



# AU-USA Persuasion Database

Database	Context	Age Range	# Samples	Location	Special Coding
Persuasion	Pers	AU: 12;10 – 18;4 USA: 14;8 – 18;9	AU: 66 USA: 113	Australia USA	SI, PSS

## Introduction

Persuasion can be defined as “the use of argumentation to convince another person to perform an act or accept the point of view desired by the persuader” (Nippold, 2007). Persuasion was chosen for the following reasons:

- It figures prominently in academic standards that cut across modes of communication: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (National Governors Association, 2010).
- Acquiring skill at persuasion is critical to success in college and career and to full participation in social and civic life.
- Persuasion challenges students to take into account their audience’s perspective and to use complex language to express complex ideas.

## Australian Participants

The Australian dataset contains persuasive samples from typically developing students whose primary language is English. The students attended public schools across the state of Queensland, Australia. Schools were situated in country and metropolitan areas and students were from a range of economic backgrounds. "Typically developing" was determined by normal progress in school and absence of special education services. Economic background was based on the school’s postcode and Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA, 2011) data. Student ability level was determined by the students’ most recent performance in English (~15% obtained a C and 15% an A). The race/ethnicity of the students, as identified on the student consent form was predominantly ‘Australian’. Age and gender are provided for all samples.

## USA Participants

Samples were elicited from typically developing students whose primary language is English. The students were drawn from public schools in two geographic areas of Wisconsin: Milwaukee area school districts, and Madison Metropolitan School District. Students were from a variety of economic backgrounds and ability levels. "Typically developing" was determined by normal progress in school and absence of special education services. Economic background was based on eligibility in the free lunch program (25% qualified for free or reduced lunch). Ability level was determined by GPA scores and teacher reports (4% were low, 25% were average, and 71% were high). The race/ethnicity of the students was similar to that of the geographic area from which they were drawn (63% White, 17% African American, 8% Hispanic, 7% Asian, and 2% Hmong, and 3% unknown). Age and gender are provided for all samples.

## Elicitation Protocol

### Overview

The elicitation protocol is easy to administer and provides optimum opportunity for the student to produce a “good” persuasive argument. Following a script, the examiner asks the student to argue for a change in their school, workplace, or community. The argument is to be directed at the student's principal, boss, or government official. The student can choose an issue of personal interest or select from a list of suggested issues. The student is given a few minutes to complete a planning sheet which contains six topics (Issue Id and Desired Change, Supporting Reasons, Counter Arguments, Response to Counter Arguments, Compromises, and Conclusion). Next to each point is a brief description of what is covered within that topic and space for making notes. Following the planning phase, the student, speaking from his/her notes, is asked to persuade the examiner who stands in for the intended authority figure. The average length of the persuasion is approximately 4 minutes and contains around 33 complete and intelligible utterances.

### Script

**Today I want to find out how well you can persuade. That’s when you talk people into changing their mind and doing something you want. I’m going to make a recording. If you want, you can listen to it when we’re finished.**

**I would like you to pick a rule or situation you would like to see changed in your school, job, or community. Imagine that I am an adult who has the power to make the change that you want. Here are a few examples:**

**1. Pretend I’m the principal of your school and you want to persuade me to provide money for a special event;**

**OR**

**2. Pretend I’m your boss and you want to persuade me to change your hours or work schedule;**

**OR**

**3. Pretend I’m a government official and you want me to change the law so that taxes are raised or lowered for a specific purpose.**

**I expect you to talk for at least a few minutes, so be sure to pick an issue you know and care about. You can choose an issue from this list [hand list to student] or else pick one of your own.**

*Allow the student time to review the suggested issues before asking: **What issue have you picked?***

*If the student has difficulty choosing an issue, offer assistance. Review the list together. If a proposed topic is not an arguable issue, e.g., strawberry ice cream is better than chocolate, encourage the student to pick a different issue. If a proposed issue is too narrow, encourage the student to modify it. For example, if the student wants to argue for a change to his or her individual grade in a particular class, suggest that the issue be broadened into an argument for a school-wide change to grading policy.*

*Once an appropriate issue has been selected, clarify the intended target of the persuasion, e.g., principal, boss, government official, by asking, **Who will you be trying to persuade?***

*If there is a mismatch between the issue and the authority figure, help the student to resolve the problem. For example, if a student wishes to convince a boss to raise the minimum wage, help the student understand that this argument is best directed toward a government official.*

*Once a match has been established between issue and authority figure, proceed to the planning directions:*

