



## ‘AWAKEN THE GIANT WITHIN’: LINGUISTIC EXPLORATIONS INTO THE ART OF DELIVERING MOTIVATIONAL TALKS

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### Abstract

*Motivational speeches prepare people for success. The one who knows the art to articulate balanced words constructs convincing and strapping arguments. Similarly, motivational talks appear to play a pivotal role in transforming lives. The objective of this research was to discover the application of linguistics in the field of motivational talks. Motivational speakers use different linguistic tools in their speeches to inspire their listeners. So, this study was an effort to investigate the importance of different tools utilized by motivational speakers in their motivational talks. The literature review highlighted how motivational speakers exploited linguistic resources in their talks. This study employed quantitative approach. For this purpose, 50 young and experienced motivational speakers from Rahim yar Khan, Bahawalpur, and Multan were selected. The data was collected with the help of a close-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered among 50 young and experienced motivational speakers. The results of the study showed that majority of the motivational speakers held that word-choice was important for motivating people. More than 70 % of the participants were of the view that appropriate use of prosodic aspects, bilingualism, effective use of body language, motivational slogans, sharing real-life experiences and making wiseword-choices made motivational talks effective.*

**Keywords:** Motivational Speakers, Linguistic tools, Stylistics, Supra-segmental aspects

### 1. Introduction

Having successful interaction in the social world is an art. In the field of linguistics, rhetoric, stylistics and discourse analysis and other forms of human communication studies, examine and explain multifarious aspect of communication in society. Every man uses language in daily life for communication with other members of society. With communication, emotions, feelings, ideas and thoughts are conveyed to others. The word “communication” is derived from the Latin word “Communicare”, which means “to share”. Communication is used to transmit information (O’Grady, 1990). Communication helps us to produce positive and negative words. Both positive and negative words affect our lives. Positive words leave a positive impact on the human mind. These words stimulate, motivate and energize receivers. Comparatively, negative words cause distraction in the mind.

According to Asante (2012), life can be completely changed by the right words at the right time. Words carry the power to touch the soul and affect the mood of the receivers making them happy or sad. So, by realizing the significance of words, we can change our life to a great extent. Words employing linguistic tools can make our communication mesmerizing. Motivational speakers’ interest rotates around these linguistic tools. They know the power of words and use multiple techniques to eliminate the difficulties of their audience. They show the optimistic side of life and help the audience to overcome pessimism. Motivational speakers boost the confidence of listeners as well as aid them in becoming assets and effective individuals of society.

#### 1.1. Background of the study

In daily life, a common speaker of any language uses linguistic tools deliberately. Human beings use affective words from the very beginning. So, with these linguistic tools, a

motivational speaker describes his own real-world experiences in the simplest way that the audience can determine the answer to their own questions difficulties. Motivational speakers estimate the requirements of the listeners and they satisfy their listeners by using a number of strategies along with linguistic tools. They transform the minds as well as the lives of the listeners by using the most effective linguistic tools in their speeches.

### **1.2. Research Problem**

The researchers of linguistics are always attracted by the effective use of language. A healthy society can be shaped by training people and by raising awareness about the power of words. An average mind cannot estimate the importance of words and linguistic tools in everyday speech. If we neglect the importance of words in our daily lives, it may result in misunderstanding. In short, motivational speakers help people to understand the importance of words with their own moving talks.

### **1.3. Research Question**

The main objective of this research study was to investigate the use of linguistic tools in motivational speeches to understand the influence of positive words. The research question of the study was:

- What kind of linguistic tools do motivational speakers employ to motivate their listeners?
- What do the motivational speakers think about verbal and non-verbal features of language?
- What are the motivational speakers' perceptions on the power of words?

