

Rhetorical Devices Used by Bill Gross in Presenting His Speech on Start-up Success

Rieyan Dhitama Lee

English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Creative Industries, Petra Christian University,
Siwalankerto 121- 131, Surabaya, 60236, INDONESIA
E-mail: a11190061@john.petra.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study, using a qualitative approach, was conducted to find out the rhetorical devices used by Bill Gross when presenting his speech on start-up success, including the function of each of the devices used. The presentation was divided into three parts: introduction, body, and conclusion. In conducting the research, the writer used the theory proposed by Harris (2018). The findings showed that the speaker used all of the rhetorical devices under the three categories, namely: Emphasis, Transition, and Clarity. Each device also has different functions depending on the context of the presentation: to raise the topic's importance, to provide emphasis, to provide clarity, to maintain the audience's curiosity, to show the impression of spontaneity, to elaborate details, to help the audience understand better, to anticipate question, and to anticipate ambiguity. In conclusion, the rhetorical devices, particularly hypophora and amplification as the mostly used ones, were applied by Bill Gross to better deliver his presentation.

Keywords: clarity; emphasis; functions; rhetorical devices; transition

INTRODUCTION

Public speaking has been one of the ways for someone to deliver their ideas, thoughts, knowledge, and many others. Public speaking has a really huge influence on the audience, but it cannot simply be done without any strategies. Hence, applying strategies is really crucial, and rhetoric as "the arts of discourse" (Andrews, 2013, p. x), may help public speakers. While rhetoric has the purpose of persuading the audience, rhetorical devices are also a very important part in public speaking. Taken from San Diego State University (2021), rhetoric can have different purposes. It investigates the use of language to organize and maintain a social group, build meaning and identity, organize behaviors, mediate power, produce changes, and create knowledge.

According to Yang (2019), Public speaking is a strategic communication, and it involves language to publicize an idea. Therefore, a good speaker needs to be confident, articulate, and competent, where they know how to use language properly. In addition, a good public talk also needs a memorable speech script to be able to convince the audience. Since rhetoric has the purpose of persuading the audience, it may be beneficial for public speakers to consider rhetoric, using some rhetorical devices in their speech.

Rhetorical devices are "the use of words in an unusual way with special and unusual meanings" (Harris, 2018, p. 2). According to Harris (2018), rhetorical devices are divided into several different main types that contain several devices. There are main types of rhetorical devices, including Balance, Emphasis, Transition, Clarity, Syntax, Figurative Language, Restatement, Sound, Drama, and Word Play. In this study, the writer focuses on three main types: Emphasis, Transition, Clarity which are considered important in public speaking by Lucas (2011), Emphasis works as the device to help the audiences understand which part is the most important one. Transition works as the device acting like a bridge for a sentence to move

to another sentence, and clarity works as the device for the speaker to help the audience understand specific words that may trigger misunderstandings.

Seeing that fact, presentation, which can be categorized as public speaking, is highly related with rhetorical devices. Presentation can be divided into three main parts that are really important, namely Introduction, Body, and Conclusion. Along with that fact, having a good strategy, for example using rhetorical devices, really matters for both the speaker and the audience. If the strategies are properly applied, the speaker is able to convey his intentions. With that being said, rhetorical devices are one of the strategies that are commonly used in a presentation.

In the study, the writer was inspired by Chandra (2022). Jonathan Calvin Chandra's study really inspired the current writer to work on the topic seeing how he did the analysis of rhetorical devices. Moreover, the study also gives the writer insights of how rhetorical devices are really helpful for public speakers. Therefore, the importance of this topic is to develop studies about rhetorical devices because of the small number of studies that talk about rhetorical devices. For example, seeing from *Petra Christian University's* Digital Collection, there are only three studies that talk about rhetorical devices. The writer's own opinion is that he believes this topic could actually be really helpful for so many people, especially for those who really do presentations in front of people. Moreover, rhetorical devices may also be an interesting material to study seeing from how useful it is when used in a presentation with the consideration of how limited studies talking about rhetorical devices.

In this study, the writer has chosen a video to analyze the speaker's rhetorical devices. The source of the video is going to be taken from Youtube, *on* DLD Conference Youtube Channels. The current status of this study is that there are studies that also study rhetorical devices used by a speaker, but the studies are very limited. In other words, there are just a few studies that talk about rhetorical devices.

