

To cite this article: Nita Maya Valiantien (2021). INVOLVING READERS IN WRITING: AN ANALYSIS OF IDEAS DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED FEMALE STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS, International Journal of Education and Social Science Research (IJESSR) 4 (6): 77-89

## INVOLVING READERS IN WRITING: AN ANALYSIS OF IDEAS DEVELOPMENT IN SELECTED FEMALE STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS

Nita Maya Valiantien

Mulawarman University, Faculty of Cultural Sciences  
Samarinda East Kalimantan, Indonesia

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.37500/IJESSR.2021.4607>

### ABSTRACT

Studies that discovered females maintain a friendly relation in a conversation have encouraged the author of this paper to explore how female writers develop their ideas in writing. In specific, this paper aims to see how female students develop their ideas in argumentative essays. This paper also attempts to present the variation of transition signals used by the students as one of the strategies to create coherence in their essays. The object of this study is the argumentative essays composed by the female students of English literature study program at Mulawarman University. Using content analysis technique, the selected argumentative essays written by female students who enrolled in academic writing course were analyzed to see the way these students developed their ideas from introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs in the essays. To see how the students maintain the coherence in the essays, the analysis toward the use of transition signal was done. The results provide the information that the pattern of ideas development that mostly found in female students' argumentative essays is initiated by the elaboration of arguments and supporting evidence before the refutation of opposition's points. For the transition signals, the results of the analysis showed that most of the selected essays presented various transition signals in its introductory, body, and conclusion

**KEYWORDS:** argumentative essay, patterns of organization, coherence, transition signals

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Some studies have revealed that women developed certain style or strategies when they use language. [1] discovered that women tend to implement a supportive or facilitative role in conversation. From [2], they found that women are considered as more expressive, tentative, and polite in conversation. In addition, women also attempt to create closer bond with others when having conversation by initiating the talk which relate about the topics or issue that they often face as a group [3, 4]. Female students were reported by [5] as the group who generally improve their language competence through note-taking, dictation test and dialogue reciting.

As women have been considered to develop certain style in language use, it then became the interests of some researchers to discover if such condition also applicable in women's writing. As it can be

predicted, some studies found clear results that women also have special style or pattern in their writing [6, 7]. Some studies also revealed that women are better in composing a written text [8,9] and in presenting argument in writing which is supported by a study from [10] who found that women have the ability to deliver better organized arguments. In another study related to argumentative feedback, [11] have found that female students constructed higher-quality argumentative feedback. Based on the fact that women are proven to use particular pattern in writing, and they are also proven in some studies to be the group that can produce better text and argument, this paper purposes to analyze in detail the flow of ideas in female students' argumentative essay and how they try to make their essay coherent.

This paper contributed in a way that it confirmed the previous findings which revealed certain pattern used by female in writing. In addition, it also offers more insight about how in specific female students organize their ideas in argumentative essay and apply the strategy to achieve coherence in their essay. The remaining parts of this paper are presented into the following sequences: review of related literature, explanation about the method, finding and discussion, and conclusion as the final part in this paper.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Features of females' writing**

There are many studies attempted to investigate the special features in females' writing. One of the studies concerned with the writing style presented by female in their writing was conducted by [6]. In the study, they revealed that more than half of the women writers participated in their study used acknowledgments in their writing. This finding suggested that women's writing is less resistance and have more connection with the readers. More specific, the study discovered that women used more auxiliaries of possibility when writing argumentation.

Another feature of females' writing was found in a study by [12]. After conducting some experiments, the results show that female students used more intensive adverbs, made more references to emotions, had more dependent clauses, hedges, and longer sentences. Other findings came from [13]. Their study found that the language features in females' writing that appear frequently are pronouns and social words, and wide variety of other psychological process references, and verbs. In addition, they also found that negations and references to the home as the language features that represent the female language style.

Females are also found to be able to create better composition of writing [8, 9, 11]. Female students constructed higher-quality argumentative feedback, especially when providing feedback on the intuitive opinion of the students [11]. This finding is aligned with the results of the study which found out that females use more statements on their own intuitive opinions and personal conceptions [14]. The reason why the female students can construct higher-quality argumentative feedback is because

females tend to apply more affiliative language such as argumentative and responsive dialogue acts [15].

