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Communication Skills in Leadership from the Analysis of Commencement Addresses
Communication Skills in Leadership from the Analysis of Commencement Addresses

It is common knowledge that motivated employees lead to higher performances in both the personal level and the enterprise level. Traditionally, company leaders and managers use monetary incentives such as a promotion or a raise in salary to motivate their subordinates. Apart from those, a great leadership is a non-monetary way to motivate the workers and communication skills is one of the most important skills a leader should have. This paper will be discussing communication skills in three different perspectives: Communication, Psychology, and Business, using commencement addresses (also known as commencement speech) as the data of the analysis.

Why Commencement Addresses? And how?

First of all, the speakers invited are usually somewhat successful in their own fields and are influential people themselves. From the analysis point of view, the exteriors such as the environment are as vital as the internal factors such as pragmatics (the use of words), syntax (order of words in sentences), and other linguistic elements. At a commencement, the speakers are required to stand behind a podium without the access to key notes or other props. Also, they are usually given roughly the same amount of time. Therefore, the speakers are in the same condition.

Secondly, while speech analyses typically only focus on the speakers, the audience is an essential perspective as well. The audience in this case are graduating students, meaning that they will be entering companies as new employees very soon, becoming the subordinates of the managers and leaders. Also, the audience are in the same mindset, their purpose is not to listen to the speeches but to receive their diploma and graduate.

The method is to create a checklist using a list of questions from rhetorical speech analysis and features of good speeches. 46 speeches are used based on recommendations from different sources. The speeches are all in English to avoid translation issues. To overcome the gaps between developments of technology and communication styles, the analysis only contains data in the 2000s (2000-2018).

Communication

In this chapter, we will use the Communication Pyramid to explain different levels of communication and how it is related to business and the choice of the data source: YouTube. In the second part, we will demonstrate questions to ask in a rhetorical speech analysis, which will be included in the checklist (control elements) for the data we will analyze. And in the final part, we will look into the findings of the analysis regarding the elements of communication.

Psychology

We will discuss how people minds can be changed or influenced with great communication skills in this chapter. There are some theories about communication skills and leadership in the perspective of Psychology. For example, researchers found that followers named “trust” as a trait that makes a good leader instead of “wisdom,” and trust is based on significant communication. In the second part, we will discuss the findings regarding the psychological elements in the analysis.

Business

In the beginning of this chapter, we will define what “Business English” is. For native speakers, the ways of communication in business scenarios are nothing more but norms, manners, or etiquettes. On the other hand, they become “rules” for non-native speakers, which we will be listed with examples. Although there are not significant elements in the analysis that is directly about business, we are able to discuss them in the business perspective.
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Abstract

Business leaders and managers use different ways to motivate their employees, and a good leadership is one of the non-monetary way. With the analysis of university commencement speech, the paper will discuss communication skills in leadership from the perspectives of Communication, Psychology, and Business. The speakers who are invited to speak at university commencements are usually successful in their fields, and the speeches are meant to motivate or influence the graduating students. The analysis is to attempt to find patterns and common factors based on theories and professional tips from both the speeches and the speakers themselves. As a future business manager or leader, there are hints and tips for improvements in leadership and communication skills we can discover from the analysis.

Keywords: Leadership, Communication, Business, Commencement Speech
Chapter One

Introduction: Model, Data, and Research Method

In the first part of this chapter, the paper will introduce a model that explains the importance of leadership and communication skills. In the second part, we will discuss the data, introduce the list of the data, and the reason of the choice of the data. In the final part of Chapter one, we will discuss the research method.

Model

It is common knowledge that motivated employees and workers lead to higher performances in both the personal level and the enterprise level. Traditionally, company leaders and managers use monetary incentives such as a promotion or a raise in salary to motivate their subordinates. The non-monetary ways are things like the challenges in work and a good leadership.

There are many non-monetary ways to motivate and influence employees, and good leadership is unarguably one of them. It is impossible to define what a “good” leadership is; however, it is practicable to list out a few management skills. The paper will discuss and cover a couple of the highly recognized leadership skills. According to a blog post “Top 10 Leadership Skills: Leadership Skills Employers Look For”, the top 10 leadership soft skills and the related skills are:

1. Communication: active listening, articulating, business storytelling, clarity, concision, correspondence, editing, explaining, expression, facilitating group
conversations, nonverbal communication, presentation, public speaking, reading body language, reducing, ambiguity, verbal communication, and written communication skills.

