

Persuasive Speeches of Grade 8 ESL Students: Arguments, Strategies, and Modes of Persuasion

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Abstract:

The study aimed to analyze the employed persuasive strategies of the participants based on Aristotle's modes of persuasion in their persuasive speeches. A descriptive qualitative design was employed, and video recording served as the research instrument of the study. The fifteen (15) participants were chosen at random using the fishbowl method. The researcher transcribed the speech verbatim and used content analysis to assign codes to each line of speech. The students used different strategies to convince the audience of their logical reasoning, credibility, and emotional appeal. Among the three Aristotelian modes of persuasion, Logos was the most commonly used, followed by Ethos and Pathos was the least used. The most prevalent strategy employed by the participants in Logos was to give factual objective information, followed by using credible supporting materials and providing examples to support the proposition. Under Ethos, sharing credentials or relevant personal experiences, followed by citing credible sources to appear competent, was found to be the most frequently employed strategy by participants. With regard to Pathos, providing lay testimony like sharing personal stories was revealed to be the most utilized persuasive strategy by the participants to build personal connections. The study suggested that English teachers make classroom activities that will lead students to use different ways of persuasion in their speeches. In addition, school administrators could also promote speech activities like speech competitions encouraging students to employ Aristotle's persuasive strategies.

Keywords: *Ethos, Pathos, Logos, persuasion, persuasive strategies*

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Introduction

Everyone needs to be able to speak clearly and efficiently if they want to be understood. As a result of practice and learning, speaking skills develop. Developing speaking skills begins with imitation in the family and develops into an outlet for expressing oneself; schools play a vital role in supporting speech development, and one of the objectives of self-expression skills is to persuade people (Duran, 2023). Gallo (2019) claims that persuasion, in a nutshell, is no longer considered a soft skill; instead, it is now considered a fundamental skill that can assist anyone in attracting investors, selling products, promoting brands, inspiring teams, and igniting movements. However, Derin et al. (2020) assert that studies on how to get students more interested in learning in class are more common than studies on how to get students to persuade other students to learn in class. There have been studies on the rhetorical appeals of spoken language. Yet, the focus has been on notable people's speeches, particularly politicians, who employ the most successful persuasive strategies to entice their voters (Zaini et al. 2022) and despite the wide variety of studies on persuasion in other communication contexts, most notably politics and marketing, there appears to be less in education. (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016; Hamuddin, Syahdan, Rahman, Rianita, & Derin, 2019). This study focused on the persuasive strategies employed by the selected Grade 8 ESL students using the theoretical lens of Aristotle's modes of persuasion. Students according to Grieve (2021) frequently need help with public speaking and persuading listeners during presentations. Rahayu et al. (2021) asserted that many students still have trouble delivering speeches, particularly persuasive speeches. It is because of a variety of factors like the fact that they give fewer speeches. However, according to Ting (2018) students deliver a persuasive speech and frequently employ persuasive techniques without even being aware of them. Aristotle offered three fundamental principles for persuasion, which he labeled modes of persuasion. Aristotle determined the components needed for persuasive speaking. They are referred to as the three pillars of persuasion - ethos, pathos, and logos and these three modalities of persuasion are necessary for any speaker who wishes to influence and persuade his audience (Beqiri, 2018).

As stated in DepEd Curriculum Guide for Grade 8 (2016), students are expected to compose and deliver persuasive speech featuring properly acknowledged information sources, grammatical signals for opinion-making, persuasion, emphasis, and appropriate prosodic features, stance, and behavior, particularly in the 2nd quarter but how to employ persuasive strategies effectively are not given emphasis. Persuasive speeches contain deep and varied learning. For this reason, learning how to deliver persuasive speeches with the right utilization of persuasive strategies should be given extra emphasis in Grade 8 since this lesson is only given and offered in Grade 8.

Having all these observations and considerations, the researcher is interested in analyzing the employed modes of persuasion, persuasive strategies, and experiences of selected Grade 8 ESL students at Pacita Complex National High School in delivering persuasive speeches.

