

The Role of Empowerment in TEDx Videos : A Reconsideration of Critical Discourse Analysis

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1. Abstract

Positive discourse analysis (PDA) attempts to find out the syntactic strategies positively used by Angela Lee Duckworth in her motivational speech entitled "Grit: the power of passion and perseverance" on TEDx program, through which she empowers every frustrated and disappointed people motivating, inspiring and energizing them by using certain syntactic strategies positively. PDA is a complementary direction to Critical Discourse Analysis in that positive ideologies are taken into consideration. Finding out such strategies is the problem of the present study. To solve that problem, there is a question that needs to be answered: What are the syntactic strategies positively used in Angela Lee Duckworth's motivational speeches through which empowerment is reflected? The present study aims at (1) investigating the way empowerment is reflected, and (2) finding out the syntactic strategies positively used by Angela Lee Duckworth in her motivational speech (Grit: the power of passion and perseverance) in addition to how frequently they are used and functioned positively. It is hypothesized that empowerment is uncovered through various syntactic strategies that are positively used in order to make positive social changes. These strategies are supposed to be sentence types (declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatory sentences) and conditionals. The methodology of the present study includes (1) a theoretical survey of PDA, (2) analyzing the motivational speech "Grit: the power of passion and perseverance" qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

Key words : Critical Discourse Analysis, Positive Discourse Analysis, Empowerment, Perseverance, Motivational Discourse, Syntax

2. Literature Review

2.1 Critical Linguistics

Baker and Ellece (2011:27) state that critical linguistics is a social approach to the study of language that was proposed by Fowler and Kress (1979). Halliday's SFG is one of the pivotal bases on which CL depends to identify how various linguistic

strategies or devices are used in texts for a variety of purposes, e.g., the use of the pronoun "we" instead of "I" to express pride.

CT has two versions when being concerned with linguistics, namely: *the traditional version* which focuses on analyzing a certain discourse through understanding it deeply, and the *modern version* that is firstly demonstrated by Max Horkheimer who is the pioneer of the Frankfurt School of Sociology in one of his well-known essays titled "Traditional and Critical Theory" in 1937. According to the modern version of CT, Horkheimer (1982:244) considers characterizing and rehabilitating the society (making social changes) as the principal aims of the CT as a social theory that was created to resist the oppression and any kind of social inequality in the Western society.

2.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough (1993:135) points out that CDA is a branch of DA that is involved in analyzing implicit as well as explicit relations power, dominance and hegemony as demonstrated in a given discourse. The role of CDA is to investigate opaque relationships of determination between linguistic practices and socio-cultural structures. CDA aims to explore the way in which such relationships are ideologically constructed by power relations and hegemony.

CDA as explained by Wodak and Mayer (2001:2) is a branch of linguistics that studies language through investigating the relations between the discursive and non-discursive (social) practices. It has a vital role in analyzing language with considering the language itself and the context in which the language is used and how they are interrelated.

Van Dijk (2001:352) points out that CDA is a discourse analytical research that is concerned with analyzing language to uncover how social power abuse, dominance and any kind of social inequalities are reproduced in a given discourse whether written or spoken in relation to the context on which it occurs. Operationally, Van Dijk's definition of CDA is adopted for the present study, as the following:

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by texts and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality.

2.3 Criticisms to CDA

Breeze (2011:498) points out that the natural heterogeneity of CDA's intellectual inheritance creates a sort of difficulty for the researcher with the exact tracing of what the justification for a certain stance could be. Accordingly, some critics accuse CDA of being randomly operated and governed by personal desire rather than scientific principle. In other words, CDA suffers from selectivity and subjectivity, i.e., a critical discourse analyst selects intentionally the discourse he desires and doing a critical analysis for that discourse according to his/her own viewpoint.

CDA has been criticized also by Rogers (2004:2), as follows :

1. Critical discourse analysts can use many social as well as linguistic theories in analyzing a given discourse critically. In other words, CDA has no specific theory or methodology to do such a DA for a given discourse, the matter that leads to the point

that CDA is not a stable, rather a changeable, research method since the analyst is free to adopt whatever critical stance he/she likes.

