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The Art of Argumentation: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Developing Thesis Statements (The Case of Kosova High School Students)

Donika Elezkurtaj Bërveniku [a] *

[a] *University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", Prishtina 10000, Kosova*

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Abstract

Living in a world of globalization, communication of various forms has become crucial. Should it be of a colloquial or formal use, language plays a vital role in our lives. As in every other area, communication is the "lifeblood" of academia as well (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Academia cannot be separated from its discourse and could not exist without it. Therefore, argumentative discourse is of an essential nature to both scholars and students. This sociolinguistically oriented research study reports on Kosovan, high school students' problems in the process of argument building and the effectiveness of class activities that promote critical thinking and argumentation. Aiming for original and reliable results, corpus linguistics has been chosen as a means of collecting naturally occurring source corpora. The data obtained from two observed debates, 40 essay evaluations and a focus group, reveal that students are not aware of certain linguistic patterns present in spoken and/or written argumentation and that they do not feel comfortable when required to take a decision that demands systematic evaluation of their thinking in search for new answers. It is obvious from the study that in order for students to create warranted arguments, which is an inevitable skill in academia, Inquiry-based Learning should be integrated across the educational system in Kosova. The results have implications for syllabus and course materials.

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Keywords: Argumentation; critical thinking; sociolinguistics; corpus; syllabus

1. Introduction

A teacher's decision to work towards the students' progress can be of crucial influence to the whole educational cycle. However, switching from the position of a teacher to that of a researcher can be said to be complicated. The difficulties lie in identifying the students' problems and deciding upon a method to approach them. The teacher researcher's awareness of learners' needs implies that the sociological aspect cannot be separated from the linguistic one (in the situation of argumentative discourse).

* Donika Elezkurtaj Bërveniku.
E-mail address: donikaelezkurtaj@gmail.com
http://dx.doi.org/.....

By assembling a learner corpus (from both spoken and written discourse) the local researcher of this study aspired to identify learner barriers with second language argumentation and provide directions towards better acquisition of argumentation skills. The combination of spoken (debate) and written (essay assignment) analysis with learner perceptions (focus group) aim to provide original and reliable data as research results.

Academic discourse is rightly considered to be central in the world of education and research. No investigation or discovery could be made available to others lacking proper communicative transmission, which occurs both in spoken and written form. Academic discourse, much like any other kind of discourse, is only effective when users custom conventions that other members of their community find familiar and convincing (Hyland, 2009). Thus, this study would not proceed and progress without considering the following vital aspects of academic discourse: Academic Genres, Argumentative Discourse, Second Language Aspect, Study Approaches and Pedagogical Approaches.

1.1. Academic genres

When students begin their studies, they enter an academic community that shares certain ways of thinking, valuing and producing texts (spoken and written). Despite this, students are brought in contact with different types of texts; and being conscious of their genres will aid the understanding and interpretation of those texts. In these academic communities, there are certain commonalities among academic discourse; so core skills can and should be present (Bloor & Bloor, 1986). Thus, Hyland (2007) states that genre is the term which is used to refer to grouping those texts together and representing how academics use language to respond to recurring situations.

Being of a community based nature and suggesting that features differ across disciplines, genre encourages scholars to research the features of the texts their correspondents need so that they become aware that when we produce academic pieces, we follow conventions for organizing messages so the correspondent can organize purpose and follow ideas. Atkinson (2003) emphasizes that theoretical interest in, especially, writing instruction shifted to a genre approach that considers discourse as a purposeful act and focuses mainly on the analysis of the contextual situation (enabling students to make sense of the world around them and to become aware of discourse as a useful and manipulatable tool (Kay & Dudley-Evans, 1998)).

One will only be able to produce a successfully acceptable composition by taking the context of a text into account. Thus, considering the importance of academic genres, the knowledge of a language can be said to be intimately attached to a social purpose as more focus is on the correspondent's viewpoint than on that of the composer.

