ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

Parichehr Afzali
Why do we need argumentative writing?

Academic writing in general:
- Interpretation
- Evaluation
- Selection

Scientific objective writing:
- To report the results of an experiment
- To be taken seriously
Applying an argumentative approach to academic writing

Argument is “a set of claims in which one or more of them are put forward so as to offer reasons for another claim”.
(Govier, 2014; p. 1).
TOULMIN’S ARGUMENT PATTERN (TAP)

TOULMIN (1958, 2003)
Toulmin’s Argument Pattern

Data → since Warrant → on account of Backing → so, (Qualifier), Claim

unless

Rebuttal
Claim

- A statement to persuade
- An answer to a question asked
- Example: "Harry is a British citizen,"
Data

- Basis of persuasion
- The evidence in support of the claim/Reasoning behind each claim

**Example:** “Harry was born in Bermuda” (It is common knowledge for British people that a person born in Bermuda is a British citizen)

1. **Theoretical data:** theories, concepts, definitions drawn from authorities, either esteemed individuals (E.g., “Habermas says . . .”) or current paradigms (E.g., “it is generally assumed in Generative Grammar . . .”).

2. **Specific data:** drawn from studies by others.

3. **Specific data:** drawn from one’s own study.

Examples of specific data: textual evidence, conceptual analysis, examples, qualitative or quantitative empirical data . . .
Warrant

- Links data to claim
- Makes it more credible
- Is either explicit or implicit
- Answers the question: ‘Why the offered data proves that the claim is true?’
- Can not easily be challenged

Example: "A person born in Bermuda will legally be a British citizen."
**Backing**

- **Supports and Strengthens the Warrant**
- **Answers Further Questions, Aimed at Evaluating Its Strength:**
  - Why is the warrant true?
  - Why is that assumption or premise or logical relationship between the data and the claim?
  - Why does that make sense?
  - How do we know that that's sound or valid?

**Example:** Legal provisions: "I trained as a barrister in London, specializing in citizenship, so I know that a man born in Bermuda will legally be a British citizen."
QUALIFIER

- Indicates the restriction of the degree of universality and certainty of claim
- Is marked by "probably," "possibly," "certainly," "presumably," "as far as the evidence goes," and "necessarily"

Example: Compare "Harry is definitely a British citizen" has a greater degree of force than the claim "Harry is a British citizen, presumably."
Rebuttal

- Indicates a counter argument
- Can be a claim itself
- Can be accompanied by backing, warrant, and qualifier
- May be rebutted by other rebuttals

Example: “A man born in Bermuda will legally be a British citizen, unless he has betrayed Britain and has become a spy of another country.”
**Claim:** “Harry is a British Citizen.”

**Data:** “Harry was born in Bermuda.”

**Warrant:** (Since) A man born in Bermuda will generally be a British subject.

**Backing:** (On account of) The following statutes and other legal provisions: ...

**Qualifier:** (So) Presumably

**Rebuttal:** (Unless) he has betrayed Britain and has become a spy of another country.

(Toulmin, 2003: 103)
(Data) Harry was born in Bermuda

(Qualifier) Persumably

(Claim) Harry is a British citizen.

(Warrant) A man born in Bermuda will generally be a British subject

(Rebuttal) He has betrayed Britain and has become a spy of another country

(Backing) The following statutes and other legal provisions:…
Roman vs. Greek structure

**Roman:**
- Thesis statement/topic sentences
- Arguing from a statement
- Anglo-American rhetorical tradition

(Evensen, 2002)
Roman vs. Greek Structure

Greek:
- One or more introductory paragraphs
- Arguing toward a qualified conclusion
- Nordic rhetorical tradition

(Evensen, 2002)
Which rhetorical tradition do you follow in your culture?
When in Rome, do as the Romans do.
Example

✗ ??: We should tax cars to decrease pollution

✗ ??: That should apply only to cars older than 15 years

✗ ??: Decreasing pollution is a generally good idea

People are generally willing to pay as little as possible and any price increase makes at least some people to decrease the consumption

✗ ??: Taxing provides incentive for drivers to use cars less and to switch to other alternatives – other means of transportation that pollute less

Questionnaire answered by people last week shows that approximately 57% would use public transportation instead of a car if annual costs of cars increased by Ls 1000

✗ ??: The tax introduced will be too high

✗ ??: Scientific research has stated that in few hundred years it won't be possible to live on Earth unless we intervene
Claim: We should tax cars to decrease pollution

Qualifier: That should apply only to cars older than 15 years

Warrant: Decreasing pollution is a generally good idea

Data: Taxing provides incentive for drivers to use cars less and to switch to other alternatives — other means of transportation that pollute less

Questionnaire answered by people last week shows that approximately 57% would use public transportation instead of a car if annual costs of cars increased by Ls 1 000

Rebuttal: The tax introduced will be too high

Backing: Scientific research has stated that in few hundred years it won’t be possible to live on Earth unless we intervene.
Obama’s Syria speech

Minutes:

3:40 – 8:07

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJdWjqX1YrE
Assad’s use of chemical weapons in spite of the international ban on their use is a threat to US national security.

This claim that Obama has proven now becomes a conclusion that he uses as data for a subsequent claim.

He gets to this conclusion in the claim that US should respond to Assad’s chemical weapons use with a targeted military strike.
Assad will keep using chemical weapons. Other regimes will seek their own WMDs. Easier access for terrorists. US allies will be threatened.

Supporting the claim: ‘The US should respond to Assad’s chemical weapons use with a targeted military strike’
Warrant: Links data to claim

Assad’s use of chemical weapons is a threat to:
- US troops
- Civilians
- US allies

And as result a threat to US national security

Obama implicitly states this is not a world we should accept
There is a threat that Iranians will seek to develop nuclear weapons

There is a very great possibility that the fighting is going to go outside of Syria into other areas of the Middle East

Backing:
- Supports and strengthens the warrant
QUALIFIER

Not necessarily used! (Obama seems 100% sure about what he says)

Qualifier:
- Indicates the restriction of the degree of universality and certainty of claim
Rebuttal:

- “I know after the terrible toll in Iraq and Afghanistan”
- “Our troops are out of Iraq; our troops are coming home from Afghanistan”
- “This nation is sick and tired of war”
- “My answer is simple: I would not put American boots on the ground in Syria”
- “I will not pursue an open-ended action like Iraq and Afghanistan”
- “I will not pursue a prolonged air campaign like Libya or Kosovo”
- “This will be a targeted strike to achieve a clear objective, detouring the use of chemical weapons and degrading Assad’s capabilities”
THANKS!

Any questions?

You can find me at parichehr.afzali@ntnu.no
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