**Talk to me as if I'm your [name the appropriate authority, e.g., principal, boss, senator] and tell me everything you can to persuade me. To do your best job, you'll first need to organize your thoughts. Here's a list of points you'll need to cover to make a complete argument [hand the student a copy of the planning sheet]. Please take the next few minutes to plan by taking notes in these blank spaces [point to the empty boxes in the column on the right]. But don't waste time writing sentences. Just jot down some key words to remind you of what you want to say. If you don't want to take notes, you can use the reverse side to draw a diagram or make a graphic organizer. Do you have any questions? Go ahead and start planning.**

*Skill at reading is not being assessed. Therefore, if the student appears to be having any difficulty understanding the planning sheet, read the text aloud to the student.*

*Allow enough time for the student to write something for each point on the planning sheet or to create a diagram or graphic organizer. Verify that the student has done some planning for each point. If not, prompt with, **Please do some planning for [name(s) of omitted point(s)].***

*When the student has finished planning, continue with: **When I turn on the recorder, you will be doing all the talking. I'm going to listen to what you have to say. Tell me everything you can think of. It's OK to look at your planning sheet to remind yourself of what you want to say. Feel free to add to what you've written. Remember: I expect you to talk for as long as you can.***

*Turn on the recording device and have the student begin speaking. Do not engage the student in a debate. Instead, limit your encouragement to affirmations such as: **Uhhuh, mhm, I see, OK, ah, etc.***

*If the student finishes speaking before several minutes has elapsed or has not discussed one or more points on the planning sheet, prompt with: **Is there anything else you can tell me?***

*When the student has finished speaking, turn off the recorder. Review the recording for quality before releasing the student. If there's time, offer to let the student listen to the recording.*

#### Examiner's role during the persuasion

Be an attentive listener. Do not give specific cues to the student during the task. You can use nonverbal cues such as head nodding and smiling to promote continued talking. You can also use prompts such as "uhhuh" and "keep going" if the student stops talking before the task is completed. Asking questions or providing too much information to the student compromises the process of capturing the student's true language and ability level.

As stated in the protocol, if the student finishes talking before several minutes has elapsed or has not discussed one or more points on the planning sheet, prompt with, "Is there anything else you can tell me?". If the student does not respond, the elicitation is over.

## Transcription Notes

The language samples were segmented into Communication Units (C-units). All transcripts were timed and pauses, within and between utterances, of two or more seconds in length, were marked.

## Coding Notes

- [EO:word] marks overgeneralization error
- [EP:word] marks pronoun error
- [EW] marks an extraneous or unnecessary word in the utterance that, if omitted, would make the utterance syntactically correct, e.g., C And he shout/ed and[EW] to the frog.
- [EW:word] marks other word-level error
- [EU] marks utterance-level error (*also marks utterances with 3 or more errors*)
- [FP] marks filled pause words such as *like*, e.g., *You (like[FP]) get six card/s.*

## Subordination Index (SI) and Persuasion Scoring Scheme (PSS) Coding

SI and PSS coding was applied to all samples.

SI is a measure of syntactic complexity which produces a ratio of the total number of clauses (main and subordinate clauses) to the number of C-units. A clause, whether main or subordinate, is a statement containing both a subject and a predicate. Grammatically, a subject is a noun phrase and a predicate is a verb phrase. Main clauses can stand by themselves. Subordinate clauses depend on the main clause to make sense. They are embedded within an utterance as noun, adjective, pronominal, or adverbial clauses.

The PSS assesses the structure and content of persuasive language, a critical language skill in secondary curriculum, using a scoring rubric consisting of the essential characteristics of a coherent persuasive argument. These characteristics include: 1) issue identification and desired change, 2) supporting reasons, 3) other point of view, 4) compromises, 5) conclusion, 6) cohesion, and 7) effectiveness. The first five characteristics roughly correspond to the topics from the student planning sheet.

Each characteristic receives a scaled score 0-5 or NA (not applicable). The PSS scoring guide defines what is meant by Proficient/Advanced (score of 5), Satisfactory/Adequate (score of 3) and Minimal/Immature (score of 1). The scores in between, 2 and 4, are undefined, use judgment. Significant factual errors reduce the score for that topic. A score of 0 is given for student errors, e.g., not covering topic, not completing/refusing task, unintelligible productions, abandoned utterances. A score of NA (non-applicable) is given for mechanical/examiner/operator errors, e.g., interference from background noise, issues with recording (cut-offs, interruptions), examiner not following protocol, examiner asking overly specific or leading questions rather than open-ended questions or prompts.