1.2. Argumentative Discourse

The key term in academic discourse is argumentation. Academic discourse is an argument itself. Argumentation is the act of forming reasons, making inductions, drawing conclusions and applying them to the case in discussion (Hyland, 2004). It can be said to be an analysis on its own. Being a carefully arranged and supported presentation of a viewpoint, it mostly leads to earning the audiences' consideration of one's perspective (Irvin, 2010).

As a mode of academic discourse, argumentation constitutes an important part of learners' academic experience. Because of the widespread presence of this genre in the academic curriculum, a common component of language classes consists of instructing argumentative speaking and writing skills (Braaksma, 2002).

The difficulties faced by language students when asked to produce a piece of text are often due to inadequate understanding of how texts are organized, which is also the case with Argumentative Essays (Swales, 1984) and Debates. As via gaining argumentation skills, students start to accept the existence of others' positions, get ready for high stakes assessments and get prepared for the real world, argumentation is said to be the number one for students in academia. As argumentation requires investigation and collection, generation and evaluation of evidence, it is thought to be one of the genres the features of which are applicable to many others (Hillocks, 2010).

1.2.1. Spoken and written argumentation

Being essential in academic circumstances, argumentation occurs in both spoken and written form. Debates and Argumentative essays have gained high prominence for students in academia. Considering the means of production, they obviously use two different channels (speaker-listener; writer-reader). On the other hand, what makes them similar in means of composition is their structure. Should it be preparation vise (investigating, collecting, generating and evaluating evidence) or final product vise, debates and argumentative essays follow a comparable if not identical pattern. Krieger (2005) even emphasizes the necessity of compiling an argumentative paper in preparation for a debate; hence putting forward their common features, particularly in structuring the arguments.

1.2.2. Thesis statement

An inevitable term when being confronted with academic and specifically argumentative discourse is the thesis statement. Aaron (1989) very briefly describes the thesis statement as the take-home message you want the reader/listener to remember. Unfortunately, this concise definition of a thesis statement is not in concord with its complexity in form and meaning.

A primary goal of academic discourse is the communication of ideas to contribute to a growing body of knowledge. Because a thesis statement clearly states what the essay is about, it guides the listener/reader through the manifestation of ideas in order to help make sense of what the speaker/writer is saying (Waddell, 2004).

Without the thesis statement, the speaker/writer will wander through incoherent thoughts and will lose the audience. Thus, the more precise the thesis statement is,

the more organized and clear the supporting evidence will be. Requiring such a precise structure and nature, sometimes the thesis statement needs to be reorganized while the research work evolves, as the original ideas may change in the process (Karper, 2002).

1.3. Second language aspect

With regard to the Kosovar setting, it should be emphasized that one cannot speak of English as a first language but rather consider the factors deriving as a result of English having the featuring status of a second language.

1.3.1. Second language acquisition and teaching

Second Language Acquisition is a field of study which comprises a set of complex issues. When it comes to education, an important aspect is the age factor. According to many researchers, the learners' age is not only relevant in the acquisition of basic linguistic patterns but also in the acquisition of more advanced academic skills (Birdsong, 1999). It is also the adults, rather than youngsters, who seem to find it harder to understand L2 communication as a cultural process which should be compared to their own culturally based communicative behavior (Baker, 2009).

Despite students' cultural awareness, there is also linguistic awareness which speaks for understanding L1 and L2 differences in order to make correct judgments in using language (Ammar, Lightbown, & Spada, 2010). This does not speak for constant usage of L1 in the process of L2 acquisition; but rather for L1 support in L2 acquisition (Littlewood & Yu, 2011).

On the other hand, avoiding L1 environment and being under L2 educational medium has also proven to result in acquisition progress (Storch, 2009). All these lead to the fact that both learner characteristics and learners' conditions have a great impact in the process of second language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

Despite the students' acquisition perspective, there is the teaching perspective as well. Second Language Teaching is an extremely sensitive field to be dealt with. From experience, everybody can speak of different teachers' and students' voices arguing about education. It is a well-known fact that there are certain discrepancies between these two parties' perceptions (Eslami, 2010). Nevertheless, both sides, especially the teachers, should start to understand, analyze and ideally adapt to learners' specific requirements (Bracaj, 2014). The analysis of these specific needs result in the necessity for multidisciplinary means of study - a way to enhance student engagement (Stebleton, Jensen, & Peter, 2010).

