Literature in Practice

Guided by Emotions: A Pedagogy of Pathos for Persuasive Writing

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Abstract

Pathos is a rhetorical technique that appeals to the emotions and five senses. This paper frames pathos arguments as a language skill that can guide the structure of persuasive essays. During the drafting stages, procatalepsis or "They Say / I Say" provides a conversational structure that responds to the audience's concerns. This structure facilitates empathy and consequently elicits emotional and sensory language (pathos) to engage the audience's worldview. Similarly, pathos can inform the later stages of an essay when one elaborates on claims made in the body. Literature and visual narrative can serve as pedagogical examples to explore and express the pathos applicable to one's audience. This paper, therefore, presents activities that employ images, literature, and sensory language to develop pathos language skill to build a persuasive essay.

Key words: Pathos, rhetorical devices, structure, persuasive writing, visual narrative

According to Tsang et al., learners view literature as particularly beneficial for cultivating "knowledge of the world, understanding of humans' thoughts and emotions" (2020, p. 17). This knowledge and understanding gained uniquely from literature can serve as the starting point and guide for persuasive communication. This paper explores how pathos appeals can produce output to fill the structural elements of an argument such as "They Say / I Say" (procatalepsis), thesis statement, and martini glass argument structure (i.e., a broad introduction; an author-driven elaboration; a section that connects the argument to broader concerns) (Komenda & Karolyi, 2016, p. 4). Wood et al. (2009, p. 23) outlines three kinds of pathos: naming emotion (simply stating the emotions that the speaker would like his audience to feel); evoking physical sensations (engaging the five senses); and using visuals (especially those with strong emotional and sensory stimulus). This article presents pedagogical applications of these three pathos types to inform thesis statement and argument formation. Emotional and sensory language can be used without research: feelings about topics (i.e., baseball, spicy chicken wings, maternity leave,

subsidies) are to an extent immediately experienced and can be immediately described (e.g., relaxing, boring, delicious, helpful, wasteful). Such emotions provide perspective about these topics to equip students with clear guidance. The skill of elaborating immediately experienced emotions can help students quickly develop three supporting points of a thesis statement. Therefore, pathos can fill in the structural elements of procatalepsis, martini glass, and thesis statement. This focus on linguistic output via emotional engagement is in agreement with the precedence literature which repudiates L2 learning via mere instrumentality (Tsang & Paran 2021, p. 2).

Structural Elements Using Pathos

Procatalepsis is a counter-argument—a response to one's naysayers. This device is used to engage other perspectives, progress one's argument, and acknowledge potential weaknesses of that argument (LiteraryDevices Editors, 2013). Grasping the emotional state and values of naysayers (i.e., Aristotle considered justice, generosity, courage, gentleness and wisdom as pathos appeals) is imperative for making effective pathos and procatalepsis

appeals (Demirdögen, 2010). Graff and Birkenstein (2014) recast procatalepsis in the more learner-friendly term "They Say / I Say" and as a format to structure academic arguments. These authors assert that the primary feature of superior argumentation is to be "deeply engaged in some way with other people's views" and that this involves "listening closely to others around us, summarizing their views in a way that they will recognize, and responding with our own ideas in kind" (ibid, 3). They stress that the procatalepsis must not be nullified by the strawman fallacy (i.e., misrepresenting opposing views so that they will be easier to dismiss).

Graff and Birkenstein (2014) illustrate the impact of using "They Say / I Say" as a big-picture structure that engages an otherwise disengaged audience. They portray sleeping, confused students responding to a speaker who forgets the "they say" of his argument as he states: "The characters in *The Sopranos* are very complex!" (p. 4). His audience becomes captivated once he applies the "they say": "Some say that *The Sopranos* presents caricatures of Italian Americans. In fact, however, the characters in the series are very complex!" (p. 5). Thus, the audience is oriented to the speaker's challenge to the audience's existing perception: that *The Sopranos* depict merely inaccurate stereotypes. Demirdögen (2010) explains that when rational appeals fail to reach unmotivated audiences, persuaders can turn to emotional appeals. Procatalepsis directly addresses and challenges the worldviews and perceptions of such audiences. It is a practical means to use pathos. Engaging the naysayers with "They Say / I Say" provides an opportunity to persuade by empathizing with their concerns.

