

UGRC 150

CRITICAL THINKING & PRACTICAL REASONING

UNIT 3 – CONTRASTING TYPES OF DISCOURSE

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Session Overview

- In **Units 1 and 2** you were introduced to techniques for studying the meaning and different uses of individual sentences.
- But most of the time when we gather information we do not think about individual sentences one at a time in isolation from each other. **In this Session** you will apply these same techniques to scrutinise batches of sentences working together—in written passages and spoken conversations, where sentences are ordered in distinct ways for different purposes
- Sentences usually convey more than single bit of information or a single level of meaning at a time. We need to assess what is communicated both implicitly and explicitly, indirectly as well as overtly, in order to make correct evaluations and to draw correct conclusions from what we hear and read as critical thinkers and good practical reasoners.

Goals and Objectives

Upon completion of this Session you will see where logical analysis belongs because you will be able to:

- distinguish between a verbal dispute and a substantive disagreement
- appreciate the deviations from literal interpretation required by metaphor, allegory and proverbial discourse
- recognise when ambiguity, vagueness, and equivocation require correction
- identify when a passage contains an argument rather than a narrative, a set of instructions, or self-asserting rhetorical polemic

REQUIRED READING: UNIT 3 of the Textbook

TYPES OF DISPUTES

VERBAL DISPUTES VS **SUBSTANTIVE DISAGREEMENTS**

Verbal Disputes and Substantive Disagreements

- To discover how correcting inconsistencies in the use of words can help to fix a disagreement that is steeped in confusion.
- Correcting a confusion does not always mean we can wipe away a disagreement by resolving people's conflicting views.
- Correcting confusion may involve instead forwarding the discussion to a productive level, either making clearer what the disagreement is about, or reaching a deeper, wider, or more complicated level of the disagreement.
- Sometimes disagreement is a good thing.

What is a dispute?

- A **dispute** may be defined as a *disagreement* or a *controversy* or *difference of opinion* between two or more people. Or Basically an argument between two or more people.
- **For instance**, if I say my grand mother was a good woman and you say she was a horrible woman then we can say there is a dispute in opinion about my grand mother.
- **We will be contrasting these two types of disputes or disagreements.**
 1. Verbal disputes
 2. Substantive disagreements

Verbal Disputes

- A **verbal dispute** is a disagreement which occurs as a result of difference in opinion about the meaning of a word and the dispute can be resolved easily when the meaning is clarified. That is, when two parties to a dispute are interpreting a particular word differently and that is what causes them to disagree with each other.
- A **verbal dispute** is therefore a disagreement which rests upon an **inconsistency** in the way the disputants are using the same words.
- Once the meanings of key words are clarified so that both sides of the dispute are relying upon the same meanings, then either it becomes clear that there is no real difference of opinion, or it becomes clear instead what is the nature and quality of their disagreement.

Verbal Disputes

Example 1:

- **Liz:** *Kpanlogo is a traditional folkloric dance that our Ga ancestors used to dance only at funerals for hundreds of years.*
- **Rich:** *NO! Kpanlogo is a neo-traditional popular dance that the dance-band Otoo Lincoln and his group created in Bukom Square, Accra, around 1962. He relied on the old funeral dirges to build up a versatile form of popular dance which suits every occasion nowadays, including funerals.*
- ***This is a verbal dispute because the dance “kpanlogo” is what is causing them to disagree.***

Verbal Disputes

Example 2:

Liz: Kwame has new laptop.

Rich: No, he does not. His brother gave him his old computer which he upgraded, and that computer is at least five years old.

So does Kwame have a “***new***” laptop? ***This depends on how one defines “new”.*** So this is also a verbal dispute.

- ***Verbal disputes can be dissolved by means of a stipulative definition*** where the parties to the dispute finally settle on a **common usage or meaning of the word** causing them to disagree in the first place.

Substantive Disagreement

- *On the other hand if the disagreement or dispute is about the expression of **different opinions about facts or subscription to contrasting values** then the dispute in question is considered as a **substantive dispute or disagreement**.*

- Substantive disagreements can be pursued fruitfully on logical grounds.

- **Example:**

Liz: The US army personnel are helping Iraqi citizens because their presence maintains a peaceful and secure environment.

Rich: No, these US soldiers are imposing martial law and have orders to target civilians so they pose a threat to Iraqi citizens.

This is a substantive dispute since the only way we can know who is telling the truth is to check the facts on the ground.

Distinguishing between Verbal and Substantive Disagreements

1. Will the disagreement be resolved by all parties accepting a stipulative definition? If so, then the participants in the argument were engaged in a *verbal dispute*.
2. Is the proposal of a stipulative definition likely to be resisted by one or more of the parties in the dispute? If so, then there may be a *substantive disagreement* between the participants.

