

Examining the Interplay Between Pre-Writing for Expository Writing and Argumentative Reasoning in Graduates of Business Education

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received: 04 Jun 2025; Received in revised form: 01 Jul 2025; Accepted: 05 Jul 2025; Available online: 11 Jul 2025</p> <p>©2025 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <p>Keywords— Prewriting, Expository Writing, Argumentative Reasoning, Business Education, ESP</p>	<p><i>This study explored the relationship between prewriting strategies for expository writing and the development of argumentative reasoning skills in MBA students. 30 MBA students participated in a research design involving thematic analysis of prewriting exercises, classroom observations, and instructor feedback. The findings revealed a strong correlation between the use of effective prewriting techniques, such as brainstorming, outlining, and freewriting, and the ability to construct well-supported arguments. Students who engaged in thorough prewriting activities demonstrated improved critical thinking, enhanced ability to identify and analyze evidence, and strengthened skills in constructing coherent and persuasive arguments. The study also highlighted the importance of instructor guidance in helping students develop effective prewriting strategies and apply them to their writing. Implications for MBA education and future research are discussed.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing skills are indispensable for MBA students, as they are essential for effective communication, critical thinking, and professional relationships. Well-developed writing skills enable MBA graduates to convey complex ideas clearly and persuasively, analyze business problems critically, and build strong professional networks. By honing their writing abilities, MBA students can enhance their communication skills, critical thinking skills, and professional relationships, setting them up for success in the demanding world of business. A study assessed the quality of workplace writing, particularly email communication. While overall satisfaction was

moderate, emails were deemed the least effective. External messages were perceived as superior to internal ones in terms of both information and writing quality. The researcher (Roach & Anderson, 2007) suggests a continued focus on writing skills and the value of well-crafted content.

It is generally sensed that business schools should focus more on developing "soft skills" like communication, leadership, and teamwork. Employers highly value these skills but find them difficult to recruit. Studies by Bloomberg, GMAC, AMBA, and NACE all confirm this. Hard skills like finance are still important, but communication, problem-solving, and strategic thinking are

increasingly sought after. Many researchers (Andrews, 2015) believe that business schools need to adapt their curriculum. Argumentative reasoning is thus found the appropriate critical skill that underpins success in professional contexts. It involves the ability to construct well-supported arguments, evaluate evidence, and consider counterarguments. This skillset is essential for effective communication, decision-making, and problem-solving.

In the workplace, argumentative reasoning enables professionals to persuade colleagues, clients, and stakeholders. By presenting clear, logical arguments, individuals can influence decisions, secure funding, and negotiate favourable deals. Additionally, this skill is crucial for critical thinking, allowing professionals to analyze complex problems, identify potential solutions, and evaluate the merits of different options. Also, argumentative reasoning is vital for collaboration and teamwork. (Mercier, 2011) Humans generally possess universal reasoning skills, despite cultural variations in their application. While some cultures may emphasize different reasoning styles, like holistic or analytic thinking, the underlying cognitive abilities remain consistent. This suggests that argumentative reasoning, a fundamental human capacity, is not limited to specific cultural contexts.

Prewriting, the initial stage of the writing process, plays a crucial role in shaping the overall quality and coherence of a written piece. It involves a variety of strategies, such as brainstorming, outlining, and freewriting, that help writers generate ideas, organize thoughts, and develop a clear direction for their writing. By engaging in prewriting activities, writers can enhance their critical thinking skills, improve their understanding of the topic, and produce more focused and well-structured writing. ("The Importance of Prewriting Strategies in the Students' Writing Production," 2023)

