

Engaging the Audience: The Role of Attention-Getting Devices in Public Speaking

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Abstract

Catching audience attention while delivering a public speech is one of the most challenging tasks for a speaker. It is widely acknowledged by the public speaking textbooks that there are attention-getting devices (AGDs) such as story, humor, question etc. that engage the audience; nevertheless, empirical evidence from research is missing. This project states that although diverse AGDs exist, certain instances tend to be more frequent and effective. Therefore, the study analyzed the introductions of 100 most viewed TED Talks using content analysis, a systematic linguistic methodology, to investigate common AGD types and corresponding audience reaction. This involved coding 18 AGD categories, their frequency of appearance and corresponding audience reaction. Coded AGDs were categorized according to the handbook of rhetorical tools and the existing advertising research on linguistic devices by McQuarrie and Mick (1996) and Miller and Toman (2016). Some of the categories were further analyzed in terms of their deviation from conventional form and were classified as schemes (e.g., rhyme) and tropes (e.g., metaphor). To explain the frequency of devices and their effectiveness, especially that of schemes and tropes, Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration-likelihood model of persuasion was adapted, reflecting the level of cognitive elaboration required by the audience to process the message. The research findings challenged the initial assumption on device frequency by showing that AGDs do not usually appear as a single device in speech introduction and instead are used as a combination of several tools. Within these combinations, stories were the most frequently appearing category, while slogan, rhyme and paradox were the least frequent ones. Overall, this study fills an existing research gap of the public speaking field by providing empirical data on the AGD types appearing in TED Talks and especially their combinations.

Keywords: attention-getting device, AGD, TED Talk, speech, introduction, engagement.

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Introduction

Speaking to a large audience and sharing personal ideas seems to be an overwhelming task. Even if there is a clear idea to share, the confusion remains on how to introduce the speech in an engaging way. Catching the audience's attention becomes one of the main goals in public speaking. Although this might be a difficult task to achieve, successful public talks rely on certain techniques to engage the audience and deliver the message as clearly as possible. Lucas (2008), in his textbooks on public speaking, highlights how providing a structured introduction with a catchphrase is one such technique. Catchphrases, or in other words, attention-getting devices (AGDs), are linguistic expressions that speakers use to interest the audience from the outset and make a memorable first impression (e.g., a story or a question). Sometimes, AGDs directly show the purpose or theme of the speech and in other cases simply attract attention, which depends on the speaker's choice of linguistic expression itself. Similarly, according to Lundberg and Keith (2008) and their discussion of rhetoric, words should be “dressed up” within a speech, meaning that an intended idea should be suggested in an engaging way by an accurate choice of structures (p. 62). Wording is important, as the ideas are understood in a certain light depending on it (Lundberg & Keith, 2008, p. 62).

This perspective is widely held by rhetoric and public speaking textbooks, showing linguistic expressions as important additions to a speech. Potential speakers, therefore, are aware of possible AGDs and their role. Nevertheless, there is still limited empirical research in the public speaking field on AGD use. The analysis of what rhetoric tools attract more audience attention is not fully provided in the existing textbooks nor scholarly works. Meanwhile, similar fields such as advertising and media have extensively researched the way linguistic devices attract the audience's attention. To be specific, Miller & Toman (2016) in their research on corporate brand slogans, found that 91.6% of slogans contain at least one linguistic device to gain consumer attention, among which such common types as metaphors and irony were present. While there is a clear picture on the types of linguistic devices used in successful advertisements, the public speaking field lacks similar analysis.

Therefore, the present study suggests a systematic linguistic methodology, such as content analysis, to thoroughly investigate frequent and effective AGDs in real practice. Specifically, this study analyzed TED Talks, which are preorganized public speeches on diverse topics aimed at spreading powerful ideas among people. Overall, such analysis aims to fill a research gap in public speaking in the absence of actual speech analysis for AGD types and their ability to gather attention differently. By conducting this, the present study attempts to help future speakers identify a suitable linguistic tool to catch the audience's attention from the outset as well as improve their public speaking skills by making speech introduction more creative.

Literature Review

Current Perspectives on AGDs and Gaps in Public Speaking

Catching audience attention in public speaking is one of the main goals for a speaker, requiring a certain structure to fulfill this requirement (Lucas, 2008; Crick, 2011). Lucas (2008) in his textbooks on public speaking explains that the audience remembers the beginning and ending of the speech more, which requires them to be clear, memorable and unique. The introductory part, specifically, has to catch the audience's attention and reveal the upcoming topic in a distinct way, where one of the suggested techniques is choosing language that raises curiosity or puzzles the audience. In this regard, such devices as intriguing statements, rhetorical questions, stories and quotes are useful (Lucas, 2008; Crick, 2011). Importantly, these devices have to be addressed to the listeners directly, so as to make sure the topic was understood by them through these linguistic tools.

As is seen, it is widely acknowledged by the public speaking and rhetoric discussions that getting audience attention starts from the speech introduction with a proper word choice and tactic; however, it is also essential to analyze the suggestions of popular books that describe how to give a TED Talk, since they directly prepare speakers for their future public talks. Donovan (2013) in his discussion of TED-like speech delivery highlights that in order to catch audience attention in the first few seconds of the speech, the most impactful rhetorical devices should be used: story, shocking

statement, or question. In this sense, both Lucas (2008) and Donovan (2013) agree that it is critically important to create a connection with an audience, provoke the natural curiosity, trigger emotions and get instant reaction. Donovan (2013) acknowledges that in order to be in the “upper echelon of speakers”, a speech has to contain a catchphrase that will show the central idea. He shares four main strategies to create a catchphrase, such as its briefness, calling for action, starting with a verb and being rhythmic and so explains how to craft catchphrases in a way the audience remembers them. In a different section of his book, Donovan (2013) mentions the importance of provoking emotions in the audience through the speech, in order to build a strong bond between speakers and listeners and strengthen the engagement. This helps the audience to stay connected with one’s speech and immerse into it. Therefore, speakers need to make listeners participate in their stories, as imagining your own presence in a story helps to involve deeper and stay focused. A similar viewpoint is shared by Gallo (2014) showing that storytelling is one of the techniques providing a direct connection with the audience (p. 44). Owing to this, listeners are involved in the speech better and are inclined to support the speaker’s shared idea. It was exemplified that the majority of speeches conducted by the TED speaker with the longest ovation, were based on stories. These statements motivate finding out whether speakers attempt to catch audience attention by using stories as an AGD.

However, there is an existing disagreement on other devices' effectiveness. While Donovan (2013) disregards quotations and jokes, arguing they are cliched even if they are intuitively assumed to be effective, Crick (2011), in the discussion on rhetorical public speaking, mentions quotations as an effective opening strategy that interests the audience, especially the expressions of famous individuals (p. 10).

Overall, it can be seen that AGDs are considered working tools, but the effectiveness of each type is still a matter of debate. Besides, the existing literature even suggests a controversial belief that AGDs are not important at all. Hashimoto (1986) discusses written introductions, suggesting that a necessity to interest the reader immediately and catch his attention is a myth. Despite the fact that it is

commonly perceived that attention-getting devices are important parts of introduction, Hashimoto (1986) states they are misleading and unclear, contradicting later discussions of Lucas (2008), Crick (2011) and Donovan (2013). At the same time, even though a wide range of suggestions on attention-getting devices use exists, there is still limited empirical research on the way AGDs are implemented in practice and their effectiveness. Such a gap creates a need for further research, where the present study attempts to analyze common AGDs in TED Talk introductions.

Linguistic Devices in AGD Construction

Although rhetorical tools (e.g., a repetition) are not commonly recognized as AGDs, they may have some role in AGD creation. Specifically, rhetorical devices like *schemes* and *tropes* have been identified in advertisements as methods of getting consumer attention (Miller & Toman, 2016).

