

# How does corrective feedback foster students' argumentative essay writing quality? A self-narrative inquiry study

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## **ABSTRACT**

Argumentative essays are one of the materials taught in the writing class in Indonesian higher education. It shapes students' creative thinking skills in presenting their arguments about the case in detail. The present study explores the role of corrective feedback in fostering students' argumentative essay writing quality in Indonesian higher education. Adopting a self-narrative inquiry study, I would like to highlight my experience teaching argumentative essays to students in the English education department of Indonesian higher education. These include teaching practices in the writing class during one semester starting from February to June 2023, practices of providing corrective feedback in students' argumentative essays, the roles of corrective feedback for fostering students' argumentative essays, and my reflection on teaching argumentative essays during one semester including materials and others. The implication of this study is discussed.

## **KEYWORDS:**

Argumentative essays;  
Corrective feedback;  
Self-narrative inquiry;  
Writing quality

## **INTRODUCTION**

Argumentative essay writing is a crucial material taught to students, particularly in higher education (Latifi et al., 2021). Further, it is also taught to students from diverse fields including biotechnology (Noroozi & Hatami, 2019). In the context of an English education major, students should learn argumentative essays since these argumentative essays have become the essential materials embedded in the curriculum in Indonesian secondary schools. More importantly, students in the English education department need to be able to write argumentative essays to shape their critical thinking skills from various perspectives. Good argumentative essays cover strong claims enhanced by reasonable arguments, evidence accomplished by elaborations of counterarguments opposing the original statement, and a combination of counterarguments and affirmative arguments that could conclude the case (Latifi et al., 2021).

From these elaborations, it could be deduced that writing is a series activity requiring process and critical thinking skills. As asserted by Wahyuningsih (2021), writing needs a process including pre-writing, planning (outline), writing, and revising drafts. Moreover, to shape the writing process, writers need to have meta-cognitive control skills and knowledge (Proske et al., 2012). In terms of argumentative writing in humanities, the compositions cover proposition and proof. Further, argumentative essays should improve a thesis enhanced by examples and evidence (Şimşek, 2022). Unfortunately, some students have not been able to write argumentative essays appropriately. As pointed out by Valero Haro et al., (2019) the quality of argumentative essay writing among students in higher education is still low to meet the accomplishment of task writing. This could be caused by several challenges including the lack of information, lack of practice, and lack of literacy about the case (Latifi et al., 2021, 2023).

In relation to overcoming these challenges, some strategies need to be proposed including the provision of feedback. Several studies dealing with providing feedback in the writing course have been undertaken by previous scholars. Valero Haro et al., (2019) examined the impact of providing peer feedback on students' information literacy and ability in writing argumentative essays. Likewise, peer feedback could lead to improving the quality of writing argumentative essays among university students (Latifi et al., 2023). Furthermore, Latifi et al., (2021) investigated the effects of feedback including online scripted, unscripted, and peer feedback on the outcomes of learning among students in creating argumentative essays. Regarding the skills needed in writing argumentative essays, Afshar et al., (2017) elaborated on the importance of critical thinking skills to foster students' ability to write exactly. In line with the previous studies, Lupton (2008) emphasized that in the process of writing, writers need to acquire knowledge literacy including searching, positioning, assessing, arranging knowledge, analyzing, making decisions, and overcoming problems. Moreover, students in higher education from various majors are supposed to improve the quality of presenting arguments and evidence in writing argumentative essays (Şimşek, 2022).

Referring to previous studies outlined above, some scholars investigated the need to improve critical thinking skills and literacy for students to foster the quality of argumentative essay writing and the need to provide feedback in enhancing students' argumentative essays.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a narrative inquiry study. Creswell (2012) highlights that narrative study focuses on unraveling the stories and experiences of individuals. It is strengthened by Clandinin (2006) asserting that narrative inquiry is a medium to narrate human experiences to establish personal experience. In line with this, this study aims to uncover my teaching experience related to the need for providing corrective feedback for fostering students' argumentative essay writing quality in the English education department in the writing course during one semester starting from February to June 2023. It also plays a teaching reflection to improve my professional teaching development in the writing course, particularly in teaching argumentative essays. Data were garnered through an observation to review classroom activities in the writing course. Further, documentation was utilized to document the process and activities in providing feedback for fostering students' argumentative essay writing quality. In this sense, I used directed corrective feedback and peer feedback in the writing course. The data were analyzed qualitatively to promote teaching reflection in the

writing course, especially in enhancing the argumentative essay writing quality among students.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Teaching Practices on the Writing Course During One Semester

My teaching practices in the writing course started from February to June 2023 in one semester. In this sense, there were several materials or topics that I teach to students in the English education department. These encompassed writing sentences and paragraphs, descriptive text, recount text, narrative text, procedure text, argumentative text, and persuasive text. To support my teaching activities, I designed lesson plans for the writing course including course identity, indicators of the study, learning outcomes, materials, learning activities, learning media and method, time allocation, and references. Further, I also distributed the lesson plan to students in the first meeting so that they have a clear understanding of some topics we are going to learn during one semester.

