



Opening and closing strategies in the literature and in TED talks

A contrastive approach

Mémoire réalisé par
Marie Carette

Promoteur(s)
Sylvie De Cock

Année académique 2017-2018
Communication multilingue, finalité langues des affaires



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ABSTRACT

Depuis des années, les TED talks, de courtes vidéos retransmettant des conférences organisées dans le monde entier, fascinent un public très varié. Abordant une grande diversité de sujets, elles sont une mine d'information et d'idées pour tout un chacun. Il est donc intéressant de se demander de quelle manière les intervenants parviennent à donner des présentations aussi captivantes qu'inspirantes.

L'objectif de ce mémoire était d'analyser les stratégies reprises dans les introductions et les conclusions de 40 TED talks sélectionnés sur base de critères précis. Ces deux parties ont en effet une influence déterminante sur l'attention que le public porte à la présentation. Les techniques les plus fréquemment décrites dans la littérature constituent le premier chapitre de ce mémoire qui servira de support pour l'analyse. Pour entamer le travail de recherche, les transcriptions des 40 TED talks ont été retravaillées en y incluant notamment différents éléments contextuels ayant un impact potentiel sur les stratégies adoptées.

La recherche s'est déroulée en deux étapes majeures : la délimitation des introductions et des conclusions des 40 transcriptions dans un premier temps, et l'identification des stratégies utilisées dans un second temps. L'analyse, de type quantitatif, des différentes techniques employées a permis d'obtenir les premiers éléments de réponse aux deux questions de recherche de cette étude. Une seconde analyse qualitative a permis d'approfondir les résultats.

Il s'est avéré que tous les intervenants des 40 TED talks sélectionnés combinaient plusieurs stratégies, tant dans leur introduction que dans leur conclusion. Plusieurs schémas d'utilisation se sont profilés et une grande variation dans l'utilisation des stratégies a été constatée. Les intervenants disposent donc d'une certaine autonomie et flexibilité dans le choix de leurs stratégies dans un contexte spécifique aux conférences TED.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Openings and closings in presentations are of utmost importance. Strong openings allow speakers to introduce the topic of their speech and make it possible to attract the audience's attention. They set the tone and are crucial to ensure the delivery of a clear presentation that is worth listening to. Closings are perhaps even more significant, as they occur at the end of a speech and tend to be remembered better than the beginning. A powerful closing enables speakers to end their presentation in a memorable way while inspiring people at the same time. It is also the perfect opportunity to make sure that the audience understood the message of the speech.

Both openings and closings should be carefully prepared and rehearsed in order to make a strong impression on the audience. Therefore, speakers should adopt specific strategies according to the purpose of their speech. This master dissertation, divided into three chapters, aims to examine the techniques used by the speakers of a selection of 40 TED talks in their openings and closings. TED conferences, as their slogan suggests, intend to inspire people by sharing a variety of interesting ideas. One could thus wonder how so many TED speakers manage to deliver such inspiring talks. First, the common opening and closing strategies outlined in the literature will be explored, which will provide basis for the forthcoming analysis. After a presentation of the data and the methodology that will be used, the openings and closings of the selected TED talks will be quantitatively and qualitatively analysed in order to uncover the well-documented and/or new techniques used by TED speakers. Finally, these two types of strategies will be compared and discussed and a general conclusion will be made.

Chapter 1: Openings and closings in the literature

Introduction

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English¹, *presenting* means “to give a speech in which you offer an idea, plan etc to be considered or accepted”. It is a very useful and important skill required in a business context for example. However, presenting is a competence that involves a lot of training and practice. In order to give an effective and memorable presentation, speakers should learn how to engage the audience and how to make sure the message they deliver is understood and remembered. Nowadays, tens of books and articles advising on presentation skills are to be found, covering multiple subjects ranging from preparing a presentation to nonverbal communication.

In this first chapter, the way speakers should open and close their presentation will more specifically come into focus. As clearly stated by Locker & Kienzler (2000: 280), “the beginning and the end of a presentation [...] are positions of emphasis”. In other words, these two sections are crucial parts of an oral presentation for the speaker and for the audience; they enable the speaker to lay the stress on, and to repeat the essential points of the speech and they help the audience remember these main points. Both the opening and the closing should be strong to ensure an effective and noteworthy presentation, as they arguably play an important part in determining the impact this presentation will have on the audience.

¹ <https://www.ldoceonline.com/>

1.1. Opening a presentation

This chapter is dedicated to what information about openings in presentations can be found in the literature. First, a definition of *opening* will be provided, followed by the most common ways a presentation can be opened.

“During the first few minutes of your presentation, your job is to assure the audience members that you are not going to waste their time and attention.”

— Dale Ludwig

1.2. Definition

As this quote suggests, the opening of an oral presentation is directly aimed at the audience. Openings have several important functions. The first purpose is to introduce the subject in an effective way so that the audience is able to understand what the presentation is about (Andeweg, De Jong & Van Breugel 2010). Secondly, an opening should make the audience “willing to listen to [the] speech” (Andeweg, De Jong & Hoeken, 1998: 1) and enable them to focus their attention on what the speaker has to say. As stated by Laws (2000: 69), “the audience is at its peak at the beginning of the presentation” and this part of the talk is thus the perfect time to grab people’s attention and to engage the audience. Finally, the opening serves as foretaste of the speaker, allowing the audience to decide whether he or she is worthy of their attention, as mentioned by Karia (2012). In other words, as Andeweg, De Jong and Hoeken (1998: 2) clearly explain, the speaker has to “establish [his or her] credibility”. In brief, Monippally (2001: 111) summarizes this by stating that the opening must make the audience “look forward to the body” of the talk.

1.3. Opening strategies

As it can be observed when reading the numerous references that give advice on presentation skills, there are plenty of possibilities to open a presentation in an effective way. Some openings may suit a certain type of presentation better than others and some speakers might be more comfortable introducing their presentation in one way or another. As Davidson (2002: 269) states, “your opening has to fit your style and comfort zone”. The opening also strongly depends on the issue that is being discussed. In this part, an overview of the most common openings discussed in literature will be provided.

1.3.1. Anecdote

One of the most popular ways to start an oral presentation is to tell a story, which is sometimes called an anecdote. As defined by Andeweg, B. & De Jong J. (2006: 169-170), it is “a short story about a certain true or fictitious incident, with a vivid or amusing twist. The incident usually involves real people, often famous ones, and sometimes the speaker, but fictitious figures also occur. An anecdote may, but does not need to bear a moral, a necessity in both parable and fable.” Locker and Kienzler (2000: 280) point out that the best anecdotes are the ones featuring the speaker and which highlight “the point of [the] talk”. Karia (2012) sheds light on the reasons why storytelling is commonly considered to be one of the best openings when starting a talk. According to him, this opening strategy is a very effective way to attract the audience and to get them enthralled by what is being said. When hearing a captivating story, people generally want to know what is happening next, and are thus more likely to listen to the rest of the talk. As a consequence, a good anecdote may make people remember the whole presentation better since the audience pays more attention to the talk. The author also argues that a personal story establishes a link between the speaker and the audience, getting people to experience the story as the speaker tells it as well as the emotions the event or situation aroused.

“A consultant asked a group of people how many of them had [a backup plan]. One brave soul from a bank raised his hand and said, “I’ve got a disaster recovery plan—complete and ready to go into action. It’s real simple, just one page.” And the consultant asked, “A one-page disaster plan? What would you do if your computer center blew up, or flooded, or caught on fire? How could you recover with just a one-page disaster plan?” He said, “Well, it’s really simple. It’s a two-step plan. First, I maintain my résumé up-to-date at all times. And second, I store a backup copy off-site.””

— *Business and administrative communication*, Locker and Kienzler (2000: 280)²

² All examples are taken from the literature.

1.3.2. Question

A second interesting way to open a talk is to start with a question. According to Locker and Kienzler (2000), this opening strategy is commonly used to engage the audience and, as stated by Karia (2012), to interact and connect with them. As Leeds (2003) explains, the speaker may choose between two types of question: the direct question, which generally requires the audience to raise their hand to answer the question and which is used to make people participate, or the rhetorical question, to which the speaker does not expect an answer and which is mostly used to make the audience think. Karia (2012: 38) adds that a further reason for using a rhetorical question when starting a presentation is the creation of a “knowledge gap”. This term refers to the difference in awareness of a particular subject between the speaker and the audience. In other words, when asking a question, the speaker gets people to realise that there is something they do not know about, but which the speaker is already aware of. As a consequence, the audience get eager to fill this gap and people start to pay closer attention to the message the speaker has to deliver.

“‘How many of you said one or two?’ he asks, raising his hand. A few hands pop up. ‘Three, four, six, eight?’ he asks, walking up the middle of the aisle to the back of the room. Hands start popping up like targets in a shooting gallery. Jeary’s Texas drawl accelerates and suddenly the place sounds like a cattle auction. ‘Do I hear 10? Twelve? Thirteen to the woman in the green shirt! Fifteen to the gentlemen in plaid,’ he fires, and the room busts out laughing.”

— *Business and administrative communication*, Locker and Kienzler (2000: 281)

1.3.3. Startling statement

As Locker and Kienzler (2000) suggest, another strong opening for an oral presentation can be the issuance of a startling statement. According to Karia (2012: 42), this statement would better be a piece of information that the audience is most likely to be unaware of. The speaker can use a shocking statement in order to “make a positive impression” on people, or start with an intriguing one to “create a mystery”. The author adds that a statement at the beginning of a presentation also creates a “knowledge gap” which the audience immediately tries to fill. In brief, as Leeds (2003: 111) states, “anything that takes the audience by surprise will have them hanging on [the speaker’s] every word until they get an explanation or further details from [him or her]”.

“If you eat a McDonald’s quarter pounder with cheese, you’ll instantly gain almost half a pound of weight!”

— *How to deliver a great TED Talk*, Karia (2012: 42)

1.3.4. *Quote*

Leeds (2003) clearly explains that using an interesting and relevant quote to start a presentation undoubtedly makes a positive first impression and makes the talk memorable. According to Karia (2012: 41), “a short quote [...] will create support for [the] speech”. Moreover, a quote should not be too long as the audience could quickly find it tedious. The author also adds that an overused quote does not have the same impact as an uncommon one, which tends to attract people’s attention better.

“Einstein said, ‘Imagination is more important ... than knowledge!’”

— *How to deliver a great TED Talk*, Karia (2012: 41)

1.3.5. *Humour*

Dignen (2007: 39) states that humour can make a presentation worth remembering. According to him, this ability may be used in various ways. The speaker might for instance make a play on words or make “a joke at [his or her] own expense”. Locker and Kienzler (2000) add that humour also aims to put the audience at ease. However, using humour is a risky strategy that will only succeed if it “fits in with [the] topic”, as mentioned by Leeds (2003: 111). Interculturality is also a reality that must be taken into account. Bell (2006: 4) explains that “cross-cultural differences in [humour] styles exist and [...] can sometimes create interactional difficulties”. In other words, people from certain cultures may not perceive humour the same way others do.

“Three elderly women were sitting on the beach in Miami. Two were talking about their children. The first one said, ‘Ah, my son is a lawyer, makes \$250,000 a year, drives a Jaguar, and sends me down here to enjoy the sun for one month every year, and he and my two grandchildren call me up every other week to see how I’m doing.’ The second woman said, ‘That’s nice, but my son is a plastic surgeon, and makes \$500,000 a year. He and his wife have twin Mercedes Benzes, and he sends me here for three months

every year and my adoring grandchildren call me every week to see how I'm doing." They turned expectantly to the third woman, who said, "I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I have no children." In unison, the other women said, "What on Earth do you do for aggravation?"

— *PowerSpeak: Engage, Inspire, and Stimulate Your Audience*,
Leeds (2003: 187)

1.4. Closing a presentation

This section is dedicated to the information about closings in presentations that can be found in the literature. First, a definition of *closing* will be provided, followed by the different ways a presentation can be closed.

*"Great is the art of beginning,
but greater the art is of ending."*

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

1.5. Definition

As Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's quote suggests, closing a presentation is perhaps even more crucial than the opening of the talk. Leeds (2003: 126) clearly points out that the closing is the last thing the audience hears. Therefore, it should be "stimulating and memorable". As explained earlier, the closing should be as strong as the beginning of the presentation. The author states that the aim of the closing is primarily to "regain the audience's attention". After a whole presentation, people may have missed a few points and might be paying less attention to what is being said than at the beginning. However, this is not the only purpose a closing should have. Secondly, Karia (2012: 70) mentions that a closing is used for "[reemphasizing the] main points". In this way, the speaker can highlight the essential points the audience should remember.

1.6. Closing strategies

As for the opening of a talk, there are several closing strategies that are discussed in the literature. The choice of strategy generally depends on the type of presentation and on the impression that the speaker wants to make at the end of the talk. In what follows, the most common closing techniques will be presented. Unlike the openings strategies which are generally used individually, the following techniques may sometimes be combined in order to create a memorable conclusion (Leeds (2003)).

1.6.1. Signal

As Dignen (2007) explains, an effective way to make sure the audience follows what the speaker says and, as Leeds (2003) adds, in order to regain people's attention, is to signpost that the presentation is coming to an end. Karia (2012: 69) states that this will make the audience "more alert" to what is to going to be said. This strategy is generally employed just before the closing actually starts.

"Before I leave the stage, let me leave you with this."

— *How to deliver a great TED Talk*, Karia (2012: 70)

1.6.2. Summary

Another potential option when ending an oral presentation is to enable the audience to hear the essential points of the talk a second time. Dignen (2007) points out that a simple summary is not enough; the speaker should also add his or her own reflection. As Karia (2012: 70) explains, the purpose is to "reinforce the major points". However, Laws (2000: 71) warns that a short presentation does not need to be summarized, as it would "seem repetitive".

"Let me wrap up. There is a mismatch between what science knows and what business does. And here is what science knows. One: Those 20th century rewards, those motivators we think are a natural part of business, do work, but only in a surprisingly narrow band of circumstances. Two: Those if-then rewards often destroy creativity. Three: The secret to high performance isn't rewards and punishments, but that unseen intrinsic drive – the drive to do things for their own sake. The drive to do things cause they matter."

— *How to deliver a great TED Talk*, Karia (2012: 70)

1.6.3. Statement

According to Leeds (2003: 128), ending a presentation with a “stirring statement” allows the speaker to close his or her speech with energy, making the message memorable.

1.6.4. Call to action

As Karia (2012: 73) explains, speakers may “tell [their] audience members exactly what [they] want them to do” in a compelling way. Leeds (2003) adds that this strategy allows the speaker to make sure his or her presentation is remembered since people will leave the presentation with something to do or change.

“As we’ve seen, this untapped market is worth \$40 million every year. We’ve seen that the rewards far outweigh the costs and that the best time to start catering to this market is now. Having discussed this, I would like to request a second meeting so that we can discuss how to go forward from here.”

— *How to deliver a great TED Talk*, Karia (2012: 73)

1.6.5. Joke

As for openings, Leeds (2003) points out that using humour when closing an oral presentation may be a good way to make the audience remember the main message of the speech.

1.6.6. Hope for a better future

Karia (2012: 71) states that another effective strategy to end a talk is to “provide hope for a better future”. According to the author, the aim of this technique is to empower the audience in order to raise hope that it is possible to overcome a problem the speaker has talked about in his or her presentation.

