ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING CONSTRUCTION OF EFL WRITING CLASS THROUGH DECLARATIVE SPEECH ACTS APPROACH

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Received: 15th June 2022; Revised: 18th October 2022; Accepted: 27th December 2022

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Indonesian undergraduate EFL students construct argumentative essays through critical discussion using Declarative speech acts and pragmatic approaches. This study employed a qualitative research method. The data consist of argumentative essays authored by undergraduate students majoring in English at a private university in Indonesia (N=34). Students worked in pairs to discuss a controversial topic, separated into protagonist and antagonist groups. The analysis showed that students used four steps of argumentation: confrontation, opening, argumentation, and conclusion. Most students used confrontation and opening stages in the introduction, argumentation stage in developing a paragraph, and end with a conclusion. To understand the purpose of argumentation, the students used four types of speech acts, which have different functions: assertive, commissive, declarative, and directive speeches. Implementing the declarative speech acts theory helps the students comprehend argumentative writing and trains them to have good critical thinking in resolving different opinions.

Key Words: declarative speech acts approach; argumentative essay; speech acts

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a skill that second language (L2) learners find the most difficult (Miri, 2014). Teachers face considerable obstacles in enhancing elementary to tertiary students' writing abilities (Kementerian Pendidikan dan kebudayaan RI, 2020). This phenomenon encourages language educators and EFL professionals to look for a way to make writing less intimidating for EFL students. The highest level of writing for university students is argumentative writing, which combines writing abilities and critical thinking. Students are frequently expected to choose a position on a subject and defend it with evidence from trustworthy sources by employing argumentative writing techniques (Setyowati et al., 2017). In a democratic setting, it is expected that members of society can defend their opinions while considering those of others. Furthermore, pupils must be able to comprehend, elaborate, organize, and integrate information in the knowledge society (List & Alexander, 2019). Learning to argue will help people advance their academic and personal life (Andrews, 2000).

The argumentative discussion typically employs terminologies and major concepts to aid comprehension, particularly for a novice reader. A fundamental idea from which argumentation springs is a dispute or different points of view (explicit or implicit). According to van Eemeren et al. (2002), there are always two sides involved in a quarrel or difference of opinion. When one side presents a viewpoint, the opposing side expresses questions about it or, more frequently, goes one step further and rejects the viewpoint. This process of the argumentative discussion uses a dialectic system (Humblin, 1970). Humblin explained that the dialectic system happens in the dialogue between two participants. The argumentative discussion has three essential components: (1) it consists of two parties, the protagonist and antagonist; (2) it has regular steps taken by both parties or participants; and (3) the dialogue has sequence steps. Moreover, the protagonist has the first opportunity to present their point of view and argumentation in this situation, followed by the responses. They then adhere to the discourse rules (Walton, 2007).

Following the above perspective, researchers used the Declarative speech acts approach to train the students to sharpen their critical thinking in argumentative writing because the Declarative speech acts investigate the critical conversation
resulting in diverse viewpoints (Kaldjärv, 2011). The Declarative speech acts paradigm best serves as a critical discourse that seeks to explain argumentative discussion and settle disagreements on the merits (van Eemeren et al., 1984). With this strategy, the protagonist and antagonist attempt to see whether the protagonist's analysis can stand the antagonist's criticism. Following the criticism from the antagonist, the protagonist presents the justification for their position. When arguing for a persuasive position, the protagonist seeks to support the statements. The protagonist attempts to disprove this assertion. The protagonist tries to justify or disprove the perspective upheld when the antagonist challenges it with fresh criticism by offering new facts that the opponent can respond to, and so on (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2003).

Besides, Declarative speech acts also discuss the use of a pragmatic viewpoint in seeing the use of language, especially in speech acts with dialectical notions from critical rationalism and dialogue logic (van Eemeren et al., 1984; van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). Previous studies show that the use of speech acts helps the speaker to show the purpose of using argumentation (Kamariah, 2021). Moreover, speech acts are used to express an opinion produced by the protagonist and antagonist sides which can resolve the problem (Fahmi & Rustono, 2018; van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2003), the dialogue analysis revealed that there might be arguments in which a speaker's intended meaning differs from the meaning that the speaker and the hearer mutually construe. And if the interactionist speech act theory is applied to models like the Declarative speech acts model, these cases can be explained. The theory of speech act is successfully used depending on certain types of conditions categorized by Searle (1969): condition of propositional substance, condition of readiness, condition of honesty, and condition of necessity (Saifudin, 2019; van Eemeren et al., 2007).

