

Course
ENG-3103-3
English and Persuasion

English Language Arts



Introduction

Every day we are inundated with texts that try to sell us products, services or ideas. Alluring ads are featured in countless magazines, newspapers, Web sites, community bulletins, radio and TV programs and highway billboards. There are also many texts that promote viewpoints on everything from politics to puppy mills, such as promotional videos, public service announcements, public speeches, opinion blogs, and radio, TV or print commentaries. The truth is we encounter a vast array of persuasive texts in our everyday lives, and we need to develop our critical judgment to properly evaluate them.

In this 75-hour course, the last of three courses in Secondary III, adult learners participate in a variety of learning situations and activities to develop their ability to discuss and analyze a variety of persuasive texts, including advertisements (ads), editorials, commentaries, opinion blogs and letters of complaint. Although these texts belong primarily to the Persuasive genre, whose main social function is to promote a product, an idea or an ideology and to influence personal or social behaviour or opinion, they may contain informative, explanatory, narrative and argumentative elements as well. (See the explanation on social functions and their corresponding genres in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.)

The course helps adult learners broaden their knowledge of the communication conventions used in persuasive texts. By the end of the course, adult learners will be able to apply this knowledge when they produce ads, opinion blogs and letters of complaint, and when they critique ads.

Subject-Specific Competencies

Competencies are developed and demonstrated through the mobilization and effective use of various resources. Among these resources are language processes, strategies and textual and linguistic knowledge. The subject-specific competencies targeted in the course *English and Persuasion* are shaded in the table below.

Competencies		Key Features	
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)	Develops resources for communicating orally and for learning	Interacts with others in different contexts	Interprets how speakers shape an oral message to create a relationship with the audience
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)	Develops resources to make sense of various written, spoken and media texts	Extends understanding of various written, spoken and media texts	Interprets his/her relationship to the text and the context
Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)	Develops resources to produce written and media texts	Follows a process to produce written and media texts	Creates a relationship with his/her audience suitable to the text and context

For more information on the subject-specific competencies, refer to the following sections:

- *Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.2
- *Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.3
- *Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)*, Chapter 3, Section 3.4

Processes and Strategies

Language processes are series of actions or operations that support competency development. In other words, they are important resources that adult learners may use to become more effective speakers, listeners, readers, viewers, writers or producers of texts. In all, there are four language processes (Research, Reading, Writing and Production); the processes suggested for this course are illustrated in the table below.

Processes	Phases
Reading	Planning task at hand Mobilizing resources Reflecting on the resources employed to achieve the task
Writing	
Production	

Communication and learning strategies are actions, behaviours, steps and techniques that enable adult learners to overcome obstacles, attain goals and achieve success. They are additional resources that adult learners may use to become more effective speakers, listeners, readers,

viewers, writers or producers of texts. The communication and learning strategies suggested for this course are illustrated in the table below.

Strategies	
Communication	Verbal and nonverbal Rhetorical Organizational Writing Multimedia/production
Learning	Cognitive Activating prior knowledge Meaning-making Listening Reading/viewing Information-gathering Interpretation Note-taking
	Socioaffective Feedback Collaborative
	Metacognitive Procedural Feedback Self-evaluation

Additional information on processes and strategies is provided in the following sections:

- Chapter 3, Section 3.5
- Appendix (Inventory of Strategies)

Cross-Curricular Competencies

The cross-curricular competencies are generic skills that can be developed and applied outside the school setting. They are developed in tandem with subject-specific competencies. Given the nature of the course *English and Persuasion*, the shaded cross-curricular competencies listed horizontally could easily be developed simultaneously with the shaded subject-specific competencies listed vertically. Since teachers have the option of choosing learning situations other than the ones suggested in this program, they may decide to develop cross-curricular competencies other than those shaded in the table below.

Cross-Curricular Competencies → Subject-Specific Competencies ↓	Uses information	Solves problems	Exercises critical judgment	Uses creativity	Adopts effective work methods	Uses ICT	Cooperates with others	Achieves his/her potential	Communicates appropriately
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn					■				■
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts			■		■				
Produces texts for personal and social purposes			■		■				■

For more information on the key features and manifestations of the cross-curricular competencies, refer to the Diversified Basic Education Program.

Subject-Specific Content

The subject-specific content includes knowledge and cultural references.

