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Research Article

Analysing the Pragma-rhetorical Structure of Motivational Storytelling in Commencement Speeches Given at American Universities

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Abstract

This article examines the pragma-rhetorical structure of motivational storytelling in American commencement speeches. It focuses on investigating the pragma-rhetorical strategies that commencement speakers employ while delivering stories to encourage and urge the graduates of American universities to act prudently in the future. It analyses the structure of storytelling in accordance with Labov's (1972) framework which encompasses six stages and then it investigates the pragma-rhetorical strategies in the overall structure of this type of storytelling. More specifically, it explores the employment of speech acts, flouting the conversational maxims, figures of speech, and rhetorical appeals in each of its six stages. To achieve these aims, the researchers chose ten commencement speeches given between 2010 and 2019, extracted representative stories delivered within these speeches, and analysed them in accordance with a developed model. The findings showed that each stage of the motivational storytelling structure is embodied with a set of pragma-rhetorical strategies that commencement speakers resort to to motivate and advice the graduates to behave wisely.

Keywords: Pragma-rhetorical structure, motivation, storytelling, commencement speeches, challenges.

Introduction

From ancient times, humans make use of storytelling to transmit and convey information or to provide entertainment among each other. Although it is difficult to mark the first occasion at which a story is told, but the available evidence states that storytelling has been widely in use before inventing the writing system. Storytelling was first utilized when humans began to communicate among each other (Stein, 1983; Egan, 1989; Kelly, 1995; Banks- Wallace, 2002; Denning, 2006). Traditionally, visual and oral practices were the only means through which preliterate societies convey their cultural and historical information. It is considered one of the major causesbehind surviving ancient civilizations as it has been the primary medium through which people have transmitted their cultural customs, history, values and heritage (Abrahamsen, 1998: 440).

Parkin (2004: 1) refers to the highly respected positions that storytellers had received in their communities in the past for the role they had played in transferring knowledge, facilitating and explaining complex challenges in their cultures and inspiring their audience to manage and overcome such challenges in their lives. In this sense, storytellers help people to view the past events, actions, and experiences to identify the connections regarding their current life and future challenges.

Literature review

The Structure of Storytelling

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Analysing the Pragma-rhetorical Structure of Motivational Storytelling in Commencement Speeches Given at American Universities

Any storytelling discourse needs to be structured in a systematic manner so that the audience can receive its intended messagecorrectly and clearly. Although the earliest attempt to define this structure can be attributed to Aristotle (Ibarra and Lineback, 2005: 67), among contemporary scholars Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) are the first who have attempted to give a structural description of oral storytelling discourse. Labov and Waletzky (1967:13) divide the structure of storytelling discourse into two main stages: the referential stage and the evaluative stage . In the referential stage, the storytellers refer directly to the characters, events, and actions of thestory. They can depict how events and actions are start and progress until they reach the ultimate outcome. The evaluative stage, in contrast, encapsulates the attitudes the storytellers have towards the events and the way they interpret the responses of their characters to motivate their audience.

Labov (1972: 363 ff) reformulates the above framework to include six stages: abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda. In the abstract, the storyteller informs the audience of the theme of the story that will be told. In the orientation, the audience listen to environmental information related to the story. The complicating action presents the audience with the main events of the story till the climax. The resolution indicates the end of the events of the story. In the evaluation, the storyteller states their interpretation of the events of the story in the light of the audience current conditions. Coda is sometimes used to mark the end of the storytelling and return to the current situation.

Speech Acts

Speech act (henceforth SA) is one of the major and most influential pragmatic elements constituting the pragmatic structure of storytelling. From a pragmatic perspective, speech acts are actions performed by speakers in a particular context and under specific conditions or circumstances. Austin (1962: 102) proposes that the issuance of an utterance comprises three kinds of acts:

1. Locutionary acts which are concerned with producing meaningful linguistic utterances.
2. Illocutionary acts are about the action intended to be performed by a speaker in uttering a particular utterance on the part of the addressee (s).
3. Perlocutionary acts are related to the consequences or effects of the uttered utterances on the addressee(s) (ibid.: 1002).

