

## TED TALK AS AN OBJECT OF RHETORIC RESEARCH

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*The given article aims at describing: how the rhetorical strategies are used in the Ted Talks presentations and how the rhetorical strategies complement to create the speech effect. Rhetorical strategies are defined as the mechanisms used through wording during communication acts that encourage action or persuade the audience. These language devices are actively applied across Ted Talk speakers to manage the listener's views. The topicality of the paper is predetermined by modern understanding communication as the process that empowers others, forms connections, influences making decisions, motivates change, and makes a difference in people's lives. A language is a powerful tool that can make huge changes if the right word is used at the right time and in the right place. The lack of communication skills to select appropriate verbal and nonverbal means to get the message to the audience in the right way by using powerful and effective words makes communication almost impossible. Storytelling and humour are under our research as two main rhetorical strategies mainly used by Ted Talk speakers. Thus, the research pays attention to the important point that rhetoric involves language as a strategic response to a situation, and rhetoric is the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols. Ted Talk by Brene Brown The Power Of Vulnerability is under the rhetorical analysis. While performing the rhetorical analysis the following research steps have been made: determining rhetorical situation and purpose; defining and understanding rhetoric as a framework for how speakers inform and persuade audience; analyzing how these speakers use a variety of rhetorical strategies and Ted Talk genre to make an impact on their audience; demonstrating an understanding of the relationship between intention, audience, and genre.*

**Key words:** *rhetoric, strategy, storytelling, humour, speech, ethos, logos, pathos.*

**Introduction.** Rhetoric is the study of how we organize and employ language effectively, and thus it becomes the study of how we organize our thinking on a wide range of subjects [2]. Rhetoric has been defined as the energy inherent in emotion and thought, transmitted through a system of signs, including language, to others to influence their decisions or actions [12]. Many studies in recent years have investigated the principles of rhetoric [7]. Therefore, the results of these studies came to reveal techniques, strategies, structural patterns and characteristics. This is a useful contribution that suggests again that rhetoric is simply part of who we are as human beings. When we express emotions and thoughts to other people with the goal of influencing or persuading them, we are engaged in rhetoric.

We'd like to focus our attention on the important point that rhetoric involves language as a strategic response to a situation, and rhetoric is the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols [7]. The language people use to define their experiences expresses attitudes and understandings of the world and creates motives in others through the construction of social reality

[4]. In this aspect, it is possible to expand the definition of rhetoric as art to include other goals such as achieving clarity through the structured use of symbols, awakening our sense of beauty through the aesthetic potential in symbols, or bringing about mutual understanding through the careful management of common meanings attached to symbols [8]. The aim of the research is to investigate the Rhetoric of TED Expert Public speakers.

The research objectives are:

- 1) to outline the scope of research of public speaking discourse;
- 2) to single out the rhetorical strategies of Ted Talk speakers.

The object of the study is Ted Talk public speaking discourse.

The subject of the study is the rhetorical strategies of Ted Talk speakers.

The research methods are the methods of rhetorical analysis, pragmatic analysis. The process of completing a rhetorical analysis presupposes the use of different rhetorical strategies. Pragmatic analysis refers to a set of linguistic tools which are used to develop systematic accounts of discursive public speeches, particularly discursive strategies.

**Theoretical Framework.** Since times immemorial eloquence was highly appreciated in ancient India, China, and Africa, also among the Aztec culture and other pre-European communities of South and North America. Moreover, in classical Greece and Rome, public speaking began to thrive in the educational sphere and civic life. Public speaking was also under extensive investigation in Aristotle's rhetoric (the third century B.C.). This outstanding work is still considered the most important research in this subject, and many of its principles are followed by public speakers nowadays. Cicero, the great Roman leader gave his public speeches to defend principles of liberty and dedicated his several works to oratory holistically. Over many centuries, many other famous thinkers have thoroughly studied such issues as a language – speech – rhetoric (the Christian preacher St. Augustine, the Roman educator Quintilian, the British philosopher Francis Bacon, the medieval writer Christine de Pizan, and the American critic Kenneth Burke) [1]. Communication researchers have provided increasingly scientific fundamentals for understanding the strategies and techniques of effective speeches [8]. The ability to communicate well is one of the most crucial language skills to develop today.

#### Research Findings

TED Talks, an acronym for Technology, Entertainment and Design, acts as one of the most recognised new forms of communication and generally innovative ideas that exist in the world [1, 40]. TED was founded in 1984 by the influential architect Richard Saul Wurman out of the convergence of three main branches: technology, entertainment and design. One of the most influential and popular websites that offer new information in the form of videos is TED Talks. TED Talks is a video platform that offers a variety of information for free on the Internet. The genre specification of a TED speech stems from its stiff local-temporal format and carefully prepared essence.

