

The Use of Persuasive Strategies by Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden in Addressing The COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the persuasive strategies employed by Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden in their speeches addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing on theories by Beebe and Beebe (2012, 2017). Utilizing a qualitative methodology, excerpts from their speeches were analyzed to identify specific strategies. The analysis revealed that Rishi Sunak employed inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, causal reasoning, credible evidence, new evidence, specific evidence, evidence to tell a story, concrete examples, emotion-arousing words, and appeal to several emotions (hope, pride, and courage). While Joe Biden used inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, causal reasoning, credible evidence, specific evidence, evidence to tell a story, concrete examples, emotion-arousing words, fear appeals, and appeal to several emotions (hope, pride, and courage). In conclusion, despite differences in age, the persuasive strategies of Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden were primarily shaped by the topic and context of their speeches.

Keywords: age, COVID-19 speech, pandemic speech, persuasive strategies

INTRODUCTION

To convince someone, persuasive communication is needed. Beebe and Beebe (2012) state that speakers commonly utilize various strategies to persuade their audience towards a particular action or to modify or reinforce their beliefs. Using persuasive strategies helps speakers to change the audience's perspective (Beebe & Beebe, 2012). Beebe and Beebe (2012, 2017) identify 16 strategies that can be effectively employed to influence listeners. This study will focus on 13 of these strategies, covering three types of reasoning, four types of effective evidence, and six emotional appeals.

Additionally, Holmes and Wilson (2017) state that age demographics significantly influence communication styles. Therefore, age could play a role in determining persuasive strategies. There are categories for each age group, two of which will be used to differentiate two subjects. Age groups are often categorized into middle age, typically defined as individuals aged 40-60 years (Collins, n.d.), and old age, commencing from 60 years (Collins, n.d.).

Both Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden are great speakers. Rishi Sunak, born on May 12, 1980, in Southampton, has served as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom since 2022, after being Chancellor of the Exchequer from 2020 to 2022 (Javaid, 2023). Renowned for his leadership and authentic oratory, he has been praised for his ability to connect with audiences emotionally (Smith, 2022). On March 17, 2020, in a speech entitled *Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak on COVID-19 response*, Rishi Sunak addressed the economic impact of COVID-19 in a 1,278-word speech, demonstrating his commitment to mitigating the pandemic's effects (UK Government, 2020).

Joe Biden, born on November 20, 1942, in Scranton, Pennsylvania, became the 46th President of the United States at the age of 78 in January 2021 (Kiger, 2021). His presidency has focused on managing the COVID-19 crisis, stabilizing the economy, and addressing social

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issues (Alexander, 2022). Despite initial challenges, he is known for his excellent public speaking skills honed despite a speech impairment. During the pandemic, he delivered a 1,493-word speech titled *Remarks by President Biden on the COVID-19 Response and the Vaccination Program* in 2021 (The White House, 2021). He addressed the Delta variant and outlined his strategic approach to the pandemic in the speech.

Therefore, the writer aims to explore the persuasive strategies employed by Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden in their public speeches about COVID-19. The writer also wants to find the similarities and differences between Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden's strategies considering age differences. In doing so, the writer employs theoretical frameworks of persuasive strategies provided by Beebe and Beebe (2012, 2017).

METHODS

The writer used a qualitative approach, where the writer herself collected the data needed for the study. The source of data was the form of paragraphs from the two speech transcripts of Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden, which gathered from Rishi Sunak's speech entitled *Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak on COVID 19 response* (UK Government, 2020) and *Joe Biden's speech entitled Remarks by President Biden on the COVID-19 Response and the Vaccination Program* (The White House, 2021). The data analyzed in this study were all paragraphs from speeches by Rishi Sunak (representing middle age) and Joe Biden (representing old age). To collect the data, the first step was to download the transcripts from two different websites. Next, the writer read the two transcripts from Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden. In addition, the writer implemented a two-digit numbering system. The first digit is used for the transcript source, and the second digit stands for every paragraph of the speaker's speech. Lastly, the writer highlighted key terms in bold within the transcripts, which signified persuasive strategies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The writer found that Rishi Sunak employed persuasive strategies; inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, causal reasoning, new evidence, specific evidence, evidence to tell a story, concrete examples, emotion-arousing words, and appeals to several emotions (hope, pride, and courage) in *Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak on COVID 19 response* (UK Government, 2020). In the other hand, Joe Biden employed persuasive strategies; inductive reasoning, causal reasoning, credible evidence, new evidence, specific evidence, evidence to tell a story, concrete examples, emotion-arousing words, fear appeals, and appeals to several emotions (hope, pride, and courage) in *Remarks by President Biden on the COVID-19 Response and the Vaccination Program* (The White House, 2021).

The Persuasive Strategies Used by Rishi Sunak in his speech *Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak on COVID 19 response*

A. Inductive Reasoning

Inductive reasoning, according to Beebe and Beebe (2012), involves a general conclusion from specific instances or examples.