Distinguishing between Verbal and Substantive Disagreements

3. Once agreement is reached about the use of key words, is there still unfinished business and unresolved conflict of opinion? Do the participants have good logical reasons for their different viewpoints? If so, then again we say they are engaged in a *substantive disagreement*
4. If people are still having a disagreement which cannot be resolved by improving their access to the facts, or by making more explicit the meaning of their words by appeal to a dictionary, or by appeal to a relevant theory, or by a stipulative or ostensive definition, then we call their dispute a *substantive disagreement*

EXERCISE: Determine whether the following disputes are Verbal or Substantive

- Juror #3:** It's these kids—the way they are nowadays. When I was a kid I used to call my father, “Sir”. That's right . . . “Sir.” You ever hear a kid call his father that anymore?

Juror #8: Fathers don't seem to think it's important anymore.
(From the movie *12 Angry Men*)
- Liz:** I don't think, I know.

Rich: I don't think you know, either.
- Rich:** Don't ask her whether you should take the job or not—make your own decision.

Liz: I am making my own decision—I have decided to ask her what I should do.
- Liz:** The capital city of Korea is Seoul.

Rich: You are wrong. The capital city of Korea is Pyongyang

EXERCISE: Determine whether the following disputes are Verbal or Substantive

5. **Rich:** Humans were created in the image of God.
Liz: God doesn't exist, so that can't be true.
6. **Liz:** I don't believe that any God exists.
Rich: Wrong, everyone believes in God, since you have to believe in something.
7. **Liz:** Life begins at conception, when a distinct genetic definition of a new organism is formed.
Rich: Such life is not human, as humanity is the ability to reason and feel.

EXERCISE: Determine whether the following disputes are Verbal or Substantive

8. **Liz:** There is no “I” in “team”!

Rich: There is in “win.”

9. **Liz:** C’mon, you have to believe the conspiracy happened or that it didn’t happen.

Rich: No, actually, I have no belief about the topic at all. It might have happened, but I don’t reject it or accept it.

METAPHORS AND PROVERBS

METAPHORS AND PROVERBS

- **Metaphors and proverbs** involve vague use of language that carries many associations. *They are the type of sentences that can carry more than one meaning simultaneously and which also have different functions, depending on the circumstances.*
- **METAPHOR:-** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used to describe an object or action with which it does not normally have an association in order to imply a connection.
- **PROVERBS:-** They are phrases that embody some advice or commonly believed fact. They can also be referred to as *axioms, truisms, clichés* and *adages*.

METAPHORS AND PROVERBS

- **Examples of metaphors and proverbs are;**

1. Time is money. (**metaphor**)

2. Juliet is the apple of my eye. (**metaphor**)

3. Life is war. (**metaphor**)

4. Birds of a feather flock together. (**proverb**)

5. When a palm-branch reaches its height, it gives way for a fresh one to grow. (**proverb**)

- *Understanding metaphors and proverbs depends so much upon the **situation, mood, reception, background knowledge or preparedness of listeners to appreciate and interpret the multiplicity of the meaning of metaphors and proverbs.** Individuals can read their own meanings into metaphors and proverbs.*

METAPHORS AND PROVERBS

- Thus metaphors and proverbs cannot be ***relied upon to convey a single objective meaning***. They are useful in inspiring, motivating, advising and to speak on topics that are socially powerful and highly charged.
- ***NB. To be very clear and straight-forward in conveying information it is usually best to avoid metaphorical and proverbial expressions. This is because their interpretations are open-ended and indecisive.***
- **For instance**, referring to Kwame as a lion, he might interpret it to mean that he is an animal and for that matter lives in the forest when you intend to mean that he is brave or courageous.

COMMON LINGUISTIC VICES

VAGUENESS, EQUIVOCATION AND AMBIGUITY

What are Linguistic Vices?

- **Linguistic vices** refer to the bad ways in which we sometimes explain our thoughts.
- When we convey information to other people we make certain errors that distort the effectiveness of the communication such that others ***misinterpret*** or ***misunderstand*** the information conveyed.
- ***The goal of declarative speech is to be explicit and clear as possible in describing, prescribing, generalizing and predicting the states of affairs in the world.***
- The vices we will be looking at are:
 - ***Vagueness, Ambiguity, and Equivocation.***

1. VAGUENESS

- When the *component words of a statement have not been carefully considered such that more information need to be conveyed to tell exactly what in the world the words refer to* then that statement is said to be **vague**.

