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STORYTELLING IN TED TALKS

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Modern Languages
The University of Mississippi

by

IULIIA RYCHKOVA

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I explore the role of storytelling in the most-viewed TED Talks, which are up to eighteen-minute speeches on various topics performed at conferences for non-experts and also accessible on the internet. The study aims to identify common narrative structural patterns and functions in the sampled talks. The ten selected TED Talks are transcribed, coded, and analyzed using qualitative data analysis software. The qualitative interpretation of story structure is based on Labov's diamond-shape model (1972), while Propp's narratemes (1928) are used to investigate the common plot development patterns in the sampled TED Talks. The features of the personal narratives are analyzed based on Ochs and Capps' narrative dimensions (2001).

The analysis revealed that the narratives present in all the sampled talks have a different degree of embeddedness in the TED Talk. The two common structural patterns of the narratives used in a TED Talk are 'backbone' narratives that serve as a spine, and relatively short embedded narratives. The most common scenario based on Propp's narratemes has been identified as the following: the speaker is the protagonist who leaves on a mission (answer the research questions), faces challenges to prove their heroic qualities (such as professional skills, creative thinking, and perseverance), responds to the challenges faced, finds the answer to the research question, and, finally, often transforms personally and professionally. The stories within the sampled TED Talks perform the following functions: a framework of a talk (mainly TED Talks with a backbone structure), a self-introduction and/or a brief introduction to the topic, an illustration to strengthen a proposed argument that can precede or follow the thesis statement, or a joke. The findings demonstrate that TED Talks, while sharing comparable properties of

academic discourse, represent a quasi-academic discourse by integrating more narrative elements and linguistic features in the talk.

Key words: storytelling, narrative, TED Talk, quasi-academic discourse, public speaking

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

- (1.0) Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in silence by tenth of seconds, so (7.1) is a pause of 7 seconds and one-tenth of a second.
- (.) A dot in parentheses indicates a tiny 'gap' within or between utterances.
- Word* Italics indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude;
- :: Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound, proportional to the number of colons.
- A dash indicates a cut-off or a self-interruption.
- . A period indicates a stopping fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence.
- , A comma indicates a continuing intonation, like when you are reading items from a list, not necessarily a clause boundary.
- ? A question mark indicates a rising intonation, not necessarily a question.
- ,? The combined question mark/comma indicates a stronger rise than a comma but weaker than a question mark.
- ↑↓ Arrows indicate marked shifts into higher or lower pitch in the utterance-part immediately following the arrow.
- WORD Uppercase indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
- ° Utterances or utterance parts bracketed by degree signs are relatively quieter than the surrounding talk.
- > < The combination of “more than” and “less than” symbols indicates that the talk between them is compressed or rushed.

- < > In the reverse order, they indicate that a stretch of talk is markedly slower.
- () Empty parentheses indicate the transcriber's inability to hear what was said.
- (()) Double parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions rather than, or in addition to, transcriptions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Storytelling, a tool for transferring knowledge, experience and ideas, has become a crucial aspect of human communication. It appears in numerous oral and written genres, such as oral memoirs, traditional folk tales, lectures, therapeutic interviews, as well as in a form of narratives embedded into short stories, which sometimes consist of no more than a clause or two, deeply embedded in the conversation (Ochs & Capps, 2001).

A relatively new genre that also aims to disseminate knowledge is the TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) Talk, which are three- to eighteen-minute speeches on various topics. The TED Talks genre emerged as a hybrid of a sales pitch, educational communication, and memoir (Ludewig, 2017) and now shares “ideas worth spreading” on various topics at conferences throughout the world and online. The TED Talk genre represents a quasi-academic genre and gives insights on how to adapt research findings for a non-expert audience. TED Talk speakers often enrich their talks with narratives in the form of an anecdotal story or joke to achieve various goals.

The purpose of this study is to examine narratives in TED Talks according to their functions and usage to understand what has made narratives an essential element of the TED Talk genre. Thus, this investigation is intended to provide answers to the following research questions: (1) Does every speaker in the sampled TED Talks use storytelling in their speech? (2) What are the main structural types of narratives used in the present corpus? (3) Is there a structural pattern of an embedded story in the sampled TED Talks? (4) What are the most

common plot elements in a TED Talk story in the present corpus? (5) What functions do the narratives serve in the sampled TED Talks?

The narrative analysis of the TED Talks is based on a selection of 10 most viewed talks according to the official TED website. All the talks are transcribed, coded, and analyzed using Labov's diamond-shape narrative model, Propp's narrative functions, and Ochs and Capps' narrative dimensions. The findings of this study demonstrate that all the speakers in the sampled TED Talks used storytelling in their performances. However, the form and function of the stories varied within a speech. It was found that the narratives had a different degree of embeddedness in the TED Talk.

The present thesis consists of six chapters which are Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, and References. In the Introduction, I provide a brief description of the topics that are discussed in the research and identify my research questions and expectations. In Chapter Two 'Literature Review', I provide a theoretical background of the nature of narrative, narratives in public speeches, and TED Talk as a new genre and a tool for knowledge dissemination. I also identify any gaps in the literature that I attempted to fill with my study.

Chapter Three 'Methodology' describes the methods that were used for collecting and analyzing the data, as well as the source of the corpus, and participants in the present research. Chapter Four 'Results' provides the results of my narrative analysis and includes tables, and figures illustrating the data. It has five sections: 'Labov's diamond-shape model analysis of the narratives in a TED Talk', 'Propp's functions in a TED Talk', 'Ochs & Capps' narrative dimensions in a TED Talk', 'Interaction of the embedded stories', 'Functions of the embedded narratives in a TED Talk'. In Chapter Five 'Discussion', I analyze the collected data and discuss

the findings in connection with the literature review. I also discuss whether the research was able to fill the gaps and answer the research questions that were identified earlier. Chapter Six 'Conclusion' provides a brief summary of the study and the findings. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Understanding narrative

A narrative may be defined as a text that recapitulates connected series of events, either real or fictional, in a temporal manner. Prince (1982) defines narrative broadly as “the representation of at least two real or fictive events or situations in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the others” (p. 4). According to Labov and Waletzky (Labov, 1997), narrative is the choice of a specific linguistic technique to report past events. In this approach to the narrative, Labov (1972) also mentions embedded narratives, which he defines as minimal narrative clauses, i.e., a sequence of two clauses which are temporally ordered. Ochs & Capps (2001) also suggest that narratives are often compressed into short stories, which sometimes consist of no more than a clause or two, and are deeply embedded in the conversation. These short stories about small incidents that may or may not have actually happened are mentioned in order to back up or elaborate on an argumentative point in an ongoing speech (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). In the present study, the terms ‘a narrative’ and ‘a story’ are used interchangeably.

Narratives in academic and quasi-academic genres are widely used in various settings, for example, public speeches, conference presentations, classrooms, meetings, etc. (e.g., Dyer & Keller-Cohen, 2000; Yu-Chih, 2008) and have been a subject of close interest for over a century now (e.g., Bruner, 1986; Labov & Fanshel, 1977; Prince, 1982; Propp, 1928). Dyer and Keller-

Cohen (2000) analyzed narratives embedded in academic lectures, in which the lecturers spoke about their expertise in solving a problem specific to their field. Their findings demonstrate that narratives in academic discourse are constructed by means of not only professional but also personal identities. Schiffrin (2009) suggests reexamining the canonical Labovian interpretation of personal-experience narratives through the lens of the structure and function, and view narratives as a blend of genres evoking place, personal identity in complex coordinates of time and space, and its interactions with the other parts of a larger story.

The concept of narratives seems to be unified, shared by people with widely different cultural backgrounds. According to Prince (1982), people often identify the same given sets of symbols as narratives and consider others as non-narratives, and they often tell narratives that are very similar. For example, Russian and North American Indian folktales were shown to have many features in common. Bruner (1986) points out that storytelling is a way for humans to translate their individual private experience of understanding into a public culturally negotiated form.

Narratology has been working towards distinguishing a comprehensive storytelling structure and functions of narrative events (e.g., Propp, 1928; Labov, 1972; Ochs, 1994; Polanyi, 1981). Vladimir Propp started narratological analysis in the 1920s by examining the basic structural elements of 100 Russian folk tales to identify their simplest structural units (Propp, 1928). Propp showed that a small set of 31 elements (or ‘functions’) could generate the whole corpus of Russian folktales: absention, interdiction, violation, reconnaissance, delivery, trickery, complicity, villainy, lack, mediation/the connective incident, beginning contraction, departure, the first function of the donor, the hero’s reaction, provision or receipt of a magical agent, spatial transition between two kingdoms / guidance, struggle, branding / marking, victory,

resolution, return, pursuit / chase, rescue, unrecognized arrival, unfounded claims, difficult task, solution, recognition, exposure, transfiguration, punishment, and wedding / reward. While not all stories contain all of Propp's narratemes, many modern books and movies fit nicely into Propp's categories.

Another approach to parse a story is the canonical Labovian narrative analysis. In his research essay "The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax," Labov (1972) states that oral narrative normally has a six-part structure, known as diamond-shaped model which includes: abstract (the introductory part of the story), orientation (information about the setting of the story), complicating action (the actual events of the narrative), resolution (the conclusion), evaluation (the reason the story is being told), and coda (the relevance of the story to every-day life). The first five parts of this structure follow each other in a chain sequence, but the evaluation is considered to be a secondary structure so it may be found in various forms and can be placed at any part of the narrative. The coda does not always have to be present or it may be present without being explicitly stated.

Similarly, Ochs and Capps (2001) claim that the structure that distinguishes narrative is sequence of the following discourse components: description, chronology, evaluation, and explanation. In this plot configuration, settings are built from descriptions; the plot unfolds in a linear or more complex chronology; there is an overarching explanation of why this particular event happened at a particular point of the narrative; and finally, the narrative ends with a moral and aesthetic evaluation of actions, emotions, thoughts, etc.

Ochs and Capps (2001) also suggest a different approach to examining narratives that do not focus on the distinctive features per se, but identify narrative dimensions that account for the ways in which narratives of personal experience are realized. Each of these dimensions –

tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance – can be manifested through binary possibilities presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Narrative dimensions and possibilities

Dimensions	Possibilities
Tellership	Whether the story is told by a single teller, or multiple tellers
Tellability	The value of a story as highly worth telling, or seemingly irrelevant
Embeddedness	The extent to which a story can be detached from or embedded in its context
Linearity	The structural qualities of a story as closed, temporal sequence, or open-ended and multi-linear
Moral stance	The narrator's attitude towards reported events, which may be certain or fluctuating

Cited from Page 2005:333, adapted from Ochs and Capps 2001:20.