## **2. Literature Review**

This research paper aims to discover the use of linguistic tools used by motivational speakers in their motivational speeches. The right use of words at the right time can be a source of pleasure, satisfaction, and completeness for people. The dynamic words aligned by employing linguistic tools can play their roles to completely transform the lives of people. Words in a language may have various functions. According to Sapir (1921), language is an innate ability to transmit thoughts, feelings, and necessities with the help of signs.

The relevant literature focuses on motivational aspects of motivational speakers, therapeutic power of words, and their positive and negative impacts.

### **Power of Words**

In the world of words, it is difficult to estimate the power of words. These words can make an individual powerful or weak, motivated or demotivated, and happy or sad. According to Asante (2012), words have the ability to transform lives. The words we articulate or comprehend can completely transform the lives of people (Wright, 2010). According to Newberg and Walden (2013), a word can impact genes that regulate emotional and physical stress.

#### **2.1.1. Impact of positive words**

Positive words always provide a positive effect on human behavior. Positive words have the ability to make people relaxed, content, pleased, gratified and motivated. Only words can transform the physical and emotional attitude of any individual (Newberg and Waldman, 2013). Positive words contain positive energy. According to Gairns and Redman (1986), positive words carry therapeutic power. Mother Teresa explains that "benevolent words may be brief and easy to utter, but their echo is eternal" (as cited in Lodhi, 2017). Furthermore, advocating at the impact of words, Newberg and Walden (2013) add that positive words stimulate frontal lobe activity which moves an individual into action.

#### **2.1.2. Impact of negative words**

Negative words are a source of distraction for the human mind. Negative words are not only harsh but also hurt other individuals. As Horton (2019) claims that negative words whether spoken, heard or thought can be responsible for anxiety and stress. The negative, harsh, and subtle words lead towards aggressive arguments and result in a difference in beliefs and views, and disappointment. Negative words damage the capability of being logical and reasonable. As the famous Pakistani motivational speaker, Qasim Ali Shah (Feb 15, 2015) explains that ‘a person can overcome the effects of bomb blast within three days but the effects of negative and harsh words remain till death.’ So, words have the power to make or mar lives. The following figure 1 shows that for one and the same thing there exist positive and negative words. The effect of communication held depends on the choices of words made by the interlocutors during the communication.

**Figure 1: Difference between positive and negative connotative words**

Positive connotation	Negative connotation
Healthy	Fat
Determined	Stubborn
Youthful	Immature
Relaxed	Sluggish
Skinny	Slender
Argument	Debate
Bitter	Strong

So, positive words in figure 1 can fetch positive responses from people and negative words may prompt negative responses from people. Thus, a good wordsmith can be a successful person in social life. Stylistics is the branch of applied linguistics which deals with the effect of word-choices on the listener or reader. For instance, let us compare the effects of ‘a year ago’ with ‘a grief ago’. ‘A grief ago’ brings a picture of a person in grief to our mind while the other phrase brings no such picture. Such dynamic aspects of word-choices are studied by stylistics (Leech, 2014 and Leech and Short 2013).

## 2.2. What is Discourse?

Generally, discourse is likened to an iceberg. Discourse contains more than just communication. It contains social context and culture as well besides communication or language. According to Mills (1997), the word ‘discourse’ originated from the Latin word “discursus” which means “to argument”. Communication plays a vital role in our life. Words are used to communicate with others. The use of proper words in a particular context and with particular meaning makes our communication effective. Words we speak in a particular situation are called context. According to Spencer (2006) discourse is far more than language. So, discourse deals with the use of language in a specific context and scenario. Cook (1989) observes that the use of language for communication is discourse. Various aspects of both verbal and nonverbal communication such as a murmur, a grunt or a curse, short and long conversations, novels, jokes, slogans, signs, are included in the discourse. Rodriguez (2019) mentions the following slogans of certain motivational speakers: ‘See you at the top’, (ZigZiglar), ‘It’s possible’, (Les Brown) and ‘Unlimited power’, (Anthony Robins). Lodhi (2017) states that ‘the motivational trainers and life coaches use dynamics of rhetoric and stylistics in their own way. They use short, catchy and facile slogans as identity of their talks such as “*shahbash tum karsakty ho*”, “bounce back”, “*aasanhai.*” and the like’ (Abstract). These positive slogans stimulate courage among their clients. In fact, most of these slogans came from their famous and bestsellers, as the following collage shows:

