Rhetorical Structure Mastery of Tertiary Students' Speech: Challenges and Possible Solutions

Syafryadin[*1]
Andy Makhrian[2]
Dian Eka Chandra Wardhana[3]

[1]Postgraduate Program of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Bengkulu, Bengkulu 38371, INDONESIA
[2]Communication Science Department, Faculty of Social and Politics Science, Universitas Bengkulu, Bengkulu 38371, INDONESIA
[3]Postgraduate Program of Indonesian Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Bengkulu, Bengkulu 38371, INDONESIA

Abstract
Rhetorical structure in speaking is essential to guiding students through speaking and making public speeches. Thus, this research explores the students' mastery of rhetorical structure in making a speech, their challenges, and potential solutions. A mixed method with an explanatory design was employed to achieve the objectives. The data were collected through a speaking test and interviews using instruments validated by peer researchers. The data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively; while the quantitative data were analysed using a simple statistical analysis, the qualitative data were examined using several stages, namely data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The results show that the students' average mastery of the rhetorical structure of speaking was not significantly high. Some students faced challenges such as language problems and problems with rhetorical structures. Language issues were articulated in grammar, anxiety, and the excessive use of fillers. The rhetorical structure became problematic because the students were unfamiliar with how to attract the audience when making a speech, they insufficiently used supported illustrations in their speech, and they rarely concluded their speech. The possible solutions to those challenges include

[*] Corresponding author, email: syafryadin@unib.ac.id

training in public speaking and continual guidance from their lecturers. With the guidance of the lecturers, it is anticipated that the students will be able to implement the three components of speech to deliver more convincing speeches.

Keywords: Rhetorical structure, speech, challenges, solutions.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Speaking genre is a topic in discourse analysis. Students of the English Department of Universitas Bengkulu, Indonesia, learn discourse analysis as a mandatory subject in their curriculum. In a speaking subject, students need to speak and explore the theory of spoken discourse to help them improve their speaking skills. Hence, they should know the steps related to speaking or rhetorical structure (Pujianti et al., 2018; Zhang & Wannaruk, 2016). In other words, the rhetorical structure of speaking is essential for students to know the steps of speaking in front of many people. It assists the students in organising their speech as a master of ceremony, speaker, presenter in a seminar, or other types of public speaking. Many studies have been conducted on discourse analysis, specifically about the genre in a written discourse (Nasihin et al., 2021; Nur et al., 2021; Wannaruk & Shi, 2014; Zhang & Wannaruk, 2016). However, only some studies pertain to spoken discourse. In fact, more studies deal with written discourse than spoken discourse (Abramova & Boulahnane, 2019).

Speech is a type of public speaking; students need to learn how to deliver public speaking in front of an audience. Thus, they need to know the rhetorical structure of public speaking. Besides, speech or public speaking is one of the compulsory courses in the English Department. Based on the preliminary observation conducted by the researcher the English Department of Universitas Bengkulu, a public university in Indonesia, the majority of students had problems with the rhetorical structures of speaking. The possible cause of this challenge is that the lecturer allowed the students to independently learn the rhetorical speech structures without giving them clear instructions. Besides, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the lecturer did not engage in face-to-face interactions with the students, and many only asked the students to make a presentation video of their speech. Some students complained that the internet connection distracts them from delivering their public speaking. It was difficult for them to upload their assignments on the learning management system. Moreover, the students had many language problems in speaking, such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar problems. In addition, only some students in the class were proficient in speaking English.

Furthermore, there have been some previous studies on the rhetorical structure in speaking. In 2011, there was a study on the pedagogical implications of the rhetorical structure of Barrack Obama and Hillary Clinton's debates during the democratic campaign period of the 2008 American presidential election. The result of the study suggests that the generic structures of a debate should be taught to students so that they know how to debate (Utama, 2011). Chan (2015) and Kaur and Ali (2017) analysed the rhetorical structure of academic presentations in a conceptual paper or critical review of previous studies. They found that a general rhetorical structure of speaking includes opening, content, and closing. In addition, Fadila et al. (2016) and

Widyawardani (2016) investigated the rhetorical structure of the speech and found that there were three rhetorical types, namely logos or logical proof, ethical proof or ethos, and emotional proof (ethos). Moreover, Singh and Ali (2019) studied the rhetorical structure in the introduction of an academic oral presentation. In their research, some similarities were found in terms of the rhetorical structure of oral presentation in the introduction, namely listener orientation and content orientation.

