

2.4 ANALYSIS TO SUBSTANTIATE, SUPPORT A STATEMENT

Learning Objectives

- ❖ Distinguish between support for a statement that relies on individual pieces of evidence and support that blends different types of content.
- ❖ Note the content typically used to provide support in this context.
- ❖ Observe how authors create layers of meaning as they provide this type of support for a statement.

In our earlier analysis of the concept of culture, we noted how the author used generalizations as the first layer of analysis, following that up with another layer that delved into those statements to unearth more concrete representations of both the generalizations and ultimately the original concept.

Assertions and generalizations, like explanations, descriptions or any other type of statement, are subject to analysis in their own right. You will recall in Unit 1, when we were discussing how authors provide support for the claims they make, we acknowledged that there was a difference in the approach taken to this activity between Extract 1.13 and Extract 1.14. At the time, we explained the difference as follows:

The nature of the support provided in our second example is different from that of the first. It is not based solely on direct observation. The combination of an added assertion, a definition, extended explanation of the definition, and reference to likely real-life problems takes the act of providing support details to another level.

*At this level, the author delves into the claim itself to unearth and make visible elements which, in his view, constitute its core meaning. This approach to identifying supporting details entails **an analysis** of the claim.*

The issue of combining and integrating different elements to build the support for the statement is a key feature of the act of analysis of a statement. Following are some examples.

Extract 2.15

Development refers to long-term personal changes that have multiple sources and multiple effects. It is like the difference between Kelvin's music at age fifteen compared to his music at age five, rather than the difference between his music one week and his music the next. Some human developments are especially broad and take years to unfold fully; a person's ever-evolving ability to "read" other's moods, for example, may take a lifetime to develop fully.

Other developments are faster and more focused, like a person's increasing skill at solving crossword puzzles. The faster and simpler is

the change, the more likely we are to call the change “learning” instead of development. The difference between learning and development is a matter of degree. When a child learns to name the planets of the solar system, for example, the child may not need a lot of time, nor does the learning involve a multitude of experiences. So it is probably better to think of that particular experience—learning to name the planets—as an example of learning rather than of development (Salkind, 2004; Lewis, 1997).

This extract begins with a sentence that provides a basic explanation of development, as long-term personal changes. To bring greater clarity to that explanation, the authors use a combination of concrete, real-life experiences and other statements. They use the example of a young child’s musical ability at age fifteen as compared to that at age five. According to the authors, it is change over an extended length of time that qualifies as development.

They reinforce that notion with the further statement that “Some human developments are especially broad and take years to unfold fully ...”. Then they follow this up with a concrete example of that assertion, specifically that a person’s ability to read another person’s moods “may take a lifetime to develop fully”. To clarify the initial explanation of ‘development’ even further, they introduce another assertion in which they distinguish between development and learning. They claim, “The difference between learning and development is a matter of degree”, following this up with another concrete real-life practice to support that claim.

Overall therefore, in this example, the authors start the segment with a broad explanation, which they proceed to clarify even further with a series of assertions that are themselves supported by more concrete evidence. Can you determine the number of layers in this analysis?

The second example was extracted from a much longer segment that is an extended analysis of the concept *values*. In general the author uses the analyses of a series of assertions to present his interpretation of the multidimensional concept ‘*values*’.

Extract 2.16

Values often suggest how people should behave, but they do not accurately reflect how people do behave. As we saw in Chapter 2, the classical sociologist Harriet Martineau made a basic distinction between what people say they believe and what they actually do, which are often at odds. Values portray an **ideal culture**, the standards society would like to embrace and live up to. But ideal culture differs from **real culture**, the way society actually is, based on what occurs and exists. In an ideal culture, there would be no traffic accidents, murders, poverty, or racial tension. But in real culture, police officers, lawmakers, educators, and social workers constantly strive to prevent or repair those accidents, crimes, and injustices. Teenagers are encouraged to value celibacy. However, the number of unplanned pregnancies among teens reveals that not only is the ideal hard to live up to, but that the value alone is not enough to spare teenagers from the potential consequences of having sex.

One way societies strive to put values into action is through rewards, sanctions, and punishments. When people observe the norms of society and uphold its values, they are often rewarded. A boy who helps an elderly woman board a bus may receive a smile and a “thank you.” A business manager who raises profit margins may receive a quarterly bonus. People sanction certain behaviours by giving their support, approval, or permission, or by instilling formal actions of disapproval and non-support. **Sanctions** are a form of **social control**, a way to encourage conformity to cultural norms. Sometimes people conform to norms in anticipation or expectation of positive sanctions: Good grades, for instance, may mean praise

from parents and teachers.

