

## Persuasive Techniques: Meta-language

Meta-language is the term given to the words and phrases we use to discuss language conventions and usage. The following list of persuasive techniques that can help to describe **how language is used to present a point of view**.

**\*Note:** The right-hand column lists *generalized* examples. You must consider the *specific* purpose and effect of each technique in the context of the point of view being presented.

PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES		
Technique	Examples	Possible purposes and effects
<b>active and passive voice</b> provides subjective or objective tone	active: <i>They released the report</i> passive: <i>The reports was released</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>active: direct, clear</li> <li>passive: indirect, detached</li> </ul>
<b>adjectives</b> Describing words	a <i>stirring</i> speech her <i>diamond-studded</i> tiara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adds detail to make the text more interesting</li> <li>can imply something positive or negative</li> </ul>
<b>alliteration and assonance</b> Repetition of initial consonants and repetition of vowel sounds	Sydney's slippery side The elite meet-and-greet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adds emphasis, reinforces meaning</li> <li>draws attention to key words or ideas</li> <li>can elicit emotive response</li> <li>memorable</li> </ul>
<b>allusion</b>	<b><i>Rusty the Clown</i></b> (compares Russell Crowe and Krusty the Clown from <i>The Simpsons</i> )  <i>Lord of the Pies</i> (reference to overweight English lord by comparing to the William Golding novel <i>Lord of the Flies</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>makes a comparison between two situations to illustrate parallels, in the hope that audience will draw conclusions</li> <li>adds humour</li> </ul>
<b>attack</b> Means of criticising an individual or idea	Her comments are little more than <i>adolescent gibberish</i> . (Ridicule, mudslinging)  Teachers <i>must be held accountable</i> for students' appalling literacy levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belittles an opponent's arguments or actions and may lend weight to those of the writer</li> <li>Disparagement of subject may sway audience's opinion</li> <li>Can offend and alienate audience if overdone</li> </ul>
<b>bias</b> overt preference or sympathy for a particular point of view	An advertisement for the Federal Liberal Party announcing the benefits of changes to Australia's workplace legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can strengthen an argument if the bias seems reasonable and within context, and if the author has some authority</li> <li>Can undermine an argument if disproportionate to the context</li> </ul>
<b>cliché</b> An overused phrase or argument	<i>In the final analysis</i>  <i>World-class</i> city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can sway an audience by appealing to something with which they are familiar</li> <li>May make an audience feel informed</li> <li>May alienate more sophisticated audience</li> </ul>
<b>colourful language</b> vulgar or rude; particularly unusual or distinctive expression	They are certainly up the creek <i>now!</i>  Who <i>gives a toss</i> about the Queen anyway?  The policy is a <i>dog's breakfast!</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can provide humour</li> <li>May offend some of the intended audience</li> <li>Establishes an informal register (friendly, one-of-us)</li> </ul>

