



# Reframing Prosodic Teaching in Political Discourse: Integrating Spanish-Language Features into Multimodal Pedagogy

Replanteando la enseñanza prosódica en el discurso político: integración de las características del idioma español en la pedagogía multimodal

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## ABSTRACT

This article presents a pedagogical model for teaching prosody in political discourse, with a specific focus on Spanish-language communication and multimodal analysis. Drawing on a classroom-based intervention conducted over three semesters at a Spanish university, the study explores how intonation, rhythm, and voice modulation function as affective and ideological resources in public speech. The proposed instructional sequence includes audiovisual analysis, corpus-based annotation using PRAAT, and student-led performances designed to develop critical listening and expressive awareness. Results indicate that prosodic training enhances learners' ability to decode emotional framing, identify rhetorical strategies, and engage in reflective, embodied communication. The model also encourages students to recognize the political implications of vocal delivery and to experiment with voice as a site of agency and critique. The findings are situated within broader debates on media literacy, civic pedagogy, and the performative turn in political communication. By bridging linguistic, rhetorical, and educational frameworks, this work contributes to emerging efforts to integrate multimodal literacy and affective awareness into the curriculum, while addressing a persistent gap in prosody-oriented teaching practices in the Spanish-speaking world.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo propone un modelo pedagógico para la enseñanza de la prosodia en el discurso político, con especial énfasis en la comunicación en lengua española y el análisis multimodal. A partir de una intervención didáctica desarrollada durante tres semestres en una universidad española, se explora cómo la entonación, el ritmo y la modulación vocal operan como recursos afectivos e ideológicos en el discurso público. La secuencia instruccional combina análisis audiovisual, anotación corpus-lingüística mediante PRAAT y ejercicios de producción performativa orientados al desarrollo de una escucha crítica y una conciencia expresiva. Los resultados indican que la formación prosódica mejora la capacidad del alumnado para decodificar el encuadre emocional, identificar estrategias retóricas y practicar una comunicación reflexiva y corporalizada. El modelo también promueve una comprensión crítica de las implicaciones políticas de la voz y fomenta su uso como herramienta de agencia y resistencia. Los hallazgos se contextualizan dentro de debates actuales sobre alfabetización mediática, pedagogía cívica y performatividad en la comunicación política. Desde un enfoque interdisciplinar, esta propuesta contribuye a cerrar la brecha existente en la enseñanza de la prosodia en contextos hispanohablantes y a fortalecer la integración curricular de la conciencia afectiva y multimodal.

## KEYWORDS | PALABRAS CLAVE

Prosody, Political Communication Multimodal Pedagogy, Spanish Discourse, Civic Education, Voice.  
Prosodia, Comunicación Política, Pedagogía Multimodal, Discurso en Español, Educación Cívica, Voz

## 1. Introduction

In an era where political communication is increasingly performative, emotional, and multimodal, the role of prosody—the rhythm, intonation, and melody of speech—has become central to understanding how leaders construct affective proximity, credibility, and ideological appeal. Despite the visibility of this phenomenon in media and public discourse, pedagogical frameworks for teaching prosody in political contexts remain scarce, particularly in Spanish-language educational settings. This article responds to that gap by proposing a multimodal, affect-sensitive approach to teaching prosody as a communicative and analytical tool in higher education. This multimodal pedagogy is anchored in the specific prosodic and discursive conventions of Spanish political orality, integrating acoustic, rhetorical, and affective dimensions into a replicable instructional sequence. At the core of this model is the development of vocal literacy and emotional intelligence—enabling students to recognize how voice encodes affect, intention, and ideological stance in persuasive speech.

While prosody has received attention in fields such as second language acquisition, speech therapy, and professional voice training, its application in the analysis and teaching of political discourse is still emerging. Scholars like Labastía (2022) and Breeze (2019) have highlighted the importance of suprasegmental features in persuasive speech, yet few practical models exist for classroom implementation—especially those tailored to the phonopragmatic characteristics of Spanish. Furthermore, most didactic approaches remain focused on content and ideology rather than delivery and affect, missing a critical layer of rhetorical meaning.

The central problem this article addresses is the lack of pedagogical frameworks that connect prosody to political meaning-making in the Spanish-speaking classroom. This article takes as its point of departure the need to equip students with the tools not only to *understand* political discourse but to *listen critically* to how it is performed. This involves recognizing the emotional and ideological work of pitch, pause, emphasis, and rhythm in shaping perceptions of sincerity, strength, or solidarity. In populist and charismatic leadership styles—both of which are prominent in contemporary Ibero-American politics—such prosodic cues often override logical content, functioning as emotional shortcuts that forge bonds with “the people. While this carries clear pedagogical potential, it also invites ethical reflection on the risks of affective manipulation and emotional engineering in political performance. Analyzing and teaching these patterns, then, becomes a powerful avenue for political literacy.

From a pedagogical perspective, this article is grounded in critical applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2001; Pennycook, 2022), multimodal learning theory (Jewitt, 2013), and recent Latin American work on political communication and affect (Calvo & Araguete, 2020; De la Torre & Peruzzotti, 2018). It aligns with calls for an education that goes beyond textual comprehension toward a *communicative and embodied understanding* of discourse. To this end, we propose a teaching model that integrates authentic audiovisual material, corpus-based excerpts, and acoustic visualization tools such as PRAAT, enabling students to analyze, interpret, and reflect on the prosodic dimension of political speech in Spanish. These components form the basis of a modular, replicable toolkit for prosodic instruction in discourse-focused communication education.

The study is guided by three research questions: (1) How can prosodic analysis be effectively integrated into Spanish-language political discourse teaching? (2) What tools and strategies enhance students' interpretive competence of affective vocal cues? (3) What impact does this instruction have on their communicative and critical awareness?

