

Map of the Book

Unit (Theme/Issues)	Writing Skills	Language Study
Unit 1 Human Beings and Nature P. 1	An Overview of Argumentative Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the nature and structure of argumentation• Distinguish argumentative writing from narrative and expository writing• Identify topics appropriate for argumentation, develop arguments, and be able to evaluate them critically	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinguish argumentative language from that used in description and narration• Observe and evaluate language used in argumentative writing
Unit 2 The Primary Purpose of Education P. 29	How to Make a Good Claim <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand what a claim is• Distinguish different types of claims• Evaluate a claim and improve it	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinguish effective from ineffective language• Use language effectively in making a claim
Unit 3 Crime and Justice P. 55	How to Support a Claim <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support an argumentation claim• Distinguish types of support in argumentation• Compose statements that support arguments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify the signposting words for premises and conclusions• Use the signposting words to make a coherent argument
Unit 4 Tradition and Modernization P. 79	How to Make Refutations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipate opposing points of view in argumentation• Define and identify refutations in an argument• Make good refutations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify general and specific words in a passage• Balance general and specific words in your writing

Critical Thinking	Intercultural Competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze arguments on the relationship between human beings and Nature Evaluate causal reasoning on the issue of global warming Examine the arguments for and against wildlife protection from the perspectives of instrumental and intrinsic value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand similarities and differences between Chinese and Western views on Nature and their relevance to the current discussion on environmental issues Formulate a Chinese perspective on the international controversy regarding responsibility for climate change mitigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and interpret different claims regarding the purpose of education Analyze and evaluate the assumptions behind controversial claims related to the purpose of education Explore the implications and consequences of such claims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand similarities and differences in Chinese and Western views on the purpose of education Compare and contrast Chinese and Western views on curriculum design, teaching methods, textbook writing, teacher-student relations, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and understand perspectives related to juvenile delinquency and gun control Evaluate the assumptions underlying these perspectives Explore the implications and consequences of these perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the rationale offered by different legal systems regarding juvenile delinquents Identify and articulate cultural similarities and differences regarding gun control Reflect on the nature of crime and how different cultures view crime prevention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipate objections to commonly held views on globalization and assess whether these objections identify significant weaknesses in the views Evaluate the changes that have occurred in the 20th and 21st centuries Develop criteria for evaluating traditional and modern lifestyles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand cultural diversity and cultural homogeneity Understand the importance of cultural context when assessing the significance of globalization Explore and understand different ways of life of different cultures in traditional and modern periods

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Unit (Theme/Issues)	Writing Skills	Language Study
<p>Unit 5 Technological Innovation and Human Progress P. 103</p>	<p>How to Develop Effective Reasoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand principles for effective reasoning • Distinguish different modes of reasoning • Evaluate the effectiveness of reasoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the concept of hedging language and the need for it in writing • Learn to use hedging language in writing when appropriate
<p>Unit 6 Multiculturalism and Its Challenges P. 131</p>	<p>How to Avoid Logical Fallacies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the definition of logical fallacies • Distinguish different types of logical fallacies • Avoid logical fallacies in your own writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use modal auxiliary verbs in hedging language • Use probability adjectives and adverbs in hedging language • Use frequency adverbs in hedging language
<p>Unit 7 Gender Differences and Equality P. 159</p>	<p>How to Evaluate Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and distinguish different types of evidence • Determine whether the evidence is strong and adequate • Select and use relevant, strong and adequate evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify different figures of speech • Distinguish metaphor, parallelism, and irony • Evaluate their respective functions and/or implications in argumentative writing
<p>Unit 8 War and Peace P. 186</p>	<p>How to Write with Cohesion and Coherence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define “cohesion” and “coherence” • Identify techniques used to make writing cohesive and coherent • Distinguish cohesive/coherent writings from incoherent and/or incohesive ones • Revise essays to make them more cohesive and coherent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand nominalization in academic writing • Use nominalization effectively

Critical Thinking	Intercultural Competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the issue of technological innovation and human progress and understand differing claims regarding the relationship between the two • Analyze and evaluate assumptions behind controversial claims as to the relationship between technological innovation and human progress • Explore implications and consequences of such claims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the differences in meaning between “reasoning” in English and “理” in Chinese • Compare and contrast Chinese and Western views on technology and its role in human progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze and evaluate the assumptions behind differing claims regarding multiculturalism in the U.S. • Understand the assumptions behind the definitions of humanism and cosmopolitanism • Explore the implications and consequences of claims regarding multiculturalism and humanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the complex relationship between humanism and cosmopolitanism involved in intercultural communication • Analyze the differences between diversity and pluralism and explore the implications and consequences of pluralism in the U.S.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and interpret different perspectives on the issue of gender differences and equality • Analyze and evaluate claims regarding gender differences and equality • Explore possible ways to ensure gender equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast the characteristics of gender inequality in different cultures • Explain the cultural reasons for gender inequality in different cultures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and understand different perspectives on the issue of war and peace • Argue for or against the possibility of lasting world peace • Explore possible practices to maintain world peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish the underlying reasons for various kinds of wars between countries/ cultures and the consequences on the parties involved • Evaluate the “soft power” of the United States in maintaining its global influence

Human Beings and Nature

Unit

An Overview of Argumentative Writing

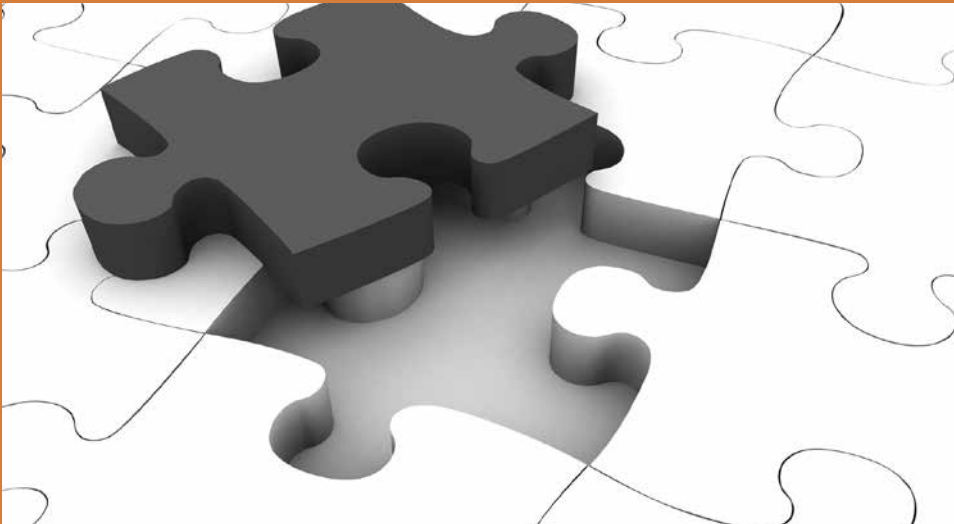


“ I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving that he can outwit nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority. ”

—E. B. White

“ Man takes his law from the Earth; the Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Tao. The law of the Tao is its being what it is. ”

—Lao Tzu



Objectives

Writing Skills

- ▶ Understand the nature and structure of argumentation
- ▶ Distinguish argumentative writing from narrative and expository writing
- ▶ Identify topics appropriate for argumentation, develop arguments, and be able to evaluate them critically

Language Study

- ▶ Distinguish argumentative language from that used in description and narration
- ▶ Observe and evaluate language used in typical argumentation

Critical Thinking

- ▶ Analyze arguments on the relationship between human beings and Nature
- ▶ Evaluate causal reasoning on the issue of global warming
- ▶ Examine the arguments for and against wildlife protection from the perspectives of instrumental and intrinsic value

Intercultural Competence

- ▶ Understand similarities and differences between Chinese and Western views on Nature and their relevance to the current discussion on environmental issues
- ▶ Formulate a Chinese perspective on the international controversy regarding responsibility for climate change mitigation

Part I Exploring the Main Issue

Pre-class Reading and Research

1. Do preliminary reading and research on the relationship between human beings and Nature related to the following questions.
 - 1) What do you think should be the ideal relationship between human beings and Nature? Please use three key words to describe your understanding of such a relationship and explain why you use them.
 - 2) In what way do you think traditional Chinese views of the relationship between human beings and Nature are similar to and/or different from Western views of the relationship between human beings and Nature?
2. For decades, environmental scientists have more or less agreed on a list of the most urgent global environmental issues, at the top of which are climate change, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, air and water pollution, soil erosion and degradation, water scarcity, ocean acidification, etc. What do you think about these issues? Which of them is the most urgent from your point of view?
3. Work in groups of four and do thorough preparation for a class presentation on your reading, thinking and research findings.

Issue Prompt

Is global warming human-made?

Global warming—the gradual heating of the earth’s surface, oceans and atmosphere—seems to have emerged as one of the most vexing environmental issues of our time and talking about it can be very tricky. Everyone has an opinion, some of them more informed than others. But what information is informing those opinions? And where does the truth lie? Scientists have documented the rise in average temperatures worldwide since the late 1800s. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), for example, the earth’s average temperature has risen by 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit (0.8 degrees Celsius) over the past century and temperatures are projected to rise another 2 to 11.5 degrees Fahrenheit (1.133 to 6.42 degrees Celsius) over the next 100 years. The rise in average global temperatures is just one aspect of global warming. Scientists are also concerned that global warming will cause climate patterns to change significantly worldwide, for example, changes in wind patterns, annual precipitation and seasonal temperature variations. A recent UNESCO statement reads, “Climate change is a global challenge. It will impact all ecosystems and human societies, in different ways and to different degrees.” In short, global warming represents a fundamental threat to all living things on earth.

Though the existence of global warming was once considered controversial, the majority

of researchers throughout the international scientific community now generally acknowledge it to be real, according to the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). What was equally controversial at one time was the cause of global warming and climate change. While some scientists agreed that the temperature increase since the mid-20th century was primarily the result of human activity, others considered it simply a natural occurrence. Both sides felt strongly that their position was correct, which made it difficult for the general public to form a responsible position and take action. So, is global warming human-made or naturally occurring? These days, scientists agree that there is evidence to show that global warming is primarily human-made. However, since public opinion often lags behind the new understanding of scientists, it is important for us to understand this issue. Here are some of the major arguments that were made for either side of the position:

The Climate Change Debate: Human Beings vs. Nature

Human Beings	Nature
1. Human beings have caused a rise in CO ₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions, causing global temperature rises.	The sun is causing global temperature rises.
2. Arctic Sea ice is melting.	Climate changes all the time. It has changed before and will change again.
3. Ocean acidification is rising, caused by rising CO ₂ levels.	Scientists talking about climate change are just looking for grant money.
4. Ten of the last 12 years were the hottest years on record.	Global warming is good for the economy and for civilization.
5. Climate change computing models are good enough to trust and to form a basis for action.	Scientists do not have a consensus about climate change.

