

Analysis of argumentative texts prepared by Chilean students of pedagogy*

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Abstract

Within the framework of academic discourse, this research contributes to the study of argumentation as a discursive genre and a modality of thought widely used in the discursive practices of higher education students. The aim of the study is to analyse the pragmatic-dialogical and discursive-textual dimensions of argumentative writings produced by Chilean students of the first year of Pedagogy. The global coherence was reviewed by relating the theses with the arguments proposed and considering the use of prototypical connectors of this discursive modality. The corpus, made up of 217 texts of first-year students, was analysed quantitatively using the free software Antconc to determine the frequency of use of prototypical features. Subsequently, a random selection of the corpus was analysed in terms of its discursive and pragmatic assessment of use. The results describe the textual options, the structure, types of arguments and the pragmatic relevance of the texts, giving account of the most widespread anomalous practices revealing flaws in writing for argumentative purposes. It is considered that an argumentation-focussed approach to academic discourse written by future educators contributes in a systematic and transversal way to their training, which is not only relevant to improve the quality of their written communications, but is valuable in that it collaborates with the development of critical thinking skills, considered central to the learning of scientific disciplines (ARCHILA, 2012) and teaching (DOMINGO, GÓMEZ, 2014).

Keywords

Argumentation - Academic writing - Discursive competence.

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Introduction

There is a general consensus that university academic training requires students to develop certain thinking skills associated with producing and not just reproducing knowledge. In this way, the need for training centres to incorporate, at both secondary and university level, training with a greater focus on the development of analytical and critical thinking is evident.

From this perspective, argumentation constitutes the discursive mechanism that conveys the construction of knowledge in all disciplines, being useful to develop disciplinary contents in the execution of pertinent tasks for diverse subjects, in which critical and reflexive reasoning is fundamental (LARRAÍN; FREIRE; OLIVOS, 2014), as is the development of argumentative skills (ARCHILA, 2012; CHIARO; AQUINO, 2017).

It is considered equally relevant in teacher training, since teaching is currently understood as a practice that requires continuous reflection (PERRENOUD, 2004; SCHÖN, 1992) that must be acquired during professional training by systematically reflecting on educational work. (PÉREZ GÓMEZ, 2010; ALVARADO et al., 2012).

However, the relationship established between argumentative reflection and the discursive practices involved in its development is still incipient. It is necessary to investigate the argumentation skills of students who join pedagogical degree programmes, specifically the shortcomings evidenced in the construction of their writing assignments, understanding that part of the academic literacy they must develop during their training should allow them to answer questions, problematize phenomena and provide foundations in argumentative formats appropriate to their pedagogical training, in addition to their disciplinary specializations (BAÑALES et al., 2015). It is especially relevant to obtain a profile of the written performance of the university students that begin their training, which characterizes at a discursive and pragmatic level this communicative practice with a high level of elaboration.

The present study seeks to describe the discursive forms used in the elaboration of argumentative texts of first-year students who enter degree programmes in the pedagogical field of a public university in the Valparaíso region. To this end, the presence of prototypical linguistic features of this modality is considered, as well as also reviewing at a discursive level the types of arguments used and the dialogical relevance acquired by the linguistic uses, that is their pragmatic relevance.

The results are presented as a record to identify the main shortcomings in the writing of learners in undergraduate university education, in terms of their ability to give a point of view with foundations when facing a problem. This writing practice is conceived as essential for the construction of knowledge in university education, and part of the specialized written culture that must be taught to those who go to university (CARLINO, 2013).

Argumentation in the university context

Regarding studies on the description of writing practices developed by students at the beginning of their university education, researchers in different contexts agree that

writing is understood as a general skill that is required as a condition to generate and give an account of learning, but that is not taught in the university (RUSSELL, 2002; URIBE ALVAREZ; CAMARGO MARTÍNEZ, 2011).

In our country, students who go to university arrive with a training that associates argumentation with oral genres, such as debates and dissertations, where the focus is the use of discursive procedures to dispute the victory of the discussion, with little training in written argumentative competence, which from our perspective is understood as configured by various skills of a cognitive, epistemic, linguistic and pragmatic nature (MÜLLER, 2015).

Furthermore, university education usually incorporates writing assignments and development or essay tests, which involve the ability to analyse, relate and justify viewpoints (FARLORA, 2015); that is, in order to assess learning the academic space uses discursive practices that turn out to be a difficult obstacle to overcome if they are not taught either before or during the students' professional training.

Likewise, arguing in written communication requires managing the relationship between certain linguistic options and discursive procedures used to achieve communicative purposes, with a significant dialogical burden. In this regard, studies carried out on the ability of the writer to recognize the value of the reader in argumentative writing, point out that Chilean university students struggle the most with the use of counter-argumentation, a dimension that refers to arguing based on the virtual presence of the opposite point of view to one's own, at the time of writing (MANZI; FLOTTTS, 2012).

