



Al-Farabi Kazakh National University
Faculty of Journalism

"Academic Writing" course.

Lecture 7. Argumentation and Use of Evidence

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Lecture 7

7. Argumentation and Use of Evidence

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Argumentation and the use of evidence are central to academic writing. They ensure your points are clear, logical, and supported by credible sources, making your work persuasive and credible. Here's an overview of how to effectively construct arguments and use evidence in your paper.

1. Argumentation: Crafting a Strong Argument

An argument is a reasoned position on a specific issue or topic, supported by evidence and logic. A good argument should:

Clearly State Your Position: Your thesis or main argument should be clear and unambiguous. This is the central claim of your paper, around which all evidence and reasoning revolve.

Example: "Social media platforms significantly influence political participation among young adults."

Provide Justification: Support your argument with reasons that explain why your position is valid. This involves presenting logical reasoning or drawing on previous research to back up your thesis.

Example: "Studies show that social media increases political engagement by offering a platform for discussion, organization, and access to political information."

Anticipate Counterarguments: Consider opposing viewpoints or objections to your argument, and address them respectfully. This strengthens your credibility and demonstrates that you've considered the issue from multiple angles.

Example: "Although some critics argue that social media platforms lead to misinformation, studies indicate that platforms also facilitate fact-checking and critical discussion."

Maintain Logical Consistency: Ensure your reasoning is coherent and follows a logical flow. Avoid fallacies (e.g., ad hominem, strawman arguments) that weaken your case.

2. Using Evidence Effectively

Evidence is the foundation of your argument. It consists of facts, data, quotations, examples, and expert opinions that support your claims. To use evidence effectively:

Types of Evidence:

Empirical Evidence: Data collected through experiments, surveys, or observations. This is particularly valuable in scientific, social science, and quantitative research.

Example: "A survey of 500 young adults revealed that 70% report following political campaigns on social media."

Theoretical Evidence: Concepts, models, or frameworks that have been developed by scholars or researchers in the field. This type of evidence supports your argument's conceptual basis.

Example: "According to the theory of media ecology, digital platforms shape public discourse by altering the ways information is consumed and shared (McLuhan, 1964)."

Statistical Evidence: Data presented in numerical form that helps quantify your claims. This is especially useful in arguments that require a strong data-driven approach.

Example: "A 2020 report by Pew Research found that 59% of young voters are more likely to vote when they follow political discussions on social media."

Expert Testimony: Opinions from recognized authorities or experts in the field. This helps to lend credibility to your argument.

example: "Dr. Jane Doe, a political scientist at XYZ University, argues that social media allows young people to access diverse perspectives, leading to greater political engagement."

Anecdotal Evidence: Personal stories or specific examples that illustrate your point. While persuasive, this should be used sparingly in academic writing.

Example: "For example, a 19-year-old college student shared that social media allowed her to follow candidates and participate in online debates, which influenced her voting behavior."

Integrating Evidence:

Introduce the Evidence: Always introduce the source or type of evidence you're presenting. Briefly explain its relevance to your argument.

Example: "Research conducted by Smith (2021) shows that..."

Present the Evidence: Provide the details of the evidence, whether it's a statistic, quote, or research finding.

Example: "According to Smith's findings, 60% of young adults are more likely to vote when they engage with political content online."

Explain the Evidence: Don't just present evidence—explain how it supports your argument. Make the connection clear.

Example: "This suggests that social media platforms provide a valuable platform for political engagement, particularly among young people who might otherwise be disengaged from traditional political channels."

Synthesize Multiple Sources: Use evidence from multiple sources to build a more compelling argument. Don't rely on a single piece of evidence.

Example: "In addition to Smith's research, studies by Brown (2019) and Lee (2020) support the claim that social media increases political participation by providing a space for youth to interact with political issues."

Cite Your Evidence: Always properly cite your sources to give credit to the original authors and allow readers to verify your evidence.

Example (APA style): (Smith, 2021).

3. Critical Thinking in Argumentation

Clarity and Precision: Be clear and precise in your arguments. Avoid ambiguous language or overly complex explanations that may confuse the reader.

Balance: Present a balanced view by acknowledging limitations in your argument or the complexity of the issue, while still supporting your main claim.

Logical Flow: Ensure that each point logically follows from the previous one. Transition sentences are helpful to maintain a smooth progression of ideas.

Objectivity: Maintain an objective tone. Avoid overly emotional language or bias that could undermine the credibility of your argument.

4. Common Pitfalls to Avoid

Overgeneralization: Avoid making sweeping statements that can't be supported by evidence. For example, "All young adults are politically engaged through social media" is too broad and needs evidence to back it up.

Cherry-picking Evidence: Using evidence selectively to support your argument while ignoring evidence that contradicts it can weaken your argument. Present a balanced view, acknowledging opposing evidence when relevant.

Lack of Proper Citation: Failing to cite sources accurately or not providing enough detail about where the evidence came from can make your argument less credible and lead to issues of plagiarism.

The educator facilitates students' development of global competence by scaffolding and supporting them through the process of producing an evidence-based written argument about a global issue. The educator effectively teaches students to recognize, articulate, and apply an understanding of different perspectives (including their own); apply critical, comparative, and creative thinking and problem solving; and form opinions based on exploration and evidence as they craft their evidence-based arguments.

