

An Analysis of Argument of Students' Argumentative Essay by Using Toulmin Model

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ABSTRACT

Argumentative essay is one kind of essay in which the writer attempts to encourage the readers to agree with his/her opinion explained in the text. This research aims to investigate the argument written by students in writing argumentative essay by using Toulmin model. Based on this model each argument is made up of four components, including claim, data, counterargument, and rebuttal. The data were taken from the argumentative essay written by the fifth semester students in undergraduate program of English Education Department at UMTS Padangsidimpuan. Based on the result of the research, it was revealed that the most common parts of argument that often provided by students in their argumentative essay were claim and data. Average students' argumentative essay contained at least a claim that was backed by three points of evidence. The result of the data also showed that the quality of argumentation written by students dropped below under level 2 in which students composed the arguments containing a claim and data, but did not provide any rebuttals in their argumentative essay.

Keywords: *Argument, argumentation, argumentative essay, Toulmin model*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a way to communicate with others without seeing the interlocutor, look at the gesture or facial expression. However, it could also be very important for communication. The skill of writing is needed in many contexts into every part of life, such as when someone wants to write an email, to narrate a memorable moment that happened in dairy, and even, for students that are expected to write essay during their writing class [1]. Thus for students, writing becomes one of the tool of communication in which they construct the text to share their feelings and ideas by giving arguments to convince the readers. Students are supposed to respond to what they have read and to reflect about it in writing. Moreover, in offering the arguments in organized text, they will be demanded to evaluate the reading, giving a valuable claim, approve it with appropriate reasons [2].

Argumentative essay is one of the genre of essays that commonly used by students [3]. Students need to give argument related to the issue that will be written about. They establish a position on a given or chosen topic and then use evidence to persuade the audience to see things from their point of view. In writing good argumentative essay, students are expected to have skill in argumentation [4]. Argumentation is the process of making statements and providing arguments for justifying opinions in order to affect others [5]. Students tend to point out which opinions are stronger than those by offering claims, and then test those viewpoints in

seeing how good they actually are [6]. Therefore, it has been proposed that in writing argumentative essay, the writer should stand strong, predict the audience's stance, defend his/her own view, recognize the alternative opinions, and if possible, refute the contradictory positions [7].

It has been justified by many researchers that writing argumentative essay becomes the most difficult type of essay writing. The factors for challenges faced during the writing argumentative essay include the development of cognitive taxing arguments, and students may not have a structured argument scheme [8]. In the same line, many students struggle with the process of argument in which they either do not realize that they are supposed to build an argument in their essay or have trouble in doing the same [9]. When they are asked to argue for their opinions on any topic, students often do not give any real arguments to believe their opinions are correct. An essay is written, but not an argument [6].

Each argument consists of three primary components, namely claim, data, and warrant. And there are three other additional components, namely qualifier, backing, and rebuttal [10]. Particularly, in writing argumentative essay, this structure has been used widely in accounting for the different elements that mark the advance of an argument [11]. This Toulmin model is considered as efficient way to evaluate the argument. In its different sections, writers/readers divide a statement and decide how successfully these parts engage in the entire whole. They define the argument's assertion,

reasons, proof them, and determine the usefulness of each through this model [12]. This Toulmin model of argument paradigm, therefore, has been commonly employed in teaching and studying argumentative essay [13].

There are some advantages of Toulmin model to be applied in writing argumentative essay. This model is considered scalable, useful as a heuristic, and can even be taught effectively [14]. The fact that it subsumes inductive, deductive and analogical reasoning lies in its simplicity. Its importance as heuristic is shown in the construction of knowledge as constructed stages. and it is used successfully to evaluate the argument component. So, this model helps unskilled writers to produce a simple argument [15]. Furthermore, it is suggested that leading to a successful argumentative writing, Toulmin model of argument is essential [11]. Therefore, through this model the argumentation of students' argumentative essay can be analyzed.

Some researchers have conducted the research related to the analysis of argument structure or element in the context of argumentative writing. It was found that students commonly provided the claim in their essay. Half of them did not provide such data, and counterclaim, they also did not provide evidence for counterclaims and omitted the conclusion in their writing [16]. The argumentative papers of L2 University students included two fundamental elements of argument they are claim and ground [11]. Students tend to state their own claims through one-side viewpoint, hence, their essay writing become informative rather than persuasive [17], [18].

English department students are expected to have a good skill in writing argumentative essay. It means students need to have an understanding of how to give and develop arguments when composing this essay. In fact, however, students still have difficulties in doing so. Most students write argumentatively by giving one side point of view. It makes their essay informative rather than persuasive. Students need to include argument elements based on Toulmin model of argument in getting good quality of argumentative essay.

Based on explanation above, the researcher wants to investigate about argument of argumentative essay by using Toulmin model that written by fifth semester English Department students at UMTS Padangsidempuan.