*“And there’s the best part. Here’s the best part. We already know this. The science confirms what we know in our hearts. **So** [my emphasis], if we repair this mismatch between what science knows and what business does, if we bring our motivation, notions of motivation into the 21st century, if we get past this lazy, dangerous, ideology of carrots and sticks, we can strengthen our businesses, we can solve a lot of those candle problems, and maybe, maybe, maybe we can change the world. I rest my case.”*

— *How to deliver a great TED Talk*, Karia (2012: 71)

1.6.7. *Discourse makers*

In the above example, another common way to close a presentation can be observed: the use of a *discourse maker* (cf. word in bold). Generally speaking, the role of discourse markers is to signal the relation between what is currently being said and the foregoing discourse, as Fraser (1996) suggests. This definition has been developed by several other authors. Taboada (2006) deepens this idea of relation by stating that discourse makers help understand the coherence of a discourse. It can also be added that discourse makers “link [...] the current sentence or utterance with its immediate context” (Redeker (1991), cited in Taboada (2006: 572)). According to Fraser (1996), there are four types of discourse markers³ but one that may be interesting for this study is the *inferential markers*, described as “expressions which signal that the force of the utterance is a conclusion which follows from the preceding discourse”: *so, then, after all, as a consequence, consequently, therefore, etc.* (Fraser (1996: 188)).

1.6.8. *Benefits*

According to Dignen (2007), a further closing technique requires the speaker to explain the audience in what ways the presentation they have been listening to will benefit them.

“All you need to do is to take ten minutes out a day to step back, to familiarize yourself with the present moment so that you get to experience a greater sense of focus, calm and clarity in your life.”

— *How to deliver a great TED Talk*, Karia (2012: 75)

³ The other types being the topic change markers, the contrastive markers and the elaborative markers (Fraser 1996: 88)).

1.7. Conclusion

After carrying out research into the different common strategies used to open and close an oral presentation, the findings show that the literature on openings appears to be much more extensive than on closings. Regrettably, the books and articles used for this dissertation explore the way a speech can be closed in less details and generally only outline certain techniques that may be adopted without explaining what these truly consist of. It can also be noted that these strategies are rarely illustrated by reference examples. The only used book providing useful and practical illustration was *How to deliver a great TED Talk* by Karia (2012). However, this book being based on existing TED talks, the given examples cannot be considered as genuinely representative of the reference examples that should be provided to illustrate the different techniques to open a presentation. It can thus be concluded that there might exist a gap in the literature between the information about openings and closings, which could be interesting to fill carrying out further research.

Chapter 2: Data and method

In this chapter, the methodology that is going to be used in order to answer the research questions will be explained. After a short presentation of the TED organisation, the two research questions addressed in this dissertation are formulated. Next, a description of the selected data used to attempt to answer these questions will be provided, as well as a discussion of the difficulties encountered to collect the data. Finally, the method that will be adopted to address the research questions will be developed.

2.1. TED talks

2.1.1. General overview

TED, which stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design, is a non-profit organisation whose main goal is, as their slogan *Ideas Worth Spreading* suggests, to offer influential content to a large public through conferences held by experts (i.e. scientists, philanthropists, musicians, business and religious leaders, philosophers,...) and attended by eager people. These conferences are filmed and released on the TED⁴ website, and to which internet users can easily get access for free.

2.1.2. History

TED was founded in 1984 by Richard Saul Wurman, who organised the first TED conference in collaboration with Harry Marks. However, the concept only spread worldwide in 1990. From then, a conference is held every year in Monterey (California) and the TED community has been expanding rapidly. In 2006, the first six talks were released online and one year later, the TED website was launched.

2.1.3. TED conferences

As people may observe when watching a TED talk online, there are several types of TED conferences. They are generally held once a year in different parts of the world. TED, the most important conference, is organised every year on the North American West Coast. TEDGlobal conferences are similar to TED but are organised in different parts of the world and are held by international speakers. TEDWomen is a three-day conference celebrating women and girls' power. Finally, TEDYouth talks are

⁴ <https://www.ted.com/>

inspirational conferences held for students from middle and high school. These four types of TED conferences are the most important ones, even though there are also special TED events hosted around the world.

2.2. Research questions

Given the success of TED talks, one could wonder how the speakers manage to deliver such inspiring and interesting talks while captivating their audience. Since openings and closings are often presented as playing a crucial role in successful talks and since TED talks arguably represent good examples of successful talks, the first research question that will be tackled in this dissertation is as follows: *Do the speakers of the selected TED talks use well-documented strategies to open and close their talk?* In other words, this study sets out to explore what well-documented techniques a selecting of TED speakers use to open and close their talk. This leads us to the second research question: *Do the speakers of the selected TED talks use other strategies than the ones outlined in the literature?* With this second question, the goal will be to compare the findings of the analysis of the selected TED talks with what literature tells us about how to open and close an oral presentation.

2.3. Data

2.3.1. Selection of the TED talks

In this study, the data consist of the transcripts of 40 TED talks that have been found on the TED website. These videos have been carefully selected in order to form a collection of inspiring and positive videos conveying a forward-looking message, prompting people into action and/or providing food for thought.

The selection was made on the basis of the title as well as of the content of the videos. When on the TED website, the first step was to browse the website in order to get a general overview of the kinds of talks that were available. As can be observed on the website, TED already sorted their videos into different categories. On the one hand, one can easily look for particular videos according to their topic. The themes are classified in alphabetical order. On the other hand, people may choose to sort the videos by a series of criteria such as newest, persuasive, informative, etc. The TED categorisation was however not used to select the data in this study as it did not neatly match my selection criteria. As a result, I systematically went through the talks available on the

TED website to identify potentially relevant talks based on the title of the talk. I subsequently watched these talks to assess whether or not they were in line with my criteria: inspiring and positive talks conveying a forward-looking message, prompting people into action and/or providing food for thought. Besides the topic, particular attention was paid to the language used. The objective was to create a collection of videos in which the speakers' language was English, whatever their origin or their accent. Table 1 gives an overview of the 40 selected TED talks that are going to be used in this study. A remark should be made concerning the talk entitled *How to live before you die* by Steve Jobs: it was not filmed during a TED conference but is still hosted on the TED website.

Selected TED talks	Speaker	Date of record	Duration of the talk ⁵	Number of words
<i>3 reasons why we can win the fight against poverty</i>	Andrew Youn	February 2016	12'52"	2125
<i>A broken body isn't a broken person</i>	Janine Shepherd	October 2012	18'26"	2976
<i>Change our culture, change our world</i>	Nate Garvis	October 2010	10'16"	1719
<i>Every kid needs a champion</i>	Rita Pierson	May 2013	7'24"	1112
<i>Fighting with nonviolence</i>	Scilla Elworthy	April 2012	15'19"	1814
<i>How frustration can make us more creative</i>	Tim Harford	September 2015	15'15"	2228
<i>How healthy living nearly killed me</i>	A.J. Jacobs	October 2011	8'17"	1341
<i>How the Internet enables intimacy</i>	Stefana Broadbent	July 2009	9'28"	1807
<i>How to live before you die</i>	Steve Jobs	June 2005	14'10"	2279
<i>How to make filthy water drinkable</i>	Michael Pritchard	July 2009	9'04"	1192
<i>How to make peace? Get angry</i>	Kailash Satyarthi	March 2015	18'12"	1790
<i>How to make stress your friend</i>	Kelly McGonigal	June 2013	13'09"	1867
<i>How to stay calm when you know you'll be stressed</i>	Daniel Levitin	September 2015	12'01"	2248
<i>How we can make crops survive without water</i>	Jill Farrant	December 2015	13'36"	2224
<i>How we can make the world a better place by 2030</i>	Michael Green	September 2015	13'16"	2039
<i>Leather and meat without killing animals</i>	Andras Forgacs	June 2013	8'31"	1126

⁵ The time between the moment the speaker opens their mouth/starts talking (depending on what can be seen on the video) and the moment at which the last words is said.

<i>Living beyond limits</i>	Amy Purdy	May 2011	9'30"	1211
<i>Looks aren't everything. Believe me, I'm a model</i>	Cameron Russell	October 2012	9'14"	1753
<i>Pay attention to non-violence</i>	Julia Bacha	July 2011	10'19"	1061
<i>Poverty, money – and love</i>	Jessica Jackley	July 2010	17'51"	3778
<i>The beauty of being a misfit</i>	Lidia Yuknavitch	February 2016	12'33"	1829
<i>The beauty of human skin in every color</i>	Angélica Dass	February 2016	10'56"	1187
<i>The power of introverts</i>	Susan Cain	February 2012	18'28"	3304
<i>The power of vulnerability</i>	Brené Brown	June 2010	19'55"	3189
<i>The story we tell about poverty isn't true</i>	Mia Birdsong	May 2015	14'56"	2212
<i>The unexpected benefit of celebrating failure</i>	Astro Teller	February 2016	15'11"	2119
<i>This is what LGBT life is like around the world</i>	Jenni Chang and Lisa Dazols	May 2015	11'15"	1499
<i>To raise brave girls, encourage adventure</i>	Caroline Paul	October 2016	12'21"	1797
<i>Try something new for 30 days</i>	Matt Cutts	March 2011	3'	470
<i>Violence against women—it's a men's issue</i>	Jackson Katz	November 2012	17'22"	3639
<i>We can fight terror without sacrificing our rights</i>	Rebecca MacKinnon	June 2016	11'34"	1586
<i>Wearing nothing new</i>	Jessi Arrington	March 2011	4'57"	767
<i>What my religion really says about women</i>	Alaa Murabit	May 2015	11'53"	1605
<i>What nonprofits can learn from Coca-Cola</i>	Melinda Gates	September 2010	15'59"	2527
<i>Why domestic violence victims don't leave</i>	Leslie Morgan Steiner	November 2012	15'29"	2230
<i>Why stay in Chernobyl? Because it's home</i>	Holly Morris	June 2013	8'27"	1260

<i>Why veterans miss war</i>	Sebastian Junger	January 2014	12'46"	2036
<i>Why we need strangeness</i>	Maria Bezaitis	April 2013	7'36"	1176
<i>Why you should love statistics</i>	Alan Smith	April 2016	12'32"	2222
<i>Your body language shapes who you are</i>	Amy Cuddy	June 2012	20'29"	3763

Table 1: Selected TED talks

2.3.2. *Preparation of the transcripts of the selected TED talks*

Once the collection of 40 videos was completed, the next step was to collect and copy the transcripts of the talks (in Word documents) in order to be able to manually analyse them. In general, a transcript can be found under the corresponding video on the TED website. However, in the case of the talk entitled *Change our culture, change our world* by Nate Garvis, no transcription of the video was available. Therefore, I transcribed the TED talk myself.

The next step was to strip the transcripts available on the TED website of any paragraph markers as I did not want to be influenced by the way the people who transcribed the data for the website had cut up the talk into paragraph.

I subsequently set out to check the transcripts from the TED website against the videos to make sure there were no mistakes or missing elements. When it came to correcting the mistakes, two cases arose. On the one hand, some words that the speaker said in the presentation were missing. In fact, phenomena such as stammering, repetitions, rewordings, etc., had systematically not been included in the transcripts (presumably in order to have a harmonious and readable text). In such a case, the original transcript was kept, and the missing words were added in red, as shown in the following example.

“So I'm taken out of college, I keep trying to go back. They say,
"You're not going to finish college. **Like**, just, you know, **there's**,
there're other things for you to do, but that's not going to work out
for you.”

— *Your body language shapes who you are*, Amy Cuddy

Another important step was to contextualize the transcript on the basis of the video. Concerning the way the presentations' openings and closings should be identified, any factor ranging from silences to reactions of the audience could have an influence. Therefore, contextual factors were added in each transcript in square brackets in random colours (except for stressed words put in italic) in order to make it easier to work with the revised transcripts, as can be observed in the following examples.

Applause

“And then I found myself back at that same school where I'd gone for that very first flight, teaching other people how to fly just under 18 months after I'd left the spinal ward. [Applause]”

— *A broken body isn't a broken person*, Janine Shepherd

Laughter

By *laughter*, I mean the moments at which the audience was laughing. When the speakers themselves started to laugh, this was categorized as the *speaker's actions and gestures*.

“Yeah. [Laughter] Me too. But that is not my confession.”

— *How to make stress your friend*, Kelly McGonigal

Pauses

In the selected TED talks, two types of pauses could be observed. I made a distinction between *short* and *long pauses*. Although the boundary between the two may seem blurred, I decided to categorize short pauses as very short periods of silence lasting generally less than two seconds. Long pauses last thus longer than two seconds. It is important that the identification of these pauses depended on how fast the person was speaking and on whether or not the speaker was about to start talking again soon. The latter case could be detected when the person was opening their mouth before speaking or was taking a breath before starting or continuing their speech. It also depended on the speaker's actions and gestures (i.e. whether or not they looked like they were thinking or waiting for a reaction from the audience).

“And it was the first time that I felt it was not only acceptable for me to be involved, but it was encouraged. It was demanded. [Short pause] Myself and other women had a seat at the table. We weren't holding hands or a medium. We were part of decision making. We were information sharing. We were crucial. And I wanted and needed for that change to be permanent. [Long pause]”

— *What my religion says about women*, Alaa Murabit

Speaker's actions and gestures

Only the speakers' movements and actions that I thought would potentially influence their speech (e.g. pauses, end of the opening, beginning of the closing, etc.) were taken into account and set to bold in the transcripts:

"I was 22. I had just graduated from Harvard College. I had moved to New York City for my first job as a writer and editor at Seventeen magazine. I had my first apartment, my first little green American Express card, and I had a very big secret. **[Takes a gun from her bag]** My secret was **[Short pause]** that I had this gun loaded with hollow-point bullets pointed at my head by the man who I thought was my soulmate, many, many times. **[Short pause]** **[Puts it back]**"

— *Why domestic violence victims don't leave*, Leslie Morgan Steiner

Stressed words

The words that are emphasised by the speakers have been italicised:

"Did we hit this target? Well, no, we didn't. We *exceeded* it."

— *How we can make the world a better place by 2030*, Michael Green

Visual aid

Speakers' use of visual aids such as slides was marked up as follows:

"This is what I have found: **[Slide 19: picture of a smiling man + "LET OURSELVES BE SEEN"]**"

— *The power of vulnerability*, Brené Brown

Videos shown during the presentation

Any videos shown during the talks were indicated in the data:

"My plants and I **[Short video of plants growing rapidly]** thank you for your attention."

— *How we can make crops survive without water*, Jill Farrant

Unclear words

In a set of talks, some words were difficult to understand and to avoid writing down something incorrect, I used the following system:

“Over the past generation, the term we've used synonymous with "beaten" is "battered," so **[Unclear]** we have **[Writes on a paperboard]** "Mary **[Short pause]** was **[Short pause]** battered.””

— *Violence against women – it's a men's issue*, Jackson Katz

The whole process was not made in one step. Each transcript required checking two to four times until it was thoroughly revised. The whole procedure is detailed in Figure 1.

