

## **Responding to Criticisms: Analysis of Persuasive Speech Acts in Gianni Infantino's Speech in Defense of Qatar World Cup**

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### **Abstract**

Selecting Qatar to host FIFA World Cup 2022 had generated considerable debate around the world. Qatar was criticized for different issues concerning migrant workers' rights, alcohol prohibition, LGBT situation. On the eve of Qatar World Cup FIFA president Gianni Infantino delivered a speech to response to the criticisms that was directed to Qatar. In his speech he is defending the Football World Cup and FIFA as well. According to the importance of football and its huge impact on people. This study is conducted in order not to let the negative criticisms prevent the people from enjoying the world cup event or to affect our unity by concentrating on issues that are not related to football or sport but instead spark debate and divide the world. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the different types of speech acts in Gianni Infantino's speech by following Searle's Speech Act theory in relation to Aristotle's strategies of persuasion (Ethos, Pathos, Logos). The analysis of data showed that, FIFA president used all the different types of speech acts (Assertive, Directive, Commissive, Expressive, and

Declarative) along with the persuasion strategies and the percentage of using them were very close. This indicates that each type played a great role to serve the speaker's intention in delivering his message and persuading the audience that despite all the desperate attempts to ruin this world cup, but Qatar was ready.

**Keywords:** Speech Act, Persuasion, FIFA, Qatar, World Cup, Gianni Infantino.

## 1.Introduction

Among the different types of sports, Football sport has received and continue to receive considerable attention from people of all kinds. Almost in 1939 football sport became the centerpiece of media such as newspapers, magazines, movie theaters, radio ..etc. Moreover, it is important to know that football sport was originated in Great Britain and the term "football" wasn't used by all the countries in the world. Instead, there were other terms used to describe this sport, for example the term "soccer" was commonly used in the United States and other countries (Oriad,2001).

However, football sport may differ from country to another by its terms, nationalities, teams' customs and fans which can be young or old, men or women, white or black ..etc. But despite the differences, this sport succeeded in gaining a wide popularity for many reasons. One of these reasons is

that it doesn't cost money because all you need is a ball and two goals. Another reason is the joy that sport brings to the audience by playing it or by watching it. In addition to this, it can be played everywhere (parks, school yards, beaches .. etc) (Dunmore, 2011).

Furthermore, we cannot neglect the impact this sport has on the audience or the world. Football sport like any other sport certainly has positive impact and negative impact but when we talk about the positive impact the first thing that come to our mind is that football sport can improve our mental health and physical health. In addition to this, social bonding is another important positive impact of this sport. It represents an escape from everyday life, and brought together people of different social and cultural spaces to cheer or boo their teams or interest. Men and boys with limited emotional vocabularies in their ordinary lives are temporarily liberated to hug, cry, and comfort one another on the field (David J. Leonard, 2017).

On the other hand, football sport can breed violence and hooliganism among people. Football hooliganism covers many behaviors both simple and complex (Canter et al, 1889:108). It is well known that each team has his own fans who can be loyal to the point that they might do

anything to defense their team even if this leads to violence (verbal or physical) (Brain,2015) (Denis Howell,1968)

According to football huge effect (positive or negative) and its popularity, it is important to be protected, developed and this is the aim of FIFA and its president Gianni Infantino as well. In one hand, he seeks to keep this organization credible, trustworthy, modern, professional and accountable. On the other hand, he tries to use football to unite the world and to end discrimination, violence, gender inequality, hunger. Therefore, this research is conducted to show how Gianni Infantino protect football sport by standing up upon the criticisms that Qatar World Cup 2022 has faced. By responding to these criticisms, Gianni Infantino in his speech uses persuasive strategies. Thus, this study aims to investigate:

- 1- Persuasive speech acts used by Gianni Infantino in defense to Qatar World Cup.
- 2- Aristoteles's three Persuasive strategies (Ethos, Pathos, Logos).

To achieves the aims above, the following questions are proposed:

- 1- What are the types of persuasive speech acts found in this research? And which type is mostly used?
- 2- What are the persuasive strategies used in this research?

