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Article

## The Analysis of Indonesian EFL Argumentative Writing Using Toulmin's Model: The Structure and Struggles from the Learners

*Hanna Sundari<sup>1</sup>, Rina Husnaini Febriyanti<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Indraprasta PGRI, Jalan Nangka No. 58, Jakarta 12530, Indonesia

### KEYWORDS

Argumentative Writing  
 Toulmin Analysis  
 EFL Learners  
 Writing Skill

### A B S T R A C T

Argumentative writing plays an important role in academic writing at university level. However, learners mostly find that writing this essay a challenging and effortful task. This present study aims at exploring the structures of argumentative essay written by Indonesian EFL students from one university in Jakarta Indonesia. Moreover, it investigates their difficulty and constraints during composing the essay. Using a descriptive qualitative design, the authors selected writing assignment and questionnaire for collecting data. A layout of Toulmin model of arguments was used in analyzing the essays. The findings of the study show that the argumentative papers cover the main elements: claim (thesis statement), data, rebut, and rebuttal data using either in block pattern or point-by-point pattern. The elements show diverse in types. Logical analysis and explanation are the most frequently used on the papers. Though they present acceptable thesis with well-organized essay, some information is unrelated and data for supporting the claim are seemingly insufficient. In addition, the students think that this essay as difficult task. In general, lack of knowledge, vocabulary and practice cause the constraints. In specific level, the students report that giving argument, finding support and working on counterargument become source of difficulty and constraints.

### CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

E-mail: hanna.sundari@gmail.com\*

### INTRODUCTION

Writing is expressing feelings, thoughts and ideas in written language. Writing skill, compared to other language skills, becomes more complex since it measures the ability of one's language (Liu and Braine, 2005). Writing skill, either in second or foreign language, plays a significant role in education system particularly for academic communication and purposes in many countries, such as Malaysia (Li and Razali, 2019),

Ethiopia (Adugna, 2019), Mainland China (Xiao and Chen, 2018) and Indonesia (Ilyasa, 2013; Widiati and Cahyono, 2001). In Taiwan, English writing has determined for high school seniors to enter national university and for college students to win high-paying jobs (Chen, 2012). Moreover, one of the purposes of writing courses in Indonesia at university mostly is enable students to develop various types of paragraphs and essays (Widiati and Cahyono, 2001), and constructing argumentative essay is one of them.

Argumentative writing has an influential position for both schools and higher education level (Dornbrack and Dixon, 2014). The ability to compose argumentative writing determines the level of language proficiency in international language tests (Qin and Karabacak, 2010; Zhang, 2018), such as TOEFL and IELTS. In the field of second language writing, some experts believe that argumentation matters (Hirvela, 2017). Its importance can also be seen by extensive research either in text-based approach or practices in teaching concerning argumentative writing. Several features have been intensively investigated in text-based analysis of learners' argumentative essays; for example conjunctions (Hamed, 2014), authorial voice (Zhao, 2013), logical fallacies (El Khoiri and Widiati, 2017), organizational pattern (Hirose, 2003), critical thinking pattern (Marni, et. al., 2019), transitional markers (Agustin and Ngadiman, 2013), interactional meta-discourse (Lee and Deakin, 2016), lexical verbs (Kanestion, et. al., 2016) as well as rhetorical devices (Yang and Sun, 2012), cohesive devices (Liu and Braine, 2005) and providing evidences (Kibler and Hardigree, 2017) in constructing argumentative writing. The study of individualized voice in argumentative writing by Helms-Park and Stapleton (2003) also found that there might not be connection between the linguistic and rhetorical devices.

Besides the above-mentioned, writing teachers, particularly in Indonesian context, have taken actions to facilitate students in learning and composing argumentative writing in the classroom in many ways. In the stage of planning the essay, the research by Setyowati, et. al., (2017) has proven that the provision is beneficial in enhancing writing performance in developing argumentative essay. Moreover, Refnaldi (2010) has also designed language scaffolding materials for argumentative writing at intermediate levels. In the line with the advance of technology, a web-based argumentative teaching media has been developed to facilitate writing course using five stages of process writing approach (Nadia, et. al., 2016). Those are to help and mediate learners in learning and successfully composing argumentative essays.

Apart from the fact that the writing teachers have done all means to create and design their writing sessions, for the learners of English as second/foreign language, writing seems to be the most difficult skill to learn (Hamed, 2014; Setyowati, et. al., 2017; Widiati and Cahyono, 2001). Particularly for argumentative writing, some learners find it a challenging and stressful task (Zhu, 2001), and the reasons can be both linguistic and cultural aspects (Zhang, 2018). In China for example, grounded by Confusian philosophy, Chinese EFL writers might not be skillful in producing persuasive ideas required in

argumentative writing (Zhang, 2018). On the other side, student's reading skills may also cause the learners struggle to recognize this genre, to generate evidence and counter arguments (Dornbrack and Dixon, 2014). This similar to Rubiaee, Darus and Bakar (2019), they have found that most students had novice awareness of writing knowledge, which affects negatively to the writing ability. Moreover, based on investigation by Rahmatunisa (2014), problems faced by students in writing argumentative essay are divided into three: linguistic, cognitive and psychological problems. To be more specific, ESL/EFL learners mostly find difficulties to handle a complex syntactic forms and proper elements in argumentative writing (Ka-kan-dee & Kaur, 2015).