TED Talks is a hybrid genre that incorporates several other genres, such as lectures by university professors, newspaper articles, conference presentations, scientific television programmes, thus combining different semiotic models, namely conversation, writing, video and sound. Since 2007 the international TED conference has successfully proved itself as one of the most prominent formats for the diffusion of ideas around the world. The conference disseminates its content under the slogan "ideas are worth spreading". Consequently, TED Talks public speeches institute represents a new object of pragmatic-linguistic

research. Public TED Talks should be interpreted as the epitome and recognition of an idea in the process of communication. Ted Talks has turned into a viral video platform and a worldwide community of influential and passionate speakers.

TED speeches are characterised by features such as:

1. conciseness;
2. structural and logical reasoning;
3. transparency;
4. clarity;
5. high degree of authority and credibility;
6. persuasiveness [5].

There are three basic parts of persuasion in Ted Talk speeches:

1. ethos (credibility of the speaker);
2. logos (the logic behind any conclusions drawn by the speaker);
3. pathos (emotional appeal or ability to create a connection between the speaker and his audience) [5].

These key elements lie at the base of any successful public speech. Firstly, to share thoughts, ideas, observations a speaker should have a certain level of knowledge about the chosen topic (that is ethos). Secondly, to make sure that the message is perceived and understood by the audience in the right way, the message must be conveyed clearly, informatively and logically (that is logos). Thirdly, to capture and hold the undivided listeners' attention the speaker has to create an emotional connection with the audience (that is pathos).

Let us analyse the extract of Ted Talk by Brene Brown "The Power Of Vulnerability" [3]: So, I'll start with this: a couple years ago, an event planner called me because I was going to do a speaking event. And she called, and she said, "I'm really struggling with how to write about you on the little flyer." And I thought, "Well, what's the struggle?" And she said, "Well, I saw you speak, and I'm going to call you a researcher, I think, but I'm afraid if I call you a researcher, no one will come, because they'll think you're boring and irrelevant." And I was like, "Okay." And she said, "But the thing I liked about your talk is you're a storyteller. So, I think what I'll do is just call you a storyteller."

The introduction of the Talk establishes ethos and pathos simultaneously: I was going to do a speaking event. the thing I liked about your talk is you're a storyteller. So, I think what I'll do is just call you a storyteller." In this way the presenter earns her credibility, talking about her storytelling skills: So, I'm a researcher-storyteller, and I'm going to talk to you today – we're talking about expanding perception – and so I want to talk to you and tell some stories about a piece of my research that fundamentally expanded my perception and

really actually changed the way that I live and love and work and parent. In addition, her position as a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work studying vulnerability, courage, authenticity, and shame for the past 10 years also adds credibility to her speech.

Logos: The things I can tell you about it: it's universal; we all have it. The only people who don't experience shame have no capacity for human empathy or connection. No one wants to talk about it, and the less you talk about it the more you have it. What underpinned this shame, this "I'm not good enough," – which we all know that feeling: "I'm not blank enough. I'm not thin enough, rich enough, beautiful enough, smart enough, promoted enough." The thing that underpinned this was excruciating vulnerability, this idea of, in order for connection to happen, we have to allow ourselves to be seen, really seen.

Moreover, the classical theory and practice of rhetoric are concerned with argumentation and persuasion [2]. The rhetorical analysis embraces the following questions:

Table 1

**The rhetorical analysis**

1. What is the communicative situation?
2. Who is the speaker?
3. What is their intention of speaking? (Ranging from attacking or defending, encouraging or discouraging from certain action, praising or blaming, teaching, motivating, fascinating, etc.).
4. Who makes up the audience?
5. Who is the intended audience?
6. What are the values and emotions of the audience to appeal to?
7. What is the content of the message?
8. Can you summarize the main idea?
9. How does the speaker address the audience's reason and their emotions?
10. What is the form in which it is conveyed?
11. What is the structure of the communication; how is it arranged?
12. What genre is the speech conducted in?
13. What figures of speech are used?
14. What is the style and emotional tone of the speech?
15. How do the expression side and the content side correspond to each other?

Ted Talk speech undergoes 5 main Cicero's canons as well:

The invention in Ted Talk. Ted Talks speakers teach their audience something new. An unfamiliar or unexpected element in Ted presentation shakes up the audience and provides a different perspective. The purpose of Ted Talk is to inform, educate and inspire the audience. The speech is inspiring

when the audience is given a new perspective on the world in which they live. A speaker may use his strong, convincing language to elicit intrigue and curiosity. His great pitch makes the topic interesting, persuades the audience to want to know more. For instance, Ted Talks speakers start with a grabber, giving the audience a chance to see their personal connection to the topic through such rhetorical technique as storytelling.

