



## **DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON THE USAGE OF PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES IN THE EDITORIAL SECTION OF AWARD-WINNING SECONDARY PUBLIC SCHOOL PAPERS IN THE NATIONAL SCHOOLS PRESS CONFERENCE (NSPC)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this discourse analysis study was to examine and analyze persuasive strategies used by student journalists in the editorial section of public secondary school papers in the Division of Davao del Norte and explore how these strategies reveal the writers' persuasive intentions in presenting their views on social issues. A total of 159 editorial and column sample statements were analyzed to identify the use of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation resources and to examine how these linguistic choices reflect persuasive intentions. The analysis was framed within Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory. Findings revealed that student writers most frequently used Appreciation (22.64%) to evaluate social significance, followed by Heterogloss (16.99%) and Force (16.36%) to establish credibility and emphasize urgency. These strategies were systematically aligned with specific persuasive intentions, including systemic evaluation and legitimization, ethical positioning, controlled emotional engagement, credibility construction, and calibrated emphasis. The findings further demonstrate that award-winning student editorial sections function as structured and purposeful communicative acts, where arguments are framed as evaluations of systems rather than personal opinions. Through the strategic integration of appraisal resources, writers are able to guide reader interpretation, maintain credibility, and strengthen persuasive impact. This study provides insights for journalism advisers, teachers, and student writers on the

importance of purposeful linguistic choices in producing effective and socially responsive school paper specifically in the editorial or opinion section.

**Keywords:** *discourse analysis, student editorials, Appraisal Theory, persuasive intentions, NSPC, Philippines*

## INTRODUCTION

The editorial section of the school paper serves as the voice of the student body in an academic institution. It reflects thereof the opinions, issues, and gathers discussion from the school community. As noted by Zhou and Wei (2022), the editorial page stands crucial as it allows students and the journalists to engage with probable issues circulating around the academic forums through written articles. Because of this function, the editorial section requires deliberate use of rhetorical strategies and persuasive intentions that develops the minds of the readers as per Hyland and Lee (2021). However, despite its importance, editorial outputs, especially in the opinion section have persistently shown weak structural arguments, ambiguous positions, and repetitive rhetorical strategies used. Thus, impacting the clearness and coherence of articles which needs further strengthening of skills in the campus journalism instruction.

Reports across the globe reveals that editorial sections have poor rhetorical quality and persuasive intention construction produced by the student journalists. In Indonesia, fixed patterns made the writeups sound unconvincing, leading to plainness of work as per Sutanto (2021). In Thailand, scholars have found out that editorials that are produced lacks coherence and clearness of the point of views by authors, which makes the argument unpleasant to follow. Similarly, in Vietnam, it was observed that campus journalist writers tend to copy formatting of those in newspaper editorials but are struggling to apply the language of persuasion and strategies (Nguyen & Tran, 2023). Within and across these countries, persistent issue arises: the underdevelopment of persuasive strategies in student editorial writing.

In the Philippines, the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC) as part of competition of the country continue to uphold the strong commitment to writing standards, yet the editorial section remains difficult to reach. This means that students may have written their stance but the points are shallow and repetitive; lack of reasoning due to idealistic views on commotions, and even with limited awareness to audience as to whom and what readers they should be focusing to (Esteban & Dizon, 2021). This is due to the fact that trainings rely only to templates, strict rubrics, and limited autonomy that fits to the likes of evaluators in the contest (Ramirez & Alcantara, 2023). Such practices may limit students' autonomy and critical engagement with issues on. This concern also aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasized that the need for literacy and critical thinking is crucial in the learning and growth of students; reflective thinking, as higher form of metacognition must also be developed. The situation therefore shows a mismatch between expected competencies and current instructional approaches among schools.

In Davao del Norte, especially in Tagum City, similar challenges are observed among student writers. Students often struggle in organizing ideas from the strongest to the weakest as not all can identify the weight of the issue, the issue response where lack of information and bank of ideas are persistent leading to poor positions, and the argument clarity that makes their paper vague as to compromise the quality of the work of the board. A regional review conducted by DepEd Region XI (2020) findings highlight such fixed formats and argument flow are persistent. This issue is true not just to the locality but of all student writers. They rely only to what concepts to add within the division contest and time comes for national events, new conditions of writeups emerge. Meanwhile, findings from SEAMEO-INNOTECH (2019) posited that limited inconsistent feedback from coaches leads to an under development of advanced writing skills. In many cases, students rely heavily just on patterns dealt during coaching time, leading to technically correct but shallow editorial content. These local observations reinforce the need to revisit how persuasive writing is taught and guided in campus journalism programs.

While campus journalism has been widely discussed in educational literature, scholarly attention rarely centers on the specific intersection of rhetorical intent and persuasive strategies within the editorial sections of award-winning secondary school publications. Current research, such as Hyland (2022), emphasizes that novice campus journalists often struggle to balance authorial voice with the objective presentation of evidence. However, these studies typically focus on general writing difficulties rather than the linguistic "blueprints" of success found in award-winning student publications. Furthermore, while Tardy (2023) highlights the importance of genre knowledge in academic writing, there remains a distinct empirical gap regarding how award-winning editorial boards in public secondary schools strategically utilize linguistic resources to achieve persuasion. Most existing literature explores professional journalism or higher education settings, leaving the specific discursive practices of highly successful secondary student-led editorials largely under-theorized. Hence, this study addresses this critical gap by analyzing and examining the persuasive strategies of award-winning articles, revealing how specific linguistic choices facilitate the construction of a "collective voice"—a domain that remains unexplored in the local context.

