

CHAPTER 2

Pinning Down Argument Structure

In this chapter, many diagrams have been included, since they are often helpful in providing a sense of the flow in argument - the fact that one is supposed to move from the premises to the conclusion. Students are not asked to draw these diagrams in exercises, because many passages contain subtle ambiguities and diagramming can raise controversies and difficulties that might pose discouraging obstacles at this stage.

The fundamental ideas in this chapter are:

- (1) Before evaluating an argument, we have to understand it.
- (2) Standardizing arguments, representing their premises and conclusions in clear language and structured order, is fundamentally important for understanding them.
- (4) Discourse that includes argument may also include material that is not part of the argument.
- (3) Arguments may contain subarguments.
- (4) Arguments may contain unstated premises and conclusions.
- (5) Visual images may be accompanied by arguments (especially in a format that includes words, such as the cartoon), but a picture *by itself* does not constitute an argument.

Difficulties may include:

- (1) A tendency to push ahead and make evaluational comments without restricting oneself to the task of identifying and stating the premises and conclusion;
- (2) A tendency to add missing premises liberally and shift from understanding an argument to creating a different argument, fixing the original thing up so as to suit one's own tastes. Students should be reminded that charity does not extend this far, and that they are asked to understand and represent an argument presented to them and not, at this point, asked to replace the presented argument with one they have invented;
- (3) A tendency to add missing conclusions liberally and turn everything into an argument, even when the original context and wording provide no good reason for doing so;
- (4) Impatience with the fussiness of standardization;
- (5) Difficulty in understanding the nature of, and details of, rhetorical flourishes - particularly for those for whom English is a second language. Conclusions may be expressed in rhetorical questions, commands, or even exclamations when these, in context, can be interpreted as making statements.

Suggestions for livening up this material:

- (1) Have students bring material from a newspaper or magazine, or another course they are taking;
- (2) Have students bring cartoons or ads with visual material and discuss whether, and why, it might be reasonable to read in conclusions or premises.
- (3) Do role plays to appreciate the pragmatic significance between scope qualification and hedging with regard to degrees of certainty.

Chapter 2, Exercise 1

1. Answer in text.
2. This passage does not contain an argument. It begins with a comment that everyone knows the U.S. is having an election (in 2008); the author proceeds to state three things that he thinks Europe should focus on. He does not offer reasons for his statement that these three things are jobs, Muslims, and neighbors.
3. Answer in text.
4. This passage does contain an argument. The conclusion is in the last sentence and is indicated by the word “therefore.” The other three sentences are premises.
5. Answer in text.
6. This passage does not contain an argument. It amounts to an expression of thanks publicly stated by the Spirit of Sport Foundation.
7. This passage contains both an argument and a subargument.
 - (1) The butler was passionately in love with the victim.
Thus,
 - (2) It was not the butler who committed the murder.
 - (3) Either the butler committed the murder or the judge committed the murder.
Therefore,
 - (4) The judge committed the murder.

The subargument goes from (1) to (2), and the main argument goes from (2) and (3) to (4). Note again: identifying the structure does not imply saying that this is a good argument.
8. Answer in text.
9. Answer in text.
10. Answer in text.
11. Hard example. Reassure students if they have difficulty. It is fairly easy to see that this passage does state an argument. The conclusion is that terrorism puts civil society in a difficult bind. The difficulty of the passage results from the fact that the premises are slightly difficult to extract. They are (1) ‘Since the modern terrorist cannot be deterred..., civil society’s war on terror must at times resort to invasions of privacy and...’ <interpreted as statement of explanation which is a premise in an argument, and not an argument in its own right> ; (2) invasions of privacy and uses of preemptive and excessive force cause intimidation and undermine trust; and (3) terrorism also causes intimidation and undermines trust.
12. This passage contains an argument.
 - (1) We are not under an obligation to give aid unless it is likely to be effective in reducing starvation or malnutrition.
Therefore,
 - (2) We are not under an obligation to give aid to countries that make no effort to reduce the rate of population growth that will lead to catastrophe.
13. Answer in text.
14. This passage contains an argument.
 - (1) The individual who robs a bank gets a lot of money.

(2) The individual who robs a bank benefits society by putting large amounts of cash back into circulation.

(3) Bank robberies stimulate the economy.