"They Say / I Say" connects well to the "martini glass" format for organizing an argument, a format in which one's argument is oriented to the "the big picture," i.e., what is relevant to the audience's immediate knowledge or experience. The first phase of the martini glass is the "kicker," which entails the "who," "what," "when," "where," and "why" of the argument in order to draw the attention of the audience to the "entire domain" (Komenda and Karolyi 2016, p. 4). (The second and third phases of the martini glass correspond to the typical body and conclusion of essays and are discussed in the last paragraph of this section.) In this "kicker" introduction, Graft and Birkenstein (2014, p. 19, p. 78) suggest naming two groups: the "naysayers" which are the sources from the which "they say" comes and the "who cares" (i.e., the groups directly affected by one's argument). Accordingly, pathos appeals are fitting

in essay introductions which engage groups who viscerally relate to the topic.

A preferable topic for a thesis statement is not only narrow, but also disputable, so that the speaker can make a claim about it. The thesis statement often includes three elements: a narrowed topic, a claim (i.e., the argument one is seeking to establish), and a plan that tells the reader how the essay will address the issue (e.g., often three main points which support the argument) (CUNY Writing Center, 2015). The aforementioned source exemplifies a narrowed topic as not dessert or ice cream, but as Ben and Jerry's Chunky Monkey Ice Cream. (In contrast to the abstract concept, the specific ice cream brand is preferable because it evokes memories, images, and the five senses). Since this topic is narrowed, one could also make a claim regarding whether it is healthy based on the information on its label or compare it with its competitors. Kluge and Taylor (2007), likewise, provide examples of narrowed topics such as "Beethoven's struggle with deafness" instead of its overly broader counterpart "Beethoven's …[challenging]... life" which could become unwieldy and aimless in attempting to encompass family issues, unsuccessful romantic pursuits, and and poor health; "Audrey Hepburn's resistance against the Nazis" instead of "the charm of Audrey Hepburn." This book also provides some helpful criteria for vetting narrowed topics by considering whether they are too personal ("My trip to Indonesia"), non-academic ("Hello Kitty is very cute"), or too trivial (How to cook tea) and with their improved counterparts: "Political Transition in Indonesia"; "The Hello Kitty Boom in Asia and America"; and "The Effects of Green Tea in Preventing Cancer." These improved, narrowed topics lend themselves better not only to making specific arguments but also to being understood through the senses and emotions.

Shore (2016, p.67-8) also contrasts "muddy" and clear thesis statements.

1. "In this essay it has been asserted that various factors should be assessed when analyzing the merits of British cuisine…" (muddy)
2. "British food tastes good. It is nutritious, palatable, and historically proven to sustain a nation." (clear)

He provides various reasons why the latter is preferable such as that it uses active tense and lists the three supporting points, which obviate the need for explaining each support in separate sentences. "Nutritious" and "palatable" exemplify pathos arguments as they relate to

senses (taste) and perception (worldview). Kluge and Taylor (2007) offer the following example of a thesis statement: "Japanese women reject marriage and motherhood because they do not get enough financial or moral support from governments or partners" (p. 13). This example not only sets up the structure with a list of three, but also presents in emotional and sensory language a relatable topic that appeals to the difficulties of Japanese women.

The thesis statement guides the rest of the essay. Aside from progressing the essay from familiar to novel, important to least important, or simple to complex, Fryxell (1996) suggests beginning in the action-packed middle followed by a chronological explanation and a dramatic conclusion (p. 10, p. 18). Following the "kicker" (i.e., The introductory model mentioned above), the martini glass continues with the body of the essay i.e., the "stem" which is an "author-driven scenario" in which the thesis statement is elaborated. The concluding section connects the argument with broader concerns for further exploration for the audience. Such broader concerns are often framed as a "so what?" in the sense of explaining what is at stake for the audience as a result of the argument. Graft and Birkenstein (2014describe how the "so what?" functions: "In *Huckleberry Finn*, a writer could argue that seemingly narrow disputes about the hero's relationship with Jim actually shed light on whether Twain's canonical, widely read novel is a critique of racism in America or is itself marred by it" (p. 97).

