

ON THE MOTIVE POWER OF WORDS:
Reflections on Sigmund Freud's select
quotation from the *Introductory Lectures on*
Psycho-Analysis

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The nature of words is not a fixed one, but rather, words are capable of great motive power. This is one of the most important claims made in the select quotation from Sigmund Freud's *Introductory Lectures of Psychoanalysis*, that words can move emotions, knowledge, and judgement. And looking back at my own experience with words, it is not hard to see why Freud exclaims that "words were originally magic".

For what else could they be? As a child growing up in the trilingual household of the Mandarin Diaspora, I had the advantage of living with not one type of word, but with the words of three different societies. I learned early on that some types words belong in only certain places: Mandarin in the household,

English at school. And as I got older, the power of the right words in the right places became even more apparent to me, especially as I honed my understanding of language in the whetstones of discussion and debate.