# Persuasion Strategies in Political Discourse: A Case Study of Boris Johnson: First Speech as Prime Minister

## By

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## Abstract

Political discourse was, and still is, an important and effective tool in the hands of those who hold the reins of power, regardless of the type of power: whether it is (political, religious, social / military, etc.). It is a tool to sharpen the spirit, change the course of things, manipulate the feelings of the recipient and direct them in the direction in which he aims to succeed. The importance of the research is embodied in the use of persuasionstrategiesin the political discourse of Boris Johnson in his first speech as a prime minister. The research problem can be clarified by answering the main question, which is "How did the Prime Minister employed persuasion strategies in his speech", which received wide importance in the various media that were not generally limited to the dissemination of political culture through various communication patterns. Through the results of the research it was found that Pathos (the audience's emotions) came in the first place with percentage of (42.63%) and a frequency of (55), then came in the second place is Ethos (the speaker's character) with percentage of 32.55% and frequency (42). On the level of persuasion appeals, responsibility ranked first among the other persuasive appeals with a percent of (13.23) , and frequency of (18). Then came the **Social** persuasive, which is related to the depiction of social groups, family ties, unity and solidarity and the creation of the sense of affiliation and belonging with (12.5%) and frequency of (17). Eventually, we can say that Boris Johnson employed various and distinct types of persuasion techniques and strategies to gain the public admiration and support in his first speech as Prime minister.

**Keywords:** Persuasion strategies, Political discourse, Prime Minister

### Research Problem

The researcher has addressed the topic of persuasion techniques in political discourse, an analytical study of BorisJohnson'sfirst Speech as Prime Ministeras a mode. By analysing the content of speech, the research problem can be represented in removing ambiguity and identifying the persuasion techniques in political discourse.The study problem is originally formulated by answering one major question which is: (How did Boris Johnson employs persuasion in his political speech?.

### 1.2 Research Questions

A number of questions formulatedbased on the research problem and as follows:

1-    What is the concept of persuasion in general?

2-    What is political discourse in terms of concept, characteristics and role in guidance and direction?

3-    What are the persuasion strategiesused in the Boris Johnson' speech?

4-    What is the communicative goal of using persuasion? And how it is employed in political discourse?

5-    What are the goals that Boris Johnsonseeks to achieve through his speech?

### 1.3. Research Aims

The research aims at:

1- Identifying the persuasionstrategiesused by Boris Johnson in his first speech as prime Minister
2- Investigating the concept of persuasion and how it can be employed in political discourse
3- Clarifying the goals of the speaker behind using these persuasion techniques

### The Significance of the Study

The significance of research on political discourse lies in the fact that it is an important means and tool in changing the state of things, transforming loss into victory, and manipulating the feelings and ideas of the recipient, as well as the following:

1. The importance of political discourse lies in restoring stability, overcoming obstacles, and mobilizing to build country.
2. It deals with and addresses the most important issues at the internal and external levels, in addition to its influence derived from the source of the discourse, which makes it more influential and widely spread
3. The political discourse pays attention to issues affecting society in general and the actors in the decision-making process
4. The political discourse showed the extent of the speaker's culture and ability to express his point of view by using the method of persuasion to change the public's convictions and mobilize them.
5. The political discourse frequently emphasizes the issue of the group in order to convey information to the recipient that decision-makers share suffering and ideas with them.
6. The political discourse succeeds in its goal through what is happening in terms of legitimacy and credibility and the overthrow of everything else.

## Introduction

Effective speech affects the listener intellectually and emotionally. The influencer, whether he is an individual, a party or a state, cannot influence or be a political actor except through discourse and influence in society. Political discourse is not just words or expressions formulated in the form of sentences, but rather is a strategic vision, political agendas, and a moral project that reflects the moral and formative cultural value. to the speaker. Because of the great importance that political discourse occupies in political, social and even military life, it is necessary to stand on it and introduce it. Some believe that there is a strong relationship between discourse and power, as Michel Foucault believes that discourse is closely related to power, in addition to that; he argues that it is not just planning and regulation by the authority only, but rather a relationship that combines language and patterns of social domination (Grant, 2003). Some believe that relying on coercion and imposing it by force on democratic societies no longer exists or is desirable, but rather, following the method of persuasion is the best, not coercion, which has become an effective element for delivering the discourse to the varioussocieties. In addition to the fact that unanimity controls or enforces the right of unanimity to think. Regardless of the difference of one society, or what is known as soft domination, which reflects the process of conflict and domination through persuasion and manipulation of the consciousness of the masses (Van Dijk, 1993). The discourse has several types, some of which are narrative and religious, expressive, journalistic and others, but the focus of our concern is the political discourse, which can be defined as that influence emanating from the political authority with the intention of change or mobilization, persuasion or misleading of a certain idea by the most recipient politicians. Popularity and importance because it is a reflection of the ideology of the political system as the important means of gaining legitimacy for its policies and decisions.