Our focus is specifically on the Spanish language, not only due to its structural and rhythmic features—syllable timing, pitch reset, final fall/rise patterns—but also due to its socio-discursive environments. From the passionate cadence of a Latin American populist speech to the measured gravitas of European parliamentary rhetoric, Spanish offers a rich terrain for exploring the politics of voice. Yet existing curricula in discourse analysis or communication studies rarely include training in prosodic analysis, let alone structured pedagogical resources for doing so.

This article builds upon classroom experiences and pedagogical experimentation carried out in undergraduate and master's courses at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid between 2023 and 2025. While it does not report empirical data, the study draws from structured teaching sessions in which prosody was integrated into discourse analysis through multimodal resources and participatory activities. These experiences serve as the foundation for the proposed instructional model and for the discussion of its practical and conceptual implications.

The structure of the article is as follows: *Section 2* offers the theoretical framework, establishing the linguistic, pedagogical, and multimodal bases of our approach. *Section 3* describes the methodology and pedagogical design of the teaching sequence, including tools, session plans, and classroom practices. *Section 4* presents reflections and evidence drawn from the classroom experience, organized thematically and supported by student responses. Finally, *Section 5* discusses the implications of this model for broader pedagogical practice, and offers conclusions and recommendations for future work.

By embedding prosodic instruction into multimodal, politically oriented tasks, we found that students became more attuned to how speakers project charisma, manipulate affect, and perform identity through voice. Our aim is twofold: (1) to outline a flexible, replicable model for teaching prosody in Spanish-language political discourse, and (2) to argue for the pedagogical importance of integrating prosodic awareness into the training of future communicators, analysts, and educators.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Prosody and Political Discourse

Prosody refers to the suprasegmental features of speech—intonation, rhythm, pitch, stress, and timing—that convey not only structural but also affective, epistemic, and interpersonal meaning (Crystal, 1975; Ladd, 2008). In the field of political communication, prosody serves as a primary carrier of emotional framing (Gumperz, 1982), pragmatic intention (Bolinger, 1989), and performative identity (Couper-Kuhlen, 2004). While lexical choices and thematic content remain dominant in political discourse analysis, prosodic features often encode ideological stance and relational positioning implicitly, through acoustic nuance rather than explicit formulation (Breeze, 2019; Wodak, 2021).

Teaching prosody in the context of political discourse is both timely and pedagogically necessary. In an era of polarized media, emotional manipulation, and performative leadership, understanding how tone, pitch, and rhythm shape persuasive speech is central to democratic literacy (Ilie, 2018; Wetherell, 2012). Yet most communication and discourse analysis curricula overlook these features, leaving students unprepared to interpret or question the emotional strategies embedded in political speech. By integrating prosodic analysis into discourse pedagogy, educators can equip learners with interpretive tools to decode affective framing, detect manipulation, and critically evaluate public voice.

Recent studies in populist discourse have highlighted prosody as a key resource in projecting affective proximity and charismatic leadership (Artero Abellán, 2025; Ilie, 2018; Roitman et al., 2023). For example, populist figures such as Donald Trump or Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) frequently manipulate prosodic contours—elongated pauses, downward final contours, emphatic pitch resets—to signal alignment with “the people,” mock political adversaries, or escalate urgency (Zienkowski & Breeze, 2019).

Spanish, as a syllable-timed language, presents distinct prosodic properties that shape its political orality. Studies of Spanish intonation describe a limited pitch range in declaratives (Hualde & Prieto, 2015), a preference for rising-falling terminal contours, and the use of prosodic phrasing to segment discourse units rather than syntactic clauses (Estebas Vilaplana & Prieto Vives, 2008; Hualde & Prieto, 2015; Sosa, 1999). These features affect how emotional charge and speaker stance are perceived, particularly in public oratory. Spanish-speaking politicians such as Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Pablo Iglesias, and Rafael Correa often employ a marked “melodic script,” where pitch height and register modulation index emotional authenticity and rhetorical intensity (Calvo & Araguete, 2020; Raiter, 2009).

This study emerged from the convergence of three gaps: (1) the underrepresentation of prosody in Spanish-language discourse teaching, (2) the growing relevance of affective leadership styles in global politics, and (3) the absence of structured classroom strategies to address prosodic meaning-making. The proposed initiative builds on critical discourse pedagogy by moving from textual analysis to vocal practice, combining audiovisual excerpts, multimodal annotation, and speech performance as learning activities (Breeze, 2019; O’keeffe, 2013).

Despite the rhetorical importance of prosody, academic treatments often remain either narrowly phonetic or broadly rhetorical, without integrating detailed acoustic analysis into sociopolitical interpretation. Exceptions include forensic phonetics (Nolan & Grigoras, 2005), affective intonation research (Grabe, Kochanski, & Coleman, 2005), and emergent work in multimodal critical discourse analysis (Breeze, 2019; O’keeffe, 2013), yet these remain underrepresented in teaching contexts.

More recent work has begun addressing this gap. Bieletto-Bueno (2020) explored vocal performance

in Mexican sociopolitical contexts, showing how pitch and intensity index authority and authenticity across speakers. Norrick (2010) analyzed the emotional impact of intonation in televised interviews, arguing that vocal tone modulates the reception of populist versus institutional discourse. In an educational setting, Yenkimaleki and Heuven (2013) demonstrated how prosodic feature awareness training improved learners' ability to interpret spoken meaning, supporting the pedagogical integration of intonation in discourse analysis. This article contributes to bridging that gap, focusing on prosody not just as a linguistic subsystem, but as a socially consequential resource for political performance and reception.

