

**A Genre Analysis of University Commencement Comedians'
Speeches**

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Abstract

Commencement ceremony speeches are a rich source of data. However, very few studies tackle this social activity. The present paper attempts to fill in the gaps in these studies. A qualitative research method is adopted to investigate the selected data. The data of this study consist of two comedian guests' commencement speeches delivered by Jim Carrey (2014) and Ellen DeGeneres (2009) at Maharishi University of Management and Tulane University, respectively. This study investigates the cognitive structuring of the two selected speeches and examines the typical strategies, techniques and tactics employed by two comedian speakers to realize their communicative purposes.

However, an eclectic model has been chosen by the researcher to

analyze the data. This model consists of Zhan's (2012) genre analysis model and Rossette-Crake's (2019) techniques and tactics of public speaking.

This study concludes that the cognitive structuring of the selected data obeys the five-move structure: Move 1 "**establishing a favorable rapport**", move 2 "**orienting to the speech**", move 3 "**announcing the thesis**", move 4 "**developing the thesis**", move 5 "**drawing a conclusion**". However, the results reveal that there is a deviation in the move sequence in these two speeches. For instance, Within Carrey's speech, the second move came after the third move. While within DeGeneres's commencement speech, the third move came after the fourth one. On the other hand, this study shows that the strategies, techniques, and tactics employed to accomplish these moves were varied. Both speakers use some of them during their speeches.

However, a strategy does not belong to only one specific move rather it can appear in another move but it does not in the same function(s).

Keywords: Genre, Genre Analysis, Commencement speech, Move, Strategy, Techniques, Tactics.

تحليل صنف لخطابات فنانيين فكاهيين في
حفلات التخرج الجامعية

الخلاصة

تعد خطابات حفلات التخرج مصدرا مهما للمعلومات، ولكن القليل من الدراسات تناولت هكذا نشاط اجتماعي. تحاول الدراسة الحالية ملأ الفراغ في هذا المجال. تعتمد الدراسة منهجا نوعيا في التحقيق، وتتألف مادة التحليل من خطابين لممثلين فكاهيين ضيفين القاها كل من جيم كاري (٢٠١٤) و ألين ديجينرز (٢٠٠٩) في جامعة مهاريشي وجامعة تيولين على التوالي. تحقق هذه الدراسة في البناء المعرفي للخطابين اللذين تم اختيارهما، وتنفحص الاستراتيجيات، والتقنيات والوسائل النموذجية التي استخدمها الفنانيين لإظهار أغراضهما التواصلية. أختار الباحث نموذجا انتقائيا مؤلف من نموذج تحليل الصنف ل (زهان ٢٠١٢) وتقنيات ووسائل (روسيتي- كريك ٢٠١٩) للمخاطبة العامة. نستنتج من الدراسة بان البناء المعرفي للخطابين يتبع الخطوات التالية: ١- اقامة علاقة مفضلة، ٢- التوجيه الى الخطاب، ٣- اعلان الفرضية، ٤- تنمية الفرضية، ٥- الاستنتاج.

تبين نتائج الدراسة وجود انحراف أو ابتعاد في تتابع الخطوات لكلا الخطابين، ففي خطاب "كاري" جاءت الخطوة الثانية بعد الخطوة الثالثة بينما في خطاب "ديجينرز"

جاءت الخطوة الثالثة بعد الخطوة الرابعة. كما تبين الدراسة ان هناك تنوع في الاستراتيجيات والوسائل المستخدمة في انجاز الخطوات، حيث استخدم كلا الفنانيين بعضها اثناء الكلام، لكن لا تنتمي الاستراتيجية لخطوة واحدة فقط وانما يمكن ان تظهر في خطوة اخرى ولكن في وظيفة او وظائف مختلفة.

1- Introduction

Bawarshi (2000: 235) states that over the past 40 years, the study of the genre across a range of contexts and various disciplines has re-conceptualised the way people think of genre and its productive and interpretative role of texts and culture, in which the studying of genres has been turned from a description to an explanatory activity. This great shift in the quality of genre studies and its expansion to include many fields led to the diversification of the sources of genre studies. According to Taylor (2006: 145), the commencement ceremony speech is one of the most memorable events in a college's life for students for its symbolism and meaning. It is a time to remember the efforts, suffering, and persistence of study times, as well as to instil hope for the future and to continue the enthusiasm to take responsibility as leaders of the graduates in society. Moreover, it is the last formal occasion to bring together alumni,

their parents, professors, and colleagues. Guests' commencement ceremony speeches are a rich data source for genre studies. However, the studies on this social activity are very few. Genre-based analysis of commencement speeches can give interested people valuable information about this kind of public speaking. The present study selects two commencement ceremony speeches delivered by prominent comedians, Jim Carrey at the Maharishi University of Management in 2014 and Ellen DeGeneres at Tulane University in 2009, as data. This study aims to:

- 1) Analyze and examine the cognitive structuring of these speeches.
- 2) Investigate practical strategies used to realise particular moves to transfer the speakers' communication purposes.
- 3) Examine Rossette-Crake's (2019) techniques and tactics of public speaking employed by the speakers to accomplish their goals.

The researcher uses an eclectic model to investigate these two speeches. This model consists of Zhan's (2012) genre analysis model and Rossette-Crake's (2019) techniques and tactics of public speaking.

