

ARGUMENTS IN INDONESIAN AND CHINESE STUDENTS' ENGLISH ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS: SPOTLIGHTING THE QUALITY AND GENDER

Argumen dalam Esai Argumentatif Bahasa Inggris Mahasiswa Indonesia dan Tiongkok: Menyoroti Kualitas dan Gender

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Abstract

Various studies have examined argumentative writing from multiple perspectives. However, the quality of arguments in Indonesian and Chinese students' English argumentative essays, particularly when analyzed from both quality and gender perspectives, remains underexplored. Hence, this study aims to address this gap by investigating the quality of argumentation and gender related patterns in English argumentative essays produced by Indonesian (IDN) and Chinese (CHN) learners of English. The corpus consisted of 20 English argumentative essays on the same topic, namely non-smoking, which were purposively selected from the International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE). The essays were grouped based on students' nationalities into Indonesian and Chinese categories. The data were analyzed using the Argumentation Quality Evaluation proposed by Erduran et al. (2004) and the Thematic Analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to examine the quality and thematic patterns of the arguments. The findings indicate that Indonesian and Chinese students' English argumentative essays demonstrated varying levels of argument quality, from weak to strong. Regarding gender, the results show that both male and female students from the Indonesian and Chinese groups produced comparable argument structures, suggesting no substantial gender-based differences in the construction of arguments. The pedagogical implications of this study provide insights for TESOL practitioners, learners of English as a foreign language, policymakers, and linguists by emphasizing the importance of developing students' awareness of argumentative structures and strengthening their ability to evaluate the quality of arguments in English argumentative writing.

Abstrak

Meskipun banyak sekali penelitian telah dilaksanakan untuk mengkaji tulisan argumentatif dari berbagai sudut pandang, bagaimana argumen dalam esai argumentatif bahasa Inggris mahasiswa Indonesia dan Tiongkok dari sudut pandang kualitas dan gender masih kurang dipelajari. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengisi kekosongan tersebut. Korpus penelitian ini terdiri dari 20 esai argumentatif dengan topik yang sama, yakni non-merokok dan dipecah menjadi dua kelompok berdasarkan kewarganegaraan mahasiswa, seperti Indonesia (IDN) dan Tiongkok (CHN). Korpus ini dikumpulkan secara terpilih melalui analisis dokumen dari situs web International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE) sebagai basis korpus dan dianalisis dengan Evaluasi Kualitas

Argumentasi (Erduran et al., 2004) dan Analisis Tematik (Braun dan Clarke, 2006). Temuan mengungkap bahwa esai argumentatif bahasa Inggris mahasiswa Indonesia dan Tiongkok menunjukkan kualitas argumen yang lemah dan kuat. Terkait gender, temuan menguraikan struktur argumen yang sama yang dihasilkan oleh mahasiswa dan mahasiswi Indonesia dan Tiongkok. Implikasi pedagogis dari penelitian ini menawarkan informasi praktis bagi praktisi TESOL, mahasiswa bukan penutur asli bahasa Inggris, pembuat kebijakan dan linguist tentang pentingnya mengadaptasi kesadaran mahasiswa terhadap skema argumentatif dan evaluasi kualitas argumentasi saat menyusun esai argumentatif bahasa Inggris.

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INTRODUCTION

Argumentative writing is a key component in achieving personal, academic, professional, and social attainments (Guo et al., 2023; Lee & Lee, 2024; Mitchell, 2000; Qin, 2013; Toulmin, 1958; Toulmin et al., 1984). As an illustration, creating logical arguments in argumentative writing reflects individuals' competencies and performance as they engage with academic, professional, and social agendas, such as conferences, seminars, discussions, and lectures (Andrews, 2010). Moreover, argumentative writing has become the most required skill for university students across various disciplines (Nesi & Gardner, 2006). Ferretti & Graham (2019) note that argumentative writing enables people to reflect, evaluate, and improve their reasoning skills to convince others through a range of discursive communication strategies. Additionally, the capacity to produce high-quality argumentative writing artefacts (e.g., argumentative essays) reflects how students respond and overcome problems through their critical thinking skills and positioning on a particular issue (Hisgen et al., 2020; Qin & Karabacak, 2010). Further, argumentative writing supports students in seeking trustworthy sources, creating persuasive inferences, and synthesizing credible data to back their claims (Thompson, 2021). However, non-native English students may encounter challenges when performing argumentative writing tasks in English due to limited exposure to the target language, decontextualised writing, and insufficient awareness of the purposes of writing, target readers, and positioning arguments (Allen et al., 2019). In response to these, teaching argumentative writing based on the culture and context-specific aspects of students and guiding them to have learning autonomy on argumentative writing practices can be a breakthrough to overcome argumentative writing challenges, especially in non-native English countries (e.g., Outer-Circle and Expanding Circle countries) (Canagarajah, 2022; Mallahi, 2024; Matsuda, 2014).

