

# PEDAGOGICAL SCIENCES

808.5-026.564:81'42-028.42''364''

## THE RHETORIC OF RESILIENCE IN UKRAINIAN ACADEMIA

**Fedoriv Yaroslava Romanivna**

Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor,

**Finogina Tetiana Stepanivna**

Candidate of Philology, Senior Lecturer,

**Pirozhenko Iryna Dmytrivna,**

**Shuhai Alla Yuriivna**

Senior Teachers

The National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy”

**Abstract:** This paper examines how the language of resilience promotes learner motivation during crises, like pandemics or armed conflicts. Specifically, during quarantine or wartime, utilising the language of resilience in education proves quite effective. Related communicative strategies include highlighting education's importance, fostering perseverance, cultivating a growth mindset, celebrating small accomplishments, and providing support. Stylistic devices like metaphor, repetition, anaphora, and parallelism enhance the message. By applying these tools in academic discourse and crafting persuasive messages, educators can inspire learners to overcome adversity, maintain motivation, and develop the resilience needed to face challenges.

**Key words:** communicative situation, language, war-related discourse, resilience, academic discourse, stylistic devices, rhetoric, ethos, pathos, logos.

### **Introduction**

Resilience is a crucial trait for anyone living in times of crisis, as it enables individuals to effectively cope with and overcome challenges they encounter.

According to Masten [8], it refers to the psychological capacity to overcome difficult situations, adapt to adversity, and maintain a sense of well-being and functionality in the face of adversity. In particular, resilience involves the ability to recover, grow, and thrive despite facing significant setbacks or trauma [7]. It encompasses emotional, cognitive, and behavioural factors that contribute to individuals' ability to navigate and cope with stressors and maintain positive mental health [4].

The concept of resilience has been widely studied and explored in various fields, including psychology, social sciences, and education. Researchers have examined the factors that contribute to the development of resilience, such as personal characteristics, social support systems, and adaptive coping strategies [9]. Empirical studies have revealed that resilience can be strengthened through interventions that facilitate problem recognition, problem-solving abilities, self-belief, social integration, and positive emotional experiences [10].

In the context of education, resilience is recognized as a vital skill that supports students' academic success and well-being. According to Benard [2], resilience empowers students to effectively navigate the obstacles encountered within the learning environment and demonstrate persistence in pursuing their educational objectives. In addition, promoting resilience in educational settings can have positive impacts on students' engagement, motivation, and overall academic performance.

### **Developing Resilience and Motivation in the English Classroom**

**The rhetoric of resilience.** The issue of resilience emerged strikingly during the initial lockdown period of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was an absolutely new situation for both students and teachers. No one was adequately prepared to confront such circumstances, and we all had to learn on foot and to adapt to new circumstances. This presented a significant challenge, but it also served as a catalyst for fostering creativity.

We will always remember the day when we found ourselves isolated from the rest of the world, confined to our own spaces, and reliant on our screens for communication, with the prospect of an extended period without in-person interactions stretching before us. Both students and teachers experienced heightened

levels of stress while still having to fulfil their respective responsibilities. Teachers, in particular, faced the additional challenge of balancing the academic progress of their students with the need to provide them with necessary emotional support.

The pre-COVID curriculum required adjustment, as it required, particularly in regard to the oral presentations as a component of the end-of-course examination. Initially, this seemed unfeasible in the new reality. Nevertheless, through intensive brainstorming with colleagues, we proposed that our students prepare solo video presentations as part of the curriculum, encompassing the topics covered throughout the academic year, and in order to keep the students' inspiration we suggested a contest for the three best video presentations conducted via a specifically designed Google Form. Among others, we suggested choosing the most entertaining presentations. And that very idea happened to become a springboard for regaining students' creativity and resilience. Eventually, the whole procedure turned into a party: with great enthusiasm, students shared, viewed, and discussed the videos and exchanged their feedback. And then came the sacred moment of assessing and announcing the winners. That was the moment of triumph over the lockdown. Students unanimously voted for the one winner whose presentation was about Indonesia [6], and the surprising moment was that it was exactly the same student whose name we the teachers had silently in mind as a winner. The charismatic presenter in the video mesmerised the audience with his effective use of verbal and nonverbal communication tools during the presentation. Despite his seemingly unemotional manner, his delivery was so skillful that it captivated the audience's attention. He used a contrasting vocabulary and strategically placed pauses, supported by carefully selected visuals, creating an artistic and engaging presentation. His language incorporated lexical emphasisers with positive connotation, deliberate repetitions, appropriate metaphors, similes, and humorous comparisons. The linguistic tools he employed in his speech aligned perfectly with the language instruction imparted in the course curriculum.

