

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This study was aimed to analyze the argumentative essays written by Thai fourth-year English major students at Naresuan University in Phitsanulok. This chapter presented a summary of the study as well as a discussion of the findings, some suggestions for further studies are also provided.

#### Summary of the Study

This study was aimed to analyze the argumentative patterns written by the fourth-year English major students at Naresuan University. There were three research questions in this study:

1. What were the major characteristics of the argumentative patterns written by Thai fourth-year English major students?
2. To what extent did the argumentative patterns written by Thai fourth-year English major students correspond to the framework of the argumentative pattern proposed by Hyland?
3. In terms of argumentative patterns, what were the differences between high-rated and low-rated essays written by the fourth-year English major students?

In this study 43 essays collected from two writing classes were analyzed. All of the students were fourth-year English majors who took the course 205422 (**Essays and Report Writing**) in the first semester of the academic year 2001 at Naresuan University. They were assigned to write an argumentative essay on the same topic: Should teachers of all English courses use only English in class?

The researcher analyzed these essays by using the framework of Hyland. First of all, the 43 essays were assigned into each of the three stages (thesis, argument, and conclusion), and then each stage was analyzed and explained in terms of move

sequence to see the overall characteristics. After that, the 43 essays were scored by two independent raters. Then the five high-rated and five-low rated essays were analyzed to see the major characteristics of the essays of each group and the characteristics of the two groups were compared.

### Summary of the Findings

The analysis of the argumentative pattern of the 43 essays written by the fourth-year English major students could be concluded as follow: first of all, 43 essays were analyzed statistically to see the overall characteristics. The findings revealed that there were 22 essays or 51.16 % in which the writers employed all stages. For the remaining 21 essays, only two stages, thesis and argument stage, were found. The problem of these writers was that they could not make a distinct conclusion in their essays. However, most characteristics of their essays found in the first two stages fitted into stages and moves that Hyland proposed.

Concerning the sentences used, the students tended to devote most of the sentences to the argument stage. There were the least sentences in the last stage (conclusion stage).

Regarding the moves used, most of the students preferred to use the central move in the first and second stage, except for the conclusion stage, where the central move was rarely found used.

For the variety of the use of moves, most students seemed to have limited ability in using various moves. In the thesis stage, it was found that the students could not use more than 3 moves from the proposed 5 moves. However, their writing still conformed to the model as all of them contained the central move. In the argument stage, There were no essays used every move; most of them employed 2 moves, claim and support. It meant that they knew how to write an argument, even though they arranged their moves in the order that was different from the mode on the expectation of Hyland. In the conclusion stage, the students did not seem to know how to write an effective conclusion as they did not include the central move in their essays.

After finishing the analysis of overall characteristics, five high-rated and five low-rated essays were analyzed. For the five high-rated essays, the analysis revealed that the writers had, to a certain extent, the ability to build a solid, logical and well-organized argument. The pattern employed was consistent to that proposed by Hyland. Twenty-two writers composed their argument adhering to the three stages: thesis, argument, and conclusion. Good writers also presented a clear proposition. They stated exactly whether they were arguing for or against the issue. The result also revealed that the students of this group seemed to be aware of their audience since they tried to provide signals throughout the essays. This quality can help the audience to follow the argument easily. Apart from these, the variety in the use of alternative moves in each stage was prominent as well. These writers tended to employ various moves to build a sound argument.

The characteristics of the low-rated essays were obviously contradictory to those of the high group. The analysis revealed that the writers of this group built their argument in poor organization. All of the low-rated essays were written in one paragraph without clear distinction between stages. Five essays lacked the conclusion stage. Signals, which give the audience the direction to follow the argument, were not provided. These writers seemed to fail to keep the focus on one proposition. They did not state their proposition whether to write for or against the issue in question. Subsequently, the readers would see the essays switching back and forth between for and against. Another important thing was that they had low ability in buttressing their argument with rationale support in order to show the audience why their view was more sound. Their support to claims seemed to be unreasonable and untrustworthy. The analysis also revealed that these students had very limited ability in using alternative moves in each stage. The central moves were used the most frequently.

### **Discussions of the Findings**

The findings made so far have shown some interesting points worth discussing. Most of these points are likely to be the problems in writing argumentation. The scores

obtained from the independent raters primarily showed the first problem. That is, the majority of 43 students got very low scores (see Appendix B). That means most of them could not write a solid and logical argument in the way that could convince English native speakers. These seemed to be three major problems that obstruct the smoothness and the solidity of their argument.

