An Analysis of Toulmin Elements in Indonesian Male and Female EFL Learners' Argumentative Writing

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ABSTRACT

Argumentative writing is an essential aspect of students' academic life. Students are commonly required to produce this type of writing as it reflects their ability to think logically and critically. Nevertheless, it may prove to be quite challenging for students, especially for Indonesian EFL learners as they may not be accustomed to writing this kind of text in English. There are some specific elements that must be present for a work to be considered a good argumentative writing, and these elements may be difficult to formulate when writing in another language. To understand the elements of an argumentative writing, one model that is commonly used is the one proposed by the contemporary British philosopher Stephen Toulmin, i.e., the Toulmin's Argument Pattern (TAP). Some of the key elements highlighted in this model include claim, reasons, evidence, warrants, and rebuttals. Although there have been several studies that focused on the implementation of this model to analyze argumentative writings, not many have directly compared the writings of Indonesian male and female EFL learners. Hence, this study is an attempt to explore how male and female learners from Indonesia produce argumentative writings. More specifically, whether they utilize the elements of argument structures similarly or differently. The data is taken from the International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE), with a total of 30 pieces of writing that are analyzed. This is divided evenly between the two groups, i.e., 15 writings from male learners and 15 writings from female learners. The data is analyzed qualitatively as no specific calculations are involved when comparing the results from both groups. The findings reveal that only two of the six elements are employed by the learners in their writings, and

that there are some similarities and differences in the way the male and female learners utilize the elements in their paragraphs.

INTRODUCTION

Argumentative writing is a type of writing that is commonly found in the academic field. During their studies, students are commonly asked to produce this kind of writing as it reflects their logical and critical thinking. Nonetheless, to be able to write a good piece of argumentative writing can prove to be quite challenging, especially if students have to write it in another language such as English. A good argumentative text requires certain key elements to be present, and some of these elements might be difficult to formulate in a foreign language.

With regards to analyzing the elements of argumentative writing, one model that is commonly used is the one proposed by Stephen Toulmin, namely Toulmin's Argument Pattern (TAP). Some of the key elements highlighted in this model include claims, reasons, evidence, warrants, and rebuttals. Studies have been conducted in which this model is implemented to analyze various argumentative texts (Qin & Karabacak, 2010; Dawson & Carson, 2016; Syerliana, Muslim and Setiawan, 2018; Lazarou and Erduran, 2020). Nevertheless, there are not many studies which have directly compared the writings of Indonesian male and female EFL learners. Hence, this study is an attempt to investigate how male and female learners from Indonesia produce argumentative writings. More specifically, whether they utilize the elements of argument structures similarly or differently. Based on this, the writers propose the following two research questions.

1) What elements of argument structures can be found in the Indonesian EFL learners' argumentative writings based on the adapted Toulmin model?
2) How do the writings of the Indonesian male and female EFL learners compare in terms of the utilization of the elements of argument structures?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Considering that Toulmin's Argument Pattern (TAP) is an essential aspect of the current research, it is briefly described in this section. Based on this model, there are several key elements that characterize argumentative writings, which include **claim, reason, evidence, warrant, qualifier,** and **rebuttal**. The claim is essentially the main argument that is

highlighted, and this claim is usually supported by several reasons and supporting evidence. A warrant is the link between the claim and the reasons (Crusius & Channell, 2015). However, it is usually not explicitly stated, so the readers have to deduce it by themselves using their logical thinking. A qualifier is an expression that limits or clarifies the claim (Crusius & Channell, 2015). Some example expressions that can function as qualifiers are "although," "in most cases," and "on the whole." As for rebuttal, it is basically "a statement that shows that the writer has anticipated counterarguments and diffused them by showing their flaws" (Crusius & Channell, 2015, p. 42). In other words, when counterarguments are made on a writer's claim, the writer must prepare a statement that can refute or negate said counterarguments.

Although there are essentially 6 elements in Toulmin's model, not all of them are used in this research. More specifically, an adapted version of this model is employed here which is taken from Qin & Karabacak's (2010) study. In this adapted version, there are 6 elements that are highlighted, **namely claim, data, counterargument claim, counterargument data, rebuttal claim,** and **rebuttal data**. 'Data' here basically encompasses reason and evidence. A summary of the definition and examples of these 6 elements can be found below.