Dimensions of argumentation

Pragmatic-dialogical

Argumentation is understood as the construction of intersubjective relationships through the act of enunciation whose intentionality is always present with its respective discourse markers. In this context, the discursive act requires some expertise from the speaker in the handling of linguistic mechanisms that ensure the understanding of the meaning of his argument. Connectors are of great importance, since they refer to “[...] the basic argumentative intention of a particular part of the discourse [translation]” (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2007, p. 25). In the same way, the use of first-person personal pronouns and verbal endings are also relevant in the study of this dimension, since they allow recognition of the authorship of the text and the degree of commitment of the writer with their argumentative position. Thus, the pragmatic or dialogical is understood as the framework or situation in which argumentation is presented as part of human interaction. To this end, both the situational component and the arguing subjects are considered, who discuss or share a knowledge of the discursive universe, be it a conversation, a dispute, a plea, etc. (VAN EEMEREN; GROOTENDORST, 2002).

Argumentation as an interactive way of proceeding is based on a series of dialectical procedures through the use of non-fallacious argumentative schemes (Ethos). The importance of analysing arguments in this dimension requires considering certain evaluation standards that pertain to formal, deductive, inductive and factual logic (BIRO;

SIEGEL, 2014). In terms of the latter, considering the representation of the other in the construction of argumentation seems fundamental, which should be evidenced in the structuring and organization of the argument, allowing for counter-argumentation or the presentation of different argumentative positions to validate one's own, presenting the weaknesses of opposing thought.

Reflective critical thinking and argumentation

Critical thinking is recognized as the embodiment of rationality, hence its direct connection with argumentation. Clearly, the link between critical thinking and argumentation is based on the construction of a framework of reasons that support a judgment. Critical thinking is thinking based on principles. When issuing a judgment, the critical thinker looks for the reasons that allow him to substantiate the claim. He or she evaluates the arguments and makes judgments based on reasons, understanding and adjusting to the principles that govern the evaluation of the strength of those reasons (SIEGEL, 2013). In this sense, argumentation requires the development of critical thinking to move from the evaluation of the opposite argument and thus validate one's own through logical and factual reasoning in a dynamic interaction that is embodied in the discourse.

Discursive-textual dimension.

The argumentative text is understood as a “[...] textual type in which sequences dominate that strive to provide reasons and arguments that defend a certain opinion of the locutor and that are intended to convince the addressee about the correctness of that opinion [translation]” (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2007, p. 21). From an analytical perspective, the content and logical analysis of the arguments in the proposition (Logos) are considered through the use of a series of argumentative strategies that respond to the rhetorical resource that seeks to influence the recipient and achieve their adhesion (Pathos) (MARTÍNEZ SOLIS, 2007).

Other essential components for argumentation are the so-called discourse markers (DM), indispensable parts in leading the reader to the inferences that are intended in the writing, since they play a very important role in the relationship between statements and textual sequences. In other words, the DMs are unquestionably part of a repertoire that both the writer and the reader have at their disposal and use strategically if they are aware of their value, to relate the different statements and textual sequences with a purpose that lies in the construction of discourse through communicative intentionality. Thus, the markers that indicate pragmatic instructions of an argumentative nature -both connectors and operators- are recognized as belonging to argumentative discourse, that is, they operate functionally with a focus on the reader or listener.

Due to the tendency to characterise them in the context of their communicative or cohesive function, different DM classifications have been developed (LOUWERSE; MITCHELL, 2003; ZORRAQUINO; PORTOLÉS, 1999; PORTOLÉS, 2001; DOMÍNGUEZ, 2007), also referring to them as connectors (PÉREZ VEGA, 2001; CALSAMIGLIA; TUSÓN, 2002).

With a greater emphasis on the textual structure, Domínguez (2007) proposes the incorporation of connectors as types of discourse markers that operate in search of coherence from textual cohesion as a starting point, that is, from the cohesive relation with statements that precede them, or in exceptional cases cohesion could be established with the extraverbal context present in the communicative course. Accordingly, the term connector is reserved for the markers that establish argumentative relationships between two or more statements.

For the purposes of this research, the classification of Zorraquino and Portolés (1999) will be established in accordance with the proposal of Domínguez (2007), distinguishing between four groups of discursive markers:

Table 1- Discourse markers

Discourse markers	Definition	Classification
Information structuring devices	They lack argumentative meaning, their function being the informative organization of discourses.	Organisers: Their function is to associate discourse segments as parts of a single comment, based on a numeration, according to space or time. Commentators: introduce a new comment related or not to the main topic. Digressive markers: introduce a comment that becomes a side issue in relation to the main theme of the discourse, and they can be considered pertinent or may bear little or no relation to the previous information.
Reformulators	They present with a clearer expression the segment of the discourse in which they occur.	Explicative markers: present the segment in a different way. Markers of rectification: the second segment corrects or improves the first. Distancing devices: assure that the first segment is not relevant. Recapitulating markers: present the second segment as a conclusion of the previous segments.
Connectors	Semantically and pragmatically link one segment of the discourse with another segment to serve as a guide to the inferences between the connected segments.	Additives: connect two segments with equal argumentative orientation. Consecutives: present a segment as a consequence of the previous one. Counter-argument markers: link two segments of discourse, with the second being eliminated or presenting less force before the conclusion drawn from the first; soften the argumentative force of the previous segment; present a contrast or contradiction between subordinate segments; introduce contrary conclusions or eliminate certain conclusions.
Argumentative operators	They condition the argumentative possibilities of the segment.	Argumentative reinforcement: they reinforce the segment in which they are faced with other possible arguments. Concretion: they present a segment as an example of something more general.

