Fostering sustainable public speaking skills: a logos-centric perspective for pre-service teachers

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Abstract

This article is intended for both the teachers involved in the professional training of pre-service teachers, as well as the pre-service teachers. The professionalism of the teacher is determined by several factors. An essential factor in this context is the competence of public speaking. The efficiency of public speaking is determined by the quality of the three dimensions: ethos, pathos, logos. This article reflects epistemological landmarks in the development of logos. The Logos appeals to the rational part of the public mind and provides support for assimilating the essence of the subject expounded by argument. Therefore, the development of the Logos is a continuous process that involves the elaboration of oratorical speeches based on arguments. In this context, the purpose of the research is testing the students' level of logos on the development of the skills to build arguments in oratory speeches based on a logical structure. The sample consisted of 50 pre-service teachers from the Faculty of Psychology, Educational Sciences, Sociology, and Social Work at Moldova State University. The students filled a questionnaire consisting of 10 items that cover some basic aspects of logos. The data reveals that the respondents are partially aware of the structure of a public speech. At the same time, students are convinced of the necessity to use arguments in discourse but are unaware of or incorrectly identify the elements of argumentation in a text. Thus, we infer the necessity to develop argument-building skills in public speaking based on a logical argumentative structure for students.

Keywords: public speaking, ethos, pathos, logos, pre-service teachers.

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1. Introduction

Human beings are social creatures, therefore, to live and coexist with their peers in society, they need communication to convey their thoughts and leverage the ideas of others. In this regard, communication involves an exchange of intentions.

Human cohesion is primarily achieved via communication in general and through speech in particular. The art of giving a speech, known as the art of oratory, is the art of speaking, however, not in any way, by anyone, or anywhere, but by an orator in front of an audience, adhering to certain requirements and having a specific purpose. In this context, logos, the art of composing speeches and delivering them convincingly and beautifully in public, is essential to successful oratorical communications.

Related to the professionalism of the teachers the development of students' logo is essential, in that, it contributes to build an effective communication relationship based on facts, examples, evidence, presented in the arguments of the discourse – the essential elements in building a qualitative discourse.

In this context, the purpose of the research is testing the students' level of logos on the development of the skills to build arguments in oratory speeches based on a logical structure.

BACKGROUND

The Concept of Public Speaking

Public speaking has been and remains an essential skill, appreciated by the society since ancient times, with applicability in various fields: politics, business, education, and others.

Platon (apud Sălăvăstru, 2010) treats the oratory/rhetoric as "the art of conquering the soul through discourse".

Cicero (apud Rudd, 2008) describes oratory as "the art of speaking in public to persuade the listeners".

According to Aristotle (apud Furley & Nehamas, 1994), "oratory is the use of all available means of persuasion".

Padron (2012) defines oratory as "the art of speaking in public with clarity and eloquence; the ability to excite and persuade".

According to various authors (Edwards & Reid, 2004; Henrik, 2021), oratory is the "practice of public speaking" and rhetoric is "a principle of persuasion described by theorists of public speech and promulgated by teachers in work of instruction".

The analysis of these meanings highlights the complexity of rhetoric, which, over time, has structured itself into a three-dimensional construct - the rhetorical triangle, consisting of ethos, logos, and pathos (Figure 1).
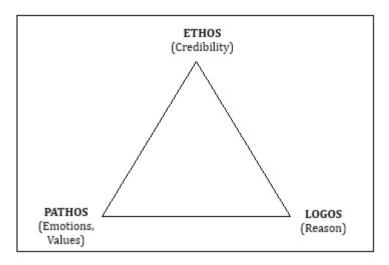
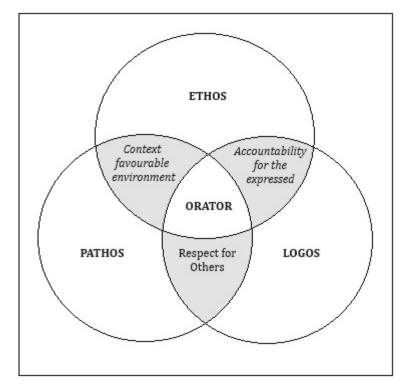**Figure 1.** The Rhetorical Triangle (Freese, 1926)