Table 1:
Definitions and Examples of the adapted six elements of Toulmin's Mode

Elements	Definition with Illustrative Examples
Claim	**Definition**: An assertion in response to a contentious topic or problem **Example**: *Foreign language learning is not essential for internationalization.*
Data	**Definition**: Evidence to support a claim. It can take various forms, such as facts, statistics, anecdotes, research studies, expert opinions, definitions, analogies, and logical explanations. **Example:** 1. *An old Chinese lady with no knowledge of English active in international art exchange because of her great skill in paper-cutting.* (anecdote) 2. *Countries such as Germany, France, Italy and Japan, though much more internationalized than China, do not place as much emphasis on English learning as China.* (fact)
Counterargument claim	**Definition**: The possible opposing views that can challenge the validity of a writers' claim; these opposing views can also be supported by data (Németh and Kormos, 2001) **Example:** *The importance of English education has been recognized by many countries in the world, including developed European countries.*
Counterargument data	**Definition**: Evidence to support a counterargument claim **Example:** 1. *Under a 1990 law, all Spanish schoolchildren are now taught a foreign language (98% choose English) from the age of 8 and in some regions start at 6.* (fact) 2. *In the Madrid region there are 26 bilingual schools and colleges in which courses--with the exception of Spanish literature and mathematics--are taught in English; by 2007 there will be 110.* (fact)
Rebuttal claim	**Definition**: Statements in which the writer responds to a counter-argument by pointing out the possible weakness in the claim, data, or warrant, such as logical fallacies, insufficient support, invalid assumptions, and immoral values (Ramage and Bean, 1999) **Example:** *The French government, one of the important European countries, is trying all the means to resist the spread of English and preserve their own language.*
Rebuttal data	**Definition**: Evidence to support a rebuttal claim **Example:** 1. *The French have spent billions on promoting their language in French-speaking territories in Africa and the Pacific.* (fact) 2. *The French government has imposed sanctions on officials or agencies using Americanisms or English phrases where a French equivalent exists.* (fact)

Source: Qin & Karabacak (2010)

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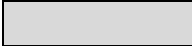*Ardi Nugroho, Rex Stardy*

METHOD

The source of data for the current study is taken from the International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE). More specifically, a total of 30 writings from Indonesian EFL learners are randomly selected and used in this research. This is divided evenly between the two gender groups, i.e., 15 writings from male learners and 15 writings from female learners. The topic of the writings is all the same, i.e., talking about part-time jobs for college or university students. The length of the writings range from approximately 200-300 words as the learners were only asked to write one paragraph. The learners are mostly between the ages of 18 to 22 years old, and their CEFR level are all B1 and B2, or it can be said that their English proficiency is at the intermediate level.

The data is analyzed qualitatively using Toulmin's Argument Pattern (TAP) to discover what elements of argument structures can be found in the learners' writings. Nonetheless, the one that is employed in this study is the adapted version of TAP (Qin & Karabacak, 2010), with the six elements previously described, i.e., claim, data, counterargument claim, counterargument data, rebuttal claim, and rebuttal data. Lastly, to answer the second research question, the result of the analysis of the elements from both groups are compared to find out whether there are any similarities and differences in terms of how the male and female learners employ the elements of argument structures in their writings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Before going into more specifics regarding the results of the data analysis for all 30 pieces of writings from the Indonesian male and female EFL learners, an example paragraph from each group is presented and briefly elaborated. In order to identify the elements in the paragraphs more easily, the coding below can be used as reference.

= claim
= data
= counterargument claim
= counterargument data
= rebuttal claim
= rebuttal data

Example Data 1: Indonesian Male Learner's Argumentative Writing

[Claim 1] As a college student, it is important to have a part time job. It have many benefit for them. [Data 1] The first benefit is it can up his / her experience about working before they have a real job. Students will need to know how they act at work place, what they must do, and how they use their ability at work. And they need to know too how they talk with the boss, what they need to do to earn a raise, and learn a socialism at their work place. [Data 2] The second benefit is to help their parents about school funds. Have a part time job can help students to decrease their parents works, or to up his month income. It is useful for them that live in poor families and have low month income. [Data 3] The third benefit is it can help the preparation of a student before they have a real job. So students will not surprised when they feel something different from working. Because the level of difficulties between the real life at work place and the college life is really different. At college, we only get frustated from the homework or study things. But at work we can get frustrated from our boss, our enemy, or even our friends.

Based on the paragraph above, it can be seen that the writer only employed two out of the six elements of argument structures, namely claim and data. The paragraph starts with the writer's view regarding part time jobs for college or university students, and the rest of the paragraph is the data to support why he thinks that part time jobs are important for college students. There are three main reasons that the writer included to justify his claim, each of which are elaborated quite nicely. Although, it would seem that the last one is somewhat similar to the first. Nonetheless, the writer decided to consider that as a separate reasoning.

