

A Sociopragmatic Study of Persuasive Appeals in English TEDx Talks

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Abstract—In TEDx lectures, persuasive communication has developed into a potent instrument for idea dissemination. However, little is known about the persuasive arguments made by speakers with varying professional backgrounds, particularly how the social aspects of occupation affect the selection of such arguments. To address this gap, this study investigates persuasive appeals in the context of TEDx talks in English. More precisely, it seeks to identify the categories of speech actions TEDx speakers use that exhibit persuasive appeals and how they differ based on the speaker's profession. This study demonstrates that pathos is the more common persuasive appeal employed by amateur TEDx presenters to emotionally engage the audience, whereas logos and ethos are essential for professionals in TEDx lectures, fitting with their role as specialists. Furthermore, there is a correlation between the persuasive appeal and the speech acts that English TEDx speakers perform, as each compelling appeal in the chosen data is linked to a consistent pattern of speech acts. For data analysis, a sample of four English TEDx talks is chosen from four different TEDx speakers. The target sample was analyzed through an eclectic model based on Searle's (1976) Theory of Speech Acts and Lucas's (2009) Model of Persuasive Strategies. The study comprised both a qualitative analysis and a quantitative analysis, which helped present the conclusion that English TEDx speakers use different persuasive appeals depending on their occupation, and the social variable of occupation, in turn, is reflected in the TEDx speakers' use of pragmatic strategies, namely speech acts.

Index Terms—persuasive appeals, TEDx talks, occupation, sociopragmatics, speech acts

I. INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, hundreds of stories have been told on a TEDx stage. Such stories are considered one of the more modern examples of effective public speaking because they are meant to persuade the audience of better well-being. Thus, persuasion plays a critical role in TEDx talks since TEDx speakers employ persuasive appeals to engage the audience, shift perspectives, and inspire action. Thus, the present study explores the way TEDx speakers utilize classical persuasive appeals and the way they vary depending on the speakers' occupation, i.e., specialists vs. non-specialists. Therefore, the present study investigates persuasive appeals in TEDx talks from sociopragmatic points of view in an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do persuasive appeals in TEDx talks vary depending on the speaker's occupation?
2. How do categories of speech acts employed by TEDx speakers manifest persuasive appeals?

As such, the study aims at:

1. Showing the way persuasive appeals in TEDx talks vary depending on the speaker's occupation.
2. Detecting the way categories of speech acts employed by TEDx speakers manifest persuasive appeals.

For the present study to attain its aims, it is hypothesized that:

1. Logos and ethos are crucial for specialists in TEDx talks because such persuasive appeals align with their role as specialists, while pathos is the more frequent persuasive appeal used by non-specialist TEDx speakers to help them connect emotionally with the audience.
2. There is a correspondence between the persuasive appeal and the speech act performed by English TEDx speakers in that there are consistent patterns of speech acts associated with each persuasive appeal used in the selected data.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Persuasion

Generally, the ability to persuade a targeted audience is one of the key functions of language. Thus, persuasion becomes essential to language since it exists in all human activities and demonstrates the way humans use their language to affect societies to reach certain intentions, such as changing individual minds, opinions, or even their decisions about anything (O'Keefe, 2002).

The idea of persuasion appeared first in ancient Greece, where philosophers referred to it as “rhetoric”, which is, in Perloff’s (2017) words, “the use of argumentation, language, and public address to influence audiences” (p. 53). Thus, the ultimate purpose of rhetoric is persuasion. Nevertheless, Black (2005) states that there is an essential difference between rhetoric and persuasion: rhetoric refers to the act of communication from the hearer’s perspective, whereas persuasion refers both to the speakers’ intentions and the successful results that the hearer is only persuaded if the speaker’s rhetoric is successful.

According to O’Keefe (2002), persuasion is the ability to influence another person’s mental state effectively and deliberately by means of communication in a situation where there is some degree of freedom on the part of the persuadee. Thus, being an interactive communicative process in which the persuader attempts to influence the persuadee’s beliefs and behaviors, it becomes evident that persuasion is characterized by deliberate intention. In this regard, O’Keefe (2002) lists five shared features of persuasion:

1. A successful attempt to influence.
2. The intention to influence the persuadee.
3. A measure of freedom (free will, free choice, voluntary action) on the persuader’s part.
4. The effects are achieved through communication.
5. A change in the mental state of the persuadee (principally as a precursor to a change in behavior).

B. *Persuasive Appeals*

Over two thousand years ago, Aristotle, in his masterpiece “The Art of Rhetoric”, identified three persuasive appeals, namely ethos (moral character), logos (the speech itself), and pathos (putting H into a certain emotional frame of mind). These three persuasive appeals represent basic ways by which the public speaker can influence his audience to do something. These appeals will probably come quite naturally to anyone, but having a strong awareness of how to manipulate them appropriately is more important.