An expression is **vague** when there is:

- Lack of clarity or distinctness
- Lack of preciseness in thought or communication
- Inexplicitness or indeterminateness as to the meaning or denotation of the expression
- Unclarity as to what in the world the expression refers to

1. VAGUENESS

Examples:

*“My officials are **monitoring** this situation very closely, and I can promise that we shall take all **appropriate measures** to ensure that the situation is resolved in a way that is **fair to all the parties involved**.”*

What are “**appropriate measures**”? They could be anything or nothing. What does “**fair to all the parties**” mean? We have no clear idea. They could mean anything.

- **Mom:** What did you do at school today?
Son: *Stuff.*
- He said he will be here **any moment from now**.
- We are sorry to say that we are looking for a **younger person** for the job.
- **Temporarily** out of service. We are unable to dispense money at this time.

2. EQUIVOCATION

- The use of **more than one connotation** of a word in the same context without any signal of the shift with the intention to manipulate or to persuade is called **equivocation**.
- The intended meaning of a word seems to shift back and forth between two or more distinct connotations without warning or indication
- **Examples:**
 1. I don't see how you can say you are an **ethical** person. It is so hard to get you to do anything; your work **ethic** is so bad.
 2. Sure philosophy helps you **argue** better, but do we really need to encourage people to **argue**? There's enough hostility in this world.

2. EQUIVOCATION

- **Examples**

Employer to Job Applicant: “In this job, we need someone who is responsible”

Applicant: “Then I am the one you are looking for. In my last job every time anything went wrong, they said I was responsible”

- Can you spot the equivocation in this **sign**?



3. AMBIGUITY

- When a word or phrase or an expression ***conveys more than one meaning*** then we say that the expression or word is **ambiguous**.
- Ambiguity can be **lexical (a word)** or **structural (the whole sentence)**; that is, either the word or the whole sentence is open to more than one interpretation. To **disambiguate** is to reveal the two meanings interpretations
- **Examples:**
 - 1.I rode a black horse in red pajamas.*** This could mean either the black horse was in red pajamas when you rode it but you intend to mean you were in a red pajamas when you rode the black horse
 - 2.John took off his trousers by the bank.*** Did he do that by a building(financial institution) or by the edge of a river?
 - 3.The passerby helps dog bite victim.*** Is the passerby helping a dog bite someone? Or is he helping a person bitten by a dog? It's not clear.

EXERCISE: Disambiguate the following expressions.....

Students Cook & Serve Grandparents

On Thursday, September 9, Gorman School hosted the first annual Grandparent's Day.

All Grandparents were invited to a school wide pancake breakfast. Upper grade students served as excellent chefs, as well as taking responsibility for serving the food and the clean up after-

San Jose cops kill man with knife

Text

Paper

San Jose cops kill man with knife

Ex-college football player, 23, shot 9 times allegedly charged police at fiancée's home

By Hamed Aleaziz and Vivian Ho

A man fatally shot by San Jose police officers while allegedly charging at them with a knife was a 23-year-old former football player at De Anza College in Cupertino who was distraught and depressed, his family said

Thursday.

Police officials said two officers opened fire Wednesday afternoon on Phillip Watkins outside his fiancée's home because they feared for their lives. The officers had been drawn to the home, officials said, by a 911 call reporting an armed home invasion

that, it turned out, had been made by Watkins himself.

But the mother of Watkins' fiancée, who also lives in the home on the 1300 block of Sherman Street, said she witnessed the shooting and described it as excessive. Faye Buchanan said the confrontation happened

shortly after she called a suicide intervention hotline in hopes of getting Watkins medical help.

Watkins' 911 call came in at 5:01 p.m., said Sgt. Heather Randol, a San Jose police spokeswoman. "The caller stated there was a male breaking into his home armed with a knife," Randol said. "The caller also stated he was locked in an upstairs bedroom with his children and request-

ed help from police."

She said Watkins was on the sidewalk in front of the home when two officers got there. He was holding a knife with a 4-inch blade and ran toward the officers in a threatening manner, Randol said.

"Both officers ordered the suspect to stop and drop the knife," Randol said. "The suspect continued to charge the officers with the knife in his hand. Both officers, fear-

ing for their safety and defense of their life, fired at the suspect."

On the police radio, one officer said, "We have a male with a knife. He's walking toward us."

"Shots fired! Shots fired!" an officer said moments later.

A short time later, an officer reported, "Male is down. Knife's still in hand."

Buchanan said she had been prompted to call the

Shoot continues on D8



Close

Translate

Listen

EXERCISE: Disambiguate the following expressions.....



EXERCISE: Disambiguate the following expressions.....

