

# Transformational Leadership and Rhetoric Competencies for Organizational Success: Analysis of Jack's Rhetoric

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**ABSTRACT**--The topic of leadership style has attracted considerable attention from both academics and practitioners. Contemporary theories about leadership argue that the psychological make-up of leaders can reflect their leadership style within their organizations. In other words, understanding leaders' charisma would lead to an understanding of their influential actions. Charisma can be equated with transformational or inspiring behavior and both concepts play major roles in an organization's success. Transformational leaders are able to influence others through their behavior and their speech, using a high style of speech to produce a sense of attraction and admiration. Their language and rhetoric can play an essential role at the organizational level. In this article, we aim to focus on leaders' speeches in contemporary dialogue, trying to determine their leadership style. We selected Jack's (an acknowledged charismatic leader) rhetoric as seen in one of his speeches, aiming to analyze and highlight the link between rhetoric and transformational behavior.

Possible conclusions may be that leaders' rhetoric can determine their leadership style, determining an organization's success. The research will conclude a number of key theoretical and practical implications that may emphasize the crucial role of leadership rhetoric for the prospects and development of an organization, which may be a key to success and innovation; it will help managers understand how to inspire employees through their speech for the benefit of the organization and society.

**Keywords**—Rhetoric, Transformational Behavior, Organizations' performance

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Transformational leaders are able to influence others through their behavior and communication. They are also able to construct meaning through their rhetoric [1]. Leaders' duties involve much more than their strategic activities such as detecting opportunities in the external environment. But their duties do include their rhetoric. In the other words, leaders' duties depend on their ability to articulate their message and communicate inspirationally. Although the field of rhetoric has secured a place in management research e.g. Sillince & Golant (2018) and in organization theory, sadly, research on rhetoric analysis to explore leaders' behavior in the field of management has largely overlapped and remains sparse (Lee, 2019). In other words, identifying leaders' style through their rhetoric remains vague. Thus, understanding leaders' rhetorical approach is not related to understanding their behavior though it can show us how employees are treated and managed within the organizations [2]

Indeed, the majority of research [3][4] has empirically examined the link between leaders and organizational success by focusing on leaders' behavior only. The researchers did not take into consideration an analysis of leaders' rhetoric towards their personality and success to emphasize their behavior. From a point that business speech considered rational and depends on logic approach. Even studies such as [5] have only just begun to make the link between leaders' rhetoric and their organizations engage in different types of dialogue, in some cases using different icons to express their thoughts, revealing behavior within their organizations. Thus, understanding leaders' rhetoric can help us to explore their behavior and how they attempt to expand our knowledge of the fundamental link between their rhetoric and transformational leadership. One of the essential ways that leaders can affect others is through their rhetoric. In this article, we attempt to analyze the rhetorical discourse (interview) of Alibaba former CEO Jack as a leader who got a hundred million buyers visiting his site per day. We will analyze his interview to explore what kind of leadership he displays and if he practices transformational behavior within his organization with success. We aim to expand our knowledge about leaders' rhetorical speech and establish transformational leadership behavior dimensions. Our research questions will be:

- Does the leader's rhetorical speech transformational leadership behavior?
- What aspects of transformational behavior does the leader's rhetoric reveal?

### 1.1 Transformational Leadership

Leadership refers to the ability of an individual to form and direct others towards achieving success, shaping social meaning through the way they communicate [6]. Transformational leaders play a vital role in motivating leadership style. They showed that leaders in their audiences, especially employees within organizations [7].

This leadership plays an essential role in an organization's performance [3][8]. Moreover, showed that transformational or charismatic leaders are linked to organizational performance, and revealed that an organization's management depends largely on the leaders' vision and their abilities in managing their organization's processes [4]. According to Avolio & Bass (1995), the characteristics of transformational leadership are idealized

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behavior, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual aspiration for success [9]. Thus, leaders with idealized behavior provide a model for ethical behavior. They instill pride, gaining respect and trust. [10] argued that leaders with ID behavior display confidence, talk about important values and ethics, and encourage enthusiasm that transformational leaders can create an emotional environment. Transformational leaders' rhetoric and speech reveal these aspects during their speech. The inspirational motivation behavior IM as one of the aspects of leadership required to use effective personality communication skills showing what is right and what is wrong during the work process. Effective communication skills are indispensable for articulating an organization's vision successfully. Thus, through verbal and non-verbal means, transformational leaders communicate self-confidence, giving credibility to what they advocate. As a result, leaders are now employing a tone that transfers their message with energy and inspiration. As for the intellectual stimulation behavior IS, leaders of this behavior encourage and stimulate creativity in their employees, communicating optimism about their organizations' future goals. According to IS leaders' behavior, employees need to have a strong purpose as this will provide the energy to drive an employee forward. Finally, individual behavior IC reflects the extent to which a leader acts like a teacher or monitor by keeping communication open.

