Altercasting

A tactic for persuading people by forcing them in a social role, so that they will be inclined to behave according to that role.

History and orientation

Although the term altercasting is used quite frequently, it is not a very well-known or elaborated theory of persuasion.

Core assumptions

When a person accepts a certain social role, a number of social pressures are brought to bear to insure that the role is enacted. The social environment expects the person to behave in a manner that is consistent with the role; the role also provides the person with selective exposure to information consistent with the role.

Altercasting means that we ‘force’ an audience to accept a particular role that make them behave in the way we want them to behave.

There are two basic forms of altercasting:

- *Manded altercasting* means that we ‘tell’ people who they are (or are supposed to be) by making an existing role salient (‘You as a Christian should...’), by placing others in a particular role (‘You as a young ambitious person should ....’), by attributing a new identity or role to someone, or by asking people to play a role.
- *Tact altercasting* means that we put ourselves as senders in a role that ‘evokes’ a natural counter-role for the other. Some common role sets are for instance expert-unknowing public, fool - normal, helper - dependent, scapegoat - sinners, etc.

Altercasting is a powerful tactic because

- the social role is a basic unit in people’s everyday condition;
- presenting oneself in a social role that can be used to cast the alter (tact altercasting) is relatively easy
- constructing roles that trap others in a course of action is also relatively easy;
- people often accept easily the social roles offered to them.

Favorite methods

Experiments

Scope and application

The tactic is frequently used in advertising and health promotion
Further Readings


Argumentation Theory

how people argue

History and Orientation

Argumentation exists from way before the 19th century, where the Aristotle’s logical theory is found first. This indicates that argumentation was an important factor already in society. Until the 1950s, the approach of argumentation was based on rhetoric and logic. In the United States debating and argumentation became an important subject on universities and colleges. Textbooks appeared on ‘Principles of Argumentation’ (Pierce, 1895). In the 1960s and 1970s Perelman and Toulmin were the most influential writers on argumentation. Perelman tried to find a description of techniques of argumentation used by people to obtain the approval of others for their opinions. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca called this ‘new rhetoric’. Toulmin, the other influential writer developed his theory (starting in 1950’s) in order to explain how argumentation occurs in the natural process of an everyday argument. He called his theory ‘the uses of argument’.

Argumentation theory cannot be seen as the theory for argumentation. Various authors have used the argumentation theory all in a slightly different way; it is not to say which version is the most developed.

Core Assumptions and Statements

‘Argumentation is a verbal and social activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge’ (Van Eemeren et al, 1996). Argumentation is a verbal activity, most often in an ordinary language. In argumentation people use words and sentences to argue, to state or to deny etc. Nonverbal communication is accompanied with verbal communication in argumentation and can play an important role. Furthermore, argumentation is a social activity, which in principle is directed to other people. Argumentation is also an activity of reason, when people put forward their arguments in argumentation they place their considerations within the realm of reason. Argumentation is always related to a standpoint. An opinion itself is not enough; arguments are needed when people differ on a standpoint. Finally, the goal of argumentation is to justify one’s standpoint or to refute someone else’s.

The version of Van Eemeren and Grootendorst of the argumentation theory, the pragma-dialectical theory, is currently most popular. They began to study argumentation as a means of resolving differences of opinion. Argumentation starts with four principles. 1)
Externalization: Argumentation needs a standpoint and an opposition to the standpoint. Therefore, argumentation research concentrates on the externalizable commitments rather than the psychological elements of people. 2) Socialization: arguments are seen as an expression of people’s processes. Crucial is to validate the arguer’s position by arguments in a certain way. Two people try to obtain an agreement in argumentation; therefore argumentation is part of a social context rather than an individual context. 3) Functionalization: Argumentation has the general function of managing the resolution of disagreement. Studying of argumentation should concentrate on the function of argumentation in the verbal management of disagreement. 4) Dialectification: Argumentation is appropriate only when you are able to use arguments that are able to help you arguing against another person. For resolving differences a theory on argumentation should have a set of standards. The term dialectical procedure is mentioned as a depending element on efficient arguing on solving differences.

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst identify various stages of argumentative dialogue. 1) Confrontation: Presentation of the problem, such as a debate question or a political disagreement. 2) Opening: Agreement on rules, such as for example, how evidence is to be presented, which sources of facts are to be used, how to handle divergent interpretations, determination of closing conditions. 3) Argumentation: Application of logical principles according to the agreed-upon rules. 4) Concluding: When closing conditions are met. These could be for example, a time limitation or the determination of an arbiter. Note that these stages are indispensable.

