Developing Argumentative Essay Writing Skills among Junior High School Students through a Writing Conference using the Toulmin Model

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ABSTRACT

Writing is an essential skill in language production that requires practice and proficiency. This paper describes how writing conferences using the Toulmin model improved the argumentative writing performance of Junior High School students (n=20) in an Integrated High School. Following a mixed-method design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected through pre-writing and post-writing activities. The t-test p-value was used to interpret the quantitative data. Meanwhile, open-ended questions and inter-rater comments examined how writing conferences helped students improve their writing. A rubric was used to grade the participants' written output while thematic analysis was utilized to extract meaningful themes from the participant's responses. The findings indicate that writing conferences using the Toulmin Model significantly improved the argument structure and writing quality of students' papers, as evidenced by significant differences in the mean scores between the participants' pre-writing and post-writing activities. The formulated themes include constructing claims/arguments, presenting/ gathering evidence, expressing ideas, centering on the topic, and reliability and truthfulness of resources. These findings shed light on the vital role that writing plays in overall communication as it improves other language skills like speaking and reading. Finally, it was found that argumentative essays helped students develop their critical thinking skills and defend their viewpoints with evidence which is essential to other language skills.

Keywords: *writing, argumentative essay, Toulmin model, writing conference, mixed methods research*

Introduction

Writing is a complex skill that requires vocabulary, grammar, idea organization, and higher-order thinking skills. Writing is difficult to learn because it encompasses

a combination of physical, cognitive, and affective competencies (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Murray & Moore, 2006). It likewise requires that a writer know how to evaluate ideas, analyze opinions, examine their composition, and construct evidence-based composition.

In language classes, providing corrective feedback on students' papers is expected. However, teachers sometimes do not prioritize correcting grammar mistakes and instead provide comments on the topic or content so as not to disrupt the flow of ideas. This leads to a lack of clarity because the grammatical mistakes, which can hamper meaning, are not immediately addressed. This shows that the clarity of writing (seen through comprehensibility and intelligibility) is frequently viewed as a secondary goal. This practice goes against the traditional emphasis on formal academic writing (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010).

In argumentative writing, it is important to examine the specific challenges and distinct difficulties for both students and educators, which can be traced to several reasons (Newell et al.,2011). First, students lack the reading comprehension skills important for understanding disciplinary texts. Second, they struggle to produce evidence to support their arguments and counterarguments and do not always recognize or use argumentative text structures. Teachers might also lack the materials or procedural understanding necessary to teach argumentative essay writing because the genre is complicated (Newell et al., 2011).

Argumentative writing's goal is to convince the audience and assert a stand on conflicting beliefs and attitudes (Hyland, 2002). Thus, an argumentative essay requires critical thinking so the reader can actively respond to the presented arguments and evaluate opinions based on evidence. According to Vdovina and Gaibisso (2013), critical thinking is a conscious challenge that requires time to become a habit of mind. Developing writing skills requires critical thinking that integrates communicative skills, active, and interactive learning.

Defining Writing Conferences

Writing conferences are face-to-face discussions between teachers and students centered around the writing process or output (Bayraktar, 2012). They are "private discussions regarding the student's writing or procedures for writing" (Sperling, 1991, p. 132). Hyland and Hyland (2019) highlight their benefits and emphasize the interactive nature of the conferences, where both parties negotiate meaning and interpretation. Writing conferences have been employed for many years in composition education and have recently gained prominence in second language (L2) writing education, aligning with a shift toward process-focused teaching strategies (Maliborska & Yu, 2016). This transition reflects the adoption of the multiple-draft method from first-language classrooms to L2 settings.
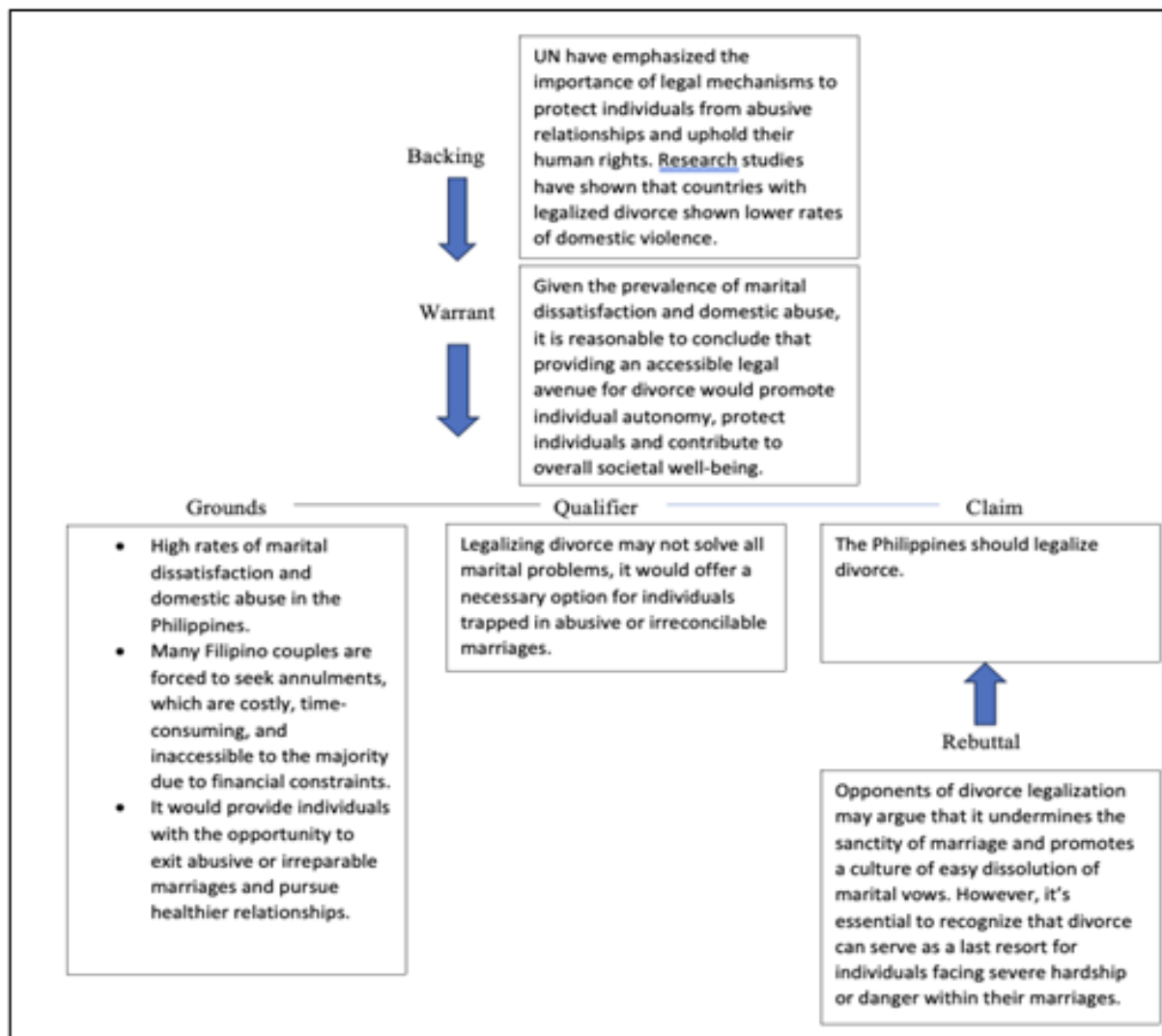
Writing conferences are referred to in the literature through a variety of terms such as response sessions, face-to-face engagement, one-on-one education, and interactive dialogues (Bayraktar, 2012). Additionally, conferences have been investigated in a variety of contexts, including writing centers and classrooms (Yu, 2020). Writing conferences are frequently held in a classroom environment as a component of a writing course (Maliborska & Yu, 2016). Conferencing in a writing center context, meanwhile, typically occurs as part of a service provided to university employees and students (Williams, 2004). Across these contexts, teachers play a central role in facilitating productive conference interactions. Much of the research on writing conferences is conducted within academic settings, underscoring their significance in educational environments (Bayraktar, 2012). Whether in classrooms or writing centers, conferences serve as dynamic platforms for collaborative learning and writing development, contributing to students' proficiency and engagement across diverse linguistic and educational landscapes.

