

Argumentation as Scholarly Inquiry: An Emerging Paradigm in Academic Writing

Research Note

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Abstract

This article reconceptualizes academic writing as an epistemic practice of scholarly inquiry, in which argumentation functions not merely as persuasion but as a reflexive mechanism for knowledge construction. It examines the integration of three emerging paradigms: problematization, Rogerian argument and Argumentation-Based Inquiry (ABI) within the broader framework of scholarly argumentation. Drawing on qualitative conceptual synthesis of interdisciplinary literature, the study analyses how these paradigms collectively enhance analytical rigor, foster dialogic engagement and expand the epistemic scope of knowledge production. The synthesis integrates insights from rhetoric and composition studies, educational theory and Himalayan socio-ecological research to demonstrate how argumentation operates within situated and context-dependent knowledge systems. Findings indicate that this integrated approach destabilizes universalizing epistemic models by embracing multiple ontological and epistemological standpoints, thereby promoting pluralistic modes of reasoning. The study further argues that embedding

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problematization, Rogerian argument and ABI in academic pedagogy and research practice can strengthen critical thinking, ethical reflexivity and collaborative knowledge construction. Overall, this paper positions argumentation as a dynamic epistemic and methodological framework that advances more inclusive, reflexive and context-sensitive scholarly knowledge production in higher education.

Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of higher education and research, academic writing has transcended its traditional instrumental role as a medium for information dissemination. It now functions as a central epistemic practice through which knowledge is produced, validated, circulated and contested. Academic writing is commonly conceptualized as a structured, evidence-based and discipline-specific mode of expression that enables the articulation and critical evaluation of knowledge claims (Graff & Birkenstein, 2018; Gabi, 2022). At its core lies argumentation, defined as the systematic formulation of claims supported by evidence, logical reasoning and engagement with alternative perspectives (Toulmin, 2003; Bean, 2011). From this perspective, scholarly inquiry is not merely the accumulation of information but an iterative and reflexive process of interpretation, critique and knowledge construction embedded within disciplinary, cultural and socio-political contexts (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Together, these concepts position academic writing as a dynamic and dialogic epistemic practice grounded in inquiry rather than mechanical skill.

The evolving terrain of academic writing is increasingly shaped by globalization, digital transformation, interdisciplinary collaboration and growing demands for epistemic justice. Within this context, problematization and Rogerian argument have emerged as complementary paradigms that reorient how argumentation is conceptualized and practiced while Argumentation-Based Inquiry (ABI) serves as a pedagogical bridge linking theory with inquiry-driven learning. Problematization requires scholars to move beyond surface-level problem identification and to interrogate the underlying assumptions embedded in research questions, theoretical constructs and dominant epistemic discourses (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). This shift holds particular significance in contexts where hegemonic knowledge systems marginalize indigenous, experiential and culturally embedded ways of knowing.

Indigenous and pragmatic epistemic reorientation is particularly evident in interdisciplinary socio-ecological systems research. In this field, sustainability is examined through context-sensitive narratives, indigenous epistemologies and institutional practices

(Cruikshank, 2005; Berkes, 2012; Campbell, 2013; Folke, 2016; Childs et al., 2021; Poudel, 2024a, 2024b). Such approaches illustrate that argumentation functions not merely as a persuasive device but as an inquiry-driven epistemic process through which situated knowledge is constructed, contested and refined. In Himalayan contexts, for example, scholars critically reinterpret human-environment relationships and environmental change by drawing on local narratives, traditional governance systems and lived ecological experiences, thereby challenging universalized models and advancing epistemic pluralism (Ostrom, 2009; Poudel, 2018; Shrestha, 2023; Gurung, 2024).

In contrast, Rogerian argument emphasizes empathetic engagement, mutual recognition and collaborative synthesis rather than adversarial confrontation (Ramage et al., 2018). Grounded in humanistic psychology, it encourages scholars to represent diverse perspectives fairly, identify shared conceptual ground and construct integrative responses to complex academic and policy challenges. In increasingly polarized domains such as environmental governance and education, this paradigm fosters inclusive discourse and mitigates epistemic exclusion. Complementing these approaches, ABI extends argumentation into structured learning environments, demonstrating that inquiry-based engagement with argument significantly enhances analytical reasoning, conceptual clarity and academic performance (Memiş & Ergün, 2023).