<p><b>connotative language</b> loaded language that evokes an idea or feeling, either positive or negative</p>	<p>The children were <i>slaughtered</i> as they slept. Her <i>reckless</i> behaviour was questioned. The ANZAC <i>legend</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages (either subtly or overtly) audience to accept a particular implication</li> <li>• Seeks to persuade audience to accept a particular viewpoint of a person or event</li> </ul>
<p><b>emotional appeal</b> attempt to persuade through emotional manipulation</p>	<p>Long-range nuclear weapons do not discriminate: <i>we are all a target</i>. (appeal to sense of insecurity) Sadly, Aboriginal health and education are <i>responsibilities we still have to address</i>. (appeal to sense of social justice)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Triggers an emotional response in audience</li> <li>• Evokes feelings of guilt, shame, horror, satisfaction, honour, etc</li> </ul>
<p><b>emotive imagery</b> language that <i>paints a picture</i> to arouse a particular emotional response</p>	<p>This <i>barbaric</i> practice has been extended to the children, and the <i>pain they suffer is evident on their faces</i>. Bodies were <i>piled up like trash in makeshift roadside graves</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets an audience's emotional response (horror, excitement, disgust outrage, etc)</li> <li>• Can alienate or offend some audiences</li> <li>• (sensitive people, or those with different political views from the writer)</li> </ul>
<p><b>euphemism</b> a mild, less direct word or phrase used to replace something offensive or unpleasant</p>	<p><i>Collateral damage</i> (unintended victims of war) <i>Unplanned landing</i> (crash) <i>In the family way</i> (pregnant)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoids offending or disturbing some readers</li> <li>• Can provide subtlety in an otherwise difficult situation</li> <li>• Can undermine the argument if used inappropriately or overused</li> </ul>
<p><b>evidence</b> material in support of an argument: statistics, fact, expert opinions, anecdotes</p>	<p><i>According to Melbourne Water, 1.5 million households used over 500 billion litres of water in the year to 30 June.</i> <i>Wind poser generates fewer pollutants than the burning of fossil fuel.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can lend an argument considerable weight, lends credibility</li> <li>• Appeal to authority</li> <li>• Can undermine an argument if used to confuse or flood with too much information.</li> </ul>
<p><b>figurative language</b> Imagery through the use of visuals, metaphors, similes</p>	<p>The <i>fabric</i> of Australia is multi-hued. Social and racial difference are the <i>fault lines</i> in our communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paints a vivid and easily understood picture for the audience</li> <li>• Implies comparison to support a position</li> </ul>
<p><b>formal language</b> Use of more elaborate, precise or sophisticated language</p>	<p>It is our firm belief that student success can be <i>facilitated through the employment of sound educational principles in a supportive learning environment</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates a sophisticated, often authoritative style that can lend weight to an argument</li> <li>• Commands respect</li> <li>• Can alienate in a situation when informal language is more appropriate</li> </ul>
<p><b>generalisation</b> broad statements implied from specific cases</p>	<p>This poor behaviour was modelled by the parents, and it is therefore <i>ultimately a parental responsibility</i>. It is clear from the evidence at this school that <i>all girls benefit from single-sex classes at VCE level</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to validate a theory or contention, sometimes dubiously</li> <li>• Can be inferred to be evidence by naïve audience</li> <li>• Can detract from or undermine if examples are unrealistic or illogical</li> </ul>
<p><b>humour</b> use of puns, irony, satire, sarcasm</p>	<p>George <i>Dubbya</i> Bush and his weapons of mass <i>distraction</i> Gillard and Rudd came out of the conference <i>licking their lips like a couple of lovestruck Cheshire cats</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often denigrates the subject</li> <li>• Can provide a more engaging and friendly tone</li> <li>• Audience can be swayed by having them enter into the joke.</li> </ul>

<p><b>hyperbole</b> exaggeration or overstatement used to imply something is more important, worse, better etc.</p>	<p><i>Every weekend the city is overrun by beggars and buskers.</i></p> <p>Our parks are little more than <i>toxic rubbish dumps</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates dramatic effects through dramatic imagery</li> <li>• Argues through the employment of shock tactics and appeals to fear</li> <li>• Argument can be less effective if overused or exaggerated</li> </ul>
<p><b>hidden agenda</b> an undisclosed plan, especially one with an ulterior motive</p>	<p>Claiming that a golf course is being closed due to lack of use when the true reason is the value of the land in the real estate market.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is dependent on audience believing the cover story</li> </ul>
<p><b>inclusive language and exclusive language</b> the effective use of <i>us and we to include, them and they</i> to exclude.</p>	<p><i>We all have a role to play.</i></p> <p><i>They bring their problems to Australia.</i></p> <p>It is up to <i>us</i> to solve the problem <i>they</i> have created.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets or accuses particular groups</li> <li>• Creates a sense of solidarity</li> <li>• Can encourage a sense of responsibility</li> <li>• Can create an 'us and them' mentality.</li> </ul>
<p><b>informal language</b> colloquial, everyday language, slang.</p>	<p>How do you like <i>them</i> apples, Senator?</p> <p><i>She'll be right mate.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates a conversational mood</li> <li>• Engenders support by establishing a rapport with the audience</li> <li>• Appeals to audience's sense of humour, cultural identity</li> <li>• Can alienate those not part of the group</li> </ul>
<p><b>irony</b> Humour found in contradictory situations, often through the use of sarcasm.</p>	<p>The war on terror has produced a volatile environment more susceptible to terrorist forces.</p> <p>In order to ensure our freedoms, more control is required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can engender support through the use of humour</li> <li>• Can evoke strong emotional responses</li> <li>• Encourages audience to see flimsy logic in a statement or event</li> </ul>
<p><b>jargon</b> Words and phrases used by a specific group of people.</p>	<p>Within the given parameters, the <i>incorporation of cultural constraints</i> adds explicit <i>performance contours</i>.</p> <p><i>Early adapters</i> are our <i>chief indicators of the viability of the product</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In correct context, allows professionals to communicate easily by using familiar words and terms</li> <li>• Often used to confuse or impress</li> <li>• Used to confer authority (sometimes underserved) on the speaker or writer</li> <li>• Can alienate those not part of the group</li> </ul>
<p><b>logic</b> reason: the use of argument to assess a situation and sway an audience</p>	<p>Research has shown that a <i>prison term for minor offences hampers rehabilitation: we must therefore, adopt a new approach to punishment, as locking up people who have committed such offences has not worked.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeal to reason rather than emotion lends credibility to the argument</li> <li>• Offers proof and possible solutions</li> <li>• Author's viewpoint supported by facts and common sense</li> </ul>
<p><b>omissions</b> the deliberate or accidental leaving out of information.</p>	<p>An opinion piece that condemns a group without considering causes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to present a particular point of view</li> <li>• Can be either persuasive or offensive</li> </ul>
<p><b>pictorial support</b> images to accompany written text and illustrate an issue or point.</p>	<p>Photograph of drunken teenager within an article about teen binge drinking</p> <p>Graph indicating rising levels of childhood obesity</p> <p>Diagram illustrating flow of information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides audience with visual text, which may aid understanding</li> <li>• Can provide emotional response in reader</li> <li>• Can provide quick factual reference for reader</li> <li>• Statistical presentations can be misleading</li> </ul>