Procedure:

- 1st viewing
 - Correction of the text (**red**)
 - Applause (**light green**)
 - Estimation of where introduction ends and where conclusion begins (**light blue**)
 - Laughter (**yellow**)
 - Pauses (**purple**)
 - Speaker's actions and gestures (**black**)
 - Unclear words (**white with a red background**)
 - Slides (**orange**)
- 2nd viewing
 - Correction of the text (**red**)
 - Pauses (**purple**)
- 3rd viewing
 - Pauses (**purple**)
 - Correction of the text (**red**)
 - Speaker's actions and gestures (**black**)

— *The beauty of human skin in every color*, Angélica Dass

Figure 1: transcripts' preparation procedure

The first viewing was generally the most time-consuming step. The focus was especially laid on the external factors of the presentation (i.e. the reactions of the audience, the slides and/or the videos shown). I also attempted to correct the text and to add some pauses in the speech. In addition, the way the speakers seem to be opening and closing their speech was already explored. I tried to estimate when openings and closings were starting and ending and how, as a first approach to the practical part of this study.

After this first step, all that remained was generally to make sure that the transcript was faithful to what the speaker was saying, adding pauses, corrections, stressed words and/or some context (e.g. the speaker's actions and gestures) when necessary.

2.3.3. *Difficulties faced when preparing the transcripts*

In general, I stumbled upon two main types of difficulties during the preparation and the correction of the 40 transcripts. First, since I am not a native speaker of English, this language barrier was sometimes a challenge. The main problems which had to be overcome were the accent of some speakers, unknown words, unclear words, the difficulty of naming some concepts such as some reactions the audience had, and the full transcription of the talk entitled *Change our culture, change our world* by Nate Garvis. Second, the way the videos are filmed was, in some cases, problematic. As the videos consist of different shots, some parts of the presentation (i.e. the speaker, the audience or the visual aids) are not always visible due the different cameras TED used to film. As a consequence, it was not always possible to describe the speaker's gestures or the visual aids in a very detailed and accurate way.

In any case, transferring information from a video onto paper will always involve a loss of precious verbal and non verbal data that is peculiar to oral communication. Several particular aspects were difficult to deal with while transcribing the videos. As mentioned earlier, the length of the pauses was for instance determined by the speed at which the speakers delivered their speech. Speed could also vary during the presentation, depending on what the speakers were saying and on the importance of their words (i.e. some people may willingly speak more slowly at some point in order to insist on something). Stress could influence the speakers' speed too. This is thus a very important aspect that cannot be transcribed and that can only be observed while watching the corresponding video. Emotions were another element that was difficult to write down. In the revised transcripts of the selected TED talks, one can easily see if the speakers were crying for instance. However, before crying, people may have tears in the eyes and a broken voice while still speaking. This cannot easily be transcribed, even if it might affect the speaker's speech.

2.4. Method

For each research question that will be addressed, a specific procedure will be implemented.

Research question 1: Do the speakers of the selected TED talks use well-documented strategies to open and close their talk?

In order to answer this first research question, it will be necessary to identify *when* and *how* the openings and closings in the transcripts of the selected videos actually start and end. Some strategies may also be used in the rest of the openings and closings. Three main elements will be taken into consideration during this process. First, the discussion of the literature about openings and closings (cf. Chapter 1). Second, the contextual factors recorded in the transcripts (e.g. applause, laughter, pauses, the speaker's actions and gestures, stressed words, the visual aid and the videos shown during the presentations). As already explained, each factor may have an influence on when and how openings and closings start and end. Finally, the way the speakers deliver their speech will also be brought into focus: stammering, repetitions and rewordings may well reflect difficult transitions between different parts of the talk.

Research question 2: Do the speakers of the selected TED talks use other strategies than the ones outlined in the literature?

The findings from my analysis of the well-documented strategies used in the selected TED talks will be compared with new strategies that may be uncovered in the analysis using Table 2 and 3 below (cf. Chapter 3).

Openings
Anecdote
Question
Startling statement
Quote
Humour

Table 2: Well-documented opening strategies

Closings
Signal
Summary
Statement
Call to action
Joke
Hope for better future
Discourse markers
Benefits

Table 3: Well-documented closing strategies

Chapter 3: Analysis of the data

This last chapter deals with the analysis of the 40 TED talks and with the findings of the research. First, the whole identification process of the openings and closings of the selected TED talks will be explained. Second, two sets of criteria will summarise all of the strategies that have been used by the speakers, classifying them according to their degree of importance in the identification process. These two sets will include well-documented strategies as well as new techniques that will be uncovered. Next, the findings of the study will be quantitatively and qualitatively described and the two research questions will be answered. Finally, a part of this dissertation will be dedicated to the discussion of the results of the study and a general conclusion will be made.

3.1. Identifying the openings and closings

In this first section, I will describe and explain the identification process of the openings and closings in the selected TED talks. Examples will also be provided by means of illustration.

The identification process was made in two main steps. The first one was to determine exactly where the openings ended and where the closings started. It was decided earlier that the beginning of each talk corresponded to the beginning of the opening, and that the end of the transcripts corresponded to the end of the closing. The previous annotations and analyses made while preparing the transcripts (cf. examples in colour in section 2.3.2.) as well as Tables 2 and 3 provided useful information for the identification. Three main cases emerged.

3.1.1. Direct and easy identification

In a series of talks, determining where the opening ended or where the closing started was rather straightforward. One of the strategies outlined in the literature could usually clearly be identified and thus left no doubt. As can be observed in example (1) below, the signal strategy (cf. sentences underlined in blue) was generally chosen by the speaker and could be employed both in the opening and in the closing.

(1) Opening

“Thank you. I'm **ehm**, honored to be with you today for your commencement from one of the finest universities in the world. **[Short pause]** Truth be told, **ehm**, I never graduated from college and **ehm**, this is the closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation. **[Laughs]** **[Short pause]** **[Laughter]** Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories. **[End of the opening]”**

— *How to live before you die*, Steve Jobs

3.1.2. Hesitation between two possibilities

In some talks, I was able to find two to three possible solutions concerning the identification of the openings or the closings. In each case, I included the different possibilities in the transcript. It is only during the identification process that I decided whether or not these possibilities were to be considered, based on the sets of criteria that were made (cf. Figures 3 and 4).

(2) Closing

[Short pause] **[Laughter]** **[1) Beginning of the closing?]** By changing the message, we were able to provide an alternative narrative which promoted the rights of women in Libya. It's something that has now been replicated internationally, **[Short pause]** and while I am not saying it's easy — *believe me*, it's not. Liberals will say you're using religion and call you a bad conservative. Conservatives will call you a lot of colorful things. I've heard everything from, "Your parents must be extremely ashamed of you" — false; they're my biggest fans — to "You will not make it to your next birthday" — again wrong, because I did. **[Short pause]** And I remain **[Short pause]** a very strong believer that women's rights and religion are not mutually exclusive. **[Short pause]** **[2) Beginning of the closing?]** But we *have* to be at the table. **[Slide 11: drawing of people around a table]** We have to stop giving up our position, because by remaining silent, we allow for the continued persecution and abuse of women worldwide. **[Short pause]** By saying that we're going to fight for women's rights and fight extremism with bombs and warfare, we completely cripple local societies which need to address these issues **[Short pause]** so that they're sustainable. **[Long pause]** It is not easy, challenging distorted religious messaging. **[Short pause]** You will have your fair share of insults and ridicule and threats. But we have to do it. We have no other option than to reclaim the message of human rights, the principles of our faith, **[Short pause]** not for us, not for the women in your families, not for the women in this room, not even for the women out there, **[Short pause]** but for societies that would be *transformed* with the participation of women. And the only way we can do that, our only option, is to be, and remain, at the table. Thank you. **[Applause]”**

— *What my religion says about women*, Alaa Murabit

Regarding this talk, I finally chose the second solution because of a variety of criteria. Two of the used techniques especially drew my attention: the problem/solution strategy and the summary. As can be observed in the example above, the underlined sentence summarises the solution to the problem presented in the body of the talk (cf. TED talk 33 in the Appendix).

3.1.3. Difficult identification

In a third set of talks, the end of the opening and/or the beginning of the closing did not appear to be obvious during the preparation of the data. In this case, I did not attempt to find where the openings and closings were and I decided to proceed with the identification while doing my analyses later.

The second step in the identification process was to determine the strategies that had been used to open and close the selected TED talks. After identifying *where* openings and closings ended and started, I thus needed to determine *how* and with what strategy. In order to do so, I used Tables 2 and 3 (cf. section 2.4.) to help me identify the techniques that had been used. When needed, I also watched the corresponding video once again, especially to detect any non-verbal language element that I could have missed. I could also examine the transcripts, mostly to read the beginning or the end of the body of the talk to make connections between all the parts of the presentation. While doing so, I sometimes stumbled across new strategies that were not part of the previous research and that I needed to name. These can be found in Figures 3 and 4 and in Tables 6 and 7 (cf. section 3.2.2.).

The following figure illustrates what each of the identifications looked like. The whole document can be found in the Appendix.

Why veterans miss war

- Opening
- *I'm going to ask and try to answer an uncomfortable question* → **SIGNAL**
- *How is it someone can go through the worst experience imaginable, and come home, back to their home, and their family, their country, and miss the war? How does that work? What does it mean?* → **QUESTIONS**
- Long pause

I'm going to ask and try to answer, **ehm**, in some ways, **kind**, kind of an uncomfortable question. **Ehm**, both civilians, obviously, and soldiers suffer in war; I don't think any civilian has ever missed the war that they were subjected to. [Short pause] I've been covering wars for almost 20 years, and one of the remarkable things for me [Short pause] is how many soldiers find themselves missing it. How is it someone can go through the worst experience imaginable, and come home, back to their home, and their family, their country, [Short pause] and miss the war? How does that work? What does it mean? [End of the opening] [Long pause]

- Closing
- **DISCOURSE MARKER**
- Summarizes the answer to the question in the body → **SUMMARY**
- **END:** *Thank you very much*

[Beginning of the closing] So you think about Brendan, you think about all these soldiers [Short pause] having an experience like that, a bond like that, in a small group, where they loved 20 other people in some ways more than they loved themselves, you think about how *good* that would feel, imagine it, [Short pause] and they, **they are**, are blessed with that experience for a year, and then they come home, and they are [Hesitates] just back in society like the rest of us are, [Short pause] not knowing who they can count on, not knowing [Short pause] who loves them, who they can love, [Short pause] not knowing exactly what anyone they know would do for them if it came down to it. That is terrifying. [Short pause] Compared to that, [Short pause] **w-**, war, psychologically, in some ways, is easy, compared to that kind of alienation. That's why they miss it, and that's what we have to understand and in some ways fix in our society. [Short pause] Thank you very much. [Applause]

— *Why veterans miss war*, Sebastian Junger

Figure 2: Identification of the openings and closings

As can be observed above, for each TED talk, I attempted to determine every strategy used in the identified openings and closings, whether previously outlined in the literature or not. Each time I considered that a sentence, a speaker's action (e.g. when the speaker inhales loudly) or a reaction of the audience (e.g. applause) was relevant for the identification, I listed it just before the corresponding part of the transcript.

At the end of the identification process, I realised that the different identified strategies were not all significant for the identification of openings or closings. Some of them played an important role in the identification process and really enabled me to make decisions when I was hesitating between several possibilities, while others were less decisive but still turned out to weigh in with the analysis. Therefore, a set of criteria was made up. I classified these strategies into degrees varying according to their decisiveness and their importance in the identification process. Figures 3 and 4 illustrate these different degrees for the openings and for the closings.