## 2.2. Pedagogical Approaches to Voice, Affect, and Rhetoric

Traditional rhetorical education, particularly in Spanish-speaking academia, tends to prioritize logos—logical argumentation and textual structure—over pathos and delivery. Voice is often treated as a technical skill for actors or speakers, rather than as a communicative layer embedded in everyday persuasion. This overlooks the fact that prosody shapes how messages are received, interpreted, and felt (Van Leeuwen, 1999).

Recent scholarship in critical communication pedagogy challenges this epistemological bias. Drawing from feminist, performative, and post-structuralist traditions, authors such as Fassett and Warren (2007), and Middleton et al. (2015) advocate for teaching communication as an embodied, emotionally charged act. This perspective recognizes the voice not only as an instrument of projection, but as a locus of identity, affect, and social power.

Teaching prosody, then, is not simply about improving oral expression; it is about fostering what could be called *vocal literacy*—the ability to hear and interpret tone, mood, stance, and relational dynamics in spoken interaction (Gumperz, 1982; Lawy, 2017). In the context of political discourse, vocal literacy allows students to decode manipulative rhetorical strategies, recognize ideological subtexts, and evaluate credibility beyond content.

Within the Latin American tradition, scholars such as Arfuch (2016) and De la Torre and Peruzzotti (2018) emphasize the emotional dimension of political discourse as essential to understanding populist engagement. These perspectives resonate with Calvo and Araguete's (2020) model of media-mediated emotional resonance, in which vocal affect functions as a bridge between leader and audience. Pedagogically, these insights call for moving beyond textual analysis toward embodied, multimodal, and affect-centered approaches to communication education.

However, current curricula in Spanish-language communication and linguistics programs rarely incorporate prosodic instruction explicitly. When prosody is addressed, it tends to be decontextualized—taught as either a phonetic abstraction or a speech technique, rather than a situated discursive practice. This article proposes to reframe prosody as a tool for critical listening, discursive interpretation, and political awareness, especially relevant in times of polarized rhetoric and performative populism.

## 2.3. Multimodality, Corpus Pedagogy, and Political Literacy

Multimodal pedagogy—understood as the strategic use of multiple semiotic resources (text, sound, image, gesture) in the learning process—has proven particularly effective in enhancing comprehension, retention, and critical thinking (Bezemer & Kress, 2015; Jewitt, 2013; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). In the domain of political discourse, it enables students to explore the interplay between what is said and how it is delivered—facial expression, gesture, pitch contour, timing—all contribute to meaning construction (Goodwin, 2000; O'Halloran, 2011).

Applying multimodal frameworks to the analysis of prosody allows for a more embodied and situated understanding of discourse. Tools like PRAAT enable the visual and auditory analysis of pitch, intensity, and speech rate; video annotation platforms like ELAN or Videograph support synchronized transcription; and platforms like Moodle or EdPuzzle allow the integration of interactive speech analysis in blended classrooms (Adami, 2015; O'keeffe, 2013).

From a data-driven learning (DDL) perspective, corpus-based pedagogy enhances linguistic awareness by exposing students to authentic, patterned discourse use (Baker, 2010; Boulton & Pérez-Paredes, 2014). The recent development of politically focused corpora, such as the TPC2016 (Artero Abellán, 2025) or the Observatorio del Discurso Político en América Latina (CEALCOM), facilitates direct access to real-world speech events that students can analyze acoustically and pragmatically.

In Latin American and Iberian classrooms, however, the integration of multimodal resources into discourse teaching remains inconsistent, limited by technological access, faculty training, or curricular inertia. Even in digital humanities contexts, prosody often remains marginal. This article advocates for a concrete and accessible pedagogical model that integrates corpus excerpts, audiovisual tools, and affective framing strategies into the teaching of Spanish-language political speech, making voice analysis central to communication literacy.

#### 2.4. Vocal Affect and Populist Performance in Latin America

Populism in Latin America has long been characterized by a direct, emotionally charged communicative style that privileges identification over deliberation, proximity over protocol. The voice, in this context, becomes a central instrument of affective alignment. Unlike European populisms, which often rely on irony or nationalist gravitas, Latin American leaders frequently perform a *maternal* or *paternalistic* ethos, modulating their vocal delivery to evoke empathy, indignation, or moral righteousness (Arfuch, 2016; Panizza, 2005).

Affect theory, particularly in its application to political communication, underscores the role of vocal prosody in transmitting *visceral ideology*—not merely what is said, but how emotion is sonically encoded and socially interpreted (Protevi, 2009; Wetherell, 2012). In this sense, vocal cues such as rising intensity, lowered pitch to convey authority, or elongated pauses to dramatize indignation are not stylistic flourishes but affective strategies deeply embedded in the populist script.

In the case of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, for example, research has identified a recurring pattern of rising intonation on accusatory phrases followed by a controlled descent to signal closure and moral superiority (Calvo & Araguete, 2020; Raiter, 2009). Similarly, AMLO's use of prosodic flatness—punctuated by sudden emphatic rises—produces an illusion of calm conviction punctuated by controlled outrage, reinforcing his image as the people's steady moral voice (Francisco-Ortega, 2020).

The pedagogical implication of these vocal patterns lies in their semiotic layering: students must learn to interpret political speech not only in terms of ideological content but in the rhythm and tone that animate its delivery. As Latin American political communication increasingly shifts to digital platforms (e.g., YouTube addresses, Instagram videos, podcast-style broadcasts), affective prosody becomes even more central to capturing audience attention and fostering parasocial intimacy (Calvo & Araguete, 2020; De la Torre & Peruzzotti, 2018).

Moreover, populist prosody frequently overlaps with other registers—religious preaching, popular song, or soccer commentary—creating a hybrid intertextuality that is culturally situated and emotionally resonant (Pennycook, 2022; Verón, 1996). This blending of orality types complicates traditional textualist models of discourse analysis, making prosodic training essential for educators seeking to prepare students for critical engagement with political media.