1.3.2. Second language speaking and writing

The most complex skills to be acquired in second language acquisition are speaking and writing. When it comes to them, various questions arise in order to understand the areas of study: How can an utterance differ from L1 to L2? How is L2 writing different form L1 writing? Is there any sociolinguistic role in the process of L2

acquisition? What is the role of these skills in the classroom? What is the purpose of student product in class? (Reichelt, Lefkowitz, Rinnert & Schultz, 2012). When it comes to L2 users of English, they can be obviously distinguished from L1 users of English mainly because of lexical and structural differences between L1 and L2 (Crossley & McNamara, 2009). Considering these differences, learners tend to use L1 during L2 production, a fact which is negatively related to L2 text quality (Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, & Sanders, 2009).

In the whole process of acquisition, second/foreign language context (Manchon, 2009) and forms (Cook & Bassetti, 2005; Flowerdew, 2009) appear to be pivotal. As far as the context is concerned, focusing on the purpose of usage (Harmer, 2004) is inevitable. Speaking of forms, the priority of spoken language over written language as well as language internal contradictions should be taken into account (Kaufman & Kaufman, 2009). Thus, the role of previous experience in both L1 and L2 is closely related to acquiring speaking and writing from learning the language itself. Despite the linguistic differences, we should also consider learners' knowledge, personality and environment as factors influencing L2 products.

1.4. Study approaches

What all the above mentioned share is the common interest to identify learners' existing competence in order to set a base for better acquisition. It is important to know that classroom research is not a library research. It involves people in order to improve their skills, techniques and strategies. As important it is to know why we do things, the more important it is to know what we do and how to do them better - in order to impact students positively (Ferrance, 2000). Thus, teachers need to think systematically and implement new views where improvements are possible (Burns, 2005). The attitude of inquiry a teacher-researcher should possess in order to follow a process of gathering information, analyzing and using the outcomes of analysis to take some action (Stinger, Christensen, & Baldwin, 2009) is a leading feature towards the development in the field of acquiring academic discourse. Pedagogical research is always focused on students and understanding students' understanding. It emerges from teachers' worries. The professional knowledge gained from this research allows teachers to be autonomous researchers rather than follow prescribed traditions (Castle, 2006).

The present study draws on the research practice of Sociolinguistics with application of Corpora and consequently Discourse Analysis in order to provide a theoretically and methodologically sound framework for the examination and reflection of students' problems in the light of experience and theoretical knowledge.

The sensitive nature of this study makes the selection of research methodology extremely delicate, as well. This research project in the setting of high school education will require analysis of various perspectives. Not only will the scenario of product be investigated but that related to the student/teacher as well. This demands, of course, a complex research design which suits both settings appropriately. Starting

from a more quantitative view and proceeding to a more qualitative one, this study will engage different approaches in order to obtain reliable and valid results.

1.4.1. The sociolinguistic approach

In order to have a more objective view of language (Krieger, 2003), corpora (which is a databank of naturally occurring texts) is the new term to revolutionize language learning/teaching. According to Leech (1997), corpus analysis can be illuminating in almost all branches of linguistics or language teaching. Corpus linguistics is a method which carries out linguistic analysis of systematic collections of naturally occurring texts. With systematic, Nesselhauf (2005) describes corpus as following certain extralinguistic principles of certain text types and a certain time span. Klimova (2014) sees this as a method to obtain and analyze data quantitatively and qualitatively rather than a theory of language. As language cannot be invented but only captured, using language product as evidence for the process of production is the only practical way for finding about the process in the context of language acquisition.