Stories can be identified in the speech with certain linguistic features. Biber (1988) associates the following features with the ‘narrative style’: verbs in the past tense and perfect aspect, third person pronouns, verbs of communication (for example, tell, speak, report, admit), present participial clauses, synthetic negation, infrequent occurrence of present tense verbs and attributive adjectives, deictic forms to narratives (for instance, ‘there’, ‘then’, ‘they’, etc.). Grieve et al. (2011) associate narratives with first person pronouns, activity verbs, and the progressive aspect. They also mention adverbial subordinators with a temporal meaning (for example, ‘since’, ‘while’) as typical markers of narration. Bauman (1986) argues that it is common for narrative discourse to represent others’ words in various ways by directly quoting another, indirectly reporting what another said, or speaking in a way that sounds like a recognizable other. Mauranen (2013) illustrates how the speaker presents issues through the lens of his/her own intellectual or professional development by means of first-person pronouns and puts himself/herself as the narrator and the experiencer in a story. Thus, the story represents a frame to the topic or a pathway into the experienced issues rather than a topic itself. For instance, the speaker tells that he/she has been concerned with the topic of his/her presentation, thus

indicating its relevance to himself/herself and to his/her audience. The collection of elements like these serves as identifiers of narrative style and thus can be used to recognize narrative elements in TED Talks as well (see below for a description of TED Talks).

Although many speakers use first-person narration, where the protagonist is either “me” as an individual or “us” as a group, in academic and quasi-academic discourse, it is also common to hear third-person narrations. Interestingly, any social institution can be a protagonist, for instance, administrative and educational entities, political movements, etc. According to Mauranen (2013), while such entities could be abstract, they are attributed certain human properties, for instance, they make decisions, argue, attempt, want, develop, introduce, abandon things (for example, Red Cross decided to open new centers in order to make a big difference to the lives of others).

2.2 Narratives in public speeches

The literature suggests that there is no single point of view on the role of narratives in academic and quasi-academic contexts. Thompson (2002) stresses the transitional status of the conference presentation between the actual research process and the finished product, the research article. Mauranen (2013) states that narratives are not extinct in the academic genre, but they have found new niches, for instance, texts for wider audiences. The TED Talk as a quasi-academic genre now plays the role of a knowledge dissemination tool and can be studied as one of these new niches.

There is a limited amount of research on the role of narratives in public speeches (e.g., Lwin, 2010; Scotto di Carlo, 2014, 2015). Aristotle (2006) explains in his “On Rhetoric” how persuasion, one of the main features of a public speaking discourse, can be achieved through ethos (appealing to ethics), pathos (appealing to emotion) and logos (appealing to logic) in

a speech. In the case of ethos, persuasion is achieved by the personal character of the speaker when the speech is spoken in such a way that the audience believes it to be credible. Persuasion can come by stirring the emotions (pathos) of the audience. It may also be achieved by logos if the speaker demonstrates a truth or an apparent truth through the appropriate persuasive arguments. Scotto di Carlo (2015) states that it is appealing to pathos, one of the most persuasive rhetoric techniques, that characterizes a TED Talk and helps to establish a connection between the speakers and their audiences. She illustrates how Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor in her TED Talk 'My Stroke of Insight' uses the strategies of emotional connection with the audiences to achieve pathos in her presentation. Scotto di Carlo points out that persuasion may come through stirring the audience's emotions that most likely can be achieved through storytelling. Bamberg (2006) describes how empathy entails different attention to the speaker and their delivery of what they talk about, arguing that the past experiences presented in a form of a memoir or life story have to be revealed in a particular empathetic style in order to be successful.

Several studies suggest that the effectiveness of using narrative in public speech depends not only on verbal but also non-verbal aspects of speech delivery. Lwin (2010) investigates how verbal as well as non-verbal features coming from the storyteller during the storytelling process help to maintain a keen engagement from the audience. Lwin analyzes an oral storytelling performance conducted by a professional storyteller in an all-girl primary school in Singapore. The findings suggest that vocal and visual features play an integral, rather than peripheral, role in the narrative development, whether through interaction with the verbal features or as independent elements. In her studies of Limba storytelling, Finnegan (1967, 1992) shows how the literary quality in storytelling is achieved by features of the performance event. The way that the storyteller enacts characters through the use of verbal as well as nonverbal elements

constructs a vivid portrayal of the events. Swann (2002, 2006) investigates how the interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements of narrator and character voices contributed to the linearity of the oral story in his analysis of an oral storytelling performance by a British storyteller, Jan Blake. A public speech is a complex act in which the content and the speech delivery are interwoven to produce a greater effect on the audience.

Narratives may also include visuals, but little research has been done about their function in quasi-academic storytelling. Badawood (2012) studies data-driven stories told through the use of information visualization. She examined this type of narrative in the TED Talk ‘Insights on HIV, in stunning data visuals’ by Hans Rosling (2009) and provided empirical results on the effect of the manner in which stories are delivered. The subjects reported that such visuals raised awareness about the topic, urgency in solving the problem and provided the data in a more compelling way so it was easier to understand than a tabular format (2012:1).

2.3 TED Talk as a genre

Technology, Entertainment, and Design (hence the abbreviation TED) conferences began in 1984 and today they cover a variety of topics – from science to business to global issues – in more than one hundred languages. The TED Talk as a newly emerged genre of sharing ideas certainly deserves more attention from researchers in academic and quasi-academic discourse. D’Avanzo (2015) speaks of TED Talks as a genre arising from ‘hybridization’ of genres (p. 281). She focuses on language differentiation deriving from different rhetorical choices made by speakers belonging to different professional categories. D’Avanzo analyzes 1,131 talks and evaluates them according to discursive elements such as boosters (demonstration of confidence, such as ‘certainly’, ‘indeed’, ‘undoubtedly’) and hedges (expressing doubt or hesitancy, such as ‘perhaps’, ‘maybe’, ‘so to speak’).

Ludewig (2017) identifies the genre that may have contributed to the emergent genre of TED Talks, i.e., a sales pitch, educational communication, and memoir. Based on a qualitative analysis of three older talks from the 1980s and 1990s and 11 recent versions of TED Talks, Ludewig points out three main features that characterize the TED Talk genre: a wide range of topics, the enthusiastic and optimistic mood of the presentations, and two rhetorical tools (anecdotes and humor). Therefore, storytelling in a form of an anecdotal story finds its representation in the TED Talk genre. Humor is an important ‘relational practice’ (Holmes & Marra, 2004), and a powerful rhetorical strategy. Jokes aim to involve the audience by arousing their interest and sympathy as well as generate enthusiasm and support for the speaker’s point (Thompson, 2002; Frobert-Adamo, 2002).

Mattiello (2017) states three aspects of TED Talks that contribute to science popularization and demonstrates how anecdotes and humor contribute to storytelling. According to Mattiello (2017), these aspects are “1) reduced technicality in content and vocabulary (vs. the specificity of scientific language or jargon), 2) the informal register and conversational or humorous tone (vs. the serious tone of, for example, medical discourse concerning health risks), and 3) the preference for narrative (vs. informative, expository, or argumentative) text type” (p. 77). The tone adopted by TED speakers is conversational and humorous, and the language contains ironic remarks, euphemistic comments, and the use of various figures of speech in comparison with seriousness and highly formal style of academic conference presentations. Speakers in TED Talks (including scientific talks) often use narratives to convey information, thus sharing personal experiences and emotional details with their audience, such as events of their childhood or youth, personal experience with some disease, etc. Speakers frequently use their personal experience or everyday language to create a familiar atmosphere in which the

audience can feel comfortable and better understand the concepts the speaker conveys (Mattiello, 2017).

As the speakers of TED conferences popularize knowledge and ideas for the audience, the TED Talk format shares certain features of the academic style. Having studied narrative elements in conference presentations, Mauranen (2013) distinguishes two main structures of the narrative used in academic presentations. In the first pattern, the talk is structured around a ‘general temporal sequence’, which goes through the entire paper as a backbone. This results in continuity and allows other elements – comments, side episodes, analytical or theoretical expositions – to be fitted in without losing the thread, while description and analysis are interlaced with a temporal storyline. Another structure involves a ‘starter sequence’ followed by a body. Sometimes the starter sequence is a narrative, which can take up a third or half of the presentation, after which the description, analysis, and comment take over. The order of this two-stage structure can be reversed. My study aims to examine the structure of the sampled TED Talks and to identify the most common pattern in TED Talk genre.

Anderson (2016), the curator of TED since 2001, points out the two most common structures for a TED Talk. A talk begins with an introduction, often in the form of an anecdote that illustrates the problem that the speaker intends to tackle. Then the speaker might give a historical background of the issue and illustrate two examples that failed followed by the speaker’s proposed solution, which often brings new dramatic evidence that supports the idea. Such structure might close with a few possible implications for the future. Anderson (2016) compares this structure with a tree, there is a central throughline, rising vertically, and each level of branches (anecdote, examples, solutions, etc.) represents an expansion of the main narrative (see Figure 1).

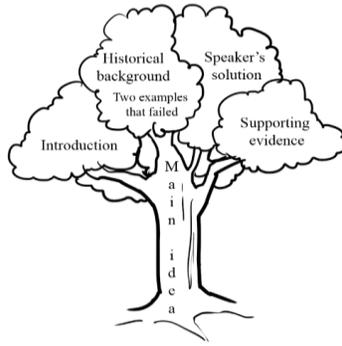


Figure 1:The Tree structure of a TED Talk by Anderson (2001)

Another talk is based on sharing five pieces of work, one after another, that have a connected theme, beginning and ending with the speaker’s current project (see figure 2). In this case, the throughline makes a loop that connects five boxes, i.e., one of the pieces of work.

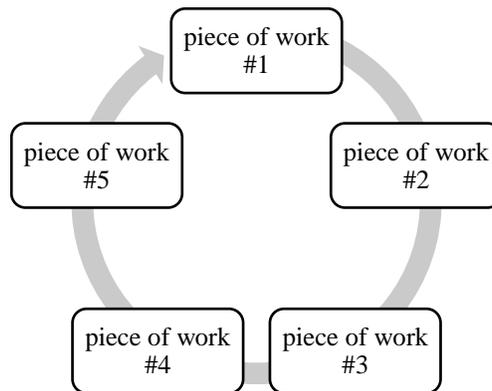


Figure 2: Five pieces of work structure in a TED Talk

Anderson (2016) concludes that the greatest talks are built around a single speaker’s own story as this structure offers the speaker the following benefits: the narrative frames the story, a personal experience creates empathy from the audience, and a linear structure makes the speech easier to follow and remember. Sir Ken Robinson, the most viewed TED Talk speaker (Anderson, 2016), shares the simple structure that he follows: introduction (getting settled, what will be covered), context (for example, why this issue matters), main concepts, practical implications, and conclusion.

The TED Talk conference, as a particular kind of community of practice, represents a new way of disseminating knowledge, popularizing science, and presenting the information in a

more accessible form to the audience. It is notable that narratives have become an integral component of the TED Talk genre. Although there are several studies on narratives in academic presentations, not much research has been done on the features and the functions of narratives in quasi-academic genres such as TED Talk. This is the gap that I will attempt to fill.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 The source of the corpus

In the present research, the analysis of the TED Talks is based on a selection of 10 most viewed talks which are available online on the TED conference webpage in October 2019. The selected TED Talks have from 31 to 64 million views according to the official TED website and are studied in order to identify if the speakers use storytelling as a public speaking tool; and if so, then what are its forms and functions in the sampled talks. All the TED Talks are available online and can be used under Creative Commons license.