I started my topic by teaching sentences since writing sentences is beneficial for writers in producing meaningful text. In this matter, I taught the structure of sentences including grammar, word choice, and so on. In addition, I also taught how to write good and meaningful paragraphs. By having a better understanding of sentences and paragraphs, students were expected to write many texts based on the type or genre. To enhance students' work, I also provided corrective feedback both directed and peer feedback. By providing feedback, students had insightful information regarding their writing mistakes and errors so that they could improve their writing.

Dealing with teaching argumentative essays, I provided materials including the structure of argumentative essays such as an introductory paragraph containing the background information, thesis statement containing a summary of the main point and claim, body paragraphs containing two or more paragraphs elaborating the reasons supporting the thesis accomplished by data, evidence, and example. The last one is the conclusion containing a restatement of the thesis and a summary of the arguments in the body paragraphs. It can be illustrated by the following figure.



Figure 1. The structure of argumentative essays

After teaching argumentative essays, I encouraged students to create argumentative essays. In this matter, I allowed students to freely choose topics or issues. They can write their arguments by supporting or contradicting the topics or issues being discussed. Also, I provided both peer and teacher corrective feedback on students' argumentative essay writing to encourage their writing performance. In addition, I adapted several strategies in teaching argumentative essays including THE READER strategy as advocated by McGee (2020) including thesis, reasons, details, explain, and review.

### **The Role of Corrective Feedback on Students' Argumentative Essays Writing Quality**

Providing feedback during the teaching and learning process plays a crucial role in encouraging students' performance, particularly in writing argumentative essays. In this matter, I provided peer corrective feedback and teacher corrective feedback to encourage students' writing performance in argumentative essays. In addition, students can comment on their peers' writing starting from the arguments, reasons, and evidence, and explain in detail. Also, I provided corrective feedback as an encouragement toward the feedback given by my peers. Based on the observation, the combination of peer and teacher corrective feedback promotes students to actively comment on the students' writing, think critically about the issue being discussed, and encourage their confidence. This is strengthened by the previous studies that corrective feedback provides an opportunity for the students to get improvement on their writing and see the comparison between the input and output (Ölmezer-Öztürk & Öztürk, 2016). Likewise, corrective feedback gives meaningful knowledge on revising the students' writing (Hojeij & Baroudi, 2018; Wahyuningsih, 2020). On the other hand, another study asserted that the quality of peer feedback can be encouraged or diminished depending on its type (Valero Haro et al., 2023).

### **Teaching Reflection and Implications for Future Teaching Development**

Teaching argumentative essay writing, I had to teach reflection it is not easy to teach writing. Indeed, writing needs a process starting from prewriting, writing, and revision. In addition, the limited time allocation in teaching argumentative essays has become a challenge for me. Indeed, there is a list of materials in writing courses such as recount text, narrative text, explanatory text, and so on. It needs more time to shape students writing skills through giving theory, practice, feedback, and evaluation. Dealing with the ways of teaching writing particularly argumentative essay writing, students need to shape their knowledge related to the issue or topics, upgrade their writing skills, enrich literacy by reading a lot of sources, and so on. To improve teaching in the future, I tried to allocate proper time in the writing course by consulting with the head of the English department and selecting some up-to-date topics as materials for teaching argumentative essay writing. The study presents the implications of the need for me to encourage students to enrich their literacy to shape their knowledge and support the writing activities and the need for students to improve their writing skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

Argumentative essay is one of the materials taught by university students. In this context, they are taught the structure of the argumentative essay, the way to give an argument and criticize it, strategies to present evidence and examples in detail, and so on. While teaching argumentative essays, I provided both peer feedback and lecturer feedback to encourage students' performance in writing. In addition, they will know their error in writing and revise it

well. More importantly, they can improve their confidence, and critical thinking by providing feedback on their peer writing. It needs more time to shape students writing skills through giving theory, practice, feedback, and evaluation. Dealing with the ways of teaching writing particularly argumentative essay writing, students need to shape their knowledge related to the issue or topics, upgrade their writing skills, enrich literacy by reading a lot of sources, and so on.

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