## 2. Who's Gianni Infantino?

The Swiss – Italian Gianni Infantino or as he also known as Giovanni Vincenzo Infantino, according to his birth name, was born on 1970 in Brig (Gianni Infantino: Biography, 1990–2024) He has law degree from Fribourg University, (Peter Millward, 2023) and he speaks seven languages (French, German, Italian, Arabic, English, Portuguese and Spanish) in which French, German, Italian are his first languages. (Inside FIFA, 1994–2024). However, Gianni Infantino has held different positions: he worked as the Secretary General of the International Centre for Sports Studies at the University of Neuchatel. Then he worked with the Union of European Football Associations, and became the Director of Legal Affairs and Club Licensing Division. Later, he occupied the position of Deputy General Secretary and Secretary General of Union of European Football Associations (Peter Millward, 2023). Finally in 2016, Infantino was elected to be the FIFA president (Panja, 2023). After he became the new FIFA president, Infantino chose to change the criminal past of FIFA as he believes by turning football into a peaceful tool that bring happiness and unity to the troubled world. (Joseph Maguire, 2021).

## 3. The History of FIFA World Cup

FIFA world cup can be simply defined as a mega-event that has the attention of billions of people around the world (Schiller, 2014) and it has been held in different countries that host the tournament each four years since 1930 (Gangal, 1997). During this event, the national teams compete against each other to reach the final match so that the champion team is rewarded for winning the FIFA World Cup (Centurion, 2014). The idea of establishing this great event goes back to the date 1904 when the FIFA took place in Paris, France to elect Robert Guerin to be the first president of FIFA (Donaldson, 2015), and it is worth mentioning that this establishment happened in the presence of seven European nations. These nations are: (Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland) Which in turn considered as the founding nations of FIFA (Schiller, 2014). However, the first FIFA World Cup took place in 1930, in which the first match of the inaugural world cup took place with France beating Mexico 4-1 and the final match took place with Uruguay (the host country) beating Argentina (4-2) (Colley, 2018). The following pictures can show us how the first FIFA World Cup looked like. Picture (1) represents the crowd at the Estadio Centenario which is a stadium in Uruguay in which football matches took place. On the other hand, picture (2) represents the official poster of this world cup which was designed by

Guillermo Laborde. This leads us to the fact that, Uruguay seized the chance of hosting FIFA first world cup not just to present this amazing event but also to present the country itself. Accordingly, Host countries will put it in mind that FIFA World Cup won't be a sport event only (Schiller,2014).



Picture (1) Picture (2)

After four years, specifically in 1934 Italy was selected by the FIFA to host the tournament of second World Cup which ended by the victory of Italy. Later on, FIFA third World Cup took place in France in 1938. And after the teams had competed against each other, Italy succussed in keeping the championship title and won the World Cup for the second time in row. Then FIFA World Cup stopped in 1942 and 1946 because of the second world war and after 12 years this event held in Brazil in 1950 to be the first World Cup that took place outside Europe and without a world cup final (Colley,2018), (Donaldson,2015). However, FIFA World Cup continued to be held each four years in many

countries and developed year by year to include many changes. For example, Sweden FIFA World Cup 1958 was the first with live television coverage (Chapman, 2016). Also in 1966, England used a typical symbol to characterize the tournament. This symbol as shown below was a cartoon lion which wears T-shirt containing UK flag painted on.

Therefore, "World cup Willie" was the mascot for England FIFA World Cup 1966 (Lisi, 2022)

World Cup Mascots in history, 2020

Then, FIFA developments continued to include the use of the yellow and the red cards in 1970 (Donaldson, 2015), and the penalty shootout was first applied in 1978. On the other hand, FIFA World Cup 2002 was the first that took place in Asia between Korea and Japan (Kapadia, 2018). In addition to this, FIFA World Cup 2018 witnesses the use of video assistant referee (VAR) which can be considered as a giant



shift that pushed football sport into a new advanced era (Utpal, 2020). Finally in 2022, FIFA World Cup took place and for the first time in middle east nation Qatar. The FIFA decision of allowing Qatar to host the World Cup tournament was criticized by many

countries. Therefore, the next section shades the lights on



Qatar World Cup 2022 and the criticisms directed towards it since this is what the research about.