The last few decades have seen an enormous growth of studies accentuating argumentative writing and argumentative essays (e.g., Guo et al., 2024; Latifi & Noroozi, 2021; Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2022; Song & Xu, 2025; Su et al., 2023; Tandiana et al., 2017; Toulmin, 2003; Zhu, 2001). Remarkably, there is a dearth of studies examining the contributions of Toulmin elements and gender to the quality of Indonesian and Chinese students' English argumentative essays. As an example, Murtadho (2021) examined metacognitive and critical thinking practices to develop EFL students' argumentative writing skills in Indonesia. The findings indicated that students were able to enhance their argumentative writing skills at the higher education level through the metacognition-based writing strategy.

Pavavijarn (2022) studied the influences of thematic progression on the quality of EFL argumentative writing. The investigative findings disclosed that thematic progression contributed

to the coherence and scores of students' argumentative essays. Besides, lexical cohesion, as one of the local cohesion strategies at the sentence level, affected the relationship between arguments and their evidence, as manifested in the Theme and Rheme patterns. Overall, the researcher inferred that thematic progression empowered students to produce effective English argumentative essays.

Zhang et. al. (2023) examined Chatbot-based training on logical fallacy in EFL argumentative writing. They reported that Chatbot-based training on logical fallacies enabled students to improve their achievements in EFL argumentative writing, even though this training could decrease their argumentative writing skills. Further, the researchers suggested combining Chatbot-based training on logical fallacies with classroom writing practices to achieve more effective results.

Lee & Lee (2024) delved into the development of argumentative writing ability in EFL middle school students in South Korea. The findings revealed that reading and writing practices considerably enhanced students' descriptive and argumentative writing skills. This study recommended using context-specific methods to help students compose their EFL argumentative essays.

Currently, Wang (2025) scrutinized the impacts of an online collaborative argumentation environment on EFL students in a northern Taiwanese university. The results showed that an online collaborative argumentation environment (CAE) created a more self-motivated learning environment than traditional approaches. For instance, the CAE instruction assisted students in generating and developing their ideas while collaborating in a group. Likewise, the CAE guided students in producing persuasive arguments by including key grounds and effective rebuttals in their English argumentative essays. Despite growing research interest in argumentative writing and argumentative essays in English, the literature on the contributions of Toulmin elements and gender to the quality of Indonesian and Chinese students' English argumentative essays is fairly limited (e.g., Juhana et al., 2023; Rosmala, 2024). Therefore, this study examines how Toulmin's model of argumentation and gender contribute to the quality of English argumentative essays written by Indonesian and Chinese learners.

METHODS

This study utilized qualitative content analysis (QCA) as a research method (Krippendorff, 2019). Schreier (2012) proposes two considerations for adopting QCA. First, QCA highlights the interpretive perspective of qualitative research to uncover personal or social meaning represented in symbolic materials. Second, QCA enables researchers to determine multiple meanings of their investigative findings. Further, Krippendorff (2019) adds that QCA allows researchers to draw credible, dependable, and replicable inferences from diverse texts and their contexts. Grounded in these considerations, this study aimed to examine how elements of Toulmin's model contribute to the quality of Indonesian and Chinese students' English argumentative essays and how gender affects that quality.

