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ARISTOTLE'S TRIAD OF PERSUASIVENESS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE WRITERS' WRITTEN TEXT

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Abstract:

In order to convince someone of what one is saying or writing about, the use of the appropriate persuasive technique is very important. At tertiary education level, academics who focus on teaching communication either in the written or spoken form emphasises on being persuasive. In communication, either in daily activities, academic or workplace, persuading someone is often used. The sender of the message needs to persuade the receiver to believe, agree, acknowledge and obey the message that one wants to convey. In this study, Aristotle's triad of ethos, pathos, and logos is usually used to explore whether a text is persuasive. Aristotle's triad focuses on credibility (ethos), emotion (pathos), and facts (logos) in persuading a person on a certain issue that is being presented. The present study attempts to identify how ESL writers write to persuade. Samples of English as Second Language writers' written assignments produced for an English for Occupational Purpose Module are used in this study. The assignment is in the form of a proposal paper written to propose an activity. The objective of a proposal paper is to propose an idea, and it is written in the hope of persuading the person reading the proposal to agree, approve and support the proposal. By studying the use of Aristotle's triad of persuasive appeals, it is hoped that it will assist academicians to focus on what to teach in their communication class and to be able to produce competent ESL writers who are able to persuade and make one agree with

their ideas and issues.

Introduction

There are many instances where we have to persuade and convince other people to favour our action and intention. For example, in our daily activity, we often persuade a family member or friend to bring us out to a movie or to our favourite restaurant. Another example of a common need to convince is when a child needs to convince his/her parents to allow him/her to go out with a friend or to buy a new toy. A similar convincing situation occurs in the workplace too where one needs to be able to persuade someone. For example, when a person wants to present an idea or proposal, he/she can convince the boss of the importance and benefit of the idea or proposal. Additionally, persuasive communication also occurs in the courtroom, hospitals, and businesses (Sunghyun Park, Han Suk Shim, Moitreya Chatterjee, Kenji Sagae, and Louis-Philippe Morency 2014).

In a paper written by Abdul Aziz and Mad Said (2019), it is stressed that persuasive writing is an important skill that students in Malaysia should acquire. They mentioned that it is because this skill will help students at the tertiary level to produce research papers and later use this skill to obtain career opportunities in many interesting careers such as politicians, lawyers, businesspeople, and advertisers. Schulze (2011) also highlighted that persuasiveness is needed in the academic world because students need to "…persuade, argue and justify their points of view in well organized persuasive texts" (p.128).

In order to convince someone of what one is saying or writing about, the use of the appropriate persuasive technique is very important. Researchers such as Abdul Aziz and Mad Said (2019), Allagui (2019), and Conley (2007) have stressed that persuasive skill is an important skill to learn in both written and spoken form. However, it is acknowledged that persuasive language is a hurdle especially for English as a second language learners (ESL) because they not only need to learn the persuasive elements but also the second language rules too (Halliday, 1989; Gibbons, 2009).

Based on the researchers extensive reading, not many research has been conducted in relation to the persuasive elements used in Malaysian ESL written work. In addition, it is also found the use of Aristotle's triads of persuasion on Malaysians written work is also rarely used. There has been a lot of previous research on persuasive aspects employing Aristotle's triad of Ethos, Pathos, and Logos (Waddell, 1990; Higgins and Walker, 2012; Allen, 2017; Myllyla, 2019). Aristotle's triad focuses on credibility (ethos), emotion (pathos) and facts (logos) in persuading a person on a certain issue that is being presented (Illie, 2006; Barnes, 1984).

Thus, in view of the importance of learning the skill of persuasion in the academic world, this paper hopes to identify how Malaysian ESL writers write to persuade. It will use Aristotle' appeal of persuasion.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative study that explores authentic ESL writers' assignments. The samples were taken from a batch of students studying English for Employment module offered in one of the Malaysian public universities. This is a purposive sample because during the particular semester that this research was conducted, there were only 3 samples as there were only 1 class with 18 students. It is part of their ongoing assessment to complete the module. The module is a 14 weeks module, and for the assessment, students had to work in groups of 5 or 6.