2. CDA is unable to analyze a given discourse in its social context while any theory can do so. So, there is nothing to distinguish CDA from any other theory.

3. Most recently, CDA has been strongly concerned with the way in which ideology works within discourse to hold or resist unequal power relations. CDA emphasizes the self-image as a critical force meanwhile such an emphasis is negative since CDA presents an inevitable impression. As a result, CDA preserves unequal power structure since it concentrates on the concept of self-image.

Finally, CDA is also criticized since it ignores the importance of the positive aspect in analyzing a given discourse. It solely sees the negative aspect through focusing on social inequality, social power abuse and dominance in the society in which language is used. Thus, there is a need for a new research method that complements the role of CDA to enable it to have an thorough eye-view of a given discourse.

2.4 Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA)

Instead of mere critiquing a given discourse and social practices, there is a movement from deconstructive towards constructive or productive activities. Martin (1999:51-52) believes that it is necessary for any discourse analyst to select discourses that motivate, energize and empower social group members in a particular society to emancipate their freedom from the domination of the oppressive attitude of the dominant powerful group in that society.

Luke (2002: 98) agrees with Martin referring to the point that there is a need to create a positive research method about analyzing discourses and the productive manner in which power is positively used in order to design a positive character of the culture in a particular society in which the discourse is used in a productive way for emancipatory needs.

Martin (2004) suggests a new complementary field of analyzing discourse critically in a positive manner. PDA is a linguistic term that is firstly established by James Martin (2004) in his paper entitled "Positive Discourse Analysis: Solidarity and Change".

Martin (2004:1) reveals that CDA is highly-concerned with language and semiosis in serving power and dominance in that it has a deconstructive tendency to emphasize the ideological governing of the social discrimination, taking into account various social variables such as ethnic identity, sex and social class. He asserts that PDA is a highly-pivotal ideologically-oriented perspective for doing a DA because it does not merely focus on the deconstructive aspect of language for the sake of power relations, rather, it focuses on attempting to make successful social changes in the society in which language is used. Accordingly, Martin (ibid) calls such a perspective *PDA*.

2.5 Empowerment

The term 'empowerment' is defined in the Cambridge English Dictionary (2022) as "the process of having freedom and power to achieve what someone needs or desires, in addition to control what happens to him/her .

Holly Martinez (2022) asserts that the gist of empowerment theory is to empower, enable, motivate and energize individuals and whole societies to have

personal, interpersonal and political authorized power in order to make their life better and their world a better place to live in. In other words, empowerment as an ideology helps social members to challenge the oppressive social as well as political systems that prevent these groups of social citizens from achieving their desires.

2.6 Motivational Discourse

Motivational speeches can be analyzed critically because they aim at making positive social changes although there is no social inequality or injustice due to concentrating on the positive side. In other words, there is no conflict between two contradictory groups since there is no negative side at all, but there is only a positive one that can be analyzed positively to make a positive social change. Making social changes does not necessarily require having two conflicting groups (in-group and out-group) and different types of social inequality.

CDA which deals with different types of social inequalities analyzes texts to make a social change while PDA is found for those discourses which deal with revealing hidden ideologies through positive rather than negative discourse production. So, PDA is useful for analyzing the motivational speech which has no negative side (social inequality) but only positive one (motivation) to make the targeted social change. For that reason, PDA is not considered a separate field of CDA, but a new complementary direction.

The purpose of motivational speech is not only to emotionally arouse an audience whether feeling scared, sad or joyful, but also to motivate, inspire, energize and empower that audience to do something with that emotional arousal. In persuasive speech, the speaker tries to persuade the audience to buy a particular product or believe in a particular ideology while a motivational speech tries to inspire and encourage the audience to do something they think that they are unable to do. As such, motivational speech is a specific form of persuasive speech. Slutsky and Aun (1997) point out that *The Toastmasters International Guide to Successful Speaking* categorizes motivational speech into four types: hero, survivor, religious, and success

3. Data Analysis

3.1 Syntactic Analysis

The analysis on the syntactic level includes conditionals and sentence types such as declaratives, interrogatives, imperative and exclamatory.