Incorporating these dynamics into the curriculum requires moving beyond normative pronunciation or delivery models. Instead, the focus should be on training students to analyze prosody as a cultural code, interpret how different vocal forms evoke ideological positions, and evaluate how these forms resonate with specific audiences. This approach not only enhances critical political literacy but also equips learners with interpretive tools to navigate contemporary media landscapes. Thus, vocal affect in Latin American populism should not be treated as a secondary feature of performance but as a constitutive element of political meaning-making, and one that merits explicit attention in multimodal pedagogical models for Spanish-language discourse education.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design and Epistemological Orientation

This section outlines the epistemological foundations and pedagogical rationale for the instructional model presented in this study. It responds to a clear gap in both discourse pedagogy and political communication education: the absence of structured, voice-centered approaches to analyzing and teaching prosody in Spanish-language political speech. This study adopts a qualitative, practice-based methodology grounded in applied linguistics, critical pedagogy, and multimodal discourse analysis. Its core aim is to design and refine a prosody-centered instructional model tailored to the analysis of political discourse. Rather than relying on experimental control or large-scale data aggregation, the study privileges contextual richness, reflexive interpretation, and pedagogical applicability, aligning with the principles of interpretivist inquiry (Dörnyei, 2007; Lincoln, 1985).

The rationale for this approach lies in a pressing educational need: students often lack the analytical tools to interpret the emotional and ideological force of political speech beyond its lexical content. As political communication increasingly relies on affective delivery and vocal performance, particularly in populist or charismatic styles, the ability to decode prosodic cues becomes essential to democratic literacy. Yet prosody remains marginal in most Spanish-language curricula, especially in critical discourse and communication programs. The project is situated at the intersection of critical applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2001; Pennycook, 2022) and constructivist pedagogy (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978). It conceptualizes learning not as the passive reception of content, but as the socially mediated construction of understanding, particularly through engagement with real-world discourses. This approach aligns with calls for education as political action (Freire, 1970), where knowledge is not merely transmitted but co-constructed in response to power-laden communicative practices.

At the methodological level, the study draws on design-based research (DBR) principles (Reeves, 2006; The Design-Based Research Collective, 2003), in which instructional interventions are iteratively refined through cycles of implementation, observation, and critical reflection. It also incorporates aspects of multimodal ethnography (Dicks, Soyinka, & Coffey, 2006), recognizing that classroom interaction is shaped not only by language but by sound, gesture, interface, and affect. While the study does not present formal empirical results, it contributes to the development of interdisciplinary pedagogy by offering a replicable, theoretically grounded model for integrating prosody into political discourse education. Situated within the broader field of critical discourse pedagogy, this contribution advances both the analytical depth of discourse studies and the applied scope of communication teaching in Spanish-speaking contexts.

### 3.2. Institutional Context and Participant Profile

The pedagogical intervention was carried out over four academic semesters (2023–2025) at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM), within two elective courses: “Discurso Político y Medios de Comunicación” (undergraduate) and “Análisis Multimodal del Discurso” (master’s level). These courses belong to the Facultad de Filología and the Máster en Estudios Lingüísticos y Literarios Hispánicos, both of which offer optional modules in discourse analysis, pragmatics, and rhetoric.

The total participant pool consisted of 48 students, ranging in age from 21 to 38, with a gender-balanced distribution (25 women, 23 men). The group was diverse in terms of academic background, with students from Filología Hispánica, Comunicación Audiovisual, Lenguas Modernas, and Estudios Interculturales. All participants had completed at least one prior course in discourse analysis or sociolinguistics, ensuring baseline familiarity with communicative theory. However, less than 15% reported any previous formal instruction in prosody, and none had worked with tools such as PRAAT or acoustic visualization software before this intervention. All participants provided informed consent for the use of their anonymized data (written reflections, assignments, and audio samples) in this study. Ethical clearance was obtained through the UCM Faculty Ethics Review Board in compliance with Spanish academic research standards (BOE 14/2011, RD 99/2011).

### 3.3. Pedagogical Materials and Data Sources

The instructional model was constructed around authentic, multimodal materials representative of contemporary Spanish-language political discourse. The corpus included:

Video-recorded political speeches and interviews from prominent figures including Andrés Manuel López Obrador, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Pablo Iglesias, and Isabel Díaz Ayuso, drawn from YouTube and public broadcaster archives (TVE, Canal Encuentro, La Sexta).

Selected segments from the Trump Primary Corpus (TPC2016) and the Observatorio de Discursos Populistas de CEALCOM, used for contrastive analysis of English- and Spanish-language prosody.

Prosodic maps and annotated transcriptions following Sp\_ToBI conventions (Aguilar, De-la-Mota, & Prieto, 2009; Beckman, Hirschberg, & Shattuck-Hufnagel, 2005), simplified for pedagogical purposes to highlight pitch movements, breaks, and stress.

The acoustic tools used in instruction included PRAAT (Boersma & Weenink, 2020) for spectrographic analysis, Audacity for waveform editing, and EdPuzzle for embedding interactive audio-visual prompts in Moodle-based instruction. Supplementary materials included excerpts from Estebas Vilaplana and Prieto Vives (2008), Sosa (1999), and real-time pitch visualization demos sourced from the UCL Intonational Phonology Lab.

### 3.4. Structure of the Teaching Sequence

The prosodic instruction unit spanned three 90-minute classroom sessions, delivered in a blended learning format that combined face-to-face instruction, digital tool use, and collaborative group tasks. The structure and content were as follows:

#### 3.4.1. Session 1: Introduction to Prosody in Political Discourse

This session introduced theoretical and terminological foundations, including:

- Definitions of prosody and suprasegmental features
- Acoustic parameters: fundamental frequency (F0), intensity, duration, pitch range
- Communicative functions: emotional coloring, turn-taking, emphasis

Students viewed a curated sequence of video excerpts (~30 seconds each) from political speeches across ideological spectra. These were analyzed in terms of vocal affect and pragmatic force, guided by instructor-led pitch contour visualizations.