Based on the experience described above, we can identify several rhetorical techniques that educators can employ to craft persuasive messages, inspiring learners

to overcome challenges and maintain motivation in completing their education:

*Repetition:* Repetition is a rhetorical technique that involves repeating key phrases or ideas to reinforce their importance. For example, educators can repeatedly emphasise the importance of perseverance, growth mindset, and celebrating small victories to reinforce the message that resilience is essential for success.

*Anaphora:* Anaphora is a rhetorical technique that involves repeating a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or sentences. For example, educators can use anaphora to emphasise the importance of education in building a better future by repeatedly starting sentences with the phrase "Education is the key to...".

*Parallelism:* Parallelism is a rhetorical technique that involves using parallel structures to create a sense of balance and harmony in a sentence or passage. For example, educators can use parallelism to emphasise the importance of support by repeating the phrase "We are here to support you" in different contexts throughout their message.

*Metaphor:* Metaphors can be used to create powerful and memorable images that help learners understand the importance of resilience. For example, educators can use the metaphor of a tree that bends but does not break in a storm to illustrate the importance of flexibility and adaptability in the face of adversity.

From a rhetorical perspective, persuasive discourse usually incorporates three Aristotelian appeals: *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*. In this context, *pathos*, which is the emotional component of public speaking, can play a significant role, particularly when the audience trusts the speaker. Even impeccable logical arguments (*logos*) may be surpassed by the power of *pathos*. However, *ethos*, which is rooted in notions of rightness *versus* wrongdoing and duty *versus* irresponsibility, tends to prevail in crisis-related appeals. As educators, we can utilise *ethos* by sharing our personal stories of resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity. By doing so, we can establish credibility and inspire learners to follow our example.

Thus, the suggested rhetorical techniques can be utilised to foster learner resilience during challenging times by crafting persuasive messages that empower learners to overcome obstacles and maintain their motivation in the face of adversity.

**TED talks for resilience: the implementation of the principle of students' autonomy in the conditions of wartime education.** As the world grappled with the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, little did we anticipate that the resilience and adaptability developed during those times would soon be tested again in the face of a full-scale aggression launched by Russia against our country on February 24, 2022.

When the delayed spring term of the academic year 2021-2022 finally began, none of the Ukrainian teachers or students had yet fully recovered from the profound shock and emotional toll inflicted by the ongoing armed conflict. All we could really think about was related to the war – one way or another. So the conversational topics which we were to discuss in the spring term according to the syllabus, seemed to be completely irrelevant in the moment when among other horrifying facts of the war - the atrocities of Bucha and Irpin – had just come to light. At the same time, teachers realised that there was no point in trying to find in the textbooks something that would resonate with the atmosphere and the spirit of the current moment, as nothing like that could even theoretically be reflected in the existing textbooks. But the term was inexorably starting and a viable plan of action had to be formulated immediately.

The solution was found while revising the students' questionnaires about the pluses and minuses of the course, and the fact that among the most favourite types of practices was always the activity which the students consistently rated above everything else, namely –TED talk discussions.

Before the war the most popular and interesting TED talks, which corresponded to the current topic, had been selected by the teacher, who formulated the questions for the discussion and the lexical tasks. All that was left for the students was to listen to the TED talk and to complete the tasks. The students enjoyed this activity.

The first problem, however, was that it was hard to guess what particular TED talks to choose so that they would interest the students at that specific historical moment. The second problem was that there was no time at all left to listen through

and select the TED talks, let alone devise any tasks for analysis and discussion.