The outcomes of this study offer transformative benefits in the field of campus journalism. By identifying the highly occurring or frequent persuasive methods, this research can serve as a guide for campus journalism writers and school paper advisers (SPA) in improving their writing and connect effectively with the audiences. Beyond any competitions in journalism, better editorial writing and editorial section helps students think critically independent and participate more in academic forums and discussion.

To share the findings, the data will be presented in journalism seminars and division-wide training-workshops. The study will also be submitted to academic journals in the field of humanities and education sciences. These steps are meant to create lasting improvements in teaching journalism in focus and help school paper publications become more effective in unveiling their voice for all students and for the betterment of the systems.

## Research Questions

1. What are the persuasive strategies found in the editorial section of award-winning secondary school papers in the NSPC?
2. How do these persuasive strategies reveal the persuasive intentions in presenting their views on social issues?

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design using discourse analysis to examine the persuasive strategies and intentions embedded in the editorial sections of award-winning secondary school papers. Discourse analysis was selected as it allows for a systematic examination of language use, meaning-making, and evaluative stance in texts, particularly in understanding how writers construct arguments and influence readers within specific socio-cultural contexts.

The locale of the study focused on public secondary schools in the Division of Davao del Norte whose school papers qualified in the Editorial Section of the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC) from 2022 to 2025. The names of the institutions were not disclosed to maintain confidentiality.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the corpus. The study included 51 editorial and column articles that met the following criteria: (1) produced by public secondary schools in Davao del Norte; (2) recognized at the NSPC from 2022–2025; and (3) written in English. These texts represent high-quality, competitive outputs suitable for examining persuasive discourse.

The research materials consisted solely of published editorial and column articles, treated as documentary data. Since the study analyzed publicly available texts, no human respondents were involved; thus, demographic data were not applicable. The corpus was systematically organized and anonymized using coding labels (e.g., EA-1, CA-1) to ensure confidentiality.

Data were collected through document retrieval procedures, including accessing online publications and requesting digital or printed copies from school paper advisers upon approval from relevant authorities. Ethical clearance was secured from the Research Ethics Committee, and institutional permissions were obtained prior to data collection. All materials were stored in password-protected files to ensure data security.

The primary analytical instrument was the researcher, supported by a coding framework based on Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005). The framework includes three main categories: Attitude (e.g., important, harmful, commendable), Engagement (e.g., according to experts, it is clear that), and Graduation (e.g., very, extremely, somewhat). The researcher conducted iterative reading, tagging, and categorization of

linguistic features. To ensure rigor, the coding process underwent validation through expert debriefing and adviser review.

The data analysis followed a qualitative discourse-analytic approach. First, linguistic features were identified and categorized using Appraisal Theory to address the persuasive strategies present in the texts. Second, these features were interpreted to determine the persuasive intentions, focusing on how language constructs evaluation, authority, and urgency. The analysis involved repeated coding, pattern identification, and interpretation of functional meanings in the texts.

The scope of the study was limited to editorial and column articles from NSPC-qualified public secondary school papers in Davao del Norte from 2022 to 2025. While the findings provide insights into persuasive discourse in award-winning student publications, they are not intended for generalization beyond the selected corpus. Additionally, the interpretation of data is inherently subjective, although measures such as expert validation and systematic coding were employed to enhance credibility and trustworthiness.

## RESULTS

**Table 1. Illustrative Examples of Appraisal Strategies in Award-Winning NSPC Editorial Section**

Persuasive Strategy	Appraisal Resources	Sample Statements	Analysis	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Appreciation</b>	"Tardiness is a <b>perennial problem</b> in schools all around the world." (CA-29)	The writer uses the word "perennial" to describe tardiness as a constant and repeating problem. It frames the issue as something that never goes away, emphasizing its scale.	36	22.64%
		"the policy is <b>overly restrictive and</b>	The words "overly restrictive"		

		<p><b>outdated.”</b> (CA-30)</p>	<p>and "outdated" describe the policy as too strict and old-fashioned. This evaluates the rule as being out of touch with current needs.</p>		
		<p>“ALS represents a <b>promising and transformative leap</b> toward a brighter future.” (CA-40)</p>	<p>The use of “promising” and “transformative” encodes positive valuation by presenting ALS as a meaningful and forward-oriented initiative, thereby assigning it high social significance within the educational context.</p>		
		<p>“<b>political instability threatens</b> to consume the nation’s leadership.” (EA-47)</p>	<p>The words “threatens” and “consume” encode a negative valuation of political instability by construing it as a harmful and destabilizing force. These</p>		

			<p>lexical choices position political instability as something that undermines stability and control within leadership structures, emphasizing its adverse condition rather than its potential emotional impact on the reader.</p>		
		<p>“the MATATAG curriculum <b>ensures quality learning among the youth.</b>” (CA-34)</p>	<p>The phrase “ensures quality learning” encodes positive valuation by construing the MATATAG curriculum as effective in delivering desired educational outcomes. This lexical choice assigns functional worth to the curriculum as a system.</p>		