Openings

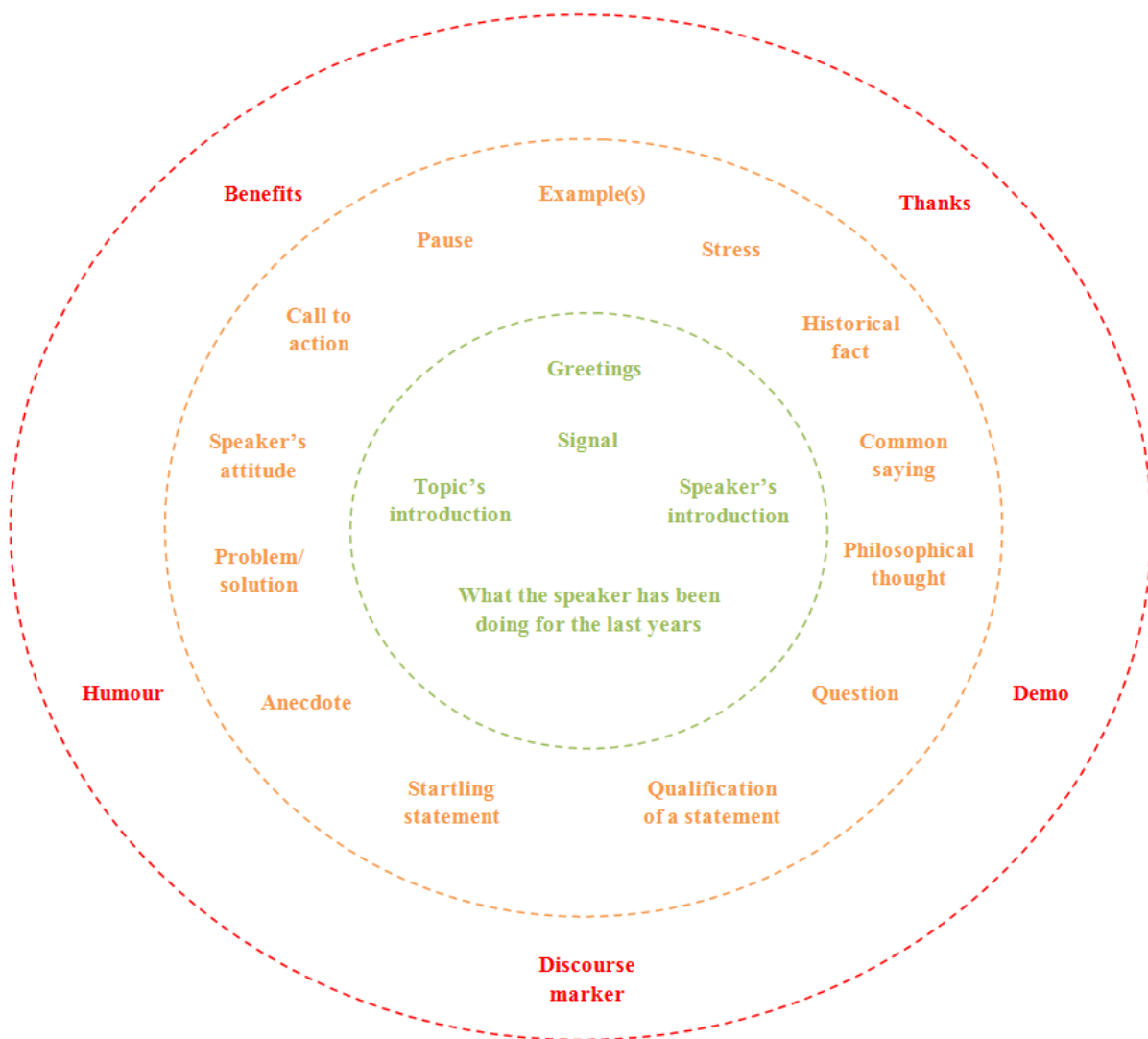


Figure 3: Set of criteria for the identification of openings

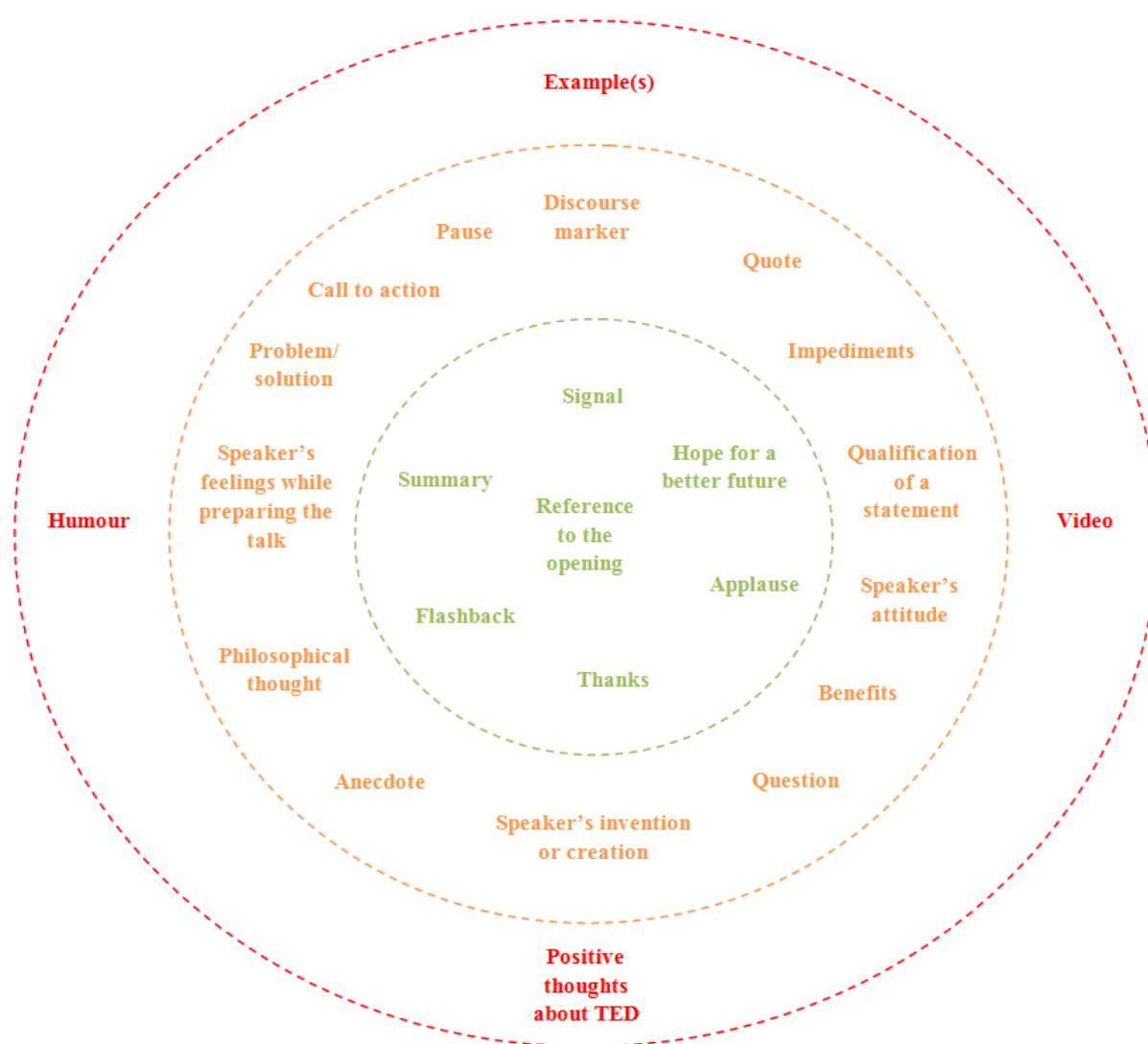


Figure 4: Set of criteria for the identification of closings

The inner circle consists of the criteria that I considered as highly decisive in the identification process. They played a very important role because they almost only occurred in openings or closings. As an example, a reference to the opening could be found in the closing of a series of talks (cf. phrase underlined in orange in example (3)). However, it does not mean that these strategies were frequently used by the speakers of the TED talks under study.

(3) *Closing*

“**[Beginning of the closing]** I think the important point here is *recognizing* that all of us are flawed. We all are going to fail now and then. **[Short pause]** The idea is to think ahead to what those failures might be, to put systems in place that will help minimize the damage, or to prevent the bad things from happening in the first place. Getting back to that snowy night in Montreal, when I got back from my trip, I had my contractor install a combination lock next to the door, with a key to the front door in it, an easy to remember combination. And I have to admit, I still have piles of mail that haven't **[Hesitates]** been sorted, and piles of emails that I haven't gone through. So I'm not completely organized, but I see organization as a gradual process, and I'm getting there. Thank you very much. **[Applause]**”

— *How to stay calm when you know you'll be stressed*, Daniel Levitin

In the talk mentioned above, the speaker started his presentation with a personal story about himself getting into a stressful situation in the middle of a cold winter's night in Montreal. After explaining the point of this anecdote in the body, he closed his talk by referring to the beginning of the presentation, which is a clear indicator that he was ending his speech.

The middle circle contains all of the criteria that could also occur in different parts of the talk and not specifically in openings or closings. However, when I stumbled across these strategies in the beginning or the end of the presentation, they still had an influence on the identification process and thus helped me make decisions. Example (4) below shows that the speaker used a philosophical thought to end the talk (cf. sentences underlined in orange).

(4) Closing

“**[Beginning of the closing]** I'm going to leave you with how we actually make it happen. **[Short pause]** The only way to get people to work on *big, risky* things — audacious ideas — *and* have them run at all the hardest parts of the problem *first*, is if you make that the path of least resistance for them. We work hard at X to make it safe to fail. Teams kill their ideas as soon as the evidence is on the table *because* they're rewarded for it. They get applause from their peers. Hugs and high fives from their manager, me in particular. **[Short pause]** They get promoted for it. We have bonused *every single person* on teams that ended their projects, from teams as small as two to teams of more than 30. We believe in dreams at the moonshot factory. But enthusiastic skepticism is not the enemy of boundless optimism. It's optimism's perfect partner. **[Short pause]** It *unlocks* the potential in every idea. **[Short pause]** We can create the future that's in our dreams. **[Short pause]** Thank you very much. **[Applause]**”

— *The unexpected benefits of celebrating failure*, Astro Teller

Finally, the outer circle consists of all the strategies that had no influence on the decision-making process.

(5) Opening

“There's a big question at the center of life in our democracies today: How do we fight terror without destroying democracies, without trampling human rights? I've spent much of my career working with journalists, with bloggers, with activists, with human rights researchers all around the world, and I've come to the conclusion that if our democratic societies do not double down on protecting and defending human rights, freedom of the press and a free and open internet, radical extremist ideologies are much more likely to persist. **[Long pause]** **[Applause]** OK, all done. Thank you very much. No, just joking. **[Short pause]** **[Laughs]** **[Laughter]** I actually want to drill down on this a little bit. **[End of the opening]** **[Short pause]**”

— *We can fight terror without sacrificing our rights*, Rebecca MacKinnon

As can be observed in the opening above (cf. sentences underlined in orange), the speaker decided to make use of humour. Nevertheless, this strategy did not allow me to determine where the opening ended. The technique that was determining in this case was the signal strategy, used in the last sentence (cf. sentence underlined in blue).

Figures 3 and 4 also reveal that a series of strategies can be found in a particular circle for openings, but in another in the case of closings. A striking example is the thanks. When TED speakers thanked the audience in their opening, there was no indication that this part of the talk was starting or coming to an end. Example (6) below illustrates this nicely (cf. phrase underlined in orange):

(6) Opening

“I'm Jessi, and this is my suitcase. **[Slide 1: picture of a person holding a bag]** But before I show you what I've got inside, I'm going to make a very public confession, and that is, I'm outfit-obsessed. **[Slide 2: 18 pictures of the speaker wearing different outfits]** I love finding, wearing, and more recently, **[Slide 2: the picture becomes smaller and appears as a screenshot of a blog]** photographing and blogging a different, colorful, crazy outfit for every single occasion. But I don't buy anything new. I get all my clothes secondhand from flea markets and thrift stores. **[Short pause] [Laughter]** Aww, thank you. **[Laughs] [Applause]** Secondhand shopping allows me to reduce the impact my wardrobe has on the environment and on my wallet. [...] **[End of the opening]**”

— *Wearing nothing new*, Jessi Arrington

However, when speakers thank the audience at the end of their closing, it clearly shows that they are ending their presentation (cf. phrase underlined in orange in example (7) below).

(7) Closing

[Beginning of the closing] So that is it. The book about it comes out in April. It's called "Drop Dead Healthy." **And**, and I hope that I don't get sick during the book tour. That's my greatest hope. So thank you very much. **[Applause]**

— *How healthy living nearly killed me*, A.J. Jacobs

3.2. Describing the openings and closings

In this section, the identified openings and closings will be examined quantitatively and qualitatively. First, a quantitative description of the opening and closings will be provided. Next, I will attempt to answer my two research questions (cf. section 2.2.) and describe the different opening and closing strategies, either well-documented or new, that have been identified. Finally, the findings of my analysis will be discussed.

3.2.1. Quantitative analysis

To begin with, the number of words per openings and closings will be illustrated thanks to the two following figures. Next, these numbers will be compared with the total number of words of the whole talks and they will be examined.

Openings

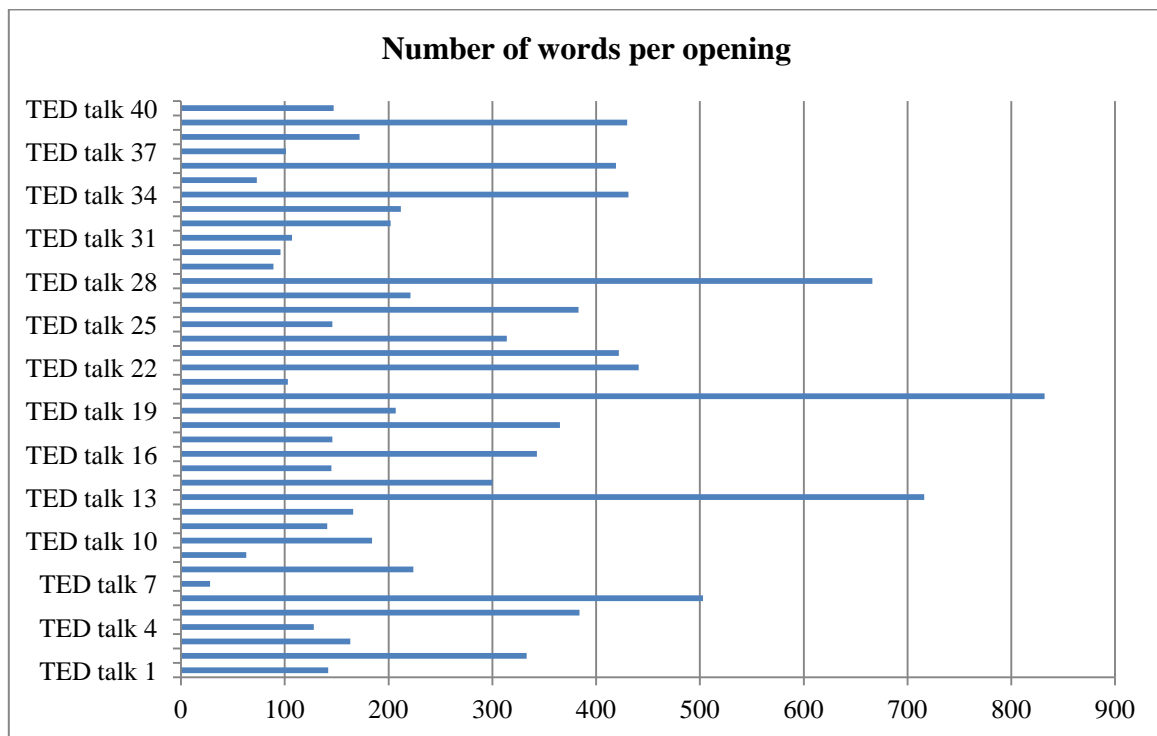


Figure 5: Number of words per opening

The above figure shows that the number of words in the selected talks' openings tends to vary considerably, ranging from 28 (cf. TED talk 7) to 832 (cf. TED talk 20). If one does the maths, an average opening contains approximately 267 words (cf. Appendix).

If we have a look at Table 1, TED talk 7, *How healthy living nearly killed me* by A.J. Jacobs, is no doubt one of the shortest talks with 1341 words, lasting eight minutes and 17 seconds. However, other talks are by far shorter in terms of number of words, while consisting an opening containing more words, namely *Try something new for 30 days* by Matt Cutts. This talk only contains 470 words in total and lasts no more than three minutes. Though, its opening contains 89 words, compared to 28.

The same goes for *Poverty, money and love* by Jessica Jackley, the talk consisting of the highest number of words, namely 3778, and the longest opening containing 832 words. This talk only lasts 17 minutes and 51 seconds, whereas a series of other talks last longer, such as *Your body language shapes who you are* by Amy Cuddy. Lasting exactly 20 minutes and 29 seconds, this talk contains slightly less words than Jessica Jackley's, namely 3763. But the total of this talk's opening only amounts to 216 words.

Closings

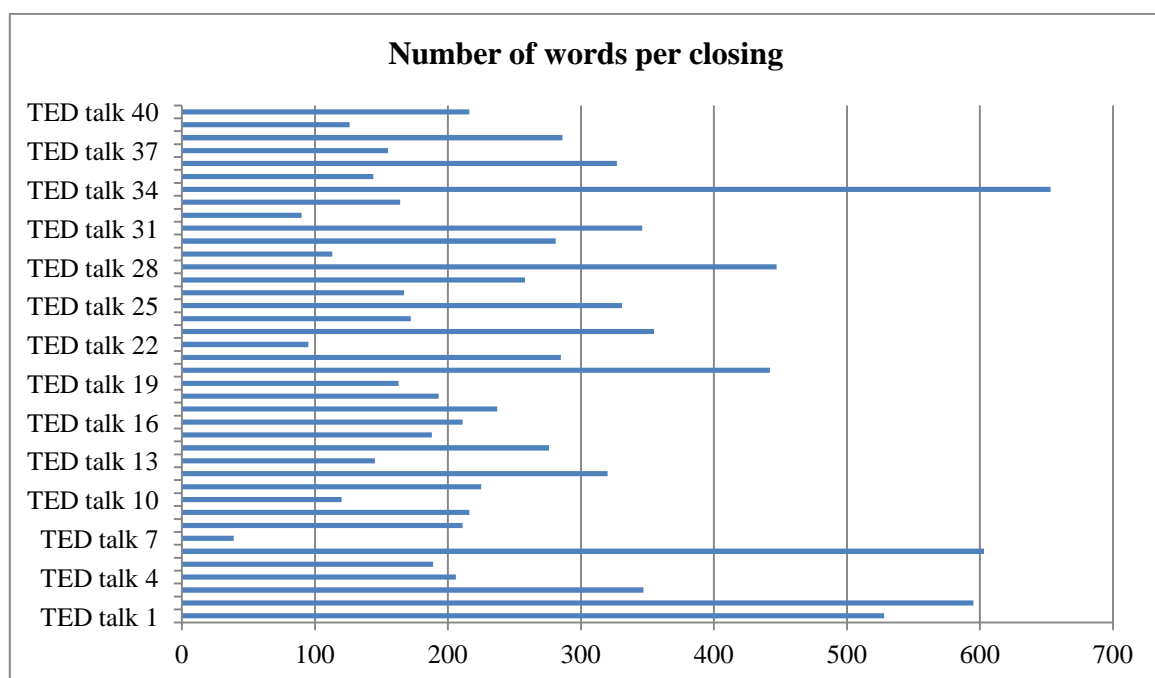


Figure 6: Number of words per closing

Regarding the closings, it can be seen in the above figure that the variation in the number of words is similar to the openings, what is quite striking. This said, the numbers are slightly different in this case with the shortest closing containing 39 words

(cf. TED talk 7), and the longest one containing 653 words (cf. TED talk 34). On average, a typical closing thus contains more or less 262 words (cf. Appendix).

