Patterns of clusivity in TED Talks: When 'you' and 'I' become 'we'

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Abstract

This paper is a qualitative and quantitative corpus-based study analysing the correlation of clusivity, tense, and modality patterns in TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) talks, which are popularising speeches aiming at knowledge dissemination among laypersons. Using a corpus composed of the TED Talks presented in 2012, the study investigates the ways in which TED speakers use first-person plural and singular pronouns when interacting with their audiences. The patterns of clusivity used in the corpus confirm one of the main characteristics of TED Talks, that is to say, the abolition of the 'scientist-mediator-audience' triangulation, typical of canonical popularising genres. The inclusive pronouns used in the corpus construct positive politeness, making the audience feel part of the knowledge-spreading experience. The analysis also reveals how TED Talks are actually an 'innovative' means of popularisation, in which there is no longer a distinction between 'I', the speaker, and 'you', the audience. 'I' and 'you' become 'we', in a common project which invites the audience to take on specific attitudes and behaviours and concretely participate in changes.

Keywords: TED Talks, clusivity, popularisation, scientist-audience interaction, discourse analysis

Resumen

Modelos de inclusión en las charlas de TED: Cuando 'tú' and 'yo' se convierten en 'nosotros'

Este artículo presenta un estudio cualitativo y cuantitativo que analiza la correlación de patrones lingüísticos de inclusión, tiempos verbales, y modalidad en un corpus de charlas TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design), que son ejemplos de discursos de popularización que buscan diseminar el conocimiento

entre los no expertos. Utilizando un corpus de charlas TED presentadas en 2012, este studio investiga el modo en que los conferenciantes de TED usan la primera persona del plural y los pronombres en singular en la interacción con su audiencia. Los patrones de incusión lingüística usados en el corpus confirman una de las características principales de las charlas TED, la eliminación de la triangulación 'científico-mediador-audiencia', típica de los géneros tradicionales de popularización. Los pronombres inclusivos usados en el corpus construyen la cortesía positiva, haciendo que la audiencia se sienta parte de la experiencia de diseminación del conocimiento. El análisis también muestra cómo las charlas TED Talks son en realidad un método 'innovador' de popularización, en el cual ya no se establece una distinción entre 'yo', el hablante, y 'tú', la audiencia. 'Yo' and 'tú' se convierte en 'nosotros', en un proyecto común que invita a la audiencia a adopter actitudes y comportamientos específicos y más concretamente a participar en los cambios.

Palabras clave: charlas TED, patrones lingüísticos de inclusión, popularización, interacción científico-audiencia, análisis del discurso

1. Introduction and aims

This paper is a qualitative and quantitative corpus-based study analysing the use of the personal pronouns 'we' and 'I' in the popularising genre of TED Talks. Popularisation "[...] is a social process consisting of a large class of discursive-semiotic practices […] aiming to communicate lay versions of scientific knowledge […]" (Calsamiglia and van Dijk, 2004, p.371).Traditionally, research on popularising texts has concentrated on a 'canonical view' of popularisation (Grundmann and Cavaillé, 2000), according to which science is built on a hermetic language that needs to be 'translated' from the science world to a popularised context, where the audience is seen as an ignorant mass on which the scientific community has the power to decide what has to be known and what does not. In Gotti's (2014: 19) words, popularisation was mainly viewed as a "reformulation":

> […] that is, a kind of redrafting that does not alter the disciplinary content – object of the transaction – as much as its language, which needs to be remodelled to suit a new target audience. In the process, information is transferred linguistically in a way similar to periphrasis or to intralinguistic translation.

During the last decades, studies on professional-lay interaction have focused more on mass media, which have become the main channel through which

popularisation is diffused (Tsou et al., 2014; Berkenkotter, 2012). The media constitute a triangular communication space, a 'meeting point' between scientists, the public, and text producers (Berruecos, 2000). The latter are mediators, usually journalists, who master an original technical/scientific language and 'translate' a scientific discourse into everyday language. Recently, the science/popularised discourse dichotomy has been further questioned and new approaches have taken the concept of popularisation from 'translation' or 'transposition' to a perspective of re-contextualisation of scientific content depending on the context (Calsamiglia and López, 2003: 141). As Gotti (2014: 23) explains,

> […] in this approach, the journalist carries out a creative reelaboration which implies more than mere terminological adjustments and involves all linguistic levels from the structure of the new text to its communicative function, from a change in register to a consideration of the public's prior knowledge of the subject matter. Moreover, the final text is dependent on the extremely hierarchical internal organisation of the media, as each news item is usually subjected to revision at different levels. According to this new approach, popularisation is thus not just seen as a category of texts, but as a recontextualisation process that implies relevant changes in the roles taken on by the actors and institutions involved, and their degree of authoritativeness.

It is against this backdrop of popularisation as recontextualisation that this study positions itself, considering TED Talks not as reformulations, but as a process involving texts, contexts, and knowledge of all the actors involved. This perspective is in line with new forms of popularisation, which seem to be tending towards a more audience-participatory concept of popularisation, directly involving the audience as an active part of knowledge formation (Calsamiglia and van Dijk, 2004, Caliendo, 2012, Bamford, 2014, Bondi, 2014, Compagnone, 2015).