Though argumentative writing is challenging, the Vygotskian learning theory attests that teachers provide scaffolding to help the student accomplish a difficult task. One form of scaffolding is through venues provided by writing conferences. Writing conferences can have a positive impact on both teaching and learning, as they promote dialogue in which meaning and interpretation can be constantly negotiated by the student and teacher (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Additionally, discussions during a conference between the instructor and the student can help students develop as writers. For it to be beneficial, the conference needs a clear schedule and consistency for the students. This allows students to know what to expect from the discussion and permits them to ask questions and seek comments, advice, and assistance (Flaherty, 2019).

The Toulmin model offers a structured approach to analyzing and constructing arguments, emphasizing the importance of evidence, reasoning, and acknowledgment of opposing viewpoints. Compared to other methods or approaches, such as classical rhetoric or formal logic, the Toulmin model provides a more flexible and practical framework for everyday argumentation, particularly in fields like law, politics, and public policy. The Toulmin model is widely preferred because it serves as a useful heuristic for teaching argumentative writing in both native language (L1) and ESL/EFL contexts. Toulmin's concept of logical reasoning can be applied through questioning strategies to give students' argumentative writing a framework and to develop their capacity for critical thought. Zainuddin & Rafik-Galea (2016), for instance, showed the potential of Toulmin's model to help average ability students cope with difficult writing demands. To help students write effective and sound argumentation, the model offers a systematic framework for analyzing arguments and constructing persuasive rhetoric. This model consists of six key components namely: claim, grounds, warrant, backing, qualifier, and rebuttal. These elements serve distinct purposes in constructing and evaluating arguments (Karbach,1987). Figure 1 shows an example of how this is used.

Figure 1

Sample Toulmin Model during Lecture

Backing

UN have emphasized the importance of legal mechanisms to protect individuals from abusive relationships and uphold their human rights. Research studies have shown that countries with legalized divorce shown lower rates of domestic violence.

Warrant

Given the prevalence of marital dissatisfaction and domestic abuse, it is reasonable to conclude that providing an accessible legal avenue for divorce would promote individual autonomy, protect individuals and contribute to overall societal well-being.

Grounds — **Qualifier** — **Claim**

Grounds:
- High rates of marital dissatisfaction and domestic abuse in the Philippines.
- Many Filipino couples are forced to seek annulments, which are costly, time-consuming, and inaccessible to the majority due to financial constraints.
- It would provide individuals with the opportunity to exit abusive or irreparable marriages and pursue healthier relationships.

Qualifier: Legalizing divorce may not solve all marital problems, it would offer a necessary option for individuals trapped in abusive or irreconcilable marriages.

Claim: The Philippines should legalize divorce.

Rebuttal

Opponents of divorce legalization may argue that it undermines the sanctity of marriage and promotes a culture of easy dissolution of marital vows. However, it's essential to recognize that divorce can serve as a last resort for individuals facing severe hardship or danger within their marriages.

Use of Writing Conference

The dynamic exchange in writing conferences fosters a deeper understanding and learning experience for both instructors and learners. Martin and Mottet (2011) highlight the value of discussion during conferences noting that these reduce perception errors by providing students the opportunity to seek clarification and conduct further research. This interactive approach allows students to assert their agency by negotiating instructor criticism and advocating for their ideas. Students get the chance to shine during conferences where they can explain their writing styles while instructors identify the student's strengths and weaknesses (Bayraktar, 2012). In contrast, written comments provide only one-way communication, limiting opportunities for clarification (Carnicelli, 1980).