Composing argumentative essay with strong argument is not an easy work. Compare to other types of essay, such as cause-effect essay and comparison/contrast essay, an argumentative writing seems the most challenging of all types of essay. The writer of argumentative writing needs to give his claim or statement. Then, he must provide his arguments, including evidence or proof to persuade the readers. Not only that, but he also has a duty to deliver the opposite view or the opponent side on his claim. At the end of his essay, he, again, should bring the readers back to his statement and convince them. It seems that the writer's toes are on the two boats. The messages they are trying to convince are back and forth from the claims and the rebuttal. As the model argument by Toulmin, argumentative writing requires six elements: claim, data, warrant, backing, rebuttal and qualifier (Zhang, 2018). Based on the observation as preliminary study during the academic writing course, majority students seem difficult to provide a sound thesis statement or claim. Moreover, they find struggles finding ideas to support their claims by giving evidences or proof. Then, the most difficult part in argumentative writing is to deliver the opposite views and their supports. Providing with its complexity, argumentative writing needs to be discovered deeper especially the problems and challenges that the students found when constructing it.

The studies and research investigating the argumentative writing either text-based analysis or other type of research have been widely conducted. However, the structure of essay and challenges based on the students' perception as well as analysis of essay text using Toulmin need to be deep investigated. In fact, the study of argumentative writing using Toulmin model was mostly in L1 contexts (Qin and Karabacak, 2010), and understanding the problems and challenges from the writer's point of view is essential since it gives insight to the teacher in selecting teaching strategy (Zhu, 2001). Therefore, this present research aims at describing the structure of argumentative writing in L2 context, Indonesian EFL learners in this

case, and elaborate their perceptions on composing argumentative essay. This present study was addressed the following research questions:

- 1) What are the structures of argumentative essays developed by the EFL students based on Toulmin's model of analysis?
- 2) How do they perceive on developing and composing argumentative essays?

### Argumentative Writing

In the academic field at university level of education, writing argumentation has become one of the required academic workloads. In writing academic English, an argumentative essay discusses a debatable issue when the writer has to take a stand on it, support their stand with solid reasons, and give the reason a solid evidence in order to convince the reader that the standpoint is right (Oshime and Hogue, 2006). Some characteristics of argumentative essays are dealt with the purpose, the issue, and the organization. As written by Anderson cited by Refnaldi (2010), the subject of argumentative essay should be controversial, arguable, and debatable, and the thesis provides a reasonable claim that is supported by arguments. The arguments should also be reliable and up-to-date evidence. On the other hand, the opposite view should be recognized and rebutted.

The purpose of argumentative writing is, in a simple way, to convince the reader of the central proposition (Schneer, 2014). In more details, Reid cited by Al-Haq & Ahmed (1994) outlined the goals of argumentative essays are 1) to present a view point to the reader, 2) to explain, clarify, and illustrate that viewpoint, and 3) to persuade the readers that the viewpoint is valid. As illustrated by Coirier and Golder (1993), argumentative writing does not state 'why such and such is the case'; however, it is much more 'why I felt it is preferable that such and such is the case'. At this point, argumentative essays require the writer proposes viewpoint and, at the same time, he is responsible to persuade the readers to have the same viewpoint as he does.

Argumentative can be organized in several ways and variation. At first, main structures of the argumentative writing are three sections: a thesis, an argument, and conclusion (Hyland in Schneer, 2014). It is then called a three-stage essay. Nonetheless, a five-paragraph essay structure was introduced to cover the frustration faced by the university students related to the on the first model (Coirier and Golder, 1993). Another patterns are a block-model and a point-by-point model (Oshime and Hogue, 2006). The block model assigns the writer to separate the rebuttals and the arguments. The rebuttals are introduced

firstly in one block or paragraph. Then it is followed by the arguments to counter the opposite view in another block or paragraph. In contrast, a point-by-point model presents the argument and rebuttal side by side, as seen on Fig 1. The selection of the model depends on the topic in which one model may work better than others (Oshime and Hogue, 2006). Despite the fact that there are numerous variety of argumentative organization, Reid in Al-Haq and Ahmed (1994) underlined that argumentative writing should include thesis, arguments, counterargument and refutation, and conclusion.