TED is a non-profit organisation involved in knowledge dissemination, or as its motto recites, in 'Ideas worth Spreading'[1]. It started off in 1984 as a conference devoted to the dissemination of *T*echnology, *E*ntertainment, and *D*esign (hence TED), and in 2006 it began to host the videos of its conferences online, eventually becoming a new popularising web-based genre. Its website and YouTube channel (TED, n.d.) have extended its audience to a potentially worldwide level. As Vincent (2015: xiii) remarks:

> TED has stirred up everyone's thirst for knowledge and it makes ideas freely available on the Internet taking the TED Talks from the privileged and elitist scenario of the main conference venues to the online reality, and in doing so, they created an innovative platform that can propel ideas forward.

These channels allow experts[1] to disseminate knowledge to a lay audience outside their disciplinary communities, at two levels: to the group of participants attending the TED conference and to web-users. TED's short (not more than twenty minutes) popularising videos are provided with a transcription, a translation into several languages, a blog, and a comment area, which have given rise to a phenomenon of genre and modality mixture. Caliendo (2012: 101) gives a very useful insight into the nature of the hybridity of TED:

> Their discursive hybridity stems from the fact that they are similar to newspaper articles that they prioritize results rather than methods (Bamford, 2012). Not dissimilarly from university lecturers, TED Talks are planned speech events during which speakers often employ multimedia resources such as visuals, music or filmed extracts. Like conference presentations, TED Talks have a limited time slot, which cannot exceed eighteen minutes. Unlike other spoken dissemination genres such as public lectures, TED presenters display a certain degree of informality and colloquialism in their delivery.

The innovative element of TED in the spectrum of popularising genres is that these talks breach the typical 'scientist-mediator-audience' triangulation (Berruecos, 2000, Scotto di Carlo, 2014 and 2015), by bringing experts directly into contact with their audience. Unlike traditional popularising contexts, TED Talks do not involve a third person who "translates" (Mortureux, 1986: 73) specialised terminology, syntax, and ideas into lexicon and syntax understood and used by non-experts. In TED Talks, it is typically the speaker that interacts directly with the audience. This direct contact requires experts to be able to communicate with their audience and especially with non-experts (cf. Calsamiglia and van Dijk, 2004).

As suggested by Marshall (2012), in order to deliver an engaging talk, speakers must analyse their audience to understand their knowledge background and interests, and adapt content to them. Above all, presentations should be dynamic and try to transmit enthusiasm, passion, and sense of belongingness. As a matter of fact, sense of inclusion is fundamental for the success of TED Talks. As Baumeister et al. (2005: 28) point out:

> After primary needs such as food and shelter are satisfied, the need to belong is among the strongest of human motivations. In fact, human social life relies to a great extent on a network of diverse relationships we form with others as a means of seeking and maintaining both belongingness and inclusion.

For these reasons, special attention must be paid to the linguistic features expressing a sense of in-groupness or out-groupness, such as stance, pathos, humour, lexical patterns, etc., as mentioned in other studies on linguistic patterns in TED Talks (cf. Caliendo and Bongo, 2012; Caliendo and Compagnone, 2013; Scotto di Carlo, 2014a and b). These features can make the audience feel either part of the community or excluded from it.

From a linguistic viewpoint, one of the most significant linguistic strategies required in the interaction between experts and the TED Talks audience is clusivity, which will be discussed in this work, in line with other studies, such as those by Vincent (2015), Rasulo (2015), and D'Avanzo (2015). According to these authors, unlike other forms of popularisation, TED Talks express this sense of clusivity through inclusive linguistic patterns, such as the inclusive 'we' form.

The paper is structured as follows: A first section will focus on the function of referentiality in the first-person plural pronouns used throughout the corpus dividing them into the distinct patterns of inclusive and exclusive plural, and inclusive and exclusive dual 'we' forms (cf. Scheibman, 2004). The aim is to understand whether these talks are actually audience-oriented or if there is a predominance of exclusive 'we' forms, emphasising the experts'/speakers' position. A second section will further analyse the occurrences of the *we* form depending on whether they are used in combination with present, past, or future tense and with the English central modals (*can, cannot, could, could not, might, might not, must, shall, should, should not, would,* and *would not*). The aim is to understand if the *we* forms are mainly used by the speakers to talk about past events in which the audience is not involved, to introduce events occurring during the speech, or to discuss about future plans involving the audience. Finally, the study will focus on a comparative analysis between the uses of the plural personal pronoun we and the singular personal pronoun 'I', to highlight their different distribution in the five groups of the corpus. The aim of this section is to understand whether there is a predominance of one of the pronouns in a group and the reasons for such distributional variation. The 'I'/'we' ratio distribution would reveal which groups focus more on the creation of a sense of similarity and

belongingness among the audience and which are more focused on personally reporting the results of their studies, explaining their personal contribution to a research.

The overall aim of the work is thus to understand how TED speakers use patterns of pronouns conveying inclusiveness as a linguistic strategy, to interact with the audience and breach the expert/non-expert 'barrier', to build their image as experts, and to attempt to persuade lay audiences to take on specific attitudes and behaviours. In the light of the above, using the criteria of referentiality, modality, and tense to investigate the linguistic patterns featuring the pronoun 'we', the paper will enquire upon the mechanisms behind the conceptual representation of clusivity in TED Talks. The study would like to contribute to the analysis of TED Talks as one of the recent modalities in which science is being spirited away from the privileged and elitist conference venues to the online reality, thereby creating an innovative forum that supports the development of new ideas. In other words, the study looks into how TED speakers use the capacity of discourse to create a participatory relationship between the scientist and the beneficiary of scientific information, to express judgments and to encourage the audience to take up positions.