Furthermore, Widodo et al. (2020) researched the rhetorical structure of a short lecture from a YouTube video. The result shows that there were three moves in short lectures, i.e. introduction, content, and conclusion. In detail, all those short lectures followed the rhetorical structures of content and conclusion, but only 90% of the studies included the introduction move. In addition, Noermanzah, Syafryadin, et al. (2020) studied the rhetorical structure of the master of ceremony (MC) in an *Aqiqah* event, and they found that the rhetorical structure of the MC in the event included opening, content, and closing. Moreover, Noermanzah, Wahyuni, et al. (2020) also researched the rhetorical structure of speech of the Mayor of Lubuklinggau City in South Sumatera, Indonesia, and found that there were five rhetorical structures in the speech, i.e. abstract, orientation, complication, resolution, and coda. Besides, Sroikudrua et al. (2021) analysed rhetorical strategies in Thai TED Talks. They discovered that there were five rhetorical strategies: structural repetition, lexical repetition, the use of rhymes, the use of songs or poetry, and the use of mottos or quotations. To conclude, those previous studies investigated the rhetorical structures of oral communication conducted by MCs and presenters in academic presentations.

In the present study, the researchers explored the students' mastery of the rhetorical structure of academic presentation or speech, its challenges and possible solutions. The research addressed three research questions:
(1) Do the students master the rhetorical structure of speech?
(2) What are the challenges experienced by the students in implementing rhetorical structures in their speech?
(3) What are the possible solutions to overcome the students' challenges in implementing the rhetorical structures in their speech?

The results of this study are significant for students, lecturers, and future researchers. Students can develop their speaking skills if they know the rhetorical speech structure, challenges and solutions. Lecturers can use the results of this study as a reference in teaching public speaking or speaking skills to enrich their conceptual materials to be presented to their students. Finally, future researchers can use the results of this study as a reference to conduct the exact scope of the research, namely rhetorical structures of speech, but with different focuses, such as students' thesis presentations or other types of public speaking.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Rhetorical Structure of Public Speaking

Public speaking is an activity where a speaker conveys information to an audience. Thus, public speaking can be a speech, presentation, or other speaking activity that allows speakers to speak in front of an audience (Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015). However, this study focused on students' speech. It comprises three main

structures: the introduction, the content or body, and the closing or conclusion (Lucas & Stob, 2019; Osborn & Osborn, 2014).

The first structure of public speaking is the introduction. This section aims to grab the audience's attention, reveal the issue, and establish the speaker's authority (Osborn & Osborn, 2014). A speaker can use a story, a question, an illustration, a quotation, a visual aid, a demonstration, humour, or a narrative to grab the audience's attention (Templeton, 2010). Moreover, the speaker delivers background information about the speech topic to the audience in order to reveal the topic (Lucas & Stob, 2019). Finally, the speaker establishes his or her credibility by presenting himself or herself as a qualified person or an expert in the given issue or field (Beebe & Beebe, 2016).

The second structure is the body, which is the most significant and usually the most extended section in a public speech. It is separated into main points and supporting resources (Lucas & Stob, 2019). The most crucial concepts established in the body of a speech to support the basic idea of a speech are referred to as main points (O'Hair et al., 2012). Besides, the speaker uses three types of supporting materials: examples, statistics, and testimony or quotations (Hamilton, 2015; Jaffe, 2016).