Method Components

The aim of an argument or discussion should not be victory, but progress. – Joseph Joubert

What is Evidence-Based Argument?

Argumentative writing uses reasons and evidence to support a claim. The purpose of an evidence-based argument is to use logic and evidence (text, data, facts, statistics, findings, expert opinion, anecdotes, or examples) to convince the reader of the validity of the writer's claim, opinion, or viewpoint. The essential components of a written argument are the claim, the supporting evidence, and the reasons that explain how the evidence proves the claim. Argument writing can also include responses to potential counterarguments.

To write effective arguments, students must research a question or issue, gather sufficient relevant evidence, formulate a claim, and develop a convincing argument. Argument writing involves critical thinking and reasoning in order to develop ideas and use evidence effectively. Students need explicit instruction in all aspects of the process as they learn to develop strong arguments independently.

Argument writing is emphasized throughout the national standards for all core subject areas. It is the #1 anchor standard for writing in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts as well as

Mathematics and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Argument writing is included in the C3 Framework from the National Council of Social Studies, and is a key practice outlined in the

Next Generation Science Standards. See links in the Resources section below.

How does evidence-based argument writing help students develop global competence?

Argument writing is a crucial skill for informed, participatory citizenship in a global society. Effective argument requires the writer to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple perspectives, ground their arguments with meaningful, authentic evidence, and acknowledge opposing viewpoints. Thus, through the development of evidence-based argument writing skills, students learn the globally competent skills and behaviors of:

- recognizing, articulating, and applying an understanding of different perspectives (including their own)
- applying critical, comparative, and creative thinking and problem solving, and
- forming opinions based on exploration and evidence.

Indeed, argument is a critical skill for success as global citizens and contributing members of our interconnected, information-rich world.

Suggested Implementation Strategies

1. Identify the globally significant issue(s) that will frame students' learning and evidence-based arguments. Engage students in learning experiences designed to build students' background knowledge.
2. Pose a question or topic—or invite students to choose a question or topic—as a focus for their written arguments.
3. Have students engage in close reading of mentor texts to discover what makes them effective. Provide well-written evidence-based arguments for students to analyze and compare, noting how the authors use evidence to support their arguments.
4. Introduce or review the elements of argumentative writing: claim, reasons, and evidence. Depending on the students' grade level, it may also be appropriate to introduce counterclaims and rebuttal. Have students identify those elements in the mentor texts.
5. Teach students to be aware of effective moves writers make (see Resources for Mentor Texts below), and have students critique and evaluate the mentor texts for effective use of these moves.

6. Support students as they engage in each step of writing an evidence-based argument, such as:

- Gathering, interpreting, and evaluating sources and data
- Identifying and analyzing evidence
- Developing a claim
- Determining which evidence best supports the claim
- Selecting credible and relevant evidence
- Incorporating a wide range of evidence into the argument
- Structuring the argument
- Providing logical reasoning; showing how the evidence proves the claim
- Anticipating and addressing potential counterarguments.

7. Conclude by asking students to participate in a final reflective debrief, reflecting in writing and/or a class discussion on how writing an evidence-based argument about a global issue helped them:

- recognize, articulate, and apply an understanding of different perspectives (including their own)
- apply critical, comparative, and creative thinking and problem solving, and
- form opinions based on exploration and evidence as they craft their evidence-based arguments.

A strong written argument can impact the reader's view of the world, influence public opinion, and serve as a catalyst for meaningful change. The goal is for students to develop the skills needed to develop well-substantiated arguments in order to argue thoughtfully and logically in real-world situations. In meeting this goal, we enable and empower students to write to change the world.

Supporting Rationale and Research

“Argument is at the heart of critical thinking and academic discourse” (Hillocks, 2010). When teachers provide scaffolding for the individual steps of finding evidence and developing written arguments, students develop stronger academic literacy, engage in more critical thinking, produce stronger arguments, and gain deeper understanding of the content (NCTE, 2012).

“Deeper learning requires students to formulate problems and generate hypotheses, to identify the data and tools necessary to solve a problem, to synthesize information from multiple sources and to construct supportable arguments” (Vander Ark and Schneider, 2014).

In order to engage in deep learning, students must “draw information from knowledge they have acquired and then do something meaningful with it.” One important way for students to engage in thinking critically and solving complex problems is to reason and construct justifiable arguments in support of a hypothesis (Vander Ark and Schneider, 2014).

Example of Effective Argumentation with Evidence

Argument: Social media increases political participation among young adults.

Evidence:

- **Statistical Evidence:** A Pew Research study in 2020 found that 59% of young adults say they are more likely to vote if they follow political content on social media.
- **Expert Testimony:** Dr. Jane Doe, a political scientist at XYZ University, explains that social media platforms create a space for young adults to access political information, which can increase their sense of political efficacy.
- **Anecdotal Evidence:** Sarah, a 20-year-old student, mentioned that she became interested in politics after following candidates on Instagram, leading her to vote for the first time in 2020.

Explanation: This evidence collectively supports the argument that social media serves as an influential tool for political engagement among young adults, facilitating information access, discussion, and participation in electoral processes.

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