2. Theoretical framework and corpus

This section describes the theoretical framework of the study, as well as the *ad hoc* corpus on which the qualitative and quantitative analysis of this work have been based.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study draws upon Scheibman's (2004) theories on clusivity, a concept that indicates various aspects of inclusion and exclusion that are cognitively construed and linguistically encoded in discourse and conveyed through personal pronouns. In the analysis that follows, particular emphasis is placed on the use of the pronoun *we*, which is quite problematic in that, as Pennycook (1994: 175) points out, "[it] is always […] a pronoun of solidarity and of rejection, of inclusion and exclusion". Specifically, the paper will present a threefold analysis based on Scheibman's methodology of coding conversational utterances, according to which personal pronouns can be classified for a variety of structural and

functional features depending on referentiality and number (exclusive/inclusive and dual/plural), tense (present, past, future), and modality. Scheibman distinguishes five values used to code the personal pronoun 'we': inclusive dual, inclusive plural, exclusive dual, exclusive plural, and generic, as summarised in Table 1 below:

Scheibman's 2004 taxonomy of "we" patterns, based on the value of referentiality		
Type	Context	Example
Inclusive dual	Speaker addressing a friend in the conversation	We better go up to Dillards.
Inclusive plural	Five family members celebrating one of their birthdays together	We gotta get a picture.
Exclusive dual	One member of a couple referring to herself and her partner, speaking to a dinner guest	We read this great book.
Exclusive plural	Speaker referring to herself and her classmates at the school where she is studying to be a farrier	We have to put ointment on 'em and stuff.
Generic[2]	Generic context-	We take our air for granted.

Table 1. Scheibman's (2004: 383) taxonomy of 'we' patterns of referentiality.

As can be seen in Table 1 above, the inclusive dual pattern refers to the speaker and one addressee ('*I*' + *you* singular); the exclusive dual refers to the speaker and another person not directly addressed ('*I*' + *s/he/it*); the inclusive plural pattern includes the speaker and more than one addressee ('*I*' + *you* plural); and the exclusive plural refers to the speaker and more than one person ('*I*' + *they*). The study will analyse how TED speakers use linguistic categories as a rhetorical strategy, to construct their relationship with their audiences, in the attempt of persuading lay audiences to accept what is being said, and perhaps modify their mindsets and behaviours pertaining to the issue presented during the talk. In order to do so, the work will be grounded on Hyland's (2010: 117) concept of 'proximity':

> I use the term proximity here to refer to a writer's control of rhetorical features which display both authority as an expert and a personal position towards issues in an unfolding text. It involves responding to the context of the text, particularly the readers who form part of that context, textually constructing both the writer and the reader as people with similar understandings and goals.

In other words, proximity consists of linguistic features which reveal the speaker's conception of the audience and the types of appeal used to

persuade and engage with a specific audience (Crismore, 1989). In expert to non-expert communication, the speaker's perspective typically dominates over the discourse space, creating a separation between him/her and the audience, which is pragmatically evident in the speaker's utterances. However, in TED Talks, the original prospective may be occasionally shifted so that it becomes a shared in-group point of view, in an attempt to establish a bond with the potential audience. This is mainly conveyed through the use of inclusive 'we' forms, rather than with the first-person singular 'I' or with exclusive 'we' forms. Inclusive pronouns construct audience involvement, making the listeners feel part of what is being said, as the speaker transmits the message that 'You and I are alike'.

Finally, since the paper focuses on the interdiscursive nature of TED as a hybrid genre, its theoretical framework also draws on discourse analysis studies and genre theory (Bhatia 2004, 2007, and 2012), which consider TED as a new pragmatic framework wherein "professional writers [and speakers] use the language to achieve the objectives of their professions" (Bhatia, 2012: 24), in a genre in which informational and promotional aims overlap, building up the experts' identities and promoting their research – besides informing lay audiences (Compagnone, 2015).

2.2. Corpus

This theoretical background, which emphasises the strong correlation between linguistic and extralinguistic aspects involved in discourse analysis, has been particularly useful for the analysis of the TED corpus under examination. After a qualitative scrutiny of the corpus, the transcriptions of TED Talks presented in English in 2012[3] were collected as an electronic corpus (hereinafter TED2012) of 154,390 tokens. It must be said that this selection is actually drawn from a major corpus of 1,386 TED Talks, elaborated for a research project of the Department of Modern Philology of the Federico II University of Naples (Italy)[4].

As the talks have been delivered by different types of experts (doctors, politicians, literary men and women, artists, etc.), the corpus used for this work has been classified into five macro areas, on the basis of an archive available on the TED website[5]: Arts and Design, Business, Education and Culture, Politics and Global issues, and Science and technology, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

TED2012 Corpus			
Field	Abbreviation	TED Talks	Tokens
Arts and Design	(AR/DS)	18	28,089
Business	(BS)	6	9535
Education and Culture	(ED/CL)	17	34,240
Politics and Global issues	(POL/GL)	13	31,518
Science and technology	(SC/TC)	30	51,008
Total		84	154,390

Table 2. Corpus of TED Talks 2012.