Example Data 2: Indonesian Female Learner's Argumentative Writing

[Claim 1] There are three reason why I agree that a college student should have a part time job. [Data 1] First of all, They will learn how to manage the money effectively. With worked as a part time, they will get more money and they can commute their parent's burden with help to pay their school. It is not only money that the student must be able to manage effectively. [Data 2] The student will learn how to manage time too. They will learn to divide their time between work and study. This way, they become an expert in time management if they can balancing part time work with their studies. So, all their time won't be wasted because of doing activity that is not too important or not productive. [Data 3] And the last, the student will get more friends outside the university. It can be hard to meet people when at

university or at least a different crowd of people. But If you work outside the university, you will meet lots of new people, making new friends which can be refreshing when university becomes a bit stale and suffocating. Some people may disagree with me, **[Claim 2]** but I believe there are more benefits for people who work part time while studying.

In the second example paragraph, it is found that the writer also utilized only two elements of argument structures, i.e., claim and data. The first claim can be found at the very beginning of the paragraph. Similar to the previous paragraph, the writer also agrees that college students should have part time jobs, and this claim is further supported by three data or reasons. At the very end of the paragraph, the writer makes another claim, more specifically that there are benefits to working part time while studying. This is more or less in line with the original claim as she does indeed agree that college students should take part time jobs.

As we have seen some examples of how these elements are incorporated in the learners' writings, let us now take a look at the summary of the results for all 30 paragraphs that have been analyzed, which can be found in the table below.

Table 2:
Summary of Elements of Argument Structures in Indonesian Male and Female EFL Learners' Argumentative Writings

Elements of Argument Structures	Male Learners	Female Learners	Total
Claim	21	24	**45**
Data	43	48	**91**
Counterargument Claim	0	0	**0**
Counterargument Data	0	0	**0**
Rebuttal Claim	0	0	**0**
Rebuttal Data	0	0	**0**
Total	**64**	**72**	

From the table above, it is evident that 'data' is the most frequently used element of argument structure in the learners' writings. In total, it is employed 91 times throughout all 30 paragraphs that are analyzed. The second element that can be found most frequently is 'claim,' with a total occurrence of 45. As for the other four elements, it can be seen that they are not utilized at all by the Indonesian learners in their paragraphs.

In terms of the comparison between the elements of argument structure that is employed by the male and female learners, the results show that there is a slight difference between the number of elements used in their writings. More specifically, the female learners incorporated more elements compared to the male learners, i.e., 72 and 64 for the females and

males respectively. In terms of the types of elements, it can be seen that they are both similar in the sense that both gender groups used more 'data' in their paragraphs compared to 'claims.' The frequencies for each are also not too different, with the males having 21 claims and 43 data, while the females have 24 claims and 48 data.

Discussion

With regards to the first research question proposed for this research, there are several important points worth discussing. First of all, in terms of the elements of argument structures, as has been mentioned above, the most frequently used element is the 'data' for the main claim of the paragraph. This shows that most of the writers have already understood that a good argumentative paragraph should have at least one specific main claim which should then be supported by several data. Most of the writers have done this quite well since most of the claims are supported by around two or three data. In other words, in terms of the basic argumentative structure, most of the learners already have the correct idea. Although, it should be noted that there is one paragraph written by a male learner that did not have any clear and specific claim at all. The paragraph mostly consisted of data. Instead of starting off the paragraph with a claim of whether students should or should not take part time jobs while studying in college or university, the paragraph starts by providing a brief definition of part time jobs. It is also worth mentioning that some paragraphs included more than three data. However, considering that the paragraphs themselves were only around 200-300 words, the paragraphs with more than three data ended up having data that were not well elaborated, at least compared to the paragraphs that only had two or three.

Second, with regards to the main 'claim' itself, although it is the second highest element that is found in these paragraphs, it should be noted that most paragraphs have two claims, but the second claim is mostly just a repetition of the first one. Simply put, the first main claim is normally stated at the beginning of the paragraph, while the second claim is found at the end of the paragraph, but it is merely a paraphrase of the same claim from the beginning. The purpose of doing such a thing is to emphasize the writer's main claim and remind the readers at the end of the paragraph as a closing statement. This is found in almost all paragraphs from the two groups, which shows that this kind of usage for claim is a common practice in argumentative writing. In terms of the claims themselves, most of the paragraphs supported part time jobs for college or university students. In other words, most of the writers agreed that part time jobs are beneficial for students and that they should take them while studying.