As for the openings, *How healthy living nearly killed me* by A.J. Jacobs consists of the shortest closing. But the shortest talk of the selection, *Try something new for 30 days* by Matt Cutts, consists of a closing containing 113 words compared to 39. Regarding the talk entitled *Poverty, money and love* by Jessica Jackley, the total number of words in the closing amounts to 442.

We can thus see that there is no defined pattern in the number of words in openings and closings. Taking into account that the average number of words per talk amounts to 1953 and that an average talk lasts 12 minutes and 35 seconds, openings and closings respectively account for 14,91% and 14,25% of the entire presentation (cf. Appendix). Interestingly, despite the wide variation in the number of words, openings and closings tend to be of equal length on average. However, although one could think that the shortest a talk is, the shortest the opening and closing will be and vice versa, it can be concluded that the duration of the talk has no influence on the number of words in openings and closings or in the entire presentation.

3.2.2. *Qualitative analysis*

In this section, I will attempt to answer my two research questions and I will discuss the findings of the study. By way of illustration, tables and figures will be included in the analysis.

Research question 1: Do the speakers of the selected TED talks use well-documented strategies to open and close their talk?

In order to answer this first research question, I used Tables 2 and 3 (cf. section 2.4.) as a basis to create two new tables (cf. Tables 4 and 5): one for the well-documented opening strategies and the other for the well-documented closing strategies. In both tables, I entered the 40 selected TED talks and I filled them whenever a well-documented strategy occurred in a talk.

Openings

OPENINGS	TED Talk 1	TED Talk 2	TED Talk 3	TED Talk 4	TED Talk 5	TED Talk 6	TED Talk 7	TED Talk 8	TED Talk 9	TED Talk 10	TED Talk 11	TED Talk 12	TED Talk 13	TED Talk 14	TED Talk 15	TED Talk 16	TED Talk 17	TED Talk 18	TED Talk 19	TED Talk 20	TED Talk 21	TED Talk 22	TED Talk 23	TED Talk 24	TED Talk 25	TED Talk 26	TED Talk 27	TED Talk 28	TED Talk 29	TED Talk 30	TED Talk 31	TED Talk 32	TED Talk 33	TED Talk 34	TED Talk 35	TED Talk 36	TED Talk 37	TED Talk 38	TED Talk 39	TED Talk 40		
Anecdote		✓			✓	✓			✓		✓					✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓						
Question					✓					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓								✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Startling statement	✓									✓				✓		✓		✓				✓								✓	✓		✓	✓		✓				✓		
Quote																																										
Humour		✓																				✓									✓									✓		
Other	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 4: Well-documented opening strategies used in the selected TED talks

As can be observed in Table 4, some well-documented strategies were frequently used by TED speakers in their opening, while some others were barely or never used at all. One can also notice that all speakers employed one or several new strategies while opening their presentation (cf. last line in grey). These will be discussed in Table 6.

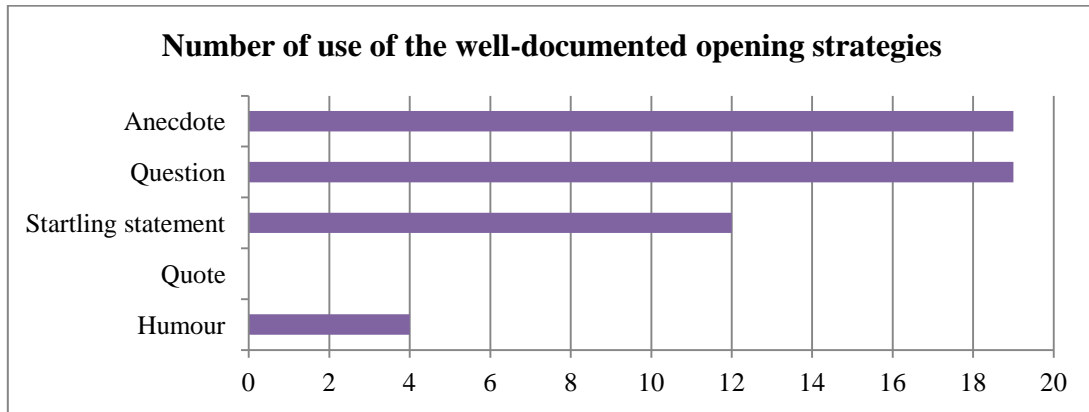


Figure 7: Number of use of the well-documented opening strategies

Figure 7 reveals that in total, four out of the five common opening strategies outlined in the literature were employed: 19 anecdotes, 19 questions, 12 startling statements, no quotes and four touches of humour. It shows us that anecdotes and questions appear to be popular strategies to use among TED speakers since almost half of them employed these techniques. However, it may seem surprising that no quote was used whereas it is a technique that was often presented as effective in the literature.

Table 4 allows us to see that most TED speakers tended to combine several strategies in their openings, either well-documented or new. This clustering is particularly interesting because the literature often presents opening strategies as techniques that should be used on their own. Speakers are generally invited to choose one technique among the most common strategies presented in books and articles dedicated to the subject. In spite of that, during this study, I found out that between one and three well-documented strategies could be used in the same opening. In total, out of 40 talks, six speakers used no common strategy discussed in the literature (but definitely used new ones), 19 speakers only used one, 10 speakers used two and five speakers used three, as shown in Figure 8.

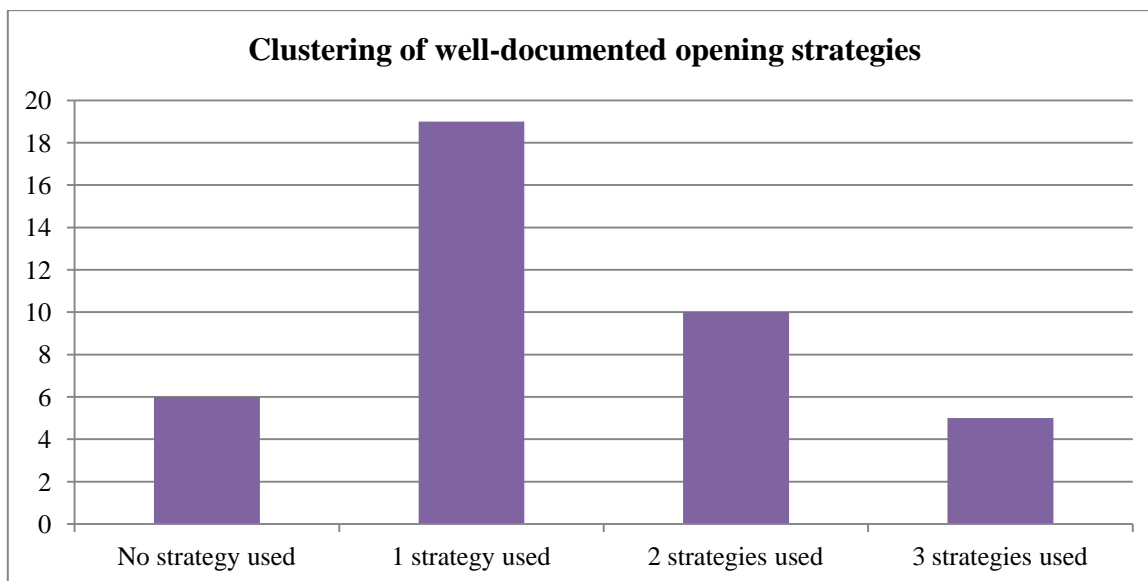


Figure 8: Clustering of well-documented opening strategies

The different strategies that are used by TED speakers all have a particular role to play in the presentation, which could explain the clustering. As mentioned in Chapter 1, anecdotes are generally chosen in order to build a relationship between the speaker and the audience. Personal stories seem to work even better since they make people feel more connected to the speaker. This strategy appears to be most chosen one to be used on its own, with a total of eight speakers opting for only a story to start their talk with (e.g. TED talk 6).

The second most frequently used well-documented opening technique is the question. Speakers seem to be willing to engage the audience and to create an interaction with people by asking a direct question. Some may use a rhetorical question instead, creating a knowledge gap between them and the audience. With this technique, speakers do not appear to be looking for an interaction with people, but rather to make the audience think about the topic of the presentation. In total, seven speakers decided to only use a question as well-documented opening strategy (e.g. TED talk 37) and eight chose to combine it with an anecdote (e.g. TED talk 17).

Thirdly, startling statements seem to be used for the same reason as the rhetorical question; creating a knowledge gap and providing the audience with food for thought. Three speakers made use of that single technique. Interestingly, although the roles of these strategies appear to be quite similar, more speakers decided to combine a startling statement with a question rather than with an anecdote, as in TED talk 10.

Finally, humour aims to put people at ease and was used 4 times, as in TED talk 31. It was always combined with other strategies, mostly startling statements. As explained in Chapter 1, this is quite a risky strategy though, which could explain that few speakers employed it.

Example 8 below clearly shows that the speaker combined three strategies (cf. phrases underlined in orange): signals (1), questions (2) and a startling statement (3).

(8) *Opening*

Good morning everybody. I'd like to talk about a couple of things today. Ehm, but the first thing is water⁽¹⁾. Now I see you've all been enjoying the water that's been provided for you here at the conference, over the past couple of days. And I'm sure you'll feel that it's from a safe source. But what if it wasn't? [Slide 1: picture of a black child taking water on the ground] What if it was from a source like this?⁽²⁾ [Short pause] Then statistics would actually say that half of you would now be suffering with diarrhea. [Short pause] I talked a lot in the past about statistics, and the provision of safe drinking water for all. But they just don't seem to get through. And I think I've worked out why. It's because, using current thinking, the scale of the problem just seems *too huge* to contemplate solving. So we just switch off: us, governments and aid agencies. [Short pause] [Slide 2: picture of somebody drinking filthy water] Well, today, I'd like to show you⁽¹⁾ that through thinking differently, [Slide 3: picture of a tool used to clean water, and a glass of water] the problem *has been solved*. [Short pause] By the way, since I've been speaking, another 13,000 people around the world are suffering now with diarrhea. And four children have just died⁽³⁾. [End of the opening] [Short pause]

— *How to make filthy water drinkable*, Michael Pritchard

Closings

CLOSINGS	TED Talk 1	TED Talk 2	TED Talk 3	TED Talk 4	TED Talk 5	TED Talk 6	TED Talk 7	TED Talk 8	TED Talk 9	TED Talk 10	TED Talk 11	TED Talk 12	TED Talk 13	TED Talk 14	TED Talk 15	TED Talk 16	TED Talk 17	TED Talk 18	TED Talk 19	TED Talk 20	TED Talk 21	TED Talk 22	TED Talk 23	TED Talk 24	TED Talk 25	TED Talk 26	TED Talk 27	TED Talk 28	TED Talk 29	TED Talk 30	TED Talk 31	TED Talk 32	TED Talk 33	TED Talk 34	TED Talk 35	TED Talk 36	TED Talk 37	TED Talk 38	TED Talk 39	TED Talk 40	
Signal	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓				✓	✓		✓			✓									✓	✓	
Summary	✓		✓		✓	✓					✓		✓	✓					✓							✓	✓								✓	✓			✓		
Statement												✓				✓																				✓					
Call to action	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓				✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	
Joke							✓																																		
Hope for better future		✓	✓	✓	✓					✓					✓		✓		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓					✓
Discourse marker	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓					✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Benefits												✓														✓													✓		
Other	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 5: Well-documented closing strategies used in the selected TED talks

Table 5 also depicts that some well-documented strategies are frequently used in a series of TED talks' closing, compared to others which are hardly used. As for opening strategies, all speakers used one or several new strategies while opening their presentation (cf. last line in grey). These will be discussed in Table 7.

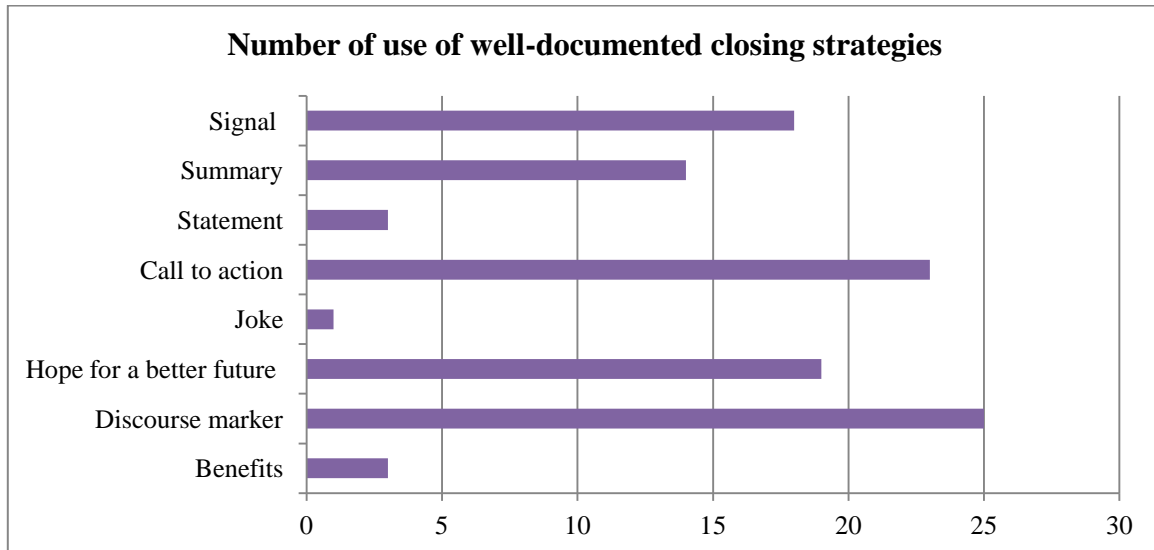


Figure 9: Number of use of the well-documented closing strategies

Figure 9 reveals how many times well-documented closing techniques were used. As can be observed, all of the eight common closing strategies outlined in the literature were employed: 18 signals, 14 summaries, three statements, 23 calls to action, one joke, 19 hopes for a better future, 25 discourse markers and three benefits. It shows us that the use of discourse markers appears to be the most popular strategy to use among TED speakers, followed closely by calls to action, signals and hope for a better future. However, only one joke was made, which could seem surprising since this technique was presented as, although risky, quite effective to make the audience remember the main message of the presentation. Benefits and statements also appear to be rarely used.

Again, thanks to Table 5, we can see that most speakers tended to combine several strategies in their closing. Unlike openings, the literature sometimes states that closing strategies may be combined in order to create a memorable closing. In Figure 10, we can notice that most speakers generally tended to use three well-documented strategies at the same time.

