



Investigating 'Persuasive Strategies' in Business English

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Abstract

Persuasion is the process of creating , reinforcing , or changing peoples' beliefs , values or actions . It is the art of convincing an audience , listeners or readers, to believe , think , or act as the speaker or writer wants them to.

Persuasion constitutes a 'speech act' , an act performed in , or by speaking. . It describes when the persuader induces a particular kind of mental state in the persuadee.

Persuasive strategies are the various means of persuasion available to any speaker.

The present paper investigates Aristotle's three different persuasive strategies (ethos , pathos , and logos) in order to see whether these strategies in business English fulfill most or all of the speech acts.

Results of the analysis show that assertive and directive speech acts constitute the highest population in the language of business English , and as for the persuasive strategies , 'logos' — causal reasoning — is most used .

Repetition of words and long patterns of syntactic parallelism of clauses are recognized in this study as a means of persuasion.



0-Introduction

Larsen (2001:9) states that persuasion is complex , interactive process in which a sender and receiver are linked by symbols , verbal and nonverbal , through which the persuader attempts to influence the persuadee to adopt a change in a given attitude or behavior because the persuadee has had his perceptions enlarged or changed.

Persuasion is widely perceived as a skill reserved for selling products and closing deals. It is also commonly seen as just another form of manipulation—devious and to be avoided. Certainly, persuasion can be used in selling and deal-clinching situations, and it can be misused to manipulate people.

Persuasion does indeed involve moving people to a position they do not currently hold, but not by begging or cajoling. Instead, it involves careful preparation, the proper framing of arguments, the presentation of vivid supporting evidence, and the effort to find the correct emotional match with your audience.

Effective persuasion involves four distinct and essential steps. First, effective persuaders establish credibility. Second, they frame their goals in a way that identifies common ground with those they intend to persuade. Third, they reinforce their positions using vivid language and compelling evidence. And fourth, they connect emotionally with their audience (Conger , 1998: 112)

Persuasion according Searle (1969) is regarded as a directive speech act in which the speaker's intention is to make the hearers to commit him or herself to perform some form of action or in other words, persuasion is an attempt of speaker to match the world with his / her words .

Babatunde and Odepitan (2009: 301) write “assertives are further used as a mobilization strategy through which the speaker informs the audiences and consequently mobilizes them towards a desired goal”.



The paper also considers 'parallelism' as a stylistic device to see if it works collaboratively with speech acts and persuasive strategies as a means to convince the audience to accept a specific course of action in the language of business English.

The present study tries to answer the following :

- 1-Whether the various persuasive strategies in business English fulfill most or all of the speech acts?
- 2-What are the communicative persuasive strategies actually perform in business English ?
- 3- What is the purpose of identifying stylistic devices in the language of business English?

1- Persuasion as a Speech Act :

Persuading someone is performing an act (roughly , that of affecting someone's beliefs or desires) using some form of communication , usually language . As such , persuasion constitutes a " speech act , an act performed in , or by speaking . It describes when one party includes a particular kind of mental state in another party . Hence , like flattery or scaring , which are speech acts , persuasion includes the potential change in the mental state of the other party . Accordingly , any instances of successful act of persuasion is composed of two events :

- 1- An attempt by the persuader , which has been referred to as the persuasive act.
- 2- Subsequent uptake by the persuadee .

This means that persuasion as a speech act falls mainly within the perlocution part and this is clear while examining the speech act theorists who give persuasion as a first example in the perlocutionary act part (Pranav et. al.,2011:2).



2-Speech Act Verbs :

To understand why the direction of fit is important to Searle in his revision of speech act theory one must look at how he clarified and transformed Austin's categories of illocutionary points. Searle did this by making it explicit what the force of an act is regardless of what utterance or propositional act is issued without regard to the utterance being locutionary, illocutionary, or perlocutionary. Searle(1999:148) states that “there are five and only five different types of illocutionary points” as follows:

1. Assertive force:

These are acts that commit a hearer to a proposition; “it is to present the proposition as representing a state of affairs in the world” and thereby they have a ‘word to world’ fit. Assertive speech acts are definitions, descriptions, assertions, statements, and so on; and because of their fit to the world they can be true or false. Despite truth conditions Assertive speech acts do not depend on the sincerity of the speaker as it is the belief of the hearer that is the marker of whether the act is taken as true or false regardless of actual truth. (Ibid.)