Regarding ethos, it is a Greek word meaning “ethics”. It is the appeal to authority or credibility of the speaker. It is also called “trustworthiness”. It is how to persuade the audience that you are qualified to speak about a certain subject. It can be seen as an attempt to create credibility or to appeal to people’s trust because people are more likely to be influenced by someone they trust (McCormack, 2014). This mode of persuasion is already established because standing on the stage to present a TEDx talk is preceded by committee approval after having access to the personal information of the TEDx presenter and other conditions put in advance.

As for logos, it is a Greek word that means “logic or reason”. This persuasive appeal (also known as “rational” or “logical” appeal) is used to persuade the audience through reasoning centered on logical evidence or facts, which can be either inductive, deductive, or enthymematic. Whatever the case may be, once the speaker tries to persuade another group or audience, he must provide clear evidence in claiming his case by using statistics, logic, objectivity, and the like in order for the message he is trying to convey to be more reliable and convincing (Lin, 2019). In TEDx talks, the speaker often supports his views and ideas with the use of facts, statistics, figures, visuals, and so on in order to influence the audience, proving that his speech is logical or scientific. Most important, however, is argument, which is one of the main aspects of this persuasive appeal. Williams (1984) defines argument as “the attempt to influence through facts and inferences, logic and reasoning”. It is, thus, a reasoning process whereby the speaker attempts to help the audience arrive at a certain conclusion by providing evidence and, accordingly, persuade them. There are various aspects of argument speakers can use to persuade the audience, such as opinion and justification, causal relation, comparison and contrast, generalization and deduction, and so on.

Concerning pathos, it is a Greek word that means “feeling”. This persuasive appeal (also called “emotional appeal”) simply denotes feeling. It is the appeal to the audience’s shared values and emotions. It also includes the appeal to their imagination and hopes, especially when scenarios of positive future results follow a recommended course of action. This appeal is powerful because people are more often moved by emotions than by logic or reason (McCrimmon, 1973). In TEDx talks, the audience feels connected with the speaker’s message because utilizing this persuasive appeal enables the speaker to invest in the audience’s emotions to sway them. It should be noted, however, that this appeal not only occurs at the initial stages of persuasion; rather, it can also be utilized in sustaining or terminating the process. Thus, persuasion may originate from stirring the emotions (pathos) of the audience through storytelling.

C. *Persuasion in TEDx Talks*

Public speaking is considered one of the most appreciated and necessary skills from classical rhetoric to our digital age. TEDx talks are deemed one of the modern effective examples of public speaking; that is why they have recently received attention and are one of the leading and most investigated genres in media discourse.

Terminologically, the word TEDx is an acronym of the words Technology, Entertainment, and Design, plus an “x” for independently organized events that reflect the unique interests and perspectives of local communities. A TEDx talk is a showcase for speakers presenting well-formed ideas in not more than eighteen minutes. TEDx talks are principally performed by persuasive and passionate speakers who seek to uncover new ideas and to share the latest research in their local areas that sparks conversations in their communities. With compelling stories, TEDx speakers talk about their real-life successes and their experiences in real-life situations in order to influence the audience by motivating, encouraging, energizing, and persuading them to do certain actions (Young, 2013).

Thus, persuasion is a fundamental element in TEDx talks since most of these talks are intended to inform, inspire, and change the audience's perspectives. TEDx speakers try to persuade and influence the audience by strategically connecting with them and making their ideas compelling. There are different strategies that TEDx speakers can employ to persuade the audience, all of which fall under the three persuasive appeals presented earlier. These strategies can be summarized as follows:

1. Conveying clear and compelling messages that are memorable. When the idea is concise and well-articulated, the audience stays focused and engaged and is finally persuaded.
2. Storytelling by using real-life examples, personal anecdotes, or case studies to demonstrate certain points. This makes the TEDx speaker more relatable, and the audience is influenced because people connect with stories more than with abstract concepts or data.
3. Establishing authority or credibility in the TEDx talk by sharing background, experiences, and qualifications with the audience to show them that the speaker is knowledgeable and trustworthy.
4. Evoking the audience's emotion and persuasive passion by creating an emotional connection with them. A persuasive delivery of the message can make the audience more likely to care about the topic of the talk and, hence, be persuaded by it.
5. Engaging the audience by using data and evidence and by asking thought-provoking questions to create an exciting atmosphere and interactive moments, to stimulate the audience's intellectuality, and to make the audience feel involved in the presentation rather than just persuasive and passionate listeners.
6. Using relevant data, evidence, studies, and statistics to provide a logical foundation for the speaker's arguments to persuade the audience intellectually.
7. Calling for action to motivate the audience to act on what they have heard. Persuasion is more effective when the TEDx speaker encourages the audience to act, like changing a mindset or adopting new behavior.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. The Model of Analysis

Based on the notions presented in the previous sections, the present study uses an eclectic model to analyze the data under scrutiny, as seen in Figure 1 below:

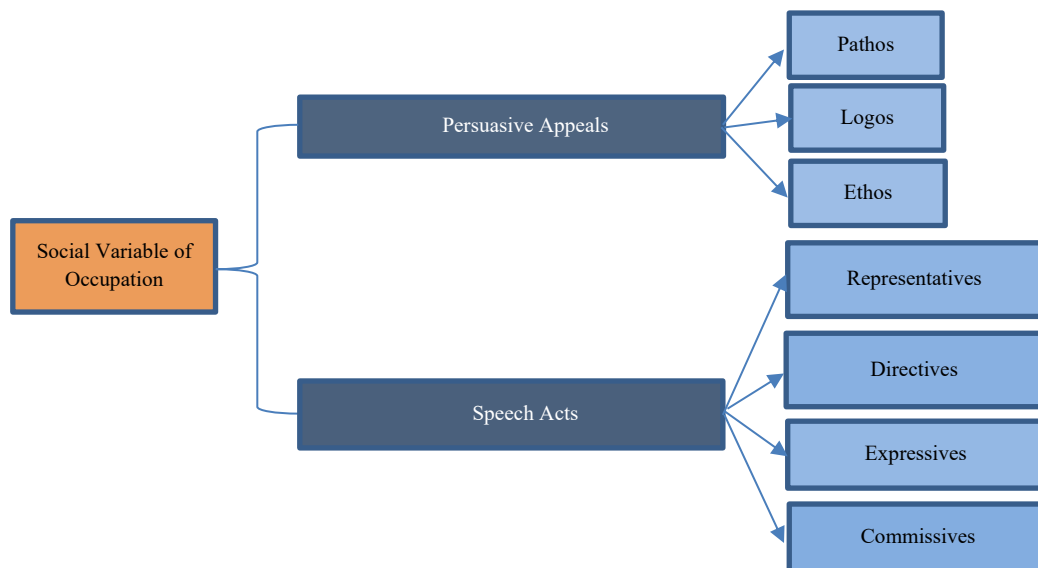


Figure 1. The Eclectic Model of the Study

B. Data Collection

The data of the present study are represented by four English TEDx talks. They are collected from the official TEDx YouTube channel. As for the criteria of the data sampling, two of Herring's (2004) criteria are adopted in the selection of the target data, namely sampling by individual and sampling by theme. Thus, the distribution of the talks depends on whether the speaker is specialized in psychology or non-specialized to sociopragmatically inspect the effect of the occupation of the speaker on the persuasive appeals and the speech acts employed to persuade the audience. As for the criterion of the theme, talks about happiness are selected as the target data. Moreover, the reason for specifically selecting these four talks is that they are the most-watched TEDx talks so far, with millions of views. Therefore, it is hypothesized that their analysis can reveal some of the prominent features that make them so remarkable and successful.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Talk 1

Title: *I Choose to be Happy*

Speaker: Elizabeth Anne Velásquez (also known as “Lizzie”)

Occupation: Non-Specialist (Motivational Speaker and Activist)

Extract No. 1

“Now imagine if you clicked on the video, and you realized that somebody posted a video of you and labeled it “The World’s Ugliest Woman or Man.”¹ Think for a second.² How would you feel?³ How do you think somebody would feel if they found that?⁴ I will tell you, because it happened to me.”⁵

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, Lizzie wants to attract the audience’s attention from the very beginning to talk about her suffering from bullying. She affects the audience emotionally and appeals to their emotions by making them imagine how harsh it could be to find a video of themselves posted online and labeled “The World’s Ugliest Woman”. Thus, pathos is the persuasive appeal used in this extract.

B. Speech Acts

Lizzie uses directive speech acts of requesting in numbers 1 and 2 to make the audience perform the mental acts of imagining and thinking and of asking in numbers 3 and 4. She effectively directs them to consider how they or someone else might feel. While the speaker is not directly telling the listener to do something, the intent is to influence the listener’s thinking and emotional response, which aligns with the directive category. A commissive speech act is also used in number 5 to attract the audience’s attention to what is next to talk about.

Extract No. 2

“... From the second I was born, the doctors prepared my parents to expect absolutely nothing out of me.¹ They said I wouldn’t come out crying.² They said I’d never talk, I’d never walk, I’d never crawl. I would literally accomplish nothing in my life.”³

A. Persuasive Appeals

Lizzie talks about her disability and her harsh conditions when everyone thought that she would be helpless. She was born with an extremely rare congenital disease called marfanoid–progeroid–lipodystrophy syndrome (MFLS). Among other symptoms, this disease prevents her from accumulating body fat and gaining weight. She uses pathos as a persuasive appeal in this extract.

B. Speech Acts

In number 1, Lizzie uses the representative speech act of stating a fact about her birth and the expectations of her doctors to convey her personal experience from the second she was born. Another representative speech act is used in both numbers 2 and 3 by reporting what the doctors said about her future abilities.