There were twenty English argumentative essays composed by Indonesian (IDN) and Chinese (CHN) students selected as the corpus of this study. These essays were selected purposively through the purposive sampling technique (Creswell, 2012) by merely spotlighting a single topic, viz., non-smoking. Each argumentative essay comprised assorted lengths of words from 202 to 316 words. These essays were specified by students' nationalities (e.g., Indonesia and China) to indicate that they were non-native English speakers. Besides, these essays were categorized by gender, with 10 argumentative essays written by 10 Indonesian students (N=5 males and 5 females) and 10 by 10 Chinese students (N=5 males and 5 females). This balanced mix of

gender types was intended to mitigate the risk of gender bias and inconsistency. The ages of both Indonesian and Chinese students ranged from 17 to 21 years old.

Regarding their disciplines, they came from various fields and majors, such as Sciences and Technology (Information Technology, Engineering, Biotechnology, Telecommunication, Chemistry, Informatics, and Electronics), Humanities (Linguistics, English, Japanese, and Education), and Social Sciences (Management, Business, and Law). Furthermore, this study considered each student's English language proficiency because it could be an influential factor in the quality of their English argumentative essays. For instance, the selected English argumentative essays in the current study should be composed by students possessing TOEIC (670+), TOEFL PBT (527+), TOEFL IBT (72+), and IELTS (4+) as delineated in the following table:

Table 1.

A profile of the argumentative essay writers from Indonesia and China on Non-smoking as the topic-controlled essay

No	Essay Code	Gender	Age	Major	Major/Occupation	CEFR
1	F-W_IDN_SMK0_009_B1_2	Female	18	Information Technology	Sciences & Technology	B1_2
2	F-W_IDN_SMK0_042_B1_2	Female	19	Linguistics	Humanities	B1_2
3	F-W_IDN_SMK0_064_B1_2	Female	19	English	Humanities	B1_2
4	F-W_IDN_SMK0_115_B1_2	Female	20	Engineering	Sciences & Technology	B1_2
5	F-W_IDN_SMK0_159_B1_2	Female	17	Management	Social Sciences	B1_2
6	W_IDN_SMK0_021_B1_2	Male	21	Management	Social Sciences	B1_2
7	W_IDN_SMK0_031_B1_2	Male	19	Business	Social Sciences	B1_2
8	W_IDN_SMK0_101_B1_2	Male	20	English	Humanities	B1_2
9	W_IDN_SMK0_172_B1_2	Male	20	Biotechnology	Sciences & Technology	B1_2
10	W_IDN_SMK0_190_B1_2	Male	18	Informatics	Sciences & Technology	B1_2
11	F-W_CHN_SMK0_004_B1_2	Female	20	Chemistry	Sciences & Technology	B1_2
12	F-W_CHN_SMK0_009_B1_2	Female	20	Telecommunication	Sciences & Technology	B1_2
13	F-W_CHN_SMK0_019_B1_2	Female	19	Law	Social Sciences	B1_2
14	F-W_CHN_SMK0_152_B1_2	Female	21	English	Humanities	B1_2
15	F-W_CHN_SMK0_183_B1_2	Female	20	Education	Humanities	B1_2
16	W_CHN_SMK0_005_B1_2	Male	20	Chemistry	Sciences & Technology	B1_2
17	W_CHN_SMK0_151_B1_2	Male	20	English	Humanities	B1_2
18	W_CHN_SMK0_270_B1_2	Male	20	Electronics	Sciences & Technology	B1_2
19	W_CHN_SMK0_349_B1_2	Male	20	Business	Social Sciences	B1_2
20	W_CHN_SMK0_380_B1_2	Male	19	Japanese	Humanities	B1_2

The argumentative essays were obtained from the International Corpus Network of Asian Learners of English (ICNALE) website developed by Dr. Shin Ishikawa from Kobe University, Japan (Ishikawa, 2024). This study only focused on Indonesian and Chinese students writing argumentative essays, though there were students from other Asian countries, viz. Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Korea, and Taiwan (Ishikawa, 2024). This selection was entrenched in the reasons that English argumentative essays composed by Indonesian and Chinese students received little attention from scholars to investigate. Another reason lay in the status of English in these countries was English as a foreign language (EFL) situated the students as non-native English speakers. With this in mind, English argumentative essays composed by Indonesian and Chinese students had the potential to enrich empirical evidence of English argumentative essays in non-native English-speaking countries (Expanding-Circle Countries), especially from the quality and gender lenses.

