

## The Argumentative Trilogy: Ethos, Pathos, logos Looking into How into Persuade

### Abstract

Persuasive/Argumentative writing is an important and a difficult mode of discourse. It is mainly difficult for non-native speakers who often bring linguistic and rhetorical scantiness to the task of persuasion in English. Although persuasion in oral and written discourse has been widely studied by rhetoricians and philosophers, we wish, through our research to shed some light on how to improve teaching and learning argumentative writing through a genre approach. We evenly wish to investigate ways to teach and allow our students learn how to appropriately use rhetoric in their writing using political discourse as a model.

**Aida HAMIMID**

Department of Letters and English Language  
Faculty of Letters and Languages  
University of Constantine 1  
(Algeria)

### Introduction

Seeing the three appeals is easy when someone edits a larger text and highlights the relevant portions of logos, pathos, and ethos. Seeing the appeals at work is more difficult, however, when faced with a real text — a text that is designed to persuade.

### 1-Argumentative Writing

It is clear that students at university need the competence of persuasive discourse. According to Connor, et.al. (1), persuasive writing is a task of a cognitive complexity for both native and nonnative speakers. Second language writers may have greater problems with persuasive writing and this is due to linguistic deficiencies and differing rhetorical patterns in their first language as claimed Crowhurst (2).

### ملخص

تعد النصوص الجدلية من أصعب أنواع النصوص وكانت محل دراسة واسعة من قبل علماء الكلام والفلسفة، وتكمن الصعوبة في استعمال الأدوات اللغوية والخطابية للغة الأم من مستخدمي اللغة الأجنبية ونقلها إلى اللغة الإنجليزية.

نسلط من خلال هذا البحث الضوء على تحسين وتطوير التدريس والتعلم الكتابة الجدلية من خلال المقاربة بالنموذج وهذا باستعمال النص السياسي.

## 2 -A Brief History about Aristotelian Rhetoric

In his *On Rhetoric* written in the 4th century B.C., the Greek philosopher Aristotle amassed his thoughts on the art of rhetoric, in addition to his theory on the three persuasive appeals. Many teachers of communication, and rhetoric assert that *On Rhetoric* is an influential and an inspirational work. Actually (Golden, et. al. (3) say that it is the most important single work on persuasion ever written. It is hard to contend this claim; most advocacies from modern books can be traced back to Aristotle's foundations. In his book *The Classic Review*, Sally van Noorden, (4) points to George Kennedy's, (5) modern translation as the standard reference text for studying *On Rhetoric*. rhetoric, such as Cicero and Quintilian, frequently used elements stemming from the Aristotelian doctrine. Cicero's character Catulus addresses the following to Antonius, who seems to stand in for Cicero himself in his appreciation of Aristotle's treatment of rhetoric

Aristotle, whom I greatly admire, set out certain forms from which to discover every method of argument not only for the disputations of philosophers but for the kind of discourse that we use in civil issues and cases; and your presentation does not deviate from his, whether because you are following in the same tracks, guided by your affinity with his divine intellect, or because you have read and learned that material, as I think more likely (In Fantham, (6), 4: 162)

### The Three Appeals

Aristotle started a procedure of classifying the possible ways that speakers or writers could persuade their audiences by the use of evidence. His theory has proven so beneficial that it has been the groundwork for philosophers and writers for more than a millennium, and will probably stand as long as civilization does. Aristotle's scheme of the use of evidence for persuasive writing was just as effective for the ancients as it will be in the next century. Evidence provides support for claims. Evidence is categorized according to how it is used to back the claim. Evidence that concentrates on our ability to think is classified as rational appeal, evidence that concentrates on our capacity to 'feel' is emotional appeal, and evidence that concentrates on our ability to trust those we find to be reliable is ethical appeal.

### Ethical Appeal

Aristotle defined ethos as the credibility or trustworthiness that the author establishes in his/her writing. Ethos is one of the three types of persuasion along with logos and pathos. Ethos, a Greek term from which the word ethics derives, refers to ethical appeal in rhetoric. The author's attitude and character toward his audience forms the basis of his/her ethical appeal. Character is what gives value to the ideas in the argument and thus provides support for the arguments since the audience trusts the speaker.

