# Presentational or Quasilogical Persuasion Styles Intercultural Impediments to the Learning of Argumentation by Arab Learners of EFL

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**Abstract**

Intercultural communication research demonstrates that Arabs tend to use the presentational style in persuasion, while the English favour the quasilogical style. Such a cultural divergence is deemed to impede the learning of argumentation skills in EFL. The aim of this paper is to expatiate on and illustrate this dissimilarity. It also offers a number of pedagogical insights on considering this intercultural dimension in teaching the writing of argumentative texts in English to Arab learners. The key proposition is to raise learners' awareness of their own cultural preferences and to recommend practical ways of teaching them the syllogistic, appeal-balanced persuasion style used in English so as to enable them to be interculturally competent when addressing English audiences.

**Keywords:** Intercultural communication, quasilogical style, persuasion styles, presentational style.

**ملخص:**

تشير الابحاث في ميدان التواصل بين الثقافات أن الثقافة العربية تميل إلى استخدام أسلوب الإقناع الحضوري ، فـي حين أن الثقافة الإنجليزية تحبذ الأسلوب شبه المنطقي . يعتقد أن هذا التمايز قد يعرقل تعلم مهارات الجدال في اللغة الإنجليزيـة كلغة أجنبية. يهدف هذا المقال إلى التفصيل في هذا الاختلاف كما يقدم عددا من الأفكار التربوية المتعلقة باعتبار هذا البعد الثقافي في تعليم كتابة النصوص الجدلية باللغة الإنجليزية للمتعلمين العرب. يكمن الاقتراح الأساسي في رفع مستوى الوعي لدى المتعلمين بالأفضليات الثقافية الخاصة بهم وفي تقديم توصيات بشأن الطرق العملية لتعليمهم أسلوب الإقناع القياسي و المتوازن الذي يميـز اللغة الإنجليزية وذلك لتمكينهم من بلوغ كفاءة التفاعل بين الثقافات عند مخاطبة القارئ ذو الثقافة الانجليزية .

**كلمات مفتاحيه :** التواصـل بين الثقافات، الأسلوب شبه المنطقي، الأسلوب الحضوري ، أساليب الإقناع.

**Introduction**

Argumentation is a type of discourse anchored in reason-giving to accomplish the act of convincing the others of the acceptability of the arguer's claims. Argumentative skills are requisite in scholastic or everyday situations. In educational settings, adeptness in persuasion is considered a cardinal skill and a determinant of academic achievement.

In such contexts, developing a sound, compelling argument in a range of written and spoken academic genres is an evidence of the student's potential to critically combine available substantiation to sustain intellectual allegations about divisive issues. Even outside such contexts, one gets involved in persuasion in daily communication on a regular basis and needs to attain credibility of his/her claims.

In today's multicultural world, many of our persuasive encounters are prone to engage culturally heterogeneous individuals. This raises the issue of the impact of cultural dissimilarity on mutual understanding and on achieving the arguers' intended goals. In intercultural communication research, it is shown that the practice of argumentation varies from one culture to another. Taking the case of Arab versus English argumentation, it is expected that teaching the skills of English argumentation in speech or in writing to learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) may be challenging, especially when the learners speak Arabic as a native language.

In the case of written argumentation, the arduousness does not lie in the intricacy of the writing skill itself as much as in the cultural tendencies, especially the communication patterns, which those learners bring with them as to what a sound argument is. Hence, there is a need to fathom the peculiarities of each cultural group in the practice of argumentation in the light of intercultural communication findings.

The goal is to predict potential intercultural problems. Equipped with such data, practitioners of EFL writing instruction can be assisted in designing appropriate materials and in selecting the most appropriate pedagogical practices to teach written argument to Arab learners of EFL.