Figure 2: Collage of Motivational Bestsellers



Lodhi (2017) observes, ‘Adolf Hitler, Martin Luther King and Winston Churchill, Atta-ullah Shah Bukhari, Zulfqar Ali Bhutto and Molana Tariq Jameel are examples of such people who impressively employed the linguistic tools in their speeches’ (p.2).

### 2.3. Communication

Communication is an integral part of our daily life. The inability to build an impactful argument may result in serious problems. It can be an obstacle in accomplishing set targets and goals. It is the language that helps people in sharing thoughts, ideas, and emotions while communicating (Singleton, 1989).

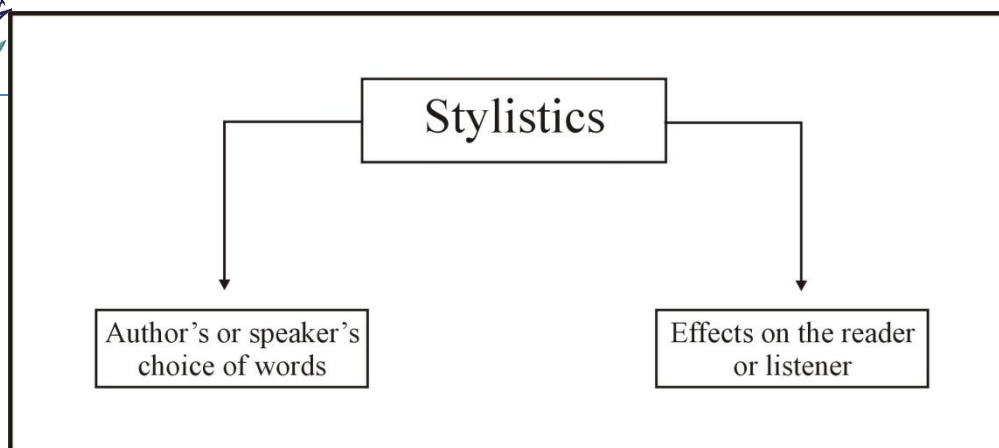
### 2.4. Language and Style

Words are powerful enough to develop or ruin the life of any individual. Style is the ability to choose suitable words in a particular situation. As Leech (2014) argues that the word ‘style’ refers to the manner of choosing a language in a particular situation for a particular purpose by a particular person. The style allows an author or speaker to become more prominent and unique. It foregrounds or diversifies a work. According to Coupland (2007), style tells us how the speakers employ different linguistic variations in society to make different meanings.

### 2.5. Stylistics

As already explained in the discussion, stylistics, being a part of linguistics, deals with specialized features of language variations. Leech (2014), states that stylistics describes the bond between language and connotative meanings. Coupland (2007), states that stylistics elaborates that ‘why does an individual selects a particular language variation in a particular situation? So, the investigation of “why” take us towards the expected meaning of the speaker. Coupland (2007) argues that people understand meaning according to the situation. Lodhi (2017) presents the following figure 3 to explain the concept of stylistics.

Figure



3.

### Stylistics

Adopted from Lodhi (2017)

#### 2.5.1. Rhetoric: An Art of persuasion

Rhetoric is ancient version of stylistics. Rhetoric is an old art of convincing people that originated among the Greeks. Aristotle was the one of the scholars who introduced this art. It was used for making speeches. Well-versed scholars from the Greek trained young and rich boys with special rhetoric tools. According to the Greek scholars, with the help of rhetoric tools a speaker could speak effectively. Rhetoric is a technique that is linked with discourse and it is used to convince the audience (Corbett and Connors 1998). According to Corbett and Connors (1998), Aristotle defined rhetoric as “every technique that is available for you in any specific situation”. Rhetoric has five basic canons classified by Cicero (as cited in Pudewa, 2017).

