

A Pragmatic analysis of emotion-triggering strategies in TED talks

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Abstract. TED talks are a relatively new genre, in which experts in different fields share their knowledge, ideas and experiences to large audiences. The talks are broadcasted worldwide, thus reaching international and intercultural spectators. Although public spoken language has been extensively studied in literature, TED talks present a new field of study, and are considered as a hybrid genre. It has been argued that, although similar in some ways, they differ from other oral discourse types, such as university lectures, in many aspects, such as the epistemic stance, the presentation of ideas, or the macro-discourse markers used (Caliendo and Compagnone, 2014). The utilization of emotion for triggering audience response is the foundation of the present study, aimed at examining the way speakers use emotions to involve spectators in their monologues, and exploring other strategies exploited to spark feedback, so that the most successful ones can be identified. The paper discusses the analysis of 120 TED talks from two different topics, business and education, taking a basic list of emotion words as a starting point, to continue examining how these emotion words and audiences intermingle by looking into laughter and applause, as the two identified forms of feedback. Results indicate that no significant differences can be found in the two subcorpora analyzed in terms of emotion words, the use of multiple humor strategies, and the acknowledgment of multicultural audiences on the side of the speakers.

Keywords: emotion; humor; intercultural context; TED talks

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1. Introduction

TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) Talks are a new form of formal and informal transference of knowledge and information. These popular speeches are usually related to the fields of science, business, the arts, technology and global issues. The delivery of these talks is affected by two core factors; on the one hand, they are broadcasted worldwide, thus falling in the category of computer mediated communication (CMC), and on the other, partly derived from this, they are heard by audiences with multiple linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which invites to look at interculturality and English as a Lingua Franca (LF).

TED talks have been considered a hybrid genre, as significant differences stand out between, for instance, academic lectures, which abide by a series of particularities (Bellés-Fortuño, 2008), and TED Talks, which are more flexibly conveyed, although their object of study might deal with academic and professional topics. The main discrepancies have been found in the way speakers present epistemic stance, (Caliendo and Compagnone, 2014, Compagnone, 2017), the styles used to introduce ideas and concepts (Uicheng and Crabtree, 2018), or the tone and manner speakers address their audiences to seduce them (Virtanen and Halmari, 2005; Ludewig, 2017; Valeiras-Jurado et al., 2018).

TED talks have been analyzed in the literature to determine the way speakers use verbs or pronouns (Caliendo and Compagnone, 2014, Compagnone, 2015, 2017), or ideas, considering the number of times the word idea(s) is mentioned, together with the macro discourse markers that are used in the presentations (Uicheng and Crabtree, 2018; Shanti and Probowati, 2021), or the way speakers address large audiences to

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seduce them (Valeiras–Jurado et al., 2018; Virtanen and Halmari, 2005). A different perspective is that used by Wingrove (2017), who explores the use of TED talks for oral practice in the FL English language classroom.

In the present paper, we focus on the way presenters convey emotion, and how audiences respond to this, to identify approaches to emotion in intercultural contexts. In particular, we explain which strategies, such as emotion words, emotional stories or humor, are most commonly and most successfully used to activate positive reactions.

A corpus-based approach (Tognini–Bonelli, 2001) is used here to study a corpus of 120 TED talks, of which 60 are about education and 60 about business. The study uses the Merriam–Webster catalog, as the basic –therefore most general, and widely known– list of emotion words to see how they are used by speakers in both subcorpora, and whether audiences' reactions are related to their utterance, as well as other discourse strategies used to provoke feedback, such as humor.

Considering the recount of rhetoric strategies speakers utilize to obtain applause (Liu et al., 2017), the working hypothesis was that basic emotion words would be used by speakers to engage audiences in their speeches, and that together with this, they used humor to trigger their audiences' applause and laughter in quite a similar way regardless of the fields of knowledge.

The research questions are related to emotion and other strategies used to trigger audience applause and laughter, and specifically, (1) whether there were significant differences in the use of emotion words in business and education talks, (2) whether emotion words used in speeches caused the audiences to applaud or laugh during a speech, and finally (3) what type of humor tactics were employed by presenters.

Thus, the derived objectives were to identify emotion words in the speeches and compare the results obtained in both subcorpora, to tackle strategies for audience response used in context, in order to detect and describe the most successful ones, and to identify common humor tactics.

The paper is organized as follows; following this introduction, the state of the art is described, in which a characterization of TED talks is presented, and then, the perspective used to analyze both emotion and humor in public speech are introduced. Next, in the methodology section, the corpus (and subcorpora) are described, as well as the corpus approach used. The results section follows, and the last section presents the discussion and conclusions of the study.

2. Background

2.1. TED talks as a hybrid genre

In an increasingly global world, in which information is transferred in the blink of an eye, new forms of access to knowledge and educational content are appearing. Some examples of this are flipped teaching classes, open-access university courses (MOOCs), and recorded speeches or lectures which can be both, broadcasted or downloaded to watch at one's own convenience. One of such new formats are TED Talks, a new and understudied genre that can be considered halfway between academic and non-academic speech settings. These talks are delivered in front of large audiences, recorded and broadcasted worldwide with the aim to transmit knowledge, ideas, or beliefs and considerations and they are becoming a very popular way for people from different backgrounds and cultures to gain access to data. Indeed, although the particulars of the monologues chosen for analysis are explained in the methodology section, TED talks are public spoken discourse, or popularization discourse (Caliendo and Compagnone, 2014), which provides the general framework of the present piece of research.

