Introduction: Persuasive Language in the Age of AI

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Abstract

Persuasive language shapes communication across disciplines and everyday life. As large language models (LLMs) become increasingly integrated into these spheres, understanding persuasion now encompasses both human and machine discourse. This introduction examines how persuasive language operates across diverse contexts by analyzing the interactional frameworks of human and AI communication. It also explores how persuasion emerges in human-AI exchanges and how these insights can inform language education and communication practices. Drawing on perspectives from linguistics, computer science, journalism, and communication studies, it presents persuasion as both a rhetorical and interactional process shaped by technology. Ultimately, it aims to deepen understanding of how AI transforms persuasive practices and to promote greater awareness of persuasion in language learning.

Keywords: Persuasion, persuasive language, AI, AI-human interaction, discourse

1. The Language of Persuasion

Dillard & Pfau (2002:x), in their edited book *The Persuasion Handbook*, outlined the broad scope of persuasion. In this introduction, we present key definitions of persuasion and the linguistic resources that underpin it, followed by a discussion of persuasive attempts, which refer to the strategies and linguistic techniques used to influence others in ordinary discourse as well as in human-AI (and vice versa) interaction.

Regarding the basic conceptual concerns and definitions of persuasion, several dimensions can be identified. The language of persuasion can first be examined from the receiving end—the state of being persuaded:

> Thus, the phrase 'being persuaded' applied to situations where behavior has been modified by symbolic transactions (messages) that are sometimes, but not always, linked with the coercive force (indirectly coercive) and that appeal to the reason and emotions of the person(s) being persuaded. (Miller, 2002: 7)

The coercive force of language is often indirect. It gives persuasive messages power to make people change behavior, attitude, or belief without an explicit threat. For this reason, it is often linked to the use of persuasion strategies. These strategies refer to techniques employed to influence the persuadee's decision to align with the persuader's goal. When the process succeeds, the persuadee is said to be persuaded. Miller (2002) further explains that persuasion typically involves behavioral conversion, meaning the abandonment of one course of action and the adoption of another. In discussing the notion of being persuaded, Marwell and Schmitt (1967, as cited in Miller, 2002: 5) identified sixteen strategies, among which 'promise', 'threat', and 'aversive stimulation' have been said to "derive their effectiveness from the persuader's ability to dispense rewards or mete out punishments to the intended persuadee(s)." This means that these strategies aim to use rewards or punishments as ways to make the persuadee agree with the persuader. Other strategies requiring "social rewards resulting from compliance" are 'moral appeal', 'altruism' (i.e., willingness to do things that bring advantages to others, even if it results in disadvantage for yourself), 'esteem positive' (positive self), and 'esteem negative' (negative self). These require social approval, as do 'being respected,' 'being popular,' and 'being in' (cf. p. 5). Collectively, these strategies engage the persuadee's need for social acceptance and conformity to the persuader's intended action. In this sense, the coercive force of language operates not through overt control but through strategies that subtly manipulate social values and psychological needs, giving persuasion its enduring power.

Hosman (2002), in the same volume, emphasizes that one crucial element of persuasion is language itself. The examination of strategies and their correspondence to linguistic

features can be observed in Shih et al. (2021) on the annotation of propaganda techniques in Chinese political news texts. The authors identified several persuasive techniques used in Chinese newspapers to achieve political purposes. English examples based on Da San Martino et al. (2019) were also provided in their paper.

However, identifying the strategies is not the only way to analyze the language of persuasion. Persuasion can also occur through the way concepts are defined and framed, since definitions themselves can shape attitudes and influence judgments. As early as 1944, Stevenson proposed the theory of persuasive definition— 'a definition can be effective as a device of deceptive persuasion' (cited in Walton, 2005: 162). In the following dialogue on culture analyzed by Stevenson (1944: 211), argumentation based on definition is shown:

(1) The Dialogue on Culture
A: *He has had but little formal education, as is plainly evident from his conversation. His sentences are often roughly cast, his historical and literary references rather obvious, and his thinking is wanting in that subtlety and sophistication which mark a trained intellect. He is definitely lacking in culture.*
B: *Much of what you say is true, but I should call him a man of culture notwithstanding.*
A: *Aren't the characteristics I mention the antithesis of culture, contrary to the very meaning of the term?*
B: *By no means. You are stressing the outward forms, simply the empty shell of culture. In the true and full sense of the term, ''culture'' means imaginative sensitivity and originality. These qualities he has; and so I say, and indeed with no little humility, that he is a man of far deeper culture than many of us who have had superior advantages in education.*

From this example, we observe only one aspect of how language can be used to persuade. We cited it because it serves as a classic illustration by Stevenson (1944), who was among the first to link persuasion theory to language use. Language, in general, encompasses tone, lexical choice, pragmatic strategies, and textual arrangement, all of which influence the effectiveness of persuasion. We will not cover every element in depth, but we will show how language shapes persuasion and communication

with AI. Next, we explore corpus resources that help analyze persuasive language.