2. Motivation: allowing employee autonomy, asking for input, assessing interests of staff, convincing, mentoring, open to employee concerns, persuasive, providing productive and challenging work, providing rewards, recognizing others, setting effective goals, team-building, thanking staff, and understanding employee differences.

3. Delegating: accepting feedback from employees, allotting resources for employees, assessing employee strengths and weakness, defining expectations, evaluating employee performance, identifying measurable outcomes, matching the task to the right employee, prioritizing tasks, setting expectations, teamwork, time management, training, and trust in employees.

4. Positivity: caring, conflict management, developing rapport, diplomacy, encouraging, empathetic, friendliness, helping others, humour, interpersonal, positive reinforcement, respect, and social.

5. Trustworthiness: ability to apologize, accountability, business ethics, confidentiality, conscientious, consistent in behaviour towards employees, credibility, emotional intelligence, empathy, honesty, integrity, moral compass, reliability, respectfulness, standing up for what is right, and thoughtful.

6. Creativity: analytical, cognitive flexibility, conceptualization, critical thinking, curiosity, embracing different cultural perspectives, foresight, identifying patterns, imaginative, innovative, listening to others’ ideas, making abstract connections, observation, open-mindedness, problem solving, sound judgements synthesizing, and visionary.
7. Feedback, being open to receiving feedback, building confidence in employees, clarity, clearly laying out expectations, coaching, following up, frequent feedback, listening to employees’ responses, mentoring, positive reinforcement, providing specific advice, and respectful.

8. Responsibility: acknowledging mistakes, being open to customer feedback, evaluating best solutions, forecasting, learning from past mistakes, listening from past mistakes, listening to feedback from employees and managers, project planning, reflectiveness, resolving problems, transparency, and trouble shooting.

9. Commitment: applying feedback, commitment to company objectives, determination, embracing professional development, following through, keeping promises, passions, perseverance, prioritization, professionalism, team player, and work ethic.

10. Flexibility: ability to learn new skills, ability to respond to new problems or issues, adaptability, improvising, negotiating, open to feedback, recognizing individual’s strengths and skills, and treating employees as individuals.

(Doyle, 2018)

Communication skills are not only important for our personal lives, but also in business. A world-renowned speechwriter for five Presidents, including Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush once said, “The art of communication is the language of leadership.” It is crucial for a leader to be able to be a presenter that connects with the audience who provides a memorable message (Paymar, 2012).

Data

The data that will be analyzed and used throughout this paper is commencement addresses. There are two perspectives we use to explain the reasons we use school commencement addresses as the data.
First of all, the speakers. In the field of speech analysis, linguistic elements such as *semantics* (meaning), *pragmatics* (use of words), *syntax* (order of words in sentences), *morphology* (parts of words), *phonetics and phonology* (sounds), and silence/ pauses are frequently used. These are the internal factors of the speakers; however, the exteriors such as the environment and the conditions are also essential when it comes to speech analysis. Some exteriors allow speakers to walk around on the stage, and some provide them with a screen for keynotes. The use of props can also affect a speech. In the case of university commencement speeches, the speakers are required to stand behind a podium, without the access to keynotes or other props, and they are usually given roughly the same amount of time. Most importantly, the demographic of the speakers varies from actors, singers, comedians to politicians, senator, and even leaders of countries. Besides, the speakers who are qualified to be invited to speak at university commencements are successful in their fields and are usually influential people.

Secondly, while speech analyses do not typically focus on the perspective of the audience, it is an essential perspective regarding this paper. The audience in this case are graduating students of universities, meaning that they will be entering companies as new employees, becoming the subordinates of the managers and leaders. Another reason regarding the audience’s points of view is that their purpose of being present is not to listen to the speeches but to receive their diplomas and graduate. However, it is common to see standing ovations for the speeches, and the highly applauded ones are usually uploaded to mass media such as news channels or YouTube to influence more people. There are also cases when great commencement speeches even escalated into best-selling books.