4. In groups of four, discuss the following questions and write your thoughts and responses on the blank lines below.

- 1) As an ordinary member of the public when this debate was current, to what extent would you have agreed or disagreed with the arguments above?
- 2) What would your position have been on the issue of global warming as a human-made vs. a natural occurrence?
- 3) How would you have argued for your position?

Your position: _____

How you would have argued for your position: _____

Part II Learning the Skills

Overview of Argumentative Writing

■ What is argumentation?

Argumentation as an aspect of human cognition. Constantly in our daily lives, we are confronted with information and opinions that conflict, and we have to deal with them, very often subconsciously. We weigh the conflicting information and opinions and select some in preference to others. When we say, “I had a big argument with my parents last night,” few people will think we presented a sound **thesis** or **claim** to our parents, consciously **supported** it with carefully selected **evidence**, rationally pointed out the flaws in their opposing views, and finally came to a well-phrased, powerful **conclusion**. Neither do we ourselves think we did. However, the process described is precisely what we call an “argumentation.” It takes place also when we deal with conflicting information and resolve differences of opinion in a more conscious way. Consider an individual’s decision on whether or not to buy a house or a government’s decision on whether to continue introducing genetically modified foods into the human food supply. For each decision, there is a list of options, each with pros and cons. The people concerned will consider key **arguments** and **counterarguments** and keep turning them over in their minds. They will seek more information, or advice, in order to resolve inconsistencies and arrive at a conclusion.

Argumentation as an aspect of human communication. We interact with people with different opinions, and argumentation is then an interaction in which we make claims, try every possible means to support what we think are mutually exclusive positions, and seek to resolve the disagreement. We seek to convince each other and at the same time are also open to being influenced. Such interaction is pervasive in daily life. It occurs everywhere and almost all the time from informal encounters between people to formally structured oral or written debates. Arguing is reason giving (i.e., support giving), where reasons are given by people to support their acts or beliefs and to influence the thought or action of others. In this case, argumentation is concerned with communication that seeks to persuade others through reasoned judgment.

Argumentation as the process of critical thinking. Every day we are bombarded by requests, arguments, and exhortations to believe or to do this or that. Making decisions about what to believe and what to do is not always an easy task. We might have liked to find a neat and easy method for determining how to make such decisions, but unfortunately there is no such thing. However, certain methods and techniques can make reaching decisions easier and more likely. Learning to employ argumentative skills with genuine effort and reflection will help us think carefully and come to the best

decisions we can. In short, to learn how to argue is to learn how to think critically.

Critical thinking is the objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgment. It has been defined as, “the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, or reasoning, as a guide to belief and action” (Michael Scriven & Richard Paul, 1987).

This textbook is concerned with argumentative writing. In argumentative writing, we use the reasoning process employed in critical thinking to form and evaluate arguments, but our argumentation is not for the purpose of guiding our beliefs and actions, but to persuade an audience—our readers. The standard for appraising the argumentation is not whether it has enabled us to arrive at the best possible belief or decision but whether it has been effectively convincing. Both of these uses of argumentation are essential human activities, but it is crucially important to remember that they are distinct, that they use argumentation differently, and for different purposes.

■ Basic concepts underlying argumentation

Argument: In everyday life, we use the word “argument” to mean a verbal dispute or disagreement. This is not the way the word is used in formal argumentation. However, the two uses are related. In formal argumentation, argument is a set of assumptions (i.e., information from which conclusions can be drawn), together with a conclusion that can be obtained by one or more reasoning steps (i.e., steps of induction and/or deduction). The assumptions are called the **support** (or, equivalently, the **premises**) of the argument, and its **conclusion** is called the **claim** of the argument. The support of an argument provides the reason for the claim of the argument. For example,

- All police chiefs are honest. (*premise/support*)
Zhang San is a police chief. (*premise/support*)
Zhang San is honest. (*conclusion/claim*)
- Anyone who fails to reply to this memo will be presumed to be in agreement. (*premise/support*)
Li Si failed to reply to this memo. (*premise/support*)
Therefore, Li Si is in agreement. (*conclusion/claim*)

It is important to note that, in argumentation, argument refers to the giving of reasons to support or criticize a claim that is questionable or open to doubt. Compare the following two statements:

- Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a play about a young man who seeks revenge.
- Hamlet experiences internal conflict because he is in love with his mother.

Most probably, we would not want to make an argument to support the first statement because it does not *say* anything that needs arguing for or against. It is basically a summation which most readers of the play would hardly find debatable. The second statement, however, has a thesis or claim that is controversial and thus it is debatable. An essay making this argument could be expected to show 1) that Hamlet is in love with his mother, 2) how and why he is in love with his mother and 3) what this implies for interpreting the play as a whole.

Rebutting argument: A rebutting argument is an argument containing a claim that is the negation of the claim of another argument. In other words, if an argument states that X holds, a rebutting argument takes the position that the negation of X holds, hence, rebutting the arguments for X. Thus, an argument A_1 that rebuts another argument A_2 is such that the claim of A_1 contradicts the claim of A_2 . For example,

- All peacocks are afraid of kangaroos. (*argument*)
- No peacocks are afraid of kangaroos. (*rebutting argument*)

Undercutting argument: An undercutting argument is an argument containing a claim that contradicts some of the assumptions of another argument. In other words, if an argument is supported by the claim that X holds and the claim that Y holds, then an undercutting argument would be an argument with a claim that is the negation of X or the negation of Y. For example,

- All peacocks are afraid of kangaroos. (*argument*)
- Not all peacocks are afraid of kangaroos. (*undercutting argument*)
- Some peacocks are afraid of kangaroos. (*undercutting argument*)

Counterargument: Given an argument A_1 , a counterargument is an argument A_2 such that either A_2 is a rebutting argument for A_1 or A_2 is an undercutting argument for A_1 .

Proponent and audience: For argumentation, we may also assume that each argument has a proponent, the person (or a group of people) putting forward the argument, and that, in some forms of argumentation, each argument has an audience, the person (or a group of people) intended as the recipient(s) of the argument. The audience for argumentation consists of the people the arguer wants to influence—not necessarily those who are immediately present.

ACTIVITY I 

Examine the following arguments. First identify the claims and the support, and then put forward counterarguments (if possible, including rebutting and undercutting arguments).

1. Freud was a real cultural innovator, for he changed forever the way humans see themselves.
2. Alcohol drunk to excess impairs judgment of time and distance. Up to 75% of fatal road accidents involve alcohol. Drinking alcohol is an anti-social habit.
3. Smoking is bad for your health, because it destroys the healthy functioning of your lungs. Anything that destroys the healthy functioning of your lungs is bad for your health.
4. Euthanasia leads to a loss of respect for human life. Anything that leads to a loss of respect for human life is dangerous. Therefore, euthanasia is dangerous.
5. Punishment does not deter crime unless it is swift and certain. Punishment is not swift and certain in the North American justice system. Therefore, punishment does not deter crime in the North American justice system.
6. The Netherlands is susceptible to flooding. What evidence do we have to support that claim? The Netherlands is below sea level in many areas, and any area below sea level is susceptible to flooding. The reason is that water always exerts pressure on whatever contains it. If released, it flows downward to occupy an empty space.
7. Climate is complicated and there are lots of competing theories and unsolved mysteries. Until this is all worked out, one cannot claim there is consensus on global warming. Until there is, we should not take any action.
8. A direct relationship has more or less been proven between massive energy consumption (primarily of fossil fuels) and growth in the economy and welfare of a country. My personal energy requirement is modest. I won't change before the big polluters have changed their behavior.

■ Underlying assumptions of argumentation

According to Zarefsky (2005), our understanding of argumentation as an aspect of human communication is based on the following five assumptions and it is these assumptions that characterize this form of argumentation and make argumentative writing different from other types of writing, i.e., narrative and expository writing.

- **Argumentation takes place with an audience in mind and the audience is the ultimate judge of success or failure of the argument advanced.** This suggests that the claims being argued for or against are not universal truths but are subject to the acceptance of actual listeners or readers.
- **Argumentation takes place under conditions of uncertainty. We do not argue about things that are certain.** Things that are uncertain are potentially controversial. Controversies involve genuine differences of opinion that matter to the arguers and which they wish to see resolved.
- **Argumentation involves providing support for claims.** Arguers offer a rationale for the audience to accept an uncertain claim. If the rationale convinces a reasonable person with critical judgment, we say that the claim is justified and the controversy is resolved.
- **Argumentation is a cooperative enterprise despite its adversarial nature.** Arguers share the common goal of reaching agreement. They also share a frame of reference, a level of agreement on which their disagreement rests. They share a common language and system of meanings, procedural assumptions and norms, such as what counts as evidence, as well as values such as modesty, respect for the audience, and the importance of free assent. Taken together, these attributes make meaningful argumentation possible and, equally, differentiate productive arguments from destructive quarrels.
- **Argumentation entails risks.** The two primary risks are the risk of being shown to be wrong—hence losing the argument—and the risk of losing face. If a person knows, for sure, that s/he is right, that person may not be motivated to engage in argument. For example, some scholars will not engage in argument with those who seek to deny historical facts. Others will not engage in argument with those who cast doubt on generally accepted scientific theories.

To summarize, this form of argumentation is a verbal, social, rational and communicative activity aimed at influencing the thoughts and/or actions of others through the process of giving reasons to support or criticize a claim that is questionable, or open to doubt. It utilizes the process of critical thinking: formulating and presenting reasons to support or refute beliefs, and drawing conclusions.

ACTIVITY 2 

In pairs/groups of four, return to the Issue Prompt paragraphs, re-examine the case described therein, and then do the following.

1. Indicate the main arguments in the case, identifying claims and their support.

Claim 1: _____

Support: _____

Claim 2: _____

Support: _____

2. Explain the case using the five assumptions introduced above.

Audience: <i>Who would the audience be?</i>	
Condition of uncertainty: <i>What is uncertain?</i>	
Justification for claims: <i>How are the claims supported?</i>	
Cooperative enterprise: <i>In what way can the argumentation be considered cooperative?</i>	
Risks: <i>What kind of risks does the argumentation involve?</i>	

3. Read the following paragraph and suppose you were one of the following people. What claims would you make concerning the issue of global warming and climate change? And what support would you provide?

