

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS MOTIVATORS' PUBLIC SPEAKING METHODS: A COMPARISON OF MIRZAKARIM NORBEKOV AND SIMON SINEK

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Abstract

Two well-known business motivators whose discourse techniques are studied in this article are Simon Sinek, an Anglo-American leadership theorist best known for his TED Talk, "How Great Leaders Inspire Action," and Mirzakarim Norbekov, a well-known Uzbek entrepreneur and motivational speaker. Using a discourse-analytic framework, the study examines rhetorical devices such as ethos, pathos, logos, metaphor, storytelling, performance style, and cross-cultural discourse patterns.

The findings demonstrate how Sinek develops persuasion through the use of universal case studies, scientific metaphors, and organized logical reasoning. Additionally, he speaks in a calm, collected manner that is suitable for Western corporate audiences. On the other hand, Norbekov employs comedy, sarcasm, autobiographical narration, and traditional allusions in a vibrant and theatrical way that appeals to Russian and Uzbek audiences. The analysis highlights cultural differences - Sinek stands for low-context, linear, and individual-centered discourse traditions, while Norbekov represents high-context, relational, and community-centered discourse traditions.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, Simon Sinek, Mirzakarim Norbekov, corporate motivation, public speaking, rhetoric, and cross-cultural communication.

Introduction

Public speaking is among the oldest human methods of social influence, dating back to the ancient rhetorical traditions and continuing into the contemporary motivational oratory (Aristotle, 2007/4th c. BCE; Kennedy, 1999). In the modern business world, public speaking is not only a means of disseminating information but also a strategic tool for developing leadership, identity, and entrepreneurial conduct (Fairhurst, 2011; Lammers & Barbour, 2006). Business motivators in particular have a unique role in communication because they combine inspiration, performance, and persuasion to influence not only individual decisions but also collective economic behavior (Conger, 1991; Gill, 2011).

Mirzakarim Norbekov and Simon Sinek are well-known for their different approaches and widespread appeal in this global field of inspirational communication. After giving one of the most watched TEDx lectures ever, How Great Leaders Inspire Action (TED, 2009), British-American author and leadership consultant Simon Sinek rose to international fame. According

to Sinek (2009) and Sinek (2011), his fundamental concept of "Start With Why" has been adopted globally in leadership development, organizational communication, and entrepreneurial discourse. His rhetorical style is designed to appeal to a global business audience and includes universalist metaphors, logical sequencing, and clarity (Anderson, 2016). Mirzakarim Norbekov, on the other hand, was born in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, and rose to prominence as a motivational speaker, wellness advocate, and author of self-help books, including the well-known book "The Experience of a Fool Who Had an Epiphany about How to Get Rid of Glasses" (Norbekov, 1998/2001). Frequently given in Uzbek and Russian, his lectures and seminars blend self-irony, humor, classic moral parables, and performative interaction with audiences. Individual drive is reflected in Norbekov's discourse, but so are larger cultural values of humor as a teaching tool, resilience, and group responsibility (Abdusamatov, 2019).

Academic studies comparing the corporate motivational speaking traditions of Central Asia and the West are scarce, despite the fact that both individuals are well-known. There is a lack of understanding regarding how local cultural traditions impact motivational discourse in non-Western contexts because the discourse analysis of motivational speech has primarily focused on Anglo-American personalities (Charteris-Black, 2011; Fairclough, 2015; Gill, 2011). This essay addresses that gap by comparing and contrasting Sinek's and Norbekov's approaches to public speaking. It does this by using discourse analysis to look at the similarities and differences between their use of rhetorical devices, cultural framing, and audience participation. From two related angles, this contrast is noteworthy. In the first place, it advances discourse analysis by demonstrating how motivational public speaking strategies that vary based on the cultural context serve the pragmatic goals of empowerment, persuasion, and identity formation. Second, it emphasizes the importance of culturally sensitive communication methods for professionals who operate in increasingly diverse environments, such as corporate executives, motivational speakers, and teachers (Gudykunst, 2003; Hall, 1976).

Thus, the three primary objectives of the study are to: (1) analyze the rhetorical and discourse strategies of Mirzakarim Norbekov and Simon Sinek; (2) compare the effectiveness of these strategies in their respective socioeconomic and cultural contexts; and (3) discuss the broader implications for cross-cultural communication in the field of business motivation.