Block Pattern	Point-by-Point Pattern
<p>I. Introduction Explanation of the issue Thesis statement</p> <p>II. Body</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Block 1</p> <p>A. Summary of other side's arguments B. Rebuttal to the first argument C. Rebuttal to the second argument D. Rebuttal to the third argument</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Block 2</p> <p>E. Your first argument F. Your second argument G. Your third argument</p> <p>III. Conclusion—may include a summary of your point of view</p>	<p>I. Introduction Explanation of the issue, including a summary of the other side's arguments Thesis statement</p> <p>II. Body</p> <p>A. Statement of the other side's first argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument B. Statement of the other side's second argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument C. Statement of the other side's third argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument</p> <p>III. Conclusion—may include a summary of your point of view</p>

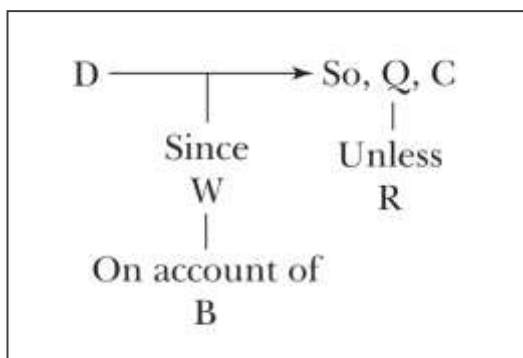
**Figure 1.** The Patterns of Argumentative Essay (Oshima & Hogue, 2006)

### Toulmin's Model Analysis

Toulmin model of argument is developed by Stephen Toulmin. Argumentation, as proposed by Toulmin, is a process of setting out a logical series of ideas that appear persuasive to readers or hearers (Rex, et. al., 2010). It is mostly used as a framework for analysis argumentative writing in L1 context and as heuristic procedure for teaching argumentative writing in L1 and L2 contexts (Qin and Karabacak, 2010).

The layout of argument consists of six complex elements: data, claim, qualifier, warrant, backing, and rebuttal (Toulmin, 2003). The main elements are claim, data and warrant; meanwhile, qualifier, backing and rebuttal posit the second-level elements (Qin and Karabacak, 2010). To be more specific, *claim* (C) is a conclusion whose merit we are seeking to build. It can also be called as *a stance*, a deliberate way of looking and/or feeling toward something for certain purpose (Rex, et. al., 2010). In the other word, it is an opinion or assertion the writer proposes on the writing (Qin and Karabacak, 2010). Meanwhile, *data* (D) or *evidence* refers to the facts as foundation for the claim (Toulmin, 2003) in the forms of ideas and information to convince the audience (Rex, et. al., 2010). Another important element in argumentation is *warrant* (W) – the explicit reasoning that links the evidence and the stance. Moreover, modal qualifier (Q) is

to indicate the strength conferred by the warrant; it is written immediately beside the conclusion which it qualifies, such as *presumably* (Toulmin, 2003). On the other hand, rebuttal (R) refers to circumstances which the general authority of the warrant would have to be set aside; it is an exceptional conditions which might be capable of defeating or rebutting the warranted opinion (Toulmin, 2003), so it is below the qualifier, as seen on fig. 1. Then, backing is to support the validity of the claim (Zhang, 2018) and to lend authority to warrant (Toulmin, 2003).



**Figure 2.** Toulmin's Model of Argument (Toulmin, 2003)

Using this framework, Toulmin illustrated the argument by giving an example of Harry. To give the connection among the elements in situation, the arguments are for example *Harry was born in Bermuda (D), so presumably (Q) he is a British subject (C); since a man born in Bermuda will generally be a British subject on the account of the following statues and other legal provisions (B); unless both his parents were aliens/he has become a naturalized American (R)* (Toulmin, 2003). In support to the *claim*, data need to be appealed, and *warrant* can then be stated. And *backing* provide the authority of *warrant*. While a qualifying 'presumably' should be in the front of conclusion or claim or thesis the writer proposes. It is also possible that the thesis/claim might be rebutted.

Having grounded by Toulmin model, (Rex, et. al., 2010) modified the framework and focused on the basic elements: stance, evidence, and warrant. Stance refers to claim, point of view, or request for a particular situation with specific readers. Moreover, evidence for argumentative writing should meet the characteristics: credible, sufficient, accurate, and most forceful. At last, the warrant serves to link stance and evidence.

The Toulmin model of argument has widely used to teach and to analyze argumentative writing genre. Not only that, it has become an important indicator to assess the quality of argumentative writing. Rex, et. al. (2010) modified this framework to teach arguments in persuasive

essay writing for high school students to develop students' ability to create and articulate soundly reasoned arguments. Using the elements of Toulmin model, Qin and Karabacak (2010) analyzed structures of argumentative papers in L2 contexts in a Chinese university. They found that most papers contained the two basic elements of arguments; claim and data. Moreover, the second-level elements were essential in developing effective argumentative paper. Furthermore, the similar investigation conducted by Zhang (2018) was also explored the development of structures and evidence on used by EFL Chinese students' argumentative writing. The result showed that most Chinese English's papers were *claim* and *data* as the basic elements in constructing argumentative essay; however, it was fewer provided counterargument and rebuttal. While the types and the number of evidences used by the students were very limited.