Global warming remains an issue of widespread political debate, sometimes split along party political lines, especially in the United States. Many of the largely settled scientific issues, such as human responsibility for global warming, remain the subject of politically or economically motivated attempts to downplay, dismiss or deny them—an ideological phenomenon categorized by academics and scientists as climate change denial. The sources of funding for those involved with climate science—both supporting and opposing mainstream scientific positions—have been questioned by both sides. There are debates about the best policy responses to the science, their cost-effectiveness and their urgency. Climate scientists, especially in the U.S., have reported official and oil-industry pressure to censor or suppress their work and hide scientific data, with directives not to discuss the subject in public communications. Legal cases regarding global warming, its effects, and measures to reduce it, have reached American courts. The fossil fuels lobby and free market think tanks have often been identified as overtly or covertly supporting efforts to undermine or discredit the scientific consensus on global warming.

- 1) A school teacher
- 2) A manager of a local paper-making enterprise
- 3) A climate scientist from the National Center for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation (NCSC)

Your claim: _____

Your support: _____

■ Structure and elements of argumentative writing

Types of writing differ, depending on the writer’s objectives (e.g., to narrate an event, expose a situation or argue for or against an idea in order to persuade). Each type has its own conventional structure and elements that help differentiate it from the others.

The following dialogue presents a typical example of real life argumentation. It involves a situation in which two people, Helen and Bob, have a difference of opinion during a dinner party. Helen is opposed to tipping. She had difficulties with tipping in restaurants in the past and she thinks that tipping is generally a bad practice that should not be continued. Bob, on the other hand, thinks that tipping is a good practice that should be retained. They decide to resolve their difference of opinion by having a discussion about it after dinner. To help track what was said at each stage in the dialogue, for later discussion, the moves are numbered below.

- Helen (1):** A problem with tipping is that sometimes it's very difficult to know how much to tip taxi drivers, hotel bellhops, or waiters and waitresses in restaurants.
- Bob (1):** That's not so difficult. If you got excellent service, give a tip. Otherwise don't give a tip at all.
- Helen (2):** But how much should one give? And how can you judge whether the service is excellent?
- Bob (2):** You just have to use common sense.
- Helen (3):** Come on Bob, that's no answer! What is common sense is often a matter of opinion, isn't it? What kind of criterion for good judgment is that?
- Bob (3):** Quite a good one. I think it's called "common sense" because it is something about which most people would agree.
- Helen (4):** With tipping, common sense leaves too much to uncertainty. Because of this uncertainty, both individuals involved may be offended. If the tipper gives too little, the receiver is embarrassed and uncomfortable. If the tipper gives too much, s/he may be embarrassed and uncomfortable. Thus the practice of tipping leads to embarrassment and discomfort.
- Bob (4):** A lot of students depend on tips to help pay their tuition costs. University education is a good thing. Discontinuing tipping would mean that fewer students could afford it.
- Helen (5):** That's not a problem. All we need to do is to raise the wages paid to service staff. Then they won't have to depend on tips.
- Bob (5):** That might just put a lot of restaurants out of business, with a resulting loss of jobs for students and others.¹

¹ What is presented above is just part of the discussion. The real discussion might have gone on for much longer. For purposes of illustration, we only consider five moves.

Consider the last part of the dialogue [moves (4 – 5)]. The structures and elements of Bob and Helen’s opposing arguments are as follows:

Here is Bob’s argument:

- University education is a good thing. (*premise/support*)
- A lot of students depend on tips to help pay their tuition costs. (*premise/support*)
- Discontinuing tipping would mean that fewer students could afford a university education. (*premise/support*)
- Therefore, tipping is a good practice that should be continued (*conclusion/claim*)

In response, Helen uses two premises to support her position:

- If we were to raise the wages paid to service staff, students would not have to rely on tips to afford a university education. (*premise/support*)
- If students did not have to rely on tips to afford a university education, it would not be necessary to continue the practice of tipping. (*premise/support*)
- Therefore, the practice of tipping could and should be discontinued. (*conclusion/claim*)

This is a conversation, but it features the structure and basic elements of typical argumentative writing. There are variations in form due to writers’ personal styles and preferences, but an argumentative essay is normally structured as follows: It opens by introducing the controversial issue that is to be argued. The writer’s own claim is usually introduced along with the issue. Then follows the main body of the essay, which is meant to support the claim. The core of the support is logical reasoning and the use of evidence. Following that is the conclusion, a restatement of the claim or a call to take action. Very often, the writer also makes efforts to prove that the opposing view is not true by identifying the fallacies in its supporting arguments. As we know, this is called refutation.

ACTIVITY 3

Read the dialogue again and discuss in pairs the following questions. Write your responses or thoughts on the blank lines.

1. What qualities of the dialogue make it one containing argumentation?
2. What is the argumentation about?

3. Identify one or two typical arguments made by the participants.
4. Should we or should we not introduce tipping in China? How would you argue for your position?

Writing Assignment 1

Write the first draft of your essay on a topic in which you argue for or against a claim using the material we have discussed on argumentation and how to write an argumentative essay. The following prompts may give you ideas of suitable topics related to the issue explored in this unit. Identify a specific topic, make a relevant claim and argue for or against it. Please do not restrict your choice of topic to the prompts listed below.

Prompts

- Since Nature is totally indifferent to human fate and does not care in the least whether human beings survive or not, human beings do not have to care about Nature.
- Not much can be done to protect Nature since it has its own way of changing or not changing.
- Human beings have spent too much money on protecting the environment, money which could have been spent on other more important things, for example, on education and fighting rural poverty.
- Environmental problems are unavoidable when China pursues rapid economic development.
- Developed nations should shoulder more responsibility for climate change mitigation.

Part III Case Analysis

Essay I

Should We Save the Jerboa?

Peter Cave

- 1 The long-eared jerboa has—er—long ears. It lives in the deserts of Mongolia and China—with its ears. A tiny nocturnal mammal, it is dwarfed by enormous ears. It hops like a kangaroo; and, for mammals, it possesses one of the biggest ear-to-body ratios. That is, it has very big ears for its size. There are little hairs on its feet, almost like snow shoes, which allow the jerboa to jump along the sand. It is said to be cute and comic. It is classified as endangered. Oh, and did I mention the ears?
- 2 Why should we care about the jerboa? Our question is about the species, as a kind, or a class of creatures. A species is easily confused in speech with the individual members of the species, not least because our language so easily flips around: “the jerboa” could designate a particular jerboa, or the species taken to be a group of jerboas, or the species taken to be the type of creature it is. Individual jerboas have two long ears each, but the species, as a collection, does not really have long ears and certainly not merely two, though the species as a type of creature is that type that normally has two long ears. When people are concerned about a species’ survival, they usually want to promote the existence of a collection of creatures of a certain type, but the species, the collection with members of a certain type, may persist.
- 3 Naturally, we may also care about individual jerboa: probably we do not want any individual jerboa to suffer. We recognize that there is something that counts as going well for an individual jerboa. But the species, as a species, is not the sort of thing that suffers pain. Preserving a species may, in fact, involve culling, or killing some members. So our general question is—and a couple of examples are—
 - Why save a species from extinction?
 - Why save the jerboa?
 - Why regret the loss of the dodo?

- 4 Some simple quick answers in favor of preservation concern the benefits or possible benefits to humans. Preservation is justified on the grounds of the species' value as an instrument to aid us. Perhaps the different species help maintain Earth's ecological balance. Maybe their genetic information, one day, could aid development of pharmaceuticals. In addition, people gain pleasure from seeing members of different species. For similar reasons, we may regret the loss of the dodo.
- 5 Suppose the jerboa lacks such instrumental value with regard to ecology and future genetic research. Suppose too that the jerboa is so furtive, living in such inhospitable conditions, that people typically will not see a jerboa and so will not gain pleasure from sighting experiences. May the species yet possess value?
- 6 Yes. People may value simply knowing that the jerboa exists, knowing that there is such a species and such variety around them. We are identifying a curious instrumental value, curious in that it fails to involve our direct experiences of the jerboa. Once again, though, we are finding value in the jerboa's existence because of its effects on humans, albeit not directly experienced effects. However, may the jerboa, or any species, have an intrinsic value, a value that does not depend for its being a value on something else—that does not depend, for example, on what humans want?
- 7 The question does not presuppose that a species cannot have both instrumental value and intrinsic value. This is not an either-or matter. Some items have both. Philosophizing, arguably, is intrinsically valuable, yet may also possess instrumental value in bringing peace and harmony to the universe. Well, okay—maybe that last point is a little fanciful. What is not fanciful is the thought that some things have intrinsic value. Somewhere along the line we stop ourselves from saying “this is only valuable because it is a means to that...” For example, the stopping point is often happiness, usually human happiness: happiness has intrinsic value.
- 8 Returning to the jerboa, by pretending that it lacks all instrumental value, we focus on whether there is any other value, an intrinsic value that applies to the species. Perhaps there is value in the jerboa's existence simply because it is a species of living individuals. Well, it is not obviously the case that “living” thereby makes something valuable. The smallpox virus, HIV, and malaria mosquitoes are living, yet we question whether they are thereby intrinsically valuable. Our negative attitude, though, may result from their harming us: they could still be intrinsically valuable.

