

# Using a Case Study to Teach the (Non)Subtleties of Language: Logical Fallacies and Principles of Conversational Coherence

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## ABSTRACT

This paper centers on a practical and relevant way to teach logical fallacies and how to avoid them to English as a second language learners in the Balkan region. The paper begins with a brief overview of the importance of teaching subtleties of language, such as logical fallacies and principles of conversational coherence and then proceeds to describe a rather heated written exchange between the editors of the Albanian daily newspaper Shekulli and representatives of the U.S. Embassy. In 2011, Shekulli published a long editorial without adding any statement saying that the views expressed in the article did not represent the stand of the newspaper. Immediately after this editorial, the US Embassy issued a brief statement accusing this newspaper of using an ad hominem argument when they explicitly referred to the ambassador's Asian looks and his short stature. In their statement, the Embassy conveyed information regarding money the U.S. government had donated to the Albanian Media Institute for the qualification of Albania journalists. The implication being that the journalists of this newspaper either did not want to attend the qualification courses organized by the Institute or they could not understand the modern principles of newspaper writing. A few days later the Dutch embassy in Tirana severed relations with Shekulli, accusing its editors of engaging in slander. Description of the case is followed by an analysis, with a focus on the logical fallacies evident in the discourse (e.g., ad hominem arguments, non sequiturs, and glittering generalities). The paper concludes with lesson plans for how the case can be used to teach not only logical fallacies but also principles of conversational coherence (Grice, 1989) by leading students through a series of exercises in which they reimagine and reconstruct the exchange in ways that produce different and perhaps more favorable outcomes.