Disposition in Ted Talk. TED Talks involve interaction between the speaker and the audience. The key principle is to remember that the speaker's job is to give to the audience, not take from them. Here the communicative intention of the speaker is to exercise communicative influence on the audience to disperse a certain idea. However, before a certain idea can be disseminated, the speaker needs to convince the audience of its rationality. To this end, the speaker makes extensive use of discursive strategies.

Eloquence in Ted Talk. It is built on the tone of the voice; the way the speaker handles his words; the emotional colouring of sentences; pauses, rhythm and pace, word emphasis, etc. Their story or message sparks a reaction with the audience. In this way, they create a vocal landscape filled with colour. By using intonation and emphasis, the speaker directs the listeners' attention to the big ideas. The more sophisticated the speaker's vocabulary, the more options the speaker has to communicate his desired message. An eloquent speaker chooses the words with care, understands the power of words.

Delivery in Ted Talks deals with the process of effective using paralanguage and body language. The body language of effective Ted Talks speakers is neutral, open, defined, and strong.

Researching Ted Talks, we paid attention to storytelling as a rhetoric strategy.

The importance of storytelling as a rhetoric strategy in Ted Talk speeches is undeniable. Storytelling can be defined as a structured narrative account of real and imagined events that are widely used in public speaking as a means for sharing, interpreting and offering the content of the story to the listeners [13]. The pragmatic function of storytelling is to grab the audience's attention and set up an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect with listeners. Storytelling is used as a rhetoric strategy for a variety of pragmatic purposes which include: make statistical data, graphics and facts more vivid and interesting; relieving tension; making important points of the presentation memorable; establishing an emotional connection with the particular audience; emphasizing the message; introduce controversial issues; encourage

thinking; shape peoples' beliefs; raise the energy level of the group; motivate people to act [6].

The best stories involve true facts from speakers' lives, self-effacing humorous facts about past mistakes, challenges and failures, success stories of people and the history of business. Effective stories are: relevant to the subject; simple and short; eliminating inconsequential detail; the plot of the story involves the lesson.

In Ted Talk *The Power Of Vulnerability* [3] there are myriads of reasons why this speech is connected with so many people. Brene's ability as a 'storyteller' is one of them. Her storytelling rhetoric strategy embraces her following communicative actions:

1) She starts the talk with a story, and performs so in a simple and conversational way clear to anyone... "So, I'll start with this... a couple of years ago..."

2) The speaker involves dialogue with the public by replaying some parts of the talk into the scenario. It is light and humorous; it still has a clear point. That is a key rhetoric element that introduces the speaker as an effective 'researcher-storyteller'.

3) The speaker introduces herself and her speaking role to us by going back in time professionally and picking another relevant story to set an appropriate communicative context in a rather human and funny way. Again, she does it so simply and effectively with the following: "This is where my story starts..."

4) She proceeds to share the trajectory of her professional career and research through personal stories which are chosen for relevance and shared conversationally. For instance, the first meeting with her therapist, Dianna, is brought to life through the dialogue and accompanying facial expressions and reactions. We are engaged in human terms, and with humour. Brene pauses and acknowledges...

"...as you know... it's not going to turn out well..."

Humour is another rhetoric strategy.

Ted Talk speakers use humour to connect, engage and entertain their audiences.

When used properly, humour is a powerful tool in any speaker's arsenal and it can have tremendous pragmatic benefits: 1. It creates a bond with the audience. A speaker who uses humour well comes across as more human, more likeable [10]. Humour puts an audience at ease and makes people more receptive to your ideas. 2. It energizes people and keeps them engaged. It is observed when we laugh, our heart rate increases and that keeps us stimulated and alert. 3. It can provide emotional relief for the audience. Many talks are serious and many talks are emotionally challenging for an audience. Well-placed humour can give your audience some much-needed relief in an otherwise serious talk. 4. It helps the audience remember the speaker's

points. Laughter improves memory and cognitive function. This helps the audience remember ideas in the talk. 5. It leaves a good impression of the speaker on the audience.

People will forget what is said, people will forget what was done, but people will never forget how a speaker made them feel.

Thus, using humour in Ted Talks can: 1. Build rapport with the audience, especially in the initial stages of the speech. 2. Emphasize the points to be remembered by the audience. 3. Keep the audience engaged. 4. Let the audience see the human side of the speaker. 5. Lighten up heavier subject matter. 6. Put the audience at ease [11].