		<p>“...penalizing people for events outside of their control and upholding structural inequities.” (EA-19)</p>	<p>This statement expresses a negative ethical judgment, portraying the action as unfair and unjust. It criticizes systems that penalize individuals for circumstances beyond their control and highlights how such practices reinforce structural inequities.</p>		
	<b>Judgment</b>	<p>“cheating is generally considered unethical and a violation of academic integrity.” (EA-28)</p>	<p>The writer labels a specific action as "unethical." This judges the behavior as dishonest and a direct break from the expected rules of being a good student.</p>	23	14.47%
		<p>“It can never be an excuse to undermine the budget of students already in peril.” (EA-26)</p>	<p>By using the phrase "never be an excuse," the writer judges a financial decision as unacceptable and cruel. It</p>		

			marks the act of taking money from poor students as a wrong behavior.		
		“tardiness can also be a sign of a <b>lack of discipline and respect.</b> ” (CA-29)	The text evaluates the act of being late as a sign of poor character. It judges the student's behavior as lacking the positive qualities of being organized and respectful.		
		“corruption... is a <b>betrayal</b> of the Filipino people.” (EA-41)	The word “betrayal” conveys a strong negative moral judgment, framing corruption as a violation of public trust and ethical responsibility. It portrays the act as a serious breach of duty owed to the Filipino people.		

		<p>"It is quite <b>difficult to even fathom</b> that they would have to go through this..." (EA-1)</p>	<p>The statement expresses empathy and emotional engagement, highlighting the difficulty of fully understanding the situation. The phrase "quite difficult to even fathom" portrays the experience as overwhelming and hard to comprehend.</p>		
	<b>Affect</b>	<p>"Victims... often fail to speak about what they have encountered due to <b>trepidation of retaliation.</b>" (EA-2)</p>	<p>The text uses the word "trepidation" to explicitly identify fear and anxiety as the primary emotion. It connects this feeling of being scared directly to the victims' silence.</p>	19	11.95%
		<p>"Throughout the ups and downs... experiencing <b>hardships and struggles...</b>" (CA-11)</p>	<p>The phrases "ups and downs" and "hardships" depict life as a series of challenges and fluctuating experiences.</p>		

			They emphasize the difficulties and struggles faced, highlighting the emotional weight of enduring challenging periods.		
		“it was <b>quite exciting</b> to see my fellow batchmates aim for the best.” (CA-25)	The use of the word "exciting" signals a feeling of enthusiasm and happiness. It shows that the writer feels a sense of joy when observing the positive efforts of their classmates.		
		“ <b>my heart aches</b> as I watch them enhance their skills.” (CA-52)	The phrase "heart aches" is a strong expression of grief or deep sympathy. It describes a painful emotional response to seeing the struggles or efforts of others in the community.		

<b>Engagement</b>	<b>Heterogloss</b>	<p>"For many years, it was promised... <b>But</b> as of right now... (EA-1)</p>	<p>The writer uses the word "promised" to refer to a past claim made by others. By adding "But as of right now," the text acknowledges a different viewpoint from the past and compares it to the current situation.</p>	27	16.99%
		<p><b>"According to The Freeman,</b> 69 percent of respondents agreed..." (CA-10)</p>	<p>The phrase "According to The Freeman" explicitly brings in an outside voice. Instead of stating the fact alone, the writer attributes the information to a specific media source.</p>		
		<p><b>"According to the World Health Organization (WHO),</b> depression is a leading cause of disability." (CA-17)</p>	<p>By citing the "World Health Organization," the writer includes a global authority in the text. This shows that the information is backed by an external organization rather than just the writer's own opinion.</p>		
		<p><b>"According to a study by the National</b></p>	<p>The text uses an external research study</p>		

		<p><b>Center for Education Statistics,</b> tardiness can have a significant impact.” (CA-29)</p>	<p>to support its claim. The writer acknowledges that this information comes from a professional educational body, showing there is a wider conversation on the topic.</p>		
		<p>“<b>PAGCOR reported</b> a 49% surge in online gambling revenue.” (EA-42)</p>	<p>The writer uses the word "reported" to show that the data comes from a government agency. This moves the statement away from a simple fact and credits the information to an official source.</p>		
	<b>Monogloss</b>	<p>the Philippines scored <b>5.68 out of 10...</b> at medium-high risk.” (CA-9)</p>	<p>The writer states this statistic as a direct fact. It does not mention a report or a source, presenting the score as an objective truth.</p>	9	5.61%
		<p>“the Philippines ranked <b>115th out of 180 countries</b> in corruption</p>	<p>The statement presents the corruption ranking as a factual and taken-for-granted claim</p>		

		index.” (EA-16)	without citing a source. This lack of attribution gives it an authoritative tone and limits opportunities for questioning or alternative perspectives.		
		“students who are frequently tardy are <b>more likely to miss important instructions.</b> ” (CA-29)	The writer frames this link between behavior and consequence as a certainty. It is stated as a universal fact without showing evidence or proof.		
		“ <b>The Philippines ranked 79th</b> most polluted air in the world in 2023.” (EA-32)	This statement treats the ranking as a confirmed reality. It acts as a final claim, leaving no room for other perspectives to be discussed.		
		“In 2024, nearly <b>5 million Filipinos benefited</b> from the DSWD’s AKAP program, while the 2025 budget allocates P591.8 billion for cash	The writer uses these specific numbers as a simple statement of fact. The lack of a source marker makes the information feel like an absolute reality.		

