

## *Unit 4 The Language of Persuasion*

Persuasive devices

- add information
- add interest

Persuasive devices are also known as rhetorical devices. They make writing and speaking more memorable and easier to understand. There are many different types of persuasive devices in English.

First, we are going to look at three: similes, analogies and metaphors.

### *Part 1 Similes, Analogies and Metaphors*

Similes, analogies and metaphors

- add colour
- add interest
- make comparisons

A **simile** (pronounced ‘**sim-il-lee**’) compares two things which are actually different but have one way in which they are similar. A simile uses words like ‘as’ or ‘like’ in order to make the comparison.

For example:

*No wonder he missed the bus; he was as slow as a snail.*

By comparing him to a very slow creature the speaker creates a colourful picture of how unhurriedly the boy was moving.

However,

*My cat is like your cat*

is not a simile because the comparison is **real**.

An **analogy** (we came across these briefly in Unit 2) compares two things in order to create a visual impression of one concept to help the reader understand that concept better.

A **metaphor** takes the comparison one step further. Instead of saying that one thing is **like** another the metaphor says that it **is** that other thing. There are two parts to a metaphor: the main idea and the image (or picture) used to describe it. Metaphors work by using something concrete (which can be

seen or touched) to describe something abstract (which cannot be seen or touched).

For example:

*He was reluctant to go to school and moved at a snail's pace towards the bus stop.*

The main idea here is that the boy did not want to go to school and the image of a snail creates the picture of him moving very slowly towards the bus stop.

### ***Exercise 1      Similes***

Read the ten similes below and put the most appropriate word from the box into each space.

sandpaper	blood	chicken	sergeant-major
rock	ice	tiger	feather      bat      oven

1. The sun rose as red as \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The bed was not comfortable. In fact, it was as hard as a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. He didn't know what to do and just seemed to run around like a headless \_\_\_\_\_.
4. He hadn't shaved for two days and his face felt like \_\_\_\_\_.
5. That cat next door is as fierce as a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I could see that I wasn't welcome, her stare was like \_\_\_\_\_.
7. It's no trouble to carry your bag, it's as light as a \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Why don't you open the window, it's like an \_\_\_\_\_ in here?
9. I am as blind as a \_\_\_\_\_ without my glasses.
10. The teacher spoke to the class like a \_\_\_\_\_ addressing the troops.

## ***Exercise 2      Metaphors***

Read the ten metaphors below and put the most appropriate word from the box into each space.

mouse	shark	factories	key	air
dictionary	digest	icy	tied up	aflame

1. A good education is the \_\_\_\_\_ to a successful future.
2. After I passed the exam I was so happy I was walking on \_\_\_\_\_
3. He was unable to \_\_\_\_\_ what the teacher had told him.  
It was just too difficult to understand.
4. John has a great vocabulary. He's a walking \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Plants are complex chemical \_\_\_\_\_.
6. I wouldn't buy a car from him. He's a real \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Her \_\_\_\_\_ glare told me that I wasn't welcome.
8. I'm sorry I'm late; I was \_\_\_\_\_ at the office.
9. The sky was \_\_\_\_\_ with the setting sun.
10. Your sister is so quiet and shy. What a little \_\_\_\_\_.

## ***Exercise 3      Understanding analogies***

Read the following passage and then answer the questions which follow the passage:

### **Planet Earth is 4,600 million years old**

(from *Greenpeace* literature)

If we condense this inconceivable time-span into an understandable concept, we can liken Earth to a person of 46 years of age.

Nothing is known about the first 7 years of this person's life, and whilst only scattered information exists about its middle span, we know that only at the age of 42 did the Earth begin to flower.

Dinosaurs and the great reptiles did not appear until one year ago, when the planet was 45. Mammals arrived only 8 months ago; in the middle of last week man-like apes evolved into ape-like men, and at the weekend the last Ice age enveloped the Earth.

Modern man has been around for 4 hours. During the last hour Man discovered agriculture. The Industrial Revolution began a minute ago.

During those sixty seconds of biological time, Modern Man has made a rubbish tip of Paradise.

He has multiplied his numbers to plague proportions, caused the extinction of 500 species of animals, ransacked the planet for fuels and now stands like a brutish infant, gloating over his meteoric rise to ascendancy, on the brink of a war to end all wars and of effectively destroying this oasis of life in the solar system.