2- Literature Review

Etymologically, The word "genre" comes from the Latin term for kind or class. However, the interest in the concept of genre dates back to the Greeks and Romans. Traditionally, the term genre was employed in the field of literature. The concept of the genre was first introduced into the area of Applied linguistics in the 1970s. However, the formal establishment of genre analysis status was in 1980, when a group of applied linguists analysed language structures based on social-cultural explanations instead of the surface distribution of language(Liu, 2012: 2407-2408). Linguistically, several disciplines pay more attention to the concept of genre in their studies. For example, more attention has been given to it by "Systemic Functional Linguistics" (SFL) (Halliday and Martin, 1993); "Applied linguistics" (Swales 1990s, Bhatia 1993); "Rhetorical Studies" (freedman and Medway 1994); Discourse community studies" (Bex 1996); and "Critical Discourse Analysis" (Wodak and Meyer 2001). Although there is no agreement on the definition of genre (Hyland, 2009: 26), some specialists have defined the genre as:

Swales (1990: 58) define the genre as " A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. this rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style". Based on swales' definition above, Bhatia states that genre is " A recognisable communicative events characterised by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs." (Bhatia, 1993: 49). According to Miller (1984), the genre is typified rhetorical action. However, she describes genres as a significant key to understanding how people participate in a community's actions. Depending on this point of view, it is not appropriate to study and understand the genre without a careful study of the community and its surrounding social context. Many researchers analyzed and investigated speeches delivered by public speakers on various

occasions. However, the studies dealing with the analysis of commencement speeches are very rare such as:

Partch and Kinnier (2011) examine 90 commencement ceremony speeches delivered at American universities between 1990 and 2007. This study uses content analysis to check the most frequent values and messages delivered in these commencement speeches. According to the researchers, these messages were: " helping others, doing the right things, never giving up, appreciating diversity, expanding the Horizons, cherish special others. And seeking balance". However, female speakers frequently cite two messages, especially at women's colleges: "be true to yourself and cherish special others".

Reynolds (2013) studied some commencement addresses delivered by well-known American business leaders at United State colleges and universities to establish relationships between leadership constructs and decision making. The analytical foundation of this study adopted servant-leadership and ethic of care. This study concluded that there is a gender difference in delivered

messages of commencement speeches. Additionally, from a feminist perspective, this study increased servant-leadership knowledge. The study proved an essential relationship between language use related to servant-leadership and the ethic of care. While qualitatively, the data analysis explored gender differences in constructions of servant-leadership and ethics of care.

Konfrst (2017) uses content analysis to examine 16 presidential speeches delivered between 1981 to 2016. These speeches were selected from particular commencement ceremonies more often delivered in May or June. The main suggestion for this study was that the tone and content of these speeches could be well predicted before they were delivered. This study concluded that the presidents used different terms to advance their policy agendas or emphasize legacy building. Moreover, the Republican presidents used particular terms for policy advocacy less than democratic ones.

3- Theoretical Framework

Bhatia's (1993) cognitive structuring model plays an important role in genre analysis. Researchers adopted this model to

analyse and examine their data in various fields. Bhatia (1993) states that each genre has a communicative purpose and a communicative goal. However, the shared set of communicative purposes shapes the genre and gives it an internal structure (Liu (2012: 2407)). The communicative purpose is accomplished through cognitive structuring, which consists of moves and certain strategies to realise them (Zhan, 2012: 214). These strategies may vary due to the speaker's or writer's aims to realize a particular communicative purpose. However, the occasion of the speech, the kind of the subject and the public are influential factors in the choice of these strategies.

3.1 Zhan's (2012) Genre-Analysis Model of PPS

Within Bhatia's framework, Zhan (2012) examined 28 prepared public speeches (PPS) delivered by experts in various fields like economics, politics, law and education. This study aimed to investigate the cognitive structuring of English PPS and examine the required strategies the speakers have selected to convey their communicative purpose. The data analysis of Zhan's study suggests that the cognitive structuring of PPS can be assigned as:

1- Move 1 Establishing a Favourable Rapport: It is the starting point of the speech. However, this move is often realised through particular phatic expressions such as greetings, addressing, and gratitude/pleasure.

2- Move 2 Orienting to the Speech: It always occurs after the first move. Speakers use several strategies to orient their audience to the speech, like making a compliment and empathising with the audience. However, the borders between moves 1 and 2 are fuzzy because they overlap in many speeches.

3- Move 3 Announcing the Thesis: Mainly, it occurs after orienting the audience to the speech. It is accomplished by using direct or indirect thesis statements explaining the speech's main idea.

4- Move 4 Developing the Thesis: It is fundamental, most informative, and the most extended move of the speech. Generally, it is divided into sections or sometimes further into sub-sections. Zhan (2012) uses Whitman and Boase's (1983) term "cells of information" to express these sections and sub-cell to sub-section. A cell of information consists of a controlling statement and supporting materials which explain and develop it. Overall,

each cell of information progresses depending on particular organisational patterns. According to Zhan (2012), the speaker may use a "Wedge cell" to realise specific necessary goals.

5- Move 5 Drawing a Conclusion: It is the last move in the speech. It represents the final chance for a speaker to summarise the speech to the audience. Several strategies can be used to realise the aim of this move, such as summary, quotations, and thank expressions. Etc.