The quantitative analysis will mainly rely on the use of *AntConc*, a concordancer developed by Laurence Anthony (Waseda University of Japan[6]). Considering the nature of the information sought, automated interrogations will be supplemented with manually retrieved data and qualitative analysis.

3. Results and analyisis

3.1. Inclusive and exclusive 'we' forms in "TED2012"

Table 3 displays the distribution of inclusive and exclusive 'we' forms in the corpus.

Inclusive and exclusive 'we' forms in TED2012			
Field	Plural inclusive (n. Tokens)	Plural exclusive	Dual exclusive
Arts and Design	134	147	21
Business	48	82	4
Education and Culture	362	138	6
Politics and Global issues	279	222	3
Science and technology	498	321	13
Total (Tokens)	1321	910	447
Total (Percentage)	57,90%	39,09%	22,06%

Table 3: Occurrences of inclusive and exclusive 'we' forms in TED2012.

As can be seen in Table 3 above, the contrastive analysis between the occurrences of inclusive and exclusive 'we' forms has revealed that the majority (57.90%) of the first-person plural utterances in the TED corpus express inclusivity ('I' + *you* plural). This pattern serves the function of assuming shared knowledge, goals, beliefs, etc., including both the speaker and the entire TED audience, as can be seen in the examples provided below:

1. Shame is an epidemic in our culture. And to get out from underneath it, to find our way back to each other, *we* have to understand how it affects us and how it affects the way **we**'re parenting, the way **we**'re working, the way *we*'re looking at each other. (Brené Brown: *Listening to Shame*-March 2012)

2. **We** overestimate our longevity, our career prospects. In short, **we**'re more optimistic than realistic, but **we** are oblivious to the fact. Take marriage for example. In the Western world, divorce rates are about 40 percent. That means that out of five married couples, two will end up splitting their assets. But when you ask newlyweds about their own likelihood of divorce, they estimate it at zero percent. (Tali Sharot: *The Optimism Bias*-February 2012)

The use of the inclusive 'we' in TED Talks evokes a sense of commonality between the speakers and their audience. This pattern constructs positive politeness, making the audience feel involved in what is said, addressing them as peers rather than apprentices. This aspect highlights one of the main differences between TED Talks and canonical academic conferences, which are characterised by a high frequency of the first-person singular pronoun 'I', due to the major communicative purpose of presenting the speakers' own research claims and findings (Caliendo and Compagnone, 2014).

From a rhetorical point of view, the "intimate" tone (Wales, 1996) and the sense of involvement of TED Talks tend to make the audience more receptive to the speaker's claims. In fact, inclusive 'we' forms actually help the speaker capture the audience's attention, trying to ensure that they feel part of a "joint enterprise" (Quirk et al., 1985: 350). This strategic pattern allows speakers to introduce ideas and hypotheses, expecting the community to endorse them. Paraphrasing Hyland's (2001: 560) metaphor, while the talk "is a shared journey of exploration for both the speaker and the audience, it is always the speaker who is leading the expedition", in the attempt of convincing the audience on the ideas that are conveyed through the talk.

Exclusive '*we*' forms ('I' + they) rank second in frequency (39.90%) among the various semantic references of the first-person plural 'we'. This pattern conveys the idea that the speaker refers to him/herself and other referents that are not part of the audience; for instance in:

3. So **we** see a lot of this. When **we** have a workshop or when we have clients in to work with us side by side, eventually we get to the point in the process that's fuzzy or unconventional. […] When **we** track them down and ask them what's going on, they say something like, "I'm just not the creative type". But **we** know that's not true. (David Kelley: *How to Build your Creative Confidence*-March 2012)

4. **We**'re gathering thousands of interactions per student per class, billions of interactions altogether, and now **we** can start analysing that, and when **we** learn from that, do experimentations that's when the real revolution will come. And you'll be able to see the results from a new generation of amazing students. (Lisa Kristine: *Photos that Bear Witness to Modern Slavery*-January 2012)

Similar to what happens in academic contexts, the exclusive 'we' form is used in TED Talks with a "representation-of-group function" (Rounds, 1987; Caliendo and Compagnone, 2014). The pronoun allows the speakers to signal their belonging to an academic or research community, so as to build their image as experts. It is interesting to note that the majority of exclusive 'we' forms are distributed among the sub-group of science and technology talks, and they perform the discourse function of explaining research processes. In this sub-group, exclusive 'we' is used to propose theories or approaches, state a goal, show results or findings, conveying the speakers' commitment and personal contributions to their field of research.

A limited percentage (2.06%) of *we* forms can be coded as dual exclusive ('*I*' + *s/he/it*). This means that the speaker talks about him/herself and another referent, which is not part of the audience, as in:

5. And I said, "Let me ask you something". And she said, "Yeah". And I said, "Do you remember when **we** were in college and really wild and kind of dumb"? And she said, "Yeah". And I said, "Remember when **we**'d leave a really bad message on our ex-boyfriend's answering machine? Then **we**'d have to break into his dorm room and then erase the tape?" And she goes, "Uh... no". (Brené Brown: *Listening to Shame*-March 2012)

6. In Nature's Great Events, a series for the BBC that I did with David Attenborough, **we** wanted to do just that. Images of grizzly bears are pretty familiar. You see them all the time, you think. But there's a whole side to their lives that we hardly ever see and had never been filmed. So what **we** did, **we** went to Alaska (Karen Bass: *Unseen Footage, Untamed Nature*-May 2012)

This form is included in TED Talks to give credit to contributors who had been personally involved in a research or in a life experience with the speaker, but were not attending the conference.