Other features that can possibly be found in females' writing is the use of more paraphrase to integrate cited information [10] and the fewer explanation in the preliminary messages on the issue they discuss [16]. When showing disagreement, females have more concealed ways. [17] found that the expression "yes, but..." that used by the female students in their study means that the students do not express their disagreement straightforwardly, but they tend to agree at the first part before expressing their actual disagreement.

## 2.2 Concept of Essay

To understand about argumentative essay, it is better to understand the concept of essay in general. In a light statement, [18] define an essay as the unity of paragraphs developed into three main parts that include introductory, supporting or body, and concluding paragraphs. The three parts have their own specific and interrelated function which aim to lead the reader understand the substance of an essay.

Specifically, the introductory paragraph is the first paragraph of an essay that aims to attract the readers' interest and introduce the topic of the essay. It contains the thesis statement, which is usually the last sentence in an introduction which functions as the statement of specific topic of the essay. Since it is more specific, thesis statement sometimes incorporates the subtopics of the main topic or mention the method of organization in an essay.

After the introduction, there are the body paragraphs or also known as supporting paragraphs. Body paragraphs are the central point of an essay in which the writer of an essay develop the topic and each body paragraph supports the thesis statement. The body of an essay is usually in one or more paragraphs. Each body paragraph has a topic sentence and several supporting sentences. It may or may not have a concluding sentence. Each body paragraph supports the thesis statement.

As the last part of an essay, the writer aims to signal the end of an essay through conclusion in concluding paragraph. Besides acting as the signal of the end of the essay, it also reminds the reader of the main points in the essay, and usually leaves the reader with final thoughts on the topic.

## 2.3 Argumentative essay

Argumentative essay as a genre of essay also follows the general concepts of an essay as what had been defined in the previous paragraph. To be more specific, [19] determined argumentative essay as a kind of essay which function is to offer the best solution to a problem, argue a certain way of looking at an issue, or may urge adoption of a specific proposal or plan of action. Therefore, it should be composed using a clear thesis and body paragraphs that offer enough reasonable reasons and persuasive evidence to convince the readers to agree about the ideas offered by the writer.

To develop well-arranged arguments, Wyrick suggests that there are at least three different patterns of argumentative essay. These patterns are differentiated based on the way the writers arrange their arguments and refutation of opposition’s point. Since there is no specific name for this pattern, in this paper, the patterns are labelled as type A, type B, and type C.



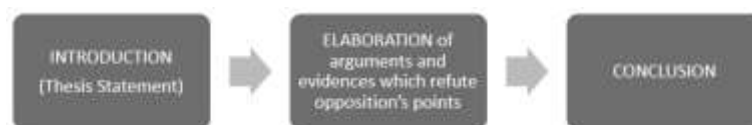
**Figure 1: Pattern of argumentative essay (Type A)**

In type A, the writers begin their essay with introduction which also state the thesis statement before they continue delivering the idea through the body paragraphs. When they have completed the introduction and state their position clearly in thesis statement, the writers who apply type A will continue their elaboration of argument by presenting supporting ideas which can stand their position. After the elaboration of argument, the writers then continue their argument by giving refutation to the opposition’s claims. By employing this type, the writers have first equipped their argument with sufficient support before they present disagreement to others’ opinion. After the whole parts have been clearly delivered, the writers then can achieve the conclusion of the overall argument.



**Figure 2: Pattern of argumentative essay (Type B)**

When using type B, what the writers elaborate first after the introductory paragraph is the refutation of the opposition’s claims. In type B, the writers use the initial body paragraph as the point of countering the contrary side. It means that the writers start to express their disagreement toward the opposite side directly in the beginning of body paragraph. When they finish the refutation, the writers then continue to present their position toward the topic by providing appropriate elaboration of arguments and supporting evidences before finally they can conclude the overall elaboration in the conclusion paragraph.