Preferences among teachers regarding conference formats vary, with some preferring one-on-one interactions or small-group settings. One-on-one collaboration simplifies feedback for students and alleviates apprehension by addressing individual language learning difficulties (Fitriani & Sabarniati, 2019). This personalized approach acknowledges the unique needs of each student and promotes a supportive learning environment conducive to effective communication and comprehension.

Effectiveness of Writing Conference

The effectiveness of writing conferences has been supported by several studies. They demonstrate that conferences help students improve their writing skills, develop better habits, and encourage independent learning, self-reliance, and revision skills (Bell, 2002; Eickholdt, 2004; Koshik, 2002). Aside from effectiveness, studies also focused on features of successful conferences. For example, Consalvo (2011) highlighted the importance of a welcoming environment in enhancing the productivity of writing conferences. Kaufman (2000), meanwhile, suggested that effective conference interaction promotes continued learning. When there is rapport, students leave the conference with new perspectives, clearer direction for future work, and renewed enthusiasm. Martin and Mottet (2011) emphasized the significance of the student-teacher connection in building trust while Chen (2005) underscored the emotional element in conference interactions, stating that learners' feelings of being welcomed, encouraged, appreciated, rejected, humiliated, or threatened remain strong even after the conference has ended.

The teacher also plays a crucial role by anticipating the topics to be covered, identifying issues, and managing the time spent on each activity. Hawkins (2016) argued that in the writing class, the teacher should control the conference discussion, including the student's motivation and attitude. The teacher must also be aware of the student's needs and how to communicate with them effectively throughout the conference. By doing this, the instructor can plan the ideal approach to use during the writing class conference.

Challenges in Implementing Writing Conference

One difficulty educators in conducting writing conferences is simultaneously handling these with their classes. Some pupils might also not feel at ease presenting their work to the class. To address this and increase comfort levels, they may be asked if they want to share or read their work in the class (Routman, 2005). Additionally, care should be taken when giving feedback. The teacher should choose words carefully and be respectful when giving feedback. A teacher's communication style is crucial to how a pupil sees her work and herself as a writer (Johnston, 2004). During conferences, providing feedback on student writing can be pedagogically beneficial, but it is not emotionally neutral (Witt & Kerssen-Griep, 2011). One-on-one discussions can lead to emotionally charged interactions (Trees et al., 2009), which may hinder strong teacher-student connection development. Thus, it is essential that the teacher provides feedback in a respectful way.

Overall, though pedagogically valuable, writing conferences involve emotional and power dynamics that necessitate careful consideration and strategic planning. The effectiveness of conferences lies not only in improving writing skills but also in fostering positive teacher-student interactions and creating an environment conducive to learning and independent thinking.

Writing Effective Argumentative Essays

Advanced writing skills are an important aspect of academic performance as well as subsequent work-related performance. Words are important in communicating verbally or in writing and in conveying the concepts one needs to express. One important argumentative writing ingredient is vocabulary. Vocabulary knowledge is an index of writing, reading, listening, and speaking ability, and it is important in argumentative writing. A student's understanding of vocabulary influences the quality of their writing (Engber, 1995; Milton, 2013; Park, 2012; Staehr, 2008), showing the need for word meaning and application mastery in writing (Chen & David 2012). Within wider vocabulary, academic vocabulary refers to the selection of words and phrases particular to a subject or topic of the study (Coxhead, 2000). Most studies indicate that, among a variety of language activities involving new words, writing is one of the effective techniques for imprinting trained vocabulary in learners' memories (Laufer, 2013). A student with rich vocabulary expresses their thoughts meaningfully and proficiently in argumentative writing.

Stance is another important element in written argumentation. It refers to attitudes, epistemic judgments, and interactional involvement that the author takes on an issue. It shows the writer's attitude toward the thesis, arguments, or evidence in writing. Either the writer agrees or disagrees with the statement. The articulation of stance is a crucial, albeit concealed, aspect of both expert and student argumentative writing, one having a great impact on the success of writing (Wingate, 2012).

Another essential element in argumentation is writing clearly and explicitly (De Vries, 2002). Writing with clarity produces work that is concise, understandable, and ready for others to read. However, many students often overlook the importance of planning and organizing their thoughts before they begin writing. Clarity in writing involves eliminating unintended ambiguity and avoiding confusing sentence structures, ensuring the message is easily understood.

Grammar and writing conventions, also important in argumentative writing, are what students often refer to as rules in writing. Grammar is an essential component of language proficiency and should be taught strategically to improve students' communication skills (Iwashita, 2018). Another crucial element of effective argumentative essays is having a strong understanding of the topic. Students emphasize that knowledge about the topic is essential for generating a well-founded point of view capable of persuading readers. Since the purpose of argumentative writing is to convince others through logic,

reasoning, and evidence, a deep understanding of the subject matter allows the writer to present information more confidently and logically. Additionally, the effective use of persuasive language enhances the power and conviction of the writer's ideas, making their arguments more compelling.

Crafting Logical and Persuasive Arguments Using the Toulmin Model

In Toulmin's argumentation, presenting a logical and convincing progression of ideas is critical in influencing readers or listeners (Toulmin, 1958). Persuasiveness is explaining what something could or can be. Though persuasion can be complicated, the basic argument structure centers on three critical components: stance, evidence, and warrant (Rex et al., 2010). Taking a perspective or stance is the initial step in crafting an argument, serving as a deliberate approach to perceiving and/or feeling about a subject and designed with a specific purpose for the readers. A writer can adopt various roles in this process. Effective arguers first assess their stance and then purposefully assemble ideas and materials to persuade readers of their perspective. They connect these thoughts and information through reasoned arguments, and a specific approach to achieve their goal (Rex et al., 2010).