## 2.0 ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE, RHETORIC, AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The term 'organizational performance' has been used by many scholars, referring to the total achievements serving an organization's mission [6]. It is the key factor of an organization [2]. Those scholars, in addition to Bourne et., (2017), concurred that an effective alignment of an organization's activities, goals and planning lead to good results. It is also the ability of a leader to set their tasks clearly and convert them into action [11]. That's why leaders, CEOs and managers always need to be aware of the importance of measuring their organizations' performance. In this regard, studies (e.g. Uddin et al., 2017 & Liu & Shi, 2018) about transformational leadership behavior and organizational performance support the idea that effective organizational outcomes are related to leaders, specifically their transformational behavior. Furthermore, an organization's financial and non-financial performance is influenced by charismatic leaders. Leaders can exhibit social meaning through their behavior. For instance, they are able to create an environment full of cooperation and team work for the sake of their organizations. Leaders have the ability to drive both employees and organizations towards success [12].

While it is fashionable to talk about leadership, rhetoric as a field of study, has taken a place and interest in management and organization theory over the last few years [5] It is the art of effective or persuasive speaking, especially the use of compositional techniques which relate intimately to the context.

Transformational leaders can influence others through motivation, by simplifying meaning and communicating

effectively. It is the ability to clarify a complex and ambiguous message to others and mobilize the meaning to gain a large audience. On the other hand, transformational leaders use utterances to simplify and shape complicated meanings. Given that, leaders' speech or rhetoric can create a relationship between the leaders and their audience or employees.

Taking these two concepts into consideration, and referring back to Conger's article, the process of rhetorical crafting involves leaders' distinct skills. The first one is the framing process and the second is the emotional message. Where the former reflects the purpose of the message that the leader wants to communicate, the latter, giving the emotional power, is more powerful than the framing process because it controls employees [5]. Thus the audience will be influenced by the rhetoric. One of transformational leaders' aims, as previously mentioned, is to communicate with their followers and clarify the organization's vision, their duties, and why the decision has been taken. This requires effective rhetoric from leaders especially when describing the future of the organizations and the future of the followers. We think that transformational leaders can use rhetorical techniques such as the use of metaphors and analogy to insure that their message is received and to influence them for the sake of the organization. These techniques, in fact, came from communication skills that reveal the speaker's emotions.

In our research, we assume that leaders' or executives' rhetoric can reveal their leadership style. In particular, we want to discover the transformational aspect of Jack's speech from his rhetorical words that express his feelings so that the rhetoric has links to the leaders' behavior within the organizations.

## 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the context of rhetorical analysis and metaphorical approach we analyze Jack's speech in both the interview and his presentation. The interview took place in January 2015 with a duration of forty-four minutes and thirty-two seconds (44:32).

### 3.1 Text Selection and Analytical Approach

Our research depends on an interpretative approach. We selected this speech for two reasons. First, we think that this research could match our study goals. Second, it allows us to observe how leaders work towards achieving success through their speeches. In our research, we listened to Jack's speech carefully to identify and gather the details of the transformational behavior through his utterances.

As a first step, we selected the words of Jack's speech (Interview) in Table (1) that belong to the idealized behavior dimension in order to assess this dimension based on the research identifications, recording the duration time.



**Table 1 Idealized Behavior and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Idealized Behavior according to the researchers	Talking about important values and ethics Being excited and encouraging enthusiasm Creating trust and an emotional environment
Idealized behavior in Jack's interview	1: Using the word 'trust' several times (5:19; 15:25; 15:28) 2: Talking about ethical (16:55) and cultural values (41:26) 3: Talking about respect (26:52) 4: Showing confidence: 'I am proud of myself' (15:31; 23:19); 'We know what we are doing' (23:04) 5: Talking about balance in life (36:51; 37:40) 6: Having his own philosophy (36:51) 7: Having a sense of purpose: a) going global and looking to improve the world (38:31); b) remaining hopeful (43:31); c) helping small businesses (29:12) 8: Having the ability to change people's ideas (36:00) 9: Talking about social responsibility (43:14) 10: Keeping employees and customer happy (38:43).

