

Persuasive strategies in Saudi academic female application letter writing

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Abstract: Persuasiveness is an area of discourse that finds wide application in almost every aspect of human life, spreading from every day domestic discussions, Human-Computer interaction (Guerini, Stock and Zancanaro, 2004) and national or international government policies. The study of writing application letters is considered as an instance of persuasive discourse which may provide useful insights on the persuasive strategies employed by individuals of a given background and culture, at a given setup. In this light, this systematic, supported by empirical evidence study, part of a larger in depth investigation on Arabic persuasion, seeks to explore and register the persuasive strategies used by academic female Saudi Arabs. Seventy six, first year university students were asked to write a letter of application for a fictitious scholarship in an authentic academic environment. The language that appeared in this specific speech act was analysed at the level beyond the sentence structure, concentrating on the writer's persuasive strategies. Data were evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively. The frequencies of the independent and the dependent variables are initially offered followed by the relationships among the variables. It was found that despite the extensive use of religious references, perhaps expected in this specific situation, a number of other more global persuasive strategies were employed by most applicants, which were grouped according to the Aristotelian Logos, Ethos and Pathos framework. Strategies employed were clustered in groups aiming at constructing a map on persuasion of this specific speech act which would help increase global awareness in international communication.

Keywords: rhetoric, discourse analysis, stylistics, Arabic, persuasion, persuasive strategies.

Introduction

In the related bibliography one may find several definitions of *culture* which today could be understood both: a) in a productive fashion as 'a way of life' (Condon 1973) [1], i.e., in the way people live and encode messages, or/and b) in a receptive fashion, i.e. in the way people decode actions and messages (Ming-Mu and Cheng-Chieh, 2006) [2] in communication. Culture is often connected to a country which includes one or similar *tribes*. It is interesting to notice today that the term *tribe* has gained another semantic meaning to the one known, i.e. people of the same descent, social values and way of living, to describe people from different descents who share common ways of living, beliefs and social values and behave in a similar fashion across state or cultural borders, i.e. businessmen, artists, brokers, students. Language, on the other hand, is the main instrument of communication and contains semantic-sentence meanings and pragmatic-speaker's intentions. Also, it is: a) the instrument of communication recognized to be subjective, involving 'assumptions, ideas and beliefs which are often not

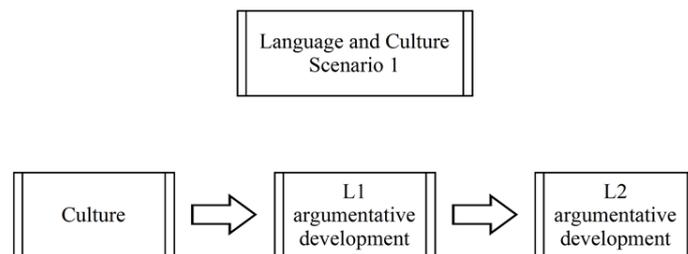
articulated’ (Jin and Cortazzi, 1993) [3], and b) the evident link in interaction and communication. Indeed Samovar, Porter and Jain (1981) [4] consider the pair ‘inseparable’. Finally, language is thought to be linked to a culture and further be affected by it (Atkinson 1999) [5], while Shen and Yao (1999) [6] suggest that understanding a culture could be achieved through the mastering of the conventions of composition in that language.

The relationship between language and culture on argumentative style was observed initially by Kaplan and it was registered in two non-empirical but action research studies in 1966 and 1988. Kaplan’s observations suggested that there were different, culturally-determined, patterns of expository writing which in his mind were influenced by different ‘cultural thought patterns’ which the author offered schematically as well. Kaplan summarized these patterns in five segments, namely Semitic, Oriental, Russian, Romance and English. Kaplan’s interest was on the apparent impact these thought patterns had in L2 writing and his findings contributed to the genesis of the area of *contrastive rhetoric* which started to operate under the umbrella of the blooming (at the time) area in applied linguistics, *contrastive analysis*.

‘Language and culture’ was the topic of the Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) in 1991 which led to the publication of a volume on the subject in the year 1993, edited by Graddol, Thompson and Byram. In this scientific area, language is seen not in ‘the narrow sense of the competing claims of different dialects, but in the more general sense of the complex relationships between language, politics and power’ (Stevenson, 1991) [7]. Two major hypotheses are typically discussed and tested in four scenarios:

A) Scenario (1) hypothesizes culture influencing the development of an L1, particularly in the areas of argumentative language, and there on, it investigates the transfer of L1 argumentative conventions to the L2. The term interference (Kupper, 2007) [8] is often used for ‘the transfer of features from speaker’s first languages into their second languages’ (Brown and Miller, 2013) [9]. This relationship is portrait in Diagram (1).

Diagram (1).



Although this hypothesis was not initially supported by all linguists, Odlin (1989:67) stated that ‘evidence for transfer’ or evidence of different cultures having different rhetorical styles was not always clear with concrete and undisputed findings, a number of scholars supported the issue with data empirically collected in contrastive studies or by supporting the hypothesis with the necessary theoretical background (Thomas, 1983 [9] ; Littlewood, 1983 [10]; Connor and Lauer 1985, 1988 [11]; Johnstone, 1989 [12]; Riley, 1989 [13] ; Mauranen 1992, 1993 [14]; James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis 1992 [15]; Cmejrková 1994; 1996 [16]; Ypsilandis 1994 [17]; Connor, Davis and Rycker, 1995 [18]), despite the registered problems with this approach (see Kramsch, 1998 [19], Kachru, 1999 [20]). From there on, a number of conferences have been dedicated to investigating the relationship between these two variables (language and culture) and a number of publications appeared in conference proceedings and international

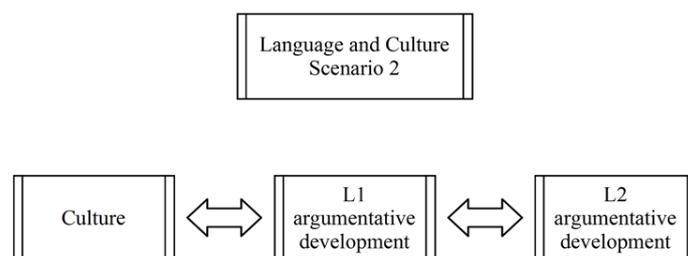
journals (among others, recently by Psaltou-Joycey and Ypsilandis 2001 [21]; Al-Ali 2004, 2006 [22]; Chakron, 2006 [23]; Figueiredo-Silva, 2008 [24]; Azuma, 2008 [25]; Purhayati, 2016 [26]). Among the books that have been published on the topic are Kramersch, (1993 and 1998) [27], Connor (1996, 2011) [28] and Hinkel (1999) [29].

The above and other evidence, discussed in the following chapters below, seems to be strong enough to claim that indeed the two variables meet, with the first (culture) having an impact on the second (language), in the way individuals or societies see and interpret stimuli and further express ideas and beliefs, particularly in persuasion and rhetoric, and that these language conventions are transferred, to a certain extent, to the L2. Although this type of language transfer is not enough to explain all infelicities of language-norm-differences occurring in native-non-native communication, it has been documented that this may lead to pragmalinguistic failure (James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis 1992 [30]; Al-Ali 2006) [31]. The research direction of most studies in the field was always from an L1 to the L2 with the second being typically the target or the norm to be acquired. Differences in the selection of persuasive strategies (or moves, Swales, 2004) [32] in oral communication have also been located between individuals at the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 in a recent study by Mori (2016) [33]. Mori's subjects (Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian State, Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of the State of Israel and president Hassan Rouhani, of the Islamic Republic of Iran,) expressed themselves through the use of different strategies, namely pathos moves for Mahmoud Abbas, logical persuasion for Netanyahu and ethos appeals by Rouhani.

B) Scenario (2) adds a diachronic element in rhetoric and it was firstly suggested by Kaplan (1966) [34] who specified that rhetoric does not only vary across cultures but also 'from time to time within a given culture'. This diachronic element supports a hypothesis in that rhetoric is dynamic and developing over the years and thus it is influenced by a different understanding of ideas (internal cultural development) and outside sources (external influence). This dynamic development has not been adequately researched or measured. Empirical or experimental research in this area, attempting to harness and test the independent variables that may have an impact on rhetoric, would be mostly welcome.

C) Scenario (3) builds on Kaplan's scenario (2) and in particular in the recent Kobayashi and Rinnert's (2012) [35] proposal to describe this relationship to run as a 'dynamic and fluid' system in the sense that it can be changing over the years by adding new contents to both sides (external influence), i.e. the learning of an L2 influencing the L1 and from there on, the L1 culture. By that token Diagram (1) may be altered to Diagram (2) which may be seen as scenario (2).

Diagram 2.



In support of the scenario 2 hypothesis is the study by Kobayashi and Rinnert's (2007) [22] who followed the linguistic development in argumentative writing, over a number of years, of

Natsu (their subject of study) in Japanese, English and later Chinese. Natsu's argumentative compositions were developing from the learning of the L2 (she had spent three years in Australia before the 2007 study) and later the L3 (she had spent a year in China). Following this paradigm it would be interesting to investigate the implications to L1 culture from the learning of an L2 (this is often observed in L2 penetration to an L1 but it has not been well documented yet in terms of culture) although it was suggested that '...linguistics and discourse analysis are not too well equipped to contribute to studies of cultural change' (Fairclough, 1993: 44) [36]. The argument is the following: 'If rhetoric changes then it is an individual's culture that changes as well', despite the fact that often cultures are portrayed as being stable. Empirical studies investigating argumentative writing in L1 only, are comparatively less, despite the continuous and growing attention in this theme, and it is at this topic that this study is wishing to contribute to, by investigating rhetorical patterns in L1 Application Letter Writing (ALW), not in a contrastive way.

D) Arguably, there is a scenario (4) in which rhetoric deploys differently across the social levels of a given culture. Studies on this topic are by far less than in the other 3 cases described above.

The Riyadh Study. It is the aim of this study to contribute to the discussion on Saudi Arabic persuasion and thus investigate, register, examine and decipher by empirical research, the construct of rhetorical strategies and persuasive strategy preference of a female academic population sample in Saudi Arabia. In particular, the Riyadh study attempts to record the rhetorical patterns in this specific set-up of argumentative writing (ALW) and investigate associations with a number of independent variables described in more detail and analyzed below.

The study raises a central descriptive question, '*what are the persuasive strategies used in letters of application for a scholarship by female academic individuals in Saudi Arabia?*' A number of hypotheses are also pursued: a) 'are the strategies used in this sample more of the suggested by Johnstone (1989) [37] 'eastern and more oriental cultures' type (of presentational and analogical persuasion) and thus different from the ones found in more western societies (Al-Ali, 2006)? B) [38] 'Do a number of independent variables have an impact on the persuasive strategies selected?' These were: (a) age of the subjects and years lived in Saudi (testing the age factor and the impact of having lived abroad as in the case of Natsu mentioned above), b) native language and level in L1 (securing all subjects had Arabic as their L1 and further measuring impact of the construct 'level in their L1' to strategy selection), c) knowledge of an L2 and level in L2 (examining scenario 2 described above, i.e. 'does knowledge of, and language level in an L2 associate with strategy selection?'), d) area of origin (the area of origin is recorded as it is often hypothesized that there exist other cultural communities within one dominant culture or that not all its citizens may share the same cultural markers as one country often contains more than one cultures), and e) family background (which registers social status impact to strategy selection).

This paper unfolds in the following structure. The first part is dedicated to persuasiveness, rhetoric, strategies and style in an effort to offer a theoretical overview on the topic. The second part considers some of the findings from empirical studies. The following parts present the methodology used for data collection, the analysis and major findings. The final part discusses any possible contribution to this area of study from these findings.

