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Talking about points of view

A Commenting on others' views

No one can be completely **objective**¹ in their point of view. Inevitably, we all see things to some extent **subjectively**². It is impossible to be truly **impartial**³. We tend to be **biased in favour of**⁴ things we're familiar with and **prejudiced against**⁵ things we have little experience of. Of course, everyone believes their own views are totally **rational**⁶.

¹ not influenced by personal beliefs or attitudes, based only on facts ² influenced by personal beliefs or attitudes ³ uninfluenced by personal beliefs or attitudes ⁴ showing an unreasonable liking for something based on personal beliefs or opinions; opposite = **biased against** ⁵ showing an unreasonable dislike for, based on personal beliefs or opinions (stronger and more pejorative than *biased*); opposite = **prejudiced in favour of** ⁶ based only on reason; opposite = **irrational**

People's views tend to change as they grow older and begin looking at life from a different **standpoint**⁷. Young people are more likely to be **radical**⁸ but then become more **reactionary**⁹ or **conservative**¹⁰ with age, considering their younger opinions **immature**¹¹.

⁷ set of principles or beliefs on the basis of which opinions are formed ⁸ believing that there should be extreme political or social change ⁹ (disapproving) opposed to political or social change or new ideas ¹⁰ not inclined to trust change, especially if it is sudden ¹¹ (disapproving) lacking in experience; opposite = **mature**

An **ideology** is a theory or set of beliefs or principles, particularly one on which a political system or organisation is based. It often has slightly negative associations in English, implying something that is rigid and restricting. A **philosophy**, on the other hand, suggests a set of beliefs that is much more thoughtful and serious.

B Word combinations relating to points of view

word combination	example	meaning
to hold views	My grandfather holds some surprisingly progressive views .	has opinions
to adopt/take a stance	It is important that the university should adopt a principled stance towards research.	take a position
to change/shift your position	Luisa was initially totally opposed to the idea but she has slightly shifted her position .	changed her point of view a little
have ethical objections to	Increasing numbers of people have ethical objections to the war.	dislike for reasons relating to morality
the principles underlying	'Treat others as you would like to be treated' is a principle underlying much religious teaching.	basic idea lying behind
to encounter prejudice	As one of the few female students of the 1920s, my grandmother encountered a certain amount of prejudice .	experienced unreasonable negative behaviour
deep-rooted prejudice	John does not share his father's deep-rooted prejudices against women.	strong, unreasonably negative views



You can say **in my opinion** but NOT **in my point of view**. You can say **from (someone's) point of view** but it means *from that person's way of looking at something* rather than *in that person's opinion*. **From the language teacher's point of view**, it's good that all children have to learn a foreign language at school.

Exercises

36.1 Change the words in bold to words which mean the *opposite*.

- 1 The views she expressed were totally **rational**.
- 2 The committee seemed to be biased **against** applications from younger people.
- 3 The book is an **objective** account of life in a small town in the 1920s.
- 4 The club rules were prejudiced **in favour** of children.
- 5 The President's daughter was quite **mature** for her age.
- 6 He has rather **radical** views about marriage.
- 7 Her views on education are rather **radical**. (use a different word from 6)
- 8 Supreme Court judges always act in a **biased** way.

36.2 Use the words in the box in an appropriate form to complete the sentences.

root shift adopt encounter underlie philosophy hold ethical

- 1 The principles of Asian and European are very similar.
- 2 People tend a more conservative stance as they get older.
- 3 She has always the view that primary education should not start before the age of seven.
- 4 Many people have objections to investing in companies which support corrupt regimes.
- 5 Some employers still have a deep-..... prejudice against employing older people, and many older people such prejudice when they apply for jobs.
- 6 The government seems to have its position recently.

36.3 Answer the questions.

- 1 What verb could be used instead of *shifted* in exercise 36.2?
- 2 What verb could be used instead of *adopt* in exercise 36.2?
- 3 Which is incorrect: (a) in my point of view, (b) in my opinion, (c) from my point of view?
- 4 In what way does calling something an ideology make it sound slightly more negative than calling it a philosophy?
- 5 What single noun is formed from the noun *point* and the verb *stand*?

36.4 Vary these sentences by rewriting them using the word in brackets.

- 1 The people of the area have some unusual views about nature. (HOLD)
- 2 Most young people seem not to like the proposals on student fees. (OBJECTIONS)
- 3 Examiners tend to prefer candidates with clear handwriting. (BIASED)
- 4 Girls look at their careers in a different way from their mothers. (STANDPOINT)
- 5 Let us now discuss the principles behind this approach. (UNDERLYING)

36.5 Read this short text and underline any words and phrases connected with points of view, opinions and ideas. Look them up in a dictionary if necessary and note them in your vocabulary book.



Academics have traditionally taken the view that their discipline is intellectually independent from all others. However, inter-disciplinary degrees are becoming more and more common, suggesting that preconceptions about what and how one should study may be somewhat misplaced. A more liberal view of education would advocate greater freedom to explore the links between different fields of learning, thus pushing the frontiers of knowledge in new and exciting directions. Many academics now feel that the future lies in this blending of ideas and the cross-fertilisation of thought which emerges from it.

