



A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS AND DELIVERY STRATEGY ON TED TALKS

Ildi Kurniawan

Universitas Bengkulu, Indonesia

Corresponding email: ildikurniawan@unib.ac.id

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to describe the comments and its delivery strategy on the speech entitled "Do Schools Kill Creativity?" by Sir Ken Robinson on TED.com. The data of this research were 50 comments of the videos (2016-2020) which contained comments on speaker or talk style not relating to talk content. This research adopted the comment theory analysis by Tsou, A. et.al (2014). Coding process and content analysis was used to see delivery strategy by the speaker. The findings of the research showed that from the total of the comments, there were 38 comments on speaker delivery, then followed by comment on praise and criticism of speaker, 13 and 2 comments, respectively. There was no comment on both personal anecdote and other comments on the speaker. Also, from the comments on speaker delivery, it was revealed that the comments on the quality of delivery were attractive, sincere, knowledgeable, fluent, accurate, effective, and efficient. Finally, it was also found that both verbal and non-verbal delivery strategies were used very well by the speaker in his speech.

Keywords: rhetorical, comment, delivery, TED talk

INTRODUCTION

When the researcher was searching one of the videos on TED.com, the researcher found an interesting video which gained its position as one of the top videos on the website. In the video, the audience looked like enjoying the event; they laughed, clapped their hands, and gave standing applause at the end. However, the speaker did not have any special slides like others; he just delivered a talk with some jokes. Surprisingly, the video has been seen many times globally and recently has reached almost five thousand comments from viewers. Then it raised questions why this video has so many comments and why people gave comments on it. This, as a matter of fact, caused me to find out this study, seeking the answer for my curiosity.

In term of commenting on video, the comments are not only limited to expression of like and dislikes but also “care what other people think about what they have created” (Rogers, 2017 p.6). Rogers emphasizes that the comments could be a way for commenters to feel connected with the videos. Meanwhile for both platforms and speakers, the comments can be medium to see how good they work on the videos, and to check how well the speakers when they deliver a speech, respectively. However, the problems are how delivery strategy can attract people giving comments and how audiences’ comments can measure speaker’s delivery strategy on the speech.

Previous studies such as Tsou, A.et. al (2014) have examined on audience’s comments on TED Talks video which were posted on TED.com and on YouTube to see the differences between the comments from the two platforms and presenter characteristics. Other studies both focus on classification of comments which are based some criteria that participants have posted (Santiago, 2014) and how comments’ tools can pave the way for commenters to get closed with the speakers (Rogers, 2017). On the other hand, Porter (2019) emphasizes to retheorize a rhetorical theory of delivery for internet-based communications. However, a study on how a comment and a delivery strategy on the video interconnected on one speaker’s speech has less attention among scholars. Certainly, there was a research concerning with analyzing audience, yet it was about relationship between writer-audience not speaker-audience relationship like in this study (Park, 1986). Moreover, some researchers, for examples, just did a rhetorical analysis on certain speech by famous figures (Maguire, 2014; Stewart, 2012; Solmsen, 1938). Another researcher, on the other hand, did a rhetorical analysis to see its significance to rhetoric and composition field (Allen & Flynn, 2016), meanwhile, the others just gave an explanation about digital rhetoric or analyze the visual rhetoric on digital writing scope (Hocks, 2003) and visual rhetoric in advertisement (Mcquarrie & Mick, 1999). Therefore, in this research, the researcher proposes two research questions namely: 1) What comments (not related to content) are depicted from the audience on the talk particularly on its delivery? 2) What types of delivery strategy are used by the speaker when delivering a speech on the talk? By identifying those research questions above, thus, the purpose of this case study is to describe the comments and its delivery strategy on the speech entitle “Do Schools Kill Creativity? by Sir Ken Robinson on TED.com.

