

Comparative study between commencement addresses

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



By analyzing texture of speech and choice of content, we will observe that though the speakers are early Identical In age, choice of career and professional status; there is disparity in the personae projected and ultimately the message delivered by them. The message in Jobs' speech (Stanford university News, 2005) was to encourage the students to not be afraid to do what they love, and he arrived at this point by lugubriously narrating three stories of adversity from his life.

Gates' speech (Harvard gazette, 2007) in contrast was aimed to inspire the students to strive to reduce inequity in the world, which he achieved by humorously recounting his exploits at Harvard and his thoughts on inequity. We notice here that despite similar situational influences, the two men try to present antithetic images of themselves by the tone of their speech and also by carefully filtering which aspects of their life they disclose (Leary, M. R. , & Allen, A. B. , 2011, p. 1199).

The first major difference is the tone of the speech; Jobs opts for a very solemn approach with few humorous departures while Gates is very liberal in his use of humor which in fact forms a very integral part of the first half of his speech. The second difference is the kind of content in the speeches; Gates shares his thoughts on inequity, the journey of his arrival at this epiphany and his thoughts on how the problem could be tackled while Jobs divulges very personal stories about his adoption, getting fired from Apple and being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Due to the fact that Jobs' speech contains more elements personal to himself, we see a very clear congruence of animator, author and principle

and as a result his speech seems more authentic as compared to Gates' speech (Montgomery, 2001 , p. 00). We discern this from the sense of passion and honesty which permeates throughout Jobs' address, and the fact that he divulges stories of some of the lowest points in his life.

This is a clear attempt to break free of the impression of himself as an ultra-successful businessman in the audience eyes, and instead replace that image with a more human one so that the audience can fully appreciate the struggles of his life and the truth about his success. As such we see that Gates seems more open to audience Interaction while Jobs seems to be In a ore pensive and distant mood which is apparent in both his vocalic and gestures.

We can observe this distant mood of Jobs speech most clearly in his gestures, more specifically in his gaze and pause, because sentences are rarely uttered in a behavioral vacuum (Tim Wharton, 2009, p. 1). During Gates' speech we see that he is very responsive to audience reaction, in that he always and looks up at the audience to accommodate for their applause.

By contrast Jobs does not take this approach, he feature of the speech ties into the previous two we have discussed, and contributes o the personae that they are trying to project; Jobs' being that of a solemn successful tech-enthusiast while Gates' is that of a humorous successful philanthropist.

These personae that they have constructed over the course of the speech are not superficial to the speech, but in fact play an important role in fulfilling the respective purposes of their speeches. The main aim of any

commencement address is to inspire the audience in some way, be it to bring about a change in their lives or a change in the world.

Both Jobs and Gates have achieved the objective of inspiring the audience, but we have seen that they went about it very differently. Since Gates' message is one of global proportions, he uses his fame and background as a philanthropist to convey his message and this is why the content of his message is structured around humor, but in contrast Jobs' message is personal to each individual and so we see that in his speech he tries to be more personal himself to elicit the kind of response he wants.