2. The Corpus of Persuasion

In this era, corpus collection has become increasingly common, and more shared linguistic resources are now available. In this introduction, we will survey existing corpora on persuasion that are accessible for use with appropriate acknowledgements and, where required, through consent or application. Corpora that are not available for use will not be included. Our initial step is to show the availability of existing English corpora.

Among the available corpus resources, a well-known series was developed by Walker and her colleagues at the Natural Language and Dialogue Systems Lab, University of California, Santa Cruz (https://nlds.soe.ucsc.edu/). These corpora contain naturally occurring dialogues rich in persuasive-strategy data, and are thus valuable for studying human-human and human-AI interaction. Walker et al. (2012a) established a corpus on deliberation and debate (see also Walker et al., 2012bc; Abbott et al., 2011), focusing on personality analysis and the styles of argumentation that resonate with different individuals. Although personality analysis is not the primary focus of our study on persuasion, the corpus provides dialogue-based persuasive language data that are valuable for linguistic analysis. In addition to the corpora developed by Walker and colleagues, other studies have created specialized datasets, though many remain unavailable to the public. The main accessible corpora are summarized in Table 1 of our survey. Although a large body of research exists on the automatic detection of persuasion, such studies fall beyond the scope of this section.

Table 1: List of Corpora on Debates or Persuasion

Corpora	Authors	Contents
The Persuasion and Personality Corpus	Lukin et al. (2017)	User-generated, factual vs. emotional dialogic exchanges compared to the effects on belief change to balanced, curated arguments.

The Internet Argument Corpus (IAC) version 2	Abbott et al. (2016); Walker et al. (2012a)	4forums (414K posts), ConvinceMe (65K posts), and a sample from CreateDebate (3K posts). It includes topic annotations, response characterizations (4forums), and stance
Persuasion For Good Corpus	Wang et al. (2019)	A collection of online conversations generated by Amazon Mechanical Turk workers, where one participant (the persuader) tries to convince the other (the persuadee) to donate to a charity. This dataset contains 1017 conversations, along with demographic data and responses to psychological surveys from users. 300 conversations also have per-sentence human annotations of dialogue acts that pertain to the persuasion setting, and sentiment.
The Multimodal Persuasive Dialogue Corpus	Kawano et al. (2022)	60 subjects (43 males and 17 females) between 18 and 38 years old for a dialogue experiment with the humanoid android ERICA
A Persuasive Dialogue Corpus	Hiraoka et al. (2014)	Dialogue between 3 professional salespeople and 19 subjects, where the salesperson is trying to convince a customer to buy a particular product.
ParlaMint corpora: 17 corpora of parliamentary debates	Erjavec et al. (2021)	A collection of 17 multilingual comparable corpora consisting of parliamentary debates. The ParlaMint corpora include debates of 17 national parliaments: Bulgarian parliament, Belgian parliament (French and Dutch language), British parliament (English language) Czech parliament, Croatian parliament, Danish parliament, Dutch parliament, French parliament, Hungarian parliament, Icelandic parliament, Italian parliament, Latvian parliament, Lithuanian parliament, Polish parliament, Slovenian parliament, and Spanish parliament.
VivesDebate	Ruiz-Dolz et al. (2021)	An Annotated Multilingual Corpus of Argumentation in a Debate Tournament
United Nations General Debate Corpus (UNGDC)		Texts of General Debate statements from 1970 (Session 25) to 2016 (Session 71)

Corpus collection has become increasingly common, accompanied by the growing availability of shared resources. In Taiwan, there are also several persuasion-related corpora, though most remain private. Research combining persuasion and AI remains largely unexplored. Next, we will discuss whether AI has an underlying philosophy.

3. The Underlying Philosophy of AI

What is the underlying philosophy of AI? Does it have one? The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is yes. AI embodies traces of human thought because it is built upon a vast collection of human-written materials. In the following section, we elaborate on this idea and consider how human perspectives and biases become embedded in AI systems.

We examine the underlying interaction mechanism framework of persuasion to explore how language is used in the process and how interactions between AI and humans can be applied to language teaching and other contexts. The term underlying interaction mechanism framework is used in a sense similar to what some scholars call schemas, frames, or scripts, defined as follows:

> Frames and scripts are constructs which were originally developed by researchers in the field of artificial intelligence. The constructs made it possible to represent in computer memory those aspects of world knowledge which appear to be involved in the natural processing of texts. […] According to de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:90), frames constitute 'global patterns' of 'common sense knowledge about some central concept', such that the lexical item denoting the concept typically evokes the whole frame. In essence, frames are static configurations of knowledge. Scripts are associated with […] basic level events such as 'do the washing' and 'visit the doctor', which are structured according to the expected sequencing of expected events (cf. Rosch 1978). (Taylor, 1995:89, italics added)