**Is this analogy effective?      Why?      Why not?**

*(Remember: an analogy is designed to help you understand a difficult concept by creating a clear visual image.)*

#### ***Exercise 4      Further practice***

**The Role of the Media:      to cover or not to cover.....**

The following text contains a good deal of vocabulary which specifically refers to the world of the theatre:

e.g.      ***a captive audience***

*Find other examples in the text and try to explain what these terms mean.*

It has been said that the role of the media is to report facts objectively, to record events as they happen so that the rest of the world will have a clearer picture of what's going on. It can be argued, however, that there are times and circumstances in which the true role of the media should be **not** to report the facts, **not** to publicise events taking place.

Take, for example, the case of the siege at the Iranian embassy in London in 1980. There were more press people and reporters at the scene than there were police, army or even spectators. The BBC covered the front of the building; the commercial channels covered the back; and the flanks were covered by a captive audience of newspaper reporters and cameramen waiting to catch a glimpse of part of the action.

The terrorists, fully aware of the attention paid by their observers, were not slow to take full advantage of the situation. The scene was set for some dramatic developments: like prima donnas and experienced performers, they took to the stage, wallowing in the limelight, expounding ideologies and making political demands for the release of the poor hostages held backstage. The media recorded and reported these acts to a live audience of millions around the world. The excitement of watching such events in the safety of one's living room stimulated interest in the proceedings to such an extent that live coverage of the siege actually competed with soap-operas for air-time.

However, after a few days, as usually happens with newsworthy items, the public's attention drifted back to the soaps, cinema queues subsided, and media coverage relaxed until the SAS made their timely assault on the building and rescued all the hostages except two, who were unlucky enough to find themselves in the path of stray bullets during the rescue.

End of siege. Or was it? As the cameramen packed up their lenses and reporters wrote the epitaphs to the slain hostages and terrorists, the scene was slowly being set for the next siege or the next hijacking or the next political kidnapping. No matter how many terrorists are shot dead, there will always be a queue waiting to take their place. And no matter who the debutants are, there will always be a willing press to critique the proceedings. But isn't it time that this symbiotic, parasitic relationship between terrorists and reporters came to an end? Without press coverage, terrorist activities are meaningless. And, surely, the general public can do without such sensational stories in an attempt to starve terrorists of the very stuff that nurtures them: publicity.

What do you think? Should media coverage of terrorist acts be suppressed?
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## ***Part 2 Other Persuasive Devices***

We have looked at three important persuasive devices: similes, analogies and metaphors. Many other persuasive devices are used by effective speakers and writers. In this section of the workbook we are going to look at ten more.

### ***Exercise 5***

Match a word from the list below with the appropriate explanation.

- simile
- amplification
- alliteration
- metaphor
- understatement
- parallelism
- exaggeration
- personification
- antithesis
- rhetorical question
- repetition
- anticipating objections

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is when you take the opposite view into account. You first consider what people who hold other views might say on the subject and then answer their point.

For example:

*Many smokers say that their rights and freedoms are being encroached upon by smoking bans but I believe that a parent's right to protect his or her child from the effects of passive smoking is more important.*

2. A \_\_\_\_\_ compares two things which are actually different but have one way in which they are similar. It uses words like 'as' or 'like' in order to make the comparison.

For example:

*He swims like a fish.*

3. A \_\_\_\_\_ is one which does not require an answer though it may provoke an answer in the mind of the reader or listener.

For example:

*Many smokers say that their rights and freedoms are being encroached upon by smoking bans but have they considered the effects of passive smoking on children?*

4. A \_\_\_\_\_ takes the comparison one step further than a simile. Instead of saying that one thing is like another it says that it **is** that other thing.

For example:

*Her question hit the target with the accuracy of an arrow in the bull's-eye.*

5. \_\_\_\_\_ is a type of metaphor. It is when an animal or object is represented as having human feelings.

For example:

*The Aussie dollar is having a quiet week.*

6. \_\_\_\_\_ suggests that something is less than it is. This may be done for emphasis, humour or courtesy.

For example:

*I see your Maths score is 22%. That's a little below the pass mark.*

7. \_\_\_\_\_ is putting together two opposite ideas to make a statement more memorable.

For example:

*The leader lived in luxury in a huge palace while his followers lived in poverty in tiny huts.*

8. \_\_\_\_\_ is saying that something is more than it is but it is clear that the writer or speaker does not expect to be taken literally.

For example:

*I was absolutely buried in paperwork at the office today.*

9. \_\_\_\_\_ means saying the same thing again. It may be the ideas that are duplicated or it may be the structure of the sentence.

For example:

*I like hot coffee because it wakes me up and I like hot chocolate because it calms me down.*

10. \_\_\_\_\_ adds something to the information.

