Comparative Advantage Speaking

Inquire: This or That?

Overview

Every day, we convince someone that one option is better than another, or that they should do this thing instead of that. Maybe this happens when deciding where to eat, or what school to attend, or job to apply for. These are all types of comparative advantage speaking. This lesson will teach you what comparative advantage speaking is, and how to compare sources, warrants, and impacts.

Big Question: How do you decide something is better than something else?

Watch: A Presentation Comes Together

In this lesson, you will learn how to make a comparative advantage presentation. A comparative advantage speech compares two sides of an issue to determine the best option. Because arguments consist of a claim, warrants, and impacts, it is important to pay close attention to how you are developing your argument.

Let's watch as Wendy does this now.

First, Wendy knows she needs to come up with a topic. She decides to talk about self-driving cars. She realizes this can be a large topic, and that she should narrow it down. She also needs to choose a side of the issue to represent. She asks herself why self-driving cars are a good thing. As she begins to write, she comes up with a list: less human error, better able to avoid accidents, and more free time during a day. The process of coming up with this list is known as brainstorming.

She takes these three ideas and starts to find research supporting her points. It’s important to understand her side, as well as the other side of the argument. She then organizes these three main points into a full sentence outline. This is the first stage of the practice process, known as organization. Remember, since Wendy is writing a comparative advantage speech, she will need to make sure she is using high quality sources, research methodology from these sources, and the impacts of the argument. When writing her full sentence outline, Wendy double checks all parts of her argument to make sure it is appealing to her audience. She checks that her sources are from a reliable and unbiased resource, her impacts are important to her audience, and that her information is logical and comes from a rigorous research methodology.
Once she has written her full sentence outline, Wendy takes the full sentences and shortens them into one or two word phrases that help her remember her talking points in those parts of the speech. Once she has her presentation outline, she starts to practice her speech.

First, she records herself to get a feel for talking and to hear that everything makes sense. Then, she practices in front of her two friends. She uses their feedback to fine-tune her speech and adjusts her main points to include any feedback she received. After she implements the changes, her friends listen again and say it sounds great! Now, it’s time for Wendy to present. She’s done the work, practiced several times, and she knows that she has a good speech.

Read: Comparative Advantage Speaking

Overview

At the end of this module, you’ll be asked to write and present a comparative advantage speech. This lesson will help guide you through the creation process by teaching you what a comparative advantage speech is, how to compare sources, how to compare warrants, and how to compare impacts.

Comparative Advantage

A comparative advantage speech compares two sides of an issue to determine the best option. Unlike other kinds of persuasive speaking, it isn’t enough to simply convince someone to do something. Instead, you want to make arguments about why one option is better than the other.

Remember, arguments consist of three parts: a claim, warrants, and an impact. For the speech you write, you will want three main points. Each main point should have one claim explaining why your side of an issue is better than the other side. Come up with three reasons in total — one for each main point. Then, find warrants to prove your side is better. Finally, offer an impact that shows why it matters to your audience that they choose your side.

It’s important to note that the information should be a direct comparison. It is not good enough to treat each point like an informative topic and tell us why your side is good. Instead, say, “The other side does A. My side does X. X is better than A for this reason.” For instance, if you were trying to convince your audience that Microsoft is better than Apple, your first main point might deal with profits. Instead of saying that Microsoft makes a lot of money in profit, say they make more than Apple. Provide a source to prove that claim, and then explain why Microsoft making more money makes them better than Apple.

Comparing Sources

When arguing that your side is better than another, there might come a time to look at what evidence they offer, look at your evidence, and explain why yours is better. The first place to start this evidence comparison is by looking at the source the information comes from. There are three things to look at: author qualifications, source bias, and editorial rigor.

Qualifications are the reasons an author should be considered an expert on a topic. If you are discussing the merits of GMO crops and you bring a source that says they cause cancer, that might be a reason GMOs are bad. However, if your source’s qualifications are that she once saw a farm in a movie, and she has a degree in musical theater, she might not be the most qualified person to listen to. On the other hand, a medical doctor that has studied the effects of GMO consumption, or a farmer that has studied the
Impact of GMOs on crop health is probably a good source of information based on their qualifications and training.

Second, look at source bias. Who paid for the information? What agenda is the source pushing? If the journal you reference is funded by Monsanto, it might not be the best place to find unbiased information about GMOs, since Monsanto makes a lot of money selling GMOs. Monsanto has an interest in making sure the only research being published is research that says good things about GMOs. Being able to explain what bias a source has, and being able to explain why it should or should not matter is important to prove your source preferable to another.