In collecting the data, the researchers adopted document analysis (Bowen, 2009). One consideration in adopting document analysis was its potential to help researchers analyze a variety of texts to inquire into meanings and to comprehend the conceptualization and development of knowledge (Bowen, 2009). Denzin (1970) maintains that document analysis can also serve as a

triangulating data collection technique for rigorously gathering data from diverse texts. Thus, this data collection technique could help researchers obtain the required data effectively.

To evaluate the quality of argumentation, this study employed Argumentation Quality Evaluation (Erduran et al., 2004). There were five levels of how writers produce argumentation in their argumentative essays. First, level 1 discloses that argumentation encompasses arguments in the form of a basic claim against a counterclaim or a claim against another claim. Second, level 2 denotes that the argumentation presents claims supported by data, warrants, or backing, with no rebuttals. Then, level 3 signifies that argumentation demonstrates arguments equipped with several claims or counterclaims accompanied by data, warrants, or backings with the ordinary, inadequate rebuttal. Moreover, level 4 designates that argumentation signifies arguments possessing a claim with an obvious rebuttal (these arguments may optionally contain an argument with some claims and counterclaims). Finally, level 5 illustrates a developed argument with several rebuttals (Erduran et al., 2004). The overview of this levelling was presented as follows:

Table 2.
Analytical framework for argumentation quality evaluation (Erduran et al., 2004)

Level	Descriptions
Level 1	Level 1 argumentation encompasses arguments in the form of a basic claim against a counterclaim or a claim against another claim.
Level 2	Level 2 argumentation indicates arguments covering claims with data, warrants or backings without rebuttals.
Level 3	Level 3 argumentation demonstrates arguments equipped with several claims or counterclaims accompanied with data, warrants or backings with the ordinary inadequate rebuttal.
Level 4	Level 4 argumentation signifies arguments possessing a claim with an obvious rebuttal (these arguments may optionally contain an argument with some claims and counterclaims).
Level 5	Level 5 argumentation illustrates a developed argument with several rebuttals.

The use of thematic analysis was intended to explore the contributions of gender to the quality of Indonesian and Chinese students' English argumentative essays. In particular, Braun and Clarke (2006) propose six significant steps of thematic analysis, such as (1) *familiarizing with the data*, (2) *generating initial codes*, (3) *searching for themes*, (4) *reviewing themes*, (5) *defining and naming themes*, and (6) *producing the report*. In *familiarizing with the data*, researchers were supported to familiarize and engage themselves with the collected data recurrently. In *generating initial codes*, researchers were guided to outline preliminary codes from the analyzed data by evaluating the data and their contexts. In *searching for themes*, researchers were led to organize and classify related data into particular themes. In *reviewing themes*, researchers were directed to review the thematic data to produce dependable and relevant data based on research questions. In *defining and naming themes*, researchers were recommended to cultivate subtle themes of data relevant to investigative areas and foci. In *producing the report*, researchers were required to compose the obtained themes into an investigative report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The quality of weak and strong arguments in Indonesian and Chinese students' English Argumentative Essays

In addition to the structures of English argumentative essays produced by Indonesian and Chinese students, this study also focuses on the argument quality in their essays. In Table 5, the quality of arguments of Indonesian and Chinese students demonstrated relatively similar results. However, one of the Chinese students was categorized to reach level 5 for her argument quality

(student #183). The similarities between Indonesian and Chinese students' English argumentative essays were indicated by the employment of *claims*, *data*, and *counterargument claims*. These elements of Toulmin's argumentative writing could be a parameter to classify students to reach what levels they were (Kuntjara, 2004).

Table 3.
The Quality of Arguments in Indonesian and Chinese Students' Argumentative Essays

Level	Indonesian Students	Chinese Students	Total
1	1	2	3
2	7	2	9
3	2	5	7
4	0	1	1
5	0	0	0
Total	10	10	20

