

Cognitive Consideration in Persuading Readers in Argumentative Writing

Betharia br. Sembiring Pandia
English Applied Linguistics Study Program
Universitas Negeri Medan (UNIMED)
Medan, Indonesia
bethariasp@mhs.unimed.ac.id

Berlin Sibarani
English Applied Linguistics Study Program
Universitas Negeri Medan (UNIMED)
Medan, Indonesia
berlinsibarani@unimed.ac.id

Sumarsih
English Applied Linguistics Study Program
Universitas Negeri Medan (UNIMED)
Medan, Indonesia
prof.sumarsih@gmail.com

Abstract— The aim of any genre of writing is absolutely an important aspect that needs to be considered by writers. However, keeping the aim of the writing in mind is not enough. As writing is meant to be read by readers, a writer needs to consider who their intended readers are. In line with this idea, the objective of this study was to investigate the undergraduate students' ways of persuading readers in their argumentative writing. This study used three kinds of cognitive consideration in writing argumentative text (Connor, 1991) that involved readers' domain knowledge and text structure, readers' attitude toward the subject, textual cues; and reasoning. The data of this study was gathered by using elicitation technique asking the subjects, the 8th semester of undergraduate students, to write under predetermined topic *Social media should be banned* with three intended readers, they were: Junior High School, Senior High School, and Undergraduate students. This study revealed that the subjects in EFL context only had two kinds of cognitive consideration in writing argumentative text, they were readers' domain knowledge and text structure; and reasoning. These kinds of consideration were applied across all intended readers. It meant that the subjects did not have specific cognitive considerations for specific readers.

Keywords: *cognitive, argumentative, writing, persuasive*

I. INTRODUCTION

Cognitive consideration refers to the process of giving careful thought of something. In the process of writing, a writer gets through cognitive consideration on how to express his ideas so it can be well accepted by the readers. In relation to this, Deane, Odendahl, Quinland, Fowles, Welsh, & Tatum (2008:17) asserts that cognitive consideration of an argumentative text consists of four aspects, they are: (1) domain knowledge and text organization; (2) reader's attitude toward the subject; (3) textual cues; and (4) reasoning. First,

domain knowledge and text organization. A writer needs to think or predict about their readers' knowledge about the subject. If the writer thinks that the readers are not familiar with the topic, then he will need to provide more background as well as clearer information about the issue. To this point, a writer ponders the information that should be explicitly stated and what information can be left out. However, the selection of the information is not enough to be considered. It takes text organization to make the text become comprehensible to the readers. Ramage, Bean, & Johnson (2016:61) mentions that the organization of argumentative text consists of the introduction, the presentation of the writer's position, summary of opposing views, and conclusion. By following the text structure, the writer hopes that his readers will be able to organize the ideas of the writers' in their mind. Second, the reader's attitude toward the subject. It refers to the writer's thoughts of reader's belief about the topic. Third, the textual cues which refers to the way of how the writer links their previous ideas to the next one so it can be meaningful as a whole. It is characterized by the use of cohesive devices that link one clause or sentence to another. Above the sentence level, textual cues also refer to the use of clear and appealing topic sentence for each main idea through the paragraphs. Forth, reasoning. It pertains to the writer's thinking to present his ideas logically. In order to make a string of logical ideas in argumentative writing, a writer considers what evidence or data will be relevant to the claim.

All of the cognitive considerations above are aimed at persuading their readers as the goal of argumentative writing. The degree to which a text is persuasive to the readers depends on how accurate a writer employs the cognitive considerations. The more cognitive consideration that a writer gets through, the more likely the writer is able to persuade the

readers. But, persuading readers is also comprised of the ways of getting the readers accept, agree with the writer's point of view or even do something based on the writer's expectation. This is called as persuasiveness. Connor (1991:67) states that persuasiveness can be measured through three important factors in argumentative writing, they are: (1) the text structure. Text structure adds persuasiveness since ideas should be segmented in paragraphs in order to not confound the readers about main points of the writers. It belongs to the persuasiveness dimensions because readers will likely hold their motivation to continue reading if the text consists of well-organized ideas; (2) reasoning (*logos*). Reasoning or *logos* focuses on the internal consistency and clarity of the argument. Reasoning for persuasiveness of argumentative writing refers to the use of explicit elements of argument such as claim, ground, and warrant; and (3) persuasive appeals (*ethos* and *pathos*). *Ethos* focuses on the credibility of the writer which is projected in the presence of alternative views in his writing. In addition to this, the writer also needs to balance their point of view with the potential counter-argument. By doing so, the writer can enhance their credibility as being a knowledgeable person of the issue. *Pathos* focuses on the writer's way to get the readers' emotional attractiveness. It is characterized by the use of concrete language, specific examples and illustration, images, and metaphors.