#### 3.4.2. Session 2: Multimodal Analysis and Corpus Annotation

In small groups, students worked with annotated transcripts of political excerpts, paired with corresponding PRAAT visualizations. Activities included:

- Identification of boundary tones (L%, H%, L-H%)
- Coding of pitch accents and phrase breaks
- Mapping prosodic cues onto discourse moves (e.g., attacks, self-praise, appeals to unity)

Tasks were scaffolded with simplified ToBI charts, glossary sheets, and instructor feedback. Students reflected in writing on how prosody shaped the credibility, emotion, and style of each speaker.

#### 3.4.3. Session 3: Production, Performance, and Critical Reflection

Each student prepared and delivered a short (90-second) political speech excerpt or original monologue, integrating learned prosodic techniques. The recordings were peer-reviewed based on:

- Accuracy of prosodic reproduction
- Affective resonance and audience engagement
- Alignment between intonation and rhetorical intention

The session concluded with a whole-class meta-reflection on the political and pedagogical implications of prosodic awareness in the age of performative leadership.

Assignments included a short analysis report (700–1,000 words) and a reflective essay on the affordances and challenges of using voice as a political resource.

The pedagogical intervention was structured as a three-session sequence aimed at developing students' awareness and analytical skills in prosodic features of political discourse. Table 1 summarizes the instructional design, outlining session themes, core objectives, classroom activities, and the tools used to support multimodal, voice-centered learning. All sessions conducted in a hybrid format (in-class + Moodle).

Table 1: Overview of the Teaching Sequence and Activities.

Session	Topic	Objectives	Activities	Tools & Materials
1	Introduction to Prosody in Political Discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define key prosodic features</li> <li>- Explore their rhetorical and affective roles</li> <li>- Initiate critical listening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Watching short political speech clips</li> <li>- Instructor-led pitch contour walkthrough</li> <li>- Group discussion on affective impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>YouTube videos</li> <li>PRAAT pitch visualizations</li> <li>Concept handouts</li> </ul>
2	Multimodal Analysis and Corpus Annotation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyze authentic excerpts</li> <li>- Annotate prosodic contours</li> <li>- Map form to function</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group-based analysis of transcripts</li> <li>- PRAAT-assisted acoustic exploration</li> <li>- Coding boundary tones and pitch accents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annotated transcripts</li> <li>PRAAT software</li> <li>Glossary sheets</li> </ul>
3	Production, Performance, and Critical Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apply prosodic strategies</li> <li>- Perform a rhetorical monologue</li> <li>- Reflect on vocal affect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student speech performances</li> <li>- Peer review and discussion</li> <li>- Final written reflection on voice and persuasion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student-prepared speeches</li> <li>Audio recordings</li> <li>Rubric sheet</li> </ul>

This structured progression enabled recursive exposure to prosodic concepts and gradually scaffolded students' critical and performative engagement with political speech.

### 3.5. Data Collection and Analytical Procedures

Multiple forms of data were collected to enable triangulated interpretation:

- Student written reflections (N=48), analyzed for recurring themes, lexical indicators of awareness, and affective stance.
- Analytic reports (N=34), examined for accuracy, depth of prosodic interpretation, and metalinguistic vocabulary use.
- Audio recordings of performances (N=20), evaluated impressionistically for rhetorical impact, supplemented by pitch tracing of selected samples.
- Instructor field notes and classroom observations, recorded systematically using an observation protocol focused on engagement, confusion points, and peer interaction dynamics.

The textual data were coded using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), beginning with deductive categories derived from the theoretical framework (e.g., "prosodic awareness," "affective resonance," "rhetorical control"), and complemented by inductively emerging codes such as "voice as identity," "humor via intonation," or "feigned neutrality." All coding was performed using NVivo 12, and inter-coder agreement was ensured via secondary review by a peer linguist at UCM.

Selected audio samples were analyzed using PRAAT to trace pitch contours and correlate acoustic cues with reported rhetorical strategies. While no inferential statistics were applied due to sample size and design, quantitative descriptions (e.g., proportion of rising intonation endings, mean pitch range, pause frequency) were used to illustrate trends.

The pedagogical intervention was structured around a three-session sequence designed to progressively develop students' awareness, analytical competence, and expressive control over prosodic features in political discourse. Each session combined theoretical input, multimodal analysis, and performance-based learning, in alignment with principles of active and experiential pedagogy. Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the instructional design, including session topics, intended learning objectives, core activities, and digital or textual tools employed. This modular structure allowed for recursive reinforcement of prosodic concepts while promoting critical engagement with both authentic discourse materials and students' own vocal practices.

## 4. Results and Pedagogical Proposal

### 4.1. Observed Learning Outcomes and Student Feedback

Analysis of student work and reflective feedback revealed consistent patterns indicating that prosodic instruction significantly enhanced their interpretive, expressive, and critical engagement with political discourse. Across the four course cohorts, participants demonstrated marked gains in their awareness of vocal *affect*, rhetorical nuance, and performance confidence.

In written reflections, over 85% of students explicitly stated that they had "never thought about voice in politics" or "did not realize how much tone changes meaning," indicating that prosodic instruction filled a perceptual and conceptual gap in their education. As one student noted:

"Escuchar a Cristina o a AMLO con esta atención al tono, a las pausas, cambia totalmente la forma en que entiendo lo que están diciendo. Es otra capa del discurso, invisible pero poderosa."