- 9 Possibly there is something valuable about nature being left, undisturbed by human beings; however, that certainly does not point to species' conservation. Nature ensures the extinction of vast numbers of species—and it may be in our human nature, quite whatever that means, to destroy species, just as it is to tame parts of nature. The rural landscapes of fields, crops, and national parks would be non-existent, but for human interferences—as would be spectacular bridges, sculptures, and architecturally stunning galleries.
- 10 Perhaps we should simply recognize that we value the presence of a variety of species. We value that presence independently of our purposes and independently of any value for us. We value the jerboa for its own sake. Note, though, that even here, its value may be resting solely on the fact that we humans value it “for its own sake.” There is, though, a stronger suggestion: that the jerboa—or any species—possesses value independently even of our valuing it. After all, if the species in question did not possess such value, why should we value it for its own sake? Why value something unless it is worthy of being valued?
- 11 It is difficult, though, to get a grip on “for its own sake” when applied to a species. If we do something for an individual jerboa's sake, we have some idea of how we are acting in its best interests, how its life may go well. We know that it needs food and shelter. But it is far from clear that a species, as opposed to particular individuals, has an interest. It is far from clear how things go well for the species, from the species' viewpoint. After all, a species lacks a viewpoint.
- 12 Human beings promote the existence of some things and not of others. We value. We are valuers. Perhaps—and perhaps conveniently for human beings—possessors of intrinsic value include at least those individuals that are themselves valuers, such as we are. We may, though, wonder why that should be believed. Without valuers, nothing would be valued; but it neither follows that valuers are valuable nor that items are only valuable if they happen to be valued.
- 13 In our valuing, having preferences, recognizing things as worthy of desire, perhaps we become aware that there are items that are intrinsically valuable, whose value is other than being experienced by us or even being experiences. Maybe that is why so many of us, even when godless, stand in wonder at the different species, seeking to preserve them against the ravages of both man and impersonal nature. Maybe that is why some of us see beauty in sunsets, in landscapes, and seascapes, a beauty that is valuable and would still exist even without humans around to appreciate that beauty.

- 14 In some cases, it may be better not to have human beings around at all. Just think of those seashores splattered with empty beer cans, cigarette ends, and worse. They offend the eye and detract from beauty; yet without the humans around, could there be any offence, any loss or gain in beauty at all?
- 15 Or would the eye of the universe still shed a tear?

ACTIVITY 4

Read the essay critically for its ideas and discuss the following questions in pairs.

1. What does Peter Cave want to argue for or against through discussing whether the jerboa should be saved? Are you convinced? If not, what is the problem with his argumentation?
2. When Cave argues that “We value that presence independently of our purposes and independently of any value for us” (Para. 10), what does he mean? What assumptions (if any) does he make in defending his position?
3. How is the case of preserving the jerboa related to the main issue of the unit? What is Cave’s position on whether to save a particular species?
4. According to what is argued in the essay, should we save living creatures like malaria mosquitoes? Why or why not?
5. People in China argue for the protection of pandas from diverse perspectives. Do research online and classify the popular reasons according to the two perspectives discussed in the essay: instrumental value and intrinsic value.

ACTIVITY 5

Read the essay, critically considering its writing techniques, and discuss the following questions in groups of three or four.

1. How does Cave generally structure the argumentation on whether the jerboa should be saved? Please diagram the logical structure of the argumentation and its elements.
2. What are the main arguments concerning the saving of the jerboa or any other species?
3. How does Cave support the claim that “we value the jerboa for its own sake” (Para. 10)? Is this claim a statement of fact, definition, value or policy in your view? Do you accept it? What might a counterargument to it be?

4. What are Cave's assumptions when making such a claim? Do you think the discussion of instrumental and intrinsic value constitutes a reasonable and valid assumption?
5. Are you convinced by Cave's reasoning concerning the claim? If not, how would you improve the reasoning?

Essay 2

Destructiveness of Man

George P. Marsh

"Not all the winds, and storms, and earthquakes, and seas, and seasons of the world, have done so much to revolutionize the earth as MAN, the power of an endless life, has done since the day he came forth upon it, and received dominion over it."

—H. Bushnell, Sermon on the Power of an Endless Life

- 1 Man has too long forgotten that the Earth was given to him for usufruct alone, not for consumption, still less for profligate waste. Nature has provided against the absolute destruction of any of her elementary matter, the raw material of her works; the thunderbolt and the tornado, the most convulsive throes of even the volcano and the earthquake, being only phenomena of decomposition and recomposition. But she has left it within the power of man irreparably to derange the combinations of inorganic matter and of organic life, which through the night of aeons she had been proportioning and balancing, to prepare the Earth for his habitation, when in the fullness of time his Creator should call him forth to enter into its possession.
- 2 Apart from the hostile influence of man, the organic and the inorganic world are, as I have remarked, bound together by such mutual relations and adaptations as secure, if not the absolute permanence and equilibrium of both, a long continuance of the established conditions of each at any given time and place, or at least, a very slow and gradual succession of changes in those conditions. But man is everywhere a disturbing agent. Wherever he plants his foot, the harmonies of nature are turned to discords. The proportions and accommodations which insured the stability of existing arrangements are overthrown. Indigenous vegetable and animal species are extirpated, and

supplanted by others of foreign origin, spontaneous production is forbidden or restricted, and the face of the Earth is either laid bare or covered with a new and reluctant growth of vegetable forms, and with alien tribes of animal life. These intentional changes and substitutions constitute, indeed, great revolutions; but vast as is their magnitude and importance, they are, as we shall see, insignificant in comparison with the contingent and unsought results which have flowed from them.

- 3 The fact that, of all organic beings, man alone is to be regarded as essentially a destructive power, and that he wields energies to resist which Nature—that nature whom all material life and all inorganic substance obey—is wholly impotent, tends to prove that, though living in physical nature, he is not of her, that he is of more exalted parentage, and belongs to a higher order of existences, than those which are born from her womb and live in blind submission to her dictates.
- 4 There are, indeed, brute destroyers, beasts and birds and insects of prey—all animal life feeds upon, and, of course, destroys other life,—but this destruction is balanced by compensations. It is, in fact, the very means by which the existence of one tribe of animals or of vegetables is secured against being smothered by the encroachments of another; and the reproductive powers of species, which serve as the food of others, are always proportioned to the demand they are destined to supply. Man pursues his victims with reckless destructiveness; and, while the sacrifice of life by the lower animals is limited by the cravings of appetite, he unsparingly persecutes, even to extirpation, thousands of organic forms which he cannot consume.²
- 5 The Earth was not, in its natural condition, completely adapted to the use of man, but only to the sustenance of wild animals and wild vegetation. These live, multiply their kind in just proportion, and attain their perfect measure of strength and beauty, without producing or requiring any important change in the natural arrangements of surface, or in each other's spontaneous tendencies, except such mutual repression of excessive increase as may prevent the extirpation of one species by the encroachments of another. In short, without

² The terrible destructiveness of man is remarkably exemplified in the pursuit of large mammals and birds for single products, attended with the entire wastage of enormous quantities of flesh, and of other parts of the animal which would be capable of valuable uses. The wild cattle of South America are slaughtered by the millions for their hides and hair; the buffalo of North America for their skin or tongues; the elephant, the walrus, and the narwhal for their tusks; and some large birds, for their plumage.

man, lower animal and spontaneous vegetable life would have been practically constant in type, distribution and proportion, and the physical geography of the Earth would have remained undisturbed for indefinite periods, and been subject to revolution only from slow development, from possible, unknown cosmical causes, or from geological action.

- 6 But man, the domestic animals that serve him, the field and garden plants the products of which supply him with food and clothing, cannot subsist and rise to the full development of their higher properties, unless brutal and unconscious nature can be effectually combated, and, to a great degree, vanquished by human art. Hence, a certain measure of transformation of terrestrial surface, of suppression of natural, and stimulation of artificially modified productivity becomes necessary. This measure man has unfortunately exceeded. He has felled the forests whose network of fibrous roots bound the mould to the rocky skeleton of the earth; but had he allowed here and there a belt of woodland to reproduce itself by spontaneous propagation, most of the mischief which his reckless destruction of the natural protection of the soil has occasioned would have been averted. He has broken up mountain reservoirs, the percolation of whose waters through unseen channels supplied fountains that refreshed his cattle and fertilized his fields; but he has neglected to maintain the cisterns and the canals of irrigation which a wise antiquity had constructed to neutralize the consequences of its own imprudence. While he has torn the thin glebe which confined the light earth of extensive plains, and has destroyed the fringe of semi-aquatic plants which skirted the coast and checked the drifting of the sea sand, he has failed to prevent the spreading of the dunes by clothing them with artificially propagated vegetation. He has ruthlessly warred on all the tribes of animated nature whose spoil he could convert to his own uses, and he has not protected the birds which prey on the insects most destructive to his own harvests.
- 7 Purely untutored humanity, it is true, interferes comparatively little with the arrangements of nature,³ and the destructive agency of man becomes more and more energetic and unsparing as he advances in civilization, until the impoverishment with which his exhaustion of the natural resources of the soil is threatening him, at last awakens him to the necessity of preserving what is left, if not of restoring what has been wantonly wasted. The wandering savage

³ It is an interesting and not hitherto sufficiently noticed fact, that the domestication of the organic world, so far as it has yet been achieved, belongs, not indeed to the savage state, but to the earliest dawn of civilization, the conquest of inorganic nature almost as exclusively to the most advanced stages of artificial culture.

grows no cultivated vegetable, fells no forest, and extirpates no useful plant, no noxious weed. If his skill in the chase enables him to entrap numbers of the animals on which he feeds, he compensates this loss by destroying also the lion, the tiger, the wolf, the otter, the seal, and the eagle, thus indirectly protecting the feebler quadrupeds and fish and fowls, which would otherwise become the booty of beasts and birds of prey. But with stationary life, or at latest with the pastoral state, man at once commences an almost indiscriminate warfare upon all the forms of animal and vegetable existence around him, and as he advances in civilization, he gradually eradicates or transforms every spontaneous product of the soil he occupies.⁴

ACTIVITY 6

Read the essay critically for its ideas and discuss the following questions in pairs.

1. When George P. Marsh claims that “of all organic beings, man alone is to be regarded as essentially a destructive power” (Para. 3), what does he mean? Do you agree with him? If not, what is your view?
2. What does Marsh want to say when he argues that “the destructive agency of man becomes more and more energetic and unsparing as he advances in civilization” (Para. 7)?
3. Marsh lists a couple of things that would not exist if it were not for human interventions. Do you think these interventions are positive or negative? Why?
4. How would you evaluate Cave and Marsh’s positions on the relationship between human beings and Nature as expressed in the two essays? Can you argue the case both ways?
5. According to Marsh, the advancement of civilization would necessarily lead to an “indiscriminate warfare upon all the forms of animal and vegetable existence around him.” (Para. 7) The Chinese government today upholds the “Scientific Outlook on Development,” which aims at fostering harmony between human beings and Nature. In what way do you think this practice will stop or slow down that “indiscriminate warfare”?

⁴ The difference between the relations of savage life, and of incipient civilization, to nature, is well seen in that part of the valley of the Mississippi which was once occupied by the mound builders and afterwards by the far less developed Indian tribes. When the tillers of the fields, which must have been cultivated to sustain the large population that once inhabited those regions, perished, or were driven out, the soil fell back to the normal forest state, and the savages who succeeded the more advanced race interfered very little, if at all, with the ordinary course of spontaneous nature.