Source: Prepared by the authors of this study.

In this context, recognizing the use of the connectors or DMs used by students for the preparation of their texts is relevant because it reveals a form of use that implies more or less appropriation of this textual type in writing in academic contexts.

Methodology

The research carried out is of an analytical-descriptive nature that considers texts in their pragmatic-dialogical and discursive-textual dimensions through linguistic features,

structure and argumentative strategies. In line with this perspective, a collection of writing obtained in a real classroom context was considered, within the framework of a subject related to the development of academic comprehension and writing skills, with the purpose of describing the discursive forms used in the production of the argumentative texts of first-year students who enrol in degree programmes, in the pedagogical field, of a public university in the Valparaíso region. The argumentative practice was elicited through the presentation of three controversial situations of a social nature.

The linguistic features of the argumentative discourse were identified with the Antconc software in the texts obtained as a result of the writing practice. In a second level of analysis, the pieces of writing with the presence of argumentative features were considered one by one, which were revised based on the types of arguments used, the established coherence, and the dialogical pertinence acquired by the linguistic uses, that is, their pragmatic relevance. A review of the functioning of these features in the discourses allowed access to frequencies and the description of erroneous functioning patterns in order to describe and analyse the argumentative writing of the first year Pedagogy students.

Corpus

The total corpus consists of 217 texts, written by first-year Pedagogy students of a public university in the middle of their first academic semester, which were transcribed into word and txt format for analysis with the free software Antconc, a help program for the analysis of corpus, which allowed the identifying of the frequencies of appearance of argumentative connectors, and by means of the Concordance tool, access was given to the context of appearance of the linguistic pattern sought, for each of the texts and for the corpus as a whole.

The task assigned to the students involved the presentation of three problematic cases; they had to choose one and develop an argumentative text supporting a point of view. They were presented with a box to remind them that essay-type argumentative texts are structured around a thesis, supporting arguments, counter arguments and a conclusion. The situations or cases raised were presented as follows:

Case 1: In the city of Valparaíso there is a large number of stray dogs, which has exceeded the manageable average and has become an environmental problem. Both the aesthetics of the city and public health are affected by the lack of control over the proliferation of stray dogs that is on the verge of becoming a plague. What is your take on the dilemma between the rights and well-being of people and the rights of animals as living beings?

Case 2: The university declares itself as a democratic, inclusive and pluralist institution, which means that it opens its doors to all students who apply without distinction. In this context, the student Juan Pérez starts a degree in Pedagogy. Shortly after being admitted, the student appears as Juana Pérez, because this person has chosen to live assuming the sexual identity that suits her. Juana continues without difficulty her studies until the end of her degree, but when she has to undertake her traineeship in a

municipal school, she is rejected because of her appearance that does not match the sex declared in the documentation, which obliges her to present herself dressed as a man as indicated on her identity card. What is your take on the issue raised, with regard to the fact that the school decides in a manner contrary to what was advocated during university training? Should the university take a more active role in dealing with this problem?

Case 3: In the university there are two students who were involved in a romantic relationship for a year but broke up due to a series of episodes of violence. The girl's parents have got a restraining order to protect the integrity of their daughter, but both students are classmates and share the same subjects. What is your take on this situation? How should the university act in this case to safeguard the right to education of all its students, without disregarding their safety and integrity?

For purposes of the manual analysis, the texts that presented argumentative linguistic features were considered from among the total collection of texts. These texts were selected based on the theoretical framework, corresponding to the use of connectors related to the thesis presented, the author's mark on the writing and the types of arguments used.

The first analysis showed that 78% of the texts in the sample with a total of 169 documents presented argumentative features and 22%, that is, 48 texts of the total, do not use linguistic features associated with argumentation. This is revealed in the following chart.

Table 2- Composition of the corpus of study

Texts in total	Texts with argumentative features	Texts without argumentative features
217	169	48
100%	78%	22%

Source: Prepared by the authors of this study.

Analysis procedure

For the purpose of the analysis, two dimensions were defined: pragmatic-dialogical, and discursive-textual, which explain the discursive practice under study.

The pragmatic-dialogical dimension refers to the ability of the writer to establish a situation or context framework that positions him or her in the chosen topic, representing this position as the opposite or standing as a counterpart to another vision on the subject, with which it establishes a confrontational dialogue. The categories of analysis prepared for this dimension correspond to the discursive presence of the enunciator identified through linguistic markings such as pronouns and endings of the 1st person singular and plural, given that its use is interpreted as the conscience of an authorship as opposed to the arguments, and therefore, as a discourse that recognizes the existence of the other. In the same way, linguistic markings that introduce other points of view or

counter-argumentation are also considered in this aspect, since they allow identifying the dialogical representation of argumentative discourse.

The discursive-textual dimension allows identifying the sustained presence of a global communicative purpose in the enunciator, which is based on the choice of arguments that support the chosen position. In this sense, it also includes the main fallacious practices used by students.