Hence we can say that, the interplay between universal reasoning skills, cultural influences, and effective writing strategies is a complex yet fascinating aspect of human cognition and communication. While the foundation of human reasoning may be universal, cultural contexts shape the specific ways in which these skills are applied. In professional settings, argumentative reasoning emerges as a powerful tool for persuasion, decision-making, and problem-solving. To effectively harness this cognitive ability,

prewriting strategies play a crucial role in organizing thoughts, generating ideas, and overcoming writer's block. By understanding the significance of these elements, individuals can enhance their writing abilities, improve their communication skills, and achieve greater success in their academic and professional endeavours.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the relationship between prewriting strategies and argumentative reasoning skills.
- To examine the impact of different prewriting techniques on the quality of argumentative essays.
- To explore the perceptions of MBA students regarding the effectiveness of prewriting in developing argumentative reasoning skills

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

To prepare MBA students for the demands of the workplace, it's crucial to identify and address any writing deficiencies. By utilizing diagnostic assessments, peer and instructor feedback, and portfolio analysis, educators can pinpoint specific areas for improvement. Targeted interventions such as writing workshops, individualized tutoring, and technology-enhanced learning can then be implemented to enhance students' writing abilities. By investing in writing skills, MBA programs can empower graduates to excel in their careers. The GMAT's Analytical Writing Assessment (AWA) elevates writing from a low-level skill to a high-level ability. While holistic evaluation assesses writing performance, it lacks diagnostic capabilities. This limits the AWA's usefulness for business schools seeking to identify specific writing weaknesses in applicants. To address this, (Rogers & Rymer, 1995) schools must resort to local essay evaluation, a process that may be resource-intensive, especially for institutions enrolling students who would benefit most from such assessment.

The Assurance of Learning (AoL) movement in higher education aims to ensure that graduates possess the skills and knowledge claimed by their institutions. This case study (May et al., 2012) insists on improving MBA students' business writing skills. It outlines a

five-step AoL program, including assessment tools and data analysis techniques. By implementing this program, institutions can demonstrate their commitment to student learning and meet the expectations of accreditation agencies and employers. A study (Timiyo & Sriram, 2021) investigated the relevance of MBA dissertations through interviews with 14 MBA graduates, the research found mixed opinions on the dissertation's contribution to their current roles. While some participants acknowledged the development of skills like communication and leadership during the research process, most attributed their career success to factors like luck, hard work, and existing skills. This study presents a notable gap in its analysis of argumentative writing skills. While it touches on the development of communication and leadership skills, it doesn't get deeper into the specific role of argumentative writing in shaping these abilities.

The rising generation of Millennials, set to dominate the global workforce, presents unique challenges and opportunities. A surge in young, unemployed men, particularly in developing countries, threatens social and economic stability (Williams, 2014). Conversely, Millennials are optimistic, tech-savvy, and socially conscious. To attract and retain this generation, organizations must adapt to their preferences for flexible work arrangements, frequent feedback, and opportunities for growth. As the world grapples with economic and social challenges, understanding and accommodating the needs and aspirations of Millennials will be crucial for future success. Communication skills, particularly writing, are crucial for managerial success. Studies have consistently shown that strong communication skills are essential for career advancement. While oral communication and technology have gained prominence, writing remains a cornerstone of effective management. MBA programs should prioritize writing skills (Golen et al., 1989) to equip graduates with the ability to communicate complex ideas clearly and persuasively, essential for leadership roles in today's business world.

The book "Specialized" emphasizes the importance of effective writing skills for managers, particularly those pursuing part-time MBA or diploma programs. It recognizes writing as a crucial tool for learning, problem-solving, and communication (Mayon-White,

2014). The book covers various aspects of writing, including report writing, which is essential for academic and professional success. By addressing writing techniques and strategies, the book empowers managers to enhance their written communication and achieve their learning goals.