The first problem is of the using of the argument elements and the ordering of those elements. Regarding the using of the elements of argument, as presented in table 2, there were only 22 essays that employed all three stages of argumentative writing according to the framework of Hyland (1990). Considering the variety of the moves used, it was also found that most writers did not employ various moves as, in each stage, they did not use more than three moves. That they were unable to effectively employ elements of argument could be the major obstacle to their success in writing. The organizing of those elements is also the problem of the writers of low-rated essays. The problems regarding the element organizing are that (1) the stages written in the essays were not clear cut, (2) the writers did not state directly their proposition, (3) they had a tendency to lack the ability in presenting supportable claims and strong supports, and (4) they seemed to be confuse in ordering the moves in each stage.

Even though the writers of the high-rated essays seemed to be able to write the argumentative essay in the way that could meet the native speakers' expectations to a certain extent, they still had some weak points that obstructed the smoothness of their writing. The first is of the use of supports; it seemed that they did not provide enough support to claims presented. As support is an indispensable part of the argument stage, students need to make sure that they give sufficient evidence to their claims in order to convince the audience; nevertheless, the writers of the high-rated essays seemed not to be much aware of this point. Another weak point of the writers of the high-rated essays is that they tended to raise too many claims but provided quite little supports. Instead of trying to strengthen the previous claims they had presented, these writers moved on presenting a series of claim. Their argument would be much stronger if they avoid presenting too many claims and provide sufficient supports to those claims.

The second problem, which might have been the factor that influenced the writers the most, is writing convention. As it was proposed in the Chapter, writers with different native languages have distinct writing conventions (Kaplan, 1966). Writers of different mother tongues might adhere to their own writing conventions. When inexperienced writers, in this case students, are assigned to write an essay in a foreign language, it is possible that the writing convention in their first language may interfere with their writing of the target language.

The third problem is about the language use due to the writers' limitation of English proficiency. Although the subjects have studied English for many years, it could not be said that they had no problems regarding grammar and vocabulary. The difficulties in terms of the creating of sentences that effectively express their ideas and the selecting of vocabularies that directly hit to their points may be another big problem for the writers to achieve a logical and strong argument. This can be concluded that students should have a threshold level of language proficiency before they can apply the knowledge of rhetorical pattern in the writing.

From the discussions above, it is necessary that Thai students should be taught not only to be able to employ the appropriate argumentative patterns but also to be aware of the interference of their first language on the target language. Another factor that should be aware of when teaching writing is students' language proficiency. This study, therefore, provided the guidance for writing effective argumentation as it, to some extent, could lead a person who teaches as well as writes argumentation to accomplish their tasks effectively. The findings also reflect the problem in writing argumentative essay which might stem from students' own writing ability that was governed by their native language influence and the limitation of their English proficiency. The findings can also be used as a data for improving teaching strategies.

### **Recommendations for English Teachers**

1. Students should be encouraged to be aware of the differences among writing conventions of different languages. They should refer to English conventional

style of writing not the Thai conventional style when they write English essays in order to meet the expectation of native-speaking readers. This awareness would help students write an essay using the rhetoric of the target language.

2. It can be concluded from the finding that the limitation of language proficiency and the writing convention of the writers are not the only factors that cause ineffective essays. Another factor is of the way the writers employed the argument elements and organized their argument. Writers with high language proficiency may not write effective enough essays unless they follow the appropriate argumentative patterns and the English writing convention. This means the teaching of argumentation should take into account argumentative patterns, the writing convention of the English language as well as of students' language proficiency.

#### Recommendations for further studies

1. In this study there were some sentences in some essays the function of which could not be identified according to the framework of Hyland. Further studies using other approaches or framework may need to be conducted in order to see what functions of these sentences would be.
2. Since this study was done with a small group of subjects, the findings may be limited to this group and may not be generalizable to the population. Further studies, therefore, should be done with a large group of subjects.
3. The division of the subjects according to their language proficiency should be made in further studies in order that more clearly good characteristics and problems of different groups of the subjects would be identified and to find out if and to what extent language proficiency can result in effective argumentative essays.
4. In further studies, a pretest and posttest should be done before and after the teaching of argumentative writing. The posttest should be done instantly after the end of the course to see the immediately effect of the teaching and again after a period of time to see the delayed effect.