Recent scholarship reinforces the view of academic writing as both an epistemic and pedagogical practice. Chauhan (2022) conceptualizes it as an art, science and craft requiring iterative refinement and reflexivity while Gabi (2022) emphasizes its ethical, evidence-based and balanced nature. Similarly, Neupane (2021, 2023) highlights structured literature engagement and academic integrity as central to scholarly inquiry. Collectively, these contributions underline the need for methodologically rigorous, ethically grounded and epistemologically plural approaches to academic argumentation. In addition, studies in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, particularly in the Global South, continue to reveal persistent challenges including difficulties in structuring arguments, maintaining coherence and navigating disciplinary conventions, challenges often exacerbated by limited institutional support and uneven supervisory practices (Pandit, 2025).

Despite these advances, a significant gap persists, argumentation is still largely conceptualized either as a rhetorical structure or a pedagogical skill with limited attention given to its integrated epistemic role across diverse contexts. Moreover, the interrelationship between problematization, Rogerian argument and ABI remains under-theorized as a unified framework for inquiry-driven knowledge construction.

This article examines how these three paradigms collectively reconfigure academic writing as an inquiry-driven epistemic practice. Specifically, it aims to analyze their individual and intersecting contributions to scholarly argumentation and develop an integrated conceptual framework that positions argumentation as a reflexive, dialogic and context-sensitive process of knowledge construction. The significance of this study lies in strengthening theoretical coherence in argumentation studies, enhancing pedagogical practices in academic writing and advancing epistemic inclusivity. By integrating insights from Himalayan socio-ecological research, the study contributes to more pluralistic, reflexive and culturally responsive approaches to knowledge production in the global academic landscape.

Review of Literature

Research on academic writing has undergone a significant transformation, shifting from prescriptive, skills-based models toward rhetorically and epistemologically grounded perspectives that position argumentation as a central mechanism of scholarly inquiry and knowledge construction (Graff & Birkenstein, 2018). Earlier approaches emphasized technical proficiency in grammar, structure and citation practices (Bean, 2011), whereas contemporary perspectives conceptualize writing as a dialogic, reflexive and socially situated practice embedded within constructivist and critical epistemologies (Gabi, 2022).

Recent studies increasingly conceptualize academic writing not merely as a technical or persuasive skill but as a form of knowledge production. Richardson and St. Pierre (2018) assert that writing itself functions as a method of inquiry through which researchers construct and interpret knowledge. Similarly, Carter and Kumar (2022) argue that doctoral and scholarly writing constitutes a core epistemic practice involving the negotiation of knowledge claims, reflexive engagement and the construction of new understandings. These perspectives reinforce the shift toward viewing argumentation as a central epistemic process rather than a purely rhetorical tool.

Toulmin's (2003) model of argumentation, comprising claims, data, warrants, backing, qualifiers and rebuttals remains foundational in structuring logically coherent academic reasoning. Complementing this framework, Walton (2004) emphasizes the importance of relevance in argumentation, highlighting how arguers must assess the relevance of evidence, reasoning and claims within specific contexts. Fisher (2013) further strengthens this foundation by underscoring the role of critical thinking in evaluating arguments, identifying assumptions and constructing reasoned judgments.

However, contemporary theorists have moved beyond formalist logic toward more reflexive, dialogic and context-sensitive approaches that recognize the situated and negotiated nature of knowledge production (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2018; Carter & Kumar, 2022). This shift foregrounds argumentation not only as structure but also as a mode of inquiry embedded within broader epistemological frameworks.

Problematization represents a key advancement in this evolution. Grounded in post-structuralist and critical traditions, it encourages researchers to interrogate assumptions embedded in existing literature rather than merely identifying research gaps (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). The authors further propose problematization as a systematic methodology involving the identification and challenging of in-house, paradigm, ideological and field assumptions to generate more influential research questions. By questioning how problems are framed, whose perspectives are privileged and which epistemologies are marginalized, problematization enables deeper theoretical innovation and reflexive critique. Its relevance is particularly evident in socio-ecological systems research where dominant sustainability narratives are increasingly re-examined through indigenous and context-sensitive perspectives. In Himalayan contexts, scholars reinterpret human–environment relationships through local narratives, traditional governance systems and lived ecological experiences, thereby challenging universalized models and advancing epistemic pluralism (Gagné, 2018; Chakraborty et al., 2021; Poudel, 2025).

Complementing this perspective, Rogerian argument offers a dialogic alternative to adversarial reasoning. Developed by Young et al. (1970) and refined by Ramage et al. (2018), it promotes empathetic engagement, mutual recognition and integrative synthesis in academic discourse. Rather than privileging opposition, Rogerian argument emphasizes fair representation of diverse viewpoints, identification of common ground and co-construction of knowledge. This approach is particularly valuable in polarized academic and policy domains, where it fosters intellectual empathy and supports inclusive scholarly dialogue (Facione, 2011; Gabi, 2022).