Thankfully, the principle of students' autonomy as one of the most powerful drivers of students' motivation came to rescue. The simple and short definition of autonomy is suggested by Holec, according to which, the student's autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's learning" [5, p. 3]. It gave the answer to the question what to do; namely, to allow the students to take charge of the learning process.

At the same time, obviously, it would have been absurd just to tell the students: you can study just the way you want – you are in charge now. As Gaston E. Bacquet points out, "students need a teacher's guidance and support so as to become more autonomous and motivated" [1, p. 57].

Thus, the task was to give the students autonomy and freedom to choose the content and ways of learning, at the same time providing them with a clear roadmap and consistent support so that they would not be confused or uncertain as to what exactly was expected of them.

So, the makings of the plan for the unprecedented spring term were starting to take shape: the employment of the principle of students' autonomy with the guidance and support from the teacher using the rich source of material afforded by TED talk conferences. The next stage was to put that idea into practice.

First, the overall approach was formulated, which was that students and the teacher had to reverse their roles. Each student was to select one TED talk that they found particularly interesting and to act as a teacher throughout the process - formulating the questions for discussion, choosing the vocabulary for the analysis, devising tasks for practising the vocabulary, and then assigning the selected TED talk for listening at home and subsequently conducting the discussion of the TED talk in class. It was not even necessary to explain the details because in the previous two terms the same students had already done dozens of such TED talk discussions prepared by the teacher, so they had a clear example to follow and the templates for every type of the task. As a result, this activity turned out to be a complete success: the students coped with the assignment competently and in their feedback commented on how much intellectual and emotional satisfaction they

derived from the experience.

Consequently, students are capable of incredible achievements when they are trusted with autonomy and are guided, encouraged, and supported along the way.

**Building students' resilience by means of questionnaires.** Proceeding from the students' feedback on the study term, we have made the next step in our research of factors affecting students' motivation and ways to build their resilience. In particular, we considered learner motivation surveys [3, p. 207-216] as an effective tool for building students' resilience by helping them to identify their problems, strengths and weaknesses and to consequently develop strategies to overcome challenges. Consequently, our recommendations for educators are as follows: they can take the following steps when using questionnaires to build students' resilience.

1. *Designing a questionnaire.* Build — or encourage the students to do so — a resilience questionnaire that is appropriate for the students' age and development level. There are many resilience questionnaires available, such as the *Resilience Scale for Adults (RSA)* and the *Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM)*, which can be adapted for use with students.

2. *Administering the questionnaire.* Conduct the questionnaire to your students and provide instructions on how to complete it. Be sure to explain the purpose of the questionnaire and assure students that their responses will be kept confidential. In the event that students are granted autonomy in this research endeavour – and they show great enthusiasm in conducting their own surveys as part of their academic essay writing – the distribution of the questionnaire can be organised through the university's *Learning Management System (LMS)*, such as Moodle, Google Classroom, or Canvas, in the form of a peer-reviewed workshop. This secures a possibility of everyone's survey to get a relevant amount of responses to make inferences based on a sufficient sample.

3. *Analyzing the results.* Once the questionnaires are completed, analyze the results to identify strengths, weaknesses, and challenging areas. Look for patterns in the responses and take note of any areas where students may require additional support. The students' observations of each other's motivation issues and their mutual

support can be particularly helpful in this regard.

4. *Discussing the results.* Schedule a group discussion of the results of the questionnaire with your students. Use the results as a starting point for a conversation about resilience and how students can develop strategies to overcome challenges. Emphasise the importance of focusing on strengths and building on areas of success.

5. *Developing an action plan.* Brainstorm with your students to collaboratively develop an action plan for building resilience. Together, identify specific strategies that can effectively overcome challenges, such as practising self-care, seeking social support, or setting achievable goals. Encourage students to articulate concrete steps they can take to implement these strategies and foster resilience in their daily lives.

6. *Monitoring progress.* Monitor students' progress over time and revisit the questionnaire periodically to track changes in resilience. Use the results to adjust the action plan and provide additional support as needed.

Thus, language teaching proves to be an effective tool for motivating learners and building resilience in the times of crisis.