## 2.1 The Concept of Political Discourse

The discourse is classified within the field of linguistic studies, specifically (linguistics) and is not included within the stagnant or restricted terms. On the contrary, the discourse is characterized by flexibility and renewal and adapts according to the nature of society, its culture and beliefs. It derives its language and images from the reflection of a certain stage of a specific time and a specific place for a particular society. Discourse is a language derived from the French (discour). Discourse is a language originally derived from the Latin word (dircursus), which in all its meanings refers to narration, improvisation, action and saying (Van Dijk, 1993). The speech and the address is a revision of speech, and he addressed him with the words of speech, while they were communicating,

Generally, speaker who aims to influence the listener or receiver to achieve a specific goal or goal, then the discourse can be a main tool for that as it defined as: "A method for researching any material formed from distinct and interrelated elements in a longitudinal extension, whether it is a language or something similar to language, and includes more than one primary sentence, and it is a comprehensive structure that characterizes the discourse in its entirety, or large portions of it" (Schumann & Thorson, 1999). Stibbe (2001) defines it as "every utterance assumes a speaker and a listener, through which the speaker tries to influence the listener in some way."

Dunmire (2012) sees it as "any utterance or verbal act that assumes the presence of a narrator and a listener and the narrator intends to influence the listener in some way." As for Foucault, he defines discourse as "texts and sayings as they express the sum of their words, their system of construction, their logical structure, or their structural organization." Hartman & Stork defines it as advocating a criterion of total, clear unit, consisting of an expressive cast of a mechanism issued by a speaker.

## 2.3 Elements of Political Discourse

The political discourse needs a set of elements from which any element can be dispensed with, and it can be summed up in:

**1. The Speaker:** He is the one who performs the discourse and speaking, he also has the ability to deliver, persuasion and creativity.
**2. The Listener:** is the intended category of the speech, and possesses the culture of understanding and analysis of the speech addressed to him.
**3. Message and language:** It is the material that is formulated in a literary form, to be presented in the speech. It is required to be clear, brief, coherent, correct, realistic and complete, i.e. to be in clear language, according to linguistic, spelling and grammatical rules in order to achieve the desired effect on him.
**4.TheCommunication channel:** It means the tools through which the discourse is delivered, through audio, print, or written media, or through social media, and mobile devices (Olagbaju & Popoola, 2020)

## 2.4 The Function of Political Discourse

The political discourse aims to instil enthusiasm in the addressee group, motivate them to accept the proposed ideas and ideologies and establish legitimacy or reject them. The speaker uses evidence, scenes, and various events to convince the objectivity of the matter, he also uses the use linguistic and linguistic inferences to obtain their credibility, delivery and acceptance by the recipient. There is a number of functions that political discourse performs, which are (Kampf, 2016):

1. The subject or the news that is intended to be communicated to the public through the speech and in a convincing, clear and correct manner.
2. Influence the listener.
3. Expressing rejection through protest, opposition and resistance to a specific policy or regime
4. Falsification and concealment of facts or promotion of non-existent topics for the benefit of people certain

H. Granting legitimacy and authorization to some people, or removing it from them and punishing them.

### 2.4 Persuasion

Many researchers in various fields have made numerous attempts to arrive at specific definitions that explain the true meaning of persuasion. Some of them defined it as: a set of intellectual and formal processes in which one party tries to influence the other and subjugate the idea. Persuasion is to achieve the desired response by pushing the reader, listener, or viewer to it by providing reasons for persuasion of the advantages or benefits of the subject, service or commodity advertised. How can it satisfy the acquired innate needs that the proclaimer provokes in the stage of creating desire, and persuasion is not represented by the rational method based on sound arguments and logical proofs, but goes beyond it to the emotional method and indirect suggestion. It can be said that it is a pattern of planned communication that seeks to influence strongly the trends and behaviour of a specific audience and bring about change in line with the goal of persuasion (Schumann & Thorson, 1999).

