

Connecting Strategies in Mark Zuckerberg's Commencement Speech at Harvard University

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Article information	Abstract
<p>Article history: Received: 23 May 2021 Accepted: 2 Nov 2021 Available online: 18 Nov 2021</p> <p>Keywords: Speech analysis Intertextuality Interdiscursivity Multimodal discourse analysis</p>	<p><i>This research aims to analyze Mark Zuckerberg's Commencement Speech at Harvard University to explore its wording and the interaction between the speaker and the audience. A Multimodal Discourse Analysis approach (MDA), and the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity were adopted in this study. The results show that intertextually, Mark Zuckerberg narrated his experiences and stories, quoting famous sayings, and inserting religious text into his speech. Interdiscursively, he imported different discourses including discourse on entrepreneurship, discourse on racism, and discourse on globalization. These mechanisms helped weave his speech text coherently and harmoniously into the context. Moreover, his actions and interactions, for instance, joking with the audience, made the formal style of speech delivery more casual, reducing the distance between the speaker and audience. Also, the audience members were encouraged to become engaged in his speech, helping to create harmony among both the local and global communities.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Mark Zuckerberg is known worldwide as the Facebook founder who has connected people virtually around the world. He studied for a while at Harvard University, but did not complete his bachelor degree. Nonetheless, a few years later, in 2017, he was invited to deliver the commencement speech to the graduates of his former *alma mater*, Harvard University. A year later, the video of his speech was published on several YouTube channels such as "Learn English" and "English Speeches", which also provide subtitles at the bottom of the screen. Because of this broad availability, his speech has become a resource for ESL/EFL learners. Interestingly, the number of views and advertisement pop-ups on his speech video have been increasing, and the counts are now the highest of any other Harvard University commencement speeches posted online. This offers *prima facie* evidence that Mark Zuckerberg has the ability to effectively give a speech to the public, and that his speech may be so captivating that second language learners want to study his speaking style.

Surprisingly, based on preliminary observation carried out in this study, Zuckerberg's speech delivery is not a monologue in the typical sense, i.e. it is not a one-way broadcast. He interacted with the audience the entire time. Moreover, the subtitles provided on YouTube channels do not match exactly with Zuckerberg's actual words. For this reason, ESL/EFL learners may not

only be interested in the precise message or wording of his speech, but also in how he effectively delivered it. This is not meant to indicate that the subtitles provided on YouTube videos are useless, but studying how Mark Zuckerberg was able to grab the attention of the audience both verbally and non-verbally might be more interesting than just knowing how to prepare a good script, which is more of a writing skill than speaking skill.

Typically, researchers pay much more attention to the examination of speeches given by politicians as they are powerful public figures who can influence a large number of people. For instance, Hammer (2010) studied five speeches given by Barack Obama during his first campaign of the 2008 presidential election and found that narratives or stories played an important role, allowing Barack Obama to portray an American national identity constituting the broadest possible political coalition and ethnic membership. On the other hand, Ye (2010) analyzed Barack Obama's victory speech using Halliday's framework (1976) and showed that three major linguistic features played important roles: positive declarative clauses, modal verbs, and inclusive pronouns. Zhao and Zhang (2017) explored Donald Trump's inaugural speech using Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar, which regards the transitivity of verbs as the key element that can express several kinds of processes and revealed that President Trump frequently used material processes to paint a bleak picture of America.

Recently, researchers have increasingly paid attention to the study of commencement speeches since the delivery of a commencement speech is no longer just a private group event at a university, but is often now open to the public via the online social medium *YouTube*. At present, world-famous universities, which normally invite highly successful people to give commencement speeches to their graduates, also publish the speeches given by these renowned persons on their YouTube Official Channels. For instance, Harvard University invited JK Rowling, the billionaire author, to give a commencement speech in 2008, and then, later, uploaded the video of her speech to the YouTube Channel "Harvard University" in 2014 when YouTube had come to have greater social impact in daily life. Since being posted online, Rowling's commencement address has become well-known worldwide, and was subsequently analyzed by Li and Tao (2018) using Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar to analyze the transitivity of verbs as the key element to classify the world of experience into different kinds of processes in the speech.

Mark Zuckerberg's commencement speech at Harvard University has also gained attention from several researchers. For instance, Qing (2018) employed Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar to investigate interpersonal function in Mark Zuckerberg's commencement speech by analyzing moods, personal pronouns, tenses and modal operators in his speech. Similarly, Arbainah (2019) adopted the approach of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics to examine the interpersonal meaning in Mark Zuckerberg's commencement speech with focus on the mood and modality. His finding of mood study shows that Zuckerberg mainly used declarative mood, aiming to give information to the audience, and the study result of modality reveals that Zuckerberg mostly used the modals *can* and *be going to*.

Although Halliday's Systemic-Functional Approach is concerned with the function of language use and may be plausible for describing how we use language to communicate with someone showing interpersonal function, analyzing a clause by giving priority to its finite verb or modal

verb may not be powerful enough to explain verbal interaction in real life. Very often, we do not produce a complete clause or sentence, but mere utterances. Izzudin (2020) investigated illocutionary acts in Mark Zucker's commencement speech following Searle's theory on speech acts. His study results show that Zuckerberg's speech contains 209 illocutionary acts, 174 of which are assertives. Assertives, as the most dominant type, occurred with the highest frequency of 69.9%, followed by directives (13%), expressives (9.6%) and commissives (7.5%).

In his research (Izzudin, 2020), it is interesting that Mark Zuckerberg's commencement speech is considered an act, not limited to only verbal expression. However, his analysis is still one-sided, relying on data from a single person -- the speech deliverer. With this approach, the audience were mistakenly assumed to be passive participants even though they clapped their hands, yelled, and laughed in response to what the speaker said. Therefore, this present paper will analyze Mark Zuckerberg's commencement speech with a different approach, namely Multimodal Discourse Analysis, so that readers can see a clearer picture of the interaction involved in his speech delivery together with analysis of his wording using the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the concepts of intertextuality and interdiscursivity, which were originally proposed by analysts of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are presented first, and then discussion of the development of Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and related literature will follow.

