

## Interface of Pragmatics and Psychology in Motivational Oratory

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### Abstract

*Motivational oratory is an area in which the theories of pragmatics and social psychology interact together. This paper presents a review of the selected theories of both social psychology and pragmatics, which are relevant for motivational oratory. It briefly explains how psychological theories of motivation, such as Hierarchy of Needs Theory, Two factor theory and Need for Achievement Theory, are useful for a motivational orator. It also traces a connection between motivational oratory and certain theories in pragmatics, such as Speech Act Theory, Politeness theory, and Cooperative Principles.*

### Keywords

Motivational oratory, theories of motivation, speech act theory, politeness theory, cooperative principles

### 1. Introduction

Oratory is an art of communication through which a person addresses a large number of audiences with a purpose of persuading, sharing information and/or motivating them. Being such a goal oriented process, it is very challenging and requires certain skill and competence in the speaker. Motivational speakers are required to use various linguistic, extralinguistic and psychological techniques to achieve motivational goals. Through the skill of oratory, politicians win public support, the public figures win a huge fan following, the spiritual gurus win followers, and the lawyers persuade the jury. Therefore, oratory is a valuable art that anybody would like to master.

For the last few decades, there has been a big demand for motivational orators. These orators motivate students to stay focussed and do well in their exam, salespersons to meet their sales targets, company employees to beat depression and stay calm and productive. There are motivation sessions for almost everybody, starting from a simple housewife to CEO of an MNC. Wide popularity of motivational oratory inspired me to study this art.

## **2. Motivation defined**

Motivation is required in every sphere of life. It not only helps individuals to achieve desired goals but also keeps life moving. It becomes very hard to live the life when motivation is lacking. Many scholars have tried to explain the concept of motivation. Gredler, Broussard and Garrison (2004) define motivation as “the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something” (cited in Lai 2011:4). Badu (2005:38) defines motivation as “the factor that induces an individual to behave in a purposive manner to achieve his or her personal or organizational goals.” Motivation is defined as the psychological process that gives behavior purpose and direction (Kreitner, 1995 cited in Badu 2005:38).

In simple words, motivation is the individual’s desire of doing something to achieve certain goals. These goals can be the basic needs of life or related to self esteem and recognition of the person.

Public speaking is such an art by which the speakers motivate the audience to do certain works or not to do certain works. They motivate the students to become competitive, the employees to work hard to achieve recognition, the parents to educate their children and depressed people to boost their self-confidence. Motivational speakers try to enhance the positive self image of the audience and try to reduce their negative self image. Motivational oratory is such an area where linguistic and psychology factors work together. In motivational oratory, the theories of pragmatics and psychology interface to

achieve the goal of motivating the audiences; therefore, I am giving a brief review of these theories.

### **3. Psychological theories of motivation**

There are mainly three classical theories of motivation. They are Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, McClelland and Johnson's Need for Achievement Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory or the Motivation and Hygiene Theory.

#### **3.1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory**

Maslow (1954) discusses the Hierarchy of Needs Theory in which he says humans have inner drive of constantly growing. This is one of well talked theories of motivation which classifies five sorts of motives. The motives are so arranged that lower level needs are kept at the bottom which are satisfied first before all the other higher level needs. These five categories of motives are: psychological needs, safety needs, social needs, ego needs and self-actualization needs.

1. **Psychological Needs:** In psychological needs, Maslow puts those needs which are basic requirements for life and existence; such as need of water, food, shelter and sex.
2. **Safety Needs:** The safety needs are the second in number from lower level of hierarchy of needs. In safety needs, Maslow talks about the needs which come after the psychological needs are fulfilled. They are protection against any sort of threat, danger or deprivation.
3. **Social Needs:** Social needs are third in number from lower level of needs in the hierarchy. One gets motivation for achieving social needs when the safety needs are satisfied. These needs include friendship, love, association, affection, belonging and acceptance. When the safety needs are satisfied, one becomes aware of all these things.

4. Ego Needs: Ego needs are on fourth number, i.e. the second from the top in the hierarchy of needs. When the social needs are satisfied, one gets motivation for satisfying ego needs. These needs include the need for achievement, strength, freedom and adequacy. In simple words, this need is about autonomy or freedom.
5. Self-actualization Needs: Self-actualization needs are the top most needs in the hierarchy of needs. When all lower level needs are satisfied, one works for the self-actualization needs. These needs include realization of one's own potentialities and capabilities that helped him/her develop continuously and the desire of becoming more than one is capable of.