2. Directive force:

“The illocutionary point of directives is to try to get the hearer to behave in such a way as to make his behavior match the propositional content of the directive” (Ibid.:148-9). This category houses such things as orders, demands, instructions, and so forth. Directives have a ‘world to word’ fit as directives are issued with the desire that the hearer should do what is proposed; should change the world according to the uttered propositional content. “Directives such as orders and requests cannot be true or false, but they can be obeyed, disobeyed, complied with, granted, denied , and so on” " (Ibid.:149)

3. Commissive force:

A performative has a commissive force when a speaker's utterance commits the speaker to undertake a course of action proposed in the utterances propositional content. Promises, vows, pledges, verbal contracts, and the like are good examples of the kinds of utterances which have a



commissive force. The direction of fit with commissives is a world to world fit since the act commits one to act as the utterance suggests. Any commissive utterance is essentially “an expression of an intention to do something” (Ibid.). Like directives a commissive is not subject to truth conditions; since a commitment is neither true nor false, rather it is kept, broken, or carried out.

4. Expressive force:

These are utterances whose point is to “express the sincerity condition of the speech act” (Ibid.). Expressive speech acts are things like condoling, thanking, apologizing, congratulating, and do in; acts that can only be performed through expressing ones inner feelings. When uttering an expressive “the propositional content typically has the null direction of fit, because the truth of the propositional content is simply taken for granted [...] [as we] assume or presuppose a match between propositional content and reality” (1999:149). Therefore an apology hinges on the speaker being sorry, condoling hinges on the speaker empathizing with the hearer, and so on; as a result expressives are subject to abuse if uttered insincerely, though conditions of sincerity vary depending on the expressive expressed.

5. Declarations:

The illocutionary point, or force, of a declaration is “to bring about a change in the world by representing it as having been changed” (Ibid.:150). This means that in virtue of having successfully declared something, then one has created a state of affairs by simply declaring that One has created said state of affairs. Declarations have the unique position of having a dual direction of fit between the world and the words used because “we change the world and thus achieve a world-to-word direction of fit by representing it as having been changed, and thus achieve a word-to-world direction of fit” (Ibid.). In essence, a declaration uttered under all proper conditions creates a state of affairs in the world that did not exist before and thus it is the declarative aspect of illocutionary utterances that allow for such things as a marriage to be a formal declaration of wedlock.



3-Persuasive Strategies:

Aristotle's three rhetorical proofs—ethos, logos, and pathos—have been employed as persuasive strategies for thousands of years. More recently, persuasive strategies have been identified based on theories and evidence related to human psychology. Although based in psychology, such persuasive strategies are regularly employed and researched in communication due to their role in advertising, marketing, politics, and interpersonal relationships.

Thus, the ultimate goal of persuasion is to convince the target to internalize the persuasive argument and adopt this new attitude as a part of their core belief system. Different techniques have been proposed to do so. The most basic ones have been given by Aristotle in his book *The Art of Rhetoric* as it established a foundation for persuasion that still holds true today. Aristotle finds that speech consists of three things: the speaker, the subject and the listener. Accordingly, he proposed three basic strategies of persuasion:

3-1 Ethos (Credibility)

The ability to persuade is related to the credibility and sincerity of the person or the document, and it is related to the audience's perceptions of how the speaker is trustworthy. It is how well the presenter convinces the audience that he or she is qualified to present (speak) on the particular subject (Headley, 2008:22). It can be done in many ways:

- By being a notable figure in the field in question, such as a college professor or an executive of a company whose business is that of the subject.
- By having a vested interest in a matter, such as the person being related to the subject in question.