(4) Small businessmen prosper as a result of bank robberies.

(5) People can read about bank robberies with great interest.

(6) The police have a chance to exercise their skills when bank robberies are committed.

So,

(7) Bank robberies are good for all.

Thus,

(8) Of the varied forms of crime, bank robbery is the most satisfactory to both the individual and society.

15. Answer in text.

16. This passage contains an argument. Standardization:

(1) No one who uses a relatively unreliable procedure in order to decide whether to punish can know whether that other person deserves punishment.

(2) No one who cannot know whether another person deserves punishment has a right to punish that person.

Therefore,

(3) No one who uses a relatively unreliable procedure in order to decide whether to punish another person has a right to punish that person.

17. This passage does not contain an argument; it offers observations on the role of observations in obtaining a good diagnosis.

Chapter 2, Exercise 2

1. Standardization:

(1) English is the language of world business and world scholarship.

(2) English is the most important language a person can learn to speak and write fluently.

Therefore

(3) There is no point in getting your first elementary education in some other language if your native language is English.

Convergent support pattern. Emphasize to students that identifying this argument does not mean that one agrees with the conclusion.

2. Answer in text.

3. Standardization:

(1) Virtue is something that is valued because of the kinds of comparisons we make between people.

Therefore,

(2) If all people shared good qualities equally, there would be no such thing as virtue.

There is one premise and one conclusion. The support pattern is, by default, linear.

4. Answer in text.

5. Standardization:

(1) Scientific theories and calculations based on the hypothesis that electrons exist explain many things that happen in our world.

Therefore

(2) Electrons must exist.

Since there is one premise and one conclusion, the support pattern is, by default, linear.

6. Here the argument contains a subargument:

(1) Language is necessary for communication.

(2) Communication is necessary for the advancement of our civilization.

Therefore

(3) Language is necessary for the advancement of our civilization.

(4) Any attempt to censor language will restrict the advancement of our civilization.

Therefore,

(5) The censorship of written materials is always wrong.

In the subargument, (1) and (2) link to support (3). In the main argument (3) and (4) link to support (5). Again, it might be wise to emphasize that identifying this content and structure does not mean that we agree with the conclusion of the argument.

7. Answer in text.

8. Standardization:

(1) Stagnation is death.

Therefore,

(2) There can be no life without change.

Note that the conclusion is expressed in a rhetorical question. Support pattern must be linear, since there is only one premise. Difficult.

9. Standardization:

(1) Descartes influenced Pascal.

(2) Pascal influenced Sartre.

Therefore,

(3) Descartes influenced Sartre.

The support pattern is linked.

10. Answer in text.

11. Answer in text.

Chapter 2, Exercise 3

1. The invited conclusion is that the global climate is getting warmer. The premises are

(1) if the global climate is getting warmer winters on the Canadian prairie should be less severe and (2) winters on the Canadian prairie are (by implication) less severe. Note: if taken as deductive, this argument would commit the fallacy of affirming the consequent; however that fact does not establish that this isn't the argument given that, after all, people do sometimes argue in fallacious ways. One can, in any event, interpret the argument as an inductive argument of the inference-to-the-best-explanation type. Particularly sharp students might ask about such things. Note, however, that we are not yet evaluating arguments; we are only identifying them and seeking to understand their content and structure.

2. Answer in text.

3. Answer in text.

4. The main conclusion is that mad cow disease is very serious. A premise is (1) mad cow disease spreads because of a certain form of protein that is not destroyed by disinfecting efforts, and this premise establishes a subconclusion, (2) that we cannot control the way mad cow disease spreads. The argument is (1) therefore (2) therefore (3), in a linear support pattern.

5. Answer in text.

6. Answer in text.

7. The conclusion is that the way to cut the crime rate among youth is to give them some meaningful activities to do. The premises are the other two statements. They link to support the conclusion. The missing premise is that if young people are given meaningful activities to do, they will not be bored.

8. Answer in text.

9. The conclusion is that photographs are not a reliable guide to what reality was like in the past. The second and third sentences are best understood as illustrative material. The premises are in the first sentence. They are (1) Photographs can be altered and (2) The techniques for altering photographs are increasingly sophisticated due to the use of computers. Alternate interpretation: The illustrative material could be understood as providing a sub-argument for (1) here.