3.2 Rossette-Crake's (2019) Techniques and Tactics of public speaking

Overall, a public speaker's language substantially affected the nature of the address. Choosing the best words can make the language clearer and more effective for the audience. However, the crucial factor of successful public speaking is not only using clear and specific language, but it should be appropriate for the topic, the audience and the occasion itself. Another critical Factor in successful public speaking is the strategies, techniques and tactics a speaker uses when delivering his or her speech. Rossette-Ceake (2019) suggests a set of techniques and

tactics that public speakers prefer to employ. They are:

1) **Language to talk to the audience**

Communicating directly with the audience is the primary means of interacting in public speaking. According to Rossette-Crake (2019), successful speakers use "language to talk to the audience" to increase their interaction with them. This technique consists of the following tactics:

A) Repetition can be employed to enhance the rhythm of the speech. For example, public speakers use repetitions to emphasise an issue and capture the audience's attention during their speeches.

B) Direct references to the speaker and the audience is another tactic that public speakers may utilise to interact with their audience. These references are usually referred to explicitly like (**I, you, we, us**).

C) Direct question is an essential choice that the speaker can use to increase their interaction with their audience.

D) Connectives typical of conversation are another tactic that reinforces the sense of interaction in public speaking, such as (So, And, But).

2) **Question and answer**

the question and answer technique is the second essential way that public speakers employ for many reasons, such as creating a social dialogue, creating suspense, triggering a closed, and enhancing the audience's listenability.

3) **Taking questions from the audience**

public speakers usually use this technique depending on formality and the genre of the speech. Announcing the speaker's policy for taking the questions from the beginning of the speech is a significant issue. However, some speakers may decide to take the audience's questions during or at the end of the speech.

4) **Terms of address**

public speakers usually employ the terms of address technique to create a theatrical effect and reinforce the sense of interaction with their audience. This technique can be used through formal expressions such as "ladies and gentlemen" or less formal expressions like "dear friends". Speakers in some genres may address specific audience members by their names such as "Robert" or by their functions like "Mr. President". This technique could

enable a speaker to warm up before entering the speech.

5)Attention-Getters

one of the fundamental ways for public speakers to establish a good and effective relationship with their audience is to follow the technique of the attention-getters. This technique consists of the following tactics:

A) Relate a personal experience

One powerful tool for the success of storytelling is to tell a story related to something the speaker has experienced to capture the audience's attention (Kushner and Yeung, 2007).

B) Get the audience to participate

standing before the audience and talking to them is not a simple matter. The essential fear speakers care about is ensuring whether the audience is engaged with the speech. Does the audience pay attention to the speech? Do they like the speaker? Do they like the speech in general? What if the audience does not participate? (Adams, 2015). A successful solution to remove these fears is to get the audience to participate in the story through the "imagine that" technique.

C) Simulating a journey

simulating a journey is another tactic that public speakers use to

increase the interaction with the audience. For example: " I'm here today to invite you to come with me on a trip into history..." (Rossette-Crake, 2019: 75).

D) Ask a question/ several questions

public speakers establish effective interaction with their audience by asking specific questions that the listeners will be able to answer. Induce the audience's curiosity by asking interesting questions (Gabrielsen and Christiansen, 2010: 128).

E) Quote

Among the famous tactics to trigger the audience's curiosity is the tactic of (Quote). Famous quotations from famous writers, specialists, or even songs are no less significant than the public speaking platform used to deliver the speech. Using wise, moderate, and practical quotations usually increase its impact on the public (Chasen and Putnam, 2012: 55).

F) Tell the story behind the speech

Stories are always something the audience loves, especially if these stories are facts, personal, and closely related to the topic of the speech (Kushner, 2004). Telling the suitable story behind the speech

itself is necessary to accomplish this task.

6) Direct speech

public speakers always use the "Direct speech" technique to make their speeches come alive, more theatrical, and engaging for the public. Using direct speech in public speaking can give an impression that speech is just like a play performed on the stage.

7) Presenting thought process in the form of a dialogue (well, now, hmmm, oh)

This technique is the primary way a speaker may use to make a speech correspond with the moment of delivery. Public speakers can employ discourse markers like (well, now, and hmmm), which suggests that the speaker is engaged in a thought process. While (oh), on the other hand, suggests spontaneity (Rossette-Crake, 2019: 78-79).

4- Methodology

The present study uses two commencement ceremony speeches delivered by two famous comedians at American universities as data to be studied and analysed using an eclectic model. the researcher selects Jim Carrey's speech at the Maharishi University of Management in 2014 and Ellen DeGeneres' speech at Tulane University in 2009. However, these

speeches obey the following criteria:

1) The study adopted only the public speakers who came from outside the University community while excluding those who came from the academic one.

2) The commencement speeches published on the official websites, which are characterised by the presence of supporting videos, have been provided only. Otherwise, it will be excluded.

3) the samples were deliberately selected from the previously mentioned universities because they are considered a link between the past and the present.

The present study adopted a qualitative research method to analyze the data to highlight the moves, strategies, techniques and tactics of genre analysis. The researcher examined and analyzed the data using an eclectic model consisting of Zhan's (2012) model of genre analysis and Rossette-Crake's (2019) techniques and tactics of public speaking.

5- Data Analysis

The data analysis will be done according to what was mentioned earlier in the theoretical framework. Due to the space limit, the researcher selects one example for each strategy, technique and tactic

in the selected commencement speeches.

