Exploring Evaluative, Emotive and Persuasive Strategies in Discourse

Editors:

Antonio García-Gómez & Mercedes Díez-Prados

ENGLISH IN THE WORLD SERIES

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Design and typeset: Celso Hdez. de la Figuera Cover design by Pere Fuster (Borràs i Talens Assessors SL)

> I S B N : 978-84-9134-287-8 D. L : V-1420-2018

> > Printed at: Safekat

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Exploring Evaluative, Emotive and Persuasive Strategies in Discourse: Introductory Remarks

Antonio García-Gómez & Mercedes Díez-Prados
Universidad de Alcalá

In the present volume, we delve into three discourse functions that have deemed of great interest for scholars through time: evaluation, emotion and persuasion. Our present intent is to move one step forward and see how they are intimately intertwined. Within the evaluative function of language, rational and emotional persuasion plays an important role; as Bamford (2007: 138) states, "evaluation is very persuasive". Similarly, types of discourse such as political and advertising, which are eminently persuasive (Cockcroft et al. 2013) because their main function is to produce a change in the addressor's beliefs (Pullman, 2013: xx), are overloaded with evaluation and strong emotions. More specifically, persuasion in these types of discourse is manifested and implemented via evaluative and emotive devices, since they provide a positive self-evaluation and negative other-evaluation or depreciation (see, for example, Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados, 2014). These devices aim to persuade the audience to "buy" what they are trying to sell, be it a product or an idea, in contrast with what their opponents have to offer. It may even be claimed that evaluation is intrinsically persuasive, since the mere manifestation of appraisal involves a statement of the addresser's beliefs with the explicit or implicit desire to make the addressee share his/her valuation (i.e. to persuade him/her), regardless of the actual effect produced.

The description of the language functions of evaluation, emotion and persuasion will be carried out in this volume through the multimodal analysis of real texts and discursive situations in which English or Spanish is spoken, without forgetting the so-called e-communication, given the great impact of these new technologies on the present global society. The papers in the present volume explore the discursive manifestations of evaluation, emotion and persuasion and the extent to which these three phenomena can be conceived separately or whether each of them is the consequence

or effect of the other(s). The purpose of persuasion is to influence somehow on the reader's value system (García-Gómez 2007) and what the papers in this volume explore is how this is carried out by using evaluative and emotive discourse. In addition to this, the present volume addresses those three language functions and their interplay in multiple discourse genres (i.e. business pitches, political debates, media discourse, fiction, social networks) that represent multiple discursive situations.

Authors depart from the premise that an evaluative process underlies every persuasive act, in the sense that trying to persuade ("the art of getting what you want", Lakhani, 2005) implies attempting to change somebody else's beliefs, points of view or convictions. In so doing, the persuader is presenting his/her reality as a more valid option than that of the receptor and, thus, is inviting him/her to reconsider his/her worldview. In addition, rational thoughts have been highly valued in the study of persuasive communication in the literature; however, persuasion also goes hand-in-hand with the way(s) words appeal to the audience's emotions.

There is no doubt that rational and emotional persuasion is at the heart of argumentative strategies such as the resort to the principles of authority, novelty, modernity, exclusiveness or internationalization (Santiago Guervós, 2012) and is manifested at all linguistic levels: phonetics (e.g. intonation, stress), morphology (e.g. suffixes, pronouns), syntax (e.g. evasive answers, rhetorical questions), lexis (e.g. argot, lexical reiteration, colloquialisms, evaluative terms) or pragmatics (e.g. face saving acts as a means of politeness, polyphony, certain speech acts). Political discourse, for example, uses varied linguistic and discursive strategies such as cohesion (e.g. Díez-Prados and Cabrejas-Peñuelas, 2012, and Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados, 2013), metaphor (e.g. Díez-Prados, 2016) or appraisal (e.g. Cabrejas-Peñuelas and Díez-Prados, 2014) with an ultimate persuasive goal.