The term Declarative speech acts refer to two disciplines: pragmatics and dialectics. Pragmatics is the study of the language used in communication, while dialectic is concerned with how arguments are exchanged (van Eemeren et al., 2007). Because the fundamental idea of a critical discourse aiming at resolving conflicts is founded on a speech act, this framework will appeal to pragmatics readers. According to this paradigm, a disagreement of opinion can only be resolved if it goes through each dialogue stage: confrontation, introduction, argumentation, and conclusion. Every utterance serves a
purpose in critical debate; speech actions are carried out according to the norms that must be followed in a critical argument to resolve a disagreement. Analytically, the critical conversation can be divided into four stages (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004): identifying the point of disagreement (confrontation stage), deciding where the debate will begin (opening stage), expressing the argumentative and critical responses to resolve the disagreement (argumentation stage), and establishing the discussion's outcome (conclusion stage). While this paradigm was accepted, van Rees (2009) used the extended theory as a springboard for the analysis of a conceptual technique that is frequently employed in argumentative discourse for strategic maneuvering.

Table 1. The distribution speech act and the functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of argumentation</th>
<th>Speech act</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation stage</td>
<td>Assertives</td>
<td>Show the way to express the point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commissives</td>
<td>Represent the agreement or the disagreement of the participants of the opinion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Directives</td>
<td>Concerned with demands to declare the viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening stage</td>
<td>Directives</td>
<td>Represent the challenge to defend the viewpoint of the proponent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commissives</td>
<td>View as the opponent's agreement or disagreement with the proponent's standpoint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentation stage</td>
<td>Directives</td>
<td>Asking the participant to advance their viewpoint.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assertives</td>
<td>The way to improve the point of view of the participants in the discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commissives</td>
<td>The agreement or the disagreement of the arguers of the standpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion stage</td>
<td>Assertives</td>
<td>The specification and the definition of the standpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commissives</td>
<td>The statement of the result of the discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assertives</td>
<td>The agreement or the disagreement of the participants regarding the viewpoint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ijee | DOI: http://doi.org/10.15408/ijee.v9i2.28522
P-ISSN: 2356-1777, E-ISSN: 2443-0390 | This is an open access article under CC-BY-SA license
Additionally, Allani (2018) agrees that the Declarative speech acts approach can explore the students in using argumentation. Also, Svačinová (2021) in his research believes that the Declarative speech acts approach tries to define crisis diary writing as an argumentative activity type. Ma and Chen (2009) said that theoretically using Declarative speech acts in academic argumentation develops the research framework and expands the research perspective and method of academic argument. Practically, it teaches academic researchers in charge of global communication how to use pragmatic argumentation reasonably and efficiently. More importantly, it gives readers a vital analytical tool they can use to properly interpret academic arguments and develop their critical thinking skills. The previous studies (A018; Ma & Chen, 2009; Svačinová, 2021) gave a wider perspective that declarative speech acts give an impact on the writing process. Based on the knowledge of the declarative speech acts approach related to argumentative writing, this research tries to fill in the gap of using declarative speech acts in argumentative writing in pairs that consist of protagonist and antagonist. This research investigates the way students construct argumentative writing based on a declarative speech act approach, actual distribution of speech acts used by students in their argumentative writing.

METHODS

The study used qualitative research. The following briefly describes the participants, data collection, and analysis.

Participant

The participant in this research was students of the Islamic University of Malang. There were thirty-four students in semester 5 in writing class. The ages of participants are around 20-21 years old. All the students have already studied English for two years at the university. The argumentative writing lecturers employed Declarative speech acts theory to help students construct writing ideas.

Data collection

The data were argumentation text from an argumentative writing class. Thirty-four students worked in pairs to discuss different topics. They chose one topic prepared by the lecturer and chose which side they wanted to be (a protagonist or an antagonist). The protagonist and antagonist attempted
to systematically determine if the protagonist's viewpoint could survive the adversary's criticism. There were four steps to get the data.