Once we established the reasons of the choice of data, we have to filter them in order to choose the best examples from the speakers and their speeches. According to some posts from several media such as Forbes and Business Insider, 46 commencement addresses were chosen as the data.
This is the list of commencement addresses (Speaker, University, Year):

Abby Wambach, Barnard College, 2018
Chance the Rapper, Dillard University, 2018
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Harvard University, 2018
Hillary Clinton, Yale University, 2018
Jeff Flake, Harvard Law School, 2018
Justin Trudeau, New York University, 2018
Oprah Winfrey, USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, 2018
Rex Tillerson, Virginia Military Institute, 2018
Ronan Farrow, Loyola Marymount University, 2018
Tim Cook, Duke University, 2018
Adam Grant, Utah State, 2017
Arnold Schwarzenegger, University of Houston, 2017
Cory Booker, University of Pennsylvania, 2017
Dalai Lama, USC San Diego, 2017
Hillary Clinton, Wellesley College, 2017
Howard Schultz, Arizona State University, 2017
Joe Biden, Colby College, 2017
Joe Biden, Cornell University, 2017
Mark Zuckerberg, Harvard University, 2017
Michael Bloomberg, Villanova, 2017
Octavia Spencer, Kent State University, 2017
Oprah Winfrey, Skidmore College, 2017
Oprah Winfrey, Smith College, 2017
Sheryl Sandberg, Virginia Tech, 2017
Theo Epstein, Yale University, 2017
Tim Cook, MIT, 2017
Will Ferrell, USC, 2017
Steven Spielberg, Harvard University, 2016
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Wellesley College, 2015
David Brooks, Dartmouth College, 2015
President George W. Bush, Southern Methodist University, 2015
Adm. William McRaven, University of Texas Austin, 2014
Jennifer Lee, University of New Hampshire, 2014
Jim Carrey, Maharishi University of Management, 2014
Sheryl Sandberg, Harvard University, 2014
Ed Helms, Knox College, 2013
George Saunders, Syracuse University, 2013
Kerry Washington, George Washington University, 2013
Oprah Winfrey, Harvard University, 2013
Tim Minchin, University of Western Australia, 2013
Elon Musk, Caltech, 2012
Oprah Winfrey, Spelman College, 2012
Conan O’Brien, Dartmouth College, 2011
Lisa Kudrow, Vassar College, 2010
Ellen DeGeneres, Tulane University, 2009
Hoda Kotb, Virginia Tech, 2008
J.K. Rowling, Harvard University, 2008
David Foster Wallace, Kenyon College, 2005
Steve Jobs, Stanford University, 2005
Research Method

The research method is to create a checklist from several theories of what a good speech is and to look for a sort of pattern and factors they have in common. The speeches that will be analyzed are the ones in English and specifically in the 2000s (2000-2018) for several reasons. The speeches are the ones in English to avoid translation issues and differences in communication styles both literally and culturally. From the perspective of technology, it makes a significant difference due to the evolution of the microphone and speaker systems. The older systems forced the speakers to speak slower with longer pauses due to the echoes.

Moreover, communication style changes a lot throughout the years. It is an index we use to select the data. For example, the jokes that were considered funny might not be considered humorous today and can be a serious issue. It is crucial for us to keep in mind that as the developments of media and communication, the way how people talk changes as well. Another index is based on the audience’s reaction (applause, standing ovations, etc.) and the view counts on YouTube, from where the data will be obtained.
Chapter Two:

Communication

In the first part of chapter two, we will look at different levels of communication on the communication pyramid and how it is related to the topic. The chapter will also discuss how we will use the communication pyramid to explain the reason for the choice of the data source and how business people can relate. Also, in the second part, we will look at the hints and tips for a good speech which will be used in the checklist regarding the perspective of communications.

Communication Pyramid


"the various levels of communication can be put into a pyramid that starts with a large base where people communicate within themselves, and builds up to a peak of mass communication."

He divides communication into four different levels – Intrapersonal, at which communication is within the self. Diaries and journals are two examples of Intrapersonal Communication.
Communication Skills in Leadership from the Analysis of Commencement Addresses

The second level, Interpersonal Communication, also known as One-on-one Communication. There are two people involved at this level—for example, a letter, email, or a text message. Today, direct messages on social media also fit into this category. The next level is Group Communication, where one person is communicating with an audience of two or more people. It can be an email sent to a group (CC), or a group chat in a message application. Finally, at the pinnacle of the pyramid, mass communication. Traditionally, there are radio and newspapers. As the development of technology, now we have television and other social media, which are considered as modern mass media.

Communication Pyramid and the Source of Data

The data we are using in this paper, commencement speech, like any other speeches, is in the level of Group Communication where one person communicates his or her ideas to a group of people. Universities typically invite one person every year to speak at commencements to the audience of graduating students, which the number can be a couple of hundreds to thousands or even more. Logically speaking, the significant ones will be uploaded to media such as Facebook and YouTube. YouTube is the largest video sharing website today, and many universities created their official accounts on the platform to upload events and commencement is one of them. It is also extremely easy to access. Unlike traditional media, we can access YouTube with a computer or even a phone anywhere, anytime. This is a crucial element for a video to become “viral.”