METHODS

The method of this research is a case study. A case study was used because this was suitable with the topic and it was in line with statement of Creswell and Poth (2018) who said, “In the case study, the investigator/researcher explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection

involving multiple sources of Information, and report a case description and case themes". The type of case study applied here was intrinsic case study which tried to describe one of videos on TED.com which has attracted many people around the globe to watch and give a comment. The focus was on the case itself because the case presents an unusual or unique situation. Then, the objective of this case study was to illustrate a unique case, a case that has unusual interest and of itself and needs to be described and detailed (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Because the case has its uniqueness, therefore, the researcher described it in detail about the speaker of video in term of delivery strategy and comments from the viewers or participants available under the video on the website.

In this research, the data were originally obtained from a video on www.TED.com entitled "Do Schools Kill Creativity?" by Sir Ken Robinson. The reason to choose this video is because this one is the first place of the most popular talks of all times on TED website with more than sixty-four million views. Also, this video has the highest comments from audiences (4899 comments) since it was firstly launched in 2006. The data of this research were comments from the audience on the video. However, due to time constraint, the researcher just collected 50 comments purposively from 2016-2020. The comments were taken if they were non-related on content and in English only. Then, the video was also observed by filling out the observation lists which was aimed to see speaker's delivery strategy while speaking. The data were stored on computer and had a special folder for the downloaded data and classify the comments from each participant with anonymous name of folders.

Data Analysis Procedures

Tsou, A. et.al (2014) categorizes the comments into eight types. Type 1 is comment on speaker or talk style not relating to talk content; type 2 is comment on talk; type 3 is other interaction with previous commenter with no discussion of talk content; type 4 is meta comment about TED itself; type 5 is spam (irrelevant, marketing or promotional not related to talk) ; type 6 is self-promotion (related to talk); type 7 is other (something in the comment that does not match any of the above categories) and type 8 is pointer (comment contains citation, hyperlink, book/article title or other pointer to external information).

However, this research adopted the type 1 comment only. This model of content analysis was taken since it described fully about the way how to categorize the comments into subcategories which helped the researcher easily to identify the types of the comments which focus on delivery. Table 1 shows the example of how to code the comments.

Table: 1 Theme and its categories

Theme	Categories	Code
Comment on speaker or talk style not relating to talk content	Personal anecdote (self-identification with speaker)	1a
	Criticism of speaker (not the talk or message)	1b
	Praise of speaker (not the talk or video)	1c
	Comment on speaker demographics	1d
	Other comment on speaker	1e
	Comment on speaker delivery/style (with or without praise or criticism)	1f

Table: 2 The coding processes

Audience Number	Participants' comments	Open Code	Subcategories	Categories	Code
24	Sir Ken Robinson's argument on how schools kill the creativity of its students is valid. Schools are teaching kids that nothing less of perfect will do and that mistakes will destroy your future in getting an education or job. This stigma is toxic and incorrect, mistakes allow people to grow and develop their knowledge. Education isn't just mathematics and English; education includes the fine arts and sports. Studies on the brain have shown that people who participate in music, dance, band, sports, etc, are smarter and less stressed. However, a "core class" teacher who sees a student drawing or singing in their classroom would view it as a distraction, but if you place a kid in the fine	"... Robinson's use of humor and rhetorical questions..." Code EP, Year of 2017)	Humor and rhetorical questions	Comment on Speaker Delivery	1f

arts their talent will be embraced and uplifted. *Robinson's use of humor and rhetorical questions proves that core classes are tearing down students and in turn killing their creativity.* (Code EP, Year of 2017)

To identify what types of delivery strategy imposed by the speakers in his speech, the researcher analyzed it by using the characteristics of two types of delivery strategy proposed by Thomson and Rucker (2002) who defined some features for each type of delivery. The features of verbal delivery are the speaker's pace/speed that makes the speech understandable; the speaker's volume makes the speech understandable; the speaker is relaxed and comfortable when speaking; and the speaker uses her/his voice expressively. Meanwhile, the features of nonverbal delivery are the speaker's behaviors (i.e., gestures) are smooth; the speaker's eye contact adds to the speech effect; and the speaker uses his or her body expressively. From the features of delivery strategies above, the researcher adopted it into some indicators of delivery and made it into observation list to help identifying each characteristic of both verbal and nonverbal delivery. The example of observation sheet can be seen in the table 3