 Various linguists have produced certain classifications of the illocutionary acts, but the most famous one is the one that is proposed by Searle (1969) after reviewing Austin's (1962) classification. Searle (1969) classifies SAs into five major categories: assertives, expressives, directives, commissives, and declaratives. Each of these five kinds of categories of acts includes other sub-acts that can be distinguished from each other by their felicity conditions (See Jacobs, 2002: 231).

Flouting Conversational Maxims

 Grice argues that speakers, in general, intend to be cooperative when they communicate with each other (1975: 33). In daily interactions, people share a cooperative principle to 'manage' their speech exchange in an efficient way (Grice, 1975: 35). Thus, he (ibid.) postulates the Cooperative Principle and four maxims guiding participants how to be cooperative: quality, quantity, relevance and manner.

• Quality – speakers' contributions should be truthful.
• Quantity – speakers' contributions should be informative.
• Relevance – speakers' contributions should relevant.
• Manner – speakers' contributions should be: clear, orderly and brief (Levinson, 1983: 104).

Thus, participants are expected to adhere to this principle and its four maxims, but when they do not, they create additional connotations (conversational implicatures) (Grice 1975: 49). Thomas (1995: 64) identifies five ways in which speakers may disobey the CMs: violating, flouting, infringing, opting out, and suspending. This paper concentrates exclusively on flouting conversational maxims (henceforth referred to as FCMs), as commencement speakers are not expected to deceive their audience (See Thomas, ibid.: 65).

Figures of Speech

According to Cambridge Online Dictionary of English, figures of speech (henceforth FoSs) are expressions that use "words to mean something different from their ordinary meaning". This language use is culture-specific as its understanding requires knowing more about that culture (Hawkes, 1972:1). It is an obviously referring pattern

showing how linguistic expressions are signified instead of what they are signified (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 5). Numerous frameworks for FoSs have been proposed in the rhetorical literature, but this study will use Grundy's (2008: 138) framework because it is rhetorical and directly related to FCMs. Grundy's (ibid) approach classifies FoSs into six categories: overstatement, understatement, , metaphor, tautology, rhetorical question, and irony.

Rhetorical Appeals

Typically, speakers employ rhetorical appeals (henceforth RAs) to enhance the persuasiveness of their discourse. According to Ganz (2011: 284), storytellers resort to use RAs either separately or collaboratively. In the literature of persuasion, there are three major RAs: pathos, ethos, and logos. Pathos is the emotions that stir the audience to an action or a change of behaviour (Brown, 2003: 242). Ethos indicates the character of speaker, his power of persuasion, and the shared concerns of the speaker and their audience (Bentley, 2000: 91). Logos is an appeal to the logical structure of a particular discourse which involves a rational argument in an attempt to persuade the audience through plain reasoning by means of logical appeals such as statistics, facts, definitions, and interpretations (Alfano and O'Brien, 2005: 33).

This study is motivated to investigate the pragma-rhetorical strategies in each stage of the motivational storytelling given by commencement speakers at American universities or institutes in the last ten years (See Appendix I). The researchers extracted one storytelling out of each commencement speech. To ensure clarity, we designated each storytelling discourse with numbers and each utterance in each storytelling with a alphabetic letters. After delineating the structural stages of each storytelling, we investigated the pragma-rhetorical strategies in each of these stages.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study is motivated to investigate the pragma-rhetorical strategies in each stage of the motivational storytelling given by commencement speakers at American universities or institutes in the last ten years (See Appendix I). The researchers extracted one storytelling out of each commencement speech. To ensure clarity, we designated each storytelling discourse with numbers and each utterance in each storytelling with a alphabetic letters. After delineating the structural stages of each storytelling, we investigated the pragma-rhetorical strategies in each of these stages.

Results and Discussion

To provide comprehensive results of the pragma-rhetorical structure of motivational storytelling in the data under scrutiny, each stage will be discussed separately in the following sub-sections.