The writer has chosen Bill Gross as the subject of the study because of the background he holds as a speaker. According to TED.com (n.d.) Bill Gross is the chairman and the CEO of a company called Idealab. Moreover, besides having a very important position in the company, Bill Gross is also a speaker who has been invited to speak about business at different places. He has been invited to talk in Ted Talk twice with the titles "The single biggest reason why start-ups succeed", "A solar energy system that tracks the sun", Supplyframe with the video titled "Bill Gross Shares His Lessons Learned In The Startup World", and Recode with the title of the video "Idealab and Heliogen Founder Bill Gross". The video chosen is Bill Gross' presentation about business titled "What Matters Most in Startup Success." The video's discussion is about start-ups' success.

The object of this study is the use of rhetorical devices as found in the utterances spoken by Bill Gross from the video that has been taken from DLD Youtube Channel. The rhetorical devices used by the speaker will only be limited to Emphasis I, Transition, and Clarity.

METHOD

In this study, the writer of this study applies qualitative research. The source of data of this study is videos from Bill Gross presenting his topic, about what matters the most from start-ups' successes. The data of this study is the utterances that contain rhetorical devices. As for the steps to collect the data, the first step the writer did was watching the video. The second step was getting the script of the videos. As the video was not provided with English subtitles, therefore the writer needed to transcribe the script first. After getting the transcription on hand, the writer took the utterances where the speakers use rhetorical devices. Each utterance was

numbered with the following two digits system of numbering. The first digit refers to the parts of the presentation. 1 for the introduction, 2 for the body, 3 for the conclusion. The second digit refers to the occurrence of utterance/utterances containing rhetorical devices.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the writer presents his findings and discussion regarding the findings. The findings reveal the rhetorical devices used by Bill Gross in his presentation, as well as the functions of the devices. For the purpose of efficiency and effectiveness, the explanation and discussions on the rhetorical devices used in Bill Gross' presentation will not be separated from those of the functions of the devices in relation to the context of the presentation.

4.1. The rhetorical devices and functions found in Bill Gross' presentation

In this section, the writer presents the rhetorical devices that are used by Bill Gross in his presentation, which are divided into three sections, introduction, body, and conclusion, together with the functions in relation to the context of the presentation.

4.1.1. Rhetorical devices and the functions found in the introduction

In this section, the writer presents the findings of rhetorical devices used by Bill Gross in the introduction of his presentation together with the functions of the devices found in relation to the context of the presentation.

4.1.1.1. Climax

The first rhetorical device used in the introduction is climax. Climax is an arrangement of words, clauses, sentences, etc that is done by speakers in order to increase the strength or importance of a sentence. It is done by structuring the words, clauses, or sentences in the best order to raise the strength or importance while the items are going (Harris, 2018).

The application of climax can be seen in the utterance 1.2:

"I would like to share with you today what matters most for **business success, for startup success, for any business.**"

According to Harris (2018), the utterance belongs to climax seen from how the speaker raises the importance of the topic by saying "For business success, for startup success, for any business", which functions to highlight the importance of the topic he is going to present, that the topic is related to the importance of success not only to business success, or startup success but also on any business success.

4.1.1.2. Polysyndeton

The second rhetorical device used in the introduction is polysyndeton. Polysyndeton is the involvement of conjunctions between each word, phrase, or sentence. With such meaning, polysyndeton is used in order to achieve various rhetorical effects. But one effect that is for sure to happen is the effect of persistence, intensity, or emphasis (Harris, 2018).

The use of polysyndeton is visible in the utterance 1.9:

"When I got to high school, I started my second business. It was 1973, when the energy crisis, the oil embargo was going on, **and** there was gas rationing in California, **and** you only

could buy five dollars of gasoline on odd or even numbered days based on the last digit of your license plate.”

According to Harris (2018), the utterance is categorized as polysyndeton seeing from the involvement of conjunctions “and” between the clauses. With the function to give an impression of an emphasis from the first clause “The oil embargo was going on”, into a situation where there was a gas rationing in the second clause, and lastly there was a limitation of buying gasoline based on the last digit of the license plate in the last clause.

4.1.1.3. Sentential Adverb

The third rhetorical device used in the introduction is the sentential adverb. A Sentient adverb has the meaning of interruption between two sentences, or there is a forced pause between two sentences. With that meaning, the sentential adverb, or the forced pause itself highlights and emphasizes a portion of the sentence (Harris, 2018).

The usage of Sentential Adverb can be seen in utterance 1.15:
“When I graduated from Caltech, **literally the month I graduated**, was the day the IBM PC came out”.

According to Harris (2018), this utterance belongs to sentential adverb seeing from the use of the sentence “Literally the month I graduated” since there is a forced pause between the first part of the sentence, “When I graduated from Caltech”, to the second part of the sentence, “Was the day the IBM PC came out”. The function of the device is to highlight and emphasize that the exact time when Bill Gross graduated was the day IBM PC came out.