ACTIVITY 7 

Read the essay, critically considering its writing techniques, and discuss the following questions in groups of three or four.

1. What are the main arguments regarding the destructiveness of human beings in their relationship with Nature? Do you agree or disagree with these arguments? Why?
2. Are you satisfied with the steps in Marsh's reasoning in supporting the claim that "of all organic beings, man alone is to be regarded as essentially a destructive power" (Para. 3)? If yes, can you provide more examples to support his reasoning? If not, what would you change or add to improve the reasoning?
3. What kind of evidence does Marsh use to support his reasoning? Is the evidence relevant and sufficient? Why or why not?
4. According to Marsh, animals are also mutual destroyers but such destruction is different from that caused by human beings. In what way is this argument related to the main argument of the destructiveness of human beings in their relationship with Nature?

are written in different language styles. One typical example of such differences is the use of different types of vocabulary (i.e., *live* vs. *inhabit*, *walk long way* vs. *traverse long distances*, *find food* vs. *find prey to hunt*, *not much water* vs. *minimal water supply*, *hot a lot* vs. *sweltering temperatures*). The words used in the lines at the left-hand side are simple and plain whereas the words in the lines at the right-hand side are complex and sophisticated. Another element is the use of different sentence structures. The sentences at the left-hand side are obviously short and simple while the sentences at the right-hand side are long and complex. Other factors include more or less use of personal pronouns, use or non-use of conversational fillers (i.e., an apparently meaningless word, phrase, or sound that marks a pause or hesitation in conversation), and use of hedges (to be discussed in Units 5 and 6).

To sum up, academic language features may vary as a function of the discipline (e.g., *social science* vs. *mathematics*), topic, and mode of communication (e.g., *written* vs. *oral*), but some core common features do exist, including conciseness, high density of sophisticated words, and complex grammatical and syntactic structures. It is generally agreed that academic English is more demanding and complex than social English.

ACTIVITY 8

The following two paragraphs discuss the same issue but use different language styles, non-academic and academic respectively. Read them carefully and summarize the characteristics of language used in the two paragraphs by writing down specific examples in the table below.

Non-academic version:

Jack Springer thinks that the government should allow people the right to own a gun. But I don't agree with him. People like him sort of think that the government limits our rights when it restricts gun stuff. They kind of think that most people who own guns are responsible guys who keep the guns for sport and recreation. They also think that the police are unable to stop violent crime and we need guns to protect ourselves. But I think he is wrong. I agree with Josephine Bluff who thinks that guns increase the amount of violent crime in the community. I also think that human life is worth more than giving shooters the right to go shooting on the weekend. And I also think that many of the guns that are kept around the house would end up being used in violent domestic disputes or teenage suicides.

Academic version:

Jack Springer maintains that the government should allow people the right to own a gun. This position asserts that the government is infringing on our democratic rights when it restricts gun ownership. Most people who own guns, so the argument goes, are responsible citizens who keep the guns for sport and recreation. It is further argued that the police are unable to stop violent crime and we need guns to protect ourselves. However, as Josephine Bluff states, guns increase the amount of violent crime in the community. Moreover, human life is worth more than giving gun owners the right to go shooting on the weekend. In addition, guns that are kept around the house have been used in violent domestic disputes and teenage suicides.

Academic English	Non-Academic English

ACTIVITY 9 

Working individually or in pairs, read the following two short paragraphs written in non-academic language and try to convert them into academic language.

1. A lot of people think the weather is getting worse. They say this has been going on for quite a long time. I think they are right because we now get storms, etc. all the time.

2. These days a lot of kids are starting school early. Years ago, they began at five, but now it's normal to start at four or younger. Why is this? One thing is that mums need to get back to work. Is this good for kids? People have studied the question and say that early schooling causes social problems like stealing, drug-taking etc. I think they're right and we should pay mums to stay at home.

Writing Assignment 2

Write the final draft of your essay based on the feedback you received from peer evaluation and your instructor, and be prepared to submit it. The final draft may be your second, third or even fourth or fifth draft for some of you. Work on the drafts using the following checklist.

Checklist

Mark the question with a check (✓) if your answer is yes.

- Have I understood and stated the issue clearly?
- Is my essay structure conventionally correct?
- Does my essay contain all the necessary elements?
- Have I developed the arguments well?
- Is my premise/support well connected with my conclusion/claim?
- Does the support I have offered genuinely support the claim?
- Have I used the appropriate language style?
- Have I eliminated words or expressions that may not be appropriate for argumentative writing?

Reflective Journal

Please write down your reflections upon what you have/have not yet learned in this unit:

- ▶ Issues I have investigated

- ▶ Writing knowledge and skills I have acquired and developed

- ▶ Critical thinking and intercultural competence I have cultivated

- ▶ Language I have studied

- ▶ Anything I wish to explore further (i.e., puzzles and difficulties)

2 Unit

The Primary Purpose of Education

How to Make a Good Claim

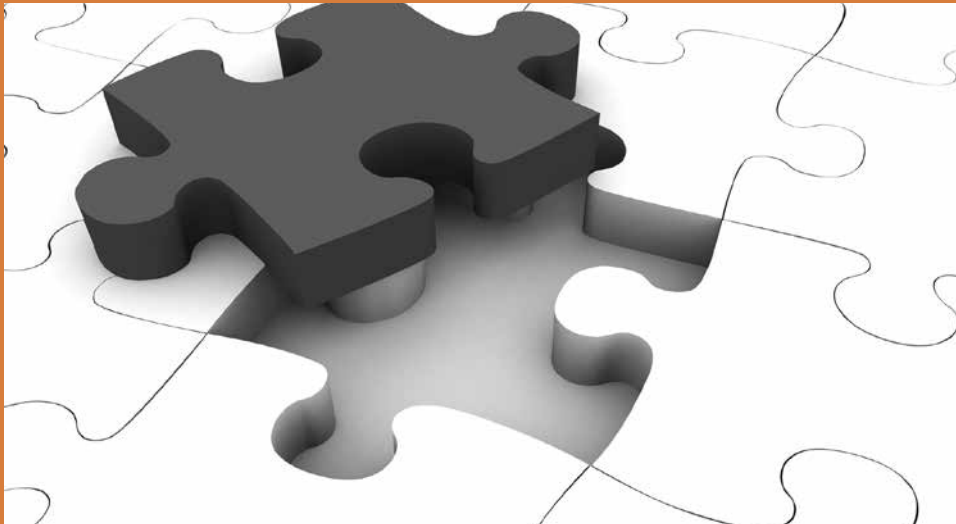


“ The purpose of education is to give to the body and to the soul all the beauty and all the perfection of which they are capable. ”

—Plato

“ Learning without thought is labor lost; thought without learning is perilous. ”

—Confucius



Objectives

Writing Skills

- ▶ Understand what a claim is
- ▶ Distinguish different types of claims
- ▶ Evaluate a claim and improve it

Language Study

- ▶ Distinguish effective from ineffective language
- ▶ Use language effectively in making a claim

Critical Thinking

- ▶ Identify and interpret different claims regarding the purpose of education
- ▶ Analyze and evaluate the assumptions behind controversial claims related to the purpose of education
- ▶ Explore the implications and consequences of such claims

Intercultural Competence

- ▶ Understand similarities and differences in Chinese and Western views on the purpose of education
- ▶ Compare and contrast Chinese and Western views on curriculum design, teaching methods, textbook writing, teacher-student relations, etc.

Part I Exploring the Main Issue

Pre-class Reading and Research

1. Do preliminary reading and research on the purpose of education related to the following questions.
 - 1) What do you think is the primary purpose of Chinese higher education? Do you think such a purpose is generally achieved? If yes, in what aspects? If not, why not?
 - 2) In what respects do you think Chinese higher education is similar to and/or different from Western higher education?

2. Consider the purpose of higher education from your own perspective. Why did you decide to go to college after graduating from high school? What do you hope to gain from a college education? Share your thoughts with your partner.

3. Work in groups of four and do thorough preparation for a class presentation on your reading, thinking and research findings.

Issue Prompt

What is the primary purpose of education?

Education starts with and parallels the evolution of human beings. The debate over its primary purpose has been going on for centuries. While some argue that education is “to enable people, individual human beings, to operate at their fullest potential, to equip them with the tools and the sense of opportunity to use their wits, skills, and passions to the fullest,” others would say that it is “to reproduce the culture that supports it—not only to reproduce it, but further its economic, political, and cultural ends” (Bruner, 1996). For example, “the educational system of an industrial society should produce a willing and compliant labor force to keep it going: unskilled and semi-skilled workers, clerical workers, middle managers, risk-sensitive entrepreneurs, all of whom are convinced that such an industrial society constitutes the right, valid, and only way of living” (ibid). But for a society in farming times, this prescription might well not have been relevant.

Indeed, much of the discussion about education is ultimately a discussion of its purpose and function. Albert Einstein argued that education is aimed at helping the younger generation become independently acting and thinking individuals rather than simply transmitting to them the civilization of the past. John Dewey also participated in the discussion through proposing

his progressive philosophy of education. Whatever their position, these thinkers are voicing their understanding of the purpose of education. Obviously, different people hold different opinions at different times and in different contexts. Here are more of these views:

- Education is preparation to live completely. —Herbert Spencer
- A complete and generous education fits a man to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both public and private, of peace and war. —John Milton
- There are two types of education... One should teach us how to make a living, and the other how to live. —John Adams
- Education is that which remains, if one has forgotten everything he learned in school. —An unidentified wit
- If the moral purpose of education is to make a positive difference to students' lives, and the purpose of higher education is to help students develop their potential as fully as possible at this level, then enabling students to be creative should be an explicit part of their higher education experience. This is the deep moral purpose that sustains our beliefs and energizes our creativity project—it is most definitely a matter of heart. —Michael Fullan

4. In groups of four, discuss the following questions and write your thoughts and responses on the blank lines below.

- 1) What do you think is the primary purpose of higher education?
- 2) What claims would you make about the purpose of higher education?
- 3) What reflections do you have on your own university education in the past years? Do you think it could have been improved? If yes, in what ways?

Your claims: _____

Your reasoning to support the claims: _____

Part II Learning the Skills

How to Make a Good Claim

■ What is a claim?