Newspaper Ambiguity

Ambiguity, having more than one meaning, may be a result of syntax or of semantics.

Examples from Newspapers

- Iraqi Head Seeks Arms
- Is There a Ring of Debris around Uranus?
- Prostitutes Appeal to Pope
- Panda Mating Fails; Veterinarian Takes Over
- Teacher Strikes Idle Kids
- Miners Refuse to Work after Death
- Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant
- Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges
- Man Struck By Lightning Faces Battery Charge
- Astronaut Takes Blame for Gas in Spacecraft
- Kids Make Nutritious Snacks
- Chef Throws His Heart into Helping Feed Needy
- Hospitals are Sued by 7 Foot Doctors

S. Mann

EXERCISE: Disambiguate the following expressions.....

1. Drunk gets nine months in stolen laptop case
2. Military head seeks arms.
3. Prostitutes appeal to pope
4. Teacher strikes delaying WAEC candidates
5. Police squad helps rabid dog bite victim
6. Enraged billy goat injures farmer with cutlass
7. Miners refuse to work after death
8. Juvenile court to try shooting defendant
- 9 Stolen jewels discovered by tree
10. Two American oil tankers collide in the Gulf of Guinea; one dies
11. Two sisters reunited after 18 years in market stall

TYPES OF DISCOURSE REVEALED IN PASSAGES

DISCOURSE REVEALED IN PASSAGES

- A **discourse** is a unit of connected speeches or writings longer than a sentence in the form of a passage either to ***covey an argument, narrate an event, give a set of instructions, or to make verbal – self assertions using rhetoric or polemic.***

The types of discourse revealed in passages are

1. Narrative
2. Instruction
3. Rhetorical polemic
4. Argument

1. NARRATIVE

- This is a passage which **reports a sequence of events in order of their occurrence**. The sentences are ordered according to time.

- **Example:**

I was about five years old when my sister informed me that I was too old to still be riding a bike with training wheels. That was the time I decided not to depend on them anymore. Even though I had some doubt, my sister and I went outside and started to take the little wheels off my bike. After my bike went through the transformation, I was now ready for the big moment. With butterflies in my stomach, I slowly got on the bike, and with my shaky hands, I gripped the handles tightly. Meanwhile my sister was holding on to me to help keep my balance. I was so afraid that she would let go, yet I was determined to ride this bike on my own. Next with a little push from her, I started to peddle. The faster my bike went the faster my heart raced. Finally I looked back nervously and noticed that my sister let go of my bike a long time ago. I was so excited that I accomplished freedom on my bike that I forgot to peddle. The next step I remember, I was lying on the ground, yet I did not care because of the adrenaline rush. I will never forget the exhilarating moment and growing up stage of riding a bike without training wheels

2. INSTRUCTION

- This is a passage that gives **description or sequence of things to do in a specified order**; it might also provide a list of directives to follow to accomplish some desired effect, like a prescription.
- **Example.**

If you are from Legon campus and you want to go to Madina, get to the Okponglo junction and wait for any of the commercial buses. Listen carefully to any of the bus conductors that mentions Madina. Get onboard one of the buses. As you sit down, you make your **1 Ghana cedi** ready to be given to the conductor of the commercial bus and you tell him/her that you will get down at Madina.

3. RHETORICAL POLEMIC

- This is a passage that communicates (**usually strong**) feeling or **persuasively vents an opinion.**
- **Examples:**

What does the ECG think it is doing with the poor service of power supply. I wont pay any electricity bill again and let us see who will dare to take me to court.

“We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island...we shall never surrender.” Sir Winston Churchill.

4. ARGUMENT

An argument is **NOT**:
The use of aggressive language or
demeanour in an attempt to shout down or
intimidate an opponent



An attempt to 'win at all costs'



ARGUMENT

- A **reason** is a consideration that provides evidence that a belief is true, or very likely to be true.
 - **Reasons are said to “support,” “justify,” or “prove” beliefs by providing evidence for them.**

An **argument** is a set of statements presented to support/justify/prove a belief or claim with a set of reasons.

Every argument has two parts:

Conclusion: the belief being supported.

Premise(s): the reason(s) intended to support the conclusion. Each reason is called a premise.

Every argument has at least one premise.