Thus, a particular type of corpora which represents language as produced by learners (Kennedy, 1998) is the now very prominent learner corpora. As a collection of written or spoken data produced by language learners who are acquiring a second or foreign language (McEnery & Xiao, 2006), the results of local learner corpus can be directly integrated into the process of acquisition.

1.4.2. Discourse analysis

In ideal scenarios, teachers are also researchers, who support professional research and work towards solving the theory-practice problem (Elliott, 2001). It is the aim of Discourse Analysis to analyze students' spoken and written texts. It has been chosen as a consequent methodology to the initial sociolinguistically oriented corpus based research for the fact that it covers a variety of areas necessary to analyze thesis statements of both spoken and written texts.

According to Trappes-Lomax (2006) discourse analysts do what people in their everyday experience of language do instinctively and largely unconsciously: notice patterning of language in use and the circumstances (participants, situations, purposes, outcomes) with which these are typically associated.

It does the analysis of spoken and written language over and above concerns such as the structure of the clause or sentence (McCarthy, 2011). Discourse Analysis is the linguistic analysis of naturally occurring connected speech or written discourse. Roughly speaking, it refers to attempts to study the organization of language above the sentence or above the clause, and therefore to study larger linguistic units, such as conversational exchanges or written texts. It follows that discourse analysis is also concerned with language use in social contexts, and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers (Swann & Ussher, 1995).

It is the particular problems or dilemmas raised by the Sociolinguistic Research which are systematically addressed by means of Discourse Analysis in order to improve an unsatisfactory state or situation.

1.4.3. Pedagogical approach

Insights gained from learner corpus research have huge potential for academic discourse research. However, the overwhelming majority of corpus-based academic discourse studies are exclusively based on native corpora. Analyses of L2 learners are not absent but they tend to focus on the writing process rather than the writing product.

There are many pressures that are pulling research and teaching apart. Britten (2002), for example, states that "the twentieth century saw the university change from a site in which teaching and research stood in a reasonably comfortable relationship with each other to one in which they became mutually antagonistic" (p. 157).

However, learner corpus (in contrast to other types) requires a different methodological approach which is realistic to the students' purposes, achievable to the students' abilities and acceptable by the teachers of those institutions (Hüttner, 2007). Hammond (1992) proposed a three-phased-wheel model of a teaching-learning cycle which comprises modeling, joint negotiation of text and independent construction of text. Hyland (2004) also emphasizes the advantages of this approach to teaching by naming them as being explicit, systematic, needs based, supportive, empowering, critical and conscious-rising.

Putting greater emphasis on actively engaging students and teachers with research, suitably adapted to recognize the variation and complexity of constructing knowledge in different disciplines, is one way of re-linking them in this century.

Thus, any learner-based corpus study would indirectly have indications for syllable and course material development.

2. Identification of the research gap

Considering the fact that the way we grasp the world is quite rooted in our culture, Kosovar students tend to fail to acquire the complexity of an issue and identify alternative/optional perspectives (Chaffee, 2006). As a result, they produce relatively deficient arguments and face large obstacles in synthesizing grasped information and evaluating/processing them. In these cases, teachers should create learning environments which intellectually challenge learners' thoughts by presenting them how to think rather than what to think (Paul & Willsen, 1993). Students should also be brought to the point to experience the situation of changing their stand on a particular matter in response to evidence (Browne & Keeley, 2004).

As the researcher of this study has also experienced a traditional way of learning and has been imposed how to think and act, it is crucial to work on a research that proposes to investigate and confront students' barriers in academic discourse. Encountering graduate high school students' deficiency in structuring texts, synthesizing ideas and thinking independently (providing warranted arguments) asks for investigation, confrontation and evaluation of certain data.

The researcher's observations of students' reactions, preferences and authentic spoken and written products will be of extensive relevance to the reliable and original nature of the research and resulting data. These findings aim to contribute to the whole teaching and educational setting in Kosova and ergo actively prepare students for a critically and intellectually rich environment which shall change the approach to academic writing to a qualitative one.

