

Comparative Genre Analysis of English Argumentative Essays Written by Chinese English and Non-English Major Students

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Abstract

Argumentative writing has long been regarded as an essential mode of written discourse. Despite some studies on argumentative essays across ages, grade levels, cultures and languages, research has not yet been conducted on writers from different academic disciplines in the Chinese context. The main purpose of this study was to investigate the current situation of move-step structure of argumentative essays written by English learners in an EFL context. Two sets of corpus of English argumentative essays written by Tongren University students were built, 100 from English majors and the other 100 from non-English majors. A selected analytical framework was used to analyze the move-step structure of the essays and some linguistic features were also investigated. Results revealed that the majority of the argumentative essays were found to follow the three stages set in the model. Findings also showed some differences in terms of move-step structure between the essays written by these two groups of students. In the conclusion, pedagogical implications informed by these results and findings are offered to benefit teaching argumentative essay writing.

Keywords: *Argumentative essay, Genre analysis, Move-step structure, Linguistic features, English and non-English major students*

Introduction

Argumentative writing has long been highly regarded as an essential mode of writing discourse and it plays an important part of second language learners' academic experience at the university level (Zhu, 2001). Argumentative texts are required to be produced in a variety of contexts.

First, in academic settings, argumentative writing is an important instrument for students who face the task of writing research papers before finishing their university careers (Crowhurst, 1991). Next, for test-takers, argumentative essay is a required genre to produce in different tests or exams, ranging from national level tests (College English Test [CET] and Test for English Majors [TEM] in China) to international tests (TOEFL and IETS). Finally, in the workplace, individuals may need to persuade others to support their proposals or opinions. Given the importance of argumentative writing, it is clear that argumentative writing plays a significant role both for academic success and for general life purposes (Crowhurst, 1990). Therefore, finding a suitable way to teach writing of this text type will prepare the students to handle this writing task well and successfully for the academic and professional purposes.

However, argumentative writing is a difficult type of text for students to produce. One weakness is poor organization associated with a lack of knowledge of argumentative structure. The student writers have inadequate exposure to argumentative writing structure, and have little knowledge of this genre. Normally, their writing lacks clear organization, and they may produce inappropriate style of writing by using inappropriate language and wrong connectors (Crowhurst, 1987). Several studies have mentioned that this problem exists in a variety of contexts (e.g. Ferris, 1994; Hyland, 1990; Connor, 1990; Crowhurst, 1990, Crowhurst, 1991). Chinese ELT learners have been reported to suffer with this difficulty as well (e.g. Gao, 2007). Therefore, more studies particularly in ELT contexts are needed to enrich the existing findings.

This present study was conducted at a public university in the south-west of China , with a student population of about 7,000, this university provides English language programs for both English majors and non-English majors.

College English is a required basic course for all first and second year undergraduate non-English major students at this university. The objective of College English is to develop students' ability to use English in a well-rounded way (CMOE, 2007). Normally, in the College English classroom, every English teacher is required to teach all four skills and this practice is known as the "one-teacher-package-class" model in the Chinese ELT context (Lu, 2007). Unsurprisingly, in three hours per week teaching, compared with instruction in listening and reading, much less attention has been devoted to writing.

For English majors, a writing course is offered to them only in term seven with two hours per week. The textbook for this course consists of eight chapters arranged in the order from word, sentence, and paragraph level to essay level. Normally, writing instruction follows the textbook based on the principle of 'from simplicity to difficulty'. However, one substantial flaw of this

textbook is the absence of writing an argumentative essay in the essay composition chapter, which would lead to the students' unfamiliarity with the structure of argumentative essay. Obviously, most English and non-English majors at this university are struggling with composing argumentative essays. Writing an argumentative essay is a demanding task for them due to inadequate exposure to this genre (Gao, 2007), insufficient explicit instruction, and unfamiliarity with the structure of argumentative writing. Therefore, the major purpose of the study is thus to investigate current rhetorical patterns of argumentative essays produced by English and non-English major students at the target university, so that the weaknesses of their writing can be identified, and therefore improvement can be suggested. The second purpose is to explore current linguistic features of the argumentative essay written by English and non-English major students so that information about language use can be obtained. The third purpose is to reveal the similarities and differences by comparing the argumentative essays written by these two groups of students, so that the teachers can adapt in different ways when teaching different groups of students this genre.