## METHOD

A qualitative descriptive research design was carried on this study out to answer the research questions. Furthermore, it was taken place in one private university in Jakarta, Indonesia. Having carried out a purposive sampling, the participants were 25 students (16 female students and 9 male students) who registered on English Education Department and attended academic writing course in 2019/2020 academic year. They are all native speakers of Indonesian language. They had held a graduate degree in various backgrounds, yet most of them is English teachers in junior or senior high schools.

Moreover, the academic writing course was held in 14 meetings; it was opened once a week for one and a half hour. One of the objectives of the course is to compose well-organized essays, and argumentative is one of them. During the course, three meetings were dedicated to discussing and drafting argumentative essay as individual assignment with a given topic. The process writing approach was selected to deliver on teaching session. The students were assigned to outline their essay helped by the table to declare the claim or thesis, support arguments, and the rebuttal. Based on the outline, they were asked to develop one well-organized essay. Consequently, each paper had at least four paragraphs consisting of one introductory, two body paragraphs, and one concluding paragraph. The topic was the purposes of English language teaching in Indonesian contexts. The brainstorming ideas and discussion dealt with the topic was conducted on warm-up activity on the course session before drafting the paper. Moreover, they had to choose one of the patterns of essay organization: block pattern and point-by-point pattern. After drafting the first paper, peer-review was applied to evaluate the essay. They

revised the draft as requested. At last, the final draft should be submitted on *Google Classroom* website.

The structure of essays composed by the students was then analyzed using elements on Toulmin's model analysis (Toulmin, 2003). However, to make more comprehensible and practical in analyzing the argumentative essays, the frameworks has been adapted and modified from several resources (Qin and Karabacak, 2010; Toulmin, 2003; Zhang, 2018). Furthermore, a 5-scale scoring rubric in Qin and Karabacak (2010) was used to assess the quality of the essay. As a conclusion, the elements that could be analyzed on the students' argumentative papers were *claim (C)*, *data (D)*, *rebuttal claim (RC)*, and *rebuttal data (RD)*. The description of the elements is as seen on Table 1. Despite the fact that the framework offering another elements, *qualifier*, *warrant* and *backing* were not be considered on the study because of their low frequency of appearance.

**Table 1.** Toulmin's Elements of Argumentative Essay

Elements	Description
Claim	A conclusion or assertion whose merit we are seeking to build (Toulmin, 2003); the (thesis) statement being argued.
Data	Evidence to support claim. It can be expert opinion, statistic, examples, personal experiences, common sense, logical analysis, and analogy (Zhang, 2018).
Rebuttal claim	Statements in which the writer responds to a counter-argument by pointing out the possible weakness in the claim, data, or warrant (Qin and Karabacak, 2010). <i>Rebut</i> means to point out problems with the other side's reasons to prove that they are not good reasons (Oshime and Hogue, 2006)
Rebuttal data	Evidence to support rebuttal claim.

At the initial stage of analysis, it was twenty-five argumentative papers that have been collected. Nevertheless, one paper was taken out of the data because it failed to fill the required task of the essay development properly. This paper consisted of one paragraph only including the thesis (claim), but it did not present other elements on argumentation. As a result, only twenty-four papers then meet the requirement for further analysis.

The second author firstly analyzed the entire essays based on the six elements and rated the essays using holistic scoring rubric for argumentative paper. On the second round, the essays were then graded and rated by the first author based on the same elements for reliability. For any

significant different scores among the raters, they discussed and decided the final scores.

The second phase of the study was to investigate the perception of the students who have experienced writing argumentative essay. A two-item question on the questionnaire was also distributed to the students to get their perceptions on composing the essay at the end of the course. It was to obtain the students' perception after experiencing in composing argumentative essay. All entire data, from both essay papers and questionnaire, were then analyzed, interpreted, and presented to answer the research questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This current study aims at two folds. At first, it explores the structures of EFL Indonesian argumentative essays using Toulmin's model of analysis. Secondly, the students' perception on developing argumentative writing was also investigated to figure out the level of difficulty from the writer's point of views.

### 1. The Structures of Students' Argumentative Essays

At the surface level of the essay pattern, the collected papers were organized into two patterns. Fourteen papers of them used block pattern. It was giving arguments and counterarguments separately in different paragraphs on the body of the essay. Meanwhile, the rest of the papers applied point-by-point essay organization in which they presented argument and counterargument side-by-side in one paragraph.

Concerning to claim, as the one of the main elements on Toulmin argument, all the collected essays presented claim to be discussed and argued on the given topic. The position was on the last sentence of the introductory paragraph as thesis statement of the essay. Most of the claims, fifteen out of twenty-four essays, was delivered in more explicit statements of writer's standpoint. Of three essays' claims used expression of personal opinion, as follow:

*I do believe that .... (S4)*

*However, I personally agree that... (S13)*

*In my opinion, students of English ... (S21)*

Moreover, six claims on the essays were delivered by stating that the writers' standpoint has been supported by sufficient evidence. And the expressions were as follow.