The Antconc software was used for the recognition of the linguistic features (shown on the far right of the table), which reveal textually the aforementioned dimensions:

Table 3- Instrument for linguistic features analysis

Dimension	Description	Linguistic features
Pragmatic-dialogical	Construction of the situation framework of argumentation as a dialogic communicative practice that is evidenced in the use of dialectical procedures that define the degree of commitment of the writer with what has been stated.	Use of Spanish personal pronouns: <i>yo, nosotros</i> ; First-person singular and first-person plural endings.
Discursive-textual	Review of the transition between the proposed thesis and the arguments presented for the achievement of the global communication purpose, considering the strategies at the textual level that are made evident through the use of connectors and discourse markers, as well as their functional relevance.	Types of arguments: through negation, emotive language, causal arguments, through generalisation, through analogy, through exemplification. Coherence between theses and arguments. Argumentative fallacies: hasty generalization, begging the question, false analogy, false cause, <i>ad populum</i> . Spanish argumentative Connectors: <i>Sin embargo, pues, por lo tanto, por tanto, pues, por ejemplo, por ende, esto es, incluso</i> .

Source: Prepared by the authors of this study.

Analysis of results

A global approach to the texts reveals that the argument markers are used with little variety, and, from a functional perspective, are not used with a rhetorical purpose that allows them to be effective in a communicative sense. Similarly, little appropriation is perceived of a writing in which the enunciator is committed to the point of view adopted in view of the problem presented.

Discursive-textual dimension

The analysis of discourse markers and argumentative connectors present in the texts produced by the students are ordered from higher to lower percentages of occurrence with respect to the argumentative linguistic features in total, with a total of 442 occurrences (ZORRAQUINO, 1999; DOMÍNGUEZ, 2007). For each case, the most recurrent functional type of the feature in the corpus is described, and a classification of a formal nature is

given together with an exemplification (In the examples of use, Spanish Connectives highlighted in bold in the original Spanish version of this article are written below in brackets in bold italics).

Table 4- Argumentative linguistic features for first year corpus writing

Linguistic feature and percentage of occurrence	Functional description	Classification	Example of use
<i>Sin embargo</i> (15%)	Introduces a counterargument	Refutative restrictive counter argumentation	"People have the right to a better well-being., However (<i>Sin embargo</i>), these animals are not to blame" (Written Corpus Argumentative text: TA, cast. 29)*.
<i>Pues</i> (14%)	Introduces a justification or an argument in the form of an explanation. Functions as a reformulator	Argumentative operator. Introduces explanation.	"[...] Something more important is also the welfare of the dogs, since (<i>pues</i>) they do not choose to be in the streets" (Corpus TA, cast 13).
<i>Por lo tanto</i> (11%)	Functions as a conclusive connector	It allows linking the statements that accompany the thesis, reinforcing it with a guarantee.	"[...] does not influence this person's work performance; therefore (<i>por tanto</i>), they should allow her to present herself as a woman, if this makes her feel comfortable" (Corpus TA, eba 3).
<i>Incluso</i> (8%)	Functions as an additive connector	Argumentative reinforcer	"Since ancient times, dogs are a great example of the benefits that arise from interacting with an animal; canines are even (<i>incluso</i>) especially considered 'man's best friend'" (Corpus TA, mus 6).
<i>Esto es</i> (7%)	Functions as a reformulator	Categorises what is stated through reformulation.	"That they would be well received and accepted; that is (<i>esto es</i>) the hallmark and we should all respect it" (Corpus TA, his 26).
<i>Por ende</i> (6%)	Functions as an inclusive connector	Allows a conclusion constructing the Enthymeme.	"All animals are living beings; consequently (<i>por ende</i>), we do not have the right to kill them" (Corpus TA, bio 3).
<i>Por ejemplo</i> (5%)	Introduces an argument of exemplification	Argumentative operator of concreteness	"Many good things can come of this like for example (<i>por ejemplo</i>), some students that are more open to diversity" (Corpus TA, Inglés 21).

*The corpus of texts produced by the students from where the examples were extracted is explained as follows (abbreviations are in Spanish):TA corresponds to Argumentative Text; in terms of the students' degree course, cast is for Spanish Pedagogy, eba for Basic Education Pedagogy, mus for Music Pedagogy, bio for Biology Pedagogy, inglés (in fact it should say ing) for English Pedagogy, bas for Basic Education Pedagogy in San Felipe, epa for Nursery Education, efi for Physical Education Pedagogy, ebavesp for Basic Education Pedagogy Evening Classes; and the number corresponds to its location in the corpus.

Source: Prepared by the authors of this study.

The preceding table illustrates the functioning and classification of the most commonly recurring linguistic features in the corpus, and these results have been obtained through the Antconc analysis. As commented in the methodological section, it is not possible to state that only a quantitative feature analysis is sufficient for a complete description. Thus, an approach to the functioning of these linguistic features in each of

the texts, in line with the interconnected arguments, reveals that reformulators are used in a sense that is closer to a descriptive discourse sequence, supported through an impersonal writing lacking in commitment. In addition, there is evidence that the use of argumentative connectors by themselves are not indicators of the presence of argumentativeness, since, in the texts under study, the construction of arguments based on a thesis is not always carried out with connectors and when they are used, they are not dealt with properly, without establishing a direct and valid relationship between the thesis and its arguments.