Table 3 does not include dual inclusives ('*I*' + *you* singular), as there were no occurrences in the corpus. This is because the speaker does not address a single individual, but the audience as a whole.

Thus, summarising the results illustrated in Table 3 on the first-person plural 'we' in terms of referentiality, it can be said that the major use of inclusive 'we' instead of exclusive 'we' forms confirms TED Talks' characteristic of creating a direct contact between the speaker and the audience. Inclusive 'we' personalises the text, helping the speaker construct a bond with the audience. It breaches the barrier between experts and audience that is usually perceived in 'canonical' popularising genres.

3.2. "We + present, past, and future tense" patterns

With reference to the second section of the analysis, the rhetorical strategy of using inclusive 'we' patterns as a means to create a connection between the speaker and the audience has been further confirmed by the analysis of the tenses and modal verbs used in conjunction with inclusive/exclusive 'we' forms. The occurrences of the first-person plural were further analysed on the basis of their combination with present, past, and future tense, as can be seen in Table 4, to verify the existence of a predominant pattern of inclusive/exclusive 'we' forms in combination with a specific verb tense.

Patterns of 'We' + Present, Past, and Future Tense		
Tense	Inclusive 'we' % (n= 1132)	Exclusive 'we' % (n= 809)	Dual exclusive % (n= 43)
Present	42,50%	15,30%	0,80%
Past	5,09%	19, 07%	0,90%
Future	2,19%	1,14%	0,10%

Table 4: Patterns of 'we' + present, past, and future tense.

In almost half of the instances (42.05%), the present tense is used in inclusive 'we' forms, for example:

7. **We're** born problem solvers. **We're** compelled to deduce and to deduct, because that's what **we do** in real life. It's this well-organised absence of information that draws us in. There's a reason that **we're** all attracted to an infant or a puppy. (Andrew Stanton: *The Clues to a Great Story*-February 2012)

8. **We're**, in a sense, failing to act in the future. **We're** purposefully, consciously being laggards. **We**'re lagging behind. Frantz Fanon, who was a psychiatrist from Martinique, said, "Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, and fulfil or betray it." What is our mission? What do **we have to do**? I think our mission is to reconcile, to reintegrate science and the arts, because right now there's a schism that exists in popular culture. You know, people have this idea that science and the arts are really separate. We think of them as separate and different things, and this idea was probably introduced centuries ago, but it's really becoming critical now, because **we're making decisions** about our society every day that, if **we keep thinking** that the arts are separate from the sciences, and we keep thinking it's cute to say, "I don't understand anything about this one, I don't understand anything about the other one," then we're going to have problems. (Mae Jemison: *Teaching Arts and Sciences Together*-February 2002)

The reason for such a pattern could be that, in these cases, inclusive 'we' is used as a rhetorical strategy to highlight the sense of inclusiveness and similarity between the speaker and the audience as the talk takes place, in order to convince them about the speaker's claims. Specifically, the high incidence of inclusive 'we' with present tense is used to indicate universal

human qualities (Example 7) or shared experiences, as in Example 8. As the passage refers to the mission of each generation of people, the inclusive 'we' could be interpreted to refer to the fact that both the speaker and his/her listeners belong to the same present generation.

With reference to the "we + future tense" pattern, 2.19% of future tenses introduced by 'we' subjects express an inclusive meaning:

9. I believe that, despite the fact that it is so dramatic and so beautiful and so inspiring and so stimulating, **we will ultimately not be judged** by our technology, **we won't be judged** by our design, *we* won't be judged by our intellect and reason. (Raghava KK: *What's your 200-Year Plan?*- April 2012)

10. We need mathematicians to come in and simulate this, to do Monte Carlo things to understand how these tools combine and work together. Of course we need drug companies to give us their expertise. We need rich-world governments to be very generous in providing aid for these things. And so as these elements come together, I'm quite optimistic that *w***e will be able to eradicate** malaria. (Bill Gates: *Mosquitos, Malaria and Education*-February 2009)

The reason for such a pattern may be found in the proactive purpose of TED Talks, which encourage the audience to make changes in everyday life, spreading the ideas presented during the TED Conferences. While the "we + present tense" pattern creates a common ground between the speaker and the audience, the "we + present tense" pattern tries to persuade the audience to take on specific attitudes and behaviours. It is used as a rhetorical strategy to make the audience feel part of a common project of changes that would be beneficial to the whole community.

With reference to the 'we + past tense' pattern, 19.07% of all past tense predicates present exclusive 'we' subjects, compared to only 5.09% of inclusives; for instance in:

11. In our earliest days at Pixar, before we truly understood the invisible workings of story, **we were** simply a group of guys just going on our gut, going on our instincts. You've got to remember that in this time of year, 1993, what was considered a successful animated picture was "The Little Mermaid", "Beauty and the Beast", "Aladdin", "Lion King". (Andrew Stanton: *The Clues to a Great Story*-March 2012)

12. I wanted to fix this. I got a friend of mine, an engineer, and three other

> doctors -Abhishek joined the team- and **we wanted** to solve this problem. (Myshkin Ingawale: *A Blood Test without Bleeding*-February 2012)

The higher frequency of exclusive predicates occurrence in the past tense over that of inclusive predicates suggests that this structure participates less in interpersonal negotiations and more in direct assertion than inclusive clauses do. When using exclusive 'we' forms, speakers typically refer to an institutional group such as a university affiliation or a place of employment, and so, the main function of exclusive 'we' forms in TED Talks is to recount and summarise research or life experiences that the speaker wants to recount and share with the audience. This aspect is further confirmed through the analysis of the patterns *we* in combination with modal auxiliary verbs in Section 3.3.