1.0 Persuasion and Rhetoric, Intervening variables, Typology and Style

Persuasion is a process, an act and a skill some human beings learn to exercise (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969) [39] from early stages of their life. Infants use cry, as their persuasive technique, to initially communicate with the outside world and then the pure imperative as they acquire their mother tongue; imperatives being considered as the most direct way of expressing a request (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) [40]. As language develops and children construct knowledge in the society they grow up in (Bruffee, 1986; Bazerman, 1990) [28], persuasion is shaped and expressed through more complex structures. The pure imperative is largely abandoned in social exchanges, as it is being characterized to include a possible threat to the recipient (Brown and Levinson 1987) [41], particularly when used by adults. Thereupon, it is not usually welcome, though it may be accepted in certain environments (e.g. military) or when it is used by children, who do not yet possess the more complicated language to express their wishes. Persuasive awareness develops either by following paradigms humans encounter and acquire as they grow, or by trial and error as they decode their L1 culture and reach a better understanding of language functions. In consequence, arguments are adopted without much in depth knowledge unless an individual attends a course on topics related to the subject.

As languages provide an enormous amount of potential structures of syntax (grammar included) and vocabulary, humans of different cultures (both internal and external state borders) decode stimuli and encode responses in different ways. Accordingly, persuasion is expressed and deployed in various language forms. It is a rather complicated act; goal oriented (in most cases, see below) and usually seeks a reaction from the recipient. Depending on the definition one endorses of persuasion, this act is presented into two versions. In its *strong form*, persuasion aims to convince and further lead to a lively participation in an act, i.e. lead those persuaded to an action; being ‘action inducement’ (Guerini, Stock and Zancanaro, 2004) [42], by changing their beliefs, attitudes, values, feelings and intentions (resulting from definitions by Simons 1976 [43], Lakoff 1982 [44], Hardin 2010 [45], Mintz and Aagaard 2012 [46]). In its *weak form*, it requires a person to concur with an action though remain passive, without necessarily changing his beliefs, while in cases it is used to gain respect. The exact opposite may also be true; there are cases in which people are persuaded of one thing (e.g. (1). smoking damages health) although they do not act accordingly. The two forms differ in that the latter does not require change in behavior and does not necessarily lead to ‘action inducement’ while in both cases a reaction is typically expected either in the form of action taken or in the form of a passive acceptance of the ideas discussed.

Both persuasion and rhetoric require a minimum of two bodies to be involved in the act; the person who uses or commits the act and the one who receives it. The two terms are often used interchangeably even though there are significant differences between the two following the explicit/implicit division. Below, the suggested differences are presented contrastively.

Persuasion (Implicit)	Rhetoric (Explicit)
Based on awareness	Based on knowledge
Ability aiming to convince using awareness or relative knowledge on the topic	Ability aiming to convince by deciphering/decoding and encoding strategically
Uses arguments and tactics based on implicit experiences	Uses Strategies based on explicit knowledge
Arguments and tactics are typically adopted or developed	Strategies are typically selected, organized and structured
Deployed mostly through language but uses other means as well	Deployed only through language
Often downgraded to a skill, an act	Often upgraded to an art
Simplified or elaborated	Elaborated

Follows a structured or unstructured approach	Follows a structured approach
Predominantly deliberate but not only	Only deliberate

Persuasion becomes rhetoric, in its Aristotelian view, when an individual possesses the knowledge and strategically adds insights to: a) decipher *potential means of persuasion* (receptive) and further, b) encode structures purposefully to *elaborate on a particular topic* (productive) in order to captivate audience's attention to convince, ask for a reaction, change in behavior or gain respect of an audience. Persuasion is predominantly a deliberate act, though in certain circumstances it can also be achieved through behaviours that were not designed intentionally to be persuasive, e.g. (2). someone conducts an action for his own pleasure and this act becomes an example for people to follow. By that respect persuasion could also be achieved *unintentionally* with an *uninformed and unstructured implicit approach*. Rhetoric, on the other hand, is an absolutely deliberate explicit art and it is executed only through the medium of language, in contrast to persuasion which can be achieved through other means as well [example (2) above]. Rhetoric encompasses the explicitly *intentional, informed and structured selection of strategies*.

Intervening variables. Several variables need to be considered by an individual in persuasive acts. Some of those are described here, divided into three groups, i.e. those related to the orator, those related to the audience and those related to the context.

Variables that need to be considered in persuasive/rhetorical acts		
Related to the orator	Related to the audience	Related to the context
Knowledge on topic	Education of audience	Purpose of act execution and implications to the audience
Knowledge of persuasion and rhetoric to select language and strategy	Audience reaction in live contexts	Power relations between the two parties involved
Knowledge of necessary language to deploy the case	Social or financial status of audience	Level of formality
Persuaders personal characteristics: character, education, position in society, financial status, etc.	Level of awareness or knowledge of audience on persuasion	Culture, context and historical time

Based on the above division, some of the questions that would typically need to be considered are: a) what is the audience the act is executed for? b) what are the power relations between the person who performs the act and the recipient? c) how well is the persuader equipped on techniques, tactics or strategies? d) how well is the persuader linguistically equipped to structure and deliver the case? e) what is the purpose of persuasive/rhetorical act and what are the implications to the audience? f) who is the person performing the act and how informed is s/he on the topic or the audience? g) what is the environment/context of persuasion? h) what is the historical time? In a research study the above variables would ideally need to be specified, registered/recorded and/or harnessed.

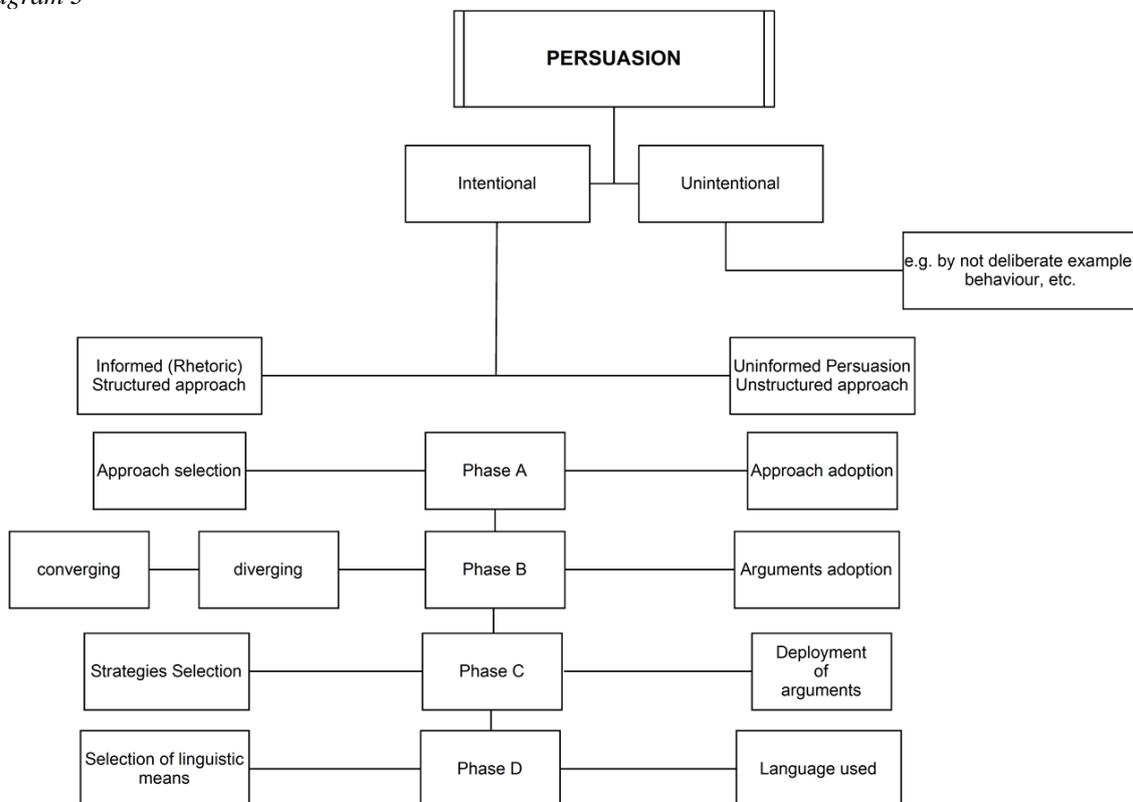
The dynamic of the context, the timing and the audience variables are often ignored. The liaison between the orator and the audience; audience reactions to rhetoric or persuasive tactics deployed being determining factors. These are not stable but developing and change not only over time (Kaplan 1966) [47] but also during the act of spoken persuasion and would thus need to be considered. These factors are difficult to harness in a research study, as there are not as yet specific rules they are described by, although good orators are able to spot those in the audience reactions, understand, value, decipher and further react and adapt their strategies or

tactics accordingly. Finally, it should be noted that an audience comes rarely with an empty mind on specific topics. Most people come to a situation with preconceived ideas or stereotypes which they broadly expect to confirm, defend and rarely challenge.

Both persuasion and rhetoric are deployed in certain phases. In case someone is equipped with knowledge on persuasion or has an increased awareness on the matter s/he would shape his/her persuasiveness in a way that would either a) meet audience beliefs or b) target the audience with strategies or arguments new to them (with reference to Giles, 1991 accommodation theory). In (a), the speaker/author decides to converge to the social, educational, regional, etc persuasiveness specifics of the recipient (hearer/reader-oriented persuasive attitude) and say/write what the recipient wishes to hear/read or in the way s/he wishes to hear/read it, in order to persuade him about the topic of persuasion (often referred to as a *populist approach*), while in (b) s/he decides to diverge from it to make a point and present his/her case in a way s/he feels better suits the situation, which is different from the specifics of persuasiveness of the particular context (speaker/writer-oriented persuasive attitude).

Clearly, for the above selection to take place it would be necessary for the speaker/author to possess knowledge or be aware of persuasion and accommodation techniques (informed explicit persuasion/rhetoric) and thus know what s/he is doing. In other cases, most people use their uninformed implicit awareness. In this light, persuasion could follow two basic strata: a) *highly informed*, which may be the result of knowledge on the subject and the consequences from the use of strategies; this is similar to rhetoric, and b) *relatively informed* or *uninformed*, based on awareness on culture developed/matured along with the awareness of language functions but not fully aware of the consequences from the adoption of arguments (tactics).

Diagram 3



Typology. Aristotle attempted to harness this vast potential of languages by offering a typology of persuasion that is still used in its initial format or adapted in other frameworks developed analogically by others (Connor and Lauer's, 1985 [48] known framework of persuasion and Johnstone's, 1989) [49].