Next, prototypical examples of the analysed texts are presented in a qualitative way, with regard to the rhetorical structure, a construction example and the types of arguments used (Spanish Connectives highlighted in bold in the original Spanish version of this article are written in brackets in bold italics).

Table 5- Prototypical examples of rhetorical structure in the first-year writing corpus

Structure	Example	Explanation
Presenting a macroargument	“In Valparaíso the issue of street dogs has always been a problem that has affected the community, with attacks, rabies, fleas, ticks and mange being some pathologies brought by poor stray dogs. But we are the real problem, because the city dog is practically a pet rather than a street animal, and if they are wandering the streets and multiplying, it is due to their neglect and abandonment. This is why we are mainly responsible for their future infestation... In short, the poor Street dog is unaware of what it does unlike human beings, and we are the main problem, not them” (Corpus TA, bas 7).	An argumentative construction is observed which gives account of a prototypical structure, presenting a thesis, arguments and then a conclusion that reformulates the thesis in order to reinforce it.
Introducing an argument or piece of information.	“With regard to the role played by the school in the problem, it is necessary to maintain respect for the decision that the person has made, since (<i>puesto que</i>) rejecting their life choice could also be taken as discrimination [...]” (Corpus TA, bas 3).	An argument or a piece of information is introduced in the form of a hypothetical statement that has an implicit guarantee, which implies that the argumentation maintains its formulation on the hypothetical level regarding what could happen if the proposed thesis were not complied with.
Accompanying the opinion, thesis or conclusion.	“[...] does not influence this person’s work performance; therefore (<i>por tanto</i>), they should allow her to present herself as a woman, if this makes her feel comfortable”. “There is a real dilemma in the face of the imminent attack of dogs, (...) people lose patience when faced with such acts. As a result (<i>por consiguiente</i>), the pressure of the people becomes evident before a government that has precariously responded” (Corpus TA, cast 21).	In these cases, the connectors allow linking the statements that accompany the thesis, reinforcing it through their guarantee. In the first case, the hypothetically formulated arguments are presented in the form of what should be allowed. In the second case, it is a concrete example of connection between arguments that support a thesis.
Suggesting the general rule.	“Nobody can deny (<i>Nadie puede negar</i>) the great problem there is not only in Valparaíso, but throughout the country with respect to stray dogs” (Corpus TA, epa 10).	In the following example the guarantee is made explicit by stating a general rule. However, when analysing the content of the text, it can be pointed out that even when it responds with the wording of a general rule, it is not such and becomes a fallacy.

Introducing modality or a qualifier.	"Clearly (<i>claramente</i>), people have a right to better welfare" (Corpus TA, cast 29).	Explicitly, a modalizer or qualifier is presented, which in this case reinforces the idea enunciated and serves as support for the thesis.
Mentioning the source or authority.	"A published study showed (<i>Un estudio publicado exponía</i>) that seventy percent of the dogs found on the street are abandoned pets. With the registry of responsible ownership, the problem could be addressed in a more meticulous way" (Corpus TA, efi 24).	In the example it is made explicit that there is a source of authority that allows sustaining the argument through specific support, but it is not made explicit which and it loses its validity.
Offering a reservation	"[...] the university should take a more active role as a "trainer of trainers". Nevertheless (<i>no obstante</i>), it is a joint task that allows clarifying issues, knowing and accepting ourselves" (Corpus TA, hist 29).	In the following example, the connector allows introducing a reservation about the thesis, establishing restrictions that are not specified, because it indicates the responsibility that the university holds without indicating with whom it shares the task.
Providing a reinforcement for the justification.	People see the reality of stray dogs as a situation that is harmful to them and to the dogs themselves, and in fact (<i>y de hecho</i>), you do not need to be an expert to see that health problems, such as rabies or ringworm, are a reflection of that " (Corpus TA, cast 30).	In this example, a guarantee is presented as a reinforcement for the thesis that is based on common sense.
Adding a counterargument.	But who has a wider worldview? As an initial response it could be the transgender, who it appears shows an acceptance of transgender peers and therefore, the impression that she would accept all sorts. On the contrary (<i>Por el contrario</i>), we could say that the people who reject this person in a working capacity have a more backward worldview [...] " (Corpus TA, cast 2).	Through the connector an opposite argument is introduced in order to give greater strength to the proposed thesis, claiming that those who do not share the thesis are backward. Arguably, the weight of the argument places it among the <i>ad populum</i> arguments.

Source: Prepared by the authors of this study.

Table 5 refers to constructions in which the structure is argumentative, and reveals the different rhetorical moves used in the argument construction. The table presents examples of the corpus in which, admittedly students handle the textual typology and its rhetorical construction, that is, they have a degree of awareness, regarding the prototypically argumentative elements. However, as seen in the examples, an important part of the construction is bordering on fallacies, as is the case of the incorporation of the counterargument that is proposed as an example and that is recognized as an *ad populum* fallacy. In this context, it is important to clarify that the inclusion of elements of rhetorical construction in the texts is presented in an isolated manner, that is, they do not occur as the development of a complete text, nor are they accomplished in the majority of the productions; that is, they coincide with erroneous or fallacious discursive statements, explained in Table 6, which exposes types of errors in the construction of arguments that are present in the writings analysed, and is the product of the analysis of the discursive function and its execution.