5.1 Jim Carrey's Commencement Speech Analysis

On 30 May 2014, the well-known comedian Jim Carrey delivered his commencement speech at Maharishi University of Management. The full text of this speech was published on the following site:

<https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/jim-carrey-commencement-speech-transcript-2014-at-maharishi-university-of-management>

Move 1: Establishing a favourable rapport

Example 1: *"Thank you. What are you sitting down for? ... You guys can stretch that out in post, right?...Thank you, Bevin. Thank you all. [Jai Guru Dev]."*

Carrey uses the **phatic expression** "Thank you" to establish a favourable rapport with his audience. In order to create a strong relationship with the audience, the speaker comically asks the public two questions: "What are you sitting...?; Can you stretch that out...?". Then he thanked "Bevin" and all other attendees with some foreign words

(**Jai Guru Dev**). In the above lines, the speaker uses **the terms of address technique** to address the attendees. He calls one of them by his name " Bevin ", while the others have been addressed using less formal terms, such as: " guys ", to set down familiarity with his audience.

Example 2: *"I am elated and truly, truly, truly excited to be present and fully connected to you...Just needs some more. [inaudible]"*

Here, Carrey employs another **phatic expression**, "I am elated...." to realize the same goal of establishing a favourable rapport with his public. In the above line, the **repetition tactic** is used when Carrey says: " truly, truly, truly " because repetitive words are more accessible to remember by the audience . and expresses his great happiness among them. Finally, he gestures comically some incomprehensible letters to keep them attentive to him. Interestingly, this line came after the first paragraph of the fourth move.

Move 3:Announcing the thesis

Example 3: *"I'm here to plant a seed today. A seed that will inspire you to move forward in life with enthusiastic hearts and a clear sense of wholeness. The question is will that seed have a chance to*

take root or will be sued by Monsanto and forced to use that seed, which may not be totally Ayurvedic?”

The speaker **explicitly** employs one of the thesis statements to announce his message: “I’m here to plant a seed today...”. He announces that he has come to sow a seed to inspire them in their future lives. However, he does not explain what this seed is. It may be safe to say that he intentionally does this to make the audience more eager and ready to know what this seed is. Then, He asks if these seeds have a chance to take root or “will be sued by Montasto...” Here, the speaker comically uses allusion as a rhetorical device to refer to one of the American agricultural biotechnology corporations because a standard reference to the famous corporation in America like “Montasto “gives more validity to the topic being discussed.

Move 2: Orienting to the speech

Example 4: “ *I want to thank the trustees, the administrators,.... for creating an institution worthy of Maharishi’s ideals of education. A place that teachers knowledge and experience, the knowledge and experience necessary to be productive in life.... I’d like to*

acknowledge all of your wonderful parents....”

Here, the speaker **commends** the trustees, the University, and the administrators because they contributed to establishing this university, in which knowledge and experiences are obtained. A **commendation strategy** is one way to direct the audience to the central part of the speech and accomplish this move’s aims. Then he expresses his admiration for the graduates’ parents and their efforts. **Making a compliment strategy** has been applied here to satisfy the public’s needs for appreciation. As a result of this compliment, the audience is happy and more willing to accept the rest of the speech.

Example 5: “ *And to the graduating class of 2017... Minus three.... Congratulations. Yes . Give yourself a round of applause please.”*

Another **compliment** is used, but this time for the graduates with great comic taste. For example, on calling the audience graduates class of 2017 instead of saying 2014, they kept silent for a short time, then Carrey made a joke by saying “ minus three, “ which brought the audience to laughter. Then he

employs a **congratulatory expression**, “Congratulations“, to satisfy their need for esteem. Finally, he tells them to applaud their outstanding achievements. What distinguishes the above line is that it comes after even certain lines of the fourth move.

Move 4: Developing the thesis

First cell of information

Example 6: “*I have no limits. I cannot be contained because I’m the container. You can’t contain the container, man. You can’t contain the container.*”

Here, the speaker focuses on the concept of “self”. He presents specific ideas and examples to clarify the idea of self-confidence. This line represents the **controlling statement** of this cell, in which he emphasizes the idea that the soul is not limited to the limits of the physical body because it has enormous capabilities which cannot be limited to a specific mould. **Repetition tactic** is used here to focus on an important point, which is the unlimited self, as he says: “You can’t contain the container”. He employs this tactic because repetitive words, phrases, or sentences are easier to remember later by the listeners.

Example 7: “*And the ego tries to keep you in the multiplex of the*

mind... And you’re going to look at a person like me and say, ‘How could we ever hope to reach those kinds of heights, Jim?’ How can we make a painting...? How do you fly so high...? ...No matter what you gain, ego will not let you rest. He will tell you that you cannot stop..., until you’ve achieved immortality.”

In this paragraph, Carrey refers to one of the three constructs in Freud’s structural model of the psyche, which is the “ego”. Then to illustrate the idea, the speaker mentions expected questions from the audience, such as: “How could we ever...?”; “How can we make...?”; “How do you fly...?”. Here, **several questions tactic** is used to maintain the audience’s attention, and they also contribute to improving the interaction between the speaker and his audience. He uses the “WH” question to induce them to think about the answers to these questions. Overall, this cell of information has been organized **logically**, where the information is arranged in a logical manner according to the subject.

Second cell of information

Example 8: “*Now fear is going to be a player in your life, but you get to decide how much. You can*

spend your whole life imagining ghosts, worrying about the pathway to the future,..., and the decisions we make ...are based in either love or fear.”