Moreover, YouTube provides the functions of view counts, likes, dislikes, and comments, making it easier to establish the quality of the data. It is clear that it does not mean a video has better contents if it has more views. However, when it comes to motivational and influential speeches, the number matters. Even though a video has great contents, if no one sees it, it is not considered influential. Again, the audience takes an integral part in this situation, which is why YouTube is the choice of the source of the data in this paper.
Communication Pyramid in Business

As other scenarios of communication, the Communication Pyramid can also be seen in business communication. A note to remind yourself is an example of intrapersonal communication. An email, a note, or a simple message to a college is considered as interpersonal communication. As a manager or leader, interpersonal communication and group communication are the two levels that one has to work on the most. By differentiating the levels of communication, we can figure out the situation easier because the communication styles are different depending on the number of audiences. Therefore, understanding the different levels of communication is the first step to a better communication skill.

Speech Analysis

There are different ways of analyzing a speech. In a Linguistic speech analysis, it can be similar to discourse analysis, where we analyze the meaning, use of words, order of words in sentences, verbal and non-verbal communication elements, and usage of pause and silence. Rhetorical analysis is another way of analyzing speeches. The primary method is to answer several questions in different perspectives such as the objectives, the context, the speech content and structure, and the delivery skills and techniques. As a business manager and leader, this method is easier to define a good speech and to assimilate the skills.

Studying and Critiquing a Speech

In a rhetorical speech analysis, we can separate it into four parts: the speech objectives, the audience and context for the speech, speech content and structure, and delivery skills and techniques. We will look into each category and the question-to-answer
came up by Andrew Dlugan, an award-winning public speaker. Some questions are eliminated as they are not related to this paper’s purpose.

The Speech Objectives. First, we have to establish the speaker’s goal – if it is to educate, to motivate, to persuade, or to entertain. In the case of commencement speeches, motivational speeches are more common as the listeners are graduating students who will be entering the society. The second thing is to find the main idea. Then we have to question the reason why the speaker is delivering the speech and if they are the right person. Although there is a great variety of occupations of the speakers, all of them have to be at a certain level to be invited by schools.

The Audience and Context for the Speech. Time, location, and the demographic of the audience are the same for commencement speeches; the speeches are delivered during commencements, at schools, to graduating students. Apart from the live audience, we also have to keep in mind the external audiences. However, commencement speech speakers usually do not target external audiences as they cannot control the viewability.

Speech Content and Structure. [Before the Speech] While it is crucial in speech analysis, it is mostly the same for commencement speech – There are other speakers in the event, the speakers are usually introduced appropriately, and the audience does not know what the topics are in advance. [The Opening] “Was a hook used effectively to draw the audience into the speech?” The way the speech open – with a story, a joke, a statistic, a statement, or a powerful visual. Also, if the opening was memorable or not. [The Body] It is important that the contents circles around the main objective. We also need to check if there are examples or statistics to support the arguments. The use of metaphors and symbolism is also highly valued as they improve understanding and creates relativity for the audience. The speaker’s organizational skills are valued here as well where if the speech was easy to follow and the transition between parts are smooth. [The Conclusion] The conciseness and the
memorability are crucial in the conclusion of a speech. This category is the most critical part of the research as we are to demonstrate the common features.

**Delivery Skills and Techniques.** Dlugan describe delivery skills as “a gigantic toolbox – the best speakers know precisely when to use every tool and for what purpose.” The following shows the category of the questions regarding the delivery skills and techniques: Enthusiasm and Connection to the Audience, Humour, Visual Aids, Use of Stage Area, Physical – Gestures and Eye Contact, Vocal Variety, and Language.

**Hints and Tips for a Good Speech**

We should also evaluate the speeches with the hints and tips from other professionals from the communication point of view. The first one we will look at is from the video “TED’s secret to great public speaking | Christ Anderson”. According to the speaker, Chris Anderson (2016), the head of TED, how ideas are created in the audience’s mind is essential, as “the number one task as a speaker is to transfer into your listeners’ mind an extraordinary gift – a strange and beautiful object that we call an idea.” He suggests it’s better to limit to one major idea. By focusing on one primary idea, it is possible for the speaker to explain the idea properly by giving context and sharing examples. This is also vital while doing a speech analysis as we usually check if the speech body circles around the same idea. Moreover, it is said that to throw so much data out, trying to prove that the speaker is smart, or trying to get all the content out is a bad habit while giving any sort of talks (Greene, 2014).