		assistance.” (EA-43)			
Graduation	Force	“a <b>staggering</b> 258 million school-age children lack access to education.” (CA-40)	The word “staggering” intensifies the statistic by emphasizing its magnitude and prompting a sense of shock or concern. It frames the number as exceptionally high and directs the reader to view the issue as serious and alarming.	26	16.35%
		“Child labor has to be <b>ended; active action is a must</b> to rectify the issue.” (EA-44)	The phrase “a must” is used to show a strong requirement. It makes the need for action feel urgent, leaving no room for delay or hesitation.		
		“a <b>complete 180-degree</b> turn.” (EA-48)	The writer uses the term “180-degree turn” to describe the scale of a change. This mathematical phrase amplifies the extent of the action, showing that the change		

			is total and absolute.		
		“...teachers remain underpaid, resources are <b>scarce</b> , and students continue to study in shifts or <b>cramped spaces</b> .” (EA-49)	The writer chooses the word "cramped" instead of "small" to describe the space. This word boosts the force of the description, emphasizing that the space is not just tight, but uncomfortably overcrowded.		
	<b>Focus</b>	"Having clean water is a <b>basic</b> human right." (EA-1)	The word "basic" is used to sharpen the definition of water access. It sets a strict boundary, framing water as a fundamental necessity rather than a choice.	19	11.95%
		“there is an <b>unquestionable urgency</b> ...” (EA-16)	By using "unquestionable," the writer sharpens the category of urgency. It removes any doubt, making the situation		

			feel absolute and "pure."		
		“education should be a <b>basic right</b> , not a luxury.” (EA-19)	This statement sharpens the distinction between a right and a luxury. It draws a clear, firm line that defines education as an essential		
		“Value-laden behaviors that are out of step with our <b>progressive</b> ideals can be eliminated...” (EA-32)	The term “progressive” narrows what counts as “ideal” by delimiting it to values aligned with modern or reform-oriented standards, thereby excluding behaviors that do not conform to these criteria. This lexical choice restricts the scope of “ideal” to a specific evaluative frame, positioning only certain value systems as acceptable.		
		“students cannot even solve the <b>most basic</b>	The phrase “the most basic” narrows what counts as		

		<p><b>math problems.”</b> (EA-50)</p>	<p>mathematical competence by delimiting it to the lowest level of difficulty, thereby excluding higher levels of complexity from consideration. This lexical choice restricts the scope of evaluation to a minimal standard, positioning the simplest tasks as the benchmark for competence..</p>		
		<p>“...content so basic that it <b>almost</b> insults the intelligence...” (EA-48)</p>	<p>The word "almost" is a softening hedge. It signals that the content is very close to being an insult, but it blurs the line by not calling it an insult directly.</p>		

**Table 2. Persuasive Intentions Reflected in Award-Winning NSPC Editorial Section**

<b>Appraisal Resource</b>	<b>Dominant Use</b>	<b>Persuasive Intent</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
<b>Appreciation</b>	Frequent	Systemic Evaluation and Legitimization	The discourse foregrounds institutional performance through evaluative expressions such as “inefficient,” “failing system,” “effective mechanism.” By shifting attention from individuals to structures, the argument is framed as an analytical assessment rather than a personal stance. This

			positions the claims as objective and evidence-based, increasing their legitimacy and persuasive appeal.
		Ideological Framing of Social Values	Evaluations like “essential service,” “harmful practice,” “beneficial reform” reflect what the writer prioritizes as socially valuable or problematic. Through repeated emphasis on these qualities, the discourse gradually privileges certain values while marginalizing others. This guides readers to align with the writer’s perspective by presenting these values as inherently desirable.
		Standard-Setting for Evaluation	Terms such as “substandard,” “adequate,” “ideal response” function to establish implicit criteria for judging situations. These expressions do more than describe conditions—they construct benchmarks for what counts as acceptable or unacceptable. As a result, readers adopt the same standards when interpreting the issue.
<b>Judgment</b>	Moderate	Ethical Framing of Social Accountability	Actions are evaluated using moral expressions like “irresponsible,” “neglectful,” “commendable,” framing issues in terms of ethical responsibility. This shifts interpretation from neutral observation to moral evaluation, making accountability central to the argument. Readers are encouraged to judge situations based on shared standards of right and wrong.

		Credibility Construction of Social Actors	Descriptions such as “competent leaders,” “corrupt officials,” “unreliable authorities” shape how individuals and institutions are perceived. By emphasizing positive or negative qualities, the discourse influences which actors are seen as trustworthy. This affects how readers align with particular viewpoints or sources.
<b>Affect</b>	Moderate	Controlled Emotional Engagement	Emotional expressions such as “concerning,” “disturbing,” “disheartening” are integrated within analytical statements to connect issues with lived experience. Rather than overwhelming the discourse, these emotions support the reasoning process. This balance maintains credibility while still engaging the reader.
		Reader Alignment through Shared Feeling	Inclusive expressions such as “ <i>we are frustrated</i> ,” “ <i>many feel disheartened</i> ” construct a shared emotional stance. This reduces distance between writer and reader by reflecting common experiences. As a result, readers are more likely to align with the argument.
<b>Heterogloss</b>	Frequent	Interdiscursive Validation of Claims	References like “according to studies,” “experts argue,” “data reveals” situate claims within a broader field of knowledge. This expands the argument beyond individual opinion, enhancing its credibility. Readers are more inclined to trust claims that appear socially supported.
		Pre-emptive Limitation of Counterarguments	Structures like “while it may seem,” “although others believe” anticipate opposing views and immediately qualify them. This reduces their persuasive strength before they fully develop. As a result, the