### Figure 3: Pattern of argumentative essay (Type C)

Unlike the previous two types which contrasted the order of elaboration of argument and the refutation, in type C, the elaboration of argument is presented along with the points of refutation. In other words, the writers combine the elaboration of argument and the refutation since the writers develop the similar point about their own argument toward the point of the refutation. Therefore, type C is used when the writers use their argumentative points to refute the opposition's claims in the same body paragraph, unlike the two previous types. In this type, the writers also put their final thought in the conclusion paragraph after carrying the whole argument about the topic in the essay that they wrote.

#### 2.4 Coherence in Essay

According to [18] a good paragraph has to be coherent which means the sentences in the paragraph should flow smoothly from the beginning until the end of the paragraph. By having coherence in paragraph, a reader can easily understand the ideas in the paragraph because one sentence leads naturally to the next one and there are no case of sudden jump ideas. There are three main ways that can be very helpful for the writers to create coherence in their writing). The three ways include using nouns and pronouns consistently, using transition signals to show relationships among ideas, and arrange the ideas into logical order.

Aligned with the previous concept, [19] suggested that coherence means that all the sentences and ideas in a paragraph flow together to make a clear, logical point about the topic being discussed in the paragraph. As a result, the readers could easily follow the ideas presented in the writing. In more details explanation, [19] proposed that the writers should make connection or transition between the sentences in paragraphs and use some strategies to achieve coherence in paragraphs among others: try to make a natural or easily recognized order, optimize the use of transitional words and phrases, repeat the key words, use various pronouns for key nouns, and maintain parallelism between sentences.

#### 2.5 Previous Studies

The first study as the reference of different language used by female is the study conducted by [20]. In their study, e-mails written by female and male students were analyzed and it was found that mainly for the students, women writers are more likely than men (mainly student) writers to use higher numbers of references to emotions, personal information, questions, compliments, self-derogatory statements, and apologies. Men writers, on the other hand, are more likely than women to use higher numbers of opinions, adjectives, and insults.

Another study related to different language used by female and male conducted by [21]. Through the study, it was found that male students used more nouns related to certain social and economic activities and scientific phenomena associated with a topic. They tend to focus on the particular aspects of the things or events, or on the particular time and places where the activities happen. Meanwhile, female students used more personal pronouns and certain words related to psychological cognitive processes.

They tend to focus on people involved in their writing and tend to use certain intensifiers and modifiers which can function as hedges. Female students are likely to try to show their concern about others or people around them, and try to soften and justify the impact of the argument they are writing, even when they are writing to anonymous readers.

### **3. METHOD**

Since the data used in this research are the words and its focus is to find out the implied content they might have, the approach that fit to this research is qualitative approach. For the method, this research applied qualitative content analysis as it is suggested by [22] that in content analysis, its purpose is to identify both conscious and unconscious messages communicated by text, which can refer to what is stated explicitly and what is implied or revealed by the way in which content is expressed. More specific, content analysis as a method in qualitative research is interpretive, involving close reading of text. By doing content analysis, a text can be interpreted subjectively which may result to multiple meanings, and it could only be analyzed based on its surrounding context.

Using content analysis, the authors analyzed argumentative essays (AE) written by female students of English literature program in Mulawarman University. The essays were composed by the female students after they have been taught about argumentative essay in academic writing course. Then, they were asked to choose one topic among several topics offered by the lecturer and started to write their argumentative essay. The essays had to meet the criteria of a standard essays which presented the appropriate structure of essay (introductory, body, and conclusion), present clear idea, show the pattern of argument thoroughly, and only have very minimum grammatical error.

### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the criteria, there are five essays that represented the argumentative essay and become the object in this study. Therefore, the findings and discussion only focus on those selected five essays. In the remaining section, the authors discussed about the pattern of organization represented in the argumentative essays constructed by female students started from the introductory, followed by supporting paragraphs, and finish with concluding paragraph. After that, the authors elaborated the use of transition signals that the students used to achieve the coherence in their essay.