Aristotle classified rhetorical strategies qualitatively, according to the path selected to achieve the target (persuasion) and based his framework in three distinct categories: Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. The first puts forward the character of the orator as an audience is more disposed to believe someone who is trustworthy/reliable/honest. The second aims to place the audience to a certain sentimental mood, to create momentum and increase passion. The third is working through logical reasoning by presenting facts and figures. In particular:

1. Aristotle uses the term *E(e)thos* to describe two interconnected human characteristics. On the one hand, he finds ethos to be an internal, born with quality, based on repetition (the term *εθισμός*, pronounced ethismos=addiction) and thus a repetitive action (spelled with small e). On the other hand he finds the term, Ethos (spelled with capital E) connected to morality (ethical, decency) which depends on the character of the speaker. The latter (Ethos) refers to one's character and therefore the qualitative characteristics in life related to people's actions. This notion is linked to moral virtues, which are also seen in liaison to ethismos=addiction and subsequently are, in the Aristotelian view, also repetitive. The philosopher goes as far as to claim that Ethical /moral virtues exist inside the individual, as a potential force. However, these need to be nourished in order to grow. In this sense Ethos becomes both an inborn and an acquired characteristic, adopted from the social environment (also by repetition which he considers a birth habit). It is indeed that characteristic of moral Ethos which distinguishes the human from the other animals which also hold the characteristic of repetition=ethismos=ethos without however the possibility of developing the moral Ethos.
2. When it comes to pathos (passion, emotion), Aristotle uses both the singular pathos and the plural (in Greek) Pathi. Pathos in the Aristotelian view is an affective characteristic aiming to place the audience into a certain frame of mind. Aristotle believed that all things in life have a reason to exist. Affective characteristics thus are related both to the outcome (the result) of an action and the reason the action is taking place for. It is the liaison between reason and outcome that is stressed here. Affective appeals are not only related to sentiments (feelings) but also to all qualitative changes that include the notion of learning again from scratch (re-learning). The term Pathima (suffering, misfortune) in the Aristotelian language does not have a negative connotation as it is in Modern Greek and carries precisely a dual meaning, a) that of conception (*piisis*), creation, and b) that of praxis, i.e. placing in action.
3. Finally, Logos in Aristotle has the meaning of language and also the meaning of logic, proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself. It refers to the linguistic potential of language as a structural system and the possibilities this system gives to the creation of logical meanings through thought, argument, and evidence. The last two Aristotle understands again as human characteristics (Aristotle 1356a 2,3) [35].

Although Aristotelian categories seem to be quite clear-cut and distinct from each other, this is not always the case as: a) there are strategies that would be placed equally well in more than one categories, i.e. the claim to assist the society after the completion of studies may be characterized both as an Ethical act or an act of pathos, b) there are strategies that could be

placed in between the categories, and c) depending on culture, one may categorize a specific strategy in a different group, i.e. reference to poor personal finances may be perceived as a pathos strategy to evoke sympathy in some cultures while logical in others aiming to support the application for financial aid.

Connor and Lauer (1985) [50] created a more detailed framework with persuasive appeals corresponding to the Aristotelian logos, ethos, and pathos, i.e. rational, credibility and affective appeals. Johnstone (1989) [51], offered her own taxonomy of persuasive styles describing the range of tactics selected by an individual in a given situation, these were: quasilogical argumentation, presentational and analogical persuasion again following by analogy the logos, ethos, and pathos division. A more recent taxonomy is Guerini and Stock and Zancanaro's (2004) [52] system which operates in a different manner. Strategies are categorized according to the purpose they mean to serve with increased awareness on the receiver, i.e. belief inducement, action inducement, and object features strategies.

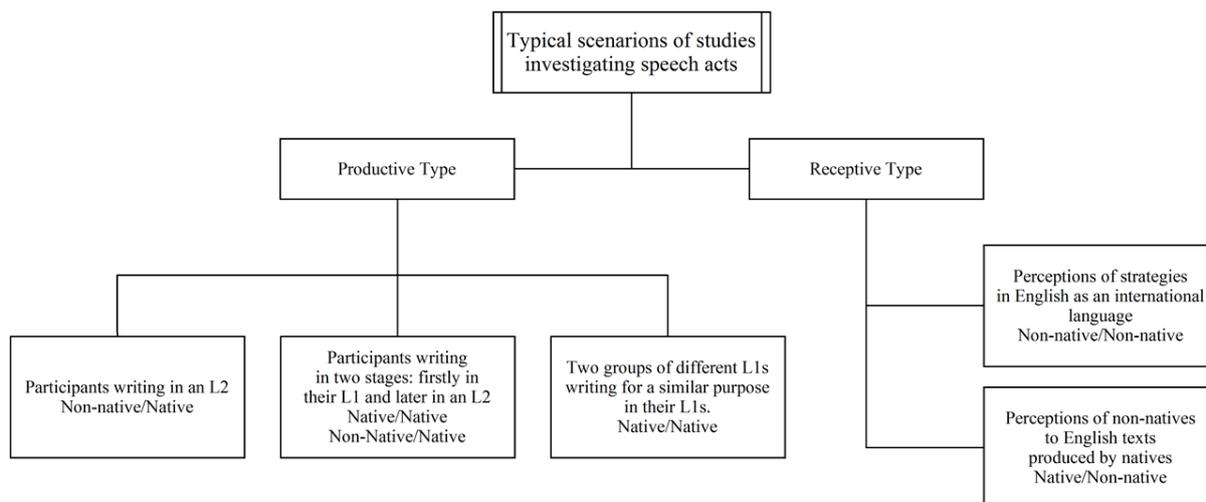
A distinction between persuasive *strategies* and persuasive *style* is also made by Johnstone (1989: 142) [53] who argues that strategies are the means, the set of tools selected, for persuasion to be effective, which she claims, 'are available to any speaker'. By comparison, 'style' refers to an individual's 'general tendency' in the selection of strategies, which is influenced by 'cultural and historical factors'. In Johnstone's (1989) [54] distinction it is assumed that all individuals make deliberate and conscious selections of the arguments they employ in each situation that requires persuasion. This may not always be the case, particularly in contrastive discourse where the non-native speaker may not comprehend the pragmatic weight his utterance carries in the target L2 audience. Notice also that, in diagram (3), a distinction is attempted between the terms strategy and argument/tactic although in this paper both terms will be used for the sake of economy. The former entails a conscious selection based on knowledge while the latter implies an adoption of arguments based on subtle knowledge and/or intuition.

Persuasive writing comes later in life and to a certain extent individuals shape their oral tactics in written format unless they are taught the particulars of written language (Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 1987) [55] and persuasion (Connors, 1997) [56] which are different in deployment from those of oral persuasion. In addition, in a written persuasive act the writer always has the advantage to edit and reshape his/her persuasive tactic to the point of the text produced meeting (being satisfactory to) his/her personal goals, views or stance on the matter or even suit the purpose it is written for. On the other hand, in written setups the author does not usually have a second chance to alter his initial approach based on the reaction of the receiver and clearly s/he cannot make use of tone and intonation as in oral persuasion.

Research on persuasive writing

Most empirical or experimental research studies investigating speech acts in argumentative writing of different types, politeness, etc., provided evidence of differences in expression, persuasive tactic selection, style and rhetoric of the *productive* type as it is easier to locate and register (subjects producing texts for a purpose). Studies in most cases proceeded contrastively; that is, by comparing L1 language conventions to an L2, English in most cases but also of other languages (Koike, 1995 for Spanish [57]; Psaltou-Joycey and Ypsilandis, 2001 for Greek [58]). Out of the many possible combinations a scholar may proceed to investigating this topic, the following three approaches or scenarios are discussed (see diagram 4 below).

Diagram 4



The *first productive type scenario* involves non-native English speaking subjects writing a letter in English for a given purpose, in a set context (James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis, 1992 [59]; Maier, 1992 [60]; Al-Ali, 2006 [61]) or fulfill an L2 discourse completion test (Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz, 1990 [62]; Nelson, Carson, Batal, and EL-Bakary, 2002 [63]) developed by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) [64]. Strategies or tactics are considered in a *productive* fashion, however they are discussed and compared *receptively*, either to the ones used by theoretical frameworks, as in the work of Al-Ali (2006, see also, the move structure analysis of Bhatia, 1993 or the politeness model by Brown and Levinson, 1987) [65], or by comparison to the ones that would have ideally been used by a native speaker or even by registering English native speakers' reactions, in addition to the theoretical maxims of politeness (Grice 1975) [66], as in James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis (1992) [67]. This implies that subjects know what they are doing with the L2 at the pragmatic level which is not always the case. Differences are typically attributed to the L1 cultural conventions transfer (mostly) in support of the *strong contrastive analysis hypothesis*. However, proceeding in this manner generally implies that it is the L2 norm that is aimed to be followed by English language learners, although there are problems with this development. Often it is not specified what English language culture is the target in question, both nationally (across the social ladder) or internationally (US, British, Indian, etc.) while the strategies or tactics discussed are frequently related to an ideal native speaker or a language that appears only in books or even conventions that are too theoretical (Blum-Kulka, Kasper and House, 1989) [67]. This also implies that English learners would need to conform to the English language cultural conventions and thus assume a different character when they use the English language and perhaps another character when they learn an L3 and so on (a skepticism that was discussed at the keynote of Claire Kramersch at the 15th 2008 AILA world conference in Essen, Germany). Ethical questions may arise from this tradition; i.e. should it be the aim of English language teaching to create a global society in which all humans behave linguistically in the same fashion when using English as the medium of communication? Although this may seem ideal on the surface and perhaps it would assist to avoidance of pragmalinguistic failure (Thomas 1983) [68], there are further questions that arise. What right and knowledge do language teachers have to interfere with a learner's personality? Would it not harm if the different ways cultures and languages decode stimuli and further encode communication be lost? There are two more reasons; one is economical, related to time available to teach all possible occurrences of differences between an L1 and an L2 and the other relates to the learner's capacity to apprehend all this information within the given period of English studies (Palmer, 1992 [69] as it is discussed in James,

Scholfield and Ypsilandis, 1994 [70]). This scenario could be enriched by having English native speakers writing for an institution of their country for the same purpose. Although the situation will not be identical, still the data could be comparable; the native English group writing in their cultural environment (which they are familiar with) while the ‘other’ group writing in a second or foreign language setup which they may have some knowledge of or they may think they know.

The *second, productive type scenario*, develops in two stages and requires the same participants to write a text for the same purpose firstly in their L1 (stage 1) and later in their L2 (stage 2). Comparisons are then made as to the strategies or tactics used in the two letters. Part of this scenario is found in Al-Ali’s (2004) [71] paper where the researcher asked students of two Jordanian universities to write a letter of application for a job. Once the second stage (writing in English the same type of letter by a sample of the same country with the same characteristics) is complete it may be possible to compare tactics used by individuals in their mother tongue and those used when writing in English. Proceeding in this manner would allow us to: a) locate and confirm which of these are clear instances of transfer; appearing both in the L1 and the L2 writing, b) verify that participants understand the differences in the two contexts, by looking at the strategies or tactics appearing only in the L1 and not in the L2 writing, and c) validate that those appearing only in the L2 writing and still are problematic may be instances of infelicities due to other psycholinguistic factors and thus need to be further investigated. The opposite (strategies or tactics appearing only in the L2 letter) and are accepted in the L2 culture would be clear cases of learning. This scenario could be enriched with interviews following written data collection for participants to provide explanations as to the selection of strategies they used in the second stage and thereon contribute to a better understanding between languages and cultures and further increase awareness of the ‘other’. This stage (1) study is of this scenario in which subjects are writing in their L1 for a scholarship offered by an institution of their country.

A similar, *third type scenario* procedure that has been used in the related bibliography, is to compare selected requests or suggestive strategies or tactics used by two groups of different L1s writing in their mother tongue for the same communicative purpose in identical or similar contexts (again one group typically involves English natives and the other non-native speakers of English) (Al-Ali 2004 [72]; Bayyurt and Marti 2015) [73]. Again comparisons are made between the two and differences are precisely attributed to culturally influenced language conventions. This type of procedure offers valuable insights as to the approach selection and the language cultural norms of the ‘other’ without urging subjects to submit to any L2 conventions.

