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# АКТУАЛЬНІ ПИТАННЯ СУСПІЛЬНИХ НАУК ТА ІСТОРІЇ МЕДИЦИНИ

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**РИТОРИЧНІ СТРАТЕГІЇ АРГУМЕНТАЦІЇ В ПРОМОВАХ TED TALKS З ПИТАНЬ МЕНТАЛЬНОГО ЗДОРОВ'Я****Віра ЯКИМЧУК**

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**RHETORICAL ARGUMENTATIVE STRATEGIES IN TED TALKS SPEECHES REGARDING THE ISSUE OF MENTAL HEALTH****Vira YAKYMCHUK**

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**Якимчук Віра. Риторичні стратегії аргументації в промовах TED Talks з питань ментального здоров'я.** Сьогодні TED Talks є потужною платформою для поширення ідей, виховання емпатії та кидання виклику суспільним нормам. Особливо в сфері дискурсу про ментальне здоров'я ці промови стали інструментом для підвищення обізнаності про проблеми поширення ментальних хвороб. Захоплююча природа TED Talks полягає не лише в історіях, а й у риторичних аргументативних стратегіях, які використовують спікери.

Питання ментального здоров'я, часто обтяжене стигмою та неправильними уявленнями, знаходить потужний голос у наочних оповідях та аргументації, що базується на доказах, представлених у TED Talks. Ефективно використовуючи особисті історії, статистику та переконливі аргументи, спікери TED Talks демонструють вміння доводити важливі аспекти ментального здоров'я, виходячи за рамки звичайних дискусій, з метою викликати співчуття, піддати сумнівам уявлення та підбурити до дій. **Метою статті** є аналіз різноманітних риторичних аргументативних стратегій, що використовуються в TED Talks, присвячених питанням ментального здоров'я. **Об'єктом** цього дослідження є транскрипти, взяті з обраного плейлиста, присвяченого питанням ментального здоров'я, доступного на вебсайті TED (<https://www.ted.com/topics/mental+health>). **Методи дослідження.** У статті ми використовуємо методику дедуктивного вияву риторичних аргументативних стратегій, що передбачає дедуктивний аналіз транскриптів промов. Застосовуємо й контекстуально-інтерпретаційний аналіз, для того, щоб пояснити контекст уривку, взятого з промови. Прагматичний аналіз, в основі якого зосереджені стратегії й тактики людського спілкування, застосовуємо для того, щоб проаналізувати основні мотиви спікерів Ted Talks. **Наукова новизна** полягає в детальному дослідженні різноманітних риторичних аргументативних стратегій, використаних спікерами, з метою сприяння усвідомленості про ментальне здоров'я. Проаналізовано вплив цих стратегій на сприйняття аудиторії, суспільні уявлення та стимулювання ідей про ментальне здоров'я, що є новаторським підходом до розуміння впливу комунікації в TED Talks на сприйняття громадськості. **Висновки.** Аналіз риторичних аргументативних стратегій у TED Talks про ментальне здоров'я розкриває різноманітність підходів до комунікації. Спікери використовують особисті історії, статистику та прояви інтелектуалізації для залучення уваги глядачів. Ці стратегії сприяють поліпшенню сприйняття питань ментального здоров'я та можуть допомогти у зменшенні стигми. Такий підхід в комунікації через TED Talks має потенціал значно вплинути на сприйняття та підтримку ментального здоров'я у суспільстві.

**Ключові слова:** риторичні аргументативні стратегії, комунікація, аргументація, TED Talks, ментальне здоров'я

**Introduction.** In the realm of public discourse, few platforms wield as much influence and power to provoke thoughtful conversations and catalyze societal change as TED Talks. Within this prestigious arena, discussions on mental health stand as a cornerstone of exploration and advocacy, commanding attention through a tapestry of rhetorical argumentation and persuasive strategies.

Mental health, an issue often shrouded in stigma and misconceptions, finds a compelling voice within the articulate narratives and evidence-based arguments presented in TED Talks. These speeches serve as illuminating windows into the complexities of mental well-being, bridging personal experiences with empirical data and expert insights to dismantle barriers of misunderstanding and stigma.

