

Periodic Research

A Communicative Analysis of Historical Speeches- Insights into Professional Legal Communication



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Abstract

It is widely accepted and acknowledged THAT a lawyer must have immaculate communication skills, consisting of verbal, non-verbal and paralinguistic elements. Only then will she put her point across effectively, and make an impact on the opposing parties, and the judges. In modern law school education, activities like moot and debating have come to occupy centre-stage, as they train aspirants in the communication required for successful lawyering. Through this article, the researcher aims to present an analysis of famous historical speeches from a communicative perspective, so as to draw out the characteristics of a good speech, and qualities of a successful orator. The two aspects of the speeches that have been focussed on are the tone used by orators, and the emotions conveyed by their words, both of which are important from the perspective of law as a profession.

Keywords: Communication, Effective Communication, Orators, Tone, Emotion, Passion, Figures of Speech, Didactic, Motivation, Optimism, Courage, Clarity of Vision, Morality, Examples, Audience, Lawyers.

Introduction

In today's world, there are a variety of fields for law students to choose from. But whether we choose to argue before a bench of judges, negotiate the terms of a merger, or communicate the terms of a settlement to a client, communication skills are of utmost importance everywhere. And what better way to learn the art of communication from the master orators themselves?

The impact that a single, well-articulated piece can have on our MINDS is stunning. Be it Jawaharlal Nehru's 'Tryst with Destiny' or Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream', our leaders have inspired us with their speeches throughout the course of history. From a communicative perspective, certain famous speeches have been very impactful in influencing the listeners. Any ideology, thought or idea can be successfully conveyed only when the orator has effective communication skills, and the tone used and emotion conveyed through this communication is of great significance (Montefiore, 2010). According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, tone refers to the "style or manner of expression in speaking or writing." It is what the audience might perceive as the writer's attitude, bias, or personality. The beauty of oration is such that behind the spoken words lie veiled emotions, which are left open to interpretation by the audience. A few words have the potential to convey several inspiring emotions, which leave indelible imprints on the mind of listeners.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' was delivered to 2,50,000 civil rights supporters on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, after the courts declared the Montgomery Bus Company (which HAD asked Rosa Parks to move to the back of the bus because she was black) racial segregation policy unconstitutional. The speech is credited with mobilizing supporters of desegregation and prompting the Civil Rights Act 1964 (King, 2001). On 14th August 1947, when Britain granted independence to India, Jawaharlal Nehru made the speech 'Tryst with Destiny' marking the end of a long struggle for freedom (Hill, 1997). Initially thought of as 'goongi gudiya', India's first female Prime Minister Indira Gandhi swayed public opinion in her favour with her strong speeches and ambitious policies (Kaviraj, 1986). She sought to increase the participation of women in politics and society, as is conveyed in her speech at the Indraprastha College for Women. Mahatma Gandhi's speech 'There is No Salvation for India' delivered at the Benaras Hindu University

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illustrates his early thoughts on India's need to gain independence from the British rule. Addresses like this one made him the popular leader of the independence movement in India (Moore, 2008). Mother Teresa delivered her speech 'Love Begins at Home' when accepting the Nobel Peace Prize on 11th December 1979. It affirms her belief in the value of every human life, including the unborn, and the sombre tone pierces the listeners' hearts. The Parliament of the World's Religions opened on 11 September 1893 at the Art Institute of Chicago. On this day, Swami Vivekananda gave a brief speech representing India and Hinduism. He bowed to goddess Saraswati and began his speech with "Sisters and brothers of America!" which earned him a standing ovation at the very beginning. The earnest, secular tone, and the message of religious tolerance and equality makes this speech a popular one (Kallat, 2011).

John F. Kennedy was the youngest and the first Roman Catholic elected as US President. His speech titled 'Ask Not What Your Country Can Do for You, but What You Can Do for Your Country' swept away many peoples' fears that he was too young and inexperienced for the job. He came to power after a narrow victory over the Republican Richard Nixon (Hahn, 1982). 'I Have Nothing to Offer but Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat' was Winston Churchill's first speech to the House of Commons after his appointment as Prime Minister of Britain in 1940. Churchill's vocabulary was large, and he loved to use intensive wordplay, alliteration, vivid imagery and metaphors. He often employed inspirational rhetoric as well