Along with the video recordings of the selected talks, the TED page also provides transcripts with timestamps that were used for transcribing using the transcription conventions introduced by Jefferson (1984) and adapted by Paul ten Have (2007). The glossary is provided with a list of abbreviations and symbols at the beginning of the thesis.

3.2 Corpus

A selection of 10 most-viewed TED Talks videos was made for the purpose of the present research. The talks selected for analysis include, in chronological order, the following:

- Talk 1. Sir Ken Robinson: Do schools kill creativity? filmed in February 2006 at TED2006, Monterey, California [19'22"];
- Talk 2. Amy Cuddy: Your body language may shape who you are, filmed in June 2012 at TEDGlobal 2012, Edinburgh, Scotland [20'56"];

- Talk 3. James Veitch: This is what happens when you reply to spam email, filmed in December 2015 at TEDGlobal, Geneva, Switzerland [9'49"];
- Talk 4. Simon Sinek: How great leaders inspire action, filmed in September 2009 at TEDxPuget Sound, Washington [17'58"];
- Talk 5. Brené Brown: The power of vulnerability, filmed in June 2010 at TEDxHouston, Texas [20'19"];
- Talk 6. Julian Treasure: How to speak so that people want to listen, filmed in June 2013 at TEDGlobal 2013, Edinburgh, Scotland [9'58"];
- Talk 7. Tim Urban: Inside the mind of a master procrastinator, filmed in February 2016 at TED2016, Vancouver, BC [14'03"];
- Talk 8. Cameron Russell: Looks aren't everything. Believe me, I'm a model, filmed in October 2012 at TEDxMidAtlantic, Washington, DC [9'37"].
- Talk 9. Sam Berns: My philosophy for a happy life, filmed in October 2013 at TEDxMidAtlantic 2013, Washington, DC [19'44"];
- Talk 10. Robert Waldinger: What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness, filmed in November 2015 at TEDxBeaconStree, Brookline, Massachusetts [12'46"];

The talks were numbered progressively to ease reference to them throughout the analysis.

The total duration of 10 sampled videos is 2 hours 26 minutes 32 seconds. Their average duration is 14 minutes and 11 seconds. Internet-user's comments on each of the talks are not part of the TED corpus selected for narrative analysis.

3.3 Participants

The participants of the present research are 10 TED Talk speakers who gave their presentations on various topics. Speakers originally come from different countries but they use English as the *lingua franca* to deliver their speeches. Their occupations also vary (for instance, there is an educator, a researcher, a comedian, a blogger, a model, a personal coach, etc.) The variety of the speakers' backgrounds diminishes the chance of correlation between the professional training and the preference of narratives in the talk.

3.4 Data collection

Once the corpus of 10 most viewed TED Talks (both video recordings and scripts) drawn from the *TED. Ideas Worth Spreading* website was formed, all the TED Talks were fully transcribed using transcription conventions suggested by Jefferson (1984) and those adopted by Paul ten Have (2007). The transcription conventions used in the research are presented at the beginning of this thesis. Then all the transcribed sampled TED Talk scripts were coded using qualitative data analysis software QDA MINER LITE. The coding key was based on Labov's diamond-shape model (abstract, orientation, complicated action, resolution, evaluation, coda), Propp's 31 narratemes, and Ochs and Capps' narrative dimensions. Propp's functions were only used to transcribe elaborated narratives in TED Talks built on a backbone structure. Embedded narratives in the sampled TED Talks were identified based on the features of narrative style (Biber, 1988): verbs in the past tense and perfect aspect, progressive aspect, first and third person pronouns, verbs of communication (e.g., tell, speak, admit) as well as the presence of the main character and temporally sequenced events in the order that they were experienced.

3.5 Data analysis

The analysis began with the place of the story in the talk, i.e., an embedded story (which appears in the introduction, body, or final part) or a backbone story (which goes through the whole talk and links all the other elements into one narrative). Based on Labov's diamond-shaped model, the TED Talk scripts were analyzed to see if there was a recurring pattern in structural element placement within TED Talk narratives. The story elements (narratemes) suggested by Propp were studied in order to point out the most common ones in the plot development of five TED Talks with a backbone story structure. The narrative dimension suggested by Ochs and Capps (2001) were examined in the sampled TED Talks in order to analyze how different speakers shape the telling of a story and how life events are structured through narrative form. Finally, the main functions of the stories in the sampled TED Talks were identified and their impact on the audience was described.

The next chapter will describe the results of my analysis.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Quantitative analysis of the 10 selected TED Talks has shown that every speaker used a story in their talks. The total number of stories in the TED Talks is 29, including five ‘backbone’ stories which go through the whole speech, and 24 relatively short embedded narratives. The average number of stories per talk is 2.9; the maximum number of stories in a talk is six (‘Do schools kill creativity?’ by Sir Ken Robinson, 2006) and the least is one (‘How to speak so that people want to listen’ by Julian Treasure, 2013). In each talk with a backbone narrative, the speaker also tells up to four embedded stories. Table 2 shows the use of narrative elements in the sampled TED Talks.

Table 2: Number of narrators using narrative elements in their talks

Talk	Backbone story	N of embedded stories	Introduction	Body	Conclusion
1 Sir Ken Robinson on Creativity		6		6	
2 Amy Cuddy on Body Language	x	1		1	
3 James Veitch on Spam Emails	x	1			1
4 Simon Sinek on Leaders		4	1	3	
5 Brené Brown on Vulnerability	x	4	1	3	
6 Julian Treasure on How to Speak		1		1	
7 Tim Urban on Procrastination	x	2		2	
8 Cameron Russell on Models		4		4	
9 Sam Berns on Happy Life		1	1		
10 Robert Waldinger on Good Life	x				
Total	5	24	3	20	1

The place of an embedded story in the talk was also analyzed (the introduction, the body, or the conclusion) as the position of the embedded narrative may affect its function in the discourse. There were 20 stories told in the body, while only three were used in the introduction

and one in the conclusion. The functions of the stories in TED Talks are suggested and described further in this chapter.

4.1 Labov's diamond-shape model analysis of the narratives in a TED Talk

Labov' diamond-shape model was used to analyze both embedded and backbone stories in the sampled TED Talks. This section provides the results of this analysis based on each narrative element of the Labov's model and describes common and usual features of the identified narratives.

4.1.1 The Abstract

It is common for narrators to begin the story with an abstract, defined as one or two sentences that summarize or encapsulate the point of the story that is to be told (Labov, 1972). The role of the abstract is to signal that the story is about to begin and spark the listener's interest to hear the rest of the story. Most of the examined TED Talks, represent a type of abstract described by Labov in their narratives (1-2).

(1) A few years ago (.) ah I got one of those spam emails. (Veitch, 2015)

(2) >I'm I'm doing a new book at the moment called Epiphany, which is ah based on a series of interviews with people (.) about how they discovered their talent. (Robinson, 2006)

However, the abstract in the examined TED Talks is often simplified. Brené Brown, shown in example (3), starts her talk with a narrative that is aimed to introduce her professional interests by deliberately saying that she is about to start. Her "So, I'll start with this" does not give any preview of what she is about to tell to the audience, and she seems confident that the listeners are awaiting her upcoming speech.

(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<.

Veitch (2015) makes the same move when making a transition to the second part of his talk, as shown in (4). Like Brown (2010), he simplifies the prescriptive linguistic form of an abstract (that is, a short summarizing statement) and basically announces that he has something to add.

(4) >But I'll tell you what, though, guys (.) I'll tell you what<. Any day is a good day-, any day is a good day, if you receive an email (.) that begins like this. (2.5)

The colloquial style of telling stories is often characterized by a fusion of its structural elements. Sir Ken Robinson in (5) starts telling a story shedding light not only on what happened (this is the abstract) but also giving an overview of the settings (for example, “my son was four,” England, the Nativity play), which is the function of the orientation. Interestingly, he also manages to integrate two jokes into this fusion of abstract and orientation in the narrative just within 27 seconds of his talk, including the audience laughter, without breaking the narrative flow, as shown in (5):

(5) When my son was four: in England (.) >actually, he was four everywhere to be honest?< ((laughs)) >If we're being strict about it, wherever he went, he was four that year<. he was in the Nativity play. Do you remember the story? No, it was big, it was a big story. >Mel Gibson did the sequel (.) you may have seen it<. ((laughs)) Nativity II. But um (.) James got the part of Joseph, which we were thrilled about. We considered this to be one of the *lead parts*.

4.1.2 Orientation

Once the story has started, the narrator then helps the listener to identify the time, place, characters, and situation of the story to be told. This all happens in the orientation and it is characterized by past continuous verbs and adjuncts of time, manner and place. When normally

narrative structural elements are temporally sequenced, for example (6), in some sampled stories, these elements can be separated by others and then continued. In (7), Brené Brown describes the setting of her short story, “When I was a young researcher, doctoral student, er my first year, I had a research professor, who (.) >one our first day’s class [...]”, and then moves to the complicating action, but suddenly, she makes a U-turn and adds some more details that extend the orientation setting and provides an evaluative character to the utterance.

(6) I'm Sam, a:nd I just turned 17. A few years ago, before my freshman year in High School, I wanted to play snare drum in the Foxboro High School Marching Band. However, >and it was a dream that I just had to accomplish<. But each snare drum and harness, weighed about <40 pounds each.> A:nd I have a disease called Progeria,? So just to give you an idea, I weigh only about 50 pounds. So, logistically, I really couldn't carry a regular sized snare drum. (Berns, 2013)

(7) When I was a young researcher, doctoral student, er my first year, I had a research professor, who (.) >one our first day’s class, he said to us,< "Here's the thing. <If you cannot measure it, it does not exist.>" (2.0) And I thought he was just sweet-talking me. I was like, "Really?" and he was like, "Absolutely." And so you have to understand that I have (.) >a bachelor's in social work, and a master's in social work, and I was getting my Ph.D. in social work<. So my entire academic career was surrounded by people, who kind of believed in the "life's messy, (1.0) love it. And I'm more of the, life's messy, clean it up, (2.0) organize it, and put it into a bento box. (Brown, 2010)

As narratives embedded in a TED Talk are often compressed, sometimes one and the same sentence shares the functions of two narrative elements. For example, in (8) “>Well, you know that<, that situation” is an abstract and the following part of this sentence, “>where you get an evaluation from your boss<,” represents the orientation that is the setting of the story.

(8) >Well, you know that<, that situation >where you get an evaluation from your boss<, a:nd, >she tells you 37 things that you do really awesome, and one thing that >you kind of you know<<, “an opportunity for growth”? And all you can think about is that opportunity for growth, right? Well, apparently this is the way my work went as well [...]

4.1.3 Complicating action

The complicating action, the core narrative category that unfolds the ‘what happened’ element of the story, has proved to be the most flexible one in terms of length. In some sampled TED Talks, complicating action is represented by a couple of clauses (see 9) while in others it takes a few paragraphs to reveal the chain of events (usually in the TED Talks with a backbone structure).