Ethos reflects the speaker's intelligence, virtue, morals, and self-confidence by highlighting their professional experience in a particular field. In Dlugan's opinion (2010), ethos includes qualities such as credibility, authority, reputation, and similarity to the audience. *Credibility* encompasses the speaker's personal qualities, such as kindness and punctuality, and abilities of conveying positive energy, using personal life examples, handling questions during the speech, and more. *Similarity* reflects the speaker's actions in establishing a harmonious connection with the audience. These actions may include adapting language to the audience, displaying appropriate manners for the context, dressing appropriately, sharing firsthand experiences, presenting examples tailored to the audience's interests, using data from reliable sources, and being available for post-speech interaction and communication. *Authority* and *reputation* are similar dimensions and pertain to individuals with expertise in a field, having knowledge and skills to deliver their message. This aspect differentiates one speaker from another.

Pathos involves establishing an emotional connection with the audience, tapping into their deep emotions and beliefs to integrate them into the subject matter. Pathos often makes the audience feel like they have a personal stake in the information provided and is often the catalyst that guides the audience into action. The characteristics of pathos comprise emotions and feelings, sensation, and motivation.

Logos employs logic, reasoning, evidence, and necessary facts to support an argument. Logos appeals to the rational part of the audience's mind and supports the assimilation of the essence of the subject at hand. Logos strategies are often used to reinforce the impact of pathos on the audience. Logos elements include evidence, proof, statistical data, universal truths, and more.

Thus, based on the relationship between self (*ethos*) and others (*pathos*) via *logos*, we synthesize the profile of the orator (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Profile of the Orator
Source: Author's own conception

In this way, oratory communication is a skill demonstrated in practice by effectively conveying messages to an audience through spoken discourse.

The Role of Logos in Public Speaking

Logos concerns the way a discourse is constructed. The logic and expressiveness in public discourse can influence the audience to a greater or lesser degree. An important aspect of discourse that influences the audience is the logical order of arguments. In this context, an essential characteristic of the orator is persuasiveness – the ability to convince the audience through arguments, thus encouraging the audience to adopt a particular behaviour (Nedelea, 2006).

Examining the etymology of the term "persuasion," we find ourselves going back to the time of the Romans, during the era of the *suasoriae*, a period when students engaged in exercises at rhetoric schools to learn how to compose deliberative speeches. This practice was not based on specific situations but rather on poetic scenarios related to historical or mythological characters. Thus, persuasion is closely tied to the realm of deliberative discourse, meant to persuade a specific audience about the utility and wisdom of making a particular decision of public significance (Druță, 2010).

Logos represents one of the three components of persuasion, alongside ethos (the

credibility of the speaker) and pathos (the emotional aspect of the discourse), and it pertains to the rational and logical arguments presented in a speech to persuade the audience.

Therefore, in public speaking, logos is essential in building a solid and coherent argument based on facts and concrete evidence. To use logos effectively, the orator must be well-informed and have an in-depth understanding of the speech topic, allowing them to provide relevant examples and persuasive arguments.

The structure of the logos in a public speech can vary depending on the subject and the target audience. However, several common elements are necessary to draft a coherent and persuasive presentation, including *the premise, the argument, concrete examples, and the conclusion*.

The *premise* entails the initial/introductory statements of an argument. It is paramount for a discourse to begin with a definite premise that forms the basis of the argument. Thus, the premise could be a statement, a thesis, a question, a piece of news, or a declaration meant to capture the audience's attention and provide an idea about the topic of the speech.