Language-Based Uses of Pathos
The following section includes exercises that show how students can develop pathos skill towards argument formation (exploring the senses through and deriving pathos appeals from narrative). Additionally, the example of *Bread!* by Kathe Kollwitz (1924) exemplifies how narrative can be derived from images and re-contextualized into one's argument. *Hours Continuing Long* by Walt Whitman (1885/1984) illustrates how literary elaboration and description can provide pathos appeals for an argument. Thus, this paper follows Hall's emphasis on the importance of "precise linguistic form" and "emotional engagement and feelings" for second language acquisition—which are gained from and explored in literary texts (2020 p. 9). Such activities encourage output—the output that generates a pathos argument (see the aforementioned example of Shore).

A. Don't Tell, Show (Using the Senses)
Exemplified above, an argumentative claim can be based simply upon sensory language (e.g., British food is "palatable" and "delicious"). When beginner and intermediate L2 learners produce the sensory language of a familiar situation, they are simultaneously developing the skill to form an argument. In the case of a soccer game, students can produce the following sensory words:

1. The *smells* of grass, beer, soda, dirt, rain.
2. The *sounds* of people cheering, directing the players to do a certain move, the players shouting and running.
3. The *touch* of the metal bleachers that everyone sits on, the water condensing on your drink, the heat from the sun.
4. The *taste* of soccer food (hot dogs, hamburgers, yakisoba).
5. The *view* of players crashing into each other, the numbers on the jerseys, the lights from the stadium.

The sensory context of such a scene can relate to the concerns of the naysayers and stakeholders. Such concerns may address arguments about whether a community decides to sponsor a sports club or build a stadium. The pathos concerns of this exercise may include preventing sports injuries or fostering community, economic or family activities. Teachers can elicit the five senses through other familiar situations such as memorable life events or settings such as one's childhood home or high school.

Donovan (2014) offers helpful examples of "showing" instead of "telling" and illustrates how to use pathos through clear descriptions such as "Sheena has *three piercings in her face* and wears her hair in a *purple Mohawk*" instead of "Sheena is a punk rocker"; "Charlie [wears] *dark glasses* and [is] accompanied by a *seeing-eye dog*" instead of "Charlie [is] blind"; and "*New buds* [are] *pushing through the frost*" instead of "It [is] early spring." Such evocative language can advocate for the counterculture, the blind, or climate change. It can connect to their respective struggles for freedom and creativity; equality and dignity; and ecological health and harmony. For example, Sheena's three piercings in the context of a hostile working environment could illustrate her achieving meaning, identity, and resolve in the face of bullying and ostracism. Consequently, her struggle (even

her piercings) could narrate a call for change in workplace harassment policies.

Accordingly, for an activity, teachers can elicit adjectives, emotional words, and sensory images for the following situations (See Table 1).

Table 1

Eliciting sensory language from example scenarios

Describe in detail:	Adjectives (possible answers)	Sensory language (possible answers)
It was a stormy night.	Dark, windy, rainy, dangerous, scary	The street is flooding. Rain is falling very fast and hard. The water is rising in the streets. The cars are turning back. Some cars are getting stuck. The cars can't move forward.
It was an exciting day.	Busy, fun, surprising, thrilling, intense	New places; amazing, gigantic buildings; clean water from a beautiful, clear river. We rode a speed boat on the ocean. What a beautiful view of the sky! The water went on forever. The air was so fresh and clean. New things I've never done before.
The cake was delicious.	Sweet, colorful, huge, layered, wavy, soft, creamy, chocolate, vanilla, strawberry	It has beautiful letters that say: "Happy 80th Birthday!" It has silver, white, and blue frosting that is in a wavy pattern. It has strawberries, blueberries, and melons dipped in a sweet, colorful sauce.

B. Walt Whitman's "Hours Continuing Long"

After pre-teaching vocabulary, awareness of pathos can be encouraged by giving the aforementioned poem to students and having them underline the sensory imagery and circle the emotional words. Seeing pathos being used can give students ideas for how to develop their own arguments and voices. Comprehension questions such as "Why can the speaker not be content?" will also illustrate how to apply pathos to an argument: students will grasp that the strong emotions of despair and the images of "plaintive cries" and "leaning one's face in her hands" in an "unfrequented spot" portray the speaker's unrequited love. The following poem by Walt Whitman

(1855/1984) names an array of emotional (in italics) and sensory images (underlined):

> "HOURS continuing long, *sore* and *heavy-hearted*,
> Hours of the dusk, when I withdraw to a *lonesome* and <u>unfrequented spot</u>, <u>seating myself</u>, <u>leaning my face in my hands</u>;
> Hours *sleepless*, <u>deep in the night</u>, when I go forth, <u>speeding swiftly the country roads, or through the city streets</u>, or pacing miles and miles, *<u>stifling plaintive cries</u>*;
> Hours *discouraged, distracted*—for the one I cannot *content* myself without, soon I saw him *content* himself without me;"

(Whitman & Kaplan, 1855/1984).

