

# Persuasion Coding Manual

## 0. Introduction

- This annotation system examines how people use language during persuasive discourse.
- We break this language down into sixteen common *language cues* of persuasion activities.
- Your job is to
  - o annotate text spans for these cues, using the definitions below
  - o mark whether each cue is part of a persuasion activity or not, and if so, the nature of the persuasion activity

## 1. Main target: *persuasion activity*

- Persuasion involves:
  - o two parties, a *persuader* and a *persuadee*
  - o an act on the part of *persuader*
  - o a causal change in the *persuadee*'s psychological state ("uptake")
- Persuasion **activity**: an attempt by a persuader to convince the persuadee about something. This can occur over large stretches in time.
- Three types of persuasion activities:
  - o change/retain their beliefs about the truth of an idea
  - o change/retain a **subjective** judgment about an object (an entity, event, or idea)
  - o change/retain a commitment regarding an event the persuadee would carry out

o Annotation of Persuasion Activity:

Persuasion activity  
agent: X  
persuadee: Y  
state: {belief, judgment, action}  
polarity: +/- (corresponds to: true/false, positive/negative,  
toward/against)  
topic: enter here as free text

- Persuasion activities are distinguished by the persuader and persuadee, the topic, the type of persuasion, and whether the persuasion is pro/contra, etc.

- o Some examples of differences:

Mary's trying to persuade John to jump out of a plane

agent: Mary                      persuadee: John                      state: action  
polarity: +  
topic: John will jump out of a plane

Is different from...

Mary's trying to persuade **Susan** to jump out of a plane

agent: Mary                      persuadee: **Susan**                      state: action  
polarity: +  
topic: Susan will jump out of a plane

Mary's trying to persuade John **that he will jump out of a plane.**

agent: Mary                      persuadee: John                      state: **belief**  
polarity: +  
topic: John will jump out of a plane

Mary's trying to persuade John **that his jumping out of a plane was helpful**

agent: Mary                      persuadee: John                      state:  
**judgment**                      polarity: +  
topic: John's jumping out of a plane                      subjective judgment:  
**helpful**

- Difficult cases
  - o Is trying to persuade John that jumping out of a plane is dangerous/foolish persuasion **action** - or **judgment** -?
    - Typically, **action** -. Often, the use of subjective terms will be used as an argument (Moral/Deontic Appeal, Outcome).
    - However, there may actually be a debate about whether something is actually beneficial or not. If so, mark this as a separate persuasion activity.
    - If the event is in the past, then it's **judgment** - (like the example above).

## 2. Language Cues

### 2.1 Overview

- We identify persuasion activities based on 14 common language cues

- o 4 are concerned with the types of outcomes from adopting the agent's request
  - o 6 are concerned with evaluations of the request
  - o 4 are general persuasive tactics
- Discusses outcomes
  - o most general: Outcome
  - o action of agent: Threat/promise
  - o how you'll feel about yourself: Self-feeling
  - o how people will see you: Social esteem
- Characteristic linked with action/belief
  - o opinion of someone important: Important Person/Organization
  - o popular opinion: Popularity
  - o traits of those who subscribe to this action/belief: Good/Bad Traits
  - o connected with previous commitments: Consistency
  - o quid pro quo: Favors/Debts
  - o people in general are like this: Social Generalization
  - o general appeal to permission/obligation: Deontic Appeal
  - o appeal to general notions of right and wrong: Moral Appeal
- General tactic
  - o see another's perspective: Empathy
  - o change spin: Redefinition
  - o rational argumentation: Reason
  - o time pressure: Scarcity
- Easy to confuse (see section 3)
  - o Popularity and Moral Appeal (Social fact)
  - o Trait Association, Self-feeling, and Deontic Appeal (Moral)
  - o Threat/Promise and Reciprocity

## 2.2. Descriptions of Cues

### 2.2.1 Outcome

- Does the agent mention outcomes of a particular course of action?
  - o The course of action could be potential or hypothetical
- Two kinds
  - o +: is the outcome something the agent thinks is desirable
  - o -: is the outcome something the agent thinks is undesirable

**<luc class="outcome" type="+">**

"We must also work on implementing the Plan of Action adopted at the Hyogo

Conference by strengthening international cooperation to better prevent and reduce risks of natural disasters and to give ourselves an organization and more effective means to make the world a safer place."