3.3. "We + modal verbs" patterns

Table 5 below summarises the distributional properties of utterances with modals in the corpus.

Distributional Properties of 'We' + Modal Auxiliary Verbs			
Modals	Inclusive 'we' % (n=186)	Exclusive 'we' % (n=101)	Dual exclusive 'we' % (n=4)	Total % (n=291)
Can	31,20%	20,20%	0,30%	51,80 %
Cannot	5,10%	2,40%	0%	7,50%
Could	10,90%	1,70%	0,30%	13,05%
Could not	0,30%	1,70%	0%	2,06%
Might	1,0%	0,30%	0%	1,30%
Might not	0%	0%	0%	0%%
Must	0,60%	0,30%	0%	1,0%
Must not	0%	0%	0%	0%
Shall	1,0%	0%	0%	1,0%
Should	5,40%	0,30%	0,30%	6,10%
Should not	0%	0%	0%	0%

Would	3,40%	7,20%	0,30%	12,02%
Would not	0%	0%	0%	0%
May not	0%	0%	0%	0%
May	5,40%	0,30%	0%	3,70%
Ought to	1,0%	0%	0%	1,0%
Total	63,90%	34,70%	1,30%	291

Table 5: Distributional properties of 'we' + modal auxiliary verbs.

The most frequent modals in the corpus are *can* (51.08%), *could* (13.05%), and *would* (12.02%). Similarly to the patterns 'we + present', 'we + past', or 'we + future', the percentage of utterances containing central modals is more numerous for inclusive tokens (63.90%) than for exclusive uses (34.70%). Only 1.30% of modal verb forms are used in dual exclusive patterns. Some examples of the main modal patterns 'we + can', 'we + could', and 'we + would' are provided below.

(i)   Inclusive 'we + can':

13. But somehow **we can insulate** ourselves from this problem. It's not our problem. It's not our burden. It's not our struggle. (Bryan Stevenson: *We Need to Talk about an Injustice*-March 2012)

(ii) Exclusive 'we + can':

14. **We**'re Americans, we can't just stand there, we have to do something. **We can compute** that during the game. And **we can use** that to sort of carve up the behaviour. (Ivan Oransky: *Are we Over-medicalized?*- April 2012)

(iii) Dual Exclusive 'we + can':

15. "Mommy, **can we come** back tomorrow?" (David Kelley: *How to Build your Creative Confidence*-March 2012)

(iv) Inclusive 'we + could':

16. What if **we could make** energy do our work without working our

undoing? **Could we have** fuel without fear? **Could we reinvent** fire? (Amory Lovins: *A 40-Year Plan for Energy*-March 2012)

(v)   Exclusive 'we + could':

17.   And **we could not find** 25 girls in high school. All of these girls went to the gold mine, and they were predominantly prostitutes doing other things. (Leymah Gbowee: *Unlock the Intelligence, Passion, Greatness of Girls*-March 2012)

(vi) Dual Exclusive 'we + could':

18.   I was giving some lectures in Germany about the death penalty. It was fascinating because one of the scholars stood up after the presentation and said, "**We** don't have the death penalty in Germany. And of course, **we could never have** the death penalty in Germany". (Bryan Stevenson: *We Need to Talk about an Injustice*-March 2012).[7]

(vii) Inclusive 'we + would':

19.   Without the optimism bias, **we would all be** slightly depressed. People with mild depression, they don't have a bias when they look into the future. They're actually more realistic than healthy individuals. (Tali Sharot: *The Optimism Bias*-February 2012)

(viii) Exclusive 'we + would':

20.   But now **we would like** you to put Joey through some paces. And plant. Thank you. And now just… All the way from sunny California we have Zem Joaquin who's going to ride the horse for us. (Handspring Puppet Co.: *The Genius Puppetry behind War Horse*-March 2011)

(ix) Exclusive Dual 'we + would':

21.   **We would have calibrated** the difficulty level of the puzzles to your expertise. (Baba Shiv: *Sometimes It's Good to Give up the Driver's Seat*-May 2012)

There is also another aspect that can explain the predominance of inclusive 'we' forms in conjunction with modal auxiliary verbs. Predicates with modal auxiliaries in inclusive utterances highlight the speaker's stance or commitment towards a proposition. For instance:

22. And when it comes to leadership, introverts are routinely passed over for leadership positions, even though introverts tend to be very careful, much less likely to take outsize risks, which is something **we might all favor** nowadays. An interesting research by Adam Grant at the Wharton School has found that introverted leaders often deliver better outcomes than extroverts do, because when they are managing proactive employees, they're much more likely to let those employees run with their ideas. (Susan Cain: *The Power of Introverts*-February 2012)