Such images and emotional language could portray how the aforementioned Charlie with dark glasses may feel as he struggles to adjust in a world that lacks proper accommodation and that is content to overlook the frustration and discontent he regularly experiences.

C. Visuals

Visual narrative can effectively convey the emotions of one's argument. Bearne and Wolstencroft (2007) explore the pedagogy of fostering "a critical awareness of how to read images" which entails capturing the ideas of images in order to be able to (re)present them (p. 20). To capture such ideas, students must learn to recognize and articulate the following:

1. the artist's / director's intent
2. category / genre (e.g., narrative, persuasive, procedural)
3. camera angle (close-up, distance, perspective)
4. color (how it relates to the atmosphere and action of the image)
5. settings (how time and place affects the meaning and emotions of the narrative)
6. posture of the subjects (p. 29, p. 47).

Teachers need to model how meaning is generated through these aspects of images and make explicit how they arrived at their understanding of the image (p. 38-9). Bearne and Wolstencroft also recommend students to use toys to experiment with these six aspects to grasp the emotional effects produced. As students articulate these effects, teachers can present alternative images and scenarios to elicit revisions and re-drafting. Segel and Heer (2010) provide several case studies of interpreting images and also mention other factors to consider such as salience (e.g., viewers' expectations in terms of reading order and placement, whether characters' bright colors are hidden or accentuated by a bright and dull background).

Color, setting, and the characters' posture in Kathe Kollwitz's work *Bread!* (1924) (Figure 1) is exemplified to generate meaning and emotional content for a thesis statement. *Bread!* is an unforgettable artwork which captures not only the suffering that resulted from war and poverty during the first half of the twentieth century but also the universal challenges of child-rearing. It

Figure 1

Kathe Kollwitz. (1867-1945). Bread!. *[lithograph]. The British Museum, London, England.*

depicts crying children pulling on their mother and looking up at her. The weight of children pulling seems to portray the mother's heavy responsibility to care for them. Her doubled-over back and her unseen face suggest that she feels the burden, but not the recognition or appreciation for her necessary work. The caption below simply states, "Bread!" which implies urgency (the exclamation point) for basic needs to be met (hence bread, not cake). "Man must not live by bread alone" (King James Version, 1769/2017) is a common expression in large parts of world and illustrates the central yet humble role of bread as a staple food therein. Students in rice-based cultures may benefit from a brief explanation of this cultural context. The monochromatic color also suggests the stark necessity of such a basic need—matter of fact like a bottom line or a doctor's report—of only one essential thing. Such a description can lead one to the emotional words of precariousness, responsibility, desperation, burden, fatigue, frustration, bitterness.

The context of this visual can inform Kluge and Taylor's example thesis statement that Japanese women are rejecting motherhood because they do not get enough support from the government or spouses (2007). Naming the emotions of this picture in the context of

child-rearing can help the audience understand why these women are reluctant to become primary care-takers. Likewise, an unseen face of a mother who alone must support these children without pay or recognition similarly can voice the hesitations that some Japanese women may understandably feel toward child-rearing.

Conclusion

Students can ascertain the pivotal role of pathos in argumentation and thus the pertinence of descriptive skill after they understand the elements of an argument (i.e., thesis statement, procatalepsis, martini glass). These elements give students a framework for engaging an audience. By considering their audiences' concerns in terms of emotional and sensory language, arguments can be developed via descriptive skill without prior research, with pathos providing the core of the argument that responds directly to an audience's concerns (e.g., Shore's claim that British food is "nutritious" and "palatable".) Following this logic, the activities above provide guidance for using pathos (i.e., Don't tell, show using senses) and the means for students to recognize its possibilities (i.e., *Bread!* by Kathe Kollwitz and *Hours Continuing Long* by Walt Whitman).

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