Intertextuality

Originally, the idea of intertextuality was proposed by Bhaktin (1981), and it was later adopted by CDA analysts such as Fairclough (1989) and Wodak (2009). Intertextuality means an utterance, text, or any pieces of writing that is shaped by prior texts, or by incorporating someone else's voice (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough, 2003). The presence of other texts or other voices in a text can be made explicitly as a direct speech with quotation markers, or implicitly as indirect speech without any markers. Additionally, one can write a text which implicitly embeds someone else's words or expression as if they were his/her own words. The imported text is reproduced, remade, or recontextualized.

Interdiscursivity

Interdiscursivity refers to the phenomenon in which there is a presence of different discourse topics or genres within another discourse topic or genre (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough, 2003). A genre normally has its own particular text type and style, so when it is mixed with a different genre, a hybrid discourse occurs. For instance, Fairclough (1996, p. 210) analyzed an advertising discourse which included public information discourse, and found that the boundary between selling and telling was blurred. Possibly, consumers may not feel that they are persuaded to buy something, but they are given useful information.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)

Actually, MDA is an approach to discourse analysis developed from the theory of mediated discourse, the principles of which were first laid out by Scollon in the late 1990s (Scollon, 1997; 1998). MDA extended the idea of CDA, which focuses only verbal elements and the analysis of texts. According to Jones and Norris (2005), MDA sees discourse as social actions. Verbal and non-verbal elements should not be analyzed separately because they work together and are part of the built environment in which people interact. In either spoken or written text, some practices, beliefs, and identities are reproduced. In this regard, MDA shares with CDA an agreement on dialogicality in discourse, or the cooccurrence of multiple voices in an interaction or a communication event (Scollon & Scollon, 2003).

Although MDA concerns both spoken and written data, more attention has been paid to still images and written discourse by several researchers, such as Craig (2013) studying newspaper coverage, Knox (2009) working on the homepage of a website, Martínez and Zammit (2017) focusing on online news, Guo and Feng (2017) analyzing advertisements, and Hakoköngäs, Halmesvaara, and Sakki (2020) exploring internet memes. Obviously, the dynamicity of such data is rather low compared to spoken discourse like a dialogue, which is involved with turn taking, and overlapping turns between one speaker and his or her interlocuter.

Norris (2004), an MDA scholar, proposed an approach to discourse analysis which emphasizes that spoken language is embedded within a complex configuration of actions and setting, and speakers or communicators are considered as social actors. In a communicative event, when a social actor produces utterances, s/he often performs actions simultaneously in order to signal some meanings. Thus, when analyzing oral communication, it is also necessary to study the nonverbal components like actions and interactions in order to gain a better interpretation of the communication. Norris (2004) classified actions into two levels: one is higher, and the other is lower. A higher-level action is created from several lower-level actions such as utterances, gestures, eye gaze, and the social actor's posture.

Norris (2004) also expanded the term "context" to be "communicative mode", and he defines it tentatively as a set of signs with meanings and regularities attached to them. All the lower-level actions and any other visual objects in the setting are also considered to be communicative modes. Norris (2004, p. 104) contends that social actors accomplish various higher-level actions with a constant interplay of various communicative modes in everyday interactions. One example of higher-level actions given by Norris (2004, p. 109) is the action of joking with friends. A social actor, Sandra, performed the action of joking with Robert and Anna by employing various communicative modes including utterances, gestures, and gaze shifts, as well as her body movement. This indicates that the action of joking would not be effectively accomplished with utterances or the verbal elements alone, but relies on the integration of other communicative modes.

In this research, following Norris (2004), MDA is extended to analyze a commencement speech, which is a spoken discourse containing dynamicity that is similar to a dialogue since the speech deliverer does not speak alone or totally hold the floor throughout the time, but interacts with

the audience. Moreover, the audience were not passive participants since they responded to what the speaker said and did.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, the commencement speech delivered at Harvard University on graduation day in 2017 is regarded as a communicative event in which Mark Zuckerberg was the main social actor who acted and interacted with the other social actors, namely the audience. His speech delivery was analyzed to discover how his actions accomplished higher-level actions, which include lower-level actions such as utterances, gestures, and eye contact, so as to maintain the attention of the audience as well as to gain responses from them.

To analyze the verbal parts of his speech in depth, two key concepts, namely Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity in CDA, were employed in order to provide a clearer picture of how the speaker was effective in wording his speech.

Data collection and transcription

The data to be transcribed in this research was obtained from the video clip of Zuckerberg's commencement speech, which is 32:36 minutes long, published on the YouTube Channel "Harvard University" (URL <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmYv8XGI-YU>).

Since this present paper adopts MDA as a framework, the transcription was made in a manner consistent with studies in Conversation Analysis (CA). Both verbal and non-verbal elements, together with the change of turn taking, are presented. The symbols and signs used to transcribe the speech in this study are as follows:

- (1) Numbers in parentheses on the left identify the line of transcription.
- {...} Braces mark utterances produced with shaky voice.
- (0.3) Decimal numbers in parentheses mark the length of time in seconds -- particularly pauses made while the speech was delivered.
- CAP Capitalization marks emphasis or stress in the speech.
- italic* Description of any actions or non-verbal elements are put in *italics*.
- "..." Quotation is used when the speaker explicitly refers to someone else's expressions.
- [Square brackets mark overlaps between actions, or when an action and a piece of utterance occur simultaneously.
- MZ The abbreviation of Mark Zuckerberg's name.
- Aud The abbreviation of the audience as a whole (some of the audience members mentioned by MZ are differently abbreviated).
- (?) This symbol represents unclear voices which cannot be transcribed into exact words or utterances.
- An arrow is used to direct readers' attention to a particular line where an interesting expression is located.

FINDINGS

The results of the study of actions and interactions performed by Mark Zuckerberg, hereafter referred to as MZ throughout the Findings section, are presented in order to show an overall picture of the speech event, which includes what happened or what the speaker performed and how he interacted with the audience.