All the above three procedures technically register strategies as a *product* and yet these are interpreted and analysed *receptively* or *perceptively* either from the side of the native speaker, as in James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis (1992) [74] or through specific criteria analysed by the expert researcher. Little is known about the *processes* that lead to the selection of the strategies by the individual. The problem here is that strategies may be decoded differently than the purpose they were encoded with, that is, in a way different than the one initially intended by the author. This may constitute to a different kind of failure, of the receptive type this time (Riley, 1989) [75]. Collection of introspective data to register and discuss the intentions of the participants’ structure approach and strategy selection would assist to a better understanding of this linguistic in principle phenomenon, i.e. to investigate if the subject’s approach is an attempt to meet the recipients wishes and norms (to the extent that these are known to them) or to target the recipient with their personal views; i.e. whether the argument is a product of attempted

accommodation, cultural language transfer or part of the idiosyncrasy of the individual. It is thus not surprising that in most cases differences registered and pragmalinguistic failure committed has been typically attributed to the construct culture. Also, most comparisons are made to a target L2 culture and rarely to register infelicities within the same culture as often cultures are taken as unified constructs and not being separated by other ethnic, social or financial statuses. Interviews with the subjects after task completion, as suggested above, would help in this direction. Alternatively, some of the above mentioned independent variables (ethnic, social or financial status) may be recorded and tested for associations with the dependent variable which is the type of persuasive strategies or tactics selected.

On the *receptive side type scenario*, the studies are comparatively less. In a follow up study James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis (1994) [76] examined how the persuasive strategies registered in their 1992 article were evaluated by other non-native speakers (English as an international language setup). A protocol letter divided in 10 parts, each containing a strategy which contributed to pragmalinguistic failure in the 1992 study, as indicated by the English natives, was further examined by Greeks, Syrians, Portuguese, Polish, and Germans via a Likert scale with 5 stances (from very unsuitable, unsuitable, to suitable, and very suitable with a middling neutral position). Reactions of the non-native speakers registered were different from those found by the English natives in several occasions although not all responses were unanimous and variations between the participating nations were recorded. Another example of a receptive type scenario is Silva (2008) who investigated the attitudes of a sample of students from different disciplinary cultures to a course which was prepared to raise awareness 'of the relationship between text form, writer's purpose(s) and social context' (pp. 33) through academic texts written in English and Portuguese. Silva registered the divergence between students in the approach and concern about the texts which were different from those of the course designer, and stressed that English texts were more reader-oriented.

Every procedure has its disadvantages although all procedures provide valuable information on persuasive writing despite their shortcomings. It is necessary to note however that studies on persuasion with evidence from different countries need to become more systematic and longitudinal as comparison of findings is difficult when procedures followed are not matching.

2.0 Method

3.1 Subjects / Participants

Seventy six (76) female subjects participated in this study, all students of the King Saud female University in Riyadh. These students followed a preparatory course before the beginning of their studies in different areas such as, Medicine, Scientific (Engineering, Physics, Mathematics), and Humanities. A preparatory course equips students with the skills they need during their studies. More details concerning the subjects are discussed in the *Personal Details* chapter of the *Analysis* section of this paper. The sample was decided to consist of students as this group seemed to ideally and realistically fit the purpose of this study (investigating ALW), as it is this group of citizens who mostly apply for study scholarships and find themselves in similar situations. Therefore this knowledge is of immediate value to their life.

A group of five (5) reviewers, with a background in linguistics, were used as judges to decide the cell each strategy belonged into from the three categories of Logos, Ethos and Pathos or combinations of the three. These judges were experienced linguists on the topic. These five judges were instructed to provide a unanimous decision and thus each strategy was discussed

and placed in an agreed section following Aristotle's model of persuasiveness. Thus, the interrater reliability coefficient was not calculated.

3.2 Research design

In order to study the persuasive strategies or tactics of the adult female academic population in Saudi the design of previous studies in the field of ALW was followed (James, et al. 1992, 1994 [77], Ypsilandis 1994 [78], Psaltou and Ypsilandis 2000 [79]) which is laconically described. Research participants were asked to provide a letter of application for a fictitious scholarship in their L1 (Saudi Arabic) following written instructions. As study scholarships in Saudi are common (every student is entitled to receive one by the Kingdom) it was decided that this fictitious scholarship would refer to studies abroad, however written in Arabic and aimed to be evaluated by Saudis. Proceeding in this manner allowed us to register the persuasive strategies of individuals in an accompanying letter which is often required to be submitted together with a curriculum vitae. This way participants were able to express themselves in full and they would be able to associate and become realistically involved with the research conditions. It may then be possible to claim that although this was not a real situation it was however a setting very close to reality (realistic).

3.3 Research Procedure

Written information about the scholarship was provided to the subjects (also applicants, participants or authors) who were asked to write an accompanying letter in support of their application. Similarly to the studies referred above, no further verbal instructions were provided as to the content of the letter nor was there any advice offered as to the structure that was to be followed. The subjects were asked to complete their letters within a two hours limit and were free to express themselves in any mode they wished.

The collected letters were translated literally in English by experts in both Arabic and English, and were further analysed both in terms of the group of independent variables related to the subject's background and the dependent variables, which were the persuasive strategies employed by the participants to deliver the job (the type of the persuasive strategy was decided by the five judges mentioned above). All data were entered in SPSS and statistical analyses are offered together with qualitative comments for every variable.

3.4 Research Apparatus

The main instrument for this study was the written invitation in Arabic for the writing of a scholarship application letter. The text was the exact translation of the one used in the studies mentioned above. A sample of this letter in English and Arabic is provided at the appendix. Statistical analyses were produced with the IBM SPSS Statistics (version 21) software.

3.0 Coding and Analyses

Each application letter was divided in three distinct parts (first, middle and final): The *Greetings* or *Introductory* part enclosed a salutation to the recipient and further involved an *opening statement* explaining the reason for writing. The second *main* part was dedicated to the *presentation of oneself*, where information about the applicant was offered together with the core of the persuasive strategies engaged by the applicants with supportive statements explaining why they should be awarded the scholarship. The final part was a *closing* section with concluding remarks. Although one would expect to find most of the persuasive appeals in the main part of a letter, where transparent persuasive strategies are typically deployed by the applicants, in this section all parts are analysed as these would illuminate and contribute to the investigation of the persuasive profile and the structure of the letter in this sample.

Each part is analysed separately. The strategies developed, together with data from the questionnaire containing information about the independent variables examined in this study, were inserted in the statistical program each with a numerical value. A number coding was employed for each individual strategy as the strategies were treated as nominal variables. Most participants used a combination of strategies and all possible combinations of strategical selection were also inserted in SPSS with number coding.

A mixed (qualitative and quantitative) analysis of the collected data was followed and it is presented in the following pattern: a) descriptive statistics with frequency distributions as to the independent variables with qualitative comments on each variable, where deemed necessary, b) frequencies together with a detailed analysis with examples from the data sample, focussing on the specific persuasive strategies used (depended variable), and c) associations between the independent and the depended variables. Any missing values were treated list wise, i.e. these values were not calculated in the data set however the subjects were still considered for the rest of the data that they provided. Subjects that left their letter incomplete; totally empty (with only their name on it) were rejected and not calculated in the data set. The percentages reported in all variables are the valid percentages which result after the deduction of missing items. Measures of association (any statistic test that expresses a relationship between variables) between dependent and independent variables were pursued, provided there were enough cases which would permit a statistical analysis, in order to find meaningful patterns that would further illuminate Saudi academic female Arabic rhetoric. Results of these tests are presented in the Further Analysis section of this paper.

3.1 Frequency distributions of independent variables – understanding the participants

Distributions of the independent variables are grouped according to the nature of the variable (scale on one side and ordinal/nominal on the other) and further subdivided in those related to the personal details of the subjects (see below). Looking at the personal details of the participants of this study would help the reader understand better the quality of the outcomes.

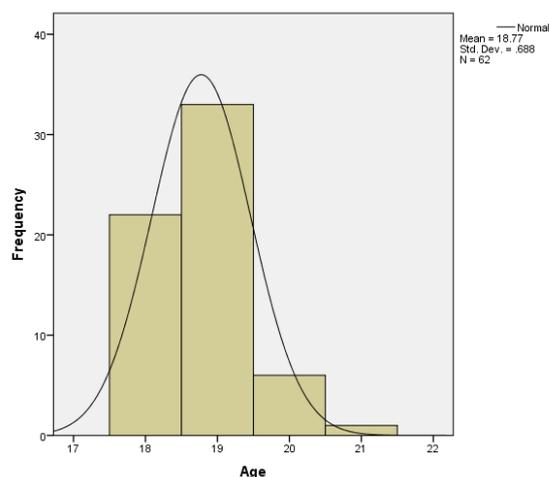
Ratio scale variables

Age and years lived in Saudi. The frequencies for each individual score in terms of the variable Age with 62 valid cases (81.6%) and 14 missing items (18.4%) are shown in the table below.

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18	22	28.9	35.5	35.5
	19	33	43.4	53.2	88.7
	20	6	7.9	9.7	98.4
	21	1	1.3	1.6	100.0
	Total	62	81.6	100.0	
Missing	99	14	18.4		
	Total	76	100.0		

The mode value (most frequent score) was 19 and the range was 3 (the difference between the highest and the lowest score). A Bell Curve on a histogram [1], that was created for this variable, showed that the distribution was symmetrical (skewness at .638, i.e. both sides of the curve line were mirror images of each other).

[1] Age Histogram



Standard deviation was at the .688 level which shows that most subjects were close to the mean (18.77). Kurtosis was found at .576, close to the standard error at .599 which means that the distribution has a sharp peak to the left (within the limits of standard error). This confirms findings of the raw descriptive data (offered right above) in that this sample can be seen as an excellent representative for the age group from 18 to 19 years. Other age groups are not adequately represented and thus findings are confined to this age group and are not representative of the entire academic female population.

As for the variable 'years lived in Saudi', 59 valid cases were counted with 17 cases missing (table below).

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	14	1,3	1,7	1,7
	15	1,3	1,7	3,4
	17	1,3	1,7	5,1
	18	21	27,6	40,7
	19	31	40,8	93,2
	20	3	3,9	98,3
	21	1	1,3	100,0
Total	59	77,6	100,0	
Missing	99	17	22,4	
Total	76	100,0		

The data shows that all subjects lived in the country for more than 14 years with the majority having lived in Saudi for all their life. This may be considered as adequate time to be considered as Saudi culturally orientated and thus an optimum sample for this study and ideal representatives of the academic female Saudi population of this age both in terms of the language and the culture variable. This is confirmed by a Pearson r correlation analysis which showed a strong statistically significant correlation [Pearson $r = .50$ $p < .001$, (N.57)], between the two variables investigated here (table below).

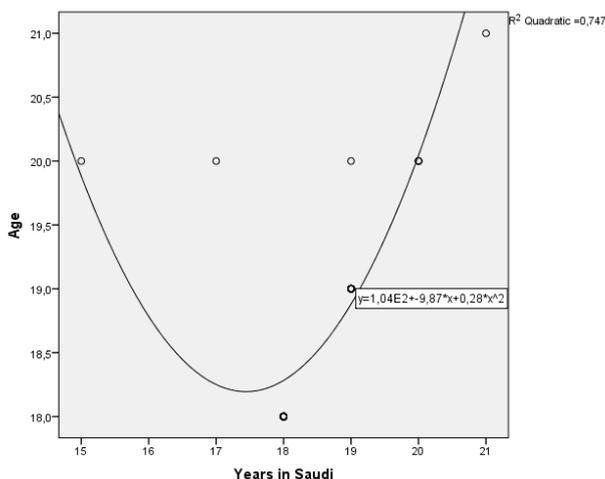
		Age	Years in Saudi
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	,505**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	62	57
Years in Saudi	Pearson Correlation	,505**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	57	59

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

On the other hand, the cases of subjects who have lived out of Saudi for a period is too small (7 subjects only who lived for a very short period out of the Kingdom) to register any statistically significant impact on the persuasive strategies here. Thus, question (a) described at the Introduction could not be pursued.