Besides, TED talks are closely related to Goffman's (1981:165) definition of academic spoken discourse, as they are institutionalized extended holdings of the floor in which one speaker imparts their views on a subject. In fact, they are quite similar to *Fresh talks* (Goffman, 1981), or *Rhetorical style talks* (Dudley–Evans and St. John, 1998). These last types of lectures become performances, with jokes and detours, in which a wide intonational range is used to constantly call the attention of the audience, and where there is room for frequent asides and digressions. Also, the study of lexis in TED talks reveals that they utilize up to 90% of vocabulary similar to that of academia (Nurmukhamedov, 2017; Liu and Chen, 2019).

However, TED talks are sometimes delivered in very informal settings, and have been alleged to present some significant differences with university lectures. Caliendo and Compagnone (2014: 3) define TED talks merely as “speech events where speakers from different fields share their knowledge with a large audience”.

The fact that TED talks have been claimed to assemble features from other public spoken genres, such as political discourse, academic discourse, memoirs, storytelling, or sales pitches points to their consideration as a new, hybrid genre (Ludewig, 2017). Still, some literature equals them to academic lectures, based on the fact that speakers might come from academic backgrounds. Despite some resemblances, and since neither purpose nor audience are coincidental between the two, significant dissimilarities exist. Indeed, TED Talks aim at persuading audiences to change certain behaviors, or views, whereas university lectures are aimed at transferring contrasted knowledge, which is meant for learning. Examples are the use of verbs of perception

and cognition (Caliendo and Compagnone, 2014), the use of prosodic strategies (Tsai, 2015), the presentation of knowledge based on reliable information sources, or the use of personal pronouns (Uicheng and Crabtree, 2018). These differences call for a new pragmatic framework for analysis, their consideration as a hybrid genre, and their characterisation.

2.2. The expression of emotion in intercultural contexts

As core part of human experience, emotion is used a central tool in many discourse types, including professional discourse (Langlotz & Locher, 2013; Alba-Juez & Mackenzie, 2019b), such as TED talks. As mentioned, TED talks are delivered in front of large audiences and broadcasted worldwide. Because of this, audiences are multicultural and multilinguistic. In fact, two factors are crucial to understand and analyze such contexts: the use of English as a lingua franca, and the effect of computer mediated communication.

Certainly, on occasion, English is neither the L1 of the speaker, nor that of the spectator in TED talks. Interculturality is an intervening factor here, as the way emotion is expressed and understood in such contexts might be constrained or reshaped (Lim, 2016). Intercultural pragmatics studies the way the language system is put to use in social encounters between interlocutors with different L1, who communicate in a common language, and represent different cultures (Kecskes 2004, 2010, 2013), pointing to literal interpretations of expressions (Kecskes, 2015), cultural and linguistic closeness as facilitators of emotion perception (Pell et al., 2009) or even to recognition and interpretation problems (Jenkins, 2000; Abelin and Allwood, 2000) in intercultural settings.

For this, it is likely that speakers take into account that audience members might have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds when their talks are prepared and delivered, and choose to use basic emotion words. Indeed, when using a LF, speakers use “discourse tactics, [...], and communication strategies to support smooth interaction and joint meaning-making” (Taguchi and Ishihara, 2018: 11). This has an effect on the presentations, in terms of pronunciation (Jenkins, 2015, 2000), grammatical simplification (Seidlhofer, 2011; Jenkins, 2015), or lexical innovation (Taguchi and Ishihara, 2018). In addition, creativity and adaptability are claimed as core characteristics of a LF (Taguchi and Ishihara, 2018).

Some of the strategies commonly used in speech contexts in front of large audiences are for instance IT support (Giménez-Moreno, 2012), voice inflection, intonation, rhythm, stress, speed, beat and modulation (Nesi, 2001), body language (Khuwaileh, 1999; Poyatos, 2002), or switches between formal and informal content (Pinto, 2019). Public speeches are loaded with an emotional component (Locher and Langlotz, 2008; Culpeper, 2011), which is both recognized by audiences and used by speakers, on occasion, it is also used to manipulate (Alba-Juez & Mackenzie, 2019b). However, little attention has been paid to communication strategies such as emotion words, emotional stories, humor, or politics used to incite audience response (in particular, applause and laughter). This can help identify what triggers emotion in intercultural contexts.

An additional feature of TED talks is that, as they are delivered to be recorded and internationally broadcasted, and can be asynchronously accessed multiple times, with subtitles added in many languages, they are considered CMC (Drasovean and Tagg, 2015). This undoubtedly influences speaker performance, making their stances similar to politician stances, in that they use a theatricalized style when addressing their audiences (Ludewig, 2017; Albalat-Mascarell and Carrió Pastor, 2019; Mestre-Mestre, 2020).

In the past, it has been claimed that the expression of emotion is more difficult in CMC contexts, particularly for written communication, (Sproull & Kiesler, 1986), whereas more recent studies state that differences are not significant (Walther, Anderson, & Park, 1994). Derks et al. (2008) support this by focusing on sociality, that is both the sense of physically belonging in an environment and awareness of other peoples' reactions. Considering social presence and visibility, their study claims that in CMC negative appraisals are reduced, and that, contrary to previous claims, emotions tend to the more explicitly verbalized than in other face-to-face contexts.

One way or the other, communication is affected by these two setting conditions; they are broadcasted worldwide to audiences who most likely use English as a Lingua Franca .