Talking about the approach to address the COVID-19, Rishi Sunak begins with specific statements that highlight challenges that cannot be overcome by isolated measures or individual efforts. Then, he gave the general conclusion for a collective approach to address the issues.

B. Causal Reasoning

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), new evidence entails introducing information or facts that the audience may not have encountered previously to support their argument.

Rishi Sunak presents new evidence to provide updated information on his proposed solutions. He introduces his argument by announcing that mortgage lenders would offer a three-month mortgage holiday.

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D. Specific Evidence

Beebe and Beebe (2012) say that the speaker uses detailed evidence to support the argument, and avoids using terms "many" and "a lot of" in order to persuade the audience. Rishi Sunak gives specific numbers for the budget to deal with economic problems due to COVID-19.

E. Evidence to Tell a Story

Beebe and Beebe (2012) state that the speaker uses a narrative as supporting evidence to give their point greater emotional impact.

Rishi Sunak mentions the meetings to support business and industries, as a response to the economic problem. He starts with narrative ideas about what he did before.

F. Concrete Example

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), the speaker uses vivid descriptions in order to persuade the audience. Rishi Sunak gives vivid description to describe a government-backed loan program that provided financial assistance to businesses in need.

G. Emotion-Arousing Words

Beebe and Beebe (2012) say that by using words and phrases that have the potential to trigger strong emotional responses in the speaker's audience.

Rishi Sunak uses words that can powerfully impact by tapping into fundamental human emotions, strengthening the bond between the speaker and audience. This strategy emphasizes government dedication, motivating trust and support, and enhancing collective confidence and resilience.

H. Appeals to Emotion of Hope

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Beebe and Beebe (2012) state using hope to motivate listeners, as the speaker can articulate messages that offer a glimpse of a more promising future.

Rishi Sunak aims to instill hope and resilience by informing the public about proactive measures for economic recovery and financial stability. By assuring their well-being, he might want to empower confidence and optimism, encouraging perseverance through challenges and belief in better outcomes ahead.

I. Appeals to Emotion of Pride

By using appeal to emotion of pride, the speaker appeals to pride in order to elicit positive emotions (Beebe & Beebe, 2012).

Rishi Sunak emphasizes the government's unwavering commitment to safeguarding the nation's health and financial security. Rishi Sunak's focus on keeping the country and its people healthy and financially secure reflects his dedication to achieving meaningful goals together and making a positive impact.

J. Appeals to Emotion of Courage

Using courage can empower listeners by issuing challenges that inspire them to take bold stances or distinguish themselves from others, motivating them to take action driven by emotion (Beebe & Beebe, 2012).

In response to a national catastrophe, Rishi Sunak highlights the need for bold action, urging a departure from traditional ideologies. He emphasizes the challenges for individuals and institutions to take innovative and decisive action.

K. Multiple Strategies

a. Deductive reasoning and specific evidence

Beebe and Beebe (2012) explain that deductive reasoning involves starting with a general statement to reach a specific conclusion. They also recommend using precise evidence to support arguments, avoiding vague terms like "many" and "a lot of" to persuade the audience (Beebe & Beebe, 2012).

In the speech, Rishi Sunak outlined government initiatives to support businesses during the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, by starting with a general statement. He emphasizes the need for liquidity support for economic stability, announcing a new loan facility with the Bank of England Governor to provide low-cost commercial paper to larger firms. Using deductive reasoning and specific evidence, he aimed to maintain confidence among business owners and stakeholders, demonstrating the government's thoughtful and principled approach to addressing the pandemic's economic challenges

b. Specific evidence and concrete example

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), specific evidence increases trust from the audience. In addition, using concrete examples helps to evoke the audience's emotion.

Rishi Sunak discussed financial relief measures for businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. He outlines initiatives such as exempting businesses in retail, hospitality,

and leisure sectors by giving vivid descriptions. By vividly describing the types of businesses included, He might aim to provide clarity and a clear vision of the government's support measures. Additionally, using specific numbers which could help to build trust and enhanced understanding of the financial challenges being addressed.

The Persuasive Strategies Used by Joe Biden in his speech *Remarks by President Biden on the COVID-19 Response and the Vaccination Program*

A. Inductive Reasoning

Joe Biden highlighted the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines, noting that while vaccinated individuals can still get infected, such cases are less common than among the unvaccinated. By beginning with a specific statement, he aims to use inductive reasoning to generalize that vaccination reduces infection risk and severity of illness.

B. Causal Reasoning

Joe Biden tried to emphasize the importance of vaccines in controlling infectious diseases like polio, smallpox, measles, mumps, and rubella in America. Using a causal reasoning approach, he linked the widespread use of vaccines to the effective control and prevention of these diseases, illustrating their crucial role in public health.

C. Credible Evidence

Beebe and Beebe (2012) say that when the audience believes the evidence is credible from reliable, informed, and impartial sources, they are far more open to the speaker's argument.

