

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This study analyzed argumentative essays written by fourth-year English Major students at Naresuan University in Phitsanulok. This chapter is devoted to the explanation of the procedures used in the study. Included is information on the subjects, data collection, data analysis, and validity and reliability of the study.

#### Subjects

The study employed 43 students. All of them were fourth-year English major students who took the course 205422 (*Essay and Report Writing*) in the first semester of the academic year 2001 at Naresuan University. There were three sections for this course in the first semester but only two sections were selected as the subjects for this study. These two groups were selected as the subjects for the reason that they were taught by the same teacher while the other group was taught by another teacher. Having different instructors might cause the variation in the study such as, the difference in teaching strategies, the content of the lessons and the teaching techniques. Selecting the two groups, therefore, could help eliminate the variation which might happen.

Concerning the students' background in English writing, the subjects had studied English writing for at least two courses in college; therefore, it was assumed that they had the ability to express their ideas through their writing at a certain level. However, these two courses did not focus on argumentative writing. In addition, the subjects had not been taught to write an argumentative essay when the data was collected. Hence, it was likely that when assigned to write an argumentation the subjects would construct their own patterns in expressing their argument.

## Data Collection

The subjects were assigned to write an argumentative essay on the following topic:

" Topic: The University is launching a new policy requiring English professors to use only English in all English classes. As a student, write an essay to the university president to argue for or against his policy."

The writing session was one hour in class and the students wrote this essay before being taught the argumentative genre.

## Data Analysis

This procedure was separated into 2 parts.

### Part I

1. After the subjects finished their writing, the essays were collected and numbered from 1-43.
2. Then, each essay was separated into individual sentences. Each sentence structure was analyzed to see its organization which would be characterized into a three stage structure: Thesis, Argument and Conclusion, according to Hyland's study (1990).
  - I. The Thesis stage introduces the discourse topic and advances the writer's proposition or central statement.
  - II. The Argument stage presents the infrastructure of reasons which characterizes the genre.
  - III. The Conclusion stage, rather than a summary or review, is a fusion of constituents in this genre. It functions to consolidate the discourse and retrospectively affirm what has been communicated.
3. After each sentence in the 43 essays was assigned into each of the three stages, then each stage was analyzed and expressed in terms of move sequences according to Hyland's study (1990. p. 66-67) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Stage	MOVE
<b>I. Thesis</b>  Introduces the proposition to be argued.	<b>Gambit</b> Attention Grabber—controversial statement or dramatic illustration. <b>Information</b> Presents background material for topic contextualization. <b>*Proposition</b> Furnish a specific statement of position which defines the topic and gives a focus to the entire composition. <b>Evaluation</b> Positive gloss—brief support of proposition. <b>Marker</b> Introduces and/ or identifies a list.
<b>II. Argument</b>  Discusses grounds for thesis.  (Four move argument sequence can be repeated indefinitely)	<b>Marker</b> Signals the introduction of a claim and relates it to the text. <b>Restatement</b> Rephrasing or repetition of proposition. <b>*Claim</b> States reason for acceptance of the proposition. Typically based on: a. Strength of perceived shared assumptions. b. A generalization based on data or evidence. c. Force of conviction. <b>Support</b> States the grounds which underpin the claim. Typically: a. Explicating assumptions used to make claim. b. Providing data or citing references.
<b>III. Conclusion</b>  Synthesizes discussion and affirms the validity of the thesis.	<b>Marker</b> Signals conclusion boundary. <b>*Consolidation</b> Presents the significance of the argument stage to the proposition. <b>Affirmation</b> Restates proposition. <b>Close</b> Widens context or perspective of proposition.

\* the central move of each stage.

4. After the analysis of both individual sentences and of the whole essay was finished. The research discussed and interpreted the data from the 43 essays in order to show the characteristics of the argumentative essay written by these 43 subjects.

## Part II

After the first part was completed, the essays will be analyze following these steps:

1. The 43 essays (already numbered) were scored by two independent raters. Before scoring the two raters were informed about the purposes of the study, the procedures and the criterion used for rating in order that they had the same basic concept in scoring. The raters were English native speakers who were involved in teaching writing at a college level.

The Test of Written English (TWE) Scoring Guide was used as the criteria for scoring the essays (See appendix A).

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was run by the computer program SPSS PC+ to compute the correlation between the two raters' scores. The inter-rater reliability score was 0.69.

Noticeably, the correlation score of the two raters was not very high, probably due to the raters' different degrees of appreciation or impression resulting from their different attitudes toward the writing. However, this reliability score could be considered acceptable.

2. The essays scored low and high (from the mean average) were classified and placed into two groups, high-rated and low-rated essays. (See Appendix B)

3. The five most high-rated essays and the five most low-rated essays (from the top 10% and the bottom 10%) were analyzed following steps 1 to 4 of the first part. From the top 10 % and the bottom 10 %, the number of essays to be analyzed was 4.3 essays from each group. However, five essays from the high-rated and the low-rated group were used to ensure that the findings would be more reliable. This method of selecting the subject was adopted by Hyland (1990), who chose 10% of the high-rated

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essays to submit to his analysis. Witte and Faigley (1984) also selected five high-rated and five low-rated essays for their analysis of cohesion in students' essays.

4. The five most high-rated essays and the five most low-rated essays were compared and contrasted the differences and the similarities in aspects of their stages and moves between the high-rated and low-rated essays.

#### Validity of the Study

This study was an analysis of argumentative essays written by the fourth-year English Major students at Naresuan University in Phitsanulok. To ensure the validity of this study, the research took into account the framework used for the analysis, the subjects of the study, and the peer-experts who analyzed the texts.

According to the framework used, Hyland's framework of analyzing argumentative writing was considered appropriate for this study, as the essays being analyzed in this study were argumentation. Since the topic assigned to the students forced them to write a reason, logical messages to convince their audience which, is the characteristic of argumentative writing. Two experts, who checked the content validity by having the expert approach the topic of the essay to be written and for face validity by the task format, are involved in writing analysis and are experienced in teaching writing.

#### Reliability of the study

1. The scoring points gained from the two raters were accounted for the inter-rater reliability. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was run by the computer program SPSS PC+. The inter-rater reliability score was 0.69 at the level of significance 0.5.

2. The researcher analyzed the essays two times for the intra-rater reliability. The percentage of the consistency of the results was 100 %.

3. The expert who proposed the framework was asked to analyze ten percentages of the whole essays in order to examine the intra-rater reliability. Then the results of the expert were compared to the results of the researcher. The percentage of the sameness was 100 %.