In the second stage, we selected the words that are most related to leaders' inspirational motivation behavior from Jack's speech (Interview) as in Table (2) in order to estimate his inspirational motivation behavior based on the research identifications.

**Table 2 Inspirational Motivation (IM) Behavior and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Inspirational motivation behavior according to the researchers	Using effective personality communication skills Showing what is right and what is wrong during the work process
Inspirational motivation behavior in Jack's interview	1: Helping to encourage and create jobs (20:00) 2: Having good relations with a lot of people (23:40) 3: Talking about vision (24:49) 4: Having hope (26:50) 5: Building employees' awareness; changing ourselves (38:29) 6: Continuing to fight and never giving up (44:09) 7: Taking opportunities and being inspirational (35:07)

In the third stage we selected the words and duration times that most related to a leader's intellectual stimulation behavior from Jack's speech (Interview) as in Table (3) in order to estimate his inspirational motivation behavior based on the research parameters.

**Table 3 Intellectual Stimulation (IS) Behavior and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Intellectual stimulation behavior according to the researchers	1: Encouraging and stimulating creativity 2: Communicating optimism about their organization's future goals. 3: Having a strong purpose and providing the energy to drive employees forward.
Intellectual stimulation behavior in Jack's interview	1: Encouraging innovation (33:21) 2: Thinking before taking a decision (10:50) 3: Working as a team (34:40) 4: Having purpose and enthusiasm: "Nothing is impossible" (25:04) 5: Talking about empowering others (40:05)

In the last stage, we selected the words and recorded the duration times most related to a leader's individual consideration behavior from Jack's speech (Interview) as in Table (4) in order to assess his inspirational motivation behavior based on the research parameters.

**Table 4 Individual Consideration (IC) Behavior and Critical Discourse Analysis**

Individual consideration behavior according to the researchers	Leader acts like a teacher or a monitor Having open communication
Individual consideration behavior in Jack's interview	1: Being a good listener and talking to people about improvement (9:05) 2: Showing concern about his employees, society, shareholders and customers; giving advice (37:40) 3: Having no prejudices towards gender; employing women and women accruing at top management levels (39:27) 4: Listening to people's complaints (44:21)

**3.2 Analysis of Findings**

Through this rhetorical turns, the examiner seeks to gather maximum information to determine to what extent Jack a transformational leader is applying idealized behavior, inspirational stimulation behavior, intellectual stimulation behavior, and individual consideration behavior as shown in Figure (1).

- Jack's Idealized Behavior During Jack's interview, he mentioned that leadership is about responsibility (12:10). Jack's idealized behavior focuses on an environment that includes trust, self-confidence, ethics, values and purpose. He has the ideal sense that nothing is impossible (25:05). This tallies with Bass





(1999) where the author equated leaders' idealized behavior with their ability to demonstrate outstanding roles emphasizing important personal values and connect these values with organizational objectives and goals. In this case, we found that Jack embodies the idealized behavior.

- Jack's Inspirational Motivational Behavior Looking back at Jack's inspirational motivational indicate his charismatic leadership. Jack, in fact, used behavior speech, he focused on encouragement, hope and his employees' awareness of the vision. This was in line with Bass, (1999) when they considered that inspirational motivational behavior refers to leaders' abilities to articulate an appealing vision of the future and challenge employees' high standards and expectations, providing optimism and purpose for the required objectives. From this point of view, we concluded that Jack, as a charismatic leader, has a sense of inspirational motivation.
- Jack's Intellectual Stimulation Behavior Jack's Intellectual Stimulation Behavior' conce rned leaders' innovation within their organizations. They must bring enthusiasm, manifest energy and a sense that nothing is impossible. He also believes in empowering people to enhance their abilities towards achieving organizational innovation. Jack's IS behavior tallies with the same authors Bass, (1999) when they found that transformational leaders are those who stimulate new perspectives and show innovative ways of doing things and encourage followers to think creatively. Thereby, Jack, as a transformational leader, fulfills the third aspect of transformational or charismatic leadership.
- Jack's Individual Consideration Behavior From the point of view of individual consideration behavior, Jack showed high-level concern towards social responsibility, which indicates that he also pays attention to his employees as mentioned in his interview. He is also a good listener to his employees' needs and complaints. IC behavior mostly relates to leaders' abilities to act as a advisor towards their employees, understanding their weaknesses and strengths. Leaders with IC behavior give an equal chance to all their employees. This was, in fact, seen in Jack's speech about women in his company who developed high levels of management and showed high-level concern towards their job.