The distinction between two is seen in Lundberg and Keith (2008) discussion on rhetoric, which highlights that speakers can implement two strategies to shape their ideas properly and so catch audience attention: use of *schemes* (*figures* in their terms) and *tropes*. The former technique refers to the implementation of creative linguistic devices by the rearrangement of words, while the latter one addresses the use of figurative language to change the meaning of literal phrases (Lundberg & Keith, 2008, p. 62). These two strategies are said to capture audience attention by being different from common language. A similar discussion is provided by Lanham (1991) with his distinction on *schemes* and *tropes*, with the former referring to figures that keep their initial meaning but change the order, and the latter addressing figures that change their literal meaning (p. 178).

Empirical evidence is noticed from McQuarrie and Mick (1996) and Miller and Toman (2016) studies in advertising, both classifying schemes and tropes and findings on their pattern of use. This inspired the classification of tools in the present study on public speaking, involving the analysis of four schemes (antithesis, repetition, rhyme and parallelism) and five tropes (metaphors, irony, allusion, paradox and simile) presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.*Schemes and Tropes Used in the Present Study.*

Device	Scheme or Trope	Definition	Source
Metaphor	Trope	A word or phrase applied to something for which it is not literally applicable to suggest a resemblance or analogy to another thing (p. 482).	Miller & Toman (2016)
Irony	Trope	Phrase that implies the opposite of its true meaning (p. 483).	Miller & Toman (2016)
Allusion	Trope	Reference either directly or indirectly to some phenomenon, person, event, or thing (p. 483).	Miller & Toman (2016)
Antithesis	Scheme	A phrase includes terms that render meaning that is opposite of the original phrase (p. 482).	Miller & Toman (2016)
Repetition	Scheme	Multiple repetitions of words, phrases and/or grammatical structure (p. 481).	Miller & Toman (2016)
Parallelism	Scheme	Similar arrangement of a pair or series of words, phrases or sentences (p. 233).	Lucas (2008)
Paradox	Trope	A self-contradictory, false, or impossible statement (p. 431).	McQuarrie & Mick (1996)
Rhyme	Scheme	Tempo or pattern of sounds through repetition (p. 480).	Miller & Toman (2016)
Simile	Trope	A metaphoric device that compares something about one thing with something about another thing. However, similes are distinguished by the explicit inclusion of a term such as 'like' or 'as' (p. 482).	Miller & Toman (2016)

Note. Table structure adapted from Miller and Toman (2016).

Overall, the aforementioned textbook suggestions on AGD use, discussions on rhetoric and advertising findings on creative linguistic tools support the idea that word choice matters in message delivery. This navigates the present study in the analysis of AGD structure: both for presence of schemes and tropes as well as common public speaking tools.

Views on AGDs from Similar Fields: Advertising and Communication

Taking into account that empirical research on AGDs in public speaking is limited, there is a way to understand possible trends in AGD use by considering literature from similar fields: advertising, communication and media. According to the research on advertisement headings by McQuarrie and Mick (1996), it was found that rhetoric devices are important additions to advertisements. The authors

highlight that a change in the expected meaning of a word, complexity to the structure of a tool, and unpredictability makes linguistic tools more creative and so engaging for the consumers. Consumers pay attention to figurative language and get curious by the rhetoric devices that overshadow straightforward messages. That is why, it was argued that the manner in which the information is presented matters more than the content itself, where figurative language perfectly fulfills the criteria. Interestingly, a similar tendency was found by Miller and Toman (2016), proving that linguistic devices are useful additions to brand slogans, as they are able to provoke consumers' interest in the brand itself. It turns out that the more creative brand slogans are, more consumer engagement could be achieved, and so is done by using linguistic devices. It is clearly seen now that despite the fact that advertisements are associated with visual representations of brands and products, verbal addition as linguistic devices actually helps to get audience attention as well.

However, it is important to note that assessing the effectiveness of linguistic tools in getting audience attention is a difficult task even in the advertising industry. According to Bellman, Nenycz-Thiel, Kennedy, Hartnett and Varan (2019) it is complicated to measure attention through one distinct method only, because there are different levels and types of attention, each requiring its own measurement. A similar viewpoint was shared by Feng, Luo, Yu and Wen (2023) on the use of rhetorical devices in online videos, showing that depending on the level of attention paid (low or high) the effectiveness of linguistic devices may vary. Both papers set a background in understanding that there are several types of attention and a method to find them out has to be set.

In continuation to the online sources' discussion, the media and communication field shows a similar idea on getting audience attention. Wang and Pavelko (2024) found that humor is indeed a frequent and beneficial tool in engaging and persuading people in health-related messages on social media. Nevertheless, humor cannot be used in the same way in relation to all health topics and particular types of health messages require certain humor types. So, the level of engagement depends on the match between message and humor types. Generally, since humor tends to be a common

strategy for audience engagement across fields, including public speaking, the pattern of its use can be noticed in the present analysis of TED Talks as well.

AGD Effectiveness: Elaboration-Likelihood Theory Perspective

Since analyzing the way AGDs influence the audience is a more difficult task, a possible explanation of certain tools' effectiveness can be analyzed through Cacioppo and Petty (1986) elaboration-likelihood theory (ELT). According to ELT, as is discussed in the encyclopedia of communication, audience persuasion depends on the level of cognitive engagement with the message shared. There are two ways of persuasion within a speech that involve different levels of cognitive engagement: central and peripheral (Vaughan, 2009, p. 331). While the former route requires higher critical thinking and introduces logical, strong arguments, the latter one doesn't require a deep cognitive elaboration and can affect the audience even without a strong message presence, where common examples are credibility and likeability of the product (Vaughan, 2009, p. 331).

This model has already been widely used in the advertisement and communication studies, assessing the factors influencing the success of the product; however, this has not been yet approached by the public speaking field which gives a foundation for conducting present study using ELT. For instance, Park et al. (2023) states that although attractiveness of a product, as a peripheral cue, is expected to be important in the low-involvement products only (e.g., soft drinks), it was found that attractiveness is involved in both high (e.g., hospital) and low-involvement products, acting as both central and peripheral cues. The idea of processing being both central and peripheral was also supported by Wang et al. (2024), finding that interaction between central and peripheral routes increases the sales performance. Specifically, both central cues (live demonstration, web information, brand popularity, price discount) and peripheral (streamers' social capital and viewers engagement) both "play significant roles in enhancing sales performance" (Wang et al., 2024, p. 12). So, two cues are found to work jointly in persuasion under certain factors instead of acting separately.

Rhetorical Devices Analysis and Elaboration-Likelihood Model

Although the elaboration-likelihood model (ELM) has been used extensively in advertising on sales performance and product dimensions, it is important to see how it can be applied in linguistic device analysis that the present study is based on. For instance, Feng et al. (2023) involving ELM as a central model in the analysis of rhetorical devices used in online videos, goes beyond its general idea of persuasion being dependent on the level of processing required and extends it to A-ELM (augmented elaboration-likelihood model), combining narrative theory and persuasion model. According to Feng et al. (2023), phrasing shapes the attention of the audience. Different levels of involvement require different linguistics tools as well as their possible combinations. Although the research was mostly focused on narratives, numerical evidence and nonnarrative as a broad category, there is still an important conclusion on device effectiveness. The higher attention is attracted by numerical evidence under high involvement. That is why one might assume that statistics or shocking statements with numerical information will be more frequent and effective. Narratives, meanwhile, receive higher attention in low involvement in comparison to nonnarrative, and a combination of numerical evidence with narratives. Pogacar et al. (2018) also makes a valid conclusion about numbers being easier to process. The same pattern was stated for sound repetition (alliteration and rhyme), as they require low cognitive effort (Pogacar et al., 2018, p. 692). Meanwhile, metaphors, questions, analogy and syntax require high cognitive effort (Pogacar et al., 2018, p. 691) and so are more difficult to process. In terms of broader categories of schemes and tropes, it was found by Feng et al. (2023) that tropes receive greater attention than literal texts under low involvement conditions (p. 9); however, schemes did not receive greater attention than literal texts under the same low involvement conditions. This might lead to a possible assumption that tropes in AGDs are more effective than literal texts and are used more frequently.

