UGRC 150
CRITICAL THINKING & PRACTICAL REASONING

Session 5 – CONTRASTING TYPES OF DISCOURSE

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• Individuals engage in a discourse use language, very often with the intention of being understood. Yet, this sometimes ends up in disputes and difficulties in understanding caused by different factors. This session introduces students to these factors and how to avoid them.

• **Goals and Objectives**
  
  At the end of the session, the student will understand

1. types of dispute.
2. the difference and relation between metaphors and proverbs
3. linguistic vices such as vagueness and equivocation, and how to avoid them.
4. the types of discourse revealed in passages.
The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

• Topic One: *TYPES OF DISPUTES*
  
  a. verbal disputes
  
  b. substantive disputes

• Topic Two: *METAPHORS AND PROVERBS*

• Topic Three: *COMMON LINGUISTIC VICES*

• Topic Four: *TYPES OF DISCOURSE REVEALED IN PASSAGES.*
Reading List

- Log onto the UG Sakai LMS course site: http://sakai.ug.edu.gh/xxxxxxxxxx
- Read Unit 3 of Recommended Text – pages 34-56
- Watch the Videos for session 5- Contrasting Types of Discourse.
- Visit the Chat Room and discuss the Forum question for session 5
Topic One

TYPES OF DISPUTE
A dispute may be defined as a disagreement or a controversy or difference of opinion between two or more people. Or Basically an argument between two or more people.

For instance, if I say my grand mother was a good woman and you say she was a horrible woman then we can say there is a dispute in opinion about my grand mother.

However, we will be looking at these two types of dispute.

1. Verbal disputes
2. Substantive disputes
Verbal Disputes

• A **verbal dispute** is a disagreement which occurs as a **result of difference in opinion about the meaning of a word and the dispute can be resolved easily when the meaning is clarified**. That is, when two parties to dispute are interpreting a particular word differently and that is what causes them to disagree with each other.

• **Examples:**

1. *kpanlogo* is a traditional folkloric dance that our Ga ancestors used to dance only at funerals for hundreds of years.

   **NO!** Kpanlogo is a neo-traditional popular dance that the dance-band Otoo Lincoln and his group created in Bukom Square, Accra, around 1962. He relied on the old funeral dirges to build up a versatile form of popular dance which suits every occasion nowadays, including funerals. This is a verbal dispute because the dance “kpanlogo” is what is causing them to disagree.
2. Kwame has new laptop. No, he does not, his brother gave him his old computer when he upgraded, and that computer is at least five years old. So does kwame have a “new” laptop? This depends on how one defines “new”. So this is also a verbal dispute.

• Verbal disputes can be dissolved by means of a stipulative definition where the parties to the dispute finally settle on a common usage or meaning of the word causing them to disagree in the first place.
On the other hand if the disagreement or dispute is about the expression of different opinions about facts or subscription to contrasting values then the dispute in question is considered as a substantive dispute.

Example:

1. The US army personnel are helping Iraqi citizens because their presence maintains a peaceful and secure environment. No, these US soldiers are imposing martial law and have orders to target civilians so they pose a threat to Iraqi citizens. This is a substantive dispute since the only way we can know who is telling the truth is to check the facts on the ground.
• **NB.** *When a dispute still exists after clarifying the ambiguity in the usage of a word between two parties then that dispute is a substantive dispute but if the dispute dissolves then it is a verbal dispute.*
Topic Two

METAPHORS AND PROVERBS
Metaphors and proverbs involve vague use of language that carries many associations. They are the type of sentences that can carry more than one meaning simultaneously and which also have different functions, depending on the circumstances.

**METAPHORS:** A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is used to describe an object or action with which it does not normally have an association in order to imply a connection.

**PROVERBS:** They are phrases that embody some advice or commonly believed fact. They can also be referred to as axioms, truisms, cliché, and adages.
Examples of metaphors and proverbs are:

1. Time is money. (metaphor)
2. Juliet is the apple of my eye. (metaphor)
3. Life is war. (metaphor)
4. Birds of a feather flock together. (proverb)
5. When a palm-branch reaches its height, it gives way for a fresh one to grow. (proverb)

Understanding metaphors and proverbs depends so much upon the situation and mood and reception and background knowledge or preparedness of listeners to appreciate and interpret the multiplicity of the meaning of metaphors and proverbs. Individuals can read their own meanings into metaphors and proverbs.
• Thus metaphors and proverbs cannot be **relied upon to convey a single objective meaning.** They are useful in inspiring, motivating and advising and to speak on topics that are socially powerful and highly charged.

• **NB. To be very clear and straight forward in conveying information it is usually best to avoid metaphorical and proverbial expressions. This is because their interpretations are open-ended and indecisive.**

• **For instance,** referring to kwame as a lion, he might interpret it to mean that he is an animal and for that matter lives in the forest when you intend to mean that he is brave or courageous.
Topic Three

COMMON LINGUISTIC VICES
Linguistic vices refer to the bad ways in which we sometimes explain our thoughts.

When we convey information to other people we make certain errors that distort the effectiveness of the communication such that others misinterpret or misunderstand the information conveyed. The goal of declarative speech is to be explicit and clear as possible in describing, prescribing, generalizing and predicting the states of affairs in the world.