Literature Review

1. Discourse analysis and public speaking

Discourse analysis offers the analytical foundation for understanding how language shapes identities, social connections, and meaning in spoken contact. According to Fairclough, discourse is a social practice that both reflects and alters power dynamics rather than being a neutral tool (1992, 2015). In public speaking, discourse analysis has been widely applied to examine political oratory (Charteris-Black, 2011; Wodak, 2009), religious sermons (Jaworski & Coupland, 2006), and media communication (van Dijk, 1997). Discourse analysis of business motivational speaking is still understudied, despite these people's growing influence on global business culture.

Scholars have noted the significance of rhetorical devices like metaphor, narrative, and repetition in persuasion and audience engagement (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Charteris-Black, 2004). Instead of merely being ornamental, these strategies are used in motivational speaking to build identities of fortitude, resilience, and leadership. Thus, we might be able to uncover the linguistic mechanics of commercial influence by looking at the discourse techniques employed by speakers such as Mirzakarim Norbekov and Simon Sinek.

2. The History of Motivational Speech and Rhetoric

The roots of inspirational public speaking can be found in classical rhetoric theory. When evaluating motivational discourse today, Aristotle's three elements of persuasion—ethics, pathos, and logos—remain pertinent (Aristotle, 2007/4th c. BCE; Kennedy, 1999). Both Cicero and Quintilian stressed the value of public speech in developing civic virtue and personal character (May 2002). Modern motivational speakers also employ pathos (emotional appeal), ethos (credibility), and logos (rational reasons) to captivate audiences.

Business executives searching for decision-making frameworks find Sinek's speeches appealing due to their ethos-driven authority and logical clarity (Anderson, 2016). Norbekov usually employs comedy, narrative, and theatrical exaggeration to evoke emotion rather than presenting ethos as a corporate expert (Abdusamatov, 2019). This discrepancy reflects broader cultural views on authority and persuasion in Western and Central Asian contexts.

3. Business Communication and Motivational Discussion

More and more business communication research has focused on leadership narratives that motivate and inspire teams (Conger, 1991; Denning, 2005). Gill (2011) defines motivational speech as "performative rhetoric," in which speakers inspire action and construct reality. This is exemplified by Sinek's "Start With Why" paradigm, which defines effective leadership in terms of purpose. As a result, the concept of leadership is reinterpreted in the discourse.

According to studies, narrative is a crucial element of motivational corporate communication. Denning (2005) states that stories are used in organizations to convey their values, vision, and strategy. Despite their shared use of storytelling, Sinek and Norbekov highlight distinct facets of it. Sinek uses parables of corporate success and failure, while Norbekov uses humorous exaggerations and autobiographical stories that address post-Soviet entrepreneurial issues.

4. Varying Cultural Perspectives on Public Speaking

Cross-cultural communication theory critically analyzes the differences between the motivational speaking traditions of Central Asia and Anglo-America.

As per Hall's (1976) theory of high-context and low-context communication, Central Asian speech is more relational, implicit, and high-context, while Western discourse is more explicit, linear, and low-context. Sinek exemplifies the low-context style, which emphasizes systematic logic and universal metaphors, while Norbekov exemplifies high-context speech through humor, cultural allusions, and moral parables that require insider knowledge.

Gudykunst's (2003) theory of anxiety and uncertainty management sheds more light on how cultural differences impact communication effectiveness. Whereas Norbekov's use of self-

deprecating humor may reduce confusion and increase identification among Uzbek audiences, Sinek's methodical clarity avoids ambiguity in multicultural business settings. According to cross-cultural comparative studies of public speaking (Neuliep, 2017; Scollon & Scollon, 2011), in order to fully understand the persuasive power of motivating techniques, it is necessary to examine them in their cultural contexts. Charisma is conveyed through embodied performance, emotional resonance, and language style, according to House et al. (1991).

5. Charisma and Performance Features

By its very nature, motivational speech is performative. We can study the establishment of legitimacy by people like Sinek and Norbekov through the sociological lens of Weber's (1947) concept of charismatic authority.

With his cool authority, logical sequencing, and visual metaphors (the "Golden Circle"), Sinek exudes charisma. Contrarily, Norbekov uses theatrical gestures, comical questions, and interactive audience interaction to create charisma. According to performativity studies (Butler, 1997; Goffman, 1959), these performances are not just expressive; they are also constitutive, as speakers adopt the personas of "visionary leader" or "wise fool," which influences how audiences view authority and legitimacy.