Table: 3 Observation Sheet

Video Title	Delivery Strategy						Reflective Notes
	Verbal		Nonverbal		Nonverbal		
	Pace/speed	Volume	Voice	Gestures	Eye Movement	Body Movement	

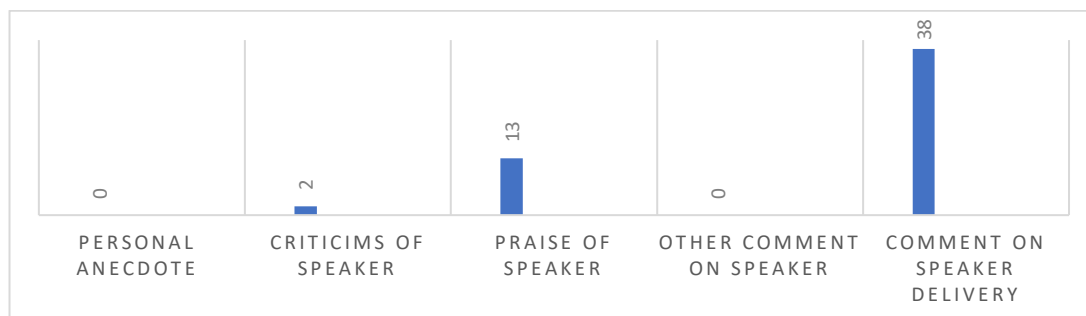
FINDINGS

In this research, there were two questions which needed to answer. They were: 1. What comments (not related to content) are depicted from the audience on the talk particularly on its delivery? 2. What types of delivery strategy are used by the speaker when delivering a speech on the talk?

What Comments (Not Related to Content) Are Depicted from The Audience on The Talk Particularly on Its Delivery?

Firstly, to answer the question 1, the overall comments which contained “non-related to content” were presented as follow.

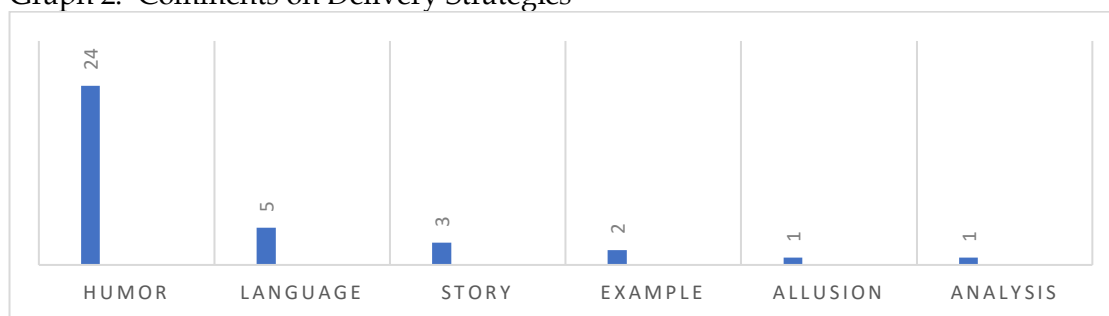
Graph 1. Overall result of Comments on Not Related to Content



From the graph above, the number of comments on speaker delivery was the highest one, 38 comments from the total sample, followed by comment on praise of speaker and criticism of speaker with 13 and 2 comments, respectively. There was no comment on personal anecdote or other comment on speaker. Also, it was found that there were three comments (see appendix Audience no. 4, 13 and 20) which contained comments on both praise speaker and on speaker delivery.