Investigating and confronting students' barriers would be lacking in quality and functionality if students' attitude, teachers' standpoint or the students' writings were not studied in relation to each other. Consequently, because of numerous differences in socio-cultural, historical and educational spheres, there is constant demand for research in the field of academic discourse, particularly in the setting of Kosova.

3. The study

The aim of the study was to discover learners' barriers in the process of argumentation (spoken and written).

3.1. Course background

The English Language course is a mandatory course for all graduate students of the Sami Frasheri high school in Prishtina, Kosova. The aim of the course is to enable students to communicate more effectively in an academic context (in preparation for university studies), with a particular focus on speaking and writing. Nevertheless, the teacher uses only a particular course book for delivering classes and exercises.

3.2. Participants' background

The study was conducted with high school students aged 17-19. They were enrolled in a four-year high school program and were homogenous in their educational and cultural background and had no previous experience in conversing argumentatively. So far, they have studied English for eight years; their education was characterized by limited resources, large classes, obedience to authority and rote-learning.

3.3. Data collection and procedure

Case study data was collected through debate observation, essay analysis and a focus group.

3.3.1. Debates

Two debates have been conducted in two different classes respectively; which have been assigned the same argumentative topic "Should Marihuana be legalized?". The debate involved three groups in each class (the affirmative team - consisting of three students - supporting the statement, the opposing team - consisting of three students - challenging the statement and the judging team - consisting of four students - evaluating the evidence and arguments together with the researcher). Students were

given one week for preparation and were finally assessed using a simple debate evaluation rubric (CSUN, 2013). After the debates had ended, an open discussion was initiated. The whole task aimed at evaluating students' oral argumentation skills.

Table 1. Debate evaluation rubric

Criteria	4	3	2	1	Grade:
1. Organization & Clarity: Main arguments and responses are outlined in a clear and orderly way.	Completely clear and orderly presentation	Mostly clear and orderly in all parts	Clear in some parts but not overall	Unclear and disorganized throughout	
2. Use of Argument: Reasons are given to support the resolution	Very strong and persuasive arguments given throughout	Many good arguments given, with only minor problems	Some decent arguments, but some significant problems	Few or no real arguments given, or all arguments given had significant problems	
3. Use of cross-examination and rebuttal: Identification of weakness in Negative team's arguments and ability to defend itself against attack.	Excellent cross-exam and defense against Negative team's objections	Good cross-exam and rebuttals, with only minor slip-ups	Decent cross-exam and/or rebuttals, but with some significant problems	Poor cross-exam or rebuttals, failure to point out problems in Negative team's position or failure to defend itself against attack.	
4. Presentation Style: Tone of voice, clarity of expression, precision of arguments all contribute to keeping audience's attention and persuading them of the team's case.	All style features were used convincingly	Most style features were used convincingly	Few style features were used convincingly	Very few style features were used, none of them convincingly	
					TOTAL SCORE:

The groups can take a maximum of 16 and a minimum of 4 points.

3.3.2. Essay assignment

A week after the debate, 40 students of two classes (including the debating groups) were given a short essay assignment with the topic "Do people who commit heinous crimes deserve the death penalty?". Having in mind the examination-oriented practice at high schools in Kosova, the researcher evaluated the writings of a minimum of 250 words each after a time scale of 40 minutes given to the students. This type of assignment had been experienced several times during their studies. The essays were evaluated using a simple essay evaluation rubric.