2. RELATED THEORIES

a. Argumentative Essay

One of the aims of writing essay is to persuade readers to agree with the writer's view mentioned in the text. This essay is one of the most common genres to be written by undergraduate students. Writing this essay is defined as a critical issue, since it is the sort of essay used

in scholarly writing such as writing papers, essays, or thesis [19]. Argumentative essay is also viewed as a dynamic practice that allows students to accept a certain point of view and attempt to persuade the reader to take the same view or take a same response [20] This essay is known as the sort of essay that best represents the logical thought of EFL learners. Learning to think objectively in the language classroom will be achieved by the method of learning to write argumentative essay.

It can be concluded that argumentative essay is the type of essay that includes of arguments on all aspects of an issue, so students are expected to think objectively in their essay. They have to examine the subject, compile, produce, and analyze data, and concisely create a stance on the subject. By presenting explanations and the facts to concern others, students are required to learn how to justify and support the points.

In argumentative discourse, there are usually three significant parts. They are introduction, body paragraph, and conclusion.

1. Introduction. The function of this part is to catch readers' attention; in a thesis statement, it requires the main argument of the essay and will represent the ideas of the body paragraph [21].
2. Body paragraph. The longest component that addresses the sub points in depth and describe the influencing principle in the main idea is called as body paragraph [21].
3. Conclusion. When thesis statement has been provided, explaining the contexts facts, presenting the proof, stating the standpoint and refuting the objections in the argumentative essay, finally, the writer could finish writing the essay. this conclusion should become the perfect ending that requires to be effective and beneficial [22].

b. Toulmin Model of Argumentation

Argumentation is known to be component of the reason which implies a collection or sharing of opinions. It is a statement that incorporates facts or an appropriate purpose to influence and inform others orally and written [23]. Wahid &Warni Argumentative method and its result are extended to argumentation, and its concept also includes both of them.

In stating an opinion, the first stage is by giving inference, expectation, perception, or belief, and the claim is the point raised to be supported. The next stage is intending knowledge to support the argument and to overcome its potential threat. The third feature is the reason or warrant that ties the information to the argument. These three stages are known to be claim, data, and warrant [10] Three other additional stages in stating opinion are offering resources to the linking between claim and data, it is referred to as baking. And then,

emphasizing the relative importance of warrants in justifying the reasons they validate which is known as qualifier. And the last is, suspecting some appeals and listing cases where the justification does not extend, so the rebuttal is provided [24].

3. METHOD

This research is classified into a descriptive research. It is used to identify the elements of argument and the quality of argumentation that written by students in argumentative essay by using Toulmin model. The data were taken from students' argumentative essay by the fifth semester English Department students at UMTS Padangsidempuan. There were 30 students who would be encouraged to compose an argumentative essay. Two topics were selected by the researcher, and then, students had to choose one topic for their argumentative writing. The topics were: whether new organization or student activities need to be established in UMTS; and, whether every student of UMTS should be required to take "Kemuhammadiyah" course.

After collecting the data, students' argumentative essay was analyzed. In this case, the researcher used a rubric based on Knudson, Nusbaum & Kardash, and Qin & Karabacak which is modified relying on Toulmin model of argument [25]. There are six elements of argument namely claim, data, counterargument claim, counterargument data, rebuttal claim, and rebuttal data. Students' essay was scored on frequencies of each of these elements in the rubric. The identification of each elements is often focused on semantic construct and linguistic components [26], [27]. Some linguistic patterns have been used in defining statements, like *I guess, I assume, in my opinion, I agree, I accept*. Explicit subordinators were also used to classify data, for example, *since, for that reason, consequently, for one thing*. While, a variety of indicator phrases words have also been identified, for instance, *it is stated that, ...but, ...a few students agree that, ...but, though, whereas, despite the fact* [11].

In addition, to determine the quality of students' argumentative essay Erduran's analytical framework was used [28], which is adapted from Toulmin model of argument.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis findings, the argument elements of students' argumentative essay of English department at UMTS Padangsidempuan is displayed in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Argument elements of students' argumentative essay based on Toulmin model

Argument Elements	Average score of Argument Elements
Claim	0.87
Data	1.73
Counterargument claim	0.6
Counterargument data	0.37
Rebuttal claim	0
Rebuttal data	0

The table showed that the average number of claim was 0.87, data was 1.73, counterargument claim was 0.6, counterargument data was 0.37, and for rebuttal claim and rebuttal data had the same result indicating that students did not provide both of this element of argument in their argumentative essay. The most common elements of argument that used by students are claim and data. Students' argumentative essay were contained a claim and to give the evidence to claim there were three pieces of data were used. Based on this result, therefore, it can be inferred that the quality of argumentation of students' essay was fallen under the level 2 based on the framework proposed by Erduran et.al.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The result of the research has shown that claim and data are parts of arguments that most often used by students in writing argumentative essay. the other parts, however, such as counterargument claim and counterargument data were less provided. Even, there is no rebuttal elements that used by students in their argumentative essay. Claim and data are included into main elements of argument that proposed by Toulmin. The used of other argument elements are crucial in contributing an effective argumentative essay.

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