In this example, the first line represents the controlling statement of this cell of information. In this line, the speaker considers fear as another challenge in the graduate arena they face, but they should decide how much. Here, the speaker employs a technique of presenting his thought in the form of dialogue when using one of the **discourse markers**, “Now...” to deliver a particular idea of “fear” simply and attractively in a dialogue atmosphere. Then, he gives them some logical expectations in a comic style, such as: “imagining ghosts” in all their lives, to explain the impact of this fear on graduates’ future. Eventually, he mentions that all decisions depend on two crucial factors: Love and fear.

Example 9: *“My father could have been a great comedian, but he didn’t believe that was possible for him...,he got a safe job as an accountant. And when I was 12 years old, he was let go from that safe job...I learned many great lessons from my father,...that you*

can fail at what you don’t want so you might as well take a chance on doing what you love.”

In this paragraph, the speaker provides a natural and practical example of the effect of fear on an individual’s future. He mentions his father, saying: “My father could have been a great comedian...”. This idea represents the climax of the topic. This cell of information is developed on a **problem-solution pattern** to show the goal, in which the speaker presents the main problem of fear and its unfavourable effects on the future of graduates, then he gives a logical solution, which is the right choice away from that fear, depending on the result of choosing the wrong profession by his father. In these lines, the speaker adopts an effective tactic to be closer to his audience: ‘**Relating a personal experience**’. He tells his listeners a real story that happened to his father: “And when I was 12 years old, he was...”. All these events and information in this cell are related to and support the controlling statement.

Third cell of information

Example 10: *“ ... People would come over to the house and they’d be greeted by a seven year old,*

throwing himself down...stairs. They would say, 'What happened?' And I would say, 'I don't know, let's check the replay.'...When I was about 28... I realized ... the purpose of my life had always been to free people from concern, ... What's yours? How will you serve the world? What did they need that your talent can provide? That's all you have to figure out... The effect you have on others is the most valuable currency..., my choosing to free people from concern got me to the top of a mountain... "

Here, the speaker brings the audience back to the past and tells them about a comic situation he made when he was only seven years old: "throwing himself down...". Here the speaker uses **Simulating a journey tactic** to be close to the audience. Consequently, the audience becomes delighted, making them more willing and comfortable listening to the speech. **Direct speech technique** has been used in these lines to create a distinctive theatrical atmosphere, in which the speaker is just like an actor conveying the event to his listeners, for instance, when he says: "They would say, "What happened?". At the end of these

lines, Carrey gives the graduates a set of motivational questions: "What's yours? How will you serve the world? What did they need that your talent can provide? That's all you have to figure out. Here, the speaker uses **several question tactic** to draw the graduates' attention, enhance their interaction with them, and think seriously after the speech. Then, based on his **personal experience**, the speaker reveals to the honorees that what is essential and what leads them to their goals is to influence others. His choice to free people from their concerns is the crucial reason that took him to the top of the mountain.

Example 11: " *You guys are so ahead of the game. You already know who you are. And that peace, that peace we're after lies somewhere beyond personality,..., beyond invention and disguise... You can join the game, fight the wars, play with form all you want... Don't let anything stand in the way of the light that shines through this form. Risk being seen in all of your glory.* "

In the above paragraph, Carrey gives significant advice to the honorees. Here he emphasizes that they are qualified for this task in the future because they know

who they are. Depending on his experiences, Carrey gives the graduates the essential advice: never to give up on their dreams, even if they are impossible, because the taste of the experience, even if it is a failure, is better than never experiencing it. Then he says: "Don't let anything stand in ...". It is the most important lesson a speaker has learned in his life and gives it to the graduates. The **controlling statement** in this cell of information is: "What's yours? How will you serve the world? What did they need that your talent can provide? That's all you have to figure out.". However, all the information, advice, and examples serve as supporting materials for the controlling statement. Finally, the **chronological order** is adopted here in this cell: "... seven year old; When I was about 28; after a decade".

Move 5: Drawing a conclusion

Example 12: " *Your job is not to figure out how it's going to happen for you, but to open the door in your head. And when the door open in real life, just walk through it... And when I say, 'Life doesn't happen to you, it happens for you.'* I really don't know if

that's true. I'm just making a conscious choice..."

The speaker here gives a condensed summary of what was stated in the speech. He re-emphasizes the idea of opening the doors of real life, taking advantage of opportunities, and not despairing in all circumstances. Here, Carrey employs a **direct speech technique** in which the audience is just like a viewer of the event and the speaker as an actor who conveys them without any modification when he says: "And when I say, life doesn't happen to you..." All this in order to create a theatrical atmosphere. In these lines, a **direct reference to the speaker and the public tactic** is employed to enhance the participants' interaction, for instance: "Your.."; "You.."; "I..".

Example 13: " *Oh, and why not take a chance on faith as well? Take a chance on faith, not religion, but faith. Not hope, but faith.., you will only ever have two choices, love or fear, Choose love, and don't ever let fear turn you against your playful heart.*"

Carrey focuses on the following essential points: Taking the opportunity of faith, not religion or hope, and choosing love over fear. These tips are the

most critical seeds that the speaker wants to plant in the hearts of the graduates throughout the speech. The paragraph begins with the **discourse marker** “ oh “, suggesting spontaneity to present his thought process in the form of a dialogue to increase the interaction between him and his audience. Also, he uses certain tools of **connective typical of conversation**, such as: “ And...”; “ But..” to link sentences with each other to make his speech flow quickly and smoothly to the recipients.