1. Invention
2. Argument
3. Style
4. Memory
5. Delivery

A successful speaker is the one who can convince his audience to change their minds, to look at a problem in a different way, or to consider a new solution. However, it is a laborious task for a motivational speaker to persuade audience over some point. Rhetoric, known as Stylistics today, is referred as an art of persuading someone over a point. According to Verdonk (2013), Sophists defined rhetoric as an ‘art of persuasion’. Aristotle divided the art of persuasion into rhetoric appeals to make a talk convincing and effective: ethos, pathos and logos. In simple words, ethos, pathos and logos refer to the art of convincing audience through the credible, emotional and logical responses of the speaker. Ethos is “the ethical and psychological appeal that the speaker makes to the audience by creating a sympathetic image of himself” (Verdonk, 2013, p.141). As Cockcroft (2014) defines ethos as, “that is, our trustworthy character, [includes] our goodwill, our morality, our competence and our emotional authenticity, as perceived by the persuadee” (p. 43-4). Pathos deals with the sentiments that a speaker arises in the audience to trigger their favorable reactions. Logos refers to the logical argumentation which is based on accepted conventional principles rather than the established truth.

#### 2.6. Motivational Talk

A motivational speech is a convincing talk presented by a skilled, competent, and persuasive person (Steele, 1970). Motivational speeches persuade people to use their power, vitality, and



strength in optimistic manners. They motivate people to spend their time in more positive, practical, innovative, and effective activities.

### **2.6.1. Motivational Speaker**

The motivational speaker is the one who motivates people to spend their lives positively and productively. They deliver speeches to encourage and persuade people. According to Martin (2001), motivational speakers show their audience the positive side of life and help them out to overcome pessimism.

### **2.6.2. How does a Motivational speaker work?**

Motivational speakers aim to refine the psychological and emotional conditions of their audience. They help people to transmute their lives. They concentrate on the personal and professional problems of people. They encourage their audience to contemplate over boundless opportunities rather than the problems of life. Robbins (2007) advocates that a speaker motivates people to think and reflect positively. He helps his listeners to wake up and look at brighter side of things and it may go without saying that brighter sides of things are always there. On account of our own limited view of things we are unable to give them their due importance. A motivational speaker transforms the limited beliefs of employees and gives a new meaning and profoundness to their professional life (Robbins, 2008). Lodhi (2017) identified the following types of motivational speakers:

1. Motivational speakers for personal development
2. Motivational speakers for business
3. Motivational speakers as a youth mentor
4. Motivational speakers for community

### **2.6.3. Effective Communication Skills of Motivational Speakers**

Motivational speakers make their speeches charismatic by using both verbal and non-verbal aspects in their motivational talks. Leathers and Eaves (2016) recommend that non-verbal aspects of language are more efficacious than verbal aspects of language. Non-verbal communication can appropriately express our emotions rather than verbal communication (Leathers and Eaves 2016). Eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, posture, dress, shoes, perfume and different aspects of body language are the key elements in non-verbal communication. When we talk about communication through means other than the verbal modes, semiotics comes into play. The therapeutic power of words, tone of voice, intonation, pitch, stress patterns, rhythm are prosodic/supra-segmental features that make the speech effective.

## **3. Research Methodology**

Research refers to the systematic investigation which involves the process of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. This research study was an attempt to analyze the application of linguistic tools used by motivational speakers in their speeches. Researchers used quantitative approach. Quantitative approach involves statistical and numerical analysis of data through surveys, scales, questionnaires, and tests. The study was of exploratory nature; therefore, the exploratory techniques for the data collection were used. For this purpose, data were collected from motivational speakers of the Southern Punjab.