For example:

*It was very dark. The blackness surrounded us. We could see nothing but the faint twinkle of the distant stars.*

11. \_\_\_\_\_ is repeating certain elements to create a balanced sentence.

For example:

*My brother is so greedy! Yesterday he ate two big pies, three huge apples and three large ice-creams...before lunch!*

12. \_\_\_\_\_ is when the first consonants of words are repeated to make them memorable. Headlines and advertising often make use of this device.

For example:

*Best Buy: British Broccoli @ \$2.00 a kilo.*

## ***Part 4      Persuasive Writing***

### ***Exercise 6***

#### **The Role of the Media:      Entertainment or facts?**

*Read through the following passage. To what extent is the text based on empirical evidence? To what extent does the passage express merely the writer's opinion?*

*Find examples of language which is used by the writer to express fact or opinion.*

*Find examples of language which the writer uses to influence the reader, to persuade the reader to share the writer's opinions.*

To define the role of the media, it's important to understand first of all what it is that people want to see and read in the newspapers and on television. Do they really want to find out the truth about what's happening elsewhere on the globe, regardless of how unpleasant that might be? Or would they be happier reading some sort of semi-fictional account of life in Hollywood or Buckingham Palace?

To be quite honest, a front page with a large picture of a famous actor in a bikini, accompanied by a gossipy article supposedly written by the aunty of a hairdresser who once cut that actor's hair, is more likely to catch the public's eye than a picture of atrocities committed in less fortunate parts of the world. The sad reality of today's world is not that there is mass slaughter being committed in numerous war-zones around the globe, but that the general public choose to ignore such atrocities and focus on real-life soap operas.

But is it the choice of the general public which determines what they will read in the breakfast papers each morning? Or is it the result of a few unscrupulous news reporters who manipulate news coverage and create a market for their own style of journalism. To manufacture news where no news exists; to sensationalise trivial events; to titillate the public with gossip and scandal; is this the true role of the media? But perhaps there's a hidden agenda, a political motive behind such press coverage: could it be that such reporting is aimed at concealing the truth, or at least of diverting attention from political realities. And if so, then why?

Perhaps the answer lies in the power struggle taking place between media magnates such as Rupert Murdoch and Kerry Packer. The media have always been acknowledged as resources of power: in the days of the information super-highway, press coverage and, more importantly, press

control represent the ability to influence people. Implicit in this is not simply the power to control what people read and hear in the media, but also the power to influence the way they think and their perception of the world.

Therein lies true power.

## ***Part 5 Persuasive Speaking***

### ***Exercise 7 Practical activity***

**Prepared speaking:** Choose one of the topics below and write notes for a one minute talk on that subject. Practise by talking to your friend.

(refer to Appendix 6 for some help on oral presentations)

1. Why you are starting or giving up smoking.
2. Why you would make a great political leader.
3. The importance of reading your horoscope everyday.
4. The last movie you saw at the cinema or on television.
5. Why all children should be taught to swim before they are ten years old...
6. Happiness is...
7. The elderly should all be sent to nursing homes.
8. Persuade your friend to get a haircut / dye their hair.
9. You were abducted by aliens. Convince your friend.
10. Superman is better than Batman because... (you may chose any two fictional characters)

Title: .....

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**Impromptu speaking:** Ask a friend to pick a number between one and ten. Speak for one minute on the subject that corresponds to the number your friend gave you.

## ***Part 6 Formal and informal language***

Academic language tends to be quite formal, especially in its written form. That means that much of the material you will have to read will be written in formal English; in addition, the language you use to write essays and reports will also need to be formal.

By contrast, the language used in spoken English i.e. in lectures, tutorials and oral presentations will be less formal (unless you are reading direct from a prepared written piece of work).

### ***What is the difference between formal and informal language?***

#### **1. The features of formal language**

- \* grammatically complete sentences, including correct punctuation
- \* the use of Passive constructions
- \* the use of discourse markers to show logical relationship between sentences
- \* high incidence of technical vocabulary
- \* the use of 'latinate' words instead of phrasal verbs e.g. *extinguish* Vs *put out*

#### **2. The features of informal language**

- \* colloquial expressions (slang)
- \* idiomatic language
- \* the use of clichés e.g. 'at the end of the day', 'in the final analysis'.....
- \* contractions e.g. it's, we're, isn't...
- \* phrasal verbs e.g. put up with, to set off.....
- \* grammatically incomplete sentences, often not punctuated properly
- \* annotations and abbreviations
- \* the absence of discourse markers
- \* the use of personal pronouns e.g. I, we, you...