23. **We**'re going to devote enormous social resources to punishing the people who commit those crimes, and that's appropriate, because **we should punish** people who do bad things. But three of those crimes are preventable. But three of those crimes are preventable. If we make the picture bigger and devote our attention to the earlier chapters, then we're never going to write the first sentence that begins the death penalty story. Thank you. (David R. Dow: *Lessons from Death Row Inmates*-February 2012)

The properties of these first-person plural patterns demonstrate that when TED speakers use inclusive 'we', they are sensitive to the interpersonal stakes involved in negotiating consensus for their assertions in the same ways that motivate them to mediate assertions towards addressees by using inclusive 'we' forms. On the opposite, the fact that exclusive predicates are less likely to include modal elements than their inclusive counterparts suggests that these structures participate less in interpersonal negotiations (Avraamidou and Osborne, 2009; Dahlstrom, 2014). Thus, it can be said that these talks tend to involve the audience, breaching the typical barrier that could be perceived between the scientific community and the audience. This is evidenced by the use of inclusive 'we' more than exclusive forms, and further by the use of present tense used in combination with inclusive 'we' forms, to stress the shared background between the speaker and the audience. Moreover, the use of future tense invites the audience to become actually part of change, through concrete participation. These patterns seem to be used as a rhetorical strategy to make the audience feel part of a common project of changes involving the whole community.

To further analyse the interaction between the audience and TED speakers, the next section will focus on a contrastive analysis between the uses of the first-person plural pronoun *we* and the first singular person 'I' in the 2012 corpus. The aim is to understand how TED speakers further negotiate their role as experts during TED Talks.

3.4. First-person singular 'I' patterns

For a contrastive analysis between the patterns of first-person singular and plural, the corpus was scrutinised in order to distinguish the occurrences of 'we' and 'I', dividing them on the basis of the five groups which constitute the corpus: Arts and design, Business, Culture and Education, Global Issues and Politics, and Sciences and Technology, as reported in Table 6 below.

Patterns of 'we' and 'I' TED 2012					
Fields of expertise	Inclusive 'we' % (n=1321)	Exclusive 'we' % (n=910)	Exclusive Dual % (n=47)	Total 'we' % (n=2278)	'I' % (n=1253)
Arts and Design	10,10%	16,10%	44,60%	13,20%	18,1%
Business	3,60%	9,0%	8,50%	5,80%	6,50%
Culture and Education	27,40%	15,10%	12,70%	22,20%	22,30%
Global and Politics	21,10%	24,30%	6,30%	9,80%	19,80%
Science and Technology	34,90%	33,07%	7,60%	34,06%	32,6%

Table 6: Occurrences of 'we' and 'I' forms.

Comparing the total number of occurrences of 'I' and 'we', it can be seen that the latter is the prevalent pronoun, with 2,278 *we* forms vs. 1,253 *I* forms, with a ratio of 1.81.

The first-person singular 'I' is used to either address the audience and to speak about the speaker's position as an expert, as can be seen in the examples (Examples 24-26) below.

24. So my name is Taylor Wilson. **I** am 17 years old and **I** am a nuclear physicist, which may be a little hard to believe, but **I** am. And I would like to make the case that nuclear fusion will be that point, that the bridge that T. Boone Pickens talked about will get us to. So nuclear fusion is our energy future. And the second point, making the case that kids can really change the world. (Taylor Wilson: *Yup, I Built a Nuclear Fusion Reactor*-March 2012)

25. **I** don't know if you know Albert Bandura. But if you go to Wikipedia, it says that he's the fourth most important psychologist in history - like Freud, Skinner, somebody and Bandura. And so I went to see him because he has just worked on phobias for a long time, which I'm very interested in. He had developed this way, this kind of methodology, that ended up curing people in a very short amount of time. In four hours he had a huge cure rate of people who had phobias (David Kelley: *How to Build your Creative Confidence*-March 2012)

26. When **I** was nine years old **I** went off to summer camp for the first time. And my mother packed me a suitcase full of books, which to me seemed like a perfectly natural thing to do. Because in my family, reading was the primary group activity. And this might sound antisocial to you, but for us it was really just a different way of being social. (Susan Cain: *The Power of Introverts*-February 2012)

The comparison of the use of 'I' and 'we' in the five groups reveals that 'I' is used more in the group of science and technology. It must be said that this group includes the highest number of talks (35.70% of TED2012). However, the major use of the first-person singular pronoun in this group can also be explained contextually by the fact that this is the only group in which scientists directly report the results of their studies, explaining their personal contribution to a research. This is the case of Taylor Williams, quoted in Example 24, who discusses his discoveries as a nuclear physicist, or David Kelley's collaboration with Albert Bandura on phobias, quoted in Example 25 above. The science and technology sub-group also includes the highest rank of exclusive 'we' forms (33.07%), which is correlated to the recounting of personal research.

4. Conclusions

This study has analysed the patterns of clusivity in TED Talks, specifically the way in which TED speakers use first-person plural and singular pronouns to negotiate their role as experts and interact with their audience. The analysis makes a contribution to further advancement of knowledge in the field of the popularising genre of TED Talks, in which the canonical scientist-mediator-audience triangulation is no longer a pattern, nor are the scientific terminology, syntax, or lexicon 'translated' any longer by a mediator to the lay audience. Instead, the speaker's ability to engage the audience directly, via a dynamic, often passionate register, creates a feeling of belongingness and inclusion which acts as a strong motivator for the public. Overall, these speaker discourse specifics are part of the strategic creation of

a channel through which a recontextualisation of the scientific ideas occurs and which contributes, alongside the speaker's register, to the creation of an audience-participatory concept.