## 1. Persuasion Styles in Intercultural Communication Research

Argumentation and persuasion vary across cultures. This is reported in a large body of literature in a number of disciplines, wherein this form of discourse is treated within its socio-cultural context (Abbadi, 2006; Aldrich, 2003; Condon & Yousef, 1975; Eller, 1989; Hatch, 1992; Hatim, 1989; Issakson-Wikberg, 1999; Kamimura & Oi, 1998; McCool, 2009; Siegel, 1999; Warnick & Manusov, 2000). Important in these works is the fact that only some aspects of the complex act of argumentation are considered[1]. In the field of intercultural communication, discussion of cross-cultural differences in persuasion style is frequently encountered. A persuasion style means essentially the favoured ways to persuade an interlocutor (Lustig & Koester, 2010). Mismatch in persuasion styles is thought to be a reason behind some unsuccessful argumentative exchanges in intercultural situations because in such settings, efficient communication requires that an individual's cultural identity and communication style match the identity and style attributed to him or her by the other party (Goodman & Baldwin, 1995).

A persuasion style is part of the more general notion of communication style, an aspect of culture which results from dissimilar cultural patterns[2]. This is generally defined as "a meta-message that contextualizes how individuals should accept and interpret a verbal message" (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988, p. 100). Spencer-Oatey (2008) regards a communication style as a generalized form of interaction or a manner of language use that exhibits clusters of co-occurring features.

According to her, a communication style encompasses verbal (linguistic, paralinguistic) and non-verbal behaviour (gesture, space and touch). Examples of communication style clusters include the following: (1) positive politeness vs. negative politeness, (2) directness vs. indirectness and (3) self-enhancement vs. self-effacement.

Other specialists add (4) talk vs. silence (Ting-Toomey, 1999) and rationality vs. emotion (Peterson, 2004). Differences in communicative styles may hamper intercultural communication since misunderstanding is far more intricate than simple divergence in linguistic system. Corbett (2011) argues, "Divergent cultural assumptions result in members of different groups having conflicting communicative styles that may be the cause of anything from vague unease and mild irritation to misunderstanding and active hostility" (p. 308). Illustrations of non-compatible communication styles are recorded in cases where Germans' directness and categorical assertions are interpreted as rudeness and aggressiveness by Americans (Goodman & Baldwin, 1995) or where English linearity in argumentation is felt to

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[1] Argumentation is multifaceted and consists of a number of layers. The range of phenomena that form the complex act of argumentation includes the expression of opinion, argumentation structures, argumentation schemes, rhetorical appeals, logical fallacies, evidence types, argument evaluation and persuasion style, etc.

[2] Hofstede (1980, 1991) suggested a framework for measuring cultural variability, consisting of four dichotomous dimensions of cultural patterns: individualism-collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity-femininity.

be dull by the Japanese and finally where Arabs' repetitiveness is seen as redundancy by Westerners (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005)

A persuasion style is one of the predictable communicative behaviours dictated by one's cultural affiliation, among other variables. Johnstone (1989) distinguishes a persuasion strategy from a persuasion style. The former denotes a range of communicative options or tactics the speaker can select from in a given rhetorical situation.

This is seen as part of one's communicative competence. The latter refers to the general community-bond tendencies as to what is believed to be the optimal way to persuade. In Johnstone's (1989) words, it is "a person's initial, reflexive choice of persuasive strategy . . . , the strategy or set of strategies he or she assumes to be the best and most universally applicable" (p. 143). Cultural disparity does affect intercultural persuasion in a number of ways. Lustig & Koester (2010) explain that interlocutors may hold dissimilar assumptions on what is considered to be adequate evidence, who can be considered an authority, how evidence is used to generate winning arguments, and when ideas are received as reasonable[3]. In fact, in this perspective, persuasion styles are seen to be exponents of the logical plane of culture, where culture is held to be a determinant of "the logic" according to which people order the world (Porter, 1972). In fact, for Toulmin (1972) what people call "rationality" varies from culture to culture. Feghali (1997) reports the findings of a number of studies investigating the difficulties of communication arising out of using the dissimilar persuasion styles in intercultural encounters.

Lustig and Koester (2010) and Johnstone (1989) offer a tripartite categorization of persuasion styles: the quasilogical style, the presentational style and the analogical style. The persuasive tools employed by the arguer in each case vary significantly. In the first style, objective statistics and testimony from witnesses are used as evidence, which is connected to the conclusion following the principles of formal logic. Speakers explicitly signal this connexion by using inference words such as thus, hence, and therefore.