3-2 Pathos (Emotion)

The persuasive appeal of pathos is an appeal to an audience's sense of identity, their self-interest and their emotions. An appeal to pathos causes an audience not just to respond emotionally, but to identify with the writer's point of view, to feel what the writer feels. It may resort to audience imagination and hopes. The persuader may establish in them a state of reception for his/her ideas. She/he can attempt to fill the readers with pity



for somebody or contempt for some wrong . Some examples of emotions that appear in public speech are : fear , compassion , pride , anger and guilt.

Emotional appeals are also difficult for some because they require honed delivery skills and the ability to use words powerfully and dramatically. The ability to use vocal variety, cadence, and repetition to rouse an audience's emotion is not easily attained (Fletcher , 2001:342) .

3-3 Logos (Reason)

Logos refers to any attempt to appeal to the intellect , i.e. Persuading by the use of reasoning . According to Aristotle , logos relates to the speech itself , in so far as it proves or seems to prove . It is normally used to describe facts and figures that support the speaker's claims . It refers to the internal consistency of the message (Amgoud and Cayrol , 2009: 123).

Logos is persuasion by words , not hard evidence . It is a presentation that convinces the listener the conclusion given is the right one for the occasion. By using impressive 'logos' that shows to the audience that the speaker is knowledgeable on the topic. Regards the appeals based on credibility, “its most important aspects are 'authoritativeness' and 'trustworthiness' (Bradley, 1991) of the respective speaker. They refer to the competence, reputation and the capacity of the speaker to be believed” (Barry, 1986).

'Causal reasoning' is reasoning from one specific to another specific, and when using it the speaker is going to prove that something happened / will happen because of another cause. In this case two types of reasoning are used, namely effect – to – cause reasoning (when the speaker is referring to events that have taken place) and cause – to – effect reasoning (when he is speaking about future ones) (Lucas, 2008 : 267)

'Statistics' supports an argument with different sort of logos . The key is differentiating between statistics and facts , and how to use them . Many positions are supported by the term 'studies show' , when often the numbers taken from a study to support a particular cause or point do not actually represent the overall point of the study . Persuasion through statistics is the use of numbers to show how good one's product is (Ibid.)



4- Parallelism in English :

Since parallelism is a key component, it requires some brief effort at defining it. Parallelism is a stylistic device of 'Repetition' ; it is a technique where words in successive lines are arranged in a balanced manner. Cook (1989:15) defines parallelism as "a device which suggests a connection, simply because the form of one sentence or clause repeats the form of another". He (Ibid: 29) adds that it is a device frequently used in literary and related discourses, in which the repetition of forms suggests a connection to the reader, through isomorphism (the principle whereby similarity of form suggests or reflects similarity of meaning).

De Beaugrande (1984: 170) also maintains that parallelism is the repetition of a structure. It is the " reusing surface formats but filling them with different expressions", for example:

e.g ,The vision of the company is to offer weekly blogs posts on business topics of current interest , to create ebooks , and to work with affiliate partners.

Here, series of similar thoughts, not identical actions, are expressed in parallel clauses (verb + possessive pronoun + direct object). To sum up, parallelism can be defined as two sentences (phrases or clauses) having the same structure, so that a strong relationship occurs between them and it occurs on the basis of sameness or oppositeness.

'Syntactic parallelism' occurs when the form of one sentence, clause or phrase repeats the form of the other (Cook, 1995: 29). To Fabb (1997: 145) syntactic parallelism is the commonest kind of structural parallelism. It involves structural identity between two sections of a text in three simultaneous senses: first, each section of the text contains the same classes of phrases and words. Second, corresponding phrases bear similar grammatical and thematical relations to the predicator. Third, the corresponding phrases and words are in the same order in both sections of the text.

On the other hand , 'Semantic parallelism' holds where two sections of a text can be interpreted to have parallel meaning. Where "parallel meaning"



covers range of possibilities with two most common kinds being similarity of meaning and opposition of meaning (Fabb, 1997: 139). Semantic parallelism arises as a result of lexical parallelism, where the two words are interpretable as being parallel to one another; the relation on meaning between the two determines relation of meaning between the two larger sections of text which include those words (Ibid).