(9) <Third, negativity>. You can fall into this. >My mother, in the last years of her life, became very negative, and it's hard to listen. I remember one day, I said to her, < "It's October 1st today," >and she said<, "I know, isn't it dreadful?" (2.0) ((laughs)) It's hard to listen when somebody's that negative. (Treasure, 2013)

The results show that embedded stories are not always about incidents that actually happened but also about the ones that may not (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008). While elaborating his point about the suppression of children’s creativity in the society, Robinson (2006) imagines William Shakespeare as a 7-year-old boy being scolded by his father and English teacher (10). This strategy also gives the story a humorous tone while suggesting a thought-provoking argument.

(10) Are you struck by a new thought how I was? (.) >You don't think of Shakespeare having a father, do you?< Do you? (.) >Because you don't think of Shakespeare being a child, (.) do you? Shakespeare being seven? (.) I never thought of it. I mean, he was seven at some point. He was in somebody's English class, wasn't he?< ((laughs)) How annoying would that be? ((laughs)) Must try harder. ((laughs)) >Being sent to bed by his dad, to Shakespeare (.) Go to bed, now! You know to William Shakespeare. And put the pencil down!< And stop speaking like that. It's (.) it's confusing everybody. (Robinson, 2006)

4.1.4 Resolution

The complicating actions are followed by resolution that recapitulates the final key event of a story, for instance, “And the girl said, >They will in a minute<.” in Robinson’s (2006) talk (11). However, this narrative element has been omitted in Veitch’s (2015) talk (12) in which he

finishes his performance with a story that does not have either resolution or coda, leaving the audience to decide how it all ended.

(11) And the teacher said >this girl hardly ever paid attention (.), and in this drawing lesson, she did. The teacher was fascinated. She went over to her, and she said (.) >What are you drawing? (.) And the girl said, I'm drawing a picture of God (1.5) And the teacher said, >But nobody knows what God looks like<. And the girl said, >They will in a minute<. (Robinson, 2006)

(12) >But I'll tell you what, though, guys (.) I'll tell you what<. Any day is a good day any day is a good day if you receive an email that begins like this (2.5)

"I am Winnie Mandela (1.5) the second wife of Nelson Mandela, the former South African President." >I was like, *oh:!* *that* Winnie Mandela<. I know so many (1.0)

"I need to transfer 45 *million* dollars out of the country because of my husband Nelson Mandela's health condition (1.0)" Let that sink in (1.0)

She sent me this (.) ah which is (.) hysterical (2.0)

And this. Ah >and this looks fairly legitimate. This is a letter of authorization. But to be honest, if there's nothing written on it<, ↑it's just a shape↑!

I said, "Winnie, I'm really sorry to hear of this. Given that Nelson *died* three months ago, I'd describe his health condition as (5.0) fairly serious."

That's the worst health condition you can have (.) not being (.) alive,?

She said, "Kindly comply with my banker's instructions. One love (3.0)"

I said, "Of course. No woman, no cry (6.0)"

She said, "My banker will need a transfer of 3000 dollars. ONE LOVE."

I said, "no problemo (2.5) I shot the sheriff" (4.0) ((written on the screen 'but I did not shoot the deputy')) Thank you. (Veitch, 2015)

4.1.5 Evaluation

Unlike other narrative categories that normally occur in the sequence in a typical oral narrative, evaluation tends to sit outside the central pattern as it can be inserted at any stage of a narrative (Simpson, 2005). Labov (1972) argues that evaluation answers the question "why [the narrative] was told, and what the narrator is getting at" (1972:366) and indicates evaluation "as the focus of waves that penetrate the narrative." (1972:367). Evaluative devices show to the listener: "this was terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy; or amusing, hilarious, wonderful"

(Labov, 1972:371), in that sense, something strange or unusual, not ordinary or plain is worth reporting.

Evaluation is also the most fluid stylistically as it may take a variety of linguistic forms depending on the particular evaluative job it is doing. Labov (1972) singles out the following types of evaluation each of them has found its representation in the sampled TED Talks: external (speaker expresses their evaluation directly, for instance, (13-14)), embedding (speaker says something to himself/herself or quotes himself/herself addressing to someone else as in (15-16)), action (what people did rather than said as in (17)), and suspension of the action, for example (18).

(13) And that was so much fun, right, [...] (Veitch, 2015)

(14) <So I figured I had to knock it on the head. I had to take it to a ridiculous conclusion. [...]> (Veitch, 2015)

(15) A few years ago (.) ah I got one of those spam emails. [...] Now, my hand was kind of hovering on the delete button, right? I was looking at my phone. I thought, I could just delete this (1.0) Or I could do what I think we've *all* (1.0) always wanted to do. (3.0) And I said, "Solomon, your email intrigues me." (Veitch, 2015)

(16) >This is how the year would go<. So I'd start off light, (1.5) and I'd bump it up in the middle months, (1.0) and then, at the end, I would kick it up into high gear. ↑Just like a little staircase. How hard could it be to walk up the stairs?↑ No big deal, right? (Urban, 2016)

(17) >One time I went into a store, and I forgot my money, and they gave me the dress for free<. (1.0) Um (.) When I was a teenager, I was driving with my friend >who was an awful driver< and she ran a red and of course, we got pulled over, (.) and all it took was a "Sorry, officer," and we were on our way. (Russell, 2012)

(18) And I said, "That's amazing, What are you going to spend your cut on?" And he said, "On Real Estate, what about you?" I thought about it for (.) a-a long time (3.0) And I said, "One word (3.0) Hummus." (7.0) (Veitch, 2015)

4.1.6 Coda

The function of coda is to signal to the audience that the story has ended and bring them back to the point where they entered the narrative; it also explains the relevance of the story being told to the up-to-date situation. Sir Ken Robinson tells the story of Gillian Lynne, who was struggling trying to focus and study hard at school but then she was sent to a dance school on doctor's recommendation and became a successful dancer. The following example illustrates how seamlessly the speaker moves from resolution (19) to coda (20).

(19) She became a soloist, >she had a wonderful career at the Royal Ballet<. She eventually graduated from the Royal Ballet School, founded- founded her own company called the Gillian Lynne Dance Company. Met Andrew Lloyd Webber. She's been responsible for some of the most successful musical theater productions in history. She's given pleasure to millions, and she's a multimillionaire. (Robinson, 2006)

(20) Somebody else might have put her on medication and told her to calm down.

While some stories may not have a coda at all, the analysis shows that several stories can share one and the same coda. In the following example, Robinson (2006) finishes two sequenced stories (11, 21) with a resolution (“And the girl said, >They will in a minute<.” and “And the third boy said, *Frank* sent this.” respectively) and moves to the coda (22) to articulate his argument. The speaker can also deliberately announce his/her intention to connect the stories as Sir Ken Robinson says, “What these things have in common [...]”.

(21) When my son was four: in England (.) [...] He was in the Nativity play. Do you remember the story? [...] James got the part of Joseph, which we were thrilled about. We considered this to be one of the *lead parts*. Er: (.) We had the place crammed full of agents in T-shirts (.) James Robinson IS Joseph. ((Laughter)) He didn't have to speak, >but you know the bit where the three kings come in?< (.) >They come in bearing gifts, (.) they bring gold, frankincense and myrrh. This really happened. We were sitting there, and they *I think* just went out of sequence (1.0) because we talked to the little boy afterward and said, You ok with that? They said, Yeah, why? Was that wrong? (.) They just switched and was it<. The three boys *came in*, (.) little four-year-olds with tea towels on their heads. And they put these boxes down, and the first boy said<, I bring you gold. And the second boy said, I bring you myrrh. And the third boy said, *Frank* sent this. ((laughs)) (Robinson, 2006)

(22) >What these things have in common is that kids will take a chance<. If they don't know, they'll have a go. Am I right? They're not *frightened* of being *wrong*. (Robinson, 2006)

4.2 Propp's functions in a TED Talk

Five out of 10 sampled TED Talks have been identified as having a backbone structure, thus offering room for development of the main story and its protagonist. These stories were parsed using 31 Propp's narratemes, however, only 22 narratemes were identified in the sampled TED Talks. The total use of each narratemes in five sampled talks is presented in Table 3. The average number of narratemes per TED Talk is 11.2 with the minimum of six and the maximum of 14. The three highlighted cells represent the narratemes that has violated the classical narratemes order suggested by Propp; in two cases, it is caused by using one and the same narratemes in the narrative more than once.

Table 3: The use of Propp's narratemes in the sampled TED Talks with a backbone structure

Propp's narratemes	Talk 2	Talk 3	Talk 5	Talk 7	Talk10
1. Absentation: Someone goes missing	1		1	1	
2. Interdiction: Hero is warned		1	1	1	
3. Violation of interdiction		1	1	1	
4. Reconnaissance: Villain seeks something		1			
5. Delivery: The villain gains information					
6. Trickery: Villain attempts to deceive victim		1		1	
7. Complicity: Unwitting helping of the enemy		1		1	
8. Villainy and lack: The need is identified	1		1		1
9. Mediation: Hero discovers the lack	1	1		1	
10. Counteraction: Hero chooses positive action		1		1	
11. Departure: Hero leaves on mission	1	1	1	1	1
12. Testing: Hero is challenged to prove heroic qualities	1	1	2	1	1
13. Reaction: Hero responds to test	1	1	1	1	1
14. Acquisition: Hero gains magical item	2				1
15. Guidance: Hero reaches destination	1		1		
16. Struggle: Hero and villain do battle		1	1	1	
17. Branding: Hero is branded			1		
18. Victory: Villain is defeated				1	

Propp's narratemes	Talk 2	Talk 3	Talk 5	Talk 7	Talk10
19. Resolution: Initial misfortune or lack is resolved				1	1
20. Return: Hero sets out for home					
21. Pursuit: Hero is chased					
22. Rescue: Pursuit ends					
23. Arrival: Hero arrives unrecognized					
24. Claim: False hero makes unfounded claims					
25. Task: Difficult task proposed to the hero			1		
26. Solution: Task is resolved	1		1		
27. Recognition: Hero is recognized	1				
28. Exposure: False hero is exposed					
29. Transfiguration: Hero is given a new appearance	1		1		
30. Punishment: Villain is punished					
31. Wedding: Hero marries or ascends the throne					
Total	12	11	14	13	6

The sampled TED Talks with a backbone structure matched the plot turning points described by Propp with notable adaptation. While in folktale discourse the hero searches for a magic object or struggles to battle the villain, TED Talk presenters in their stories seek for the answers to their research questions, overcome challenges in their studies, get tested on their claims, and become transformed both personally and professionally by their findings. A prime example for this is the story of Brené Brown (2010) whose research path led her from the violation of the interdiction to study ‘a messy topic’ to facing the villain represented by the concept of vulnerability that she had an inner conflict with, then she was battling it while getting tested by the circumstances (an overwhelming work and an emotional breakdown) that led her to a sort of spiritual awakening and a complete transformation of the way she “lives, and loves, and works, and parents” now.