1. Higher-level actions

The speech deliverer performed several actions while talking to the audience; however, only major higher-level actions by which the speaker could successfully grab the audience's attention, or connect himself with the audience, are presented. Giving a commencement speech can be regarded as one type of public speaking; holding the audience's attention throughout a long monologue is not an easy task. In this study, it was found that the speaker performed five major higher-level actions: joking, exchanging similar experiences, inspiring and encouraging the audience, building audience involvement, and blessing the audience.

a. Joking

One of the higher-level actions that MZ successfully performed to grab the audience's attention was joking. Most of his joking actions were made at the beginning part of his speech, while a few of them were embedded in other actions. Therefore, it can be said that humor or joking is an effective strategy that the speaker used to quickly connect himself with the audience in the very first few minutes of the speech. Consider Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1

- | | |
|---------|------------------------|
| (1) MZ | I love this place. |
| (2) | ┌ <i>widely smiled</i> |
| (3) Aud | └ <i>laughed</i> |

Instead of starting his speech right after coming to stand at the podium by addressing distinguished guests, MZ said "I love this place" and smiled widely, showing his teeth. Such a smile can be considered as a sign of sincerity and authentic happiness, so it matched well with the word "love" in his utterance. The audience, then, responded with laughter.

In terms of humor analysis, his utterance and his action could be seen as contradictory since the words "this place" referred to Harvard University where he used to study, but could not complete his degree. His first joke functions to create a good starting point of being friendly to the audience, which includes mainly graduates and their parents, and their response (line 3) is a positive sign of welcoming the speaker.

Actually, the real start of his speech delivery is found in line 7 when he formally addresses the distinguished guests. Therefore, his actions and interactions in the preceding lines (line 1 to 6), considered in terms of structure, can be considered part of "pre-speech". Not only did he

joke with the audience, but also expressed his thanks with emphasis on the immediate context of the rain, showing his concern (line 4) about the difficulty the audience had to encounter while listening to his speech.

Excerpt 2

- (1) MZ I love this place.
(2) [*smiled widely showing his teeth*
(3) Aud [*laughed*
(4) MZ Thank you all for coming out in the RAIN. The POURING rain.
(5) We're gonna make this WORTH it for you.
(6) Aud *applauded*
(7) MZ President Faust, Board of Overseers, faculty, friends, alumni, proud
(8) parents,

The podium where MZ stood was protected from the elements while the audience members were seated outdoors. The video shows that some audience members were holding umbrellas and the others were wearing raincoats. In addition to his concern, MZ made a promise that the audience would find his speech worth listening to, and he got a response of applause (line 6) which probably indicates the audience's appreciation of his caring expression and being pleased with his promise that the speech would be worthwhile.

Even though MZ started out formally addressing distinguished guests, he put stress on the members of the administrative board (line 9) and jokingly looked around as if to find whether there was a member of the board participating in this speech event. Thus, his action of joking was embedded in the speech opening, and this made the audience laugh in response (line 11). As a result, the formal speech opening turned into a casual one.

Excerpt 3

- (7) MZ President Faust, Board of Overseers, faculty, friends, alumni, proud
(8) parents,
(9) MEMBERS of the AD BOARD
(10) *turned to the right looking at someone*
(11) Aud *laughed*

It is widely accepted that joking can be successful only when the speaker and hearer share certain knowledge; the shared knowledge behind this action is FaceMash, which is a website created by MZ in 2003. On it, he put photos of female students without permission and let his friends vote on the girls' attractiveness. When this was forwarded throughout the university, he was accused of violating the girls' rights to privacy and had to go before the administrative board. After that, he withdrew, and left the university.

Excerpt 4

- (14) MZ I'm honored to be here today because, let's face it, you accomplished
(15) something I never could.
(16) *smiled with his hands opened*
(17) Aud *laughed*
(18) MZ { If I get through this speech today, it'll be the first time I actually
(19) { finish something at Harvard.
(20) { *held his right hand*
(21) Aud *laughed*

In line 14, at first it seems that MZ started his speech conventionally, "I'm honored to be here today because", but then he said something semantically opposing the preceding clause (I'm honored), and this is not the reason grammatically prefaced by the subordinator "because", but it went well with his action of smiling with his hands opened signaling that he was pleased and sincerely accepted the academic success of the audience members, most of whom were graduates. As a result, his joke becomes a compliment to honor the audience, not himself, the guest speaker.

MZ continued joking (line 18 - 20) with his utterance and action of holding out his right hand, signaling he was serious with what he was saying, and then successfully got another response from the audience because his speech delivery is actually much less time-consuming than the audience' academic success.

b. Exchanging similar experiences

Another action that used by MZ to grab the audience' attention was to interact with them by exchanging similar experiences. Since the majority of the audience were Harvard University graduates, one of his effective strategies was to get them to recall memories that they had in common with him. Consider Excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5

- (33) MZ But first, these last couple days have brought back a lot of good
(34) memories.
(35) How many of you remember EXACTLY where you were and what
(36) you were doing when you got that email telling you that
(37) you got into Harvard? (0.3)
(38) Aud (?)
(39) MZ *pointed to someone with a wide smile and moved his eye gaze towards*
(40) *the front*
(41) I was playing the video game Civilization and I ran downstairs

Before moving onto the real topic of his speech, MZ asked the graduates to recall the moment when they were informed that they had been accepted to Harvard University. He paused about

3 seconds (line 37) waiting for responses from the audience. His pause is a good sign, showing that he was hearing the answers although the answers could not be clearly heard when everyone talked simultaneously without any microphones. Then, he pointed his right index finger, accompanied by his wide smile, at someone in the audience, which may indicate that he understood the reply. And then he moved his eye gaze towards the front to interact with full audience via eye contact, signaling that he was pleased with all the answers. This mirrors the excitement he felt when he first received his email from Harvard University.

Even though MZ did not complete his degree, he could get the audience to feel the sense of “belonging” to the same academic community by focusing on the start of student life at Harvard University and how all parents would be proud of their children.