Method

a. Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design. Qualitative research implies gathering and scrutinizing non-numeric figures (such as text, video, or audio) to interpret notions, viewpoints, or experiences, which can be utilized to gain deeper insight into an issue or produce new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2020). Additionally, the study is descriptive because the researcher analyzed the words delivered or the content of the participants' speeches. **McCombes (2019)** implied

that descriptive research aims to describe a population, situation, or phenomenon accurately and systematically. It may employ a variety of research techniques to examine one or more constructs. Additionally, it is a suitable method for determining characteristics, frequencies, trends, and categories.

b. Sources of Data

The researcher used simple random sampling through the fishbowl method in selecting the participants. There was an equal possibility of selection for every individual in the population which avoids biases in choosing the participants. According to Bhardwaj (2019), simple random sampling is a widely employed sampling technique in scientific research. Simple random sampling is a method employed in research studies to select participants from groups that exhibit a high degree of homogeneity. In this sampling technique, individuals are chosen to participate in the study in a random manner. 15 Grade 8 ESL students at Pacita Complex National High School were picked at random from four sections handled by the researcher. The participants were selected for the study because they were fit to answer the problems posed in the study.

c. Research Instrument

The researcher used the video recorder as an instrument to gather data from the participants' persuasive speeches. Madondo (2021) argued audio/video recorders can be used as instruments to collect data. The transcripts of the participants' persuasive speeches were checked by three Grade 8 English teachers who also teach at Pacita Complex National High School. They used a checklist made by the researcher which was also validated by three experts based on how different researchers interpreted Aristotle's modes of persuasion in terms of persuasive strategies. In addition, to the instrument used, the researcher also employed semi-structured interviews to know the students' preferences in terms of modes of persuasion. This method usually consists of a dialogue between the researcher and the participant, guided by a flexible interview protocol and supplemented by follow-up questions, inquiries, and comments. This method allows researchers to gather open data, examine participants' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about specific topics, and delve deeper into personal and sometimes sensitive issues (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

d. Data Gathering Procedure

Permission was required not only from the school's head but also from the division's superintendent, to investigate and collect data. After obtaining permission from the school head and division superintendent, the researcher selected fifteen Grade 8 ESL students as participants who voluntarily participated. Following permission informed consent and assent letters were provided to the selected participants and their parents as part of the process. The participants were given at least three days to accomplish the performance task of delivering an extemporaneous speech to persuade audiences. Grice and Skinner (2000, as cited in Assaf, 2020) define extemporaneous speech as the method of delivering and presenting a speech without memorizing the exact words. Each participant had 5 to 7 minutes to give his or her speech, similar to what Householder and Loudon (2013) conducted in an extemporaneous speech activity. According to them, speakers are given 5 to 7 minutes to talk about the topic given to them. However, the majority of the students were only able to deliver their speeches for 2 to 3 minutes the most.



The participants were assigned a topic, "Playing Online Games Can Make You Smarter," and given thirty minutes to provide answers to support their claims regarding the subject matter. During the time allotted for preparation, they were able to look at whatever websites they wanted on the internet, and they were asked to write down any information that they believed may be used to bolster their arguments. The participants were called in a random order, and the researcher used a video recording device to document each participant's speech as it was given. The researcher consolidated the responses of the student's recorded video persuasive speech through transcription.

The transcript was written down in a Microsoft Word file, then transferred to Microsoft Excel to perform the manual coding. Content analysis was utilized in analyzing the transcribed video recorded speech of the selected Grade 8 ESL students in performing manual coding to determine the expressions of persuasion used in the students' speeches, know how the expressions of persuasion translated into persuasive strategies, and identify which among Aristotle's modes of persuasion characterize the strategies. Researchers employed content analysis as implied by Luo (2023) to figure out the intentions, messages, and outcomes of communication substance. The researcher used content analysis in treating qualitative data to perform manual coding. The study followed Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017) guide in doing qualitative content analysis. The researcher in the initial step read and re-read the speeches' transcripts to get a sense of the whole and to gain a better understanding of what the students were dealing with. In the next step, the researcher labeled the condensed meaning units by formulating codes. The researcher used open codes which means no pre-set codes were considered but developed and the codes may be modified during the coding process and then grouped these codes into categories.

To establish the credibility of the analysis, external validators were considered. An external validator involves other researchers carefully examining the research process including the data analysis of the research to evaluate the accuracy and evaluate if the research findings are supported by data Creswell (2012). The completed transcription file was handed to three Grade 8 English teachers who also teach at Pacita Complex National High School and teach lessons about Aristotle's modes of persuasion to be validated. The external validator received a copy of a researcher-made checklist validated by three experts as a guide in determining the modes of persuasion and persuasive strategies in participants' speeches. The external auditors critique the thematic analysis and findings of the study based on the transcript. Their suggestions for refining the codes, themes, and sub-themes were considered.