4.1.1.4. Distinctio

And the last device used in the introduction part is distinctio. It is where the speaker has to explain some certain words that are believed to have unique meaning, or specific meanings that usually are not understood by the audience. It is used to prevent misunderstanding or ambiguity. It also draws the audience's attention who are in confusion of a word's unique meaning (Harris, 2018).

The usage of distinctio can be seen in utterance 1.16:

“So I ran down to my computer land store in Pasadena, bought an IBM PC, computerized my business, began to teach myself how to program and then I started making software to work with lotus 1-2-3, to improve the counting software and eventually made a natural language interface to Lotus 1-2-3, and then Lotus acquired **our company, our little small company when I was 25 years old**, for ten million dollars and I moved back to Boston to work with Lotus in Cambridge.”

According to Harris (2018), the utterance belongs to distinctio seeing from the fact it has the characteristics. The use of distinctio here is to explain the unique meaning of “Our company”. The words of “**Our company**” is too general that it can create confusion of which company that the speaker refers to when saying “Our company”, so the word “Our company” is specified with the detail “Our little small company”, which was acquired by Lotus when he was 25 years old. The function of the device is to prevent confusion that might happen if the speaker did not specify the company he is referring to since the term “Our company” is very general.

4.1.2. Rhetorical devices and the functions found in the body

In this section, the writer shows the findings of rhetorical devices used by Bill Gross in the body of his presentation together with the function of each device in relation to the context of the presentation.

4.1.2.1. Asyndeton

The first device used in the body is asyndeton. Asyndeton is the practice of omitting conjunctions between words, phrases, or clauses. The function of this device is to give the impression of being spontaneous (Harris, 2018).

The use of asyndeton is visible in utterance 2.4:

“Going forward he says the next Bill Gates won't be building an operating system, the next Larry Page won't make a search engine, the next Mark Zuckerberg won't make a social network”.

According to Harris (2018), the utterance belongs to asyndeton seeing how the speaker does not use any conjunctions when telling about CEOs. The function of this device is to give the impression of being spontaneous. Thus, the sentence gives the impression that there might be more CEOs that will not do the same thing.

4.1.2.2. Procatalepsis

The second device used in the body is procatalepsis. Procatalepsis is the device a speaker can use to anticipate possible questions. The function of the device is to allow an argument that is an opposing viewpoint (Harris, 2018).

The use of procatalepsis can be seen from utterance 2.43:

“So what could you do about it because sometimes it's just luck. But what you can do about it is you can actually look at your business and then take up your product”.

According to Harris (2018), the utterance belongs to procatalepsis when the speaker says “So what could you do about it because sometimes it's just luck”, and continues to answer that thought. The function is to anticipate possible questions from the audience since there might be the thought that the success of a company is not because of what Bill Gross has said, but because of luck. So Bill Gross raised that thought to anticipate questions related to luck.

4.1.2.3. Hypophora

The third device used in the body is hypophora. Hypophora is a practice of asking a question and then followed with a lengthy response. This device is useful to clarify a speaker's idea, and it is also important to keep the audiences' interests or curiosity (Harris, 2018).

The use of hypophora can be seen from utterances 2.2-2.3,:

“So now what can I tell you about this?, how do I extract all those all those experiences into some simple learnings? So I read this book recently from Peter Thiel, where everybody's looking for a formula and he vises being in the book there is no simple formula because each new big bold idea is gonna do something innovative that hasn't been done before, and therefore you can't look to the past to see what what's gonna work.”

According to Harris (2018) the utterance is classified into Hypophora since in the utterance, there is a question asked by Bill Gross, “So now what can I tell you about this?, how do I extract all those experiences into some simple learnings?”. After questioning, Bill Gross then answers with a lengthy answer about the simple learning that he can share with the audience, which indicates the long answer given after the question. The function of the device is to keep the audience’s interest by signaling that there is a change of talk to the answers of Bill Gross’ question.

4.1.2.4. Exemplum

The fourth device used in the body is exemplum. Exemplum is the practice of giving examples of abstract discussion, which has to be concrete, visible, real examples. It can be the presence of a relevant case, application, story, or other type of illustration (Harris, 2018).

The use of exemplum in the body of the presentation can be seen from utterances 2.25-2.26,

“The business model ranked kind of low, because you might start out a business without a **business model, but you could add what later if you have fundamental customer demand. So take Facebook as an example, and even Twitter. Remember people laughing at both of those early on, because they didn’t have a business model. But they developed a business afterwards. So if you have something that customers really want and you have a huge product market fit, and pull of your product, you could add a business model later.** So I don’t think that’s essential to have on the first day”.