Excerpt 6

- (43) MZ I swear getting into Harvard is THE thing my parents are most
(44) proud of me for. My mom is nodding.
(45) *pointed to his mother*
(46) Mom *nodded her head and smiled*

To an EFL/ESL learner whose proficiency is not high, it might seem unusual to put stress on a function word such as an article instead of content words, and the article “the” (line 43) is not preceding a vowel sound, yet it was pronounced /ði:/ by the speaker. Actually, MZ pronounced this definite article /ði:/ to show strong emphasis, (instead of /ðə / which is more descriptive). As a result, this strong emphasis, which agrees with the definiteness of the article, allows him to present the high degree of worth associated with getting into Harvard University. MZ also referred to his mother, who was sitting in the first row with his father and other audience members. His mother responded (line 46) by nodding her head and smiling, indicating that she confirmed what her son had said. Instead of relying on the verbal element alone, the speaker interacted with his parents, who were sitting with other proud parents of the graduates.

After that, MZ also got the graduates in the audience to recall their experiences of the first class they had attended, as shown below in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7

- (47) MZ How many of you remember your first lecture here at Harvard?
(48) Mine was Computer Science 121 with the incredible Harry Lewis.
(49) Aud *yelled*
(50) MZ Harry!
(51) *quickly moved his eye gaze and clapped his hands with a wide smile*

MZ asked about the first lecture at the university that the graduates in the audience had taken, and then shared his own experience of a course in computer science he attended with a lecturer named Harry Lewis (line 48). Then, he quickly moved his eye gaze probably to where the professor was seated and clapped his hands with a wide smile so as to honor the teacher and

show appreciation for his teaching. Harry Lewis is a well-known American computer scientist, mathematician, and university administrator, and was the Dean of Harvard College (overseeing undergraduate experience) when MZ was studying there. So, it can be assumed that the audience was yelling in unison because they recognized the person MZ was referring to, and this loud cheer confirmed that Harry Lewis was indeed as incredible as MZ proclaimed.

In addition, the speaker also shared another experience when he spent his time at Harvard University just a few days before he left the university. Let us consider Excerpt 8.

Excerpt 8

- (62) MZ But my BEST memory from Harvard is meeting Priscilla.
(63) *looked at his wife who was sitting beside his parents*
(64) Pris *smiled*
(65) MZ I had just launched this prank website FaceMash
(66) Aud *laughed*
(67) MZ and the ad board wanted to SEE ME.
(68) *made 'air quotes' with two fingers of each hand*
(69) Everyone thought I was going to get kicked out. My parents
(70) drove up here to help me pack my stuff.
(71) My friends threw me a going-away party.
(72) WHO does that?
(73) *opened his arms and smiled*
(74) As luck would have it, Priscilla was at that party with her friends.

MZ referred to meeting his wife, Priscilla (shortened to Pris in the transcription) at Harvard University as his best memory, with the emphasis on the word “best” (line 62), indicating that even though he was apparently in trouble, he was lucky in this difficult time. He first met his wife at a farewell party arranged by his friends. This portion of his speech got the audience to recall FaceMash; the audience laughed in response, which was a positive sign. The speaker then highlighted FaceMash as something good that led him to meet his wife. As a result, the negative side of FaceMash, which had been so serious that the administrative board wanted “see him”, was obscured and reproduced as luck.

c. Inspiring and encouraging the audience

In this study, the actions of inspiring and encouraging the audience were analyzed together rather than separately because it was found that very often the speaker tried to motivate the audience to do several things, such as providing more freedom or giving more chances to others and promoting equality. He also proposed inspired ideas. In other words, he attempted to interest the audience so as to “turn them on”.

MZ introduced the main content of his commencement speech, encouraging the audience to do things that benefit people in the world. The excerpts that follow illustrate how he introduced his topic and its components.

Excerpt 9

- (96) MZ Today I want to talk about purpose. But I'm not here to give you
(97) the standard commencement about finding your purpose.
(98) We're MILLENNIALS.
(99) *spread his eye contact*
(100) We try to do that instinctively. INSTEAD, I'm here to tell you that
(101) finding YOUR purpose
(102) *spread his eye contact*
(103) isn't ENOUGH. The challenge for our generation is creating a world
(104) where everyone has a sense of purpose.

Linguistically, the speaker used the inclusive “we” and put the stress on the word “millennials” (line 98) to show that he and the majority of his audience, the graduates, belonged to the same group, and that this could create a sense of unity. Additionally, this sense of unity was reiterated with the words “our generation”. Physically, he spread his eye contact (line 99 and 102), indicating that he was paying attention to everyone in the audience. This interaction was consistent with the use of the inclusive “we” and the sense of “being members of the same group”. Additionally, his utterance in line 103 presupposes the obligation of this generation and encourages the audience to make the world a better place where everyone has a hope for achieving the goals in his/her life.

MZ also proposed inspired ideas such as the ones shown in Excerpt 10 below.

Excerpt 10

- (261) MZ How about modernizing democracy so everyone can vote ONLINE
(262) Aud *loudly applauded*
(263) MZ and how about personalizing education, so everyone can LEARN.
(264) Aud *applauded*

As can be clearly seen, MZ put the stress on the word “online”, emphasizing that the use of technology to vote for someone without the need for physical polling stations is a modern idea; it stands to reason, then, that traditional voting methods are old fashioned. The audience applauded loudly and immediately in response, and this applause was louder than the applause noted at line 264. In comparison, the second idea he proposed is not completely new, and it can be done either online or offline.

MZ sought to further inspire the audience by putting a stress on the word “achievement” as something possible, and he encouraged united cooperation through the use of the word “let’s”, which he uttered twice: once in line 265 and again in line 268. His body language in line 269, specifically, his lip compression, is consistent with the preceding utterance suggesting that he is serious with what he is saying. The audience demonstrates acceptance of his message of doing big things and creating purpose by responding with lengthy applause, which lasted 5 seconds (line 270), indicating their admiration and appreciation. MZ smiled in response to this long applause, probably to indicate that he was glad that the audience embraced his ideas.