*Other have some evidence that... (S5)*

*There is some evidence that ... (S8, S12, & S19)*

*There are some proof of teacher that... (S9)*

*There are some factors supporting the idea that ... (S17)*

Another way to state the claim as thesis statement on the argumentation found on the students' papers was using modal words and expressions. The use of modality was to show the necessity and obligation of the writer's standpoint. The excerpts below were the sample of claims.

*Therefore, the English language teaching is better addressing to ... (S15)*

*However, culture should be more considered in ... (S18)*

*To create the better result of learning English, Indonesia needs to ... (S22)*

Moreover, it was also revealed from the papers that some of students prefer to declare the claim or thesis by stating that some people have the same conclusion and agree with it. The writers put the second party to persuade the readers on the essay, as follow.

*The others argue that ... (S2).*

*Some says that ... (S14).*

*There are also some people study ... (S16)*

*While others argue that ... (S20)*

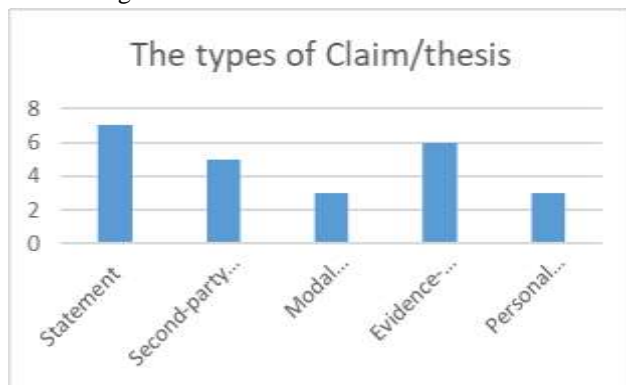
*Second opinion said many people believe that ... (S23)*

On the other side, the rest of the claim as either thesis statement or topic sentence on the papers was expressed by providing the statement or conclusion that was being argued. The excerpts below are the sample.

*A student with low level can communicate quite successfully (S11)*

*Speaking English is not just about being able to communicate with native English speakers, ... (S25)*

For the claim on the collected papers, it then can be concluded that all argumentative essays on the data contains at least one claim or thesis that is being argued by the writers. Meanwhile the ways of the writers declare their claims are various, such as giving statement, evidence-based expression, second-party expression, personal opinion expression, and modal expression, as seen on Fig 3.



**Figure 3.** Type of Claim/thesis

Beside the above-mentioned, it was also revealed that several claims or thesis proposed by the student-writers

were apparently less persuasive and argumentative. Claims that were presented in the form of general statement, in fact it was the majority of the claims, seems to be similar as announcement or issues for discussion rather than one standpoint to convince the readers/audience to have no doubt about the point. Claim, such as *'However, it also can lead the students to know how to communicate in English with student's culture and local accent' (S7)*, was less directive, and it can potentially mislead the readers.

The second element of the Toulmin model analysis for argumentative writing is *data* to support the *claim*. From the collected argumentative papers, the data were presented on the body paragraphs of the essay. The paragraph was marked by the indent on the first sentence. The majority of the papers, twenty out of twenty-four papers, was organized in three body paragraphs to provide the data as support of the claim. While, three papers had two body paragraphs, and one paper contained five body paragraphs on it.



**Figure 4.** The Types of Data for Claim/thesis

Concerning to the type of data given on the students' essays, the data or evidence were given in various ways. Logical analysis and explanation were the most frequent type of data used to support the thesis on the essay. The writer backed up the claim by providing several concepts that showed relation among them, either cause-effect relation, concession or another type of relation so that the claim and the data were reasonable and logical. For example, the logical explanation presented by paper S13 that stated *'Furthermore, the success of learning English can't be measured by only one skill because learning a language has four skills, and speaking is only of them. Not many people have strength in all aspects. Everyone has different dominant skill'(S13)*. On her essay, the student-writer tried to persuade the readers that native-like fluency especially for speaking skill is not a must in

learning language. She built a relation between success of learning English, language skills and speaking skill.

However, several explanation and analysis seemingly fail to meet the logic and to support the claim. For example, to support the writer's idea that students learn English to communicate, he defends it by giving explanation that *'popular culture has also played an important part in spreading English... . American movies are seen in almost every country'* (S10). The evidence looks unrelated to the viewpoint so that it is insufficient to support it.

The other type of data or evidence found on the students' papers consisted of exemplification, research studies, and facts respectively. Besides, statistics, definition, expert opinion, observation, and experience were also revealed as data or evidence to support the claim or thesis proposed by the writers, as seen on Fig. The following are several samples of data or evidence.

*For example, they learn English to study abroad, to work overseas, or to travel. (S5).*

*According to my observation, in ELT especially in Central java, many English teachers still teach English with Javanese accent. (S23)*

The next elements on the Toulmin model analysis are the rebut, that stands as a counterargument for the claim and/or data. From the collected papers, it was discovered that the students' papers provided the rebuts to counter the thesis with diverse strength. Based on the organization of the essay mentioned on the previous part on finding, the patterns were block organization and point-by-point organization. In block pattern, the counterargument was delivered in one separate paragraph before the conclusion, as follow.