Research Methodology

Writer Participants and Teacher Interviewees

Two hundred students were selected as writer participants among students who were required to write an argumentative essay on the given topic. Among them, 100 writer participants were English major students, who were second-year, third-year and fourth-year students. The other 100 students were non-English major students who major in Chinese, mathematics, politics, history, biology, chemistry and agriculture. All of them were second-year students. To triangulate the source of data, the researcher conducted the interviews with 20 student writers and 5 teachers. Among these 20 student interviewees, ten were sophomores, juniors and seniors English majors, and the other 10 were second year non-English major students who were majoring in mathematics, history, politics, agriculture and Chinese. As for the teacher interviewees, two teach extensive reading to English majors, one teaches writing to English majors, and another 2 teach English for non-English majors.

Data & Data Collection

“The analysis of a genre based on data obtained from a small corpus of texts has become a widely used method of obtaining information about language use.” (Henry and Roseberry, 2001. p. 93). Data for the present study were students' writing pieces of the argumentative essay. Two set of corpus were built; one was the texts collected from English majors, and the other from non-English majors at the target university. The corpora consisting of 200 writing pieces derived from two sources: 100 writing pieces composed by English majors, and the other 100 pieces by non-English majors. As for the writing task, background information about the topic was provided; the required text length, content and basic elements needed to be contained in the argumentative essay were clearly stated.

Procedure

Data were collected in September, 2010 at the target university. More than 100 English major and more than 100 non-English major students were asked to write an argumentative essay with more than 220 words on the topic ‘Should Smoking be Banned in All Public Places?’ in one hour. After they had finished the writing, only 100 pieces of texts were selected from each group to be used in the investigation, constituting a corpus 200 texts. The selection criteria of the texts heavily depended on the text length required for the writing task. Texts were rejected if they appeared to be illogically written or shorter than expected. These 200 texts were then ready for the analysis using the selected framework.

Analytical Framework

Despite the availability of four other argumentative essay analysis frameworks proposed by Toulmin (1958), Veal (1997), Lock and Lockart (1998), and Derewianka (1990), the 3-move model by Hyland (1990) was chosen as a framework for the analysis of these 200 argumentative essays for the following reasons (See Appendix A). First, Hyland’s framework is a comprehensive model for analyzing argumentative essays. It provides a detailed description of each stage and move, which offers a clearly explained rhetorical structure of an argumentative essay that can be used as a suitable sample model for analysis. The second reason for using this model is because of its validity. This framework has proved valid because Hyland arrived at it by analyzing 65 top 10% of essays submitted for a high school matriculation in English. Finally, this framework has been employed to analyze the texts produced by non-English speakers, which are similar to the target writers in this present study.

Analysis Procedure

The corpus categorization and the move analysis took a coding system. Two corpora were categorized according to students’ majors. One set of corpus was coded EM which stands for English major, while the other one was coded NEM which stands for non-English major. The texts were labeled from EM001 to EM100 to indicate the number of the pieces of writing, and the same happened to NEM001 to NEM100. As for move analysis coding system, *I* stands for Information, *P* for Proportion, *M* for Marker, and etc, according to Hyland’s framework (1990). In this study, a set of moves and linguistic features characterizing the structure of the text were identified. Then, the linguistic features of some of the moves were analyzed. The selection of these moves for linguistic feature analysis was based on two criteria, i.e. moves with high frequent presence and moves with the status as central moves according to Hyland (1990).

Both move analysis and linguistic features identification were conducted manually. This may lead to subjective results with low reliability. The inter-rater reliability method is a good solution to this problem. In order to increase the accuracy of texts analysis and obtain high reliability, a researcher at TU with applied linguistics background, who specializes in genre analysis, analyzed the texts as an inter-rater. Texts were analyzed by two raters independently before

confirming the results to reach agreement on move analysis. The statistical calculation for percentage agreement used in this study was the simplest and most common method of reporting inter-rater reliability. Holsti's (1969) coefficient of reliability (C. R.) indicates the number of agreements per total number of coding decisions. And it provides a formula for calculating percent agreement:

$$C. R. = \frac{m}{n1 + n2}$$

Where: m = the number of coding decisions upon which the two coders agree

n1 = number of coding decisions made by rater 1

n2 = number of coding decisions made by rater 2

When the C. R. value is above 0.75, it indicates excellent agreement.

After the analysis of all texts, the interviews with 5 teachers and 20 student writers from different disciplines were conducted. These five teachers were coded as T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5 for easier description later in the discussion section. The interview questions were formulated based on the results from the analysis (Appendix B). The semi-structured interviews with teachers and students were conducted in Chinese to achieve better understanding of both the interview questions and responses, and the interviews were tape-recorded.