To begin with, there was one Indonesian student and two Chinese students composing their English argumentative essays by stating claims without data. This argumentation signified that they were at level 1. At this level, argumentation encompasses arguments in the form of a basic claim against a counterclaim or a claim against another claim without data (Erduran, 2004). Then, there were seven Indonesian students and two Chinese students in level 2 based on the quality of their arguments. In level 2, the quality of students' arguments included claims supported by data, warrants, or backings without rebuttals (Erduran, 2004). Moreover, there were two Indonesian students and five Chinese students occupying level 3, as viewed from their argument constructions. At this level, students wrote their arguments by involving several claims or counterclaims, accompanied by data, warrants, or backing, with an ordinary, inadequate rebuttal (Erduran, 2004). Unlike Indonesian students who did not include *rebuttal claims* in the structures of their English argumentative essays, one of the Chinese students proposed it: student #183. The inclusion of rebuttal claims to arguments in an argumentative essay potentially elevated it to reach level 4, where arguments indicated a claim with an obvious rebuttal (these arguments may optionally contain an argument with some claims and counterclaims) (Erduran, 2004). Surprisingly, no students from Indonesia and China reached level 5, in which the argumentation designates a developed argument and several rebuttals (Erduran, 2004). Rusfandi (2015) adds that one of the challenges of non-native English writers lies in deficient English language proficiency, either in L2 or FL contexts.

Given these facts, both Indonesian and Chinese students can write arguments supported by data and counterargument structures, as represented by the quality of their English argumentative essays. Conversely, the absence of counterargument data, rebuttal claims, and rebuttal data has completely failed to disclose their opposing views to other arguments. This reflects a characteristic of them as novice writers, focusing more on the 'knowledge-telling model' rather than the knowledge-transforming model (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987), in which writers ideally conceptualize their ideas, formulate opposing views, and produce a framework to bridge them (Garate & Melero, 2004).

The contributions of gender to the structures of Indonesian and Chinese students' English argumentative essays

Equal argument structures produced by Indonesian male and female students

Viewed from the gender perspective, the structures of Indonesian students' English argumentative essays. Of the ten Indonesian students (N=5 males and 5 females), most included

two predominant Toulmin's argumentative writing elements, namely *claims* and *data*. On the one hand, Indonesian male students wrote 50 *claims*, 33 *data*, no *counterargument claims*, no *counterargument data*, no *rebuttal claims*, and no *rebuttal data*. These elements were embodied in the essays of students #021, #031, #101, #172, and #190. On the other hand, Indonesian female students composed 44 *claims*, 39 *data*, 1 *counterargument claim*, no *counterargument data*, no *rebuttal claim*, and no *rebuttal data*. Such elements emerged in the English essays of student #009, student #042, student #64, student #115, and student #159 as depicted in the subsequent table:

Table 4.
English Argumentative Essays of Indonesian Students Based on Genders

Toulmin's Argumentative Writing Elements	Students' Genders		Total
	Male Students	Female Students	
Claim	50	44	94
Data	33	39	72
Counterargument claim	-	1	1
Counterargument data	-	-	0
Rebuttal claim	-	-	0
Rebuttal data	-	-	0
Total	83	84	167

As an example, student #009 wrote ten *claims*, seven *data*, one *counterargument claim*, no *counterargument data*, no *rebuttal claim*, and no *rebuttal data*. Compared to other Indonesian male and female students, student #009 produced more complete elements, as she not only includes *claims* and *data* but also a *counterargument* in her English argumentative essay. In particular, she raised the issue of smoking in public places, namely, restaurants. She presumed that smokers were aware of the prohibition on smoking in public places. Nonetheless, they ignored it. Moreover, they had comprehended health risks caused by being exposed to cigarette smoke, such as cancer and other health problems [*data 1 & 2*]. These smokers' activities not only threaten their health but also other non-smoking people staying in such public places [*Claims 3 & 4*]. Furthermore, she emerged with a *counterargument claim* as a response to such problematic situations by positioning herself as a person resisting people smoking in public places, notably restaurants.