Argumentation-Based Inquiry (ABI) extends these theoretical orientations into pedagogical and empirical domains by embedding argumentation within inquiry-driven learning processes. ABI conceptualizes arguments as iterative cycles of claim formulation, evidence evaluation and conceptual refinement, thereby operationalizing argument as an active process of knowledge construction. Empirical studies demonstrate that ABI significantly enhances higher-order cognitive skills, including analysis, synthesis and

evaluation, while improving academic performance and engagement (Memiş & Ergün, 2023; Lin et al., 2024). Thus, ABI serves as a bridge between theoretical models of argumentation and their practical application in educational settings.

Recent literature further contextualizes these ideas within broader academic practices. Chauhan (2022) conceptualizes academic writing as an iterative process involving drafting, revision and audience negotiation, particularly highlighting challenges faced by multilingual scholars. Gabi (2022) defines academic writing as a structured, evidence-based and ethically grounded mode of knowledge expression. Neupane (2021) advances the literature review as an epistemological mapping process that supports conceptual framing and problematization, while Neupane (2023) examines plagiarism through conceptual and ethical lenses, reinforcing academic integrity as foundational to scholarly credibility. Research in Nepalese and broader Global South contexts further reveals that academic writing is often constrained by linguistic limitations and insufficient emphasis on argumentation as a process of inquiry (Pandit, 2025).

These developments converge with growing concerns over epistemic injustice in knowledge production. Fricker (2007) highlights how systemic biases can silence or discredit certain knowers and knowledge systems, while Bhakuni and Abimbola (2021) extend this critique to global academic practices, underscoring the marginalization of voices from the Global South. In Himalayan socio-ecological scholarship, these intersections are particularly visible, as researchers integrate local knowledge systems and indigenous epistemologies to challenge dominant Western-centric models of sustainability and environmental governance (Chakraborty et al., 2021).

Despite these advances, a critical gap persists: existing literature largely treats problematization, Rogerian argument and ABI as discrete paradigms with limited attention to their integrative potential as a unified epistemic framework for academic writing. Furthermore, their combined application remains underexplored in Global South contexts, where epistemic plurality and decolonial perspectives are especially significant. Addressing this gap, the present study advances an integrated conceptual synthesis that positions argumentation not merely as a rhetorical or pedagogical tool, but as a reflexive, pluralistic and inquiry-driven epistemic practice of knowledge construction.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative conceptual synthesis approach to examine how problematization, Rogerian argument and Argumentation-Based Inquiry (ABI) collectively reconceptualize academic writing as an epistemic and inquiry-driven process. Grounded in

a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, the study views knowledge as socially situated and co-constructed through scholarly interpretation and dialogue (Gabi, 2022; Neupane, 2021). Accordingly, it prioritizes theoretical integration and conceptual refinement over empirical generalization.

Data were drawn from a wide range of interdisciplinary literature spanning rhetoric and composition studies, qualitative methodology, educational theory and socio-ecological research. The analytical corpus included both foundational and contemporary works. Sources were identified through purposive, theory-driven searches in Scopus, JSTOR and Google Scholar using keywords such as “argumentation as inquiry,” “problematization,” “Rogerian argument,” “argumentation-based inquiry,” and “epistemic writing.” Inclusion criteria prioritized peer-reviewed articles, influential books and conceptually significant book chapters published between 2010 and 2025 while purely descriptive, technical or non-theoretical studies were excluded.

The analysis followed an iterative thematic synthesis process consisting of three main stages: (i) identification of core constructs such as reflexivity, assumption interrogation, dialogic engagement and epistemic pluralism; (ii) examination of cross-paradigmatic relationships, tensions and intersections; and (iii) synthesis and integration into a coherent conceptual framework. Analytical rigor was maintained through continuous researcher reflexivity, constant comparison of sources and careful attention to diverse epistemic perspectives, particularly those emerging from Global South scholarship. Although this study is not empirically driven, the qualitative conceptual synthesis methodology is especially well-suited for theory-building and advancing integrative scholarship in the emerging domain of argumentation as scholarly inquiry.