#### 4.About Qatar World Cup

In this section, the researcher talks in brief about Qatar World Cup.

Therefore, it is important to know how Qatar had the bid to host the tournament. First, it is worth mentioning that Qatar was interested in the idea of hosting FIFA World Cup since the past in 2009, and made great efforts to increase its approval chance but of course Qatar was not the only country which has interest in hosting the tournament. Instead, there were five other countries: Japan, Korea, USA and Australia. Later in 2010, FIFA executive committee held an event to vote for one of the previous countries to hold FIFA World Cup 2022. Finally, the Committee voted for Qatar and by this announcement Qatar became the first Arab country that host this great mega event (Mutuku,2018) (Ruta,2015).

However, the tournament kicked off on November 21 until December 18, 2022 in which new stadiums and innovative air conditioning systems were built to ensure that the players and tourists will get a comfortable and happy stay in Qatar during the tournament (Nevins,2022).

Talking about the stadiums, the matches were played in different stadiums across five cities in Qatar. These cities are: (Doha, Lusail, Al Khor, Al Rayyan, and Al

Wakrah). The majority of the stadiums hold around 40,000 people, except a special one located in Lusail hold around 80,000 people (Stay,2022). At Lusail stadium, the final match was played between Argentina and France on 19 December in which Argentina was crowned Qatar World Cup Champions (COLE,2023).

Away from the architectural aspect, Qatar designed a mascot named (La'eeb). The choice of this mascot goes with their culture in one hand and encourages everyone to believe in themselves on the other hand. La'eeb is an Arabic word and has the meaning (super-skilled player). The design of the mascot is based on a piece of Qatari clothing called "ghutra". The picture below shows how La'eeb looks like (Pope,2022).



After announcing Qatar hosting FIFA World Cup 2022, a wave of criticism was directed towards FIFA and Qatar suggesting that Qatar was not eligible to host this sport

event for reasons related to its climate, cost, socio political issues and corruption in the bidding process. In defense of Qatar, FIFA president (Gianni Infantino) responded to that wave of criticism by delivering an amazing speech on the eve of Qatar World Cup. However, in this study the researcher tends to use speech acts theory in addition to Aristotle strategies of persuasion to show how Infantino defended Qatar World Cup. The following section therefore is designed for this purpose.

### **5.Persuasive Speech Act**

As mentioned previously this study shades the lights on Infantino's persuasive speech in defense of Qatar world Cup. Therefore, it is important to explain the relation between persuasion and speech act for the reason that the process of achieving persuading requires using language for performing acts. However, the term persuasion can be simply defined as the attempt to persuade or influence someone (O'keefe,2015). This definition leads us to discover that the process of persuasion involves two parties:

- 1- A Persuader: the person who persuade.
- 2- A Persuadee: the person who persuaded by the persuader (ibid).

Miller (1980) believes that persuasion is an attempt to strengthen the audience's beliefs or to change their thinking or behavior. According to Perelman (1982) the notion of persuasion is reflected in Aristotle's Rhetoric in which three types of influencing belief and action are discussed. The first type is called (Ethos) which can be regarded as the ethical one that represents the voice of the persuader, the believability and the credibility that he expresses through the speech. The second type is the emotional one that is known as (Pathos). This type deals with the emotions as a mean to persuade others. Finally, the third type is (Logos) and as the name implies, this type deals with logic in which persuasion can be achieved through reason and evidence (Virtanen, 2005) (Zhu, 2005)

Indicating to what is said above, speech act theorists believe that persuasion is an act by itself, and it can be expressed not only through the verb "persuade" but also by other different acts. It is "the perlocutionary effect that is generated from any situation that has a persuasion impact" (Maysa' Kadhim Hussein Jibreen, 2019).

By mentioning speech act, it is important to know that speech act theory was introduced first by the philosopher Austin in his famous book "How to Do Things With Words" then this theory was developed later by the philosopher Searl.