Datum 1: *Everyone must have known that smoking is very dangerous [Claim 1]. It has had many bad effects on smokers and people around them [Claim 2]. Smoking could give both active smokers and passive smokers many diseases [Data 1]. It can cause cancer and many other health problems [Data 2]. Smoking inside the room is very dangerous for passive smokers [Claim 3]. Usually, passive smokers cover their noses or get out of that room as fast as possible [Claim 4]. But, in some places like restaurants, we cannot get out directly when people are smoking near us [Counterargument claim 1]. We eat in restaurants usually for a long time [Claim 5]. If people near us smoke, it gives many people bad smoke [Data 5]. Smoke produced from smoking is very dangerous for our health [Claim 6]. If we inhale them for an extended period, we could get serious health problems [Data 6]. People should think about others [Claim 7]. They shouldn't smoke in front of others because it could give both active smokers and passive smokers many diseases [Data 7]. It can cause cancer and many other health problems [Data 8]. If they can't stop smoking in front of others, I think restaurants should ban smoking for the sake of all people [Claim 8]. Smoking should be banned at all restaurants in the country [Claim 9]. So, people who eat in that restaurant eat calmly. [Claim 10] (Student #009)*

In this case, she argued that encountering smokers in public places was inevitable because everyone had the right to visit restaurants. On the other hand, she resisted smoking in public places because it may lead non-smoking people to suffer from such an activity, which they did not smoke, particularly concerning health issues (e.g., cancer and other diseases). She nominated these non-smoking people as passive smokers since they indirectly inhale cigarette smoke exhaled by active smokers [data 6 & 7]. Even, she argued that passive smokers may obtain worse health effects from cigarette smoke than active smokers [data 7]. Unfortunately, she did not provide any scientific explanations or sufficient data to specifically describe that passive smokers may experience worse effects than active smokers. In light of this, Indonesian female students produced more complete Toulmin argumentative structures than Indonesian male students.

Although Indonesian female students produced a more complete structure of Toulmin's argumentative writing elements than Indonesian male students, Indonesian male students constructed more *claims* (50) than Indonesian female students (44). This indicated that Indonesian male students generated more ideas than Indonesian female students in response to a topic-controlled essay in ICNALE, namely non-smoking. These *claims* were written by students #159, #021, #031, #101, #172, and #190.

As an illustration, student #101 wrote eight *claims* and nine *data*. To make an effective description, this elaboration covers *only claim 1*: he argued that smoking has been a lifestyle for both men and women in this era [*claim 1*]. He added that adults and teenagers had started smoking at early ages [*claim 2*]. He assumed that this phenomenon was due to three dominant factors: environment, prestige, and sensation [*claim 3*]. To support his *claims*, he proposed *data*. In *data 1* and *2*, people smoked because they imitated others smoking due to environmental, prestige, and sensation factors. In *data 3*, he presumed that people who kept smoking had not realized the harmful effects of smoking on their health, such as TBC, bronchitis, and other respiratory diseases [*data 3*]. Given these facts, student #101, as representative evidence of Indonesian male students, supported his *claims* with *data*. However, he did not include all elements, such as a *counterargument claim*, *counterargument data*, *rebuttal claim*, and *rebuttal data*.

In conclusion, both Indonesian male and female students are capable of producing their English argumentative essays properly, using Toulmin's elements of argumentative writing. However, they should consider other elements (*counterargument claim*, *counterargument data*, *rebuttal claim*, and *rebuttal data*) to construct stronger argument patterns and convince readers of their argumentative essay's issues.

Equal argument structures produced by Chinese male and female students

Similar to the English argumentative essay structures composed by Indonesian male and female students, Chinese students created their English argumentative essays by dominantly adopting *claims* and *data*. On the contrary, they wrote more counterarguments and rebuttal claims than Indonesian students. On the one hand, Chinese female students composed 46 *claims*, 25 *data*, seven *counterargument claims*, and one *rebuttal claim*. On the other hand, Chinese male students noted 38 *claims*, 27 *data*, four *counterargument claims*, and two *rebuttal claims* as depicted in the following table:

Table 5.
English Argumentative Essays of Chinese Students Based on Genders

Toulmin's Writing Elements	Argumentative	Students' Genders		Total
		Male Students	Female Students	
Claim		38	46	84
Data		27	25	52

Counterargument claim	4	7	11
Counterargument data	-	-	0
Rebuttal claim	2	1	3
Rebuttal data	-	-	0
Total	69	79	148