The focus on how specific linguistic evaluative and emotive choices affect persuasive discourse is our first major point in the papers collected for the volume. Lakoff (1982: 28) classifies persuasion as "the attempt or intention of one participant to change the behaviour, feelings, intentions or viewpoint of another by communicative means". Whether a speaker's illocutionary act is recognised as one of persuasion is not guaranteed and depends on the hearer understanding it as such.

Part I of the volume compiles a group of papers with a cross-linguistic Spanish/English approach. This work constitutes a conscious effort to show case studies in which engagement, linguistic choices and multimodality are exploited as evaluative, emotive and persuasive strategies. Within a discourse pragmatic approach, these papers attempt to clarify and somehow systematize the study of these strategies in different text-types.

'Comparing Engagement in Non-fictional Texts: An English-Spanish Contrastive Study of Argumentative and Expository Texts from a Parallel Corpus' by Marta Begoña Carretero-Lapevre. Following the Appraisal framework, Carretero explores the role of Engagement in argumentative and expository texts from MULTINOT, an English-Spanish parallel corpus. The Engagement realisations were submitted to quantitative analysis, whose main results are: 1) Distributional differences among subcategories were found in the English and Spanish texts, which hints that Engagement devices were not always faithfully translated; 2) The comparison of the original texts in both languages shows distributional differences in the more delicate categories of Engagement but not in its main categories; 3) Distributional dissimilarities were found between the argumentative and expository texts, largely due to the different main purposes of both types. These results together provide evidence of the close relationship between persuasion and evaluation in language.

'With Two Colours: Multimodal Persuasion in Socio-political Posters' by Silvia Molina-Plaza. The author attempts to shed light onto the most characteristic meaning making processes in socio-political posters taken from With Two Colours exhibition in 2013, when protests and social unrest against Spanish financial crisis deepened, by examining sixteen representative examples from a multimodal-cognitive perspective. Her mixed approach reveals the way the semantics and the interaction of the verbal and the visual modes work, and the cognitive processes developed by artists and the audience to produce and interpret persuasive meanings conveyed by the different modes in the posters. Results reveal the force of certain discourse strategies, appeals, blending, recontextualization and visual metaphors to create convincing multimodal ensembles. The underlying metaphor in the exhibition CONSERVATIVE POLITICS IS UNFAIR DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH is grounded in left wing Spanish political parties and serves ideological and emotional purposes in order to promote diverging anti-PP politics.

'Sentimiento atlético: Persuasion and Emotion at Play' by María José García-Vizcaíno. The author offers a new perspective on the communicative functions of advertising. Focusing on the four domains of human experience: public, social, tribal, and psychological, this chapter shows that beyond persuading consumers to buy something, advertising can also perform a social function by reinforcing both the individual and group identities of a specific set of viewers. Consequently, the expressive function of language can play a decisive role when what is advertised is not a product or service, but rather a sentiment. This is the case of the advertising campaigns of the Spanish *fútbol* team *Atlético de Madrid* which use emotion to create a sense of belonging to a group with well-defined social values.

'When It Takes Two to Scare One: Managing Fear Appeals in Triadic Dialogues in Health Care Settings' by Bruno Echauri Galván. The author discusses the implications of certain persuasion techniques for interpreters working in health care settings. The working languages chosen are English and Spanish. Specifically, the chapter focuses on fear appeals aimed at quitting smoking, and it is based on a fieldwork conducted among medical staff and potential patients. With the help of all participants, the study pinpoints the most salient features of fear appeals used in real practice and some responses to them. On these grounds, it devises a series of interpreting guidelines to work effectively with fear appeals and their replies throughout mediated interactions in medical settings.

Part II of the volume comprises a group of papers with a functional and socio-cognitive approach to evaluation, emotion and persuasion. In doing so, they attempt to throw light on the ways the social and cognitive construal of affective and emphathetic dispositions affect evaluative discourse. Furthermore, these papers study the ways in which individual minds and linguistic processes are shaped by their interaction with socio-cultural structures and practices by being together with other embodied minds (Zlatev 2007, Pishwa 2009).