Table 2. Steps in collecting data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The theory and examples of using Declarative speech acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Choosing discussion partner Presenting the topic of discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Discussion verbally of the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Writing students’ idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Continue to write the argumentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Submitting the writing feedback processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Repair the writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Submitting the revised writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

To investigate the use of the Declarative speech acts procedure in critical discussion, the researchers analyzed the use of the argumentative text procedure (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2003). The researchers identified each paragraph of the student’s writing based on these rules: First, during the confrontation phase, discussant 1 externalized a position. This position was contested in an argumentation writing or speech that addresses a non-mixed, single difference (by discussant 2). Second, after discussant 1 accepted discussant 2’s challenge to clarify the point of view and agreed on the role assignments and discussion rules, the discussants began a debate in the initial stage. Third, the protagonist-assumed discussant tried to defend the initial stance in the argumentation stage against the antagonist-assumed discussant. Lastly, the discussant who served as the main character in the argumentation stage either retracts or did not retract the initial stance in the conclusion stage. In contrast, the discussant who served as the opposition in the argumentation stage either upheld or rejected the initial position in the dispute. The researchers divided the data into two categories based on the analysis of the procedure: students’ writing on the protagonist and the antagonist with Declarative speech acts rules.

The researchers analyzed the reason for using language by identifying the sentences' words, sentences, and purposes to investigate the distribution of speech acts. According to the dialectical method of a critical discussion, each speech act in the text had a particular function in examining the acceptability of assertions. Every statement had a purpose in the early stages of a critical debate. The speech acts were performed following the conventions that must be followed in a critical discussion intended to settle a dispute (Kaldjarv, 2011).
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Construction of Argumentative Writing Based on A Declarative speech acts Approach

This section explained the construction of students' argumentative writing in critical discussion. The students (N=34) were divided into two groups: 17 protagonists and 17 antagonists. The paragraph composition ideally consisted of an introduction, a developing paragraph, and a conclusion. Each composition contained several phases for creating the argument, including the confrontation, opening, argumentation, and conclusion. The following table presents students' construction of argumentation.

Table 3. The composition of the argumentation paragraph

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The composition</th>
<th>Confrontation stage</th>
<th>Opening stage</th>
<th>Argumentation stage</th>
<th>Conclusion stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paragraph</td>
<td>Fr %</td>
<td>Fr %</td>
<td>Fr %</td>
<td>Fr %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>eq</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>eq</td>
<td>eq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develing topics</td>
<td>27 45,</td>
<td>17 28</td>
<td>14 23,</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13 22,</td>
<td>15 25</td>
<td>34 57,</td>
<td>11 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3 5,1</td>
<td>2 3,</td>
<td>7 11,</td>
<td>27 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 3 shows that the students frequently used the confrontation stage (28,9%) and opening stage (45,9 %) in their paragraph introduction. In addition, the students used the argumentation stage in the developing topics (57,8%) and a summary in the conclusion section (45,9%). The students gave a systematic writing process in the introduction stage. They showed their standpoint about the case, showing the reason why they agreed or disagreed with the motion of the case. In the opening stage, the students tried to see the opponent’s standpoint on the case. Both sides started to decide to do a critical discussion about the case. In the argumentation stage, the students tried to elaborate on a, evidence, and fact to strengthen their opinion. In the conclusion stage, students tried to give the decision of the discussion whether they followed the other side’s opinion or still believed in their standpoint. This is different from Kaldjärv (2011) who found that most students of Estonian students use the first group writing style in exploring the state exam composition. This case happened because the work of Estonian uses a monologue manuscript that lacks a dialectical approach.

Argumentative writing was the textual process of defending and discussing arguments (Ferretti et al., 2009). argumentation model has been the most prominent theoretical framework to date regarding the essential elements of an argument.
Through independent research into a subject to produce a collection, generation, and evaluation of evidence to support their position on it, students were motivated to construct arguments through the use of argumentative writing. Students were often asked to adopt a viewpoint on a topic through the practice of argumentative writing and to support that position with evidence from trustworthy and authoritative sources (Setyowati et al., 2017). A group of statements was referred to as an argument, and critical thinking was strongly related to this concept. Certainty justifications for believing some more claims and a judgment (Indrilla & Ciptaningrum, 2018). A writer must provide the information in an orderly, structured, and logical way to reach a persuasive conclusion (Fisher, 2013).

Using a communicative writing process brought the dialogue between the protagonist and antagonist. Argumentation demanded conversation. The levels of critical discussion effectively showed the argumentative writing's dialogue-level disagreements. Moreover, according to van Eemeren & Grootendorst’s (2003) critical discussion, protagonist and antagonist speech acts interact in the dialectical process to resolve different opinions. In this opportunity, the students delivered the standpoint and took position and discussion rules in the confrontation and opening stage; the students might present data, evidence, opinion, and argumentation, and both discussants had the opportunity to dispute, maintain the standpoint, attacked the other side, and answered the questions. The students tried to elaborate the standpoint and argumentation into the conclusion. In this stage, the students needed to decide whether to kept the standpoint or recognized the other viewpoint.