### **3.1. Sample of the Study**

The researchers employed simple random sampling method and collected data from the 50 motivational speakers of the Southern Punjab. The motivational speakers who participated in the study were working at different institutes in Multan, Bahawalpur, and Rahim yar Khan.

### **3.2. Research Tool**

Data collection is an integral part of any research study. As it was quantitative approach, a close-ended questionnaire was designed, piloted and administered for the purpose of data collection.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Findings

As previously mentioned, a close-ended questionnaire was employed for the purpose of data collection. The questionnaire comprised of 5 points Likert scale. For the statistical analysis of collected data, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 21) was used. After analyzing the quantitative data, the data were presented in the form of a table.

**Table 1: Motivational speaker and Power of linguistic tools**

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
A person who shows purpose of life is called motivational speaker.	58%	34%	4%		4%
Motivational speakers have power to inspire the people.	74%	22%	4%		
Motivational speakers share real life experience to inspire the people.	72%	22%		2%	4%
Motivational speakers assist their listeners to accomplish their goals.	60%	30%	6%		4%
Motivational speakers assist people in solving their problems.	50%	40%	8%	2%	
Motivational speakers help the people to identify their strengths.	68%	24%	2%		6%
Motivational speakers create harmony between mental abilities and physical abilities by their speeches.	18%	44%	10%	12%	16%
The mind of listeners can be affected by linguistic tools.	34%	48%	2%	4%	12%
Encouragement for open questions gives positive thinking to listeners	44%	30%	12%	2%	12%
A motivational speaker should allow their listeners to confirm that they are listening.	24%	42%	14%	4%	16%
Specific motivational slogans stimulate the listeners.	32%	44%	10%	6%	8%
Motivational speakers encourage the young generation to spend life in healthy and ambitious activities.	36%	38%	4%	12%	10%
Organizations invite motivational speakers to enhance the motivation of their employees	32%	22%	22%	2%	16%

When the participants of the research study were asked if they considered a motivational speaker a person who showed the audience purpose of life, 58% of the respondents strongly agreed and 34% agreed with the statement. Next, 72% of them strongly agreed and 22% agreed that motivational speakers inspired people with real-life experiences and they helped

people in achieving their goals. Around 68% of the motivational speakers strongly agreed and 24% agreed to the statement that they helped people in identifying their strengths and 62% believed that their speeches created harmony among mental and physical abilities. 82% of the respondents believed that the linguistic tools they employed were impactful for their listeners. Furthermore, when it was asked if encouragement for open questions contributed to positive results, 74% agreed with the statements. About 76% of the motivational speakers believed that motivational slogans could stimulate listeners. 74% of the participants agreed that they encouraged the young generation to spend life in healthy and ambitious activities. Around 54% suggested that organizations should invite motivational speakers to motivate their employees and 18% disagreed with the statement. According to some participants, the life of people could be changed with the use of some other linguistic devices i.e. stress, intonation, notable and extraordinary language and style, flowery wording, decorated phrases, and sentences.

**Table 2: Verbal and Non-verbal aspects of motivational speakers’ communication.**

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Wise use of prosodic/supra-segmental aspects makes our discourse charming.	30%	54%	4%		12%
Slowness in pace of speech makes the dialogue boring	30%	30%	8%		32%
Fastness in pace of speech diverts the attention of the listeners.	22%	38%	6%	6%	28%
Monotone or flat voice can make your listeners feel boredom.	32%	40%	4%	6%	18%
The use of bilingualism is an efficient strategy in motivational speeches.	36%	44%	4%		16%
Right words at the right time can change the life of the listeners.	56%	34%	6%		4%
The arrangement of words can change the meaning of the words.	64%	22%	2%	2%	10%
Effective communication depends on the right choice of the words.	66%	26%	8%		
Conciseness of speech makes our discussion effective	30%	58%	2%		10%
In order to make their speech effective motivational speakers make effective use of body language.	58%	32%			10%
Positive body language emits positive vibes	66%	24%	2%		8%
Maintaining eye contact with the listeners leaves positive impact	48%	40%		2%	10%
Interruption of eye contact can distract the listener's attention.	24	50%	10%	4%	12%



