

Rhetorical Strategies Used in Indonesian Persuasive Essays Written by Students Majoring in Indonesian and in English

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Abstract: This study was aimed at comparing rhetorical strategies used in the Indonesian persuasive essays written by students majoring in Indonesian and those majoring in English. Two groups were involved: the third-year students of the Department of Indonesian Language and Literature and the fourth-year students of the English Department of the State University of Malang. They were asked to write persuasive essays on whether violence on TV programs should be restricted. The results showed that there was a significant difference between the rhetorical strategies in Indonesian persuasive essays written by students majoring in Indonesian and those written by students majoring in English. In general, the essays written by the students majoring in English were more successful than those written by the students majoring in Indonesian in terms of the superstructure of argument, the Toulmin model of informal reasoning, and the persuasive appeals.

Keywords: Indonesian persuasive essays, rhetorical strategies, superstructure of argument, the Toulmin model of informal reasoning, and the persuasive appeals.

Research studies of the relationship between first and second language rhetoric are of two distinct types. The first type involves writers from two different cultures writing in the same language. The purpose of such

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studies is to discover cross-cultural differences in the rhetorical patterns. In most of these studies, researchers analyze texts of English as a second language and those of English as a first language. Various studies have compared L1 English texts and texts of English as a second language (ESL) written by a group of students from different L1 backgrounds (Kubota, 1998; Silva, 1997; Kartika, 1997).

Kartika (1997), for example, studied the rhetoric of newspaper articles written by Indonesian and English native writers. The results of the study indicated that most articles written by Indonesian writers were argumentative essays and a small number of them were exemplification expository essays. Most of the articles written by English-speaking writers constituted cause and effect expository essays, while a limited number of them constituted both argumentative and narrative essays. Kartika showed that although the Indonesian- and English-speaking writers wrote essays of similar genres, the rhetorical structures of the ideas developed in the essays were not necessarily the same.

The assumption behind the comparative studies of ESL and L1 English texts is that if distinct patterns emerged from the English texts written by different L1 groups, they would provide evidence that such rhetorical patterns exist in their L1. These patterns are then carried into L2 writing. The findings of such studies are hypothesized to be useful in determining the implications of any differences for the pedagogy of second language writing.

The other type of study involves writers from the same culture writing in two different languages. ESL texts and texts written in the same writers' L1 are compared. The central question is whether rhetorical patterns similar to those in L1 texts are produced when the second language learners write ESL essays. Support for the notion of an L1 influence was found in a number of studies (Indrasuta, 1988; Mohan & Lo, 1985).

Indrasuta (1988), for instance, examined narrative writing by Thai advanced secondary school students in Thai and in English. Linguistic, stylistic, and discourse components were considered as factors that function together to form a narrative text. Indrasuta concluded that ESL essays and L1 Thai essays were similar with regard to narrative style and function and were different in terms of linguistic components.

Indrasuta's findings were in line with a study conducted by Mohan and Lo (1985). They found that the lack of English writing skills of Chinese students was not because of their cultural thought patterns, but

due to factors of language development. Mohan and Lo concluded that "transfer of rhetorical organization is more likely to help than to interfere," (p. 259). They also suggested further research to examine whether students who are skillful writers in their L1 have an advantage in L2 composition.

The two types of study are important as they permit us to explore such issues as the extent to which differences in rhetorical strategies are due to differences in cultural patterns of thought and expression, differences in the languages themselves, or differences in the proficiency levels of writers (Connor, 1997). Examining the issue from a slightly different perspective, the present study investigated differences in Indonesian persuasive essays written by students from two different areas of language study: Indonesian and English. The research question was formulated as follows: in terms of rhetorical strategies, were there any differences between the Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in Indonesian and those written by the students majoring in English?

METHOD

The participants of this study were undergraduate students of State University of Malang, Indonesia. Two groups of students were involved: third-year students majoring in Indonesian and fourth-year students majoring in English. The students majoring in Indonesian had been taught English as a subject in their secondary school education for six years. However, they did not ordinarily continue learning English. As they had chosen Indonesian as their specialization, the effect of exposure to English was minimized. Since the students learned formal Indonesian, their competence may reflect the standard use of Indonesian as a medium of instruction and as a medium of cultural expression. In addition, since Indonesian is also the students' field of study, it may be assumed that the essays that they write represent the rhetoric of writing that is developed in this field.