The hero or the protagonist in four out of five sampled stories is a TED Talk presenter himself/herself, while in Talk 10, the protagonist is The Harvard Study of Adult Development,

probably the longest study of adult life that's ever been done. As a hero, it has a mission to investigate what really keeps people happy and healthy, it has survived when “almost all projects of this kind fall apart within a decade” (Waldinger, Talk 10), and it continues its mission now studying the children of the initial participants.

In the analysis, 22 out of 31 narratemes were identified in five sampled TED Talks and they are presented in Figure 3. The results suggest that in all five TED Talks the protagonist left for a mission (for example, to answer the research questions), was challenged to prove their heroic qualities (such as professional skills, creative thinking, and perseverance), and responded to the challenges faced.

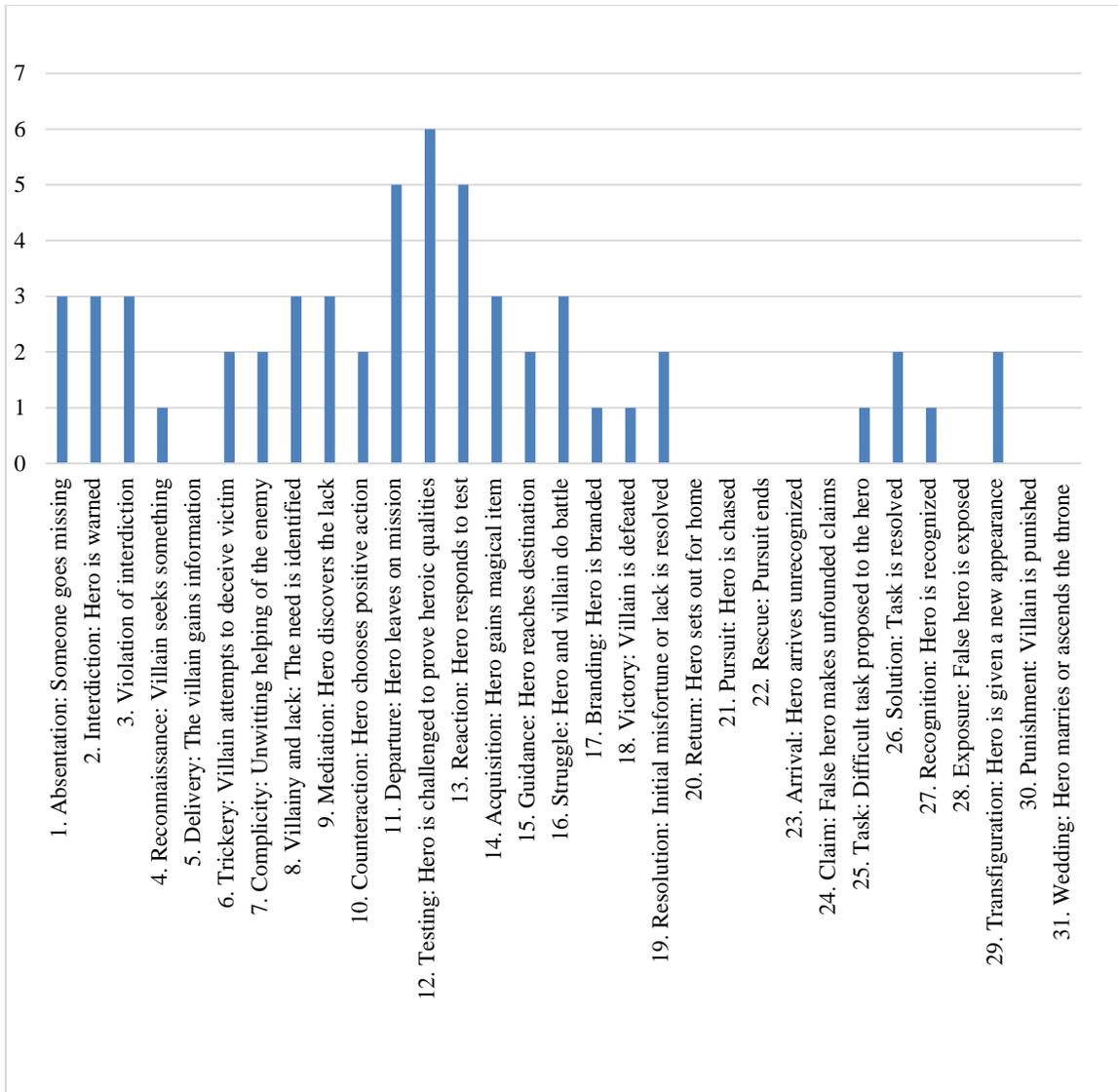


Figure 3: Most common Propp's narratemes in the sampled TED Talks

Surprisingly, not every story has a villain that is later defeated by the hero; oftentimes, it is a lack of something that pushes the protagonist to go on a mission and resolve it, for example (23).

(23) We forget vast amounts of what happens to us in life, and sometimes memory is downright creative. But, (0.5) what if we could watch entire lives as they unfold through time? >What if we could study people< from the time that they were teenagers all the way into old age to see what really keeps people happy and healthy? (Waldinger, 2015)

Normally, all the identified functions in the sampled TED Talks follow the order described by Propp. The suggested order of the narratemes is violated only once, when the violation of the interdiction (responding the spam email in (25)) precedes the villain's reconnaissance (the spammer's search for a victim in (24)).

(24) It said, "Hello James Veitch. I have an interesting business proposal I want to share with you, Solomon." (1.0) Now, my hand was kind of hovering on the delete button, right? (Veitch, 2015)

(25) I was looking at my phone. I thought, I could just delete this (1.0) Or I could do what I think we've all (1.0) always wanted to do (3.0) And I said, "Solomon, your email intrigues me." (Veitch, 2015)

Some narratemes were used more than once. For example, Brené Brown went through the testing (a series of mini-adventures or challenges within the story) twice: first, when she had to dig deeper and prolong her research from one to six years (26); second, when she experienced an emotional breakdown and had to consult a therapist (a donor in Propp's theory) on her research path (27).

(26) <My one year turned into (.) six years>. (1.0) <Thousands of stories>. Hundreds of long interviews. Focus groups,? At one point, people were sending me journal pages, and sending me their stories, (.) um (.) thousands of pieces of data (.) um (.) in six years. And I kind of got a handle on it. (Brown, 2010)

(27) And so, I said, "Here's the thing. I (.) I'm struggling." >And she said, "What's the struggle?" And I said,< "Well, I have a vulnerability issue,? And, I know, that vulnerability is kind if the< core of shame, and fear,> and our struggle for worthiness, but it appears that it's also the <birthplace (.) of joy, of creativity, of belonging, of love.> And I think I have a problem, and I need some help." (Brown, 2010)

4.3 Ochs & Capps' narrative dimensions in a TED Talk

Both embedded and backbone narratives in the sampled TED Talks were analyzed using the Ochs & Capps' narrative dimensions in order to determine the features of these personal

narratives. Based on the suggested binary characteristics, the majority of narratives of personal experience analyzed in the sampled TED Talks tends to exhibit the following cluster of characteristics highlighted in Table 4: one active teller, highly tellable account, relatively embedded in surrounding talk, linear temporal and causal organization, and certain, constant moral stance.

Table 4: Narrative dimensions and possibilities in the sampled TED Talks

Dimensions		Possibilities
Tellership	One active teller	→ Multiple active tellers
Tellability	High	→ Low
Embeddedness	Detached	→ Embedded
Linearity	Closed temporal and causal order	→ Open temporal and causal order
Moral stance	Certain, constant	→ Uncertain, fluid

Cited from Ochs and Capps 2001:20.

4.3.1 Tellership

Narratives of personal experience are characterized by a low involvement in co-telling (Ochs and Capps, 2001). That is, in the sampled talks, the stories are told by a single teller, a TED Talk speaker, and the audience responds to the presenter's speech mainly with applause and laughter. For example, in (28), Veitch (2015) entertains the audience with funny remarks while sharing the story about his experience in answering a spam email. However, the TED Talk speaker can make the co-telling more active to some extent by posing a question to the audience or asking them to raise their hands to express their opinion or position (29-30).

- (28) James Veitch: I said, "*50 kilograms?* There's no point doing this at all unless you're shipping at least a *metric ton*
- The audience: ((Laughter))
((Applause))
- James Veitch: He said, "What do you do for a living?" (2.0)
- The audience: ((Laughter))

(29) Sir Ken Robinson: Good morning. How are you?
The audience: Good.

(30) Sir Ken Robinson: It's really prompted by >a conversation I had with a wonderful woman who maybe much people have never heard of, she's called< Gillian Lynne. >Have you heard of her?<
The audience: ()
Sir Ken Robinson: Some have.

4.3.2 *Tellability*

From the perspective of tellability, the analyzed narratives in the sampled TED Talks are highly worth telling or highly tellable. As TED Talks are supposed to be prepared and practiced before delivery, the TED Talk speakers seem to think through the content of their talks including the narrative examples they are going to give. Following the main goal of the TED project (disseminate the ideas worth spreading), the topics and the titles of the TED Talks tend to be relevant to the audience, which is also visible in the talk's content. Even though the topics are not restricted by a certain area, all of them report human events that touch the listeners as they are supposedly interesting and important to the audience in the first place.

4.3.3 *Embeddedness*

The embedded narratives identified in the sampled TED Talks are thematically relevant to the discussed topic, do not have a distinct turn-taking, and thus, match the description of relatively embedded narratives by Ochs and Capps (2001). According to Ochs and Capps, such “personal narratives illustrate a point, make a comparison to support an argument, or otherwise elaborate a focus of concern” (2001:37); most of them correspond to the functions of embedded narratives that have been identified in the following section of this chapter. Another feature that characterizes the embedded narratives is that they are tied to thematic and rhetorical integration

within the talk. The speaker makes the stories appear relevant (even if they are not) and uses these narratives to further a point made in the discourse (Jefferson, 1978).

4.3.4 Linearity

Structurally, the examined narratives in the sampled TED Talks are closed and have a temporal sequence. The only narrative that is left open-ended is a story in James Veitch's talk (see 12), in which he stops half-way of the story and does not tell how he ended that conversation with a spammer.

4.3.5 Moral stance

Moral stance that shows the narrator's attitude towards reported events in a TED Talk is certain and constant. This type of narrative also features linear plot organization as it is noted by Bernstein (1994). TED Talk presenters use narratives to affirm a moral perspective of their ground and experiences and shape the narratives to make their own comportment appear morally superior as they represent the minority who follow the 'right' way declared in the talk. The concept of TED itself, "ideas worth spreading", shapes the image of a virtuous person (and a protagonist of the stories in most of the cases) who "queries, seeks, and so doing, learns what is good" (Ochs & Capps, 2001: 51).

4.4 Functions of the narratives in a TED Talk

In order to identify the functions of the narratives in the sampled TED Talks, their positioning within the text of the talk was analyzed. The analysis of the structural functions of the narratives suggests that the stories in the sampled TED Talks are used for various reasons, that is, they serve as a frame of a talk (mainly TED Talks with a backbone structure), self-introduction (as in 31) and/or a brief introduction to the topic, or as an illustration to strengthen a

proposed argument which can precede or follow the thesis statement (for example, 32-33).