2.3. Humor

As has been thoroughly established (Mackenzie and Alba-Juez, 2019a), humor transcends genres, and can be used in all sorts of contexts. Indeed, (successful) humor is one of the easiest discourse strategies to track in talks and lectures, since it triggers laughter. Its use in this context has been widely studied from different perspectives. From the viewpoint of linguistics, the interest lays in tackling the semantic, cognitive, and pragmatic mechanisms that are responsible for it. A variety of taxonomies of humor types have been proposed. Some studies (Dynel, 2009, 2011; Norrick 2004) focus on conversational or verbal humor and point to jokes, lexemes, witticisms, retorts, teasing, banter and putdown. Other, focus specifically on lecture humor (Holmes, 2000; Nesi, 2012, Wanzer and Frymier, 1999; Wanzer et al. 2006). A new classification is proposed by Nesi (2012), who describes six main types of laughter episodes after analyzing and comparing the Michigan Corpus

of Spoken English (MICASE) and the British Academic Spoken English (BASE): *teasing*, *lecturer error*, *self-deprecation*, *black humor*, *disparagement* and *word play*. She also points at different uses of these resources in each corpus.

Regarding the study of humor from a pragmatic perspective, it has been argued that it is the violation of a maxim in Grice's theory of conversational implicature (Norrick, 1993, 2003). It is, however, one of the aspects that poses most problems to this approach as, for instance, Verschueren (1999) highlights, pointing to the fact that humor dwells in the exploitation of the impossibility of full explicitness. Neo-Gricean approaches talk about humor as related to truthfulness and untruthfulness, and furthermore, between overt and covert untruthfulness (Dynel, 2016; Vincent Marrelli, 2003, 2004), depending on the type of deviation from Grice's maxim of Quality. Humor is also a nonchalant (cooler) way of communicating emotion (Norrick, 2009).

In this, different cultural and linguistic backgrounds need to be addressed to look into student response to speeches (Flowerdew and Miller, 1997; Kecskes, 2016). In this regard, Nesi (2012) argues that the use of humor in lectures is culture-specific, and calls for academic attention to the implications of humor in intercultural environments. We will be looking into some examples of humor throughout the speeches, in order to identify the types used, and put humor in rapport to emotion words.

3. Methodology

The foundation of the present work has been to identify emotion, and humor on two TED talks topics: education and business, and audience response to these, and see whether results can be comparable. The objectives were first to identify the most common and successful expressions of emotion in each subcorpus, to see whether they are used similarly in both contexts. Secondly, to look into other engaging strategies (emotion stories, politics, ideas, humor), based on the fact that speakers gained applause, laughter, or both from their audiences, taking the emotion words they used as reference. Quantitative and qualitative complementary analyses were carried out, so that the results obtained from could be contrasted, and the effectiveness of the analyses implemented, and tested. Thirdly, to analyze the way humor is used in the speeches in order to identify the types of humorous strategies used.

The approach chosen for the analysis is corpus linguistics, using corpus-based and corpus-driven analyses to ensure that results are not biased just by identifying basic emotion words. The purpose of the study was to put in relation basic expressions of emotion and humor, and see the way they affect audience engagement (laughter, applause).

3.1. Corpus

The corpus compiled and used for the research consists of 120 talks delivered within the framework of TED talks. In such speeches, presenters are expected to inspire audiences with their ideas, approaches, or analyses. TED talks cover an enormous number of topics, categorized according to the event that hosted them, the interest of the listener, or the topic of the conversation. Obviously, all these features are essential in the characterization of the talks, since they approach different types of knowledge and experience. All talks chosen for the analysis belong to their international version; TED Global. The analysis of the talks can shed light on the type of strategies used to communicate, transfer emotion and prompt reactions at a global scale. The talks are located in a repository, and can be accessed worldwide.

The corpus, then, consists of two subcorpora; one made up of 60 talks in the field of education, the second, made up of 60 talks in the field of business. They were delivered between 2006 and 2019 by both male and female speakers, and were selected to have approximately the same length of time. Generally, TED talks are transcribed to several languages, and interactive transcripts of talks that have been translated into a certain language can be accessed from drop-down menus at the bottom of the videos. All scripts come with extralinguistic features, such as a timer and marks of applause and laughter. Figure 1 shows an example of this.

```
18:20
MV: Well, first of all, I take it very seriously, because bias has no
room in law enforcement. We have to prove our cases with the evidence
and the facts and the jurisprudence in order also to present it to
the courts. The second thing is that Europe is open for business, but
not for tax evasion.
18:43
(Applause)
```

Figure 1. Example of transcript. Document b02w2017.txt

For the analyses, talk scripts were compiled and tagged, according to the date, gender of the speaker, and subject (business, education). The tagging included the topic (b for business, e for education), the text number (1-60), the speaker gender (m-w) and the year of delivery (2006-2019): b03m2017, e35w2018. In total, the corpus added up a total of words of 350,794, of which 131,131 words were related to education talks, and 219,663 to business talks.

3.2. Analyses

Both, corpus-based and corpus-driven analyses (Biber, 2009) were carried out to analyze the talks, using complementary perspectives. For the concordancing and frequency analyses in the texts, in the corpus-based analysis, Anthony's (2017) ProtAnt and AntConc tools were used. The corpus-driven analysis was structured as follows: first, the corpus was scrutinized in order to find basic emotion words used in the talks, based on the Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary³. Wildcards of the words listed within operated as target wordlist. Table 1 displays the wildcards used in the analysis, in alphabetical order.

Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary emotion words		
Accept*	Distress*	Long*
Admir*	Embarrass*	Lov*
Affect*	Enthusias*	Lust*
Aggravat*	Env*	Malic*
Anger	Excit*	Miser*
Anguish*	Fear*	Optim*
Anxi*	Frustrat*	Panic
Attract*	Fur*	Passion*
Bore*	Generos*	Patien*
Cautio*	Greed*	Pessimis*
Certain*	Grie*	Pity
Confiden*	Guilt*	Pleas*
Confus*	Happ*	Pride*
Content	Hate*	Rage*
Courag*	Hatr*	Relie*
Curios*	Hope*	Sad*
Def*	Horror*	Satisf*
Defeat*	Hostil*	Scorn*
Delight	Impat*	Shame*
Depend*	Jealous*	Sorrow*
Depress*	Joy*	Symphat*
Desir*	Kind*	Terr*
Disappoint*	Like*	Wonder*
Dismay	Lone*	Wrath

Table 1. 72 basic emotion words – wildcards

Then, the corpus-driven analysis was carried out by looking at the moments in which audiences responded in an overt way, that is, the moments where there was applause and/or laughter in the scripts. All instances of applause at the end of talks were discarded from the analysis since they were expected in the context. Such moments were identified and contextualized, in order to see what had activated them. Based on the content, a classification of those speech moments was completed, including: humor (and which kind), personal (emotive) stories, politics, and ideas (business ideas, ideas to improve education). Focus was then set on the study of humor, subsequently analyzed to categorize the main types used.

Then, the two lists were cross-referenced, to spot cases in which the two items evaluated (emotion words, emotion expression on the side of the audience) were coincidental, so that a rapport could be established between emotion words and discursive strategies used by the speakers and the audiences' emotional responses. Throughout the analyses, the two corpora (business, education) were compared in order to discern similarities and differences between them.

³ (<https://learnersdictionary.com/3000-words/topic/emotions-vocabulary-english>)

4. Discussion

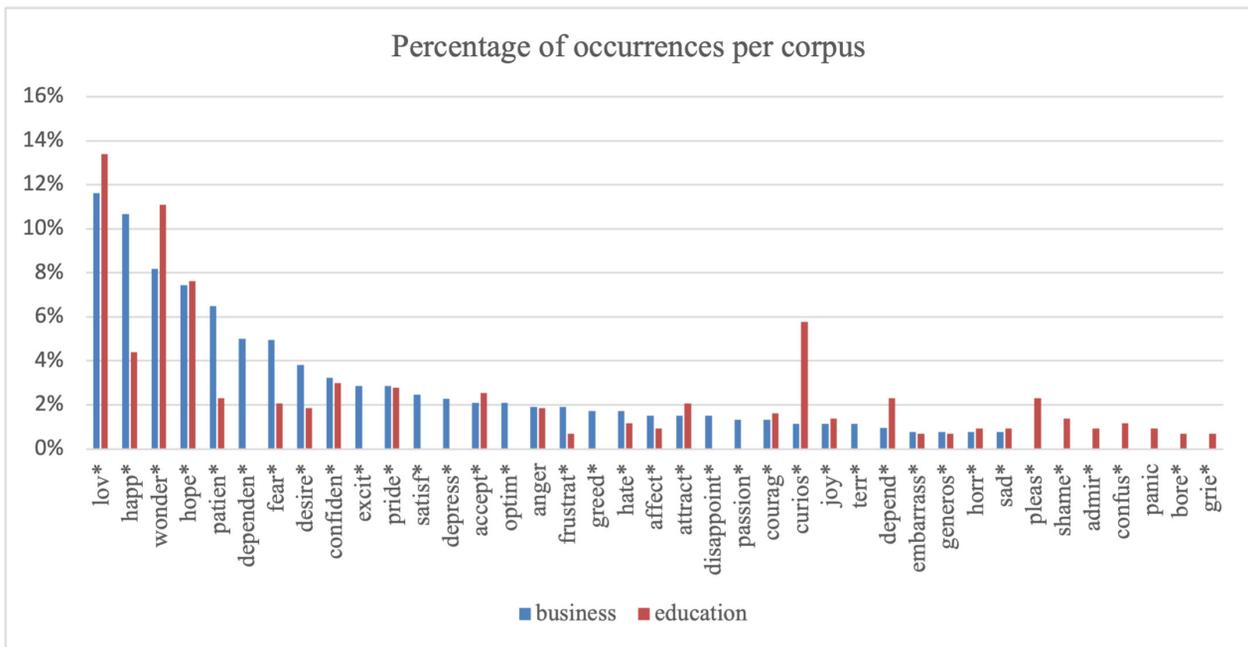
As explained, the first corpus-based examination was to identify the most commonly used emotion words in all the talks. In this case, results were normalized per 100 words, as the corpora were different in size for business and for education. The results show that, with reference to the use of emotion words in the two fields (business and education), although there are no statistically significant differences, in the case of education speakers, there are 0.17 emotion words per 100 words, whereas in the case of business speakers there are 0.13 emotion words per 100 words. Here are, in full numbers, emotion words with most occurrences in both corpora.

