

TED TALKS: ON THE WAY TO A SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION

The importance of public speaking skills in the 21st century cannot be emphasised enough. We live in a highly competitive world in which our academic success depends significantly on our public speaking performance.

Academic presentations are important and at the same time challenging tasks for learners of English as a foreign language. To start with, the lack of confidence in their public speaking skills prevents high school students from participating in scientific conferences, debates, MUN (Model United Nations) conferences, thus, limiting their opportunities to practise their English beyond the regular class topics and assignments. Moreover, public speaking skills can prepare school graduates for university, and are extremely important for career success in later life.

From what has been expounded above, the aim of the research is to carry out the move analysis of TED talks and prove that understanding of the rhetorical structure of TED talks can assist learners in creating and delivering a successful presentation.

The research is based on two move models: a move model for the scientific conference presentations (Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas, 2005), and a model of corpus-based analysis of TED talks (Yu-jung Chang, 2015). The spoken data used for the research comprise 5 talks given at TED conferences on different topics (science, language, ecology, communication) by native speakers.

After selecting the talks for analysis, the functional/communicative components were identified in the presentations. The existing move types were applied to the given presentations. Some move steps were adapted, and some steps such as *Outline structure* established by existing research were not found in the chosen presentations. The move analysis of the talks identified five move types and sixteen steps.

To practically test the results of the research the following experiment has been conducted. After watching a TED talk the students of the 10th and 11th “L” forms were asked to choose a topic and create a talk. At this stage no plan/structure of the talk was given. As a result, only half of the students managed to cope with the task. The results of a survey showed that the lack of structure was one of the problems which prevented

the students from creating a talk. At the final stage of the experiment the students analyzed the talks working with the handouts based on the results of the research.

Moves and Steps in TED talk “Why I must speak out about climate change”

Move	Step
Listener orientation	
Topic introduction	Set the scene
	Announce topic
Speaker presentation	Establish authority
	Show stance/position
Topic development	Present an argument
	Offer an explanation
	Describe a process/consequences
Closure	Make an offer
	Call for action
	Gratitude

An interesting observation here is that understanding the structure not only helped the students to create their own talks but it also motivated them and increased their interest in the process.

The summary of the research carried out allows us to come to the following conclusions:

- TED talks presentations have a complex non-linear rhetorical structure. The order of moves and steps is not fixed.
- TED talks are both informational and entertaining normally with a strong emotional appeal. Personal life stories can be used both at the beginning and at the end of the talk. At the beginning of the talk we can use them to introduce the topic and emphasise its importance. While at the end of the talk personal life stories can be used to change the audience’s outlook on the topic discussed. All moves of the talks are interactive and listener oriented.

Thus, the conducted research proves that understanding the rhetorical structure of TED talks can assist learners in creating and delivering a successful presentation.