COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS USED BY TED TALK SPEAKERS TO ATTRACT THEIR AUDIENCES

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Abstract

TED stands for Technology, Entertainment, and Design. It is a global set of conferences that has now broadened its focus to include talks on many scientific, cultural, and academic topics (ted.com). This research aimed to identify the kinds of communicative functions used by speakers in TED Talks and which communicative functions are used the most by the speakers to attract their audiences. There were two basic data involved in this study. The first data were TED Talks audio-visual recordings. There were six videos used in this study. The second data was the transcript of the TED Talks. This research adopted the purposive sampling method. The analysis of the functional communicative profile has shown that some communicative functions are used in the same way by TED Talk speakers. Some other functions are more frequently used than others. The most frequently used were the heuristic communicative function and interactional communicative function. This study is expected to enrich the knowledge of teachers and practitioners whose daily lives are close to public speaking and better understand what makes certain public talks and speeches succeeded to captivate their viewers.

Keywords: communicative functions, speech, language

INTRODUCTION

Language at its most basic function is to communicate. Words provide information about social processes—who has more status, whether a group is working well together, if someone is being deceptive, and the quality of a close relationship. Word choice provides information about a person's perception (Semin & Fiedler, 1988).

People occupy most of their daily life to communicate with others for various purposes such as sharing information, ideas, knowledge, and so forth. Steward and Cash (1978 in Baird 1981:1) claim that communication is an activity in which people engage the most often from the moment they are born until the instant they die. In a sense, communication is constantly changing, a dynamic function involving exchange and interaction. To involve in such interaction, people must improve and optimize their communication repertoire to make the communication itself effective and useful.

This study is related to the communicative functions used in the speeches of TED Talk speakers. These are the reasons which become the reasons for choosing the topic: Relevant with the Discourse Studies (approaches to analyze written, vocal, or sign language use), Semantics (the study of meaning that is used for understanding human expression through language), and Pragmatics (the study of ways in which context contributes to meaning). This study aimed to take a look closer at what makes certain public talks and speeches succeeded to captivate their viewers.

Traditionally, teachers have encouraged students to engage with and interpret literature— novels, poems, short stories, and plays. However, it often occurs that the spoken word is left unanalyzed, even though the spoken word has the potential to alter our space just as much as the written. Based on this consideration, two problems can be formulated in this study. They are: What kinds of communicative functions are used by speakers in TED Talks? and which communicative function do the speakers use most to attract their audiences?

The final result of the study is expected to give theoretical, pedagogical, and practical implications. Theoretically, it will give a better understanding of communicative functions in public talk and speeches. Pedagogically, the final result of the study will enrich and enhance the knowledge of public speeches and their influence.

As mankind is now globally interconnected by technology, a speech can reach a larger audience than it ever did in all of human history, especially with the internet. Meanwhile, practically, it will give a contribution to the readers or students, particularly those who are interested in researching public speeches to find the contributive forces of what makes a good public speaker.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The speech analysis and communicative function have been investigated by several researchers previously. The first study investigating language, meaning, context, and functional communication was by Elizabeth Armstrong (2010). Her study addresses the kinds of issues that are involved in functional communication and specifically addresses the role of language in this endeavor. It aims to highlight language as a set of meaning-making resources rather than as a set of syntactic/semantic constructs that exist outside of the communicator's everyday environment, that have to be mastered before being put into place, and that exist regardless of specific contexts. In the 1970s, Audrey Holland first emphasized the importance of functional communication rather than linguistic accuracy for individuals with aphasia, noting that they could often communicate better than they could talk. Her approach inspired many to explore

why and how this could be so, and to look for avenues that tapped everyday communication skills, rather than the person with aphasia's performance on decontextualized language tests.

The strength of this study is its important contribution to the investigation that discusses language's role in social life in which speakers not only convey information to each other but maintain social relationships through communication. A taxonomy of the different kinds of social meanings that speakers use to communicate is proposed for use in aphasia research, based on the work of Halliday (1994) - those related to conveying ideas and experiences (e.g., vocabulary related to particular experiences, topics), those related to interpersonal relationships (e.g., speech acts, evaluative language devices, exchange structure), and those related to maintaining continuity and coherence across the speaker's discourse (e.g., cohesion). In addition, the systematic relationship existing between language and context and its clinical implications are explored.

Looking at the evaluation above the next study on communicative function must examine all of these areas to gain a comprehensive picture of functional communication. Once again, however, it is recommended that studies be conducted within a theoretical construct of context so that systematic and integrated analyses can add to our knowledge of functional communication.

My study fills in the gap of this reviewed study by conducting an in-depth analysis of communicative function. My research will take into account one of the most important points that make a speech appealing to its viewers, the communicative function in its expressions.