According to Austin (1962) the term speech acts can refer to the “actions performed in saying something”. He believed that we can use words not only to say something. Instead, we can use words to do things. Along with this believe, he distinguished between two terms. One of these terms is the “performative” which refers to the language that we use to do something, while the other term is the “constative” which refers to the language that we use to say something (Petrey,2016).

Furthermore, Austin (1962) classified the speech acts into three types (locutionary, illocutionary, perlocutionary). First, the locutionary act is associated with constative and refers to “actual words uttered”. Second, the illocutionary is associated with performative and refers to the “ force or intention behind the words”. Third, the perlocutionary act refers to the “effect of illocution on the hearer” (Thomas,2014). Then Austin (1962:151-164) presented five types of illocutionary act: “verdictives(diagnose; convict), exercitives (appoint; urge), commissives (vow; oppose), behabitives(apologize; curse), expositives(report; argue)” (Thomas M.,2012).

But Searle (1976) was having a different point of view concerning Austin’s taxonomy of speech act. Thus, he discussed the weakness in Austin’s work then he presented

a new classification consisting of these five categories (Assertives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives, Declaratives). However, the following table summarizes Searl's taxonomy of speech act (Williams-Tinajero, 2010), (Kaburise, 2011), (Searle, 1979).

Searl's Five Categories	Definition	Verbs	Example
Assertives	Represent the state of affairs (reality). In assertions, statements, claims and suggestions can be true or false.	Assert, state, boast, complain, conclude, deduce, consider	There are dark clouds in the sky; it may rain tomorrow .
Directives	Get the listener to carry out an action. They are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something.	Ask, order, pray, entreat, permit, beg, pray, command, request, plead, invite, advise, dare.	Please, join us for dinner on Monday.

		challenge. defy	
Commissives	Commit the speaker to some future course of action. Place obligation on the speaker and may be in the form of promise, offer, threat and vow.	Promise, pledge, vow ,	Touch the dial one more time and you will regret it.
Expressives	Indicate speaker's psychological state of mind or attitude to some prior action or state of affairs. They are seen in greetings, apologies, congratulations, condolences	Deplore. condole, diagnose, welcome,	I'm so glad to meet you.

	and expressions of giving thanks.		
Declaratives	They take the form of blessings, christenings, weddings, firing and so on. They bring about some alteration in the status or condition of the referred object solely by virtue of the fact that declaration has been successfully performed .	Pronounce, appoint, declare, resign, fire, excommunic ate, christen ,	I appoint you chairman

## 6. Methodology and Analysis

### 6.1 Research Approach

The data of this research is analyzed through the mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative). The researcher seeks



through the qualitative analysis to investigate the different types of persuasive speech acts used in Gianni Infantino's speech. And in order to show the frequency and the percentages of these types, the quantitative analysis will be used.

## 6.2 Data Collection

The data of the present research is based on a speech delivered by the FIFA president Gianni Infantino on the eve of the 2022 world cup in Qatar. The transcript of this speech has been downloaded from the internet source [www.TheSportsExaminer.com](http://www.TheSportsExaminer.com) which matches the video of FIFA event that has been uploaded on YouTube and was downloaded from the link

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq5RzV8dj8Y&t=2769s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xq5RzV8dj8Y&t=2769s).

## 6.3 Data Analysis

FIFA president delivered a great long speech on the eve of Qatar World Cup to discuss certain matters relating to this huge event. This speech included the criticisms that Qatar faced concerning the matters below which represent the focus of controversy. The analysis, therefore is limited to Gianni Infantino responses to these criticisms.