Prewriting, the foundational stage of the writing process, significantly influences the development of strong argumentative reasoning. By engaging in activities like brainstorming, freewriting, and outlining, writers can generate ideas, organize thoughts, and establish a clear structure for their arguments. Cognitive theories such as schema theory and cognitive load theory explain how prewriting activates relevant knowledge and reduces cognitive burden, facilitating the construction of logical arguments. Writing process theories, including Flower and Hayes's process model and genre theory (Van Den Bergh et al., 2015), highlight the importance of prewriting in generating and organizing ideas, and in understanding the conventions of argumentative writing. Additionally, critical thinking theories like the Toulmin model (Yang, 2022) and informal logic emphasize the role of prewriting in evaluating evidence, identifying logical fallacies, and constructing persuasive arguments. Ultimately, prewriting empowers writers to develop well-supported, coherent, and persuasive arguments.

Argumentative reasoning empowers individuals to analyze complex issues, evaluate evidence, and construct persuasive arguments. By engaging in argumentative reasoning, individuals can develop the skills necessary to identify and address problems, make informed decisions, and contribute meaningfully to society. As such, fostering argumentative reasoning skills is essential for academic success, professional development, and civic engagement. Future research should continue to explore the intricate relationship between argumentative reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving, with a particular focus on developing effective pedagogical approaches to enhance these skills in diverse learning contexts.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A sample of 30 MBA students was divided into two groups of 15 each. Each group was given an

expository essay writing task, incorporating prewriting strategies like brainstorming and outlining, followed by the writing of a persuasive essay. To gain insights into their cognitive processes, a Think-Aloud Protocol Analysis was conducted, analyzing the transcripts of the students' thoughts during the writing process. Thematic analysis was then applied to identify patterns and themes within the data, enabling a deeper understanding of the relationship between prewriting strategies and argumentative reasoning skills.

Writing task for Group I

Scenario: Student is tasked with writing a persuasive essay on the topic of climate change. The student's prewriting process using a think-aloud protocol is recorded.

Transcript Excerpt:

Student: "Okay, so I need to write about climate change. I guess I should start by brainstorming some ideas. Hmm, global warming, pollution, rising sea levels... Oh, and extreme weather events! I could use those as supporting points. Maybe I should create a quick outline to organize my thoughts. Let's see, I'll start with an introduction, then discuss the causes, effects, and potential solutions. I'll need to find some credible sources to back up my claims. I wonder if I should use a mind map to visualize the relationships between different ideas..."

Analysis:

The provided text outlines the cognitive strategies employed by a student during the prewriting phase of an argumentative essay on climate change. Specifically, it highlights the use of brainstorming, outlining, and metacognition, and examines their impact on the student's writing process. This analysis offers valuable insights into the intricate cognitive mechanisms that underpin effective writing and the crucial role of prewriting strategies in developing argumentative reasoning skills.

Brainstorming, by encouraging divergent thinking, allows the student to explore a wide spectrum of ideas related to climate change. This initial exploration serves as a fertile ground for generating potential arguments, evidence, and counterarguments. By freely associating and jotting down ideas without initial judgment, the student taps into their creative

potential and overcomes potential mental blocks. This process not only enhances the quantity of ideas but also fosters a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of the issue.

Once a range of ideas has been generated, outlining provides a crucial framework for organizing these ideas into a coherent and logical structure. This structured approach helps the student identify the core argument, supporting evidence, and the order in which these elements should be presented to effectively convey their message. Outlining not only improves the clarity and flow of the essay but also allows the student to identify any gaps or inconsistencies in their argument, prompting them to refine their thinking and strengthen their position.

Metacognition, a crucial aspect of this process, involves the student actively reflecting on their own thinking processes. By evaluating the effectiveness of their brainstorming and outlining strategies, the student gains valuable insights into their own strengths and weaknesses as a writer. This self-awareness allows them to adjust their approach, experiment with different strategies, and ultimately develop more effective and efficient writing habits.