10. Answer in text.

Chapter 2, Exercise 4

1. Answer in text.

2. There is an unstated conclusion to the effect that you should give the woman you love glorious jewels. The premise is that glorious jewels like these have delighted beautiful women for more than a century. (Clearly, this passage copies the style of an advertisement.)

3. Answer in text.

4. Answer in text.

5. Answer in text.

6. There is an argument. The premise is that group performance in problem solving is superior to even the individual work of the most expert group members. The conclusion is that students learn better when they cooperate. There is no unstated conclusion. There does seem to be an unstated premise to the effect that students *learn* when they are working together to achieve a superior result.

7. Answer in text.

8. Answer in text.

9. The visual materials are described because they help to understand what the advertisers are trying to establish here. The conclusion is that (5) nuclear processes are safe and should continue to play an important role in the future of American energy. The stated premises are (1) that nuclear power does not emit greenhouse gases; (2) that irradiation of foods eliminates harmful microbes; (3) that nuclear technology helps in various activities ranging from medicine to space exploration; and (4) that nuclear power plants help keep the air clean. All these points are stated, not implicit. The visual material is intended to convey an association between nuclear power and natural health. (Note: Argumentative appeals to 'the natural' are discussed at the end of Chapter 3.)

10. The conclusion is the first sentence. The premise is the second sentence. The missing premise is that restricting admission to a golf competition is an example of discrimination.

11. The conclusion is that women's ski jumping should be accepted as an event in the Olympics. This conclusion is not quite stated explicitly; it can be drawn from the rhetorical question in the second sentence, and from the first sentence. There are three premises and these are offered in a convergent support pattern. (1) Women's ski jumping has been recognized for a long time. (2) There are competitions in women's ski jumping in many different countries. (3) There are some pretty expert women ski jumpers who are thrilling to watch. Note that premises in the standardized argument should be complete as to information content; thus in (1) we don't say "this sport", but rather we fill in which sport.

Chapter 2, Exercise 5

1. Answer in text.

2. Standardization:

(1) High blood pressure is a real health hazard.

(2) Being overweight is likely to cause high blood pressure (missing premise)

Therefore,

(3) Anyone who is overweight should get to work and reduce.

3. Standardization:

(1) Any busy person is at risk of illnesses caused by stress.

(2) All mothers are busy persons, (missing premise)

So,

(3) All mothers are at risk of illnesses caused by stress.

4. Answer in text.

5. Standardization:

(1) If people were truly unselfish, they would give as much to worthy charities as they save for old age.

(2) People do not give as much to worthy charities as they save for their old age. (missing premise, indicated by the rhetorical question, "do they?" which invites a negative answer) Therefore,

(3) People are not truly unselfish, (missing conclusion, indicated by the exclamatory phrase at the end of the passage)

6. Answer in text.

7. Answer in text.

8. Standardization:

(1) We all hope to grow old some day; (2) When we grow old we will need the services of retailers, manufacturers, politicians, dentists, doctors, nurses, and many other personnel; (3) These people will provide us with what we need; (4) These people will help to care for us; (5) Only a few of these people will be our own children; so, (6) The rest of these people will be other people's children; therefore, (7) We all have a personal stake in educating other people's children. (5) supports (6) in a subargument. The last sentence is taken to express (7) in slightly different words. Premises (1), (2), (3), (4), and (6) link to support (7).

9. Answer in text.

10. Answer in text.

11. This passage does not contain an argument. It describes the attitudes and practices of the Taliban and offers an explanation of their harsh measures against women.

12. Answer in text.

13. The conclusion is implied by the rhetorical question at the end. It is (3) Kelsey would not likely go out with the speaker. The stated premises are (1) if Kelsey is highly intelligent she would only go out with highly intelligent guys and (2) the speaker is not a highly intelligent guy. An unstated premise, which we will call (4), is that Kelsey is highly intelligent.

14. Answer in text.

15. The stated premise is that Kelsey is a librarian. The stated conclusion is that Kelsey is highly intelligent. The missing premise is that all librarians are highly intelligent.

16. This passage does not contain an argument. The "since" in the opening sentence is better interpreted as explanatory; the words "it is hardly surprising that" indicate that this phenomenon is being explained.