- \*Talking about values, ethics and responsibilities
- \*Having a sense of purpose
- \*Encouraging innovation
- \*Empowering his employees
- \*Taking consideration of internal and external environments

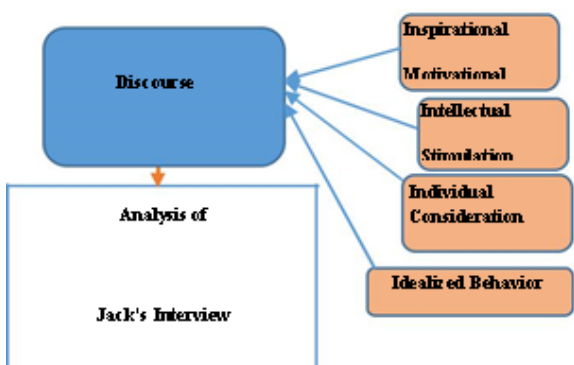
**Figure.1 Transformational Leadership Behavior and Jack's Discourse**

*3.3 Metaphoric Analysis*

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. According to Table (5), Jack used several metaphors that many metaphors which indicates he is a practitioner of effective leadership.

**Table 5 Jack's Metaphoric Words**

"In love with government but don't marry them".(19:38)	Create awareness and giving advice.
Using the pronoun "we" several times (1:40; 3:08; 3:17; 4:25)	A leader always uses the pronoun "we" instead of "I" which refers to his belief in team work.
Using the word "I" remember' many times reflects his deep experience. (26:50; 27:00; 28:30; 29:04)	Jack has a lot of experience. Heracleous & Klearing (2014) argued that there is a behavior that distinguishes each person from others, and shows leaders' behavior depending on their experience.
"Don't move your loot" (6:47)	Klarin & Ray. (2019) showed that visionary roles and good leaders also keep their feet on the ground and are ready to roll up their sleeves at every moment. This, in fact, was mentioned during Jack's speech.
"Compared to the last 15 years, we are big but compared to 15 years later, we are still a baby" (3:35).	High sense of purpose, high achievements and looking to keep progressing.
"When you have a billion dollars that is not your money" (43:00)	Ethics, trust and responsibility.



**4.0 DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTION**

Transformational leadership behavior and organizational performance, we conducted this research to link transformational behavior and organizational performance through a discourse analysis of Jack's interview.

Our research used one of the new approaches, revealing the transformational behavior through the leader's rhetoric. Furthermore, our discourse analysis perspective provided further empirical evidence of this relationship by showing



the transformational behavior particularly related with the idealized, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and idealized behavior. Our research showed the evidence that transformational leadership behavior can be seen through the leader's speech as well as it can predict organizational performance. Looking at Jack's organizational performance situation, it has grown from 80 to 30,000 people which indicates the organization is getting bigger due to Jack's supervision. We also found that the organization's profitability increased due to customer satisfaction evidence by 100 million buyers and 60 million transactions every day. Looking to his macro achievements, Jack has directly and indirectly created 40 million job opportunities for China, and is able to create jobs outside of China as well (30:20). Findings also showed that Jack's high-scoring words are mostly related to idealized behavior so we considered in our research that the charismatic side of Jack was most evident in his idealized transformational behavior (ID).

### 5.0 RESEARCH LIMITATION

Our research has its limitations. The first is the limited time frame of the context. The second is that we were unable to reach him personally to discuss his speech for our study. This study is about transformational and charismatic leadership, focusing mainly on leaders' rhetorical speech. That said, our study was based on the theoretical rather than the statistical approach. Finally, we leave these limitations to be explored by future researches, which can include studying Jack's speech and analyzing his transformational leadership behavior from the rhetorical perspective.

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