The *argument* consists of expert opinions, evidence, analogies, and values that support the ideas or concepts stated in the premise and might be used to influence and persuade the audience to accept a particular position.

Bieltz (2012) claims that an argument is: "an idea, behaviour, or gesture intended to impose an opinion or action by claiming an assertion or attitude". Therefore, the argument is the most important means of intellectual justification or support for an idea or theory.

Golu (2002) interprets an argument as "the highest and most elaborate intellectual function specific to human thinking".

To craft a compelling and convincing speech, it is essential to present well-structured, logically organized arguments grounded in factual and objective information.

In this context, counterarguments also play a significant role. Addressing potential counterarguments can anticipate the audience's objections. This can assist in strengthening the speaker's arguments and reducing any doubts or scepticism from the audience.

Concrete examples - using concrete examples can help illustrate the arguments and shed light on the subject of the speech. This might help the audience better understand the topic and establish a stronger connection with the speaker's message.

The *conclusion* implies summarizing the arguments at the end of the speech and formulating coherent conclusions that emphasize the speaker's main point of view and encourage the audience to act or consider the speaker's message.

The efficient design and delivery of a public speech by an orator is made possible using connectors indicative of the type of logical relationship between argumentative sentences.

Thus, in the work *"Text Theory: Key Terms"*, the authors (Constantinovici et. al., 2011), classify connectors based on their functions: those that mark the thesis: *our opinion is that we will show that, it is worth noting that;* those that introduce premises: *considering that, as,*

because, in fact, proof that, thus, also; those that introduce the argument: *we will demonstrate why, to put it more clearly, the reasoning is as follows;* those that introduce a premise or data (justifiers)*: because, in order that, in fact, as a matter of fact, given that, how, proof that etc.;* those that introduce the first argument or premise: *first of all, firstly, let us begin with..., it should be noted first that..., the first point refers to..., let's start with...;* those that introduce the following arguments or premises: *in addition, secondly, furthermore, likewise, on the other hand, not only, but also...;* those that introduce the last argument*: finally, lastly, but not least;* those that introduce the general rule *(generalizers): based on the rule highlighting that..., given that..., it is valid that../ then..., it is known that..., assuming that..., considering that..., then etc.;* those that introduce the manner or qualifier *(modals): as it seems, in my opinion etc.;* those that introduce the source or the authority *(guarantors): as the author mentions...;* those that introduce reservations (relativizers): *only if not, except for etc.;* those that introduce a counter-opinion *(alternatives): I do not believe that I would not agree when you state that, it does not seem to me that..., the thesis does not convince me;* those that link the arguments together: *and, but, yet, however, or;* those that introduce the thesis or conclusion *(conclusive): therefore, thus, hence, this is why etc.*

Thus, connectors underpin the orator's argumentative strategy, aiming at providing acceptable grounds for the audience to be convinced of the truth of the thesis (Șatravca, 2020). Therefore, as stated by Larson (2003), through these connectors, the argumentative process can be constructed, in which the "persuasive agent" seeks to exert influence on the "persuaded agent" to convince them to adhere to their opinion and the theses they support. So, argumentation is a set of discursive techniques aimed at eliciting or increasing the adherence of those present to the ideas/theories presented (Șatravca, 2020).

Argumentation is a *logical practice* highlighting the dynamic aspect of reasoning. Its goal is to provide a concrete utility to various forms of reasoning, which materializes in the justification (grounding) of a proposition within a dialogical relationship. In this context, argumentation is the organization of propositions by means of reasoning with the purpose of justifying (proving) another proposition so as to persuade the interlocutor about the truth or falseness of that proposition (Sălăvăstru, 2002).

The proposition that is thus justified is called the *thesis/claim* of the argument. The statements justifying the thesis are termed the *grounds* of the argument. The principle, law, or norm by which the grounds constitute the sufficient condition of the thesis, and the thesis, in turn, is the necessary consequence of the grounds, is called the *foundation/backing* of the argument (Sălăvăstru, 2002).