5-Data Analysis :

The study investigated 20 texts of business English . The total number of persuasive strategies are 190 . The highest number of persuasive strategies is logos and it reads 105 out of 190 which constitutes 56%. This number indicates that logos as a strategy is positively correlated with the style of this data (See Table 1) . Here are some examples of logos strategy emerged in this study:

- 1- It is going to be an essential facet of every business wishing to succeed.
- 2- ... because they have everything to do with our company right now , today.
- 3- We really have no options but to use money and when we do that we need banks.
- 4- The benefits and positives are obvious.
- 5 - ... as well as dialogues on specific categories of products.
- 6- And we share the same view.
- 7- They are being brought about by demographic and economic realities.

As for pathos , the present study reads 90 strategies out of the total number which is 190 and it constitutes 48% . Consider the following examples :

- 8- ... we should be way ahead by now seeing what a tremendous benefit such diversity can be for business.



9-It will mean a happier ship with its sails full of wind.

10-Our aim is to serve you , the local people , locally.

11-We feel they will have more understanding of your particular needs.

12-It listens to your ideas , your suggestions and your needs.

13-They are an actual organ of the business itself.

Ethos persuasive strategy account for 67 and it reads 36% (Table 1). Here are some examples :

14-We have extended our opening hours because that has been one of the suggestions we have been given.

15-I promise we will take very good care of it.

16-...I have been carrying out 'missions for growth' over the last two years.

17-I would like to remind businesses: you can address your questions to the business support initiatives which the EU finances.

Another utilization of logos persuasive strategy is the manifestation of logical proofs . This is used via providing 'reasons' and 'statistics'. This is shown in the following italicized examples of business English:

18-... because *lower* costs mean *higher* profits.

19-It is *multi million* dollar business.

20-Like the rest of the world , we are at something of a crossroads , where traditional advertising methods *no longer* provide the impact...

21-By 2010 the US work force will have an increase of 29% 45-64 year olds , and 14% of those who are 65 years old plus.

22-For others its values full of gold *bullion*.

23-... as a result , to increase EU by *more than half* a point.



In the above mentioned examples from business English , the speaker is providing statistics (numbers and amounts) in order to convince the audience about his business under development.

In order to provide facts about businesses , the business owners are usually using 'cause to effect ' reasoning logical strategy . The study shows that 'cause to effect' reads 54% , whereas 'effect to cause' has less control as a logical persuasive strategy of business and it accounts for 33%(Table 1). Consider the following examples :

24-We *are well aware* of the current , economic difficulties present in our sector and this will mean that we need to get extra creative in our sales methods ...

25-We *are launching* a new brand which we are hoping to capture...

26-It *is going to be* an essential facet of every business ...

27-This *is done* through the dialogues on regulatory policy as well as dialogues on specific categories of products...

In this respect , the speaker is using future tenses of verbs to provide facts about his business and cooperation to gain access to market which are more convincing than the past tenses to the audience.

Persuasive strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Logos	105	56%
<i>Cause to Effect</i>	66	54%
<i>Effect to Cause</i>	27	33%
Pathos	90	48%
<i>Friendly Feelings</i>	58	64%
Ethos	67	36%

Table 1

Persuasive Strategies in Business English



On the pragmatic level , the data indicate that assertive speech acts constitute 61% (355 out of the total number 578). Expressive speech acts read 26% (150 out of 578) . Commissive speech acts constitute 7% and directive speech acts read 6%. See (Table 2)

Speech Acts Verbs	Frequency	Percentage
Assertive	355	61%
Expressive	150	26%
Commissive	40	7%
Directive	35	6%

Table 2

Speech Act Verbs

The above table shows that assertive speech acts emerge the highest number in business English then expressive speech acts come at the second stage and these two verbs are followed by commissives and directives which have lower rates from the totals.