Aristotle recognized two kinds of ethos — invented and situated (Crowley (7). Invented ethos develops in the discourse by the tone and attitude the rhetor takes toward his audience and subject. If a rhetor appears unbiased, even-handed, and fair as

she/he begins an argument dealing with a controversial subject, chances are that the audience is more inclined to listen to the rhetor's argument and to consider the rhetor to be honest, forthright, and reliable as a source of information about that subject. However, the rhetor probably has some pre-existing reputation, and that too can be used to establish credibility with the audience. One tends to listen to the "experts" when seeking information about a subject. If someone such as President Clinton were to discuss the influence of big money in contemporary American politics, the audience is likely to know him, as an established character, and to recognize him as a person who has enormous knowledge of this issue. Notice that personal character and ethical character are two different things, though often rhetoricians merge the two. A person can have enormous credibility about a subject despite what you think of him or her as a person.

### **Emotional Appeal**



Pathos, also called the pathetic or emotional appeals, persuades audiences by using emotions (Lanham, (8)). In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle states that there are two different origins of the emotional appeals. First, the rhetor may use *enargeia*. The word *enargeia* means literally "in work"; energizing or actualizing. It refers to the rhetor's goal of arousing the passions within the audience to move them to act (Corbett, (9)). For example, consider the Save the Children ad on the left. The ad uses a photo of a small child, so malnourished that his bones are clearly visible under his skin. He sits huddled in the open air, weak, in a fetal position. A vulture sits, waiting, in the background. The images and text in this

ad are designed to have the maximum emotional effect for one thing: to motivate the reader to act — to make an act of charity.

Secondly, the rhetor may use honorific or pejorative language to generate emotional appeal (Crowley, (6)). Honorific and pejorative language together is often called *suasive language*, language designed to sway the audience in favor of or against a subject. Honorific language heaps praise on its subject and treats the subject with respect. Pejorative language disparages the subject, ridiculing and downplaying the significance of the subject.

### **Rational Appeal**

*Logos* translates into "word" or "reason." In rhetoric, *logos* refers to systems of reasoning. *Logos*, along with *ethos* and *pathos*, make up a means of persuasion called the three appeals — three ways of persuading an audience (Covino and Jolliffe, (10)). For the ancient Greeks, *logos* meant more than logic or reasoning: it meant "thought plus action" (Covino and Jollife, (10)). It appeals to patterns, conventions, and modes of reasoning that the audience finds convincing and persuasive. Although *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* are different, but complementary methods of persuasion. *Ethos* moves an audience by proving the credibility and trustworthiness of the rhetor, the speaker; *pathos* seeks to change the attitudes and actions of the audience by playing on

the feelings of the audience; and logos persuades through the powers of reasoning (Covino and Jolliffe (10)). Rhetors must consider all three means of persuasion if they wish to convince the audience. Before engaging in discourse, the rhetors must ask themselves the following:

What do we believe, think, or feel in common?

Are the premises, or evidence, for the argument just and appropriate? and

Does the proper conclusion follow from the assumptions of the premises and what would prevent the audience from accepting the conclusion? (Covino and Jolliffe (10)).

Every time we write, we engage in argument. Through writing, we try to persuade and influence our readers, either directly or indirectly. We work to get them to change their minds, to do something, or to begin thinking in new ways. Therefore, every writer needs to know and be able to use principles of rhetoric. The first step towards such knowledge is learning to see the argumentative nature of all writing.

### **Method**

For the present study, we dealt with a sample of 30 EFL students at the department of letters and English language, at the University of Condtantine1. In the Third year, students are required to write argument essays for their assignments and for writing their BA project as an initiation to research.

### **Tools of Research**

#### **The Experiment**

Students were prepared to write persuasive pieces by experiencing the genre approach through examples of persuasive writing. Our experiment consists of a pre-test; and a posttest also.