A scatter plot [2], which is a visual image of relation between the two variables, reveals that there is a negative relation between *age* and *years lived in Saudi* until a certain point and there on, that these are related positively (typical U-shape curvilinear relation).

[2] Age and Years Lived in Saudi ScatterDot

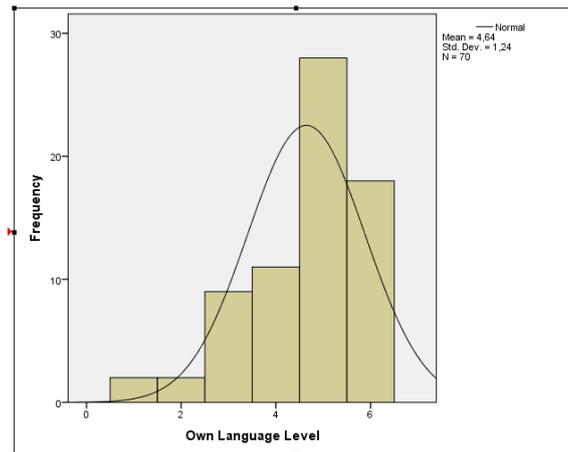


Nominal and Ordinal Variables

Native language and level in L1, Knowledge of and level in L2, Area of study and Region born in Saudi. Most participants (67) were native speakers of Saudi Arabic (97.1%) while there were two cases of subjects with other mother tongues; namely Somalian and French (1.4% each). These two subjects were not considered as to the strategy selection (see below). This comes in support of the previous statement that this sample can be considered as a good representative of the specific population with no other mother tongue interference. In this section there were only 7 cases (9.2%) of missing items.

Further, the *level of L1* was examined through the results of an independent to this study language proficiency test. The distribution of frequencies in a six score scale after a language test for 70 valid cases (92.1%) with 6 missing items (7.9%) is offered in three groups: a) the distribution in the first group with low scores included 2 applicants (2.9%) at the fair level (these two were not those who had Somali and French as their mother tongue) and another 2 at the good level, b) the second group involved 9 applicants at the very good level (12.9%) and 11 at the high level (15.7%), c) the third and final group incorporated the majority of the applicants, 28 at the very high level (40%) and 18 at the excellent level (25.7%). The median (score that splits the group in two) and the mode (most frequent score) values are both at 5, a rather high level of language proficiency. Data distribution was more spread out on the left and a Bell Curve on a histogram [3] that was created, shows this distribution graphically.

[3] Own language (L1) level histogram



The distribution is moderately skewed with skewness at -1.0 (the minus indicator shows that the *tail* to the left is longer than the one on the right) which means that the Bell Curve lacked symmetry. Kurtosis was at $.737$ (above the standard error of kurtosis at $.566$) which indicates a distinct peak near the mean from the right side of the curve (or rather rapid decline). The above indicates that this sample cannot be thought as representative of the entire student population or the academic female Saudi population as most subjects are above the high level in their L1 and therefore it may limit findings to highly qualified speakers of Arabic (the elite). It should be noted that all interpretations and conclusions resulting from this study should bear this factor in mind. On the other hand, this finding has a positive effect in this study as it indicates that these highly linguistically equipped female students possessed the linguistic means to express themselves fully in their L1.

Out of the 70 valid (7.9% missing values) cases of this sample, 67 (95.7%) were *speaking another language* and only 3 (4.3%) were monolingual. The level in their L2 varied from A1 to C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages with most subjects being at the C1 level (29/43.9%) while 18 (27.3%) were at a higher level (C2) and 10 (15.2%) at a B2 level. The language that was spoken by the absolute 100% of the cases was English. The next language that appeared high in the list was French (6 subjects) and the third Japanese with 2 subjects. Italian, Spanish, Korean, Somali, and Turkish were spoken by 1 subject each. This finding reveals that any impact for the L2 on type of strategy selection cannot be traced as there are not enough participants to act as a monitor group, i.e. participants that do not speak another L2.

In terms of the variable *stream of study* most subjects (44 in number, which is the 63.8% of the sample) were registered to pursue a degree in the medical sector while 25 (36.2%) in the scientific sector. There were 7 missing items (9.2%) of subjects who did not complete this section. Both groups are represented adequately for statistical analyses. Several correlation tests showed that there were no statistically significant associations between the *selection of the persuasive strategies* (dependent variable of this study) and the *stream of study* followed by the participants (independent variable).

For the variable *region born in Saudi* the following frequencies were found: most participants (36/60%) came from the central region while 8 (13.3%) came from Al-Qasim and 9 from the southern region (15%). The western region is represented with 5 applicants (8.3%) and the eastern and northern regions only with 1 (1.7%). There were 16 cases of missing items (21.1%). It can be suggested at this stage that the sample is further confounded to be representative of predominantly the central region and less of the Al-Qasim, the southern and the western

regions. Despite the small number of subjects from other than the central region of Saudi, associations between this variable and *type of strategy selection* revealed no statistically significant relations [question (d) of the Introduction].

Subjects' fathers and mothers' occupation and educational background - question (e) of the introduction. Father's occupation seems to vary; of the 69 valid cases (90.8%) most (27) were declared to work in the private sector (39.1%), 17 had government positions (24.6%), 14 were retired (20.3%) and 11 worked in the educational sector (15.9%). The father's educational background of the valid cases (exactly as above) was as follows: 51 had a university degree (73.9%), 10 finished high school (14.5%) and 8 finished an elementary school (11.6%). In both cases there were 7 missing items (9.2%).

As for the mother's occupation, distribution of scores seemed to vary equally for 71 valid cases (93.4%): 42 (59.2%) were declared to be house wives, 25 worked in the educational sector (35.2%) while 4 had government positions (5.6%). Five (5) subjects did not complete this question (6.6%). Mother's educational background for 69 valid cases (90.8%) was as follows: 41 (59.4%) had a university degree, 16 (23.2%) finished elementary school, 11 (15.9%) finished high school and 1 had no education at all (1.4%). There were 7 cases of missing items to this question. These independent variables when tested presented no significant associations with the dependent variables of the study except for the mother's educational background, which is presented in the section further statistical analysis, below.

3.2 Frequency distributions of the dependent variables.

Out of the 76 participants in the study, 2 were excluded (2.6%) for having submitted an incomplete letter of application; this sample is reduced to 74 valid cases (97.4%). It should be noted at this stage that, in Saudi Arabia students typically receive a scholarship without having to write an accompanying letter for it and this was the reason the for the initial call to advertise a scholarship out of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Frequency distributions of the dependent variables are following Bhatia's (1993) model of job application structural description (analysed in separate sections below, in *italics*), which are grouped and presented in four major sectors. Two more sectors are added (Salutations and Greetings, and introduction of themselves) as these appeared in all letters of the participants. The final groups are: a) salutations or greetings, b) *introducing candidature*, c) introduction of themselves, d) the main part of the letter containing the arguments of persuasion where *essential detailing and indicating value of candidature* is offered, and e) conclusion where *soliciting response* and *ending politely* strategies are used. Frequencies with valid percentages are offered, accompanied with qualitative comments, where deemed necessary. Examples of strategies are presented in each case, translated literally in English.

Salutations/Greetings. Five types of salutations were registered. All directly related to the Islamic religion. Three appeared at the beginning of the letter, one in the middle and one at the end as a closing statement. The first is about the action of writing the application letter which is performed in the name of Allah, the second and the third are religious wishes to the recipient of the letter, while the fourth is expressed in the form of hope or a wish even when the applicant expresses a reality and it appears in the middle of the letter. The last, at the closing section, is either a reproduction of a similar statement used at the beginning of the letter or a religious beneficial wish for both the author herself and the recipient.

The *first introductory salutation* is expressed in the form of a dedication to Allah, whom the action of writing the application letter is offered to, e.g. 1. ‘In the Name of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful’. This statement is reported in most letters as it is found repeated several times in the Quran, indeed in almost all of the 144 Surahs (chapters). 66 of the subjects (89.2%) started their application with this statement while 8 did not include it at all (10.8%). This introductory statement is used merely as an expression to declare faith as all actions in the Islamic religion are performed in the name of Allah and are thus dedicated to the prophet.

The *second salutation* is a wish for peace and mercy to the recipient. This statement is shaped in the form of a wish, e.g. 2. ‘Peace be upon you and God’s mercy and blessings’. This statement is widely used in every day talk in the Islamic Arab world but only by a small number of subjects here (4/5.4%), while the majority did not incorporate it at all in their letter (70/94.6%). This statement probably shows stronger religious belief by the author, containing three of the key elements of the Islamic religion, i.e. peace (both internal and external), God’s mercy (for sins committed) and God’s blessings for the future. In addition, this entails a traditional informal initial common greeting which operates as a declaration of peace (I come in peace), it is a guarantee that there is not a threat and it became a cliché in traditional informal greetings.

The *third statement* is a religious blessing for the recipient and it is expressed in the following mode, e.g. 3. ‘Mr X, May God protect him’. Notice that, although the statement is about the recipient of the letter and his name is actually mentioned in the text, the author uses the object pronoun *him* instead of *you*. It is then understood that although this wish is about the recipient, it is addressed to a higher religious power and not to him directly. This statement was used by most subjects at the beginning of their letter and it is another cliché. 55 used it as described above (74.3%) while 19 applicants decided not to include it in their letter at all (25.7%). Notice that, salutations in any formal letter in Arabic are to be written in the third person singular as the author does require the attention of the recipient yet.

The *fourth statement* is the most common in spoken Arabic (Inshallah) which appears in a simple form, e.g. 4. ‘God willing...’ or in a more complicated version, e.g. 5. ‘Praise be to God, this by the grace of God Almighty and the hard work...’. The latter formulaic expression is used to express hope in that the action described will take place without any problems (example 4) and it is related to what is expressed (context related), thought it can be used with no transparent liaison to what is stated as in the example 5. In this former case it is used to declare strong religious faith. Only 15 (19.7%) of the applicants included a statement of this type in their application.

The *final direct religious salutation* appears at the end of the letter; it includes a wish to the recipient and either matches, in form, one of those used at the introduction, e.g. 6. ‘Peace be upon you and God’s mercy and blessings’ or it encompasses another religious wish for both the author and the recipient of the letter, e.g. 7. ‘May God give you and me success and guide us to the right path’. This religious closing was used by only 18 (24.3%) subjects while the majority 56 (75.7%) did not include any religious-type closing at all.

All religious salutations here are part of a ceremonial procedure (a step of a ritual) with no clear aim except for declaring faith to Islam. A Chi-Square association test revealed a significant 2-sided relationship between those who used a wish to the recipient (second religious statement above) and those who used a religious closing ($X^2 = 5.0$, $p = <0.03$). This association is found

to be moderately strong, Cramer's V at .261. This may indicate that the first and the third types of salutation examples recorded in this study are operating more as clichés used by most, while the second and the final salutations indicate a strong religious belief. The strong identified association shows that although these salutations were not commonly used, subjects who included them at the beginning of their letter also used them at the end as a closing remark.

Introducing candidature. Only 43 (58,1%) of the subjects have been found to specifically write the reason for applying in the form of an introductory statement, as it would be expected in this situation. Although formal applications typically start with such a statement, placed at the very beginning of an application letter (as most of the 43 subjects have done), there have been few cases where candidature was introduced in the middle of the application letter. The rest of the applicants did not include a sentence of this type in their letter at all and begun presenting the reasons they felt they were eligible for this award, i.e. commenced with the persuasive strategies. Those who included an introductory statement proceeded in either a formal fashion, e.g. 8. 'I would like to apply for...', e.g. 9. 'I am writing this letter to express...' or with a less formal expression, e.g. 10. 'I am happy to apply for...'.