Generally, it can be seen that the majority of studies support the same view point on creative linguistic devices being useful additions in attracting audience attention. Meanwhile, a point of

disagreement is raised at what type of devices interest the audience in reality more. Despite the fact that these statements are grounded in the research on advertising and media, public speaking lacks empirical evidence within the scholarly works. Therefore, a gap still exists.

Research Questions

The following research questions attempt to fill the existing gap by analyzing what linguistic tools as AGDs are more common in public speeches and highlight the audience reaction in response to them. Overall, as it was already assumed by this project that a complete public speech structure includes an AGD, the research proceeds by questioning what are the most common types of them. Since there has not been empirical testing if some attention-getting devices (AGDs) are used more frequently than others in actual practice of public speaking, the first research question is proposed. In addition, it is understudied which AGDs have a better ability to interest the audience and provoke reaction, leading to the second question.

RQ1. What techniques are used most commonly in creating AGDs in TED talks?

RQ2. Do certain AGDs receive more audience reaction both during the talk (observable response) and on the digital platform (views and likes)?

Methods

Sample

Online videos of recorded TED Talks were chosen as a research sample for the present study. The sample was gathered exclusively from the official YouTube channel “TED,” specifically addressing speeches delivered in English. This study was focused particularly on TED Talks, while other types of videos presented on the channel were excluded: online translations, podcasts, TEDx Talks, TEDed, and talks with unintelligible speech. The only exception was for four TEDx Talks as they appeared within the 100 most viewed talks on the official channel. To collect particularly most-viewed TED Talks, the YouTube setting for sorting videos by “popularity”, which was shown on the web page itself, was used, given that YouTube classifies popular videos according to the number of

views. Sorting videos by the number of views was preferred since this can represent TED Talks with the higher audience interest, making it more valid for the analysis of common AGDs. As the ranking of views changes over time, the research considered the videos that were most viewed at the time of sample collection (October, 2025). Overall, the data set consisted of 100 most-viewed TED Talks, given that videos, which did not meet the criteria, were excluded (n=4) and other videos were additionally added to replace them (n=4). Generally, the first 2 minutes of TED talks were sampled, as the focus was on the introductory part where speakers usually use AGDs.

Coding

This research was conducted by a content analysis method: after careful evaluation of a sample (TED Talks), the categorization of data (AGD types and audience responses) began. Both AGDs and audience responses were classified into several categories and were further analyzed in terms of their frequency of use. So as to start coding, the classification of AGDs was based on the categorization of linguistic devices by two advertising studies and two public speaking textbooks: McQuarrie and Mick (1996), Miller and Toman (2016), Lucas (2008) and Crick (2011), correspondingly. This is presented in Table 2 and Table 3 below.

Table 2.

Schemes and Tropes Used in the AGD Categorization

Linguistic device	McQuarrie & Mick (1996)	Miller & Toman (2016)	Lucas (2008)
irony	✓	✓	
parallelism			✓
repetition	✓	✓	✓
metaphor	✓	✓	✓
allusion	✓	✓	
antithesis	✓	✓	✓
simile	✓	✓	✓
paradox	✓	✓	
rhyme	✓	✓	✓

Table 3.*Public Speaking Devices Used in the AGD Categorization*

Linguistic device	Crick (2011)	Lucas (2008)
shocking statement ¹	✓	✓
story	✓	✓
humor	✓	
statistics ²	✓	
visual demonstration	✓	
participatory device ³		
question	✓	✓
quotation	✓	✓

In order to have a brief idea of possible AGD types in TED Talks, a grounded approach of sampling was taken: the codebook was crafted, firstly, by taking a small portion of the sample, solely 10 TED talk videos, to see what AGDs were used there. This created a preliminary classification of AGDs. Later, as the coding began, an iterative approach was undertaken: starting to code and as soon as a new code was found, a codebook was extended and revised as the project went on. The initial number of 11 AGD categories was extended to 18 by iterative coding. The final codebook consisted of 18 AGDs categories: question, quotation, metaphor, statistics, shocking statement, story, humor, irony, allusion, antithesis, repetition, parallelism, paradox, rhyme, slogan, participatory device, visual demonstration and simile. As the study aimed to analyze how AGDs interest the audience, the audience reaction both within the recording (in-person TED talk listeners) and outside of it (YouTube viewers) was coded. Firstly, after each AGD use a laughter, applause, participation and silence was coded. In this case, a bivariate approach was used, meaning that it was coded whether there was a reaction or not at all. Additionally, correlation between AGD frequency with the audience reaction was analyzed. Secondly, this was further followed by coding likes and views as well as calculating their ratio (likes/views) and finding the median number. To systematically collect the research data, Google

¹ Named as a *startling statement* in Lucas (2008) and *intriguing statement* in Crick (2011)

² Named as a *startling statement* in Lucas (2008) textbook.

³ Not suggested as a separate AGD in the reviewed textbooks but added due to its presence in the collected data sample

Forms were used and the collected data was automatically stored in a separate Google Sheets (see Appendix A). A full codebook containing the collected data can be shared upon request.

Two coders were trained before coding. 15% of the sample was randomly selected for double-coding and any differences in coding were discussed and resolved between coders. Sometimes it was not possible to calculate p value and Cohen's kappa due to the limited data, so coders relied on the % agreement alone (Table 4 and Table 5).

Table 4.

Inter-Coder Reliability with Sufficient Coding Data.

AGD	Agreement	P value	Cohen's kappa
Question	93.75%	0	0.871
Metaphor	100.00%	0	1
Quotation	93.75%	0.070701	0.6364
Humor	93.75%	0	0.871
Statistics	93.75%	0	0.8462
Story	87.50%	0.000006	0.75
Shocking Statement	87.50%	0.000009	0.746
Visual demonstration	93.75%	0.871	0
Parallelism	100.00%	0	1
Participatory Device	100.00%	0	1
Paradox	93.75%	1	0
Reference values	>80%	<0.05	>0.75

Table 5.

Inter-Coder Reliability with Limited Coding Data.

AGD	Agreement	P value	Cohen's kappa
Simile	100.00%	Undefined	Undefined
Antithesis	100.00%	Undefined	Undefined
Irony	87.50%	Undefined	1
Repetition	93.75%	Undefined	1
Allusion	100.00%	Undefined	Undefined
Rhyme	100.00%	Undefined	Undefined
Slogan/Motto	100.00%	Undefined	Undefined
Reference values	>80%	<0.05	>0.75