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Degrees of certainty

This unit looks at the ways writers express how certain they are about the facts or opinions they are presenting. This unit deals with some vocabulary which will help you to handle certainty in academic writing appropriately.

A Being tentative

It is a common mistake for students to present something as a proven fact when it is actually an opinion. In a serious piece of academic writing you should not, for example, write *Girls are better at learning languages than boys*; you could write, instead, *There is some evidence to suggest that girls may be better at learning languages than boys* or *It can be argued that girls are better at learning languages than boys*.

Here are some other expressions that are useful when presenting ideas that may be true but are not proven facts.

It may not be the case that girls are naturally better at foreign languages.

It would seem/appear that girls are more interested in languages than boys.

We can presume that all humans have the ability to learn a second language. [believe something to be true because it seems very likely]

There appears/seems to be some evidence linking diet with language ability.

There is some evidence that previous studies are unreliable.

We can draw the **tentative** conclusion that early language skills determine how successful a child will be at school. [possible, not yet certain]

B It is true or almost certainly true

It is **undoubtedly** true that language ability is not simply a matter of intelligence. [without doubt, certainly]

It is, **of course**, essential to check data carefully. [shows the writer sees this as obvious]

It is **evident** that girls and boys develop at slightly different rates. [obvious, clear]

The best age for language learning is, **apparently**, the teenage years.

Pronunciation of unfamiliar sounds **presumably** comes more easily to young children.

The research is **likely** to lead to some interesting results. = The research **will probably** lead to some interesting results.

Boys **tend** to have better practical skills than girls. [are likely to]

There is a tendency for boys to be more enthusiastic about team sports than girls. [it is often the case that]

There is every likelihood that the research will be completed by June. [it is probable]

The situation is **liable** to change. [may change, is likely to change]

C The writer is unsure

The research has **allegedly** come to some very significant conclusions. [it is claimed; the use of this adverb suggests that the writer does not believe the claims are true]

Boys are **considered to be** more inclined to take risks than girls. [people think that – the implication is that the writer may not agree]

The **perception** of boys as poor language learners can be shown to be false. [common view, often one which the writer feels is inappropriate in some way]

The article is **reportedly** an excellent piece of work [it is reported that; the use of the adverb makes it clear the writer has not seen the article]

In the absence of evidence to the contrary we can assume that Laing is correct. [as there is no evidence to suggest the opposite]

Exercises

37.1 Match the beginning of each sentence with the most appropriate ending.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1 We may | assume that the exchange rate will continue to fluctuate. |
| 2 It would seem | not to be the case that all the questions were answered honestly. |
| 3 Of course it | to appear from all the findings that the test is reliable. |
| 4 We can certainly | well discover that the problem was caused by overheating. |
| 5 It may well turn out | argued that conflict was inevitable after the events of recent years. |
| 6 It could be | is true that not all factories cause huge amounts of pollution. |

37.2 Insert adverbs based on the words in italics into suitable places in the sentences.

- Russo was a member of a terrorist organisation, but it was never proved. *allege*
- At that time, the population of tigers was widespread in the region. *report*
- The collapse of the roof caused a sprinkler system pipe to burst. *appear*
- To get a better job is a main motivation for going on to higher education. *presume*
- We may conclude that water shortages are likely to increase rather than decrease. *tentative*
- The students were guessing some of the answers instead of using their knowledge of the context. *evidence*

37.3 Complete the missing forms in the table. Use a dictionary if necessary. Do not fill the shaded boxes.



noun	verb	adjective	adverb
	tend		
evidence			
	seem		
		likely	
	perceive		

37.4 Change these sentences. Use different forms of the words in bold, as instructed.

- There is little **likelihood** that everyone will fail the test. (use the adjective)
- Students **tend** to leave preparation for exams till the last minute. (use the noun)
- We saw **evidence** that some students had copied each other's answers. (use the adjective)
- People commonly **perceive** that older people cannot learn musical instruments to a professional standard. (use the noun)
- The melting of the polar ice caps **seems** to be inevitable. (use the adverb)

37.5 Make the sentences more formal by replacing the underlined words or phrases.

- People generally think that rats are carriers of diseases.
- There isn't much evidence to support the opinion that diesel cars cause more pollution than petrol cars.
- It is extremely likely that rail passenger numbers will continue to decline.
- In the absence of other evidence, we must conclude that right-handedness is not linked to intelligence in any way.
- Of course, it is true that engineering graduates are in increasing demand.
- The area near the river often floods in winter.

FOLLOW UP

Look at a recent article reporting on some research in your own discipline. Can you find any examples of the kind of language discussed in this unit in it? Note down any examples that you find.

A Developing an argument: what it is about

Read these extracts from the opening paragraphs of student essays. Note the prepositions.