Evidence is another essential element of a strong argument. It provides the factual, logical, or experiential basis that supports the writer's claims. Evidence can take various forms—data, examples, expert testimony, or real-world observations—but it must be relevant, credible, and clearly connected to the claims. A solid argument starts by examining the data to be used as evidence that leads to a thesis statement or significant claim. This should precede the thesis statement in an argumentative essay, though many teachers start by having students write a thesis statement (Hillocks, 2011).

Finally, warrants or claims persuade readers of the proposition's validity. Readers rely on the connection between the claim and the evidence in determining the essence of a warrant. Teaching students to write such links involves posing questions that compel them to delve into their reasoning until they internalize these considerations (Rex et al., 2010). Yang (2022) identifies three ways to enhance the teaching of claims. Firstly, teachers should increase students' understanding of writing prompts and guide them in crafting concise, compelling arguments. Strong introductions enable students to better develop their arguments in the body paragraphs. Planning before writing should be emphasized, discouraging students from immediately tackling the first paragraphs. Without planning, some students may veer- off the essay's topic by merely restating ideas rather than expanding on them. Alternatively, they may overload the first paragraph with numerous assertions, resulting in a disorganized and inconclusive conclusion. Therefore, it is advisable for students to plan first before writing their first paragraphs.

The conceptual framework of this study, reflected in Figure 2, represents a structured approach to improving argumentative essay writing skills through an iterative process that integrates pre-writing, feedback, assessment, and revision. Writing conferences are the independent variable that serves as the intervention to improve the writing of argumentative essays of students using the Toulmin model.

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework
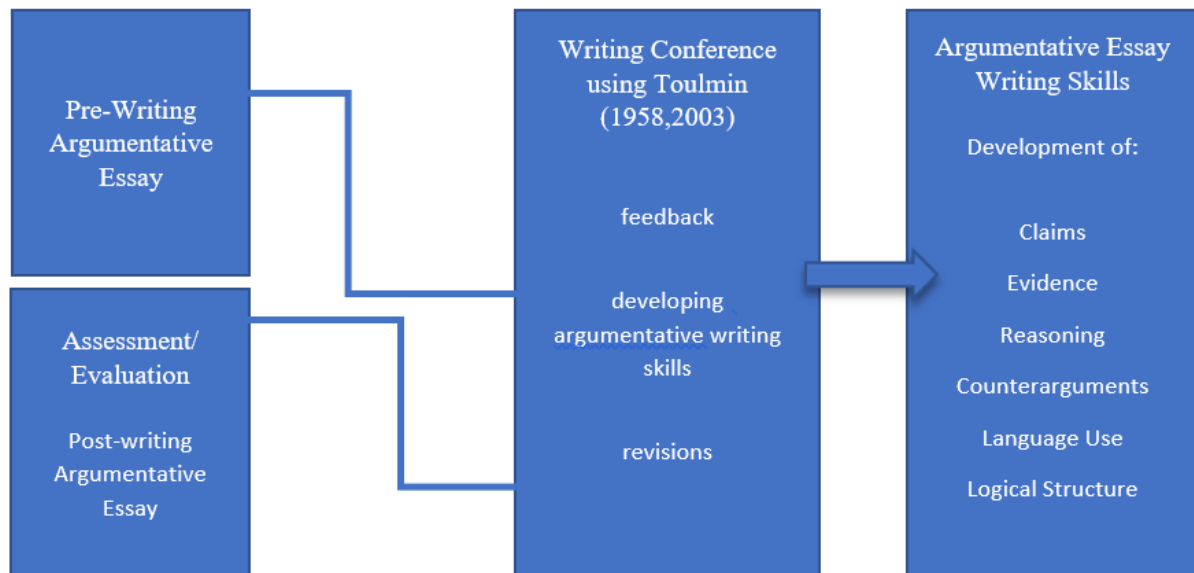
Argumentative writing is a crucial skill especially in academic settings, as it enables individuals to effectively present and defend their ideas. The Toulmin model is a widely adopted argumentation framework due to its structured method of analyzing and constructing arguments. Despite its popularity, limited research has been conducted to explore its application across diverse linguistic contexts, particularly in teaching argumentative writing to learners in ESL/EFL settings. Thus, this study investigated how writing conferences helped students improve their argumentative writing by applying the Toulmin method. The following are the research questions:

1. What are the argumentative writing scores of students before and after the implementation of a conference?
2. How does participating in a writing conference enhance students' argumentative essay writing skills?
3. What difficulties were addressed by implementing a writing conference?

Methods

Research Design

The study used a mixed-methods design which investigates issues by leveraging the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Efron & Ravid, 2013). This study used thematic analysis for interpreting qualitative data and statistical treatments such as mean and t-test for analyzing the quantitative data. By integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches, the mixed-methods design offered a well-rounded perspective. The quantitative data revealed what improvements occurred in students'

writing scores, while the qualitative data explored how these improvements happened and why the intervention was effective. This design ensured a thorough investigation of the study's objectives and made it well-suited to address the research questions comprehensively.

Participants

The study involved 20 students from Integrated High School taking English 10, which emphasizes various types of writing. These students were purposely selected as they were inexperienced in writing argumentative essays.

Table 1

Inclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

1. Ages 15-16
2. All gender
3. Students who are Grade 10 in Integrated High School.
4. Students who enrolled in public school and under K to 12 curriculum.
5. Academic writing is included in the curriculum of Grade 10.
6. Students who are struggling in writing argumentative essays.
7. First-time learners of argumentative writing.

The students were selected based on the inclusion criteria outlined in Table 1. These criteria ensured that the participants were aligned with the study's objectives and context.