### 1- Migrant Workers Rights

Gianni Infantino responded to the criticisms concerning the labor matter by using different types of speech acts which are explained below. From the early beginning (Ethos) strategy can

be seen in which the speech is delivered by a famous trustworthy person (elected FIFA president). However, he started his speech by evoking the audience feelings using (pathos) strategies talking about his childhood and describing how it is difficult to be a migrant worker as his father suffered this experience as mentioned in (line 1,2,4). He took upon himself, as he is FIFA president, protecting the worker's rights. He explained that he came by himself to Qatar in order to observe and help the people in this country, who already care about them, to present what can help those workers (line 3,8,10,11) and Indeed Qatar opened the door for the migrant workers to find jobs in this country and it provided many things that serve their interest and give them their rights (line 13,15,19,20,21,22) even FIFA president promised and comforted the workers that he will be there until they get all their rights (line 23). According to what Qatar did to protect worker's rights, Gianni Infantino address a message to the other countries telling them to stop criticizing and giving moral lessons. He asked them to look at themselves in the mirror and to apologize about the things they have done for others. Also, he advised them to follow the lead of Qatar if they really care about human rights in general and workers right in specific (line 7,9,12,14,17,18,24). Finally, we can't neglect how grateful he was for those workers. He used the expressive

speech act in line (5,6,15) to thank all the people who worked on this event including his staff and all the volunteers. Returning back to Aristotle's persuasive strategies, Gianni Infantino delivered this speech using (Logos) strategy because he was defending Qatar according to evidences and facts, he saw there by himself.

- 1- I think – what I see brings me back to my personal story.  
I am [the] son of migrant workers. (Assertive) (Logos)
- 2- And I was brought back to my childhood. (Expressive)  
(Pathos)
- 3- And I said to the people here in Qatar, 'this is not good, this is not right. (Directive) (Logos)
- 4- I feel like them, because I know what it means to be discriminated, to be bullied, as a foreigner in a foreign country. (Expressive) (Pathos)
- 5- So, I applaud all those who are engaged here.  
(Expressive) (Pathos)
- 6- And I thank them for doing that (Expressive) (Pathos)
- 7- We should apologize for the next 3,000 years, before starting to give moral lessons to people. (Directive) (Pathos)
- 8- I came here six years ago and addressed the matter of migrant workers. straight on, at my very first meeting.  
(Assertive) (Logos)

- 9- Who is actually caring about the workers. Who?  
(Directive) (Pathos)
- 10- FIFA does. Football does. The World Cup does. And to be fair to them, Qatar does, as well. (Assertive) (Logos)
- 11- I bumped into a migrant study, not a FIFA study, a Human Rights Watch study (Assertive) (Ethos)
- 12- Why nobody asks for a compensation to be paid for the families of these migrants who died? (Expressive) (Logos)
- 13- Well Qatar is actually offering them this opportunity.  
(Commissive) (Logos)
- 14- So, if Europe would really care about the destiny of these people, Europe could also do as Qatar did: create some channels, legal channels. (Directive) (Logos)
- 15- The kafala system was abolished, minimum wages were introduced, heat protection measures were taken.  
(Declarative) (Logos)
- 16- Thanks to him coming here, even in difficult situations.  
(Expressive) (Pathos)
- 17- Why couldn't we do something like this in Europe and so something much better for many more people all over the world. (Directive) (Pathos)
- 18- We need to invest in helping these people. We need to invest in education, to give them a better future, to give them more hope. (Directive) (Pathos)

19- I am happy because there is a real prospect and there are some formalities to be carried out, of a dedicated office.

(Expressive) (Pathos)

20- There will be an ILO permanent office which will serve exactly the purpose which was asked for to assist everyone who is here, show them their rights and remedies possible.

(Declarative) (Pathos)

21- When it comes to compensation of workers as well, you should know that there is a legal framework to cover worker's compensation (Assertive) (Logos)

22- Qatar established a Worker's Support and Insurance Fund, to support compensation claims. (Declarative) (Logos)

23- We will be back, we will be here to check, don't worry. (Commissive) (Ethos)

24- So, take from our learnings, partner with the no. 1 partner in this area – ILO – and work to make the lives of workers all over the world a little bit better. (Directive) (Pathos)

## 2- **LGBT Situation**

Responding to the criticisms that Qatar faced concerning the LGBT rights, FIFA president explained in his speech that all what have been said about this issue is false accusations and he indicated that Qatar is following FIFA rules by letting the people around the whole world who have different beliefs, religions, race, sexual orientation ..etc to attend this event.