Brene Brown began her presentation with a short anecdote: A couple of years ago, an event planner called me because I was going to do a speaking event. She said, "I'm really struggling with how to write about you on the little flier." And I thought, "Well, what's the struggle?" And she said, "Well, I saw you speak, and I'm going to call you a researcher but I'm afraid if I call you a researcher, no one will come because they'll think you're boring and irrelevant." And I was like, "Okay." And she said, "But the thing I liked about your talk is you're a storyteller. So, I think what I'll do is just call you a storyteller."

Another example of Brene's usage of humour is: If there's anyone who wants their life to look like this, it would be me, but it doesn't work. Because what we do is we take fat from our butts and put it in our cheeks. Which just, I hope in 100 years, people will look back and go, "Wow."

Eventually, we would like to accentuate on nonverbal aspects of communicative behaviour of Ted Talk speakers:

1. Addressing the audience as if they are having a casual-informative conversation with each person.

2. Nonverbal actions are:

a) simple smile makes the audience feel more comfortable and at ease;

b) steps towards the audience in case to encourage or persuade the audience;

c) making eye contact while speaking to make sure that the audience is involved and engaged;

d) using hand gestures that emphasize the words, keeping the audience's attention by varying their gestures, incorporating the head, arms and hands;

e) using positive gestures to sway the audience;

f) their voice holds power and can project;

g) using slow and measured breathing to pace the speech;

h) pausing to emphasize key points.

Therefore, when it comes to rhetoric, it's not just a figure of speech, but a valuable tool that can

allow the person to assess the situation and deal with it accordingly to produce a pragmatic effect on the audience.

### Conclusions

The research emphasizes the significance of rhetoric strategies used by Ted Talk public speakers to gain a pragmatic effect. TED Talks is defined as a hybrid genre that incorporates several other genres, such as lectures by university professors, newspaper articles, conference presentations, scientific television programmes, thus combining different semiotic models, namely conversation, writing, video and sound [9]. Using the methods of rhetorical we have achieved the set objective of

the research. Rhetorical strategies used by Ted Talk speakers are to actualise them as speech person. These strategies help them to express themselves, structure their thoughts and influence the audience.

The research has revealed the characteristics of TED speeches (conciseness; structural and logical reasoning, transparency, clarity; high degree of authority and credibility; persuasiveness). However, three basic parts of persuasion in Ted Talk speeches have been discovered: ethos (credibility of the speaker); logos (the logic behind any drawn conclusions); pathos (as an emotional appeal). The main rhetorical strategies under the study used by Ted Talk speakers are storytelling, humour, etc.

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## **TED TALK ЯК ОБ'ЄКТ РИТОРИЧНОГО ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ**

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*Метою цієї статті постає використання риторичних стратегій у презентаціях Ted Talk. Стаття також передбачає дослідження того аспекту яким чином риторичні стратегії сприяють створенню мовленнєвого ефекту з боку адресанта на адресата. Риторичні стратегії визначаються як механізми, що застосовуються через вербальне та невербальне оформлення під час певного комунікативного акту, що спонукає до дії та переконує аудиторію. Ці вербальні та невербальні засоби активно застосовуються мовцями Ted Talk задля того, щоб ефективно управляти думкою аудиторії. Актуальність дослідження зумовлено сучасним розумінням комунікації як такого процесу, що заряджає інших, формує міжособистісні зв'язки, впливає на прийняття рішень, мотивує на позитивні зміни і змінює життя людей на краще. Невміння обирати відповідні вербальні та невербальні засоби для конкретної аудиторії робить комунікацію майже неможливою. Сторітеллінг і гумор розглядаються у цьому дослідженні як основні риторичні стратегії, що вдало використовуються Ted Talk мовцями. Таким чином, дослідження фокусує увагу, по-перше, на риторичні, що досліджує мову як стратегічну відповідь на комунікативну ситуацію, і, по-друге, на риторичні як на використанні мови у символічних засобах, що сприяє кооперації мовців, які реагують на ці символічні засоби. У центрі нашого риторичного аналізу перебуває виступ Brene Brown на Ted Talk під назвою *The Power Of Vulnerability* (Сила Вразливості). Здійснюючи риторичний аналіз Ted Talk промови, такі дослідницькі кроки були виконані нами: визначення риторичної ситуації та мети; ідентифікація та розуміння риторики як тієї наукової рамки, згідно якої мовці інформують та переконують свою аудиторію; аналіз того, як мовці використовують цілий спектр риторичних стратегій і жанр Ted Talk задля того, щоб здійснити вплив на свою аудиторію; демонстрація розуміння відношень: інтенція, аудиторія, та жанр.*

***Ключові слова:** риторика, стратегія, сторітеллінг, гумор, мовлення, етос, логос, патос.*