

# *The Opening Speech in Romanian Public Universities*

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**Abstract:** *In the paper “The Opening Speech in Romanian Public Universities” we aim to examine the opening speeches delivered in Universities for special occasions such as the beginning of the academic year and the inauguration of a new faculty, a new area or sector of a university. Speeches are an important way for any organization to build and maintain their public image, and they also are an important part of the organizational culture of an institution. These speeches usually mention the mission, vision and values of the organization in one way or another, in order to have continuity and cohesion in all the ways the organization communicates; when someone checks all the speeches, press releases and the such coming from the organization, they will have a clear and whole picture of what the organization is about. In this paper, we will firstly bring into discussion a content analysis of two opening speeches from different Universities, where we will focus on the kind of style, tonality, symbols and references they use, on whether they have any recurrent elements or special kind of elements mentioned, and also, whether they mention tradition, among others. Secondly, we will compare the elements studied in the content analysis to see how the two speeches mention those elements and what we can infer from it, whether they use different tones, styles and elements. Finally, we shall draw a conclusion based on the information we have gathered. I believe this topic is a very important one for Universities especially, as it helps them in designing their speeches in a more cohesive manner and in preserving communication continuity.*

**Keywords:** *inaugural speech, University, analysis, references, tradition, recurrent elements.*

## **1. Introduction**

The subject of this paper is the opening speech in Romanian public universities. I will focus on the opening speeches held in Universities for special occasions. These occasions include the beginning of the academic year, the inauguration of a new building, statue and new areas of the faculty or university. The speeches usually follow a certain pattern and have certain elements which I will be analysing. I chose this subject because I want to examine these patterns and elements, and the way in which they differ from faculty/university to faculty/university.

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to the important elements in opening speeches, which make each speech different, yet part of the organizational culture of the university. These elements are different from university to university and even from faculty to faculty, because they are part of their institutional identity and they should all paint the same picture.

Therefore, the premise on which this paper is based is that each opening speech has certain elements that are specific to the faculty or university, which in turn are part of the organizational culture of the institution.

## **2. Research method**

The research corpus is made up of 2 opening speeches: one entitled "Universities in the University. Identity construction and breakdown in higher education institutions" and delivered by Prof. Adrian Neculau, PhD, from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iasi, on the occasion of the opening of the 2011-2012 academic year, and the other, delivered by Gheorghe Costaforu from the University of Bucharest during the inauguration of the University building on 14 december 1869, and taken from the book "The idea of University", written by Toma Sava. The corpus was specifically chosen in order to better

analyze the elements I will present in subchapter 2.1 and also in order to see what similarities and differences they have.

### **2.1 Content analysis**

The object of this research will be 2 opening speeches from different Universities, using content analysis tables. In this analysis, I will examine the tonality and style of the speeches, the symbols and references they use, the existence of recurrent or special elements, and those elements related to tradition (if any).

In the analysis, I will focus on the following categories:

- The length of the speech
- The context in which the speech was delivered
- The topic of the speech
- The style
- The tonality
- The identity of the person delivering the speech
- The symbols used
- The references used
- Recurrent or special elements
- Elements of tradition
- Evoked feelings

With the help of the analysis grid, I will be able to spot the patterns and elements which prevail in the two speeches and have a better understanding of them. This method is a less subjective one, which will enable me to analyse the whole picture regarding the corpus I have selected and to confirm my theory according to which each inaugural speech of any faculty has those specific elements that also are part of the faculty's organizational culture.

### **2.2 Comparative analysis**

I will also use the comparative analysis as an investigative tool so as to compare the 2 speeches using the data obtained from the analysis grid.

While the content analysis is more rigid, objective and systematic, the comparative one allows for more freedom of analysis and interpreting and is more subjective. The points compared in this analysis will be the ones specified in subchapter 2.1. With this tool, I will be able to identify the main elements of the two speeches, what elements the speeches have in common, what elements are different and whether there are any unique elements which do not appear at all in one speech but are present in the other.

### **3. Results**

I analysed the following two speeches: one was delivered by Gheorghe Costaforu from the University of Bucharest during the inauguration of the University building on 14 december 1869, and taken from the book "The idea of University", written by Toma Sava, and the other, entitled "Universities in the University. Identity construction and breakdown in higher education institutions" was delivered by Prof. Adrian Neculau, PhD, from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iasi, on the occasion of the opening of the 2011-2012 academic year. I will analyse the two speeches using a content analysis grid and a comparative analysis grid created by myself.

The elements I will focus on in particular are the symbols and references used, recurrent or special elements, elements of tradition and evoked feelings. I will analyse the speeches to see their particularities, what elements define them, and in the comparative analysis, I will compare them to identify the similarities and differences between them.

Firstly, the length of both speeches is impressive: the speech delivered at the inauguration of the building of the University of Bucharest is 7 pages long, whereas the one held during the opening of the academic year has 13 pages, which I consider a very long speech.