Extract No. 3

“... No one wanted to play with me; no one wanted to stand by me. No one wanted to have a single thing to do with me because I was different...”

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, Lizzie again engages the audience emotionally by telling them about her experience on her first day in kindergarten. How she was an outcast due to her difference, thus using pathos here.

B. Speech Acts

To convey her emotions and feelings of being isolated and rejected, Lizzie uses an expressive speech act of feeling in this extract. Here, she wants to share the emotional impact of being ignored or excluded in that time.

Extract No. 4

“So again, at such a young age, I was forced to be in a situation of ‘I can either choose to be happy, or I could choose to give up.’¹ Luckily, I chose to be happy.² As I grew up, I started making a lot of friends.”³

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, Lizzie moves the audience to a different phase by evoking a positive and favorable emotion in the audience, namely hope. She strategically connects these emotions to the purpose of her speech, i.e., choosing to be happy. Again, pathos is used here.

B. Speech Acts

Expressive speech acts are used in numbers 1 and 2 to reflect on her emotional journey and to share her personal feelings about a difficult situation. The choice between being happy or giving up is an emotional decision, and Lizzie expresses how she chose to be positive and happy. In number 3, a representative speech act is used by making factual statements about the choices and outcomes she experienced after choosing to be happy.

Extract No. 5

“As I got older, I, of course, had to deal with a lot of bullying; luckily, no physical bullying, but a lot of name-calling and stares.¹ And so I felt self-conscious a lot, even though I was so young, because I didn’t look like the popular girls.”²

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, Lizzie refers to an important phenomenon in her story, that of bullying. She again uses pathos to appeal to the audience's emotion by creating an emotional connection of feeling pity when she explained her self-conscious phase where she found the answer to her permanent question, "What is wrong with me?" She became aware of the reasons behind being an outcast.

B. Speech Acts

In number 1, a representative speech act is used by stating a fact about her experience with bullying, specifically describing the kind of bullying she faced, not physical bullying but the name-calling and stares. In number 2, she uses an expressive speech act of feeling to share her internal emotional state; that is, feeling self-conscious and how it impacted her, particularly when comparing herself to the "popular" girls, saying that she is different and does not fit the expected standard.

Extract No. 6

"...2013 will be my eighth year of motivational speaking¹. My first year of college, I published my first book, called "Lizzie Beautiful," in English and Spanish.² I ended up writing my second book, and it came out this October, called "Be Beautiful, Be You."³ A couple of days ago, I got an e-mail from my publishing house with a release date for my third book.⁴ And this May, I will be getting my degree from Texas State University.⁵"

A. Persuasive Appeals

Being meticulous about the arrangement of the context of her speech, Lizzie moves the audience to understand the message of her talk as well as to attract their attention to her credibility as a persuader. She starts to mention her accomplishments, as if her suffering forced her to drive herself to her best version. She was put in a situation where "[she] can either choose to be happy or give up," and fortunately, she chose to be happy and successful. More importantly, to show the audience that she is qualified to talk about happiness, Lizzie, in this extract, resorts to ethos, or the appeal to authority or trustworthiness.

B. Speech Acts

With four representative speech acts of stating in 1, 2, 3, and 4, and a commissive speech act of promising in 5, Lizzie talks about her achievements after choosing to be happy. Such accomplishments represent a reply for the bullying she faced in different stages of her life.

Talk 2

Title: *You Have One Life. Live It*

Speaker: Sherry McConkey

Occupation: Non-Specialist (Activist)

Extract No. 1

"...There's no way to explain that kind of pain; it's a constant circle of emotions: fear, guilt, loss, and anger, and those words don't do it justice.¹ It's like somebody's squeezing your throat and stepping on your chest; you can't breathe."²

A. Persuasive Appeals

Sherry McConkey starts her talk with her reaction to hearing the news of her husband's death. She attempts to accurately describe the pain she felt at that moment. Here, she utilizes pathos quite well to make the audience feel the same emotions that she does.

B. Speech Acts

Two expressive speech acts are utilized by McConkey in the above extract to express her strong emotions of fear, guilt, loss, and anger. She wants to highlight her emotional state, to show her deep pain and her reaction to it.

Extract No. 2

"...I had no idea what to do, my brain was screaming, I couldn't breathe, and my daughter was staring at me, scared and confused..."

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, she also uses pathos. She appeals to the audience's emotion to show her helplessness at that time and her situation of being a single mom after losing her husband.

B. Speech Acts

This utterance is an expressive speech act that McConkey uses to convey her emotional state in that moment. She reflects a strong emotional response to the situation.

Extract No. 3

"...I felt the pain of a grieving wife and the kids that wouldn't know their father, and I saw herself in me, and it killed me.¹ I was reliving Shane's persuasive appeals, and I was emotionally exhausted by so many of our friends dying way too young."²

A. Persuasive Appeals

Similarly, in this extract, McConkey resorts to pathos by creating an emotional connection when she conveys her feelings about personal experiences, more specifically, the death of her husband's friend.