Table 6- Types of arguments and error in first year corpus writing

Types of argument	Discourse function	Problem or error	Example
By negation	Counter-argumentative in as much as the opposite argument is presented in the form of a dichotomy.	A hasty generalization is made by a negation that creates a polarized argument.	"Although these cases occur in which an aggressor and a victim participate in an act of violence, there is no doubt that social opinion may differ from the law or rights; <i>no</i> matter how much the masses of people think that the aggressors do <i>not</i> deserve respect, the laws and constitutional rights defend all people equally, whatever their condition"(Corpus TA, eba 209).
<i>Ad populum</i>	Appeals in the form of an emotional construction to achieve the support of the reader.	Use of hyperbolic resources in order to place greater emphasis in the form of emotional impact on the recipient, with the weight of the argument lying in the impact it causes on the recipient.	"This problem has got out of control because of the large number of abandoned dogs in very poor conditions and with diseases, thus causing a serious environmental problem which not only affects the aesthetics of the city but may also affect people's health"(Corpus TA, eba2).
Causal	A causal relation of the arguments is established that allows justifying the thesis, or a cause can help explain the thesis and thus substantiate it.	It corresponds to those cases in which a cause and a consequence that are not linkable are related in an argument. In this example the argument is constructed through a causal relationship that does not contribute to sustain the thesis.	One of the main reasons is the abandonment of these faithful animals, maybe due to the lack of ethics and judgement of the individuals 'responsible' for them"(Corpus TA, eba 4).
By generalisation	It allows presenting particular points of view as general to validate the thesis.	It corresponds to those cases in which an argument is raised by generalization without sufficient evidence to support it. In this case there is a polarisation of ideas that does not allow a middle ground.	"So, what is more feasible, to create an awareness in humans or to incriminate ourselves before dogs?" (Corpus TA, eba 221).
By analogy	Comparing one element with another to give more emphasis and substance to the thesis.	In this case, arguments are presented with elements that cannot be compared.	"Both the dog and the human being have the same right to be born, to grow up, to live and to die due to the natural conditions of each living being, to be surrounded by a free environment and in the necessary conditions to develop all the kinds of skills that they possess" (Corpus TA, eba 12).
By exemplification	Substantiates the thesis through particular examples that tend to move towards generalisation.	In this case the generalisation lies in attributing to stray dogs the sole cause of the insanitary aspect of a place.	"It is a fact that the low health standards present in the streets of the city are greatly contributed to by stray dogs, who take over public squares and land, leaving the place very unsightly besides being dirty and smelly, putting citizens' health at risk" (Corpus TA, eba 13).

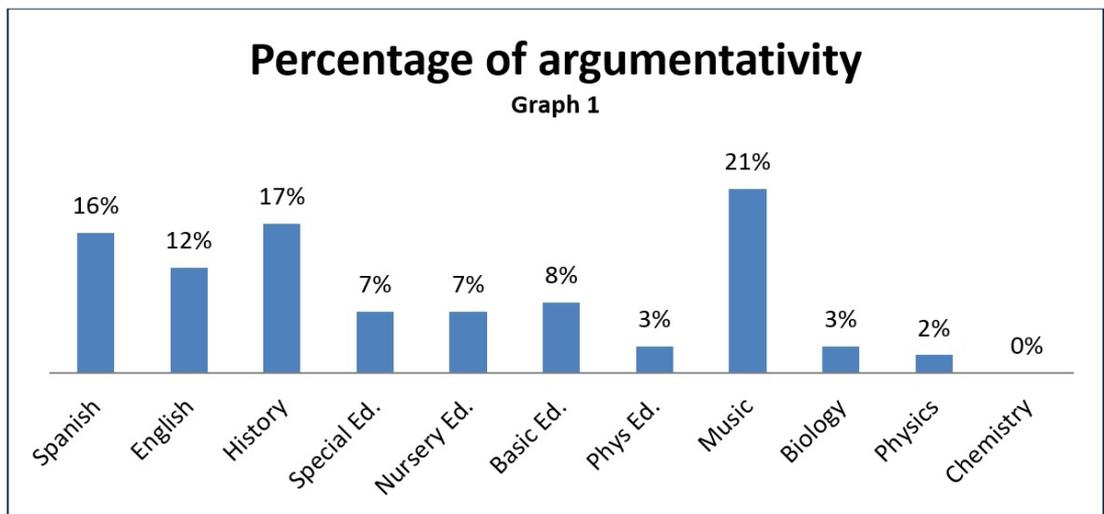
Source: Prepared by the authors of this study.