*Unfortunately, good pronunciation is still necessary in academic speaking. As a result, students in ELT class, at least, are able to reach native-like fluency and proficiency in presenting topics. It is also to avoid misunderstanding. (25).*

The essays that presented the rebut in point-by-point pattern were commonly used the expressions to show opposition or opponent. Those expressions were as follow.

*Opponents claims that ... . On the other hand, ... (S19)*

*Some people argue that .... Despite that statement, people should remember that ... (20)*

*Opponents also persist that ... (S5)*

*Opponents also state that ... . However, ... (S12)*

Meanwhile, the last element on Toulmin model that is analyzed on the paper was the data to support the claim/thesis; it is commonly called rebuttal data. It was

thirty-four items identified as rebuttal data on the papers. Similar to data for claim/thesis, logical analysis and explanation was the most frequently type used as data to support the rebuttal claim/thesis. The other types were facts, research studies, expert opinion, and examples (see Figure 5).

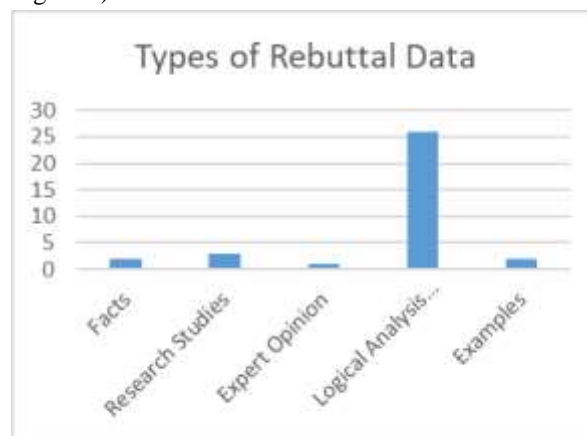


Figure 5. The Types of Rebuttal Data

Moreover, not all the rebut claim was supported by the rebuttal data. Six out of twenty-four papers were presenting the rebuts, but they did not provide the data as supports. The rebuttal claim/thesis is directly followed by the claim or the data proposed by the student-writer. Here are samples of rebuttal claim without giving sufficient explicit data as support.

*Some practitioners believe the proficiency in English is always come to ability in speaking and pronunciation. The others argue the students have it without knowing the purpose of communication is useless. (S2)*

*Final argument from the opponents said that local English teachers who teach more than ten years can speak fluently like native speaker. In fact, native-like fluency doesn't come by itself. (S19).*

Concerning to the overall quality of the essay, the majority of the essays put a position in scale 4 on the scale scoring rubric for argumentative writing (see Figure 6). It indicates that the essays have provided a reasonable standpoint, and they developed well-organized pattern. Moreover, they were also some opposite point of views completed with general evidence as support. However, at the same time, there may be some irrelevant information, insufficient data/evidence, ineffective rebut and several grammar mechanical errors. On the other hand, the other papers had the lower quality of argumentative writing; in scale 3 and 2. In the other words, they stated the writer's point of view, but some major problems were found, such as inconsistent point, minimal and unrelated reasons or arguments, and numerous grammar mechanical errors.

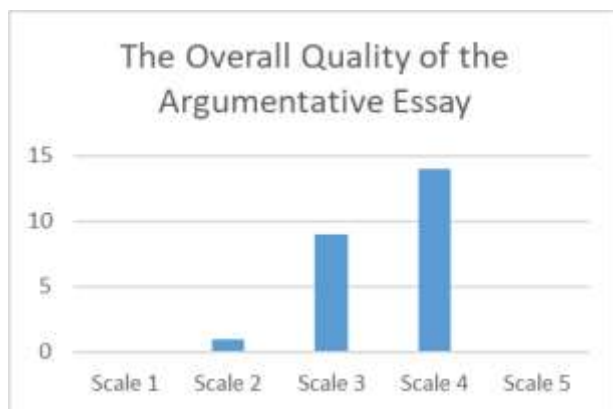


Figure 6. The Quality of Argumentative Essay

## 2. The Students' Perception of Developing Argumentative Essays

The second investigation of the study was dealt with the perception of the students who have experienced writing argumentative essay. They were asked to fill two item questions: one closed-ended question on the difficulty level of argumentative essay and one open-ended question that elaborates the opinion about the constraints in developing argumentative essay. All student-writers responded on the first item. The result showed that the majority of them, 68% of the students, thought that developing argumentative essay is an effortful activity to do and a difficult skill to accomplish (see Figure 7). It gains 56% as difficult and 12% to be very difficult.