Analysis and Results

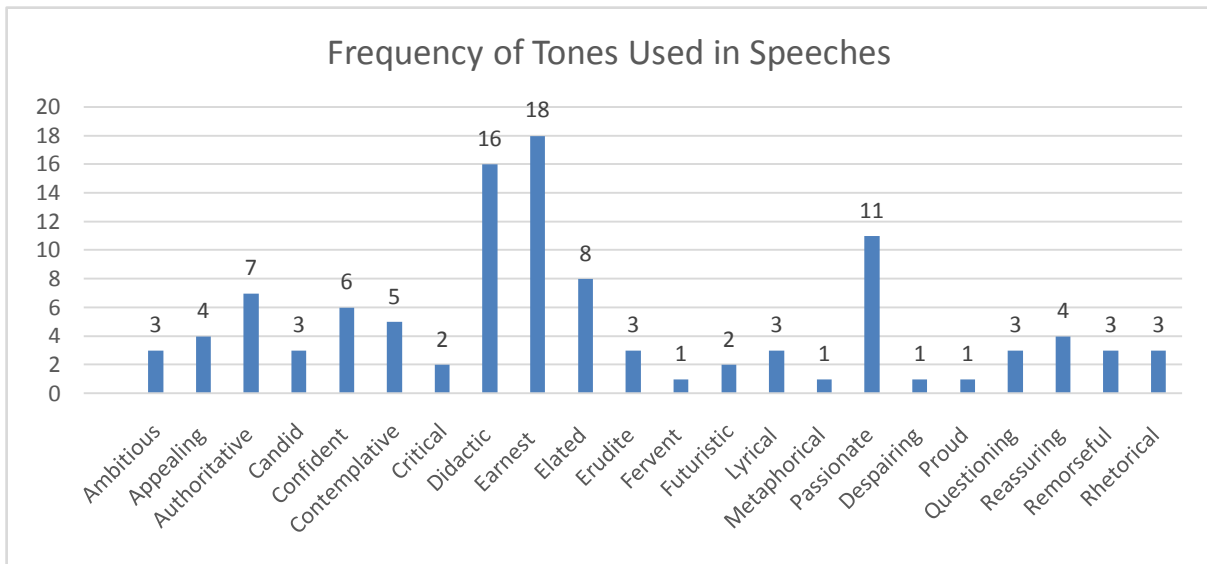
(Lukacs, 2008). Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President of the United States in 1932 despite contracting polio in 1921. His famous speech assuring the masses that 'The Only Thing We Have to Fear is Fear Itself' demonstrated his remarkable powers of leadership in the face of the 1933 economic collapse. In 1994, four years after his release from prison, Nelson Mandela delivered his speech 'Free at Last', on the occasion of the African National Congress winning the South Africa elections. He became President, and was greeted rapturously by black and white South Africans, and people throughout the world.

Aim of Study

This study aims to study the tone and emotion used by orators in famous, historical speeches to draw out essentials of communication for lawyers.

Methodology

The method of doctrinal research has been applied. The researcher first gathered books, CDs, video clippings and online resources from where to gain familiarity with the individual speeches. Then, the tones and emotions of these speeches were analysed in detail, using an observation table. A total of one hundred and eight observations were recorded, which consisted of excerpts from the speeches themselves, along with an identification of the tone and emotion. For the purpose of this research paper, the observation table has not been reproduced in its entirety, but graphs and analysis have been constructed for the crisp and accurate presentation of the results of the research.