The cognitive considerations and persuasiveness above are a group of ideas that represents the writer's awareness of readers with the aim of making the readers able to understand the content of the writer's argumentative writing and to persuade the readers. The cognitive consideration and the factors that determine the persuasiveness in argumentative writing which are realized in English as native Language (ENL) and English as Second Language (ESL) above may be projected differently in Indonesia in which English is used as a foreign language (EFL).

Therefore, this study will be focused on what cognitive considerations are employed; and why the EFL students use them in their argumentative writing.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Argument is often viewed as the quarrelsome act of two people or groups which attempt to beat each other or to urge one-sided approval. However, it is not what argument actually is. Argument is defined as a form of thinking in which reasons or evidences are provided to support the conclusion (Chaffee, 2012:441). What is meant as conclusion in Chaffee's definition is the same as what others label as claim which is used to represent main viewpoint. Toulmin *et.al* (2003:87) states that there are four elements of argument: (1) claims/ the precise standpoint of the writer towards the issue; (2) reason/ the rational motive for the claim; (3) grounds/ data, (4) warrants/ the underlying assumption that forms the enthymeme (claim and reason) into a complete logical

structure, and (5) backing/ to support the warrant and to persuade the audience to accept the warrant.

In the process of writing argumentative text, Deane *et.al* (2008:17) states that there are several important things that a writer needs to consider such as: (a) reader's domain knowledge and text organization. The implication of considering the reader's domain knowledge guides the writer to also think about text organization. Text organization refers to the presentation of ideas in an organized pattern. A writer likely takes time thinking about the text structure before he starts elaborating his ideas. Considering the text structure means that the writer tries to find ways to segment his ideas. This is an important part of cognitive consideration because by guiding the readers to recognize the idea segmentation, the readers will be able to locate the points they need for successful comprehension. Thus, by having considerations about text structure will increase more chances of the argumentative writing being persuasive to the readers; (b) reader's attitude toward the subject. Flower (2000:140) asserts that reader's attitude refers to the mental representation that a reader has about the topic. It is about the feeling and principle that readers hold; (c) textual cues. Textual cues refer to any textual elements that signal and guide the readers to comprehend the text. In order to comprehend the text, a writer needs to help the readers to relate the idea within or across the sentences; (d) reasoning. In relation to this, reasoning refers to the process of establishing reliable support for the writer's argument. It means that the supports added to the writer's claim should be sufficient to maintain the claims, and relevant in terms of its connectedness to the claims.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is conducted by using descriptive qualitative research design. This research is intended to describe the undergraduate students' ways of expressing persuasiveness through writing as well as cognitive considerations that they employ in argumentative writing towards different readers and topics. The data of this research is the sentences of the students' writing that represent their use of cognitive consideration

IV. RESULTS

In writing argumentative text, the subjects only have two kinds of cognitive considerations, they are: (a) readers' background knowledge and text structure; (b) reasoning, which is seen in detail as follows:

A. Readers' Background Knowledge and Text Structure

Data 1a

Social media is a tool of interactions among people to share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. There are many kinds of social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, instagram, Twitter, etc. People often use those social media to communicate with other people.

In data 1a, the starting point for writing argumentative text is by giving definition. Definition refers to detailed description of something in attempt to avoid readers' misunderstanding and to gain more precise image of what is being defined (Ary *et.al* 2010 : 36). The definition can be seen in *Social media is a tool of interactions among people to share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks*. This means that the subjects consider that the readers do not know what social media is. This is the reason why the subjects start the argument with the definition.

In terms of text organization Ramage *et.al* (2016:88) states that the number of ideas segmentation should be formed as: (1) introduction; (2) writer's position; (3) opposing view; and (4) conclusion. This means that the subjects segment their arguments in a different way from that of in the theory.

The subjects persuade their readers by considering the text structure of argumentative writing in three hierarchies, namely: (a) introduction; (b) writer's position; and (c) conclusion as seen in data below.