Meanwhile, after analyzing the audiences’ comment on its delivery strategy, it was found that the speaker used these following delivery strategies on his speech:

Graph 2. Comments on Delivery Strategies



From the graph 2, the speaker mostly used humor on his delivery strategy with 24 comments on it, then followed by the language, story, and example with 5, 3 and 2 comments, respectively. Besides, allusion and analysis were the least delivery strategy used by speakers with one comment for each.

What Types of Delivery Strategy Are Used by The Speaker When Delivering A Speech on The Talk?

For the second question, “What types of delivery strategy are used by the speaker when delivering a speech on the talk?”. The result of the analysis based on the observation sheet provided for this question was presented in the table 4.

Table: 4 Delivery strategy are used by the speaker

Video Title	Delivery Strategy						Reflective Notes
	Verbal			Nonverbal			
	Pace/speed	Volume	Voice	Gestures	Eye Movement	Body Movement	
Do Schools Kill Creativity?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	

From the table 4 above, it is clearly seen that the speaker used both verbal and nonverbal strategy while delivering his speech in front of his audience. Overall, in verbal strategy, the speaker totally has used normal pace, nice volume and clear sound and appropriate gestures. However, in nonverbal strategy, speaker did not use body movement very well but eye movement.

DISCUSSION

From the previous results, it was found that there were two types of comments on speaker delivery given by audiences: the quality of the delivery and the delivery strategy used by speaker. The comments on the quality of the delivery included attractive, sincere, and knowledgeable, fluent, accurate, effective, and efficient. Each of this category was taken from the statements or comments below:

- *Attractive delivery*

This comment from audience no.2 who said
 “This is definitely both an interesting and informative speech! The speaker's way of delivering the presentation really attracts me! He is a REAL public speaker! (JD,2020).

- *Sincere and knowledgeable delivery*

“Follow that! Sir Ken Robinson certainly knows how to make a speech.... it was delivered with sincerity.” (DP,2019)

- *Fluent delivery*

“...Robinson is able to fluently and eloquently deliver his speech with a balanced amount of comedy, gaining the audience's appeal in order to turn their attention to the issue of creativity...” (AN,2017)

- *Accurate and well delivery*

“Sir Ken Robinson's point that schools are killing creativity is very accurate and well delivered...” (JS,2017)

- *Effective and efficient delivery*

“...His delivery is effective and efficient, leaving the audience with a call to action- fix the broken system.” (AS,2016)

Also, from the comments, it is important for a public speaker to consider that a good delivery should contain those values and they are certainly found on Sir Ken Robinson's speech. Meanwhile, after analyzing the audiences' comment on its delivery strategy, it was found that the speaker used these following delivery strategies on his speech:

- *Humor*

From the comments, it was found that the speaker mostly used humor when delivering his speech. Some forms of humors described by audience could be in forms of comedy, irony, satire, sarcasm. Here are some comments regarding the use of humor:

“...Sir Ken Robinson relies on his use of comedic humor to make the audience laugh and ponder on the thoughts he left in their heads. Through the rhetorical questions and humor, he amplifies his idea that schools are based purely on core learning and are killing the creativity in children”. (TS,2016)

“...The rhetoric device Robinson continually uses throughout this Ted talk is humor. His sarcastic remarks throughout the speech keep the audience focused on the overall message, which is people need to piece back together a school system that encourages creativity, rather than kill it. (ES,2016)

“...Robinson does a wonderful job portraying that creativity should be a hierarchy to common core education through humor, irony and at points satire, as well as allusions...”. (CM,2016)

In addition, according to the audience, the use of the humor in delivering a speech could be specifically the way to: a) gain the audience's appeal to turn their attention to the issue (AN,2017); b) make speech fun to listen to and strengthens argument (AF,2017); c) keep audience not only

entertained but thinking. (JM, 2016)”; d) keep audiences engaged. (AL, 2016; AH,2016; DG,2016); e) make the speech flow more easily and to captivate the audience (DF, 2016; SS,2016); f) make the audience laugh and ponder on the thoughts he left in their heads. (TS,2016); g) allow the audience to feel comfortable and connect easier to speaker (JA,2016); h) keep the audience focused on what to say. (LR,2016)); i) make speaker familiar with the audience (LM,2016). Therefore, from that functions, it was clearly seen that the speakers successfully delivered his speech by giving some jokes or humors to get the audience’s attention and so the audience felt happy, comfortable, focused, and understood with the points delivered by the speaker.