As introduced in Unit 1, an argumentative essay usually consists of four parts: a statement of the issue, a statement of one's position on that issue, arguments that support one's position, and rebuttals of arguments that support contrary positions. A **claim** is the statement of one's position on a particular issue and appears as a statement of fact, definition, value, or policy. It is intended that the audience (i.e., both readers and listeners) will accept it, and sometimes they will take action in response. Here is an example of a claim:

- Employees should be encouraged not to work overtime.

We can understand what a claim is by examining its counterclaim. A **counterclaim** is a claim set up in opposition to a previous claim. The following statement makes the counterclaim to the claim above:

- Working overtime enables people to produce more and increase the overall wealth of our society.

Sometimes, it may not be enough simply to acknowledge other points of view and present our own argument. When we are dealing with an issue that our readers feel strongly about, we may need to rebut the opposing arguments. As introduced in Unit 1, to rebut means to negate the claim of another argument. In other words, it is actually to point out problems with an opposing view and to show where an opponent's argument breaks down. For example, the rebuttal to the counterclaim above would be:

- The quality and improvement of a society is not merely based on the wealth it possesses.

ACTIVITY I 

I. The following table illustrates how possible arguments and reasoning can be developed for a claim. In pairs, examine these arguments and ways of reasoning and then discuss how they are related to the claim.

Claim	Arguments	Reasoning
Employees should be encouraged not to work overtime.	Working overtime affects the health of employees.	If people work far more than their normal hours, they often don't have enough time for rest, which may lead to serious health problems.
	Working overtime may affect family relationships.	Working overtime takes up employees' private time and they have less time to spend with their families. This may pose potential danger to their family relationships.
	The culture of working overtime has a negative influence on our society.	When working overtime turns into a work culture, people are encouraged to put their work in first place. This doesn't help improve our society's well-being and may affect its value system.

II. Suppose you were one of the following people, what claim would you make concerning the above issue? What arguments and reasoning would you give for your claim?

- an employee
- a spouse of the employee
- a boss
- a representative from the National Institute of Health

Your claim: _____

Your arguments and reasoning: _____

■ Types of claim

By definition, claims naturally fall into two types: **objective** and **subjective** ones. An objective claim is one whose truth or falsity is independent of whether we think it is true or false. For example, a statement like “There is life on Mars” is an objective claim because whether there is life there does not depend on whether we think there is. Not all claims are objective. For example, “Ronald Reagan was a great president” is not objective because whether or not “Ronald Reagan was a great president” does depend on whether we think he was. If few people think he was, then he was not. It is a matter of opinion or belief. Claims of this type are subjective ones. In other words, whether a subjective claim is true or false is not independent of whether we think it is true or false. What we as arguers need to do is to use solid evidence, strong reasoning or any other methods to argue for or against it. Some would also consider objective claims as claims of fact and subjective ones as claims of value and claims of policy.

Claims of fact assert that something is true or not true. For example,

- Men have more opportunities than women in our society.
- Teenagers whose parents value education are more likely to attend college.

Claims of value assert that something is good or bad, more or less desirable. For example,

- Viewing television is a wasteful activity.
- The central message of all competition is that other people are potential obstacles to one’s own success.
- Globalization has spurred inequality—both among citizens in the wealthiest countries as well as among nations of the developing world.

Claims of policy assert that one course of action is superior to another. For example,

- There should still be colleges and schools just for men/boys and some just for women/girls.
- Universities should require every student to take a variety of courses outside the student’s field of study.
- Restrictions should be placed on the use of mobile phones in public areas like restaurants and theaters.

One thing that is worth particular attention is the point of view known as **moral subjectivism** in making claims and developing arguments. This assumes that all claims

which have a moral property ascribed to them are purely subjective: that is, whether something is good or bad, right or wrong depends entirely on what we think. “Is it all right for students to cheat in exams because they think exams do not correctly reflect their achievements?” According to moral subjectivists, this is just a matter of opinion and one opinion could be as correct as the other. Another example is “It is permissible to stone a woman to death because she has been accused of committing adultery.” While some people might argue that it is too complicated to make judgments in these cases, most of us would agree that it is not all right for students to cheat in exams, neither is it permissible to stone a woman to death for committing adultery or for any other reason because the rightness and wrongness of actions exist independently of what we think. In other words, moral opinions are not purely subjective even though some might appear to be. As stated in Unit 1, argumentation takes place over controversial issues or claims. For a claim that is either morally right or morally wrong, not much space for argumentation is actually left. A good but not perfect technique to determine whether there is room for argumentation over an opinion with a moral element is to ask yourself the question: *Is your (or someone else’s) action prohibited or required by a moral rule or principle?* If not, then it is probably not morally wrong and there is, thus, space for argumentation to take place.

■ How to evaluate a claim?

It is easy to make a claim but not easy to make a good claim. We can discuss a claim we have made with our classmates or instructors and get their reactions. But very often we need to learn how to evaluate claims on our own since this is an important beginning step in learning to write an argumentative essay. Here are some questions we can ask ourselves when reviewing our claim. If the responses to all of them are YES, then it may be a good one.

- **Have I taken a position that others might challenge or oppose?** If the claim simply states facts that no one would, or even could, disagree with, it is highly possible that we are simply providing a summary rather than making a claim.
- **Is my claim specific enough?** Claims that are too vague are often not sufficiently strong. If the claim contains words like “good” or “successful,” we should see if we could be more specific: *why* is something “good”; *what specifically* makes something “successful”?
- **Does my claim pass the “so what?” test?** If our first response is, “So what?” then we need to clarify or perhaps to connect it to a larger issue.

- **Does my claim pass the “how and why?” test?** If our first response is “How?” or “Why?” our claim may be too open-ended and give insufficient guidance to the reader. We can add information to give the reader a better understanding of our position right from the beginning.
- **Does my essay support my claim specifically and without digressing?** If the claim and the whole essay do not seem to go together, one of them has to change. It’s always fine to change the claim to reflect new perceptions that have occurred to us in the course of writing the essay.

Here is an example to illustrate how a claim can be improved through such an evaluation process.

Claim 1: The North and South fought the Civil War for many reasons, some of which were the same and some different.



Claim 2: While both sides fought the Civil War over the issue of slavery, the North fought for moral reasons while the South fought to preserve its way of life.



Claim 3: While both Northerners and Southerners believed they fought against tyranny and oppression, Northerners focused on the oppression of slaves while Southerners defended their own right to self-government.

All three claims are concerned with the reasons the North and South fought the American Civil War. Claim 1 simply restates the issue without taking any position on it. Some would argue that it does assume a kind of position but it is not one that can be challenged or opposed. Claim 1 is a weak claim. Claim 2 is much better, in that it takes the position that the two sides fought the war for a reason over which they disagreed (i.e., *fighting for a moral reason* vs. *fighting for upholding their way of life*), which is also specific. Yet, some writers believe that the claim is still too vague to argue for or against, finally concluding that both sides fought for moral reasons but from different perspectives. Claim 3 is these writers’ final position—that both sides believed that they fought against tyranny and oppression but one fought against the oppression of the slaves and the other fought against the oppression of having their right to self-government denied. One thing to note is that this claim is just one of many possible interpretations of the American Civil War. The issue is, thus, controversial and debatable.

ACTIVITY 2

Read the following claims, identify their types and comment whether they are good ones. If not, how would you improve them?

1. Since more and more jobs are opening in computer-related fields, colleges should require courses in computer science.
2. Everyone should take a course in logic. It helps you to think clearly.
3. No one can look back on his schooldays and say with truth that they were altogether unhappy.
4. It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.
5. Education is an indivisible part of the prosperity of the nation. The more educated and cultured people there are in a country, the more flourishing and thrifty the country is.
6. The mass media, including TV, radio, and newspapers have a great influence on people and especially on the younger generation. They play an important role in shaping the opinions and positions of the younger generation.
7. Do not train a child to learn by using force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.
8. Foreign capital investment in Third World countries is not the way for those countries to improve the average living standards of their people.

ACTIVITY 3

Read the following claims and discuss in pairs how you would support each of them. At the same time, reflect upon the way the claims are made and see if you can improve them.

1. Giving in to terrorist demands is rarely, if ever, a good policy.
2. Recessions are periods of reduced economic activity.
3. Sex education should be increased in schools in an attempt to curb problems like teenage pregnancy.
4. College students should have complete freedom to choose their own courses.
5. Rainforest destruction should be prohibited.
6. To encourage healthy eating, higher taxes should be imposed on soft drinks and junk food.

7. College students in China should be offered financial incentives to graduate in three years rather than four.
8. The movie rating system should be introduced in China as soon as possible.

Writing Assignment 1

Write the first draft of your essay in which you argue for or against a claim using what we have discussed so far about claim-making. The following prompts may give you ideas for appropriate topics relevant to the issue explored in this unit. Develop a specific topic, make a relevant claim and argue for or against it. Please do not restrict your choice of topic to the prompts listed below.

Prompts

- One of the best gifts is education. It is not possible to be over-educated. Education means getting to know and understand yourself and the world. Thus, the more people are educated, the better place the world will be.
- Educated workers are more productive. They are able to understand their role in their company or organization, and work out of interest rather than necessity. Uneducated workers, on the other hand, are dissatisfied and have low morale.
- Too much money is being spent on education. This money should be spent on other more important services.
- People are becoming over-specialized. They know more than is necessary for their jobs. They are not flexible enough to be useful in other areas.
- The value of a degree is now lost. People don't have respect for university graduates anymore, since everybody has a degree. This undermines the whole purpose of going to college.

Part III Case Analysis

Essay I

On Education

Albert Einstein

- 1 Sometimes one sees in the school simply the instrument for transferring a certain maximum quantity of knowledge to the growing generation. But that's not right. Knowledge is dead; the school, however, serves the living. It should develop in the young individuals those qualities and capabilities which are of value for the welfare of the commonwealth. But that does not mean that individuality should be destroyed and the individual becomes a mere tool of the community, like a bee or an ant. For a community of standardized individuals without personal originality and personal aims would be a poor community without possibilities for development. On the contrary, the aim must be the training of independently thinking and acting individuals, who, however, see in the service of the community their highest life problem.
- 2 But how shall one try to attain this ideal? Should one perhaps try to realize this aim by moralizing? Not at all. Words are and remain empty sounds, and the road to perdition has ever been accompanied by lip service to an ideal. But personalities are not formed by what is heard and said but by labor and activity.
- 3 The most important method of education accordingly always has consisted of where the pupil was urged to actual performance. This applies as well to the first attempts at writings of the primary boy as to the doctor's thesis on graduation from university, or as to the mere memorizing of a poem, the writing of a composition, the interpretation and translation of a text, the solving of a mathematical problem or the practice of a physical sport.
- 4 But behind every achievement exists the motivation which is at the foundation of it and which, in turn, is strengthened and nourished by the accomplishment of the undertaking. Here there are the greatest differences and they are of greatest importance to the education value of the school. The same work may owe its origin to fear and compulsion, ambitious desire for authority and distinction, or a loving interest in the object and a desire for truth

and understanding and, thus, to that divine curiosity which every healthy child possesses, but which so often is weakened early.

