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위풍당당 seminar

Effective persuasion and argumentation

This seminar will discuss ways of presenting one's ideas and arguments effectively in academic English, particularly in academic writing.

1. Getting started

Argumentation: Presenting a claim (thesis, argument) and supporting it with reasons and evidence. All arguments are, either implicitly or explicitly, comparisons of two hypotheses that attempt to explain the same facts, observations, or ideas.

Goal: Persuading, or at least showing that the thesis is reasonable

1.1. Basic structure

2. Arguments

2.1. Explicit comparison of hypotheses

In some papers, you want to explicitly compare two different hypotheses or explanations.

1. Identify the properties or predictions of each hypothesis that distinguish it from the other.
2. Describe those features or properties.
3. Explain which are correct and incorrect.

The structure of the essay (or paper section) will look something like this.

1. A description, summary or explanation of the hypotheses.
2. An explanation of the differences between the two hypotheses, such as different predictions.
3. Examination of the evidence that confirms or disconfirms these predictions.
4. An evaluation of which hypothesis is correct or better – more consistent with the evidence.

2.2. Weak arguments – common problems

1. Too much information
2. Overly broad topic
3. Not enough information
4. Non-academic rhetorical structure

2.3. Logical fallacies

- Emotional arguments, emotional appeals, emotional language
- Overgeneralization
- Exaggerated claims that cannot be proven
- Cherry-picking evidence or arguments – picking only those that support your view and ignoring other evidence to the contrary
- Strawman: misrepresenting the opposing viewpoint

3. Counter-argumentation

A counterargument is a response to an objection (be it a real objection, or potential objection that readers might have). This is standard in much academic writing, lecturing and presentations. One must anticipate potential objections or criticisms to the points that one is trying to make, and then address them. Failure to do so will lead to a weak presentation of your ideas, and may fail to connect with or convince the readers or listeners. Counterarguments may take the following forms.

1. Attempting to completely disprove or refute the objection
2. Dismissing it or showing that it is not relevant
3. Argue that your opponent's evidence does not really support the claims
4. Argue against your opponent's logic
5. Argue against the underlying assumptions of the objection
6. Concessive arguments – granting some validity to the objection, while providing your countering viewpoint: "While X may be so, it is also true that..." or "Although they reported that..., other studies have shown that..."
7. Counterexamples – in some fields, good counterexamples can take down a strong claim.
8. Contrast and comparison, e.g., your idea (experiment, data, etc.) with others' data or ideas; your experiment versus someone else's; your product with previous products

Keep in mind the following tips.

1. Avoid over-summarizing differing or opposing views that would be familiar to the readers.
2. Avoid making overly strong counter-arguments that are not convincingly supported by strong evidence or other support – otherwise, use more concessive sentences
3. Frame the potential objections in subordinate clauses (or other backgrounding structures) when possible, to de-emphasize them in the flow of thought. Contrast markers (*although, though, however, but, while, despite, in contrast, yet, to the contrary*) are commonly used to cite these objections and then answer them, e.g., *Although X has claimed that..., our data show that this is this does not hold when...*
4. More detailed summaries of opposing viewpoints may belong in a literature review section of a thesis or major paper.
5. Avoid logical fallacies or incorrect statements, e.g.:
   - misrepresenting the opposing viewpoint – a strawman argument
   - cherry-picking evidence or arguments – picking only those that support your view and ignoring other evidence to the contrary
   - exaggerated or unwarranted claims about the other position or its implications

4. Example

Should the university require most courses to be taught in English (EMI policy)?

Should S' be required to take X amount of EMI courses?

Let's imagine a research paper about this topic[1].

→ Specific arguments: in favor; against it; modify it – if so, how?

4.1. Scope

4.2. Introduction

4.3. Thesis & outline

4.4. Arguments (body)

pros (arguments in favor)	cons (arguments against)

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1 S' = students; EMI = English mediated instruction;