The students majoring in English have completed all of their skill courses, including four writing courses technically known as Writing I to Writing IV, spread out from the second to the fifth semester. The Writing I course trains the students to write paragraphs based on model paragraphs of various genres. Writing II teaches the students to develop ideas into an essay with an emphasis on the organization of the essay. Writing III provides the students with opportunities to write more essays with various techniques of development such as cause and effect or com-

parison and contrast. Writing IV focuses on the development of an argumentative type of writing, i.e. one with problem-solution patterns.

The two groups of participants were asked to write persuasive essays, the prompt of which was written in Indonesian. The same topic was assigned to the groups. This was done to avoid possible divergence in the rhetorical patterns caused by topic variety. The writing task was assigned to participants in class sessions. The participants were asked to write about whether violence on TV programs should be restricted. The issue was chosen because it was considered close to the life of these students. In order that the students understand the persuasive task, the students were told to persuade their audience of their point of view.

Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted. The purpose of the pilot study was to examine whether the prompt for the writing task had been understood by the students. In addition to the wording of the instruments, the exact timing and the procedures of administration could be assessed from this pilot study. Two classes of first-year students of the English department were involved in the pilot study. The pilot study involved the students from the first year for two reasons. First, if the writing prompt was understood by the first-year students, there would be no reason to believe that it would not be understood by the higher-level students. Second, the exact length of time needed by the first-year students to do the task would be a reasonable basis to determine the time allocated for other groups in the actual task assignment. The data collection took place in the months of September and October 1999.

To evaluate rhetorical strategies used in the Indonesian persuasive essays, Connor and Lauer's model (Connor, 1996; Connor & Lauer, 1988) was used. This model emphasizes three measures: the superstructure of argument, the Toulmin analysis of informal reasoning, and the persuasive appeals. Following Connor and Lauer's procedures in scoring the superstructure of argument, student essays received one point for the presence of each component. As an illustration, an essay containing all four components would receive 4 points, while an essay containing situation, problem, and solution, but no evaluation, would get 3 points. Furthermore, a score of 0-3 was given to each component of the Toulmin model of informal reasoning. The minimum score for this variable was then 0, while the maximum score was 9. Like the procedures applied for the Toulmin model of informal reasoning, a score of 0-3 was given to each component of the persuasive appeals. Thus, the possible minimum score for this variable was 0, while the maximum score was 9.

The scoring of the persuasive essays was done by six raters. All were faculty members of the English department of the State University of Malang. Three teams of raters scored the essays using one of the measures in Connor and Lauer's model. Each of the raters rated 80 Indonesian essays. To make sure that each of the measures was applied correctly in assigning scores for each essay, the raters were trained in a workshop session for each team. In the workshop sessions, the raters were assembled to discuss the relevant measure and the procedures for applying this measure. Both raters were asked to score five essays in Indonesian written by the students of the classes used in the pilot study. The raters read and scored the essays according to the criteria set for each measure. At the end of discussion in each session, an agreement was finally reached for overall scores and for the individual parts of the system as well.

The raters were informed that the essays were written by the students from two different fields of language study. The essays were coded and randomized so that raters would not know which were written by the students majoring in Indonesian and which were written by those majoring in English. By coding the essays, the effect of the writer's names on the scores was reduced and by randomizing the essays, bias in scoring as a result of group membership was eliminated. The interrater reliability based on the Spearman-Brown prophesy formula for the total scores of the Indonesian persuasive essays was .85.

RESULTS

The total mean score for the three measures for evaluating the rhetorical strategies used in Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in Indonesian was 8.95. The mean for rhetorical strategies used in the essays written by the students majoring in English was 12.51. As shown in Table 1, the means of rhetorical strategies used in the essays written by the two groups of students were significantly different.