After going through these five categories of motive or needs, we can deduct that a satisfied needs are not the source of motivation and when the lower-level of needs are satisfied, the needs which are next in hierarchy become 'the most proponent determinant of behaviour' or to say the source of motivation (Hamner and Organ 1978, cited in Pardee 1990:9)

Motivational orators first gauge the audiences level of hierarchy of needs and then boost their motivation to satisfy those needs. Motivational oratory does not create needs but rather identifies those needs which are already there in the audiences' psychology. Orators business is just to boost the motivation which is already present in the audiences. Various linguistic and psychological techniques are used for this purpose.

### **3.2. Need for Achievement Theory**

McClelland and Johnson (1984) have given the need for achievement theory which says that when a person has a strong need, it works as motivation for that person to satisfy that need. One learns about needs by coping with one's environment.

In the need for achievement theory, one desires to master ideas, objects and other persons, and to boost one's self-esteem through one's talent (Wallace, Goldstein and

Nathan 1987 cited in Pardee 1990:15). McClelland developed a detailed set of factors which shows a need for achievement. These sets are:

1. Achievers want those situations in which they personally become responsible for finding solutions to the problems.
2. Achievers have such a tendency in which they set average achievement goals which causes “calculated risks.”
3. For their performance, achievers like concrete feedback

(McClelland and Johnson 1984 cited in Pardee 1990:14-15).

Motivational orators use Need for Achievement Theory to understand achievers’ psychology and to meaningfully utilize it to boost their motivation. In order to boost audiences self-confidence, orators generally recognise and appreciate their achievements and then set further goals for them. In doing so, they explain to the audiences the logic of pursuing the suggested goals and risks involved in them. Believing in audiences’ ability to undertake the suggested actions and acknowledging their efforts to the goal are important factors keeping the audiences motivated.

### **3.3. Motivation Hygiene Theory**

Frederick Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory or Motivation Hygiene Theory (1959) is based on the feedback collected from two hundred engineers and accountants in USA regarding their feelings towards environment of their workplace. Herzberg classified two sets of factors to decide the attitude and performance of the employees. He called these factors motivation and hygiene factors. The factors which increase the job satisfaction of the employees are motivation factors and the factors which prevent job dissatisfaction of employees are hygiene factors. The motivation factors are intrinsic factors; while hygiene factors are extrinsic factors.

Motivation factors or intrinsic factors are achievement, work itself, recognition, advancement, responsibility, praise, etc and the hygiene factors or the extrinsic factors are company policy, supervision, working conditions, salary, job security, status, salary and personal life. If the motivation factors are supplied, employees get satisfaction and motivation and if hygiene factors are fully supplied it will prevent job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, Mousner, and Snyderman, 1959, as cited in Pardee 1990:10-11). The hygiene factors if fully supplied will not result in job satisfaction but prevent job dissatisfaction of employees. Employees' productivity or performance increases when motivation factors are fully addressed.

Motivation Hygiene Theory is related to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory but is slightly different. While Hierarchy of Needs Theory says that all five levels of needs motivate people, Motivation Hygiene Theory insists that supply of lower-level of needs does not cause motivation but just prevents dissatisfaction. Higher level of needs must be met to motivate the employees. When the external factors are supplied employees feel free from the unpleasant working environment that will prevent job dissatisfaction. The opposite of satisfaction is not dissatisfaction but 'no satisfaction' and the opposite of dissatisfaction is not satisfaction but 'no dissatisfaction' (Robbins, 2009 cited in Yusoff, Kian, & Idris 2013:19). When a speaker delivers a speech to motivate employees of a company, he/she keeps these factors in his mind.

#### **4. Motivational Oratory and Pragmatics**

The motivational orators use various theories of pragmatics to make their speeches effective. The most relevant theories for a motivational orator are – Austin's Speech Act Theory, Theory of Politeness, Leech's Maxims and Grice's Cooperative Principles. Therefore, I am giving a brief review of these theories.

##### **4.1. Motivational Oratory and Speech Act Theory**

Austin (1962) gave the theory of Speech Act in his book “How to Things with Words”. He defined speech acts as performing some action by just saying something. According to the speech act theory an action performed when an utterance is made. For instance we thank our friends for their help, congratulate them on their success, apologize when we do mistake. So these are some actions we can perform just by saying words. A father in the church announces a man and woman as husband and wife just by making the utterance “I announce you as husband and wife”. An utterance can be analyzed on three levels or what Austin calls three types of speech acts. They are locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary effect. Locutionary act is just making an utterance, the intention behind an utterance is illocutionary act, and the effect of an utterance on the listener is the perlocutionary effect. For instance, when the speaker says, “Good morning to all of you”. Just by saying this he makes the locutionary act, the intention behind wishing the good morning to the audience is winning the acceptance of the audience and the perlocutionary effect of this utterance is seen on the audience in form of whistling, applause and wishing the good morning back.