The second study from Wong Ngan Ling (2011), entitled Communicative Functions and Meanings of Silence: An Analysis of Cross-Cultural Views, aims to provide some clues on how silence plays a communicative role in our daily life, how often people use silence to communicate with each other, and how it works in different areas of human communication in various cross-cultural contexts. In addition, it is to find out what the cultural differences in attitudes are concerning silence in communication. As cultural attitude plays a marked role in interpreting and assessing what has been said and been left unsaid, misjudging someone's use of silence can take place in many contexts and on many levels. Misunderstanding based on the differences between people in their use or understanding of particular concepts (for example, the degree of tolerance of silence) could cause an unwanted communication breakdown. To avoid these types of misinterpretation, or to enhance better interpersonal Communicative Functions and Meanings of Silence and intercultural communication, while improving the quality of communication, a greater awareness of the multitude of silence meanings and serious

consideration of the varied communicative functions in various social-cultural contexts should be promoted. By decoding the positive facilitative uses or negative-inhibitive functions played by silence in different cultural contexts, not only could someone's silence be interpreted more correctly in various situations, which would help to minimize misunderstanding, but also a better mutual understanding among different cultures could be promoted, assisting smoother inter-cultural communication between Japan and other countries, perhaps, particularly those of the West.

This study is good at pointing out the functions and meanings played by silence in different social contexts across a sample of 82 British, 54 Japanese, and 30 other respondents in a questionnaire survey aimed at attaining a broader viewpoint and greater awareness of silence in interpersonal communication. The main objective of this research is to discover whether in a different cultural context people use silence as a means of conveying messages, and if this is correct, what the functions of silence are, and to what extent and in what way they are different or similar across cultures. This could be achieved by focusing on European society, specifically the British, which shares a certain insularity as an 'island' nation, with Japan. Are the communicative functions performed by silence unique to each culture? Does the meaning of silence change when the situations vary? Answering such questions is another objective of this survey.

However, delving further into whether silence is used as a means of communication in different contexts and situations, surprisingly, all three groups of people demonstrate they had the experience of using silence to convey feelings and thoughts. Thus, it can be inferred that many of them use silence as a means of communication without any conscious intention.

Therefore it is necessary to scrutiny further what communicative function we can find if the objects are thematic speeches that can be accessed online and viewed around the globe. To fill in this viewed study, this study attempted to look into what is inside the talks' scripts.

Halliday (1994) identifies seven communicative functions that language has for human use. For Halliday, humans since they were children are motivated to develop language because it serves certain purposes or functions to them. There are seven communicative functions according to Halliday. The first four functions help humans to satisfy physical, emotional, and social needs. The next three functions help humans to come to terms with their environment.

The following are those seven communicative functions of language according to Halliday:

Table 1. Seven Communicative Functions According to Haliday

No	Communicative Functions	Abbreviation	Explanation
Instrumental: when language is used to express needs			
	Protest	PR	Acts or utterances are used to interrupt an action. Include opposing resistance to the action of others and rejecting offered object.
	Exclamatory	EX	Acts or utterances expressing an emotional reaction to an event or situation. Including expressions of surprise, pleasure, frustration, and contentment.
	Social Routine Request	SRR	Acts or utterances that initiate or continue a social interaction play. It is a specific kind of action request involving interaction.
	Performative	PE	Acts or utterances are used in familiar action schemes applied to objects.
	Play	P	Acts involving organized activity.
Regulatory: when language is used to tell others what to do			
	Object Request	OR	Acts or utterances are used to request a concrete desired object.
	Action Request	AR	Acts or utterances used to request that the other act (includes a request for help).
	Cforsent Request	CR	Acts or utterances are used to request permission to perform an action.
	Self Regulatory	SR	Utterances are used to verbally control owns actions.
Interactional functions: here, language is used to make contact with others and form relationships			

	Comment	C	Acts or utterances are used to direct attention to an object or event. Include pointing, showing, describing, and informing.
	Labelling	L	Acts or utterances are used to receive attention on an object or event by referent identification.
	Joint Play	JP	Organized activity shared between speakers and interlocutor/audience.
	Recognition of other	RO	Acts or utterances are used to obtain the attention of others or to indicate the recognition of their presence. Includes calling, compliment, toxic and politeness markers.
Personal functions: this is the use of language to express feelings, opinions, and individual identity			
	Showing Off	SO	Acts or utterances are used to attract attention to the self.
	Reactive	RE	Utterances produce while examining or interacting with someone.
	Non-focused	NF	Acts or utterances produce although the subject's attention is not focused on any person.
Heuristic functions: when language is used to gain knowledge about the environment or what is happening around			
	Information	IR	Acts or utterances are used to request information about an object or an event. Include WH-questions and other utterances with interrogative prosodic contour.
	Exploratory	X	Acts involving activities of investigating a determined object.
Imaginative function: here, language is used to tell stories and jokes and to create an imaginary environment			

	Narrative	NA	Utterances aim to narrate real or imaginary stories
Representational: the use of language to convey facts and information			
	Narrative	NA	Utterances aim to narrate facts to support an explanation/opinion including research studies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To reach the objective of this study, which was to identify the communicative functions used in the talks of TED speakers, qualitative research was conducted. This kind of research does not focus on numerals or statistics but it gives an in-depth analysis of the content of the speeches. Therefore, many stretches of words were employed to analyze, describe, interpret, and explain it.