On the basis of this form of reasoning, it is possible to discover deductively what is true or false and right or wrong about a particular experience. The second style appeals to the emotional facets of persuasion. Speakers use language and manipulate its various tools (especially sensory devices) for the purpose of producing an expressive response. In this style, it is not the ideas that persuade, but rather the vivid way in which they are portrayed. Audiences are "moved" through aesthetic appeal.

Believing something comes as a result of feeling. Therefore, an absolute truth does not exist, and there are no obvious rights or wrongs to be revealed. The third style looks for proving an idea (a conclusion) and persuading the listener by supplying an analogy, a story or a parable in which there is either an implied or overt point to be learned. In this style, persuasion seems to be embedded in the collective experience of groups rather than the ideas themselves or the individuals projecting them. In this style the speaker does not affirm his claim directly but expects the other to understand their message by using slight hints to make their point. Proficiency in persuasion lies in selecting and narrating a pertinent story which

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[3] The conceptions of reasonableness differ among argumentation scholars, depending on their philosophical orientations. This paper follows the anthropological perspective. The anthropological approach is relative, for it treats arguments within their cultural context. In other words, an argument is reasonable if it complies with the norms of a given community as regards its persuasiveness. This outlook considers the cultural context as a determiner of rationality; thus, it is said to be inter-subjective.

encapsulates the core of the persuader's intended standpoints. The distinction between the three persuasion styles is summarized in Table 1. (p. 144-145)

| | Quasilogic | Presentation | Analogy |
|---|---|---|---|
| distinguishing model | model from formal logic; convincing | model from poetry; moving | model from narrative; teaching |
| linguistic correlates | use of "logical connectives": thus, hence, therefore . . . | "rhetorical deixis": here, now, this | formulaic language: "You know what they say"; "That reminds me" |
| | | visual metaphors: behold, look, see | "the words of the ancestors"; proverbs |
| | subordination; integration | coordination/ parataxis/ parallelism; involvement | chronology; timeless past ("once upon a time"); involvement |

**Figure 1. Three persuasive strategies. Adapted from Language, communication, and culture (p. 145), by Ting-Toomey, S., & Korzenny, F. (Eds.), 1989, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.**

This threefold classification needs to be corroborated by empirical research that can determine the extent to which particular cultural groups follow predominantly one or more of these styles.

### 3. Persuasion in the Arab Culture

Johnstone claims that for Arabs[4], persuasion is attained through presentation, not through the logic behind the words (Quesada, 1992). Presentation is thus related to the manner an idea is expressed, rather than the proposition made. Indeed, Manolescu (2005) explains, the presentational force is the force of style as argument: the weight of argument is carried by the inherent properties of language itself. Johnstone (1987) emphasizes the emotional outcomes of presentation. In her words, "Presentation makes things believable because it forces them into the affective field of the hearer and keeps them there" (p. 90). Kavoossi's (2000) view follows the same direction: the presentational style depends chiefly on the vigor of words to incite potent emotional and cognitive responses in readers. Tuleja's (2009) account of Arab argumentation goes in the same line. She holds that Arabs show a high appreciation of the persuasive weight of rhythm and sound of words, leading to a style whose effect depends immensely on devices that augment the emotional influence of messages. Feghali (1997), highlighting the affective aspect of presentation, lists this among the typical communicative styles of Arabic in general, and he dubs it affectiveness or the intuitive-affective style of emotional appeal. In composition and rhetoric, the reliance on affective means to persuade is dubbed pathos, that is, appeal to emotions.

In order to measure the degree to which speakers use presentation in persuasion, one has to delimit the range of its linguistic exponents. Manolescu (2005) shows that presentational

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[4] The term *Arab* is sometimes considered a fuzzy term. Confusions are found when it is taken to mean Middle Eastern or Muslim. Both Feghali (1997), and Goodman and Baldwin (1995) have attempted to remove such a terminological vagueness by defining the term in relation to the linguistic background of the individual rather than his or her ethnic, national or religious affiliations. For them, being Arab is related to speaking Arabic as a mother tongue. It is Arabic that delineates the boundaries of the Arab Community. Due to historical reasons, language could be granted such a prestigious rank in society that natural eloquence in Arabic has become a marker of cultural membership.

devices may embrace but are not limited to language uses such as word choice, syntax, figures and tropes, and larger units of composition. Johnstone (1989) offers a more comprehensive model in which she delineates the linguistic correlates of the persuasive style of presentation. For her, presentational persuasion depends on the following tools:

(1) **Rhythmic, paratactic repetition** (parallel coordinated clauses),
(2) **Visual metaphors** (using words like see, look, behold, etc),
(3) **Rhetorical deixis** (terms like here, now and this referring to ideas).