Example 14: “ *Thank you so much. [inaudible]. I’m so honored. Thank you.*”

Finally, the speaker thanked his audience using a typical **thank- expression**: “ Thank you so much”. Then he comically uses the same inaudible foreign words used at the beginning of his speech. After that, he expresses his great respect for the attendees by using one of the **phatic expressions**:” I’m so honored”. Eventually, he again thanks his audience for listening, saying: “ Thank you “. What distinguishes this conclusion is that Carrey does not use any expression to signal that the speech is near the end. Instead, a combination of different

strategies is employed to realize the aims of the move: **summary, statement of action, thank-expression, and comedy.**

5.2 Ellen DeGeneres’ Commencement Speech analysis

On 16 May 2009, the famous comedian Ellen DeGeneres delivered her commencement speech at Tulane University. The full text of this speech was published on the following site:

<https://www.eofire.com/podcast/speech-ellen-degeneres/>

Move 1: Establishing a favorable rapport

Example 15: “*Oh boy, thank you so much, thank you so much. Thank you, President Cowan, Mrs. President Cowen; distinguished guests, undistinguished guests,..., honored faculty and creepy Spanish teacher. And thank you to all the graduating class of 2009,*”

DeGeneres starts her speech with one of the **discourse markers**, “Oh”, as a tool of **presenting her thought in the form of a dialogue**, which suggests spontaneity, which means that the speech will be spontaneous from the heart. Then she employs a **piling of phatic expressions** to establish a

favorable rapport with her audience, such as: “thank you so much”; “ Thank you,... “. Moreover, several ways are used to address the attendees. She uses names and professional titles to address: “President Cowan, Mrs. President Cowen” while addressing the guests bizarrely and comically when she says: “distinguished guests, undistinguished guests”; “honored faculty and creepy Spanish teacher”. Using various ways to address the guests has positive repercussions on the interaction of the audience with the speaker. Then she thanks the honorees of the class of 2009 for their achievements, saying: “And thank you to all the graduating class of 2009,”

Example 16: “ *But I’m honored that you’re asked me here to speak at your common cement* ”

Another **phatic expression** is utilized here: “ I’m honoured...” to express her thanks and gratitude, especially to the organizers of this occasion and all the attendees. In addition, she employs humour here effectively when she pronounces the word “ commencement” as “common”; “cement”.

Move 2: Orienting to the speech

Example 17: “*I realize most of you are hungover and have splitting headache and haven’t slept since Fat Tuesday, but you can’t graduate till I finish, so listen up.*”

“ *When I was asked to make the commencement speech, I immediately said yes...* ”

In this example, DeGeneres uses the “**Making a compliment**” strategy. First, She compliments the graduates by trying to satisfy their need for esteem, saying: “I realize most of you... since Fat Tuesday” then, she expresses her appreciation and respect for the efforts made by the graduates to reach this stage humorously when she says: “ I ...and haven’t slept since Fat Tuesday.”. Then she adds that they cannot graduate until she finishes her speech, so they must listen. Here, **Humour** has a tremendous positive impact on the audience, it makes them so happy, and as a result, they become more willing to hear the rest of the speech. Finally, in the second line, the speaker **commends the occasion**: “When I was asked... I immediately said yes”. Her immediate approval of the invitation reflects her respect, appreciation and concern for this occasion.

Example 18: *“I didn’t go to any college at all, any college. And I’m not saying you wasted your time, or money, but look at me, I’m a huge celebrity.”*

The speaker starts talking about herself, saying: “I didn’t go to any college at all, any college...huge celebrity”, Here, DeGeneres applies another strategy of **empathizing with the audience** to accomplish the aim of this move. She sympathizes with the audience who did not attend university and did not graduate. Although DeGeneres never entered university, however, she is now a celebrity. **The repetition tactic** is used here to emphasize that she did not go to college, saying “any college at all, any college”. Moreover, she continues **humorously**: “And I’m not saying you wasted your time, or money, but look at me...” from time to time, humour employs to make the public more delighted. In the above example, the speaker uses the **connective typical of conversation tactic** to connect the sentences or phrases. For instance: “ And..”; “ But...”.

Example 19: *“ But why am I here today? Clearly not to steal, you’re too far away... I’m here because of you. Because I can’t*

think of a more tenacious, more courageous graduating class. I mean, look at you all, wearing your robes....I’m here because I love New Orleans. I was born and raised here, I spent my formative years here, and like of you, while I was living here I only did laundry six times...”

In this paragraph, DeGeneres applies a **question and answer technique** when she asks her audience: “But why am I here today? then she answers, Clearly not to steal, you are too far away ”. She uses this to capture the public’s attention and increase their interaction. Her answer comes comically. Then she gives them the logical answer to her coming: “I’m here because of you...wearing your robes”. Here, the speaker **compliments the graduates** and describes them as a “more tenacious, more courageous graduating class”, and also she **commends the occasion** when she refers to their robes as a symbol of the graduation occasion. Moreover, she adds another reason for her attendance: her love for New Orleans because it is the city where she was born and raised. Eventually, in a hilarious way, she says: “and like of you, while I was living here, I only did laundry six

times...”. The speaker **directly references the speaker and her public**. She uses: “ I..”; “ you...” to enhance the interaction with the audience.