•*Language*

In this context, it was found that some audience considered that the speaker used language skill as the strategy of delivering speech such as the use of rhetorical question, simple and concise language, device of ethos. Here are some examples of comments regarding this use.

“...Through the rhetorical questions and humor, he amplifies his idea that schools are based purely on core learning and are killing the creativity in children.”. (TS,2016). Then. the use of this rhetorical question is quite important for a public speaker as CC, 2016 mentions that “...Sir Ken Robinson most effectively uses rhetorical questions to support his argument...” (CC,2016).

“I would like to say that Sir Ken Robinson is a great public speaker as he uses simple and concise language to present his ideas...” (MR,2020)

“...The speaker uses the device of ethos by giving personal examples of his own son and sympathizing with the crowd...” (SR,2017)

•*Story*

Here, it was clearly seen that the audience stressed the importance of giving a story whether personal story or short story while delivering a speech since it could make listeners fun with speech and help listeners understand it. As mentioned by two audience below:

“...His use of humor and personal experiences makes his speech fun to listen to and also strengthens his argument...” (AF,2017)

“...Robinson utilizes much pathos in his audience via funny short stories to engage his listeners, making it easier for them to connect with his argument...” (JD, 2016)

• *Examples*

It was also important for speakers to support his or her arguments by giving some examples while they were giving his or her speech in public. These examples help audience understand the speech but bear in mind that the example should be valid and easy to understand by audience. Below are ample of audience’s comment concerning this issue:

“...Sir Ken Robinson's humorous examples keep the audience captivated and hungry for more throughout his presentation and his large ...range of examples provide ample support for his claim that schools are indeed killing creativity.” (SS,2016).

“...Robinson does an excellent job of keeping the audience engaged with his use of humor, while still providing valid examples for analysis of his point...” (AH,2016)

• *Allusion*

Audience also saw an allusion or a reference as an important strategy for speaker while delivering speech. Below were the comments from the audience regarding on this matter.

(“ ...Robinson does a wonderful job portraying that creativity should be a hierarchy to common core education through humor, irony and at points satire, as well as allusions. (CM,2016)

• *Analysis*

In this context, the speaker talked a lot about one of social life matters that is education system. By analyzing it and try to connect it with social life, it could be an interesting topic for audience to listen. Here was the example of audience’s comment on this issue.

“...Sir Ken Robinson gives a great blend of humor and an analysis of social relations to give an overview of education system...” (DK,2020)

Moreover, dealing with the delivery strategy are used by the speaker when delivering a speech on the talk, the researcher could summarize that both verbal and non-verbal delivery strategies were used successfully by the speaker in his speech to public. Take for examples, in term of verbal delivery

such as pace or speed, the speaker spoke in normal pace, so it was easy to follow. Further, the volume was nice that very word could be heard clearly including the voice or tone as well. With his British accents, the speech was totally unique and easy to understand. On the other hand, on non-verbal delivery strategy, especially body movement, the speaker did not move so much; mostly just standing in the center; no walking around. Therefore, it felt like rather boring to watch because the speaker was mostly staying in the middle of the stage.