This essay is **based on** findings from recent research into cold fusion. The arguments I shall **put forward** are **relevant to** our understanding of Newton's laws. **For the purposes** of this essay, two opposing theories will be **scrutinised**. I shall **refer to** Ashbach's and Linn's work, **respectively**. Many articles have been published **on the subject** of genetic modification of crops. The political arguments concerning population control are **beyond the scope** of this essay. The first section reviews recent literature, **with reference to** the arguments concerning economic policy.

B Adding points to an argument

Bad diet and high stress levels, **as well as** lack of exercise, are key factors in causing heart disease; **on top of which** there is smoking, which is one of the most damaging factors. **In addition to** the questionnaire, we also conducted interviews with some of the subjects. A **further** argument in support of raising the retirement age is that life expectancy is increasing. **Moreover/Furthermore**¹, many people enjoy working; **for example / for instance**², in a recent survey, 68% of people said they would like to work till they were at least 70.

¹ *moreover* is much more frequently used in academic style than *furthermore* ² *for example* is much more frequently used in academic style than *for instance*

C Qualifying: limiting and specifying an argument

Dr O'Malley is leading a class discussion on human rights.

O'Malley: OK. 'Human rights are rights which you possess simply because you are human.' **To what extent** can we say that? What are **the pros and cons**¹ of this view?

Anna: Well, I think it's too simplistic, **in the sense that**² it ignores the rights of victims and everyone else's right to life. So, **provided that** we remember this, then we can give people basic rights, **albeit**³ with limitations.

Kirsten: Mm, **that's all very well, but**⁴ if you say human rights depend on, say, government decisions about national security, then they're no longer *rights*, are they? They become privileges. **Having said that**⁵, it's a complex issue with no simple answer. **Even so**, I still think we must be careful not to give our rights away.

O'Malley: OK. Fine. **Apart from** victim's rights, are there other arguments for restricting rights? I mean we could look at protecting property, ending a chronically sick person's life, **and so on / and so forth**⁶. Let's talk about **the degree/extent to which** these are relevant.

Ricardo: Every sick person has the right to life, **but at the same time** we should be free to decide when we want to die.

O'Malley: Well, a lot of sick people can't make that decision for themselves, **despite the fact** that we may respect their right to a dignified death.

Ricardo: Hmm. **Nevertheless/Nonetheless**⁷, I think it's a key issue.

¹ (slightly informal) advantages and disadvantages ² used to explain precisely what has just been said ³ (formal) although ⁴ (informal, typical of spoken contexts) indicates a partial agreement, followed by a disagreement ⁵ (typical of spoken contexts) said when you wish to add a point which

contrasts with what has just been said ⁶ (typical of spoken contexts) can be used separately or together (*and so on and so forth*); can also be *et cetera* (more common in writing – *etc.*) ⁷ however; *nevertheless* is more frequent in academic style than *nonetheless*

Exercises

38.1 Fill in the prepositions in this text about the first wife of Henry VIII of England (1491–1547).

This essay examines the early life of Catherine of Aragon (1485–1536), focusing particularly the period of her brief marriage to Prince Arthur, his death at the age of 15 and her subsequent marriage his brother Prince Henry, later to become King Henry VIII of England. the purposes this essay, I shall pay little attention either the earlier or the later periods of her life. Her eventual divorce from King Henry is, thus, the scope this essay. Much more has already been written the subject this later period of her life. The literature reference the period is extensive but my essay is largely based a couple of key sources, which are particularly relevant any discussion of this period, and I shall refer these throughout.

38.2 Which word comes next in these phrases?

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 the pros and | 5 that's all very well |
| 2 at the same | 6 the extent to |
| 3 and so on and so | 7 in addition |
| 4 having said | 8 as well |

38.3 Use phrases from the box to replace phrases from the paragraph with the same meaning.

nevertheless	the degree	as well as	provided that
advantages and disadvantages	for instance	furthermore	

There are a number of pros and cons to take into account when considering the purchase of a hybrid (gasoline-electric) car. Such cars are, for example, undoubtedly better for the environment in the sense that they cause less air pollution. Moreover, the extent to which they rely on oil, a natural resource which is rapidly becoming depleted, is much less than is the case with conventional cars. Nonetheless, hybrid cars are not without their problems. Cost may be an issue and also the technical complexity of this relatively new type of engine. As long as you take these factors into account, there is no reason not to buy a hybrid car.

38.4 Choose the correct word or phrase to complete each sentence.

- She wrote an excellent essay with a certain amount of help.
A even so B albeit C despite the fact
- A point must also now be made against a change in the law.
A furthermore B respective C further
- He is a great poet his work has had a great influence on other writers.
A in the sense that B on top of which C provided that
- Let us now discuss the influence of the revolution on the rich and the poor
A say B respectively C moreover
- The riots resulted in much damage., we should not ignore the fact that the disorder brought benefits to some.
A As well as B With reference to C Having said that
- But there is a negative side to new technology. the advantages we also need to consider a number of disadvantages.
A Be that as it may B Apart from C That's all very well but