

REPETITION AS AN INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY IN OPRAH WINFREY'S HARVARD COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS 2013

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Abstract

Oprah Winfrey is famous for her long-lasting talk show, the Oprah Winfrey show, which was broadcasted for 24 years from 1987 to 2011. The show is one of the most influential talk shows in the world. On May 30 this year, she was invited to speak in front of graduates of Harvard University. The speech is interesting to be analyzed since it is delivered by a very famous person to graduates of the most prestigious university in USA. This unique context surely influences the design, structure, and goal of the speech as well as the way it is delivered. One of the characteristics apparent in Winfrey's speech is her particular use of certain involvement strategies to interact with her audience. Among the strategies, repetition is the most obviously used. As an involvement strategy, the repetition used by Winfrey is effective in making her speech more powerful. There are three forms of repetition that Winfrey uses in her speech, i.e. exact repetition, repetition with variation, and paraphrase. Meanwhile, four functions of repetition are represented in her speech, i.e. production, comprehension, connection, and interaction. Repetitions enable Winfrey to produce a more efficient and powerful speech which is easily comprehended by its audience. Winfrey also uses repetitions to relate her ideas with others' by giving examples and stating her standpoint. Besides, Winfrey repeats certain verbal expressions to serve some interactional purposes, such as for getting or keeping the floor, providing back-channel response, gearing up the audience to answer or speak, showing appreciation, and linking her ideas to another's ratifying another's contributions.

Keywords: repetition, involvement strategy, Oprah Winfrey, Harvard commencement, speech