6. Research Gap

Though political rhetoric, leadership communication, and discourse analysis have been the subject of much research, motivational business speaking has not received as much attention in a cross-cultural comparative framework. While non-Western traditions are still not well studied, the majority of the literature currently in publication concentrates on Western figures (Charteris-Black, 2011; Fairclough, 2015).

Norbekov's example is all the more remarkable because of the mixed discourse shaped by Soviet history, Uzbek cultural traditions, and global commercial objectives. This study's comparison of Norbekov and Sinek contributes to the discourse analysis of corporate motivation and clarifies the ways in which language, culture, and performance interact to influence motivational communication.

Methods

1. Research design

This study employs a qualitative discourse analysis design and a comparative case study methodology. Discourse analysis is the best way to look at the language, rhetoric, and performance techniques used by motivational speakers (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014). It focuses on how, why, and how audiences receive what is said. Using a comparative case technique, we can find both similarities and differences between Simon Sinek and Mirzakarim Norbekov. This shows how cultural background affects how people communicate to motivate others.

2. Data Sources

For every speaker, two corpora were collected:

Ten extensively disseminated English-language speeches and interviews from 2009 to 2023 make up the Simon Sinek corpus. His 2009 TED Talk, "How Great Leaders Inspire Action," conference keynotes, and a few selected interviews that are accessible on YouTube are among them.

Ten speeches and lectures in Russian and Uzbek from 2005 to 2022 make up the Mirzakarim Norbekov corpus. They were gathered from his masterclasses in Tashkent and Moscow that were publicly recorded, as well as from training sessions, workshops, and motivational gatherings that were published.

Based on each speaker's representativeness in terms of accessibility, audience reach, and rhetorical style, the corpora were selected. Both verbal and paralinguistic elements were taken into consideration when transcribing each tape.

3. Transcription and Interpretation

Each document was meticulously transcribed. A multilingual researcher translated Norbekov's speeches, which were delivered in Uzbek and Russian, into English to ensure that they would be compatible with Sinek's English writings. In addition to lexical choices, the pragmatic indicators, pauses, intonation, and humor that contribute to discourse meaning were taken into consideration in the wake of van Dijk (1997).

The translation was managed in two steps:

1. Direct translation for accurate semantics.
2. Using back-translation to preserve idiomatic and cultural nuances (Brislin, 1970).

As a result, Norbekov's use of sayings, humor, and cultural references could be preserved throughout the analysis.

4. Framework for Analyses

Structured around the following categories, the analysis integrated rhetorical analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA):

1. Aristotle's 2007 book *Ethos, Pathos, and Logos*: recognizing speeches' emotional appeal, logical rationale, and credibility.
2. *Metaphor and Framing* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which looks at how speakers use figurative language to frame leadership, success, and hardship.
3. *Storytelling and Narrative* (Denning, 2005): Examining parables, stories, and personal tales that motivate audiences.
4. *Performance and Paralinguistics* (Goffman, 1959; Butler, 1997): Evaluating gestures, comedy, intonation, and audience engagement as delivery strategies.
5. Comparing high-context versus low-context methods in Sinek's Western style and Norbekov's Central Asian style is one way to examine cross-cultural discourse markers (Hall, 1976; Scollon & Scollon, 2011).

The incorporation of both frameworks into the study guarantees both macro-level (sociocultural) and micro-level (linguistic) analysis of the utterances.

5. Methods for Coding and Analysis

After transcription, the data was imported into the qualitative coding program NVivo 12. The previously described analytical categories served as the basis for the development of a theme coding scheme. Three steps comprised the coding process:

The process of finding recurrent metaphors, patterns, and rhetorical devices in all of the content is known as "open coding." Codes in axial coding are categorized into broader groups like "self-positioning," "emotional appeals," "leadership metaphors," and "humor strategies." In order to identify similarities between Sinek and Norbekov's rhetorical repertoires, selective coding compares them (e.g. narrative) and analogies (such as humor versus systematic reasoning).

To assess inter-coder reliability, a second researcher coded 20% of the data independently. Eighty-seven percent of respondents agreed, which is considered suitable for qualitative discourse investigations (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

6. Moral Aspects

Since this study looks at publically available speeches, formal ethical approval was not required. However, careful attention was given to avoiding decontextualized interpretation, accurately portraying translated content, and correctly citing sources. The analysis maintains the cultural integrity of both speakers by situating them within their respective sociocultural contexts.