EDUCATION		BUSINESS	
EMOTION WORD	OCCURRENCES	EMOTION WORD	OCCURRENCES
Lov*	58	Lov*	61
Wonder*	48	Happ*	56
Hope*	33	Wonder*	43
Curios*	25	Hope*	39
Happ*	19	Patien*	34
Pride*	12	Fear*	26
Accept*	11	Depend*	23
Confiden*	10	Desir*	20
Excit*	10	Confid*	17
Patien*	10	Excit*	15
Pleas*	10	Pride*	15
Attract*	9	Satisf*	13
Fear*	9	Depress*	12

Table 2. Most commonly used words in business and education

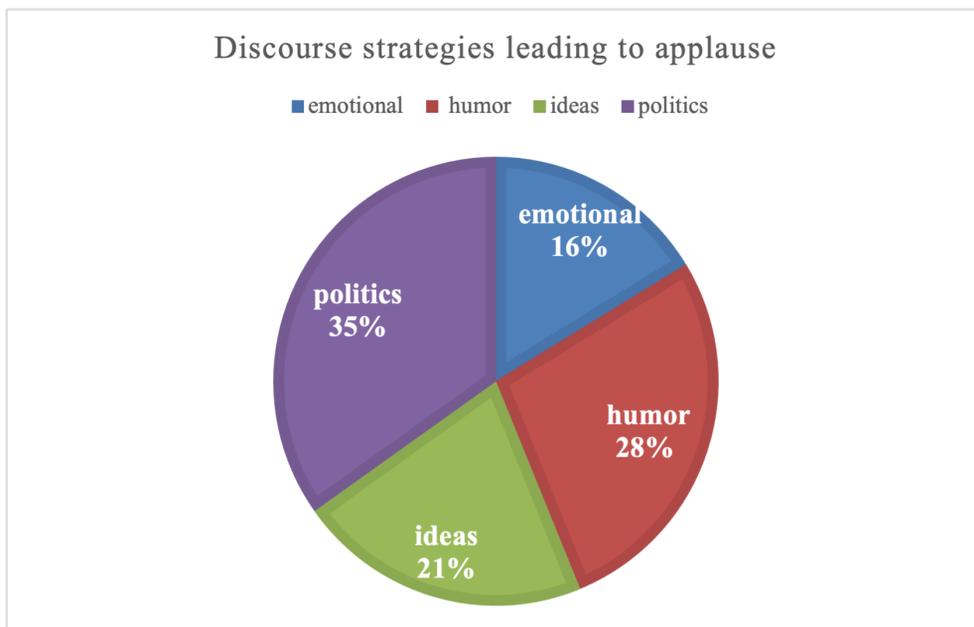
If we take a look at each corpus specifically, and then compare the results for the most common occurrences within each of them, some differences are found in the use of emotion words. Some of them only appear in one corpus depress* (depressing, depressed, depressive), grie* (grief, griefs), in other cases, differences in the use are enormous curio* (curiosity). It is also worth mentioning the case of depend* (dependent, independent), which mostly appears as dependent in business, but as independent in education.

Nevertheless, it is still remarkable that the most commonly used emotion words in the case of both education and business were lov* (love, loved, lovers, loving), with 58 cases in education and 61 in business, hop* (hope, hoped, hopeful, hopefully, hopeless), with 32 occurrences in the case of education, 8 in the case of business, or wonder* (wonder, wondered, wonderful, wonderfully, wondering), with 48 cases in education and 43 in business. Fear* (fear, fears, feared) is the first negative emotion which appears in the ranking (9 occurrences in the case of education and 26 in the case of business). Other emotion words found in the talks were not coincidental to this extent – for instance, satisf* (satisfactory, satisfying) was the twelfth most commonly used emotion word in business (13 occurrences), but was never used in education talks, or curio* (curiosity), which was uttered 25 times in education, but only one in business.



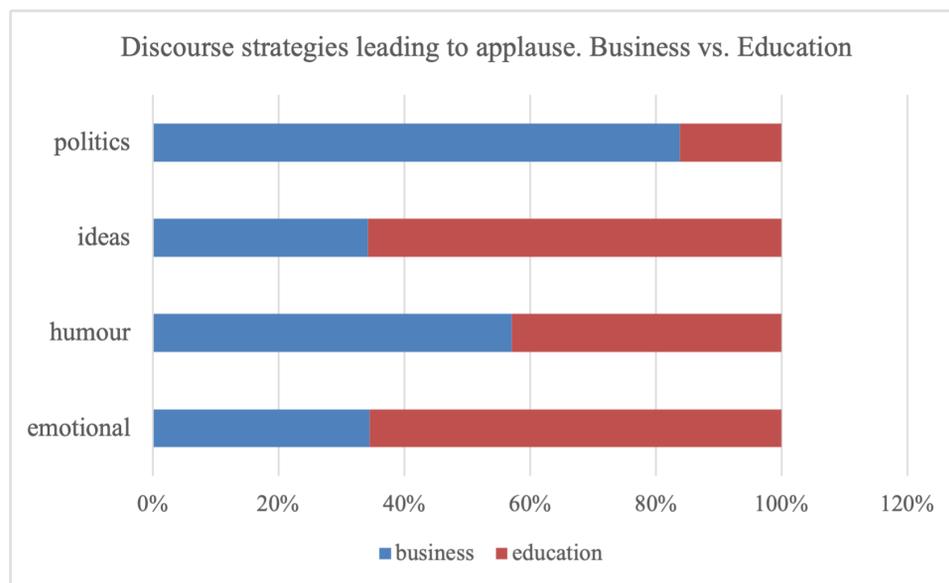
Graph 01. Percentage of occurrences per corpus

With regards to the second analysis, (the identification of moments of applause and laughter in the corpora analyzed), audiences applauded a total of 313 times throughout the speeches. After having discarded the times in which applause was delivered at the end of the speech (clearly, all speeches end in applause), 186 spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment instances of applause were identified. The contexts for these instances of applause were classified according to: emotional stories related to the speaker’s past or present lives, humor, ideas related to innovation or improvement, political ideas, and politics. Political ideas are here considered in the category of politics to emphasize the type of content included in the speeches, thus contrasting Bhatia’s 2012 statements about the “private intentions” of speakers (Bhatia 2012), namely to build up their expert identity. Graph 02 shows the results for this.