- 5 The educational influence which is exercised upon the pupil by the accomplishment of one and the same work may be widely different, depending upon whether fear of hurting egoistic passion or desire for pleasure and satisfaction is at the bottom of this work. And nobody will maintain that the administration of the school and the attitude of the teachers do not have an influence upon the molding of the psychological foundation for pupils.
- 6 To me the worst thing seems to be for a school principally to work with methods of fear, force, and artificial authority. Such treatment destroys the sound sentiments, the sincerity, and the self confidence of the pupil. It produces the submissive subject. It is not so hard to keep the school free from the worst of all evils. Give into the power of the teacher the fewest possible coercive measures, so that the only source of the pupil's respect for the teacher is the human and intellectual qualities of the latter.
- 7 The second-named motive, ambition or, in milder terms, the aiming at recognition and consideration, lies firmly fixed in human nature. With absence of mental stimulus of this kind, human cooperation would be entirely impossible; the desire for approval of one's fellow-man certainly is one of the most important binding powers of society. In this complex of feelings, constructive and destructive forces lie closely together. Desire for approval and recognition is a healthy motive but the desire to be acknowledged as better, stronger, or more intelligent than a fellow being or fellow scholar easily leads to an excessively egoistic psychological adjustment, which may become injurious for the individual and for the community. Therefore, the school and the teacher must guard against employing the easy method of creating individual ambition, in order to induce the pupils to diligent work. Darwin's theory of the struggle for existence and the selectivity connected with it has by many people been cited as authorization of the encouragement of the spirit of competition. Some people also in such a way have tried to prove pseudo-scientifically the necessity of the destructive economic struggle of competition between individuals. But this is wrong, because man owes his strength in the struggle for existence to the fact that he is a socially living animal.
- 8 As little as a battle between single ants of an ant hill is essential for survival, just so little is this the case with the individual members of a human community.

Therefore, one should guard against preaching to the young man success in the customary sense as the aim of life. For a successful man is he who receives a great deal from his fellow men, usually incomparably more than corresponds to his service to them. The value of a man, however, should be seen in what he gives and not what he is able to receive.

- 9 The most important motive for work in school and in life is pleasure in work, pleasure in its results, and the knowledge of the value of the result to the community. In the awakening and strengthening of the psychological forces in the young man, I see the most important task given by the school. Such a psychological foundation alone leads to a joyous desire for the highest possessions of men, knowledge and artist-like workmanship.
- 10 The awakening of the productive psychological powers is certainly less easy than the practice of force or the awakening of individual ambition but is the more valuable for it. The point is to develop the childlike inclination for play and the childlike desire for recognition and to guide the child over to the important fields for society; it is that education which, in the main, is founded upon the desire for successful activity and acknowledgment. If the school succeeds in working successfully from such points of view, it will be highly honored by the rising generation and the tasks given by the school will be submitted to as a sort of gift. I have known children who preferred school time to vacation.
- 11 Such a school demands from the teacher that he be a kind of artist in his province. What can be done that this spirit be gained in the school? For this there is just as little a universal remedy as there is for an individual to remain well. But there are certain necessary conditions which can be met. First, teachers should grow up in such schools. Second, the teacher should be given extensive liberty in the selection of the material to be taught and the methods of teaching employed by him. For it is true also of him that pleasure in the shaping of his work is killed by force and exterior pressure.
- 12 If you have followed my meditations up to this point, you will probably wonder about one thing. I have spoken fully about what spirit, according to my opinion, youth should have been instructed. But I have said nothing yet about the choice of subjects for instruction, nor about the method of teaching. Should language predominate or the technical education in science?
- 13 To this I answer: in my opinion all this is of secondary importance. If a young man has trained his muscles and physical endurance by gymnastics and walking,

he will later be trained for every physical work. This is also analogous to the training of the mind and of the mental and manual skill. Thus, the wit was not wrong who defined education in this way: "Education is that which remains, if one has forgotten everything he learned in school." For this reason I am not at all anxious to take sides in the struggle between the followers of the classical philologic-historical education and the education more devoted to natural science.

- 14 On the other hand, I want to oppose the idea that the school has to teach directly that special knowledge and those accomplishments which one has to use later directly in life. The demands of life are much too manifold to let such a specialized training in school appear possible. Apart from that, it seems to me, moreover, objectionable to treat the individual like a dead tool. The school should always have as its aim that the young man leaves it as a harmonious personality, not as a specialist. This in my opinion is true in a certain sense even for technical schools, whose students will devote themselves to a quite definite profession. The development of general ability for independent thinking and judgment should always be placed foremost, not the acquisition of special knowledge. If a person masters the fundamentals of his subject and has learned to think and work independently, he will surely find his way and besides will be more able to adapt himself to progress and changes than the person whose training principally consists in the acquiring of detailed knowledge.
- 15 Finally, I wish to emphasize once more that what has been said here in a somewhat categorical form does not claim to mean more than the personal opinion of a man, which is founded upon nothing but his own personal experience, which he has gathered as a student and as a teacher.

ACTIVITY 4

Read the essay critically for its ideas and discuss the following questions in pairs.

1. What does Albert Einstein believe to be the primary purpose of education?
2. According to Einstein, what is the most important educational method? Do you agree? If yes, what would be the significance of applying such a method in the Chinese educational context? If not, what method would you recommend?
3. How do you understand the statement that "Education is that which remains, if one has forgotten everything he learned in school?" (Para. 13) Please give an example to

illustrate your understanding.

4. What are the best and/or worst things about Chinese education? In what aspects do Chinese and Western education possibly differ?
5. Many people cite Darwin's theory of "survival of the fittest" to justify competition in schools. Einstein obviously argues against it. What do you know about Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection? And do you think Einstein's arguments are convincing? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY 5

Read the essay, critically considering its writing techniques, and discuss the following questions in groups of three or four.

1. What claim does Einstein make concerning the purpose of education? Is it a claim of fact, definition, value or policy? Do you accept it? Why or why not? What could be a counterclaim to it?
2. What are Einstein's main arguments and reasoning thereafter developed out of the particular claim? Are you convinced? If not, how would you improve them?
3. What assumptions do you think Einstein starts from when making such a claim? Do you think the assumptions are reasonable and valid? Why or why not?
4. How is this claim related to the discussion of educational method? Is the latter supportive of the former?
5. Are you convinced by Einstein's reasoning about motivations for learning? Is it logically consistent with his reasoning about the purpose of education?

The Neglected Purpose of Education

Jack Jennings

- 1 *“To prepare all citizens to become responsible members of a democratic society.”*
- 2 *“To develop socialization and citizenship skills in children.”*
- 3 *“Preparing students for responsible, productive citizenship and imbuing them with values common to one democratic society.”*
- 4 These similar phrases were developed by diverse groups of citizens in three communities—Berwyn, Illinois, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, respectively—to describe what they saw as a basic mission of public education.
- 5 These conclusions emerged from 72 citizens’ forums held in all regions of the country in 1996 through 1998 by the National PTA, Phi Delta Kappa, and the Center on Education Policy. Their purpose was to encourage local residents to discuss the purposes of public education, the effectiveness of their schools, and ways to improve public education.
- 6 The conversations, which lasted three to four hours, included parents of public school and home-schooled children, Catholic school administrators, law enforcement officers, religious leaders, business people, and many others. Public school educators were limited in number so their views would not overwhelm the opinions of others. Discussions were held in small groups so that everyone had a chance to speak. To ensure the independence of this venture, funding came from charitable foundations.
- 7 Strikingly, the participants in every meeting in every part of the country concurred that there were two main purposes of public education: to prepare students for further education and employment and to prepare them to be good citizens. Citizens at various meetings came up with slightly different wording and combinations of purposes, but they consistently agreed on those two purposes.
- 8 Now, fifteen years later, public schools are focusing on the first purpose, preparing students for further education and employment. Sadly, the second purpose, preparing students for citizenship, is being lost amid the emphasis on the first.

- 9 Civic education has been the traditional means of teaching students about democracy. Students learn about the role of government in American society, what good citizenship means, which skills are needed to be good citizens, and how to promote tolerance and respect for others.
- 10 But civic learning has been increasingly pushed aside, according to the Center for Civic Education (CCE). Until the 1960s, according to a paper by the Center's John Hale and Mark Molli, three civics and government courses were common in American high schools. Two of them ("Civics" and "Problems of Democracy") explored the role of citizens and encouraged students to discuss current issues. Today those courses are very rare, as is "professional development" in civics instruction for teachers. In New Jersey, for example, only 39 percent of districts had a required course in civic education, and just 35 percent of districts offered in-service training opportunities for teachers in civic learning. In Arizona, 53 percent of public school teachers had never been given in-service professional development in civic learning.
- 11 What remains is a course on "American Government" that usually spends little time on how people can, and why they should, participate as citizens. This course is usually offered in twelfth grade—too little, too late, especially for the large number of students who drop out before their senior year and may benefit the most from understanding their rights and responsibilities as citizens.
- 12 In the elementary grades, CCE notes in the same paper, civic learning used to be woven throughout the curriculum. In 2010, less than half of 4th grade teachers reported emphasizing key topics of civic education to a moderate or large extent, according to the most recent NAEP civics assessment. Not surprisingly, only 27 percent of 4th graders, 22 percent of 8th graders, and 24 percent of 12th graders performed at or above the "proficient" level on the 2010 NAEP civics assessment. Only 52 percent of 4th graders could correctly identify the main idea in a summary of the introduction to the Declaration of Independence.
- 13 The large influx of immigrants, including many from countries that are not fully or even partly democratic, creates a special urgency for civic education. The terrorist attack at the Boston Marathon by two immigrant youths reminds us of the challenges involved in instilling democratic values and tolerance among immigrants from every part of the globe.
- 14 In June 2013, the CCE will release a new civic education curriculum that takes advantage of interactive technology while still being well-grounded in

content. Chuck Quigley, executive director of the Center, drew on his decades of experience to update the teaching in this area.