B. Speech Acts

Again, two expressive speech acts are used by McConkey to share her emotional state of losing loved ones and the deep sorrow tied to such loss.

Extract No. 4

“This particular death was a result of a skydiving accident of yet another amazing friend.¹ I’m not an angry person, but for the first time in my life I was overcome with anger—real, raw, gut-wrenching anger.^{2”}

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, the use of pathos is also evident through McConkey’s expressing her anger about the death of her husband, although she is normally not an angry person.

B. Speech Acts

In this extract, two speech acts are used. In number 1, she uses the representative speech act of stating the facts behind the death of her friend. In number 2, she uses an expressive speech act to convey her emotional reaction to the situation, focusing on how she felt in that moment of anger, which is deeply personal and emotional.

Extract No. 5

“...I’ve received hundreds of amazing e-mails about how Shane has influenced somebody’s life in a positive way.¹ And I cannot explain how amazing that feels.^{2”}

A. Persuasive Appeals

After expressing her sadness and grief about losing her husband in a terrible accident, she moves the audience to the healing phase she went through. Thus, again with pathos, from negative to positive emotions, she wants to persuade the audience that each one of us can choose how to live his life, and it’s through hard times that one can learn how to endure heartache, overcome obstacles, and become a bigger version of oneself. Here, she evokes different emotions of the new beginning she decided to make.

B. Speech Acts

In number 1, McConkey uses a representative speech act, stating the facts of receiving e-mails about the positive effect of her husband on people’s lives. In number 2, she uses an expressive speech act, sharing her emotional reaction to the positive feedback she has received. She wants to express her feelings of amazement and gratitude for such feedback.

Extract No. 6

“I persevere through his death,¹ and although I can’t and never will be able to explain losing the love of my life,² I can say that through incredible tragedy, I discovered a new me.³ Being happy is not dependent on my circumstances pursuing persuasive appeals, and living life—really living life—is the greatest choice I can make every day.^{4”}

A. Persuasive Appeals

In these last words, McConkey ends her talk after establishing an emotional connection with the audience to make them understand her perspective and to persuade them to accept her claims. Thus, it is with pathos that she refocuses her pain from losing her husband, which led to personal growth. She finalizes her talk by persuading the audience to live their lives and to learn to drive themselves to the best version after any hard experience they go through.

B. Speech Acts

With three representative speech acts in numbers 1, 3, and 4, McConkey states facts about how she has persevered through grief and how she has learned from it and changed throughout her journey. In number 2, she uses an expressive speech act to convey her grief and the emotional complexity of that experience.

Talk 3

Title: *How to Get Rid of Loneliness and Become Happy*

Speaker: Dr. Olivia Remes

Occupation: Specialist (Mental Health Expert)

Extract No. 1

“Loneliness can make you depressed.¹ It can lead to early death, and it can make it more likely that you get Alzheimer’s disease.² Loneliness can physically harm you.^{3”}

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, it is obvious that Dr. Remes uses logos, or the appeal to logic. She provides scientific facts to persuade the audience to be aware of loneliness because it is a serious problem.

B. Speech Acts

As for speech acts, Remes starts her talk with three directive speech acts of warning by shedding light on the negative consequences of loneliness. In this way, she tries to influence the audience’s behavior or mindset.

Extract. No. 2

“The problem is that more and more people are lonely today; in fact, it’s almost one in three.¹ You’d think that with all of this social media, smartphones, and FaceTime that allow us to get in touch with one another instantly, we’d feel more connected. But actually, the opposite is true; we’re lonelier than ever, more depressed and anxious than ever.^{2”}

A. Persuasive Appeals

Again, in this extract, Remes utilizes logos when she provides statistics, such as “It’s almost one in three,” as evidence to support her argument. Moreover, she refers to the reasons behind feeling lonely. More accurately, she uses cause-to-effect reasoning to persuade the audience through logic.

B. Speech Acts

With two representative speech acts of stating, Remes mentions the effect of social media and technology on human connection.

Extract No. 3

“The reason that loneliness has such serious consequences is that the human being is a social animal, and if it’s on its own for too long, it gets sick.”

A. Persuasive Appeals

Similarly, Remes uses logos in her reasoning in this extract. She uses effect-to-cause reasoning to refer to a problem that really exists. She gives the consequences of loneliness before mentioning its causes.

B. Speech Acts

A representative speech act of reasoning is used in this extract to explain the cause (human nature) behind the effect (loneliness leading to sickness).

Extract No. 4

“Today, I’ll be talking to you about how to get rid of loneliness and become happy.¹ So, I’m a researcher at the University of Cambridge, studying anxiety and depression, and whenever I tell people what I do, many times, they point to themselves and say, ‘You’ve got a case study right here.’²”

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, Remes shifts to ethos to persuade the audience through her authority or credibility, as if she is telling them that she is a specialist and is qualified to talk about the subject.