According to Harris (2018), the utterance belongs to exemplum seeing how the speaker gives an example of starting a business without a business model, where the examples given are Facebook and *Twitter*. The function of the device is to give clarity to the audience by giving examples, where in this case, the examples given by the speaker regarding starting a business without a business model are Facebook and *Twitter*, where they started without any business model, but really succeeded. Because the point about business models is quite abstract, the device is needed to give clarity. Moreover, it also helps the audience to understand better the discussion brought by Bill Gross.

4.1.2.5. Amplification

The fifth device used in the body is amplification. Amplification is where the speaker restates his own words, and then elaborates on it. This function of the device is to highlight some certain points, for elaboration, and also for clarity of some expressions (Harris, 2018).

The use of amplification can be seen in utterance 2.6,:

“Team and the execution, **how efficient is the team? how effective is it? how adaptable?**”.

According to Harris (2018), the utterance belongs to amplification seeing from how Bill Gross elaborates and clarifies regarding the phrase “Team and the execution”. Bill Gross restates his words and elaborates that by giving clarity, about what actually Bill Gross means by saying “The team and execution”, where it can be seen from how Bill Gross specifies his thought with “How efficient is the team? How effective is it? How adaptable”. The function of the device is to help the speaker elaborate his own thoughts by giving details on what exactly he observed when he was observing the team and the execution.

4.1.2.6. Metanoia

And the last device used in the body is metanoia. It is a device that allows the speaker to be able to reject their own words or thoughts and then express it later in a different way. This device has the function to give emphasis, clarity and also allows speakers to modify their own thoughts or words in case a mistake is made (Harris, 2018).

The use of metanoia can be seen in utterance 2.5,:

“So, how can you figure out what to do next? how can you figure out some things to apply to your business? So I tried to look at these things, the idea, **and not just the idea** but how novelty or how differentiable it is, is there a unique truth in the idea the way Peter Thiel talks? are there competitor moats you can build around it?”.

According to Harris (2018), the utterance belongs to metanoia seeing how the speaker rejects his first thought, which is “The idea”, and then he expresses better by elaborating on what he looks at when he was observing the idea, which is “How novelty or differentiable it is”. The function of the device is to provide clarity because the phrase of “The idea” itself is unclear. By using metanoia, the speaker is able to provide clarity of what exactly he looks at when observing the idea.

4.1.3. Rhetorical devices and the functions found in the conclusion

In this section, the writer shows the finding of the rhetorical devices found in the conclusion of the presentation together with the functions of the devices in relation to the context.

4.1.3.1. Metabasis

The first device used in the conclusion is metabasis. Metabasis is a short summary of what has been said or discussed previously and what will come next. The function of the device is to act as a summary that links into the following discussion. The device is also useful to keep the audience’s mind organized on point (Harris, 2018).

The application of metabasis is visible utterance 3.1,:

“So summarizing this together, I would say some of the reasons why the business opportunity is so great right now is because there’s permissionless innovation. All of the new platforms that are being developed today, almost all of them compared to the old days, you don’t need to ask anybody for permission to invent something.”

According to Harris (2018), the utterance is categorized into metabasis from the clause “So summarizing this together”, where the word “this” acts as the point of how the device is applied. “This” acts as the short summary of what has been seen from the body of the presentation, and then the next sentences follow what has been discussed previously. The function of the device is to keep the audience’s minds organized on point, as this device acts to link the previous discussion to the next discussion.

CONCLUSION

After doing the analysis, the writer found out that the findings show that all of the rhetorical devices were used by Bill Gross when presenting start-up success. In the introduction of the presentation, climax, polysyndeton, sentential adverb, and hypophora are used. In the body of the presentation, asyndeton, polysyndeton, sentential adverb, procatalepsis, hypophora, distinctio, exemplum, amplification, and metanoia are used. In the conclusion of the presentation, asyndeton, metabasis, procatalepsis, distinctio, and amplification are used.

In his presentation, Bill Gross employed the rhetorical devices properly to deliver his points. He was able to emphasize his important words, he was able to move from one discussion to another discussion, he was able to keep the audience's interest towards the presentation, he was able to clarify his own words, and he was able to sum up the points having been discussed. With these functions, he was able to deliver a successful presentation.

In short, the writer concluded that rhetorical devices are a very useful tool for public speakers to use in their presentation, as it is able to help both the speaker and the audience. It can be seen from how the devices under Emphasis are really helpful for the speaker to emphasize his words in his presentation, which makes his words remarkable. It can also be seen from how the devices under the transition category help the speaker to move from one discussion to another discussion. Lastly, it can be seen from how the devices really help the speaker to be able to clarify his ideas using devices under the clarity category, which is also helpful for the audience to understand the presentation.

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