The thesis/claim, grounds and foundation/backing are elements of the Toulmin Model (1993), a logical structure used to write an argumentative text.

Considering the Toulmin Model, we propose an argumentative text based on Balzac's statement: *"Moral suffering, before which physical suffering pales, nevertheless*

excites less pity, because it is not seen" (Table 1).

Table 1. *An Example of an Argumentative Text Based on the Toulmin Model*

Elements of argumentation	Examples
The thesis/claim of the argument	Moral suffering excites less pity
The grounds of the argument (Reasoning, evidence, proof)	Moral suffering is not seen
The foundation/backing of the argument	The moral suffering that is not seen excite less pity

(Toulmin, 1993)

The breadth of argumentation can vary from a single ground (reasoning) capable of proving a thesis to multiple reasonings serving the same purpose. Regardless of how broad an argument may be, it can be reduced to the minimal sequences of argumentation, those in which we deal with a single ground or reasoning of the thesis. In fact, the thesis of the argument does not encompass the entire argumentative process; on the contrary, the entire argumentative process is set in motion to prove it, to establish it. The essential role in this complex process belongs to the other two elements: the *ground* and the *foundation of the argument* (Sălăvăstru, 2002).

Another recognized model of argumentation used in public debates is the SExI argument model (Table 2):

Table 2. *The SExI Argument Model*

The elements of the SExI argument model	The essence of the SExI argument model	An example of SExI argument model
Statement (S)	The assertion or claim comprising the premise/thesis/idea to be demonstrated, as well as the expression of one's opinion about it.	Homework assignments hinder students from developing in their areas of talent.
Explanation (Ex)	A set of logical judgments constructed based on one or more premises/statements, which lead to a conclusion.	Pupils' free time should be free/unrestricted. That is, it should allow pupils to engage in activities they cannot do during their study hours. The time for school-type study is the time spent at school, while the free time overlaps with the time spent outside of school. If a child is musically gifted, they are unlikely to develop the skill in music education classes. They are more likely to develop this talent outside of school. However, this will only happen if their extracurricular time is not taken up with something else, such as homework.
Illustration (I)	Examples, evidence, or specific instances that further clarify and strengthen the argument	Numerous scholarly studies, most notably by Ken Robinson (2015), prove that schools do not sufficiently foster creativity in students, with the only available time for creativity development being time spent at home. Countries that encourage creativity among students through their education systems are precisely those that have removed homework

		from the teaching practices (Finland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, etc.).
Impact (I)	The consequences of adopting one point of view or another, which emphasise the significance or relevance of the argument.	We are not only considering these pieces of evidence but also the consequences of this practice of assigning a lot of homework to pupils. The most unfortunate consequence is that most students with a dominant talent are put in a position of giving up on developing it to its full potential. This is why homework should be banned.

(Cerchez et. al., 2016)

Thus, argumentation is a complex process consisting of several elements, especially the argument, used in the discourse to influence and persuade the audience to accept a particular position.

Diagnosing logos in pre-service teachers

Research purpose

Testing the students' logos on the development of the skills to build arguments in oratory speeches based on a logical structure.

Participants

The sample involved in the questionnaires consisted of 50 pre-service teachers from the Faculty of Psychology, Educational Sciences, Sociology, and Social Work at Moldova State University in their first and second years of study.
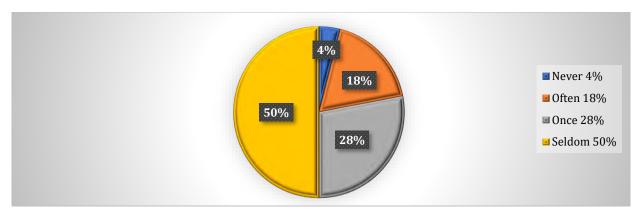
Research instrument

To assess the students' understanding of logos in public speaking, we drafted and implemented a questionnaire consisting of 10 items that cover some basic aspects of logos: the structure and content of discourse, the use of rational arguments in drafting a speech, and the ability to identify arguments within a text/discourse.