Move 4: Developing the thesis

First cell of information

Example 20: “ *When I finished school, I was completely lost and by school, I mean middle school...And I really, I had no ambition...I shucked oysters, I was a hostess,...I had no idea .. I didn't really have a plan... My point is that, by the time I was your age, I really thought I knew who I was but I had no idea... So what I'm saying is, when you're older, most of you will be gay.*”

Here, DeGeneres speaks about the challenging conditions after completing middle school. First, she had no ambition and did not know what she wanted. Then she describes her instability in working life, as she was moving from one job to another, having no plan. This information she conveys to the honorees serves as supporting materials and examples of the **controlling statement**: “When I finished school, I was completely lost, and by school, I mean middle school”. Then she talks about her condition when she was the same age as the graduates,

and she continues to have no idea about herself. Eventually, in a funny comedic manner, she predicts that most graduates will be gay in the future. Throughout this paragraph, DeGeneres takes her listener's thoughts on a journey to see the various stages of her life and learn the lessons by using the **simulate a journey tactic**. Also, the speaker utilizes **direct references to the speaker and the audience tactic**, such as: “ I..”; “ you..” to enhance the interaction with the audience.

Example 21: “ *I maybe 19, and my girlfriend at the time was killed in a car accident ... And I was living in a basement apartment; I had no money; I had no heat , no air...*”

In these lines, the speaker moves the audience to the time when she was only 19 years old. She employs the tactic of **relating personal experiences** to add more credibility to her speech because her story is about actual events and real characters. Here, she tells them a tragic story that happened to her girlfriend; she died in a car accident. Through this sad story, she connects with her audience emotionally. However, she continued to suffer from the difficult circumstances of life. This

cell of information is arranged **chronologically**: “When I finished school... by the time I was your age... I maybe 19”.

Second cell of information

Example 22: “*And I started writing and what poured out of me was an imaginary conversation with God, which was one-sided... And I started this path of stand-up, and it was successful and it was great, but it was hard because I was trying to please everybody and I had this secret that I was keeping , that I was gay. And I thought if people found out they wouldn’t like me,... Then my career turned... I got my own sitcom, and that was very successful, another level of success.*”

Unlike the first cell of information, the second one focuses on the successes achieved by the speaker after the difficult circumstances she faced. In the first paragraph, DeGeneres indicates the beginning of her success, accomplished after long-suffering and soul-searching. Writing a one-sided, imaginary conversation with God is the first of those successes. This remarkable success was never easy. This cell's **controlling statement** explains: “And I

started this path ... that I was gay.”. She has suffered a lot from being gay. She cannot tell people this because they will hate her. However, getting her sitcom was the second level of achievement. In the above paragraph, many **connective typical of conversation** employs to link the sentences and enhance the interaction between the speaker and the public. For example: “And..”; “but..”.

Example 23: “*and I just wanted to be honest. And I thought, ‘What the worst that could happen? I can lose my career’. I did. I lost my career. The show was cancelled after six years without even telling me...*”

In these lines, DeGeneres talks about the hardest decision she made, which was only, to be honest, to free herself from the tremendous psychological pressure inside her. Eventually, she made a great decision, and as a result, she lost her job. In this paragraph, the speaker uses the **direct speech technique** to grab the audience’s attention by giving them a particular feeling, just like what happens in the theatre, in which the speaker is like an actor who is saying something for an instant: “And I thought, “What the worst

that could happen? I can lose my career.” I did.

Example 24: *“Yet, I was getting letters from kids that almost committed suicide,...And I realized that I had a purpose...And then I was offered a talk show... I mean, it was so important for me to lose everything because I found out what the most important thing is, is to be true to yourself...I don’t live in fear, I’m free; .. I know who I am”*

In these sentences, the speaker indicates the beginning of a new stage in which she realizes that she had a purpose when she received a group of letters belonging to children who tried to commit suicide. Consequently, a talk show has been offered to her. Then, she clarifies that the most important thing she reveals is "to be true to yourself.". Because when she decided to be true to herself, she lived free, without restrictions, fear, or secrets, since she knew who she was. This cell of information is organized in a **cause-and-effect pattern**. For example, her success was her writing of the imaginary conversation with God. Also, she lost her career because she decided to be true to herself. While the

reason behind her achievements is that she had a purpose was the kids’ letters she got.

Move 3: Announcing the thesis

Unlike most commencement ceremony speakers, DeGeneres starts her speech by telling her audience about events, situations, and difficulties that she had experienced and overcame before her goals were achieved, and then she gives them specific advice. She starts from the bottom to the top of the pyramid. In other words, from precise details to general objectives. She **implicitly announced her thesis** by delivering several crucial messages to her audience, the most important of which is: Be true to yourself; I know who I am.”

Example 25: *“ And as you grow, you’ll realize the definition of success changes... For me, the most important thing in your life is to live your life with integrity .. to live your life as an honest and compassionate person, to contribute in some way”*

Here, the speaker tells the graduates another piece of advice, such as that their future definition of success will change. This prediction came based on what she went through during her life. Then she urges the attendees to live their

life with honesty, integrity, and compassion. The move of announcing the thesis typically comes after finishing move four.

Move 5: Drawing a conclusion

Example 26: “*So to conclude my conclusion, follow your passion, stay true to yourself. Never follow anyone else’s path,. Don’t give advice,... Don’t take anyone’s advice. So my advice to you is to be true to yourself and everything will be fine.*”

Here, DeGeneres employs a common **formulaic expression**: “So to conclude my conclusion...” as a sign indicating the near end of the speech. Then she uses a chain of essential advice to represent the speech’s climax, such as: “follow your passion, stay true to yourself,...”. Moreover, among all these tips, great importance is given to one of them: “be true to yourself.”. Here, the speaker uses the **tactic of repetition** when she repeats the exact words twice: “true to yourself” because the repetitive words are easily remembered later. It is usually employed to concentrate on a particular point or idea. Finally, she clarifies that when applying this advice, everything will be fine. This prediction came from her personal experience because it

saved her from that psychological pressure and made her accessible.