The researcher-made checklist which was validated by three experts before the transcription helped the researcher to identify the persuasive strategies and modes of persuasion found in the participants' speeches. Finally, the gathered data were used in coding and in categorizing them into themes. To validate the results of the study the researcher used different methods of data collection. The researcher utilized the video recording of a persuasive speech to get the transcript of the speech as the basis for the content analysis as mentioned by Luo (2023) and the second one was the conduct of semi-structured interview to get the impressions of students about the persuasive strategies, they prefer to employ in presenting a persuasive speech based on Aristotle's mode of persuasion.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1

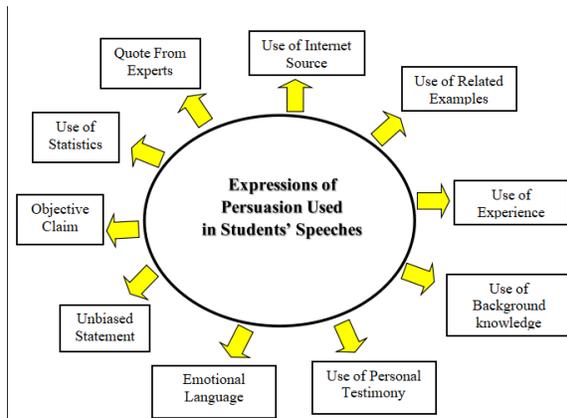


Figure 1 depicts the selected Grade 8 ESL students’ expressions of persuasion in their speeches and the following are: use of internet source; use of Related Examples; Experience-Based; Use of Background Knowledge; Use of Personal Testimony; Emotional Language; Unbiased Statement; Presenting Claim; Use of Statistics; Use of Printed Material Source; and Quote from Expert.

One of the frequent expressions appeared in the students’ speeches is presenting a claim in which shows that carefully choosing supporting material that is verifiable, specific, and unbiased can help speakers to persuade their audiences. The analysis of the data is similar to what Gurevich (2019) claims in

his study that using reliable authoritative sources to back up the premises of the argument and having a background in the subject helps the reader or listener believe that the speaker or writer has enough experience, training, and knowledge to talk about the subject with authority.

Figure 2

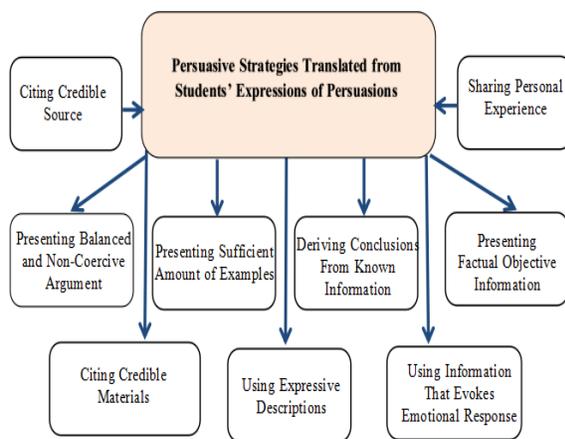


Figure 2 shows the persuasive strategies that emerge from the students' expressions of persuasion in their speeches. It reveals how the students employed different persuasive strategies to win the side of the audience and have a compelling speech. The persuasive strategies translated are citing credible sources; sharing personal stories; presenting balanced and non-coercive arguments; - presenting a sufficient amount of examples; deriving conclusions from known information; presenting factual objective information; citing credible materials; sharing personal experiences; using expressive descriptions; and using information that evokes an emotional response. Bose et al.

(2019), implies that speakers can be persuasive and be able to

deliver a compelling speech by presenting a balanced argument that does not impose agreement this means of persuasion build the speaker's trustworthiness, reputation, sincerity, and similarity with the audience. Furthermore, Gagich and Zickel (2018) state that for a speaker to be compelling they should present compelling arguments that are balanced and present multiple points of view. Similarly, Jones (2013), and Gagich and Zickel (2018) assert that a speaker should present factual objective information that serves as a reason to support the argument and could derive conclusions from known information to effectively persuade their audiences. Likewise, Jones (2013), argued that providing examples along with the employment of arguments, logic, warrants/justification, claims, and data indicates a persuasive strategy that emphasizes the clarity and purity of the argument. Beqiri (2018) also asserts that offering ample and relevant examples

substantiates speakers' claims. Frymier (2021) claims that testimonies of authority expert opinions, and statistics all play a role. It means that ideas or concepts used by the speaker must be borrowed from reliable and authoritative sources, thus using credible supporting materials is a strategy used in persuasion to catch audiences' interest and have a stronger argument. In addition, Frymier (2018), pointed out that the emotional touch of the speech ignites the passion of the audience to move or do something hence, the use of vivid language enhances the persuasive impact of the speeches.