The statistical analysis of the data reflects that the Abstract stage is accomplished through using five pragma-rhetorical strategies: SAs, FCMs, FoSs, and RAs with a percentage of (33.33%), (21.97%), (21.21%), and (23.49%), respectively. These findings are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Pragma-rhetorical strategies in the Abstract

Pragma-rhetorical strategies	F	%
SAs	44	33.33
FCMs	29	21.97
FoSs	28	21.21
RAs	31	23.49
Total	132	100.00

As Table 2 shows, the statistical analysis reveals that most of the SAs used by CSs in this stage of storytelling are Rep SA of asserting and stating with the percentages of (31.82%) and (22.72%), respectively. This frequent use of Rep SA of asserting mirrors the role of CSs to inform the graduates in this stage about the values and concepts that they want to assert in their motivational storytelling. The Rep SA of stating is the second-high SA in this

stage to assert the nature of motivational storytelling as CSs hints to successful things that happened in the past for their nations as an attempt to motivate the graduates to exploit their potentials efficiently.

Table 2

Speech Act Strategies in the Abstract

Speech Act Strategies		F	%
Rep	Asserting	14	31.82
	Reporting	3	6.82
	Stating	10	22.72
	Criticizing	1	2.27
	Boasting	3	6.82
	Lamenting	1	2.27
Dir	Advising	1	2.27
	Encouraging	2	4.55
Com	Offering	3	6.82
Exp	Boasting	6	13.64
	Total	44	100.00

In terms of FCMs, the results indicate that CSs flout only three CMs in this stage, namely QlM, QnM, and MM with the percentages of (51.72%), (41.38%), and (6.90%), respectively, as shown in Table 3. This recurrent employment in flouting QlM and QnM reveal how CSs try to start their storytelling with a state of imagination through using metaphorical images or overstating and understating the facts they intend to go through in their motivational storytelling. The low flouting MM receives indicates the clarity and orderliness of information presented by CSs in this stage. The absence of RM from flouting in this stage shows the CSs' commitment to giving the graduate information that is directly related to the topic they discuss.

Table 3

Flouting the Conversational Maxims in Abstract

FCMs	F	%
QlM	15	51.72
QnM	12	41.38
MM	2	6.90
Total	29	100.00

In respect of exploiting the FoSs in the stage, Table 4 shows that CSs employ five types of FoSs, namely tautology, overstatement, understatement, metaphor, and rhetorical question with the percentages of (25.00%), (35.71%), (10.71%), (25.00%), and (3.58%), respectively. As such, CSs rely heavily on changing the real representations of their facts to motivate the graduates to listen to the upcoming story. This recurrent use of metaphor implies the metaphorical nature of the Abstract CSs give.

Table 4

Figures of Speech in Abstract

FoSs	F	%
Tautology	7	25.00

Overstatement	10	35.71
Understatement	3	10.71
Metaphor	7	25.00
Rhetorical Q.	1	3.58
Total	28	100.00

In relation the RAs, Table 5 displays that CSs employs the three RAs. Thus, they utilise pathos, ethos, and logos with the percentages (38.71%), (45.16%), (12.90%), respectively. They also manipulate the use of these RAs by mixing some of them together with a percentage of (3.23%). The recurrent use of ethos in this stage implies the CSs' intent to refer to their personalities as a source of motivation to the graduates. They concentrate on manifesting their personalities to graduates in this stage as an initial spark to graduates' motivation. The use of pathos, on the other hand, exhibits their focus on triggering the personal emotions of the graduates to prepare them for the rest of the motivational storytelling.

Table 5

Rhetorical Appeals in Abstract

RAS	**F**	**%**
Pathos	12	38.71
Ethos	14	45.16
Logos	4	12.90
Mixed	1	3.23
Total	31	100.00

Orientation

The statistical analysis shows the ten CSs use orientation as their second stage of the opening stage for their motivational storytelling. It also discloses that this stage is embodied by three pragma-rhetorical strategies: SAs, and RAs with the percentages of (45.95%) and (54.05%), respectively. Table 6 displays these findings more clearly.