Students also improved in their metalinguistic vocabulary, moving from general terms ("she sounded strong") to more precise formulations ("the falling boundary tone reinforces her moral stance"). Their analysis reports showed increased granularity in describing vocal strategies such as emphasis, irony, sarcasm, indignation, and inclusivity. For example, several students linked pitch resets and lengthened stressed syllables with attempts to emotionally "underline" key values like *patria*, *justicia*, or *seguridad*.

Performance tasks revealed growth in self-awareness and vocal intentionality. In the first course iteration, student speeches tended to mimic rhythm and structure without strong prosodic variation. By the final iteration, students demonstrated better intonational control, using pauses, contrastive stress, and intonational phrasing to enhance the credibility and affective power of their messages.

Peer review comments reflected increased evaluative sophistication. Feedback shifted from surface

observations (“good tone”) to discourse-aware critiques (“you used rising contours too often; it made the ending sound insecure” or “your pause before ‘la gente’ gave it more weight — that was effective”). These shifts suggest that prosody was no longer perceived as merely performance technique, but as a semiotic and political resource.

#### 4.2. Identified Challenges and Areas for Adjustment

Despite the overall success of the intervention, several challenges emerged that merit consideration in future applications. The first was technological hesitation: some students initially found PRAAT intimidating, especially those unfamiliar with phonetics or acoustic tools. Simplifying the interface and offering step-by-step templates helped, but a low-threshold introduction is essential.

Second, students struggled with abstracting prosodic categories into general patterns across speakers. While they could describe a given clip in detail, drawing broader conclusions about intonational styles (e.g., populist vs. technocratic) required further scaffolding. Comparative tasks helped, but these skills require time to consolidate.

A third issue was performance anxiety. Public speaking always carries emotional weight, but adding intentional prosody as a focal point heightened self-consciousness. Students reported feeling “exposed” or “artificial” when trying to manipulate their voice deliberately. Peer support and normalization of experimentation were key to managing this.

#### 4.3. Toward a Transferable Model of Prosodic Pedagogy in Political Discourse

The results of this intervention support the development of a structured yet adaptable pedagogical model designed to integrate prosodic analysis and training into Spanish-language political discourse education. Rather than offering a rigid curriculum or fixed sequence of tasks, the proposed model is modular, recursive, and sensitive to institutional and cultural contexts. It is rooted in the pedagogical principles of scaffolding, experiential learning, and critical multimodal engagement, and is informed by a constructivist understanding of learning as a dialogic, embodied, and affectively charged process.

The model is organized into three overlapping and interdependent phases: perceptual awareness, analytical application, and performance and production. Each phase builds upon the previous one but can also be adapted or re-entered based on learners’ progress, disciplinary needs, or technological constraints.

##### 4.3.1. Phase 1: Developing Perceptual Awareness of Prosody as Meaning

The first step in cultivating prosodic literacy is perceptual. Many students—even those with prior training in discourse analysis or rhetoric—enter the classroom with an implicit bias toward semantic content, grammatical structure, or lexical choice as the primary conveyors of meaning. The acoustic dimension of language often remains unexamined, intuitive, or dismissed as merely aesthetic. This phase seeks to destabilize that assumption by training students to hear prosody as a semiotic system in its own right.

Instruction begins with short, decontextualized clips from well-known political figures across the Spanish-speaking world—typically between 20 and 45 seconds in length—chosen for their prosodic salience and rhetorical force. Examples include the declarative authority of Isabel Díaz Ayuso, the rising indignation of Pablo Iglesias, the rhythmic cadences of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, or the slow, measured delivery of AMLO. These clips are played without subtitles or visual aids at first, and students are encouraged to listen actively, identifying moments of emphasis, emotional inflection, or strategic silence.

As a second step, the audio is paired with acoustic visualizations—primarily pitch contours and intensity graphs generated through PRAAT or integrated tools within Moodle or Audacity. This visual externalization of sound allows students to match perceived vocal effects with their quantifiable prosodic correlates, such as fundamental frequency (F0), amplitude variation, or speech rate. This not only demystifies the acoustic landscape but also reinforces the idea that prosody is analyzable, teachable, and repeatable, not an artistic accident.

Throughout this phase, prosody is framed not as ornamentation, but as a functional, ideologically loaded, and culturally situated layer of meaning-making. Class discussion invites students to explore questions such as: What does it mean to speak with emphasis? How does rising intonation alter our perception of confidence? Can we recognize sarcasm or sincerity by tone alone? By the end of this phase, students begin to “hear” discourse differently—recognizing that voice, like text, is coded, strategic, and interpretable.

#### 4.3.2. Phase 2: Analytical Application Through Corpus and Collaborative Work

Once perceptual sensitivity has been developed, students are ready to engage in structured analysis of prosody using authentic materials and collaborative inquiry. In this phase, prosodic instruction shifts from listening to interpreting and annotating political speech, linking prosodic forms to discursive functions, emotional framing, and ideological positioning.

Students work in small groups with annotated transcripts drawn from corpora such as the Trump Primary Corpus (TPC2016), CEALCOM, or instructor-selected YouTube materials. These transcripts are enriched with simplified Sp\_ToBI-inspired notations, marking pitch accents, boundary tones, breaks, and stress patterns. Color-coded or symbol-assisted versions are used for accessibility, particularly for learners without prior training in phonetics. (see Table 2). This exemplifies an excerpt of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, morning conference, January 7, 2020, addressing critics of security policy. Visual Representation (PRAAT Extract – simplified). A pitch contour graph can be embedded here in the final typeset.

Table 2: Transcript of Simplified Prosodic Annotation.

