



## Example of an assignment structured around a single argument

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The following example is from an assignment from the programme in linguistics. The argument is presented without a qualifier and instead uses two rebuttals that each require their own backing.

### **Claim**

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) does not consistently formulate its guidelines for the assessment of second-language competences within either the cognitive or the pragmatic paradigm of linguistics. Rather, the guidelines use a mixed discourse stemming from both paradigms. Using elements from both paradigms makes it unclear whether grammatical or pragmatic competencies are the criteria for assessing competences within a second language.

### **Qualifier**

The claim is made without a qualifier.

### **Grounds**

Independent analysis and discussion of an excerpt from ACTFL's guidelines for the assessment of second-language competence.

### **Warrant**

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995)

### **Rebuttal 1**

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is designed for ideological studies with a view to changing social power relations.

### **Backing 1**

Fairclough's definition of a discourse as a presentation of a particular social practice from a certain perspective is also useful in this context, as ACTFL's assessment of second-language competence is a particular social practice, and the two linguistic paradigms are different perspectives. Furthermore, the use of language in connection with the two paradigmatic understandings of second-language acquisition shows clear discursive differences.

### **Rebuttal 2**

One could have used Foucault's or Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999) instead of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis.

### **Backing 2**

Only Fairclough's critical discourse analysis uses specific social interaction, which in this case is the extract from the ACTFL guidelines. This is one of the strengths of critical discourse analysis (Jørgensen & Phillips 1999).