Results

The results from the questionnaire applied to the experimental sample are presented further.

Thus, the responses to Item 1, in which respondents were asked if they have ever delivered a speech in public, highlight that:
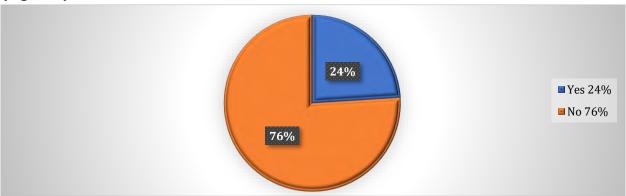
- 50% of students rarely delivered a speech in public;
- 28% of students delivered a public speech only once;
- 18% of students often delivered a speech in public;
- 4% of students never delivered a public speech (Figure 3).

Figure 3. The level of student engagement in public speaking

Source: Author's own conception

For Item 2, students were asked to assess whether they currently consider themselves good orators holding public credibility. Therefore, the following results are registered:

• 76% of the students do not consider themselves good orators with public credibility;

• 24% of the students consider themselves good orators with public credibility (Figure 4).
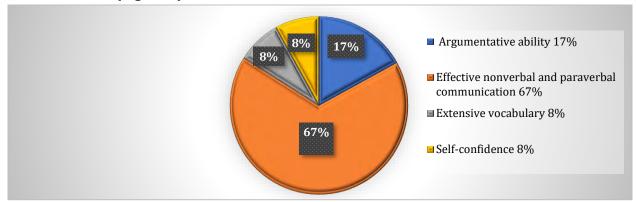

Figure 4. The students' opinions regarding their public credibility

Source: Author's own conception

For Item 3, students who responded affirmatively to the previous item were asked to list the qualities they possess that give them credibility in the eyes of the public. Thus, we highlight the following:

• 67% of the students believe that effective non-verbal and para-verbal communication, especially appropriate body posture and tone, as well as managing emotions during the speech, provide them with credibility in front of the audience;

• 17% of the students consider the ability to argue as a fundamental quality that grants them public credibility;

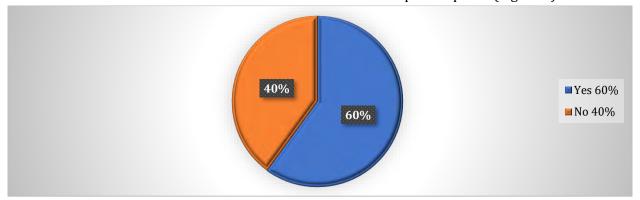• 8% of the students believe that having an extensive vocabulary is a quality related to public credibility;

- 8% of the students consider that they have credibility in front of the public due to self-confidence (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Students' qualities that grant public credibility
Source: Author's own conception

Based on the responses provided in Item 4, in which respondents were asked if they have ever written a discourse, we find the following:

- the majority of students (60%) have written the text of a public speech;
- 40% of the students have never written the text of a public speech (Figure 6).
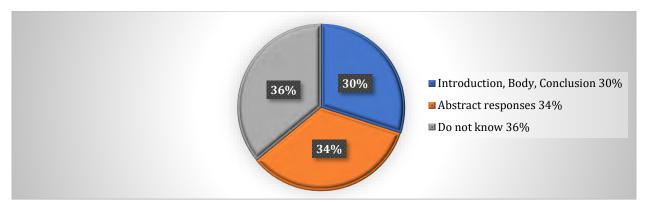

Figure 6. The students' experience of writing a discourse
Source: Author's own conception

For Item 5, students who responded affirmatively to the previous item were asked to mention the structural elements of a discourse. Therefore, we highlight the following:

- 36% of the students responded that they do not know the structural elements of a discourse;
- 34% of the students provide abstract responses;
- 30% of the students mention three structural elements of a speech: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion (Figure 7).
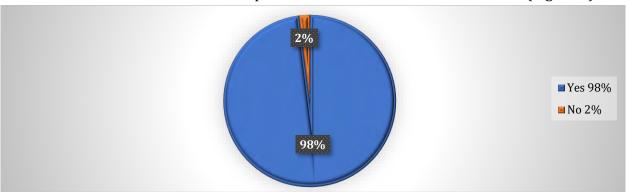
Figure 7. The structural elements of a speech according to the students' perspectives
Source: Author's own conception

For Item 6, students were asked whether they managed to capture and hold the audience's attention. Therefore, the following results are registered:
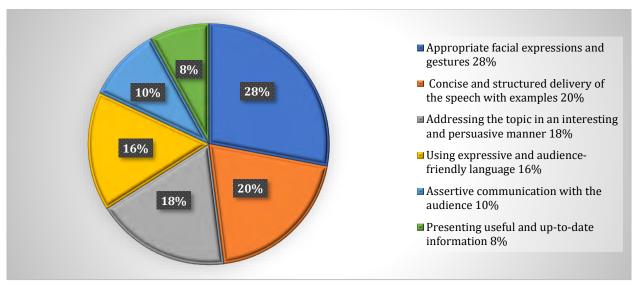- 98% of the students managed to capture and hold the audience's attention;
- 2% of the students failed to capture and hold the audience's attention (Figure 8).

Figure 8. The students' opinion on capturing and holding the audience's attention
Source: Author's own conception

For item 7, the respondents who answered affirmatively to the previous item highlighted the following ways of capturing and holding the audience's attention:
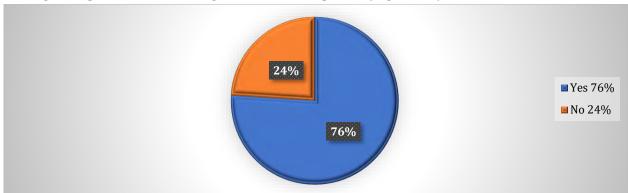- 28% of the respondents - appropriate facial expressions and gestures;
- 20% of the respondents - concise and structured delivery of the speech with examples;
- 18% of the respondents - addressing the topic in an interesting and persuasive manner;
- 16% of the respondents - using expressive and audience-friendly language;
- 10% of the respondents - assertive communication with the audience, especially by showing respect to the listeners and asking clarifying questions;
- 8% of the respondents - presenting useful and up-to-date information (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Ways to capture and hold the audience's attention
Source: Author's own conception

Item 8 asked students to assess the importance of convincing the audience with the use of arguments in the discourse. Thus, the results are as follows:

- 76% of the students consider it important to persuade the audience through the presentation of arguments in the speech;
- 24% of the students do not consider it important to persuade the audience through the presentation of arguments in the speech (Figure 10).
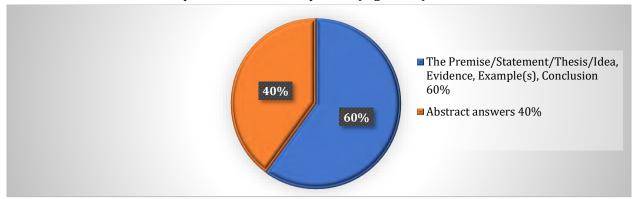

Figure 10. Students' opinion on the importance of convincing the audience through the presentation of arguments in the context of the speech
Source: Author's own conception

At Item 9, students who answered affirmatively to the previous item were asked to mention the constituent elements of an argument. In this context, we highlight the following:
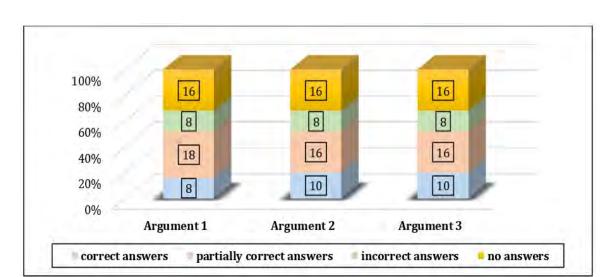
- 60% of the students mention the premise/statement/thesis/idea, evidence, example(s), and conclusion as constituent elements of an argument;
- 40% of the students provide abstract responses (Figure 11).