The communicative models with which this can be done are as follows:

1. *Emphasising the importance of education:* In times of crisis, education may be disrupted or inaccessible, making it difficult for learners to stay motivated. Consequently, by emphasising the importance of education in building a better future, learners may be more likely to persevere despite the challenges they face.

2. *Encouraging perseverance:* Learners may encounter many obstacles in their pursuit of education during wartime, such as lack of resources or safety concerns. By encouraging them to persevere through these obstacles, educators can help them develop the resilience they need to overcome future challenges.

3. *Fostering a growth mindset:* A growth mindset is the belief that one's abilities can be developed through hard work and dedication. By fostering a growth mindset in learners, educators can help them see challenges as opportunities for growth, rather than as insurmountable barriers.

4. *Celebrating small victories:* In times of war, it may be difficult for



learners to see progress in their education. However, by celebrating small victories, such as completing an assignment or learning a new concept, educators can help learners stay motivated and build their resilience.

5. *Providing support*: Finally, it is important for educators to provide support to learners in times of war. This can include emotional support, such as empathy and understanding, as well as practical support, such as access to resources or opportunities for collaboration with peers.

Ultimately, the language classroom context for developing resilience can be a powerful tool for motivating learners in times of crisis. By emphasising the importance of education, encouraging perseverance, fostering a growth mindset, celebrating small victories, and providing support, educators can help learners to develop the resilience they need to overcome the challenges they face.

**Conclusion** As can be inferred from the above discussion, resilience plays a crucial role in individuals' ability to adapt, recover, and thrive in the face of adversity. The literature on resilience provides valuable insights into the factors that contribute to its development and the interventions that can enhance resilience. Language teaching has demonstrated its effectiveness as a powerful tool for motivating learners and fostering resilience during times of crisis. By integrating motivational techniques and strategies into language instruction, educators can create engaging and supportive learning environments that empower students to persevere and overcome challenges. Through language learning, students can develop important skills such as problem-solving, adaptability, and self-efficacy, which are essential for building resilience in the face of adversity. Language teaching not only equips learners with the necessary linguistic competencies but also instils a sense of resilience and determination that can be applied in various aspects of their lives.

#### **WORKS CITED**

1. Bacquet, G.E. (2018). *The Link between Autonomy and Motivation and Their Effect in The Learning Process of Burmese English-Language Learners. Dissertation as part of the MA TESOL*. London, University College London (United Kingdom): ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. Retrieved from

<https://www.proquest.com/openview/0c6692d2ff9ac24a04cf193275145d78/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=2026366&diss=y>

2. Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency. What We Have Learned*. San Francisco: West Ed. 148 pages.
3. Fedoriv Ya.R., Pirozhenko I. D., Solomashenko N. V., Zhukorska L. P., Fedoriv M. L. (2023). Strategies and Practices for Enhancing Learner Motivation in Times of War: Ukraine Case Study // *Science and technology: problems, prospects and innovations*. Proceedings of the 8th International scientific and practical conference. CPN Publishing Group. Osaka, Japan. 2023. Pp. 207-216. URL: <https://sci-conf.com.ua/viii-mizhnarodna-naukovo-praktichna-konferentsiya-science-and-technology-problems-prospects-and-innovations-11-13-05-2023-osaka-уарониya-arhiv/> (дата звернення: 14.05.2023 р.).
4. Fletcher, D., & Sarkar, M. (2013). Psychological Resilience: A Review and Critique of Definitions, Concepts and Theory. // *European Psychologist*, 18, 12-23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000124>
5. Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
6. Kucheruk, Y. (2020). Indonesia [Video]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=Hph6i089M1A>
7. Luthar, S. S., & Cicchetti, D. (2000). The Construct of Resilience: Implications for Interventions and Social Policies. // *Development and Psychopathology*, 12, 857-885. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579400004156>
8. Masten, A. (2001). Ordinary Magic: Resilience Process in Development. *American Psychologist*, 56, 227-228. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.227>
9. Masten, A.S., & Barnes, A.J. (2018). Resilience in Children: Developmental Perspectives. // *Children*, 5.
10. Southwick, S. M., Bonanno, G. A., Masten, A. S., & Yehuda, R. (2014). Resilience definition, theory and challenges. // *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 5, 1-14.