7. Limitations of the Method

The study acknowledges several shortcomings. Initially, it is possible that the sample's ten speeches per speaker do not accurately reflect their rhetorical repertoire.

Finally, discourse analysis depends on context. Our knowledge of the actual persuasive impact was constrained by the lack of audience reception data, despite the fact that this study compared approaches across cultural boundaries.

Results and Discussions

1. Ethos: Building Credibility and Authority

Simon Sinek's expertise in his field and his authority as an intellectual are the cornerstones of his ethics. He portrays himself as a researcher who has found a universal concept known as the "Golden Circle" by looking at leaders and businesses in his well-known TED Talk, "How Great Leaders Inspire Action" (2009). His tone is humble yet authoritative, and he establishes himself as a mentor and fellow student by using phrases like "I discovered" and "my work shows" (Heath, 2017). Reasoned audiences seeking structured insights are drawn to his culture of knowledge-based credibility.

The ethos of Mirzakarim Norbekov, however, is firmly rooted in his charisma and life experiences. In contrast to presenting himself as a polished business thinker, he presents himself as an adversity survivor who is a shining example of resilience and unconventional insight (Norbekov, 2005). He frequently discusses his teenage struggles, failures, and self-discipline in his speeches, turning his personal biography into a moral authority. While Sinek minimizes the self to highlight ideas, Norbekov makes himself the focal point of his ideology. This hits home in Russian and Central Asian contexts, where viewers value credibility and personal development (Yusupov, 2019).

Consequently, the motivational rhetoric of the East and the West differs significantly:

Whereas Sinek establishes ethos through intellectual reliability, Norbekov does so through embodied authenticity.

2. Pathos: Invoking Feelings

Sinek employs subdued, often subtle pathos. He uses appeals to meaning, ambition, and hope to inspire others. His quote, "People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it," is delivered with cool conviction rather than shouted, causing an emotional shift through reflection rather than ecstasy (Gallo, 2014). His stories, like those involving Apple and Martin Luther King Jr., encourage people to believe that they are a part of something bigger.

Conversely, Norbekov thrives on strong emotions. Throughout his sardonic and humorous lectures, he regularly mocks his audience: "You are all sick because you are lazy!" (2005) Norbekov. This promotes a vibrant atmosphere of friendship, humor, and reflection rather than alienating listeners.

Using a technique Bakhtin (1981) would call "carnavalesque," Norbekov subverts hierarchies by joking with and occasionally at his audience. Central Asian rhetorical traditions, where comedy and exaggeration are commonly used as persuasive strategies, are reminiscent of this enthusiastic melancholy (Khalid, 2007).

To summarize, Sinek's emotional appeal is uplifting and visionary, whereas Norbekov's is provocative and humorous. However, both aim to stimulate motivation by using affective correlation.

3. Logos: Arranging Argumentation

The core of Sinek's speeches is lucid analysis. Westerners' propensity for structured reasoning is satiated by his rational and aesthetically pleasing "Golden Circle" approach (Why–How–What) (Munter, 2016). His frequent use of scientific terms like the neocortex and limbic brain adds to the logical appeal of his thesis by presenting it as neuroscientifically grounded.

Norbekov's logos is situational and pragmatic, as opposed to abstract. He usually emphasizes his points of view with exercises, stories, or paradoxical proverbs. For instance, when he counsels audiences to "smile even when your soul hurts," he blends psychological knowledge with theatrical technique. His cultural background makes this a folk-psychological logic that appeals to embodied experience and common sense, even though it would not make sense to a Western scholar (Sharipov, 2015).

This disparity demonstrates how Western motivational rhetoric tends to place more emphasis on systematic logic, while Central Asian traditions value experienced wisdom as sound reasoning.

4. Metaphors and Phraseology

Despite the fact that both speakers make extensive use of metaphors, their strategies differ. Sinek frequently makes use of metaphors from mechanics and biology. It portrays leadership as a "inner engine," organizations as "circles," and human decision-making as being driven by "the brain's wiring." These metaphors bolster his appeal to reason and science by establishing abstract concepts in concrete images (Charteris-Black, 2011).

Norbekov's metaphors are more embodied and folkloric. Using the body as a battlefield, he likens indolence to a "disease" and discipline to a "cure." He grounds abstract ideas in everyday imagery using well-known cultural symbols, such as stories about wolves, donkeys, and rural life.

