or her audience or the entire world. However, once one has an opportunity to physically interact with and listen to the person's voice- the real emotional, physical and cultural elements of the speaker can be easily picked up and placed in their right perspective. By the same token, actors, educators, editors, politicians, religious leaders, advertisers, insurance agents, singers, writers, inspirational speakers suffuse their voices with certain words to successfully appeal to their audiences.

Verbal communication is unique to humans. Human beings are emotional creatures. The human voice is thought to convey emotional valence, arousal and intensity. Music is a powerful medium capable of eliciting a broad range of emotions. The ability to detect emotion in speech and music is an important task in our daily lives. Studies have been conducted to determine why and how music is able to influence its listeners' moods and emotions. Results showed that melodies with the voice were better recognised than all other instrumental melodies. The authors suggest that the biological significance of the human voice provides a greater depth of processing and enhanced memory.

Think about a normal day in one's life. How many words does a person speak? How many words do you hear? According to Caleb Lott in the article titled: *The Power of the Human Voice*, while there are several different numbers floating around, an average human speaks a minimum of 7000 words every day. The same writer goes on to say that the human voice is a tremendous asset which can be used to make the ordinary extraordinary. For example, the games Thomas Was Alone and Bastion use the human voice in a unique way that dynamically affects the players' experiences of the games. This is so because a narrative-focused game is not only a powerful and amazing way to tell the story but also does so in a way that the visuals cannot

convey. The writing is amazing, but without the awe-inspiring narration, the impact of the writing would be lessened.

The human voice is an amazing tool that can have a profound effect on video games. Using a narrator affects the gameplay and the experience the player remembers after walking away from the game. Think of being held in awe, listening to the radio where the mellifluous voices of one's favourite program's hosts awaken, mesmerise, excite or sooth one. This boils down to the fact that our visceral reactions to the ways people play form an integral part of our interactions and communication. *Annie Tucker Morgan in Talk to Me: The Powerful Effects of the Human Voice* says there is a reason why many people's first instinct when they are upset is to call their mother. Mother's love is not only enduring but it is something strong that a person finds echoing instinctively and emotionally. She goes on to explain how a University of Wisconsin -Madison study has identified a concrete link between the sound of Mom's voice and the soothing of jangled nerves through the release of stress-relieving oxytocin -also known as the "love hormone" in the brain. Researchers say that women prefer deep male voices on the condition that those voices are saying complementary things, but also that a woman's particular preference for the pitch of a male voice depends on the pitch of her own. Jeffrey Jacob, founder and president of *Persuasive Speaking* highlighted the correlation between people's voices and their professional and personal successes. A study conducted showed that if the other person does not like the sound of one's voice, one might have a hard time securing his or her approval.

If we do not verbalise we write down things. Is writing not something of great magnificence? If so, why can we not make a difference?

The world has never been static, so has writing. It is dynamic. It makes the world revel and reveal itself. Out went the traditional writing feather or pen, and in surged the typewriter, then the "wise" computer. Kudos, the world crooned in celebration of probably one of civilization's amazing conquest and result.

However, this does not mean that the pen is down and out. Not at all. Neither does it mean that the pen has ceased to be mightier than the sword. Writing is writing whether by virtue of the might of the pen or the wizardry of the computer. In verbal communication one can detect the power of the human voice and the mood of the speaker through such elements of speech as intonation, speed, pause, pitch and emphasis. In the written text, register and paragraphing (for example through the use exclamations) can help detect the speaker's intentions and emotions.

Different words mean different things to different people. How do writers hold the attention of readers? Through the beauty of words, story-telling helps us derive entertainment from reading, escape from an onerous or anxious life, and of course, understand more about of the world. Through words writers create plots that are not devoid of suspense and mystery. Watts in *Writing A Novel* says, "A plot is like a knitted sweater-only as good as the stitches. Without the links we have a tangle of wool, chaotic and uninteresting. We get immersed in reading because of the power of causality, the power of words. Words play a crucial role in creating a work of art like a novel. Watts in in the same book says a good answer to a narrative question is as satisfying as scratching an itch.

Through writing we find courage, ammunition and inspiration to go on, in spite of all the odds, we find vision to define and refine our identities and destinies. Yes, through writing we find ourselves, our voice and verve.

J.D. Salinger came up with an interesting observation. He said "What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much, though." Are you not ready to knock many a reader out? Are you not ready to unleash your greatness? How many writers are sitting on their works of art?

Writers and words are good bedfellows. Pass that word. Maya Angelou, the famous author of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* says "Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with shades of deeper meaning." A word is a unit of expression which is intertwined with sight, sound, smell, touch, and body movement. I think it is memorable (and obviously powerful) because it appeals to our physical, emotional and intellectual processes. As language practitioners, this knowledge (of the mental schema) is crucial.

What is in a word? For me, words illuminate, revel and reveal the world. Literature is literature because of words that constitute it. Patrick Rothfuss says, "Words are pale shadows of forgotten names. As names have power, words have power. Words can light fires in the minds of men. Words can wring tears from the hardest hearts." Yet, Rudyard Kipling claims, "Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind" I think this is a very interesting observation.

Patrick Rothfuss illustrates this by declaring, "Words are pale shadows of forgotten names. As names have power, words have power. Words can light fires in the minds of men. Words can wring tears from the hardest hearts."

The beauty of literature is in seeking and gaining an insight into the complexity and diversity of life through the analysis of how the human voice infuses words with shades of deeper meaning. For indeed the dynamic human voice can roar, soar and breathe life into different pregnant clouds of words and meanings.

About Author

Ndaba Sibanda is a passionate author whose works of art have been featured in several international anthologies, magazines and journals. He is the author of *Love O'clock* and *The Dead Must Be Sobbing*. He has co-authored more than twenty-five published books