Knowledge

The prescribed textual and linguistic elements, necessary for the development of the competencies targeted in this course, are listed below in alphabetical order.

Textual Elements

- ✓ audience and communication context
- ✓ coherence, cohesion and conciseness
- ✓ consistency or logical presentation of ideas
- ✓ emotional/aesthetic appeal of text
- ✓ facts and opinions
- ✓ layout of business letters (block format, modified block, semi-block)
- ✓ main and supporting ideas
- ✓ methods of organization (e.g. analogy, cause/effect, chronological order, comparison/contrast, example, explanation, listing of ideas)
- ✓ paragraphing
- ✓ relevant vs. irrelevant details
- ✓ social function(s) of text
- ✓ sufficient vs. insufficient development of main ideas
- ✓ textual features of ads: use of media devices such as pictures, images, designs, colours, logos, special lettering, etc.
- ✓ textual features of letters of complaint: date, sender's name and address, inside address, formal salutation, body of letter, formal closing, typed signature and written signature and/or identification initials, legible font and standard size paper

Linguistic Elements

- ✓ abbreviations
- ✓ agreement (of person, subject and verb, verb tenses, pronoun and antecedent)
- ✓ body language (gestures/movements/facial expressions/eye contact)
- ✓ capitalization and standard punctuation (commas, colons, end punctuation)
- ✓ common sentence errors (e.g. fragments, dangling modifiers)
- ✓ commonly misspelled or confused words
- ✓ language (connotative, aesthetic, figurative)
- ✓ language devices (e.g. jingles, puns, catchy phrases, humour, hyperbole, metaphor, simile, rhyme, rhythm)
- ✓ language functions (contextualizing, summarizing)
- ✓ language tone and register (style/level of language suitable to the context)
- ✓ oral communication features (voice tone, speed, volume, emphasis, enunciation, pronunciation)
- ✓ simple, compound and complex sentences (coordinators and subordinators)
- ✓ synonyms and antonyms
- ✓ syntax

Cultural References

In this course, teachers may decide to have adult learners explore the aesthetic aspect of culture by focusing on the notions of beauty communicated through and exploited by the world of advertising.

By examining ads that appear on billboards and TV and in magazines and newspapers, adult learners realize that images of attractive young men and women dominate these texts, and they consider the resulting social impact. In the process, they identify the type of ads where sexually provocative language, images, poses and partial nudity are considered appropriate (e.g. in the fashion and music industries), as well as the type of ads where more conservative and average-looking individuals are featured (e.g. in public service, insurance, food and household-cleaning ads). In general, adult learners reflect on the prevalent use of appealing images and language in ads of all kinds and learn to connect these features to the audiences the ads are targeting.

Adult learners may also focus on advertisements that target or feature children and consider the messages these ads convey. For example, adult learners can examine how the vocabulary, colours, images, objects or illustrations in such ads are designed to appeal to impressionable children and the purpose this serves. They may discuss any related ethical concerns, such as the reinforcement of sexual or racial stereotypes, the promotion of unhealthy food choices and so on.

By considering different types of advertisements, adult learners become aware that, while every society has standards of beauty, some social groups find textual features such as flowery language, ornate lettering, monochromatic colour schemes, blatantly sexual or graphic images more or less aesthetically pleasing. All of this depends on the role the text plays within the social group in question.

Alternatively, teachers may decide to focus on the sociological or the sociolinguistic aspect of culture. (See Chapter 4 for additional information on the three cultural aspects.)

Families of Learning Situations

The term “families of learning situations” refers to groupings of learning situations that vary in style and complexity but share some common characteristics. The families of learning situations targeted in this course are shaded in the table below.

Families of Learning Situations	
	Exploring and creating literary diversity
▶	Seeking and imparting information
▶	Developing and supporting a stance

Seeking is associated with the communication purposes of gathering and understanding information concerning the target audiences, language styles, and rhetorical devices characteristic of various sorts of persuasive texts. **Imparting** refers to the relaying of information in formal/informal discussions and print or media texts such as ads, ad reviews, opinion blogs and letters of complaint.

Developing is associated with the communication purposes of formulating opinions about the effectiveness of various persuasive texts and formulating ideas when preparing to create similar texts. **Supporting** involves providing reasons for one’s opinions of the persuasive texts of others, as well as explaining or defending the ideas advanced in persuasive texts of one’s own.