Results and Discussion

Results were found after 200 texts were analyzed. The results are reported here from two aspects: move analysis and linguistic features. This section starts with the report of the results from six aspects in move analysis, and the results from the analysis of linguistic features were reported from four aspects.

Move Analysis

Non-Argumentative Essays

Two texts, NEM 005 and NEM 100, were taken out of the corpus because they are not argumentative essays. These two texts only compared the two opposite opinions on the controversial issue, which is whether smoking should be banned in all public places. However, neither of these two writers expressed their own standpoints on this issue. NEM 005 and NEM 100 cannot be viewed as argumentative essays because they lack the writer's opinion or position, which is a necessary element in an argumentative essay (Hyland, 1990). It is assumed that the writers of NEM 005 and NEM 100 do not know the Proposition, the writer's position, is one of obligatory components in argumentative writing.

Moves Always/Mostly Present

Information move in the Thesis stage

As a universal element in the argumentative writing, the move of Information was found to be used in 93.85% of the texts. A possible reason given by T4 is that they are university students, so it is most likely that they keep up with the current events around them on campus. If an essay topic is about current events, therefore the related information about these issues will be familiar to the students. Another reason provided by T3 reveals the relationship between the Information move and the issue being discussed. The Information functions as supporting materials to help increase the awareness of current situation concerning the controversial issue, or attract the reader's attention to this issue.

Examples of Information move:

1. *Smoking in the public places has always been a hot topic which draws a lot of attention. (EM 036)*
2. *Since January 1, 2011, smoking in public places will be forbidden in China. (NEM 015)*

Proposition move in the Thesis stage

Among the 198 texts, Proposition move occurred in 86.5% of the texts. According to the interview data, T3 and T4 provided possible reasons why the Proposition move occurred so frequently in essays. In their opinion, most students have opinion on significant topics, especially topics related to their health and to their environment. If the topic is one that students are familiar with, the Proposition move is a very natural thing to be able to use. However, T2 thinks this is because of L1 transfer. In a Chinese argumentative essay, the writer is required to claim his or her position on an issue. Students just transfer this skill naturally from the Chinese writing tradition.

Examples of Proposition move:

1. *I think smoking must be banned in all public places. (EM 043)*
2. *I don't think it should be banned completely. (NEM 080)*

Claim move in the Argument stage

As the central move in the argument stage, the move of Claim appeared in 180 texts in the first move cycle. The high rate of appearance of this move may result from the following reasons. T1 thinks that it has something to do with the teaching practice in class. When discussing something on a topic, students are normally expected to provide reasons to support their opinions. Moreover, according to T2 and T3, university students are equipped with reasoning, analyzing and logical skills and abilities to a certain extent. Once they give their opinions, supporting reasons must be present to accompany them. However, it seems to T4 that the claim, the reason for acceptance of proposition, would follow the proposition. When students are able to formulate

the proposition or take a stand on a subject, the claim naturally comes after the proposition, functioning as complimentary materials. Interestingly, the number of claim in the third move cycle reduced to 92, That is to say, most students could just offer two reasons to explain why they accepted the proposition. Moreover, not all claims were followed by a support, which is an indispensable part to the claim in a tied pair of moves. The failure of giving sufficient reasons and the support may result from the lack of particular field knowledge related to the given topic. This assumption was confirmed by most student interviewees, who claimed that their failure of providing sufficient reasons to support their stand on a subject is their common problem when writing an argumentative essay. The following are examples to show when only claims were provided without any supporting details to support these claims.

1. (EM 002) *Smoking will waste your much money.*
2. (EM 006) *Smoking in public places is a bad habit and it harms public environment.*
3. (NEM 001) *We all know smoking is harmful to our health.*
4. (NEM 018) *Smoking is bad for the evaluation of a country's image in the world.*

Moves Rarely Present

Gambit move in the Thesis stage

Only 7 out of 198 (3.55%) students' texts were found to contain this move. According to T4, the students lack understanding about perceived function of the Gambit. In his opinion, attention grabbing does not give information so it might not be seen as necessary by some students. Furthermore, it requires better master of written language and may be beyond some students' skill levels. This explanation also agrees with that of Hyland (1990) who pointed out that the Gambit move requires certain skills which are beyond students' awareness and ability. However, T3 attributes the nearly absence of this move to the lack of knowledge about the structure of argumentative essay. This assumption confirms the demonstration of Crowhurst (1990), who identified a lack of knowledge about the structure of argumentative essay as one of the characteristic problems of student writers. For example:

1. *Nowadays, people's health has become a serious problem, more and more people has kinds of diseases and passed away. (NEM 001)*
2. *As we all know, the phenomenon of smoking has become more and more serious. (EM 067)*

Evaluation move in the Thesis stage

Only 7.6% of the texts contained the move of evaluation, giving a sound reason to give a brief support to Proposition. The possible reason for this scarcity given by T4 is that Evaluation is higher order thinking and may be beyond students' skill levels. Therefore, most students just

gave their positions on the given topic rather than gave a further explanation to the reason for their stances. For example:

1. *From my viewpoint, I agree with the government's decision because we need a clean environment. (NEM 031)*
2. *In my opinion, government should ban the smoking in all public places, because smoking not only influence people's health, but also cause environment problems. (EM 012)*

Restatement move in the Argument stage

Restatement move is a repetition of proposition. The move functions as a reminder of the subject. The Argument stage consists of a possible three move cycles repeated in a specific order in this study. In 3 move cycles, only 5 students were found to use this move (in the first move cycle, no text was found to present this move; in the second and third move cycles, 2 and 3 students used it respectively in each move cycle). T5 attributes this to students' unfamiliarity with the structure of an essay and ignorance of the need to restate their position on the proposition. One more reason is that the students do not know the function of this move, according to T2.

Non-Argument Embedded in Argumentative Essay

The narratives and dialogues to be described below, which function as one move in the text respectively, are part of an argumentative essay. Although both of them were incorporated into the essays to help persuade the readers, they appeared little persuasive or argumentative.

Narratives

Argument is a typical characteristic in an argumentative writing. However, EM 074 was found to contain a short narration rather than an argument when he or she attempted to persuade the reader to stop smoking in public places.

"It is a very satiric, once I was waiting for the train, there is a big sign said no smoking, but I also saw some people smoke in the waiting room, so I hope everybody should pay more attention on our health and environment."

This non-argument agrees with that of Crowhurst (1990), who found some student writers respond to persuasive tasks with writing not recognizably persuasive but with narratives that are rather informative. He assumed that probably narrative is more primary text type and less cognitive demanding than persuasive one, therefore the student writers tend to use easier one instead of more challenging, expected form.

Dialogues

In addition to narratives, dialogues, another kind of non-argument, was found in the corpus. NEM 002 used this type of non-argument which made a conversational exchange between two persons.

“Sometimes, I ask my friend why smoking, and if you can’t smoke what can you. He tell me: “when I feel lonely or hurted, or if I have not it, I feel sad, looking as it is my girlfriend”. I laugh at him: “you regard it as girlfriend, but she will kill you”. Finally, I failed, because I try to smoke and find it well. But I love it less than now I can’t make money.”

This paragraph mainly informs the reader the reason why people smoke and the difficulty in stop smoking. However, it gives no attention to trying to persuade the reader not to smoke in public places. Also, this incidence confirms that of Crowhurst (1990), who had a similar finding with younger learners. One possible reason for such responses is that dialogues and description may be easier than giving reasons for EFL student writers with relatively poor English language proficiency and writing ability.

New Moves

Contradiction move in the Argument stage

Five texts were found to contain a new move, called the Contradiction move in the Thesis stage. Take NEM 052 and NEM 072 as examples, the writers originally held the point that they agreed with the smoking ban in all public places, and already provided two reasons as claims to support the proposition. However, it seems that the third claim is contradictory to the standpoint which the writer held, thus the name the Contradiction move. This claim stated the potential disadvantages of banning-smoking policy may bring. T4 provided possible reasons for this new move of Contradiction. He assumed that the presence of Contradiction move reveals the internal conflict of the writer, especially related to the topic ‘smoking’. On one hand, the students think the policy would cause people to stop smoking, on the other hand, they would not see anyone lose their jobs as the result of bankruptcy of tobacco industry. This may cause inner conflict, and that inner conflict is reflected through their writing. The other four teacher interviewees stated that the students may be uncertain about their positions on the issue. When they found the inconsistency with the original opinion, they could not stop and just let it go. Another possibility is that the students attempt to increase the words to reach the required length.

Examples:

1. (NEM 052) In my opinion, I think smoking should be banned in all public places..... Smoking can make them forget their sadness and unhappy. And smoking can make them very happy...