Several stories also function as a joke to provide emotional relief for the audience and keep them engaged (see 11). Figure 4 shows the number of each detected function of the narrative in the sampled TED Talks.

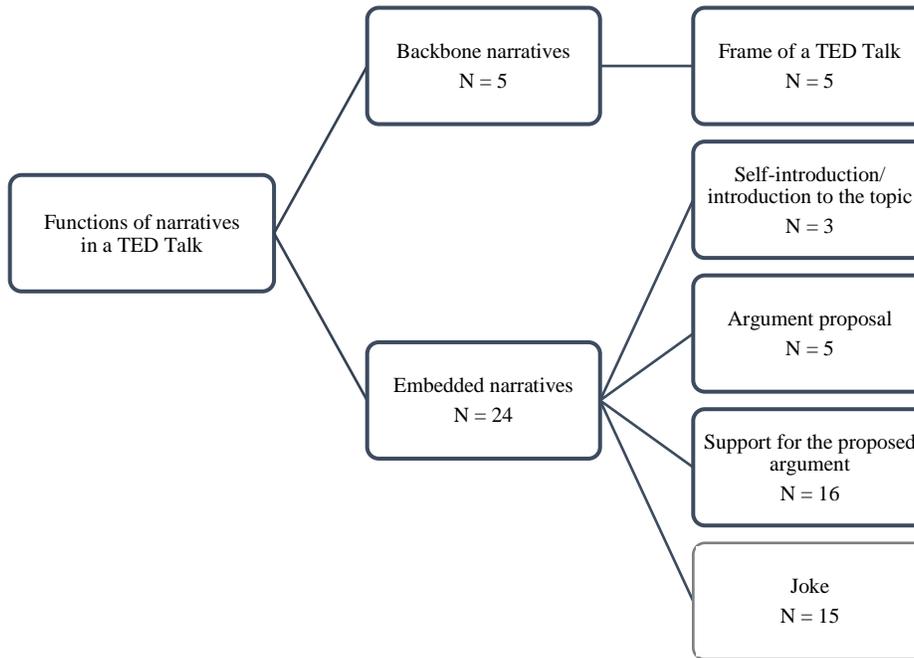


Figure 4: Functions of the narrative in the sampled TED talks

The embedded stories at the beginning of a TED talk give a brief idea of who the speakers are or what sort of issue they are going to discuss in this talk. In this case, the story answers these questions somewhat indirectly while the speaker describes the setting and reconstructs the past events. In example (31), Brené Brown (2010) starts her talk with a story about the confusion of her research work. By sharing her friend’s disbelief about the mixture of a researcher and a storyteller in one person in her story, she thus answers the audience’ silent question on what she is and what to expect in this TED Talk.

(31) >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-I 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." And of course, <the academic, insecure> part of me was like, ">You're going to call me a what?<" And she said, "I'm going to call you a storyteller." >And I was like<, (.) "Why not 'magic pixie'?" Um. I was like, "I-I don't (.) er (.) >Let me think about this for a second.<" I tried to call deep on my courage,? And I thought, you know, I am a storyteller. I'm a qualitative researcher. I collect stories, that's what I do. And maybe stories are just data with a soul, (.) you know? And maybe I'm just (.) a storyteller. And so I said, "You know what? Why don't you just say I'm a researcher-storyteller." >And she went<, "((LAUGHS)). There's no such thing." So I'm a researcher-storyteller. (Brown, 2010)

Another common function of embedded stories is to provide support for the statement that the speaker proposes. The majority of stories encountered in the TED Talks followed the thesis statement made by the speaker and gave a life example to elaborate it. Sinek (2009) constantly repeats the law of diffusion of innovation that he discovered (32), which is followed by a fragment (33) of a story of success demonstrated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

(32) People don't buy what you do (.) they buy why you do it, and what you do simply serves as the proof of what you believe. (1.0) (Sinek, 2009)

(33) Now let me give you (.) a successful example >of the law of diffusion of innovation<. In the summer of 1963, two-hundred fifty thousand people showed up (.) on the mall in Washington to hear (.) Dr. King speak. They sent out no invitations. And there was no website to check the date. >How do you do that?< Well, (.) Dr. King wasn't the only man in America, who was a, >who was a great orator<. >He wasn't the only man in America who suffered in a pre-civil rights America<. In fact, some of his ideas were ↑bad. But he had a gift. >He didn't go around telling people what needed to change in America<. >He went around and told people what he believed<. "I believe, I believe, I believe," he told people. <And people who believed what he believed> took his cause, and they made it their own, and they told people. >And some of those people< (.) um (.) >created structures to get the word out to even< more people. And lo and behold, <two-hundred fifty thousand people showed up on the right day at the right time to hear him speak>. (Sinek, 2009)

In three talks, the speakers reverse the storytelling order and tell a story that later brings them to the main point that they want to express. The following example (34) is an embedded

story told by Brown (2010) that sheds light on her personality as a researcher and expands an important point of her life backbone story, as shown in (36).

(34) When I was a young researcher, doctoral student, er my first year, I had a research professor, who (.) >one our first day's class, he said to us,< "Here's the thing. <If you cannot measure it, it does not exist.>" (2.0) And I thought he was just sweet-talking me. I was like, "Really?" and he was like, "Absolutely." And so you have to understand that I have (.) >a bachelor's in social work, and a master's in social work, and I was getting my Ph.D. in social work<. So my entire academic career was surrounded by people, who kind of believed in the "life's messy, (1.0) love it." And I'm more of the, "life's messy, clean it up, (2.0) organize it, and put it into a bento box." Um. (Brown, 2010)

(35) And so I thought, >you know what?,< this is the career for me, because I am interested in some messy topics. But I want to be able to make them <not messy>. I want to understand them. I want to hack into these things that I know are important, and lay the code out for everyone to see. (Brown, 2010)

Many of the stories are told as jokes with a humorous tone. They seem to function as an entertaining tool to keep the audience engaged and provide emotional relief. In the following extract (36), Sir Ken Robinson (2006) makes funny comments while telling the story, thus engaging the audience into what he is about to say. As this function is not reflected in the talk structure, that humorous story is calculated separately from the previous three. Another example is the TED Talk by the comic Veitch (2015) (see 12) who speaks with short lines making the audience burst with laughter every other five seconds.

(36) When my son was four: in England (.) >actually, he was four everywhere to be honest?< ((laughs)) >If we're being strict about it, wherever he went, he was four that year<. he was in the Nativity play. Do you remember the story? No, it was big, it was a big story. >Mel Gibson did the sequel (.) you may have seen it<. ((laughs)) Nativity II. But um (.) James got the part of Joseph, which we were thrilled about. We considered this to be one of the *lead parts*.

4.5 Other findings

There are some unusual cases of how embedded narratives can interact with each other. Robinson (2006), who used the maximum (six) number of embedded narratives in his TED Talk among the sampled talks, while walking the audience through the talk from his argument “I believe this passionately, that we don't grow into creativity, we grow out of it. Or rather, we get educated out of it” to “(...) every education system on earth has the same hierarchy of subjects”, supports his argument with two stories, where one story arises inside another (37-39). While (37) and (39) represent two parts of a story which supports the speakers’ main arguments, (38) illustrates another relevant problem, the one of suppressing children's creativity in school, in a joking manner. Such interaction of the narratives can be presented in the form of a nesting doll shown in Figure 5.

(37) Um. I-I lived in Stratford-on-Avon (.) until >about five years ago. In fact, we moved< from Stratford to Los Angeles. So you can imagine what a seamless transition (.) you know this was from LA. (Robinson, 2006)

(38) >Actually, we lived in a place called Snitterfield,<(.) were just outside Stratford, which is where Shakespeare's father was born (1.5) Are you struck by a new thought how I was?(.) >You don't think of Shakespeare having a father, do you?< Do you? (.) >Because you don't think of Shakespeare being a child, (.) do you? Shakespeare being seven? (.) I never thought of it. I mean, he was seven at some point. He was in somebody's English class, wasn't he?< ((laughs)) How annoying would that be? ((laughs)) Must try harder. ((laughs)) >Being sent to bed by his dad, to Shakespeare (.) Go to bed, now! You know to William Shakespeare. And put the pencil down!< And stop speaking like that. It's (.) it's confusing everybody. (Robinson, 2006)

(39) Anyway (.) um (2.0) we mo:ved from Stratford to Los Angeles. >And I just want to say a word about the transition. Actually, my son <didn't want to come. I've got two kids. He's 21 now, my daughter's 16<. He didn't want to come (.) to Los Angeles. >He loved it, but he had a< girlfriend (.) in England. Er (.) >This was the love of his life<. Sarah. He'd known her for a month. >Mind you, they'd had their fourth anniversary,< because it's a long time when you're 16. >Anyway, he was really upset on the plane. He said, "I'll never find another girl like Sarah." (1.0) And we were rather pleased about that, frankly,< She was (2.0) ((laughs))

>because she was the main reason we were leaving the country<. >But something strikes you when you move to America and travel around the world< (.) every education system on earth <has the same hierarchy of subjects>. Every one. >Doesn't matter where you go. You'd think it would be otherwise, but it isn't<. (Robinson, 2006)

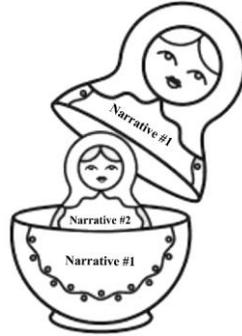


Figure 5: Interaction of two narratives in the form of a nesting doll

Another attention-grabbing narrative technique of combining two stories into one is used by Sinek (2009) who uses contrast and parallelism to construct all the provided examples that support his main idea. When approaching a story of the Wright brothers' success in inventing the first flying machine, Sinek starts with a story of Samuel Pierpont Langley, a famous person at the time, who seemed to have all the opportunities to win a flying machine race but he did not (40-45). Sinek breaks down all the arguments the audience could have offered by listing all the advantages Samuel Pierpont Langley had over the Wright brothers in (41-43). This creates the contrast between the two stories that cross over in (44) in the resolution.

(40) I always say that, you know, there's er (.) if you if you if you um (0.5) >hire people just because they can do a job, they'll work for your money, but if they believe what you believe, they'll work for you with blood, and sweat, and tears<. Nowhere else is there a better example than with the Wright brothers.

(41) Most people don't know about Samuel Pierpont Langley. And back in the early 20th century, the pursuit of powered man flight was like the dot com of the day. Everybody was trying it. And Samuel Pierpont Langley had, what we assume, <to be the recipe for success>. Even now, you ask people, "Why did your product or why did your company fail?" and people always give you the same permutation of the same three things: under-capitalized, the wrong people, bad market conditions. It's always the same three things. So

let's explore that. Samuel Pierpont Langley, (.) was given 50,000 dollars by the War Department to figure out this flying machine. Money was no problem. He held a seat at Harvard and worked at the Smithsonian, and was extremely well-connected; he knew all the big minds of the day. He hired the best minds money could find, and the market conditions were fantastic. The New York Times followed him around everywhere, and everyone was rooting for Langley. Then how come we've never heard of Samuel Pierpont Langley?