Broad Areas of Learning

The table below illustrates the broad areas of learning. These five areas are selected on the basis of their importance to society. Each comprises an educational aim and focuses of development that help teachers delineate the knowledge that can be explored in specific learning situations.

Broad Areas of Learning → Subject-Specific Competencies ↓	Health and Well-Being	Career Planning and Entrepreneurship	Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities	Media Literacy	Citizenship and Community Life
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn			■		
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts			■		
Produces texts for personal and social purposes			■		

As demonstrated in the chart above and the example of a learning situation below, Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities is a broad area of learning well suited to this course.

When adult learners focus on Environmental Awareness and Consumer Rights and Responsibilities, they may develop:

- responsible use of goods and services (e.g. a critical stance towards advertising and other forms of propaganda or manipulation)

Other broad areas of learning could also be selected to create different learning situations.

For more information on the broad areas of learning, their educational aim and focuses of development, refer to the Diversified Basic Education Program.

Example of a Learning Situation

Outrage Over the Name of the Emergency Ward

In this learning situation, adult learners are presented with the following scenario:

You have just read a newspaper editorial about the planned renaming of the emergency room of a children’s hospital. It is to be renamed after a clothing retailer in exchange for a \$10-million donation. The problem is that the retailer has recently launched a sexually charged promotional booklet containing an overt portrayal of teen nudity. The editorial explains that a group of over one hundred doctors and three children’s advocacy groups have signed a letter urging the hospital not to go ahead with the renaming. Their letter states that a public health institution for children should not endorse a company that uses sexually explicit images involving teenagers to promote the sale of clothing and other products.

The author of the newspaper editorial, in contrast, believes the renaming of the emergency room is harmless given the fact that the publicly-funded hospital could put this generous donation to good use. The author believes the retailer’s use of sexually explicit images of young adults in its advertisement is an insufficient reason for the children’s hospital to reject this proposed donation. You do not share the author’s view on this issue and decide to express and explain your own view by either sending a letter to the editor or posting an opinion blog.

End-of-Course Outcomes

By the end of the course, adult learners will be able to:

Discuss and analyze

- **advertisements** (e.g. ads with full motion and audio: voice/sound effects/music, ads with print text only or print text and photos)
- **opinion-based texts** (e.g. print/radio/TV commentaries, opinion blogs)
- **letters of complaint** (e.g. a letter to the editor of a community newsletter/newspaper, a local member of parliament, a teacher or a school administrator)

When adult learners discuss a variety of ads, they focus on the ads’ social function(s), target audience(s) and communication conventions. They discuss the language in each ad and consider how effectively it persuades the target audience to view the product or service in a particular way. They identify examples of connotative, figurative or aesthetic language (including language that appeals to the sense of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing) and discuss the effect of the type of language used. They identify the standard page layout of a full or half-page ad and discuss the positioning and interplay of image, colour and print. They discuss the rhetorical devices used in the ad, including media devices such as effective or appealing sound effects/colours/designs/logos, and language devices such as jingles, catchy phrases, puns, humour, hyperbole, rhyme, rhythm, metaphor and simile.

Adult learners discuss how these devices increase the persuasive appeal of the ad and the way beautiful or sexually charged images or words are exploited. They discuss the ad's informative, explanatory, narrative or argumentative elements and analyze the values that the ad embodies or promotes. They also analyze the role of persuasion in advertising in general.

When adult learners discuss a print or recorded commentary and an opinion blog, they focus on the texts' social function(s), target audience(s) and communication conventions. They adopt a suitable reading stance. They compare the level of formality and language style/tone in the selected texts and give reasons for any differences. They evaluate the impact of the texts' persuasive elements such as the use of connotative language, emphasis or repetition. Adult learners identify the viewpoints presented in each text and the main supporting details. They also identify the texts' informative, explanatory, argumentative or narrative elements and express their own point of view on the topic of the commentary or blog.