In Russia and Uzbekistan, audiences accustomed to oral storytelling traditions and knowledge derived from proverbs find resonance in his use of metaphor. Because of this, while both use metaphors to explain motivation, Sinek's are universalizing and scientific, while Norbekov's are mythical and localizing.

5. Making use of narration and storytelling

Case-study storytelling is a common technique used by Sinek to illustrate his points. Examples include stories about Apple, the Wright brothers, or Martin Luther King Jr. For example, these stories give audiences motivational examples that connect leadership theory to achievements in the past (Denning, 2005).

On the other hand, Norbekov employs autobiographical and parabolic narrative. His tales often begin with "When I was young..." or contain humorous village stories. Because these stories are about common struggles rather than heroic figures, they are relatable.

He cites an example of how a mentor forced him to do push-ups until he broke down in tears in order to turn his personal suffering into a teaching moment. This method is consistent with oral traditions in Central Asia, where knowledge is communicated through parables rather than abstract theories (DeWeese, 1994).

6. The Performance of Paralinguistics

The biggest difference between the two speakers' performances is this.

- Sinek: composed, thoughtful, steady-paced, with clear modulation of speech and deliberate hand gestures. He uses a TED Talk style that prioritizes clarity over humor, which works well on the global corporate stage (Anderson, 2016).

Dynamic, dramatic, and unpredictable is how one describes Norbekov. By shouting, laughing, imitating voices, using sarcasm, and moving among the crowd, he breaks the formal barrier. His paralinguistic methods encourage group participation more like stand-up comedy or oral folklore performances than corporate speech.

This difference highlights the cultural coding of delivery techniques: Sinek embodies Western standards of professionalism, while Norbekov uses Central Asian comedy and performance traditions to establish authority and intimacy simultaneously.

7. Cross-cultural Rhetorical Patterns

The most significant conclusion from this comparative study is that both Sinek and Norbekov embody cultural discourse traditions.

- Sinek reflects low-context, individual-centered, linear discourse: arguments are explicit, structured, and meant to persuade cognitively.

Humor, accepted cultural norms, and embodied authority serve as the foundation for Norbekov's arguments, which reflect relational, high-context, and community-centered discourse.

Both work well, though for different audiences. High-context cultures, as mentioned by Hall (1976), rely more on relationship cues and indirect meaning, whereas low-context cultures value directness and clarity. This theory explains why Norbekov resonates in Uzbek and Russian contexts while Sinek thrives in Western corporate culture.

Conclusion

The speech patterns of two well-known business motivators, Mirzakarim Norbekov and Simon Sinek, have been examined in this study through the lens of comparative discourse analysis. According to the findings, despite the fact that both speakers aimed to inspire their audiences to make changes in their personal or professional lives, contextual and cultural factors significantly influenced their rhetorical approaches.

Using logical frameworks such as the Golden Circle and supported by universal case studies and scientific metaphors, Simon Sinek primarily employs structured logos and ethos to create persuasion. His measured, businesslike, and intellectually sound speaking style reflects Western business standards. Listeners seeking clarity, rational justifications, and creative leadership models will find his speech appealing.

Conversely, Mirzakarim Norbekov emphasizes embodied ethos and strong emotion in his oratory, which is founded on comedy, provocation, and conventional wisdom. He incorporates culturally relevant metaphors, autobiographical storytelling, and participatory performance techniques into his motivational strategy. The use of humor, oral tradition, and experiential credibility as primary cultural strategies of persuasion continues to be highly effective in Uzbekistan, Russia, and Central Asia.

The comparative analysis highlights how important cultural frameworks are in creating motivated discourse. Whereas Sinek represents a linear, low-context rhetorical tradition, Norbekov represents a relational, high-context rhetorical style. Both approaches demonstrate effectiveness within their respective environments, despite also highlighting the challenges of transferring motivational speaking techniques across cultural boundaries.

Discourse analysis provides a powerful lens through which to view public speaking as both a universal activity (with the goal of persuading, inspiring, and mobilizing) and a culturally specific phenomenon (formed by norms, traditions, and expectations), as this study concludes. Future research could expand this comparison by looking at audience reception studies, multimodal discourse features (like gesture and intonation), and the adaptability of motivational speech on digital platforms in different countries.

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