#### **4.1.1. Felicity Conditions**

According to Austin (1962) for a speech act to be successful, certain conditions have to be met. He called these conditions as happiness conditions or felicity conditions. The felicity condition is the appropriateness of person, place and time.

Motivational orators generally use the speech act theory in their speeches by thanking the audience and managing committee and promising them sure success. Speakers naturally follow the felicity conditions as most of the motivational orators are generally successful businessmen or public figures and they are mostly invited to tell their success stories to audience at certain occasions such as commencement, convocation, anniversary of the company, etc. People get motivation only when they get it from successful businessmen or public figures. So it can be said that motivational speakers follow the felicity conditions of appropriate person, place and time.

## **4.2. Motivation Oratory and the Cooperative Principles**

Communication runs smoothly and successfully when the interlocutors adhere to the certain conversational maxims. The conversational maxims are given by Grice (1975) in his 'Logic and Conversation' under Cooperative principle. He discussed four cooperative principles. They are maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation and maxim of manner.

### **4.2.1. Maxim of Quantity**

The first maxim of Cooperative principle, i.e. maxim of quantity, says that the speakers should provide as much information as is required. They should neither be over informative, nor less informative. The speakers who give less information than required risk their listeners not being able to understand what they are talking about; those who provide more information than listeners require, risk boring them.

### **4.2.2. Maxim of Quality**

Maxim of quality is the second cooperative principle. This maxim says that the speakers should only say what they believe to be true to best of their knowledge. They must not say what they think to be not true. Some speakers use certain connectives, such as 'as far as I know' to make their listeners believe that whatever they are saying is true to their knowledge.

### **4.2.3. Maxim of Relation**

The third principle of the cooperative principle i.e. the maxim of relation which says that the speakers should say something that is relevant to what has preceded. For

instance speakers like to use phrases such as ‘just going back to your point’ ‘as Mr. X said’ etc to show the relevance to the conversation.

#### 4.2.4. Maxim of Manner

The fourth and the last cooperative principle is the maxim of manner which says that the speakers should be brief and systematic and avoid ambiguity in their conversation. For this purpose speakers use ‘just to clarify the point’, ‘to make it clear’ etc.

In motivational oratory all the four maxims are observed. Most motivational orators speak what they believe to be true and they present as much information as required for motivating the audience. Mostly their information shared by them is relevant and presented in orderly and unambiguously. Since the main purpose of the motivational orators is not to narrate the facts but to motivate the audience, they use imaginary stories and anecdotes. In doing so, they do not flout the maxims of quality and quantity as they deal with probabilities and possibility in a given situation rather than facts and figures. If a motivational speaker flouts the maxim of quality, he/she will soon lose rapport with the audiences; if he/she flouts the maxim of quantity, his/her speech will become boring. While flouting the maxim of manner will make his/her speech incomprehensible and therefore ineffective, the irrelevant narration will easily tire the audiences. Due to all these reasons it is very necessary for a motivational orator to observe the maxims of cooperative principles.

#### 4.3. Motivation Oratory and the Theory of Politeness

Brown and Levinson (1987) gave the theory of politeness. The theory says in order to maintain social relationship, one must acknowledge and have the awareness of the **face**, the self-image of the people that one addresses. They said that it is believed across cultures that speakers should respect each other’s public self-image, take their feelings into consideration and not do Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). When FTAs cannot be

avoid, negative politeness can be used to redress the threat that maintains hearers negative face i.e. the freedom of action, concern for time and, not to be disturbed by others. The positive politeness can also be used to redress the FTAs. The positive politeness is the desire of being liked, accepted and admired by others and need of inclusiveness.

There are different ways of accomplishing one's goal and showing concern for face. For example Rama is sitting in the exam hall and his pen stops working; he would like one of the students to help him. He can just say, "oh my god! My pen is not working". May be someone hears and helps him with a pen.

The FTAs can be done on record and off record. When you ask for something indirectly in a loud voice so that people near you could hear you, is FTA off record. The one example given above is the example of the FTA off record because Rama does not ask for the pen from any of the students but speaks loud enough so that other students could hear and interpret that his pen is not working and he needs a pen.