The following examples are the types of speech act of verbs with the strategy emerged in the present study:

28 -Yet no one doubts the value of such diversity . Assertive / Logos
(the executive of a bank asserts the action here and the audience would take into consideration his logical appeal)

29 -Already minorities account for trillions of dollars worth of spending power . Assertive / Pathos
(the speaker claims a belief by giving numbers to appeal to the emotions of the audience)

30-We should be grabbing it with both hands . Directive / Pathos
(the speaker here directs a demand to the listener to impress the audience deeply).

31 - I am pleased to have the possibility to visit this fair and to open the global business and market platform . Expressive / Ethos



(the arguer expresses his pleasure for the new event and shares his trustworthiness)

32-And we share the same view . Commissive / Logos

(the speaker offers a viewpoint here that gives persuasion to the audience)

33-These missions bring an important contribution to the EU industrial cooperation in general . Assertive / Pathos

(the arguer claims of the action to convince the hearer of his point)

34-I promise we'll take very good care of it. Commissive / Ethos

(there is a commitment to be truthful and to convince the audience)

35- ... to tell us how to manage that money . Assertive / Ethos

(the arguer asserts the action underdevelopment to persuade the hearer)

36-We really have no options but to use money and when we do that we need banks . Assertive / Logos

(the speaker thinks of other possibilities for cooperation in order to influence the hearer's beliefs)

37- ... as a result, to increase EU GDP by more than half a point . Assertive / Logos

(the speaker mobilizes the audience by assertion to the desired goal)

38-My missions also look at markets economic potential and at those that have only recently become a potential destination ... Assertive / logos

(logically , the speaker aims at persuading the audience by using beliefs and arguments)

39- ... where traditional advertising methods no longer *provide* the impact they once did , and we have to *look* to new ways of building both brand and loyalty. Assertive , Directive / Logos

(the arguer commits and then directs the audience to a fact of the expressed proposition. They all geared towards influencing the hearer's beliefs)

40 - ... we have to stop thinking in terms of our business apart from our customers. Commissive / Pathos

(the speaker gives unrealistic promises and includes announcement of intention)

41- ... but I think it's important that we expand it so we understand this whole social media marketing trend. Assertive / Ethos

(the speaker argued for a change and swayed the audience to believe him)

42 -In a similar way , people with too much fungus in their bodies –which feeds on sugar –crave sweet foods. Assertive / Logos

(the arguer reports he audience of a fact to accept it as true)



43-Now that we have it ... we need to use it . Not force it , not make what our old media models offered. Assertive / Logos

(by causal reasoning , the speaker believes and asserts the action here to persuade the hearers)

44-We must embrace that change somehow . Directive / Pathos

(the arguer in this speech directs the audience by giving them future goals (change) in a friendly manner)

45-They directly help the SMEs to enter into contact with the authorities of the respective markets and with potential business partners. Assertive/ Pathos

(to persuade the hearers , the speaker is trying to reiterate his point better)

46 -So if you ravel to Asia or run out of money in London we'll also be there to help . Directive / Logos

(by using logical expression , the speaker urges the audience to act promptly)

47-So make the most of our opening offers ! Directive / Pathos

(the speaker is emphatic and encouraging at the same time so that his appeal would be taken into consideration)

48-We feel they will have more understanding of your particular needs. Expressive / Pathos

(the arguer is expressing his feeling to a particular need to influence the hearers' beliefs)

49-I visited with a business delegation Brazil , Chile , Mexico , and Peru. Assertive / Ethos

(the speaker commits the hearer to understand what he believes in by giving credibility and trustworthiness)

50-Now , I could keep it simple without expanding this analogy , but I think it's important that we expand it so we understand this whole social media marketing trend . Assertive / Ethos

(the speaker again in this speech is trying to inform the audience and consequently moves them towards the desired goal)

The implementation of 'Friendly Feeling' as pathos persuasive strategy figures out most of the emotional proofs of this study rather than anger , sympathy , compassion , etc. Consider the following examples from this study :

51-I am *very glad* you have chosen to celebrate with us . Assertive speech act

52-So , *please* make the most of it now. Directive speech act



53-I am *happy* to see that the forum covers all the main trading partners of the EU. Expressive speech act

54-We must *embrace* the change somehow . Directive speech act

55-These missions *bring an important* contribution to the EU industrial cooperation in general and ... Assertive speech act

56-They will take *more pride* in that work . Assertive speech act

The present study implements repetition as a linguistic device to achieve persuasion . Here are some examples :

57-*It will mean* potentially vast savings in turnover , absenteeism , and training. *It will mean* a good return on investment on policies in these areas. *It will mean* greater creativity , interest and dynamics.