Finally, the objective of a speech conclusion is to indicate the end of the speech to the audience and reaffirm the speech's core concepts (O'Hair et al., 2012). These objectives can be met by stating explicitly or directly to the audience that the speech is about to end, summarising the speech, concluding with a quotation, making a dramatic declaration, and repeating the main point of the opening (Coopman & Lull, 2012; German, 2017). To conclude, the rhetorical structure of a speech includes an introduction or opening, content, and closing. For example, in a speech, in the introduction, the speaker needs to attract the audience's attention and tell the speech's background. Then, in the content part, the speaker reveals the main point of the speech and supporting details. In the closing, the speaker concludes the speech.

2.2 Challenges and Solutions in Implementing Rhetorical Structure in Public Speaking

According to Ur (2014), there are a number of issues that students need help with when speaking, i.e. inhibition, lack of ideas, low participation, and the use of the mother tongue. First, when students speak, they experience difficulties or inhibition, indicated by frequent hesitation when presenting their thoughts to an audience (Pabro-Maquidato, 2021). They exhibit shyness or need more confidence in expressing themselves in English. Furthermore, they fear making mistakes when speaking (Wulandari et al., 2022). The second problem, the lack of ideas, indicates that they are still determining what to say (Juanchich et al., 2017). They get stuck when they wish to speak in front of their classmates. The lack of ideas can be caused by their lack of motivation to speak and knowledge (Jaya et al., 2022; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). Thus, the students can be stuck in speaking because they do not know what to say. Furthermore, the problem of low participation occurs because not all students are motivated to participate in the speaking exercises assigned by their teacher (Marzuki, 2017). As a result, only some students are allowed to speak. In such a setting, their participation in the classroom is poor, making individuals unable to develop their speaking skills (Jaya et al., 2022). Finally, many students use their mother tongue when speaking English, which is one of the issues that can make them unable to communicate effectively in English (Syafryadin & Boulahnane, 2021). The use of the

mother tongue when speaking English occurs when students speak the same language as their L1 (Debreli & Oyman, 2015).

In addition to the problems discussed above, Sutarsyah (2017) and Tyas et al. (2019) added anxiety as another problem students face when speaking in front of an audience. This can cause them to get stuck while speaking (Liu, 2018; Tatar, 2005). Moreover, Osborn and Osborn (2014) stated that speaking content is so problematic that attracting students' attention in making a speech or speaking is challenging. Students need to read a lot of resources or references to obtain the content for their speaking. Swales and Feak (2012) point out that problems in rhetorical structure in public speaking can be content problems. For example, the content delivered by the speaker might not be convincing to the audience. Besides, Crick (2017) adds that rhetorical problems in public speaking include difficulty attracting public attention and language problems.

Furthermore, the problems in speaking, be it rhetorical structure or other speaking-related problems, should be overcome by a speaker. One solution to these challenges is public speaking training (Verderber et al., 2012; Wrench et al., 2016). During the training, the students can practice and discuss the problems they experienced when giving public speaking with their trainer. Furthermore, Mandel (2000) and Wrench et al. (2016) suggest that a speaking practice familiarises students with speaking in front of many people. In other words, practice gives students experience in doing public speaking. They can be aware of their weaknesses and strengths. They can also record their speaking to listen and improve.

3. METHODS

The researchers employed a sequential mixed method, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods (Ary et al., 2010; Creswell, 2014; Kumar, 2018) to achieve the research objectives. The research sample consisted of 25 students with a three-year diploma at the English Department of Universitas Bengkulu because they were enrolled in a public speaking course. Those students have completed the basic speaking course. The sampling technique was total sampling because the researchers included all students in the class as the sample.

The data were collected using speech or presentation tests and interviews using the instruments validated by research peers. The students' performances were graded based on how well they followed a rhetorical structure, which included an introduction, body, and conclusion/closing. Each part of the speech was given a point based on how much of the speech it made up: the introduction (30 points), the main part of the speech (45 points), and the ending (25 points). The rhetorical structure was observed based on several indicators, namely introduction, content, and closing, while the challenges consisted of rhetorical structure. Moreover, the data for the solution to the challenges were obtained after the challenges were identified. The procedures of data collection were (1) obtaining permission from the head of the English Department of Universitas Bengkulu, (2) discussing with the public speaking lecturer about the rhetorical structure, (3) asking students to fill in the consent form of research ethics for gathering the data if they agreed to participate in the study, (4) collecting their speech videos, and (5) interviewing ten students about their problems in implementing rhetorical structure in speech.