Graph 02. Discourse strategies leading to applause

Looking at the distribution in terms of business vs. education talks, the results obtained clarify differences in the strategies used in each context. Graph 03 offers the proportion of these strategies used in each field. Clearly, there is an uneven distribution, as the vast majority of cases in which the mentioning of political issues leads to applause are in business talks, which is comparable to cases in which applause is obtained in education when referring to emotional stories, or ideas.



Graph 03. Discourse strategies leading to applause. Business vs. education talks

It can be seen that around 15% of all cases are somewhat related to the presentation of the speaker identified to his or her personal story. Examples of this can be seen in example (1), in which a personal story of inspiration and overcoming is explained in detail:

- (1) (...) interviews, I got into the fellowship program with a full scholarship. My father was confused, my mother was worried... (APPLAUSE) My father was confused, my mother was worried, but I felt butterflies in my stomach because I was going to step out of my village for the first time to study in the national capital. [e2w2019].

Besides, almost a third of all cases in which there was applause are related to humorous strategies. In most, laughter preceded applause. Humorous strategies are presented with the results for laughter contexts, but example (2) shows the combination of humor and applause:

- (2) Our generation does not want its epitaph to read, “We kept charity overhead low.” (Laughter) (APPLAUSE). We want it to read that we changed the world, and that part of the way we did that was by changing the way we think about these things. [b10m2013].

Another third of settings triggering applause are related to ideas. In many occasions, ideas are related to innovation (both in business and in education). Usually, these are very emphatic ideas about how things should be done. This is displayed in example (3):

- (3) So, designers all over the world can analyze their products down to the parts per million for human and ecological health. (APPLAUSE) We’ve developed a protocol so that companies can send these same messages all the way through their supply chain [b54m2005.txt]

Also, a significant amount of applause comes from political statements and ideas (33%). Example (4) illustrates a political statement, related to the ideas of authority and freedom:

- (4) But the accountability’s up the line judging the decision against the effect on everybody, not just on the disgruntled person. You can’t run a society by the lowest common denominator. (APPLAUSE). So, what’s needed is a basic shift in philosophy. We can pull the plug on a lot of this stuff if we shift our philosophy. We’ve been taught that authority is the enemy of freedom. It’s not true. [b28m2010.txt].

When looking at the number of talks where LAUGHTER was identified, we see that audiences laugh in 597 cases, which is almost twice as many times as they applaud. Humorous strategies in spoken contexts have been grouped: teasing – overt pretense of hostility serving genuine friendliness (Partington, 2006) –, lexemes (lexical units used in discourse for a humorous effect, because of a novel use, or word play) or putdown (or disparagement). We will show some examples of these in the speeches in Examples (5–18):

- (5) Be very careful what you get into people's heads because it's virtually impossible to shift it afterwards, right? (Laughter) I'm not quite sure how he died, actually. Was he beheaded in the end, or hung? (Laughter) (Teasing) [e49m2008.txt]
- (6) Actually, what I find is, everybody has an interest in education. Don't you? I find this very interesting. If you're at a dinner party, and you say you work in education – actually, you're not often at dinner parties, frankly. (Putdown) [e18m2006].
- (7) Being gay and fathering triplets is by far the most socially innovative, socially entrepreneurial thing I have ever done. (Laughter) (Applause) The real social innovation I want to talk about involves charity. (Lexeme). [b10m2013.txt]
- (8) [...] I see a pendulum ticking. And I'm thinking, "Oh yeah, the square root of the length is proportional to its period." (Laughter) I keep climbing up, go back. I go to a place where a dowel splits off. There's a clock, clock, clock, clock. (Lexeme). [e34m2008.txt]

Then, the research consisted of finding examples of conversational humorous catchphrases. Here, the intention was to identify jokes (the telling of a story with a build-up and a punch), witticisms (humorous textual units introduced in the conversation), and banters (light, playful, teasing remarks). No retorts (quick responses to a preceding turn (Norrick 1993), were found, since there are no proper conversations). This is seen in Examples 9 and 10.

- (9) Children are not, for the most part, suffering from a psychological condition. They're suffering from childhood. (Laughter). And I know this because I spent my early life as a child. I went through the whole thing. (Joke) [e14m2013.txt].
- (10) Have you wondered why politicians are not what they used to be? It's not because their DNA has degenerated. (Laughter) 07:26 It is rather because one can be in government today and not in power. (Witticism). [b06m2016.txt]

Finally, examples of self-deprecation, and black humor (consideration of human suffering as absurd rather than pitiable, or human existence as pointless) were also identified in the corpus. There were no instances of laughter due to lecturer errors.

- (11) [...] I use basically the same technology as this 14th-century classroom. Note the textbook, the sage on the stage, and the sleeping guy in the back. (Laughter) Just like today. (Self-deprecation). [e30m2012.txt]
- (12) And in the words of Malcolm Gladwell, crack cocaine was the extra-chunky version of tomato sauce for the inner city. (Laughter) Because crack cocaine was an unbelievable innovation. I don't have time to talk about it today, but if you think about it. (Black humor) [b61m2004.txt].

Some examples of humor directly mentioned multiculturalism, and/or culturally-specific or language specific audiences, and point to some particularities, often based on stereotypes, which are the base of the humorous strategy used.