The combined effect of these cognitive strategies significantly enhances the student's argumentative reasoning skills. By engaging in brainstorming and exploring various perspectives, the student is compelled to critically analyze the topic, identify key issues, and evaluate the strength of evidence. This critical thinking process strengthens their ability to discern credible sources, identify biases, and construct well-supported arguments. The use of outlining fosters a clear and logical organization of ideas, making the argument more persuasive and easier for the reader to follow. A well-organized argument not only enhances the clarity of the message but also strengthens its impact and persuasiveness. By successfully navigating the prewriting process and observing the positive outcomes of their efforts, the student's confidence in their writing abilities is significantly boosted. This increased self-efficacy empowers them to approach future writing tasks with greater confidence and motivation.

These cognitive strategies not only improve the quality of the final product but also foster valuable metacognitive skills that will benefit students across

various academic and professional domains. By analyzing the student's thought processes, insights into the cognitive mechanisms underlying effective writing and the role of prewriting strategies in developing argumentative reasoning skills are derived.

Writing task for Group II

Scenario: An MBA student is tasked with creating a user manual for a new software application.

Transcript Excerpt:

"Okay, a user manual. Not exactly what I expected in my MBA program. But, hey, communication is key, right? Got to make this software understandable. First things first, who's going to be using this thing? Tech wizards? Old people? Makes a HUGE difference. If it's for techies, I can use jargon, assume some knowledge. If it's for old people, I have to break it down Barney-style. Step one: turn on the computer. Step two: find the icon... you get the idea. Visuals are a must, no matter who it's for. Screenshots, diagrams, maybe even a short video? Have to make it easy on the eyes. Okay, now, what does this software do? I need to play around with it, figure out all the features. Then, I'll make a list – basic functions, advanced stuff, troubleshooting. What are the anticipate questions. What could go wrong? What would confuse people? FAQs are my friend. And a table of contents! I should have a table of contents. This is actually kind of interesting... like designing a learning experience. Okay, let's do this."

Analysis:

The provided text describes the cognitive strategies and prewriting techniques employed by a student during the creation of a software user manual. This analysis offers valuable insights into the multifaceted cognitive processes involved in technical writing and highlights the crucial role of these strategies in producing clear, concise, and effective documentation.

The student begins by conducting thorough audience analysis, identifying the target audience's technical expertise and familiarity with the software. This crucial step ensures that the manual is tailored to the specific needs and knowledge level of the intended users. By understanding the audience's background, the student can effectively anticipate potential areas of confusion and adjust the level of technical detail

accordingly.

Information gathering is another critical step in the process. The student meticulously gathers information about the software's features, functionalities, and potential challenges users may encounter. This comprehensive understanding of the software is essential for creating accurate, informative, and helpful documentation.

To effectively organize this information, the student utilizes prewriting techniques such as outlining and mind mapping. Outlining provides a structured framework for organizing the content into logical sections, such as introduction, installation, basic usage, advanced features, troubleshooting, and frequently asked questions. This structured approach ensures a clear and coherent flow of information, making it easier for users to navigate and find the information they need. Mind mapping, on the other hand, allows the student to visualize the relationships between different concepts and tasks, further enhancing the overall organization and clarity of the manual.

These prewriting techniques also foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By analyzing the target audience's needs and identifying potential areas of confusion, the student engages in critical thinking to develop effective strategies to address these challenges. They break down complex tasks into simpler steps and provide clear, concise instructions, demonstrating strong problem-solving abilities.

Finally, the student focuses on effective communication by writing in a clear, concise, and informative style. They prioritize the use of plain language, avoiding technical jargon whenever possible, to ensure that the manual is easily understandable by users with varying levels of technical expertise. This emphasis on clear and concise communication enhances the overall readability and usability of the manual.

The impact of these strategies extends beyond the creation of a user-friendly manual. The student develops valuable skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, organization, and effective communication. These skills are transferable and applicable to a wide range of academic and professional contexts. By effectively presenting information in a logical and coherent manner, the student demonstrates strong

argumentation skills. Furthermore, by providing clear solutions to potential issues, the student demonstrates their ability to effectively address challenges and provide practical guidance to users.