#### **The Pre-Test**

The pretest was taken by 30 EFL students before they were given any mode of writing to follow. They were first given various topics that they were familiar with, and they can state their position. Next, students selected a topic to write about, and it was the same topic for everyone to guarantee a better and an equal evaluation for our students. Student's papers were then analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively based on

two models. First, Aristotle's Rhetorical Model (ethos, pathos, logos)

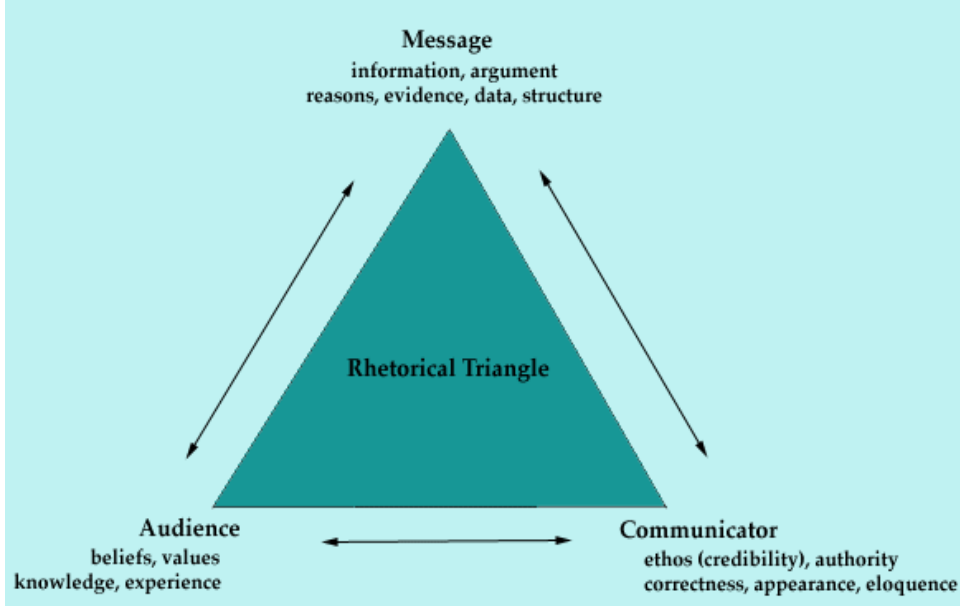


Figure 1. . Source: Ohio University

Second, Toulmin's Argument Model that consists of:

Grounds: reasons or supporting evidence that bolster the claim.

Warrant: the principle, provision or chain of reasoning that connects the grounds/reason to the claim. (ethos, pathos, logos)

Backing: support, justification, reasons to back up the warrant.

Rebuttal/Reservation: exceptions to the claim; description and rebuttal of counter-examples and counter-arguments.

Qualification: specification of limits to claim, warrant and backing. The degree of conditionality asserted. Toulmin (1969).

### Results and Discussion

The results were summarized in the following table

Qualitative score	Excellent	Better/ skillful	Uneven	Insufficient/unsatisfactory
Number of Essays=30	1%	9%	70%	20%

Table 1. Qualitative and Quantitative Description of Pretest Scores.

Only 1% of students produced responses that were scored as “excellent” which were consistently well developed and organized.

9% of students produced responses that were scored as “better/skillfull

70% of students produced responses that were scored as “uneven” that took a clear position but offered unclear supports.

20% of students produce responses that were scored “insufficient to unsatisfactory” in which they attempt to take a position, but their arguments for their position were not clear, and were not well supported.

**Inadequate content in student’s essays, poor organization, and stylistic problems  
The Post -Test**

In the posttest, 30 students were given six political texts to analyze rhetorically using Aristotles’ and Toulmin models of persuasion throughout six sessions. The texts were three presidential speeches: Kennedy’s Speech in Berlin, 1963; Regan Challenger Speech in 1986, and Obama inaugural speech in 2009; besides three opinion articles from the New York Times. Issues published in February 2012. Through analyzing political texts rhetorically, teachers will help students practice taking a position, forming an argument with sound claims and evidence for an appropriate audience. Developing the skills of these central concepts will enable students to better communicate through strong persuasive writing. This type of analysis serves duple purpose in that it allows the students to interpret a text as they begin to think about their own choice of audience. Using the rhetorical model permits the students to plan their essays around an audience that fits their ultimate goals. In effect, the rhetorical method removes the teacher as the de facto audience. By accurately identifying their audience, the students can now determine their own purpose.