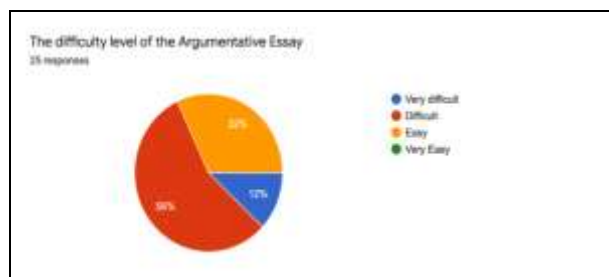


Figure 7. Difficulty Level of Argumentative Essay

Beside the difficulty level in composing argumentative paper, the writing constraints were also explored on this present study. From the collected data, they were then divided into two categories: general constraints and specific constraints. In general level of writing, student-writers perceived that they found some problems, such as lack of knowledge, vocabulary, and practice. Furthermore, they felt that starting to write was very difficult as it was the first time to compose this type of essay. For example, sample S15 wrote that *'Because I am not used to write so I don't know what to say as an argument'*. The other constraints were lacking ideas, unfamiliar topic, less concentration, and limited time.

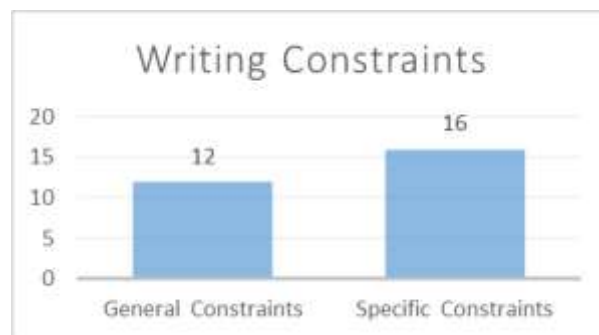


Figure 8. Constraints in Writing Argumentative Essay

In addition to general constraints, specific constraints in composing argumentative essays reached a greater number, as seen on Figure 8. It indicates that some specific features of argumentative writing have caused difficulty among the student-writer when composing the essay. They found that giving argument and counterargument was demanding and complicated. They mostly consider that finding supports and working on contradictory argument need a great deal of effort. For instance, sample S21 stated *'to me writing argumentative essay in this level is a bit difficult because we have to write both opinions with the reasons'*. As a conclusion, student-writers need to encounter two constraints either general level or specific level when they develop argumentative essays.

This study examined the structures of argumentative essays made by Indonesian EFL learners and explored their perceptions about how difficult in developing this essay in English. After collecting the data from the student-writers and their papers, the findings are then divided into two sections: the elements of the argumentative essay based on Toulmin's model of argument and the difficulty and constraints in developing it.

In general, the entire collected papers follow the Toulmin's model of argument on four elements: claim, data, rebut, and rebuttal data. As mentioned by (Toulmin, 2003), the argument consists of six complex elements: data, claim, qualifier, warrant, backing, and rebuttal. Meanwhile, the warrant, qualifier and backing are apparently not found on the papers. Moreover, by following the block pattern and point-by-point pattern, the collected papers also meet the features of argumentative writing to include thesis, arguments, counterargument and refutation, and conclusion (Reid in Al-Haq and Ahmed, 1994).

Concerning to claim, one of the main elements, all collected papers present at least one claim to be argued, and giving statement is the most frequently used in presenting it. The study by Qin and Karabacak (2010) and



Zhang (2018) show that the papers that they analyzed contain two basic elements, namely *claim* and *data*. However, the majority of claim on this present study seems less persuasive and directive. It is much more like an announcement rather than writer's viewpoint or preference to persuade the readers. The almost similar result found on the study by Ka-kan-dee and Kaur (2015). They discover that the Thai EFL learners do not have ability to produce a clear thesis statement because of lack of familiarity with the genre. Indeed, argumentation deals with persuasive strategies employed to change the mind of other agents (Paglieri and Castelfranchi, 2006). It entails what the writer feels and prefers (Coirier and Golder, 1993). When the claim or thesis (thesis statement) is clearly stated and positioned in the beginning of the essay, the writer seems to be more competent and skillful (Schneer, 2014).

In the case of rebut or counterargument, the collected papers provide rebut with diverse strength. They are organized in two patterns: block and point-by-point. This result is consistent to the study by Qin and Karabacak (2010) and Zhang (2018). Providing rebut or opposite viewpoint may increase the quality of argumentative writing. Good arguments present multiple sides, and giving rebut upgrades the effectiveness of the arguments (Qin and Karabacak, 2010).

Related to the data, to support either claim or rebut, on this present research, the entire papers provide them in various types. Giving logical analysis and explanation is the most salient on the essays. Others are facts, examples, research studies, expert opinion, experience, and statistic data. This is similar to the research by Zhang (2018) for Chinese EFL learners. It shows that the most frequent used evidence is the logical analysis (58%), anecdote (23%), and common sense (11%). Giving logical explanation become the most preferable among the writers. Nonetheless, the analysis and explanation are relatively unrelated and inconsistent to the viewpoint proposed by the writers.