The proposal papers produced by students for their English of Employment course were analysed based on Aristotle's concept of rhetoric. using Aristotle's framework, the sentences used in the proposal paper were analysed and identified with pathos, ethos or logos according to the persuasive appeal shown in the sentences used. Table 2.1 shows the framework for analysing persuasion in students' proposal paper based on Aristotle's conception of rhetoric.

Table 2.1: Framework for Analysing Persuasive Appeals in Student Proposals Based on Aristotle's Conception of Rhetoric

Appeal	Definition	Indicators
Pathos	Appeal to emotions	Mentioning the feelings, needs, values and desires of the target or themselves. Promising, praising, and thanking. Using emotive words and adjectives to manipulate feelings. Mentioning values and either their own or the target's emotional state in order to persuade.
Logos	Appeal to reason	Using argumentation, logic, warrants/ justification, claims, data and evidence/ examples. May use linguistic links such as initially, later and finally for logical reasoning.
Ethos	Appeal to the credibility and trustworthiness of the speaker or the audience	**Positive sense** Appealing to their similarities with their audience. Showing deference or respect for the rights and feelings of the target. **Negative sense** Using reverse accusation, denying and negation of the credibility and trustworthiness of the target. Using descriptors that highlight positive or negative attributes of the target.

Source: Su-Hie Ting (2018)

Three sections were analysed from the proposal papers: Background section, Statement of Need section and Impact section. Each section was compared with the same section from the three different groups' proposal papers. The research was conducted by identifying and describing the persuasive appeals used in each of the three proposal papers, which are coded as appeals to the rhetorical proof of ethos, logos or pathos. The results were also being compared with selected studies from other researchers

The results were tabulated by sections and appeals. The frequency of the type of sentences used was counted and classified as ethos, logos or pathos, and according to their types of appeal. The three group's proposal papers were labelled as group A (Skyway Airline), group B (Orga-nize Sdn. Bhd) and group C (Pawfect café).

Result and Discussion

Distribution of Sentence Types of Appeal by Different Group in Each Section of The Proposal Paper
There are three types of sentence which are pathos, ethos and logos. Pathos refers to the emotion or feeling shown in a sentence, while ethos refers to the sentences that show the authority or reputation of the writer and lastly, logos refers to sentences used to show facts and logic. When writing a proposal paper, it is very important to select words to build good sentences in order to persuade the reader to take action based on the proposal.

Based on data collected from analysing the proposal paper by each group, the results are shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Distribution Types of Appeal Shows in Sentences Used By Different Group in Different Section of The Proposal Paper

Section	Group	Pathos	Ethos	Logos
Background	A	0	2	6
	B	1	2	4
	C	4	0	7
Statement of Need	A	3	1	5
	B	0	3	5
	C	5	0	9
Impact	A	1	1	1
	B	1	1	1
	C	0	1	1
	Total	**15**	**11**	**39**

Based on Table 3.1 above, three sections were selected from the proposal paper; background, statement of need and impact. In the background section, students were supposed to explain their idea or action that they want to propose.

Compared to group A and group B, group C did not use any ethos appeal in their background section. In contrast, group A does not show any pathos appeal; however, only group B used all three pathos, ethos and pathos in the background section. In a study by Guo and Wang (2016), it was written that Aristotle thinks that from the very beginning, speakers or writers should establish his or her moral credibility. This will make the audience or reader show trust and give credit to what the speaker or writer said or wrote. Therefore, Ethos-coded sentences should reflect ideas or experience of any individual in a group that participates in the project to build trust with the reader to consider the proposed idea (Hansen, 2004).

In the statement of need section, students need to state the reason for their idea or action. This section usually needs the writer to provide facts or statistic referring to their idea or action, thus logos should be used in their sentences. Based on Table 3.1 above, all three groups show logos appeal in their sentences at the statement of need section with group C having the most logos appeal compared to other groups. However, group C does not use ethos appeal, while group B does not show any pathos appeal. For group A, the writers use all three pathos, ethos and logos in this section.