2. (NEM 072) *In my view, smoking should not be banned in all public places..... Smoking is harmful to health, we shouldn't smoke too much, it harms yourself and it also harms others.*

Non-Supporting move in the Argument stage

Three texts presented a new move which seems irrelevant to the proposition. For example, EM 083 stated the difficulty in stopping smoking, which has little to do with the writer's stance. One reason for this given by T4 is that the writers lack knowledge of the purpose and generic structure of the genre, so they just present all related or unrelated knowledge of the field they have, hoping that they complete the writing task without caring about the quality. According to the other 4 teacher interviewees, EFL students tend to write short texts. When students present all they know about the topic but find the texts are still short, they may try to write whatever to reach the required text length to satisfy the requirement of the writing task.

Examples:

1. (EM083) *It is not easy to give up smoking.*
2. (EM099) *Many adults begin to smoke for it looks cool, especially for some actors in movies.*
3. (NEM033) *Smoking have other ways to receive nicotine nowadays, we have many ways to receive nicotine.*

Suggestion/Recommendation move in the Conclusion stage

Ten writers provide some suggestions or recommendations for the government, the smokers or the public. These statements are not accounted for in Hyland's model (1990), so they are categorized as a new move called "the Suggestion/Recommendation move. The Suggestion move aims to help carry out the government policy by providing suggestions or recommendations. The presence of this new move may attribute to the following reasons. T3 thinks that if the students have good understanding of the issue, and have deep insights into this issue, then, they are likely to provide suggestions or recommendations. According to T4, whether to offer the Suggestion move depends on the topic. The more they are familiar with the argument or topic, the more they are likely to have this move.

1. (EM 074) *Government...doesn't allow the factory to produce the cigarettes.*
2. (EM 094) *Government should set a special place for the people who really can't give up smoking.*
3. (NEM 098) *I think smokers had better give up smoking, not only in private places, but also in the public places.*

Differences between EM and NEM

Despite no significant differences between EM and NEM, the following three items are still worth noting, which provide insights into apparent differences between disciplines.

Average move frequency per person

The result showed that an average English major student used more moves than an average non-English one. 10.6 moves occurred on average in the text written by an English major, while only 7.59 moves occurred on average in a non-English major's essay. Though there was no significant difference between these two groups of students in this study, the existing slight difference is still worth dealing with. Based on the interview with teachers and students, most interviewees claimed that the difference lies in students' majors. EM students have more English language exposure to the English language, so they have better understanding of nature of English, especially sentence, paragraph and essay structures. They have greater awareness of those things. It is easier for them to include more moves in their paper because they have more linguistic knowledge on the structure of essay.

Contradiction move

Interestingly, this new move was only found in essays written by non-English majors, though its occurrence frequency was very low (only 5 essays present this move). It is assumed that English majors have better knowledge about English argumentative essay. They know how it is structured and know the purpose of this genre, which is to convince the reader that the writer's opinion is correct or it is at least worth considering. English majors are more skillful at making their claims consistent with the Proposition. According to most of the NEM student interviewees, their problems when writing an argumentative essay are normally at syntactic, vocabulary, grammar or sentence levels, while for most of EM student interviewees, their problems usually related to essay level, such as reasoning skills and logical skills. This may indicate again that English majors have better command of English, and when writing an argumentative essay, non-English majors focus more on the basic language level.

Non-argumentative essays

Two non-argumentative essays which cannot be regarded as real argumentative essays only appeared in the corpus of non-English major students. Proposition, an obligatory move, was absent in these two essays. According to the student interviewees, they learned about the structure of argumentative essay from teachers, books and CET, but most of them just knew about it in general at the stage level rather than in specific at the move level. Moreover, 65% of the student interviewees supposed that English major students have a better basic knowledge about writing argumentative essay than non-English major students. In their opinion, English major students have much more exposure to English because they have to take more English courses due to a requirement of the specific discipline, and they have more opportunities to use English.

New Move-Step Pattern

A new pattern of argumentative essay was identified in 12 texts, which is quite different from Hyland’s model. In the new pattern of Information ^ Advantages (Claim & Support) n ^ Disadvantages (Claim ^ Support) n ^ Proposition, it starts with the background materials for the topic contextualization. Next, it lists the advantages of smoking or banning smoking, meanwhile, possible reasons are provided to support these advantages. Then, the disadvantages are analyzed, which is similar to what happens to advantages. Finally, the writer expresses the stance through comparison the advantages and disadvantages stated earlier. The difference between this new model and Hyland’s model is that it shows both sides of arguments whereas Hyland’s model just only requires information of one opinion. Students learn about the new pattern from the following three sources according to the teacher and student interviewees: from the English teachers in high school; from reading materials and reference books for CET when they were preparing for it; and from the writing teacher at university. Through the exposure to these sources, the students are encouraged to say both sides of pros and cons, and write about advantages and disadvantages of an argument of a topic.