From this excerpt, our notion of the underlying interaction mechanism includes both frames and scripts, representing the static and dynamic aspects mentioned by Taylor. Our focus, however, is on the mechanisms that shape

interaction between humans and machines. The "common-sense knowledge about some central concept" (de Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981: 90) reflects configurations of world knowledge "structured according to the expected sequencing of events" (Rosch, 1978; Taylor, 1995: 89). This perspective is also reflected in our debate chatbot project, where interactional patterns emerge dynamically through turn-taking and topic development. It further relates to the study by Yen and Chung (2025, this volume), which showed how discourse markers function as cues for coherence, stance, and engagement in human-AI dialogue. Their goal is to use AI to help students practice the language of persuasion. During the chatbot activities, they collected and analyzed the AI's responses and added them to a new corpus section, the Corpus of Persuasion (Interaction with AI). This dataset will then be compared with the existing human-to-human corpus to examine whether AI demonstrates similar goals, reasoning patterns, or underlying philosophical tendencies.

Müller (2025) outlined the principal topics, arguments, and positions in the philosophy of AI, excluding ethical concerns. He argued that beyond intelligence and computation, it is essential to view AI through the lens of cognition, encompassing "perception, action, meaning, rational choice, free will, consciousness, and normativity." These dimensions provide a useful foundation for our investigation into the kinds of cognition AI demonstrates when engaging in persuasive language. Similarly, Hipólito (2023) emphasized that AI is deeply rooted in human sociocultural practices. Building on this view, our line of research calls for greater attention to the underlying philosophies that shape how AI generates persuasive responses. Since technologies are inherently designed with human values and practices, understanding what has been "taught" to AI requires direct interaction with it.

In this section, we have shown two key points. First, AI systems display preferences shaped by the materials on which they are trained; their underlying philosophy reflects human values and practices. Second, to understand AI's philosophy in its use of persuasive language, we must communicate with it through activities such as debates or argumentation.

4. Application of AI in the Classroom

Many studies have incorporated AI into classroom learning. Su et al. (2023) used ChatGPT to teach argumentative writing, examining prompt design and the changes students made before and after editing with AI assistance. Lin (2022) investigated how students' positions influence argumentation learning across online and face-to-face environments. Chalaguine and Hunter (2019) argued that chatbots should be trained to understand both sides of an argument, including conflicting viewpoints, so that they can handle controversial topics and formulate appropriate responses. This insight is particularly relevant for classroom practice. When integrating AI into lessons, it is crucial that chatbots be responsive to multiple perspectives. Only then can students learn effectively by engaging in meaningful, dynamic exchanges with the machine.

As these studies suggest, preparing both students and teachers for this new era is essential. Since AI carries an underlying philosophy shaped by human values and reasoning, understanding how to integrate it thoughtfully in educational contexts becomes even more critical. The use of AI in classrooms is no longer a reversible trend, and educators must learn not only its tools but also its underlying assumptions. As Gillani et al. (2023: 99) noted, "AI is a loose umbrella term that refers to a collection of methods, capabilities, and limitations." Building on this view, applications of AI in education can be seen in areas such as: (a) intelligent tutoring systems (ITS);
(b) assessment and feedback;
(c) coaching and counselling;
(d) school-choice suggestions; and
(e) outcome prediction.

Although these uses are powerful, Gillani et al. also cautioned that it is the values embedded in AI that affect the outcomes we receive:

> All technologies (including those powered by AI) have been designed with a set of values, practices, and use-cases in mind—and therefore, can be changed, even if they appear opaque or difficult to understand. (Gillani et al., 2023: 107)

This view that AI embodies values and a form of philosophy is important because it demonstrates how AI mirrors human practices. This aligns with

our view that AI is not value-neutral but reflects an underlying philosophy shaped by human reasoning and social practice. Recognizing these human imprints is essential when integrating AI into education, as they determine not only how technologies function but also how teachers and learners interact with them. In other words, it may have a philosophy shaped by the materials used to build it. Boddington (2023a) in *Philosophy for AI Ethics*, and again in Boddington (2023b), emphasized that we must understand humans before we can understand AI ethics:

> Issues outlined of relevance to AI ethics include questions concerning the place of human beings in the natural world; claims of particular roles that humans may have; claims that human beings have some essential nature; claims about the relationship of humans to the mind and to embodiment; the boundaries and limits to human nature; and claims about divisions within human nature, our strengths and weaknesses, and how humans may be improved. (Boddington, 2023b, abstract)

These reflections bring us back to the central idea that understanding AI begins with understanding ourselves. If AI mirrors human reasoning and social practices, then its ethical and philosophical dimensions are extensions of our own. As Boddington recalled, any exploration of AI's nature must start from the study of what it means to be human, including our cognition, morality, and limitations. For educators and researchers alike, this means that integrating AI responsibly involves not only technical competence but also philosophical awareness. In recognizing that AI inherits the values embedded in human knowledge, we affirm the need for continual reflection on how our creations think, reason, and persuade on our behalf. In the era of AI-mediated persuasion, understanding the mechanics of how machines generate and deploy persuasive language becomes paramount for guiding informed educational practices.

Acknowledgements

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