Excerpt 11

- (265) MZ These ACHIEVEMENTS are within our reach. Let's do them ALL in a way
(266) that gives everyone in our society a ROLE.
(267) *spread his eye contact*
(268) Let's do BIG THINGS, not just to create progress but to CREATE PURPOSE.
(269) *compressed his lips*
(270) Aud *applauded* (0.5)
(271) MZ *smiled*

The speaker also inspired and encouraged the audience to be more concerned about providing freedom or creating more opportunities for others to try new ideas (Excerpt 12). He compared doing a job in the previous generation with doing one now, and then pointed out the difference between having preference for job stability and being entrepreneurial. He showed his preference for starting new businesses and investing in projects since this creates more opportunities to try new ideas, and then he waited quietly to allow the audience to ponder these thoughts (line 283).

Excerpt 12

- (274) MZ The second is redefining our idea of equality so everyone has the
(275) freedom to pursue their purpose. Now many of our parents had
(276) stable jobs throughout their careers.
(277) *spread his eye contact*
(278) But in our generation, we're all a little entrepreneurial, whether we're
(279) starting our own projects or finding our role in another one.
(280) And you know that's great. Because our culture of entrepreneurship is how
(281) we create so much progress.
(282) An entrepreneurial culture thrives when it is easy to try lots of new ideas.
(283) *spread his eye contact, and paused* (0.2)

In the following excerpt, MZ further encouraged the audience to work for the benefit of society with the emphatic address of "you" (line 353) along with the preceding utterance "Many of you will do well" confirming the abilities of the audience, which appear similar to his own. The audience responded with lengthy applause, lasting for five seconds (line 355), and showing that the audience agreed with him or appreciated his idea. Next, his utterances in line 356 and 358 together with the eye contact with his wife received another long round of applause (line 359) which probably indicated the audience' admiration and appreciation of their devotion and financial support to community service.

Excerpt 13

- (350) MZ And YES, giving everyone the freedom to pursue purpose isn't gonna be free.
(351) People like me should pay for it.
(352) *touched his chest with his right hand*

- (353) And a lot of you are gonna do really well, and YOU should too.
(354) *spread his eye contact*
(355) Aud *applauded* (0.5)
(356) MZ That is why Priscilla and I started the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and
(357) *looked at his wife*
(358) committed our wealth to promoting equal opportunity.
(359) Aud *applauded* (0.5)

d. Building audience involvement

MZ also encouraged the audience to work toward building a global community where people treat one another as citizens of the world. However, creating a global community in the real world is not a task as simple as virtually connecting people via Facebook. MZ tried to get the graduates in the audience involved in his speech by asking some questions to elicit their responses.

Excerpt 14

- (410) MZ Now, quick show of hands.
(411) *spread his eye contact*
(412) How many of you here are from another country?
(413) Aud (?)
(414) MZ *smiled*
(415) *All right now keep your hands up!*
(416) *raised his right hand*
(417) How many of you are friends with one of these folks?
(418) *spread his eye contact*
(419) Aud (?)
(420) MZ Now we're talkin'. See, we have GROWN UP CONNECTED.

MZ interacted with the audience by asking them to raise their hands (line 410) and spread his eye contact in an effort to elicit responses from them. Then, he moved on to asking a question that invited non-native American graduates to identify themselves, and he successfully captured the audience's attention and engaged them; they responded enthusiastically even though their words were not clear enough to be transcribed (line 413). He then smiled in response to this audience behavior. His smile (line 414) is a positive gesture with the power to mitigate the negative sense of the imperative utterance ("Quick show of hands") that might have sounded like a command. His smile can also be interpreted as a signal showing that he was pleased to see the response from the audience, or a sign of welcome to the non-native American audience after asking the question in line 412. Next, he continued to build audience involvement with another imperative utterance ("Keep your hands up!") while raising his own hand (line 415 – 416). In this instance, the imperative utterance lost any sense of giving a command, and was turned into a request for cooperation as the speaker did the same thing he was asking the audience to do.

Another extended question concerning friendship was raised (line 417), followed by the spread of his eye contact showing his care for the entire audience. This action successfully elicited an audience response. After having surveyed the show of hands among the audience indicating non-native Americans and their many friends, MZ concluded that “we have grown up connected” using the inclusive “we” and making emphatic pronunciation of “grown up connected” (line 420). This clearly indicates that he was successfully building audience involvement, and it also provides evidence that his objective of building a global community is possible to achieve.

MZ further illustrated how global community building is possible by introducing four outstanding members of the graduating class, none of whom were native Americans. All of them had done community service long before they enrolled in Harvard University. Let us consider some examples. The first is a female from Uganda (Excerpt 15) and the second is from Mexico (Excerpt 16).

Excerpt 15

- (493) MZ I met Agnes Igoe who’s graduating today.
(494) Agnes! Where are you?
(495) Agn *stood up smiling and put her hat on*
(496) Aud *turned to look at Agnes Igoe*
(497) MZ { Agnes spent her childhood navigating conflict zones with human
(498) { trafficking in Uganda and now she’s trained THOUSANDS of law
(499) { enforcement officials to keep communities safe.
(500) { *looked at Agnes*
(501) Aud { *applauded (0.7)*
(502) MZ { *clapped his hands*

MZ mentioned Agnes Igoe and asked where she was in the audience. This question acted as an indirect request for her to stand up, which she did, (line 495) drawing the full attention of the audience (line 496). MZ referred to her by her first name, “Agnes”, suggesting intimacy and reducing the formality, and then provided details about the community service she had done. After hearing these details, the other audience members responded with a long round of applause lasting for seven seconds (line 501) which showed their great appreciation and admiration; MZ added his applause to that of the audience (line 502) a few seconds later, showing his involvement and agreement.

Excerpt 16

- (509) MZ And I met David Razu Aznar, who’s graduating from the Kennedy School
(510) today. David stand up!
(511) Dav *stood up and smiled*
(512) Aud *turned to look at him and applauded (0.4)*
(513) MZ { David is a former city councilor who fought to make Mexico City
(514) { the FIRST Latin American city to pass marriage equality
(515) { *opened his left hand towards where David stood*
(516) { even BEFORE San Francisco.