B. Speech Acts

In number 1, she wants to attract the audience’s attention by means of a commissive of promising that she commits herself to perform an action, i.e., give a talk or offer advice about overcoming loneliness. In number 2, she uses a representative speech act of stating to share her professional background and what typically happens when she mentions her research field to others.

Extract No. 5

“When she started talking, you could feel the sadness in her voice when she said that she was always lonely and never felt like she fit in.¹ She would ask herself, “What’s wrong with me?” And I thought, you know, to have to ask yourself this question is so painful.²”

A. Persuasive Appeals

In talking about a case study, Remes uses pathos in order to appeal to the audience’s emotions to show the real effect of loneliness and persuade and influence the audience through her claims.

B. Speech Acts

With two expressive speech acts, Remes conveys the emotional state of someone who suffers from loneliness.

Extract No. 6

“The ancient Buddhist monks used to say that happiness and suffering are all in the mind—they’re not out there.¹ So happiness is not out there, found through other people or objects. Rather, it’s in here.² So if happiness and suffering are in the mind, then it follows that the causes of happiness and suffering are also in the mind.³ It turns out that if you want to stop being lonely, you have to change how you perceive the world.⁴ And this is where the difference lies between people who are lonely and those who aren’t.⁵”

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, the use of logos is evident in Remes’s use of argument and reasoning. More accurately, she makes inferences and draws conclusions through the use of reason to persuade the audience to change how they perceive the world because it is all in their minds, and it is their choice to be happy.

B. Speech Acts

Remes uses representative speech acts of reporting in number 1 and acts of reasoning in numbers 2, 3, and 5. However, in number 4, she uses a directive speech act of recommending based on knowledge or reasoning to help the audience stop or avoid being lonely.

Talk 4

Title: *Happiness is a Choice*

Speaker: Veronda Bellamy

Occupation: Mental Health Therapist

Extract No. 1

“I’m a therapist—a mental health therapist.”

A. Persuasive Appeals

Veronda chooses to start her talk with ethos as a persuasive appeal to show her authority or credibility. As a mental health therapist, she can persuade the audience that she is qualified to speak about this subject.

B. Speech Acts

Veronda uses a representative speech act of asserting because she confidently states her profession and asserts it as true to show the audience that she is a specialist.

Extract No. 2

“That stress felt like loads of quilts, and the imagery of those quilts was actually manifest as extra weight.”

A. Persuasive Appeals

In this extract, Veronda conveys her personal story in hard times in an attempt to evoke the audience’s emotion. In this way, she utilizes pathos as a persuasive appeal.

B. Speech Acts

She uses an expressive speech act to convey her feelings during the hard times she went through.

Extract No. 3

“I began to really search for what exactly is the meaning of happiness¹, and it’s probably not going to come as any surprise to any of you, but I found that happiness is not about things, right? But rather moments that we all have, we all have within our personal control.² I continued in my research, and I found that we get to define happiness for ourselves.³”

A. Persuasive Appeals

In the above extract, both ethos and logos are used. Ethos is used when she mentions that she began to search and continued her research. As a result, she can persuade the audience that she is trustworthy and not only claiming something; rather, her statements are based on previous research. As for logos, she uses argument, drawing logical conclusions like, “Happiness is not about things, right? But rather moments that we all have, we all have within our personal control,” and “We get to define happiness for ourselves”.

B. Speech Acts

Veronda uses three representative speech acts in this excerpt. In number 1, she states a fact—she began to search for happiness. In numbers 2 and 3, she uses speech acts of concluding about the exact meaning of happiness.

Extract No. 4

“Yale University has a course on happiness, and this course during a pandemic was its most popular course in its 300 years of existence, being taught over three million times.¹ They kind of told me happiness is the kinder, more gentler approach to healing. It is at the root of being well.²”

A. Persuasive Appeals

Similarly, in this extract. Veronda utilizes logos by providing statistics in order to be more reliable and convincing in her statements.

B. Speech Acts

In this extract, Veronda uses two representative speech acts—the act of stating in number 1 and the act of reporting in number 2—to share her experience in the course she had during the pandemic.

Extract No. 5

“Happiness is not not having problems, nor is happiness because as a therapist I have to put this disclaimer out: it’s not a cure for depression.¹ Happiness is filling all the emotions and finding that one little thread that you can connect yourself to and experience well-being, wellness, and happiness, even if just for a moment.² Happiness varies; it’s not a constant state,³ but you get to define the happiness for yourself.⁴”

A. Persuasive Appeals

Again, with reasoning and logical conclusions, Veronda tries to persuade the audience to define happiness for themselves. Moreover, ethos is also used in this extract when she reminds the audience of her authority “as a therapist”.

