

## A Contrastive Rhetoric Study of Persuasion in

### TED Talks Narratives

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### Abstract

Since 1984 thousands of stories have been told on stage in the platform known as TEDEX or TED TALKS. These were inspiring stories covering diverse areas of life and meant to persuade the audience of better well-being. The present paper investigates the powerful persuasive features present in twenty randomly selected Ted Talks narratives: ten American English and ten Egyptian Arabic narratives. The paper employs Cockcroft and Cockcroft's model of persuasion (2013) with its three tripartite divisions of Aristotle's Ethos, Pathos and Logos. The contrastive analysis is done within Marc Alexander's (2009) adapted version of Mann and Thompson's Rhetorical Structure Theory (1988), which best suits the data under investigation. The paper adds more items under the presentational and subject matter relations introduced by Mann and Thompson's RST, so that more types of utterances are easily identified and categorized. It also compares and contrasts the techniques used in both languages to examine the types employed for persuasion of the two different types of audience.

**Keywords:** TED Talk narratives, Rhetorical Structure Theory, Model of Persuasion, Contrastive Study

### Objectives of the Study:

The study aims at comparing and contrasting ten TED Talk English narratives to ten Arabic narratives (narratives of each language consisting of appr.130 minutes in total) to see the similarities and differences as to the structure and persuasive techniques of each Talk. The research attempts to test if the diverse issues tackled by multi-cultural speakers entail the employment of different persuasive techniques. A thorough analysis of narratives on multi-levels is done: beginning from the coherence of narratives, going through the choice of words, and ending

with sentences and images. The paper applies Marc Alexander's (2009) adaptation of Mann and Thompson's Rhetorical Structure Theory (1988). Then Cockcroft and Cockcroft's (2013) model of persuasion is employed to investigate the different strategies of persuasion.

### **Research Questions:**

1. How far does Rhetorical Structure Theory give insight into the overall coherence of the English and Arabic narratives?
2. Which type of relations is more frequently used? Subject-matter or presentational?
3. What are the similarities and differences in terms of Ethos between English and Arabic TED talks?
4. What are the prevailing Pathos persuading strategies used in the English and Arabic texts?
5. What are the most frequently employed Logos persuading techniques in English and Arabic narratives?
6. What are the similarities and differences between English and Arabic narrative rhetorical structure?
7. What are the similarities and differences between English and Arabic narrative persuasive techniques?
8. How far does cultural difference affect the choice of persuasive techniques?

### **Methodology of the Study:**

The narratives are first cut into chunks, or episodes- each forming a part of the persuasive story, each rhetorical thrust forming the episode is put in a tabular form and labelled, following Marc Alexander's adaptation. Then Cockcroft and Cockcroft's model of persuasion is applied to each part: the persuasive tools are divided into three main levels: Ethos (personality), Pathos (emotions) and Logos (reason) so that they can shed light on the persuasive strategies used to achieve the speaker's goal. A quantitative qualitative method is followed to analyze the English data, then the Arabic data, finally comparing and contrasting the results, based on the frequencies found.

### **Review of Literature:**

Chang (2015) examined the rhetorical structure of talks from TED conferences to explore the possibility of their being incorporated into the instruction of oral presentation in English-language classrooms. The analysis identified seven major

move types (and their respective component steps) and established a genre prototype based on move frequencies, lengths, associations, and patterns of occurrence.

Sallomi and Nayel (2017) presented a paper addressing the persuasive techniques used in both English and Arabic religious sermons. The study aimed at identifying the persuasive techniques adopted in the selected sermons from both languages showing how these techniques are devoted to persuade the audience. After examining the corpus, the researchers have found out that though most persuasive techniques are present in both sermons, still some points of difference are available between the two.

Iuliia Rychkova (2020) explored the role of storytelling in the most-viewed TED Talks, on various topics performed at conferences for non-experts. The study aimed to identify common narrative structural patterns and functions in the sampled talks. The qualitative interpretation of story structure was based on Labov's (1972) diamond-shape model, while Propp's (1928) narratemes were used to investigate the common plot development patterns in the sampled TED Talks. The aim of the study was to identify the most effective way to produce a persuasive discourse and hence, sway the audience's opinion.

Nahla Nadeem (2021) aimed to provide a conceptualization of how narratives function in TED talks. She used Bamberg's positioning theory as a theoretical framework to build a communicative model of TED Talk narratives. Using a multi-modal discourse analysis approach, the model was applied to the narratives used in Guy Winch's TED Talk in 2015. The model provided an analytical tool for investigating the dynamic interaction and semiotic signaling involved in the communicative performance of TED Talk narratives.

While the previous studies examined TED Talks as to the structure of the narrative applying Bamberg's positioning theory, Labov's or Propp's models, the present study offers a contrastive study between English and Arabic narratives using a different theory and model. Marc Alexander's adaptation (2009) of Mann and Thompson's Rhetorical Structure Theory (1987) is used as the umbrella theory, then Cockcroft and Cockcroft's Model of persuasion (2013) is employed with its tripartite division, aiming at analyzing the persuasive techniques used in English and Arabic narratives.

## **Theoretical Preliminaries:**

## Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST):

Rhetorical Structure Theory or (RST for short) was originally developed by William Mann and Sandra Thompson in 1987 as a pragmatic framework aiming at analyzing the underlying structures of written texts. Their framework aim at finding out how coherent the units constructing a text is, regardless of its type: they work on different types and sizes of texts like personal letters, advertisements, articles, travel brochures and even recipes (p. 80).

They identify the most common type of text relation as the “nucleus-satellite” relation (p.80). This same idea is reiterated by Marc Alexander (2009): “the relations, units and direction of effect are all decided by the analyst” (p.15). “Nucleus” means that unit or “span” of the text, which may or may not be an independent clause that is crucial to the speaker/writer’s objective, and is not subject to “deletion” or “substitution”, whereas the “satellite” is only there as an ancillary to the “nucleus”.

Mann and Thompson (1988) also speak of “schemas”. In simple words, schemas are the types of functional relations that hold between the nucleus and its satellite/s. They identify a number of schemas: Solution hood (where the nucleus is the question and the satellite is the solution), Motivation and Enablement, Elaboration, Circumstance, Background, Evidence and Justification, Relations of Cause (Non/Volitional Cause, Non/Volitional Result, and Purpose), Antithesis and Concession, Condition, Interpretation and Evaluation, Restatement and Summary, Sequence, Method, and finally Summary. However, they point earlier (1987) to what they call the “Joint schema”, which is different from all the other schemas in that it is a relation between two nuclei used for example in listings (p.94).

Anna Mauranen (1993) is the first to distinguish between generic and rhetorical moves. By generic, she means the multi-nuclear and the subject matter, whereas rhetorical means the presentational relations. Echoing this, a listing is put on the RST website, for further clarification, where Taboada and Mann (2005) group the relations according to their end aim: for instance, presentational relations are meant to “increase some inclination in the reader, such as the desire to act or the degree of positive regard for, belief in, or acceptance of the nucleus” (para.3). As for the subject-matter relations, they only aim at helping the reader capture the relationship between rhetorical thrusts without any positive action. Finally, the multinuclear relations are those existing between two equal “spans”,

and not between a nucleus and a satellite. These include contrast, joint, list, sequence, and con/disjunction.