ARGUMENT

Belief/Claim: Richie is intelligent

Why?:

1. All Accra Aca boys are intelligent,
And
2. Richie is an Accra Aca boy

Argument:

All Accra Aca boys are intelligent
Richie is an Accra Aca boy
Therefore, Richie is intelligent

ARGUMENT

- In each of the following arguments, there is a conclusion and at least one premise. Can you distinguish the premise(s) from the conclusion?
 - 1) *Bats are mammals, and they can fly. So, some mammals can fly.*
 - 2) *The officer will arrive to the base on time, since she's never been late a day in her life.*
 - 3) *War is wrong because it involves killing innocent people, and that is always wrong.*
 - 4) *Humankind was created by aliens from another planet. A wise man once told me so.*
- All four examples above are arguments. All of them *attempt* to show that a conclusion is true by offering premises in support of it. However, you probably noticed that most of them are not *good* arguments.

ARGUMENT

Bats are mammals, and they can fly. So, some mammals can fly.

[Premise 1] *Bats are mammals, and* **[Premise 2]** *they can fly.*

[Conclusion] *So, some mammals can fly.*

The officer will arrive to the base on time, since she's never been late a day in her life.

[Conclusion] *The officer will arrive to the base on time, since*
[Premise] *she's never been late a day in her life.*



NOTE: A **syllogism** is an argument with two premises

ARGUMENT

War is wrong because it involves killing innocent people, and that is always wrong.

[Conclusion] War is wrong because **[Premise 1]** it involves killing innocent people, and **[Premise 2]** that is always wrong.



Humankind was created by aliens from another planet. A wise man once told me so.

[Conclusion] Humankind was created by aliens from another planet. **[Premise]** A wise man once told me so.

Identify the premise(s) and conclusion....

- We must resist all forms of government censorship. Freedom of speech and expression are essential to a democratic form of government. As soon as we allow some censorship, it won't be long before censorship will be used to silence opinions critical of the government.



Identify the premise(s) and conclusion....

Witches are real. They are mentioned in the Bible. There are many people today who claim to be witches. And historical records reveal that there were witches in Salem, Massachusetts (Vaughn 2010: 25).



FINDING ARGUMENTS

- Tips for finding arguments:

1) Find the conclusion first. Whenever you read or hear something and you're not sure if it contains an argument, ask yourself **“What claim is the author/speaker trying to persuade me to believe?”** That claim will be the conclusion.

2) After identifying a possible conclusion, find the premises. If an argument is present, there should be a conclusion that the author is trying to convince you of **and** reasons (premises) offered to show that the conclusion is true. If there are no premises, there is no argument.

FINDING ARGUMENTS

3) **Look for indicators**—words or phrases typically followed by a premise or conclusion. (Indicators are not always used!)

- **Points of caution:** (1) The lists below are not complete! (2) Some arguments contain no indicators at all!

Premise Indicators	Conclusion Indicators
<i>because, since, for, as, after all, the reason is that, in light of the fact that, based on the fact that, etc.</i>	<i>so, therefore, thus, hence, ergo, implies that, it follows that, accordingly, consequently, we may infer that, etc.</i>

EXERCISES....

- **“The university ought to raise the retirement age from 65 to 75. People are living longer than they used to, and many academics are still productive even after 70. Why, Dr Morgan discovered the cure for the common cold when she was 72! Older academics have a great deal of expertise that can benefit younger members of staff. If academics know they are going to be forced out at 65, they may feel unhappy about their jobs. So academics are likely to be less productive if the retirement age stays as it is.”**
 - 1. What is the main conclusion of the argument?**
 - 2. What are the main premises of the argument?**
 - 3. Write out any sub-conclusions of the argument.**

EXERCISES....

Identify whether the passage is or is not an argument; if a passage is an argument, state its main conclusion.

- a) The tiger, whose population is estimated at about 6000, may become extinct in the next decade, according to some claims.
- b) Of all the animals commonly eaten in the Western world, the pig is without doubt the most intelligent. The natural intelligence of a pig is comparable and perhaps even superior to that of a dog; it is possible to rear pigs as companions to human beings and train them to respond to simple commands much as a dog would. (Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*)
- c) Since animals are sentient, and can feel both pleasure and pain, we ought to take their interests into account; we should not harm animals for no good reason. Most humans can thrive on a plant-based diet, so eating meat is unethical. We should always try to act ethically, so we should all avoid eating meat.

EXERCISES....

Identify whether the passage is or is not an argument; if a passage is an argument, state its main conclusion.

- I. I'm not sure a bad person can write a good book. If art doesn't make us better, then what on earth is it for? (Alice Walker)
- II. Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is. (Blaise Pascal).
- III. Is the arrow-maker less benevolent than the maker of armour of defense? And yet the arrow-maker's only fear is lest men should not be hurt, and the armour-maker's only fear is lest men should be hurt. So it is with the priest and the coffin maker. The choice of profession, therefore, is a thing in which great caution is required. (Menicus)

End of Session