Our voice, sound, is also crucial when it comes to communication. According to a sound and communication expert Julian Treasure (2014), whose speech is in the top 10 TED talks of all time,

“We teach our children how to read and write, but not how to speak and listen. Listening is untaught and usually unpracticed. Our amazing human voice is marginalised as we communicate more and more through text, not spoken word.”
Greene also stated that our voice tone communicates 38% of the impact that one human being has on another, while words only communicate 7%, and body language communicates 55%.

Treasure described our voice as a toolbox, and it changes how we communicate even with the same words. The tools he introduced were: register, timbre, prosody, pace, silence, pitch, and volume. The register is the high and lows in our voice, as we usually speak through our throats and our voice becomes lower as we move down to the chest. He mentioned that people tend to vote for politicians with lower voice because we associate depth in the voice with power. Timbre is the way our voice feels, and people prefer voices that are rich, smooth and warm. Prosody is if we speak as if it is music or in a monotone, which is not a good example of a great use of our voice. The pace is the speed of how we speak to create different motions, for example, if we speaker very fast, the listener feels that we are excited, and we can speak slower to emphasize our words. Silence is the pause in the studies of communication. The pitch and volume can also show our emotions behind the words.

**Findings**

As most speakers were able to do most of the techniques, few of them did not necessarily deliver their addresses by the “rules”. For example, in the Steve Job’s 2005 commencement address to Stanford, he gave the audience more than one important idea. Tim Minchin’s speech to UWA in 2013 also stated 9 life lessons to his audience.

From the speech analysis perspective, not all speakers use humour or tell a joke to their audience as a hook. Not all speakers were capable of telling a joke, or to be humorous, yet they could still deliver a great speech that receives a standing ovation such as J. K. Rowling’s commencement address at Harvard in 2011.
Chapter Three:

Psychology

We will discuss the importance of communication regarding the perspectives of Psychology in Chapter Three. In the first part, we will look into the purpose of communication, and how it is essential regarding psychology. In the second part, we will look at the hints and tips for a good speech which will be used in the checklist regarding the perspective of communications.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Psychological Needs

As we will discuss communication skills regarding psychology, it is vital that we look into Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. It is a motivational theory that put our human needs into different levels in a pyramid.

Maslow (1943) stated that in order to proceed on to a higher level, human beings must satisfy lower level deficit needs first. However, in his later statement, he said that he previous work may have given “the false impressions that a need must be satisfied 100 percent before the next need emerges” (Maslow, 1987). It means that when a deficit need has been somehow satisfied,
we will move on to the next set of needs yet to be satisfied. According to a psychology tutor and researcher for The University of Manchester, Saul McLeod, “growth needs do not stem from a lack of something, but rather from a desire to grow as a person.”

“Trust” is a crucial element in business. John Maxwell (2007) stated that “people will only follow a leader they trust.” In the business scenario, it can be placed in the Safety Needs level in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Workers must trust that their employments are secured without threats before they move on to think about joy in their workplace. According to Patrick Lencioni’s (2002) *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, “trust” is also vital when it comes to team building. Apart from team building, it also influences the feeling of belonging in the workplace and acceptance.

**Hints and Tips for a Good Speech**

There are some points in the communication theories mentioned in the previous chapter that relates to trust. Treasure mentioned that there are seven deadly sins in communication we should avoid: gossip, judging, negativity, complaining, excuses, lying, and dogmatism. These can all create impacts in the trusts between people, especially in business. Gossiping is to speak ill of somebody who is not present, and we know that people who gossip will be gossiping about us as well. Negativity is the definitely one of the “don’t dos” when it comes to motivating people. Lying, or exaggeration, when it sometimes becomes lying, can discredit our words. Complaining and excuses do not directly affect trusts, however, they are both negative and to pass blames on to everybody else without taking responsibility for their actions is not going to help to gain other’s trust. Dogmatism is the confusion of facts with opinions, and it is hard for people to listen to one speaking about their opinions as if they were true.

In Treasure’s talk, he also introduced the four powerful cornerstones that make our speech powerful: Honesty – be clear and straight; Authenticity – be yourself; Integrity – be your word; Love – wish them well. In order to gain trust, it is vital for us to be honest, to be
ourselves, and to live by our own words. There are two reasons for the final one – to wish them well. The first reason is that not all people in all situations prefer absolute honesty, yet if we tempered it with love, it becomes a great thing. The second reason is that if you wish somebody well, it is hard to judge them at the same time. By avoiding the seven deadly sins in communication and achieving the four powerful cornerstones, it does not only make us a better communicator, but also a more likable person. It is said that people tend to trust and to be influenced by people they find likable (Cialdini, 2007). Maxwell also stated that “a leader who is confident and secure will empower others, not hoard power.”