Finally, consider editorial rigor. How many sets of eyes looked at an article before it was published? How many people had the opportunity to find out if the information is factual, or if it makes sense? If it’s published in a place that has a peer review system where other subject matter experts review information for factual information, it probably holds up. However, if it’s a blog that only the author edits, it might not be as rigorous or factual as other sources, thus less preferable.

Comparing Warrants

After comparing sources, compare the warrants those sources provide. Remember, a warrant is the support for why an argument is true. It might be a study, a statistic, or an example. One important thing to look at when comparing warrants is the methodology used to create that warrant. A methodology refers to the specific steps taken to conduct research. You should be able to explain how those findings came about. Did they survey people? Did they conduct an experiment? You also want to know how many people were involved. What was the research sample size? If they only asked seven people, that might not be the best warrant to prove something. On the other hand, if they asked 7,000 people, that might be better to prove something is true. Finally, you want to know how recent the research was done. Data from 1980 might not hold up anymore. Knowing how information was found, how many people were studied, and when the study was conducted will help you decide if your warrants hold up compared to the other side.

Comparing Impacts

The final way to compare arguments is to look at the impact. Impacts are why an argument matters to your audience. When comparing impacts, explain why your side matters to the audience, but do so in a way that proves it matters more than the other side. There are three steps to this.

First, explain why it matters. This should be in a general sense, explaining why the issue is important at all. Second, explain why it matters to your audience. This tells your audience why they, specifically, should care about the issue. Also include in this part why it’s more important than the other side. Finally, tell your audience how to decide what’s more important. You might tell them your side saves money. The other side might show they save time. It’s on you to explain to your audience why they should care about saving money more than they care about saving time. Comparing impacts is often the most difficult place to make comparisons, because much of it is personal opinion. But, if you can do it well, it can have a large and long-lasting impact on your audience.

Reflect Poll: The Importance of Comparison

Which comparative element is most persuasive to you?

- source comparison
- warrant comparison
Expand: Start to Finish

Overview
For this module, you will have to produce a comparative advantage presentation about a topic of your choice. This section will walk you through what to do to complete that assignment.

Select a Topic
The first step is to come up with a topic. When brainstorming your topic, come up with ideas that are interesting to you. Remember, this is a comparative advantage speech, so you want to avoid topics such as teaching something or convincing someone to take steps to solve a problem. Instead, choose a topic allowing you to convince an audience that one side of the issue is more correct or preferable than the other side. Keep in mind your time limit, so when coming up with a topic, ask yourself, “Can I talk about all of this in six to eight minutes?” If the answer is no, find ways to trim your topic down to include less information. On the other hand, make sure you have enough information to speak that long.

Outlining
Once you have selected a topic, it’s time to write an outline. This is the first stage of practicing: organization. Organize everything into a preparation outline. Once you have a preparation outline, convert it into a presentation outline. This outline has a few words for each component of the outline, instead of full sentences. You will need to turn in the presentation outline for full credit on the assignment. Your outline should include an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

Practicing
Once you have your outline, it’s time to start practicing! This is stage two and three of the practice process. Make sure to practice in front of audiences who will give feedback on things that can be done better. Friends, classmates, or family make great practice audiences.

Presenting
The last part of the assignment is to present your speech. You’ll record your speech as well, so make sure your device is charged and you speak loudly enough for the device to register your voice. When presenting, be professional and confident. After all your practice, you’re ready to go. You’ve got this! Just take a deep breath, and knock the presentation out of the park!

Lesson Toolbox

Additional Resources and Readings
A video with tips to make writing a speech easier
- Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78p6x_acAtw

An article with topic ideas for help with brainstorming
- Link to resource: https://essayshark.com/blog/good-topics-for-persuasive-speeches/
A video providing tips on how to best practice your presentation
  ● Link to resource: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-dbUrluW0M

Lesson Glossary

**comparative advantage**: a speech comparing two sides of an issue to determine the best option

**qualifications**: the reasons an author should be considered an expert on a topic

**methodology**: the specific steps taken to conduct research

Check Your Knowledge

1. Impact comparison is difficult because much of it is opinion based.
   a. True
   b. False
2. Comparative advantage speaking is a type of informative speaking.
   a. True
   b. False
3. Comparative advantage speeches should explain why your side is better than the other side of your topic.
   a. True
   b. False

Answer Key:
1. A  2. B  3. A

Citations

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