Lastly, in terms of the other elements of argument structure, namely the 'counterargument claim,' 'counterargument data,' 'rebuttal claim,' and 'rebuttal data,' the reasoning behind their absence in the learners' paragraphs is perhaps due to the fact that the paragraphs were mostly

focused on developing the main claim stated at the beginning of the paragraph. In other words, the writers did not really try to develop the paragraph further by including arguments that were contradictory to the main claim. They instead focused solely on justifying the main claim by providing supporting reasons or data. Additionally, it is possible that the word limitation contributed to the nonexistence of the other elements, in the sense that since the paragraphs were only 200-300 words long, perhaps the writers felt that it would not be wise to include too many different elements as it would make the paragraph less focused and not developed well enough. Last but not least, it may also be the case that Indonesian learners are accustomed to making argumentative paragraphs in this way. To be exact, the writers did not include other elements beside the main claim and data to support it since they are normally taught to write paragraphs like this. Speaking based on personal experience in teaching writing, the writers also felt that they usually taught the students to focus only one main claim and several supporting data. Including arguments that go against the main claim can be considered as irrelevant sentences as they do not directly support the main claim of the paragraph.

As for the second research question regarding the comparison between the two groups of learners, there are two main points worth highlighting. Firstly, both groups are generally quite similar in their usage of the elements of argument structures. This is shown from the similar amounts of elements used in their writings. Most of the learners from each of the groups included one or two claims in their paragraphs, all of which are supported by around two or three data. This goes to show that both groups have similar ideas on how to write a proper argumentative piece of writing.

Lastly, it should be underlined that even though both male and female learners employed the elements quite similarly (i.e., they both employed 'data' the most), the female learners incorporated the two elements more frequently than the males in their writings. Even though the overall total is not too significantly different, it can still be assumed that the female learners ended up using more claims and data since they are more 'diligent' than the males, in the sense that they put more effort in elaborating and justifying their claims. The males on the other hand did not seem to try and develop their arguments too much, as some of them merely included only two data to support the main claim of the paragraph. The females mostly had at least three data to support the claim and only one paragraph only had two data. Of course, it is also with noting that one of the male paragraph had the most amount of data, i.e., six data, but considering the word limitation of the paragraph, these data were not elaborated well enough. In addition, some paragraphs written by the males also only had the main claim at the beginning but did not repeat it again at the end of the paragraph. Whereas most of the female learners included two claims in their paragraphs.

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CONCLUSION

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the findings and discussion presented above. First of all, in terms of the elements of argument structure, it would seem that out of the six elements, only two are utilized in the Indonesian EFL learners' writings, namely 'claim' and 'data.' These are the only two that can be found in the paragraphs since they are the most basic and important elements that should be present in argumentative writings. This is more or less in line with the findings of Qin & Karabacak's (2010) study where it was found that the Chinese EFL students mostly employed these two in their writings (the other elements were utilized much less frequently). Although the other elements would of course enrich the argumentative paragraphs further, the presence of these two show that the Indonesian EFL learners already have a good idea of what constitutes as a proper argumentative paragraph. Hence, it can be concluded that the Indonesian learners' argumentative paragraphs are still rather basic as they did not incorporate a wide variety of elements to make the paragraphs more comprehensive and detailed.

Furthermore, in terms of the similarities and differences between the male and female learners, it can be said that they are similar as they both employ the elements quite similarly (i.e., they both only used the same two elements). Nonetheless, they slightly differ in terms of the frequency, where the female learners utilized these two elements more often than the male learners. Therefore, it can be assumed that the female learners produce slightly better argumentative paragraphs as they employ the two elements more frequently, which make their arguments more justified overall and more well supported.

Lastly, with regards to the pedagogical implications, considering that the findings reveal that Indonesian learners do not make use of all of the elements of argument structures, it would be best that English teachers in Indonesia raise the students' awareness of these other elements. By incorporating them into their writings, it would improve the overall quality of their argumentative paragraphs. It would also train the students to be more critical as they would not only focus on side of the argument and its supporting data, but also the counterargument or the other point of view.

To sum up, the writers realize that this research is limited in numerous aspects. Further studies concerning the use of elements of argumentative structures would benefit from analyzing a much larger group of samples, which may even include those from different cultural

backgrounds, to explore whether learners from different countries employ these elements similarly or differently. Last but not least, it is also suggested that future research would not only look at the presence of the elements in the paragraphs but relate them to the overall quality of the argumentative writings as well.

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