It is also a set of psychological foundations that characterize persuasion through communication aimed at changing trends of the public or rebuilding its behavior and influencing its values. Thus, positive trends and a state of acceptance of the public towards the message and its content are created, and then reach a state of persuasion that would not have been achieved without it and this matter prompted some to distinguish these communicative efforts with content. Persuasion (persuasive communication), which aims to target a specific group in order to demean it and then persuade it to accept a certain idea or to adhere to a specific position on the source based on the persuasion campaign. Therefore, you find that communication does not achieve a goal without relying on the foundations of persuasion that cannot be achieved without interaction with the public or a state of convergence that cannot be reached without the existence of a communication process. Evidence and arguments can be marketed and supplied with emotional influences in order to prepare the recipient to accept ideas and be in harmony with the prior goal of changing his direction or persuading him to accept an idea. The speaker also must take into consideration the aspect of the atmosphere or the surrounding environment and the time factor in achieving Persuasion, which are undoubtedly complicated efforts as they deal with groups or individuals who have perceptions and impressions that cannot be crossed (Miller, 1980) . As for the components of the persuasion process, the researcher (Karl Hofland) and a group of his colleagues conducted extensive studies in the post-World War II era on persuasion as it represents one of the psychological processes and come to establish that the main elements of persuasion are as follows:

1. The source of the persuasive message
2. The channel through which the message is presented.
3. The message , the persuasive content
4. The target: the events of influence and the persuasion of the recipient..

## 2.5 Persuasion Types

The content of the message is usually related to the ability to persuade; Plato defines persuasion as winning people's minds. Aristotle believed that persuasion is "the ability to reveal all possible means of persuasion in each specific case. "Each of them is as follows:

### 1- Emotional Persuasion:

It is the process through which the owner of the persuasive message is able to influence a person's attitudes or behavior without pressure, but rather through communication on the part of others.

It can also be defined as bringing about a change in the convictions of a person or a certain group in order to gain their transfer and obtain their support, or affirmation towards positions, an issue or a direction. Supporting or persuading a certain opinion or position, while the person who is being persuading the leader who addresses the masses in order to entice people to him and support his policy. Emotional persuasion aims to influence the public's sentiments and emotions, raise its psychological and social needs, and address its different senses in order to achieve the goals of the persuasive. It depends on:

1. Use of logos and symbols.
2. The meanings of the words.
3. Superlative verb forms.
4. The use of linguistic methods.
5. Presenting the opinion as fact.
6. citing sources.
7. Using the herd instinct.

### 2- Rational Persuasion

It is the persuasion that depends on addressing the mind to the recipient, presenting arguments and logical evidence and implementing opinions. After discussing it and showing its various aspects, the techniques used in this type are as follows:

A. Citing factual information and events
B. Provide numbers and statistics.
C. Build results on premise.
D. Refuting the other point of view.

### 3. Intimidation Persuasion

Among the different approaches to persuasion, there is an attempt to change the psychological structure of the recipient by raising his needs, motives, or tendencies. Among the common types in this field is raising the recipient's expectations that his doing a certain behaviour will endanger him or lead to a loss of social acceptance. Intimidation is a common persuasion in planning persuasive messages in the field of media or advertising, as the content in this case focuses on the dangers or results. It is desirable if the recipient does not respond to the recommendations of the persuasive message (Slater & Rouner, 2002).

## 2.6 Aristotle's Persuasive Strategies

According to Aristotle, there are three main components that create the ability of a person to persuade: (1) the speaker's character (ethos), (2) the audience's emotions (pathos), and (3) the rationality of the speech's arguments (logos) (Berlin, 1996). One of the crucial elements of persuasive speech is its ability to leave the right impression of the speaker's character, play with the emotions and feelings of the audience, and prove the truth of the

statements made. Aristotle According to Aristotle, through using these artistic proofs, orators can sell their views and affect decision-making (Miksa, 1996). These arguments reveal that when delivering a persuasive speech or discourse, an orator must demonstrate his or her character, evoke the audience's emotions, and appeal to the audience's natural instinct for what is true by stating facts. As far as the literature review is concerned not many studies have been conducted on the political discourse and Aristotelian rhetoric. Some scholars have explored public speeches made by presidents, political leaders, or campaign candidates (Erisen & Villalobos, 2014; Mshvenieradze, 2013).

Other studies have shaded light on the social media discourse (Bronstein, 2013) of various politicians. Mshvenieradze (2013) explored the strategies of Aristotelian rhetoric (i.e., logos, ethos, and pathos) used by the candidates, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, during the French presidential elections in 2002 and 2007.