**Analytical Speech Acts in Argumentative Text Based on A Declarative Speech Acts Approach**

The argumentative text comprised four key discussion stages: confrontation, opening, argumentative, and conclusion. Each step of the stages consisted of complex speech acts which had different purposes. The analytical speech effectively explained argumentation as a communicative practice, in which both the speaker and hearer played a fundamental role (Marchal, 2021).

Table 4. Speech Act Distribution Used by the students in argumentative writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Assertive</th>
<th>Commissive</th>
<th>Declarative</th>
<th>Directive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fr eq</td>
<td>Fr eq</td>
<td>Fr eq</td>
<td>Fr eq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Protagonist)</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/ijee | DOI: http://doi.org/10.15408/ijee.v9i2.28522
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Stages | Assertive | Commissive | Declarative | Directive |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fr %</td>
<td>Fr %</td>
<td>Fr %</td>
<td>Fr %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation (protagonist side)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>4,0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation (antagonist side)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6,3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening (protagonist side)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening (antagonist side)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative (protagonist side)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argumentative (antagonist side)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion (protagonist side)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8,5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion (antagonist side)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8,9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Confrontation stage

Speech acts indicated the purpose of the statements or sentences in creating an argumentative paragraph. Assertive, commissive and Declarative speech acts are all used during the confrontation stage. Assertiveness was the most frequently used in the confrontation stage by the protagonist (5,6%) and antagonist (7%). It can be seen in the following responses; data (1) is from the protagonist and data (2) is from the antagonist to present the case-related viewpoint at the confrontation stage. Kamariah (2021) found that using assertive speech acts in the confrontation stage was shown by expressing a point of view. She selected the speech act depending on the speaker's or writer's willingness to accept a specific propositional ability to a certain degree (van Eemeren et al., 2007).

(1) The death penalty is an effective way to deter criminals because death penalty can be both a deterrent and influence the behavior of those who commit serious crimes (100a)

(2) On the other side I disagree with the argument that money brings happiness to us (105a)

Data (1) is an assertive speech act used by the protagonist which shows how students express their standpoint by giving an implicit explanation about the death penalty. It is different with data (2) from the antagonist which expresses standpoint explicitly by saying “I disagree”.

In addition, the study discovered that other writers employed sympathy to support the viewpoint (data 3) and
(data 4). According to van Eemeren & Grootendorst (2004), commissives were employed to support a standpoint or not by reiterating a viewpoint that has been rejected as well as to support a challenge to a standpoint. Here, the students attempt to further their viewpoint by disparaging that of the opposing side.

(3) Life is hard without money. But that doesn't mean money is everything. Because having a lot of money does not guarantee leads happiness. people have jobs that give them meaning or purpose, they are happier and regardless of how much money they make (105)

(4) People must be familiar with the phrase "money can't buy happiness." The term is not entirely correct.

Both data (3) and (4) represent disagreement of the opposite team. The protagonist expresses disagreement by comparing the antagonist’s point of view and the protagonist’s argumentation, and vice versa.

Furthermore, the researchers also found declarative speech act in the confrontation stage (data 5 and 6) used to define.

(5) Money is an acceptable currency in exchange for economic activities (106a)

(6) Standardized Test (UN) is an exam held to control student competence at the primary and secondary education levels as a result of the learning process in accordance with the Graduate Competency Standards (SKL) (133).

Both data (5 and 6) show how the parties give definitions of money and national examination. These actions did not give a direct impact on resolving different opinions between parties because, in critical discussion, declaratives did not play a significant part in resolving problems. Nevertheless, in the confrontation stage, declaratives could uncover pseudo-disputes (Kamariah, 2021).

Another speech act, directives, was also found in the confrontation stage by the protagonist’s side. Directives expressed the demand to declare the standpoint about the case shown in data (7) below.

(7) Yep, I totally agree. If money brings happiness to people, of course, because why do we live without money, we can't live? (104)

In this confrontation, the protagonist uses two speech acts in one
stage: assertiveness and directives. Here, the writer focused on the use of directives which represented how the protagonist asked other parties to declare the point of view of the case. There were some purposes for using directives (Saifudin, 2019), such as to refute points of view that were raised, to defend points of view, to ask the opposing party for points of support for his position, or to demand a definition or an explanation of an opponent's statement.