3.1.1 Sentence Types

The sentences of the motivational speech of Duckworth are going to be classified according to function into; declaratives, interrogatives, imperative and exclamatory sentences. Consider the following table:

Table(1): Classifying Sentences Types according to Function

Total no.	Declarative		Imperative		Interrogative		Exclamatory	
	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc	Freq.	Perc	Freq.	Perc
52	45	86.5%	0	0%	7	13.5%	0	0%

Table (1) shows the sentence types used in Duckworth's motivational speech which represent the data of the present study. In Table (1), sentences are classified into four types, namely: Declarative, Imperative, Interrogative, and Exclamatory. The frequency of occurrence of each type has been counted and its percentage has also been provided. The percentage of using each type positively is going to be justified in order to uncover the ideology of empowerment via using such types.

As it is shown in Table (1), the declarative sentences are the most frequently used sentence type in the motivational speech of Duckworth. Out of 52 sentences, 45 declarative ones are found in all of the selected motivational speeches, that makes (86.5%). This means that the declarative sentence is the type that most meets the need of the motivational speaker in motivating the audience.

The high frequency of occurrence of the declarative sentences is not arbitrary which means that there is a need for a justification. Motivational speakers use declarative sentences in a greater proportion than the rest of the types since they are concerned with conveying information directly and informing the addressee explicitly. Syntactically, declarative sentences function as statements. Thus, the motivational speaker can gain the audience's trust through giving them the targeted information directly.

Interrogative sentences are also among the sentence types that motivational speakers prefer, but they use them less frequently than declarative sentences. Such a preference is going to be justified.

In Table (1), Duckworth uses 7 interrogative sentences out of 537 sentences in her motivational speech making (13.5%). This percentage makes it the second type mostly used in motivational speeches.

Motivational speakers sometimes uses interrogation for a rhetorical purpose rather than to know something new as a normal direct question does. A set of rhetorical questions need to be employed in order to excite the audience, attract their attention and get them to agree with what he says, i.e., admitting their weaknesses that they need to overcome. So, the interrogative sentences are used since they meet a necessary need that cannot be met by any other type. That is how interrogation is positively used to create a social change in the real life of the audience.

The reason behind the smaller percentage of using interrogative sentences is that if the motivational speaker uses more and more rhetorical questions, they will lose their influence on the recipient, hence, the listener will feel bored for the repetition of questions raised by the motivational speaker simply because the listener doesn't come to hear questions only. So, using interrogation less than declaration is to maintain the effectiveness of the rhetorical questions being used during the motivational speech.

As illustrated in Table (1), Duckworth never uses imperative sentences in her motivational speech. An ample justification of such percentage will be provided. This is due to the absence of familiarity that allows the speaker to direct orders and prohibitions to the audience, the matter that leads to the listener's annoyance and failure in making social change.

As in Table (1), there are no exclamatory sentences in Duckworth motivational speech making (0%). The reason behind not using exclamatory sentences is their

function. In other words, this type reflects the speaker's sense of strong emotional feelings about a particular thing meanwhile the audience does not necessarily have the same feeling. Moreover, the use of exclamation is a personal preference that is limited to the person's feeling about something. As far as the data of the present study is concerned, the motivational speaker does not use the exclamatory sentence, meaning that it cannot be used positively except some rare cases that are not found in Duckworth's motivational speech.

Conditionals

Duckworth's motivational speeches includes conditional sentences that are positively used to motivate and inspire the audience in order to make positive social changes. In this section, conditional sentences in each motivational speech are qualitatively described and quantitatively counted. Consider Table (3) :

Table (2) : Conditional Sentences

Total Sentence No.	Conditionals	
	Freq.	Percentage
52	2	3.8 %

In Table (2), the conditional sentences that are used in Duckworth's motivational speech are numbered with calculating percentages. Noticeably, there are only 2 conditional sentences out of 52 sentences making (3.8%). There must be a justification for using conditionals in the motivational speech because certainly they are not arbitrarily used.

Syntactically speaking, the conditional sentence connects two phrases that are linked to each other in terms of occurrence, i.e., the first clause is achieved once the second is achieved and vice versa. For example, (If you study hard, you will succeed). In this example, success is connected to studying hard. In other words, if the addressee doesn't study hard, success will not be reached.