Table 6

Pragma-rhetorical strategies in Orientation

Pragma-rhetorical strategies	**F**	**%**
SAs	17	45.95
RAs	20	54.05
Total	37	100.00

In relation to SAs, Table 7 indicates that the Rep SA of reporting is the most dominate SA in the orientation substage with a percentage of (47.06%). The second dominant SA is the Rep SA of asserting with a percentage of (11.77%). The dominance of the Rep SA of reporting in this stage implies its dramatic function which is to inform the audience about the main settings of the story.

Table 7

Speech Act Strategies in Orientation

SAs		**F**	**%**
Rep	Asserting	2	11.77
	Reporting	8	47.06

	Stating	2	11.77
	Criticising	1	5.88
Dir	Advising	1	5.88
	Encouraging	1	5.88
Com	Offering	1	5.88
	Boasting	1	5.88
	Total	17	100.00

With respect to RAs, the statistical analysis reveals that CSs utilise the three RAs in this stage in addition to the strategy of mixing some of them together. That is, pathos receives the most frequent employment reaching (30%) whereas logos receive the least percentage of (20 %). Ethos and mixing appeals share the second position in the use with a percentage of (25%). Table 8 includes the detail of these findings. Such mixing intends to set the graduates' emotional power and widen their thinking about such logical concepts.

Table 8

Rhetorical Appeals in Orientation

	F	%
RAs		
Pathos	6	30.00
Ethos	5	25.00
Logos	4	20.00
Mixed	5	25.00
Total	20	100.00

Complicating Action

The statistical analysis shows that CSs utilise four pragma-rhetorical strategies in this stage to convey the major events of their motivational storytelling, namely SAs, FCMs, FoSs, and RAs with the percentages (38.32%), (23.36%), (17.76%), and (20.56%), respectively. Table (9) below reveals more detail about these findings.

Table 9

Pragma-rhetorical strategies in the Complicating Action

Pragma-rhetorical strategies	F	%
SAs	82	38.32
FCMs	50	23.36
FoSs	38	17.76
RAS	44	20.56
Total	214	100.00

Concerning the SAs, the results point out that CSs, in the complicating action stage, rely mostly on the Rep SA of reporting with the percentages of (75.61%). This recurrent percentage of occurrence for the Rep SA of reporting mirrors the dramatic nature of the complicating action stage which is mainly related with reporting events happened in the past. Table 10 below illustrates these findings in detail.

Table 10

Speech Act Strategies in Complicating Action

	SAs	F	%
Rep	Asserting	12	14.63
	Reporting	62	75.61
	Stating	2	2.44
	Criticising	1	1.22
Com	Pledging	1	1.22
Exp	Praising	3	3.66
	Boasting	1	1.22
	Total	82	100.00

As far as FCMs is concerned, the statistical analysis indicates that CSs flout QlM, QnM, RM, and, MM while delivering the complicating action stage with the percentages of (58.00%), (34.00%), (2.00%), and (6.00%), respectively, as Table 11 authenticates. The heavy reliance on flouting QlM reveals that the events that these CSs, in this stage, tell are not presented as they occurred. Instead, they tend to metaphorise, maximise, or even minimise the reality of the events to add motivational aspects to the events they tell. Their reliance on flouting RM and MM is very low as they provide relevant information as possible as they can.

Table 11

Flouting the Conversational Maxims in Complicating Action

FCMS	F	%
QlM	29	58.00
QnM	17	34.00
RM	1	2.00
MM	3	6.00
Total	50	100.00

In respect to the FoSs, the statistical analysis shows that the CSs exploit five FoSs, namely tautology, overstatement, understatement, metaphor, and irony with the percentages of (23.68%), (28.95%), (2.63%), (42.11%), and (2.63%), respectively. Table 12 authenticates these findings. The employment of the overstatement over other FoSs comes from its role in maximising the descriptions and interpretation of the stories' events and, then, the motivational effect on the graduates. The use of metaphor as a second tool after overstatement in attaching additional meaning to the CSs' words is actually used as an economic and motivational tool of communication.