As for the Impact section, it is supposed to make a prediction on what will happen or the effect of the idea or action socially. From Table 3.1 above, both group A and group B use the three appeals of pathos, ethos and logos, but only group C uses two appeals which is ethos and logos only. Each appeal consists of one sentence to show each appeal in this section by each group. In contrast, group C does not use pathos appeal in their sentences.
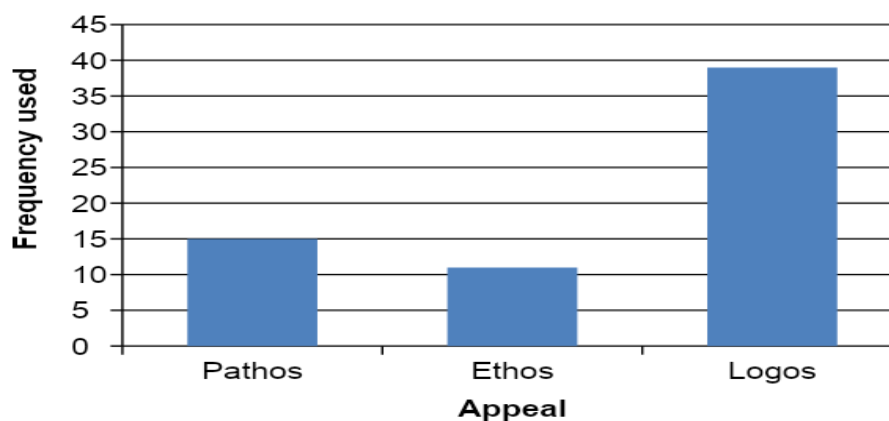

Figure 3.1: Frequency of Appeals Used in Sentences from Proposal Paper

Based on Figure 3.1 above, logos appeared more, which is 39 times compared to pathos and ethos with 15 and 11 times respectively. There are significant differences that can be seen between logos to pathos, and ethos. Ethos that shows the authority or reputation of the writer shows the lowest appeal being used in the proposal papers only 11 times. However, in a study by Su-Hie (2018), using Aristotle's conception of rhetoric, pathos was used more than logos in persuasive discourage, and ethos is the least used.

With reference to the proposal papers analysed, most writers included logos as a deception to persuade the reader. Logos or logic are usually used to make an argument or proof based on logic statistic or information. For examples from the proposal papers;
"_Based on the survey_ ... _in the year 2018_, the number of stray cats had increase rapidly over ..."
"Skyway Airline _achieved as much as RM 3 billion annual profit in 2018_."
"_Statistic has shown_ that the living cost in Malaysia has been increasing steadily ... _(News Straits Times, 2018)._"

Logos or logic information can be cited from any trusted sources. All group A, B and C used logos-coded sentences in each section selected from the proposal paper. As in the proposal papers analysed, it showed that the writer used logos to show the problem and the reasons for what they wrote about. Compared to a study by Guo and Wang (2016), the authors also use logical information to persuade the reader. At first, the readers are inclined to side when the author does not give their reasons at the beginning, however, after being shown a collection of logic reasons, readers were able to accept what the author proposed.

Guo and Wang (2016) stated that, to leave a strong effect on a proposal, it is important for the logic of the proposal were reasonable and well organised.

Pathos, which shows the emotion or feeling of the writer is used second the most on this proposal papers by this group of students. However, a non-direct sentence was used, but instead, the writer stated the consequence of an action that may help the reader. For example;
"The promotional price ... help the students _lighten their burden_ in expensive flight fares."
"... create the most welcoming environment for them and _give a good impression of our beloved town_ ..."
"... their awful odour emitting from them is _disturbing my dining experience_."

As we can read from the example above, writers try to show how they feel and understand reader's problems. The writer also wants to leave an impression on the reader about why they are concerned about the problem they stated and why the action needs to be taken. Some writer included a melancholy scene to evokes sympathy in readers' heart. A study by Hansen (2004) showed that pathos cause a significant gap in understanding the panel members' feeling towards the context of the proposal. It also revealed that compared to ethos and logos, pathos actually can suppress the proposal writing genre as a persuasive strategy (Hansen, 2004). In addition, a study by Guo (2016), mentioned that the author in their study used pathos with irony as the more indignant the reader feels, the more ironic people think the proposal is. The author used pathos to evoke the emotional responses from the reader; they tried to make the reader feel scared at first, then angry, and finally indignant (Guo and Wang, 2016).