By artfully blending personal anecdotes, statistical evidence, and persuasive appeals, TED speakers navigate the delicate terrain of mental health, transcending conventional discourse to evoke empathy, challenge preconceptions, and incite action. Their meticulous use of rhetorical devices, compelling narratives, and cogent arguments creates a remarkable speech that not only captivates audiences but also inspires transformative thought and action.

**Analysis of the recent research and publications.**

Today we are witnessing a growth in research in this field. Scientists from around the world are exploring the potential of argumentation strategies in various discourses (A. Konverskyi<sup>1</sup>, V. Kravets<sup>2</sup>, S. Neryan<sup>3</sup>, F. Van Eemeren, B. Garssen<sup>4</sup>), the peculiarities of TED Talks speeches (C. MacKrill, C. Silvester<sup>5</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Konverskyi A. Logika: pidruchnyk. 2-he vyd., vypravlene [Logic: a textbook. 2nd ed., corrected], K.: VPTs «Kyivskyi universytet», 2017, 391 p. [in Ukrainian].

<sup>2</sup> Kravets V. Teoriya ritorichnoyi argumentatsiyi: klasichna tradytsiya. Magisterski studiyi. Al'manakh [Theory of rhetorical argumentation: classical tradition. Master's studies. Almanac], Kherson, KHDU, Vyp. 22, 2022, P. 55-57 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>3</sup> Neryan S. «Rytorichni stratehii argumentatsii u spilkuvani v sotsial'nykh merezhakh» [Rhetorical strategies of argumentation in communication in social networks], Visnyk ONU [Bulletin of ONU], Vyp. 25. 2(22), 2020, P. 64-73 [in Ukrainian].

<sup>4</sup> Van Eemeren F, Garssen B. Reflections on Theoretical Issues in Argumentation Theory. Springer International Publishing. Switzerland, 2015, 293 p.

<sup>5</sup> MacKrill C., Silvester C., Pennebaker J., Petrie K. What makes an idea worth spreading? Language markers of popularity in TED talks by academics and other speakers Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology. Vol. 72, Issue 8, 2021, P. 1028-1038.

K. Uicheng, M. Crabtree<sup>6</sup>, T. Rogers<sup>7</sup>) as well as establishing tools for effective discourse visualization.

Within the realm of communicative interaction, researchers identify a general framework, a strategy, through which communication between communicants occurs (A. Bielova<sup>8</sup>, T. van Dijk, W. Kintsch<sup>9</sup>, O. Selivanova<sup>10</sup> and others).

Despite the multitude of new directions in the study of verbal and non-verbal persuasion mechanisms, researchers are not abandoning attempts to resort to traditional (classical) argumentation theory, its basic laws, and principles, drawing inspiration to discover effective and impactful methods of influence.

**The aim of this article** is to analyze the varied rhetorical argumentative strategies employed in TED Talks discussing mental health. It seeks to uncover how speakers use personal narratives, statistics, emotional appeals, and other strategies to engage audiences and advocate for mental health awareness. Additionally, it aims to examine the potential impact of these rhetorical approaches on audience perceptions, societal attitudes, and the promotion of dialogue surrounding mental health. Ultimately, the goal is to understand how effective communication in TED Talks can contribute to reducing stigma, fostering understanding, and promoting mental health advocacy.

**The object of this research** is the analysis of transcripts extracted from a selected playlist focused on mental health available on the TED website (<https://www.ted.com/topics/mental+health>). These transcripts serve as the primary material for investigating the rhetorical argumentative strategies employed by speakers in addressing mental health topics within the TED Talks platform.