Table 12

Figures of Speech in Complicating Action

FoSs	F	%
Tautology	9	23.68
Overstatement	11	28.95
Understatement	1	2.63
Metaphor	16	42.11
Irony	1	2.63
Total	38	100.00

The statistical findings in Table 13 explicate that CSs utilise the three RAs individually without mixing. As such they use pathos, ethos, and logos with the percentages (33.33%), (35.56%), and (31.11%), respectively. The overuse of pathos is attributed to the central purpose of embedding motivational storytelling within the commencement speeches, which is engaging the graduates' emotions when the CSs present their motivational and

moral lessons. In addition to pathos, CSs also use ethos to be the second frequent RA because the CSs tend to refer to themselves and their actions and thoughts as motivational models of success.

Table 13

Rhetorical Appeals in Complicating Action

RAs	F	%
Pathos	15	33.33
Ethos	16	35.56
Logos	14	31.11
Total	45	100.00

Resolution

As the statistical analysis shows, the resolution stage is performed by all the ten CSs under study.   It also shows that this stage is conducted through utilising the four pragma-rhetorical strategies, namely SAs, FCMs, FoSs, and RAs with percentages of (34.78%), (19.57%), (15.22%), and (30.43%), respectively. These findings are stated obviously in Table 14 below.

Table 14

Pragma-rhetorical strategies in the Resolution

Pragma-rhetorical strategies	F	%
SAs	16	34.78
FCMs	9	19.57
FoSs	7	15.22
RAs	14	30.43
Total	46	100.00

Regarding the statistical analysis manifests that CSs in the resolution stage rely on the Rep SA of reporting with the most frequent use with a percentage of (87.50%) to mark the final event(s) of their stories, as shown in Table 15 below.

Table 15

Speech Act Strategies in Resolution

SAs		F	%
Rep	Reporting	14	87.50
Exp	Boasting	1	6.25
Dec	Declaring	1	6.25
Total		16	100.00

In terms of FCMs, Table 16 shows the CSs in this stage rely only on flouting QlM and QnM with the percentages of (66.67%) and (33.33%), respectively. The recurrent interest in flouting QlM by CSs reflects their efforts to trigger the graduates' imagination to the final result of the story and prepare them for the closing stage.

Table 16

Flouting the Conversational Maxims in Resolution

FCMs	Total

	F	%
QlM	6	66.67
QnM	3	33.33
Total	9	100.00

In relation to FoSs in the resolution stage, the results denote that some CSs appeal to FoSs in this stage to flout CMs and, in turn, enhance the graduates' emotions to the resolution of the story. Table 17 below shows that the CSs rely heavily on overstatement and metaphor with an equal percentage of (42.86%). This reflects the importance of these two FoSs in maximising the dramatic end of their story.

Table 17

Figures of Speech in Resolution

FoSs	F	%
Tautology	1	14.28
Overstatement	3	42.86
Metaphor	3	42.86
Total	7	100.00

With reference to RAs, the statistical analysis states that CSs utilise the RAs in the resolution stage in the same way they utilise them in the complicating action stage, as shown in Table 18 below. That is, they resort to the RAs individually without combining them together. The ethos receives a percentage of (53.33%) over the use of pathos and logos which record the percentages of (20.00%) and (26.67%), respectively. Again, the overuse of ethos reflects the essence of the motivational storytelling in commencement speeches which intend to reveal the experiences of CSs to the graduates.

Table 18

Rhetorical Appeals in Resolution

RAs	F	%
Pathos	3	20.00
Ethos	8	53.33
Logos	4	26.67
Total	15	100.00

Evaluation

The statistical analysis reveals that CSs employ the five pragma-rhetorical strategies in the evaluation stage; namely, they use SAs, FCMs, FoSs, and RAs with the percentages of (40.77%), (25.00%), (15.77%), and (18.46%), respectively. More detail about these findings are explicated in Table 19 below.