**<luc class="outcome" type="-">**

"The first, which represents a significant minority, is to go backward by dissolving the Palestinian Authority and declaring the failure of the Oslo project under that assumption that this will bring us back to pre-PA days of direct occupation. . . ."

### 2.2.2. Threat/Promise

- Does the agent make an offer based on some exchange?
  - o This must be an actual offer
    - different from reciprocity: reciprocity is a reminder of some past action
    - different from appeal to an important person for punishment/reward: the agent is the punisher/rewarder in the threat/promise case.
  - o Two kinds
    - threat: non-compliance brings punishment
    - promise: compliance brings reward

**<luc class="threat/promise" type="threat">**

"We incite our Muslim brothers in Pakistan to deter with all their capabilities the American crusaders from invading Pakistan and Afghanistan for the prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, who said: He who does not join fighters in battle, fails to support them financially or take care of a fighter's family will be punished by God before the Day of Judgment."

**<luc class="threat/promise" type="promise">**

"Those who left children behind them, their children are mind. I will be their caretaker, God willing." (Al Qaeda Transcripts)

### 2.2.3 Self-Feeling

- Does the agent state that the persuadee will feel better emotionally if they do what the agent asks/believes what the agent asks?
  - o has to do with what the person will think of themselves (so, not just "happier")
  - o feeling "less guilty" or "happy with your decision" are examples
- Two types
  - o +: doing/believing something will make them feel better
  - o -: doing/believing will make them feel worse

<luc class="self-feeling" type="-">

If you do this, you'll regret it for the rest of your life.

#### 2.2.4. Social Esteem

- Does the agent indicate that people the persuadee values will like them more/less if they do/believe what the agent asks?
  - o the group can be quite broad ("society"/"people")
- Two types
  - o +: people will like them more
  - o -: people will like them less

<luc class="esteem" type="-">

If you do that, no one will trust you again.

#### 2.2.5 Important Person/Organization

- Does the agent directly name some kind of authority or important person/organization in making a claim?
- There are several kinds of authorities:
  - o punishment/reward: authorities who can punish or reward behavior (e.g., divine entities)
  - o organizational: an organizational authority over the audience (e.g., a boss, a commander, a legal system)?
  - o charisma: a individual who others want to be like (e.g., product endorsers, famous figures, celebrities)
  - o expert: an expert on a subject (e.g., a scientist, an educator, a judge, etc.)?
- Use of authority or important person/organization
  - o +: individual **endorses/requires** the claim
  - o -: individual **rejects/forbids** the claim

<luc class="authority" type="organizational" valence="positive">

"Bilateral negotiations are seen as the main strategy to achieve the legitimate Palestinian objectives of ending the Israeli occupation, achieving statehood and freedom as well as solving the issue of Palestinian refugees in accordance with UNGA Resolution 194."

<luc class="authority" type="organizational" valence="negative">

"Second, the prolonged process has enabled Israel to expand its control over most of the occupied territories through the illegal settling of Jewish populations in those territories contrary to international law."

### 2.2.6. Popularity

- Does the agent argue for a persuasive target based on popular support?

<luc class="popularity">

"I can only endorse the often expressed sentiment that it is the international communities' duty to act to protect people in danger . . . ." (UN)

### 2.2.7. Good/Bad Traits

- Does the agent associate the belief or action with what a person with "good qualities" would believe or do?
  - o "good qualities" can mean: moral, reasonable, rational, etc. Any quality that the agent thinks is good to have.
- Two types:
  - o +: a good person would do/believe this
  - o -: a bad person would do/believe this

<luc class="association" type="-">

But only a crazy person could believe that.