They study writing persuasive essays as early as Grade 6, and the features of academic writing are formally introduced in the 4th quarter of 7th grade. Their curriculum incorporates a variety of academic writing forms, such as informative and persuasive essays, and emphasizes paragraph writing enhancement. Writing an argumentative essay, being a more complex skill, is introduced in Grade 10 as part of a spiral curriculum. This progression positions Grade 10 students as beginners in argumentative essay writing, making them suitable for this study.

Instruments

Pre-and Post-Writing Test

The pre-and post -writing parallel tests measured the effect of writing conferences on students' argumentative writing production. In both tasks, students were instructed

to write an argumentative essays of 380–400 words. The pre-intervention topic was *"Can Social Media Be a Tool for Learning and Growth in Schools?"* Both tasks followed the Toulmin Model to guide students in constructing claims, grounds, and warrants. These tasks were validated by three expert language teachers, each with over ten years of experience in teaching English. The validators confirmed the clarity and feasibility of the topic, instructions, and time limit of 60 minutes. The tasks were then pilot-tested with another group of students to ensure reliability.

Toulmin Model Lecture

The Toulmin Model lecture was an instructional tool aimed at providing students with a structured argumentation approach. It guided them in constructing claims, supporting them with grounds, and backing those grounds with warrants. This lecture ensured that students had a clear framework for writing their essays. The lecture materials were reviewed by the same three language experts to verify their relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study's objectives.

Rubric for Assessment

The rubric served as the primary tool for assessing students' essays. It focused on five criteria: originality, ideas, writing conventions, organization, and argument. The argument criterion, in particular, assessed the students' ability to create an argument by presenting a claim, providing grounds to support it, and substantiating the grounds with a warrant. The rubric was evaluated by the expert validators to ensure consistency and fairness in scoring. It was also applied during the pilot test to confirm its usability and reliability for grading student outputs.

Inter-Rater Comments

Qualitative data were gathered through comments from an inter-rater. The inter-rater provided detailed observations and evaluations of the students' performance in both the pre- and post-writing activities. These comments complemented the rubric scores by offering insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the students' argumentative writing. The qualifications of the inter-rater were aligned with those of the validators, ensuring expertise in evaluating argumentative writing.

Open-Ended Questionnaire

An open-ended questionnaire was used to investigate students' thoughts and opinions on the teacher-student writing conferences. It consisted of five guided questions designed to capture students' reflections on their learning experience. To ensure clarity and comprehension, the questionnaire was validated by three expert educators and pilot-tested with five Grade 10 students. The feedback from

the pilot testing confirmed that the questions were easy to understand and elicited meaningful responses.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before the conduct of the study, the participants were informed of the objectives of the study and that their participation in the study was voluntary and that their identity would be kept confidential. The researcher sought approval from the Division Office in the locality before the implementation of the study. To ensure the welfare of the research participants, consent forms were personally completed by their guardians or parents.

At the start of data collection, the students wrote an argumentative essay as a pre-test one week before the implementation of the writing conference. The pre-test essays were evaluated by inter-raters, who reported that most students scored low based on the rubric criteria. A week later, the instructor provided a handout featuring a sample argumentative essay structured using the Toulmin model. The instructor then explained how to write an argumentative essay using Toulmin's essay outline. The outline included instructions for developing a claim (thesis or hypothesis), presenting data (factual evidence), establishing warrants (logical connections between the data and the thesis), adding qualifiers (statements limiting the thesis's scope), and including a rebuttal (a counterclaim to refute opposing arguments).

The teacher-student conference was conducted after the inter-rater gave written feedback on the first draft of their writing. The lecturer/researcher explained the written feedback on their paper. The teacher-student conference took about 5-10 minutes per participant. The students were asked, *"After the lecture about the Toulmin model, which part of your essay do you think needs revisions? Do you think you were able to write your argument effectively? What revisions do you plan to make before your final draft? Do you have any questions or concerns about the writing process?"* The lecturer conducted one-on-one coaching to ensure that students could improve their argumentative writing skills. The students revised their draft according to the conference agreement and the Toulmin model. In the sixth week, the students took the post-writing activity to see the effect of the lecture about the Toulmin model and writing conference on their writing. After this, ten (10) students participated in the semi-structured interview. The interview took place immediately after the post-writing activity to gather new perspectives into their experiences and reflections on the intervention.

Data Analysis

The study employed quantitative and qualitative analyses to investigate the effects of teacher-student conference on students' writing. It used mean and t-tests to analyze the scores from the pre-writing and post-writing activities. Meanwhile, the inter-rater comments and answers in the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis.

For the quantitative component, the rubric, presented in Figure 3, was used to score the pre-writing and post-writing output. The pre-writing and post-writing outputs were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as the mean and T-test p-values to get the significant difference in the scores from the pre-writing and post-writing activity. For the thematic analysis, the gathered data were interpreted using Clarke & Braun (2016) thematic analysis. An initial open-ended questionnaire response coding was done to identify key patterns and relevant significant data. The initial codes were then sorted into meaning units, sub-themes, and themes. Each meaning unit was then integrated into a sub-theme to help conceptualize and refine the main themes that emerged from the data.