Scientists and linguists have applied content analysis across a diverse set of texts. According to Cohen (2007: 474-475), the population refers not only to people but also, and mainly, to the domain of the analysis such as newspapers, programs, interview transcripts, textbooks, conversations, examination scripts, and so on. The first data were TED Talk audio-visual recordings. The data were obtained by downloading them from TED's official channels. There were six audio-visual recordings used in this study. They have received various ranges of viewers from thousands to millions. All TED Talk speakers were given an equal amount of time to deliver their speech, which is 18 minutes. Some speakers made use of all the allocated time, some did not. The speakers came from various backgrounds, two speakers talked about the business world setting, two speakers talked about art, and the other two discussed topics related to science/health world.

This study is mainly about conducting vigilant scrutiny of the data, which are the transcript of the selected TED Talks. The core of such investigation was putting on the identification, at the next phases, on the careful evaluation of the script of the talks on their communicative functions. These chores, which consist of transcribing, identifying, classifying, and analyzing were therefore accomplished by applying the content analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The following is the finding regarding the identification and the overall interpretation of each item in the form of the analysis of a communicative function that is presented in sequential order. Additionally, a number indicator that refers to the lines is also displayed in the quotations to enable fast access to the original data there.

Table 2. Communicative Function Analysis Results

Theory / Halliday (1)	Instrumental					Regulatory				Interactional				Personal			Heuristic		Imaginativ	Representa
Fernandes (2)	PR	EX	SRR	PE	P	OR	AR	CR	SR	C	L	JP	RO	SO	RE	NF	IR	XP	NA	NA
Sheryl Sandberg		4	1	2			7			8			1	8			11	6	6	6
Sarah Kay				1			2			3			2	7				3	5	1
Kelly McGonigal				3			2			2	1	1	1	1			4	4		5
Chade Meng Tan		3		2			7			7			1	6			12	12		4
Isabel Behncke		2		1			2			6			2				2	3		3
Alex Laskey				1		1	5			6			1	1			7	3	2	7
Subtotal		9	1	10		1	25			32	1	1	8	23			36	31	13	26
Total	20					26				41				23			67		13	26

From the figure above we can see that in her TED Talk, Sheryl Sandberg employs all seven communicative functions throughout her talk. There are 7 action requests in the

regulatory communicative function; 11 pieces of information and 6 exploratories in the heuristic communicative function; 4 exclamatory, 1 social routine request, and 2 performatives in the instrumental communicative function; 8 comments and 1 recognition of others in the interactional communicative function; 8 show-offs in the personal communicative function; 6 narratives of imaginative communicative function and 6 narratives of representational communicative function.

The second talk is from Sarah Kay, she employs all seven communicative functions throughout her talk. There are 2 action requests in the regulatory communicative function; 3 exploratories in the heuristic communicative function; 1 performative in the instrumental communicative function; 3 comments and 2 recognition of others in the interactional communicative function; 7 show-offs in the personal communicative function; 5 narratives of imaginative communicative function and 1 narrative of representational communicative function.

The third talk is from Kelly Mc Gonigal who employs six out of seven communicative functions throughout her talk. There are 2 action requests in the regulatory communicative function; 4 information and 4 exploratories in the heuristic communicative function; 3 performatives in the instrumental communicative function; 2 comments, 1 joint play, and 1 recognition of others in the interactional communicative function; 1 showing off in the personal communicative function; and 5 narratives of representational communicative function.

The fourth talk is from Chade Meng Tan who employs six out of seven communicative functions throughout her talk. There are 7 action requests in the regulatory communicative function; 12 pieces of information and 12 exploratories in the heuristic communicative function; 3 exclamatory and 2 performatives in the instrumental communicative function; 7 comments and 1 recognition of others in the interactional communicative function; 6 show-offs in the personal communicative function; and 4 narratives of representational communicative function.

The sixth talk is from Isabel Behncke who employs five out of seven communicative functions throughout her talk. There are 2 action requests in the regulatory communicative function; 2 pieces of information and 3 exploratories in the heuristic communicative function; 2 exclamatory and 1 performative in the instrumental communicative function; 6 comments and 2 recognition of others in the interactional communicative function; and 3 narratives of representational communicative function.