Linguistic Features

The analysis of linguistic features was concerned with tenses, specific attitudinal stance, auxiliary verbs and markers in the moves of Information, Proposition, Claim and Support, and in the Argumentative stage. Comparatively, these selected moves appeared with high frequency. Moreover, the Proposition, Claim and Support are indispensable moves according to Hyland (1990).

The Information Move

Table 1. Occurrence Percentage of Tenses in the Information Move

Three tenses were mainly used in the move of Information, which are present tense, present

The Information Move		
Tenses	EM	NEM
Present Tense	30%	50%
Present Perfect Tense	31%	14%
Future Tense	39%	36%

perfect tense and future tense. Present tense and present perfect tense are

used in this stage to indicate the liveliness and contemporary relevance to the thesis to be argued. In addition, adverbs of time, such as *recently*, and *nowadays*, were used to correspond with the tenses used in the Information move. Future tense was found used as well. This incidence is related to the topic which is about a will-be-done action in this study. Therefore, future tense was

used in the essays to show that the government policy on smoking will be put in force in a future time. These three tenses were alternatively used to highlight the features of the move of information.

Examples:

1. (EM 037) **Recently**, the problem of smoking should be banned in all public places **has aroused** people's concern.
2. (NEM011) From January, 2011, in China, smoking **will be banned** in all public places.
3. (NEM 055) **Nowadays**, it **is reported** that a new policy will be carried out.

The Proposition Move

Table 2. *Frequency of Phrases in the Proposition Move*

The Proposition Move		
Phrases	EM	NEM
in my opinion	30	35
as far as I'm concerned	13	7
personally speaking	6	0
as for me	10	2
from my standpoint	2	3
in my viewpoint	2	3
from my perspective	0	1

Table 3. *Frequency of Verbs in the Proposition Move*

The Proposition Move		
Words/Phrases	EM	NEM
think	24	25
agree	18	19

support	15	3
oppose	1	0
approve	1	0
believe	1	4
confirm	1	0
dislike	1	0
reject	0	1

The words or phrases in Tables 2 and 3 were found to be used to help the realization of this move. The phrases in Table 2 indicate that the writer's position of a particular controversial issue will come next. These phrases help prepare the reader that the writer is going to state his or her proposition. Such phrases appeared in 63 texts of EM, and in 51 texts of NEM. One function of these words is to claim ownership of the proposition. For example,

1. (EM 035) *As far as I'm concerned, smoking should be banned in all public places. .*
2. (EM 045) *Personally, I would say yes to this ban and I firmly support it.*
3. (NEM 008) *in my opinion, I reject smoking very much.*
4. (NEM 031) *From my viewpoint, I'm very agree with the government's decision...*

The Claim Move and the Support Move

Table 4. *Frequency of Auxiliary Verbs in the Claim and Support Moves*

The Claim Move and the Support Move		
Auxiliary Verbs	EM	NEM
will	168	157
can	46	57
may	5	7
could	1	2
would	0	1

The Claim is the central move in the Argument stage, and the Support move is obligatory in this stage. Meanwhile, the Support move is an indispensable second part to the Claim in a tied pair of claim-support moves (Hyland, 1990). Therefore, linguistic features were identified in these two go-hand-in-hand moves. Auxiliary verbs such as *can*, *will*, *may*, and *could* were found to be used in these two moves. These four auxiliary verbs appeared in 74 texts of EM, and 69 texts in NEM. Among them, *will* and *can* were frequently used. For *can*, it helps the writer illustrate the potential of smoking or the ban of smoking, and the writer used *will*, *may* or *could* to indicate the probability and possibility the government policy on smoking may bring. Some examples are given below:

1. (EM 033) *It could lung cancer.*
2. (EM 082) *It is obvious that cigarettes would produce some waste gas which pollutes our environment.*
3. (NEM 024) *Smoking in public places will result in many bad effect and don't have benefit at all.*
4. (NEM 027) *Smoking can influence other people's health.*