The data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The speaking achievement or rhetorical structure mastery or test was analysed using simple statistical analyses. The researchers used co-raters to minimise subjectivity (Arsyad et al., 2020) in assessing the students' speaking rhetorical structure mastery. The co-raters were qualified in terms of educational background and experience in public speaking. The co-raters each had a master's degree in English education and worked as a speaking lecturer at Universitas Bengkulu. In order to make the same perception between the first co-rater and the second co-rater, the researchers calculated Cohen's kappa to analyse inter-rater reliability.

Moreover, the qualitative data obtained from the interview were analysed using thematic analysis. This analysis has several steps, namely familiarising with the data, coding, searching themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In familiarising the data, the interview transcription about problems and solutions of rhetorical speech structures were determined before the interview data were coded into numeric data. Furthermore, the researchers searched the themes related to the problems and solutions by highlighting the them. Afterwards, the themes were reviewed, defined and named based on the research objectives. Finally, the researchers wrote a report about students' problems and solutions in applying rhetorical structures in their speeches.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

Before analysing quantitatively the students' mastery of the rhetorical structure of speech, the researchers analysed whether the two raters had the same perception in grading the students' speech in terms of rhetorical structure mastery based on Cohen's kappa. The result of the analysis result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Symmetric measures.

	Value	Asymp. Std.Error[s]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement Kappa	0.675	0.110	4.595	0.000
N of Valid Cases	25			

Note. a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 1 shows that the coefficient kappa is 0.675 and the p-value is 0.000, suggesting that the p-value is lower than alpha ($\alpha = 0.05$). It indicates that there was no different perception between rater 1 and rater 2, which means that the grades given by the raters are reliable.

4.1.1 The students' mastery of the rhetorical structure of speech

The students' mastery of rhetorical structure can be seen in Table 2. It shows that all students employed the rhetorical structures of speech, including introduction, content, and closing. However, their mean scores were different. In general, the

students got a mean score of 71.16 for their mastery of the rhetorical structure of their speech, which can be categorised at the average level because the range was between 70 and 80. Moreover, the highest total score from the introduction, content and closing was 90, while the lowest was 45.

Table 2. Students' mastery of the rhetorical structure of speech.

		Introduction	Content	Closing	Total Score
N	Valid	25	25	25	25
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		21.32	36.04	13.80	71.16
Median		20.83[a]	39.23[a]	14.29[a]	72.00[a]
Std. Deviation		3.449	9.231	4.153	11.227
Minimum		15	15	0	45
Maximum		30	45	20	90
Percentiles	25	18.96[b]	29.38[b]	11.31[b]	65.36[b]
	50	20.83	39.23	14.29	72.00
	75	23.43	43.17	17.38	78.50

a. Calculated from grouped data.
b. Percentiles are calculated from grouped data.

4.1.2 Students' challenges in implementing rhetorical structure in speech

Based on the results of the interviews, the students faced several problems in implementing the rhetorical structure during their speeches. Student 1 faced introduction problems because the student found it difficult to be the centre of attention for the audience in the initial part of her speech. Student 1 said:

(1) I think my problem is the difficulty to attract the audience's attention at the beginning of my speech or the introduction. (S1)

Student 2 thought that she was nervous during the speech, which made her forget what she wanted to say in her speech, especially in the part of the speech content. She said:

(2) Sir, I am nervous about delivering my speech, so it causes me to forget what I want to say, especially in the content of my speech. (S2)

Moreover, Student 3 had a problem with the conclusion because he forgot to conclude his speech. He said:

(3) Sometimes, I forget to conclude my speech, Sir, because of the time limitation. (S3)