Presentational relations include antithesis, background, concession, enablement, evidence, justify, motivation, preparation, restatement, and summary. Subject matter relations include circumstance, condition, elaboration, evaluation, interpretation, means, non-volitional cause, non-volitional result, otherwise, purpose, solutionhood, unless (a strange term, yet put as such in their taxonomy), volitional cause, and volitional result.

Later in 2006, Taboada and Mann published an article on RST reiterating more or less the same basic ideas in Mann and Thompson's theory. They state that RST "[...] explains coherence by postulating a hierarchal, connected structure of texts, in which every part of a text has a role, a function to play, with respect to other parts in the text" (p.425). Consequently, RST "captures the underlying structure of texts" (p.429). They consider a unit as any independent clause plus its subordinates. Nonetheless, this has one shortcoming: that fine details within the text can be easily glossed over. In addition to the types of schemes postulated earlier by Mann and Thompson, they add six more schemas to make them 30 schemas in total. These are the preparation, restatement, unconditional, means, unless and joint. Furthermore, Mann stated that it is not compulsory to use trees as the only representation of discourse structure.

As aforementioned, many linguists tackle RST adding or modifying some features; however, in 2009, Marc Alexander made a significant adaptation of the RST model, applying it to one of Agatha Christie's mysteries. He argues: "The rhetorical structure of persuasive narratives has not been investigated to the same extent as other styles of rhetorical analysis, such as those in politics, classical studies or education" (p.13). Alexander found that applying Mann and Thompson's RST in its original form, to long persuasive monologues like detective stories turns out to be very difficult, because of the long, complex relations between units. He argues that RST is "insensitive to text size" (p.100). He also believes that "rhetoric [in its original sense] is often used to mean persuasive techniques found in non-literary texts" (p.14).

That same idea is stated by Chafe (1996) who believes that: "a tree diagram falls short of capturing the gradual development of ideas through time under the

influence of both cognitive and social goals and constraints” (pp. 55-56). For this reason, Alexander thought of doing away with the tree idea, and substituting it with the tabular form, which in turn, would allow a much easier grasp of relations among schemas.

Alexander’s (2009) contribution to RST can be seen in a number of points, the first of which is that he gave the “ties” names and not the moves. His adaptation allows “the rhetorical moves of the discourse itself to dictate the hierarchical structure of the text” (p.17). He also built on Mann’s postulate that it is not a must to use trees. He prefers tables with one column structure and calling the analyzed parts “rhetorical thrusts”, be it phrases or clauses, as far as they serve a function in the ties found in between parts within the text. In his article, he employs the thirty-one relations postulated by Mann and Thompson; He also adds others, so that some of the functions can be seen clearly. The added parts are “claim’, “series”, “theory”, “simile”, “situation”, “apparent acceptance”, “acceptance query”, “refutation from evidence”, “concrete example”, and “conclusion from previous”. However, he does not mention where they belong: to the presentational or to the subject matter relations. Later, in the findings of this paper, these new nomenclatures will be set in their places so that any researcher would easily categorize the functions they meet in further research.

In addition, Alexander (2009) coins a new term, “TASK”, by which he means “preparation move” and a move is not an independent clause as his predecessors said, but rather any group of words that has a meaning and function. Calling it a “thrust”, he only adds that it should have a “persuasive function”. In his analysis of the detective story *Murder on the Orient Express*, he designed a tabular form for every sub- episode in the story, giving it a title. For further clarification, he uses large initial letters and black border as opposed to the small capitals and grey borders for the sub- moves. He also precedes the satellite thrusts with one, two, or three full stops depending on the kind of subordination they provide for the main nucleus. His aim is to make the table understandable for the reader as far as the relationship among thrusts is concerned, without the need for further reading after the table.

### **Cockroft and Cockroft’s Model of Persuasion:**

Robert and Susan Cockroft (1992, 2005) based their model of persuasion on that designed by Aristotle in 1926. They even use the same terms of structural

principles he coined: *Ethos, Pathos and Logos*, three sides of one triangle working simultaneously and not linearly. By *Ethos*, they refer to the speaker's personality and stance. Garver (1994) summarizes the speaker's qualities based on Aristotle's words: "Trust is built up progressively by impressions of someone's moral strength (*arete*), benevolence (*eunoia*), and [...] "constructive competence" or the ability to offer shrewd, practical but principled advice (*phronesis*) (pp.132-8). For a rhetorician to affect audience, he has to affect them on the two levels of psychology and values (Cockroft &Cockroft, 2005, p. 17). In other words, the audience are usually affected by the speaker's individuality, who he is, what values he stands for, how he understands his audience and hence how he addresses them.

While the age and gender are two important sociolinguistic variables that affect the audience's receipt of the persuasive message, the persuader's stance – a vital part of the persuasive process-is dynamic as well in a sense that it can be open or close, rigid or flexible, structured or disorganized. Audience may refuse a persuader if she is for instance a female or because there is a generation gap between them. Likewise, they might build a resistance against a persuader if what he stands for is against their values.

Understanding the audience is a key step in achieving the required effect. The persuader has to know how to be flexible or humorous when necessary. "It is this "warmth of thought [ ], energy and exuberance of personality which [...] will assist the persuader, finding the expression via changing mood and tone" (Cockroft &Cockroft, 2005, p. 35). It takes both "creativity" and "talent" on the part of the persuader to understand and persuade his audience. Burke (1969) argues that a persuader can realize his target by knowing how to speak his audience's language by "speech, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, [in short, when he identifies his ways with the target audience]" (p.55).

By *Pathos*, Aristotle means appealing to the audience's emotions. Cockroft & Cockroft (2005) add the term "engagement" to this principle to mean "orient[ing] emotional appeals precisely towards audience and topic, and to found them on sources of feeling accessible to speaker and audience [...]" (p.17). They also add that employing "powerful imagery creates empathy for a persuader to achieve his goals; he has to make the audience feel both sympathy and empathy towards the topic he is tackling. To achieve this, audience must visualize the emotions he is

raising, so the persuader can resort to techniques like graphic vividness, emotive abstract words, repetitions, metaphors or any other tools depending on what the persuader thinks will move the audience's emotions. Moreover, Cockroft & Cockroft speak of "freeze-framing" in what they term as "the laser analogy". They simply state that in the same way that the energy is built up in a laser tube through the alignment of mirrors; emotions are built up by the persuader, intensified, and then transformed.