(42) A few hundred miles away in Dayton Ohio, (.) Orville and Wilbur Wright. They had NONE of what we consider to be the recipe for success. They had no money, >they paid for their dream with the proceeds from their bicycle shop<. Not a single person on the Wright brothers' team had a college education, not even Orville, or Wilbur. And The New York Times followed them around nowhere.

(43) The difference was, Orville and Wilbur were driven by a cause, >by a purpose, by a belief<. They believed: that <if they could figure out this flying machine, it'll change the course of the world>. Samuel Pierpont Langley was different. He wanted to be rich, and he wanted to be famous. He was in pursuit of the result. He was in pursuit of the riches. And lo and behold, look what happened. The people who believed: in the Wright brothers' dream worked with them with blood, and sweat, and tears. The others just worked for the paycheck. >They tell stories of how every time the Wright brothers went out, they would have to take five sets of parts<, because that's how many times they would crash before supper.

(44) And, eventually, on December 17th, 1903, the Wright brothers took flight. And no one was there to even (.) experience it. We found out about it a few days later. And further proof that Langley was motivated by the wrong thing, >the day the Wright brothers took flight<, he quit. >He could have said<, "That's an amazing discovery, guys, and I will improve upon your technology," >but he didn't<. He wasn't first, he didn't get rich, he didn't get famous, (.) so he quit.

(45) People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it. If you talk about what you believe, you will attract those who believe what you believe.

Visual aids play an important role in storytelling in the TED Talk genre. In the sampled TED Talks, eight out of ten speakers used slides in their talks, moreover, four of these presenters also employed pictures and text on the slides directly in the storytelling process. This was common for both backbone and embedded narratives. For example, Berns (2013), whose weight is only 50 pounds due to his chronic illness, says that his parents and teachers created a drum that he was able to carry and play in the marching band. While he was telling this story, there was a

photo of him playing that drum at the performance, which creates the setting for that narrative episode (46).

(46) I'm Sam, and I just turned 17. A few years ago, before my freshman year in High School, I wanted to play snare drum in the Foxboro High School Marching Band. However, >and it was a dream that I just had to accomplish<. But each snare drum and harness, weighed about <40 pounds each.> And I have a disease called Progeria,? So just to give you an idea, I weigh only about 50 pounds. So, logistically, I really couldn't carry a regular sized snare drum. And because of this the band director assigned me to play (.) pit percussion during the halftime show. Now pit percussion was fun,? It involved some really cool (.) auxiliary percussion instruments, ((pictures of the instruments appear on the slide)) like <the bongos, timpani, and timbales, and cowbell> ((name the pictures on the slide)). So it was fun. Ah (.) but it involved no marching, and I was just (.) so devastated. However, (.) nothing was going to stop me from playing snare drum with the marching band (.) in the halftime show. So my family and I, worked with an engineer, to design (.) a: ((a picture of a blueprint appears on the slide)) (.) snare drum harness, that would be lighter, and easier for me to carry. And so, after continuous work, ((a picture of a designed drum appears on the slide)) ah we made a snare drum apparatus that weighs only about 6 pounds. (Berns, 2013)

Veitch (2015), while giving a talk on correspondence with a spammer, used a slide template like an email window on which the lines from the actual emails he received would appear. Such details contribute to creating the setting of the story and make it more vivid as if the correspondence is going on right now and both the speaker and the audience is an addresser of these emails.

In conclusion, the analysis has revealed that every speaker in the sampled TED Talks uses at least one narrative in their TED talks, reaching the maximum of seven narratives per talk. In the sampled TED Talks, narratives are represented in two forms which are 'backbone' narratives that serve as a spine for some of the TED Talks, and numerous relatively short embedded narratives positioned in the body of the talk. Most of the narratives follow Labov's diamond-shape narrative model, however, the narrative elements are often compressed or merged in the embedded stories. The five 'backbone' narratives were parsed using 31 Propp's

narratemes, however, only 22 narratemes were identified with an average number of 11.2. Five functions of the stories have been identified in the TED Talks which are story framework, self-introduction/introduction to the topic, argument proposal, support for the proposed argument, and additional function shared by most of the narratives, jokes. Additional findings demonstrate the interaction between some embedded narratives, as well as, the seemingly important role of visuals in supporting narratives in the TED Talks.

I will discuss the most important results in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results obtained from this narrative analysis study demonstrate that storytelling is an essential component of the TED Talk genre. All presenters in the sampled TED Talks used storytelling to some extent: while some only included a three-clause long anecdotal story, others built their entire talk around a story of their professional or personal experience. This finding supports Thompson's (2002) and Mauranen's (2013) argument that narratives have found new niches in the transition from academic to non-academic context in the form of presentations for wider audiences.

As the present study aimed to identify the common structural patterns of the narratives used in the TED Talk, two main types of the narratives have been found. First, the narratives that go through the entire narrative as a backbone and can also interweave other elements, such as comments, arguments, and side episodes without losing the thread. Second, relatively short embedded stories were used for various purposes in the TED Talks. The results echo those of Mauranen (2013), who studies structures of the narrative used in academic presentations and distinguishes two main types of narratives, which are a 'general temporal sequence' (the one with a 'backbone' structure) and a 'starter sequence' followed by a body, that can take up to a third or half of the presentation. The backbone story that has been identified by Mauranen correlates to Anderson's (2016) description of "a great story" (2016: 65), in which the narrator is the experiencer in a story, and the narrative frames the talk around the speaker's own story, in which the protagonist meets an obstacle in the beginning, attempts to overcome it, leading to a

climax, and then a denouement. Thus, the backbone story represents a frame to the topic rather than the topic itself.

While five out of the ten sampled TED Talks match the general temporal sequence described by Mauranen (2013), the realization of other narratives goes beyond the starter sequence. Only three out of the ten TED Talks begin with a distinct narrative and introduce the speaker and/or the topic of the talk. Most of the embedded narratives were used in the body of the TED Talks and served to other functions, which will be discussed further in this chapter. Thus, TED Talks, while sharing the features of an academic genre, integrate more narrative elements in the talk representing a quasi-academic genre.

The main instrument to parse the stories in the sampled TED Talks was Labov's diamond-shape model for oral narratives. All the stories were coded using six narrative elements (abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda) and the analysis demonstrated that in the majority of cases, the narratives matched Labov's model with minor exceptions. For example, the coda was omitted or shared by two narratives with a similar message. Another finding shows that embedded narratives are often compressed and that is why sometimes one and the same sentence can share the functions of two narrative elements, for example, abstract and orientation. Such compression also makes structural elements more simplified and fused, for example, one and the same clause can be both abstract and orientation. In embedded stories, because of the colloquial manner of storytelling, narrative elements are relatively short and simple too. For instance, the abstract may not give a summary of a story but simply says, "I'm gonna start with this." (Brown, 2010)

Another finding of mine shows that embedded stories in a TED Talk are not always about incidents that actually happened but also about the ones that may not have (Bamberg &

Georgakopoulou, 2008). While elaborating his point about the suppression of children's creativity in the society, Robinson (2006) imagines William Shakespeare as a 7-year-old boy being scolded by his father and English teacher (10). Similarly, Urban (2016) introduces his humorous theory about what is going on in the brain of a procrastinator through a story with fictional characters. This strategy also gives the story a humorous tone while suggesting a thought-provoking argument.

The most common plot development elements in a TED Talk story were identified using Propp's (1928) narratemes. At first sight, Propp's narratemes (1928) derived from folktales may seem inapplicable to public speaking discourse; however, the TED Talks built on backbone narratives turned out to match the plot turning points described by Propp. While in folktale discourse the hero searches for a magic object or struggles to battle the villain, TED Talk presenters in their stories seek for the answers to their research questions, overcome challenges in their studies, get tested on their claims, and become transformed both personally and professionally by their findings. The distribution of 22 out of 31 narratemes suggests that in the most common plot pattern, the speaker is a protagonist and a hero of a story who leaves on a mission (answer the research questions), faces challenges to prove their heroic qualities (such as professional skills, creative thinking, and perseverance), responds to the challenges faced. In the end, the hero finds the answer to the research question and, finally, often transforms personally and professionally. Thus, this scenario represents a common model for knowledge dissemination through a personal story of the presenter.

Based on narrative dimensions suggested Ochs and Capps (2001) for narratives of personal experience, both embedded and backbone narratives in the sampled TED Talks were analyzed in order to determine the features of these personal narratives. Based on the suggested

binary characteristics, the majority of narratives of personal experience exhibited the following cluster of characteristics: one active teller, highly tellable account, relatively embedded in surrounding talk, linear temporal and causal organization, and a certain, constant moral stance.

Parallel to the academic presentation discourse analyzed by Mauranen (2013), the protagonist in a quasi-academic discourse in the TED Talk genre can be expressed by either “me” as an individual, usually it is a speaker himself/herself, or “us” as a group. In five sampled talks with a backbone structure, the protagonist was a research project that did not “fall apart within a decade”, “survived” and taught the research group a number of lessons (Waldinger, Talk 10). Similarly, an idea or a theory may be explained through a story with fictional characters. In his TED Talk, Tim Urban explains his vision of what is going on in a procrastinator’s brain with a story about the Rational Decision-Maker, the Gratification Monkey, and the Panic Monster who meet up at the Dark Playground and determine whether a person is going to work or procrastinate. Thereby, the findings prove that the concept of the protagonist in quasi-academic discourse is flexible and it can be expressed by various personalities and entities.

Most of the linguistic features that single out a story in the speech (e.g., Bauman, 1986; Biber, 1988; Grieve et al., 2011) found their representation in the sampled TED Talks. Such features are associated with the narrative style include, for instance, verbs in the past, synthetic negation, deictic forms to narratives, first person pronouns, activity verbs, progressive aspect, and various ways to resent others’ words. Interestingly, the variety of possible verbs of communication was simplified and limited to ‘said’ and ‘was like’ that possibly contributed to a more informal, familiar atmosphere between the speaker and helped to better understand the concepts the speaker conveys, as noted by Scotto di Carlo (2015).

Visuals turned out to play an important role in storytelling in the TED Talk genre. While eight out of ten TED Talks speakers used slides as a visual aid in their talks, four of these presenters also employed them directly in the storytelling process in both backbone and embedded narratives. For example, Cameron Russell shows the unrealistic image that was built by fashion professionals and photo-editors by juxtaposing her pictures as a fashion model in a studio to her natural image in daily-life situations. She does not have to give many details in her narrative as the pictures speak for themselves. Similarly, Sam simply mentions that his parents and teachers managed to create a snare drum that he would be able to carry and play in the marching band, while the photo of him playing that drum at the performance puts the setting for that narrative episode. James Veitch (Talk 3), when giving a talk on correspondence with a spammer, creates the setting of the story and makes it more vivid by using a slide template like an email window. One of the few researchers who studies storytelling through information visualization in TED Talks in particular is Badawood (2012). However, her main focus is on data-driven stories, which is one of the aspects of visuals.