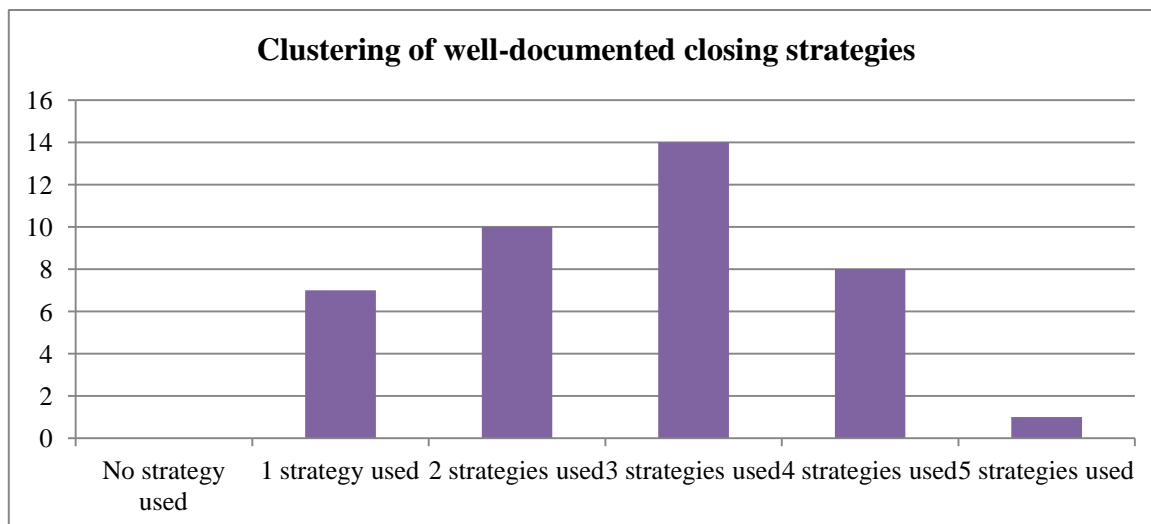


Figure 10: Clustering of well-documented closing strategies

As for the openings, TED speakers definitely employed certain types of strategies for a specific purpose. Regarding the most popular strategy, discourse markers' purpose is generally to indicate people that something important is about to be said. This strategy tends to make the audience pay more attention to the presentation as it signals that the speaker is about to say something interesting: a summary, a conclusion, etc. But as discourse markers generally consist of one or two words, they are always combined with other, more specific strategies.

Second, calls to action are no doubt a technique used to get the audience involved and to encourage people to take action. But this strategy alone may not always be sufficient to indicate the audience that the presentation is coming to an end, and is thus commonly combined with a variety of other techniques. A good example is the signal strategy, used 10 times in combination with a call to action (e.g. TED talk 1).

Offering hope for a better future aims to convey a positive message as well as inspiring the audience. This may also lead people to take action in the future if they have the feeling that what they are doing will have a positive impact. This strategy is, for its part, never used on its own, as in TED talk 3, it is combined with three other well-documented closing techniques and some other new strategies.

As its name suggests, the signal strategy is also used to make the audience more alert to what the speaker is saying and to make sure that people follow the presentation. One can thus notice that speakers tend to signal that they are going to close their presentation before using other varied strategies (e.g. TED talk 39).

Summaries seem to be used quite often by TED speakers in order to allow the audience to remember the main points of the presentation. Never used on its own, this strategy may not be sufficient to signal people that the talk is coming to an end. A good example of summary can be found in TED talk 11.

Finally, statements, benefits and jokes appear to be little used. Surprisingly, statements seem to be preferably used as opening strategy rather than as part of the closing. Moreover, humour and the use of a joke are not used often, neither in the opening nor in the closing. It appears to be quite an unpopular well-documented strategy among TED speakers.

A striking example of clustering in closings can be observed below. This talk's speaker combined 3 well-documented strategies (cf. sentences underlined in orange): discourse markers (1), summary (2) and a call to action (3).

(9) *Closing*

[Beginning of the closing] So⁽¹⁾, in each case, it was anger, it began from anger, turned into idea, and action. [Short pause] So anger, what next? Idea, and [Short pause] [Audience: "Action"] Anger, idea, action⁽²⁾. Which I tried to do. [Short pause] Anger is a power, anger is an energy, and the law of nature is that energy can never be created and never be vanished, [Short pause] can never be destroyed. So why can't the energy of anger [Unclear] be translated or [Unclear] translated and harnessed to create a better and beautiful world, more just and equitable world? Anger is within each one of you, and [Short pause] I will share a secret for a few seconds: that if we are confined in the narrow shells of egos, and the circles of [Short pause] selfishness, then the anger turn out to be hatred, violence, revenge, destruction. But if we are able to break the circles, then the same anger could turn into a great power. We can break the circles by using **of** our inherent compassion and connect with the world through compassion to make this world better. That same anger could be transformed into it. So dear friends, sisters and brothers, again, as a Nobel Laureate, I am urging you to become angry. [Short pause] [Laughter] I am urging you to become angry. [Short pause] And the angriest among us is the one who can transform his anger into idea and action⁽³⁾. [Short pause] Thank you so much. **Thank you.** [Applause]

— *How to make peace, get angry*, Kailash Satyarthi

Answer to the first research question

After having analysed the well-documented techniques used in openings and closings in the selected TED talks, it appeared that a series of opening and closing strategies outlined in the literature were frequently implemented by TED speakers, whereas others turned out to be quite unpopular.

Regarding openings, anecdotes and questions seem to be the most chosen techniques in order to open a talk. They are both strategies that are frequently presented in the literature as highly effective, which coincides with the findings. However, it may seem surprising that the quote, although frequently mentioned as an efficient strategy too, is actually little used by the speakers of the selected TED talks. As far as closings are concerned, four well-documented strategies were widely employed by speakers: discourse markers, calls to action, hope for a better future and signals. Contrary to openings, statements do not seem to be a popular technique to close a talk. However, both in openings and closings, speakers used little humour, presented as a risky strategy in the literature.

In the one and the other openings and closings, an interesting phenomenon could be observed: clustering. This combination of several strategies reveals that speakers tended to look for techniques fulfilling a variety of different purposes: building a relationship with the audience, creating an interaction or providing people with food for thought. Besides, it could be noticed that some strategies fulfilling one same purpose were used at the same time (e.g. a startling statement with a rhetorical question). One second reason for clustering could be that some speakers intend to make an impact and thus emphasize their point, choosing to use several strategies with the same purpose. It also appears that some of the common well-documented strategies are not always sufficient to indicate the end of the opening or the beginning of the closing, when used on their own (e.g. calls to action). This may thus be a third reason why TED speakers tend to use several techniques in their openings and closings.

Tables 4 and 5 clearly depict that TED speakers tended to use more well-documented closing than opening strategies. As can be observed in Figures 8 and 10, most speakers seemed to prefer using only one well-documented strategy to open their talk, whereas they generally tended to combine three techniques in their closing on average. In total, only five speakers used one well-documented strategy to close their presentation.

Finally, it can be observed that all speakers used new strategies, either combined with a well-documented technique or not. Interestingly, it appears that the common opening and closing strategies discussed in the literature are generally not sufficient to open and close a talk in a memorable way, according to the speakers of the selected TED talks. In the next section of this study, these new strategies will be presented and explored.

Research question 2: Do the speakers of the selected TED talks use other strategies than the ones outlined in the literature?

This second research question will be answered the same way as the first one. Two new tables will be included (cf. Tables 6 and 7), presenting the new opening and closing strategies used in the selected TED talks. It may occur that some well-documented opening techniques turn out to be used for closings and vice-versa; these strategies will still be considered as new since they will be used in another way than the one outlined in the literature. In the presentation of the analysis, graphs will be used by means of illustration.

Openings

OPENINGS	TED Talk 1	TED Talk 2	TED Talk 3	TED Talk 4	TED Talk 5	TED Talk 6	TED Talk 7	TED Talk 8	TED Talk 9	TED Talk 10	TED Talk 11	TED Talk 12	TED Talk 13	TED Talk 14	TED Talk 15	TED Talk 16	TED Talk 17	TED Talk 18	TED Talk 19	TED Talk 20	TED Talk 21	TED Talk 22	TED Talk 23	TED Talk 24	TED Talk 25	TED Talk 26	TED Talk 27	TED Talk 28	TED Talk 29	TED Talk 30	TED Talk 31	TED Talk 32	TED Talk 33	TED Talk 34	TED Talk 35	TED Talk 36	TED Talk 37	TED Talk 38	TED Talk 39	TED Talk 40		
Speaker's actions and gestures		√																√																								
Benefits																													√			√										
Call to action												√				√																			√							√
Common saying																																							√			
Demo																		√					√																			
Discourse marker		√		√	√	√				√			√					√	√	√	√		√	√		√		√	√				√	√	√		√			√	√	
Example(s)					√						√																															
Greetings										√								√																								
Historical fact																						√				√																
Speaker's intro-duction		√		√								√						√	√			√		√		√							√	√		√						

[illegible]

Table 6 gives an overview of the new opening strategies that have been uncovered during the analysis. Just as for the well-documented strategies, it can also be observed that a series of techniques seem to be quite popular whereas other were barely used. The four lines in green represent the interesting use of new opening strategies which are presented in the literature as common closing techniques. Two of them, the use of a discourse marker and the signal strategy, appear to have been chosen by a large amount of speakers.

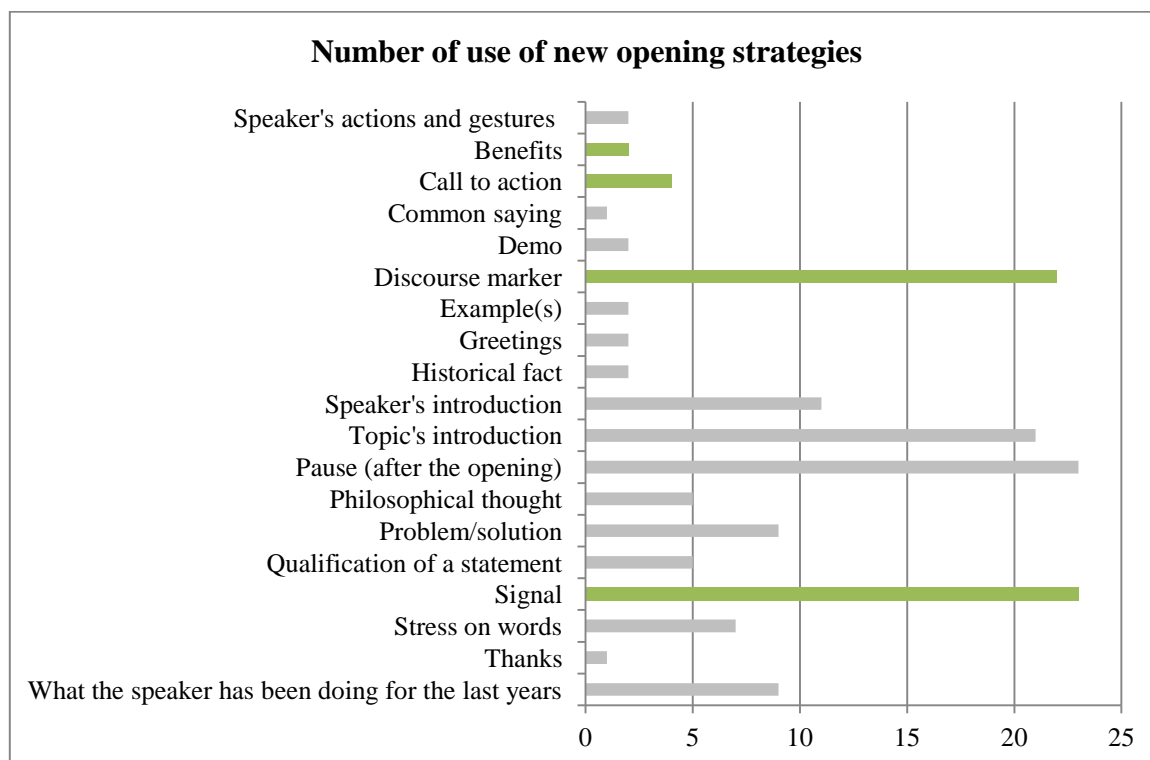


Figure 11: Number of use of new opening strategies

In the above figure, we can see how many times new opening strategies were employed. Four out of the 19 techniques stand out of the table, two of which are well-documented closing strategies (cf. strategies in green). In total, 23 signals and pauses after the opening, 21 discourse markers and introductions of the topic of the presentation were used. The speakers introduced themselves at the beginning of their talk 11 times. The problem/solution strategy and the explanation of what the speaker has been doing for the last years are both used in almost one quarter of the times, and the other techniques seem to be less popular among TED speakers. Benefits and calls to action, two other well-documented closing strategies, appear to be used a little in openings though.

Finally, common sayings and thanks at the beginning of the presentation were chosen only one time and do not seem to be effective or popular strategies to use to open a talk.

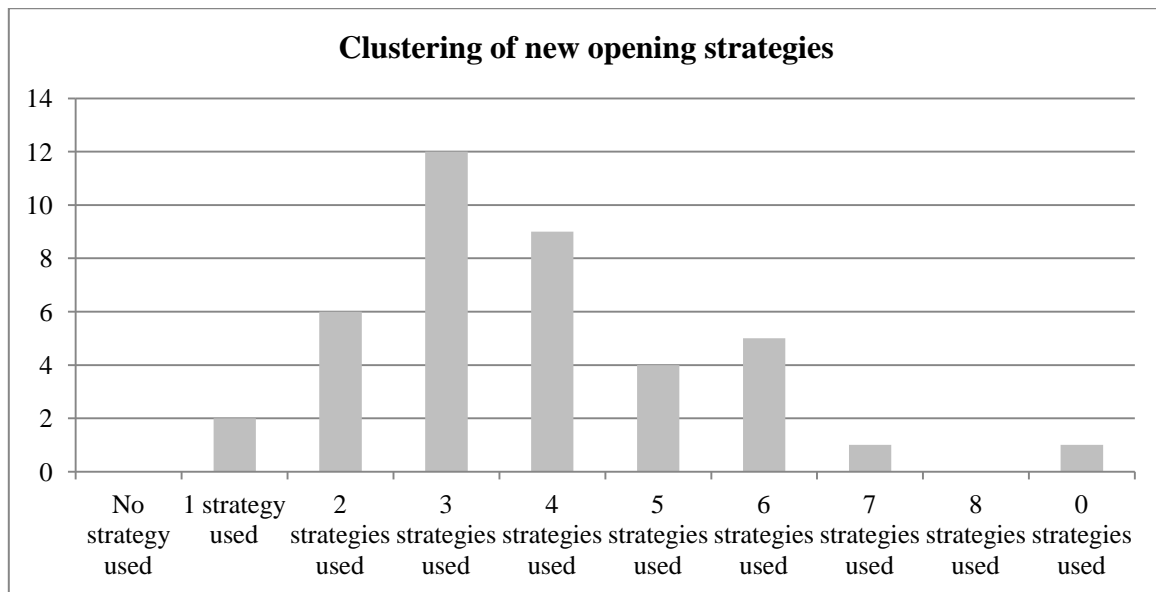


Figure 12: Clustering of new opening strategies

Figure 12 clearly depicts that speakers also tended to combine several new opening strategies, three or four in most cases. As for the common well-documented techniques, these new ways of opening a presentation all have a particular purpose.