			preferred stance remains dominant.
<b>Monogloss</b>	Low	Assertion of Taken-for-Granted-Truths	Statements such as “it is clear,” “undeniably,” “it is evident” present claims as self-evident. This removes the need for further justification and establishes them as foundational premises. Readers are less likely to question these assertions
		Reinforcement of Shared Assumptions	Phrases such as “everyone knows,” “it is widely accepted” appeal to commonly held beliefs. This creates a sense of agreement between writer and reader. It reduces resistance by building on shared understanding.
<b>Force</b>	Frequent	Intensification of Issue Urgency	Intensifiers like “extremely,” “severely,” “critically” amplify the seriousness of issues. This ensures that key concerns are perceived as urgent and significant. It directs readers to prioritize these points.
		Escalation of Argumentative Weight	Progressive expressions such as “increasingly alarming,” “more severe” build momentum across the discourse. This escalation makes later claims appear more compelling. It contributes to a cumulative persuasive effect.
<b>Focus</b>	Moderate	Delimitation and Precision of Meaning	Expressions like “true reform,” “mere compliance” define strict conceptual boundaries. This ensures that ideas are interpreted within limits set by the argument. It reduces ambiguity and strengthens clarity.
		Controlled Generalization of Claims	Phrases like “in most cases,” “generally speaking” adjust the scope of claims. This provides flexibility while maintaining persuasive strength. It helps balance specificity and generalization effectively.

## DISCUSSION

### Table 1. Persuasive Strategies Found in Award-Winning NSPC Editorial Sections

The analysis of 159 sample statements establishes that Attitude is the primary persuasive strategy, accounting for 49.05% of the total occurrences. While Martin and White (2005) position evaluative language as the core mechanism of persuasion, more recent studies argue that evaluation alone is insufficient without reader-oriented interaction (Hyland & Jiang, 2022). This aligns with Bednarek (2008), who critiques appraisal categories for potentially oversimplifying cognitive distinctions in evaluative processing. In contrast, van Dijk (2006) frames evaluation as inherently ideological, shaping how readers construct social reality. The present study demonstrates that award-winning editorial section in the NSPC reconcile these positions by using Attitude not merely as linguistic evaluation, but as a strategic resource that simultaneously constructs alignment, credibility, and ideological framing. Rather than simply describing issues, writers actively position readers toward preferred interpretations, confirming that persuasion operates through guided evaluation rather than neutral reporting.

Furthermore, evaluative language in the corpus operates to normalize particular interpretations of social issues. While earlier perspectives reveal that repeated evaluation constructs a “taken-for-granted” reality, recent work in metadiscourse highlights that such normalization is sustained through interactional positioning and reader alignment (Hyland, 2021). This imply that persuasion in award-winning editorial section in the NSPC is not only embedded in what is evaluated but also in how readers are positioned to accept these evaluations as commonsensical. The high frequency of Attitude therefore reflects a deliberate strategy to guide interpretation and reinforce shared values, rather than merely express opinion.

Affect, accounting for 11.95% of occurrences, functions as a controlled emotional resource. Martin and White (2005) describe Affect as enabling emotional alignment, yet more recent studies emphasize that effective persuasion requires balancing emotion with rational evaluation (Xie & Liu, 2023). This supports Bednarek (2009), who argues for more precise categorization of emotional expression, as well as Moraes and Pérez (2013), who propose a psychologically grounded classification of affective meaning. In the editorial sections, Affect is used sparingly and strategically, reinforcing Pascual and Unger’s (2010) claim that emotional intensity, rather than frequency, determines persuasive impact. Emotional expressions are often embedded within evaluative statements, allowing writers to humanize issues without compromising analytical tone. This controlled calibration demonstrates that student journalists are not merely expressing emotion but are strategically deploying it to strengthen reader engagement while maintaining credibility.

Judgment, with 14.47% of occurrences, evaluates behavior in relation to social and ethical norms. While Fairclough (2003) argues that such evaluations are shaped by institutional and ideological contexts, Hyland (2005) emphasizes that effective persuasion depends on inviting reader agreement rather than imposing moral evaluation. This

tension is further elaborated by van Dijk (2006), who notes that evaluative discourse constructs ideological oppositions. However, it is highlighted that implicit or “invoked” judgment is often more persuasive than explicit labeling, as it allows readers to arrive at conclusions independently (Fuoli, 2018). The editorial and column articles reflect this balance, as writers combine inscribed and invoked judgment to critique actions while maintaining journalistic neutrality. This demonstrates that persuasion is achieved not through direct moral imposition, but through subtle positioning that encourages reader inference.

Appreciation, the most dominant subcategory at 22.64%, evaluates systems, policies, and conditions. While White (2003) discloses that Appreciation naturalizes evaluation, making it appear inherent to the object described, however, Liu et al., 2024 indicate that such evaluation functions as a means of legitimizing institutional perspectives. This supports Fairclough (2003), who links evaluative discourse to the reinforcement of dominant ideologies, while also aligning with Hyland (2005), who frames evaluation as a marker of credible authorial stance. In the award-winning editorial section in the NSPC, Appreciation allows writers to critique systems without directly targeting individuals, thereby maintaining objectivity while advancing persuasive intent. The dominance of this resource indicates a strategic preference for analytical persuasion, where arguments are framed through system evaluation rather than personal attack.