The examples provided show the most frequent errors or problems in the texts of the corpus. Clearly, generalisation is one of the ways to validate the thesis; however, in most of the cases referred to, this generalisation is arbitrary or lacks force. In the same way, the presented analogies fail inasmuch as what is compared belongs to different spheres

or forces a parallel that cannot be drawn. For its part, the irrefutability of a formulated position does not allow recognising the other, does not give rise to questioning and appears in a large part of the corpus introduced through a negation that radicalises the position and prevents the visualization of another perspective. Finally, the causal argument is part of the analysis, but in most of the occurrences, as in the example presented, the cause-consequence relationship cannot be linked to the thesis formulated, since it does not serve to substantiate it.

Having described both the linguistic features, the rhetorical structure and the frequent types of errors in the texts written by first-year students of the university, graph 1 shows the distribution of the use of linguistic features by discipline, which are distributed in 169 texts, regarding a total of 442 occurrences.

Graph 1- Percentage of use of prototypical features of argumentation by degree programme



Source: Prepared by the authors of this study.

An important point on the sample analysed is that 22% of the texts do not incorporate features of the relevant discourse dimension to develop reflection on a topic. Likewise, when displaying the data that emerge from the remaining 78% in relation to the relevant degree programmes, a distribution is represented that ranks an artistic discipline in first place (21%), followed in descending order by disciplines in the area of humanities (History Pedagogy 17%, Spanish Pedagogy 16% and English Pedagogy 12%); Education (Basic Education 8%, and Special Education and Nursery Education with 7%), with the areas of Sports Science and Science being located in the lowest percentiles. The results presented indicate that school education in writing is not sufficient or does not cover opinion writing. Also, taking into account specific areas of knowledge indicates a small tendency towards a better performance of students in the humanistic area, even though, as already mentioned before, it is necessary to evaluate the functional value of the linguistic features in use.

Pragmatic-dialogical dimension

Construction of the situation framework

In the analysis of the construction of the enunciative subject, we start by analysing the inscription of the self in the discourse, as the representation of the speaker in the text. According to this point, by way of example, three fragments of texts are presented that allow illustrating how the author is inscribed in their production or how they are neutralized giving way to impersonal use.

Table 7- Examples of author inscription in texts produced by students

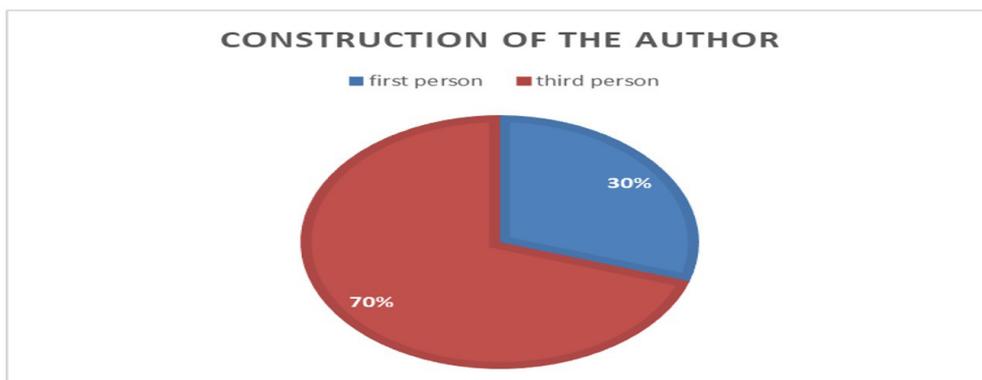
Author inscription through the first-person singular	Author inscription through the first-person plural	Author neutralisation through the third person
<p>"Certainly for me the dog hunting issue has no place in my opinion as a living and intelligent being that walks the earth; the abandonment of the animals is not their fault, but that of their owners who did not take responsibility in pet ownership"(Corpus TA, ebavesp 14).</p> <p>"The dog isman's best friend, and will never abandon you, which is why I cannot understand how unscrupulous individuals can exist who are capable of abandoning a friend"(Corpus TA, ebavesp 14).</p> <p>"Certainly the problem that affects our city today passes through the whole system in which it follows, that is, it is not only a matter of abandonment that certainly leaves much to be desired, but also the authorities have not created a prevention plan against the huge reproduction of the stray dogs of Valparaíso "(Corpus TA, eba 13).</p>	<p>"If we look at the beginnings of the lives of these dogs, many are born or begin to grow up inside a home, whose families take care of them and give them a roof, but there comes a time when the animal becomes a problem for the human being, it makes you waste a lot of time, expense, space, and endless other things, which make the person take the cruel decision to abandon the dog"(Corpus TA, eba 214).</p> <p>"These animals are in the streets thanks to the bad attitude of the human being, we forget them as if they were an old toy or something that has gone out of fashion; looking at them they remind us day by day that they live in those places and conditions thanks to people like us, if the inhabitants of this port complain about the alleged plague of dogs, they must realize that the solution is in our hands "(Corpus TA, eba 5).</p>	<p>"Currently, the population of stray dogs has grown excessively, which is a nuisance for both human beings and animals. This is mainly caused by the carelessness of both the owners and the Municipality.</p> <p>To this effect, it is necessary to raise awareness and create a culture in the community, and consider this as more than an aesthetic and superficial issue.</p> <p>We must give importance from the health perspective and take into account that dogs are living beings and therefore have rights.</p> <p>One must attach importance to the sanitary perspective and take into account that dogs are living beings and therefore have rights.</p> <p>To resolve this issue, it is necessary to place the value and respect that the case deserves, and to this end it is essential that the municipality and the community are committed and act for the common good, in order to help and save the animals, and so that this situation is not repeated (...que no se repita).</p> <p>One of the initiatives to end this dilemma is that people stop abandoning their animals, that if they acquire a pet, they are able to act as responsible owners.</p> <p>Another key initiative is for the Municipality to implement a free veterinary service, so that people can treat their sick dogs, and they can also sterilise them so as not to have unwanted pets, which they will later abandon"(Corpus TA, cast 6).</p>

Source: Prepared by the authors of this study.