Introduction

Social media is an online media in which the users can easily share information. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the examples of social media. Nowadays, most teens has been influenced by social media. They usually used social media to post and upload status, pictures, and video. They depend on social media to get more followers and to become outstanding. This habit that is using social media obviously lead teens to some bad effects.

Writer's Position

First, most teens stay connected to the internet, accessing social media this whole time. They always check their social media account from the time they wake up in the morning till they back to sleep at night. They usually stayed up at the whole night. This habit could ruin their sleep pattern and it would lead to a higher risk of exhaustion and depression. It can affect their performance at school.

Second, social media could decrease the real life social interaction because they are being more comfortable with their online friends. A study that was conducted by the National Citizen Service also found that most girls seek comfort on social media rather than talking their problem to their parents.

Conclusion

In conclusion, social media basically created to connect people around the world easily. However, the excessive use of social media could lead to some bad effects, especially for teenagers. As it has been mentioned above that social media could lead to some bad effects, which are exhaustion and depression. As a teenager, the exhaustion from school has been tough because of extracurricular and classroom assignment. Then, the teenager decrease their social life in real life. They do not know how to socialize with other. They think their online friend more comfortable. I suggest

teens nowadays should decrease their dependable from social media. They should play and communicate with people out of the social media.

This three-layered text structure was presented across readers and writers. This text structure was different from that of stated by the experts in argumentative writing (Ramage *et.al*, 2016). They stated that the text structure of argumentative writing consisted of (a) introduction; (b) writer's position; (c) opposing view; and (d) conclusion.

By comparing Data 1b with the theory, it was concluded that the subjects missed the opposing view, and every layer of the text structure such as (a) introduction; (b) writer's position, and (c) conclusion had their own criteria (Ramage, 2016:61). The subjects, in developing each layer, persuaded the readers by applying different criteria from those of stated in the theory. It is seen in this following table.

TABLE 1. THE DIFFERENCE OF TEXT STRUCTURE BETWEEN THE THEORY AND THE APPLICATION BY THE SUBJECTS

Text Structure based on Theory	Text Structure Applied by the Subjects
Introduction	Introduction
Writer's Position	Writer's Position
Opposing View	Conclusion
Conclusion	
(Ramage <i>et.al</i> , 2016:61)	(Three-layered Structure)

B. Reasoning

In addition to the readers' domain knowledge and text structure, the subjects also considered their way of reasoning. As stated by Toulmin *et.al* (2003:11), reasoning is about thinking the structure underlying an argument which contains one or more of following elements, such as: (1) claim (the writer's stance); (2) reasons (motive for the claim); (3) ground (data which supports the claim); (4) warrant (underlying assumption that completes the relationship between claim and reason; and (5) backing (the basis on which we believe that this kind of argument is believable).

However, the subjects only provide claim as seen in data 2a and 2b below.

Data 3a

It makes them addicted to social media for people who are addicted to social media for people who are addicted to this, it can have a harmful effect on their live and their health.

In data 2a, the structure of subjects' argument relied on presenting claim for all intended readers. Based on data 2a, the subjects tended to present their claim implicitly when they wanted to show their opposing toward the topic as seen in *for people who are addicted to this, it can have a harmful effect on their live and their health*. Within these sentences, the subjects used the word *harmful* to describe the effect of social media to

its users. By presenting the attribute of social media, the subject did not precisely claim that social media should be banned or not. Thus, it was labelled as implicit claim. In addition to the implicit claim, the subject also used the word *harmful* to implicitly state the subject's position about the topic.

This claim was presented to all of the intended readers. The subjects might think that providing implicit claim to all of the readers was clear enough to make them understand what the following paragraphs would be about. By presenting the same way of claim in the arguments, it meant that the subjects did not have specific cognitive consideration to specific readers.

In addition to presenting the claim, the subjects also provided reasons to show motive for their claim, as seen in data 2b.

Data 2b

But, besides of the positive effect, social media also has many negative effects especially for Junior High School students. They are to make them lazy or disturb their focus and to waste their money. That's why social media should be banned for Junior High School Students.

In data 2b, the subjects considered presenting reasons in their claim. Reason is defined as the basis or motive for an action. By using this definition, the action was identified in *that's why social media should be banned* which was about banning social media; while the motives for the action are stated as *they are to make them lazy or disturb their focus and to waste their money* in which the sentences present the reasons of banning social media. The reasons were provided in the subjects' argumentative writing across all intended readers. It means that the subjects did not have specific consideration whether they should provide reasons to certain intended readers.

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