### ***Exercise 8***

Insert 'Formal language' or 'Informal language' in the spaces below:

\_\_\_\_\_ is the language of scientific and factual compositions. It should contain no abbreviations or slang expressions.

\_\_\_\_\_ is the language used for speaking and writing to friends and family. It often contains abbreviations and slang expressions.

### ***Exercise 9***

*Rewrite the following sentences by replacing the phrasal verbs with formal, 'latinate' words:*

e.g. The enemy was too strong; we had to **give up**.

—————→ **surrender** .

1. I was totally **done in** after the marathon.
2. Don't **call out** the answer; **put up** your hand.
3. He was a bit **put out** when I told him to **shut up**.
4. If I were you, I wouldn't **put up with** that sort of behaviour.
5. The dog was very sick so we had him **put down**.
6. They managed to **put by** enough money for their early retirement.
7. He's irritable because he's just **given up** smoking.
8. They **got down** to work at eight o'clock sharp.
9. She **picked up** enough Indonesian to **get by** in Bali.
10. This dress is too long; it needs **taking up**.

### ***Exercise 10***

Here is another article entitled: ‘*Should Australia become a Republic?*’

This article, too, is rather informal.

*Rewrite the article replacing as much of the informal language as you can with formal language.*

#### ***SHOULD AUSTRALIA BECOME A REPUBLIC?***

Recently there has been lots of talk about Australia becoming a republic. At the moment we are a country, but we have the Queen as our head of state, and she appoints a Governor General, so we are not really independent.

People seem divided about the pros and cons. People who want a republic say England is a long way from Australia. We are really part of Asia and not a European country, so why does the Queen live in London? Anyway, England is more interested in Europe. Also, if you go back in history, Australia was an English colony, but not now. Coming up to 2000, it's a long time since England ran Australia, so what use is having a queen from England?

Other countries who we do business with, say, Japan, probably think we're not really independent (and they can see the British flag on our flag), so they think Australia doesn't really know what it is. Also, many new Australians are now from Asia or Europe, not England. They're not bothered about the Queen.

On the other hand, lots of people like the tradition of having the Queen. Especially older people like that and say a new country like Australia needs a link with a true past. 'Why ruin our tradition for no good reason?' they ask. People know that Australia's history and language are English. So newcomers from Asia or Europe must understand that and respect the values of Australia. We speak English and teach migrants ESL, so respecting the Queen seems logical.

Some older people remember the wars, when Australian soldiers died fighting for England and Australia. So, out of respect for the dead, we should stay where we are and keep what we have. Also, people worry about who will be president if we have a republic. They don't like the American system and prefer the English Queen who visits every five years to a president who would be on TV all the time. It seems younger people are more for a change to a republic. Personally, I agree with them, though I still respect the Queen.

### ***Exercise 11***

The sentences below have been taken from two letters requesting accommodation. One is a formal letter to a hotel making a reservation; the other is an informal letter to a friend asking if you can stay at their house for a few days. Try to reconstruct the two letters.

I'd be grateful if you could let me know one way or the other by the end of this week.  
Many thanks.

Dear Jean and Max,

77, High Street  
Surbiton  
14<sup>th</sup> May

I think it was at Jamie's party wasn't it?

**Re: Accommodation 15<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> June**

I have to attend a conference in your area next month and I was wondering if you wouldn't mind putting me up for a few days.

Please confirm by fax at the above number. A prompt response would be appreciated.

How are you both? I hope you are well. It seems like ages since we were last able to meet up.

I am writing to ask you a favour.

I'd be arriving on the afternoon of Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June and leaving early Monday morning. No need to worry about feeding me as I'll be eating at the conference centre between meetings. (If I have time!)

I am writing to enquire if you have a single room available for the above dates. My preference would be for a view overlooking the park if possible.

Best wishes  
From  
Mark

I will be arriving on the afternoon of Friday 15<sup>th</sup>. Please book a table for me in your restaurant that evening at 7.00. I will also require a packed lunch to take with me when I leave on Monday morning.

If you have room for me that would be great, but if not I'll just book in to the local hotel and with luck we can meet up for lunch on Monday before I go home.

77, High Street  
Surbiton  
Chelmsford  
Essex  
CH62 9GH

Tel: 345 346772  
Fax: 345 346773

14<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Dear Sir or Madam,

Yours faithfully,

M. Smith (Mr.)

The Manager  
Sheraton Hotel  
Brighton  
BR23 8TJ

### ***Exercise 12      Practical activity***

Now try writing two letters of your own. Write a formal letter to your bank manager requesting an overdraft and an informal letter to your friend asking to borrow some money.