**Opening stage**

After Student 1 accepted student 2's challenge to convey their respective points of view, the division of labor and the rules for the debate are accepted. The data (commissive, declarative, and directive speech acts) had been identified. Directive speech act 2.6% (protagonist) and 4.07% (antagonist) challenges the opposing argument to defend the standpoint. Here, the writer asked the opposite side to get clarification about the other student's standpoint and statement. Fahmi and Rustono (2018) found that directives were used in the opening stage to demand the opposite party's clarification and asked for evidence of the argumentation. For example:

(8) But people should also pay attention to child abuse cases – how do we send someone who commits such a heinous crime, and it happens again and again, to society? (100b)

(9) Many reasons were found like what if they escaped from prison? What if ex-criminals who got out of prison were all around us? and other things. Is that a reason to take human life (101)

The data (8) show that the student from the protagonist wants to clarify how the student from the antagonist handles severe crime if the second student disagrees with implementing the death penalty for severe cases. The antagonist had a chance to explain the reason or offered new ideas for eradicating criminal acts. Data (9) also showed how the protagonist team asked the clarification of the antagonist’s argumentation.

Another speech act in the opening stage was the commissive speech acts, which account for 4.8% (protagonist) and 3.3% (antagonist) which showed how the student supported the standpoint or not by repeating rejecting standpoint. This commissive was in line with van Eemeren et al. (2007) accepting or disagreeing with the opposing argument, consenting to be a part of the opposing argument, agreeing with the norms of discussion connected to accepting or denying the arguments, and deciding to start a new
discussion are a few instances of compliant speech acts in debate. Data (10) and (11) represent the use of the commissive speech act in the text. The students defended the standpoint by showing the opposition's weakness. The students compared arguments to determine which were more logical and credible. In line with Kamariah's (2021) research, using commissive in the opening stage showed the disagreement that can create to support the case and express his opinion. For example

(10) Even, some people find every way to get more money to create happiness like they buckle down to fill up their needs and lifestyle and if we look any further, we can see some people do bad things just to get money (106b)

(11) Students must study many subjects for three years, but the subjects tested are only three subjects. And logically, with the Standardized Tests (UN), many do not realize that they are studying to pass the exam. It's not about getting better, having better qualities, or having good manners; it's just about passing the test. (133)

Data (10) show how people try hard to get money and achieve happiness. They will do everything to fulfill their life's needs, but the students emphasized that some people used the wrong way to achieve that purpose. The students could not say that this was the definition that money is everything in human life. The students tried to compare the argumentation everyone needed money and the reality that some people used the wrong ways to get that money. This was how the students defended their standpoints and stand on their position. Data (11) indicated how the party assigned its beliefs about the case. The party tried to show that they were on the antagonist's side.

In the opening stage, the use of declarative speech act is 0,3% (protagonist) which means only one student uses declarative to represent explanations, definitions, and the expression of the viewpoint.

(12) Standardized Test (UN) is an exam held to control student competence at the primary and secondary education levels as a result of the learning process in accordance with the Graduate Competency Standards (SKL) (133)

The student uses declaratives in the opening stage to define the National examination.
Argumentative Stage

In the argumentative stage, to counter the students who have assumed the position of an antagonist, students who had assumed the protagonist roles sought to defend the initial viewpoint (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2003). Here, the researchers found four types of speech acts: assertive 22.9% (protagonist) and 14.4% (antagonist), commissive 2.2% (protagonist), directives (2.6% (protagonist) and 1.1% (antagonist), and declarative 0.7% (protagonist) and 0.3% (antagonist). Assertiveness in the argumentative stage refers to how the speaker or writer presents the case and increases the discussion participants' points of view (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). Speakers or writers use assertive speech acts to extract data and show the truth to convince others. Opponents will respond to a question using a variety of arguments. The objective also includes getting the other individual to come clean and admit the truth. The statement may convey the viewpoint under discussion, support a viewpoint with an argument, or explain the result of a discussion. Fahmi and Rustono (2018) also found that assertives were used to indicate explanation and argumentation. Excerpt (13) shows how the protagonist student defends the standpoint by exploring data and the truth of the effectiveness of National Examination implementation while another writer showed the opposite argumentation (Data 14). This is in line with van Eemeren et al. (2007) who gave a specific illustration of this assertive speech act adds to the argument.