Logos- the third tripartite side- includes "the process of identifying the *issues* at the heart of the debate; the range of diverse arguments in the discourse; the structure of thought these arguments compose; and the sequencing, coherence and logical values of these arguments" (Cockroft & Cockroft, p. 18). Logos is employed not only to appeal to the audience's minds, but also to their emotions. That is why logos is an important aspect of the persuading process; it is in fact at the heart of persuasion. Logos is divided into invention and judgement. By invention Cockroft & Cockroft mean a method of thinking up arguments on any given topic, and by judgement [they] mean the evaluation of these arguments as they bear on the issue at hand" (p.81). The present paper is only concerned with the first of these parts as the second one is concerned with judging to what extent the argument succeeded in persuading the audience by referring to the audience.

Logos includes ten models of persuasion. The definition model, the root meaning model, the cause and effect model the similarity model and the oppositional model. Then there is the degree model, the model of testimony, the part/whole model and finally, the associational model. This latter includes four main varieties: subject/adjunct, lifestyle/status, place/function, and time/activity (Cockroft&Cockroft, pp. 85-106).

Cockroft and Cockroft offer a persuasive repertoire that help researchers in their analysis of texts. They speak of sound patterning, lexical and syntactic choices. Sound patterning for them, "create and enhance meaning" (p.165). On the phonetic level, alliteration, assonance, consonance, dissonance, onomatopoeia, and rhyme are examples. Alliteration is repetition of the first consonant; assonance, repetition of medial vowel, and consonance is the repetition of medial and final consonants. As for onomatopoeia, it is when the sound refers to the meaning, and finally, rhyme is the repetition of same sounds in the same line.

**Data Analysis:**

After applying RST analysis to twenty TED Talk narratives, the following items were found missing in the table proposed by Mann and Thompson and not added by Alexander in his adaptation. The added items are either explanatory to the already mentioned, or they are basic types not originally included. They are added in italics to the original table:

**RST table 1 with Researcher’s Contribution:**

Presentational Relations	Subject-Matter Relations
Antithesis ( <i>is has to be the opposite</i> )	Circumstance ( <i>Prepositional/Adverbial phrases</i> )
Concession ( <i>not necessarily the opposite</i> )	Conditional
Background ( <i>only for comprehension</i> )	Elaboration
Enablement	Evaluation
Evidence ( <i>anecdotes/documentaries/testimonials/statistics</i> )	Interpretation
Justification	Means
Motivation	Cause (volitional/ non-volitional)
Preparation ( <i>has to be before a Nucleus</i> )	Result (volitional/non-volitional)
Restatement	Purpose
Summary	Solutionhood
<i>Rhetorical Queries</i>	Unless
<i>Directives(suggestion/encouragement/direct commands)</i>	Otherwise
<i>Statement (claims/acceptance of claim/refutal of claim)</i>	<i>Situation</i>
<i>Question Tags</i>	<i>Deduction (Conclusion/ discovery)</i>
	<i>Answer to Queries</i>
	<i>Imaginary dialogues</i>

**The items added in the table** were met during analysis, the researcher put each based on how they contribute to the understanding of the relation between each and every piece of discourse. For instance, rhetorical queries (I adopt Alexander’s term) are employed to increase the inclination of the audience- a basic function in presentational relations- and not only to make them further understand the utterance in question. In addition, I tried to put it as close in function to the other related utterances, like restatements that already belong to the presentational relations. As for the imaginary or virtual monologues or dialogues, these are used to help the audience visualize the situation more vividly, so I inserted them under the subject-matter relations that aim at audience recognition of the relation in question, only without making them do any kind of action.

Following Marc Alexander’s adaptation of RST, the present paper examined each English TED Talk separately, first dividing it into episodes or parts, then putting each episode in an analysis table like that of Alexander’s, to analyze how its parts relate to one another. In the forthcoming tables, *presentational* and *subject-matter relations* are put according to the link that holds between the “rhetorical thrusts”. I follow Alexander’s method in using bold with main thrusts and full stops to denote the level of subordination, which make it extremely easy for readers to follow the rhetorical link between moves only by looking at the tabular form.

An example table follows to show the method of analysis. It is taken from a Talk entitled; “I grew up in a Cult: It was Heaven and Hell”, by Lilia Tarawa. The following episode is an example of the hell she talked about when she was attending school.

Table 2: *The Classroom Episode*

Fervent bowled in the door dragging Willing by the shoulder	CLAIM 1
Willing had been disobedient	.CAUSE
I don’t remember what he’d done	..COMMENT
It could have been that he combed his hair the wrong way	...DEDUCTION EXAMPLE
spoke back to his father,	...DEDUCTION EXAMPLE

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listened to music he wasn't allowed to listen to,	...DEDUCTION EXAMPLE
, or read a book he wasn't allowed to read	...DEDUCTION EXAMPLE
That didn't matter	..EVALUATION
The punishment was the same	...RESULT (VOLITIONAL)
Willing was ordered to bend over and pull down his pants	...ELABORATION (PROCESS)
And my stomach rolled	....RESULT (NON_VOLITIONAL)
Fervent pulled out the leather belt	CLAIM 2
We were then told to watch as Fervent beat Willing with it	.DIRECTIVE
And I refused to look.	..RESULT 1 (VOLITIONAL)
In that moment	CIRCUMSTANCE
My respect for Fervent's leadership imploded.	..RESULT 2(VOLITIONAL)

In the table above, there are two main claims (nuclei), each followed by a number of subordinate thrusts (satellites). From the table, the reader can understand the relation between the main claim and the other subordinating sentences: for instance, the narrator claims that Fervent-a leading figure in her tribe- punishes his son violently by pulling out his belt. A fearful thrust then ensues when they are directed as a class- to watch the incident, and as a result, Lilia refused willfully to respond; and a further result was that she stopped respecting Fervent for good. Another analysis table is put as a sample from the Arabic narratives. The table below is taken from a talk entitled "The Magic of Chasing Dreams" by Hesham ElGamal. The episode selected is one in which he likens human beings to icebergs:

Table 3: *The Iceberg Metaphor Episode*

البنى آدميين عاملين زي جبل الجليد Human beings are like icebergs	CLAIM 1
أيوه جبل الجليد Aha! Icebergs!	.RESTATEMENT
جبل الجليد بيبقى جزء صغير منه هو اللي باين	.SUBCLAIM

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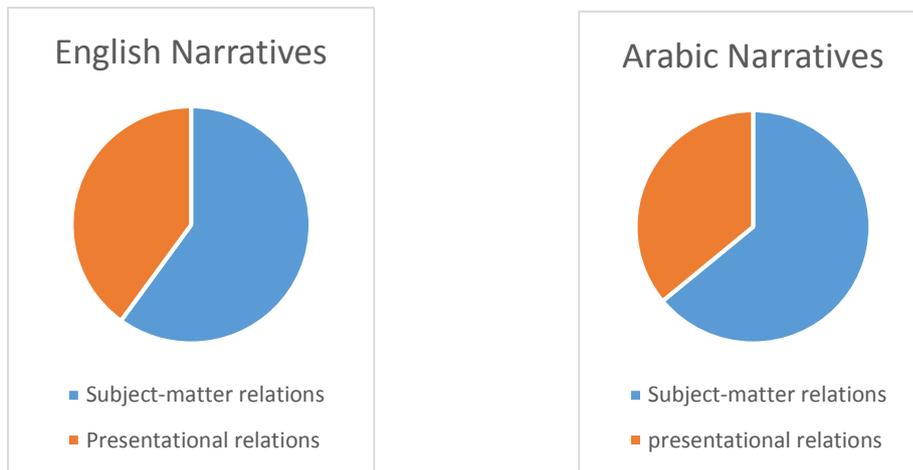
### TED Talks Narratives