By and large, this type of persuasion depends on the individual and his choice of linguistic tools that involve the hearer or reader and hence create presence. It is the individual who persuades, not the content of arguments.

### 4. Persuasion in the English Culture

Persuasion for the English is essentially the act of giving evidence to support one's claims. Intercultural communication research usually describes the English style of persuasion as quasilogical (Lustig & Koester, 2010; Johnstone, 1986). Following predominantly the long-established formal, syllogistic tradition, English speakers find it more forceful the act of supplying reasonable evidence to ascertain the credibility of their claims. Johnstone (1989) states that "Persuaders in the quasilogical mode create the rhetorical impression that their arguments are logically incontrovertible. The goal of quasilogical persuasion is to convince, to make it seem impossible for an audience using rationality not to accept the arguer's conclusion" (p. 145).  The quasilogical style used in the Western world deduces a conclusion from a set of premises. A persuader is more inclined to have recourse to rational means, such as facts or statistics to prove his or her claims. Style is only a sequel to invention and arrangement. Regardless of the language being used, the argument is stable, and it is the ideas that are persuasive, not the accessory shape of the idea. At the language plane, Johnstone (1989) explains, the quasilogical style makes use of logical connectives as therefore, thus, then or hence in addition to hypotactic structures.

Seen in this way, English persuasion seems to depend largely on logos, the rational appeals, rather than pathos[5]. Consequently, the standard books of English academic writing support the position that persuasion should rely on rational tools rather than emotional ones. It is emphasized in Western tradition, as Murray and Hudges (2008) argue, that writers ought to be as objective as possible. Therefore, academic writing in English generally exploits logic and reasonableness more than the other appeals. To them, "All argument in academic writing should make an appeal to reason rather than emotion" (p. 37). Nadell et al. (2009) take the same position by stating that the writer's main interest in an argumentation-persuasion text should be with the soundness of an argument.

Other appeals might be used but are less weighty if used alone.

According to Reid (1982), the strength of argument depends for the most part on the quality and the quantity of the rational supporting evidence presented, which determines success of the writer in convincing the reader. It is true that writers have to choose thoughtfully the language that highlights their message but should not entirely make their arguments dependent on it. In his words, "Such language should support, not supplant, clear thinking" (p. 458). In English, overuse of pathos is seen to undermine the professionalism of any argumentative paper. Johnstone (1989) argues that the English reflexively tend to prefer rational and syllogistic means to emotive ones, and this is a marker of the quasilogical style.

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[5] The tendency of Westerners to be objective stems from the instrumental, rather than the aesthetic, view of language as a carrier of information, regardless of the surface forms of the message (Johnston, 1986)

Persuaders ought to be selective as to the most appropriate blend of evidence to enhance the logos of their position. Logical conclusions are extracted from assumptions and decisions derived from weighing a collection of solid supporting evidence. Standard composition textbooks suggest the following array of techniques to introduce supporting evidence that writers might draw on in persuasive writing: (1) facts, (2) referring to an authority, (3) testimony of others whose views are relevant to the topic, (4) statistics, (5) examples, and (6) anecdotes (Fawcet, 2012; Govier, 2010; Nadell et al, 2009; Rosa & Eschholz, 2008; Wyrick, 2011). Writers of academic texts are advised to present evidence of one or more kinds, choosing from the variety of available strategies. When doing so, Wyrick (op. cit.) emphasizes, the purpose and the audience have to be considered, the possibilities should be assessed and the most effective kind of backing has to be chosen.

## 5. Pedagogical Implications for Teaching English Written Arguments to Arab learners of EFL

In teaching written argument to Arab EFL learners, the hypothesis that these learners will transfer the persuasion styles of their native culture to their English texts is not excluded when accounting for their difficulties in producing a "good" argumentative text for English audiences. Indeed, the examination of the explanatory paradigms of learner problems in EFL writing reveals that the cultural paradigm comes to the fore (Kaplan, 1966). The logic imposed by one's native culture is very likely to manifest itself in communication regardless of the language being used.