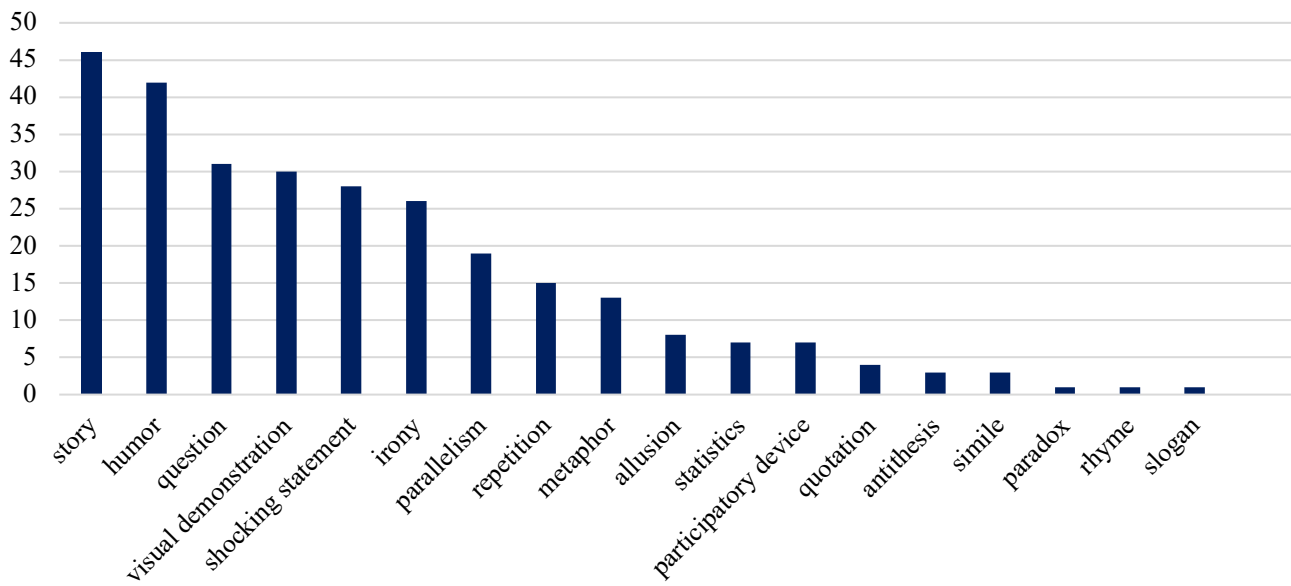
Results

Frequency of Devices

Given that the first research question is focused on how common different AGDs are in TED Talks, the chart below represents the frequency of linguistic devices used as AGDs within the analyzed 100 TED Talks (Figure 1). Overall, the distribution of these linguistic devices was categorized according to their levels of frequency: commonly used, moderately used, rarely used and minimally used. Starting with the commonly used devices, these corresponded to a *story* and *humor*, ranging from 40-50 TED Talks. Moderately used devices were *question*, *visual demonstration*, *shocking statement* and *irony*, found in 25-30 TED Talks. Rarely used linguistic devices were *parallelism*, *repetition* and *metaphor*, found in 10-20 TED Talks. Meanwhile, *statistics*, *participatory device*, *allusion*, *quotation*, *antithesis*, *simile*, *paradox*, *rhyme* and *slogan*, noticed in less than 10 TED Talks, were classified as minimally used devices. The sections 5.1-5.4 further provide closer analysis of each category while a full table of AGDs is available in the Appendix B.

Figure 1.

Presence of AGDs in 100 Analyzed TED Talks.



Note. Devices were used in more than one TED Talk and so the number of appearances exceeds 100.

5.1 Commonly Used

The most frequent linguistic device used as AGD, as a story, was found in 46 TED Talks.

To exemplify, in a TED Talk “This is what happens when you reply to spam email” James Veitch starts by saying:

A few years ago, I got one of those spam emails. And it managed to get through my spam filter. I'm not quite sure how, but it turned up in my inbox, and it was from a guy called Solomon Odonkoh...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. Or I could do what I think we've all always wanted to do. And I said, “Solomon, your email intrigues me.”

Since the speaker proceeds to a narrative of a personal situation, where both other characters and the author himself is portrayed, this was classified as a story. Regarding humor, which is the second most common device noticed in 42 TED Talks, it was used in a speech “The orchestra in my mouth”, where Tom Thum says, “My name is Tom, and I've come here today to come clean about what I do for money. Basically, I use my mouth in strange ways in exchange for cash.” In this example a laughter was caused in the context of him describing what he does for a living, which turned out to be beatboxing. Instead of telling this in an ordinary manner, a humorous effect was reached by an unexpected and exaggerated way of describing how he uses his mouth. Within analyzed TED Talks humor did not always correspond to a conventional joke-like form and instead referred to any communication device eliciting laughter.

5.2 Moderately Used

Within this category, questions were present in 31 TED Talks, visual demonstrations in 30 TED Talks, shocking statements in 28 TED Talks, and irony in 26 TED Talks. So as to make the comparison clearer each device is exemplified further. In her TED Talk “Rethinking infidelity ... a talk for anyone who has ever loved,” Esther Perel opens her speech by asking a question “Why do we cheat?” In terms of visual demonstrations, since these are non-verbal devices, some of them were provided without any

verbal explanation or reference while others were introduced with them. For instance, Tim Urban in his speech “Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator” as a part of AGD says:

Now, when a normal student writes a paper, they might spread the work out a little like this. So, you know...you get started maybe a little slowly, but you get enough done in the first week that, with some heavier days later on, everything gets done...but then...I would kind of do this.

Using phrases “like this” and “this” referenced two visual slides in the background, specifically, bar charts representing the progress of writing a paper; thus, these were coded as visual demonstrations.

Although using photo slide was a common visual demonstration, the analyzed TED Talks also included some unusual types (e.g., beatboxing, changing outfit or a toddler sitting in a baby chair). An example of a shocking statement was found in the Bill Gates’s speech “The next outbreak? We’re not ready,” where he says, “If anything kills over 10 million people in the next few decades, it's most likely to be a highly infectious virus rather than a war.” Since information about the foreseeable death of the population in this example is both unexpected and threatening, it was coded as a shocking statement. Lastly, irony was seen in a speech “How to gain control of your free time” by Laura Vanderkam with her saying, “When people find out I write about time management, they assume two things. One is that I'm always on time, and I'm not...I was once late to my own speech on time management.” Even though the author is expected to be a punctual person, in reality, she is not, which creates a deviation from the expected meaning and so was coded as irony.

5.3 Rarely Used

This category refers to three primary linguistic devices, namely parallelism, found in 18 TED Talks, repetition found in 15 TED Talks and metaphor found in 14 TED Talks. In terms of parallelism, a clear example was noticed in a TED Talk “The danger of a single story,” where Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says, “...they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather.” Here, a similar grammatical arrangement of phrases in the past tense structure refers to parallelism. Repetition, on its

turn, appeared in a speech “The puzzle of motivation,” where Dan Pink says, “I did something that I regret, something that I'm not particularly proud of. Something that, in many ways, I wish no one would ever know.” Here, repeating the word “something” several times was coded as repetition. Meanwhile, a metaphor can be seen in Hugh Herr’s TED Talk “New bionics let us run, climb and dance,” where he says, “The human voice: It's the instrument we all play.” Since “human voice” is compared to “instrument” so as to show their resemblance, this was coded as a metaphor.

5.4 Minimally Used

This category refers to nine different devices, namely, an allusion (8 TED Talks), statistics (7 TED Talks), participatory device (7 TED Talks), quotation (4 TED Talks), antithesis (3 TED Talks), simile (3 TED Talks), paradox (1 TED Talk), rhyme (1 TED Talk) and slogan (1 TED Talks). Allusion, with the highest number of occurrences from this category, was clearly seen in the speech “How great leaders inspire action” with Simon Sinek saying, “Why is Apple so innovative? Why is it that Martin Luther King led the Civil Rights Movement?” Referencing the company (Apple), person (Martin Luther King) and event (Civil Rights Movement), in this case, was coded as allusion. Quotation, as a device with the middle value in this category, was used as an AGD in Tabettha Boyajian’s speech “The most mysterious star in the universe,” where she says, “‘Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence’.” Since this is a reference to the well-known phrase attributed to Carl Sagan, it corresponds to a quotation. Lastly, rhyme, as one of the devices with the lowest number of occurrences from this category, was noticed in Rita Pierson’s speech “Every kid needs a champion” with her saying, “If I should have a daughter, instead of “Mom,” she's going to call me “Point B,” because that way she knows that no matter what happens, at least she can always find her way to me.” In this example, the words “B” and “me,” with their similar sound pattern, create a rhythmic effect. Table 6 further presents common examples and explanations of other minimally used devices, while Appendix C provides a full table.

