

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking as a form of “formal oral monologue” (Rosette-Crake, 2019, p. 39) covers a wide variety of communication practices, from formal speeches to informal presentations. Each context produces distinct language patterns, follows a particular format, and interacts uniquely with paralinguistic elements, such as delivery and staging, thus creating different genres. Genre is then defined as “a staged, goal-oriented social process” (Martin et al., 1987, as cited in Iedema, 1995, p. 257). Furthermore, with the rise of online video as “the second great driver of the renaissance in public speaking” (Anderson, 2016, p. 227), more diverse formats have quickly developed and established the “new oratory” (Rosette-Crake, 2019). Besides emphasizing the visual experience, the use of language reflecting a less hierarchical relationship between the audience and speakers, i.e., “conversationalization” (Fairclough, 1994, as cited in Rosette-Crake, 2019, p. 43), defines this form of this contemporary form of public speaking. This genre is particularly evident in TED Talks, as reflected by the term “talk” rather than “speech.”

While once highlighting the fields of technology, entertainment, and design (as the acronym suggests), present talks have included more diverse thought-provoking topics that can be addressed by speakers across the board in independently organized TEDx conferences. Still, an interesting subject matter by itself is not enough to keep the audience engaged; there has to be a clear structure that effectively develops it (Anderson, 2016). To understand how TEDx Talks are realized in stages to reach their goal, systemic functional linguistics (SFL), which treats language as “a meaning-making resource” (Halliday, 1978, as cited in Szenes, 2022), is adopted as the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

In SFL studies, dialogues are more highly researched since the meaning-making process, which can be identified from the interlocutors’ responses, is clearer. Interaction in the classroom is often studied, focusing on how participants, i.e., students and instructors, adopt appropriate roles in the knowledge construction processes to achieve various instructional goals (Åhman & Jeppsson, 2020; Bukit & Naipospos, 2021; Danielsson et al., 2023; DeJarnette, 2022; Digruher, 2019; Farahat, 2020; Farangi et al., 2024; Fattany, 2022; Febriyanti & Rozelin, 2024; Kuswoyo et al., 2021; Mulatsih & Yuliasri, 2021; Sun et al., 2024; Thwaite et al., 2020; Yang & Yin, 2022; Yonata, 2021). The trend in recent studies on monologue, such as public speaking, is examining speeches delivered by prominent figures in terms of how certain rhetorical devices are used to reflect on the prevailing socio-political situations to create a sense of unity among their audience (Adriyadi et al., 2020; AlAfnan, 2022; Aliffudin & Cahyono,

2023; Ashiq et al., 2021; Darong, 2021; Darong, 2022; Gea, 2024; Hadifi, 2023; Hardiyanti et al., 2023; Insiadah, 2024; Malkawi & Fareh, 2023; Megah & Noor, 2021; Mushtaq et al., 2020; Saleem et al., 2023; Wardani, 2021).

Beyond linguistics, public speaking is often researched through the scope of psychology. A considerable amount of research has already been conducted on how the fear of public speaking affects a speaker's distress tolerance and speech quality (Ahmad et al., 2022; Antolović et al., 2023; Dansieh et al., 2021; Gallego et al., 2021; Grieve et al., 2021; Syahfutra & Wibowo, 2021; Tsang, 2020, Wijaya, 2024) with recommended strategies provided to help speakers manage their emotional responses. The use of technologies such as virtual reality (VR) devices and artificial intelligence (AI) assistants to help overcome stage fright is also increasingly being studied (Fehlmann et al., 2023; Gruber & Kaplan-Rakowski, 2020; Lindner et al., 2020; Premkumar et al., 2021; Reeves et al., 2021; Shazly, 2021; Valls-Ratés et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2020).

While much has been explored on content delivery and audience engagement in public speaking, less attention has been given to the structural and functional aspects that contribute to the effectiveness of speeches (e.g., Kraisriwattana & Poonpon, 2021; Noermanzah et al., 2019; Sukarno & Salikin, 2022). Thus, to fill this gap, this study looks into how meaning unfolds in stages through embedding genres to achieve a particular goal. The five most popular TEDx talks with the "how-to" theme are chosen as the research object because they are among the most popular ideas worth spreading (Anderson, 2016). Drawing on SFL-related theories, this paper will conclude with the argument that embedding genres in stages plays a role in extending the meaning of "how-to" TEDx talks. Thus, this research builds on and extends current research into generic structure potential and meaning potential in SFL, offering insights into the linguistic strategies that contribute to the success of these TEDx talks.