Findings and Discussion

The synthesis demonstrates that when academic argumentation is reconceptualized as scholarly inquiry, it operates as a dynamic and multidimensional epistemic practice. The integration of problematization, Rogerian argument, and Argumentation-Based Inquiry (ABI) significantly enriches this practice by enhancing analytical rigor, reflexivity, ethical awareness and epistemic inclusivity. Collectively, these paradigms transform argumentation from a collection of discrete rhetorical or pedagogical tools into a cohesive, inquiry-driven process through which knowledge is critically generated, negotiated and refined across diverse epistemological contexts. This understanding directly builds upon the reconceptualization of academic writing presented in the introduction and the theoretical foundations established in the review of literature.

Argumentation as Structured and Reflexive Epistemic Practice

The analysis confirms that scholarly argumentation remains foundational to academic inquiry, requiring clearly articulated claims supported by evidence, logical coherence, and transparent reasoning (Graff & Birkenstein, 2018). Toulmin's (2003) model continues to offer a robust structural foundation for linking claims, data, warrants, and rebuttals, thereby situating arguments within broader scholarly dialogues. However, consistent with contemporary perspectives, argumentation extends beyond structural form toward a reflexive orientation in which knowledge claims are continuously interrogated and reconstructed (Bean, 2011; Gabi, 2022). In this sense, academic writing emerges as an evolving epistemic practice that balances objectivity with interpretive reflexivity and methodological transparency. This aligns closely with the reconceptualization of writing as inquiry articulated in the introduction and the epistemological shifts discussed in the review of literature.

Problematization as Epistemic Disruption and Inquiry Reorientation

A central finding of this study is that problematization functions as a powerful epistemic mechanism that disrupts taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in dominant scholarly discourses (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). Rather than engaging in conventional “gap-spotting,” problematization generates more generative research questions by interrogating in-house, root-metaphor, and ideological assumptions. This approach enables deeper theoretical innovation and reflexive critique.

In socio-ecological research, this function is particularly evident. In Himalayan scholarship, dominant climate and sustainability narratives are critically reframed through localized and experiential perspectives. For instance, in his work on “Changing Weather-Worlds,” Poudel (2025) illustrates how environmental knowledge can be reinterpreted as relational and culturally embedded rather than universally quantifiable. Similarly, Childs et al. (2021) have documented the interactions between religion, disaster and lived experiences in the context of the 2015 Nepal earthquake. Such applications demonstrate that problematization not only enhances analytical depth but also advances epistemic justice by foregrounding marginalized knowledge systems (Shrestha, 2023; Gurung, 2024).

Rogerian Argument as Dialogic and Integrative Reasoning

Complementing problematization's critical orientation, Rogerian argument shifts academic reasoning from adversarial confrontation toward dialogic engagement. This paradigm emphasizes fair representation of diverse viewpoints, identification of common ground

and the construction of integrative solutions rather than winning debates (Ramage et al., 2018). By fostering empathy and inclusivity, Rogerian argument reduces epistemic fragmentation and enhances the communicative and ethical dimensions of scholarly inquiry (Facione, 2011; Gabi, 2022).

This dialogic orientation proves especially valuable in polarized academic and policy domains. In pedagogical contexts, it supports collaborative learning by encouraging open dialogue and reducing defensive reasoning, thereby reinforcing academic writing as a socially situated and participatory practice.

Argumentation-Based Inquiry (ABI) as Operational Integration

While problematization and Rogerian argument provide critical and dialogic foundations, ABI operationalizes these principles within structured inquiry processes. The synthesis shows that ABI embeds argumentation in iterative cycles of claim formulation, evidence evaluation and conceptual refinement. Empirical evidence indicates that ABI significantly enhances higher-order cognitive skills, including analysis, synthesis and evaluation while improving academic performance and engagement (Memiş & Ergün, 2023).

Importantly, ABI bridges theory and practice by translating the critical questioning of problematization and the empathetic engagement of Rogerian argument into concrete pedagogical strategies. This integration addresses a key gap identified in the Literature Review by offering an applied framework for enacting argumentation in educational settings.

The Integrated Epistemic Argumentation Framework

The most significant contribution of this study is the Integrated Epistemic Argumentation Framework (IEAF). This framework brings together three paradigms as interdependent and mutually reinforcing dimensions of scholarly inquiry:

- Problematization acts as the critical engine by disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions and generating more generative and theoretically interesting research questions.
- Rogerian argument provides the relational foundation through empathetic engagement, fair representation of diverse viewpoints, and collaborative synthesis.
- Argumentation-Based Inquiry (ABI) supplies the operational structure through iterative cycles of claim formulation, evidence evaluation, and conceptual refinement.