When adult learners discuss letters of complaint, they focus on the letters' social function(s), target audience and communication conventions. They adopt a suitable reading stance. They compare the level of formality and language tone in the selected letters. They discuss the text layout (block format, modified block or semi-block). They identify the standard parts of a business letter, i.e. the date, sender's name and address, inside address, formal salutation, body, formal closing, typed signature and written signature and/or identification initials. They analyze the nature of the complaint presented in each letter, the supporting details provided and their organization. They evaluate each letter's persuasiveness and provide reasons for their evaluation.

Produce

- **an advertisement**

When adult learners produce a print or media advertisement, they select and promote a product or service with a specific target audience in mind. The ad they produce incorporates at least two of the rhetorical devices (media and language devices) listed on the previous page and the ad uses a suitable layout style. The product or service featured in their ad is clearly identifiable, and the language and images employed are suitable to the target audience.

Text length: maximum 1 page for print ads including images; 15-20 seconds for media ads

Communication context: familiar or unfamiliar audience; informal or formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

Produce

- **an opinion blog for the general public**

When adult learners create an opinion blog for the general public, they select a topic on which they have a strong opinion. They may, for example, select a current controversial issue in a national magazine or local newspaper. In the title or opening sentence of their blog, adult learners identify their topic clearly.

They contextualize this topic by providing any necessary background details and state their own opinion. They then explain and defend their opinion by supplying a few supporting facts, arguments or reasons. Finally, they conclude their blog by either summarizing their position, proposing a recommendation of some kind, or posing a question/comment that will stimulate a response to their blog.

Text length: approx. 200-300 words (1 or 2 paragraphs)

Communication context: familiar or unfamiliar audience; fairly formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

Produce

- **a letter of complaint** (e.g. to the editor of a community newsletter/newspaper, a local member of parliament, a teacher or a school administrator)

When adult learners write a letter of complaint, they use formal, concise language. In addition, they use a style that is appropriate to a formal letter of complaint. In other words, they use formal punctuation, include all required business letter parts (date, sender's name and address, inside address, formal salutation, body of letter, formal closing, typed signature and written signature and/or identification initials), and present this information in a suitable order, using a layout such as block format, modified block or semi-block. They organize their text so as to achieve clarity and economy of style.

Adult learners begin their letter with a clear identification of the subject of the complaint, such as inaccurate or incomplete public information, or an objectionable comment, decision or policy. They then provide accurate, precise background information (e.g. who did what when) and specify in detail the exact nature of their complaint. In the second paragraph, they conclude their letter with a statement of the corrective action they desire, or a statement regarding the seriousness of the subject of their complaint.

Text length: approx. 200-300 words

Communication context: familiar or unfamiliar audience; fairly formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

Present orally

- **an ad review**

When adult learners present their review (live or recorded) of an ad chosen or approved by the teacher, they start by identifying the product/service promoted in the ad and its target audience. They give details about some of the persuasive aspects of the ad, such as its use of appealing colours/logos/images, connotative language, humour, hyperbole, jingles, catchy phrases and other rhetorical devices. They then rate the ad's persuasiveness using, for example, a star or point system, explaining what the items in their rating system signify. They provide arguments for their rating.

Text length: 1-1.5 minutes

Communication context: familiar or unfamiliar audience; informal or formal tone and register suitable to the text type and target audience

Teachers need to ensure that adult learners use planning tools such as brainstorming, lists, outlines and discussions as they begin creating their texts. Teachers also need to ensure that adult learners actively reflect on what they learned and how successfully they communicated in the texts they created. For example, learners may use self-evaluation checklists or feedback discussions to appraise how clearly and persuasively they communicated their ideas when they produced an ad, presented an oral ad review and wrote an opinion blog and letter of complaint. They may use the same type of evaluation tools to reflect on the effectiveness of the various learning and communication strategies they used, and to reflect on what they learned as a result of discussing and creating these texts.

Evaluation Criteria for the Competencies Targeted by the Course

Competencies	Evaluation Criteria
Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn (C1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective communication of ideas • Effective communication for learning • Appropriate use of language conventions
Reads and listens to written, spoken and media texts (C2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherent construction of meaning from texts • Demonstration of understanding of contextual connections • Thorough comprehension of structures and features of texts • Critical interpretation of texts
Produces texts for personal and social purposes (C3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective organization of texts to communicate • Appropriate adaptation of language to audience and purpose • Appropriate use of structures, features, codes and conventions of texts • Correct application of language conventions (usage and mechanics)