A complete essay is constructed through three main divisions covering introductory, body, and concluding paragraph. In this research, all the selected essays were developed through these three subdivisions. The analysis of the pattern of organization involved the analysis of the three divisions. At first, the analysis was started from the introductory paragraph, where the focus is on the thesis statement since it is the central of the topic that the participants developed. Next, in body paragraphs, the authors analyzed the length of the paragraph and the pattern of arguments represented by female students in their essay. After that, the analysis was conducted to see how the students constructed the conclusion which emphasizing on the use of concluding signal.

Start from the introduction, the important thing that the authors highlighted is the way the participants present their idea in the opening window of their essay, that is the thesis statement. Thesis statement is an important part of an essay since it shows the aims of the writers in their entire writing. In this study, the students were asked to write an essay about the given topics and it was found that the five argumentative essays as the object in this study discussed the topics about animal testing, reality shows, human cloning, and killing animals for food.

**Table 1: Thesis Statements in introductory paragraph**

Essay Sample	Topic of Essay	Thesis Statement
AE1	Animal Testing	“We all know that using animal for testing is a way to save human life.”
AE2	Reality Shows	“There are some reality shows that can influence and make them become a better person.”
AE3	Human Cloning	“They strongly reject about human cloning and tell some effects if people still do human cloning.”
AE4	Killing animals for food	“There are some reasons that people may kill animals for food.”
AE5	Killing animals for food	“There are some reasons to support the refusal of killing animal for food.”

Table 1 presents the thesis statement written by female students in their argumentative essays. Overall, it was found that women employ personal pronouns and structure “there-” to initiate their general idea in thesis statement. From the data, there are two personal pronouns: “we” and “they” found in the thesis statement. The finding which showed female students use personal pronouns is aligned with the previous studies [13, 21]. The use of pronoun “we” is more often used as a co-operative. It is mostly related to a large group of people, and is the signal which indicated that the writers expect to be the representative of the group. In addition, the use of “we” also showed that the writer attempted to include the audience in what the topic discussed [23]. Meanwhile, the use of pronoun ‘they’ is often found in a situation where a person whose gender is unknown or unimportant in the context. By applying pronoun ‘they’, writers can address broader range of people and identities [24]. The use of “there... “structure showed that the writers express events, actions and states of affairs in a schematic way, without the intrusion of participants [25]. Such findings support the previous studies which claim that female tend to be more cooperative in communication [1, 3, 4, 6]. The findings showed that this cooperative feature also existed in the way female communicate their ideas through writing.

The researcher also analyzed the number of paragraph that the participants create to elaborate their ideas in supporting paragraph. Table 2 shows that on average, female students were able to develop their supporting ideas at least in four paragraphs up to six paragraphs which represent the body of the argumentative essays.

**Table 2: Number of Body Paragraphs and Pattern of Arguments**

<b>Essay Sample</b>	<b>Number of Body par.</b>	<b>Pattern of arguments (Type A/ Type B/Type C)</b>
AE 1	4	Type A: Introduction (Thesis Statement) → Elaboration of arguments and supporting evidence → Refutation of opposition’s points → Conclusion
AE 2	6	Type C: Introduction (Thesis Statement) → Elaboration of arguments and evidence which refute opposition’s points → Conclusion
AE 3	6	Type A: Introduction (Thesis Statement) → Elaboration of arguments and supporting evidence → Refutation of opposition’s points → Conclusion
AE 4	5	Type A: Introduction (Thesis Statement) → Elaboration of arguments and supporting evidence → Refutation of opposition’s points → Conclusion
AE 5	4	Type A: Introduction (Thesis Statement) → Elaboration of arguments and supporting evidence → Refutation of opposition’s points → Conclusion

The second focus of the analysis is the pattern of arguments that the participants applied in the body paragraphs of their essay. Refer to the table, four female participants used pattern A and only one participant used pattern C. It can be generalized that female writers were more convenience to use



pattern A which started with the elaboration of arguments and supporting evidence then followed by refutation of opposition's points.