Word	Pitch Accent	Break Index	Comment
Nuestros adversarios	L+H*	2	Emphasis, contrastive subject
no quieren que	H*	1	Neutral information delivery
avancemos	H* !H%	3	Rising-falling tone – assertive closure
pero el pueblo	L+H*	2	Reset – audience alignment signal
está muy consciente	H*	2	Strong focus on citizen awareness
de lo que estamos	L*	1	Downstepped continuation
haciendo	H* L%	3	Final fall – closure with rhetorical certainty

Each group is tasked with mapping prosodic cues—e.g., final rise, pause, downstep—to communicative functions in the speaker’s rhetorical strategy: legitimization, attack, self-praise, irony, or calls for collective unity. Tools such as PRAAT are used not only to visualize pitch and intensity but to measure changes in prosodic contours across discourse moves. Students are also encouraged to discuss affective implications—how does a pitch rise index sarcasm in one speaker but concern in another? What emotions are carried by rhythm alone? Instructor scaffolding includes the use of discourse move taxonomies (e.g., Teun van Dijk’s macrostructures), affective function labels (e.g., indignation, reassurance), and simplified acoustic glossaries. Through iterative cycles of analysis, feedback, and group comparison, students begin to formulate hypotheses about ideological style and vocal typology: the angry populist, the didactic technocrat, the moral authority. By the end of this phase, students demonstrate the ability to justify analytical claims about speaker intent and effect based on prosodic evidence, bridging the gap between form and function. Importantly, the collaborative nature of this work helps students negotiate interpretation, debate nuances, and become aware of how affect and ideology are filtered through auditory perception.

#### 4.4.3. Phase 3: Performance, Embodiment, and Political Voice

The final phase moves from analysis to production, inviting students to engage in the embodied application of prosodic knowledge. While the first two phases focus on decoding political speech, this phase repositions students as vocal agents—capable of shaping their own rhetorical affect through intentional manipulation of pitch, rhythm, pacing, and stress. Each student is asked to prepare and perform a short (60–90 second) speech fragment or original monologue that draws on the prosodic features studied in class. The content can be satirical, supportive, critical, or fictional—as long as it employs prosody deliberately to construct a political ethos. Performances are recorded, played back in class, and subjected to peer review using a custom-designed rubric, which includes categories such as: Prosodic Control, Affective Framing, Rhetorical Coherence, Audience Engagement and Critical Awareness (Self-Reflection). This peer and instructor rubric facilitated evaluation and fostered critical reflection throughout the final phase. (See Table 3)

This rubric was used for peer and instructor feedback on student performances. It integrated both technical and critical criteria, encouraging students to connect vocal practice with rhetorical and ideological framing. Students wrote self-reflection essays, connecting their vocal decisions to communicative intentions, emotional effects, and ideological meanings. Many report initial discomfort—describing their own voice as “foreign,” “exaggerated,” or “revealing”—but gradually recognize the rhetorical agency embedded in vocal choices.

Table 3: Prosodic Performance Assessment Rubric Designed for Feedback on Student Performances.

Criteria	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Acceptable (3)	Needs Improvement (1–2)
Prosodic Control	Demonstrates consistent control over pitch, rhythm, pacing, and stress with clear communicative intent.	Generally controls prosody with minor lapses; most features align with communicative goals.	Shows basic understanding of prosodic features, but control is uneven or inconsistent.	Limited or incorrect use of prosody; lacks deliberate manipulation or awareness.
Affective Framing	Vocal delivery enhances emotional tone and rhetorical force; effectively evokes a specific affect (e.g., indignation, irony, solidarity).	Attempts to convey affect; some vocal-emotional alignment achieved.	Affective intention is unclear or weak; prosody does not consistently match rhetorical aim.	Flat or mismatched affect; listener unable to discern emotional or rhetorical tone.
Rhetorical Coherence	Prosodic features align closely with the message's argumentative and discursive structure.	Mostly coherent prosodic alignment; some minor mismatches or inconsistencies.	Partial alignment between voice and rhetorical structure; delivery feels improvised.	Lacks coherence; prosodic delivery undermines or confuses the message.
Audience Engagement	Captivating delivery; maintains attention through strategic variation and emphasis.	Generally engaging, with noticeable effort to modulate voice.	Delivery is somewhat flat or uneven; audience attention fluctuates.	Monotone or difficult to follow; lacks emphasis or modulation to hold audience interest.
Critical Awareness (Self-Reflection)	Reflection articulates vocal choices in relation to emotion, ideology, and rhetorical strategy with clear insight.	Reflection addresses some vocal choices and effects with moderate clarity.	Reflection is superficial or descriptive; lacks depth of analysis.	Limited or missing reflection; little connection between theory and practice.

This final phase crystallizes the learning process: students have moved from passive perception to critical analysis to embodied production, recognizing prosody as a multimodal, and politically consequential dimension of discourse.

#### 4.3.4. Transferability and Implementation Across Contexts

This model is not tied to a specific institutional structure or linguistic context. While rooted in Spanish-language political communication, its logic and components can be adapted to other languages, disciplines, or educational levels. In undergraduate linguistics courses, it reinforces core concepts such as intonation and rhythm. In media or political science programs, it supports critical discourse analysis and rhetorical studies. In teacher training or civic education, it fosters vocal confidence, public speaking skills, and media literacy.