One of the skills within the communication category mentioned in Doyle’s Top 10 Leadership Skills is “listening”. While many people think that the more interesting a person is, the more that they speak, Olivia Fox Cabane (2012) argued that if people want to seem charismatic, they need to listen attentively and do the opposite of the stereotypical traits about charismatic people telling long stories, dominating, and directing conversations. For a manager, it is a very important skill regarding communication. On the other hand, it is difficult for the commencement address speakers or company leaders who speak to hundreds and thousands of people to listen to every single one of their audience. However, what can be done is to study ahead what their listeners are interested in to enhance their speeches, or to create an idea that benefits the audience and is worth sharing.

This leads to the tip from the professionals regarding psychological perspective is from Anderson, who pointed out that we should focus on one major idea when giving a talk. He stated in his book TED Talks, that one of the steps to build an idea in the listener’s mind is to make your idea worth sharing. This idea can be with the intentions of changing the audience’s opinions, enrich their point of views, or enhance their lives. The idea does not require scientific data or a revolutionary finding; however, it needs to be a gift to the audience. If the listeners do not find the idea benefits themselves, the entire speech becomes a performance or a presentation. As Greene’s stated in his talk about the greatest speakers in the history, “great
speakers don’t give a speech or a performance, a presentation to the audience; they have a conversation with.”

The final hint from the professionals is about the “hook”. Anderson said that permission is required in order to start building ideas inside the minds of the listeners, and curiosity is the main tool to achieve that. He suggested using provocative and intriguing questions to identify that something does not make sense and needs explaining. By revealing a disconnection in the audience’s point of view, they will naturally feel the need to bridge that knowledge gap. If the desire of that were created, it will become much easier to build an idea in people’s minds. Another way is to use humour. In the rhetorical speech analysis, humour is one of the criteria within the speech delivery skills and techniques. By using humour with appropriate pauses around the punch lines and phrases, humour can be a very powerful hook. Comedians like Ellen DeGeneres are specifically the ones that are really good at using humour as that is a huge part of their job.

**Findings**

Regarding the seven deadly sins in communication, most of the speakers were able to avoid them; however, in cases with speakers that are entertainers such as actors or comedians, it is hard for them to completely avoid the seven deadly sins in communication. We also look into if the humour is appropriate for the audience while doing a rhetorical speech analysis, and it is the same. For example, in Ellen DeGeneres’ commencement address to Tulane University in 2009, she was able to start her speech with jokes after jokes. At a point when she was greeting the audience, she said “the creepy Spanish teacher”. The audience, including the people sitting on stage, laughed while knowing that it is obviously not as appropriate. People laughed because it was funny, and what people find humorous are not always appropriate, therefore the comedians were able to gather people’s attention even if they did not follow the “rules”.

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Chapter Four:

Business

The fourth chapter will be discussing from the perspective of business. In English speaking culture and situations, there are some “rules” regarding business communication. It is more likely to discover them in a non-native culture where people are learning English as a foreign language. After establishing the rules, we will look into the items used in the analysis of the commencement addresses.

Business English

In business situations, there are specific ways of communication. They are considered as norms, manners, or etiquettes for English native speakers and “rules” for non-native speakers. The first thing we have to do is to define the term “Business English” to have a clear idea about what it is really about. According to Katie Almeida Spencer (2017), an experienced trainer of English as a Second Language and a specialist in the business context, “Business English is the type of English used in business contexts, such as international trade, commerce, finance, insurance, banking, and many office settings. It entails expectations of clarity, particular vocabulary and grammatical structures.” She stated three essential elements in Business English: clarity, vocabulary, and grammar.

Clarity

It is vital in all sorts of business scenarios and writing or speaking in business also requires the context to be as clear as possible. The reason is to avoid uncertainties of which the listeners may interpret the context in their own ways, and it can lead to miscommunication. On the other hand, situations such as marketing campaigns are similar to literature, where the readers’ or the listeners’ interpretation is not an obstruction of communication.
Vocabulary

While sophisticated vocabulary is commonly used in novels and law-related contexts, it is crucial to be straightforward and rather short in business situations. According to Spencer, there are five foundations we should avoid: clichés, proverbs, idioms, phrasal verbs, and long verbs. Here are the definitions and examples:

Cliché – a saying or remark that is very often made and is therefore not original and not interesting, for example, “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.”