In an iceberg, only a very small part of it is seen	
من فوق السطح The top	CIRCUMSTANCE
و الجزء الأكبر يبقى مستخبي And the biggest part is hidden	..ELABORATION
تحت المية Underneath the water	CIRCUMSTANCE
البنى آدميين كمان عاملين كدة Human beings are exactly the same	.SUBCLAIM
احنا عاملين كدة We are like this	..RESTATEMENT
جزء كبير من تركيبتنا يبقى مستخبي مش بس عن الناس A very big part of us is hidden not only from people	...ELABORATION
لكن مستخبي عننا احنا كمان But also from us	....CONCESSION
الجزء اللي تحت ده بنسميه العقل الباطن This hidden part is called the subconscious mind	CLAIM 2
The العقل الباطن ده منجم أسرار The subconscious mind is a mine of secrets	CLAIM 3
فيه كل الحاجات اللي بتحركنا من غير ما نحس It has everything that moves us without being conscious	.CAUSE
قيمتنا، مخاوفنا، رغباتنا، أولوياتنا Our values, fears, desires, priorities	..LISTING
كل الحاجات دي موجودة في الجزء اللي تحت All these are found in the lower hidden part	...SUMMARY

In a similar vein, the Arabic narrative is divided into main claims: this time 3 main claims are detected. A case in point is when ElGamal likens human Beings to icebergs. He then elaborates on his claim first by restating the metaphor, and

second by mentioning the details of an iceberg, what it looks like and how humans are the same, with a clear use of prepositional phrases referred to as circumstance.

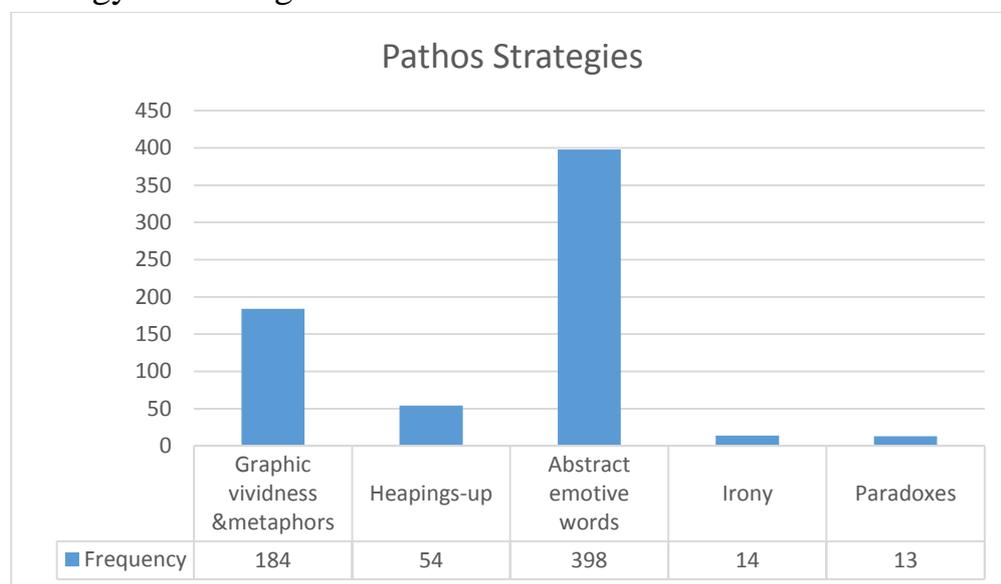
As to the types of rhetorical relations employed, a significant similarity was noticed in both English and Arabic narratives. The bisection the narratives according to Alexander's adaptation of RST, show that both English and Arabic narratives employ a hefty amount of subject-matter relations in comparison to the presentational relations. A quantitative analysis showed that in the English data, 60% of the rhetoric used was subject- matter relations, whereas 40% of the narratives was presentational. In a similar vein, subject-matter relations in the Arabic narratives amounted to 64%, whereas the presentational formed only 36%. TED talk speakers aim more at making their audience understand the relations in question and get persuaded, rather than direct them to take an action on the spot.



Both narratives show a number of common prevailing techniques in terms of the persuasive triangle: Ethos, Pathos and Logos proposed by Cockcroft and Cockcroft (2005).

The twenty English and Arabic narratives tackle different topics about surviving hardships, accepting others, and moving from failure to success through overcoming challenges. Not all of the speakers are specialists in their fields; however, they are all successful people. They all rely on narrating a part of a personal dilemma that they managed to overcome, learned from and achieved success. Their figures and topics encourage their audience to listen, understand and act accordingly. Thus, they all succeed in achieving persuasion by involving themselves as human beings in stories that make them close to their audience. As a result, they succeed as far as Ethos is concerned in appealing to the listeners.

As for the Pathos, narrators appealed to the audience’s emotions through prevalent number of strategies like *metaphorical images*, *emotive abstract words*, *listings*, *irony and paradoxes*. The following chart shows the different occurrences of each strategy in the English narratives:



The chart shows that the employment of *emotive positive and negative words* is the main strategy that speakers rely on to affect their audience’s emotions. They represent 60% of the total strategies used. This is followed by *graphic vividness and metaphors* that represent 28%; heapings-up form 8%, and finally *irony and paradoxes* are the least used, each making only 2%.

In the ten English talks, speakers rely on moving the audience’s emotions through building emotional tension by the usage of a myriad of *emotive abstract positive and negative words*. “Incredible, challenging, ashamed, wounded inside, traumatic, painful, horrible, rewarding, exciting, fantastic, effective, terrifying and beautiful” are cases in point.

Other emotion-moving technique is the use of *graphic vividness and metaphors*. Images like “ they look like dead parrots”, “let me take you on a journey”, “the way we think eats away at our mental health”, “can you slice through the psychological scar tissue of your programming?”, or “my perception later turned into a formula”, are examples on how the narrators depend on drawing a virtual image before their audience to move their emotions.

