

24 May 2013

2:45pm – 3:30pm

Room A308

Roundtable Title: Counterargumentation and reasoning in academic writing

Presenter: Dr Paul Stapleton, The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Abstract

One of the cornerstones of critical thinking is to have an open mind for alternative viewpoints. Students are often given an opportunity to display this quality when responding to writing prompts in school. However, research studies have shown that at both the secondary and tertiary levels, students usually display a "myside bias." Specifically, they fail to seriously consider alternative viewpoints via counterargumentation and rebuttals. Furthermore, despite attempts to measure the quality of arguments in terms of persuasiveness and absence of inaccuracies and fallacies, no standardized method has appeared. In this roundtable discussion, issues such as how to encourage counterargumentation and enhanced quality of reasoning will be approached.

Questions for discussion:

1. What specific methods can best discourage the myside bias?
2. Is it always good to encourage counterargumentation?
3. Should writing prompts include specific instructions request counterarguments and rebuttals?
4. How can we determine persuasiveness?
5. Are there qualities in the local culture that discourage counterargumentation and critical thinking?

Biodata

Paul Stapleton is an Associate Professor at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. His research interests include academic writing and research methods. His current projects investigate argumentative writing and the composing processes of second language writers.