

PRAGMA-RHETORIC ANALYSIS OF STEVE JOB'S FELICITATION ADDRESS (2005)

Anna LYASHUK (Kirovohrad, Ukraine)

Стаття присвячена прагма-риторичному аналізу вітальної промови на прикладі вітального звернення Стіва Джобса. У роботі було виявлено основні шляхи досягнення комунікативної мети засобами успішної персуазивної комунікативної дії.

***Ключові слова:** вітальна промова, прагматична ціль, мовленнєвий акт, ілокутивний акт, перлокутивний ефект.*

The paper focuses on pragma-rhetoric analysis of the commencement address based on Steve Job's felicitation speech. The fulfilment of communicative intention achieved by a successful persuasive communicative action has been considered.

***Key words:** felicitation address, pragmatic intention, speech act, illocutionary act, perlocutionary effect.*

David Crystal points that “pragmatics studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others.” Noam Chomsky states that language is used purposefully and in later writings he introduces the term pragmatic competence - knowledge of how language is related to the situation in which it is used. Pragmatic competence “places language in the institutional setting of its use, relating intentions and purposes to the linguistic means at hand” [2].

If the primary function of language is for the purpose of communication, thus, language is essential for the purpose of felicitation - the use of language to perform some speech act to congratulate the audience on a certain occasion. The proposed paper investigates the felicitation address of Steve Jobs to the graduates of Stanford University focusing on the pragmatic functions of locution, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts of the speech with a view to determine the global pattern of pragmatic moves of the felicitation speech.

The linguistic data were drawn from the Commencement address delivered by Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Computer and of Pixar Animation Studios, on June 12, 2005 and analyzed following the Speech Act theory of Austin and Searle [1, 3, 4] which have been claimed to operate by universal pragmatic principles. Others have shown them to vary in conceptualization and verbalization across cultures and languages [5].

Working within the Speech Acts theory, the study considers the illocutionary forces in the speech with the aim of identifying the semantic peculiarities of pragmatic implementation realization in the speech. There are certain types of verbs that indicate speech acts which appear in five different forms highlighted by Searle (see Table 1):

Table 1

Types speech acts realised in the speech under analysis

Type	Definition	Example
Commissives	The speakers commit themselves to performing an action they have to then carry out	promises, oaths
Declarations/ Assertives	To bring something about in the world, a statement	pronouncing someone a graduate, pronouncing someone guilty
Directives	To influence the listener to do something	requests, commands, advice
Expressives	A psychological state is expressed which has an impact on the listener or speaker	congratulations, thanks
Representatives	A belief is expressed	reciting a creed (religious beliefs shared by a community)

The analysis of Job’s felicitation address shows the relative tendencies of the speech acts to be used as direct and indirect illocutionary acts in the forms of assertives, directives, expressives, and declaratives. “In the case of illocutionary acts we succeed in doing what we are trying to do by getting our audience to recognize what we are trying to do. But the ‘effect’ on the hearer is not a belief or a response, it consists simply in the hearer understanding the utterance of the speaker.” [4: 47]. It is noticeable that Steve Jobs relies more on utterances that perform directive and expressive acts than other speech acts. To get his audience to find what he says is accurate he must be credible, so Jobs uses fewer commissives and less declarations but quite many directives (“*never lose faith*”, “*stay foolish*” and to “*never settle*”) and expressives to validate himself as a reliable source of advice.

The analysed speech is relatively informative and highly motivational. It enforces its perlocutionary effect through the elements of explicit and implicit calls to action. The latter ones show predominance in the use of narrative constructions to express hidden motivations, and modal verbs and infinitive clauses to project volition and intention.

It is seen from the examples (see Table 2) that Jobs in his speech uses such language means that fulfill his pragmatic goals to engage the audience and draw the addressees in to make himself seem more credible, which in turn makes his speech more trustworthy.

Table 2

Pragmatic intention realization analysis

	Definition	Example
Locution	The actual words uttered.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>"Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories."</i> 2. <i>"I never graduated from college. Truth be told, this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation"</i> 3. <i>"About a year ago I was diagnosed with cancer"</i>
Illocution	The intention behind the words uttered.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Wanting attention/ motivating listening</i> 2. <i>Adding elements of humor to his speech to be better perceived by the audience</i> 3. <i>Creating a personal connection</i>
Perlocution	The influence of the words on the listener.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Feeling involved and interested</i> 2. <i>Setting a humorous mood, putting the audience at ease.</i> 3. <i>Achieving a personal and an emotional connection with his audience</i>

The speaker exercises his power as the person who has a valuable experience to share with those who are on the way to take important decisions in their life. The text of the speech contains the expressives that are meant to indicate the sincerity of his intentions. While using such speech acts, the speaker does not only create an argument of ethos, but it allows him to win his audience over and to achieve a desirable perlocutionary effect. The audience only knows a successful man standing on that stage, not the humble person that is ready to confess the road to success has been rough.