This study attempted to point out and describe the functions that stories can perform in a TED Talk based on their position in relation to other parts of the talk. The analysis revealed that the stories in the sampled TED Talks served as a framework of a talk (mainly TED Talks with a backbone structure), self-introduction and/or an introduction to the topic, argument proposal, and support for the proposed argument (see Figure 4). There was no research found on that topic; thus, this classification is a first attempt to arrange narratives as a rhetorical tool and it may need further investigation.

The role of humor in TED Talks was broadly discussed in the literature review (Frobert-Adamo, 2002; Holmes & Marra, 2004; Ludewig, 2017; Mattiello, 2017; Thompson, 2002) and it

was also given attention in the present study. Despite the relatively formal format of the TED Talk conference, the speakers often make humorous and ironic comments in their stories (for example, “When I was a student, if you had a degree, you had a job. If you didn't have a job, it's because you didn't want one. And *I* (.) didn't want one, frankly.” (Robinson, 2006). Ludewig (2017) refers to anecdotes and humor as rhetorical tools, arguing that they are characteristic of the TED Talk genre. The analysis of functions that narratives perform in the TED Talk has revealed that 15 out of 24 embedded stories can be described as humoristic, ironic, or witty. According to Thompson (2002) and Frobert-Adamo (2002), jokes are aimed to involve the audience by arousing their interest and sympathy as well as generate enthusiasm and support for the speaker's point. For that reason, jokes were identified as one of the functions that narratives can perform in a TED Talk along with the other four.

Unexpectedly, the structural analysis of embedded narratives revealed that stories can interact and influence each other in the talk text. For example, stories can unfold one from another as in a nesting doll and cross over in the conclusion or in the speaker's thesis statement (Robinson, 2006). Such structure makes the argument sound more reliable and persuasive.

Another interesting example was identified in Talk 4 in which two stories were shaped by parallelism and compared in the end (Sinek, 2009). Such structure reminds me of some sort of a parable about good and bad which seeks to enlighten the audience like previous generations used to do with the help of storytelling. This finding supports the idea that quasi-academic discourse can include a wider spectrum of genres in the form of a story.

In conclusion, in this chapter I have discussed the most important findings from my investigation: the two common structural patterns of the narratives used in a TED Talk, the structural features of narratives according to Labov's diamond-shape model, the most common

plot development narratemes suggested by Propp, the nature of the protagonist, linguistic features of narratives, the functions they perform in a TED Talk and the way they can interact and influence each other.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the importance of my findings and suggest ideas for future research.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this thesis was to investigate whether TED Talk speakers use storytelling in the sampled talks. The total number of stories in the ten TED Talks analyzed is 29; the average number of stories per talk is 2.9. However, my findings suggest that the number, length, and functions of these narratives vary from talk to talk.

My second and third research questions focused on how narratives in the sampled TED Talks were structured. My analysis has revealed that two types of narratives go through a TED Talk as a ‘backbone,’ and frame the talk around a single story (five talks out of ten), and embedded narratives intertwine into the talk flow or right into a backbone story as a side narrative (24 embedded narratives in total). Findings of this study demonstrate that in the majority of cases, the identified narratives match Labov’s diamond-shape model, with minor exceptions, in which the coda is omitted or shared by two narratives with a similar message. Another finding of mine shows that embedded narratives are often compressed, and sometimes one and the same sentence shares the functions of two narrative elements, for example, abstract and orientation.

Analysis of the identified narratives based on Propp’s narratemes answered the fourth research question on the most common plot development elements in a TED Talk story. In the sampled TED Talks with a backbone structure, 22 out of 31 narratemes were identified. Their distribution suggests that in the most common plot pattern, the speaker is a protagonist who leaves on a mission (answer the research questions), gets challenged to prove their heroic

qualities (such as professional skills, creative thinking, and perseverance), and responds to the challenges faced. In the end, the hero finds the answer to the research question and often transforms personally and professionally. Thus, this scenario represents a common model for knowledge dissemination through the personal story of the presenter.

Another conclusion drawn from this study is that narratives can interact or influence each other in a TED Talk. Interestingly, stories can grow one from another as a “nesting doll” (see Figure 5) or cross over in the conclusion or in the speaker’s thesis statement. There is also a remarkable example that identified how two stories can be built on parallelism and be compared in the end.

Finally, I attempted to point out and describe the functions that stories can perform in a TED Talk based on their position in relation to other parts of the talk. The analysis suggests that the stories in the sampled TED Talks serve as a framework of a talk (mainly TED Talks with a backbone structure), a self-introduction and/or a brief introduction to the topic, an illustration to strengthen a proposed argument that can precede or follow the thesis statement, or a joke (see Figure 4).

6.1 Limitations of the study

The present study was performed based on a rather small corpus (ten TED Talks). Different results and insights might have been yielded if the corpus had been larger. In addition, the corpus was built on the most popular TED Talks; however, some of them were organized independently as TEDx events and those presenters did not have the same type of training prior to speech delivery as the ones from an official annual TED conference. Findings could have been more homogeneous and the overall structure of a standard TED Talk could have been identified if the corpus contained only TED Talks from the original TED Talk conferences. Also, the

gender distribution of participants is rather uneven (7 males and 3 females) and was not brought to a perfect balance. Keeping the balance or focusing on a particular gender could have contributed to clearer data and provided a better picture of the overall choice and characteristics of narratives used in a talk.

6.2 Further research

Suggestions for further research include the construction of a larger corpus, or, more specifically, a corpus with an even gender and topic distribution. A large scope would probably extend our vision of how stories are built and embedded in a speech. The findings of narrative structure and functions from this study could be compared to the ones found in a larger corpus.

Comparisons between narratives in male and female talks might help us better understand, for instance, how the talk is shaped depending on the speaker's gender; or to the contrary, unified as a genre for all TED presenters. Therefore, any comparative studies whose aim is to investigate narrative features depending on TED Talk subject's gender are encouraged.

This study showed that visual aids often take part in the process of narration, therefore, the field of narratology may need more studies on how visuals intertwine in quasi-academic discourse and in a TED Talk specifically.

Another future research suggestion concerns focusing on non-verbal features of narratives. Studying not only verbal but also non-verbal aspects of a story delivery would give a new perspective on storytelling in public speeches, as well as suggest guidelines on how to incorporate narratives in a TED Talk or other genres of quasi-academic discourse more effectively.

6.3 Significance of the study

The purpose of this study was to fill the gap in the niche of narrative analysis of a quasi-academic discourse. As there has been a limited number of studies done on narratives in a quasi-academic discourse like a TED Talk, the present study aimed to suggest for the field of narratology a new direction for narrative analysis and offer a different platform to investigate narrative practices. TED Talk, as a genre, suggests a new way of knowledge dissemination and can be used as a model for lecturers and instructors on how to adapt their content to a non-specialist audience using various instruments, including storytelling. From this perspective, the findings on how TED Talk speakers share their research or professional experience using stories can serve as a role model or a guide for those who need to give a public speech to non-experts.

Another contribution of the present study is the description of a talk with a backbone story structure. While Anderson (2016) and Mauranen (2013) give a brief portrayal of what it looks like, this study analyzes the personality of a protagonist and common plot components through the lens of Propp's narratemes. The findings of the present thesis could also contribute to the re-thinking of famous narrative models such as the ones of Labov and Propp. They proved to be applicable not only to spontaneous oral narratives of personal experiences or folktale discourse respectively but to a broader variety of genres.

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VITA

Iuliia Rychkova

EDUCATION

Non-degree (2017-2018), The University of Mississippi.

M.A. in Teaching Foreign Languages (2016-2018), Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University, Russia. Thesis title: “Enhancing the rhetorical competence of undergraduate students with blogging.”

B.A. in Teaching English and French as a Second Language (2011-2016), Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University, Russia. Thesis title: “Storytelling in teaching vocabulary to L2 English middle school students.”

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Graduate Teaching Assistant of Russian, Department of Modern Languages, The University of Mississippi (2018-present). Responsibilities include: co-teaching Russian 111, 211, 399, independently teaching Russian 201, 299 classes, leading extra-curricular activities in Russian.

Graduate Teaching Assistant of Phonology, Department of Modern Languages, The University of Mississippi (spring semester 2019). Responsibilities include: grading.

Volunteer Instructor at the Community English as a Second Language classes, The University of Mississippi (March, 2019). Responsibilities include: facilitating English for adult learners of intermediate language proficiency level.

Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant of Russian, The University of Mississippi (2017-2018). Responsibilities include: tutoring, co-teaching, grading, leading the daily Russian conversation table meetings.

Teacher of English and French, Language School “Journey”, Novosibirsk, Russia (2016-2017). Responsibilities include: teaching school students and adults.

EFL Teacher, Language School “Tip-Top”, Novosibirsk, Russia (2015-2016).
Responsibilities include: teaching primary and middle school students.

EFL Intern, Regional Specialized Boarding School for Gifted Children named after N.Nurmakov, Karaganda, Kazakhstan (November-December, 2014). Responsibilities include: Assisting professors with teaching English, lesson planning, organizing school performances.

PUBLICATIONS

Rychkova, I. (2019). A pen pals project in L2 Russian class. *Mississippi Foreign Language Association (MFLA) Crusader*, 67(2), 13-15.

Rychkova, I. (2015). Storytelling technology in teaching foreign languages. Proceedings from the IV All-Russian student conference with international participation: *The Youth of The XXI Century: Education, Science, Innovation*, 5, (pp. 181-183). Novosibirsk, Russia: Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University.

Rychkova, I. (2015). The problem of grammatical homonymy in the English language. Proceedings from the IV All-Russian student conference with international participation: *The Youth of The XXI Century: Education, Science, Innovation*, 5, (pp. 179-181). Novosibirsk, Russia: Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University.

Khoroshilova S., & Rychkova, I. (2014). The vowel system of modern British pronunciation: monophthongs. Proceedings from international online conference: *Current Problems of Philology and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages*, 1, (pp. 150-155). Novosibirsk, Russia: Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

The Revival of Pen Pals in L2 classroom. Paper presented at Mississippi Foreign Language Association, Starkville, Mississippi (November, 2019).

The Second Wave of Pen Pals. Paper presented at the 21st Annual Conference of Central Association of Russian Teachers of America, Albuquerque, New Mexico (April, 2019).

Blogging as an Educational Tool for Second Language Teaching. Paper presented at Mississippi Foreign Language Association, Hattiesburg, Mississippi (November, 2018).

Teaching Foreign Languages and Teacher Training in Russia: The Case of Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University. Paper presented at Mississippi Foreign Language Association, University, Mississippi (November, 2017).

AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS

Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Scholarship, Mississippi, the USA (August, 2017 – May, 2018).

Enhanced State Academic Scholarship for Academic Achievements, Novosibirsk, Russia (February, 2013; October, 2014; February, 2015; October, 2015; February, 2016).

The Nadezhda Kuzbassa (The Hope of the Kuzbass region) medal, awarded to citizens under the age of 18 who have shown outstanding abilities and achieved significant results in social activities, Kemerovo, Russia (December, 2010).

LANGUAGES

Russian (Native speaker)

English (Superior)

French (Advanced)

Spanish (Intermediate)