

Assertion or Fact?

In conventional English rhetoric, we present an assertion before the facts that give clarity and credibility to the assertion. Also, because facts cannot be disputed, they are regarded as stronger credibility support than assertions are.

Sometimes a writer will disguise his opinion as a fact. For example, he might say “Most people think that he is corrupt,” when in fact it is his opinion that most people think so. Such statements have to be supported by *undeniable* facts.

Compare the individual features (1 → 1, 2 → 2, etc.) of assertions and facts.

an assertion

1. what the writer or speaker *believes* to be true
2. opinion
3. subjective
4. logical support

a fact

1. something that is *undeniably* true
2. not opinion
3. objective
4. concrete support

Distinguishing between assertion and fact

To give credibility to what we say and write, we must know how to distinguish between assertion and fact, and we must know how to use assertion and fact in the most effective way. First, let’s learn how to distinguish. In this “argument,” can you tell which items are facts and which are assertions?

- a. He’s a poor politician.
- b. He’s ignorant.
- c. He’s corrupt.
- d. In 2004 he was convicted of receiving bribery.

Only *d* is a fact. The other items are assertions.

Here’s another example.

Five people were indicted last week accused of violating the National Security Law, contacting North Korean agents, making unauthorized visits to North Korea and leaking confidential information to the North. Investigators have characterized the case as possibly the largest pro-North Korean spy case since 2000, when President Kim Dae-jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il held a historic summit meeting. Among the five indicted are Choi Ki-young, Democratic Labor Party deputy secretary general, and Lee Jung-hun, a former member of the DLP’s central committee. The DLP has yet to make an official statement regarding the case, despite serious charges that include the passing on of information such as the ideological orientations of more than 340 party officials and minutes of party meetings. On the day of the indictment, the DLP issued no official statement even as the Grand National Party accused it of being connected to espionage activities. Instead, the party spokesperson, in response to a reporter’s question, said that the truth will be revealed in court. This silence is disappointing to the more than 10 percent of the electorate who voted for the DLP in the 2004 general elections. When the DLP won its seats in the National Assembly, this was seen as a substantial political development. Expectations were high that the party would represent its constituents in the mainstream political arena, giving voice to the various demands of the hitherto underrepresented social minorities and the poor working class. If the DLP fails launch its own investigation into the allegations, it will crush those hopes and it may be a long time before a progressive party is allowed back into mainstream politics. The party and its leadership must remember how difficult it was to become part of the political system, to be heard in the National Assembly. It is imperative that the party conduct its own internal investigation into the matter, as a responsible political party should.

Assertion	Fact	Presented as fact, but ?
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In relation to this, you might also want to read “Point Fronting in Speaking and Writing,” at E>G, Composition.