<p><b>praise</b> expression of approval or admiration</p>	<p>Her efforts are to be <i>commended</i>. <i>We should feel proud</i> of our commitment to cultural diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evokes positive sentiments that can sway an audience</li> <li>• Helps to paint the subject in a positive light.</li> </ul>
<p><b>pun</b> play on words: humorous use of synonyms or homonyms</p>	<p>Water chief <i>damned</i> by local critics. PM feels the <i>heat</i> over climate change. Public transport: designing a <i>fare</i> system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humour used to engage audience</li> <li>• Can be used to create a sense of irony</li> </ul>
<p><b>repetition</b> reuse of words or phrases</p>	<p><i>We cannot imagine</i> the horrors they faced: <i>we cannot imagine</i> the strength of their spirit. And <i>we cannot</i> allow it to happen again.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is memorable</li> <li>• Highlights important or main points</li> <li>• Creates a rhythm that can have a hypnotic effect.</li> </ul>
<p><b>rhetorical question</b> a question that does not require an answer</p>	<p><i>Must we wait for years</i> before this man leaves office? <i>And why do we do this?</i> Because we are fair and honest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages audience to critically consider the issue and perhaps accept the author's answer</li> <li>• Can imply that the answer is obvious and that anyone who disagrees is foolish</li> <li>• Can evoke emotional response</li> </ul>
<p><b>sarcasm</b> the use of irony to mock or show contempt, by implying the opposite of what is actually said</p>	<p>We can now look forward to loner ticket queues, sweatier rides and more train rage. Why stop at 30 students to a classroom when we can cram at least 15 more in?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can provide humour to make a point</li> <li>• Provides political commentary in an amusing format</li> <li>• Can engender hostility in audience</li> </ul>
<p><b>satire</b> the use of humour or exaggeration to expose or criticise</p>	<p>Television programs such as <i>Real Stories</i>, <i>The Chaser's War on Everything</i> and <i>Frontline</i> Political cartoons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides humour to make a point</li> <li>• Provides political commentary in an amusing format</li> <li>• Can engender hostility in audience</li> </ul>
<p><b>sensationalism</b></p>	<p>Overseas fee-paying students are <i>stealing our university places!</i> <i>Juvenile joyriders terrorise community!</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeals to audience's curiosity, prejudices</li> <li>• Can reinforce stereotypes</li> <li>• Can offend or alienate</li> </ul>
<p><b>sound effects</b> sounds added to or enhanced in a text</p>	<p>The sound of a cash register in an advertisement to suggest a bargain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appeal through association</li> <li>• Create a mood</li> </ul>
<p><b>subtext</b> an underlying theme or message in a text, with an unstated meaning</p>	<p>A news article implying that Aboriginal health problems are of their unmaking An analysis of an election campaign that implies a flawed, cynical approach by the party</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can send a covert message to the audience</li> <li>• Can be seen as underhanded or manipulative by those who do not agree</li> <li>• Very persuasive if audience is unaware of the subtext</li> </ul>
<p><b>vested interest</b> a personal interest in a decision</p>	<p>An article written by a real estate agent about the property market in a particular area A letter written by a family member supporting the actions of a high profile member of the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View may be biased</li> <li>• Cannot be considered an objective opinion</li> </ul>
<p><b>vocabulary choice</b> the deliberate selection of words</p>	<p>A news article about a <i>health crisis</i> or a <i>heath concern</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to support a point of view</li> <li>• Can paint a subject in either a positive or negative light.</li> </ul>