Argumentation analysis of persuasive messages

Schellens uses a typology which differentiates between restricted and unrestricted argumentation schemes. Restricted schemes are limited to a certain conclusion. The group restricted argumentation schemes can be divided into three different parts 1) Regularity-based argumentation (Schellens, 1985: 77-102): used in support of a descriptive statement about the present, the past or the future. Argumentation is given for a proposition of a factual or descriptive nature on the basis of a regularly recurring empirical link. 2) Rule-based argumentation (Schellens, 1985: 115-151; see also Gottlieb 1968 on rule-guided reasoning: used in support of a normative statement about the value of a situation or process. Arguments are given for a statement of a normative nature 3) Pragmatic argumentation: leading to a statement about the desirability of intended behavior. A position on the desirability of a given action, behavior or measure is advocated on the basis of its advantages and/or disadvantages. (Schellens, 1985: 153-178; see also Walton 1996: 75-77).

In addition to these restricted argumentation schemes, Schellens also distinguishes three unrestricted forms; argumentation from authority, argumentation from example and argumentation from analogy. These schemas are not limited to a conclusion of a type, but have a wider application.

Conceptual Model

**Favorite Methods**

Observation, content/argument analysis.

**Scope and Application**

Argumentation theory is an interdisciplinary field which attracts attention from philosophers, logicians, linguists, legal scholars, speech communication theorists, etc. The theory is grounded in conversational, interpersonal communication, but also applies to group communication and written communication. De Jong & Schellens (2004) illustrate the possibilities of argumentation analysis in the context of public information.

**Further Readings**


Classical Rhetoric

effective use of language: persuasion

History and Orientation

The classical rhetoric is a combination of argumentation and persuasion. Rhetoric is a blend of classical systems by among others, three ancient Greek teachers: Plato, Isocrates (and the Sophists) and Aristotle. The ancient Greeks wondered about language, because they noticed that spoken or written text had a certain influence. It rapidly became apparent that the primary political skill of the age was the ability to speak effectively for one's interests. This demanded participation and demanded that citizens speak. Therefore decisions were made through deliberation and voting- both speech acts.

Core Assumptions and Statements

Rhetoric can be defined as 1) to perceive how language is at work orally and in writing, and 2) to become proficient in applying the resources of language in their own speaking and
writing. In a way every utterance of a human is rhetoric, because all human utterances are speech-acts meant to persuade.

Discerning how language is working in others' or one's own writing and speaking, one must (artificially) divide form and content, what is being said and how this is said, because rhetoric examines so attentively the how of language, the methods and means of communication, it has sometimes been discounted as something only concerned with style or appearances, and not with the quality or content of communication.

Rhetoric has sometimes lived down to its critics, but as set forth from antiquity, rhetoric was a comprehensive art just as much concerned with what one could say as how one might say it. Indeed, a basic premise for rhetoric is the indivisibility of means from meaning; how one says something conveys meaning as much as what one says. Rhetoric studies the effectiveness of language comprehensively, including its emotional impact, as much as its propositional content.

**Scope and Application**

Rhetorical can be used to persuade people. The Greeks noticed that the politically crucial skill of effective public speaking can be done with (classical) rhetoric.

**Further Readings**


**Coordinated Management of Meaning**

people construct meaning on the basis of exchanging rules

**History and Orientation**

Pearce and Cronen (1980) developed the Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory. According to CMM, two people who are interacting socially, construct the meaning of their conversation. Each of the individuals is also comprised of an interpersonal system which helps explain their actions and reactions.
The CMM theory is related to a number of theories: (e.g.) Speech Act, Symbolic Interaction and Systems Theory.

Core Assumptions and Statements

The theory of CMM says basically that persons-in-conversation construct their own social realities. Pearce and Cronen (1980) believe that CMM is useful in our everyday lives. People within a social situation first want to understand what is going on and apply rules to figure things out. They act on the basis of their understanding, employing rules to decide what kind of action is appropriate.

Pearce and Cronen (1980) use the term ‘making social worlds’ in relation to CMM. People have a vision of what they think is needed, noble and good and also hate and fear certain things. People want to accomplish things in life and they hope to manage things whenever they are in conflict. Coordination is difficult when two people have different views; this is called different logics of meaning and action.

CMM is a rule based theory. Constitutive rules are essentially rules of meaning, used by communicators to interpret or understand an event or message. Regulative rules are essentially rules of action: they determine how to respond or behave.