- 15 Thus, the public endorses fostering citizenship as a basic purpose of public education, assessments document the need for civic education, and the teaching material is available. Yet schools are not placing a high value on this subject. The goal of strengthening our nation's economic competitiveness by improving math, science, and language arts education has overshadowed the need to teach children the values fundamental to preserving democracy.
- 16 Politicians and elected officials ought to understand the importance of civic education more than anyone, but most stand by silently as civic education is downgraded. That is not the case with other disciplines. Professionals whose jobs involve math and science advocate for more time in the school day for their specialties, but people who have devoted their careers to government and politics are generally not vocal in advocating for civic education.
- 17 We all must remind ourselves that students need to be taught what it means to make a democracy work. Otherwise, we imperil the very existence of our democratic society.

ACTIVITY 6

Read the essay critically for its ideas and discuss the following questions in pairs.

1. According to Jack Jennings, what is the “neglected purpose” in American public education? Is it also a neglected purpose in Chinese education?
2. Why is civic education important? What can students learn from it?
3. According to Jennings, American public schools are not placing a high value on civic education. Why is this the case?
4. What are the politicians and elected officials' attitudes toward this alleged missing mission of public education? Does the same thing happen in the Chinese context?
5. Compare Essays 1 and 2 and comment in what way they are similar to or different from each other concerning the purpose of education.

ACTIVITY 7

Read the essay, critically considering its writing techniques, and discuss the following questions in groups of three or four.

1. What is Jennings' claim about American public education? What assumptions might he be working from when making this claim?
2. How does Jennings argue for the claim in general? Is the argumentation effective and convincing?
3. Jennings reports in details how the conclusions about the basic mission of public education have emerged from different citizens' forums. What is his purpose in doing this? In what way is it related to his making the claim?
4. What evidence does Jennings use to support his argument that "civic learning has been increasingly pushed aside" (Para. 10)? Is the evidence logically relevant and strong? If not, what do you think Jennings could do to improve his argument?
5. Another argument Jennings makes is that most politicians and elected officials "stand by silently as civic education is downgraded." (Para. 16) Is this argument well supported? If not, what do you think should be done to strengthen it?

Part IV Language Study

Effective Language

Language is considered a resource in argumentation—arguments are cast in language and language is an intrinsic aspect of arguments, not something that is added simply for ornament. To write effectively, it is not enough to have well organized ideas in complete and coherent sentences and paragraphs. We must also think about the style, tone and clarity of our writing, and adapt these elements to the readers. Arguers make choices about language at three levels: word, sentence and discourse, which all serve as a strategic resource for conveying meaning as intended. Sometimes a sentence is hard to understand because of a problem with the syntax, or at the sentence level. But very often problems with clarity of language are a matter of **word choice** (or **diction**).

Choosing words that capture our meaning and convey that meaning to the readers is, thus, important yet challenging. When used effectively, word choice can help make writing clear, concise and compelling. Effective word choice means that the words

chosen must be appropriate to the intended message. Let's consider the following examples and see what the problems might be:

- Martin is addicted to biting his fingernails.
- Martin has the habit of biting his fingernails.

The first sentence is an example of the misuse of the denotative word “addicted” followed by the correct usage “habit” in the second sentence. Words have both denotations (literal meanings, or “dictionary definitions”) and connotations (suggestive meanings). The example below tells us more about the differences between denotation and connotation.

- You may live in a house, but we live in a home.

“House” and “home” are common, simple single words. If we were to look them up in a dictionary, we would find that both have the same meaning, “a dwelling place.” But the sentence above suggests that “home” has an additional meaning that “house” does not have. Apart from the strict dictionary definition (or denotation), we also associate such things as comfort, love, security, and privacy with “home” but do not necessarily make the same associations with “house.” The various feelings, images, and memories that surround a word make up its connotations. Connotations can be both negative and positive. Consider the following example:

- There are over 2,000 vagrants in the city.
- There are over 2,000 people with no fixed address in the city.
- There are over 2,000 homeless people in the city.

All three of these expressions refer to exactly the same group of people, but they invoke different associations in readers' minds: a “vagrant” is a public nuisance while a “homeless” person is one worthy of pity and charity. The dry expression “with no fixed address” is deliberately used to avoid most of the positive or negative associations of the other two expressions. For now, we need to know that the relationship between words and meanings is extremely complicated and a primary source of misunderstanding often lies in incorrect word choice, especially instances involving differences between denotation and connotation.

Other common problems with clarity of language include **awkwardness**, **vagueness** and/or **ambiguity**. Consider the following examples:

Example 1: The dialectical interface between neo-Platonists and anti-disestablishment Catholics offers an algorithm for deontological thought.

Revision: The dialogue between neo-Platonists and certain Catholic thinkers is a model for deontological thought.

Problem: Use of jargon or technical terms that make the readers' work unnecessarily difficult. Sometimes we need to use these words because they are important terms in our field, but we shouldn't throw them around just to "sound smart" as doing so often results in awkward language use.

Example 2: My cousin Jake hugged my brother Trey even though he didn't like him very much.

Revision: My cousin Jake hugged my brother Trey even though Jake doesn't like Trey very much.

Problem: Use of a pronoun when readers cannot tell whom/what it refers to. This is an ambiguous use of language.

Example 3: Society teaches young girls that beauty is their most important quality. In order to prevent eating disorders and other health problems, we must change society.

Revision: Contemporary American popular media, like magazines and movies, teach young girls that beauty is their most important quality. In order to prevent eating disorders and other health problems, we must change the images and role models girls are offered.

Problem: Use of loaded language. Sometimes, as writers, we know what we mean by a certain word (e.g., "society"), but we do not spell it out for readers. We use the word often, but without clarifying what we are talking about. This is often the source of vagueness and/or ambiguity in language use and it hampers understanding.

Another two problems are **wordiness** and the **overuse of slang and cliché**. Wordiness refers to a situation in which instead of choosing exactly the right word to express an idea concisely, a writer is verbose, using too many imprecise words. Examine the following examples and see if this might be a problem with our writing:

(absolutely) essential	(currently) underway	(generally) tend to	past (experience)
(already) existing	(definitely) proved	(long) been forgotten	period (of time)
(alternative) choices	empty (void)	mix (together)	simply (speaking)
at (the) present (time)	(end) result	(model) simulation	smaller (in size)
(basic) fundamentals	(fellow) colleague	never (before)	(time) evolution
(completely) eliminate	fewer (in number)	none (at all)	the (color) white
(completely) false	first (began)	(very) unique	variety of (different)
(continue to) remain	(general) overview	(overall) summary	

Note: Wordy words or expressions are listed in bold.

Clichés are catchy phrases so frequently used that they have become trite and annoying. They are problematic because their overuse has diminished their impact and because they require several words where often one would do. This is especially true in argumentative writing where concision and clarity are particularly valued. The way to avoid clichés is first to recognize them and then to create shorter, fresher equivalents. Look at the following paragraph and point out any clichés in it:

John Doe had been sleeping like the dead when his alarm clock screamed like a banshee at him. It was 1:36 p.m., and John had planned to be up bright and early that morning. His eyelids were as heavy as lead as he wracked his brain for excuses. It had been the mother of all lost weekends. Now he had to pay the piper—he'd missed Core again, and the hand of doom was heavy upon his grade in the class.

We can immediately see that some expressions in the paragraph are very familiar: “sleeping like the dead,” “screamed like a banshee,” “bright and early,” “as heavy as lead,” “pay the piper,” etc. Frequently used, sometimes overused, these phrases are now worn-out language. They are typical clichés.

We can next ask if there is one word that means the same thing as the cliché(s) we have identified in these paragraphs. If not, can we use two or three words to express the idea?

To sum up, to be concise and precise, avoiding ambiguity and overuse of clichés, does not mean that argumentative prose has to be boring. On the contrary, effective word choice will help make argumentation more compelling and appealing. In order to write effectively, the writer must consider the objective of his/her essay, the context in which it is being written, and who will be reading it. This is not only a rule of thumb (a cliché, by the way) in argumentative writing but also for other types of writing.

ACTIVITY 8

In the following sentences, replace the slang or cliché with the selection more appropriate for formal writing by ticking the box that precedes your answer.

- My mother *freaked out* when she saw the phone bill.
 bugged out got very upset
- The book was so *wicked cool*. I'd recommend it to anyone.
 entertaining awesome
- Lisa was really *messed up* and started drinking heavily.
 screwed up having a hard time
- Even when *I've got homework coming out of my ears*, I'm still glad to be a student.
 I've got more homework than I'll ever finish.
 I'm up to my eyeballs in homework.
- As foster parents, we got more than we *bargained for*.
 were out of our league were overcome with unexpected responsibilities

ACTIVITY 9

Read the following paragraphs individually or in pairs, paying particular attention to the italicized expressions. All of these expressions would be too imprecise for use in some contexts; determine which are too imprecise in this context.

In view of what can happen in 12 months to the fertilizer you apply *at any one time*, you can see why just one annual application may not be adequate. Here is a guide to timing the feeding of some of *the more common types* of garden flowers.

Feed begonias and fuchsias *frequently* with label-recommended amounts or *less frequently* with *no more than* half the recommended amount. Feed roses with label-recommended amounts as *a new year's growth begins* and as *each bloom period ends*. Feed azaleas, camellias, rhododendrons, and *similar plants immediately after* bloom and again when the nights begin cooling off. Following these simple instructions can help your flower garden to be as attractive as it can be.

Writing Assignment 2

Write the final draft of your essay based on the feedback you received from peer evaluation and your instructor, and be prepared to submit it. The final draft may be your second, third or even fourth or fifth draft for some of you. Work on the drafts using the following checklist.

Checklist

Mark the question with a check (✓) if your answer is yes.

- Have I made a good claim?
- Is it controversial and debatable?
- Is it specific enough to be argued for or against?
- Did I make efforts to evaluate it before I started to write the essay?
- Did I read extensively about the issue I explore in the essay?
- Is my language sufficiently concise and precise?
- Am I sure what each word I have used really means?
- Have I used language effectively?

Reflective Journal

Please write down your reflections upon what you have/have not yet learned in this unit:

- ▶ Issues I have investigated

- ▶ Writing knowledge and skills I have acquired and developed

- ▶ Critical thinking and intercultural competence I have cultivated

- ▶ Language I have studied

- ▶ Anything I wish to explore further (i.e., puzzles and difficulties)