Figure 3

Rubric for Argumentative Essay

CRITERIA	10	8	5
Originality	The essay showcases creativity and a unique perspective, offering a fresh and compelling take on the topic.	The essay at least showcases creativity and a unique perspective, offering a fresh and compelling take on the topic.	The essay doesn't showcase creativity and a unique perspective, offering a fresh and compelling take on the topic.
Ideas	The essay presents clear, relevant, and well-developed ideas. Ideas are logically structured and support the thesis statement.	The essay somehow presents clear, relevant, and well-developed ideas. Ideas are not so logically structured and not well support the thesis statement.	The essay lacks clear, relevant, and well-developed ideas. Ideas are not logically structured and support the thesis statement.
Writing Conventions	The essay demonstrates correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and formatting. It adheres to standard writing conventions.	The essay somehow demonstrates correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and formatting. It adheres to standard writing conventions.	The essay doesn't demonstrate correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and formatting. It adheres to standard writing conventions.
Organization	The essay exhibits a logical structure with an effective introduction, well-organized body paragraphs, and strong conclusion. Transitions guide the reader effectively.	The essay in some way exhibits a logical structure with an effective introduction, well-organized body paragraphs, and conclusion. Transitions guide the reader effectively.	The essay doesn't exhibit a logical structure with an effective introduction, not well-organized body paragraphs, and not strong conclusion. Lack of transitions.
Supporting Evidence	The evidence is complete, accurate, and relevant to the claim. The writer correctly identifies the literary conventions.	The evidence that is offered is relevant but not complete. The literary conventions are identified but not complete.	The evidence that is offered is weak, inaccurate or incomplete. The writer inaccurately identifies the literary conventions.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study, organized based on its research questions.

Students' Writing before and after the Implementation of Writing Conference

Table 2 presents the results of dependent samples t-tests comparing the means of variables between the students' pretest scores and the post-test scores, the means and standard deviations for both groups, and the t-values, df, and p-values.

For male respondents, the post-test scores ($M = 42.40$, $SD = 3.53$) were significantly higher than the pretest scores ($M = 35.40$, $SD = 4.86$), $t(9) = -4.09$, $p = .003$. For female respondents, the post-test scores ($M = 46.10$, $SD = 3.57$) were significantly higher than the pretest scores ($M = 36.90$, $SD = 2.23$), $t(9) = -10.94$, $p = .000$. Overall, the post-test scores ($M = 44.25$, $SD = 3.95$) were significantly higher than the pretest scores ($M = 36.15$, $SD = 3.76$), $t(19) = -8.42$, $p = .000$. The p-values for all tests were significant ($p < .05$), suggesting that the observed differences were unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Table 2

Student's Pre- and Post-Intervention Scores in Argumentative Writing

Respondent (N)	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	t	df	p	Interpretation
Male (N = 10)	35.40 (4.86)	42.40 (3.53)	-4.09	9	.003	Significant
Female (N = 10)	36.90 (2.23)	46.10 (3.57)	-10.94	9	.000	Significant
Overall (N = 20)	36.15 (3.76)	44.25 (3.95)	-8.42	19	.000	Significant

Note: mean *M*, standard deviation *SD*, t-value *t*, degrees of freedom *df*, p-value *p*.

The findings provide evidence of the intervention's effectiveness. According to Vygotsky' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, personalized guidance can help students achieve skills they might not develop independently (Vygotsky, 1978). The significant improvement of both male and female post-writing scores could stem from targeted feedback given to students on the weaknesses in their writing output. The dialogic interactions between the students and teacher fosters a collaborative learning environment. Research by Graham & Perin (2007) found that students benefit from writing instruction that incorporates peer and teacher dialogues.

Table 3 presents the feedback by the inter-raters on the students' argumentative essays before the writing conference. The feedback addressed issues related to sentence structure, organization of ideas, and argument presentation, among others.

Table 3

Pre-Intervention Writing Feedback to Students

Feedback	Specific Comments	Sample Student Writing
Sentence Structure	Use correct punctuation marks. Do not include irrelevant sentences Check the spelling and capitalization.	*Student B:* *Furthermore,Social Media's usefulness is an advantage of a lot of students considering what I've said earlier which is how people can search up anything that concerns them.*
Organization of Ideas	The fluidity of ideas must improve.	*Student C:* *Whereas back in the day, students had to rely on actually going somewhere to study or look for information. They had to meet people in person whenever they had inquiries, and thanks to social media communication between not only the students and teachers but the parents as well can be done wherever at any point in time.*
Presentation of Arguments	Add evidence to support the claim. The paper didn't show a clear argument. Highlight the two sides of the argument. Include data/evidence that supports the two sides of the argument.	*Student H:* *It should be noted that students and other personnel in schools use social media as one of their source of information. I think that it cannot be used entirely as a learning tool.*
Others	No proper indentation in the first sentence of the paragraph. There is information that is not properly cited.	*Student D:* *Social media is a worldwide tool for different purposes like gossip, latest news/articles, entertainment and many more. Some examples of social media are Facebook, Tiktok, Instagram, Messenger.*

Table 4 shows the post-intervention feedback given to students. The received feedback shows that student writing utilized sufficient evidence to support claims, improved punctuation mark use, and used more relevant sentences, better coherence

in paragraphs, clearer argumentation, better objectivity through presentation of the issues' various sides, better spelling, capitalization, and indentation, better paragraph idea unity, and proper citation.

Student A – Pre – Intervention

According also to a recent study on the ResearchGate website, social networking improves the grade of students and enriches educational experience. It teaches important life lessons and make perfect planning. It engages student be more successful in their own experience. However, social media allows students to flex their creative ideas and social interactions that cannot be replaced in the school. When social media changes everything for the better, it is also for the worse.

Student A- Post – Intervention

According to a recent study from the Research's year 2018, social media improves the grades of students and enrich their educational experience. It engages students to be more successful in their own experiences. Social media also allows students to flex their creative ideas and social interactions that are irreplaceable. Like Facebook(2004), use for spreading news and posts including Twitter (2006) and Instagram (2010). These apps were the most used social media by the users until now. Facebook, got 2.93 billion active users out of 4.59 billion active users (The Top 10 Social Media Platforms,2022).

Between the two paragraphs taken from the pre-and post-intervention essay of Student A, the post-intervention paragraph is more effective. It provides specific details and mentions popular social platforms, adding credibility to the argument. It also highlights the positive aspects of social media, including their impact on grades, educational experiences, creativity, and social interactions. In contrast, the pre-intervention paragraph lacks specific details and repeats the same sentences about teaching important life lessons and making perfect planning. It does not delve into the specifics of the study or provide concrete examples of how social media can be beneficial.