### 2.2.8 Consistency

- Does the agent discuss behaving consistently with beliefs or promises?
  - o this can apply to the agent, the audience, or a third party
- Use of consistency
  - o +: the individual is consistent with beliefs/promises
  - o -: the individual is inconsistent with beliefs/promises

<luc class="consistency" type="+">

"Palestinian officials have always and consistently reiterated their commitment to the peace process."

"I reaffirm the commitment of my country to the millennium development goals."

<luc class="consistency" type="-">

"First, both Israeli public opinion and Israel's political elite have been moving away from the basic assumption underpinning the peace process, namely the end of occupation."

### 2.2.9. Reciprocity

- Does the agent make reference to past help/injury by another party that requires a response?
  - o This is based on our preference for returning favors or responding to injuries.
- Four ways of discussing reciprocity
  - o past favors: favors have been done for some individual
  - o past injuries: injuries have been done to some individual
  - o response: what someone deserves for a favor/injury
  - o debt: a reminder of an obligation owed
- An agent might talk about only one of these at a time, leaving the rest unsaid

**<luc class="reciprocity" type="favor">**

HOSTAGE TAKER: What is happening with, uh, Mr. <Prisoner Last Name>?

POLICE: Uh, let's get the food order squared away here.

**<luc class="reciprocity" type="response">**

POLICE: Wait a minute now, what are you gonna give this--what are you gonna give me? All I've been do'n is givin you -

HOSTAGE TAKER : Well I'm gonna, I'm gonna give you I'll give you your hostages and everything and at three o'clock . I'll let <HOSTAGE name> out. I just want something to smoke.

**<luc class="reciprocity" type="debt">**

POLICE: Wait a minute now, what are you gonna give this--what are you gonna give me? All I've been do'n is givin you -

HOSTAGE TAKER : Well I'm gonna, I'm gonna give you I'll give you your hostages and everything and at three o'clock . I'll let <HOSTAGE name> out. I just want something to smoke.

## 2.2.10. Deontic Appeal / Moral Appeal

- Does the agent appeal to **general principles** in support?
  - o we see many of these with general statements like "People tend to", "typically", "usually", "rarely", etc.
- General principles can take three forms
  - o **moral**: Is this type of activity in question **right, good, moral, just**?
  - o **social fact**: Is this type activity one people tend to do (normal)?
    - we tend to see this with general statements like "In general, men don't like these kinds of films."
  - o **duties/permissions**: Does the agent make reference to what is permitted, required, or forbidden?

- see this with words like “must”, “have to”, “ought to”, “can” and imperatives “Don’t do that!”
- also includes what must be done to get something accomplished (also uses “must”, “have to”, etc.)

**<luc class="principles" type="moral">**

To resort to crime in a difficult situation, is weak. Even evil.

**<luc class="principles" type="duties">**

"Rather it has to be used as a tool to achieve complete independence."

**<luc class="principles" type="duties">**

"We need mechanisms which, without violating the right to privacy of legal bank accounts, will nonetheless allow these ill-gotten gains to be confiscated for the benefit of poor countries."

**<luc class="principles" type="duties">**

There could be an appeal for "Reality Journalism" but you'd have to market it

### 2.2.11. Empathy

- Is the agent attempting to get the persuadee to view things from the emotional perspective of another?
  - o that perspective could be that of the agent or a third party

**<luc class="empathy">**

"Listen, you don't want to cause this kind of heartache on you parents, do you? They care about you." (Hostage Transcript training sample)

"I have heard with great sorrow that some of our brethren Muslims in Karachi were killed while expressing their opposition to the aggression of the forces of the crusader America and its allies against the Muslims' territories in Pakistan and Afghanistan." (Al Qaeda Transcripts)

### 2.2.12 Redefinition

- Does the agent describe some entity differently to give a positive/negative spin?
- Two types
  - o analogy: saying something is like something else
    - see this with terms like “like”, “similar to”, “related to”
  - o defining: saying something is something else.