In our language we pick out some things for our attention and not others. When we pay attention to certain events our language improves in writing and practice. CMM offers three terms as a way of applying the communication perspective to the events and objects of our social worlds: coordination, coherence, and mystery.

Coordination directs our attention to the ways in which our actions come together to produce patterns. These patterns comprise the events and objects of the social world in which we live. Coordination suggests that all events and objects in our social worlds are constructed by interweaved activities of multiple persons.

Coherence directs our attention to the stories that we tell that make our lives meaningful. The construction of meaning is an inherent part of what it means to be human, and the ‘story’ is the primary form of this process. With this in mind, CMM suggests that we tell stories about many things, including our own individual and collective identity and the world around us. There is always a tension between the stories we tell to make the world coherent and stories we live as we coordinate with other people. CMM focuses on a powerful dynamic that accounts for the joys, frustrations, surprises and tragedies of social life.

The term mystery is used to remind us that there is more to life than the mere fact of daily existence. Pearce and Cronen (1980) believe that any attempt to reduce our lives to mere facts is a mistake and will ultimately fail. In other words mystery directs our attention to the fact that the universe is far bigger and subtler than any possible set of stories by which we can make it coherent. It makes sense to ask, of any social pattern, ‘how is it made’ and ‘how might we remake it differently’.

Favorite Methods

Speec-act analysis and interaction-analysis.
Scope and Application

Pearce and Cronen (1980) present the CMM as a practical theory, designed to improve life.

Example

A public dialogue was held about how a Colombian city could achieve safety and prosperity. One participant made a suggestion that would involve the police. Before this person had finished speaking, another interrupted, shouting angrily, “The police? The police are corrupt!” Another shouted, with equal intensity, “No, they are not corrupt!”

This moment can be seen a point of creating social words. Our social words are created differently depending on what the facilitator does in this instance and how others act. The following statements show the creation of social words by the acts of speakers and others:

‘If the police were not corrupt, what would be different?’

‘I see that confidence in the police is important. Before we continue let’s talk about this’.


References

Key publications


Language Expectancy Theory

effects of linguistic variations on persuasive messages

History and Orientation

Brooks (1970) provided a spark to begin developing the Language Expectancy Theory. He had expectations about what a source might or might not say in persuasive messages. Burgoon, Jones and Stewart (1975) added the impact of linguistic strategies. They claimed that strategic linguistic choices can be significant predictors of persuasive success. In 1995 Burgoon provided a detailed version of the formulation of the Language Expectancy Theory.

Core Assumptions and Statements

Language Expectancy Theory is a formalized model about message strategies and attitude and behavior change. Message strategies include verbal aggressions like fear appeal, explicit opinions and language intensity which are more combat. Language Expectancy Theory assumes that language is a rule-governed system and people develop expectations concerning the language or message strategies employed by others in persuasive attempts (Burgoon, 1995). Expectations are a function of cultural and sociological norms and preferences arising from cultural values and societal standards or ideals for competent communication.

Language Expectancy Theory assumes that changes in the direction desired by an actor occur when positive violations of expectancies occur. Positive violations occur (a) when the enacted behavior is better or more preferred than that which was expected in the situation. Change occurs because enacted behavior is outside the bandwidth in a positive direction, and such behavior prompts attitude or behavioral change (Burgoon, 1995).

Positive violations occur (b) when negatively evaluated sources conform more closely than expected to cultural values or situational norms. This can result in overly positive evaluation of the source and change promoted by the actor (Burgoon, 1995).

Negative violations, resulting from language choices that lie outside socially acceptable behavior in a negative direction, produce no attitude or behavior change in receivers.

Favorite Methods

Laboratory research settings.

Scope and Application

The Language Expectancy Theory explains the effect of the use of different linguistic variations (language, language intensity) on people who use persuasive messages. It is used as a theoretical framework to explain the effects of several source, message and receiver
variables on message persuasiveness. Persuasive messages are used often, with this theory the impact can be described of using different intensities in language.

**Example**

Even though people are informed about skin cancer prevention, they do not always comply with prevention advice. From Language Expectancy Theory, it was predicted that messages with high language intensity would improve compliance with sun safety recommendations and that this effect would be enhanced with deductive argument style. Parents received sun safety messages (newsletters, brochures, tip cards) by mail that varied in language intensity and logical style.

Parents receiving messages with high- as opposed to low-intensity language complied more with sun safety advice. By carefully adjusting messages features, health professionals can obtain further compliance beyond that produced by educating people about health risks and creating favorable attitudes and self-efficacy expectations. Highly intense language may be a good general strategy in prevention messages.