Table 2. Argumentative essay evaluation rubric

Criteria	4	3	2	1	Grade
Focus & Structure	Essay maintains a clear, relevant and logical organization. Essay is organized into multiple sections that creatively and intelligently build up to support a unique and complex argument.	Essay maintains a clear, relevant and logical organization. Multiple sections (groups of paragraphs) work together to form an argument.	Essay maintains a mostly clear and logical organization. Simple paragraphs are used (rather than multiple sections).	Essay does not maintain a clear and logical organization. Simple paragraphs are used in a disorganized manner.	
Introduction	Introductory section provides a strong opening, context and a complex and original thesis statement. The thesis includes details that preview the rest of the essay.	Introductory section provides a strong opening, context and a thesis statement. The thesis includes details that preview the rest of the essay.	Introductory section provides a strong opening, adequate context and a clear thesis statement.	Introductory section contains some context and an unclear thesis statement	
Evidence	Student supports thesis statement with multiple clear and relevant examples from credible sources using quotes and citations. Evidence acknowledges and refutes alternate or opposing points of view using quotes and citations.	Student supports thesis statement with multiple clear and relevant examples from credible sources using quotes and citations. Evidence acknowledges and refutes alternate or opposing points of view.	Student supports thesis statement with some clear and relevant examples from credible sources using quotes and citations. Evidence attempts to acknowledge and refute alternate or opposing points of view but does so unclearly.	Student supports thesis statement with few clear and relevant examples from credible sources using quotes and citations. No alternate points are discussed.	
Conclusion	Essay provides a concluding statement that summarizes the major points, explains their significance, and builds new ideas and insights. The conclusion continues to use quotes and sources to support its claims.	Essay provides a concluding statement that summarizes the major points, explains their significance, and builds new ideas and insights.	Essay provides mostly summary and explanation but offers few new ideas and insights.	Essay provides mostly summary and offers little explanation and no new ideas and insights.	
Style	Uses strong words, transitional phrases and complex sentences throughout. Grammatical conventions are followed successfully (95% accuracy)	Frequently uses strong words, transitional phrases and complex sentences. Grammatical conventions are usually followed with success (85% accuracy)	Sometimes uses strong words, transitional phrases and complex sentences. Grammatical conventions are sometimes followed (75% accuracy)	Rarely uses strong words, transitional phrases and complex sentences. Grammatical conventions are rarely followed (65% accuracy)	TOTAL SCORE: ____

3.3.3. Focus group

In order to gain a more detailed understanding of the students' perspective, the researcher conducted a focus group with six participants (one from each debating group). The discussion took place at a bookshop/café and lasted an hour and fifty minutes. The whole discussion was conducted in English (having some occasional switches to the students' native language, Albanian). With the participants' approval, the discussion was recorded and notes were taken. The taped discussion was transcribed verbatim where the names of the students have been changed.

4. Findings

The findings from the debates and essay assignments are aimed at shedding light on the students' production of ideally warranted arguments (spoken and written) – thesis statements. The focus group, on the other hand, will provide insight into students' perceptions of instructional methodology they have gone through so far in their classes.

4.1. Debates

The debate data obtained from the twelve respondents in total (three in each debating group for two debates) regarding the usage of a thesis statement as means of providing warranted arguments is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Student argumentation during debates

Occurrence	Explanation	Percent
Inexistent Thesis Statement	Information separated into different sentences rather than in one statement	70%
Late Thesis Statement	Essential information provided too late	55%
Visible Indication	Obvious indications made	80%
Obvious Fact	An obvious fact stated	70%
Personal Conviction	Personal conviction used as a fact	60%
Conventional Wisdom	Conventional wisdom as reason	25%
Vague Vocabulary	Unacceptable word choice	60%

More than two thirds of the respondents failed to construct a thesis statement made of synthesized information and instead recalled information in separate statements. Most of the debaters used certain phrases to show that an indication for the point of the debate is being made ('The point of our position is that …'). In half of the cases, the thesis statement got lost in time and words after being introduced too late. 70% of the students used obvious and general facts in order to support their position ('Drugs are dangerous …'). More than half of them presented claims supporting them by personal opinions ('Relaxing with friends is wonderful…').

Conventional wisdom was applied as a reason by one fourth of the respondents ('Time cures all wounds…'). A phenomenon present throughout more than half of the debates was the use of vague vocabulary ('always', 'never', 'believe', 'need', 'feel', 'perfect'; including adverbs used as modifiers of verbs).

4.2. Essay assignment

The researcher has evaluated the students' essays by using a simple essay evaluation rubric. For the sake of the research results, the findings from the essay analysis were fortunately in concord with those of the debates.