The researchers were interested in investigating the linguistic tools used by motivational speakers in their speeches. 84% of the motivational speakers agreed that wise use of prosodic/supra-segmental aspects made discourse charming. While asking about the features i.e. speed of communication, when it was asked if slowness in the pace of speech made the dialogue boring 60% agreed but 32% disagreed to the idea but they also agreed that the pace of speech could divert the attention of the listeners. 86% of the participants favored the idea that the right words at the right time in the right order could change the life of the listeners. Around 80% of the speakers considered the use of bilingualism (more than one language) as an efficient strategy in motivational speeches. When it was asked if the coherence and conciseness in discussion impacted listeners, about 88% of the respondents gave positive responses and strongly agreed to the statement that effective use of body language might result in high motivation. Positive body language emits positive vibes. Eye contact is one of the crucial tools of motivational speakers when it was asked if maintaining eye contact with the listeners left positive impact, 88% agreed with the statement. About 74% agreed that interruption in eye contact could distract the listener's attention. The results of the study showed that motivational speakers used linguistic tools to make their speeches successful, powerful, and convincing. Most of the participants acknowledged that many motivational speakers employed linguistic devices in their speeches. The linguistic and paralinguistic tools used by motivational speakers were the key essence of their speeches.

**Table 3: Therapeutic power of words**

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
Positive words can create a sense of hope.	68%	20%	2%	6%	4%
Positive words give us liveliness.	72%	24%		2%	2%
Negative words make us hopeless.	62%	30%	2%	2%	4%
Positive words can neutralize negativity	52%	42%	4%	2%	
Words have healing power.	76%	24%			
Positive words carry therapeutic impact.	52%	40%	6%		2%
Positive words energize our soul.	72%	24%	2%		2%
Use of negative words in the beginning of the speech can demotivate the listener.	36%	34%	6%	8%	16%
Fusion of two different words can create powerful impact	26%	52%	6%	4%	12%

When the motivational speakers were asked if verbal features carried any weightage, the response was highly positive. 52% of them strongly and 40% slightly agreed that positive words carried therapeutic impact. Positive words could create a sense of hope and liveliness, 88% agreed with the statement. 78% witnessed that fusion of two different words gave a powerful impact. Negative words might make people hopeless so 70% of the participants believed that the use of negative words at the beginning of the speech could demotivate the listener. About 52% strongly agreed and 42% slightly agreed that positive words could neutralize negativity.

## 5. Conclusion

Motivational speakers help their listeners come out of pessimism by showing them the positive, cheerful, lively, happy and brighter aspects of life. They encourage their listeners to crush the hurdles of their lives. They understand the psychological needs of their listeners and transform their lives by using positive, energetic, and appropriate words. The style of a motivational speaker is very important in motivating people. Being an artist, a motivational speaker chooses his style, language, and tools according to his audience and their needs.

In order to motivate their audience, motivational speakers use a lot of linguistic tools in their speeches. Motivational speakers use stress, intonation, rhythm, catchy phrases, and sentences and effective body language to deliver inspirational speeches effective.

Majority of the motivational speakers opined that word-choice was important for motivating people. More than 80% of the participants were of the view that appropriate use of prosodic aspects, bilingualism and wise word-choice made motivational talks effective. More than 70% of the motivational speakers opined that positive words created a sense of hope, neutralize negativity, energize our souls and have therapeutic effect on the listener. Similarly, negative words, more than 70% of the participants agreed that negative words demotivated the listeners. More than 74% of the participants agreed that effective body language was necessary for positive impact of motivational talks. 76% Specific motivational slogans stimulate the listeners. 94% of the participants believed that sharing real life experiences inspired the audience.

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