- (13) Now, I've told this story to a mostly Asian audience before. Nobody laughs. (They just shake their head. Of course (Laughter). [b03m2017].
- (14) The world changed overnight. As for me, disillusioned by the failed religion of my youth [communism], I went to America and became a Berkeley hippie. (Laughter). [b09m2014].
- (15) [...] just look at your Indian people around here, you'll see them smile; they know what it is. (Laughter). And then look at people who have done business in India, you'll see the exasperation on their faces. [b41m2009]

In other cases, speakers referred to absent spectators, cyber-audiences directly, and included them in their face-to-face humorous strategies, or compelled them to act:

- (16) But that being said, it's a very good media opportunity. (Laughter). You know how many people watch these TED Talks? It's a lot. That's just a working title [b15m2011].
- (17) This is a global problem. [...] England is right behind you, as usual. (Laughter). We need a revolution. Mexico, Australia, Germany, India, China. [b40m2010].

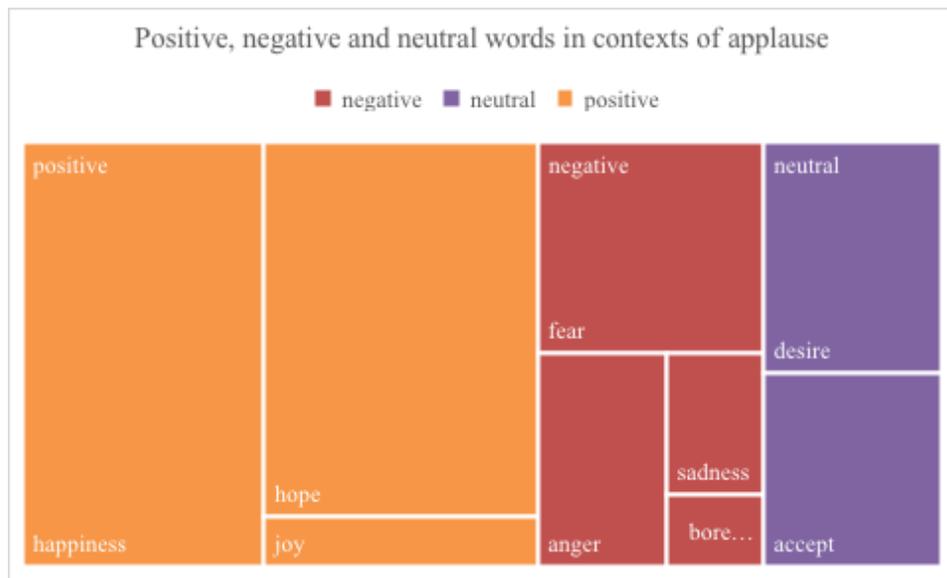
The third set of analyses took into account both these two perspectives. On the one hand, it looked at moments when audiences responded to the inputs offered by the speakers in the form of either laughter or applause, and at the emotion words uttered in the immediately preceding or following context (up to a sentence) were identified. We will first present the results for cases of emotion words in the vicinity of either APPLAUSE

or LAUGHTER. In the first case, this resulted in the identification of a total of 186 occasions, of which 94 were discarded because they just marked the end of the speech, 39 emotion word types (of which 23 with merely one or two utterances), and a total of 202 tokens. The distribution for the remaining 16 types is shown in Table 3.

Emotion words in contexts of applause	
Word	Total occurrences
Lov*	29%
Hope*	16%
Curios*	10%
Wonder*	9%
Pleas*	5%
Fear*	4%
Desir*	4%
Confiden*	3%
Courag*	3%
Shame*	3%
Joy*	3%
Hate*	2%
Horror*	2%
Grie*	2%
Pride*	2%
Panic	2%

Table 3. Emotion words in contexts of applause

In Graph 04 these words grouped according to whether they refer to positive or negative emotions, based on the proposal by the Human-Machine Interaction Network on Emotion (HUMAINE)⁴. The number of words identified as positive greatly outnumbers negative words, since they represent 85% of the total.



Graph 04. Positive, neutral, and negative emotion words in the context of applause

Here are some examples (examples 18 and 19) that illustrate the type of sentences that include emotion words in the preceding context, and which therefore can be interpreted as triggers for the subsequent response. Examples containing both positive and negative emotion word have been chosen so that contexts can be appreciated.

⁴ <https://web.archive.org/web/20080420075254/http://emotion-research.net/>.

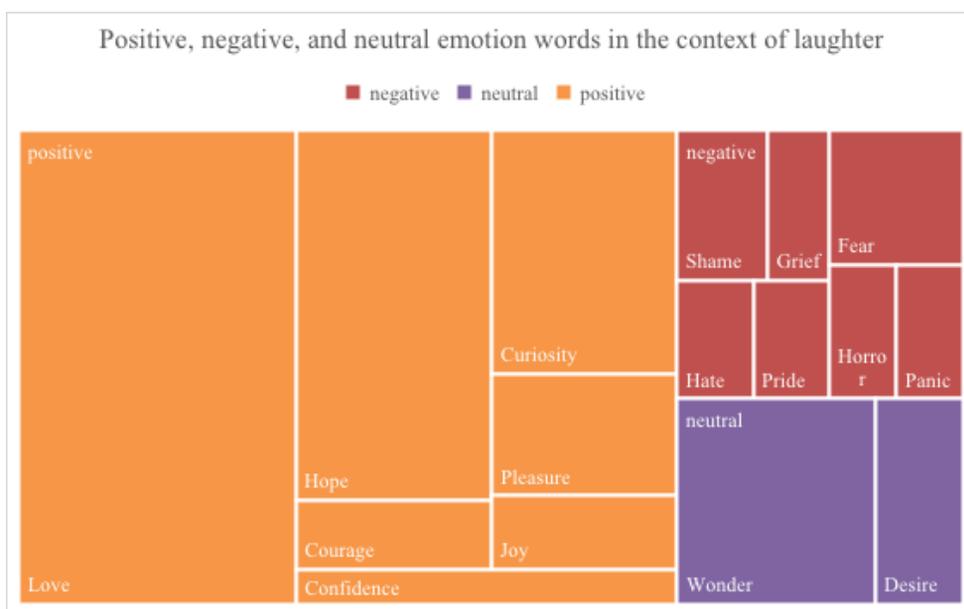
- (18) (...) the statistics and the evidence, and they would find any government of old guilty of child abuse. That’s my belief. (Applause) (Applause ends). Now, if I came up here, and I wish I could come up here today (...). [b40m2010.txt]
- (19) (...) few sources of hope: we ought to try to re-moralize work. One way not to do it: teach more ethics courses. (Applause). There is no better way to show people that you’re not serious than to tie up everything you have to say. [b46m2009.txt]