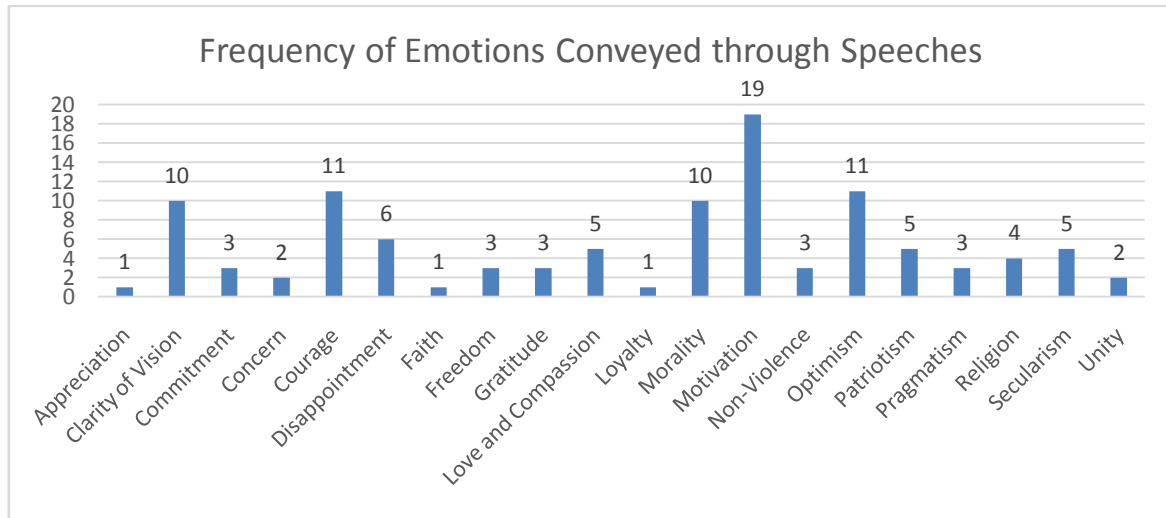


Studying the results of the observations, 'earnest' (18 occurrences), 'didactic' (16 occurrences) and 'passionate' (11 occurrences) emerge as the predominant tones employed by orators while delivering speeches. 'Earnest' conveys a serious and intent mental state, while 'Didactic' is designed or intended to teach, or intended to convey instruction and information. 'Passionate' is a tone conveying strong emotions and beliefs. The conclusion which can be drawn from the above is that the audience

responds most, and takes inspiration from the speaker, if he himself is earnest and passionate about his cause. If the tone of the speaker is serious, it conveys their earnestness and motivates the audience to think about the cause or ideas being propounded. A common perception which is disproved through this research paper is that the audience does not relate to a didactic tone. 'Didactic' is the second most frequently used tone in the researcher's observation pool. This proves that

speeches involving moral sensitivity fare well with listeners, and makes a lasting impacts on them. One could easily speculate that when famous leaders and respected public figures attempt to chastise others

through their passionate beliefs and experiences, the listeners aspire to achieve the same cause. They may or may not support those causes, but it helps them develop their opinions for or against them.



Studying the results of the observations, five emotions emerge as the predominant ones conveyed by orators in their speeches. The first one is 'motivation' (19 occurrences), which refers to the speaker's attempt to motivate his listeners and inspire them to work towards a certain ideal. The second dominant emotion conveyed is that of 'optimism' (11 occurrences). It has been observed that if the speaker himself is optimistic and enthusiastic about his cause, he is able to connect with his audience much more. 'Courage' (11 occurrences) is the third conspicuous emotion. Leaders often seek to INSTILL a sense of courage in the masses to fight, or to not give up. This conveys determination on their own part as well. There is a famous phrase "A country should have not only leaders, but should display leadership." Audiences connect much more to leaders who deliver speeches which exhibit Clarity of Vision (10 occurrences), which is why it is hardly surprising that this is a common keyword. What and How of future planning should be covered under clarity of vision, for it to make a lasting impact and inspire the listeners. Lastly, SINCE 'didactic' has emerged as a predominant tone, and it follows that 'morality' (10 occurrences) appear as a popular emotion expressed by orators.

Conclusion

From the speeches that have been read for the purpose of this research paper, the following can said to be the essentials of a good speech, which ought to be employed by law practitioners and students to make an impact on their listeners and make their point all the more impactful. The very first characteristic is the usage of varying tones. Through an individual analysis of the speeches, it has been found that in order to capture and maintain the interest of the audience, it helps to convey a focused message using varying tones. The tones should vary from didactic to earnest to passionate. These were the three most popular tones among the speeches the researcher undertook to analyse. Condescending

tones give the audience the impression that they are being patronised, and do not fare well with them. Such tones have not been noticed even once among all the popular speeches studied above. The next characteristic is that the speech should carry a single predominant emotion or message. Using the tones mentioned above to convey a single-point message works wonders. If there are varying tones conveying varying emotions, the audiences loses track and the message gets lost. This constitutes a barrier to effective communication. Focus and clarity of vision is also important. There is a famous phrase "A country should have not only leaders, but should display leadership." Audiences connect much more to leaders who deliver speeches which exhibit clarity of vision. The 'what' and 'how' of future planning should be covered under clarity of vision, for it to make a lasting impact and inspire the listeners. The speaker should also be passionate about the cause or ideal he is arguing for. This reaches out to the audience, and motivates them to develop their own opinions for or against the cause. Figures of speech should be utilised abundantly. Rhetoric tones and metaphors go a long way in grabbing the audience's attention and conveying the message effectively. The last characteristic is the usage of statistics and examples; using national and international statistics lend credibility to the speaker's words. Having examples helps listeners understand and internalise the message by relating to it.

In short, the important ingredients of speech for lawyers as pointed out through my observations are that a speech should be passionate so as to appeal to the hearts and minds of men, and make them understand what the speaker intends, through a single-point, focused message. The message must also be clear so that the people can easily interpret it. Condescending and patronizing tones should be avoided. The speech must have correct and concrete facts and evidence, backed with statistics and examples. Metaphors, similes and other figures of

speech should be used according to the pulse of the audience. The speech must appeal to the practical as well as emotional senses of the audience. The speaker must appreciate the audience and give them reasons to listen.

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