Next, students wrote an argumentative essay on a topic that they chose. We helped the students focus on determining their own purpose for writing. What is their overall goal for writing this particular essay? What are they trying to accomplish?

Our hope was that the students would see that persuasion is their ultimate aim rather than just writing an essay for the sake of completion. The students should understand that their purpose is to persuade their audience that they possess.

Then, Students’ essays were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. And as in the pretest, we used both models Aristotle’s and Toulmins’ to analyze students’ production.

**Results and discussions**

The results were summarized in the following table

Qualitative score	Excellent	Better/ skillful	Uneven	Insufficient/ Unsatisfactory
Number of Essays	3%	31%	59%	7%

Table2. Qualitative and Quantitative Description of Posttest Scores.

3% of students produced responses that were scored as “excellent” which were consistently well developed and organized.

31% of students produced responses that were scored as “better/skillful

59 % of students produced responses that were scored as “uneven” that took a clear position but offered unclear supports.

7 % of students produce responses that were scored “insufficient to unsatisfactory” in which they attempt to take a position, but their arguments for their position were not clear, and were not well supported.

When we compare the posttest results with those of the pretest results, we can see that there is an amelioration in students' performance, and in their essay quality. As the one scored as excellent were just 1% in the pretest, and it was 3% in the posttest. The essays that were described as being unsatisfactory were 20% in the pretest, and they declined to 7% in the posttest.

### **Conclusion**

The results obtained in the show that there is an improvement in students production both qualitatively and quantitatively compared to the pretest, although their performance was not very good; one possible interpretation could be the lack of time (6 sessions only).

Our experiment showed that the use of political discourse as a model in teaching rhetoric, helped students to better their performance. Because they learn how arguments are built and how diction was carefully selected by politicians.

When students read critically, they try to determine the quality of the argument. The reader must be open-minded and skeptical all at once, constantly adjusting the degree of personal belief in relation to the quality of the essay's arguments. Thus, analyzing political texts was very helpful for students to write.

Writing is more than the utilization of complex structure; it is a meaning making activity in which the rhetorical choices made create different nuances and shades of meaning for different audiences and contexts. Mastering the argumentative essay is a key skill for writing success. A sound, well reasoned, compelling argument is one of the most persuasive communicative acts we humans can create.

### **References**

- 1- Connor, U. Lauer, J. Understanding Persuasive Essay Writing: A Linguistic and a Rhetorical Approach, Text, 5, 309-326
- 2- Crowhurst, M: Interrelationships between reading and writing persuasive discourse. Research in the Teaching of English. 1991
- 3- Golden, James L., Goodwin F. Berquist, William E. Coleman, Ruth Golden, The rhetoric of Western thought: From the Mediterranean world to the global setting, 9th ed. Dubuque, IA (USA): p.67. & J.Michael Sproule (eds.). (2007).
- 4- Van Noorden, Sally. "A translation of Aristotle's Rhetoric," The Classical Review, 1993, 43.2, pp. 251-252.
- 5- Kennedy, George A. (trans./ed.). 1991. Aristotle 'On Rhetoric': A Theory of Civic Discourse. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6. Elaine Fantham, The Roman World of Cicero's De Oratore (Oxford University Press, 2004)
- 7- Crowley, Sharon. Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students. New York: Macmillan, 1994.
- 8- Lanham, Richard A. A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.
- 9- Corbett, Edward P.J. Classical Rhetoric for Modern Students, 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.
10. Covino. A. Davide. A. Jolliffe. Rhetoric: Concepts, Definitions, Boundaries, Allyn & Bacon. 1995.