Table 1 Comparison of Rhetorical Strategies Used in Indonesian Persuasive Essays Across Fields of Language Study

Group	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>
Students majoring in Indonesian	40	8.95	2.59	-6.15*
Students majoring in English	40	12.51	2.59	*p.05

To elaborate differences between rhetorical strategies used, further comparisons were made based on each of the three measures for evaluating persuasive essays taken separately. The first measure used to evaluate the persuasive essays was the superstructure of argument. In accordance with the criteria set out for the superstructure of argument, a persuasive essay should contain statements of situation, problem, solution, and evaluation. The extent to which students' essays included each component can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Percentage of Indonesian Persuasive Essays Containing the Components of the Superstructure of Argument (Mean Scores of 2 Raters)

Group	N	Situation	Problem	Solution	Evaluation
Students majoring in Indonesian	40	74%	96%	95%	48%
Students majoring in English	40	85%	98%	96%	46%

Figure 1 exhibits the presence of the characteristics of the superstructure of argument used in the Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in Indonesian and those majoring in English. Except for a 9% difference in statements of situation, the characteristics of the superstructure of argument were very similar.

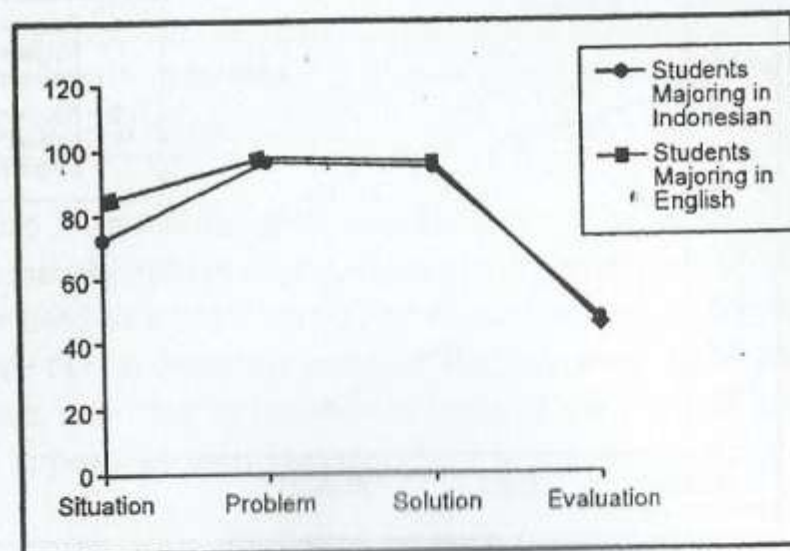


Figure 1 Characteristics of the Superstructure of Argument

The second measure used to evaluate persuasive essays was the Toulmin model of informal reasoning. This measure requires statement of claim, data, and warrant in every argument. The means of the three components of the Toulmin model of informal reasoning are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Means of the Components of the Toulmin Model of Informal Reasoning (Mean Scores of 2 Raters)

Group	N	Claim	Data	Warrant
Students majoring in Indonesian	40	1.15	0.55	0.19
Students majoring in English	40	1.48	1.24	0.66

Figure 2 presents graphically the characteristics of the Toulmin model of informal reasoning used in the Indonesian persuasive essays written by each group. As shown in the figure, the students majoring in English were more successful than the students majoring in Indonesian in formulating a claim, in supporting the claim with data, and in using warrants that relate the data and the claim.