Table 6.*Minimally Used Devices*

Device	% of use	Example	Explanation
Statistics	7%	“Men who sleep five hours a night have significantly smaller testicles than those who sleep seven hours or more.”	statistical data on how sleep affects men
Participatory device	7%	“I want everybody to put out your hands like this for me, first of all. OK, clap them together, once. OK, reverse your hands.”	requesting audience to move their hands and participate
Antithesis	3%	“The human voice...It's the only one that can start a war or say ‘I love you’.”	two opposing statements: “start a war” and “say I love you”
Simile	3%	“I'm like Shakira, Shakira meets Muhammad Ali.”	the use of "like" to compare herself with Shakira
Paradox	1%	“Yes, it is a scrambled egg... But...the egg is unscrambling itself. And you'll now see the yolk and the white have separated. And now they're going to be poured back into the egg.”	impossible statement on how egg is unscrambled
Slogan/Motto	1%	The Olympic motto is Citius, Altius, Fortius." Faster, Higher, Stronger.”	using an Olympic motto

Note. Less than 10 TED Talks. A full table is provided in the Appendix C.

Combination of Devices for AGD

Although story was the most common device, it was not used alone, and instead was found to be combined with other devices to create an AGD. According to the collected data, in most TED Talks there is no use of one distinct AGD; instead, a combination of two or more devices is used. Notably, there were only 15 speeches that used a single device as an AGD. Among them, 9 AGDs had a *question*, which is the most frequent device used independently, 2 AGDs had a *shocking statement*, 2 AGDs had a *story*, 1 AGD had *humor* and 1 AGD had a *visual demonstration*. Overall, 85 TED Talks (85%) had a combination of devices as an AGD. To see the tendency in combinations, the Table 7 below shows the number of devices involved in AGDs as well as their frequency of appearance within the analyzed 100 TED Talks. Generally, it is noticeable that the most common combination types were

the ones consisting of two or three devices, while combinations of five to seven devices were quite rare. Therefore, to exemplify common combinations of two, Figure 2 below illustrates top-10 most frequent combinations of two as well as their number of occurrences within the analyzed 100 TED Talks. Notably, these combinations themselves had additional devices working with them, where the largest number of devices in one AGD, as is mentioned above, reached 7.

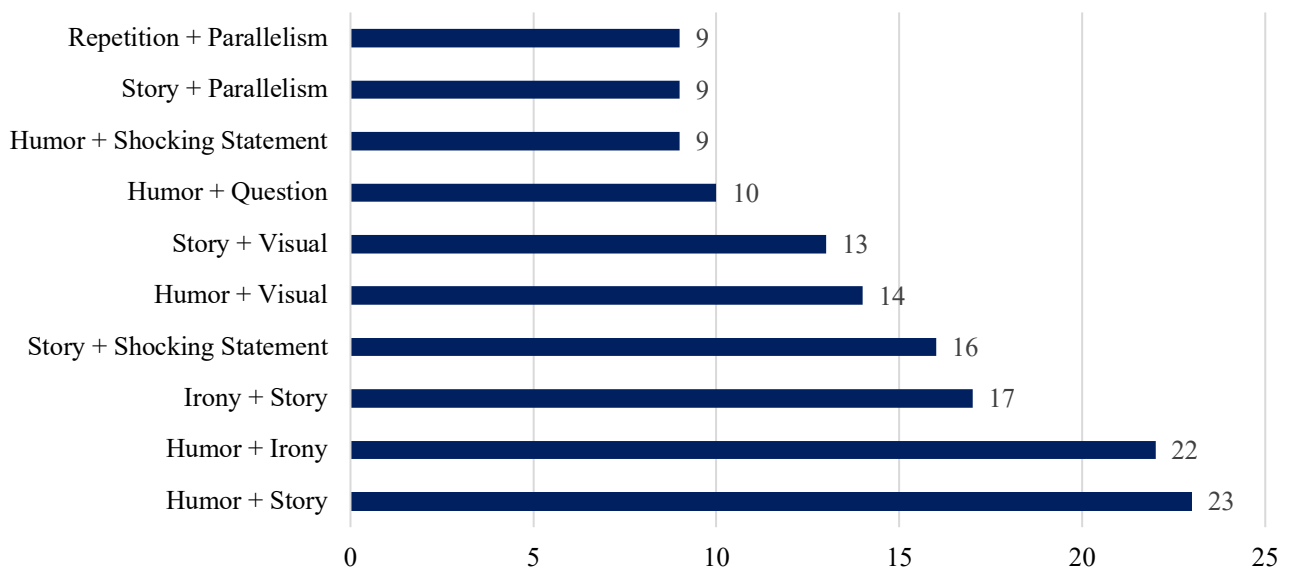
Table 7.

Number of Devices Used in a Combination of AGD and Frequency of Appearance.

N of devices in a combination	Frequency of appearance
1	15
2	30
3	30
4	15
5	4
6	4
7	2
Total	100

Figure 2.

Top 10 Most Frequent AGD Co-Occurrences of Two within Combinations



In order to give a general understanding of these combinations, an example of how *story* and *humor* worked together is provided. In a TED Talk “How to stay calm when you know you'll be stressed” Daniel Levitin says:

A few years ago, I broke into my own house. I had just driven home, it was around midnight in the dead of Montreal winter, I had been visiting my friend, Jeff, across town, and the thermometer on the front porch read minus 40 degrees -- and don't bother asking if that's Celsius or Fahrenheit, minus 40 is where the two scales meet [HUMOR] -- it was very cold. And as I stood on the front porch fumbling in my pockets, I found I didn't have my keys...[STORY].

This AGD contains a story, since a clear narration of a previous occasion as well as characters are present. Meanwhile humor appears in his reflection on 40 degrees being cold for both Celsius and Fahrenheit. As is seen, humor is a part of a story where both devices combined to make up one AGD.

Given that story was frequently combined with other tools, *story* and *irony* as a combination of two can be exemplified further. To be precise, such a combination was noticed in Angela Lee Duckworth's speech “Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance”, where she says, “When I was 27 years old [STORY], I left a very demanding job in management consulting for a job that was even more demanding: teaching [IRONY].” In this case, a story reflects a personal narrative about a job change, while irony is visible in revealing that teaching is actually not more demanding than management, and so creating a deviation from the expected meaning.

A different example to the AGD combination of two is related to the use of a *story* and a *shocking statement* together. In a TED Talk, “Everything you think you know about addiction is wrong”, Johann Hari starts his speech by saying, “One of my earliest memories [STORY] is of trying to wake up one of my relatives and not being able to. [SHOCKING STATEMENT]” This AGD contains a story, as it narrates a personal incident and recalls it as a memory. Besides, it has a shocking

statement, as it reveals a harsh fact that is both unexpected and threatening. Therefore, this type of AGD is considered to have a combination of two linguistic devices.

Regarding the combinations of three, which were as frequent as the combinations of two, some groupings appeared independently, while others co-occurred as a part of a bigger AGD combination. One common three-device combination was the grouping of *humor*, *story* and *irony*. For instance, in a speech “Strange answers to the psychopath test” Jon Ronson says:

I was at a friend's house [STORY], and she had on her shelf a copy of the DSM manual, which is the manual of mental disorders. It lists every known mental disorder. And it used to be, back in the '50s, a very slim pamphlet. And then it got bigger and bigger and bigger, and now it's 886 pages long. And it lists currently 374 mental disorders. So I was leafing through it, wondering if I had any mental disorders, and it turns out I've got 12 [HUMOR and IRONY].

The whole AGD takes the form of a story, where the author explains a personal situation at a friend's house. Humor and irony in this story worked together and were revealed while mentioning that he has 12 disorders.