Regarding the results obtained in contexts of laughter, audiences laughed a total of 593 times, considering both corpora. However, the total number of settings analyzed were 20, considering that only settings where any of the 72 emotion words under consideration appeared were studied. The most commonly used terms are shown below.

Emotion words in contexts of laughter	
Word	Total occurrences
Anger	5%
Bore*	5%
Joy*	5%
Sad*	5%
Content*	5%
Accept*	10%
Certain*	10%
Fear*	15%
Hope*	15%
wonder	25%

Table 4. Emotion words in contexts of laughter

Graph 05 displays these same emotion words depending on whether they are positive or negative (or neutral), based on the proposal by the Human-Machine Interaction Network on Emotion (HUMAINE). As in the previous case, it can be seen that the great majority of emotion words used were positive. In particular wonder and hope account for almost half of all positive words, and add up 40% of all words used.



Graph 05. Positive, neutral, and negative emotion words in the context of laughter

As before, a couple of instances (20 and 21) exemplify laughter in the vicinity of both positive and negative emotion words. Although the speakers’ word choices were very different, the intended consequence – laughter – was achieved in both cases.

- (20) When you looked at the hard instructions, the effect was larger. Why? Because now the builders loved it even more. (Laughter) They put all this extra effort into it. And evaluators? They loved it even less. [b65m2012.txt]
- (21) [...] scare them. Ultimately, moving forward, I think we have to embrace fear. We've got to put that bear in a cage. (Laughter) Embrace fear. Embrace risk. One big spoonful at a time, we have to embrace risk. [b15m2011.txt]

5. Conclusions

The present research analyzed the type of strategies used by TED TALK speakers in order to trigger their audiences' responses. First, basic emotion words were identified in the two sets of scripts, in business and in education. Then, contexts for laughter and applause were analyzed, so that strategies used by the speakers could be identified. Next, these two analyses were put in relation, and it was attested up to which point these two aspects were interwoven. Finally, an in-depth examination of the type of humor used in the talks was completed.

On the one hand, regarding the use of emotion words, similar uses in both corpora were found. Also, the wildcards used identified two words with significantly larger degree of appearance than the rest, in both fields: hope and fear. This indicates uses of emotion words relative to basic emotions, corroborating the first working hypothesis. However, interesting differences, as the use of some words in one of the subcorpus, but not in the other were also spotted: accept or curiosity were very much used in education, but barely in business talks.

It was seen that the discourse strategies used to trigger emotion vary. Regarding applause, the most common tactics were related to the narration of an emotional personal story, and the explanation of ideas, political and otherwise. Humorous stories generated either laughter or laughter and applause. Some such strategies were self-deprecation, or lexemes, for instance.

When these two analyses were contrasted to identify how often presenters used basic emotion words to spark laughter or applause, surprisingly, we found that this was not the usual choice, as few occurrences of emotion words were found in the vicinity of laughter and applause in either subcorpora. Indeed, the results of the present investigation show that, whereas there is little variation in the use of emotion words regarding topics (similar results were obtained for business and for education), speakers do not necessarily use basic emotion words to stir their audiences' emotions, as could be expected for use in multilingual and multicultural contexts, looking for a common ground for communication, but rather use other discourse strategies, such as different sorts of humor.

In all cases (laughter and applause), many more words related to positive emotions were used in both corpora than words linked to either neutral or negative emotions, thus confirming results of previous investigations related to public speech in CMC.

Face-to face audiences seemed to be mostly moved by the understanding of emotional personal stories, ideas and politics, which is also interesting from an intercultural viewpoint. However, there is no way to know whether humor was similarly understood and received by distant, asynchronous cyber-audiences. In this sense, TED Talk speakers seem to be emotionally placing themselves near face-to-face audiences, and using them as reference to construct their speeches, although acknowledging the existence of remote cyber-audiences (Examples 16-17).

Finally, it can be said that humorous expressions used in TED talks lay somewhere between conversational and academic humor, considering the choice of the strategies used. Contrarily to the speakers (lack of) choice of basic emotion words, humor used in the talks tends to take into account (in some cases even explicitly) the acknowledgement of different audiences and cultures, and for this tends to be either very culture-specific (stereotypical), or very universal (examples 14-15).

Future lines of work could be looking into differences in the use of strategies depending on gender (female vs. male speakers), the type of personal stories used to trigger response on the side of the audience, or clear signs of computer mediated communication strategies in the talks.

CREDiT Authorship Contribution

Writing - original draft - Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically the writing of the initial draft (including substantive translation). Eva María Mestre-Mestre.

Writing - revision and editing - Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by members of the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision - including pre- or post-publication stages. María Beatriz Pérez-Cabello de Alba.

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