

Motivating Language Theory and NCAA Coaches' Halftime Communication

Christopher Streeter, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Sport Management

Nichols College

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Abstract

This presentation explores how NCAA head men's soccer coaches' halftime communication influence match outcomes in the United States utilizing the motivating language constructs of empathetic language, meaning-making language, and direction-giving language. Through the lens of motivating language theory (MLT), four research questions guide this presentation: RQ1: How do NCAA head men's soccer coaches' halftime communication influence match outcomes in the United States utilizing the motivating language constructs of empathetic language, meaning-making language, and direction-giving language? RQ2: How do NCAA head men's soccer coaches' halftime communication utilize the motivating language construct of empathetic language? RQ3: How do NCAA head men's soccer coaches' halftime communication utilize the motivating language construct of meaning-making language? RQ4: How do NCAA head men's soccer coaches' halftime communication utilize the motivating language construct of direction-giving language? Four sources, semi-structured interviews, audio recorded halftime speeches, final match box scores, and the Motivating Language Scale, all generated data that were triangulated to provide answers to the four research questions. This presentation will discuss quantitative findings and eight qualitative inductive themes found to be vitally important to the delivery of halftime speeches: Sense of Understanding, Addressing Psychological and Emotional Conditions, Clarifying Questions, Metaphorical Language, Camaraderie and Culture, Tactical Management, Communicative Timing, and Mode of Delivery.

Keywords: Coaching, NCAA, soccer, halftime, Motivating Language Theory

Overview

In its purest form, to coach is to communicate. Whether verbal or nonverbal, passive or aggressive, technical or tactical, communication is a vital part of what coaches do (Neck et al., 2016). Coach communication with players accounts for up to 80% of coaches' time (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018). Effective coaches recognize the important role they play in influencing behavior, boosting confidence, inciting passion, modeling fair play, and maximizing the performance of their athletes. The way in which a coach teaches a skill, reinforces a behavior, highlights an error, or delivers a halftime speech plays an important role in the efficacy, esteem, and performance outcomes of the athletes under his or her watch. Coaches are key figures in every sport regardless of the level of competition. Millions of coaches practice the profession throughout the world and have the means to positively, or negatively, impact athletes' physical, social-emotional, and psychological well-being (Al-Emadi et al., 2018).

Halftime speeches take place every day. They are given at every level of sport and are delivered by coaches all over the world. Despite the frequency of halftime speeches and influence coach communication has on players (Allain et al., 2018), there is a significant dearth of literature comprehensively exploring halftime communication, a critical time of competition (Avugos et al., 2020). This presentation explores how NCAA head men's soccer coaches' halftime communication influence match outcomes in the United States utilizing the motivating language (ML) constructs of empathetic language, meaning-making language, and direction-giving language.

The practical applications and significance of this presentation are many. It gives coaches at all levels all over the world, within a multitude of sports, insight into a

validated, influential, research-based linguistic strategy (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018) to consider implementing when delivering a halftime speech. It adds to the limited body of literature that explores this critical time of competition (Allain et al., 2018; Avugos et al., 2020; Staw et al., 2019). Last, it expands our understanding of Motivating Language Theory (MLT) beyond the dyadic relationship (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018) and explores MLT within a team context, a fruitful area for future research (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2018).

This presentation adds value to the sporting community and advances scientific knowledge in several ways: (a) Provides a deeper understanding of MLT and its applicability to sport, (b) expands our understanding of coach communication, (c) provides needed insight into halftime communication, specifically NCAA head men's soccer coaches' halftime communication, and (d) determines how NCAA head men's soccer coaches' halftime communication influence match outcomes in the United States utilizing the motivating language constructs of empathetic language, meaning-making language, and direction-giving language.