- (517) *smiled*
(518) Aud *applauded* (0.7)
(519) Dav *bowed his head and sat down*

Excerpt 16 shows that the speech deliverer is well-prepared as he used past tense when saying “I met David Razu Aznar” (line 509). David was called on to stand up so that others in the audience could see him. The audience responded with a rather long round of applause lasting four seconds. MZ explained what David had done for his home, Mexico City, with the emphatic modifier “first” to stress how quickly David had pushed the process of marriage equality in comparison to similar legislation in San Francisco. If we consider the body language of MZ, then we can see how much he appreciated David’s devotion to his community as he opened his left hand towards David (line 515) and smiled (line 517). His actions encouraged another, even longer round of applause from the audience. In response, David bowed his head in acknowledgement of the applause before sitting down.

After introducing these selected outstanding graduates who had performed community services, MZ used himself as a further example of someone who made a difference, starting by connecting students at Harvard University, and ultimately building Facebook to connect people globally (Excerpt 17). Even though Facebook is a virtual connection, he identified it as an example of connecting people in the real world. MZ’s action here can be regarded as another step in building the audience involvement.

Excerpt 17

- (520) MZ And THIS is MY STORY TOO. A student in a dorm, connecting one
(521) community at a time, and keeping at it until one day we can connect
(522) the whole world. (0.3) CHANGE STARTS LOCAL.
(523) *spread his eye contact*
(524) even GLOBAL CHANGE STARTS SMALL with people like us.

Zuckerberg connected his story with the discourse marker “and” at the beginning of his utterance (line 520), and the stressed adverb “too” after “my story”, relating his own actions to those of the persons he had introduced immediately before. In other words, he puts his own story forward as another illustration of building community. He then made paused for three seconds, probably to give the audience time to consider what they’d heard, and be prepared to hear his statement that “change starts local” in line 522, followed by his eye contact with the audience. This excerpt finishes with a further emphatic proclamation (line 524) that is personalized with the phrase, “with people like us”.

e. Blessing the audience

Before closing the commencement speech, MZ did not forget to connect his words to the surrounding context where he and the audience were situated. He first referred to the church behind him, and then to a prayer (line 569). Like other guest speakers, he blessed the audience by quoting the prayer “Mi Shebeirach” before saying “Good luck” in line 580. Regarding his

non-verbal communication, he touched his chest with his right hand (line 572) and then said something about his experience. His gesture of touching his chest could be interpreted as a to himself and his feelings in difficult times, aligning it with the utterance that followed in line 573. Finally, he addressed his good wishes to the audience and the graduates in particular (line 578).

Excerpt 18

- (569) MZ As we sit here in front of Memorial Church, I am reminded of a prayer
(570) *spread his eye contact*
(571) Mi Shebeirach, that I say
(572) *touched his chest with his right hand*
(573) whenever I face a big challenge that I sing to my daughter thinking about
(574) her future when I tuck her at night. And it goes “May the source of
(575) strength, who’s blessed the ones before us, help us find the courage
(576) *spread his eye contact*
(577) to make our lives a blessing.”
(578) I hope you find the courage to make your life a blessing.
(579) *spread his eye contact*
(580) Congratulations, Class of 2017! Good luck out there.
(581) *widely smiled*
(582) Aud { *applauded (0.30)*
(583) Prof { *came to hug Mark Zuckerberg*
(584) MZ { *smiled and waved his hand to the audience*
(585) Pres { *came to shake hand with Mark Zuckerberg*

After saying “Good luck out there”, MZ gave a wide smile to the audience (line 581) showing his sincere wish, and then he was given a very long ovation, lasting for 30 seconds, indicating the audience’ praise of him. Moreover, during the time the audience applauded, one professor came to hug him, and then MZ turned to the audience and again smiled, suggesting his acknowledgment of the ovation, and waved his hand to the audience signaling a final good bye and that the speech event had come to its end. Finally, the president of Harvard University came to shake hands with him as sound of applause faded.

To summarize, in this communicative event, MZ, the main social actor, performed five major higher-level actions, which include joking, exchanging similar experiences, inspiring and encouraging the audience, building audience involvement, and blessing the audience. It seems rather obvious that these higher-level actions were well performed in conjunction with two major lower-level actions: the speaker’s utterances which contains words with inspirational and motivational meaning, purposeful pauses, and stresses, and words that have inclusive sense to reduce the distance between the speaker and audience. The speaker’s body language such as smiles, hand gestures, and eye contact were mindfully essential to his interaction with the audience, and simultaneously helped him to successfully connect with the audience.

2. Intertextuality

In this section, the mechanisms to link other texts or import them into the speech were presented. It was found that there were three main mechanisms: narrating experiences and stories, quoting famous sayings, and inserting religious text. The first mechanism was used several times and sometimes was embedded with other strategies. The second occurred twice, and the last was employed just once.

a. *Narrating experiences and stories*

Like Barack Obama (Hammer, 2010), MZ narrated his experiences and stories, some of which were part of the action of exchanging similar experiences and some were part of the actions of inspiring and encouraging the audience. For instance, to encourage the audience, MZ narrated how he started building Facebook. In the excerpt below, he mentioned the place where he first created Facebook, and then elaborated on the initial commitment to help connect the students in Harvard University. He repeated the words he once said to Noch, who had asked him to write a program to connect all the students in the university. MZ's reference to "someone" in line 140 was then coherently connected with "us" in line 142.

Surprisingly, this pronoun "us" which is grammatically related to "we" in line 144 becomes metaphorically related to "kids" in line 144. The meaning of the word "kid" may literally appear incompatible with the age of persons who study at "college". However, this meaning conflict was made possible with the following utterance "We didn't know anything about that," since it helped confirm that they were innocent like a small kid.

Excerpt 19

- (134) MZ I launched Facebook from that little dorm in Kirkland House.
(135) *pointed to the direction where the house located and smiled*
(136) Aud *laughed*
(137) MZ I went to Noch's with my friend KX. And
(138) *spread his eye contact*
(139) I remember telling him clearly that I was excited to help
(140) connect the Harvard community, but one day someone would
(141) connect the whole world. The THING IS it never even OCCURRED
(142) to me that someone might be US.
(143) *spread his eye contact*
(144) We were just college KIDS. We didn't know anything about that.