#### **Presentation of the primary material.**

Argumentation is a form of intellectual activity in which beliefs about the truth or falsehood of a particular proposition are formed and its assessment and appropriateness for the author, interlocutor, or audience are determined. It's a multifaceted and multi-component work of human intellectual activity, drawing from logic, philosophy, psychology, linguistics, rhetoric, ethics, aesthetics, cultural studies, intuition, common sense, and more. Among these components, logic stands out. In any field of human activity or science, terms and procedures like truth, confirmation, consequence, apodicticity, proof, refutation, interpretation, explanation, and verification are utilized, but it's within logic that the nature of these concepts and procedures is fully elucidated.

Rhetorical argumentation in modern persuasive discourse is characterized by communicative direction,

a focus on adapting the speaker to the behavior of a specific audience, fundamental theoretical principles of construction, including both technical and non-technical arguments, which correspond to rhetorical strategies in three aspects of rhetoric (logos, ethos, pathos).

Among rhetorical strategies of argumentation, we distinguish strategies of intellectualization and self-presentation. In the first case, it involves demonstrating one's intellect – the level of education, knowledge, erudition, and the use of relevant arguments in the discussion. In the second case, it pertains to the activation of the speaker as a personality, whose statements are perceived without additional argumentation precisely through respect for the individual.

The intellectualization strategy in the speech «The neuroscience of psychedelic drugs, music and nostalgia» by Frederick Streeter Barrett<sup>11</sup> is evident through the author's structured and methodical approach to understanding the effects of music and psychedelic drugs on human emotion and mental health. For example: «*At various points over the past 20 years, I've studied two fundamental human experiences that have taught me an awful lot about emotion and that may hold the keys to a revolution in psychiatry. The first is how we experience music. The second is how we experience psychedelic drugs such as LSD and magic mushrooms, or psilocybin, which is the active component in magic mushrooms.*» By framing the narrative around their two-decade-long study of these experiences, the speaker sets the stage for an intellectually driven exploration. The use of language like «studied,» «taught me an awful lot,» and «may hold the keys to a revolution in psychiatry» emphasizes a scholarly and analytical perspective. The author presents these experiences as subjects of in-depth examination rather than casual observations, indicating a deliberate and thorough investigation.

Another example of intellectualization strategy is evident in the introductory words of Keely Muscatell<sup>12</sup> in her speech «The science behind how sickness shapes your mood»: «*Today, I want to tell you about some research showing that the same physiological changes happening in your body that cause the physical symptoms you have when you're sick, are also shaping your mood and your social behavior. In other words, changes in the immune system can signal to the brain to cause us to think, feel and act differently.*» The speaker employs intellectualization by delving into scientific research to explain the correlation between physiological changes and their impact on mood and behavior. She presents complex scientific concepts

<sup>6</sup> Uicheng, K., Crabtree, M. Macro Discourse Markers in TED Talks: How Ideas Are Signaled to Listeners. Thailand: PASAA, Vol. 55, 2018, 31 p.

<sup>7</sup> Rogers T. Understanding public perceptions of TED Talks: Influence and impact of a multi-platform, multi-venue non-profit organization as a communicative space. Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, ProQuest LLC, 2018, 235 p.

<sup>8</sup> Bielova A. D. Komunikatyvni stratehii i taktyky: problemy systematyky. Movni i kontseptual'ni kartyny svitu: zb. nauk. pr. [Communicative strategies and tactics: problems of systematics. Linguistic and conceptual pictures of the world: coll. of science pr.], K.: KNU im. T. Shevchenka, 2004, P. 11-16. [in Ukrainian].

<sup>9</sup> T. A. van Dijk, W. Kintsch. Strategies of Discourse Comprehension, New York, Academic Press, 1983, 413 p.

<sup>10</sup> Selivanova O. O. Linhvystychna entsyklopediya [Linguistic encyclopedia], Poltava: Dovkillya-K, 2011, 844 p. [in Ukrainian].