Introduction of themselves. In this case the subjects were divided. Thirty-six decided to introduce themselves at the beginning of the letter (48.6%) while another 38 did not include a self-introductory statement (51.4%). Those who decided to include an introduction of themselves proceeded predominantly in two ways, either by: a) writing a rather informal statement, e.g. 11. 'I am student Nora' or a more formal equivalent, e.g. 12. 'I am a student of King Saud University' (witnessed in 86.1% cases), or b) presenting themselves in the plural form (13.8%) as representatives of a group, e.g. 13. 'we are the secondary stage students...' or e.g. 14. 'we are the graduates'. Using the plural personal pronoun instead of the singular may be interpreted as an instance of Hofstede's (2005) 'lack of individualism' proclaimed by him for the Arabic culture or an illustration of a collective culture in general (Hofstede and Bond, 1984:419) where, opposite to an individual culture, the focus is more on 'we' rather than on 'I'. The two authors stress that in collective cultures, 'people belong to in-groups or collectivities which look after them in exchange for loyalty' (Hofstede and Bond, 1984 as referred in Jin and Cortazzi, 1993:85). Notice however that most of the subjects decided to present themselves using the singular. Is this an instance of cultural change? Both cases however are not expected in formal ALW by being informal for a situation of this type, either by being grammatically (first case), or pragmatically (second case) unacceptable.

Self-presentation continued with a direct statement concerning their background, either with an extensive reference to their qualifications, e.g. 15. 'I graduated from... with 97% grade... I got 80% in the achievement test and 81% in the abilities test', or with shorter statements in the following form, e.g. 16. 'I have finished my academic study with a high grade...', or e.g. 17. 'I have achieved a high grade...'. The applicants refer explicitly to themselves by providing information that would normally be included in a CV. This tactic was used by 51 subjects (68.9%) while the rest 23 (31.1%) either selected a more indirect statement, e.g. 18. 'my teachers praise me....' or did not make any reference at all. Making direct and extensive reference to their qualifications for self-presentation is also witnessed in similar letters written by Greek applicants as those are reported in James, Scholfield and Ypsiladis (1992). Although this is considered a rational appeal typically used in Western cultures (Connor and Lauer, 1988), extensive reference to someone's qualifications in a letter of application may be considered as highly egocentric (James, Scholfield and Ypsiladis, 1994).

23 subjects (30.2%) further supported their self-presentation with a personal judgement or self-evaluation, expressed with a direct statement in the one of the following modes, e.g. 19. ‘I think... I deserve it’, e.g. 20. ‘I am one of the top-ranking students’, e.g. 21. ‘I am a superior and ideal student’ or e.g. 22. ‘I am a hard-working student’. Similar self-evaluations were also found in James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis (1992) by Greeks and were considered very egocentric by the English natives who acted as judges in that study.

Main Arguments for applying. Although the entire AL may be considered as part of the overall persuasive tactic of the applicant, together with the other supportive documents, the main argumentative strategies appear at the heart of the accompanying letter. Initially, the distribution and frequencies of strategies used by the subjects are presented, following the Aristotelian division of *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*. This framework was selected among the other known frameworks (i.e. Connor and Lauer’s, 1985; Johnstone’s, 1986) for the initial recording of persuasive strategies, as it provided the foundation for all the other developed systems. However, the terminology used in qualitative comments in the analysis, derives also from the ones suggested by the above-mentioned scholars. In tables (1, 2, 3) below, the column *frequency* presents the number of subjects who used the strategy in question, and the column *valid* includes how many times the declared strategy was employed, i.e. in table (1) 8 subjects did not use the *logos* strategy at all, while 23 subjects used it only once. By this light, tables (1,2,3) are to be read from top to bottom and left. Notice that it is the frequency and the valid percentage columns that are of interest here, as the third column presents the percentages without considering the missing items. At a second stage (table 4), the distribution of all the possible combination of strategies selected by the subjects is presented.

The principal unit of analysis is the sentence though it was the argument that was counted. Indicators of a new argument are divided by grammar elements (e.g. the conjunctive ‘and’ or the particle ‘to’), punctuation (e.g. full stop, comma), new sentence, and finally rhetoric argumentative elements (e.g. because), in relation to conceptual elements (i.e. where a new argument is presented). The conjunctive (and) signifies a different argument only when a new idea is presented. Alternatively, the sentence was accepted only as one argument.

Table (1) shows the frequencies of the subjects (second column) who used *logos* arguments in their letter and the times these were included in their applications (first column).

Table 1.

Number of Logos Arguments					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	8	10,5	10,8	10,8
	1	23	30,3	31,1	41,9
	2	18	23,7	24,3	66,2
	3	16	21,1	21,6	87,8
	4	4	5,3	5,4	93,2
	5	2	2,6	2,7	95,9
	6	2	2,6	2,7	98,6
	7	1	1,3	1,4	100,0
	Total	74	97,4	100,0	
Missing	99	2	2,6		
Total		76	100,0		

It reads that 8 subjects did not use any *logos* arguments at all (quasi logical argumentation), while most of them used it from 1 to 3 times in their letters. Very few subjects incorporated more than 4 arguments of this type in their letters. In total 152 *logos* arguments were used in all the letters by the 66 subjects. Examples of quasi logical argumentation were related to: a)

their career, e.g. 23. ‘to study medicine abroad’ b) the acquisition of more skills, e.g. 24. ‘to improve my language skills’, or c) for pure communication purposes (e.g. 25. ‘to talk to different nationalities’), recognising that ‘English is the language of the modern age’. Logical argumentation seems to be used by more subjects and more times in the application letters of in this sample.

Table (2) offers the frequencies of ethos arguments.

Table 2.

Number of Ethical Arguments					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	29	38,2	39,2	39,2
	1	26	34,2	35,1	74,3
	2	10	13,2	13,5	87,8
	3	8	10,5	10,8	98,6
	4	1	1,3	1,4	100,0
	Total	74	97,4	100,0	
Missing	99	2	2,6		
Total		76	100,0		

Twenty-nine of the subjects made no use of ethos arguments (credibility appeals) at all, while 26 used it once and 10 used it twice. 8 subjects used 3 ethical arguments and 1 used 4. A total of 74 ethical arguments appeared in all letters employed by 39 subjects. Arguments of ethos appear in 4 different fashions:

- 1) The first was a credibility appeal used by only one applicant and it was expressed in the form of an introduction to her family background, e.g. 26. ‘I come from an educated family, my father is..., who graduated from..., my elder brother is..., my middle brother is..., my middle brother is... and my younger sister is...’. Introducing family members is a traditional mode to gain credibility to the eyes of the receiver.
- 2) The second ethos strategy was deployed through the use of complimentary expressions for the target language or the target language institutions, e.g. 27. ‘gain experience from the best universities in America’, e.g. 28. ‘English is a very important language’, e.g. 29. ‘due to the importance of English language in our present time...’. This strategy was used by most subjects here and also by Greeks in James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis (1992) [80] and it was perceived as flattery by the English natives who acted as judges in that study.
- 3) A third ethos strategy involved a statement with their opinion as to whom the scholarship should be awarded to, e.g. 30. ‘I think it is the right of each student who achieved a high grade in the general secondary certificate to get a scholarship to study abroad’.
- 4) Finally, a fourth strategy included a wish with the use of charged language praising the nation which appeared in a small number of letters, e.g. 31. ‘The Saudi student is the new future generation, so let’s work hard to build it up to the better’. Some of the above strategies could be categorised in the pathos section, below. However, they are placed under this heading as the judges of this study thought that applicants probably wish to show their ethical stance towards the country, the target language and its institutions, and the award in general. Table (3) contains the *pathos* arguments employed by the participants.

Table 3.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	36	47,4	48,6	48,6
	1	16	21,1	21,6	70,3
	2	10	13,2	13,5	83,8
	3	7	9,2	9,5	93,2
	4	2	2,6	2,7	95,9
	5	1	1,3	1,4	97,3
	6	1	1,3	1,4	98,6
	9	1	1,3	1,4	100,0
	Total	74	97,4	100,0	
	Missing	99	2	2,6	
Total		76	100,0		

Pathos arguments were not used by 36 of the subjects. 16 used it only once while 10 used it twice and 7 included three arguments of this type in their letters. Very few applicants included more than three pathos arguments in their letters while 1 subject included 9. A total of 85 pathos arguments appeared in all letters used by 39 subjects. Examples of pathos arguments could be grouped in the following categories:

1) Those of patriotic origin, e.g. 32. ‘I will do my best to serve my country’, e.g. 33. ‘to develop my country and its culture...’ or in an even more grandiose manner, e.g. 34. ‘raise the nation’s flag’ seeing themselves as representative of their country abroad, and by excessive use of charged language, e.g. 35. ‘I – your daughter – swear that I will do my best to get benefit as much as I can for this scholarship and to serve my country as much as I can’. The choice of the noun ‘daughter’ here demonstrates indeed the strong element of patriotism in these subjects who feel members of the country-family.

2) Those linked to religion, (b₁ directly, as in e.g. 36. ‘serve my religion’ or b₂ indirectly, as in e.g. 37. ‘work hard to serve our society’). Notice here that the declared will to service to society, which appears in many cases, on the surface may be interpreted to show altruism while it may have a religious motive in the background, as the applicant who makes the reference may probably either be influenced by the *Al Kafi book of belief and disbelief* in which it is stated clearly that ‘those who do not help those in need are not Muslims’ (Volume 2), or shows lack of individualism as this was identified by Hofstede (2005).

3) Those related to a strong wish and personal goals, e.g. 38. ‘achieve my childhood dreams’, e.g. 39. ‘my dream is to study in the USA’, e.g. 40. ‘my lifelong dream’, e.g. 41. ‘great dream and clear goal’. Again, in James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis (1992) similar statements used by Greeks were considered by the English native judges as an ‘emotional blackmail’ to the recipient; i.e. if I am not awarded the scholarship my dream will be destroyed.

Table (4) below, presents the frequencies and the distribution of arguments adopted by the subjects of the study. In the frequency column the number of subjects who used the type of argument is offered while in the first column the type of argument used. All possible strategic combinations are registered.

Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency and distribution of arguments adopted by the subjects

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Logos	16	21.1	21.6	21.6
	Ethos	2	2.6	2.7	24.3

	Pathos	1	1.3	1.4	25.7
	Logos+Ethos	18	23.7	24.3	50.0
	Logos+Pathos	12	15.8	16.2	66.2
	Ethos+Pathos	5	6.6	6.8	73.0
	All	20	26.3	27.0	100.0
	Total	74	97.4	100.0	
Missing	99	2	2.6		
Total		76	100.0		

At the above distribution table, seven independent groups are distinguished, in a descending manner: a) those who used a mixture of persuasive strategies of all types (20/27%), b) those who employed a combination of logical and ethical arguments (18/24.3%), c) those who employed solely logical arguments (16/21.6%), d) those who utilized logical and pathos speech elements (12/16.2%), e) those who made use of ethos and pathos strategies (5/6.8%), and finally f) those who used exclusively arguments of ethos (2/2.7%) and pathos (1/1.4%).