Conditional sentences are positively used by motivational speakers through comparing phrases of success to the conditional phrases for reaching that success to motivate, encourage and inspire the audience to succeed by reaching the conditions that are presented by the motivational speaker. Thus, the ideology of empowerment is disclosed by the positive use of conditional sentences in motivational speeches.

4. Conclusion

The syntactic strategies used positively in Duckworth's motivational speech for the present study to make a social change are sentence types including (declaratives and interrogatives) and conditional sentences leading us to conclude that motivational speakers intentionally use specific sentence types for particular functions, that is why they use declarative sentences more than the interrogative ones.

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Appendix

By Angela Lee Duckworth

<https://youtu.be/H14bBuluwB8>

"Grit: the power of passion and perseverance"

When I was 27 years old, I left a very demanding job in management consulting for a job that was even more demanding: teaching. I went to teach seventh graders math in the New York

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City public schools. And like any teacher, I made quizzes and tests. I gave out homework assignments. When the work came back, I calculated grades. What struck me was that IQ was not the only difference between my best and my worst students. Some of my strongest performers did not have stratospheric IQ scores. Some of my smartest kids weren't doing so well.

And that got me thinking. The kinds of things you need to learn in seventh grade math, sure, they're hard: ratios, decimals, the area of a parallelogram. But these concepts are not impossible, and I was firmly convinced that every one of my students could learn the material if they worked hard and long enough. After several more years of teaching, I came to the conclusion that what we need in education is a much better understanding of students and learning from a

motivational perspective, from a psychological perspective. In education, the one thing we know how to measure best is IQ. But what if doing well in school and in life depends on much more than your ability to learn quickly and easily? So I left the classroom, and I went to graduate school to become a psychologist. I started studying kids and adults in all kinds of super

challenging settings, and in every study my question was, who is successful here and why? My research team and I went to West Point Military Academy. We tried to predict which cadets would stay in military training and which would drop out. We went to the National Spelling Bee and tried to predict which children would advance farthest in competition. We studied rookie teachers working in really tough neighborhoods, asking which teachers are still going to be here in teaching by the end of the school year, and of those, who will be the most effective at

improving learning outcomes for their students? We partnered with private companies, asking, which of these salespeople is going to keep their jobs? And who's going to earn the most money?

In all those very different contexts, one characteristic emerged as a significant predictor of success. And it wasn't social intelligence. It wasn't good looks, physical health, and it wasn't IQ. It was grit. Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Grit is having stamina. Grit is sticking with your future, day in, day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years, and working really hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it's a marathon,

not a sprint. A few years ago, I started studying grit in the Chicago public schools. I asked thousands of high school juniors to take grit questionnaires, and then waited around more than a year to see who would graduate. Turns out that grittier kids were significantly more likely to graduate, even when I matched them on every characteristic I could measure, things like family income, standardized achievement test scores, even how safe kids felt when they were at school.

So it's not just at West Point or the National Spelling Bee that grit matters. It's also in school, especially for kids at risk for dropping out. To me, the most shocking thing about grit is how little we know, how little science knows, about building it. Every day, parents and teachers ask me, "How do I build grit in kids? What do I do to teach kids a solid work ethic? How do I keep

them motivated for the long run?" The honest answer is, What I do know is that talent doesn't make you gritty. Our data show very clearly that there are many talented individuals who simply do not follow through on their commitments. In fact, in our data, grit is usually unrelated or even inversely related to measures of talent. So far, the best idea I've heard about building grit in kids is something called "growth mindset." This is an idea developed at Stanford University by Carol Dweck, and it is the belief that the ability to learn is not fixed, that it can change with your effort.

Dr. Dweck has shown that when kids read and learn about the brain and how it changes and grows in response to challenge, they're much more likely to persevere when they fail, because they don't believe that failure is a permanent condition. So growth mindset is a great idea for building grit. But we need more. And that's where I'm going to end my remarks, because that's where we are. That's the work that stands before us. We need to take our best ideas, our strongest intuitions, and we need to test them. We need to measure whether we've been successful, and we have to be willing to fail, to be wrong, to start over again with lessons learned. In other words, we need to be gritty about getting our kids grittier.

Thank you.