At this stage, it can be drawn a conclusion that the argumentative essays made by the Indonesian EFL writers have met the structures of Toulmin model including claim, data, rebut, and rebuttal data. However, the claim is generally less persuasive, and the data for either claim and rebut are seemingly unrelated and insufficient as support. This may determine the overall quality of the argumentative essay. This type of essay can be marked as well-written argumentative writing when it provides a strong, clear thesis (claim) statement (Al-Haq & Ahmed, 1994). In addition, argumentative essay must be 'supported' (Coirier & Golder, 1993). Having the less persuasive claim and insufficient data, therefore, the

collected papers on this study gain on scale 2, 3, and 4; they are relatively good but tend to poor. It means that the majority of the essays gives pieces of irrelevant information, and it fails to bring ineffective refutation. Even though they are well-organized essays with acceptable claim/thesis, some grammatical and mechanical problems are also found. The almost similar result was on the study by Zhang (2018) which shows that the overall Chinese EFL learners' performance on argumentation was poor. And the finding on this current study support the research result by (Al-Haq & Ahmed, 1994) that discovered that argumentative papers written by students at Ibn Saud Islamic University were low in all component.

In addition to the elements on the argumentative essays, it is also discovered the difficulty and constraints in developing argumentative essay based on the students' perception. From the questionnaire, student-writers find that writing argumentative seem difficult (56%) and very difficult (12%). The majority of the students think that composing argumentative essay is an effortful assignment to accomplish. This result is consistent to study by Zhu (2001) that interviewed Mexican graduate students. They thought that argumentative assignment as a challenging and even stressful task.

To be more specific, the students-writers on this study express several constraints when developing argumentative essays. The constraints are then divided into two: general and specific constraints. In general level, the constraints are lack of knowledge, vocabulary, and practice. Moreover, unfamiliar topic and limited time are also revealed on the data. This finding is also consistent to what is encountered by Mexican graduate students when developing this essay. They reported difficulty related to genre knowledge, vocabulary, page limit, organizing ideas, and topic selection (Zhu, 2001). The study by Rahmatunisa (2014) also shows almost similar issues that grammatical linguistic aspect and organizing paragraphs on essay become problems in composing this essay.

In addition to general constraints, the student-writes on this research also reported specific constraints related to features on argumentative essay as the major problem. They find that stating thesis (claim), finding support, and working on opposite view are very difficult tasks to achieve. The same result is also revealed on the research by Zhu (2001) and Ka-kan-dee and Kaur (2015). Zhu (2001) found that the organization and rhetorical structure of argumentative essays make the students anxious and stressful. Meanwhile, Ka-kan-dee and Kaur (2015) interviewed lecturers in Thailand and found that Thai ELF learners encountered the same problems in

composing argumentative essay, such as inability to produce a clear statement, organizing ideas, and producing solid evidence.

Writing argumentative essays covers more than just knowing how to write and compose; it includes supporting process as reasoning process and considering other point of view and opposing arguments (Coirier and Golder, 1993). Having this complexity, this essay is extremely challenging and difficult even for L1 learners. In the English as a foreign language context, we found on the students' papers that they have relatively brought personal viewpoint to propose as claim or thesis. But then, they fail to execute it on well-organized writing layout. Moreover, they find difficult to provide solid and strong evidence as data. Then we also discover that they confuse on the concept of rebut or the opposite viewpoint. It is possible that culture may cause the problem to providing counterargument and overall elements on argumentation, as mentioned by Zhu (2001) and Qin and Karabacak (2010).

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing the argumentative papers written by the Indonesian EFL students based on Toulmin's model of argument and coding the questionnaire to collect their perception, several findings have been discovered and concluded into two section. At first, argumentative essays have presented the main elements of Toulmin model and provided the structures of argumentative writing. It covers the claim (thesis statement), data, rebut, and rebuttal data. Those elements are diverse and various in types and strength. The most salient data used to support the claim is logical analysis and explanation. While, in general, the overall quality of the essays is relatively low considering the unrelated information and ineffective argument. Although the essays have mostly been well-organized, some major problems are found, such as insufficient support and grammatical mechanical errors. The argumentative essays made by the Indonesian EFL writers have met the structures of Toulmin model including claim, data, rebut, and rebuttal data. However, the claim is generally less persuasive, and the data for either claim and rebut are seemingly unrelated and insufficient as support. This fact may lead to an important pedagogical implication for EFL writing instruction and instructors to create a writing course that stimulates students to develop well-organized essay but also well-thought essay.

In addition, the students think that writing argumentative essay is difficult task to accomplish. The difficulties can be general and specific. In general level, lack of knowledge, vocabulary, practice has become the source of difficulty. The others are unfamiliar topic and limited

time. On the other hand, the complex features on argumentative essay results in problems when composing the essay. The students report that giving argument, finding support and working contradictory argument cause difficulty and confusion.

This current research may bring some limitation. The number of the participants in this study was relatively small; therefore, care needs to be taken when trying to interpret the results of the research. Therefore, for further investigation, the greater number of participants from different level of proficiency can be advisably taken to see the implication. Moreover, considering the findings of this current research, it is also suggestive to select and investigate the teaching method or strategy that meet the specific characteristic of argumentative essay. Therefore, the difficulty, problems, confusion and anxiety faced by the students could be eliminated, and the quality of the papers can be enhanced.

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