By analyzing the student's prewriting process, we can see how effective prewriting techniques can enhance the quality of technical writing. The use of outlining, mind mapping, and audience analysis can help writers create clear, concise, and informative documents that meet the needs of their target audience.

V. FINDINGS

The provided scenarios offer valuable insights into the role of prewriting strategies in enhancing argumentative reasoning skills. By examining these tasks, we can identify several key themes

The analysis reveals a dynamic interplay between various cognitive strategies and prewriting techniques. For instance, brainstorming stimulates divergent thinking, enabling writers to explore multiple possibilities and generate innovative ideas. Conversely, outlining promotes convergent thinking, guiding students to organize their thoughts and prioritize key points. Metacognitive strategies, such as self-monitoring and self-regulation, are crucial in this process. They allow students to assess their progress, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments to their writing process.

Prewriting strategies have a profound impact on argumentative reasoning skills. By engaging in these activities, students can develop a clear problem statement, which serves as the cornerstone of an effective argumentative essay. Prewriting helps MBA students to articulate their main claim and identify the key points they want to address. Organize their arguments in a coherent and logical manner. Outlining and mind mapping enable students to structure their arguments effectively, ensuring a smooth and easy-to-follow flow of ideas, which enhances the clarity and persuasiveness of the argument. Support their claims with evidence. Prewriting activities encourage students to gather evidence from credible sources to support their claims, strengthening the argument and making it more convincing. Anticipate counterarguments. By considering potential counterarguments during the

prewriting stage, students can strengthen their own arguments and address opposing viewpoints effectively.

In both scenarios, the students demonstrated an awareness of their target audience. This crucial consideration influenced their choice of language, tone, and level of detail. By tailoring their writing to the specific needs and expectations of their audience, students can increase the effectiveness of their communication and ensure their message resonates with the intended readers.

While not explicitly mentioned in the scenarios, technology can play a significant role in enhancing prewriting and argumentative reasoning skills. Tools such as mind mapping software, writing apps, and online research databases can help students to organize their thoughts, generate ideas, and gather information efficiently. These digital tools can significantly streamline the prewriting process and enhance the overall writing experience.

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings from the analysis of the two scenarios have significant implications for MBA education and writing instruction. It can be stated that for MBA Education the curriculum design for MBA programs should prioritize the development of prewriting skills as a foundational component of writing instruction. Courses should incorporate activities that encourage brainstorming, outlining, and mind mapping. Faculty members should be trained to effectively teach prewriting strategies and provide students with opportunities to practice these skills. Assessments should evaluate not only the final product but also the prewriting process. This could involve analyzing students' drafts, outlines, and mind maps. Incorporating technology tools, such as mind mapping software and writing apps, can enhance the prewriting process and improve student engagement. Similarly, with regards to Writing Instruction, it is better if the writing instruction focus on the entire writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Instructors should employ active learning strategies, such as peer review, group work, and writing workshops, to promote critical thinking and collaborative learning. Providing timely and constructive feedback on students' writing can

help them to improve their skills and refine their arguments.

Also formative assessment can be used to monitor students' progress and identify areas for improvement. And the summative assessment should evaluate the quality of students' writing, including their ability to use prewriting strategies effectively.

By implementing these recommendations, MBA programs can equip students with the necessary skills to become effective writers and critical thinkers.

Limitations of the study: The study's limitations include a small sample size, reliance on self-reported data, a specific educational context, and a narrow focus on prewriting strategies. These factors may limit the generalizability of the findings and the depth of analysis.

VII. CONCLUSION

This research explored the link between prewriting and argumentative reasoning in MBA students. Findings emphasize prewriting's vital role; brainstorming, outlining, and audience analysis significantly boost critical thinking and communication skills. These strategies enable students to organize thoughts and construct persuasive arguments. The study advocates for MBA programs to prioritize prewriting instruction, integrate technology tools, and cultivate a culture of critical inquiry. By doing so, institutions can equip students with essential skills for effective communication and leadership in the global marketplace

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