The context in which the speeches were delivered are different too. One was held during the inauguration of the building of the

University of Bucharest in 1869 and the other was delivered during the opening of the 2011-2012 academic year at the University of Iasi.

The topics of the speeches are change and intellectual conflict as ways of progress, history, identity and progress. As expected, these topics are specific to opening speeches, since change, progress, identity and intellectual conflict are a part of any University's life, and history is of course always a part of any University's identity. What I did not expect, however, was the topic of ideological control present in the 2011 speech, which went hand in hand with the history of the University: during the communist period, any novel ideas put forth and debated by the intellectuals working at the university were considered wrong and intolerable by the communists, who only accepted the party's ideas as "right".

The style of the speeches is very formal; however, one is more subjective, while the other is more objective and also, in one there are foreign words, as this was the way in which intellectual spoke during that time, while the other used jargon elements to express ideas.

Analysing the tone of the speeches, one was found to have a very positive tone, speaking of change and how the University would make things better for the population, while the other had a rather neutral tone, mostly talking about the history and facts regarding "the darker" period of the University.

The feelings evoked by the speeches are retrospection, remembrance, honour, pride, gratefulness, praise and glory. It was interesting to see how these feelings of retrospection and remembrance appear in this speech, since the occasion on which it was delivered was a joyous one - a celebration. But seeing the context in which these feelings are evoked, it does make sense. History, even if it is a dark one, should be honored, known, understood and learned from. Surely, the feelings of honour, pride, praise, glory and gratefulness make more sense in the context of inaugurating the University building back in 1869, so no surprise here.

In both cases, the speakers are male.

In the speeches, I have found 4 categories of symbols used: symbols referring to knowledge, symbols referring to rebuilding, symbols referring to struggle, and symbols referring to the university. The exact words used to refer to knowledge, rebuilding, struggle and the university will be discussed in the comparative analysis part.

There are only 3 types of references made in the speeches analysed, which are references to the history of education, to the history of the University and to the speeches of the forefathers.

There are also plenty of recurrent elements in the speeches I have analysed, in terms of identity, power, school, education, ideology, forefathers, descendants and science. Since the speeches were delivered in an academic environment, nearly all these elements have to do with the university. The only elements which stand out are power and ideology. Power in the academic context means competence, recognition, alliances, grouping and regrouping, assertion strategies, but also knowledge is power. Ideology has been mentioned earlier, with reference to the communist period.

There are only 3 elements that pertain to tradition in both speeches: they mention forefathers, descendants and science.

In what follows, I will carry out the comparative analysis of the 2 speeches I will no longer analyse speech length, context, tone and the identity of the speakers, since I have already emphasized what was relevant there. For ease of reference, I will refer to the speech which was delivered during the opening of the academic year at the University of Iasi as “the speech from 2011”, and I will call the speech held during the inauguration of the building of the University of Bucharest the “speech from 1869”.

In terms of topics, the speech from 1869 has only 3, which are the history of education, the history of the university and the promise of progress. The speech from 2011 has a lot more topics, the main one being change. The rest of the topics present there are: intellectual conflict as a way of progress, the university as a place where ideological conflicts and conflicts of power reign, the history of

education and of the university, the reasons why we have to invoke a harmful history when we are trying to build our future, the ideological control during communism, reconstruction and the concept of identity. There are 2 common themes in these speeches: the history of education and that of the university, the rest being different, depending on what the speakers wanted to focus on in their speeches.

The style of the speeches is similar, in that both are formal and that the speakers use something “special”: the speech from 1869 uses foreign words since it was common at the time for intellectuals to use them, and the speech from 2011 uses jargon specific to universities. The speech from 1869 is more subjective and even addresses the King and Queen, who I presume were present at the event, while the speech from 2011 is more objective.

The speeches are complete opposites when it comes to the feelings evoked. The speech from 2011 evokes feelings of retrospection and remembrance, to look back on the past and see how things evolved, where things went bad and to think about what can be changed in the present and future, whereas the speech from 1869 is all about honour, pride, gratefulness, praise and glory.

The speeches have a variety of symbols that they used, which I have grouped into 4 categories: symbols referring to knowledge, symbols referring to rebuilding, symbols referring to struggle and symbols referring to the university. The speech from 1869 had symbols referring mostly to knowledge and rebuilding, and one referring to the university: young people drinking from the source of light/knowledge, ruins from which they rebuild, the fiery torch of science, the star that guided the 3 wise men, the most beautiful ornament in the country. The speech from 2011 had symbols referring mostly to struggle, reconstruction and knowledge: the social game of dissimulation, identity reconstruction, the European spirit and the fight between ideas, professors who were “authorities” in their fields and changed social landmarks, “ideological and political education”, “wrong ideas”, and the clinical death of some domains.