Furthermore, Student 4 faced a language problem, especially in grammar. The student needed clarification with tenses to use in his speaking. He reported that:

(4) My problem is using correct grammar in speaking of all parts of my speech. I was not sure whether to use present tense, simple future, and other tenses. I always misused the verb 'be' and auxiliary verbs. (S4)

In addition, Student 5 encountered difficulties in terms of the content of the speech. The student did not provide evidence to support his speech. Moreover, the student used many fillers in his speaking, and he said:

(5)   I have a problem with the main parts of my speech. I seldom include supporting evidence or facts to support my speech. Besides, when speaking, I always use many fillers, like…mmmm…eeee… So, it influences my speech fluency. (S5)

Finally, Student 6 faced a problem in deciding the topic for his speech. He had difficulty finding an interesting topic to be delivered to the audience when speaking. Therefore, the content of his speech was not interesting. He said:

(6)   I do not know how to decide on an interesting topic for my speech. Besides, the content of my speech is not quite interesting. (S6)

4.1.3 Possible solutions to the challenges in implementing rhetorical structure in speech

Based on the interview results, the participants proposed several solutions to their problems in implementing the rhetorical structure in their speech. First, the students proposed public speaking training. In this case, the students should follow this training to improve their speaking skills in front of an audience. In this context, Student 1 stated:

(7)   I think I need to join a public speaking training. (S1)

Second, the students admitted they need to learn more about the rhetorical structure of public speaking and practice it several times until they can do it properly. In addition, Student 2 and Student 3 said, respectively:

(8)   The possible solution is that I must read a lot about the rhetorical structure of speaking and practice it. (S2)
(9)   I need more practice, Sir. (S3)

Third, grammar problems can be solved by reading materials related to the grammar aspects with which they have problems and by asking the lecturer when they do not understand the materials. Student 5 said:

(10) I have to be careful in using grammar. I should reread the tenses and learn about them. Then, I also need to ask my lecturer whether it is wrong or not. (S5)

Fourth, to solve the problem related to the inability to provide sufficient supporting evidence in speaking and finding an interesting topic, the students needed to read books or other sources to gain more knowledge on possible topics for their speech. Consulting the lecturer was also proposed as a solution. Student 6 said:

(11) I should provide some information in terms of supporting evidence. I need to be critical…I need to read a lot about the topic. I have to find more interesting topics from many sources, including social media or the library. Then, I need to learn how to speak attractively in front of many people. I also need to discuss this with the lecturer. (S6)

4.2 Discussion

The data analysis in this study has provided three important findings, i.e. the students' mastery of the rhetorical speech structure, the challenges in implementing it, and the solutions for those challenges. First, the students' mastery of rhetorical structure was average. The students' mastery of rhetorical structure in the introduction can be categorised as high, but three students still received low scores in this structure. This low level of rhetorical structure mastery was because those students did not know how to attract the audience by using an introduction in their speech. In this case, the introduction is one of the most important parts of a speech because the speaker can impress the audience to listen to the rest of the speech. Swales and Feak (2012) and Crick (2017) state that attracting an audience's attention is an essential part of public speaking. On the other hand, the students' mastery of rhetorical structure in the content is at an average level. However, two students were still graded in the low-level category because they did not know how to construct their speech content, and they did not have adequate knowledge of the rhetorical structure of the speech content. The students could not get a higher score in this section because they could not successfully transfer their speech content to the audience. Osborn and Osborn (2014) point out that the content of a speech is the main point because the speaker puts the essence of the speech in the content of the speech, which should be delivered using an interesting rhetorical structure. Finally, in closing, the students' mastery of rhetorical structure was also average; however, some students forgot to conclude their speech. This finding showed that the students could not properly deliver the speech's closing.