Another common combination was of *humor*, *question* and *story* visible in Adam Grant's TED Talk “The surprising habits of original thinkers, where he says:

Seven years ago [STORY], a student came to me and asked me to invest in his company...Six months go by, it's the day before the company launches, and there is still not a functioning website. “You guys realize, the entire company is a website. That's literally all it is.” So I obviously declined to invest. They sell glasses online. They were recently recognized as the world's most innovative company and valued at over a billion dollars. And now? My wife handles our investments [HUMOR]. Why was I so wrong? [QUESTION]

Since the author starts his speech by narrating a situation about investments, involving other characters (his students and a wife) and himself, this creates a story. Within this narration an unexpected ending of

his wife now being responsible for finances creates a comic effect, and so refers to humor. Lastly, the use of rhetorical questions completes the AGD.

Another noticeable combination of three refers to the use of humor, irony and visual together. For instance, the TED Talk “The art of asking” by Amanda Palmer starts with this statement: “So, I didn't always make my living from music. For about five years after graduating from an upstanding liberal arts university, this was my day job [VISUAL: a photo of her standing as a statue in the middle of a street appears] [HUMOR and IRONY].” Although both humorous and ironic effects may not be explicitly seen through the provided transcription, in fact, they were noticeable via the visual demonstration. The author showing her working as a statue provoked laughter since it was unexpected to see this job after completing a formal degree, which comprised both humor and irony. That is why the AGD worked well with the use of humor, irony and a visual demonstration together. Overall, based on the aforementioned examples, it can be seen that the same linguistic devices were combined differently to make diverse AGDs.

Audience Reaction Within the TED Talk

In order to trace AGDs and their effect on the audience, I was also coding for audience reaction: laughter, applause, participation and silence. It was assumed that the explicit audience reaction after the AGD is a clear sign of audience engagement. The data I gathered shows that even though laughter, applause and participation was traced in 54 TED Talks, silence was noticed in 46 TED Talks.

Firstly, *laughter* was the most frequent audience reaction to AGD, occurring in 52 TED Talks. *Applause*, as the second most common audience reaction was traced in 10 TED Talks; however, laughter and applause were not always used on their own, and instead sometimes co-occurred with each other. So, every instance of applause was immediately followed by a laughter, and so the aforementioned 10 videos containing applause were also coded for laughter. It was further found that audience participation such as raising hands or moving them is a common audience response, although not the most frequent one. It was witnessed in 7 videos out of 100 TED Talks, in three of which it was

also followed by laughter. Importantly, audience participation occurred solely whenever speakers asked the audience to do so directly by using a participatory AGD. For example, in the speech “How to make stress your friend” the speaker Kelly McGonigal, as a part of his AGD, tells the audience “In the past year, I want you to just raise your hand if you've experienced relatively little stress. Anyone?” and the audience raised their hands. This was their reaction to a direct request followed by a question. There were no cases whenever the audience did not participate if the speaker asked to. That being said, there still were instances where no reaction was given and so were coded for *silence*. Silence was found in 46% of speeches, among which the top-3 most frequently used AGDs were stories (23 TED Talks), shocking statements (17 TED Talks) and questions (13 TED Talks). That being said, the aforementioned findings do not suggest that silence was provoked by these devices alone. Instead, since AGD was mostly a combination of devices, stories, shocking statements and questions were usually one of the components of the bigger AGD combination that did not get any reaction.

Audience Reaction Outside the TED Talk

Although the highest number of views within 100 most viewed TED Talks was achieved by Tim Urban’s TED Talk “Inside the Mind of a Master Procrastinator” containing humor, irony, story and a visual demonstration as an AGD, the higher engagement of viewers was not noticed in relation to these devices. Instead, it was associated with the use of a less frequent device, namely *simile*. Since online audience engagement was analyzed by the median likes-to-views ratio, the results can be seen in Table 8. According to these findings, simile had the highest median ratio (likes/views), constituting 2.50%, followed by statistics (2.49%), participatory device (2.33%), shocking statement (2.26%) and a quotation (2.22%). The lowest ratio was associated with repetition and allusion, both making up 1.52% (see Appendix D).

Table 8.*Median Likes-to-Views Ratio*

Devices used in AGD	Frequency of appearance (TED Talk)	Median ratio (likes/views)
simile	3	2.50%
statistics	7	2.49%
participatory device	7	2.33%
shocking statement	28	2.26%
quotation	4	2.22%

Note. This table reflects five devices with the highest median ratio. A full table is in Appendix D.

Discussion

These results suggest three primary findings: the frequency of linguistic devices used as AGDs, tendency of linguistic devices to create AGD combinations and the audience engagement with AGDs.

Frequency of Devices

According to the results, story, humor and question are the top-3 most frequent AGDs among 100 TED Talks. This tendency is consistent with Lucas (2008) and Crick (2011) suggestions on the use of stories, humor and questions as attention-grabbing strategies; however, these results contrast with Crick (2011) suggestion on the use of quotations, as in fact they were noticed minimally ($n < 10$) within analyzed TED talks. This, instead, is consistent with Donovan's (2013) view on quotations avoidance, explaining that they are cliched.

In addition to this, if a broader range of top-5 most common devices (story, humor, question, visual demonstration, shocking statement) is taken, it can be noticed that they do not belong to classical figures of speech and so are not schemes nor tropes (see Appendix E). Instead, these are common public speaking AGDs suggested by textbooks. Meanwhile, the rest AGDs, which are less common, correspond to both schemes (antithesis, repetition, rhyme, parallelism) and tropes (metaphors, simile, irony, allusion and paradox), except for the participatory device, quotation and slogan. This could be explained by the plain style theory, suggesting that English prose should be more direct and have

common vocabulary rather than incline on schemes and tropes so as to ensure easier comprehension for readers (Tebeaux, 1997, p. 142). Although it is taken from writing communication, it is clearly seen from the project results that TED Talk speakers favoured figures of speech less than devices based on content (common public speaking AGDs). On the one hand this challenges Lundberg and Keith (2008) idea on schemes (*figures* in their terms) and tropes being useful devices for audience attention. On the other hand, this supports Lucas (2008) and Crick (2011) discussion on schemes and tropes as useful tools for adding *vividness* to the speech. That is why it can be said that these figures of speech were not the main AGDs in speeches but rather creative additions making speech more vibrant.

Still, the research challenges previous findings by Miller & Toman (2016) on schemes being more frequent devices than tropes, since within the top-100 TED Talks the results were not consistent. Although such schemes as *repetition* and *parallelism* were used more frequently than all the tropes found, *irony* (a trope) outweighed all the schemes (including repetition and parallelism); Besides, *antithesis* and *rhyme* (a scheme) were used less than *allusion* and *metaphor* (a trope). So, the higher effectiveness of schemes than that of tropes is not fully supported. Schemes and tropes, in fact, also tended to combine in AGD creation both with each other and other devices (e.g., a story), which is consistent with the Miller and Toman (2016) findings on several linguistic devices working simultaneously in some brand slogans.

Combination of Devices for AGD

The research findings are not that straightforward. It is important to highlight that according to the results, AGD was not always a single linguistic tool that attracted attention, but instead a placeholder for several devices that build a catchy mechanism. Although this finding was unexpected, it is in fact grounded in the literature on persuasion. Interestingly, the general idea of combinations as a possible technique was mentioned by Lucas (2008), and the research results support this viewpoint; although the way they are structured nor the types of combinations were not explained by the author,

this was, instead, suggested by Miller and Toman (2016) finding that several linguistic devices are combined in one brand slogan.

