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Every piece of writing has a conviction consisting of a thesis and an argument. The thesis represents the authors' perspective, while the argument refers to the ways by which the author influences the readers to accept the thesis. An author may elaborate the conviction both in terms of academic and creative writings. In an academic writing, the conviction reveals itself through the series of reasoning and arguments, which support the conclusion. In narratives, the conviction lies in the theme, or central idea, whether stated or implied. The category of academic and creative writings, however, refers more to the genre rather than the subject matter.

Through different kinds of writing, an author communicates to the readers. In narrative writings, the writer does not only express his or her thought, feelings and emotion, but also portrays and responds the social, economic, political, and cultural realities in which he or she lives. D. H. Lawrence's The Man Who Died, for example, represents his portrayal and response to the social realities of the early twentieth-century England. The same is true to George Bernard Shaw when he writes Arms and the Man. In the play, George Bernard Shaw portrays the social condition of the English society in the early twentieth century.

Just as in the narratives, in academic writings the author also presents his or her conviction through theses and arguments. The authors conviction in academic writings, however, can usually be identified more easily than that in the narratives because the author puts forward the conviction in a more direct manner. In academic writings, the authors conviction is usually resumed in the concluding part following the analysis and synthesis.

At the heart of the writing genres, whether narrative or academic, the author is trying to influence or persuade the readers so that the readers can accept his or her thesis. To meet the objective, and author should have an appropriate and clear thesis, sufficient arguments and reasons supporting the thesis, and an
PERSUASION, DIPLOMACY AND RHETORIC IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In planning his/her public relations campaign, a Public Relations Practitioner needs to recognise the values and attitudes of his/her publics whereas they need to employ a persuasive strategy as their main objective is to build a mutual understanding and support that eventually will change their publics opinion, attitudes and values, the way the public relations practitioner wishes.

Key words: Reputation, Persuasion, Change, Publics.

INTRODUCTION

A definition of Public Relations (PR) offered by the Institute of Public Relations (IPR), a professional body for PR in the United Kingdom as follows:

Public Relations is about reputation - the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. Public relations practice is the discipline which looks after reputation - with the aim of understanding and support, and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between organisation and its publics (IPR, 1999:1, Harrison, 2000:2).

The above quotation suggests the significant key word of reputation where impression management to win publics support is one of its essential natures. Some steps are certainly needed, starting from analysing publics view and hidden expectation up to formulating the message effectively to stimulate action.

In addition, influencing publics opinion and behaviour is the next key word to focus. This idea suggests a thorough strategy by employing rational and emotional appeals to make the public see things the way we do. A persuasion technique of approaching the public is therefore needed and it is only by understanding what people like and interested in, this effort is worth doing. Edward Bernays, a US pioneer on public relations in his Engineering of Consent (Bernays, 1955, Harrison, 2000:22) said that to conduct a successful persuasion, the first thing to do is determining the values and attitudes of the public we wish to persuade and then describe the client in a way that conforms to those values and attitudes. This paper aims at suggesting strategies to win public support effectively by focusing on the language employed.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The Nature of Persuasion, Diplomacy and Rhetoric

Persuasion is a deliberate attempt by an individual or organisation to bring about a change of opinion, belief, value or attitude in another individual or group (Gill and Adams, 1998:130). From the perspective of the person being persuaded, the process means a certain degree of psychological pressure. Persuasion comes somewhere between influence at one end, where the pressure is of rational argument and coercion in another end, where the pressure is a threat of punishment. The following diagram will clarify what I mean previously.