There were not many references in any of the speeches: only 2 in the speech from 1869, the history of education and how the University was approved and helped by the royal family to come into being. The speech from 2011 also makes reference to the history of education, but also to the speeches of the forefathers, which is very plausible considering that in 1869 there was only 2 universities in Romania, the one from Iasi and the one from Bucharest, so the older speech could not have used that.

There are some common recurrent elements in both speeches, those elements being school, education and forefathers. The speech from 2011 also has identity, power and ideology as recurring elements, whereas the speech from 1869 has also descendants and science as recurring elements.

There are only 3 elements pertaining to tradition in both speeches, 2 appearing in both: mentions of science and forefathers, the speech from 1869 also mentioning the descendants.

#### **4. Sources consulted**

The topic of this scientific paper is opening speeches, which is a part of the public relations domain. The two primary sources I have used to research and gather information on the topic were “Discursul-semantura al institutiei” written by Lavinia Suci, which I consulted in order to obtain more information about institutional communication, organisational culture and speeches delivered in institutions in order to have a better understanding of the topic, and the other source was “Idea de Universitate”, written by Toma Sava, from where I took one of the analysed speeches and gathered information about what a university means in Romania.

#### **5. Conclusions**

Based on the content analysis and the comparative analysis, I have realised that the two speeches have many things in common, yet also many elements which are different. Most elements found are relevant



to any university in Romania. Whereas history is an element present in both, progress and change are other elements found in both speeches. I have noticed that the speech from 1869 mostly focused on how the university was going to change lives, make things better for the population, educate people and create brilliant minds for the world of science, while that from 2011 was focused more on remembering the past, especially the communist period, rebuilding the image of the University and honouring and remembering the forefathers' mission, understanding what was wrong in the communist era and striving not to repeat those mistakes again.

For the dissertation paper, I will expand my corpus of speeches in order to have an even better picture of the elements shared by the speeches delivered in Romanian universities and to see to what extent those elements are part of the organisational culture of each University.

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## Annexes

- **Comparative analysis**

Variable	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Speech Length (pages)	13 pages	7 pages
Speech Context	The opening of the 2011-2012 academic year at the	The inauguration of the University of Bucharest

	Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences	building on December 14, 1869
Theme	Intellectual conflict as a way of progress, University as a place where conflict of ideologies and conflicts of power reign, History of Education and of the University, why do we have to invoke a harmful History when we are trying to build our future, the ideological control during communism, identity (reconstruction and concept of), <b>change</b> (main theme)	History of education and university, promise of progress
Style	Very formal, use of jargon, objective	Very formal, use of foreign words (common at the time), subjective and addressing the King and Queen
Tone	Neutral tone	positive tone
Evoked feelings	Retrospection, remembrance	Honour, pride, gratefulness, praise, glory
Identity of the speaker	prof. univ. dr. Adrian Neculau, male	Gheorghe Costaforu, male, no other information presented
Symbols used	Social game of dissimulation, identity reconstruction, European spirit, fight between ideas, professors which were 'authorities' on their domains, changed social landmarks, 'ideological and political education', 'wrong ideas', conditions	Youths drinking from the source of light/knowledge, Ruins from which they rebuild, fiery torch of science, the star that guided the 3 wise men, the most beautiful ornament of the country,

	of clinical death of some domains,	
References used	The speech of the forefathers, the history of the University	The history of education, how the University was approved and helped by the royal family to be founded,
Recurrent elements	Identity, power, school, education, ideology, forefathers,	Forefathers, descendants, science, school, education
Elements pertaining to tradition	Mentions of science, Mentions of the forefathers	Mentions of descendants Mentions of science, Mentions of the forefathers

- **Content analysis grid**

Speech length	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Short (max 3 pages)		
Medium ( 3-5 pages)		
Long (5-7 pages)		x
Very long (7+ pages)	x	

Speech Context	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Festive course held with the occasion of the new academic year	x	
The inauguration of the University building		x

Theme	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Change	x	
Intellectual conflict as a way of progress	x	
History	x	x

Ideological control	x	
Identity	x	
Progress		x

Style	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Formal	x	x
Informal		
Use of foreign words		x
Use of jargon	x	
Subjective		x
Objective	x	

Tone	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Positive		x
Neutral	x	
Negative		

Evoked feelings	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Retrospection	x	
Remembrance	x	
Honour		x
Pride		x
Gratefulness		x
Praise		x
Glory		x

Identity of the speaker	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Male	x	x
Female		

Symbols used	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Symbols referring to knowledge		x
Symbols referring to rebuilding	x	
Symbols referring to struggle	x	
Symbols referring to the university		x

References used	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
History of education	x	x
History of university	x	x
Speech of the forefathers	x	

Recurrent elements	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Identity	x	
Power	x	
School	x	x
Education	x	x
Ideology	x	
Forefathers	x	x
Descendants		x
Science		x

Elements pertaining to tradition	Opening of academic year speech	Inauguration of building speech
Mentions of the forefathers	x	x
Mentions of descendants		x
Mentions of science	x	x