## Data Analysis

The data of the current study is Boris Johnson's first speech as Prime Minister, his speech has been analyzed toinvestigate the types of persuasive strategies that the speaker employed. From table (1) , it can clearly observed that there are various types and appeals of persuasion have been used for the purpose of persuasion and influence by using them as arguments, evidence and evidence to reinforce the topics presented through the speech. As the table shows, the most frequently used type of persuasive strategies is Pathos (the audience's emotions) with percentage of (42.63%) and a frequency of (55). While the second rank is obtained by Ethos (the speaker's character) with percentage of 32.55 and frequency (42) repeatedly when talking about a social, political, religious, economic, educational issue that reinforces a specific fact or event that occurred within the subject which consequently attracts the attention of the recipient. Logos strategy ranked third (the rationality of the speech's arguments) with a percentage of (20.03) and frequency (31).

Table (2) shows the sub-categories that were used as a persuasive appeals throughout the speech. As it illustrated in table (2), twelve types of persuasive appeals have been employed by Boris Johnson. Clearly, the most frequently and highly employed type is ***Responsibility*** (which concerned with the politicians' acknowledgement of their moral responsibilities, duties, and obligations) with percentage (13.23%) and frequency (18), this type appears in his following statements:

"My job is to make your streets safer - and we are going to begin with another 20,000 police on the streets and we start recruiting forthwith."
"My job is to make sure you don't have to wait 3 weeks to see your GP - and we start work this week, with 20 new hospital upgrades, and ensuring that money for the NHS really does get to the front line."
"My job is to protect you or your parents or grandparents from the fear of having to sell your home to pay for the costs of care."
"that we will fix the crisis in social care once and for all with a clear plan we have prepared to give every older person the dignity and security they deserve."
"My job is to make sure your kids get a superb education, wherever they are in the country"
"I am today building a great team of men and women, I will take personal responsibility for the change I want to see."
"I will tell you something else about my job. It is to be prime minister of the whole United Kingdom."

Where he takes responsibility in front of the people to make all this promises and attempts to overcome all these challenges and achieve all the mentioned goals so that the audience would believe he will actually make all these decisions since he promised to take responsibility of them. The second most highly employed type of persuasion appeals is *social*(which is related to the depiction of social groups, family ties, unity and solidarity and the creation of the sense of affiliation and belonging) with (12.5%) and frequency of (17). Which clearly appears in his speech, for instance, he states, "answering at last the plea of the forgotten people and the left-behind towns by physically and literally renewing the ties that bind us together. "Where attempts to persuade people by claiming that he will renew the ties and bind them together. The third most highly used persuasive appeals is the *emotional*(which used by the politician that attempts to win an argument by trying to get an emotional reaction from the opponent and audience) with percentage11.76% and frequency 16. For instance, Johnson states "The people who bet against Britain are going to lose their shirts "where he tries to evoke people's patriotic emotions for their country "Britain". Ranked fourth with percentage (11.02%) and frequency (15) is the persuasive appeals "Credibility" which basically refers to the employment of personal and possessive pronouns in order to motivate and influence others and to be viewed as a good character. For instance, "I have every confidence that in 99 days' time we will have cracked it" which reflects the speaker's willingness to show to the audience that he will be able to solve all their problems in merely 99 days. Furthermore, *achievement* (it is about listing the successful accomplishments, fulfilments and realizations that match with the politician's plans and agendas to affect the audience's thoughts) persuasive appeal has also been found in Johnson's speech with frequency (14) and percentage (10.29%). He says, for example, "we will have the extra lubrication of the £39 billion, and whatever deal we do we will prepare this autumn for an economic package to boost British business and to lengthen this country's lead as the number one destination in this continent for overseas investment. "Which is a sequence of statements to put forward the achievements that he will do as a prime Minister?