Steve Jobs convinces to take his advice as he uses the three facets of rhetoric, **ethos, logos, and pathos** to involve his audience and to make his speech more credible and believable. Jobs’ implementation of ethos in his speech is what makes his speech trustworthy; it is part of what makes people believe what he says is true.

He used the sentences to verbalize the arguments to pathos, ethos and logos but addresses mainly to the arguments to ethos, to his authority in particular which serves as a motivator to the audience to follow his accomplishments. Then the Apple Co-founder uses pathos to tap into the audiences feelings of ease and sympathy (e.g. throughout the first story, he evokes pathos from the audience when he discusses his childhood and being adopted, sleeping on the floor in friends' rooms and returning coke bottles for the 5¢ deposits to buy food with); he then simultaneously develops his ethos with the audience and explains that he has faced adversity in the form of illness (pathos).

In Jobs’ case, declarative locutionary speech acts presenting only his opinion and history of his life as evidence make the required perlocutionary effect to connect with his audience even more, which creates rhetorical backing in ethos. He is known as a successful man and role model already who creates a trustworthy persona for himself. He makes himself out to be a person who overcomes many obstacles and carries on even in the most difficult times.

His speech is structured consistently (containing Introduction, Main Body divided into three stories and Conclusion) to help him bluntly, but vaguely introduce his pragmatic intentions in a sort of *this-is-what-my-story-is-about-and-how-I'll-tell-you-what-it-means-for-you* way. For example, let’s consider this Jobs’ approach exemplified in his opener for his third story when he tries to influence the audience’s

feelings by the reference to the eternal human values of Life, Love and Death saying “*My third story is about death*”. His short statement and simple way of speaking portrays honesty and builds the logos of his argument.

When speaking on death Jobs bluntly points out that “*Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it*”. These blunt and insightful comments are used to show his audience that it is natural that all people die so they should understand the importance to get a life and live with the time they have following their passions and desires. The perlocutionary effect of the analysed speech act highlights the idea of living without regrets what is his one and only advice for the graduates. Through his use of open statements and visible proof that success is attainable, Jobs achieves his pragmatic goal to encourage the graduates to follow their hearts – what is the direct and straightforward pathos.

His first story is appealing to the audience's emotion by him telling his story of birth. His introduction appeals to the audience's emotions, giving Jobs an effective gateway into the rest of his speech. He then goes on to tell us a second story of his creation of Apple and Pixar to create trustworthiness. In Jobs' third story, he sums up his life experiences to show his audience that he really has been down a tough road in life and the life advice he gives should be taken as logical and valid.

The language means used to verbalize the pragmatic purposes in the speech work to portray the personality of the speaker and express his explicit or implicit volition and intention towards the audience. These are ways of showing status by orienting comments to oneself (**Self-oriented**), to the other (**Other-oriented** tokens), or to the general or prevailing situation (**Neutral token**).

For instance **self-oriented** phatic tokens are personal to the speaker: “*I am honored*” or “*I never graduated*”. The use throughout the text of the pronoun „I” in an abundant manner in over 50% of the time shows that this speech will be given from personal experience and will contain stories that have a direct link with Steve Jobs.

Other-oriented tokens are related to the audience what in the text under analysis is followed in the usage of the pronoun **You**: “*Do you want him?*” or “*How can you get fired from a company you started?*”.

A **neutral token** refers to the context or general state of affairs: “*It wasn't all romantic.*” or “*No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there*”.

From this point of view other conclusions may be drawn. If speaking consists in making one's intentions to make a certain speech act explicit, then speaking may be seen as a communication of pragmatic intentions. Giving a close look at the speech under analysis we can conclude that taking advice from a stranger is never positive and Jobs is a stranger to most of the audience. That is why pragmatic goal of tying in personal experiences is a rational means to achieve perlocutionary effects of the speech. Success of the speech under analysis lies in obviously simple locution in “*three short stories*” which makes his audience all know him and by understanding him, they are more likely to take his life advice.

Thus a rational speaker must intend the speech act to appear relevant enough for catching the audience's attention. Further to achieve the prospect perlocutionary effect this utterance should allow the listener to make the right implications with a minimal effort in making the best relevant conclusions in that situation in order to interpret the intended meaning. To ensure achieving his communicative intention the speaker has to choose such language means which would make his pragmatic intention commonly obvious. The final fulfilment of his communicative intentions consists precisely in being fully recognized by the audience.

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ВІДОМОСТІ ПРО АВТОРА

Анна Ляшук – кандидат філологічних наук, доцент кафедри практики германських мов Кіровоградського державного педагогічного університету імені Володимира Винниченка.

Наукові інтереси: лексична семантика, лінгвопрагматика, зіставні дослідження.