In Table 7 we present some examples of the inscription of the self in the studied corpus, which present scarce occurrences, and which can be seen in the use of first-person personal pronouns and verb endings.

In line with this conception, it is interesting to observe in Graph 2 that the majority of students do not leave speaker markings in the text, representing a structure closer to the description and the expository text than to argumentation, using the third person singular and the impersonal construction with *se* (in Spanish).

Graph 2- Author's inscription in the text



Source: Prepared by the authors of this study.

The 30% indicated in the graph corresponds to those texts constructed in the first person, which implies a commitment to the presented position. However, the lack of counter-argumentation limits their dialogical nature and the development of critical thinking, as we indicated above. Finally, the high percentage of texts constructed in the third person, also reveal the distance with the dialogical argumentative construction that shows the level of commitment of the writer to their position.

Conclusion

The analysis of the argumentation constructed by first year university students reveals their lack of mastery regarding the structure and the pragmatic function of texts. While it is possible to reflect on an early diagnosis, it is necessary to establish a new study to see if more expertise is acquired through the course of their professional training that allows them to develop this discursive practice with greater success. The concern is mainly related to the fact that they are Pedagogy students, who will be responsible for developing critical thinking and argumentation skills in elementary and middle school students. For this reason, there is an acknowledgement of the importance of incorporating academic writing focused on reflection and supporting opinions in the students' teacher training in the different disciplinary areas, since argumentative production is essential for the development of critical thinking and it is directly linked to the professional practice of teaching.

Although there is a use of connectors typical of argumentation, the way of constructing texts is not very consistent with the genre. As stated in the analysis of the

results, the rate of use of such connectors is very low. Furthermore, the analysis allows us to ascertain that the produced texts approximate the description or the problem and solution text structure more than the argumentative type. In those cases in which an argumentative text is correctly constructed, its support is weak and it lacks depth, with arguments that constitute hasty generalisations and concrete exemplifications that are of a volitional or deontic nature. The lack of inscription of the first person in the discourse moves it away from the argumentative text, establishing a discursive distance that does not allow identifying the commitment to the position presented.

The discursive function that considers a counter-argumentative use of connectors is the most common, although it occurs infrequently in the texts, and its argumentative value is in most cases of the restrictive refutative counter-argumentation type, with only a small percentage of cases featuring an argumentative value of contrariety or exclusive counter-argumentation.

The analysis also allows retrieving connectors with a discursive function of argumentative operator of reinforcement with an argumentative value of gradual addition, in as much as it emphasises the force of the argument through the addition made with a gradation connective, such as *es más* (*moreover*), *más aún* (*furthermore*), or evidentiary addition as is the case of the use of the connector *de hecho* (*in fact*) that also functions as reinforcement, adding to the first argument the reinforcement of an argument through exemplification that emphasizes the nature of the former, providing a proof of fact, according to Domínguez (2007).

There are two interesting cases in which the discursive function is a distancing reformulator with an argumentative value of restrictive counter-argumentation, but in both cases, the argumentative construction leads to irrefutability from a perspective that is questionable and that in fact does not accept the relationship established in the form of the reformulator. Even so, it is noteworthy that the argumentation construction from this perspective allows the dissenting voice to be incorporated into discourse with the restrictions that result from distancing oneself from one's own point of view.

It should be noted that in the review and analysis of the writing, twenty texts were found that, from the perspective of their discursive function, presented explanatory and rectifying reformulators that escape the classification of argumentative value proposed by Domínguez (2007), because they concern uses framed in an explanatory or descriptive structure, alien to the commitment that lies in argumentation.

Given this scenario, it can be stated that although the first-year students know the argumentative genre, and argumentative features are found in their texts, in 78% of the total, the use does not amount to a coherent text in the form of a thesis statement and the arguments that sustain it. In general, these cases constitute written products that notwithstanding the use of argumentation markings, approximate more the production of descriptive and expository texts, without stating a specific position that they support through certain arguments. The precariousness or simplification of the constructed argumentation also accounts for the poor development of reflective critical thinking, so that faced with the task assigned to them, it was difficult for them to state a position, develop the grounds that would sustain this position and, above all, recognise other

perspectives or positions, establishing discrepancies or validating one's perspective by criticising an alternative or opposing position. Although these are first-year university students, it is expected that the questioning and the way of analysing the problematic situations in which a statement of opinion is requested, be supported in a coherent and sufficient manner.

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