A composite is scored by adding the total of the six characteristic scores. Maximum score = 30.

## Analysis Notes

The SALT group transcribed the samples following the SALT format and performed a series of statistical analyses to describe the dataset for consistency, differences across samples from AU and USA, age-related and gender related changes, as well as topic related changes.

## Using SALT to Compare Samples to the Persuasion Database

Use SALT's Database menu to compare your sample with age or grade-matched samples selected from the Persuasion database. SALT looks at the "+ Context" plus line in your transcript to determine which database to pre-select. To pre-select the Persuasion database, include the following plus lines in your transcript:

+ Context: Pers

Although you can type these plus lines into your transcript, the easiest way is to select the correct sampling context (Pers) when first creating a new transcript (by completing the New Transcript Header information dialogue box).

## Acknowledgements

*USA Samples:* We gratefully acknowledge and thank Thomas O. Malone, a retired speech-language pathologist formerly with the Brown Deer School District, for being the driving force behind this project. His influence is everywhere including, but not limited to, designing the protocol used, recruiting clinicians from Milwaukee-area school districts, and presenting the results of the project (Heilmann, et al., 2015). We would also like to thank Dr. John Heilmann (United States) and Dr. Marleen Westerveld (Australia) for their work getting the research protocols in place and working with the school districts to obtain their approval and cooperation. We would like to thank the following clinicians and students who collected the Wisconsin persuasion samples:

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- Wauwatosa School District: Amy Brantley, Peg Hamby, Christine Maranan, Kathy Meinecke, Molly Suberlak, Amanda Voigtlander
- West Allis-West Milwaukee School District: Sarah Bartosch, Erin Jodie
- UW-Milwaukee graduate students: Taylor Hansen, Maggie Long, Maricel Schulte

*Australian Samples:* The Australian samples were collected by speech-language pathologists employed by the Department of Education and Training, Queensland, Australia. The following clinicians assisted with the data collection: Alicia Terrey, Diane Chen, Donna Arulogan, Elizabeth Tweed, Emma Fraser, Jane Westphal, Kaitlin Scurr, Kristy Cooney, Bronte Brooke, Leanne Herbert, Lynda Miles, Melissa Gardiner, Robyn Kalkaus, Sarah Johnston, Bronte Brook.

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## Persuasion Topics List

Changing the time school starts in the morning
Allowing students to leave campus during the school day without special permission
Requiring students to do graded homework
Requiring students to take foreign language classes
Allowing teachers to socialize with students on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, etc.
Including grades in physical education classes in students' grade point average
Allowing students to listen to their music using headphones during free periods
Changing the access teenagers have to entertainment that is violent or sexually suggestive; entertainment includes movies, music, and video games
Requiring school uniforms or a dress code for students
Awarding cash or other incentives to students who earn good grades
Replacing traditional textbooks with notebook computers or digital materials
Requiring cities to provide free wireless Internet access in public spaces
Requiring people to get a license in order to become parents
Allowing alternatives to jail, such as counseling or public service, for convicted criminals
Requiring colleges to pay their student athletes a salary for playing
Requiring drug tests for professional athletes
Allowing employers to require drug tests as part of their hiring procedure
Requiring workers to pay for their own work uniforms or equipment
Raising the minimum wage
Changing the minimum age for voting, drinking, driving, or holding a job
Other: Topic of your choice

**Persuasion Planning Sheet** (*The actual form used can be downloaded from the SALT web site at [www.saltsoftware.com/resources/](http://www.saltsoftware.com/resources/)*)

**What to Talk about When Trying to Persuade Someone**

Topic	What's Covered	Notes
Issue ID and Desired Change	What rule or situation do you want changed? What would you change it to?	
Supporting Reasons	What facts or values or evidence helps your side? Be sure to include how your change would help or benefit the listener or people the listener cares about.	
Counter Arguments – Other Point of View	What are some good reasons on the other side?	
Response to Counter Arguments	What can you say to knock down or weaken the reasons on the other side? What reasons on the other side can you agree with, either in whole or in part?	
Compromises	If you can't get your way 100%, what deals would be acceptable so each side wins a little?	
Conclusion	Briefly sum up your position: What do you want? Why do you want it? What are the first steps needed to make the change happen?	

Please use the backside of this page for an optional diagram or graphic organizer, or for additional notes.