Through the analysis of the linguistic patterns of inclusiveness/ exclusiveness used in the corpus, it has been noticed that these audience-oriented talks do not concentrate on the speakers' identity and reputation, but on the relationship that the experts have with the content of the talk and on how they are personally involved in the topic of the speech.

From a quantitative viewpoint, the analysis has revealed a majority of inclusive *we* forms (57.90%). This result highlights the main characteristic of TED Talks, for which inclusive pronouns are used to construct audience involvement, breaching the barrier between experts and audience that is usually perceived in 'canonical' popularising genres. This sense of similarity and belongingness was further confirmed by the analysis of the tenses used with inclusive/exclusive 'we' forms. 42.50% of present tense is used in inclusive 'we' patterns. This tense is used with inclusive 'we' forms to stress what the speaker and the audience share as human conditions and experiences.19,07% of all past tense predicates present exclusive subjects. The majority of past tense occurrences with exclusive *we* forms are used to tell stories or recount events that have happened in the speakers' lives, which necessarily do not involve the audience directly. Finally, 2.19% of future tenses are used in inclusive occurrences. The use of the future tense with inclusive occurrences is used to encourage the audience to make changes in everyday life, spreading the ideas presented during the TED Conferences.

Similarly to the present and future patterns, the percentage of utterances containing central modals is more numerous with inclusive tokens of 'we' (63.90%). Finally, the analysis of the 'I'/'we' ratio confirmed the preponderance of inclusive 'we' forms in the corpus, with 2,275 we forms against 1,253 'I' forms. The group of science and technology included the major use of the first-person singular pronoun, as 'I' is necessary to report the results of personal studies and experiments. Therefore, it can be said that the overall use of the patterns 'I' and 'we' have confirmed the main characteristic of TED Talks, that is to say, the abolition of the typical 'scientist-mediator-audience' triangulation. Inclusive pronouns construct positive politeness, making the audience feel included, while the speaker seems to be acting on behalf of the audience as a kind of spokesperson, elaborating an argument with which the community concurs.

Overall, while canonical scientific texts and presentations institutionalise the results of research experiences, in TED Talks the speakers clearly humanise their intellectual experience. Of course, a general analysis like this does not allow drawing completely exhaustive and generalisable conclusions, especially for a complex genre like TED. In fact, the effect of the inclusive 'we' might not always be used to address the audience as peers of the expert, but to address them as part of humanity and to present them with knowledge which is assumed to apply universally, including the speaker and the audience. Moreover, it would be interesting to analyse the use of clusivity depending on the type of experts involved (e.g. politicians certainly use a higher frequency of inclusive 'we' forms than teachers). In this sense, further study is still needed, to further confirm whether the inclusive pronoun phenomenon is a prerogative of some groups or if it significantly occurs even in groups where it is generally less expected.

However, in a world in which formal cultural institutions no longer detain the centrality and monopoly of knowledge dissemination, the success of popularised genres depends on how experts contribute to the way in which the audience approaches science not as something distant and separate, but as a heritage belonging to the whole community. Through TED, experts contribute to the 'humanisation' of knowledge, establishing an interpersonal proximity with the audience, which feels part of the knowledge dissemination. Therefore, TED Talks can be considered an innovative means of popularisation, which position themselves within the approaches considering popularisation as not 'ancillary' to the elite of technical/specialised texts (Hilgartner, 1990). They are rather a process taking place along "[…] an expository continuum […]" between genres (Cloître and Shinn, 1985: 58). This new perspective is starting a process of convergence, which is taking popularisation from the concepts of 'vulgarisation', 'debasement', 'translation', or 'transposition' to a perspective on recontextualisation of scientific content depending on the context (Calsamiglia and López, 2003: 141). TED Talks thus view science dissemination as no longer having a sharp distinction between 'I', the speaker, and 'you', the audience. 'I' and 'you' become 'we', in a common project, in compliance with TED's mission of 'Ideas worth Spreading'.

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NOTES

[1] The term 'experts' used throughout this paper should be understood as specialists belonging to the professional categories of academics, entrepreneurs, employees in companies and consultants, politicians, artists, literary writers and lay people (both VIPs and ordinary people), as described in the corpus section. The categories are grouped as follows: Arts and Design, Business, Education and Culture, Politics and Global issues, and Science and technology.

[2] These very generic usages will not be analyzed in this study.

[3] All the transcripts of the excerpts used in this paper are available in their full version at www.tedtalks.com.

[4] The project is headed by professors G. Bongo, G. Caliendo, and M. Rasulo. The data discussed in this paper is part of the results obtained as a contributor to the research project, as the author has been asked to focus on the talks held in 2012.

[5] https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AsKzpC8gYBmTcGpHbFlILThBSzhmZkRhNm8yYllsWGc&hl=e%20%20n#gid=0 (Last accessed: June 2016)

[6] Antconc is retrieved from http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc_index.html. Its features include word and keyword frequency generators, concordance distribution plots, and tools for clusters, n-grams, and collocates analysis.

[7] This example has a dual function, as its generalised 'we' could be interpreted as referring to 'people in Germany' where the speaker presents himself as a member of the group attending the conference. However, it can also be seen as having an exclusive role in the opposition 'Germany'/ rest of the audience/world.