The most used strategies are the signal and the use of discourse markers. The former strategy is employed to indicate that something important is going to be said in what follows. It is generally combined with other strategies, although it can be noticed that TED talk 30 is the only presentation in which the signal strategy is the only new technique that is used. Discourse markers have a similar purpose. Interestingly, they are used with the signal strategy in 11 cases. It can also be observed that there are in total 21 inferential markers that are used in openings, whereas these words are defined as expressions signalling a conclusion (cf. Chapter 1). We can assume that speakers may intend to grab the audience's attention after expending on a particular subject in their opening, and that they want to indicate that something important is going to be said. Examples could be to signal a sudden change of situation in an anecdote (e.g. TED talk 2), to come back to the topic of the presentation after an anecdote (e.g. TED talk 13), to answer a rhetorical question (e.g. TED talk 10), etc.

Pauses are also a non vocal manner to signal something to the audience. Although pauses may be used in every part of the talk for different purposes, pausing at the end of an opening usually indicates that the speaker is going to start another part of their presentation. It can sometimes also occur in order to make a strong impression on what has just been said. When the speaker makes a lot of short pauses in their speech, longer pauses are generally used to fulfil the signalling purpose, as in TED talk 37.

A last way to indicate something important to the audience is to stress specific words in order to emphasize them. By doing this, speakers highlight some pieces of information they want people to remember or pay attention to. This can be observed in TED talk 5 for instance.

Some techniques also appear to be used to build a relationship with the audience. One speaker used a common saying to start her talk because it is a phrase that most people have already heard, including the speaker herself (cf. TED talk 38). By using it, she managed to put the audience and herself on an equal foot. Greetings and thanks were also used a few times, allowing the speaker to be polite and to talk directly to the audience by thanking people to be present or juts by saying hello. Finally, the problem/solution strategy is used by speakers to introduce a particular problem to the audience. This problem may be personal to some people, or concern the entire society. The aim of the strategy is thus to address this problem and to provide the audience with possible solutions (either introduced in the opening, either summarised in the closing, but generally developed in the body), while building a relationship with them at the same time.

This problem/solution strategy also has another purpose: it makes the presentation more concrete and it gives credibility to the speaker. Presenting actual solutions to people enables them to understand the matter at hand better and to consider the speaker as trustworthy and skilful. They are thus more likely to follow the speaker's advice. The benefits strategy and the use of concrete examples to illustrate the talk have similar purposes. However, it may happen that some speakers qualify a solution or a benefit they have just given (e.g. TED talk 4). It proves the audience that speakers stay realistic, enabling them to be seen as credible and human. Moreover, when speakers introduce themselves and what they have been doing for the last years, they also establish a

relation of trust with the audience. It enables people to perceive their message as worth listening to and to perceive speakers as professional and skilled.

As already mentioned before (cf. research question 1), calls to action aim to engage the audience and encourage them to take action. Similarly, the use of a philosophical thought allows people to think about a subject and provides them with food for thought.

A demonstration at the beginning of a talk is also a great way to make the message of the presentation meaningful and concrete. It gives life to the speech and also attracts people's attention.

Finally, the speaker's actions and gestures may fulfil a similar purpose to a demonstration, but can also sometimes indicate the end of the opening or that something important is going to be said. In TED talk 2, the speaker finishes her opening by inhaling loudly and sitting down, signalling that she is about to start the body of her presentation. This also made her appear more human because her attitude could convey specific emotions (e.g. the difficulty to speak on a particular topic).

In the example below, one can find an example of clustering of new strategies in openings (cf. sentences underlined in orange and in square brackets): philosophical thought (1), pause after the opening (2).

(10) Opening

If your life were a book [Short pause] and you were the author,
how would you want your story to go?⁽¹⁾ [Short pause] That's the
question that changed my life forever. Growing up in the hot Las
Vegas desert, all I wanted was to be free. I would daydream about
travelling the world, living in a place where it snowed, and I would
picture all of the stories [Slide 1: picture of a child] that I would
go on to tell. [Slide 2: picture of a young woman] At the age of
19, the day after I graduated high school, I moved to a place where
it snowed and I became a massage therapist. With this job all I
needed were my hands and my massage table by my side and I
could go anywhere. For the first time in my life, I felt free,
independent and *completely* in control of my life. [Short pause]
That is, until my life took a detour. [Short pause]⁽²⁾ [End of the
opening]

— *Living beyond limits*, Amy Purdy

Closings

CLOSINGS	TED Talk 1	TED Talk 2	TED Talk 3	TED Talk 4	TED Talk 5	TED Talk 6	TED Talk 7	TED Talk 8	TED Talk 9	TED Talk 10	TED Talk 11	TED Talk 12	TED Talk 13	TED Talk 14	TED Talk 15	TED Talk 16	TED Talk 17	TED Talk 18	TED Talk 19	TED Talk 20	TED Talk 21	TED Talk 22	TED Talk 23	TED Talk 24	TED Talk 25	TED Talk 26	TED Talk 27	TED Talk 28	TED Talk 29	TED Talk 30	TED Talk 31	TED Talk 32	TED Talk 33	TED Talk 34	TED Talk 35	TED Talk 36	TED Talk 37	TED Talk 38	TED Talk 39	TED Talk 40			
Anecdote						✓			✓																				✓														
Applause (at the end of the closing)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Speaker’s actions and gestures		✓																				✓			✓			✓															
Example(s)						✓						✓																✓						✓						✓			
Speakers’ feelings while preparing the talk																		✓																									
Flashback									✓								✓	✓																									
Impediment	✓									✓										✓				✓							✓	✓		✓	✓								
Speakers’ invention/ creation							✓																									✓											

Pause (before the closing)		√	√		√				√			√		√	√	√			√	√		√	√	√				√	√	√	√		√		
Philo- sophical thought		√										√	√			√	√		√			√						√						√	√
Positive thoughts about TED					√											√		√																	
Problem/ solution	√		√						√				√	√	√			√					√					√					√	√	
Qualifica- tion of a statement							√																												
Question					√					√			√		√								√	√								√		√	
Quote		√						√																			√								
Reference to the opening	√	√			√	√				√		√				√			√				√				√							√	
Thanks (at the end of the closing)	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Video													√									√													

Table 7: New closing strategies and factors used in the selected TED talks

In Table 7, we can clearly see that two out of the 18 new closing strategies are almost always used by the speakers. Regarding the rest of the techniques, it can be noticed that few of them are used on a regular basis, but that quite a lot of strategies are employed at the same time. Figure 13 below confirms this observation.

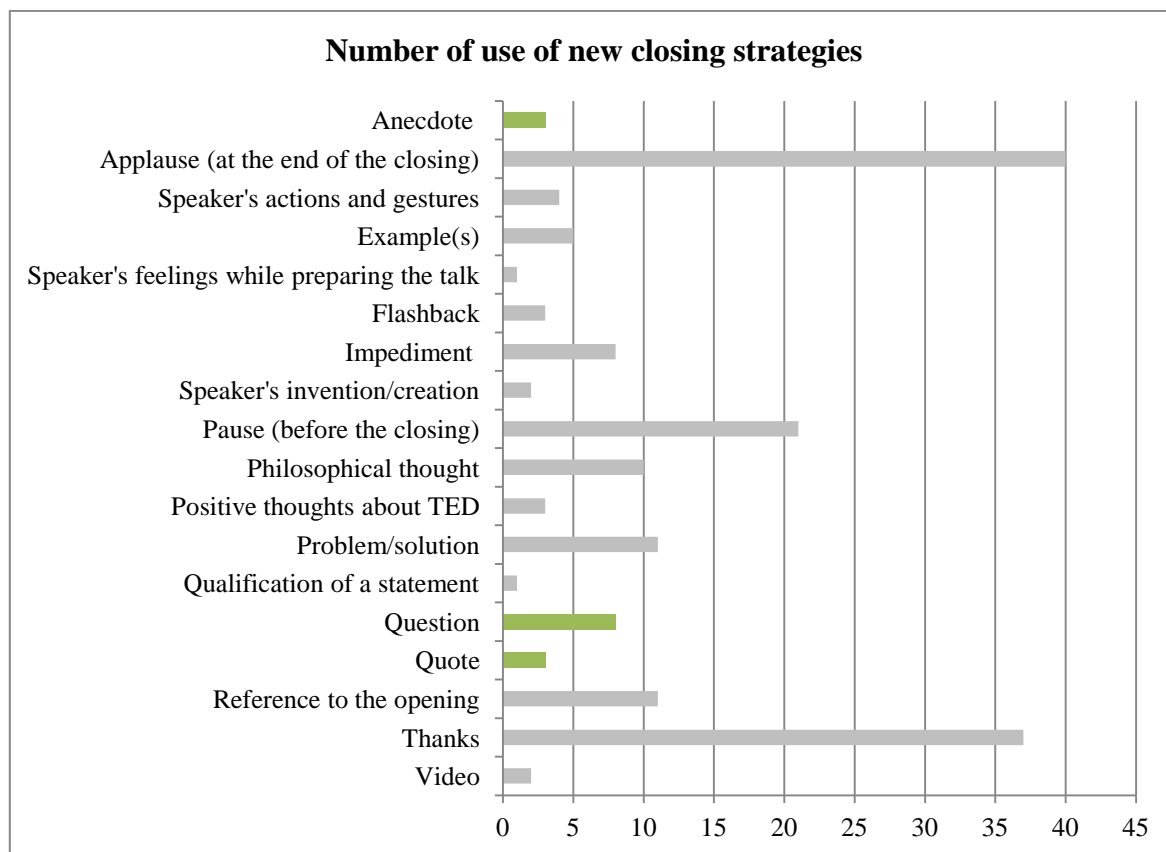


Figure 13: Number of use of new closing strategies

The figure above depicts that three well-documented opening strategies were used in some closings, although in a small amount. Questions were used eight times and by contrast, anecdotes and quotes were employed three times. Interestingly, one can notice that no quote was used in the openings of the selected TED talks whereas three speakers decided to use this common opening strategy in their closing. In the end, it seems that well-documented opening techniques are quite unpopular to be used in closings.

Thanks and applause both appear to be frequently used strategies. Although the latter technique is not a strategy intended by speaker themselves, it always occurs at the end of a talk and can generally be linked to the thanks. Surprisingly, these are not always said by speakers at the end of their presentation.

Finally, pauses before the closing also seem to be quite popular, with 21 occurrences.

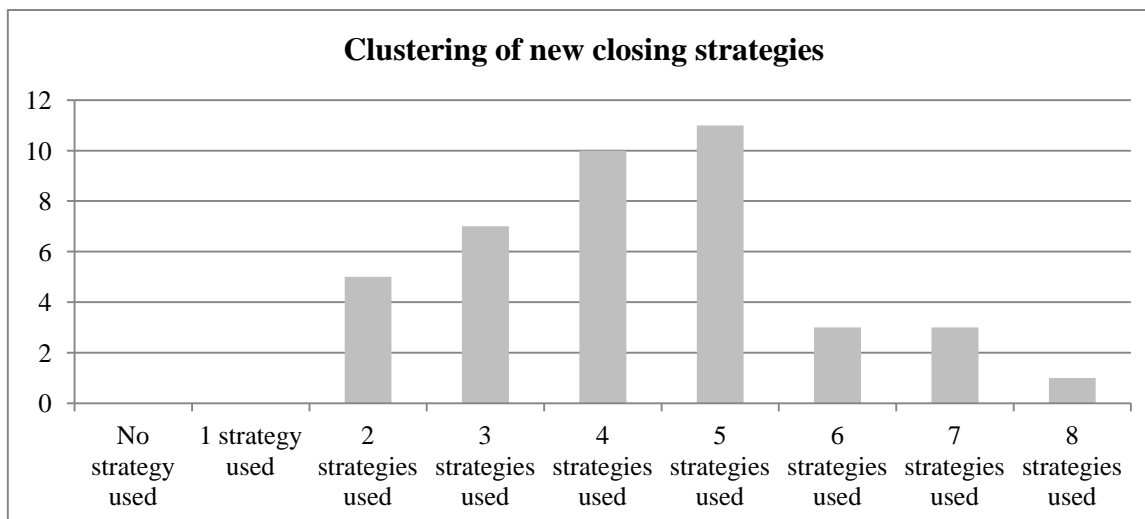


Figure 14: Clustering of new closing strategies

Figure 14 depicts that most speakers decided to use between four and five new closing strategies at the same time. As already explained, applause and thanks go hand in hand, the former generally resulting from the latter. Thanks are a strategy that was used by 37 speakers in order to indicate the end of the closing and also to be polite and thank the audience for their attention. This is surprising because it appears to be TED's trademark to end a talk. The remaining three speakers chose to finish their presentation with either "Okay" (cf. TED talk 8), a video (cf. TED talk 27) or a wave (cf. TED talk 28). Opposite to thanks, pausing just before a closing indicates its beginning.

Interestingly, anecdotes, a popular common opening strategy, were used in three talks whereas this technique was also used in the opening. However, it seems that each time, the anecdote used in the closing was neither linked nor resulting from the one told in the opening (e.g. TED talk 6). Nevertheless, it is a strategy which, as mentioned before (cf. research question 1), aims to build a relationship with the audience by telling them a story. Another technique serving the same purpose is the speaker's feelings while preparing the talk. By telling how they felt, speakers confided in the audience and shared something personal with them. It also made them appear more human in the eyes of the audience, just as another strategy: the speaker's actions and gestures (cf. research question 1).

Asking a question in the closing is the well-documented opening strategy that was used the most. Surprisingly, in six out of the eight occurrences (except for TED talks 14 and 29), a question was also used in the opening. In two of these talks (cf. TED talks 5 and 11), the same question, was asked both in the opening and the closing.

As explained for the first research question, examples and the qualification of a statement tend to make the presentation more concrete and to give more credibility to the speaker, just as the problem/solution strategy. Still, it is important to notice that, in most talks, only the solution to the problem was presented in the closing, the former being introduced in the opening or the body of the presentation.

An interesting new strategy that was uncovered is the use of a reference to the opening in the closing. It clearly indicates that the speaker is closing their presentation, and it allows the audience to remember the beginning of the presentation at the same time. In some cases, it may also enable people to understand the main message of the talk better (e.g. TED talk 22).

It could sometimes happen that the speakers introduced impediments to a solution, a call to action or a specific objective that they wanted people to meet. This strategy allows them to stay realistic while encouraging people to take action, as in TED talk 1. It also aims to make people think about possible solutions to remove this impediment. Also intended to provide food for thought, philosophical thoughts appear to be used twice as often in closings than in openings.

Some speakers decided to take advantage of their presentation to present one of their creations or inventions, such as books or websites. Two of them did so in their closing (e.g. TED talks 7) and their talk was thus generally linked to the product they were promoting. This strategy usually aims to encourage the audience to get more information about the topic of the presentation by making use of the promoted products.

Another strategy that is certainly typical of this study is expressing positive thoughts about TED. At the end of their presentation, 3 speakers made the decision to thank TED for allowing them to deliver their speech or to talk about the great time they were spending at the conference (e.g. TED talk 5).

Flashbacks occurred three times, allowing the speakers to make a connection between their closing and their opening, and making it possible for the audience to understand that the presentation was coming to an end. A good example of the use of this strategy is TED talk 17.