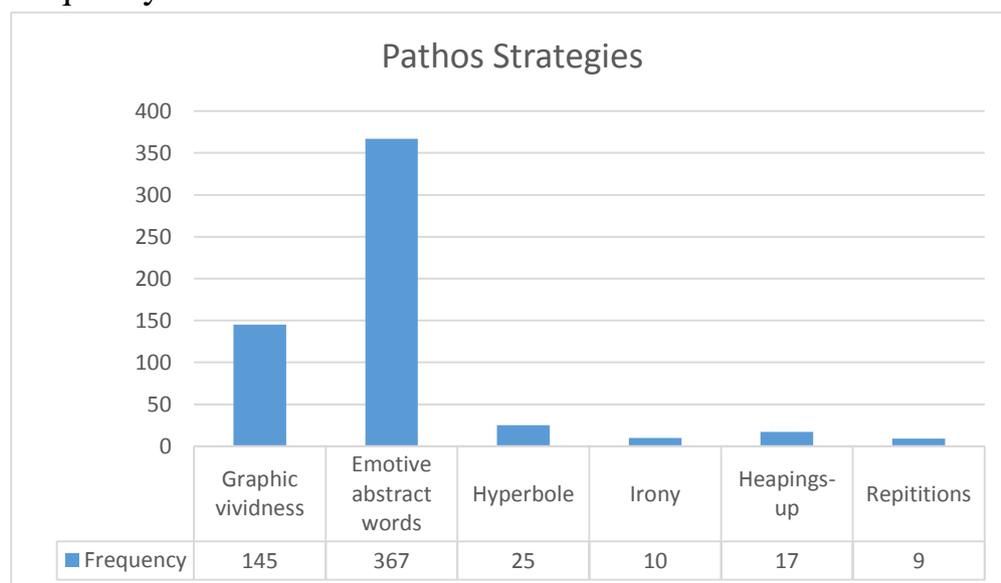
Moreover, *listings or heapings-up* contribute to this emotional build-up. This is an example from one of the talks where the speaker describes a moment he felt

was dying: “I’m freaking out. Sirens are blaring. I am laying on a stretcher. I am trembling. My arms are tingling. The pain is crushing me.” Another example is seen in: “The way we name ourselves is a reflection of who we are, our declarations, family histories, the things we believe, the morals we abide by, our homes, cultures, transformations,…”

*Irony* is very much limited in usage, but is not less effective.

An example of irony is when the speaker is talking about her life in Italy in an earlier life, she is mocking how emotional her folks are when she says: “It’s like an opera, you take the garbage out, they got to kiss everybody cos you might not come back.” In addition, targeting sarcasm at people who complain about the traffic, they are described as: “they’re riding with a committee in their heads.” Finally, *paradoxes* are also employed and have great emotional effect on the audience; a speaker is talking about how people have become lately: “we’re wealthier, but unhappier; more prosperous, but more depressed; we have faster and faster transportation, but faster and faster to complain about it.”

Likewise, Arabic texts exhibit the same strategies addressing emotions; i.e. *emotive abstract words*, *graphic vividness*, *heapings-up* and *irony*. Yet, *hyperbole* is also used together with *instant repetitions*. The chart below indicates their frequency in the Arabic narratives:



The chart shows that, like English narratives, *emotive abstract words* are the most frequently used to appeal to emotions, positive and negative words like:

"مرتاح/صادق/ضحكة/حطوة/رومانسية/إعجاب/نعمة/خايف/بلاوى/اكتئاب/بيضعف/"

(Relieved, honest. Laugh, beautiful, romantic, admiration, bliss, afraid, disasters, depression, weaken) are abundant in the narratives, they form 64% of the strategies used in Pathos. This is followed in frequency by *graphic vividness*, which forms 25%. This is evident in instances like:

1. My nightmare was when my teacher would tell me to stand up and read aloud in class

كان الكابوس بتاعى إن المدرس يقولى قوم أقف فى الفصل و أقرأ حاجة مع الناس

2. Exactly in the way you see someone for the first time and feel that her name is Samia for no logical reason  
زى ما تشوف واحدة تحس ان اسمها سامية! مش عارف ليه!

3. You will never meet a lion who makes a project of dears so that he will find his food ready at hand  
ما هتلاقى أسد بيعمل مشروع غزلان عشان لما يجوع مايتهدش حيله عمرك

*Graphic vividness* is followed in frequency by *hyperbole*. It represents 4% only, but is highly effective. Instances of this type are seen in the following:

4. They were really very hospitable  
"بجد شالونى من عالارض شيل"

5. Of course this colloquial poetry issue is too big to be covered in just 30 seconds, it needs at least 48 seconds!

طبعاً موضوع شاعر العامية ده موضوع كبير جداً ماينفعش يتقال فى 30 ثانية عايز على الأقل 48 ثانية

6. I became too strong that I can carry this tree

أنا بقيت قوى جداً أنا ممكن أشيل الشجرة دى

*Heapings-up* are likewise rare, only 3%. Examples of listings are:

7. I was surprised, I objected and left  
أستغربت و اعترضت ومشيت

8. The idea of having a dream is beautiful, romantic, naïve and nice  
فكرة الحلم فكرة حلوة رومانسية ساذجة لطيفة

9. I even did not have a piece of paper, a pen, or a mobile, I was not even able to contact anyone  
و حتى مش معايا و لا ورقة و لا قلم و لا موبايل و لا عارفة أكلم حد

As for *repetitions* and *irony*, they are 2% each. Instant repetitions have an emotional effect, examples can be seen in the following:

10. How come a part of you? How come a part of you? حته منك إزاي؟! حته منك إزاي!؟

11. I was waiting on the pavement for the microbus! I was waiting on the pavement for the microbus!  
وقفت عالرصيف استنى الميكروباص!وقفت عالرصيف استنى الميكروباص

Examples of irony are spotted in the following:

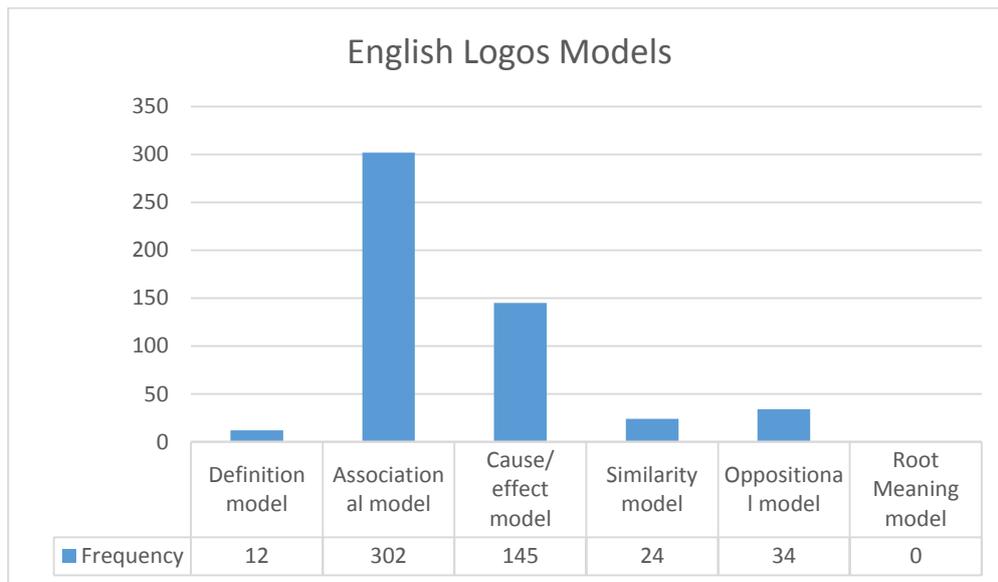
12. The poem is 37 square cubes of deep words القصيدة عبارة عن سبعة و ثلاثين مكعب من الكلام العميق
13. The frank liberal school has got nothing to do with liberalism or frankness مدرسة الليبرالي الصريح مالهاش أى علاقة بالليبرالية أو الصراحة