Proverb – a short sentence usually known by many people, stating something commonly experienced or giving advice, for example, “A farmer too lazy to plant in the spring has nothing to harvest in the fall.”

Idiom – a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own, usually culturally based. For example, “In a nutshell, we will not be able to sign the deal.”

Phrasal Verb – a phrase that consists of a verb with a preposition or adverb or both, the meaning of which is different from the meaning of its separate parts. For example, using “resume” instead of “pick up,” “arrange” instead of “set up.”

Long Verb – longer verbs such as “utilize” should be replaced by “use.” Therefore, Spencer suggests that “good written communication is made of short, direct sentences that use the most impact words for your purpose. We should make our statements as simple as possible.

Grammar

As the simplicity that can be seen in vocabulary, it is also vital when it comes to grammar. Many non-native speakers typically assume that they have to use complex grammar for business as they did in their academic writings. However, in most of the case, good English here are the past, present, future simple tenses and present perfect tense.
Efficiency and accuracy are crucial in business, meaning that the context should be easily read and absorbed to save time and money. For indicating the order of actions in business, words like “first” and “then” is more preferred instead of complex grammatical structures.

**Hints and Tips for a Good Speech**

As mentioned in the first part, avoiding hard and technical terms are also one of the steps Anderson suggested for speaking and building an idea in the audience’s mind. It is a common mistake where speakers often forget that their audience is not familiar with the concepts, words, and terms the speaker live with. He advised the speakers to “use the power of language to weave together concepts that already exist in the listeners’ minds – but not your (the speaker’s) language, their (the listeners’) language. Start with where they are.” He also stated that the use of metaphor can play a crucial role in this situation, however, it opposes the idea in Business English that we should avoid uncleanness. Therefore, speakers should know, if not, study beforehand, what their audience knows and live by, in order to make the decision of the use of metaphors.

On the other hand, there are situations when metaphors can be extremely useful even in business. For example, when a manager or a leader is trying to teach new things or concepts to the new employees, having an internal communication, using a metaphor with ideas the listeners already knew can make explaining things more efficient instead. Another example is B2C situations such as marketing a new product or a new concept, metaphors and other vocabularies or terms that are said to be avoided in business are used quite often to explain or to spice up the interests of the customers. Again, the use of metaphors and more complex languages are based on each situation, and leaders should learn to use them in the right situation to the right audience.

In business communication, efficiency and effectiveness are extremely vital. According to an executive coach, Glenn Smith, the reason is that “efficiency is important for
profitability. Effectiveness is important for growth.” Therefore, businesspeople must be aware of communicating with efficiency and effectiveness. By using short and direct vocabularies or terms, we are able to communicate with each other without any confusion. This is a reason why emails and messages in business are usually shorter than other situations such as invitations. The difference can also be seen in the newspaper; the terms an economic newspaper uses are usually not the same to the words other newspaper media uses.

Findings

As the audience of commencement addresses are graduating students, most speakers did a really great job on using vocabularies and concepts college students are familiar with. It seems that all of them are clear with their goal; they are not there to try to teach them about their jobs but to motivate and influence them with ideas based on their own experiences. Most speakers also used simple grammar as it is not essential for them to be extremely formal or literary to their listeners.

However, when it comes to the avoiding of clichés, proverbs, idioms, phrasal verbs, and long verbs, it does not seem that many of them delivered their speeches in the Business English way. Some commencement addresses are under fifteen minutes and some are almost thirty minutes long, therefore, it is important for the speakers to use vocabularies and phrases that are not too simple or in other words, boring. Speakers, especially authors, or creators in any other forms such as actors or musicians, tend to put their words in a way that the listeners can interpret or use their own imaginations. An interesting thing is that even if the speakers are great business people, they do not always stick with the Business English “rules” when they gave an address at commencement. As mentioned before, speakers should understand, if not, study their audience to create a suitable speech for them. If speakers were able to achieve that, they might be able to motivate and influence their listeners.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

After looking into the three different perspectives (Communication, Psychology, and Business) on communication skills, we created a list of yes and no questions for analyzing the commencement addresses based on theories and tips from the professionals. This is the list of the questions based on the elements that most speakers at commencements were able to achieve:

The Questions

1. Was the speaker enthusiastic?
2. Was there audience interaction? Was it effective?
3. Was the message you- and we-focused, or was it I- and me-focused?
4. Was humour used?
5. Was the humour relevant to the speech?
6. Was the humour safe and appropriate given the audience?
7. Were appropriate pauses used before and after the punch lines, phrases, or words?
8. Was the speaker easy to hear?
9. Were loud and soft variations used appropriately?
10. Was the speaking pace varied? Was it slow enough overall to be understandable?
11. Were pauses used to aid understanding, heighten excitement, or provide drama?
12. Was the language appropriate for the audience?
13. Did the speaker articulate clearly?
14. Were sentences short and easy to understand?
15. Was technical jargon or unnecessarily complex language used?
16. Were rhetorical devices used? (amplification, irony, repetition, metaphor, etc.)
17. Did the speaker focus on one major idea?
18. Did the speaker give their audience a reason to care?
19. Did the speaker build their idea with familiar concepts?
20. Did the speaker make their idea worth sharing?