The second significant finding shows that there were several problems that the students experienced in implementing the rhetorical structure in their speech. The problems can be categorised into two parts: language and rhetorical structure problems. Language problem refers to difficulty in applying correct grammar in a speech. Several students sometimes misused the verb 'be' and the auxiliary verbs in tenses, e.g. 'I here' instead of 'I am here,' 'I am believe that' instead of 'I believe that.' This problem occurred because of insufficient knowledge of English grammar. In addition, some students were not fluent in speaking because they were nervous. They were stuck when they were trying to find the right vocabulary. They also made superfluous pauses in their speeches. Other students used fillers in their speech, such as 'hmmm,' 'eeee,' etc. In this case, Ur (2014) states that the problems that students have in speaking are lack of idea and inhibition. Language problems can influence students' ability to deliver their speech to the audience. Consequently, the rhetorical structures in speech could not be properly implemented by the speaker in their speech (Crick, 2017). The other problem was related to the rhetorical structure. In the introduction, some students found it hard to attract the audience's attention in their speech, which led to delivering an uninteresting speech in front of the audience.

Moreover, some students admitted that it was a daunting task to find interesting topics to discuss. This problem is caused by a lack of reading as they were not engaged in reading about current issues. Swales and Feak (2017) also mention that attracting the audience's attention in a speech is one of the problems. In the content part, some students did not support their arguments in their speaking with relevant examples and evidence. Osborn and Osborn (2014) and Sutarsyah (2017) say that students found supporting their ideas challenging when giving a speech. The same problem was found in the closing part, where several students did not conclude their speech because,

according to the students, they forgot it. This result is different from that of Widodo et al. (2020). Their study shows that the students applied the rhetorical structure in closing their speech. This difference might be explained by the fact that the present study analysed the speech in more detail, focusing not only on the speech in general but also on the speech into three structures, i.e. introduction, content and conclusion.

The third finding shows several solutions to overcome the students' challenges in applying the rhetorical structure in their speech. Some interviewed students believed that public speaking training could solve the challenges because the students will get knowledge about public speaking, which would help them practice their speaking. The students could also consult their speaking trainers regarding their speaking problems. Osborn and Osborn (2014) agree that training can solve students' problems in public speaking by opening the speech, delivering it, and closing it. Another solution is that the students need to read more about rhetorical structure in speaking so that they will know the elements in the introduction, content, and closing of a speech, which would help them deliver their speech. Furthermore, the problem in the use of grammar can be solved by reading adequate materials about grammar and consulting their lecturers when they have questions or when they need to ensure that they have used the grammar correctly. The lecturer can also teach grammar explicitly in relation to the students' speech or speaking. It has been demonstrated that explicit instruction, which is methodical, clear, motivating, and success-oriented, increases student achievement (Vanpatten & Cadierno, 1993).

This research has shown that the students' mastery of the rhetorical structures in speaking was related to their problems and solutions. Some students had problems with the introduction, content, and conclusion. In addition, they experienced challenges in speaking in front of many people. Those challenges can be solved by their lecturers and trainers who understand their challenges. The lecturers will need extra time to train the students so that they can enhance their speaking abilities. These findings have pedagogical implications in the field of English language education. Teaching students the rhetorical structure of speaking will equip them with how to give a speech in academic or non-academic contexts. They can follow the rhetorical structure of a speech to make the audience and lecturers understand their speeches.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this research, the majority of students have followed the rhetorical structure in delivering a speech, i.e. introduction, body or content, and closing. The students' ability to implement rhetorical structure in speaking can be classified into a medium level. Moreover, the students faced challenges in implementing the rhetorical structure, i.e. lack of knowledge of rhetorical structure in public speaking and language problems. The possible solutions to solving the problems include public speaking training, grammar learning, and speaking practice.

One limitation of this research is that the solutions provided were based on the students' opinions, and thus the effectiveness of the solution cannot be implied. These proposed solutions need to be implemented and analysed to find out whether they could solve the problems experienced by students in applying rhetorical structure and using the language accurately in their speech. Therefore, further research can implement public speaking training to solve these problems. In addition, future

research can study the mastery of rhetorical structure in different types of public speaking, such as ceremonial speaking, persuasive speaking, informative speaking, entertaining speaking, etc. Another study can deal with teachers' mastery of rhetorical structure in public speaking.

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