As for the logical models used, different types were used, however, the *associational model* is the most frequent type of logical persuasive techniques used, followed by the *cause-effect model*. Examples of various types of association can be seen in *lifestyle/status* like: “ When I wake up in the morning, I crack open a can of Redbull, then drink several more cans throughout the day”; “We have become human doings, we have more people on antidepressants”; and “ She and her family go on all exciting adventures together on the weekends.” Other examples belong to the *subject/ adjunct* type, like: “she has a rewarding career”; “That’s very scary” and “I’m a normal boring person.” “ So, by 16 I sat glued to fitness competition on television” and “ It’s October 10, I’m lying on a stretcher at the back of an ambulance” are instances of the third type of associational model known as *time/activity*.

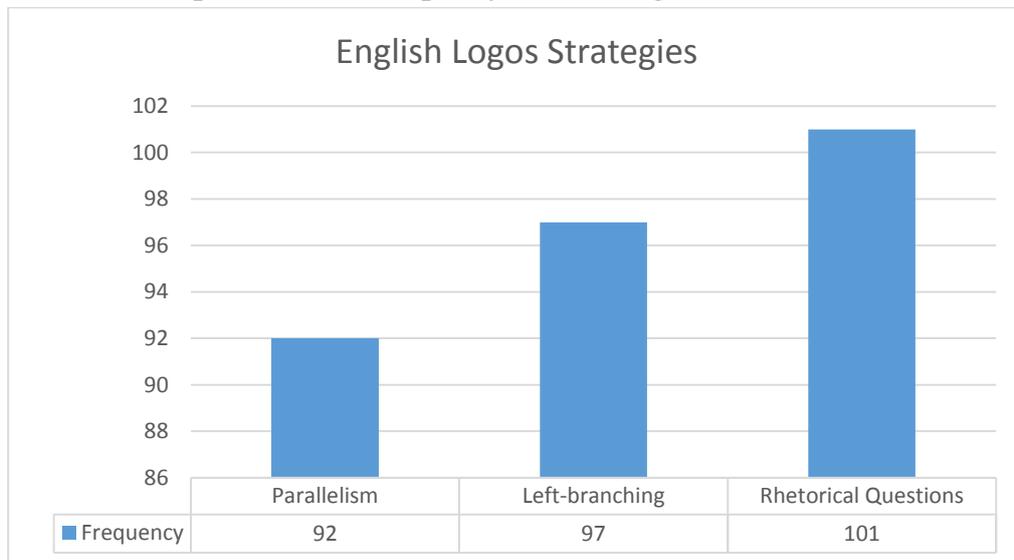
Moreover, narrators depend on the logical *cause and effect*, volitional or non-volitional to address the minds of their audience. Cases in point are: “I haven’t gotten that much rest in a long time, and now my body’s breaking down.”; “What shocked me wasn’t their poverty, but their happiness”; “The malleability of a person’s story must be self-determined, because no one can speak the names of billions in one breath”, and “I want to share the tools I created to survive because remaining silent, I become part of the problem.”

## A Contrastive Rhetoric Study of Persuasion in

### TED Talks Narratives



*Parallelism*, *marked branching* and *rhetorical questions* are three significant strategies used to appeal to the audience’s logos. The chart below shows their frequency in English narratives: *Parallelism* represents 32%, *left-branching* 33% and *rhetorical questions* 35%- a frequency which means that approximately the three techniques are used equally in the English narratives.



Parallel structures depend on repeating a certain sentence form to engage the audience’s minds and affect their emotions. Instances of parallelism can be noticed in: “did you love to dance?/did you love to draw?, I was already doing what I loved/ I was already fulfilled/ I was already happy/ I was already living my purpose, you were interacting/you were sitting there/ you were talking to them, Like a Mohammed turned Mo/ or a Lisa Pizza turned Iman, and since then, I’ve researched it, I’ve worked on it, I’ve thought about it.”

*Rhetorical queries* are also a repetitive strategy used throughout the ten English Talks. Usually narrators resort to rhetorical queries to engage the audience in their topic. They aim at making the receivers think about the logic of the issue and provide even unspoken answers. Examples can be cited in a self-question like: “why am I waiting and why have I hinged all of my happiness on this cover?” ; or a question directed to the audience like: “does anyone in here know what the purpose of life is?” or a question at the end of the Talk just to encourage the audience to act: “what bad mental habits are you holding back?”.

*Left Branching* is another common structural persuasive strategy in the ten English narratives. Left branching gives weight to the beginning of the utterance to grab more attention from the audience. The branching is of several types, not only prepositional phrases, cases in point are: “To me, they’re really ugly”, “Because sooner or later, you are gonna hit a time in your life where you will need mental health”, “in so many cases, we label them tough.” As far as *logos* is concerned, the *associational model* is frequently used in Arabic narratives like it is used in the English ones. Many instances of this type are abundant in the Arabic narratives:

14. Let’s be realistic خلينا نكون واقعيين
15. But it has never been or ever will be easy and you will never be lucky بس هي عمرها ما هتبقى سهلة و عمرك ما هتبقى محظوظين
16. Veiled women are not clever, smart or successful المحجبات مش شاطرين مش أذكيا مش ناجحين

These are examples of the *subject/adjunct* type. *Time/activity* is also evident in examples like

17. I was a third primary student when my mum told me كنت في تالته ابتدائي لما ماما مسكتني و قالتلي
18. Everyday, I visited a new place كنت كل يوم في حته جديدة
19. I went on my first day to get acquainted to my new colleagues روحت أول يوم أتعرف على دفعتي
20. I worked as an engineer for eight years" اشتغلت مهندس لمدة ثمان سنين"

Instances of *lifestyle/status* can be seen in:

21. When I stutter, people would start murmuring making fun of me لما بتهته الناس بتبتدي تستظرف و تتوشوش
22. In Egypt, there is no such thing as psychological health

احنا عندنا فى مصر مفيش حاجة اسمها صحة نفسية

23. I've always loved to sing أنا طول عمرى بحب أغنى

In the Arabic data the *place/function* type is employed:

24. For ten years, we have played music here at university, in the opera house and in "Saqiat ElSawy" قعدنا نلعب عشر

سنين هنا فى الجامعة و الأوبرا و ساقية الصاوى

25. It is not the mere job and function of your brain to calculate numbers, but it was created for a more important function عقلك مش مهمته ووظيفته الوحيدة هى حساب الأرقام، هو خلق لوظيفة أكبر وأهم