Example from: Buller et al (2000)

**References**

**Key publications**


**Model of Text Comprehension**

How people comprehend texts.

**History and Orientation**

A number of theories about reading exist in which different parts of the reading process are described: recognizing letters and words, syntactic parsing of sentences, understanding the meaning of words and sentences, incorporating the meaning of the text in other present knowledge about the same topic. One of the most influential theories is the theory of Kintsch
and Van Dijk (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). This theory describes the complete reading process, from recognizing words until constructing a representation of the meaning of the text. The emphasis of the theory is on understanding the meaning of a text. Kintsch continued working on the theory. In 1988, it was extended with the so-called construction-integration model (Kintsch, 1988), followed by a completely updated theory in 1998 (Kintsch, 1998). This theory is often used as a starting point for constructing own models and theories, which several authors have done.

Core Assumptions and Statements

When a reader reads a text, an "understanding" of the text is created in the reader's mind. The process of constructing a situation model is called the "comprehension process". Kintsch and van Dijk assume that readers of a text build three different mental representations of the text: a verbatim representation of the text, a semantic representation that describes the meaning of the text and a situational representation of the situation to which the text refers. The propositional representation consists initially of a list of propositions that are derived from the text. After having read a complete sentence, this list of propositions is transformed into a network of propositions. If the text is coherent, all nodes of the network are connected to each other. The situational representation is comparable with the mental models described by Johnson-Laird. Text comprehension can be improved by instruction that helps readers use specific comprehension strategies.

Conceptual Model

Scope and Application

Text comprehension can be used for studying how people comprehend text in a second language with the help of multimodal instructional materials.

Example

An example of reading ability is vocabulary knowledge: there may be a causal connection between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Another example is related to a cognitive aspect. A learner selects relevant information from what is presented and constructs mental representations of the text. This process is moderated by individual differences, such as prior knowledge, abilities, preferences, strategies and effective factors.

Further Readings


Reference on theory:


**Psycho-Linguistic Theory**

use of language has persuasive power

There is no such thing as the Psycho-Linguistic Theory. Several theories are part of the field of Psycho-Linguistic.

**See: Model of Text Comprehension**

**Core Assumptions and Statements**

Language is a product of reasoning and therefore accessible to general, rational analysis, i.e. in analogy to other cognitive functions. Cognitive linguistics can be seen as the modern instantiation of this view, regarding language-bound functionality of the brain as incorporated and inextricably linked with other functions of the brain and being a learned ability, biologically / genetically based only on general-purpose "reasoning-mechanisms" of the brain. Applied in communication science this theory a.o. means that a particular use of language in messages has more or less persuasive power depending on a.o. the value system, the effort and the motivation of receivers. (Chomsky, Piaget, Vygotsky).

See for Chomsky: Natural (born) language.

See for Piaget & Vygotsky: theories on learning.
Speech Act

understanding speaker’s intention

(in Dutch: taalhandelingen)

History and Orientation

Speech act theory is built on the foundation laid by Wittgenstein and Austin. John Searle is most often associated with the theory. Ludwig Wittgenstein began a line of thought called ‘ordinary language philosophy’. He taught that the meaning of language depends on its actual use. Language, as used in ordinary life, is a language game because it consists of rules. In other words, people follow rules to do things with the language.

Core Assumptions and Statements

According to Searle, to understand language one must understand the speaker’s intention. Since language is intentional behavior, it should be treated like a form of action. Thus Searle refers to statements as speech acts. The speech act is the basic unit of language used to express meaning, an utterance that expresses an intention. Normally, the speech act is a sentence, but it can be a word or phrase as long as it follows the rules necessary to accomplish the intention. When one speaks, one performs an act. Speech is not just used to designate something, it actually does something. Speech act stresses the intent of the act as a whole. According to Searle, understanding the speaker’s intention is essential to capture the meaning. Without the speaker’s intention, it is impossible to understand the words as a speech act. There are four types of speech act: utterance acts, propositional acts (referring is a type of propositional act), illocutionary acts (promises, questions and commands) and perlocutionary acts. A perlocutionary act can be used to elicit some behavioral response from the listener. Searle believes that speakers perform acts by observing two types of rules: constitutive rules or definition rules (create or define new forms of behavior) and regulative or behavior rules (these rules govern types of behavior that already exist).

Favorite Methods

Content and conversation analysis.

Scope and Application

Speech act theory has contributed to the rules perspective in communication because it provides a basis for examining what happens when speakers use different definition and behavior rules. By analyzing the rules used by each speaker, researchers can better understand why conversational misunderstandings have occurred.
Further Readings