It becomes evident from the above distribution that, most subjects (55/74,3%) decided to make use of a combination of strategies (more than one type or of all three). Stand-alone logos arguments come second in their choice (16/21,6) while ethos and pathos follow with very small frequencies (2/2,7 and 1/1,4 respectively). On the other hand, logos arguments (quasi logical argumentation) are widely used either independently or in combination with ethos or pathos, which clearly shows that it is the most widespread type of argumentation. It should be noted that although pathos/emotional arguments are not selected by many subjects (table 3 and 4) they are used many times by the few who adopted them (table 3). While the number of subjects who used pathos arguments is the same with those who selected ethical argumentation, the number of times emotional arguments were used was higher than the number of ethical arguments. Notice also that, the number of subjects who selected solely ethical and emotional argumentation is significantly low, in two and one cases respectively.

Closing section.

Closing statements were used by most subjects 68 (91.8%) which could be grouped in four types:

- 1) A religious blessing described at the beginning of the analysis, e.g. 42. 'I hope to hear from you and praise and bless', e.g. 43. 'to express my deep hope that you will accept my application, God willing', e.g. 44. 'May God reward those who helped and contributed to the development of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia'.
- 2) A plea for their application to be considered favourably, e.g. 45. 'I hope you will consider my application favourably'.
- 3) By thanking the recipient or praising the government for the scholarship, e.g. 46. 'thank you for your cooperation', e.g. 47. 'finally, I would like to thank you for your great efforts that open the way for the daughters and sons of this country to achieve the best education'. Notice that the selection of the word 'cooperation' is not appropriate for the situation as there is no cooperation between the applicant and the recipient nor is the applicant in a position to thank the recipient for something they have not yet done. Expressions of this type in James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis (1992) were considered by the English native judges as a display of manners by the applicants to favourably influence the decision of the recipient.
- 4) patriotic expressions with the use of charged language, e.g. 48. 'glory to our country and rules', e.g. 49. 'daughters of the homeland'. There have been no cases found in which subjects including or attempted to solicit a response by the recipient.

Further statistical analysis.

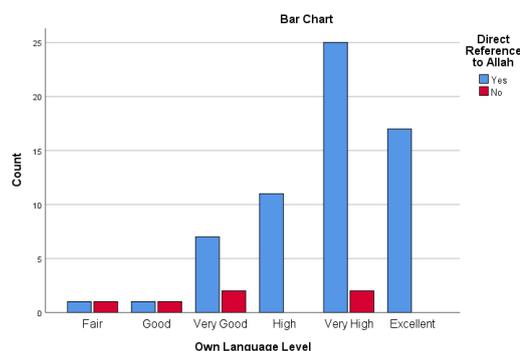
Measurement associations between the independent variables.

A) Associations between *level in L1* and *level in L2* (both ordinal variables) were correlated with the Spearman rho (ρ) correlation coefficient. These two variables were strongly positively correlated, Spearman ρ (61) = .000 (two tailed) $p < .001$. This indicates that when the level in L1 is high, the level in L2 is also high. This finding may confirm the earlier claim that this sample is the elite of the student female Saudi population. Further, it may be thought that this is an indication of language predisposition or personal interests in these subjects or it may relate to their cognitive skills in general. Both these hypotheses at this stage will remain unanswered as they were not investigated. Statistically significant associations found between this variable (Level in L1) and *type of strategy selection* [question (c) of the Introduction] are discussed in (B) and (C), below.

Measurement associations of the dependent in relation to the independent variables. Several measurements of associations were pursued among the independent and the dependent variables. Initially nominal to nominal associations were pursued and the Pearson Chi Square (PCS) values are reported, unless there are more than 20% of cases with an expected count less than 5. In these cases, the Fisher's Exact Test (FET) value is reported. Cramer's V (CV) value is also presented as this indicates the strength of the relationship between the variables. The statistical significance level is set at less than $p < .05$. The number of cases (N.) is also offered in brackets. Only the statistically significant associations are reported here. Looking at relations between the independent and the dependent variables revealed several statistically significant associations between:

B) as mentioned in (A) the variables *level in L1* and *type of strategy selection* [question (c) of the Introduction] revealed no statistically significant associations. However, statistically significant associations were located between the variables *L1 level* and *direct reference to Allah*; it was found that: a) a moderate positive relation exists between the two variables which is supported by the CV value at .441 and b) a statistically significant association with N.68 valid cases at 13.21 FET, with 5 degrees of freedom and significance level at $p < .021$. This is witnessed in the following bar chart (1); the higher the L1 level of the individuals, the higher a direct reference to Allah is made.

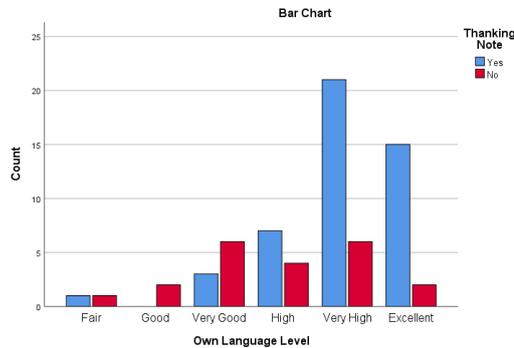
Bar chart 1.



C) the variables *L1 level* and *thanking note*; it was found that: a) a moderate positive relation exists between the two variables which is supported by the CV value at .457 and b) a chi square correlation analysis confirmed this relationship with (N.68) valid cases at 13.21, with 5 degrees of freedom and significance level FET at $p < .008$. The bar chart (2) below shows this

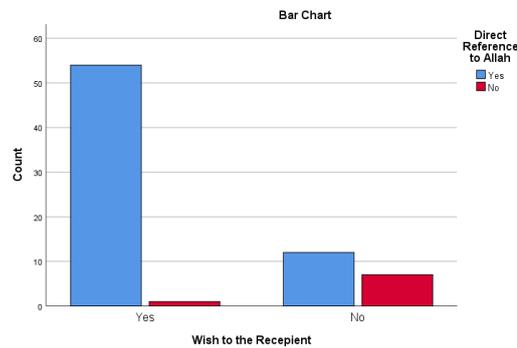
relationship schematically; the higher the level, the more subjects included thanking notes to the recipient in their letters.

Bar chart 2.



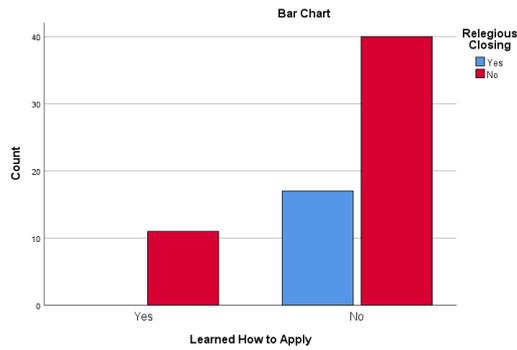
D) the variables *wish for piece and mercy to the recipient* and *direct reference to Allah* at the beginning of the letter; the PCS value was at 17.96 while the CV value was at .49, supporting a moderately positive relation, $p < .001$ with N.74 valid cases. This indicates that if an applicant does not make a direct reference to Allah at the very beginning of the letter she is not expected to continue with a wish for piece and mercy, as shown in the bar chart (3) below.

Bar chart 3.



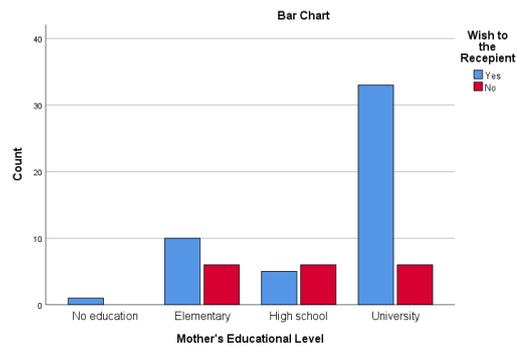
E) the variables *knowledge of how to write an application letter in their L1* and *religious closing*, which is a strong religious indicator; a statistically significant association was located at $p < .035$ level of significance, PCS at 4,3 with a low positive relation, 1 degree of freedom, CV at .25 and (N. 64) valid cases. The following bar chart (4) shows that those who learned how to write an application letter in their L1 avoided a religious closing in their application letter.

Bar chart 4.



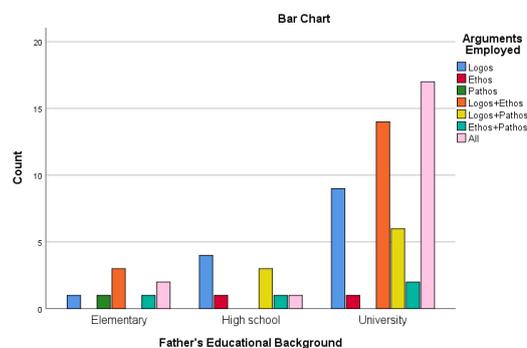
F) the variables *mother's educational level* and *wish to the recipient* were also found to have a moderately positive relation (CV at .350), and a statistically significant association with FET at $p < .028$). The PCS value is at 8,1 with (N.67) valid cases and 1 degree of freedom. The bar chart (5) depicts this relationship schematically. The higher the mother's educational level, the more subjects employed religious closings.

Bar chart 5.



G) While *father's profession* did not associate statistically with the *type of selected strategies* variable, his *educational background* presented statistically significant associations [FET (18,8)=.03, $p < .05$]. CV (.394) strength of association proved to be strong. The higher the educational level the more logos and logos+ethos strategies were selected (bar chart 6). *Mother's educational background* did not seem to significantly correlate with the type of strategy selection.

Bar chart 6.



The other independent variables that were registered in the study did not seem to have a statistically significant impact on any of the dependent variables measured.

Measurement correlations between the dependent variables

H) the *number of ethos* and the *number of pathos* arguments employed in the letter by the applicants were statistically correlated at $p < .001$ level of significance. The Pearson value was at .416 with 74 valid cases. This indicates that those who used ethos arguments also used pathos strategies in their letter. A similar test that was run between logos and the other two types of strategies did not show any statistically significant correlations.

Summary and Conclusions

Summarizing frequency distribution of types of strategies (main descriptive question of the study), and number of individuals who have selected them, it is possible to conclude that Saudi female academic persuasiveness is characterized by logical and strong pathos (religious elements and patriotic assertions), and ethos (social credibility construction appeals): a) logos arguments are by far the ones that appear the most, in the majority of the application letters and they are also those selected by most applicants (Table 5), and b) both pathos and ethos argumentation follow, very closely in numbers between them, which suggests that these two elements remain also strong in Saudi persuasion.

Table 5

Total number of strategies and total number of subjects who used it, by type of strategy			
	Logos	Ethos	Pathos
Number of strategies (left column)	152	74	85
Number of subjects (right column)	66	39	39

There are four basic elements included in the above-mentioned categories:

A) The logical element, as participants realise that a scholarship award is based upon specific criteria that are related to their personal achievements and performance scores, which are expressed in a direct manner. This finding comes in partial contrast to earlier claims by Kaplan (1975) [81] of a spiral manner rhetorical pattern for Arabic persuasion, and Johnstone (1989) [82] and Al-Ali (2006) [83] for the extensive, if not sole, use of presentational and analogical persuasion in oriental and religious cultures. There may be possible explanations for this: 1) Saudi Arabic persuasion differs from other Arabic persuasion. This would indicate that Arabic persuasion is not to be treated as one consistent chunk across the Arabic nations but rather containing different appeals which may be dependent on a specific Arabic culture. Although Arabic is the common language of different nations in what is known as the Arabic world, persuasiveness may develop across borders in different ways. Saudi Arabia is a rich country and Saudi Arabs are typically better off than other Arabs. As it is witnessed in the different native Englishes around the world, where rhetorical patterns differ from place to place, so it may be true for the Arabic language. This data seems to contribute to this hypothesis which may certainly need to be further investigated. 2) The Saudi Arabic persuasion has changed over the years, and c) Kaplan's (1972) [84] claims on Arabic persuasion were not the result of empirical studies but merely based on conventional common stereotypes of understandings of the other. It may be possible to conclude that logical argumentation is becoming an essential part of the Saudi Arabic academic female persuasion and that the rhetoric of this sample is clearly moving away from the purely ethical or emotional argumentation, both in the number

of arguments used and the number of participants who included it in their letters. This may be an indication of a gradual change or development of the Saudi female academic persuasiveness towards more western values. Despite the preference to logical argumentation, it may not be possible to conclude that the Saudi Arabic female academic rhetoric of this sample leans to this rhetorical pattern, as most subjects used a combination and a plethora of strategies (Table 4, above). By that respect Saudi Arabic academic female persuasion is not monolithic and makes use of different types of persuasive strategies.