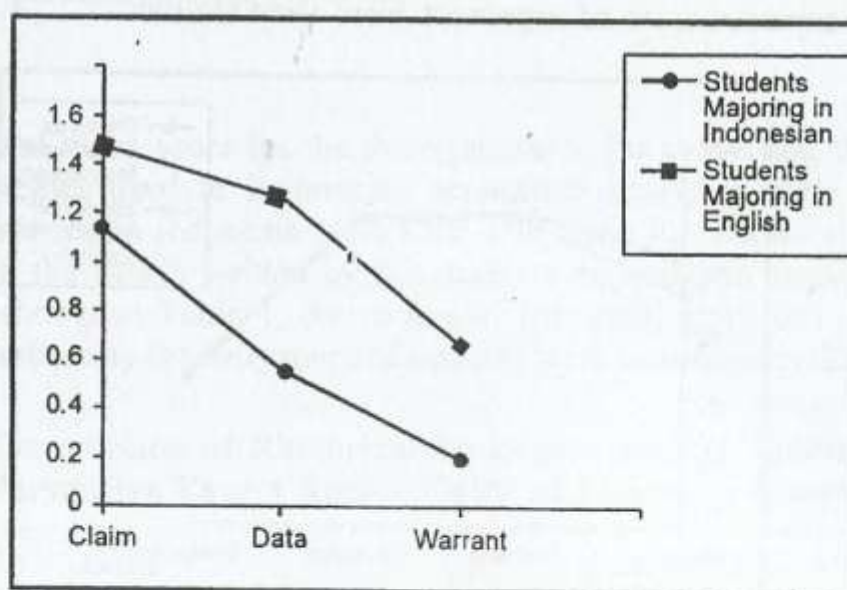


Figure 2 Characteristics of the Toulmin Model of Informal Reasoning

The mean scores from the criteria of the Toulmin model of informal reasoning indicated that claims were not clearly stated in the Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in Indonesian. The essays were less likely to have consistent points of view. Furthermore, these essays were only minimally supported by data. The data did not directly relate to the major claims. The students majoring in Indonesian virtually never used any warrants in their essays. Conversely, the Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in English were more likely to have explicitly stated claims with two or more subclaims that had been developed. The claims were more often supported by data, although the data rarely relied on personal experience or authority. The essays showed an attempt to relate the data and the claim, but the warrants were likely to be minimally reliable and relevant.

The third measure to evaluate the persuasive essays was the persuasive appeals. In the light of the criteria of the persuasive appeals, rational, credibility, and affective appeals are obligatory in a persuasive essay. The mean scores of components of the persuasive appeals for the two groups can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4 Means of the Components of the Persuasive Appeals
(Mean Scores of 2 Raters)**

Group	N	Rational	Credibility	Affective
Students majoring in Indonesian	40	1.47	1.24	1.21
Students majoring in English	40	2.16	1.85	1.86

Figure 3 shows the characteristics of the persuasive appeals used in Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in English and those used in essays written by the students majoring in Indonesian. In general, the students majoring in English were more successful than the students majoring in Indonesian in using the rational, credibility, and affective appeals in their essays.

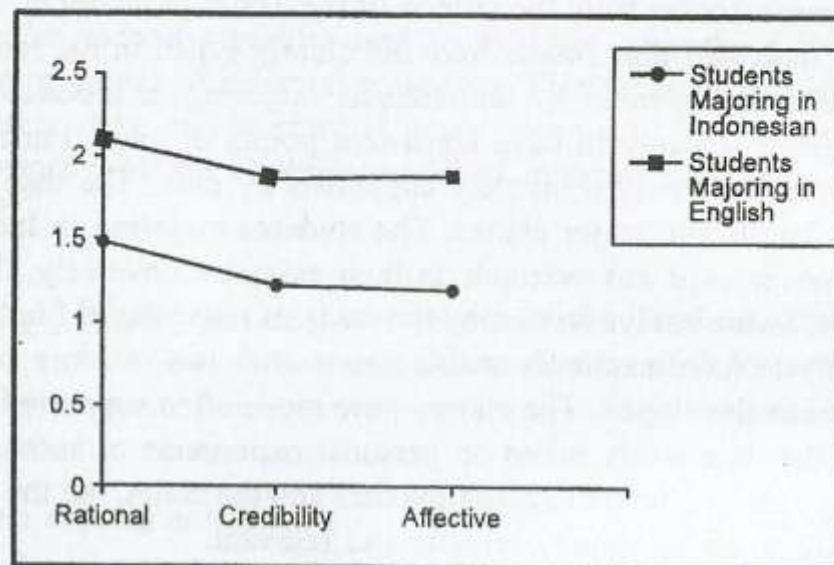


Figure 3 Characteristics of the Persuasive Appeals

The Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in Indonesian contained rational appeals which were minimally developed. The essays were also likely to use a single (or a series of) rational appeal(s) with at least two points of development. The essays had either some awareness of audience's values or some writer credibility of other than general knowledge. Furthermore, the essays used minimally charged language that could evoke emotion. In contrast, the Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in English generally used a single (or a series of) rational appeal(s) with at least two points of development. The essays also had some writer credibility of other than general knowledge and had some awareness of audience's values. Moreover, the essays adequately used charged language or metaphors to evoke emotion.