On that basis, teaching the skill of English argumentation to EFL learners ought to highlight the preferred style for English readerships. The role of this intercultural dimension seems to be essential in teaching this type of discourse in the target language to non-native speakers. Practically, when teaching argumentation and persuasion, instructors can pursue a number of practices to reduce the influence of native culture communicative tendencies.

The first recommendation is the explicit analysis of cultural dissimilarity in persuasion. EFL learners' attention should be drawn to the postulated cultural divergence between Arab and English cultures in persuasion styles (the presentational style vs. the quasilogical style). To achieve this goal, exposure to authentic English argumentative discourse followed by explicit comparison to Arabic discourse can be exploited to underscore the differences.

The second recommendation is the instruction of the quasilogical style exponents. EFL learners need to be trained in using the formal correlates of the quasilogical style. Three elements can be underlined here.

First, learners should be made aware of the forms of syllogism, the basic construct in formal logic, and their attention should be drawn to formulating true premises to have "valid" arguments. Second, learners have to be familiar with the forms of evidence that are accepted as rational means (logos) in persuasion.

The instruction can proceed from simple argumentation to complex argumentation. Third, logical fallacies have to be taught to them.

An important factor that has to be attended to when using logos is to avoid logical fallacies. Any substantiation of claims based on lack of judiciousness is designated as fallacious and weak, in spite of having immense persuasive potential. Finally, instruction of written argument should involve a component related to balancing the rhetorical appeals of ethos, pathos and logos by teaching explicitly the exponents of each and training learners to give priority to logos as the core of their persuasion.

## 6. Theoretical issues

In this paper, we have attempted to exploit a theoretical categorization of persuasion styles to handle certain difficulties that often arise in teaching English to non-native speakers. The purpose is to improve the instruction of a very important type of discourse, argumentation. However, a number of theoretical issues come to fore, and they ought to be considered before assuming that the specified persuasion styles fit accurately the cultural groups concerned with the typology.

To begin with, according to the existing literature on Arab versus English communication styles, the Arab culture is presented as one homogeneous whole, ignoring the linguistic regional variation and its resulting cultural disparity within the Arab world. The question that arises is whether the postulated Arab communication styles typify the Algerian case, especially that the linguistic situation in Arab countries is diglossic. Standard Arabic, whose characteristics are referred to in the literature, is not the mother tongue but a High variety limited in its contexts of use.

Thus, what features are exactly transferred to the learners' English texts? Insights on this issue can be obtained by conducting a sociolinguistically oriented study on the precise features of the Algerian Arabic variety(s) and its/their related cultural patterns. In other words, the assumptions made in this paper need to be supported with empirical corroboration in the Algerian context. Native-speakerism of the English language is second central issue. The core concern here is that this ideological construct encourages "othering" the users of English who are outside the English speaking world and allotting to them "an imagined, problematic generalized Other to the unproblematic Self of the 'native speaker'" (Holliday, 2006, p. 386). With such stereotyping, some superiority is attributed to some cultural groups and their linguistic behaviours.

At this point, it is obvious that a non-native speaker's style of persuasion is different, but to what extent is the native speaker's style the model to be followed? Given these theoretical considerations, the claims raised in this paper remain vulnerable to inconsistency. Therefore, it is believed that an experimental testing of our claims can reduce such inherent threats to validity.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have attempted to explain and illustrate a postulated divergence in persuasion styles between Arab and English speakers and to make use of its understanding in enhancement of instructional practices of written English arguments to Arabic-speaking EFL learners in the Algerian context.

The rationale behind selecting this form discourse is the prominence of argumentative skills both in the academia and everyday encounters. Persuading another of the acceptability of one's claims is seen to be essential in communication.

Considering the intercultural dimension in teaching English written argumentation to Arabic-speaking learners of English can certainly assist them in participating effectively in contexts where English norms are the touchstone. It is emphasized, however, that the need to follow English norms in persuasion remains an ethnocentric tendency in assessing non-English speakers' discourse.

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