Table 4

Post-Intervention Writing Feedback to Students

Feedback	Specific Comments	References [actual students' writing]
Sentence Structure	Improved use of punctuation marks Relevant sentence Correct spelling and capitalization	*Student B:* *Social media can be a tool when it comes to learning because of the information or sources we get through different social media platforms. Social media is useful to communicate our teachers even our classmates when distance learning started.*
Organization of Ideas	Coherence Unity	*Student C:* *This concludes that social media can become a tool in learning. It has a huge role in education especially in the 21st century, where we rely mostly in technology. We use technology in our daily lives so much that we can't live without it, researching is also a part of it. With the use of social media we achieve a lot of things in education like independent learning but it has its cons like an unhealthy amount of time and too much screen exposure.*
Presentation of Arguments	Evidence is sufficient to support the claim. Clear argument Statements showed objectivity. Improved two sides of the argument.	*Student H:* *Social media help parents stay involved in their child's learning. They can be updated on school-related activities, projects and, events that are happening in school through chatting websites like Messenger (2011). Teachers can also get in touch with parents to share their child's progress and social media enables them to be informed about school matters, learning and, education.........* *Some may still argue that most of the time social media distracts students from their studies due to short attention spans, bad sleep patterns, bullying, rumor spreading, idealistic view of others' lives and, peer pressure ....*
Others	Proper indentation Proper citation was observed.	*Student D:* *The development of information technology has affected the way teachers teach and students learn also using digital devices has become our daily routine not only by playing games and communicating with our friends, classmates and teachers but also in education and knowledge (Kumar & Nanda, 2020)*

How a Writing Conference Improves Students' Argumentative Essay

Table 5 presents the exhibited themes, questions, and evidence from student responses and lecturer comments that demonstrate how student-teacher conferences helped improve student writing.

Table 5

Themes Illustrating the Impact of Conferences on Student Argumentative Essays

Themes	Questions	Evidence from Student Responses	Evidence from Lecturer Comments
Self-Evaluation and Critical Reflection	#1: After the lecture about the Toulmin model, which part of your essay do you think needs revisions?	*"I need to find more real examples and facts to make my argument better."*	*"Thank you for your thoughtful reflection on your essay and your plan for revisions."*
Strengthening Argument with Evidence	# 2: Do you think were you able to write your argument effectively?	*"I need to do a better job of giving stronger evidence and reasons to back up what I'm saying."*	*"Look for studies, case studies, or real-world examples that demonstrate how social media has been successfully utilized for learning."*
Revision Planning	#3: What revisions do you plan to make before your final draft?	*"I will do more research to find more evidence and examples… improve my reasoning to make my arguments stronger."*	*"Your plan for revisions is impressive! Focusing on refining your evidence and warrant sections… aligns well with the goals of effective academic writing."*
Clarification of Writing Process	#4: Do you have any questions or concerns about the writing process?	*"I wonder if there are any specific strategies… for strengthening the warrant section of my essay."*	*"Integrating counterarguments effectively can indeed strengthen your argument… reviewing examples of well-developed warrants in academic writing can help."*

Theme 1: Self-Evaluation and Critical Reflection

One prominent theme from the data was the student's ability to critique and evaluate their writing output based on the given criteria and frameworks. This helped the lecturer set the positive mood of the conversation by letting the student speak first while the lecturer created a positive and supportive atmosphere, actively listening and noting responses. This approach not only built student's confidence but also fostered a constructive dialogue.

Theme 2: Strengthening Argument with Evidence

Students critically assessed whether their arguments were compelling and well-supported. They reviewed and revisited examples that substantiated their claims. It was also a good avenue to give tips on gathering evidence from reliable sources.

The lecturer also asked questions based on the interrater's suggestion of using questioning to help the students realize improvement points. This was preferred to asking discouraging, straightforward questions. Furthermore, giving a Toulmin Model lecture helped the conference run smoothly because the students realized the points that they needed to improve.

Theme 3: Revision Planning

Students formed a concrete realization of what to revise in the essay. They began to assess the efficacy of their writing process, contemplating whether they had executed it correctly or not. Similarly, they reflected on whether they conveyed their thoughts logically, ensuring that grammar did not compromise the coherence of their writing.

Theme 4: Clarification of Writing Process

Asking questions and sharing concerns ensured that feedback was given clearly. Giving ways and means to help students proceed with their revisions ensured that students knew where to get reliable information sources. Clarifications enabled students to think about integrating counterarguments to strengthen their points and encourage meaningful engagement with the topic.

Table 6

Difficulties Addressed by Discussing the Toulmin Model in Writing Conferences

Constructs (Themes)	Code(s)	f	Random Student's Response
Constructing claims/ argument	Making stand Not being biased Stance is clear	8	**Student B:** I'm having a difficulty in taking my own stance in an argumentative essay but because of the help of writing conference I learned how to support and make my stance reliable and meaningful.
Presenting/gathering evidence	Not being biased	6	**Student C:** In putting evidence to prove the topic being discussed is true or factual.
Expressing Ideas	Choose of words Limited words	2	**Student E:** Having a wrong choice of words and limited words impedes me to express my ideas.
Centering on topic	Focusing on topic Stay on topic	4	**Student D:** It helped me stay in topic more, rather than just going farther and farther away from the topic and not proving my stance.
Reliability and truthfulness of resources	True and factual Articles reliable meaningful	7	**Student A:** It is difficult for me to search for ideas because there is a lot of false or irrelevant information, and I need to choose the right one information.

Table 6 presents the difficulties addressed by the Toulmin Model conferences. The thematic analysis shows that feedback is a powerful tool to help students write effectively, clarify their ideas, and avoid further errors in writing. The themes extracted show that the writing challenges were improved. By using the Toulmin model, revisions had constructed claims/arguments, well presented and gathered evidence, more clearly expressed ideas that center on topics, and finally, more deliberate use of reliable and truthful resources.