However, for gestures and eyes contact, the speaker completely did a nice job. He used his hands and forefinger to express the ideas or to stress something important on his speech. Eyes contact to the audience also contributes a lot on his speech. The speaker was considerably good at getting attention from the audience by looking at them proportionally. Good lighting and zooming on the speaker's face also definitely helped audience to get connected with the speaker. Unfortunately, this speech was not equipped with a projector or slide displayed during this speech. However, this situation helped the audience not to get distracted. Thus, they could focus on the speaker only.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

From the result of the research above, there are some points that could be concluded. Firstly, it was found that there were two types of comments on speaker delivery given by audiences: the quality of the delivery and the delivery strategy used by speaker. The comments on the quality of the delivery included attractive, sincere, knowledgeable, fluent, accurate, effective, and efficient. Secondly, the speaker delivered the speech verbally and nonverbally with interesting jokes or humors. From the collected comments, almost all audience mentioned that the speech delivered by Sir Ken Robinson was very humorous. This led to the success of the speaker in delivering his speech to public. A speech could be entertaining and full of meaning for audience. Although the speech was not supported by any slides, the audience kept their attention connected with it. In short, delivery strategy is one of the main successful keys for anyone who wants to be a great speaker when speaking on the stage.

Limitations and Steps for Further Research

This research just covered 50 comments in the last four years (2016-2020) as sample, while the video itself has been published for many years ago (2006) and has almost 5000 comments globally. As a result, for the next researchers who are interested in doing the same thing, it is expected to include more comments from different periods. Moreover, the language of the comments

analyzed in this research is limited only in English. Therefore, looking at other comments written in other languages could be interesting facts to see. Then, the video has been translated into many languages. Therefore, knowing comments from diverse language would be beneficial for further researchers to consider. Furthermore, it is highly recommended for the next researchers to consider working with other experts (speaking skill experts or information, communication, and technology experts) when analyzing the video. Perhaps, the result of the analysis of the video will be great if the researcher can do that.

REFERENCES

- Allen, I., & Flynn, E. (2016). Barack Obama's Significance for Rhetoric and Composition. *College Composition and Communication*, 67(3), 465-469. Retrieved February 2, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24633889>
- Creswell, J and Poth, C (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*. Sage
- Hocks, M. (2003). Understanding Visual Rhetoric in Digital Writing Environments. *College Composition and Communication*, 54(4), 629-656. doi:10.2307/3594188
- Maguire, L (2014). "We Shall Fight": A Rhetorical Analysis of Churchill's Famous Speech. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 17(2), 255-286. doi:10.14321/rhetpublaffa.17.2.0255
- Mcquarrie, E., & Mick, D. (1999). Visual Rhetoric in Advertising: Text-Interpretive, Experimental, and Reader-Response Analyses. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26(1), 37-54. doi:10.1086/209549
- Park, D. (1986). Analyzing Audiences. *College Composition and Communication*, 37(4), 478-488. doi:10.2307/357917
- Porter, J.E. (2009). Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric. *Computers and Composition*. Volume 26, Issue 4, p. 207-224, doi.org/10.1016/j.compcom.2009.09.004. (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S8755461509000632>)
- Rogers, T. (2017). Understanding Public Perceptions of TED Talks: Influence and Impact of a Multi-platform, Multi-Venue Non-Profit Organization as a Communicative Space (Order No. 10271269). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1896118757). Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1896118757?accountid=12846>
- Santiago, N. (2015). Virtual public spheres: An investigation of virtual public sphere activity on TED talks (Order No. AAI1558755). Available from Sociological Abstracts. (1684425859; 201519277). Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1684425859?accountid=12846>

- Solmsen, F. (1938). Cicero's First Speeches: A Rhetorical Analysis. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 69, 542-556. doi:10.2307/283198
- Stewart, F. (2012). Exploring Afrocentricity: An Analysis of the Discourse of Barack Obama. *Journal of African American Studies*, 15(3), 269-278. Retrieved February 2, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43525493>
- Thomson, S., & Rucker, M. L. (2002). The development of a specialized public speaking competency scale: Test of reliability. *Communication Research Reports*, 67, 449459. doi: 10.1080/08824090209384828
- Tsou, A., Thelwall, M., Mongeon, P., & Sugimoto, C.R. (2014). A Community of Curious Souls: An Analysis of Commenting Behavior on TED Talks Videos. *PLoS ONE* 9(4): e93609. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.009360>