Table 4: Student argumentation in essay

Occurrence	Explanation	Percent
Inexistent Thesis Statement	Information separated into different sentences rather than in one statement	45%
Late Thesis Statement	Obvious indications made	80%
Visible Indication	Essential information provided too late	40%
Obvious Fact	An obvious fact stated	60%
Personal Conviction	Personal conviction used as a fact	50%
Conventional Wisdom	Unacceptable word choice - informal - unsophisticated - vague - exaggerated - subjective - generally unnecessary - generally correct - jargon, cliché, abbreviations, slang, not gender	70%
Vague Vocabulary	Information separated into different sentences rather than in one statement	60%

Less than half of the respondents failed to construct a thesis statement made of synthesized information and instead recalled information in separate statements. 80% of the debaters used certain phrases to show that an indication for the point of the debate is being made ('The aim of my position is that …'). In contrast to the debates, in the essays, the late thesis statement was less distinct. Obvious facts and personal convictions also made a great part of the thesis statement construction. More evident, on the other hand, was the unacceptable word choice made by the students.

4.3. Focus group

The transcripts of the focus group have shown the matters below as pivotal:

- supporting a position
- critical thinking
- cultural differences
- educational traditions
- linguistic competence

5. Discussion

5.1. Supporting a position

The biggest challenge students face when it comes to argumentation is the arguments itself; or simply saying supporting their own position. This occurrence was mostly present in the situations where students used personal convictions, conventional wisdom and vague expressions in order to make their point. It was also Kay (1998) who put forth the importance for students to make sense of the world around them rather than making account only of their own beliefs.

5.2. Critical thinking

This fact is closely related to the phenomenon of critical thinking. The most common cases where the lack of the ability to think critically was detected were statements with no claim and statements providing obvious facts rather than an analysis of the particular situation. Observing the debates and conducting the focus group have also seconded this problematic issue as the respondents claimed that the moment they were asked to defend an opposing position they felt 'unnatural' in doing so and thus lacked the capacity to go beyond their views.

5.3. Cultural differences

Being complicated in its nature, argumentative discourse becomes even more complicated when it is used as a second/foreign language. The younger the learners of the language are the easier they become acquainted to the second language community (Baker, 2009). This cultural aspect of language acquisition is an inevitable part of the competence to argument precisely in a language other than the native one. Cultural differences transmit their problems mostly via language.

5.4. Educational traditions

Argumentative discourse is only effective when the conversations are familiar to the community (Hyland, 2009). These familiarities can only be brought closer to students via education. Sticking only to traditional educational approaches will keep L2 students far from L1 perfection. Thus, in the case of academic discourses, genre specific and inquiry-based approaches result in triggering necessary argumentative features closer to the learner in the best way possible (Hillocks, 2010).

5.5. Linguistic competence

One of the most evident occurrences has derived from both debate and essay analysis, which have again proven to be closely correlated to each other in the means of argumentation (Krieger, 2005). Concerns with the correct use of vocabulary have taken a great part of structuring warranted arguments into a complete thesis

statement. The constant need for reorganizing thesis statements (Karper, 2002) according to changing needs and views seems to be the greatest difficulty for students.

6. Conclusion

This study shows how important it is to consider new educational approaches when it comes to second language academic discourse. Being of a vital nature, introducing argumentative communication early in education aims for a better understanding of the world beyond the students' personal views.

The revealing form of learner corpora this study provides, combining both forms of argumentation a student can be in contact with, delivers cultural, educational and linguistic aspects to be concerned about. The fact that students are aware of these issues and their significance speaks for a positive attitude towards changes, which is a promising stance (as no change could be possible without the students' willingness to do so). Creating an environment challenging for the students and their studies definitely depends a lot on the teachers who are to refine future teaching practices and viewpoints towards academia

The study aspires to encourage teacher-researchers with similar challenges in teaching argumentative discourse to explore both learner and text perceptions so that education can better meet the learners' academic essentials.

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