Figure 3

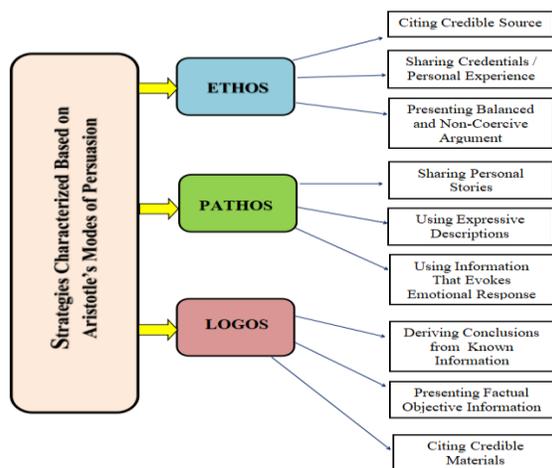
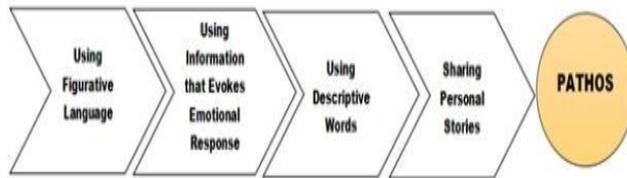


Figure 3 shows the persuasive the persuasive strategies translated or identified from the coded expressions of the student's speeches are characterized based on Aristotle's modes of persuasion such as Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. The construct shows the persuasive strategies that are prevalent in their speeches. Based on the speech analysis the following strategies like citing credible sources, sharing personal experience, and presenting balanced and non-coercive arguments relate to Ethos as one of Aristotle's modes of persuasion. Another mode, that emerged is Pathos, which derives from the following strategies: sharing personal stories, using expressive descriptions, and

using information that evokes emotional response. Lastly, the third mode linked to Logos based on the techniques applied by the students. The strategies utilized by the students are the following: presenting a sufficient amount of examples, deriving conclusions from known information, presenting factual objective information, and citing credible materials. Among the three major types of modes of persuasion, Logos is the most commonly used mode of persuasion similar to the findings of Osman et al. (2018) and Lob et al. (2021) but opposite to Ching's (2020) findings followed by ethos and pathos in contrast with the findings of Osma et al. (2018) wherein ethos is the least used persuasive mode. The participant's argument is created based on logical evidence supporting the idea of Asif et al. (2021). On the other hand, ethos is found to be the second most prevalent used mode of persuasion which is opposite to the study made by Higgins and Walker. In a study by Higgins and Walker (2012), Ethos is the dominant mode of persuasion found in the documents they analyzed, despite ethos being less prevalent in student proposal papers than pathos and logos. Pathos, emerged to be the least mode employed by the students opposite to the study made by Su-hie (2018) using Aristotle's modes of persuasion as the framework of the study in analyzing the English language written Text and found that Pathos is more effective in persuasive discouragement than logos, and Ethos is the least effective.

Figure 4



It can be gleaned in Figure 4 that Pathos emerges to be the most preferred mode of persuasion of the students based on the interview responses. It is concluded that the students felt confident and comfortable using emotional appeals, such as figurative language, personal stories, and vivid descriptions, to connect with their audience on an emotional

level which is opposite to the result of the speech analysis. Shabrina (2016) asserts that Pathos is used to touch the listeners' emotions by making herself a part of the audience. In a study made by Faiz et al. (2020) Pathos is utilized to make make people feel something by showing kindness, admiration, and honesty. Similarly, Ching (2020), analyzed persuasive emails and found that Pathos is frequently used by the students in connecting with the instructor's emotions to accomplish their goals.

Conclusion

- a. Among the identified persuasive strategies employed by the students, it was found that presenting factual objective information and presenting a sufficient amount of examples were the most employed strategies by the students while the least employed persuasive strategies were using expressive descriptions and using information the evokes emotional response from the audiences.
- b. Based on Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion, it was concluded that the students employed frequent persuasive strategies under Logos, followed by Ethos and Pathos came as the last mode of persuasion that was least employed by the students. It is found based on the analysis of the speeches that the selected Grade 8 ESL students preferred to employ persuasive strategies under Logos, which relates to the reasoning and logic of an argument. However, they showed insufficient mastery about employing strategies relating to Pathos which relates to building personal connection and establishing emotional impact with the audiences.
- c. It was therefore concluded that the selected Grade 8 ESL students showed different preferences in employing persuasive strategies to convince their audiences. Most of the students relied on Logos-related strategies focusing on the strength and the clarity of the argument while some of them relied on Ethos-related strategies focusing on competence and trustworthiness and few of the participants relied on the utilization of Pathos-related strategies dealing with establishing personal connection with the audiences and building emotional impact which need to be empowered.
- d. It was concluded that the results of the actual speech analysis are different from the result of the conducted semi-structured interview. Students showcased persuasive skills in utilizing strategies relating to Logos, whereas according to the interview, students felt that they were good and showed a preference for employing persuasive strategies relating to Pathos particularly establishing a personal connection with the audience and building emotional impact in their speeches.

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