As mentioned earlier, no quote was used in the openings of the selected TED talks whereas, surprisingly, this well-documented opening strategy was used in three closings. One can wonder why quotes are generally presented as a great way to open a talk, although the analysis shows that it seems to be more popular to be used in closings. The purpose of this technique is surely to make the talk memorable and to provide the audience with food for thought, as in TED talk 25 for example.

Lastly, in two cases, the speakers chose to end their talk with a video, one of which even replaced the usual thanks (cf. TED talk 27). In both cases, this strategy was used to fulfil a different purpose. In TED talk 14, a very short video of drought-tolerant crops opening and closing rapidly was shown in order to mime applause. In this case, the speaker clearly decided to add some humour to end her talk. However, the two other speakers in TED talk 27 showed a video of their homosexual wedding in America in order to give hope to people (regarding the acceptance of gay marriages in the world) and to end on a positive note.

In the example below, one can see that several new closing strategies were combined (cf. phrases underlined in orange): a reference to the opening (1) (cf. Appendix for the whole analysis), the speaker's feelings while preparing the talk (2), positive thoughts about TED (3) and a philosophical thought (4).

(11) Closing

[Short pause] [Beginning of the closing] Ehm, so, when I was writing this talk, I found it very difficult to strike an honest balance⁽¹⁾, because on the one hand, I felt very uncomfortable⁽²⁾ to come out here and say, "Look I've received all these benefits from a deck stacked in my favor," and it also felt really uncomfortable to follow that up with, "and it doesn't always make me happy." But mostly it was difficult to unpack a legacy of gender and racial oppression when I am one of the biggest beneficiaries. **Ehm**, but [Laughs] I'm also happy and honored to be up here⁽³⁾ and I think that it's great that I got to come **you know**, before 10 or 20 or 30 years had passed and I'd had more agency in my career, because maybe then I wouldn't tell the story of how I got my first job, or maybe I wouldn't tell the story of how I paid for college, which seems so important right now. [Short pause] **Ehm**, if there's a takeaway to this talk, I hope it's that we all feel more comfortable acknowledging the power of image in our perceived successes and our perceived failures⁽⁴⁾. [Short pause] Thank you. [Applause]

— *Looks aren't everything. Believe me, I'm a model*, Cameron Russell

Answer to the second research question

After carrying out the second part of the study, it appears that a variety of new opening and closing strategies were used by the speakers of the selected TED talks. Again, some of them were particularly popular whereas others were barely used.

Regarding the openings, signals and pauses after an opening were the most chosen techniques, followed closely by discourse markers and introductions of the presentation's topic. One can notice that signals and discourse markers were presented in the literature as two common closing strategies. Surprisingly, the signal technique was even more used in openings than in closings, with 23 occurrences compared to 18 respectively. Twenty-five speakers decided to use discourse markers in their closing and twenty-one did it in their opening. Benefits and calls to action, other well-documented closing strategies, were for their part hardly used. As far as closings are concerned, thanks at the end of the closing seem to be one of the most chosen strategies to end a talk, and there were applause at the end of each presentation. Three well-documented opening strategies were used in closings: questions, anecdotes and quotes. Interestingly, the latter was never used in openings whereas three speakers decided to use this technique to end their speech.

In the end, it appears that opening and closing strategies are more flexible than what the literature might suggest. In total, four well-documented closing strategies were employed in openings and three well-documented openings techniques were used in closings. Several strategies could also be used at the same time both in openings and closings and thus were not always meant to be used on their own. Once again, speakers tend to combine several new opening and closing strategies in their presentation. As can be observed in Figures 12 and 14, they appear to use more closing strategies at the same time than opening techniques. The majority of them seem to prefer using between three and four new opening strategies at the same time whereas most of them tend to employ four or five new strategies in their closing. These new techniques are generally used to fulfil a variety of purposes, sometimes different than in openings: giving credibility to the message of the talk and to the speaker, staying realistic, allowing the audience to follow the presentation better, enabling the speaker to be considered as human in the eyes of the audience, etc.

3.2.3. Discussion of the findings

After analysing well-documented and new opening and closing strategies separately, it turns out that every single speaker combined one or several common techniques outlined in the literature with one or more new strategies, both in their opening and in their closing (cf. Tables 4 and 5).

In their openings, three speakers used two strategies, either one well-documented with one new (cf. TED talk 30), either two new (cf. TED talks 7 and 8). One speaker employed up to 11 opening strategies; two well-documented and nine new (cf. TED talk 18). The other speakers thus combined between three and 10 openings strategies in their talk. Regarding the closings, one speaker used three techniques; one well-documented and two new (cf. TED talk 8) and two of them combined 10 strategies (TED talks 5 and 14). The other speakers thus employed between four and nine techniques in their talk's closing. Figure 15 below depicts the combination of well-documented and new opening and closing strategies.

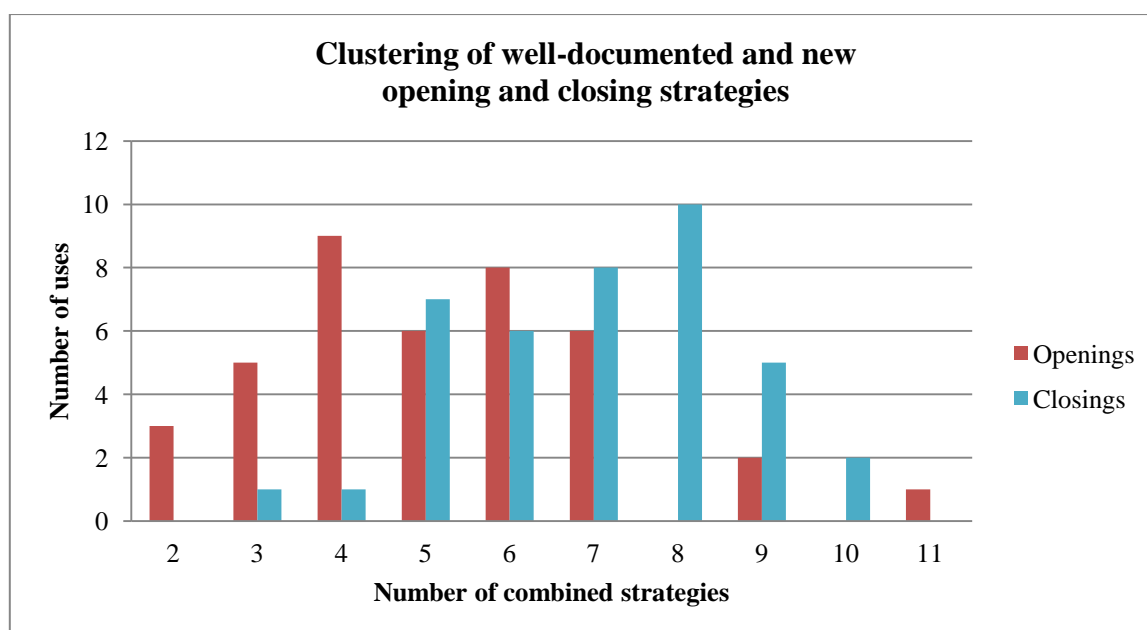


Figure 15: Clustering of well-documented and new opening and closing strategies

As can be observed above, the speakers of the selected TED talks tended to combine more techniques in their closings than in their openings. Regarding openings, more speakers employed between two and four strategies whereas more speakers used between 8 and 10 strategies in their closings. Tables 8 and 9 below give an overview of the combination of well-documented and new techniques in the 40 TED talks.

N° TED talk	Number of well-documented strategies used	Number of new strategies used	Total opening strategies used
1	1	3	4
2	2	5	7
3	0	4	4
4	0	6	6
5	2	4	6
6	1	2	3
7	0	2	2
8	0	2	2
9	1	3	4
10	2	7	9
11	2	3	5
12	1	5	6
13	1	3	4
14	1	3	4
15	1	3	4
16	3	6	9
17	2	3	5
18	2	9	11
19	1	6	7
20	1	3	4
21	0	4	4
22	3	3	6
23	1	3	4
24	1	5	6
25	1	5	6
26	1	6	7
27	2	1	3
28	2	4	6
29	1	2	3
30	1	1	2
31	3	4	7
32	1	6	7
33	2	4	6
34	3	4	7
35	1	4	5
36	3	2	5
37	1	2	3
38	1	4	5
39	2	3	5
40	0	3	3

Table 8: Total use of well-documented and new opening strategies

N° TED talk	Number of well-documented strategies used	Number of new strategies used	Total closing strategies used
1	4	5	9
2	2	7	9
3	4	4	8
4	3	2	5
5	4	6	10
6	4	5	9
7	3	3	6
8	1	2	3
9	1	6	7
10	2	4	6
11	3	4	7
12	4	4	8
13	3	4	7
14	3	7	10
15	4	3	7
16	1	5	6
17	4	5	9
18	1	8	9
19	3	2	5
20	3	5	8
21	2	4	6
22	1	5	6
23	3	2	5
24	2	4	6
25	2	5	7
26	4	3	7
27	2	3	5
28	1	7	8
29	3	5	8
30	2	3	5
31	3	4	7
32	1	4	5
33	3	5	8
34	3	5	8
35	2	3	5
36	3	4	7
37	2	2	4
38	3	5	8
39	2	6	8
40	5	3	8

Table 9: Total use of well-documented and new closing strategies

The findings of this study have revealed that the use of opening and closing strategies in the selected TED talks was much more flexible than suggested in the literature. Five special uses can be observed:

First, it appeared that a series of well-documented opening techniques were used in closings. As can be noticed in TED talk 5 for instance, strategies like questions, anecdotes and quotes, three common techniques intended to be used in openings, can be employed in closings. The same goes for well-documented closing techniques used in openings (i.e. signal, benefits, calls to action and discourse makers), as can be seen in TED talk 1 for example. In the end, it seemed that some predetermined uses did not always apply since quotes were employed in closings but not in openings and the signal strategy was much more used in openings than in closings.

One can also observe that some of the uncovered strategies could be used both in openings and in closings. Six techniques are concerned: the speaker's actions and gestures, the use of a pause (after the opening or before the closing), a philosophical thought, the qualification of a statement, the use of examples and the problem/solution strategy as the most striking finding. This interesting strategy can be observed in TED talk 16. TED talk 2 is also a very good example in which the speaker's actions and gestures had an influence on the identification of both the opening and the closing.

Finally, some of the new strategies appeared to be strictly used in openings and while others were only employed in closings. Tables 10 and 11 give an overview of the most frequent techniques strictly used in openings or closings.

Openings		
Strategy	Explanation	Example
Topic's introduction	Speakers may introduce the topic of their talk clearly, using for instance a sentence such as "I'm going to talk about..."	TED talk 10
Speaker's introduction	Speakers may talk about their job, mostly to show that they have some experience in a particular field	TED talk 18
Stress on words	Some words may be stressed in order to attract the audience's attention on them, usually because it concerns the topic of the talk	TED talk 4
What the speaker has been doing for the last years	Speakers may explain the research or the job they have been carrying out, also to show that they have some experience in a particular field	TED talk 12

Table 10: most frequent new strategies strictly used in openings

Closings		
Strategy	Explanation	Example
Thanks	Most speakers thank the audience for their attention to show that the presentation is coming to an end	TED talk 2
Reference to the opening	In their closing, speakers may use a particular sentence or a specific word that has been used in the opening to establish a link between the beginning and the end of the talk	TED talk 11
Impediment	Some speakers give impediments to an objective, a call to action or a solution to stay realistic and to encourage people to overcome the obstacles	TED talks 1

Table 11: most frequent new strategies strictly used in closings

Throughout the analysis, one of the strategies turned out to be quite challenging to explore: the use of discourse markers. These little groups of words could sometimes be combined with another strategy in one same sentence, and may be used everywhere. At the beginning, I decided to only focus on inferential markers (cf. Chapter 1) and to leave out the others. However, it appeared that some of these discourse markers were also used in the openings. I first considered to classify the utterances according to the type of marker (cf. Fraser 1996), but after reflecting on the matter, I made the decision to only take inferential markers into consideration. I believe this could be interesting to see if some expressions of conclusion were used to open a talk. In order to do so, I based my analysis on the list of inferential markers given by Fraser (1996) in his article. Whenever a discourse marker (or any other strategy) was used in combination with another technique, I counted that there were two strategies used.

Finally, it appeared that some of the contextual factors that had been taken into account during the preparation of the transcripts turned out to be irrelevant in this study. Applause (except in closings), laughter, short and long pauses (that did not occur at the end of an opening or before a closing), some speaker's actions and gestures, some stressed words (several in openings and all of them in closings) and visual aids appeared to have no influence on the identification of the selected TED talks' openings and closings. Stammering, repetitions and rewordings had also been included in the transcripts but only had an influence on the number of words of the transcripts.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

In particular contexts such as the TED conferences, one could wonder what speakers do to deliver such memorable speeches. As the TED non-profit clearly states, the organisation aims to entertain people by spreading a variety of ideas worth sharing. One could thus assume that speakers would adopt specific strategies that would enable them to meet their prime objective: inspire their audience. In order to give a presentation worth listening to, it is commonly acknowledged that openings and closings are the most important parts of a talk, as the former will attract people's attention and the latter will be the part that the audience will remember the most. The goal of this study was therefore to explore the strategies used by the speakers of a selection of 40 TED talks to open and close their speech.

The literature generally suggests that some specific strategies should be employed in a presentation's opening and closing. While speakers are usually invited to select only one opening strategy, the closing techniques outlined in books and articles are often presented as strategies that can be combined. In this study, it was therefore important to start with the exploration of the most common opening and closing techniques outlined in the literature. These would later serve as a basis to analyse the selected TED talks' openings and closings.

During this research, it appeared that some well-documented opening and closing strategies were quite popular among TED speakers, whereas others were barely or never used at all. An interesting example was the quote, often presented as a strong and effective opening strategy, but which was never chosen by the speakers of the selected TED talks. Surprisingly, this technique turned out to be used in some closings, whilst other common closing strategies were used in openings. This was the case for signals and discourse makers for instance. It can also be noticed that a selection of new opening and closing techniques adopted in the 40 TED talks were uncovered. Some of them were exclusively used in openings or in closings and others were employed in both parts. A striking example was the problem/solution strategy, the problem being generally presented in the opening and the solution being either introduced in the opening, either summarised in the closing.

Interestingly, it seemed that TED speakers, not in-keeping with what the literature generally suggests, combined several strategies both in their openings and closings. It appeared that in total, some speakers used 10 strategies in their closings and up to 11 in their openings. This phenomenon, also called clustering, revealed that opening and closing strategies can in fact be

used in a very flexible way. It is also worth noting that speakers tended to combine several techniques that intended to fulfil different purposes. Some of these strategies sometimes seemed to be insufficient to clearly convey the speaker's message to the audience clearly. For example, a technique that was often used in combination with another was the signal strategy.

It can be concluded that the speakers of the 40 selected TED talks all combined a variety of well-documented and uncovered strategies in their talk's opening and closing, which enabled them to convey their message memorably. It may be interesting, however, to carry out further research in order to explore the way other TED speakers open and close their presentation. Since the selection of talks was based on particular criteria of my own choice (positivity, the conveyance of forward-looking messages and the provision of food for thought), it could be assumed that the findings of this study match the category of talks that have been selected. Another possibility could also be to explore the used opening and closing strategies by the speakers according to their nationality, as TED holds conferences internationally and as this dissertation only focused on English-speaking talks. New selections of talks may therefore lead to other interesting findings.

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