To exemplify, student #152 constituted six *claims*, eight *data*, and one *counterargument claim*. She maintained that smoking should be prohibited in restaurants in her country (China) [claim1]. To support her claim, she provided *data 1* discussing the detriments of smoking for smokers themselves, their families, other people, and the environment. She specified that the detrimental effect could be greater if it occurred in public places, such as restaurants [data 2]. Not only claims and data but also *counterargument claims* were included in her English argumentative essay, represented in the clause "...People cannot do anything on their own will..." [Counterargument Claim 1]. This counterargument claim was a response to the previous claim (*claim 5*), delineating that "...One may have one thousand reasons to smoke, but which is more important, the short-term pleasure on the one hand, or the health of oneself, of one's parents, friends, and children on the other?..." [Claim 5]. Briefly stated, as a representative of Chinese students writing an English argumentative essay, student #152 has demonstrated that Chinese female students can produce a well-argued structure by including claims, data, and a *counterclaim*. However, *counterargument data* and *rebuttal data* are absent from her essay structure.

Likewise, student #005, as a representative of a Chinese male student, wrote seven *claims*, seven *data points*, and two *counterargument claims*. He argued that people tended to smoke when visiting restaurants [*claim 1*]. Another claim stipulated that smoking had been a worldwide phenomenon [*claim 2*]. Then, he responded to his prior claims [*claims 1 and 2*] by posing *counterargument claims*, namely "...We do not have the right to stop them from smoking [*counterargument claim 1*], but the law can decide where they can smoke and where they cannot..." [*counterargument claim 2*]. Further, he cited several data points to support his claim [*claim 4*], highlighting that smoking should be forbidden in all restaurants in his country (China). These data were "...Smoking can release one's stress indeed, but its disadvantages outweigh the advantages..." [*data 1*]. *It is harmful to our bodies, especially the lungs, and the smoke smokers release also harms nonsmokers* [*data 2*]. *Restaurants are public places where people have meals; the environment must be clean* [*data 3*]. *Smoking in restaurants not only pollutes the environment but also pollutes the food* [*data 4*]. *What's more, smoke can spread freely in the restaurant* [*data 5*],... *all the customers in the restaurant will be exposed to the awful gas* [*data 6*], *so the quality of the environment cannot be assured* [*data 7*]. Grounded in this empirical evidence, Chinese male students can produce well-supported arguments, backed by *data*.

Additionally, they indicate critical thinking skills by including *counterargument claims* as a medium to evaluate and validate the written claims, data, and their connections. This study is relevant to the investigative results reported by Noroozi et al. (2023) that examine gender differences in students' argumentative essay writing, peer review performance, and uptake in online learning environments. They reported that gender contributes crucially to the construction of argumentative essay writing, peer review performances, and peer review comprehension.

CONCLUSION

The current study aims to examine how elements of Toulmin's model contributed to the quality of Indonesian and Chinese students' English argumentative essays, and how gender contributed to that quality. The findings showed that Indonesian and Chinese students' English

argumentative essays indicated both weak (e.g., one Indonesian student and two Chinese students stated claims without data) and strong (e.g., both groups applied claims, data, and counterarguments) argument quality. Grounded in a gender perspective, Indonesian male and female students, as well as Chinese male and female students, were able to construct equal argument structures. As an example, Indonesian male and female students wrote their English argumentative essays appropriately according to Toulmin's argumentative writing elements, such as *claim*, *data*, and *counterargument*. Based on the analysis of Chinese students' English argumentative essays, male and female Chinese students could compose *claims*, *data*, *counterargument claims*, and *rebuttal claims*.

This study offers theoretical, practical, and empirical contributions. As an illustration, the theoretical contribution of the present study is to extend prevailing theories of argumentative writing that focus on argument quality and gender. The practical contribution informs teachers, students, policymakers, and other related stakeholders that argumentative rhetorical patterns, high-quality arguments, and gender types affect the persuasiveness of argumentative writing artefacts (e.g., essays). From an empirical perspective, this study complements and builds on previous investigations of argumentative writing and essays from the viewpoint of argument quality and gender, notably in EFL contexts (e.g., Indonesian and Chinese EFL milieus).

Apart from its pivotal empirical findings, this study has shortcomings, namely non-triangulated data collection procedures, description-based inquiry, and a non-native English speaker's orientation to norms. Further studies should involve triangulated data collection procedures (e.g., interviews, surveys, or think-aloud protocols), intervention-based studies (e.g., experimental studies or action research), and evaluation of both native-English-speaking students and non-native English-speaking students.

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