The vices we are looking at are:

- Vagueness, Ambiguity, and Equivocation.
Vagueness

• When the *component words of a statement has not been carefully considered* such that *more information need to be conveyed to tell exactly what in the world the word refers to* then that statement is said to be *vague*.

• Example:

1. *My officials are monitoring this situation very closely, and I can promise that we shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the situation is resolved in a way that is fair to all the parties involved.* What are “appropriate measures”? They could be anything or nothing. What does “fair to all the parties” mean? We have no clear idea. They could mean anything.

• *NB. The point is to be more precise and specific.*
Ambiguity

• When a word or phrase or statement *conveys more than one meaning* then we say that expression is **ambiguous**.

• **Examples:**

  1. *I rode a black horse in red pajamas*. This could mean either the black horse was in red pajamas when you rode it but you intend to mean you were in a red pajamas when you rode the black horse

  2. *John took off his trousers by the bank*. Did he do that by a building(financial institution) or by the edge of a river?

  3. *The passerby helps dog bite victim*. Is the passerby helping a dog bite someone? Or is he helping a person bitten by a dog? It’s not clear.
Equivocation

• *When a word is used more than once in the same context without any signal of the shift in connotation with the intention to manipulate or persuade* then we say there is an error of *equivocation*. When the same word is used with two different meanings.

• **Examples:**

1. I don't see how you can say you are an *ethical* person. It is so hard to get you to do anything; your work *ethic* is so bad.

2. Sure philosophy helps you *argue* better, but do we really need to encourage people to *argue*? There's enough hostility in this world.
Topic Four

TYPES OF DISCOURSE REVEALED IN PASSAGES.

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A **discourse** is a unit of connected speeches or writings longer than a sentence in the form of a passage either to convey an argument, narrate an event, or give a set of instructions or to express a verbal – self assertions using rhetoric or polemic.

The types of discourse revealed in passages are:

- Narrative
- Instruction
- Rhetorical polemic
- Argument
Narratives

• This is a passage which reports a sequence of events in order of their occurrence. The sentences are ordered according to time.

• Example:

1. I was about five years old when my sister informed me that I was too old to still be riding a bike with training wheels. That was the time I decided not to depend on them anymore. Even though I had some doubt, my sister and I went outside and started to take the little wheels off my bike. After my bike went through the transformation, I was now ready for the big moment. With butterflies in my stomach, I slowly got on the bike, and with my shaky hands, I gripped the handles tightly. Meanwhile my sister was holding on to me to help keep my balance. I was so afraid that she would let go, yet I was determined to ride this bike on my own. Next with a little push from her, I started to peddle. The faster my bike went the faster my heart raced. Finally I looked back nervously and noticed that my sister let go of my bike a long time ago. I was so excited that I accomplished freedom on my bike that I forgot to peddle. The next step I remember, I was lying on the ground, yet I did not care because of the adrenaline rush. I will never forget the exhilarating moment and growing up stage of riding a bike without training wheels.

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Instruction

• This is a passage that gives **description or sequence of things to do in a specified order; it might also provide a list of directives to follow to accomplish some desired effect, like a prescription.**

• Example.

  1. If you are from Legon campus and you want to go to Madina, get to the Okponglo junction and wait for any of the commercial buses. Listen carefully to any of the bus conductors that mentions Madina. Get onboard one of the buses. As you sit down, you make your **1 Ghana cedi** ready to be given to the conductor of the commercial bus and you tell him/her that you will get down at Madina.
Rhetorical Polemic

• This is a passage that communicates (usually strong) feeling or persuasively vents an opinion.

• Examples:
  1. The politicians want vote. You can see they are corrupt. So don't trust any politician.
  2. I hate running these lab tests. Every time I am exposed the diseased plants I fall ill.
  3. What does the ECG think it is doing with the poor service of power supply. I wont pay any electricity bill again and let us see who will dare to take me to court.
Argument

• An **argument** is a passage that is made up of **statements** typically used to **persuade someone of something or to present reasons for accepting a conclusion**. It has two parts the **premises** and the **conclusion**.

• **PREMISES:** is a statement in an argument that provide reason or support for the conclusion. There can be one or many premises in a single argument.

• **CONCLUSION:** is a statement in an argument that indicates of what the arguer is trying to convince the reader/listener to accept. There can be only one conclusion in a single argument.
Indicators of premises and conclusion of an argument.

- The following will guide you to identify statements which are premises and those which are conclusions.
- **PREMISES**: Because, in light of, since, given that, provided etc.
- **CONCLUSION**: Hence, therefore, consequently, so, as a result, thus, then, we can conclude that etc.

**NB:** These indicators will lead you to be able to identify the statements which are premises or conclusion. However take caution of the fact that it is not always the case that when any of the indicators appear in a passage that the passage becomes an argument.
Examples of Argument

• Jesse is one year old. Most one-year-olds can walk. It follows that Jesse can walk.
• Since the housing market is depressed and interest rates are low, it's a good time to buy a home.
• China is guilty of extreme human rights abuses. Further, they refuse to implement democratic reforms. Thus, the U.S. should refuse to deal with the present Chinese government.
• When the accident occurred there were no witnesses. Without witnesses you cannot claim insurance. Without insurance you have to pay for repairs yourself. So I will have to pay for repairs myself.
• Task identify the conclusion in the above arguments.