Ethos that shows the reputation or identity of the writer was also used in the proposal papers. However, only group C does not shows any ethos-coded sentences, especially in the background and statements of need section. Writer of other groups used ethos as a device appeal to show the company reputation and target audience, for examples;

*"Skyway Airline Sdn Bhd had successfully established its name as <u>one of the best airline in
Malaysia and is well-known as a customer-friendly company</u> ..."*
*"... plan to increase the net profit of the <u>company due to bad earnings on the second half of
last year.</u>"*
*"... crowd and target community are <u>people of all ages who's active and interested to try</u> out
new kind of isotonic drink ...."*

The writers give information about the company reputation and at the same time give out the
problem faced by the company. Writers also tried to shows how they concern about their
targeted audience by giving solutions based on the problem.

Even though the uses of ethos sentences in this proposal papers are the lowest, compared to
pathos and logos, compared to a study by Higgins and Walker (2012) showed that in the
document they analysed, ethos seems as the dominant sentences. The document they studied
wants to persuade the reader that they are trustworthy. As in a study by Guo and Wang
(2016), the writer described a scene in Ireland and gave the reader curiosity and interest.
When they read the first part, the reader will think that author showed s their concern and can
help by giving some feasible advice on the problem stated.

One Type Appeal, Two Type Appeal and Three Type Appeal Used by Groups
There are one type appeal; pathos, ethos and logos, two types appeal; a combination of any
two from one type appeal, and lastly, the three types appeal; the combination of all pathos,
ethos and logos. A good combination of any appeal when writing can help in expressing the
information of the idea or action and may persuade the reader to take action on the idea or
action proposed. Table 3.2 below shows the total frequency types of appeal mostly used by
the three groups in every section selected of their proposal paper.

Table 3.2: Frequency of Types of Appeal in Different Sections Used by Different Group

Section	One type appeal		Two type appeal		Three type appeal	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Background	0	0	2	66.67	1	33.33
Statement of Need	0	0	2	66.67	1	33.33
Impact	0	0	1	33.33	2	66.67
Total	0		5		4	

Based on received student proposal from three different groups, most groups used two and
three types of appeal when writing their proposal paper in a paragraph: pathos-logos, ethos-
logos and pathos-ethos-logos.

Example of two type appeal used in the proposal studied:
"… <u>cheap and effective energy drinks have a high demand in the existing market</u>[L]*, high profit
from this new product can be expected. ... plan to increase the net profit of the <u>company due
to bad earnings on the second half of last year</u>.*[E]"
Example of three type appeal used in the proposal studied;

"As we know, <u>Sandakan is one of the main city in Sabah</u>[E]. Therefore, the <u>present of tourists in Sandakan in unavoidable</u>. ... Thus, we need to create the most welcoming environment for them and give good impression of <u>our beloved town Sandakan</u>[P] …"
(E : Ethos, L : Logos, P : Pathos)

In contrast to Sue-Hie 2018 study on students' informal request, she found that the majority of the students used one type of appeal to persuade, some of them used two types appeal, and only one of them used three types appeals to persuade. The difference may be due to the formality of the situation and the size of the request. To propose a proposal paper, it needed to be formal and follow a certain format as the size of requesting is bigger compared to the informal request by students. Most students in their study preferred to use pathos and hardly use ethos in their sentences. Despite the background of students, emotional appeal or pathos seems to be more commonly used in persuasion strategy (Su-Hie, 2018).

For background and statement of need, most groups used two types of appeal, which are pathos-logos and ethos-logos. Here we can conclude that students like to include logic statement (logos) in their writing to support their proposal. In a study by Myllyla (2019) using CEO letters, logos appeared dominant and is strong interdependence between than others and was complemented by both ethos and pathos in the above-mentioned ways. However, in the impact section, three types of appeal, pathos-ethos-logos are mostly used by students in their statements when writing a proposal paper.

Conclusion
By studying the use of Aristotle's triad of persuasive appeals, it is hoped that it will assist academicians to focus on what to teach in their communication class and to be able to produce competent ESL writers who are able to persuade and make one agree with their ideas and issues. Moreover, Aristotle triad can be introduced as a guide to writers and speakers to arrange their ideas and points better.

This research has its limitation as it uses only three samples. Further research may require a more substantial amount of samples to be studied. Furthermore in order to make the finding more reliable and beneficial, this study can be further developed by looking into the viewpoint and background of the writers. This enables us to get a better picture as to how the writing is arranged in such a way.

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