This pedagogical model also responds to broader global trends in political communication education, where there is growing recognition of the need to integrate multimodal literacy, affective analysis, and performative competence into curriculum design (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018; Ekström et al., 2016). As political discourse increasingly shifts to audiovisual platforms—YouTube channels, livestreams, podcasts, TikTok statements—the ability to listen critically, interpret vocal framing, and perform persuasively is no longer optional but essential. Educational institutions worldwide are beginning to incorporate vocal training into courses on media rhetoric, civic engagement, and digital storytelling, but few models focus specifically on the prosodic layer of discourse. By centering Spanish-language prosody as both an object of study and a means of critical expression, this model advances an urgent pedagogical agenda: one that bridges technical skill, ideological awareness, and multimodal communicative power in the training of future educators, analysts, and citizens. Ultimately, what the model offers is not a formula but a pedagogical orientation: one that centers the human voice as a site of political meaning, affective resonance, and educational intervention. It promotes critical listening, rhetorical embodiment, and multimodal literacy, allowing students to see—and hear—how ideology is not only written and spoken, but voiced.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

### 5.1. Reframing the Role of Voice in Political Communication Pedagogy

This study affirms the pedagogical viability and communicative necessity of integrating prosodic instruction into political discourse education, particularly within Spanish-speaking academic contexts where vocal delivery remains under-theorized and under-taught. The results from the intervention demonstrate that prosodic features—intonation, rhythm, stress, and pacing—are not marginal embellishments but core meaning-making resources that carry emotional, ideological, and relational force. When taught through a structured, multimodal, and collaborative framework, these features can be made accessible to learners with diverse backgrounds and skill levels, fostering both analytical insight and expressive agency.

Critically, this reframing challenges the dominant textualist paradigm in political communication instruction, where discourse is often reduced to written transcripts, thematic content, or argumentative structure. While such approaches remain foundational, they risk erasing the embodied, performed, and affective dimensions of speech that play a central role in political persuasion—especially in populist, charismatic, or mediatized contexts (Wodak, 2021; Zienkowksi & Breeze, 2019). The voice is not simply a medium through which political ideas are expressed; it is itself a performative instrument of ideology, credibility, and affective identification (Calvo & Aruguete, 2020; Ilie, 2018).

These findings align with recent empirical studies that emphasize the pedagogical impact of multimodal discourse analysis (Norrick, 2010), as well as student-centered approaches to voice and rhetorical training (Yenkimaleki & Heuven, 2013). Our results echo these by showing that students gain not only conceptual understanding but also practical tools to evaluate and produce vocal meaning in political contexts. The data also suggest that prosodic instruction has transformative effects on learners, enabling them to move from passive consumption of political rhetoric to active interpretation and production. Students not only developed more precise analytical vocabularies but also began to listen more critically, detect ideological framing through tone, and understand their own speech habits as tools for engagement or resistance. In this way, the classroom becomes not only a site of analysis but a space of vocal empowerment—a rehearsal room for rhetorical citizenship.

### 5.2. Implications for Curriculum Design and Teacher Training

The implications of these findings extend beyond discourse analysis or political science departments. In an age where vocal presence and audiovisual discourse dominate public communication—from YouTube livestreams to TikTok politics and podcast persuasion—there is an urgent need to train students across disciplines in multimodal critical literacy (Adami, 2015; Jewitt, 2013). This includes not only reading across media but also learning to recognize and employ affective vocal strategies with intention and responsibility.

For educators, this model offers a replicable template that can be scaled, adapted, or hybridized depending on institutional resources and learner profiles. It supports interdisciplinary learning goals by merging insights from phonetics, critical discourse analysis, media studies, and rhetorical education. Educators implementing this model can follow three practical criteria: (1) incorporate authentic audiovisual materials with varied ideological and vocal profiles; (2) use accessible tools such as PRAAT, Audacity, or ELAN to visualize and annotate speech; and (3) combine production and analysis to close the gap between theory and voice-based practice. This model contributes to both educational and media-literacy domains by shifting the unit of analysis from text to performance, and from persuasion-as-logic to persuasion-as-affect. It offers a concrete way to integrate civic engagement, emotional intelligence, and rhetorical agency into the communication curriculum.

In teacher training programs, particularly those focused on civic education, critical pedagogy, or communication skills, prosodic awareness can function as a bridge between form and values: teaching how to speak clearly becomes inseparable from teaching how to speak ethically, persuasively, and dialogically. This underscores the broader social and democratic stakes of prosodic pedagogy. We therefore recommend that (1) discourse and media literacy courses explicitly include vocal analysis, (2) communication syllabi embed at least one prosody-centered module, (3) educators receive targeted training in acoustic tools and interpretive strategies, and (4) institutions recognize embodied voice work as part of academic communication competence.

### 5.3. Limitations and Future Research

While the findings of this intervention are promising, several limitations must be acknowledged. The study's scope was relatively small and confined to a single institutional context; larger-scale applications across diverse educational settings are needed to assess generalizability. Additionally, while qualitative analysis offered rich interpretive insights, future research could incorporate experimental or longitudinal designs to track the development of prosodic competence over time. Another important area for exploration is the cross-linguistic transferability of this model. While focused here on Spanish-language political discourse, many of the pedagogical strategies—particularly those involving acoustic visualization, corpus-based annotation, and affective performance—could be adapted for other linguistic contexts. Comparative studies across languages or political cultures could shed light on how prosodic norms shape public ethos differently, and how pedagogy can respond accordingly. Technological integration also warrants further refinement. Although tools like

PRAAT and Audacity proved effective, they require both instructor training and student acclimatization. The development of user-friendly educational platforms for prosodic analysis—or the adaptation of existing voice software for pedagogical purposes—could facilitate broader adoption and scalability.

#### 5.4. Final Remarks

In sum, this article argues that the teaching of prosody in political discourse is both feasible and necessary, particularly within the evolving landscape of digital communication and affective politics. By grounding instruction in authentic materials, collaborative inquiry, and embodied experimentation, educators can help students uncover a layer of meaning that is as strategic as it is emotional, as performative as it is political. As educational institutions seek to foster media literacy, civic engagement, and critical thinking, it is time to move beyond what is written or even said—and start listening to how it is voiced. The classroom, as this study shows, can become a place where students not only interpret power but begin to practice it—through pitch, pause, rhythm, and resonance.

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