



Persuasion – Database Description

Database	Context	Age Range	Grade in School	# Samples	Location	Special Coding
Persuasion	Pers	USA: 14;8 – 18;9 AU: 12;10 – 18;4	USA: 9-12 AU: N/A	USA: 113 AU: 66	WI Australia	SI, PSS

Persuasion can be defined as “the use of argumentation to convince another person to perform an act or accept the point of view desired by the persuader” (Nippold, 2007). Persuasion was chosen for the following reasons:

- It figures prominently in academic standards that cut across modes of communication: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (National Governors Association, 2010).
- Acquiring skill at persuasion is critical to success in college and career and to full participation in social and civic life.
- Persuasion challenges speakers to take into account their audience’s perspective and to use complex language to express complex ideas.

USA Participants

Samples were elicited from typically developing speakers whose primary language is English. The speakers were drawn from public schools in two geographic areas of Wisconsin: Milwaukee area school districts, and Madison Metropolitan School District. Speakers were from a variety of economic backgrounds and ability levels. "Typically developing" was determined by normal progress in school and absence of special education services. Economic background was based on eligibility in the free lunch program (25% qualified for free or reduced lunch). Ability level was determined by GPA scores and teacher reports (4% were low, 25% were average, and 71% were high). The race/ethnicity of the speakers was similar to that of the geographic area from which they were drawn (63% White, 17% African American, 8% Hispanic, 7% Asian, and 2% Hmong, and 3% unknown). Age, grade, and gender are provided for all samples.

Australian Participants

The Australian dataset contains persuasive samples from typically developing speakers whose primary language is English. The speakers attended public schools across the state of Queensland, Australia. Schools were situated in country and metropolitan areas and speakers were from a range of economic backgrounds. "Typically developing" was determined by normal progress in school and absence of special education services. Economic background was based on the school’s postcode and Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA, 2011) data. Speaker ability level was determined by the speakers’ most recent performance in English (~15% obtained a C and 15% an A). The race/ethnicity of the speakers, as identified on the speaker consent form was predominantly ‘Australian’. Age and gender are provided for all samples. Grade in school data is not available.

Sample Elicitation

All persuasion language samples were collected in person. Participants were given a few minutes to select an issue, either from the list of suggested issues or one of their own choosing. They were then given a few minutes to complete a planning sheet consisting of the following list of points: issue id and desired change, supporting reasons, counter arguments/other point of view, response to counter arguments, compromises, and conclusions. Following the planning phase, the participants were asked to narrate their persuasive argument using their notes. Using this protocol, the language samples tend to be between 3 - 4 minutes in length.

Refer to the [persuasion protocol](#) for details.

Transcription Notes

Utterances were segmented into Communication Units (C-Units) as defined in the SALT documentation. The transcripts begin and end with the speaker's first and last utterance of the persuasion, respectively. All transcripts were timed and pauses, within and between utterances, of two or more seconds in length, were marked.

Coding Notes

- [EO:word] marks overgeneralization error
- [EP:word] marks pronoun error
- [EW] marks an extraneous or unnecessary word in the utterance that, if omitted, would make the utterance syntactically correct, e.g., C And he shout/ed and[EW] to the frog.
- [EW:word] marks other word-level error
- [EU] marks utterance-level error (*also marks utterances with 3 or more errors*)
- [FP] marks filled pause words such as *like*, e.g., *You (like[FP]) get six card/s.*
- [TI] marks a Topic Initiator; speaker's utterance consists of one of the points from the planning sheet, e.g., "Compromises [TI]".

All transcripts were hand-coded and scored for Subordination Index (SI) and Persuasion Scoring Scheme (PSS) as defined in the SALT documentation.

Subordination Index (SI) and Persuasion Scoring Scheme (PSS) Coding

SI is a measure of syntactic complexity which produces a ratio of the total number of clauses (main and subordinate clauses) to the number of C-units. A clause, whether main or subordinate, is a statement containing both a subject and a predicate. Grammatically, a subject is a noun phrase and a predicate is a verb phrase. Main clauses can stand by themselves. Subordinate clauses depend on the main clause to make sense. They are embedded within an utterance as noun, adjective, pronominal, or adverbial clauses.

The PSS assesses the structure and content of persuasive language, a critical language skill in secondary curriculum, using a scoring rubric consisting of the essential characteristics of a coherent persuasive argument. These characteristics include: 1) issue identification and desired change, 2) supporting reasons, 3) other point of view, 4) compromises, 5) conclusion, 6) cohesion, and 7) effectiveness. The first five characteristics roughly correspond to the points from the planning sheet.

Each characteristic receives a scaled score 0-5 or NA (not applicable). The PSS scoring guide defines what is meant by Proficient/Advanced (score of 5), Satisfactory/Adequate (score of 3) and Minimal/Immature (score of 1). The scores in between, 2 and 4, are undefined, use judgment. Significant factual errors reduce the score for that characteristic. A score of 0 is given for speaker errors, e.g., not covering the characteristic, not completing/refusing task, unintelligible productions, abandoned utterances. A score of NA (non-applicable) is given for mechanical/examiner/operator errors, e.g., interference from background noise, issues with recording (cut-offs, interruptions), examiner not following protocol, examiner asking overly specific or leading questions rather than open-ended questions or prompts.

A composite is scored by adding the total of the six characteristic scores. Maximum score = 30.

Analysis Notes

The SALT group transcribed the samples following the SALT format and performed a series of statistical analyses to describe the dataset for consistency, differences across samples from AU and USA, age-related and gender related changes, as well as topic-related changes.

Using SALT to Compare Transcripts to the Persuasion Database

Use SALT's Database menu to compare your transcript with age or grade-matched transcripts selected from the Persuasion database. SALT looks at the "+ Context" plus line in your transcript to determine which database to pre-select. To pre-select the Persuasion database, include the following plus lines in your transcript:

- + Language: English
- + Context: Pers

Although you can type these plus lines into your transcript, the easiest way is to select the correct language (English) and sampling context (Pers) when first creating a new transcript by completing the New Transcript Header information dialogue box.

Acknowledgements

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References

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