Based on the data, one difficulty addressed by the Toulmin Model conferences was in the formulation of claims and arguments. For example, one respondent, when asked how writing the conference improved their writing, said "I'm having difficulty in taking my stance in an argumentative essay but because of the help of the writing conference I learned how to support and make my stance reliable and meaningful." This suggests the conferences were useful in improving writing, especially in constructing claims and arguments. This is in line with the findings of Bacha (2010) and Varghese and Abraham (1998), who found that after the lecture on the Toulmin model, students' papers included more complex argumentation structures and clearly stated claims.

Another common challenge is evaluating the reliability and credibility of sources. One respondent shared: "It is difficult for me to search for ideas because there is a lot of false or irrelevant information, and I need to choose the right information." This underscores the need for using credible, trustworthy sources to effectively support arguments. Another recurring challenge was the difficulty in incorporating evidence to support arguments. One respondent shared: "I have a hard time putting evidence to prove the topic being discussed as true or factual." This challenge corroborated the observation of Qin (2013) that, at the beginning, student papers often relied on personal opinions or anecdotal evidence. After learning the Toulmin model, students became more adept at identifying and using evidence to validate their arguments effectively.

Another significant difficulty addressed was staying focused on the topic of essays. One respondent shared, "It helped me stay on topic more, rather than just going farther and farther away from the topic and not proving my stance." This aligns with the findings of Alagözlü (2007), who noted similar struggles in Turkish EFL university students' essays to articulate a clear viewpoint in argumentative essays. Through proper guidance, they realized the importance of taking a definitive stance rather than straddling the middle ground.

The last difficulty that appeared in the responses of the students was expressing ideas. This is shown by a respondent's answer: *"Having a wrong choice of words and limited words impedes me to express my ideas."* The statement highlights the obstacles in expressing ideas and word choice, emphasizing the need for support and development in these areas.

Discussion

The study found that writing conferences significantly improved the argumentative writing skills of students, as evidenced by the pre-and post-conference essay scores. This aligns with previous research indicating individualized feedback and conferencing's benefits in writing instruction (Black & William, 2009). The improvement in students' originality and authenticity, as well as the clarity and focus of their arguments, shows that writing conferences fosters critical thinking and enhances learners' writing abilities by encouraging them to use their own voice (Hyland, 2016). One notable improvement was students' ability to organize ideas logically and exclude irrelevant content. Graham and Perin (2007) argued that targeted writing interventions such as writing conferences enable students to develop essay coherence. The proper employment of cohesive devices, as observed in the post-writing data, also corroborates Alfalagg (2020) conclusion that writing conferences give advice on how to use cohesive devices properly and accurately. Other improvements were also observed. The participants learned to support their claims and arguments using evidence, use punctuation marks correctly, supply relevant sentences, ensure coherence in the paragraphs, provide explicit arguments, employ objective statements, observe correct spelling, capitalization, and proper indentation, present both sides of the argument, observe paragraph idea unity, correctly cite sources, paid attention to details, and observed writing clarity and

precision. They likewise supplied relevant sentences and maintained coherence within paragraphs, contributing to the overall flow of their essays.

In addition, the incorporation of questions based on the Toulmin model during the writing conferences facilitated critical reflection and evaluation of students' work. This empowered students to identify weaknesses in their arguments and develop improvement strategies. Additionally, the guidance on integrating counterarguments effectively and gathering evidence from reliable sources further supported students in refining their writing skills. This led to significant improvements in students' writing, including enhanced sentence structure, organization of ideas, and presentation of arguments.

Before the intervention, students exhibited challenges in various aspects of writing, including constructing claims and arguments, presenting and gathering evidence, expressing ideas, centering on the topic, and ensuring the reliability and truthfulness of resources. However, through the Toulmin Model writing conferences, students have addressed these aforementioned challenges. The conferences provided the students with valuable opportunities to receive feedback and guidance on their writing. Through the feedback, students identified areas for revision, such as strengthening claims, providing stronger evidence, and improving overall coherence and clarity. Andrade (2019) and Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) similarly highlighted good feedback's effectiveness in supporting self-regulation.

The findings of this study have important implications for English learning and teaching, particularly writing instruction. Utilizing Toulmin model conferences help students to strengthen their arguments and present strong evidence for effective argumentative essays. This also addresses the student difficulties in writing persuasive arguments. By offering structured guidance, feedback, and resources, writing conferences develop students' writing abilities, such as formulating convincing claims, effectively presenting evidence, and communicating ideas clearly. These results highlight the significance of targeted interventions in enhancing students' writing skills and academic achievement (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Conclusion

The results of the study revealed that the writing conference helped students address weaknesses in writing their argumentative essays. The Toulmin Model conferences can effectively scaffold students' difficulty in writing, promote learner autonomy, and develop basic argumentative essay writing skills. Specifically, they can enhance students' writing skills, specifically their ability to choose the right words, express their viewpoints better, clarify ideas, and adhere to the basic conventions of academic writing. The Toulmin model assists students in establishing the six parts of an argument - claim, grounds, warrant, qualifier, rebuttal, and backing - which are instrumental in creating a strong and impactful argumentative essay.

This study underscores the pivotal role that writing conferences play in enhancing students' writing skills. They help students develop better organization of ideas, clearer argumentation, and more effective use of evidence. The study also emphasizes the importance of addressing specific challenges such as maintaining coherence, using cohesive devices, and supporting claims with credible sources. Through interventions similar to this study's, students refine their writing techniques and enhance their overall writing competence. Teachers should create a writing culture and provide individualized support, such as writing conferences, to help students overcome common writing difficulties. Schools should adopt an approach that integrates writing practice and feedback, allowing students to revisit and improve upon basic writing principles throughout their academic journey.

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