It is similarly followed by the *cause/effect model*. Showing the audience the reasons for actions and their volitional or non-volitional results is a genuine part of persuasion. Some cases in point are:

26. We will try to help those who work in the handmade industry so that God would bless them with money“ نحاول نساعد الناس اللي بتشتغل فى الهاند ميد عشان ربنا يرزقهم“

27. I asked him for a phone to call my mum روجت أقوله انى محتاجة التليفون عشان أكلم مامتى

28. You can't go in as you don't fit in

you don't fit in ماينفعش تدخلى جوه عشان

29. Putting my daughter's future before me, I became strong. عشان مستقبل بنتى أنا. قويبت

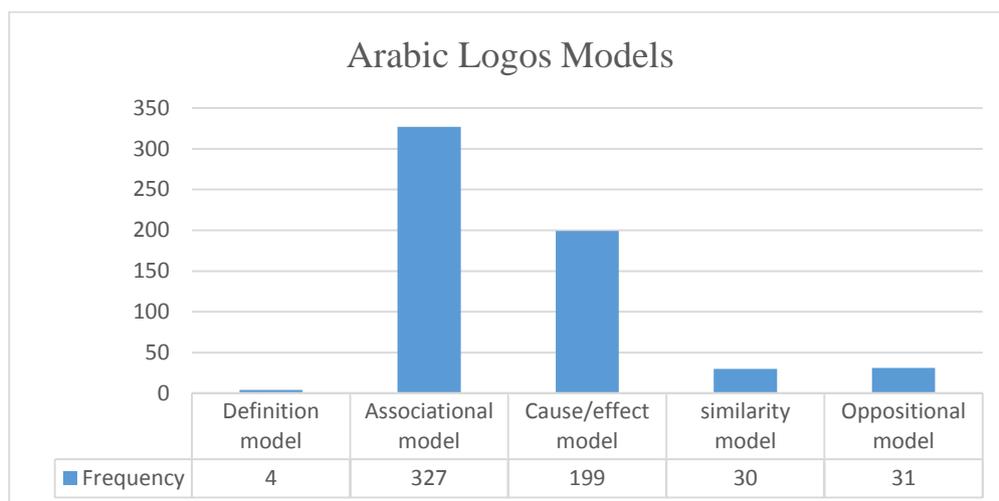
30. Just listen carefully... your life will change totally للحاجات.... هتغير بس نسمع حياتك تماما

31. Of course this made me very nervous and I couldn't know what to do طبعا ده وترنى جدا و ما بقيتش عارفة المفروض أعمل إيه

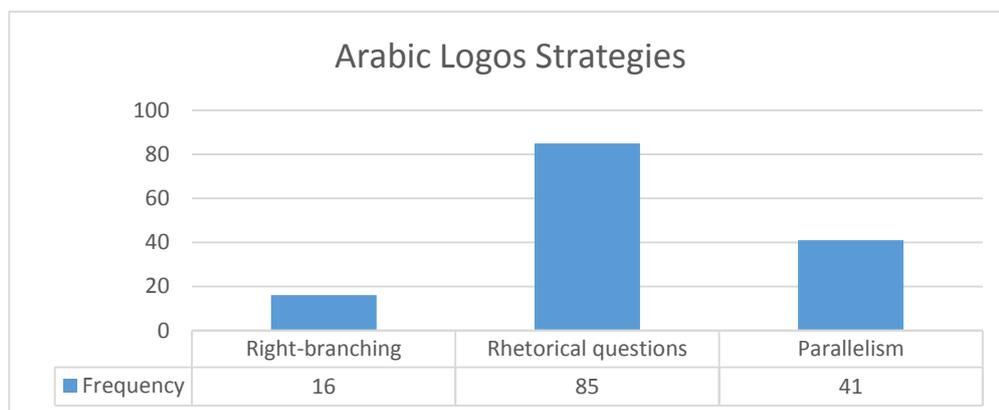
32. Because he knows that his strong will will get him where he wants لأنه عارف إن المعافرة هتوصله للى هو عايزه

33. Calculations always detain you from getting things done. فالحسابات هى اللى دايمًا بتعطلنا

## A Contrastive Rhetoric Study of Persuasion in TED Talks Narratives



Marked right branching in Arabic texts replaces left branching in English. The chart below indicates the frequency of each strategy:



The chart shows the supremacy of rhetorical queries, they represent 60%, whereas parallelism forms 29% and finally right branching is 11%. Narrators use the ordinary and expected *Left Branching* structure that is typical of Arabic. Examples of this unmarked type can be seen in:

34. I envied those who have clear jobs *كنت بحقد على اللي ليهم مهن واضحة*

35. The young boy has always wanted to sing *الولد الصغير كان نفسه يغنى*

36. Just imagine with me a girl travelling alone *تخيلوا معايا بنت مسافرة لوحدها*

These left-branching examples far outweigh right structures like: 37. After graduation..... *من بعد سن التخرج.....*

38. so, after you have finished,..... *المهم بع ما تخلص.....*

39. When I was in third primary,..... *و أنا فى أولى ابتدائى.....*

Like English narratives, *rhetorical queries* in Arabic narratives are also common and significant. Egyptian Tedex narrators use a large number of rhetorical queries

in different forms: sometimes they are used as a monologue like:

40. So, what have I learnt from all this? or virtual questions asked by parents in some imaginary situation related to Egyptian culture:

41. Oh My God! Are you going to travel on your own?! لا! انتى هتسافرى لوحدهك؟!

or a hypothetical question in a job assessment:

42. Are you happy with us? Are we stressing you? مبسوط معانا؟ طب ضاغطين عليك فى الشغل؟

Sometimes the query is put in a hypothetical dialogue between participants to make the audience visualize the situation as if really happening in front of them. Real conversations bring life to narrations. For instance, in one of the narratives, the speaker imagines a conversation between a person and a life coach, in which the person asks the life coach:

43. How come that my circumstances are not an obstacle? My whole life and struggle are not an obstacle? ”يعنى ايه ظروفى مش عقبة؟ حياتى و الكفاح بناعى مش عقبة؟“

In other narratives the rhetorical queries are meant to be a part of a monologue, in a dialogue with the self, the narrator tells the audience how he wondered:

44. Shall I succeed? Shall people like me? Shall I be rich?

يا ترى هنجح؟ يا ترى الناس هتحببنى؟ يترى هكسب فلوس؟

Queries are not only imaginary, but sometimes they are used to narrate real life events to the audience:

45. He told me: why are you thanking me? I said: Weren't you the one who helped publish my book? He said: Son, I don't know you or your book. لقيته بيقولى: انت بتشكرنى على ايه؟ قولتله: هو مش حضرتك نشرت كتابى ووديته لدار نشر؟ قالى: يابنى انا معرفكش و معرفش كتابك اسمه ايه

46. As if a chip is taken from a part of my brain and inserted in another part and everything would just go smoothly كأن فى فيشة بتتفك من حته فى مخى و تركب فى حنة تانية و الدنيا تمشى بكل سلاسة