**Table (1).** Persuasive strategies used by Boris Johnson

| Persuasive Strategies | Frequency | Percentage |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Logos | 31 | 20.03% |
| Ethos | 42 | 32.55% |
| Pathos | 55 | 42.63% |
| Total | 129 | 100% |

**Figure (1)** Persuasive strategies used by Boris Johnson
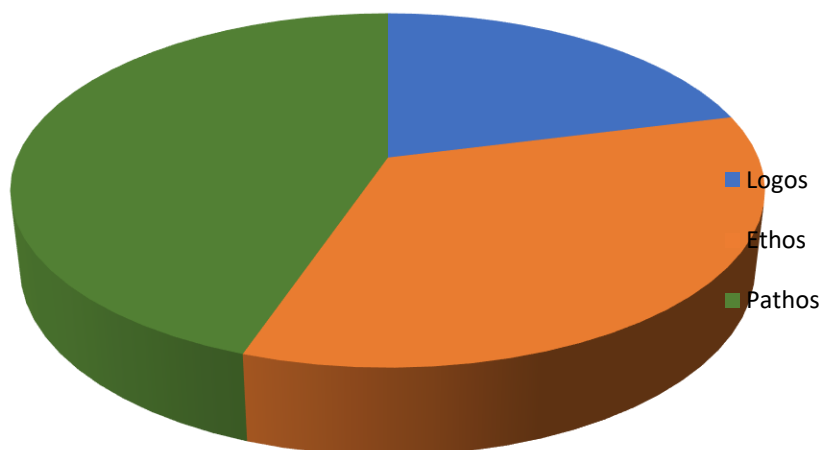
**Table (2).** Persuasive appeals used by Boris Johnson

| Persuasive Appeals | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Rational | 6 | 4.14% |
| Statics | 12 | 8.82% |
| Emotional | 16 | 11.76% |
| Facts | 10 | 7.53% |
| Humour | 6 | 4.14% |
| Achievement | 14 | 10.29% |
| Play on words | 5 | 5.67% |
| Responsibility | 18 | 13.23% |
| Credibility | 15 | 11.02% |
| Social | 17 | 12.5% |
| Ethics | 8 | 5.88% |
| Expertise | 9 | 6.61% |
| Total | 136 | 100% |

**Figure (2)** Persuasive appeals used by Boris Johnson
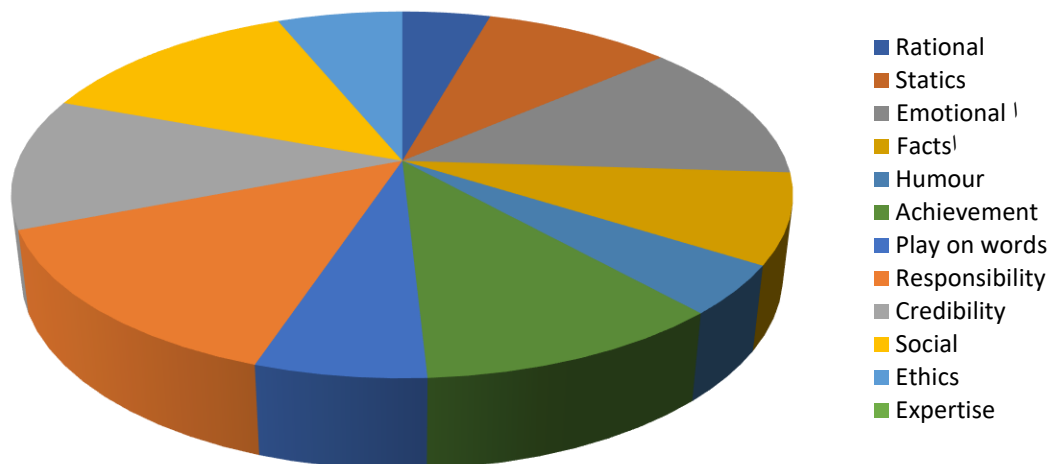


## Conclusion

The current study gives a comprehensive consideration of how persuasive strategies are used in the political speech of Boris Johnson' first speech as a prime minister. The analytical framework clearly reveals the use of the persuasive elements of ethos, pathos, and logos. Interestingly, the study shows that along with the claim of Aristotle which indicates that one of the requirements of the successful speech is its ability to transcend reason, or logos, and engage the audience's emotions via presenting a positive character, worthy of respect and trust. From the perspective of persuasive tactics and strategies, Johnson masterfully adopted the three crucial types to create a solid rhetorical persuasion which are ethos, logos, and pathos. Furthermore, the results from the current study drives to the conclusion (that is in line with Aristotle's theory) which basically means that the speaker need not only to his speech believable and understandable but also make his personality look right in order to play and manipulate the mind of the people so that he can get their approval. Eventually, Boris adopted various types of persuasive appeals and it appears to be that the most highly and frequently used type of persuasive appeal by him is the responsibility where he acknowledges his moral

responsibilities, duties, and obligations with percentage (13.23%) and frequency with of more varied persuasive strategies.

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