When the writers elaborate their ideas first before rejecting, it can be a hint that the writers do not want the readers to fault another opposition's points before the readers have enough evidence to do so. Therefore, female writers attempt to provide enough supporting statement from the elaboration of argument which is presented previously. It also means that in general, females tend to put their idea first before showing that they actually disagree with another opposition's idea. This finding is aligned with what [17] found in their study that females tend to express their agreement first before expressing their actual disagreement. The finding also implied that female writers try to express less firm argument and at the same time justify the power of the argument they are writing which is the same with the findings from Ishikawa [21]

Concluding paragraph is the last section in an essay where the writers conclude their entire ideas or restate their topic using different words. This study found that female students used conclusion signal in their concluding paragraph appropriately. Specifically, Table 3 shows how each participant created the ending for their essay.

**Table 3: Concluding signal/ sentence used in the essay sample**

Essay Sample	Conclusion
AE1	"Based on the existing evidence, we can conclude that the use of animals for testing is really beneficial for the animal and even human life itself."
AE2	"To conclude, we should not blame all the reality shows as a bad influence for people."
AE3	"From what I had explained before, cloning is not really a good idea to have a copy of someone or to have a baby from this way."
AE4	"To sum up, killing animals for food is not wrong"
AE5	"To sum up, killing animal for foods actually is not the best way to fulfill our foods issues"

From the table, it can be seen that the students used conclusion signal such as: to conclude, to sum up, and end to state that they presented the concluding section. This finding suggests that female students summarizing their whole ideas in the essay and restating their thesis statement using different words.

The students also showed that they tend to restate their initial idea and state final comment in the end of the paragraph to make the readers remember about the ideas.

Related to the use of transition signal as one of the strategies to improve coherence in writing, the findings show that most of the participants used transition signals in each part of their essay as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: List of transition signal in sample essays**

Essay	List of Transition Signal
AE 1	<p><b>Introductory:</b> -</p> <p><b>Body:</b> Then, Beside that, When, Furthermore, After, However, While, Thus, The first, the second, But, Yet, Additionally, Then, Moreover, So,</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> We can conclude that</p>
AE 2	<p><b>Introductory:</b> Although, For example, Another, However</p> <p><b>Body:</b> Another one, But, Because of that,</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> To conclude</p>
AE 3	<p><b>Introductory:</b> Yet</p> <p><b>Body:</b> While, Besides, Because, But,</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> From what I had explained before...</p>
AE 4	<p><b>Introductory:</b> Therefore, Besides, so that</p> <p><b>Body:</b> But, First, Second, therefore, so that</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> To sum up, However, but</p>
AE 5	<p><b>Introductory:</b> But, So,</p> <p><b>Body:</b> Because, When</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> To sum up</p>

The table shows that female participants tend to employ the transition signal in almost each part of their essays. The findings also show that the students are able to use various types of transition signal in their essays. This indicated that female students attempted to create coherence in their essay which can help the readers to understand the ideas in the essay.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

From the analysis of the female students' argumentative essays, it was discovered that some findings in this research confirm the findings from previous studies which indicate that they have more concern about developing social relationship even with the anonymous readers, for example by using pronoun 'we' in the thesis statement. As for the pattern of arguments in the essay, most of the participants applied Pattern A in their essay. It gave information that they tend to present their own idea first before refuting opposition's idea. This finding also implied that female writers try to express less firm argument and at the same time justify the power of the argument they are writing. For the coherence of the essay, it was found that female participants used variety of transition signals in their introductory, body, and conclusion paragraphs. This finding can be a preliminary signal that female students maintain their effort to create coherence in their essay.

As the final thought, it is suggested that the future researchers who have similar interest with the topic of this research could consider to involve more participants in the research to get broader data. In addition, the data should not only be limited to one type of essay and the analysis for the coherence can be done by examining another strategies such as the use of consistent pronoun and noun in writing.