The Marker move in the Argument stage

Table 5. Occurrence Frequency of Markers in the Argument Stage

The Marker move in the Argument stage		
Markers	Occurrence Frequency (EM)	Occurrence Frequency (NEM)
first(ly)..., second(ly)..., finally	65	23
to begin with..., then..., last...	4	0
on one hand..., on the other hand	6	14
moreover/furthermore	4	1
what's more	7	2
in addition/additionally	5	2

Markers which indicate the sequence and connections between the argument and the proposition were found to be used by both English major and non-English major students. In the first move cycle, 74 texts by English majors presented this move, while 39 by non-English majors. In the second move cycle, the number of this move occurrence increased to 84 and 47, respectively. Interestingly, the number decreased to 64 and 29 in the third move cycle. Two main devices for achieving the function of the Marker move were found to be used. One device was listing signals such as *'first(ly)...., second(ly)...., finally'*, etc. Most students used such signals in the main study, which corresponds to that in the studies by Hyland (1990) and Chen (2002), who claimed that such markers to frame the sequence were preferred by students. Another types of device is transition signals to indicate the step to another sequence, marking addition, contrast, condition, specificity, etc. For example, words or phrases such as *additionally, in addition, what's more, moreover, and on the other hand* were found to be used. However, the students tended to use few types of markers, and sometimes misused discourse connectives. They used *above all* instead of *first of all*, *at last* instead of *lastly*, *in one hand* instead of *on one hand*, for instances. Also the misuse of these markers both in the Argument stage and the Conclusion stage was found in the study of Chen (2002). Some examples are given below:

1. (NEM 015) **At last** (*lastly*), *I read in the newspaper and in my gardening magazine that the ends of cigarettes are so poisonous that if a baby swallows one, it is likely to die.*
2. (NEM 039) **In all** (*All in all*), *online evaluation is needed.*
3. (NEM 047) **In total** (*In conclusion*), *smoking should be banned in all public places.*
4. (EM 008) **At first** (*First of all*), *it's very impolite to smoke in public places.*

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

In general, most argumentative essays written by TU English major and non-English major students contain three stages: the Thesis stage, the Argument stage and the Conclusion stage, which corresponds to an established model by Hyland (1990).

The results showed that there are no significant differences between English major and non-English major students in terms of move-step structure and linguistic features.

The presence of the new moves which do not exist in Hyland's model (1990) and new pattern of argumentative essay highlighted the finding of the move-step structure of argumentative essays written by TU English major and non-English major students. Although only the minority of students used these new moves and patterns, it is possible that much more students whose texts were not included in these 200 essays used them.

The results from the present study are of great significance for teacher educators and materials developers both in theoretical and practical perspectives. Particularly, the results strengthen

pedagogical claims about the importance of genre-based approach, which provides valuable resources for classroom practices.

First of all, from a broader perspective, genre theory should be included in curriculum which guides the design of textbooks and the implement of teaching practices. A wide variety of genres are expected to be learned by university students. However, neither the curricular nor textbooks has included any single word about genre. Also, neither of them has put emphasis on genre. Thus, developing a framework for a flexible genre-based writing curriculum for EFL learners is necessary.

Secondly, a significant topic should be chosen when teachers assign writing tasks of composing argumentative essays as a topic plays a significant role in writing an argumentative essay. Crowhurst (1990) claimed that students write better when they write on issues that really concerned them. The topic has impact on generating content, formulating arguments and using language. Thus, teachers need to explore meaningful, interesting topics and guide students to look for information on these topics to make sure students prepare themselves for sufficient arguments.

Thirdly, teachers should present complete text or range of texts with similar schematic structure as writing models. Teachers can select and provide good models of argumentative genre, analyzing representative samples of the genre to identify their stages and typical linguistic features, deconstructing and analyzing the language and structure. Students need to be exposed to such text type and a method of understanding how the contexts and purposes of texts are related to their schematic structures and linguistic knowledge. Thus, by providing and analyzing text samples of the genre, it is a way to familiarize students with the structure and linguistic features of this genre. In this way, teachers would help students increase the awareness of the structure and the purpose of the argumentative genre. Meanwhile, students are empowered with strategies and skills necessary to replicate these features in their own writing. Also, it is possible to choose poor writing scripts as bad models for students as suggested by Hyland (1990). He pointed out that badly organized texts could also provide opportunities for analyzing weaknesses and examples of ineffectual communication. However, 'presentation of the model alone was not successful in producing improvement. Improvement in overall quality was hardly to be expected from a single exposure to the model' (Crowhurst, 1991, p. 330). Therefore, explicit instruction of argumentative genre is necessary and required in classroom practices.