To summarize, the rhetorical strategies used in Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in Indonesian were significantly different from those used in the essays written by the students majoring in English. Comparisons of rhetorical strategies according to each measure tended to show that the differences were mainly present in the use of components of the Toulmin model of informal reasoning and the persuasive appeals, where the English majors used the strategies more successfully. The characteristics of the superstructure argument used in the essays of the two groups of students were similar.

A significant difference was found between rhetorical strategies used in the Indonesian persuasive essays written by the students majoring in English and those used in the essays written by the students majoring in Indonesian. However, it is not easy to explain this difference. Two reasons underlie this difficulty.

First, a search of the literature yielded no information on whether there are particular rhetorical strategies that should be expected when Indonesian students write Indonesian persuasive essays. Therefore, it was not known whether the Indonesian persuasive essays written by the third-year students majoring in Indonesian were "more Indonesian" than those written by the fourth-year students majoring in English. Considering that Indonesian is the students' field of study, an assumption that the essays of the third-year students majoring in Indonesian represent the rhetorical features appropriate in this field might be plausible until further research is carried out.

Second, the results obtained from measures originally developed for evaluating English persuasive essays might suggest that the essays of the third-year students majoring in Indonesian were less advanced than those of the fourth-year students majoring in English. The difference of the rhetorical strategies was characterized by higher means of the fourth-year students majoring in English. For example, the students majoring in English outperformed the students majoring in Indonesian in using claims and supports for the claims, and in using warrants to relate claims and the supports. Furthermore, the essays written by the students majoring in English showed more credible knowledge and awareness of audience's values than those written by the students majoring in Indonesian. These essays were also rich in the use of charged language or metaphors to evoke emotion. The use of a measure specifically developed for evaluating Indonesian persuasive rhetoric might help to determine whether differences are due to differences in proficiency in using rhetorical strategies or to differences inherent in the strategies appropriate to the different languages.

The difference may be understood by considering the possible role of exposure to the rhetoric of the languages that the students had studied as their majors. The students majoring in English were exposed to English reading materials and taught writing based on the English rhetoric. Consequently, they may have been influenced by their knowledge of the English rhetoric even when writing in Indonesian. In contrast, the third-year

students majored in Indonesian language and literature, and this discipline was likely to determine their rhetorical strategies in writing Indonesian persuasive essays. It is assumed that their writing behaviors were not related to English rhetoric. They had not studied English since senior high school. Therefore, it is plausible to infer that the university majors of the two groups of students made their rhetorical strategies in Indonesian persuasive essays different from each other.

The results of the study support previous findings (Mohan & Lo, 1985; Kamimura, 1996) which showed that second language development (as an effect of formal study) was significantly related to the way the students write in the first language. That is, the rhetorical strategies learned in the second or foreign language were likely to be adopted in first language writing. In this case, the fourth-year students majoring in English have developed their EFL rhetoric through the instruction in their field of study. In contrast, influenced by the teaching of formal Indonesian in the department of Indonesian language and literature, the third-year students majoring in Indonesian maintained rhetorical strategies different from those used by the fourth-year students majoring in English.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In the light of the discussion of the results, it can be concluded that students' major area of language study was likely to influence their use of rhetorical strategies in writing Indonesian persuasive essays. In the absence of measures specifically designed to evaluate rhetorical strategies used in Indonesian persuasive essays, this study successfully applied measures originally developed for evaluating English persuasive essays as a basis to investigate the rhetorical strategies in the Indonesian persuasive essays. However, the rhetorical strategies in the Indonesian persuasive essays explored by this study should be treated with care. This is because the rhetorical strategies were described on the basis of English rhetoric. There was a possibility that the 'real' rhetorical strategies in Indonesian persuasive essays were not revealed by this study. Therefore, future research on contrastive rhetoric of Indonesian essays should describe rhetorical strategies used in the Indonesian persuasive essays as a foundation for further comparisons. Alternatively, the English measures should be

adapted in some way. By doing so, the interpretation of differences or similarities in the rhetorical strategies used in Indonesian persuasive essays could be provided in a more conclusive way.

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