B. Speech Acts

In this extract, she uses three representative speech acts of concluding as a judgment about the nature of happiness. She offers an interpretation based on the reasoning she presented earlier. Moreover, in number 4, she uses the directive speech act of encouraging.

Extract No. 6

“Happiness is the purposeful pursuit of positive things.”

A. Persuasive Appeals

In these final words, Veronda resorts to logos to provide a short scientific definition of happiness in order for her message to be memorable. She recaps the main points she has covered in one plausible definition.

B. Speech Acts

In this extract, Veronda uses a representative speech act of concluding when she gives a scientific definition of happiness.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis demonstrates some significant differences regarding the use of persuasive appeals between specialist and non-specialist TEDx speakers.

TABLE 1
STATISTICAL COMPARISON BETWEEN SPECIALIST AND NON-SPECIALIST TEDx SPEAKERS IN TERMS OF PERSUASIVE APPEALS

Types of Persuasive Appeals	Specialist TEDx Speakers		Non-Specialist TEDx Speakers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Ethos	4	26.6 %	1	8.3 %
Logos	9	60 %	0	0 %
Pathos	2	13.3 %	11	91.6 %
Total	15	100 %	12	100 %

More accurately, Table 1 shows that the social variable of occupation can be reflected in the frequent use of logos by the specialists, among other persuasive appeals, scoring 60%. This finding is indicative because it aligns with their role as experts sharing knowledge. That is, specialists want to maintain a sense of objectivity in their talks to keep the focus on facts and evidence rather than on emotions. They focus on explaining concepts logically to help the audience understand the topic and think critically about it. As for ethos, it scores 26.6%. This indicates that ethos is crucial for specialists in TEDx talks because it helps them establish their credibility and helps the audience trust ideas and the information they provide. Thus, by showing their expertise, using evidence, and speaking confidently, specialists ensure that their message is considered reliable and taken seriously by the audience. By contrast, pathos is the more frequently used of the persuasive appeals by non-specialist TEDx speakers, scoring 91.6%, because non-specialists try to connect emotionally with the audience to make their message more engaging, impactful, and memorable. They depend on sharing their personal stories or highlighting the human aspect of the topic to make the audience feel the pain, the joy, or the hope in their stories. As a result, the audience is persuaded and motivated to act. The variance in the use of persuasive appeals is displayed in Figure 2 below:

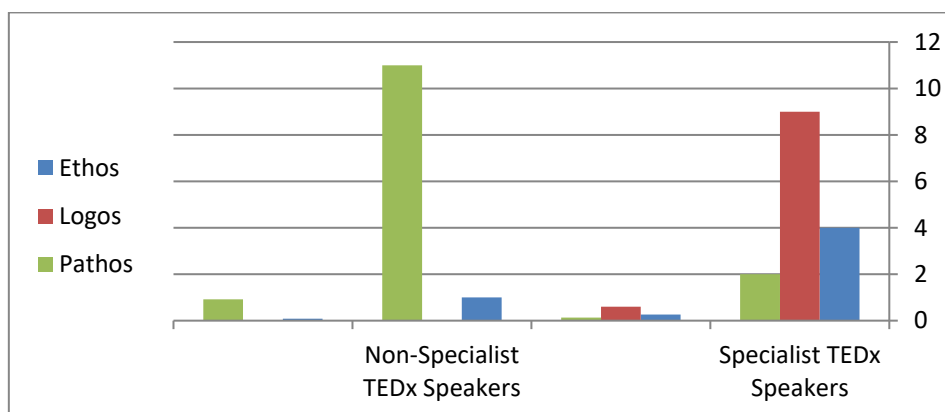


Figure 2. Specialist and Non-Specialist TEDx Speakers' Use of Persuasive Appeals

As far as the use of speech acts is concerned, English TEDx speakers perform different categories and types of speech acts, such as stating, asserting, reasoning, concluding, reporting, requesting, encouraging, warning, recommending, asking, promising, and expressive speech acts of feeling. TEDx speakers use them in different percentages, as shown in Table 2 below. However, some percentages of the speech acts used are indicative. For example, expressive speech acts of feeling and representative speech acts of stating are frequently performed by non-specialist TEDx speakers. Each scores 37.5%. On the other hand, specialist TEDx speakers perform representative speech acts of concluding, reasoning, and stating more frequently in their talks, scoring 22.2%, 14.8%, and 18.5%, respectively.