- And to emphasize this, he repeated the phrase “everyone is welcome” more than one (line 25,26,27,28). In addition to this, we can see in (line29) Gianni Infantino is asking the people to respect each other’s beliefs, religions, and to stop criticizing Qatar just because this country didn’t allow the LGBT people to show their orientation in public. Also, he added in (line 30) that every one has different point of view towards this issue, even he who wish if he could do something to them, but of course he had to stick to the rules and respect what Qatar wants and believes in. The speech here also witnessed the use of both (pathos) and (Logos) and of course (Ethos) as it is delivered by the same person.
- 25- They have confirmed and I can confirm that everyone is welcome. (Declarative) (Logos)
- 26- This is a clear FIFA requirement; everyone has to be welcomed. (Commissive) (Logos)
- 27- Everyone who comes to Qatar is welcome, whatever religion, race, sexual orientation, belief she or he has. Everyone is welcome. (Expressive) (Pathos)
- 28- This is our requirement and the Qatari state sticks to that requirement. (Directive) (Logos)
- 29- So, what do you want to do about it? You want to stay home and hammer and criticize and say how bad they are:

these Arabs or these Muslims or whatever, because it's not allowed to be publicly gay? (Directive) (Pathos)

30- Of course, I believe it should be allowed, as FIFA President. (Assertive) (Logos)

### 3- Alcohol Prohibition

Dealing with the last issue, Gianni Infantino responded to all what have been said about Alcohol prohibition by clarifying the fact that any decision was taken by Qatar was not done by Qatar alone. Instead, FIFA was there to discuss the matter (line 31). He clarified that they both came to this decision for the people safety (line 35) and of course this will not be the end of the world if a person stay without these drinks just for a few times (line33). Again he shows that some criticisms were directed not against the decision itself but to the people or their religion, beliefs, traditions..etc. He mentioned in (line 34) that preventing alcohol in stadiums is not something that people would face for the first time. But it is a usual thing that they had faced in previous countries. Despite this, He indicated (in line 32,36) that there will be places in Qatar where they can freely have these drinks and he offered them another drink that the can have while they are in stadiums.

31- Let me first assure you that every decision that is taken in this World Cup is a joint decision, between Qatar and FIFA.

Every decision. It is discussed, debated and taken jointly.

(Assertive) (Logos)

32- There will be, I don't know, how many fan zones – eight, 10, big fan zones – over 200 places where you can buy alcohol in Qatar anyway. (Assertive) (Logos)

33- If for three hours a day you cannot drink a beer, you will survive. (Assertive) (Logos)

34- The same rules apply in France, or in Spain or in Portugal or in Scotland, where no beer is allowed in stadiums. Now here it seems to become a big thing because it's a Muslim country. (Assertive) (Logos)

35- We have to make sure that people can go in and go out and these whole flows function in the right way and that's why we had to take the decision about the beer. (Commissive) (Logos)

36- We make sure that Bud Zero will be sold in the stadiums and Budweiser in plenty of places in the whole city (Commissive) (Logos)

## 7. Conclusions

In this study, the researcher focused on FIFA and sport in general but on football and Qatar World Cup in specific. From my point of view, football is a great sport that help people to escape from the pressures of life. It is a magical tool that gather different people to engage or interact with



each other. In fact, it is heartwarming to see our families, our friends enjoying their time and sharing the same interest. Therefore, it is essential to stand against anything which may represent a threat or danger to it.

Accordingly, this study shaded the lights on Qatar World Cup and the criticisms that Qatar Faced. The researcher, selected the speech which was delivered by FIFA president. The analysis of the speech showed that Gianni Infantino responded to these criticisms and defended FIFA, football sport, world cup and Qatar as well. To achieve his purpose, he used all the types of speech acts with frequency of (27.77%) for Assertives, (25%) for Directives, (22.22%) for Expressives, (13.88%) for Commissives and (11,11%) for Declaratives. This variation indicates that Gianni Infantino didn't stick to one sort. He did his best to persuade the audience by including his speech facts, emotions, obligations, advises, blames...etc . Also, it is worth mentioning that what enhanced his speech was the use of the Aristotle's strategies of persuasion (Ethos. Pathos, Logos) which served the same purpose.

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