One more interesting thing is how MZ used the pronouns "us" and "we". It appears at first to include Noch as he first referred to "him" in line 139, but the pronoun "us" that follows is not used to describe MZ and Noch since he actually created Facebook later with support from his friend, KX Jin. Therefore, it can be said that the use of this pronoun in his narrative is ambiguous. This might be due to the fact that when MZ successfully created Facebook, he was sued by Noch who claimed that the idea for the social network was actually initiated by him. Noch did not

win the case since he did not take part in creating Facebook, but he further appealed to the president of Harvard University, who denied his appeal explaining that the policy of the university is to support students for being innovative. MZ may have wanted to avoid referring to this conflict because he and Noch had once been friends who had studied at the same university where he returned on this day as a guest speaker. Raising the past conflict would have been out of step with his goal of encouraging the audience to create a world where everyone has a sense of purpose, or has a role to play as part of a great success.

Regarding the main content of his speech, MZ encouraged the audience to help build the global community and promote equal opportunities. He told a story about when his wife, Priscilla, had asked him to teach an afterschool program for her students. One day, after class, he was talking to them about going to college, and one of his top students said he was not sure if he could go to college because he was undocumented (ie. he was in the United States illegally). MZ narrated the story in detail with shaky voice (marked with { - } in the transcription, lines 554 – 555, and 563 – 564). His shaky voice betrayed his deep feeling about plight of the student, and it indicates authentic sympathy. MZ used this story as a mechanism that led him to exhorting the audience to improve the global community by promoting equal opportunities. The response was a long round of applause lasting for 12 seconds, showing that the audience appreciated, admired, and agreed with his ideas.

Excerpt 20

- (554) MZ He wasn't sure if the country he calls home, {the ONLY ONE he's
(555) KNOWN, was gonna deny him} his dream of going to college. But he
(556) wasn't feeling sorry for himself. He wasn't even thinking of himself.
(557) He has a GREATER sense of purpose and he's gonna bring people
(558) along with him.
(559) *spread his eye contact, and paused (0.3)*
(560) It says something about our situation today that I can't even say his
(561) name because I don't want to put him at risk.
(562) *spread his eye contact and paused for 3 seconds*
(563) {But if a high-school senior who doesn't know what the future holds
(564) for him can do his part to move the world forward} then we OWE it to
(565) the world to DO OUR PART TOO.
(566) [*hold his right hand and bent his pointing finger down to the podium*
(567) Aud *applauded (0.12)*

b. Quoting famous sayings

In addition to narrating his own stories and experiences, MZ also quoted famous sayings and well-known expressions. Some sayings are embedded in anecdotes. Consider the excerpt below in which MZ quoted a janitor who worked at NASA (line 110).

Excerpt 21

- (106) MZ One of my favorite stories is when JFK went to go visit the NASA

- (107) space center, and he saw a janitor holding a broom
(108) *hold his hands together*
(109) and he asked him what he was doing, and the janitor replied
→ (110) [“Mr. President, I’m helping put a man on the moon.”
(111) *stretched his shoulders backwards*
(112) Purpose is that feeling that you are part of something bigger than
(113) yourself, that you are needed, and that you have something better
(114) ahead to work for.

According to Fairclough (1992), to quote someone else’s words is to reproduce their words. As can be clearly seen in excerpt 21, while reproducing the janitor’s reply to John F. Kennedy’s question, MZ also behaved with a shoulder stretch, signaling how proud the janitor was of his job as he was part of the great success. The actual words spoken by the janitor might seem to be an overstatement if decontextualized, but when it is recontextualized in this speech, it shows that a job which might not be highly respected is actually important when one has self-esteem. In terms of coherence, this is well connected with the following utterances (line 112 – 114) that, if you have a purpose (or you have self-esteem), then you can contribute to something great with your focus on the future. As a result, MZ was able to effectively convince the audience of the importance of “having a purpose”; no matter what job you are working on, you play a role in achieving something greater in the future.

In Zuckerberg’s view, one needs to be determined and work hard when trying out new ideas. In line 226 of Excerpt 22, he referred to the famous concept of “the eureka moment”, which is a moment of sudden insight, and he labeled it as a dangerous lie, i.e. it is a waste of time to wait for such a moment that does not exist. The belief in a eureka moment may prevent people from having courage to try their innovative ideas or metaphorically nourishing the “seeds of good ideas” (line 230).

Excerpt 22

- (223) MZ If I had to know everything about connecting people
(224) *spread his eye contact*
(225) before I got started, I never would have built Facebook. Movies and pop
→ (226) culture just get this ALL WRONG. The idea of a single eureka moment is a
(227) DANGEROUS LIE. It makes us feel INADEQUATE because we feel like
(228) we haven’t had ours yet.
(229) *spread his eye contact*
(230) And it prevents people with SEEDS of GOOD IDEAS from ever getting
(231) started in the first place.

The metaphor of “seeds of good ideas” originally came from Rick Brooks and Tod Bol, the founders of Little Free Library.¹ They popularize the Little School Houses on posts along

¹The history of Little Free Library (URL <https://littlefreelibrary.org/ourhistory/>) and origin of the idiom can be discovered on Washington Post Online News of December 18, 2019 (URL <https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/>)

sidewalks and in parks in Princeton, Illinois and other places. Passersby put in their books, take out someone else's. In so doing, people are able to enjoy reading books within their community without necessarily buying new ones, thereby, saving money and other resources. MZ borrowed this idea from Brooks and Bol and used it in a different context of a communicative event; that is, he recontextualized it in his speech in order to put forward the idea that there must be fewer obstacles that prevent people with a pool of good ideas from getting started and developing these ideas.

c. Inserting religious text

Although there are many other ways in which Zuckerberg could have ended his address to the Harvard graduates, MZ imported a prayer, "Mi Shebeirach", into his speech, and shared his life experiences in which the prayer has provided moral support to him and acted as a blessing for his baby daughter. Sharing this was a way of connecting his concern about his daughter's future with his wishes for the audience's lives in the future, and his stated hope that they will find the courage to make their lives a blessing. Interestingly, this is not a direct wish for a gift to be given to the audience; rather, it is offered as a result of the audience's own choice and effort (line 577). Nonetheless, it is coherent with that idea proposed in his speech that, to pursue a purpose, you need to work hard and must be stubborn on your pursuit of your goals no matter how many times you may fail.

