

TUTORIAL 16: THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE

ICONS TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE THE COURSE HANDOUTS



Whole class
discussion



Teams/Groups
discussion



Take/make notes



Impromptu talk topic
(speak for 1 min)

Learning objectives:

- Avoid jumping to conclusions by looking for textual clues
 - Words – choice, denoted, intention,
 - Omission, misrepresentation
 - Layout
 - Graphics
- Judge conclusions
 - Tentative
 - Warranted
- Draw warranted conclusions

1. AVOID JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

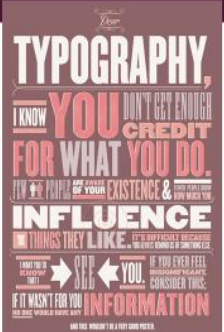
1.1 Words

Words should be chosen with accuracy and precision. Words used to convey opinion should do so as objectively as possible. Words that appeal to emotion should be rare in academic writing and speaking. To avoid jumping to conclusions, look out for words that are meant to ‘lure’ you into a particular point of view. One category of words to look out for is rhetorical devices, e.g. hyperbole (exaggeration), analogy (comparing one thing to another), flattery, value judgment and when rhetorical questions are used to gain sympathy rather than focus attention on a point, e.g. “who wouldn’t want a lot of money?”

1.2 Layout

LAYOUT CLUES

- Titles
- Headings and subheadings
- Font sizes
- Text boxes/call outs
- Italics, bold
- Use of colour
- Icons



2. JUDGE CONCLUSIONS

2.1 Tentative conclusions

Tentative conclusions are usually reached when the evidence is good but not outright proven due to small sample size or early stages of experimentation. **Tentative language is called hedging and it is how you can show that you are being cautious or circumspect in making your claims. Hedging is an important feature in academic writing. Hint: your Panel Discussion and your Oxford Essay should have some of these hedges to demonstrate that you are aware of how big a claim you can make.** Remember, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. When the evidence that you have is not completely irrefutable, go for intellectual humility!

E.g., "It is **possible** that the use of a different model will result in very different outcomes."

E.g., "The data **appear** to support the hypothesis, but further sampling would need to be undertaken to increase the reliability of the final result."

E.g., "The results shown in Figure 1 **suggest** that stratified sampling by gender..."

Look out also for large claims with small evidence, for example: "Raspberry ketones are the number 1 miracle in a bottle to burn your fat", "There's abundant proof that drinking water cures cancer".

2.2 Omission and Misrepresentation

Some conclusions in arguments cannot be accepted because they may contain:

Omissions

- Major opposing reasons or ideas or objections not taken into account and refuted or conceded
- Key evidence or data that may have contradicted argument left out

OR

Misrepresentation

- Describing someone or a group of people with an unfair focus on a single aspect of their character or abilities.

Consider the following flawed conclusions and give reasons to why they are so.



Has information been omitted or misrepresented, and if so, how?

FLAWED CONCLUSIONS	REASONS
1. Those who argue that intelligence is not in-born do a disservice to the truly bright individual and hinder attempts to discover excellence. Many of us had intensive training on an instrument such as the piano when we were children, but we obviously did not all turn out to be a Beethoven or Mozart. We are all able to recognize brilliance when we see it. Proponents of the view that intelligence can be nurtured are too ready to blame society or the education system for not turning out more geniuses. They want us to believe that many of our children could be a genius, which is unfair on parent and teachers alike.	
2. Juvenile crime has risen sharply in cities. Young people are out of control. There are only two options in a situation like this. Either we agree to put up with savage assaults on our persons and property, or we place a curfew on all young people after 10 o'clock.	
3. Einstein was not very good at maths when he was at school. Many school-children today could solve maths problems that he used to struggle with. The accolade of 'great scientist' shouldn't be ascribed to someone who struggled with basic numerical problems.	
4. The public's knowledge of health is poor and more money is needed for education in this area. Increased sums of money should be spent on courses to make people aware of personal health issues. People don't always know what they can do to take care of their health so further investment is needed in training on health matters.	

Source: Cottrell, S. (2005). *Critical thinking skills: developing effective analysis and argument*, London: Palgrave-Macmillan. Pp.118-119.

What about this video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiy1MeXzhfA> on the Defective Detective?



- How did the defective detective make the wrong conclusions?
- How is this applicable to us?

3. DRAW WARRANTED CONCLUSIONS

Having looked at the sum total of all the textual clues and evidence, you may begin to draw warranted conclusions. Warranted means that the conclusions are evidence based, and that you have as much evidence as possible, and have evaluated if there is any evidence that is missing or misrepresented.

One set of evidence may give rise to more than one possible warranted conclusion – this is what gives differing points of view. Sometimes, there is more than one possible conclusion possible and the best one will depend on the context or the situation. So be wary of sounding too dogmatic. **You may need to nuance how you phrase the conclusions in what you write or say.** In real life terms, this likely means that a conclusion is something like a solution to a problem and you need to find the best possible solution.



In the following video clip, Kim Huat has drawn a number of conclusions which are not wrong in themselves, but which don't pass muster in an academic context because of how they were expressed. So, what linguistic transformation must occur before his conclusions are taken more seriously?

- "It's not beyond borders, it's beyond stupid!"
- "The only proverb I know is 'where there is a queue, there is good food'."
- "The Cathy walked from Changi to Bedok?"
- "What do you mean by the dark side of paradise?"
- "Singapore got poor people and got crime but what you mean by a lot of crime and human trafficking? The writer got pull all this information from out of their backside one is it?"
- "The FBI can *suka suka* take out gun in Singapore and bang the door and shoot the bad guy one, got permit or not? Is this call the Foreign Bureau of Interference or not?"

ARE KIM HUAT'S CONCLUSIONS ALL WARRANTED?

▪ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MScSovg_6l0 Part I (watch Part I for this activity)



OPTIONAL FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

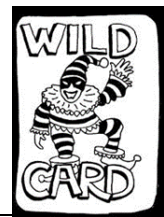
Write a short response (300 words) to this question:

In this episode, the producers wanted a credible storyline set in an exotic foreign location with drama and excitement. Based on the points of contention in the episode, Criminal Minds, Beyond Borders, that Mr Brown has pointed out, how would you define the term “realistic”?

Drop this in the LumiNUS folder Criminal Minds Formative Assessment for feedback. Definitions are quite important in writing your essay in CA3, so it is not a bad idea to get some practice in. Clearly, a dictionary definition is not what is required here.

4. WILD CARD PRACTICE # 7

Can you speak for two minutes on the importance of words?



COURSE NOTES

- All texts have clues; knowing where they are is the key to unlocking the mystery of the message.
- Denoted words must be used with care and deliberation and not accidentally or thoughtlessly.
- Hedging is used to show circumspection and caution:
 - “Recent incidents regarding difficulty in securing mid range rental accommodation in Singapore for Indian and Chinese expatriates *suggest* there *may be some* localised discrimination on the part of a section of Singaporean landlords.”
 - “If the logical gaps are irreconcilable, it *proves* their argument is weak” vs “if the logical gaps are irreconcilable, it *may indicate* their argument is weak”.
- Choice of words, nuance, doublespeak, weasel words – these are words used deliberately to make a point stronger or weaker, to change a view, to affect a decision.
- There is an element of subjectivity, but you can mitigate this by being as objective as possible.
- Signal words show line of reasoning and are important to help assess the author’s conclusion.
- Clues should be decoded and evaluated before conclusions are drawn.