Table 19

Pragma-rhetorical strategies in the Evaluation

Pragma-rhetorical strategies	F	%
SAs	106	40.77
FCMs	65	25.00
FoSs	41	15.77
RAs	48	18.46
Total	260	100.00

In relation to SAs, Table 20 shows the most dominant SAs in this stage are the Dir SA of advising and the Rep SA of asserting with the percentages of (22.64%) and (16.04%), respectively. The recurrent use of Rep SA of reporting in this stage reflects the CSs' interest in evaluating the story indirectly via reporting their reactions or others' regarding the event of the story to embed their views or opinions. The use of the Dir SA of advising in such recurrent use explains obviously the role of CSs in this motivational storytelling to motivate the graduates by advising them to do what they think is the best to do.

Table 20

Speech Act Strategies in Evaluation

SAs		F	%
Rep	Asserting	17	16.04
	Reporting	16	15.1
	Stating	14	13.21
	Criticizing	6	5.66
	Predicting	3	2.83
	Claiming	1	0.94
Dir	Advising	24	22.64
	Warning	4	3.78
	Encouraging	7	6.6
Com	Offering	1	0.94
Exp	Praising	7	6.6
	Boasting	5	4.72
	Thanking	1	0.94
Total		106	100.00

With respect to FCMs, the statistical analysis in Table 21 shows that CSs flout the four CMs in this stage, but the focus is on QlM and QnM with the percentages of (44.61%) and (41.54%) to manipulate the representation of the information they give in this stage. Their low reliance on flouting RM which scores a percentage of (7.69%) echoes their intention to provide relevant information as possible as they can. The absence of flouting RM and MM imitates the need to present clear and relevant information to engage the graduates' emotions quickly.

Table 21

Flouting the Conversational Maxims in Evaluation

FCMs	F	%
QlM	29	44.61
QnM	27	41.54
RM	1	1.54
MM	8	12.31
Total	65	100.00

In relation to FoSs, Table 22 below shows that CSs reply on four FoSs in the evaluation stage, namely tautology, overstatement, understatement, and metaphor with the percentages (21.43%), (40.48%), (2.38%), and (35.71%), respectively.

Table 22

Figures of Speech in Evaluation

FoSs	F	%
Tautology	9	21.43
Overstatement	17	40.48
Understatement	1	2.38
Metaphor	15	35.71
Total	42	100.00

In terms of RAs, the statistical analysis indicates that CSs three RAs in this stage separately and collaboratively. As such, they use pathos, ethos, logos individually with the percentages of (52.09%), (20.83%), (20.83%), respectively, and make combinations of them with a percentage of (6.25%). The increased interest in using pathos in this stage reflects its dramatic nature as a station of evaluating past experiences in the light of the graduates' current conditions. In other words, the personal centre is changed in this stage. Table 23 below explicates these findings in detail.

Table 23

Rhetorical Appeals in Evaluation

RAs	F	%
Pathos	25	52.09
Ethos	10	20.83
Logos	10	20.83
Mixed	3	6.25
Total	48	100.00

Coda

The results show that ten CSs have not marked off their motivational storytelling with coda, namely Mariano-Florentina (judge), Tom Hanks (actor), and Deval Patrick (politician). However, the other CSs perform this stage with the flowing pragma-rhetorical strategies: SAs, FCMs, FoSs, and RAs with the percentages of (40.00%), (20.00 %), (12.50%), and (27.50%), respectively. Table 24 views these findings in detail.

Table 24

Pragma-rhetorical strategies in Coda

Pragma-rhetorical strategies	F	%
SAs	16	40.00
FCMs	8	20.00
FoSs	5	12.50
RAs	11	27.50
Total	40	100.00

In terms of SAs, the statistical analysis explicates that the Rep SA of asserting and Dir SA of encouraging are the most common SAs in the coda stage with an equal percentage of (22.22%). to maximise the motivational power of the graduates by referring to particular states of affair and encouraging them to exploit their sources and

qualifications to achieve their goals as a final strategy of motivation. Table 25 below authenticates these findings in detail.