Excerpt 23

- (571) MZ Mi Shebeirach, that I say
(572) *touched his chest with his right hand*
(573) whenever I face a big challenge that I sing to my daughter, thinking about
(574) her future when I tuck her at night. And it goes, "May the source of
(574) strength, who's blessed the ones before us, help us find the courage
(575) *spread his eye contact*
(576) to make our lives a blessing."
(577) I hope YOU find the courage to make your life a blessing.

3. Interdiscursivity

It was found that there was a presence of different discourse topics in Zuckerberg's commencement speech. Three major different discourses were imported, and all of them were part of the actions of inspiring and encouraging the audience. They are discourses on entrepreneurship, discourse on racism, and discourse on globalization.

a. Discourse on entrepreneurship

MZ motivated the audience to support the idea of promoting freedom to pursue purpose. One of his interdiscursive strategies is to import the discourse on entrepreneurship by talking about the entrepreneurial culture in the generation of millennials, which he says is more open for people to try new ideas without fear of failure. Not only did he use himself as an example, but

he also referred to other renowned persons such the writer, JK Rowling, and entertainer, Beyoncé, whose jobs and successes are not in the same area as his at all. Moreover, these two famous persons are not typically seen as entrepreneurs, but they are included in this discourse as an illustration and reiteration of the idea that it is common to fail before you become successful. Furthermore, JK Rowling and Beyoncé are not millennials, but their successes are still fresh and well-known to the audience, so they are better choices than others, like Thomas Edison, considered by many to be the greatest inventor in American history.

Excerpt 23

- (278) MZ But in our generation, we're all entrepreneurial, whether we're
(279) Starting our own projects or finding our role in another one. And you know
(280) that's great. Because our culture of entrepreneurship is how we create
(281) so much progress. An entrepreneurial culture thrives when it is easy
(282) to try lots of new ideas.
(283) *spread his eye contact and paused for 2 seconds*
(284) Facebook wasn't the first thing I built. I also built chat systems, and
(285) games, study tools and music players.
(286) *spread his eye contact*
(287) And I'm not alone. JK Rowling got rejected TWELVE TIMES before
(288) she finally wrote and published HARRY POTTER. Even BEYONCE had
(289) to make HUNDREDS of SONGS
(290) *raise his eyebrows*
(291) to get HALO.
(292) *smiled*
(293) Aud *laughed*
(294) MZ The GREATEST successes COME from HAVING the
(295) FREEDOM to FAIL.

b. Discourse on racism

Discourse on racism and discrimination was imported in the speech when MZ narrated his experience of teaching an after-school program at the local Boys and Girls Club as requested by his wife. The class of students was depicted in his speech as a group of students who were not all native or white Americans, and were struggling for better lives as can be seen in Excerpt 24.

Excerpt 24

- (383) MZ I taught those kids lessons on product development and marketing
(384) and they taught me what it was like growing up feeling targeted for
(385) your race, and what it's like having a family member in prison.
(386) I shared stories of my time in school, and they shared
(387) *spread his eye contact*
(388) their hope that one day they would get to go to college too.

c. Discourse on globalization

When we think of globalization, we may think of the advantages of technological improvement which result in high productivity and lower prices of products in the world economy. However, as we enter the new wave of globalization being driven by the digital revolution, there is a question about whether globalization really benefits people. MZ pointed out the disadvantages of globalization. He stated that many jobs had been eliminated, and that the sense of belonging to a group or a community was being eroded in comparison to the situation found during the previous generation.

Excerpt 25

- (117) MZ When our parents graduated, that sense of purpose reliably came
(118) from your job, your church, your community.
→ (119) But today, technology and automation are eliminating many jobs.
→ (120) Membership in a lot of communities has been declining, and
(121) a lot of people
(122) *spread his eye contact*
(123) are feeling disconnected and depressed and are trying to fill a void
(124) in their lives.

As part of the actions of inspiring and encouraging the audience, MZ called for global responsibility, which requires us to cooperate to improve the world, and solve global problems such as climate change and pandemics (Excerpt 26). It is a good strategy to mention big problems first, which are described as something beyond the ability of one country to cope with, and then call for cooperation from the global community.

Excerpt 26

- (443) MZ No country can fight climate change alone or prevent pandemics.
(444) Progress now requires coming together
(445) *spread his eye contact*
→ (446) not just as cities or nations, but also as a global community.

CONCLUSION

This research studied the commencement speech delivered by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard University with the aim of exploring the wording of his speech, and the interactions between Mark Zuckerberg and the audience. The speaker is well known as the creator of Facebook, and he has connected an incredibly large number of people in the virtual world. In the real world, according to the study results, he was also able to effectively connect himself with the audience during the Harvard University commencement address through his actions and interactions, which relied on both verbal and non-verbal elements. In particular, his actions of joking and discussing common experiences reduced the distance between himself and the audience, and

he was also able to increase the audience involvement, creating a sense of unity. This supported his aim of inspiring and encouraging the audience to create a global community where everyone is recognized as a global citizen with equal rights.

Additionally, his mechanisms of intertextuality and interdiscursivity not only contributed to connecting his utterances and helping them to flow coherently, but they were also supported by the actions he performed, especially in his efforts to engage people to cooperate and promote global citizenship. As a result, it can be said that, with this speech, the identity of Mark Zuckerberg as a young billionaire or successful entrepreneur who founded Facebook was discursively extended to include the image of a considerate and caring person who is concerned about other people, particularly the unfortunate, and who is also concerned with protecting individual rights for everyone.

The results of this study also suggest that, to deliver a captivating speech, one cannot just rely on the verbal components or a well-written script; rather, the non-verbal elements, such as vocal variety, eye contact, smiles, and hand gestures are also of great importance in expressing concepts more meaningfully. ESL/EFL learners can still make use of the subtitles provided by those YouTubers in an effort to improve writing skills, or as a model for preparing a good script for a speech, but to improve speaking skill -- particularly the skills of public speaking with a large audience -- it is also important to learn the body language or non-verbal elements that enhance a speaker's ability to effectively interact with the audience.

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