Joe Biden stated the professional background and credibility of a key figure in addressing COVID-19. Highlighting extensive experience and dedication to science, he might want to bolster the credibility of his argument. By showcasing the individual as a career scientist, he sought to strengthen public trust in the scientific foundation of pandemic-related policy decisions.

D. Specific Evidence

Joe Biden citing specific numbers such as the percentage of adults and adolescents vaccinated, along with the total number of Americans immunized. He wants to underscore the success of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign in the United States. This detailed statistical information highlighted the government's achievements, reinforcing public confidence in the effectiveness of the vaccination efforts.

E. Evidence to Tell a Story

Joe Biden uses evidence to tell a story by using COVID-19 cases among children, emphasizing their rarity and the infrequency of severe cases. By sharing a story with factual evidence, he wants to acknowledge parents' concerns and aims to resonate with the audience's emotions. This blend of evidence with cases likely aims to create a compelling and relatable narrative that addresses both the reality and the concerns surrounding children's health.

F. Concrete Example

Joe Biden gave clear instructions on finding nearby vaccine sites without an appointment, aiming to make the information tangible and understandable. By mentioning

specific steps, he made the process relatable and encouraged immediate action. This approach likely enhanced the emotional connection by reducing anxiety about accessing vaccines and emphasizing their ease and accessibility.

G. Emotion-Arousing Words

Joe Biden discusses the current efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing its immense complexity. By describing it as one of the most challenging tasks faced in recent history, he underscores the unprecedented nature of the crisis and emphasizes the significant resources and coordination needed for an effective response. His language aims to highlight the urgency and scale of the pandemic, urging collective action and resilience.

H. Fear Appeals

Beebe and Beebe (2012) explain that speakers may employ the threat of potential harm to persuade the audience to heed their advice.

Joe Biden mentions the severity of COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths among the unvaccinated, emphasizing the direct health risks involved. His aim was to evoke fear among the audience about the potential consequences of not getting vaccinated. By highlighting specific outcomes and personalizing the risk, Joe Biden could try to motivate protective actions and underscore the urgency of the pandemic.

I. Appeals to Emotion of Hope

Joe Biden describes requirements and incentives to combat the challenges posed by the Delta variant, aiming to increase vaccination rates. This effort reflects optimism for resolving current issues and moving towards a future without the pandemic, offering hope for improved conditions ahead.

J. Appeals to Emotion of Pride

Joe Biden stresses the importance of continued efforts against COVID-19, emphasizing public participation as crucial. He uses an appeal to national pride, urging collective responsibility and unity. This strategy aims to motivate vaccination by invoking a sense of patriotism, framing it as a civic duty contributing to the nation's well-being and unity.

K. Appeals to Emotion of Courage

Joe Biden emphasized the importance of COVID-19 vaccinations and their long-term effectiveness. He implied that widespread vaccination would gradually show positive impacts. Biden appeals to hope, aiming to inspire the audience to get vaccinated by highlighting personal benefits and issuing a direct call to action. His message encourages proactive steps towards community health and safety through vaccination.

L. Multiple Strategies

- a. Evidence to tell a story and appeal to emotions of courage

Based on Beebe and Beebe (2012) using evidence to tell a story imbues the speaker's message with emotional resonance, while appeals to courage could encourage listeners.

In the speech, Joe Biden tried to underscore the significance of the FDA's full approval of the COVID-19 vaccine, addressing public concerns and emphasizing its pivotal role in pandemic mitigation. By using evidence and appeals to courage, he seeks to build trust and encourage collective action, urging the public to unite in combating COVID-19 and minimizing its impact on society.

b. Credible evidence and specific evidence

According to Beebe and Beebe (2012), using credible and specific evidence could enhance persuasion by fostering audience trust and clarity in the speaker's argument.

Joe Biden gives credible sources for explaining the impact of vaccination efforts on public health, emphasizing their effectiveness in saving lives and reducing hospitalizations. By providing specific statistics, he demonstrated the tangible benefits of vaccination, making the argument more compelling and highlighting the success of the vaccination campaign.

CONCLUSION

In short, Rishi Sunak and Joe Biden utilize persuasive strategies outlined by Beebe and Beebe (2012, 2017) in their speeches addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis reveals that both speakers employ similar strategies, including inductive reasoning, causal reasoning, specific evidence, storytelling, concrete examples, emotion-arousing words, and appeals to several emotions such as hope, pride, and courage. Neither speaker uses metaphors and similes, appeals to the emotion of reverence, or shared myths in their speeches. Additionally, they often combine two strategies in one except. There are, however, some differences. Rishi Sunak employs certain strategies that Joe Biden does not, and vice versa. There are also differences in their use of evidence to tell a story. This may happen due to the topic they both bring. While Rishi Sunak centers on providing solutions to economic issues, Joe Biden aims to increase the public's willingness to get vaccinated.

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