Starting with schemes and tropes combined with each other, this could be explained by the elaboration-likelihood theory. If we look closely, schemes, as linguistic devices with excess regularity, usually, do not require a deep cognitive elaboration on the content, looking similar to what a peripheral route involves. Meanwhile, tropes with the change in meaning, require interpretation and higher critical thinking, similar to what a central route involves. This could be supported by McQuarrie and Mick (1996, as cited in Miller & Toman, 2016, p. 477) discussion of schemes being quite simple, and so easier for the audience to comprehend and remember. At the same time, tropes are quite complex and have to be processed deeper by the listeners, but this could build a better connection in the memory (Miller & Toman, 2016, p. 477). As is mentioned in the encyclopedia on communication, “messages can be processed through both central and peripheral routes”, meaning they are not mutually exclusive (Vaughan, 2009, p. 331). Therefore, it could be said that by combining schemes and tropes together to create a single AGD, a speaker achieves a balanced way of capturing audience attention.

For instance, in his speech “The puzzle of motivation,” Dan Pink starts by saying, “I need to make a confession at once here. A little over 20 years ago, I did something that I regret, something that [REPETITION] I'm not particularly proud of [PARALLELISM]. Something that [REPETITION], in many ways, I wish no one would ever know, but here I feel kind of obliged to reveal [SHOCKING STATEMENT]. In the late 1980s, in a moment of youthful indiscretion, I went to law school [HUMOR and IRONY].” In such a broad combination such trope as irony works together with such schemes as repetition and parallelism. As it was mentioned before, both central and peripheral cues can work together, which is now noticeable from the schemes and tropes perspective. This is crucial for the present study, since analyzed AGDs did not consist solely of tools functioning through the central route but were combined with peripheral cues as well. By combining these two types of devices, a speaker

was capable of capturing audience attention on both deeper and surface cognitive levels, and so ensuring the AGD effectiveness.

When it comes to common AGD categories suggested by public speaking textbooks (e.g., story), the discussion on their complexity of processing is not rooted in the literature. Therefore, the explanation of their combinations cannot be fully covered by ELM. Despite that, a preliminary analysis of the tools in this research suggests a possible understanding of visual demonstration, for instance, as a peripheral cue, with its ease to be comprehended while story, as a central cue, with its complexity to be comprehended. Eventually, combining these tools together illustrates a possible combination of peripheral and central cues, supported by Wang et al. (2024). Importantly, classifying these tools into central and peripheral cues is only interpretive and can depend on the context of speech. This shows that it is complicated to identify whether certain tools are more effective than the others; nevertheless, it is clearly seen that combining tools based on central and peripheral elaboration together is a common strategy to ensure audience engagement. On a bigger scale this leads to a clearer understanding of combinations significance and their prevalence over single tools for AGDs. Peripheral cues could catch the audience's attention immediately so as to lead to further deeper connection introduced by a central cue. Overall, this study attempted to extend the ELM framework to the findings in public speaking.

The effectiveness depends on diverse factors and so frequent appearance of one device over another cannot directly suggest its higher persuasiveness. Instead, AGDs were usually combined so as to fit a certain speech frame where that particular combination would reach a better persuasion. Thus, since device effectiveness varies from setting to setting, it is probably preferred to use a combination of tools which also vary depending on some factors.

Audience Reaction Within the TED Talk

An important consideration is the correlation between AGD frequency of appearance and the corresponding audience reaction to it. Although stories were found to be the most common AGD, they frequently did not get any audience response (silence). According to the findings, silence was traced

mostly after stories, shocking statements and questions. Initially, silence was perceived as a sign of AGD ineffectiveness, as the audience does not show any engagement and interest in the speech; however, the research results show that silence, in contrast, can be a sign of complete attention when listeners do not want to interrupt the speaker, actively listen or are in a shocked state.

Firstly, according to Slater and Rouner (2002) on the persuasiveness of entertainment-education messages in narratives, narrative persuasion depends on absorption, referring to the level of investment in a story. It is stated that whenever the audience is fully absorbed, central and peripheral cues are no longer clear in assessing narrative persuasiveness (Slater & Rouner, 2002, p. 177). This could support an idea of silence being a sign of engagement with stories, as the audience was immersed in a story and didn't react to a persuasive attempt.

Secondly, a shocking statement as one of the AGDs that witnessed silence can resemble listeners' appalled state. Even though this is not grounded in the studies my project considered, this can be interpreted from the TED Talks themselves. To be specific, in the speech "My escape from North Korea" by Hyeonsoo Lee, an AGD contained a shocking statement saying, "When I was seven years old, I saw my first public execution," towards which the audience kept silent because of the probable shocked state in relation to cruel public punishments at young age.

Thirdly, when it comes to a question that is the third most common device witnessing silence, both Pogacar et al. (2018) and Areni (2003) argue that the persuasion effect of a question depends on its type and particular conditions (e.g., low and high involvement). So, it cannot be stated that silence was a sign of question ineffectiveness since certain types, as rhetorical questions, for instance, do not require any answer and so the audience does not respond. Overall, it is hard to predict whether AGD is effective as there are different types of devices even within the categories present and varying factors their effect depends on.

Audience Reaction Outside the TED Talk

Although similes are found to be linguistic devices having the highest ratio (likes to views), it certainly cannot be stated that they were the AGD tools alone provoking the highest interest leading to liking. Instead, talks containing similes are interpreted as the ones doing so; however, since there are combinations of AGDs this ratio might have been resulted from another device's presence or a general combination of all. This finding can be supported by Feng et. al. (2023) finding on more views being achieved whenever tropes were used over literal text under low involvement conditions. Since TED Talks are of low involvement for online viewers such interpretation could be made. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of similes can be rooted in a more vivid tendency: every instance of a simile ($n=3$) was present in the exact same combination of humor, irony and story (also *visual*). Therefore, assessing the audience response in relation to one distinct tool can be insufficient and analysis of combinations can be required. As is seen from the results, it is hard to derive the effectiveness of AGD with a use of a single method: be it the audience response within the TED Talk or outside of it. In reality, even implementing both of them does not give consistent results and unified explanation for certain AGD effectiveness. This is supported by the Bellman, Nenycz-Thiel, Kennedy, Hartnett and Varan (2019) discussion on the difficulty of measuring attention through one distinct method only, especially given diverse levels and types of attention paid, each leading to separate measurements.

Conclusion

This project analyzed the most common attention-getting devices (AGDs) in public speeches as well as corresponding audience reaction. Conducting a content analysis of the 100 most-viewed TED Talks to identify presence of diverse AGD types, with the categorization of devices adapted from McQuarrie and Mick (1996) and Miller and Toman (2016), revealed a significant finding on the use of AGD combinations. Instead of a single linguistic device as an attention-getting device, speech introductions tended to have several devices in one AGD to catch audience attention. Regarding the first research question on the frequency of AGD appearance, the findings showed that story was the

most common device, but was usually grouped with other categories, such as humor or shocking statement, creating AGD combination within one speech introduction. The same pattern was applicable to other devices as well, leading to various types of possible combinations. Since this pattern of AGD use was an understudied aspect in public speaking field, an elaboration-likelihood model on audience persuasion by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) was adapted, so as to explain how combinations can be functioning. Meanwhile, audience engagement with AGDs, as part of the second research question, showed that assessing AGD effectiveness is a complex task. Even though audience responses such as laughter, applause, participation and silence were traced, and online engagement (likes-to-views ratio) was assessed, a definitive correlation between these and AGD effectiveness was not fully identified. Despite that, a clear view of audience engagement in response to attention-getting devices was acknowledged by the research.