All of these are assertive repetition of the same style . This repetition represents logos persuasive strategy. It is used by the speaker to clarify the speakers' communicative intention. : *This* , my friends ... *this* is the power of social media marketing .

58 -*It costs* between 4,800\$ and 10,000\$ a year to own a car . *It costs* 200\$ to 2000\$ to take public transportation.

Repetition here is for the purpose of persuasion of pathos strategy . The speaker utilizes assertive speech acts that commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition.

59-That the demands of *our third party* organ , *our customers* , is what should drive product selection and, to some extent *our very identity*.

Repetition here is stated by pathos strategy . The speaker is achieving the desired goal of persuasion .

The present study also represents long patterns of syntactic parallelism as another mean of persuasion . Here are some examples of business English :

60 -*The more money* we have , *the more* we need highly qualified professional.

61 - ...*more investment* in public transportation can mean *more jobs* for our people , *more sales* for our business and better quality of life for everybody.

62-This is done through *dialogues on regulatory* policy as well as *dialogues on specific* categories of products .

63- *The more* we pay attention to our business and promote it , *the more* we promote a positive life experience for ourselves.

64- The problem was not *in planning or in development*, but rather *in production*.



6 -Findings and Concluding Remarks :

1-The study explores logos , pathos , ethos , and speech acts as a means of persuasion in business English .

2-The findings reveal that logos as a persuasive strategy is commonly used in business English . Logos amount to 56 % , pathos 48% , whereas ethos reads 36% in business English.

3-The study also illustrates that these persuasive strategies appeal to cause and debates consequences.

4-Assertive speech acts and expressives are highly emerged in business English to modify the attitudes of the audience and beliefs towards an intended direction . Assertive verbs read 61 % , whereas expressive speech acts verbs constitute 26% of the total speech acts in the analysed data. Other speech acts (commissives and directives) constitute small proportion of the total speech acts(commissive 7 % and directive 6%) . Assertive and expressive speech acts help to reiterate the point better in business English

5- In this respect , 'assertive' will help the audience to infer why the speaker has referred to the knowledge of the topic in business English : investment , marketing techniques , selling , bank services. According to Babatunde and Odepitan (2009: 301): “assertives are essential for the realization of a rhetorical end, which is PERSUASION”.

6-Speech act verbs are used in this study for the sake of 'persuasion' rather than of motivation and emotion.

7 -Logos of 'causal reasoning' is widely utilized in this paper . 'Cause to effect' reasoning is worked collaboratively rather than 'effect to cause' reasoning . 'Cause to effect' reasoning reads 54% , whereas 'effect to cause' reasoning for logos strategy reads 33% . This means that the arguer is speaking about the future to persuade others rather than is speaking about events that are being employed as a means of persuasion. On the other hand, 'Statistics' is also used as a means of logical proof to address the audiences minds and hearts.



8 -Proofs of emotion as a pathos strategy are utilized to arouse various shapes of feelings such as anger , shame , pity , sympathy and friendly feelings. Emotional proof of ' friendly feelings' shares 64% from the total pathos strategy which is the highest rate of emotions.

9 - The speakers of business English tend to introduce a number of stylistic devices in the development of their speeches. The overall aim , the devices would aid to reinforce the value of the truth of the claims made . In general , the present study identified other linguistic devices such as parallelisms and repetition as supportive strategies for speeches (this answers question 3 in this paper) :

- Repetition is used in business English to clarify the speaker's communicative intention and all in a bid to achieve the desired goal of persuasion.

- Long patterns of syntactic parallelism of clauses are identified in business English as a means of persuasion in order to add conciseness .



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