When people go against a society's values, they are punished. A boy who shoves an elderly woman aside to board the bus first may receive frowns or even a scolding from other passengers. A business manager who drives away customers will likely be fired. Breaking norms and rejecting values can lead to cultural sanctions such as earning a negative label — lazy, no-good bum — or to legal sanctions such as traffic tickets, fines, or imprisonment.

The first sentence in each of the three paragraphs in the extract is a statement – the first is an assertion and the second two – generalizations. To substantiate the assertion of the first paragraph, the author advances another assertion from another author who makes a distinction between what people say they believe (their values) and what they actually do. The rest of the paragraph builds on this statement, first introducing two additional concepts – *ideal culture* and *real culture* - that form the basis for the discussion of the real-life issues that the author uses to substantiate the initial claim.

The construction of the other two paragraphs follows a similar pattern combining additional statements with examples of real-world human behaviour that reflect the essential meaning of those statements.

Four things are to be noted about the analysis of statements as reflected in these two extracts. First, the statement to be analyzed appears in a single sentence at the beginning of the segment, which is usually a paragraph.

Secondly, as noted earlier, the supporting details are not simply based on evidence drawn from observation of external events, situations and/or occurrences. Rather, they combine statements with real-world representations of those statements in a manner that enhances the clarity of the initial statement.

Further, as noted in Extract 2.16, the analysis may be done in such a way as to highlight similarities and/or differences in the elements brought together for the purpose of illuminating the main statement.

Finally, just as in the case of concept analysis, in analyzing a statement, the author combines different forms of content, for example descriptions, assertions etc., in a way that gives expression to the ideas that constitute the inner meaning of the statement being analysed.

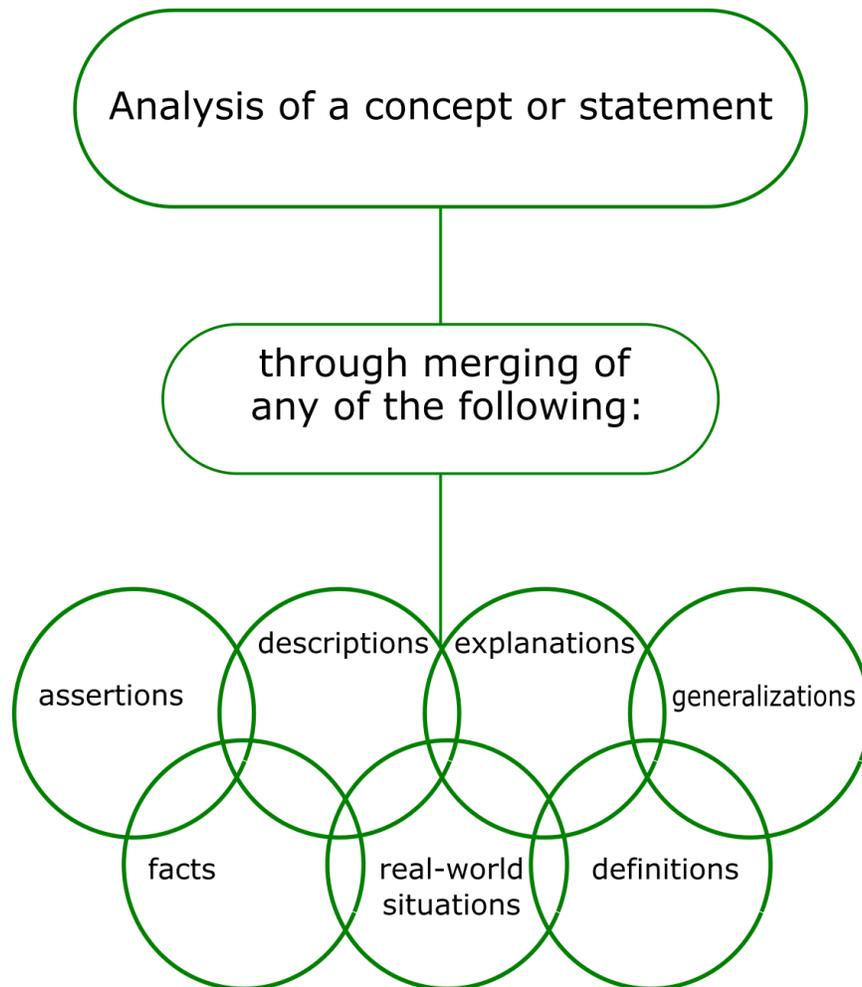


Figure 2.14 – Bringing together the attributes to build the analysis of a concept or statement

Key Takeaways

- ❖ When authors use analysis to support a statement they do not simply rely on evidence gleaned from observation of external phenomena.
- ❖ Analysis of a statement (be it explanation, assertion, generalization) entails bringing out the attributes that are inherent in the statement.
- ❖ The supporting details typically combine different forms of content – other statements, real-world situations.