If a speaker asks for something, makes a suggestion, invites someone directly and openly, it is called she/he is doing the FTA bald on record. These utterances are direct speech acts which contain the imperatives without hedging devices. For instance if Rama turns to his neighboring student and says "give me a pen". This FTA is bald on record as it does not have any redressal strategies to mitigate the effect of face threatening to hearer's negative face. By doing this he threatened the negative face of the student by not showing concern for her/his time and freedom of action.

The FTAs on record or off record threaten the negative face of the hearer by imposing works on them or by interrupting their freedom of action. To redress the effect of the FTAs bald on record, speakers use negative politeness strategies. By using these strategies, speakers show concern for negative face of the hearer by showing concern for his/her time, thing, using questions, hesitation and apology. Going back to the above

mentioned example of the exam hall if Ram turns to one of the students and says, “Could I borrow your pen for five minutes please?” Note that in the example the speaker does an FTA on record but with negative politeness by using question instead of imperative sentence that gives the hearer a chance to say ‘no’. The speaker also shows concern for the value of the pen and his/her time by using ‘please’ and ‘for five minutes’.

Positive Politeness is related to hearer’s positive face, which individual’s desire of being appreciated, acknowledged and accepted. All the acts of thanking, praising, flattering, and showing intimacy come under positive politeness. Positive face can be threatened, maintained, and enhanced. Act such as not thanking, not welcoming, showing disregard, and criticizing threaten hearer’s positive face. While the observance of formalities of thanking, welcoming, etc. maintains hearer’s positive face. Acts such as praising hearer and his/her actions, showing respect in public, introducing in a grand way, enhance hearer’s positive face. The acts of maintaining and enhancing positive face are considered polite.

Motivational orators are often use politeness strategies to avoid disagreement and build rapport with the audiences. They generally thank the audiences, appreciate their achievement, and show concern for their comfort. All these acts are the acts of politeness which make the audiences positively disposed towards the speaker and help in building rapport. Audiences’ positive disposition towards the speaker breaks the communication barriers and creates the possibility of the success of motivational effort done by the speaker.

#### **4.4. Motivation Oratory and Leech’s Politeness Maxims**

Leech (1983) lists six maxims of politeness. They are tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. The first and second maxim form a pair and third and fourth maxim form another pair while the fifth and sixth maxims stand alone.

The maxim of tact is focused on the hearer which says ‘minimise cost to other’ and ‘maximise benefits to other’ while the maxim of generosity is focused on the speaker which says ‘maximise the cost to self’ and ‘minimise benefit to self’.

Motivational speakers generally use the maxim of tact by trying to show how the audiences are rich with golden opportunities and means and at the same time maximize cost to self by mentioning how tough it was for them when they were at the same verge.

The maxim of approbation is focused on the hearer which says ‘maximise praise of other’ and ‘minimise dispraise of other’ while the maxim of modesty is focused on the speaker which says ‘maximise the dispraise of self’ and ‘minimise the praise of self’.

Motivational orators use the maxim of approbation very tactfully by praising the audiences’ little success and showing them chances of various opportunities. The speakers not only praise audiences’ success but also tell them benefits of failure by mentioning their own failures. The speakers also use the maxim of modesty by mentioning their own failures and wrong decisions by which they dispraise themselves and minimise praise to self.

The last two maxims that do not form a pair are the maxim of agreement and the maxim of sympathy. The maxim of agreement says ‘maximise agreement between self and other’ and ‘minimise disagreement between self and other’.

Motivational speakers mostly apply the maxim of agreement to take the audiences in confidence and enhance their credibility. The use of this maxim helps the speakers to make the audience belief that whatever they are saying is true. For enhancing the agreement between the audiences and themselves, they generally use the life stories of great people and anecdotes. People generally listen to those speakers who become successful in establishing the agreement between self and the audiences.

The maxim of sympathy says ‘maximise sympathy between self and other’ and ‘minimise antipathy between self and other’

The motivational generally motivate the audiences by sympathizing and empathizing with them. They generally show love and affection towards the audiences which makes easy for them to connect to their problems and thereby take them into confidence. The audiences also feel that the speakers really understand their problem and whatever the speaker is saying is real solution to their problems.

## **5. Conclusion**

On the basis of the review of important theories it can be safely said that the success of motivational oratory depends upon the combination of strategies of pragmatics and psychology. For analysing motivational oratory a model would be required that analyses both linguistic and psychological strategies side by side. Such a model should integrate the established principles of motivational oratory together with related theories in psychology and pragmatics. Such a model should also be unambiguous in defining terminology and have comprehensibility and required clarity. This review paper establishes the need for such an integrated model.

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