Limitations

Key limitation of this research falls into the coding procedure. Although AGDs were classified based on the existing linguistic devices categories and taxonomy, manually coding them caused certain irregularities. Specifically, some devices appeared in the first few seconds while the others in the later time period (still, within 2 minutes), and so determining what was the AGD among them was ambiguous: the first appearing device according to the time or the first one getting reaction even if occurring later. Some devices present in the beginning of a talk had no reaction, while the later ones provoked an immediate one, and vice versa. Therefore, determining AGDs based on the audience reaction was inefficient and so coding considered all the tools appearing within 2 minutes of a TED Talk introduction. The only exception was whenever a direct transition to the main point was noticed, as in such cases, devices appearing after the transition were not coded even if reminded of AGD. Overall, manual coding might have affected the accuracy of results on the AGD frequency since some devices could have been overlooked while others misinterpreted. In addition to this, finding AGD combinations themselves caused a difficulty in deriving a single conclusion about the effectiveness of

each device. Specifically, it was not possible to derive a distinct conclusion about the audience response in relation to a certain device, as they co-occurred. The next limitation falls under the interpretation of AGD effectiveness with the adapted ELM. The framework was only adapted to the public speaking field and so the explanation of a reason behind the combination use is not fully justified but rather interpreted. Lastly, calculating inter-coder reliability was not always possible due to the limited data. Specifically, counting Cohen's Kappa and p-value, as variables dependent on the level of both agreement and disagreement, was unstable for rarely ($n = 10-20$) and minimally ($n < 10$) occurring devices. There were insufficient data points to assess how reliable the agreement was, especially, whenever all the double-coded speeches were coded for these devices' absence.

Future Research

Although the use of AGD combinations became apparent within TED talks, the reason behind their effectiveness is still underrepresented. One of the explanations this research intended to suggest is perceiving the findings in a form and content dichotomy. To be clear, it seems that very often there is a linguistic device that gives a form or structure to the AGD like a story or question and sometimes it has a content that produces additional effects, like humor. However, this conceptualization is only interpretive and does not have direct theoretical evidence. That is why a deeper analysis could be conducted in the future.

It was also noticed that within the AGD combinations, there is usually the main and a supplementary device. In other words, even though there is a combination creating a single AGD, not all the devices inside of it possess the same value and effect. As of now, this distinction is only latent, meaning that there is no direct justification to it inside the speech and it cannot be certainly stated whether a particular AGD was truly the core one in a combination. Instead, this observation is based solely on personal perception and reaction. Therefore, this can be a matter of future investigations, so as to derive an accurate conclusion about the AGD structure in public speeches.

Besides, the current research did not classify the TED Talks according to the speech topics; nevertheless, identifying the correlation between the speech field (education, music, science, etc.) and the tools used as AGDs would be beneficial in deriving a more specific conclusion on what is used in actual public speeches and so improving them. At the same time, one of the factors in audience persuasion can be the level of their knowledge about the persuasion attempt.

Lastly, since assessing the AGD effectiveness remains an open question, future research could involve a persuasion-knowledge model by Friestad and Wright (1994), explaining how the audience may disregard clear persuasion attempts. Eventually, this will combine an analysis of both AGD types as well as the audience engagement level.

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Appendix A

Google Form Used for AGD Coding

<https://forms.gle/ZKKEvPHfRJ4XtJFU6>

Appendix B

Complete List of 18 AGDs Coded with the Examples from the Analyzed TED Talks

Type	Example
Question	“Why do we cheat?”
Statistics	“Men who sleep five hours a night have significantly smaller testicles than those who sleep seven hours or more.”
Metaphor	“Looking deeply inside nature, through the magnifying glass of science...”
Shocking statement	“If anything kills over 10 million people in the next few decades, it's most likely to be a highly infectious virus rather than a war.”
Story	“When I was 14 years old, I had low self-esteem. I felt I was not talented at anything. One day, I bought a yo-yo”
Humor	“Basically, I use my mouth in strange ways in exchange for cash.”
Irony	“What an intriguing group of individuals you are ... to a psychologist.”
Allusion	“Why is Apple so innovative? Year after year, after year, they're more innovative than all their competition. Why is it that Martin Luther King led the Civil Rights Movement?”
Antithesis	“The human voice...It's the only one that can start a war or say ‘I love you’”
Repetition	“I did something that I regret, something that I'm not particularly proud of. Something that, in many ways, I wish no one would ever know.”
Parallelism	“...they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather.”
Quotation	“Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence”
Paradox	“Yes, it is a scrambled egg. But as you look at it...you may notice that what's actually happening is that the egg is unscrambling itself. And you'll now see the yolk and the white have separated. And now they're going to be poured back into the egg.”
Rhyme	“If I should have a daughter, instead of "Mom," she's going to call me “Point B,” because that way she knows that no matter what happens, at least she can always find her way to me.”
Slogan/Motto	“The Olympic motto is Citius, Altius, Fortius. ‘Faster, Higher, Stronger’.”
Participatory device	“I want everybody to put out your hands like this for me, first of all. OK, clap them together, once. OK, reverse your hands.”
Visual demonstration	“And then I would kind of do this...” the word “this” refers to a photo slide.
Simile	“And when they all were seated, a Service, like a Drum -- kept beating -- beating --”

Appendix C

Full Table of Minimally Used Devices

Device	Example	Source	Explanation
Statistics	"Men who sleep five hours a night have significantly smaller testicles than those who sleep seven hours or more."	Matt Walker, "Sleep Is Your Superpower"	statistical data on sleep effect on men
Participatory device	"I want everybody to put out your hands like this for me, first of all. OK, clap them together, once. OK, reverse your hands"	Keith Barry, "Brain magic"	requesting audience to move their hands and participate
Allusion	"Why is Apple so innovative? Why is it that Martin Luther King led the Civil Rights Movement?"	Simon Sinek, "How Great Leaders Inspire Action"	Reference to company, person and event
Quotation	““Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence””	Tabetha Boyajian, "The most mysterious star in the universe"	Reference to a well-known phrase
Antithesis	"The human voice...It's the only one that can start a war or say "I love you""	Julian Treasure, "How to Speak So That People Want to Listen"	Two opposing statements: “start a war” and “say I love you”
Simile	"I'm like Shakira, Shakira meets Muhammad Ali"	Maysoon Zayid, "I got 99 problems... palsy is just one"	the use of "like" to compare herself with Shakira
Paradox	"Yes, it is a scrambled egg. But as you look at it...the egg is unscrambling itself...the yolk and the white have separated. And now they're going to be poured back into the egg."	David Christian, "The history of our world in 18 minutes"	impossible statement on how egg is unscrambled
Rhyme	"If I should have a daughter, instead of "Mom," she's going to call me "Point B," because that way she knows that no matter what happens, at least she can always find her way to me."	Sarah Kay, "If I should have a daughter ..."	"Point B" and "Way to me" are rhymed
Slogan/Motto	"The Olympic motto is Citius, Altius, Fortius." Faster, Higher, Stronger."	Rita Pierson, "Every kid needs a champion"	Using an Olympic motto

Appendix D

Full Table on Median Likes-to-Views Ratio

Devices used in AGD	Presence of AGDs	Median ratio (likes/views)
story	46	1.99%
humor	42	2.41%
question	31	1.98%
visual demonstration	30	1.93%
shocking statement	28	2.26%
irony	26	1.87%
parallelism	19	1.95%
repetition	15	1.52%
metaphor	13	2.08%
allusion	8	1.52%
statistics	7	2.49%
participatory device	7	2.33%
quotation	4	2.22%
antithesis	3	2.08%
simile	3	2.50%
paradox	2	1.20%
rhyme	1	2.16%
slogan	1	1.98%

Appendix E

Top-5 Frequent Devices Coded as AGDs

Type	Example
Story	“When I was 14 years old, I had low self-esteem. I felt I was not talented at anything. One day, I bought a yo-yo”
Humor	“Basically, I use my mouth in strange ways in exchange for cash”
Question	"Why do we cheat?"
Visual demonstration	Photo and video slides or physical demonstration
Shocking statement	“If anything kills over 10 million people in the next few decades, it's most likely to be a highly infectious virus rather than a war”