'Delving into the Psychotic Mind of Norma(n) Bates: Evaluation and the Authorial Voice in Narrative Fiction' by Joaquín Primo-Pacheco. Primo-Pacheco focuses on literary discourse and explores the use of evaluative and persuasive strategies in the first chapter of Robert Bloch's suspense novel Psycho. By recourse to the positive versus negative loading of the attitude sub-system in the appraisal framework, the analysis sheds light on the linguistic means by

which evaluation fosters relations of alignment and disalignment of prospective readers with the two main characters (Norman and Norma Bates), so as to persuade readers to appraise Norman as a harmless man and Norma as a tyrant who is capable of committing murder, thus ensuring the final surprise twist where these assessments are proven incorrect. In so doing, Primo-Pacheco demonstrates how evaluation and persuasion can play a central role in the construal of narrative fiction.

'Romantic Homosexual Male Construction of Identity in Love Song Lyrics' by Ionut Alecsandru. In his current study, Alecsandru undergoes a discourse analysis of eight lyrics by means of the synchronic transitivity analysis to discover whether homosexual males construct their identities as active doers or compliant doers when their identities are overtly stated and when they are not in the romantic relationships depicted in each song. To address this issue, two data sets were compiled: corpus A, in which the identity of the singer and his lover is overtly addressed through the direct indexing, and corpus B, in which the singer and his lover's identity is unstated. Alecsandru's study shows that in corpus A, the participants in the romantic relationship seem to act on a level of equality, whereas, in corpus B, they act upon each other.

'Linguistic Choices in Persuasive Discourse: Preliminary Analysis of Self-reference, Positive Polarity and Sentence Construction' by Rosa Muñoz-Luna. The author examines language in successful persuasive discourse. In particular, she analyses morphological, lexical and syntactic features, namely, the use of pronouns (for self-reference), positive polarity adjectives, and sentence construction. By using NVivo® software, Muñoz-Luna examines two speeches by female participants in TV show Dragons' Den. As the author shows, NVivo® measures the total number of references of each token analysed (personal pronouns, positive adjectives and sentence length), and then provides relative parameters which indicate the degree of frequency of an item over the rest in a particular context. Results show that more persuasive oral discourse contains a higher amount of self-references to the speaker, a frequent use of positive polarity items and short and balanced sentences.

'Digital Storytelling and the Art of the Emotional Appeal: The Case of *Despite My Fears*' by Isabel Alonso-Belmonte. Alonso-Belmonte explores the multimodal expression of emotions in a digital story title Despite My Fears. By drawing on a combination of different

functionally-oriented approaches to the study of multimodal texts, this chapter draws attention to the digital narrator's conscious use of multimodal resources to generate empathy, to emotionally touch the audience and eventually, to send a message of empowerment and success. Results show that positive emotions are maximised over negative ones by the use of specific visual and aural resources which reinforce, compare and clarify the verbal message. Findings are discussed in relation with more recent research on digital narratives.

The volume makes manifest that evaluative, emotive and persuasive strategies are pervasive in many linguistic manifestations and are implemented by an ample spectrum of linguistic and non-linguistic devices. No single methodological framework, nor a definite set of linguistic devices can account in isolation for what makes a given discourse sample persuasive; thus, a miscellanea of discursive approaches like the one offered in this volume can shed some light of what contributes to the persuasion of a text and to what extend persuasion is achieved by evaluation and/or other means.

Evaluation, emotion and persuasion, as well as their interplay, are examined through the prism of theoretical frameworks with a vast and well-established research tradition, such as the Appraisal Framework, Functional Linguistics, or Critical Discourse Analysis. Furthermore, the analyses cover three key linguistic levels: morphology, syntax and discourse as a whole, which are analyzed empirically in data samples gathered from real and diverse socio-cultural settings.

Acknowledgements

The present study was financially supported by a grant (ID No: FFI2013-47792-C2-2-P). This chapter is part of the long-term research Project 'EMOtion and language at work': The discursive emotive/evaluative FUNction in different texts and contexts within corporate and institutional work: PROject PERsuasion (EMOFUNDETT: PROPER).

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