B) The religious element (component), which is the strongest of all the other elements as it is reappearing in different forms within the application letters. The applicant's faith is manifested or declared in two different ways: a) with direct, overt and transparent cliché salutations, which contain direct religious references and expressions in all parts of the letter but principally at the beginning and at the end (pathos), and b) in an indirect and covert manner, evident in the strong interest to provide to the society (claimed social benefit), which may result from religious beliefs (diminishing ones' self for the benefit of the common good) used by the applicant to gain credibility by her ethos. It should be also noted that, despite the strong appearance of the religious element, in most of the application letters, there is still a noticed scaffolded differentiation within the sample (from moderate use to excessive use) as to the number and the strength of these clichés. Some applicants decide to incorporate all five different forms analysed above, while others include one or two or even do not include any at all in their letters. This differentiation is significant, and it is statistically corresponding to the language level in L1 while it comes in conflict with those who declared to have been taught how to write a letter of application for a scholarship and avoided using religious closings at all.

C) The patriotic element, which is predominantly expressed with love for the country and a wish to contribute to its development, with the new knowledge to be acquired, or the stated desire to represent it successfully out of its borders. This element is also connected to the expressed pathos in the form of appreciation of what is offered by the government to its nationals. Is this a genuine act of gratitude or is it a complimentary expression to positively affect the recipient or the government? At this stage it is not possible to clarify. This could also be interpreted as an attempted credibility-gain element, in which the applicant is trying to construct and increase credibility by claiming to share the same values, beliefs and preferences with the receiver and there on construct an identity (a self). When writing an application letter for a scholarship, applicants do not simply produce arguments to support their case but also undergo a process of identity construction to present themselves as morally positive, virtuous, and trustworthy members of a community. Positioning theory holds that 'rather than being *reflected* in discourse, identity is actively, ongoingly, dynamically *constituted*' (Benwell and Stokoe 2009: 4).

D) The politeness element, expressed by thanking the recipient of the awarding body in advance (a typical closure also witnessed in letters by Greeks), which could be seen as a move to show manners (politeness) and thus positively affect the awarding body or an act by the applicant to show respect to a higher authority.

On the other hand, the independent variables recorded and tested in this study which proved to have a significant impact on the depended variable were:

1) A positive relationship between level in L1 and a₁) the use of a direct reference to Allah and a₂) the use of a thanking note at the end of the letter (sections B and C of the *further statistical analysis* chapter). This shows that better linguistically equipped students tend to use only the

standard religious introductory statement and avoid the more religious declarations, as they are aware of language politeness functions to affirm respect to the recipient of the letter.

2) A positive statistical relationship between those who did not use an initial religious introductory statement and also did not use other religious statements within the letter (section D of the *further statistical analysis* chapter), and further, those who learned how to write an application letter and avoided the use of religious closings (E). These two findings may suggest that religious closings are avoided by either those who have learned how to write an application letter, those who do not use religious statements at all, or those whose mother has a high educational level (section F of the *further statistical analysis* chapter).

3) Last, a very significant finding relates statistically the father's educational background with the type of strategy selection (logos and ethos), which supports the idea that any development in persuasive strategy selection would come from education and within a family.

It is possible to conclude that Saudi female academic persuasion is based on logic, which is strongly present in the presentation of personal credentials and achievements, religion, social patriotic values and beliefs in identity construction, directly or indirectly expressed. Most of the independent variables tested, did not have a statistically significant impact on strategy selection, as it was shown in other similar studies. In contrast to the study by Papadopoulos and Ypsilandis (2017), language level in L1 does not play a significant factor in strategy selection. Perhaps, this is only evident in subjects of younger age (as in the afore mentioned study) when language is still improving significantly every year. Once a certain language and maturation level is passed, then strategy selection becomes part of the idiosyncrasy of the individual.

Discussion

The initial hypotheses have been partially supported by the evidence. While logical argumentation was found to be the most frequently used persuasive strategy, it is evident that Saudi Arabic female academic persuasion remains also highly influenced by the Islamic religion, which is a strong element in this sample. However, the absence of strong religious elements in some letters, particularly by those subjects who come from the educational elite of the country, shows signs of cultural development and change which is on the making (transition period). By that respect, it may be possible to claim that persuasion is a dynamic, non-stable, field and an area of discourse influenced by other variables, e.g. the level of education of other family members, i.e. father's educational background, in this study, which leads to the next major question. Is persuasiveness affected more by external sources, i.e. family (inner circle), culture (outer circle), and historical factors, and less by internal factors, such as the individual's internal characteristics and preferences? This is more than a problem of direction which needs to be investigated. Also, are the individuals consciously selecting the most appropriate to the situation persuasive strategies by accommodating to the situation (informed choices) or are they not fully aware of their strategical practices (uninformed choices)? In the latter case, a hypothesis would be constructed in favour of the individuals being equipped with the full spectrum of the persuasive strategies that exist and thereupon consciously select the ones more appropriate to the situation and either converge to those expected strategies of the recipient or diverge from it (fully aware of the situation) to state their 'self'. The dyad of *sameness vs. difference* is seen here which is related to the way the authors position themselves as sharing/rejecting certain beliefs and values of community and categorize themselves as belonging to certain groups. Group membership in some cases is vivid (gender, age, ethnicity,

etc.). It may be explicitly stated or underpinned, if the speaker, for example, mentions their professional affiliation or status. The more similarities the author has with the recipient (social group membership, and being consonant in terms of beliefs, preferences and values), the more credible they are. On the other hand, the former would suggest that it is a matter of language style, which James, Scholfield and Ypsilandis (1992) [85] claimed that it is more related to the rhetorical preferences of a speech community which, to a certain extent, influences the individual and thus is closer to the view that the individual is not fully aware of the persuasive selections that s/he makes. The opposite seems to be found in some cases here, i.e. an individual's (inner circle) different tendency within a certain culture. Coseriu's study on language change may, by parallel, enlighten this topic in favour of change resulting from an individual spreading to a society. In detail, Coseriu's model of language change follows four different phases, namely those of *adoption* (in which an innovation is used by an individual), *diffusion* (a phase in which this innovation is adopted by several individuals), *selection* (a phase in which this innovation is used alternatively together with the older term) and *mutation* (the phase in which a retention of a term is made or both distribution are kept in the same dialect). A significant fragment of persuasiveness relates to self-image, self-presentation and 'social identity' and 'the self', the last two declared' as issues 'at the heart of studies of cultural change' (Fairclough, 1993:44). A middling position would consider persuasive style as the result of external and internal influences, the proportion of which is different in every individual and would be difficult to identify.

The argumentation used in this sample could also be divided into two broad categories: a) global, for logical persuasion, which may be considered more international, used by members of the same distinct, student in this case, tribe, and would not be expected to cause pragmatolinguistic infelicities in most cultures, and b) local, for ethos and pathos appeals, which are strongly linked with the culture(s) of specific nation(s), and typically differ from other cultures and would be expected to cause failure on the pragmatic level unless there are cognate pragmatic values between cultures. In Baylis, Smith and Owens (2008:10) [86] it is stated that a global cosmopolitan culture seems to be emerging in at least most urban areas; 'the world is becoming homogeneous' as differences between cultures are diminishing. This is in their view a result of electronic communications which affect and 'alter our notions of the social groups we work with and live in'. It should be noted also that, despite that logos argumentation seems to be a more internationally accepted persuasive strategy, it does not carry the same weight in all cultures, while pathos and ethos, which are more culture specific and are expressed in a different way in different cultures, are easily spotted and thus remain in memory as they are striking and stand out of the other argumentation with the intense messages they carry. Pathos arguments are either loved or hated by the recipients depending on their personal values and beliefs and may give the impression of being the sole or the representative persuasive strategy related to a group's language and culture.

The design of the study, the procedure that was followed and the type of the subjects selected proved to be an ideal research environment for this topic. The method selected to proceed in this study proved to be sound for data collection, which is of immediate relevance to a larger student and not only population. The sample selected may be representative of Saudi female academic population despite its confining variables (age, year of study). The mixed analysis that was followed, provided the evidence and enlightened development of the persuasive tactics in this sample, something that a qualitative analysis would not have been able to locate.

On the other hand, a number of shortcomings have been identified and are registered here:

1) The number of subjects was too low, for some of the independent variables tested, to have a measurable impact and give a significant effect, i.e. *age* (most participants being between 18 and 19 and very few older than that), *years lived abroad* and *area of origin* as most subjects were from the central part of the country with only a few representatives from other provinces. These variables may need to be re-tested in another sample containing a significant number of subjects for each variable tested, following the same procedure. Thus, questions (a) and (d) described at the Introduction could not be pursued.

2) The distribution of the sample for the variable *first language level* was not symmetrical as most subjects were linguistically highly qualified speakers of Arabic. This confines findings as to this sample being representative of the entire population; the high linguistic level of the subjects depicts an elite of students with considerably high marks at their language tests. On the other hand, this may have a positive effect as subjects were linguistically equipped to express themselves fully in their L1.

3) The independent variable related to their family financial status (which was not controlled) may have shown whether a non-needed scholarship would have had an impact on the strategic choice.

Future research could be enriched by: a) recording the opinions of judges (application reviewers) who would provide information related to the acceptability (success or failure) of each type of strategy for this purpose, and investigate if absence of religious introductory statements would have any impact to the award of the scholarship, b) investigate persuasiveness in other Islamic states to see if religious salutations are commonly used, and c) investigate transfer of these conventions in letters written in English by another sample of Saudi female students, similar to the one in this study, for transfer in ALW to be empirically supported by evidence. Statistically significant associations registered between strategies in the two letters, would provide evidence of transfer. The other cases would then have to be explained differently through other psycholinguistic explanations (transfer, accommodation, idiosyncrasy of the individual). In all the reported contrastive studies in this work pragmalinguistic failures were attributed merely to L1 transfer. Whereas this is evident in many cases, some errors may be also attributed to developmental processes as the L2 learner is trying to decode (together with the structural system) the pragmatic system of the language, which is at a higher level (above the surface structure), less transparent without prescriptive in many cases rules (James, 1998). The problem here is that while grammar rule infringement follows specific Chomskian patterns the pragmatic level does not, or its rules are significantly more complex.

Finally, although this study is of a rather ethnographic type, it may provide the linguistic community with empirical data on Saudi academic female persuasiveness and thus benefit international communication and further contribute to a better understanding between cultures (short-term target). In addition to this short-term target the study has a longer-term objective, which is to help create a map of persuasion based on empirical data on the topic in the Arabic world, which remains fairly unexplored. Although this study is not conclusive on this matter it could certainly be used as an example of possible cultural and linguistic norms for the Saudi educated female population. A systematic framework construction with an agreed typology for scholars to contribute to the issue is needed. This way, findings will be more easily comparable and results will be more sound.

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