Example 27: “*I guess what I’m trying to say is life is like one big Mardi Gras. But instead of showing your boobs, show people your brain,..*”

In the above line, the speaker metaphorically said that life is likened to Mardi Gras. Here, the speaker’s choice for this occasion has several motives: Firstly, the people of New Orleans are familiar with the Mardi Gras celebration. Secondly, this festival is usually fun and comedy, so it will be easy and exciting to remember. Then in a comedic way, the speaker urges the attendees to be creative in their future working life. She recommends: “But instead of showing your boobs, show people your brain.”.

Example 28: “*So the Katrina class of 2009, I say congratulations, and if you don’t remember a thing I said today, remember this, you’re going to be OK, dum de dumdum, just dance.*”

In this paragraph, the speaker **metaphorically** calls the graduates: “ Katrina class of 2009;...” this is pivotal because they were among the survivors of

the devastating Hurricane Katrina that hit the state in 2005. Therefore, this name may reflect the speaker's sympathy for them. After that, she utilizes a well-known **congratulatory expression** to commend the honorees when she says: "I say congratulations.". Eventually, the speaker utters parts of a melody belonging to one of Lady Gaga's songs. Then she told them: "just dance" to this song. Therefore, hearing this particular song will motivate the graduates to remember their graduation day and its events. Finally, DeGeneres employs several strategies to give a distinctive conclusion, such as a **formulaic expression, summary, metaphor, congratulatory expression, and song.**

6- Conclusion

This study aims to characterise the commencement ceremony speeches of two prominent comedians: " Jim Carrey 2014 " and " Ellen DeGeneres 2009" at Maharishi University of Management and Tulane University, respectively, as a genre and examine the cognitive structuring, moves and strategies of these speeches. However, the techniques and Tactics of public speaking have been taken into

account in this analysis. The data analysis shows the following:

1) The cognitive structuring of the selected speeches involves the following five moves: **establishing a favourable rapport, orienting to the speech, announcing the thesis, developing the thesis, and drawing a conclusion.** Speakers employ particular strategies, techniques and tactics to realise these moves.

In the first move, Carrey and DeGeneres used a piling of phatic expressions strategy (see examples 1, 2, 15, 16) to establish a favourable rapport with their audience. However, both speakers employed the terms of address technique to accomplish this move (see examples 1, 15). Carrey adopts the repetition tactic, while DeGeneres presents her thoughts as a dialogue technique to realise the same move (see examples 2,15).

In the second move, Both speakers employ the strategy of "making a compliment" and "commend the graduates and the occasion itself" (see examples 4, 5, 17, 19). Carrey uses congratulatory expression to accomplish this move (see example 5). While DeGeneres uses

the strategy of empathizing with her audience (see example 18).

In the third move, the two speakers variously announced their theses. Carrey uses an explicit thesis statement (see Example 3). At the same time, DeGeneres announced her thesis statement implicitly (see Example 25).

In the fourth move, the thesis statement of Carrey's speech is developed through three cells of information. However, the speaker develops these cells on the logical, problem-solution, and chronological patterns, respectively. At the same time, the thesis statement of DeGeneres' speech is developed through two cells of information. The first one is arranged chronologically, while the other is followed the cause-and-effect pattern.

In the fifth move, both speakers use a combination of strategies to realise the aim of this move. The summary is employed in both speeches. Carrey uses the **formulaic expression, metaphor, congratulatory expression** and **song**. On the other hand, DeGeneres employs statement of action, thank-expression, and comedy.

2) The two speakers use specific strategies to achieve their goals.

Sometimes the two speakers employ the same strategy to accomplish a specific move. However they vary in the others.

3) The genre strategies do not belong only to one specific move. For example, Carrey uses "thank you" as one of the phatic expressions to realise the first move and the fifth move (see example 1, 14). While DeGeneres employs "Thank you" to realize the first move only (see example 15). So the same strategy employs to accomplish different moves with different functions.

4) There are shared factors used by Carrey and DeGeneres regarding the structure of the speech and the employed strategies. They both use humour from the beginning to the end of their speeches. Carrey, for example, asks his audience humorously, saying: "what are you sitting down for?". This strange question makes the audience more delighted and ready to receive the rest of the speech. On the other hand, DeGeneres uses funny and unexpected ways when she discusses the origin of the term "commencement". She claims that this word originated from two words: "common" and "cement". Moreover, these two speakers ended their speeches in

unexpected ways. For instance, Carrey ended his speech with the incomprehensible words “Jai Guru Der”. While DeGeneres ended her speech with a music piece from one of Lady Gaga’s songs.

5) Although the two speeches obeyed the five moves structure, there is a deviation in their sequence of them. Within Carrey’s speech, move 2 (Orienting to the speech) came after move 3 (Announcing the thesis). While in DeGeneres’ speech, move 3 (Announcing the thesis) came after move four (Developing the thesis).

6) There is a variation in the use of Rossette-Crake’s (2019) techniques and tactics between the two political commencement speakers.

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