And the last talk is from Alex Laskey, where he employs all seven communicative functions throughout his talk. There are 1 object request and 5 action requests in the regulatory communicative function; 7 pieces of information and 3 exploratories in the heuristic communicative function; 1 performative in the instrumental communicative function; 6 comments and 1 recognition of others in the interactional communicative function; 1 show-off in the personal communicative function; 2 narratives of imaginative communicative function and 7 narratives of representational communicative function.

Discussion

The analysis of the functional communicative profile has shown that some communicative functions are used in the same way by TED Talk speakers, while some other functions are more frequently used. Considering the similarity of the use of communicative functions it can be observed that there is a kind of communicative balance in the TED Talk speeches. The speakers tend to adapt his/her communication to the audiences/viewers, producing a more symmetric interaction (Fernandes, 2003) and sharing the audience's attention focus (Siller and Sigman, 2002).

Based on the research findings, the kind of communicative function which appears the most is a heuristic communicative function with 67 appearances. The heuristic communicative function consists of informative and exploratory. This means that while giving their talks, the speakers very often ask the audience to join the activity of discussing specific subject matters (health, entertainment, psychology, etc.) through various kinds of informative means such as asking for reasonings, asking for a method, asking for capability, asking for identity, asking for information, irony, rhetorical interrogation, asking for a cause, looking for possibility, prediction, asking for a quantity, etc. Other than that, the speakers also invest their talk time to do exploration on the subject being talked about through several exploratory means such as making an opinion, doing a report, making an observation, making a hypothesis, procedure, and even through a long statement.

This heuristic communicative function provides time for both the speaker and the audience to process the information and have a deeper discussion on it. Although sometimes the questions being asked as an informative means are rhetorical, which means that they do not need answers, this effort still triggers the revelation of more information in the talks to come out.

While looking at the quantity of appearance, heuristic communicative functions make the most quantity, timewise speaking, there is one phenomenon. That is the fact that all speakers

spend a significant amount of their speech span to bring about narratives. Although the narratives do not appear as much as the heuristic communicative function, once it appears, the speakers use quite long and many sentences to narrate that. And those narratives serve as imaginative communicative functions and representational communicative functions.

This observation shows the power of having the ability to narrate something, be it facts or an imaginative story. All speakers are experts in their fields and equipped with in-depth analysis of facts and research. Translating complex issues, goals, and ideas into good stories can be daunting. Everyone loves a good story. That's why stories are so effective for engaging an audience and inspiring action (Goodman, 2014). Telling stories is what makes us human. Stories ignite our imagination and let us leap over cultural walls and cross the barriers of time. They bring us to other worlds and let us explore other lives and yet, at the same time, give us a better understanding of our own time, place, and emotions.

The speakers also gave jokes within the narratives that they are presenting. We can see this by observing the transcript text and counting how many times they draw laughter out of their audience. Andrew Lanton (2012), the filmmaker behind Wall-E and Toy Story, explains why jokes have power — because they build a pointed story, heading toward a punch line.

There is rapid growth in the understanding and use of life stories and other narrative approaches in the mid-20th century. Why did narrative inquiries become popular in the field of psychology? And why did so many psychologists become so interested in the narrative construction of reality? Indeed, a narrative turn took place, with historians leading the way (Lyons, 2007, p. 604).

There was a movement started by a cognitive psychologist, Jerome Bruner who acknowledged the importance of personal truth from the subjective point of view. He illustrated in his studies that personal meaning (and reality) is constructed during the making and telling of one's narratives. It is through stories that tell what we have experienced, and "that stories are our way of organizing, interpreting and creating meaning from our experiences while maintaining a sense of continuity through it all" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 232). According to Connelly and Clandinin's (1994) view, stories or narratives are "the closest we can come to experience" (p. 415), and they call their study of experience narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000/2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).

However, with the same time allocation given to them, they manage their usage of time differently. Some decided to use most of it, but some only use less than half of the time allocation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study is expected to enrich the knowledge of teachers and practitioners whose daily lives are close to public speaking either for themselves or for their students. Especially for teachers and coaches who train in various kinds of English spoken word competitions such as English debate clubs, speech contests, story retelling, drama, English indie movies, etc., It is important for teachers and coaches, to take a look closer at what makes certain public talks and speeches succeeded to captivate their viewers.

Future studies need to investigate the possibilities that there are other factors influencing the number of people who are interested in thematic speeches, especially TED Talks. Aside from their communicative function contents, these speeches might have similarities and differences as well in terms of trending issues, specific field breakthroughs, and subject matters. Therefore there will be more comprehensive studies and research as references for speech analysis in general, specifically in communicative function.

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