21. Did the speaker avoid: Gossip, Judging, Negativity, Excuses, Penultimate, Dogmatism?

22. Were there the four powerful foundations (Honesty, Authenticity, Integrity, Love)?

Most of the traits are practical and can be achieved in different ways: voice and sound related elements can be achieved by taking voice lessons from a vocal coach. The others can be achieved by practicing and self-development. Even though the questions are based on what most speakers in the commencement speeches were able to achieve, not one single speaker was able to achieve all of them; and at the same time, not one of the elements were achieved by all speakers. Anderson also stated that there is not a single formula to a great talk.

On the other hand, there are factors the speakers all share but are abstract. One of them is to be authentic. Most professionals including the ones that are referred to throughout this paper mentioned this in their talks or books. Greene even stated that this is the most important thing and it can make one’s words powerful to create a tipping point that has the potential to influence people, or “change every single thing on the planet, and indeed, make the world a better place.” Also, as all speakers are invited to speak at commencements as a great example for the graduating students to look up to. Although they are from different fields and professionals, they are all somehow charismatic and influential people that lead a great team of followers. However, the element “having a charismatic personality” is not included in the list due to the fact that it is not possible to be specified from the speeches themselves.

The only abstract trait that all speakers share and is included in the list is number one, “being enthusiastic.” There are two ways we can tell if the speakers are enthusiastic: The first one is the voice and sound. If speakers used the right vocal techniques, they will be able to convince their listener that they are passionate about their talks. The second one is from Treasure’s four powerful cornerstones, “integrity – be your word, doing what you say, and
being somebody, people can trust.” All the commencement speakers are well-known public figures, and their speeches, at commencements or any other situations, are based on their experiences, their personal lives, and their ways of seeing the world. Therefore, it is fair to say that all of them are living by their words, eager and passionate about what they do.

**Other Findings**

It is crucial for future managers and leaders to know the importance of communication skills. In *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie (1964) suggested that “social skills and public speaking, vital skills are high in demand both in personal life and business.” The skills are still high in demand as stated in Anderson’s *Ted Talks*, “great public speaking skills have never been more important or potentially influential than they are today” as media like TED and YouTube enable the speakers to inspire more people and create changes.

The second thing that we have to know is that every single person has the ability to be a great speaker and “to break through and to create a tipping point” (Greene). In Greene’s TED talk, he shared a fact that

“41% of the world, across cultures, is terrified almost to the point, and often to the point, of actually turning down speaking appointments. Whether they are political leaders, or business leaders, or charitable leaders, they turn down opportunities to shake the world because they are scared. In my experience, the number one reason is that we don’t know what public speaking really is.”

He used his personal experience with Princess Diana to prove the point that even the people that are known as great speakers have the fear when it comes to speaking. Even though Princess Diana thought that she did not have the charm and the humour Prince Charles had when it comes to speaking to a group of people, Greene explained to her that it is her enthusiasm that people look up to, and it is her passion that people fell in love with.
We also have to know that “Everyone, no matter how unassuming, will influence many people over a lifetime” (Maxwell, 1993). Anderson also has the same point of view; he suggested that everyone can be a great speaker. Therefore, willingly or unwillingly, every one of us, especially managers and business leaders, will influence many people. In order to influence your audience, your listeners, in a positive way, a motivational way, improving our communication skills is a great way of developing ourselves and the leadership traits.

There are communication skills that we can acquire through professional bits of help, and there are skills and traits that are technically not acquirable. However, it is essential for a great speaker to be aware of such skills and the ones they are yet to be able to do. Moreover, if we remain ignorant about them, we will never be able to enhance our communication skills. Being aware is the first step of acquiring a new piece of knowledge, and that is the same for communication skills in leadership. Most importantly, to acknowledge the fact that a good leader is a good communicator.
References


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Communication Skills in Leadership from the Analysis of Commencement Addresses

Commencement Addresses


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