Figure 11. The students' view on the constituent elements of an argument
Source: Author's own conception

At Item 10, students were asked to underline (using distinct types of lines) the constituent elements in the three arguments below, then to explain in the caption which component and which type of line they used:

>   1. *...if you call me the fairest of all, you will receive power, glory in war and the most beautiful mortal...*
>   2. *My colleague is always criticized by his teachers because he always forgets to write his name on the paper.*
>   3. *Greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced because they are destroying the ozone layer.*
> The results for this Item (Figure 12) are as follows:

• for *Argument 1,* the majority of respondents (36%) provided partially correct answers, 8% of respondents provided correct answers, 8% of respondents provided incorrect answers, and 32% of respondents did not provide an answer;

• for *Argument 2,* the majority of respondents either answered somewhat correctly (32%) or did not provide any response (32%). Additionally, 20% of respondents provided correct answers, and 16% provided incorrect answers;

• for *Argument 3,* the results are similar to Argument 2, with the majority of respondents either answering somewhat correctly (32%) or not providing any response (32%). Additionally, 20% of respondents provided correct answers, and 16% provided incorrect answers.

Figure 12. The assessment of students' ability to identify the elements of an argument
Source: Author's own conception

The data from the qualitative analysis of logos reveals that the respondents are partially aware of the structure of a public speech. At the same time, students are convinced of the necessity to use arguments in discourse but are unaware of or incorrectly identify the elements of argumentation in a text.

Generalizing the survey data on logos in oratory communication in students, we infer the necessity to develop argument-building skills in public speaking based on a logical argumentative structure for students.

Discussions and Limits

The research at hand provides insights into the role of logos in public speaking. Logos refers to rational thinking, and the development of rational thinking in pre-service teachers is essential for designing and carrying out an educational process oriented toward the development of critical thinking based on argumentation. Although there are studies referring to oratorical communication in general, the aspect of logos development in pre-service teachers is less researched. In this context, we evaluated the level of logos in oratorical communication in pre-service teachers, which highlights the need to develop skills to elaborate arguments in discourse.

Nevertheless, we would like to mention the limits encountered during this research, the handling of which could streamline further research on this topic. Our study presents a limit due to the difficulty in generalizing the results at a transdisciplinary level, because the sample consists only from students from the Faculty of Psychology, Educational Sciences, Sociology and Social Work with a certain specific regarding the communication style, so it is possible that the results differ in faculties of real science that have a technical communication

style and faculties of humanities that have a belletristic communication style. Thus, it is opportune to extend the research in other faculties, in order to streamline the manifestation of logos during discourse. Another limit is due to the type of present study, a transversal study, and for robust conclusions it will be useful to have a longitudinal approach.

Conclusions

In summary, the role of logos in public speaking is essential in terms of ways of drafting and structuring a discourse. Logos is one of the three components of persuasion, along with ethos and pathos, influencing the process of logical, thorough, and well-founded argumentation based on facts and concrete evidence. In this context, the speaker is required to have a deep understanding of the speech topic so they can provide relevant examples and argue them convincingly. The results obtained from testing the students' logos on the development of the skills to build arguments in oratory speeches based on a logical structure, reveals that the respondents are partially aware of the structure of a public speech and of the necessity to use arguments in discourse. These findings highlight the need to develop skills in making speeches based on arguments in transdisciplinary curricular context: addressing this topic both in specialized courses in the educational field and in courses in various academic fields.

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