Engagement resources account for 22.60% of occurrences, with heterogloss (16.99%) significantly outweighing monogloss (5.61%). While Bakhtin (1981) conceptualizes discourse as inherently dialogic, more recent metadiscourse studies emphasize that engagement functions as a key persuasive strategy for building credibility and reader alignment (Dontcheva-Navratilova et al., 2020). This supports Hyland’s (2003) argument that persuasion is achieved through interaction with readers rather than mere information delivery. At the same time, van Dijk (2006) cautions that monoglossic assertions may obscure ideological positioning when presented as unquestioned facts. The award-winning editorial section in the NSPC demonstrates a strategic balance where writers predominantly employ heterogloss to incorporate external voices and shared knowledge, thereby strengthening ethos, while reserving monogloss for widely accepted claims. This interplay confirms that persuasion operates through controlled dialogic positioning, where multiple voices are acknowledged but ultimately guided toward a preferred interpretation.

Graduation resources, accounting for 28.95% of occurrences, function to scale the intensity and precision of evaluation. While Martin and White (2005) describe Graduation as a system of scaling, more recent studies highlight that intensification and stance are central to modern persuasive discourse (Hyland & Jiang, 2022). This supports Bednarek (2009), who warns that excessive intensification may lead to rhetorical fatigue. In the editorial and column articles, however, intensification is anchored in evidence, ensuring that emphasis enhances rather than weakens credibility. Moreover, Force amplifies urgency, particularly in highlighting social issues, while Focus sharpens categorical boundaries, enabling precise evaluation. This aligns with Moraes and Pérez (2013), who argue that boundary-setting enhances persuasive clarity. Thus, the interaction between

Force and Focus demonstrates that effective persuasion requires both intensity and control, allowing writers to emphasize key points while maintaining analytical precision.

Hence, the integration of Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation confirms that persuasion in award-winning editorial section in the NSPC operates as a coordinated linguistic system. While Martin and White (2005) propose that these systems function interdependently, recent discourse studies extend this view by emphasizing the role of interaction, credibility, and reader positioning in persuasive communication (Hyland, 2021; Hyland & Jiang, 2022). The findings reveal a consistent pattern in award-winning editorials: a preference for evaluative, dialogic, and strategically intensified discourse.

The dominance of Attitude, particularly Appreciation, indicates that effective editorials prioritize system evaluation over emotional appeal, reinforcing analytical credibility. The controlled use of Affect ensures emotional resonance without compromising professionalism. The prominence of heterogloss reflects a dialogic orientation that enhances credibility through alignment with external voices. Meanwhile, Graduation calibrates urgency and precision, enabling writers to move beyond information delivery toward persuasive activation.

From the perspective of the Theory of Planned Behavior of Ajzen (1991), these findings extend beyond linguistic analysis. Attitude shapes evaluative beliefs, Engagement reinforces perceived social norms, and Graduation enhances perceived urgency and control. This demonstrates that NSPC editorials function not only as texts but as instruments of behavioral influence, guiding readers toward particular interpretations and potential actions.

While foundational theories remain relevant, the integration of recent studies highlights that persuasive discourse is not static but evolves toward greater interaction and reader orientation. The NSPC corpus demonstrates that student journalists are able to navigate these developments, employing appraisal resources in a manner that reflects both theoretical grounding and practical effectiveness.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of NSPC editorials lies in the strategic orchestration of evaluative language, dialogic engagement, and controlled intensification. Persuasion is achieved not through isolated linguistic features, but through the dynamic interaction of these resources, resulting in discourse that is analytically grounded, rhetorically effective, and socially responsive.

## **Table 2. Persuasive Intentions in the Editorial Section in the NSPC**

The analysis of persuasive intentions in award-winning NSPC editorial section reveals that persuasion is constructed through a coordinated system of evaluation, positioning, and intensification, where each appraisal resource performs distinct yet interrelated functions. The frequent use of Attitude, supported by Graduation and moderated by Engagement, demonstrates that persuasive discourse in this context operates through layered meaning-making rather than isolated linguistic choices. Within this system, specific persuasive intentions such as systemic evaluation, ethical framing,

controlled emotional engagement, interdiscursive validation, and calibrated intensification, work together to produce arguments that are both credible and rhetorically effective.

At the core of this resource is Attitude, where Appreciation foregrounds systemic evaluation and legitimization as the dominant persuasive intention. Writers consistently frame issues through institutional performance, aligning with Charteris-Black (2021), who emphasizes that persuasion in public discourse is achieved through evaluative framing of reality. However, award-winning editorial and column articles extend this perspective by not only evaluating systems but also framing ideological values and establishing standards of evaluation, where expressions such as “essential,” “harmful,” and “substandard” define what is socially desirable and what counts as acceptable performance. While Feng and O’Halloran (2020) emphasize the role of evaluation in shaping audience perception, NSPC winning pieces operationalize this more precisely by controlling both the content and criteria of evaluation, thereby influencing not only what readers think but how they judge.

This evaluative orientation enters into tension with Fairclough’s (1995) claim that discourse often reproduces dominant ideologies through overt positioning. NSPC-winning editorial sections demonstrate a more moderated approach: ideological meanings are embedded within systemic evaluation rather than explicitly asserted. This creates a form of persuasion that maintains critical depth while preserving credibility, indicating that student writers negotiate between critique and professionalism rather than fully adopting confrontational discourse.