In Himalayan socio-ecological contexts, the IEAF demonstrates strong practical potential. Traditional institutions such as *thiti* can be critically problematized, dialogically engaged with modern scientific frameworks and systematically refined through ABI cycles (Poudel, 2024a). This integrated process enables scholars to produce knowledge that is both academically rigorous and deeply culturally grounded, thereby advancing epistemic inclusivity.

Pedagogical, Epistemic and Contextual Implications

The proposed framework carries important implications for both pedagogy and research. In higher education, integrating problematization, Rogerian dialogue and ABI transform academic writing from a product-oriented task into a process-oriented inquiry practice. Specific strategies such as assumption-challenging exercises, dialogic role-playing and structured argumentation cycles can enhance critical thinking, analytical reasoning and collaborative learning (Chauhan, 2022; Memiş & Ergün, 2023).

Beyond pedagogy, the framework contributes to ongoing debates on epistemic justice and decolonial knowledge production. It addresses documented challenges in ESL/EFL and Global South academic writing contexts where students often struggle with argument construction and critical engagement due to limited exposure to inquiry-driven approaches (Pandit, 2025). By legitimizing diverse ways of knowing and challenging Western-centric epistemologies, the IEAF supports more pluralistic and inclusive scholarly practices (Neupane, 2021; Ghanbari & Salari, 2022).

Critical Reflections and Future Directions

Despite its strengths, the application of this integrated approach is not without challenges. Shifting from adversarial to dialogic and reflexive argumentation may encounter resistance in traditional academic cultures and implementing ABI-based pedagogies requires significant time and skilled facilitation. Nevertheless, the framework's interdisciplinary applicability strengthens both interpretive depth in qualitative research and analytical rigor in empirical studies.

In an era marked by digital transformation and generative artificial intelligence, these paradigms gain renewed relevance. They offer critical tools for evaluating knowledge claims, maintaining reflexivity and ensuring ethical engagement in AI-mediated scholarly environments. Future research should empirically test the IEAF across diverse disciplinary, linguistic, and technological contexts to validate and refine its applicability.

Overall, the findings confirm that argumentation, when reconceptualized through the integration of problematization, Rogerian argument and ABI evolves into a reflexive, dialogic and context-sensitive epistemic practice. This approach expands academic writing beyond mere persuasion toward more inclusive and collaborative forms of knowledge construction thereby advancing equitable and pluralistic global academic discourse.

Conclusion

This study reconceptualizes academic writing as an epistemic and inquiry-driven practice in which argumentation functions not merely as rhetorical persuasion but as a reflexive process of knowledge construction. By integrating problematization, Rogerian argument and Argumentation-Based Inquiry (ABI), the study proposes a unified conceptual framework-the Integrated Epistemic Argumentation Framework (IEAF) that repositions scholarly writing as a dynamic, dialogic and context-sensitive mode of inquiry. This integration challenges conventional understandings of argumentation as linear or adversarial, instead emphasizing its role in fostering epistemic pluralism, critical reflexivity and collaborative knowledge production.

The findings demonstrate that problematization enables the interrogation of implicit assumptions within dominant knowledge systems, Rogerian argument facilitates empathetic and inclusive scholarly dialogue and ABI operationalizes these orientations through structured cycles of inquiry and evidence-based reasoning. Together, these paradigms expand both the analytical and pedagogical boundaries of academic writing by effectively bridging theoretical critique with applied inquiry processes. Their relevance is particularly pronounced in addressing Western-centric biases in knowledge production, especially when applied to Global South contexts such as Himalayan socio-ecological research.

Theoretically, the study builds upon and extends key traditions in argumentation and knowledge construction, including Toulmin's (2003) model of structured argument, problematization (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011), dialogic reasoning in Rogerian approaches (Ramage et al., 2018) and ABI as a pedagogical framework (Memiş & Ergün, 2023). This integrated perspective illustrates how scholarly argumentation can evolve toward more inclusive, reflexive and context-sensitive forms of knowledge production thereby contributing to an emerging epistemic paradigm in academic writing.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its reliance on conceptual synthesis rather than empirical validation. Future research should therefore empirically test the proposed Integrated Epistemic Argumentation Framework (IEAF) across diverse

disciplinary, linguistic and technological contexts, including artificial intelligence mediated academic writing environments. Overall, the study underscores the importance of reimagining argumentation as an integrated epistemic practice that supports a more inclusive, reflexive and collaborative global academic discourse.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author

Author Introduction

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