<sup>11</sup> Streeter Barrett F. The neuroscience of psychedelic drugs, music and nostalgia. TED Ideas worth spreading, URL: [https://www.ted.com/talks/frederick\\_streeter\\_barrett\\_the\\_neuroscience\\_of\\_psychedelc\\_drugs\\_music\\_and\\_nostalgia/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/frederick_streeter_barrett_the_neuroscience_of_psychedelc_drugs_music_and_nostalgia/transcript)

<sup>12</sup> Muscatell K. The science behind how sickness shapes your mood. TED Ideas worth spreading, URL: [https://www.ted.com/talks/keely\\_muscatell\\_the\\_science\\_behind\\_how\\_sickness\\_shapes\\_your\\_mood/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/keely_muscatell_the_science_behind_how_sickness_shapes_your_mood/transcript)

in an understandable manner, illustrating how alterations in the immune system can influence mental states and social conduct. By focusing on empirical evidence and scientific findings, this strategy aims to provide a logical and reasoned explanation for the audience, grounding the discussion in concrete research to enhance understanding and credibility.

The strategy of intellectualization is often crucial when portraying the real picture of mental health issues worldwide. Sandersan Onie<sup>13</sup> in his speech «How targeted ads might just save your life» aims to illustrate the real numbers of suicide attempts as the cause of death for Australians: «*I now know that I'm not alone, where in Australia, suicide is the leading cause of death for individuals aged between 15 to 44 years old. And for every single suicide death, there are 25 to 30 times the number of attempts. Our recent research has even shown us that less than half of people who attempt suicide will actually reach out for help prior, meaning that if we are to reach them, we need to meet them where they are.*»

The speaker makes use of intellectualization by incorporating statistical data and research findings to shed light on a critical issue – suicide rates in Australia. By presenting factual information, such as statistics on suicide rates and attempts, the speaker aims to emphasize the severity of the situation and create awareness among the audience. This strategy employs data-driven evidence to underscore the urgency of the problem and the need for proactive measures to address and prevent these alarming statistics.

The strategy of self-presentation in the transcripts lies within the speakers' deliberate disclosure of their personal experiences. Speakers often choose to reveal their past trauma, the challenges they faced as a child, and their emotional journey towards healing and advocacy.

By sharing their personal story, the speakers portray themselves as someone who has undergone significant struggles but has also overcome them. The deliberate choice to disclose vulnerable experiences, such as childhood trauma and the resulting impact, is a form of self-presentation aimed at establishing credibility, relatability, and a sense of authenticity to resonate with the audience.

Examples of self-presentation strategy can be observed in the speech «How teachers can help students navigate trauma» by Godwin L<sup>14</sup>. For example: «*So I was that kid that teachers thought was the overachiever, the popular person, the one that had it together. But guys, I was lost. I was lost, and I wanted someone to ask me, «Lisa, why are you here all the time, why are you throwing yourself into all these things?» Did they ever wonder, was I running away from someone, was I running away from something? Why did I not want to be in my*

*community or in my home? Why did I want to be at school all the time? No one ever asked.*»

This excerpt showcases the speaker's self-presentation strategy by providing a retrospective view of their past. They portray themselves as the «overachiever» and «popular person» perceived by teachers and peers. However, the speaker contrasts this outward perception with an internal struggle, revealing feelings of being «lost» and craving understanding.

By sharing this introspective narrative, the speaker presents a dichotomy between the external image projected by their achievements and the internal turmoil they experienced. This deliberate contrast serves as a means of self-presentation, aiming to humanize their persona and reveal the unseen struggles behind the perceived success.

Mendias K<sup>15</sup> utilizes the strategy of self-presentation in her speech «The mood-boosting power of crying» in the following excerpt: «*Crying is as essential to me as breathing. And now, if I'm caught crying on that couch by my wonderful husband, who has had to learn way more about crying than he ever wanted to, he doesn't run away. He'll ask me why I'm crying, and I'll let him know I just need my release. He'll take my hand, and you know what I'll do? I will let it all out. And then I'm going to sink into that deep sense of intimacy and extraordinary sense of relief that only my tears can bring.*»

This passage demonstrates a deliberate strategy of self-presentation centered around vulnerability and emotional openness. The speaker portrays herself as someone deeply connected to her emotions and unafraid of expressing them openly. By sharing her experience of crying, she emphasizes the support and understanding she receives from her husband, highlighting a sense of trust and intimacy within their relationship. This portrayal aims to normalize and validate the act of crying as an essential part of their emotional release and emphasizes the relief it brings, painting a picture of emotional authenticity and closeness within their personal life.