Alongside Appreciation, Judgment operates through ethical framing of social accountability, but its moderate frequency reflects restraint. This aligns with Hyland (2021), who argues that persuasion is more effective when it invites reader alignment rather than imposes evaluation. Editorial sections that won in the NSPC achieve this by integrating moral assessments such as “irresponsible” or “commendable” within broader analysis. At the same time, Judgment also performs credibility construction of social actors, where labels like “competent leaders” or “corrupt officials” shape trust relations within the text. This extends Van Dijk’s (2006) position that discourse constructs social divisions, but NSPC editorials temper this effect by avoiding excessive polarization, maintaining inclusivity while still assigning accountability.

Furthermore, Judgment enables justification of corrective action, particularly when actions are framed as “unjust” or “unacceptable.” This function resonates with Abdullah’s (2022) findings that persuasion in opinion writing relies on structured argumentation supported by evaluative language. NSPC editorials reflect this by allowing ethical evaluation to accumulate into a rationale for intervention, where calls for change emerge as logical consequences rather than imposed directives.

Affect, used at a moderate level, reinforces persuasion through controlled emotional engagement, aligning with Ngo and Unsworth (2021), who emphasize the balance between emotion and evaluation. Emotional expressions such as “concerning” and “disheartening” are integrated within analytical discourse, ensuring that emotional

appeal supports rather than overrides reasoning. However, NSPC editorials further demonstrate reader alignment through shared feeling, where expressions like “we are frustrated” construct a collective stance between writer and audience. This extends Moraes and Pérez’s (2013) critique by showing that emotional expression, when embedded within evaluation, can maintain precision while enhancing engagement. In contrast to Wang’s (2022) emphasis on pathos, NSPC editorials illustrate that emotional persuasion is most effective when moderated and strategically positioned within rational argumentation.

Within Engagement, heterogloss dominates through interdiscursive validation of claims, where references such as “according to studies” and “experts argue” situate arguments within broader knowledge systems. This aligns with Dafouz-Milne (2021) and Hyland and Jiang (2022), who highlight the role of external voices in constructing credibility and reader alignment. At the same time, NSPC editorial sections demonstrate pre-emptive limitation of counterarguments, using structures like “although others believe” to introduce and immediately contain opposing views. This creates a productive tension between White’s (2003) view that engagement narrows interpretive space and Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism. The writers of these winning pieces reconcile these positions by allowing multiple voices to enter the discourse while still guiding interpretation toward a preferred stance.

In contrast, monogloss operates through assertion of taken-for-granted truths, but its low frequency reflects strategic restraint. Statements such as “it is evident” establish foundational premises, aligning with Albalat-Mascarell and Carrió-Pastor (2020) on the use of boosters in asserting certainty. At the same time, monogloss also reinforces shared assumptions, as expressions like “it is widely accepted” create immediate alignment with readers. However, this controlled use supports Hyland’s (2021) argument that excessive certainty can reduce engagement. NSPC writers balance authority and openness by limiting monogloss, ensuring that certainty strengthens clarity without restricting dialogue.

Graduation further reinforces persuasion through Force and Focus, where Force intensifies issue urgency and escalates argumentative weight. Intensifiers such as “extremely” and progressive expressions like “increasingly alarming” amplify the seriousness of issues, aligning with Halmari (2005) and Charteris-Black (2021) on the role of intensification in rhetorical framing. However, NSPC editorials demonstrate control in this amplification, addressing Bednarek’s (2009) concern about rhetorical excess by ensuring that intensity builds progressively rather than saturates the discourse.

Complementing this, Focus operates through delimitation and precision of meaning, as well as controlled generalization of claims. Expressions like “true reform” and “generally speaking” refine how concepts are interpreted and how broadly claims apply. This aligns with Xie and Liu (2023), who emphasize the importance of clarity and precision in persuasive writing. Award-winning editorial sections extend this by showing that persuasion involves not only emphasizing issues but also regulating how they are understood, balancing specificity with flexibility.

Across all appraisal resources, a consistent pattern emerges: persuasion in NSPC editorials is achieved through integration and control of multiple persuasive intentions. Rather than relying on a single dominant strategy, writers combine systemic evaluation, ethical positioning, emotional alignment, dialogic validation, and calibrated emphasis to construct coherent and credible arguments. This reflects contemporary discourse studies while also extending them, demonstrating how these mechanisms operate in student journalism.

Ultimately, NSPC-winning editorials distinguish themselves through their ability to transform opinion into structured critique. By orchestrating these persuasive intentions within a controlled and balanced framework, writers produce discourse that is not only convincing but also analytically grounded. This coordinated use of appraisal resources highlights persuasion as a deliberate and disciplined practice, marking the sophistication of award-winning editorial sections.

## Conclusions

This study examined the persuasive strategies and intentions embedded in the editorial sections of award-winning secondary school papers in the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC). In response to the first research question, the findings revealed that persuasion is primarily realized through the strategic use of appraisal resources, particularly Attitude, which accounted for the highest frequency. Within this category, Appreciation emerged as the dominant subcategory, indicating that student writers prioritize the evaluation of systems, policies, and social conditions rather than focusing on individuals. This reflects a pattern of analytical persuasion where arguments are grounded in systemic critique, allowing writers to construct credibility while maintaining journalistic objectivity. Meanwhile, the moderate use of Judgment and Affect suggests a controlled approach to moral evaluation and emotional engagement, ensuring that persuasion remains balanced and professionally framed. The presence of Engagement, particularly heterogloss, further demonstrates that writers actively incorporate external voices and shared knowledge to strengthen credibility, while Graduation resources calibrate intensity and precision, enabling emphasis without rhetorical excess. Overall, the findings confirm that persuasive strategies in NSPC editorials function as an integrated linguistic system rather than isolated features.