Thus, next, teachers should offer students explicit instruction in argumentative writing. Writing instruction needs to offer students an explicit knowledge of how target texts are structured and why they are written the way they look like because learning to write requires outcomes and expectations. The explicitness sets very clear outcomes and expectations of writing rather than obtains the knowledge from unanalyzed samples, from repeated writing experience and from teachers' comments and suggestion (Hyland, 2003). Students would be sensitized to argumentative genre by sharing the teacher's familiarity with such genre.

Finally, teachers should encourage students to make good use of positive L1 transfer. Definitely, students have various skills and specific knowledge for writing argumentative essay in L1. The repertoire of strategies can be transferred from L1 to L2. L1 influences L2 writing in terms of rhetorical patterns such as paragraph organization, linear organization structure, coordinating conjunctions, indirectness devices, rhetorical appeals and reasoning strategies (Uysal, 2008). Chinese vocabulary, discourse and Chinese writing styles were found to have direct or indirect effects on English writing (Wang & Wen, 2004). Students should be encouraged to compare writing argumentative essay in L1 and L2, finding out the similarities and differences between these two and borrowing useful writing strategies, skills, rhetorical device and relevant knowledge from L1.

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Appendix 1. Elements of Structure of the Argumentative Essay

Stage	Move
<p>I. Thesis Introduces the proposition to</p>	<p>(Gambit) Attention Grabber – controversial statement of dramatic illusion.</p>

<p>be argued.</p>	<p>(Information) Presents background material for topic contextualization.</p> <p>Proposition Furnishes a specific statement of position.</p> <p>(Evaluation) Positive gloss – brief support of proposition.</p> <p>(Marker) Introduces and /or identifies a list.</p>
<p>2. Argument</p> <p>Discusses grounds for thesis. (four move argument sequence can be repeated indefinitely)</p>	<p>Marker Signals the introduction of a claim and relates it to the text.</p> <p>(Restatement) Rephrasing or repetition of proposition.</p> <p>Claim States reason for acceptance of the proposition.</p> <p>Support States the grounds which underpin the claim.</p>
<p>3. Conclusion</p> <p>Synthesized discussion and affirms the validity of the thesis.</p>	<p>(Marker) Signals conclusion boundary</p> <p>Consolidation Presents the significance of the argument stage to the proposition.</p> <p>(Affirmation) Restates proposition.</p> <p>(Close) Widens context or perspective of proposition.</p>

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- of the Gambit move in most of students' essays?
2. Why do you think most of students can use the move of Information?
 3. Why do you think most of the students could use the move of Proposition easily and naturally?
 4. Why did most of students fail to present the Evaluation move?
 5. Why did the Restatement move rarely occur in students' texts?
 6. Why do you think most of the texts present the move of Claim?

7. Why do you think most of the students used much more Affirmation than Consolidation?
8. Why do you think an average English major student used more moves than an average non-English major?
9. Do you think an essay with the pattern 'I + A (C+S) n + D + P' is an argumentative essay? Why do you think some texts (13) have this pattern?
10. Do you think the new move Suggestion/Recommendation in the Conclusion is acceptable? What are reasons for the presence of this move?
11. What are reasons for the presence of the new move of Contradiction to the Proposition?

Interview Questions for Students

1. Did you know about the general structure of argumentative essay before? From who?
 2. What are the problems you have when writing one?
 3. Do you think an essay with the pattern 'I + A (C+S) n + D + P' is an argumentative essay? Some students wrote their essays with the pattern. From whom do you think they got it?
 4. Do you think those EMs would have a better basic knowledge about writing argumentative essay? Why?
 5. What makes a good conclusion in an argumentative essay?
 6. What are basic elements for an argumentative essay?
1. 你以前知道英语议论文的大致结构吗? 从哪里知道的?
 2. 你觉得在写英语议论文的时候, 主要有哪些困难?
 3. 你觉得'I + A (C+S) n + D + P'是议论文的结构吗? 有些学生用了这个结构, 你觉得他们是从哪里了解到的?
 4. 你认为英语专业学生比非英语专业学生有比较好的有关英语议论文知识吗? 为什么?
 5. 你认为一篇好的议论文的结尾应该是怎样的?
 6. 你认为一篇英语议论文有哪些基本要素?