*Parallelism* is evident as well in the Arabic Talks. Repetition of the same sentence structure is abundantly employed by speakers. Parallel sentences are easy to understand and memorize on the part of the audience-an effect that a speaker would want to achieve. The following are examples of such repetitions:

47. What is right differs from one society to the other, and from one family to the other and from time to time  
الصح من مجتمع لمجتمع مختلف/ و من عيلة لعيلة مختلف/ و من زمن لزمان مختلف،

48. Some people run for no cause and others run for a cause and meaning  
فى ناس بتجرى من غير تمن و من غير معنى/ و فى ناس بتجرى و فى تمن و فى معنى

49. I will be able exactly just as she was able, there are many youth younger than me, yet because they stopped learning, they grew older  
زى ما هى قدرت أنا هقدر، فى شباب أصغر منى و منكم بطلوا يتعلموا..هم عجزوا

50. There are a lot of older people and yet are younger  
فى ناس أكبر منا بكتير و هم شباب عننا،

51. We are not clever, we are not successful, we are not smart, we are dumb, we cause others to feel sheepish  
احنا مش شاطرين/احنا مش ناجحين/احنا مش أذكيا/احنا مابنفهمش/احنا مانشرفش

### Discussion of Findings:

While both of the English and the Arabic narratives show a big number of cause/result volitional and non-volitional relations, and elaboration techniques like examples, processes, and attributes, the Arabic narratives show virtual dialogues as an integral part of graphic vividness. Speakers narrate real and imaginary dialogues before their audience to bring a close-in lens on the overall message they want to deliver. In addition, in Egyptian culture, narrating with much detail including real or imaginative dialogic or monologic style is an integral part of the Egyptians' entertainment and persuasion tools.

Delving further deep into the narratives themselves, both English and Arabic narrators speak of their personal experiences as normal human beings, and so, they get closer to their audience as far as Ethos is concerned. Influencers, specialists, celebrities, or even ordinary people, the speakers always resort to short introductions and quick tackling of the main purpose of their talk, narrating a part of their personal experiences to the audience to show their success and failure and lessons learnt along their life journeys. Hence, they add further persuasive devices to their messages.

As for the Logos, the cause/effect model is the prevailing model used in both languages, followed by the associational model, especially that of subject/ adjunct type. It seems that showing the audience the reasons behind taking certain actions

and the resulting effects, especially when comparing two attitudes, has a great effect on persuading them of the message the speaker aims at conveying. In addition, using the subject/ adjunct associational model is also prevalent in both languages; associating an attitude, person or object with positive or negative adjuncts has a profound effect on the recognition of the audience and their persuasion. Other associational models are employed, like for instance lifestyle/status and time/ activity, and they are used to compare and contrast different attitudes of the same person before and after change, or between two persons living two contrasting life styles. In the same vein, similarity and oppositional models appear in both languages to compare and contrast people or objects.

Graphic vividness and metaphors are seen to be employed on a wide scale in both types of narratives. Nonetheless, the type of images employed differ from one culture to another. They contribute to making the audience visualize the message aimed at. It is worth-noting here that in English narratives, listings or heapings-up also contribute to this visualization and emotional build-up, whereas in Arabic narratives, no listings are used. On the other hand, parallel structures in English and Arabic are extensively used. Left-branching in English narratives are also evident, whereas in Arabic rarely used. Random repetitions in both types of narratives are employed, no special types are employed.

### **Conclusion:**

This paper attempted to answer a number of research questions concerning the analysis of English and Arabic TED Talk narratives. Using Alexander's adaptation of Mann and Thompson's Rhetorical Structure Theory and Cockcroft and Cockcroft's Model of Persuasion, the researcher managed to provide answers to all the questions.

RST especially the adapted version of Marc Alexander is a trusted method of analyzing long narratives, fifteen pages long: through the use of the tabular form, episodes of narration are easily pinpointed and categorized. Moreover, assigning bold and full stops make the understanding of the relations very easy for the reader. It is also worth mentioning in this respect that the analysis of Arabic narratives is as easy as the English ones. The analyzed data, mounting to twenty pages each, were easily understood as cohesive texts through Alexander's tabular form.

The Arabic narratives are largely the same as the English. The two prevailing models used are the cause/effect followed by the associational. As for the persuasive techniques, English and Arabic narratives show more similarities than differences in spite of the fact that these are completely two different languages and speakers and audiences come from two different cultural backgrounds. The pathos strategies employed in the English and Arabic narratives are emotive abstract words, graphic vividness, heapings-up and irony. The Arabic narratives use furthermore instant repetitions, and hyperbole.

Regarding the logos strategies, Arabic and English both employ three main techniques; namely, marked syntactic branching, parallelism and rhetorical queries. Narrators mainly use the usual Arabic sentence structure and almost use no fronting. In addition, Arabic narrators depend heavily on quasi-dialogues (taken from real Egyptian culture, or virtual conversations) more than English narrators.

English and Arabic narratives randomly selected, look almost alike in the way the narrators address their audience. No long introductions are used in the narratives, in most of the cases, a very short background is provided, and then the core objective is introduced. Moreover, regardless of the narrator's background or profession, personal experiences are shared with the audience. Narrators in both languages-definitely having prowess in the topics they cover, though not always specialized-employ various and plenty subordinating moves, giving more weight to subject-matter relations, over those of the presentational ones.

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دراسة تقابلية بلاغية لإستراتيجيات الإقناع فى سرديات محادثات تيد

د. غادة السيد بلال عطية

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**المستخلص:**

منذ عام 1984 بدأت الآلاف من السرديات على منصة تيد فى الإنتشار. و ترجع أهمية هذه السرديات لكونها الأكثر تأثيراً على الحضور حيث تهدف إلى تقديم قصصاً ملهمة عن الكفاح و النجاح مما يكون له أعظم الأثر على الحضور فى إقناعهم بتغيير نمط الحياة و من ثم الاستمتاع بحياة أفضل. و لهذا السبب اتخذت هذه الورقة البحثية تلك السرديات مادة لها حيث يقوم البحث بتحليل عشر سرديات باللغة الإنجليزية و عشر أخرى باللغة العربية و عقد دراسة تقابلية بينهما. يعتمد البحث على نظرية البنية البلاغية لمان و تومسون (1987) و التى تم تبنيها و تعديلها على يد مارك الكساندر (2009)، و قد تم استخدام تعديل الكساندر لأنه أكثر ملائمة للنص. كما يقوم البحث بتحليل إستراتيجيات الإقناع المذكورة وفقاً لنموذج الإقناع لكوكروفت و كوكروفت (2013). و قد أضاف البحث جزءاً جديداً على تصنيف مان و تومسون تحت عنوانى العلاقات العرضية و العلاقات الموضوعية بحيث يكون تحليل النصوص فيما بعد أكثر سهولة و يسر على الباحث.

**الكلمات الدالة:** سرديات محادثات تيد، نظرية البنية البلاغية، نموذج الإقناع، دراسة تقابلية