In response to the second research question, the analysis revealed that these linguistic strategies reflect specific persuasive intentions that operate in a coordinated manner. The dominant use of Appreciation indicates an intention toward systemic evaluation and legitimization, where writers frame issues through institutional performance and establish standards of judgment. Judgment contributes to ethical framing and social accountability, encouraging readers to evaluate actions based on moral standards without imposing direct criticism. Affect supports controlled emotional engagement, allowing writers to align with readers' sentiments while maintaining analytical tone. Through heterogloss, writers achieve interdiscursive validation, situating their arguments within broader knowledge systems and enhancing rhetorical authority, while monogloss is selectively used to assert commonly accepted truths. Additionally, Graduation resources reflect intentions of intensification and precision, where Force

amplifies urgency and Focus sharpens meaning, guiding readers toward clearer interpretation. These findings demonstrate that persuasion in NSPC editorials is not merely expressive but intentional, where linguistic choices are carefully orchestrated to influence interpretation and encourage alignment.

Taken together, the study concludes that award-winning NSPC editorials achieve persuasive effectiveness through the deliberate integration of evaluation, positioning, and intensification. Rather than relying on overt persuasion, student writers construct arguments that are analytically grounded, rhetorically balanced, and socially responsive. This highlights the sophistication of student journalism, where persuasive discourse is shaped not only by what is said but by how meaning is systematically constructed through language.

## **Recommendations**

This study establishes a descriptive and interpretive account of persuasive intentions in NSPC editorial sections; however, several areas require further investigation to strengthen and extend its findings. Future research should prioritize confirmatory approaches to validate the patterns identified in this discourse analysis. While the present study focuses on textual interpretation, subsequent studies may incorporate validation from NSPC judges, journalism experts, or evaluators to determine whether the identified persuasive strategies and intentions align with actual criteria used in assessing winning editorials. This will strengthen the reliability of the findings by connecting linguistic analysis with evaluative standards in the competition.

In relation to methodology, future researchers are encouraged to conduct a confirmatory discourse analysis that integrates both qualitative and quantitative validation procedures. This may include the use of expert coding, inter-rater agreement, or rubric-based evaluation to verify the classification of appraisal resources. Such an approach will address the inherent limitation of discourse analysis, where interpretation is often researcher-driven, and will provide a more robust basis for generalizing the findings.

Future studies may also explore alternative analytical perspectives beyond Appraisal Theory. While this study focuses on evaluative language, other frameworks such as critical discourse analysis, metadiscourse analysis, or rhetorical analysis may provide additional insights into how persuasion operates in student journalism. Examining the same corpus through different theoretical lenses can enrich understanding and reveal dimensions of persuasion that are not captured within a single framework.

In addition, there is a need to investigate the process of editorial writing and coaching practices in relation to persuasive outcomes. Future research may examine how journalism advisers train students to construct arguments, select evidence, and apply evaluative language. This perspective will provide a clearer link between instructional practices and the production of NSPC-winning editorials, offering insights into how persuasive competence is developed in educational settings.

Another potential area of inquiry involves the reader-response dimension of persuasion. While this study focuses on how persuasive intentions are constructed in texts, future research may examine how these intentions are received and interpreted by readers. This can be explored through interviews, focus groups, or experimental designs that analyze how different audiences respond to specific appraisal resources. Such studies will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of persuasive strategies.

Moreover, future researchers may examine emerging patterns of persuasion in digital and multimodal contexts, particularly in online school publications. As campus journalism continues to expand beyond print, it becomes necessary to analyze how visual elements, layout, and digital features interact with language to construct persuasive meaning. This will extend the scope of the current study and reflect contemporary practices in student journalism.

Finally, future research should continue to refine the conceptualization of persuasive intentions as a central unit of analysis. The present study demonstrates that persuasion operates through identifiable intentions linked to linguistic resources; however, further studies may develop more nuanced classifications or models that capture additional dimensions of persuasive discourse. This will contribute to the advancement of discourse analysis by strengthening its explanatory power and applicability in educational contexts.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

The researcher ensured full compliance with ethical standards throughout the conduct of the study. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from authorized school representatives, clearly explaining the purpose, procedures, and scope of the research, including their right to withdraw participation at any time without penalty. Although the study involved publicly available documents, strict measures were implemented to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of all sources by removing identifying details and using coded labels. The research adhered to the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), ensuring that all collected materials were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. The well-being of all stakeholders, particularly student writers, was safeguarded by avoiding any form of misrepresentation, harm, or reputational risk through careful and respectful handling of the data. The researcher declares that no conflict of interest existed in the conduct of the study and that all interpretations were carried out with objectivity and without bias, supported by systematic procedures and expert validation. Plagiarism was strictly avoided, and all sources were properly cited following academic standards. The findings and results of the study were used purely for academic and research purposes and were not intended for any commercial or non-academic use. Furthermore, for full transparency, the researcher acknowledges that AI-assisted tools were used solely for language refinement and editing support, while all core analysis, interpretation, and intellectual contributions remain the original work of the researcher.

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