## REFERENCES

- [1] J. Holmes, Functions of You Know in Women's and Men's Speech. *Language in Society*, 15 (1),1986,1-21
- [2] S. A. Basow and K Rubenfeld. "Troubles talk": Effects of gender and gender-typing. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 48(3-4), 2003, 183–187.
- [3] J. Gray. *Men are from mars, women are from venus: a practical guide for improving communication and getting what you want in a relationship*. (New York: Harper Collins, 1992)
- [4] D. Tannen. *You just don't understand: women and men in conversation*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990)
- [5] W. Na. Gender Differences in the Use of English Vocabulary Learning Strategies in Chinese Senior High Schools. *CS Canada Studies in Literature and Language*, 12(4), 2016, 58-62
- [6] D. L. Rubin, and K. Greene. Gender-typical style in written language. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 26, 1992, 7-40.
- [7] A. Mulac, J. J. Bradac, and P. Gibbons, Empirical support for the gender-as culture hypothesis: An intercultural analysis of male/female language differences. *Human Communication Research*, 27, 2001, 121-152

- [8] M. Zhang, R.E.Bennet, P. Dean, and P.W.v. Rijn, Are There Gender Differences in How Students Write Their Essays? An Analysis of Writing Processes. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 38(2), 2019, 14-26
- [9] Z. Al-Saadi | (2020) Gender differences in writing: The mediating effect of language proficiency and writing fluency in text quality, *Cogent Education*, 7(1), 2020, 1-19.
- [10] D. Waskita, Differences in Men's and Women's Esl Academic Writing at The University of Melbourne. *Jurnal Sosioteknologi*, 14(7), 2008, 448-463
- [11] O. Noroozi, J. Hatami, A. Bayat, S. v. Ginkel, H. J. A. Biemans, and M. Mulder (2018): Students' online argumentative peer feedback, essay writing, and content learning: does gender matter? *Interactive Learning Environments*, 28 (6), 2018, 698-712
- [12] A. Mulac, D.R. Seibold, J.L. Farris. Female and Male Managers' and Professionals' Criticism Giving: Differences in Language Use and Effects. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 19(4), 2000, 389-415.
- [13] M.L. Newman, C.J Groom, L.D Handelman, and J.W. Pennebaker. Gender Differences in Language Use: An Analysis of 14,000 Text Samples. *Discourse Processes*, 45, 2008, 211-236.
- [14] J. Underwood, G. Underwood, D. Wood. (2000). When does gender matter? Interactions during computer-based problem solving. *Learning and Instruction*, 10(5), 2000, 447-462.
- [15] G. Erkens, and J. Janssen. Automatic coding of dialogue acts in collaboration protocols. *Computer Supported Learning*, 3, 2008, 447-470
- [16] Q. Li. Gender and computer-mediated communication: An exploration of elementary students' mathematics and science learning. *Journal of Computers in Mathematics and Science Teaching*, 21(4), 2002, 341-359.
- [17] F.R. Prinsen, M.L.L. Volman, and J. Terwel. Gender-related differences in computer-mediated communication and computer-supported collaborative learning. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 23 (5), 2007, 393-409
- [18] A. Oshima and A. Hogue. *introduction to academic writing (third edition)*. (NY: Pearson Education, 2007)
- [19] J. Wyrick. *steps to writing well with additional readings (eighth edition)*. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2011)

- [20] J. Hartley, J.W. Pennebaker, and C. Fox. Using New Technology to Assess the Academic Writing Styles of Male and Female Pairs and Individuals. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 33 (3), 2003, 243-261
- [21] Y. Ishikawa. Gender Differences in Vocabulary Use in Essay Writing by University Students. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 192, 2015, 593 – 600.
- [22] H. Julian, Content Analysis, In L.M. Given (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008) 120-121.
- [23] Fortanet, I. 2004. The use of ‘we’ in university lectures: reference and function. *English for Specific Purposes*, 23, 2004, 45–66
- [24] Purdue University, “Gendered Pronouns & Singular “They”,” Purdue Online Writing Lab, n.d. [Online]. Available: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/grammar/pronouns/gendered\\_pronouns\\_and\\_singular\\_they.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/grammar/pronouns/gendered_pronouns_and_singular_they.html) [Accessed: March 12, 2021].
- [25] A. Downing, and P. Locke. *English grammar: a university course*. (NY: Routledge, 2006).

### Author Profile

**Nita Maya Valiantien** received the Bachelor of Education and Master of Education degrees in English Education from Mulawarman University in 2006 and 2011, respectively. She is now a lecturer in Faculty of Cultural Sciences Mulawarman University.