- see this with parenthetical comments or “is a” forms (like below)

o These cues are used to link things together. In the Analogy example below, the agent associates Pakistan with Afghanistan, linking modern fighting in Pakistan to defense in a previous period.

**<luc class="redefinition" type="predication">**

How is an administration which gave us the Patriot Act, a war without the full support of the people, going to promote a "ownership society"?

**<luc class="redefinition" type="predication">**

"Pakistan is the first line of defense of Islam in this region, as Afghanistan was on the front line of defending itself and Pakistan against the Russian invasion more than 20 years ago."

**<luc class="redefinition" type="analogy">**

"Pakistan is the first line of defense of Islam in this region, as Afghanistan was on the front line of defending itself and Pakistan against the Russian invasion more than 20 years ago."

### 2.2.13. Reason

- General purpose tag for justification.
- Important identifiers:
  - o Lists,
  - o itemization
  - o cause-and-effect language: *because, so that*
  - o example: this is true; here is an example
  - o absurd conclusion: this logic leads to something absurd

**<luc class="reason" type="cause">**

We ought to send a signal in no uncertain terms that the clash of civilizations will simply not take place, because we all share a universal civilization, which is based on a belief in mankind, as encapsulated in the United Nations Charter.

**<luc class="reason" type="example">**

Case in point: [urlLink](#) The Phillipines , where a long-dormant Islamic terrorist outfit, revitalised by the Phillipines' government's cowing to to terrorist demands and pulling troops out of Iraq to free a single hostage, has probably doomed hundreds, if not thousands, to death.

<luc class="reason" type="absurd">

by that logic, 'only 500' would be quite acceptable as an argument too. Ridiculous.

#### 2.2.14. Scarcity

- Does the agent mentioning how rare something is ("supplies are limited") or how brief something will last?
- Three kinds of scarcity
  - o Scarcity: The object is rare, "Supplies Limited".
  - o Urgency: The deal won't last very long, "Act now"
  - o Opportunity: It's never been this good/needed (and things may get worse), "Never been a better time"
    - lots of Opportunity cases use superlatives (the best, the worst, the highest); the superlative has to emphasize that things could change

<luc class="scarcity" type="urgency">

We swear to Allah that we have started preparing ... to capture him and his allies or kill them and present them as gift to our people. the man said. This is the last warning.

<luc class="scarcity" type="opportunity">

"There are some indications that such a dynamic is in place. Israel has never been criticized as it is being criticized now, and support for Palestinian statehood was never as strong as it is now."

<luc class="scarcity" type="opportunity">

"Global imbalances are growing and are now at their highest level in the history of humanity."

### 3. Differentiating Types of Cues

#### 3.1 Popularity vs. Appeal to Principles (Social fact)

- Popularity is a type a **reason** to act/believe in a certain way.
- Social norms discusses what is commonly done/believed. This may be part of an argument against doing what is commonly done.
- Key difference: Popularity uses public sentiment as direct evidence, Social norms does not.

#### 3.2 Trait Association vs. Self-feeling vs. Appeal to Principles (Moral)

- All three of these discuss "good and bad", but they mean different things
  - o Self-feeling: how the persuadee will feel; emotional and personal

- o Self-feeling: how the persuadee will feel; emotional and personal
- o Moral Appeal: Talks about actions or beliefs as good/evil/bad/(im)moral. Does not talk about **individuals.**
- o Good/Bad Traits: Talks about people who do/believe certain kinds of things, not about the actions abstractly. In addition, good and bad might not be moral at all here (e.g., crazy)!
- Key differences:
  - o Talking about how the persuadee will feel? Self-feeling
  - o Associating the activity/belief with a personal characteristic?
    - > Good/Bad Traits
  - o Abstract moral judgment? Appeal to Principles Moral

### 3.4. Threat/Promise vs. Reciprocity

- Threat/Promise is an actual offer: do this or else
- Reciprocity deals with quid pro quo: since they did this to me, I'll do that to them.
- Key differences:
  - o Is there an offer being made? threat/promise
  - o Is there a notion of quid pro quo for something done? reciprocity