TABLE 2
STATISTICAL COMPARISON BETWEEN SPECIALIST AND NON-SPECIALIST TEDx SPEAKERS IN TERMS OF SPEECH ACTS

Types Of Speech Acts	Specialist TEDx Speakers		Non-Specialist TEDx Speakers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Rep. SA of Stating	5	18.5 %	12	37.5 %
Rep. SA of Asserting	1	3.7 %	0	0 %
Rep. SA of Reporting	2	7.4 %	2	6.2 %
Rep. SA of Reasoning	4	14.8 %	0	0 %
Rep. SA of Concluding	6	22.2 %	0	0 %
Dir. SA of Asking	0	0 %	2	6.2 %
Dir. SA of Requesting	0	0 %	2	6.2 %
Dir. SA of Warning	3	11.1 %	0	0 %
Dir. SA of Recommending	1	3.7 %	0	0 %
Dir. SA of Encouraging	1	3.7 %	0	0 %
Exp. SA of Feeling	3	11.1 %	12	37.5 %
Com. SA of Promising	1	3.7 %	2	6.2 %
Total	27	100 %	32	100 %

Key: SA=Speech Act, Rep.= Representative, Dir= Directive, Com= Commissive

The variance in the use of speech acts between specialist and non-specialist TEDx speakers is more evident in Figure 3 below:

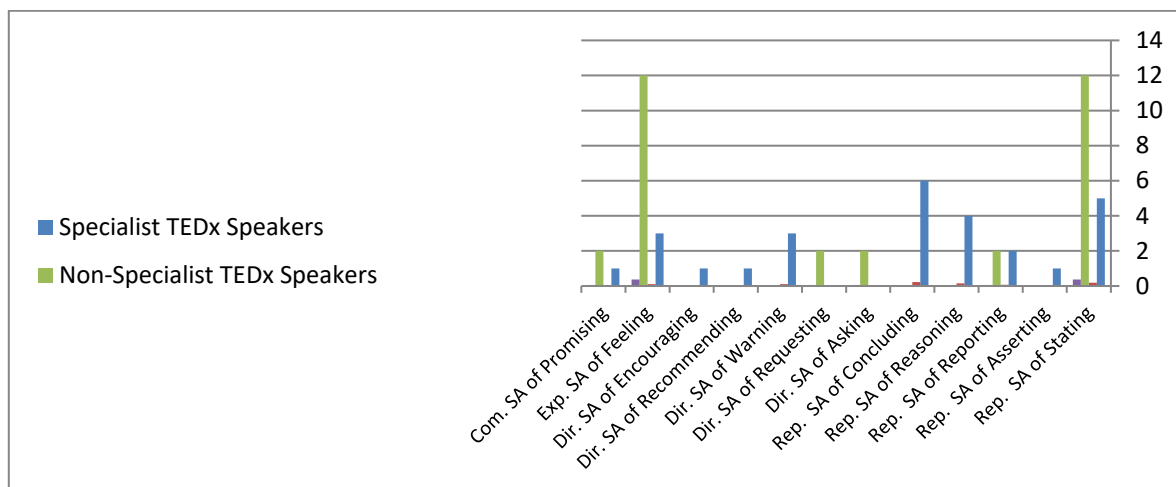


Figure 3. Specialist and Non-Specialist TEDx Speakers' Use of Speech Acts

The above findings show that there is a relationship between the persuasive appeal and the speech act performed by TEDx speakers in that these speech acts are associated with each persuasive appeal used in the selected data. More accurately, logos and ethos are mostly realized by means of representative speech acts of concluding and reasoning, while pathos is mostly realized by means of expressive speech acts of feeling. Thus, this analysis shows that English TEDx speakers use different persuasive appeals depending on their occupation, and the social variable of occupation, in turn, is reflected in the TEDx speakers' use of pragmatic strategies, namely speech acts.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study examined persuasive appeals from sociopragmatic points of view in the context of English TEDx talks, and after the analysis conducted on the selected data, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, persuasion plays a critical role in English TEDx talks since TEDx speakers employ persuasive appeals to engage the audience, shift perspectives, and inspire action. Second, occupation is an inevitable sociolinguistic variable that significantly influences how TEDx speakers persuade the audience. It can shape whether the speaker uses authority-based persuasion (ethos), logic-based persuasion (logos), or emotion-based persuasion (pathos). Third, logos and ethos are crucial for specialists in TEDx talks because such persuasive appeals align with their role as specialists. They try to establish their credibility, share knowledge, and maintain a sense of objectivity by focusing more on facts and evidence than emotions. On the other hand, pathos is the more frequent persuasive appeal used by non-specialist TEDx speakers because they try to connect emotionally with the audience to make their message more engaging, impactful, and memorable. This validates hypothesis number 1. Fourth, there are consistent patterns of speech acts made by English TEDx in the selected data that manifest and correspond with the persuasive appeal used by English TEDx speakers. More accurately, logos and ethos are realized by means of representative speech acts of stating, concluding, and reasoning, while pathos is mostly realized by means of representative speech acts of stating and expressive speech acts of feeling. This validates hypothesis number 2. Finally, English TEDx speakers use different strategies to persuade the audience, such as conveying clear and compelling messages, storytelling, sharing information, experiences, or qualifications, evoking emotion, using data and evidence, and calling for action. All of these strategies fall under the three persuasive appeals identified earlier.

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