One more example of self-presentation strategy can be seen in the abstract of Anne Marie Albano's<sup>16</sup> speech «How to raise kids who can overcome anxiety»: «*As a child, I had many fears. I was afraid of lightning, insects, loud noises and costumed characters. I also had two very severe phobias of doctors and injections. During my struggles to escape from our family doctor, I would become so physically combative that he actually slapped me in the face to stun me. I was six. I was all fight-or-flight back then, and holding me down for a simple vaccine took three or four adults, including my parents.*»

The speaker presents a vulnerable portrayal of their childhood fears and phobias, showcasing their vulnerability and the challenges she faced. Their self-presentation strategy highlights her early struggles with fear and

<sup>13</sup> Onie S. How targeted ads might just save your life. TED Ideas worth spreading, URL: [https://www.ted.com/talks/sandersan\\_onie\\_how\\_targeted\\_ads\\_might\\_just\\_save\\_your\\_life/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/sandersan_onie_how_targeted_ads_might_just_save_your_life/transcript)

<sup>14</sup> Godwin L. How teachers can help students navigate trauma. TED Ideas worth spreading, URL: [https://www.ted.com/talks/lisa\\_godwin\\_how\\_teachers\\_can\\_help\\_students Navigate Trauma/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/lisa_godwin_how_teachers_can_help_students Navigate Trauma/transcript)

<sup>15</sup> Mendias K. The mood-boosting power of crying. TED Ideas worth spreading, URL: [https://www.ted.com/talks/kathy\\_mendias\\_the\\_mood\\_boosting\\_power\\_of\\_crying/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/kathy_mendias_the_mood_boosting_power_of_crying/transcript)

<sup>16</sup> Albano A. M. How to raise kids who can overcome anxiety. TED Ideas worth spreading, URL: [https://www.ted.com/talks/anne\\_marie\\_albano\\_how\\_to\\_raise\\_kids\\_who\\_can\\_overcome\\_anxiety/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/anne_marie_albano_how_to_raise_kids_who_can_overcome_anxiety/transcript)

medical phobias, emphasizing their intense emotional reactions and the physical confrontation she experienced with medical personnel. This strategy aims to evoke empathy and understanding from the audience by painting a vivid picture of the past struggles, emphasizing the vulnerability and the severity of fears during childhood.

**Conclusions and perspectives of further research.**

In the context of TED Talks, discussions around mental health represent a pivotal aspect, leveraging rhetoric to create impactful speeches that transcend barriers of stigma and misunderstanding. These talks serve as powerful tools to dismantle misconceptions about mental well-being, utilizing personal narratives, empirical data, and persuasive appeals to evoke empathy and drive societal change. This multifaceted approach not only captivates audiences but also fosters transformative thoughts and actions. It presents mental health in a manner that transcends traditional discourse, fostering empathy, challenging preconceptions, and stimulating proactive responses.

Within persuasive discourse, rhetorical argumentation is characterized by its adaptability to specific audiences, employing strategies rooted in ethos, logos, and pathos. The utilization of intellectualization and self-presentation strategies is particularly noteworthy. Intellectualization strategy emphasizes the demonstration of intellect, knowledge, and relevant arguments. Meanwhile, self-presentation strategy activates the speaker's personality,

fostering credibility and respect without excessive argumentation.

Overall, TED Talks serve as influential platform that employ rhetorical argumentative strategies adeptly to advocate for mental health awareness. The fusion of personal narratives, evidence-based arguments, and persuasive appeals not only engages audiences but also fosters empathy, challenges stereotypes, and promotes constructive actions and attitudes towards mental well-being.

Further research in this domain could explore several perspectives to deepen our understanding of rhetorical argumentative strategies in general health-focused TED Talks, podcasts or other media platforms.

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