Table 25

Speech Act Strategies in Coda

SAs		F	%
Rep	Asserting	4	22.22
	Stating	2	16.65
	Criticizing	1	5.56
	Predicting	1	5.56
Dir	Advising	1	11.11
	Warning	1	5.56
	Encouraging	4	22.22
Exp	Praising	1	5.56
	Hoping	1	5.56
Total Number		16	100.00

With respect to FCMs, Table 26 demonstrates that this stage is formed via flouting QlM and MM with the percentages of (75.00%) and (25.00%), respectively. The focus on flouting QlM reflects the motivational purpose of the stories they tell, which is highly enhanced when imagination involves. Avoiding flouting QnM and RM states the shortness of this stage and its directly relevance to theme of the story which is used to mark off their storytelling.

Table 26

Flouting the Conversational Maxims in Coda

FCMs	F	%
QlM	6	75.00
MM	2	25.00
Total	8	100.00

In terms of FoSs, table 27 indicates that the Coda stage is performed through overstatement and rhetorical question with the percentages of (60.00%) and (40.00%), respectively. More particularly, overstatement is used to maximise the effect of their codas whereas rhetorical questions is employed to ensure that the graduates have perceived their assertions in the previous stages.

Table 27

Figures of Speech in Coda

FoSs	F	%
Overstatement	3	60.00
Rhetorical Q	2	40.00
Total	5	100.00

As far as the RAs are concerned, the statistical analysis in Table 28 proves that the coda stage is formulated using the three RAs separately and collaboratively. As such, the most prevailed RA in this stage is pathos with a percentage of (72.73%) to ensure the perception of the motivational message (s). Other RAs score an equal

percentage of (9.09%) for each. The recurrent use of pathos in this stage is to end the story with a motivational spark on the graduates.

Table 28

Rhetorical Appeals in Coda

RAs	F	%
Pathos	8	72.73
Ethos	1	9.09
Logos	1	9.09
Mixed	1	9.09
Total	11	100.00

Conclusions

This study clearly illustrates that storytelling is an essential motivational strategy that commencement speakers heavily rely on to provoke the graduates' emotional state regarding their future lives and careers. By exposing past experiences to the graduates with the available choices and taken decision (s) that accompany these experiences, commencement speakers motivate the graduates to take the lead to face future challenges. After exploring the world of others, storytelling in commencement speeches makes the uncertain certain to the graduatesand reinforces their self-confidence. Moreover, it can be concluded that motivational storytelling in American commencement speeches is pragma-rhetorically constructed via six stages: abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, evaluation, and coda. Hence, the findings reveal that the structure of the motivational storytelling in American commencement speeches comply with Labovian' framework of storytelling. It can be used as to add a proof to the universality of this framework. In each stage, commencement speakers rely on particular pragma-rhetorical strategies and tactics to fulfil the purpose of each stage.

This study contributes to increase our comprehending of the structure of motivational storytelling in this type of discourse. It also shows us clearly the employment of the pragmatic and rhetorical strategies we need to understand such motivational storytelling. The conclusions of this study, however, were restricted to commencement speeches in the United States and should not be applied universally to all motivational storytelling. Therefore, future researches should focus on the pragmatic-rhetorical structure of motivational storytelling in other varieties of English or on motivational storytelling in other types of discourse.

Appendix I: The Selected Universities and the Commencement Speakers

Serial No.	Year	University/ institute	Names of CSs	Hyperlinks
1	2010	Harvard University	David H. Souter	https://youtu.be/eCxaDwOCXD8
2	2011	Yale University	Tom Hanks	https://youtu.be/baIlinqoExQ
3	2012	Harvard University	Fareed Zakaria	https://youtu.be/CD6CW4fPQfs
4	2013	Harvard University	Oprah Winfrey	https://youtu.be/GMWFieBGR7c
5	2014	Harvard University	Michael Bloomberg	https://youtu.be/Zhfn2zgFFJ8
6	2015	Harvard University	Deval Patrick	https://youtu.be/-flgIKTSIas
7	2016	MIT	Matt Damon	https://youtu.be/DFNgoZ5-qAM
8	2017	Stanford university	Mariano Florentina	https://youtu.be/BP2ItX1XxOM
9	2018	MIT	Sheryl Sandberg	https://youtu.be/8w1d1TWxwec
10	2019	Stanford University	Tim Cook	https://youtu.be/2C2VJwGBRRw

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