(13) The standardized test (UN) is also an exercise to face the challenges that will occur after graduating from school to form a superior generation. As a quote says "If it is like a standardized test (UN) is only a rung of the ladder that you must pass before piling up thousands of other stairs that wait in the future." Standardized tests train student’s mentality and train student’s responsibilities which will be very useful for students in the future. Cheating during standardized tests (UN) reflects students who have weak mentality because they are not confident, lack effort, only rely on friends, and easily give up on challenges. Mental learners must be built very well (132)

(14) Several reasons make this Standardized Test (UN) an unhealthy competency. First, some students cannot get good grades because they cannot master the material due to
educational gaps between regions. Second, they will justify any means to get good grades because the Standardized Test (UN) purpose grades, including cheating to get good grades. Last, educators who work closely with students (133)

Commissive speech acts (totaling 2,2%) were also found in the argumentation stage by protagonist, indicating that the students agree or disagree with another student's argumentation. For example:

(15) Do You still think that when you got a lot of money leads to happiness? okay-okay, so how about this when you buy something that you like, you felt happy right when buying those items, such as your favorite supercar, a mansion, etc. With the money, you can afford a lot of things that you want to own, so I think the more money you spend on your favorite things the happier you are (108)

Excerpt (15) shows the illustration that buying things, fulfilling their needs, and spending more money on a hobby will create happiness in real life. It describes the reality of people with a lot of money who can do whatever they want. Kamariah (2021) also found that the use of commissives shows how students can do something better than others.

The speech acts used in the argumentation stage were directives, 2.6% (protagonist) and 1.1% (antagonist), in the form of asking other students to give a definition, specification, and further explanation. Using directives also indicates that the students want to advance argumentation in explaining the case. According to Saifudin (2019), an effectively-directed speech act might be used to criticize arguments that support or defend a point of view, solicit an opponent's opinion to support a speaker’s point of view, or to ask an opponent to clarify or explain a remark. For example:

(16) In simple word money is everything but everything is not about money. What do you mean by that? If someone dies, we can't buy a soul for them and we can't also make their life (119)

(17) Well still not believing that money leads to happiness? , well if that is the case, let’s take a look at this, well-known research from 2010 had shown that people tend to feel happier the more money they make only up until a point of about $75,000 a year. More people felt happiest when they can make
more money than they think of right

Directive speech acts, exemplified by data (16) for the protagonist and (17) for the antagonist, are explicitly used to ask explanation about the opposite student's statement. The students were able to weaken the opposite arguments by asking for clarification. As van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004) said, the directive speech act in the argumentation stage is for asking the opponent's definition, specification, and additional explanation of the argumentation, which supports the standpoint.

The researchers also found declaratives in the Argumentation stage whose function is for giving definition, specification, and additional argumentation to support the standpoint. Declarative speech acts are 0,7% (for the protagonists) and 0,3 % used by the antagonist shown in the data (18) and (19). Both excerpts indicate how students try to give the definition of terminology which strengthens their standpoint.

(18) The Standardized Test (UN) is an examination carried out as a national evaluation system for elementary to high school

(19) The death penalty is a sentence or verdict handed down by the court as the heaviest form of punishment imposed on a person due to his actions

**Conclusion stage**

In the last stages, the conclusion stage, most of the students both protagonist (8,9%) and antagonist (8,5%) use assertive. The findings were In line with van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004), we believe that assertiveness is to defend their standpoint and assign the result of the discussion. Here data (20) and (21) how students from the protagonist and antagonist still believe in their standpoint until the end of their argumentation. Kaldjärv (2011) also found in his research that students tend to use assertive speech acts to preserve their standpoint

(20) The conclusion is money can bring a person happiness. Money can increase the satisfaction of life depending on how people spend it. If everyone spends money on experiences or items that match his values, it will increase each person's happiness. And the last quote is, "money can't buy happiness, but it has happier money."(112)

(21) In conclusion, many strong reasons say that money is not a source of happiness, money is only a tool for needs, and don't be
excessive in spending. Money cannot buy happiness because true happiness comes from our hearts when we can be grateful for what we have (113).

**Discussion**

This research viewed the dynamic of how the students construct argumentative writing and how the distribution of speech act in every stage of argumentative writing. The finding above shows how the discussant uses confrontation, opening, argumentation, and conclusion to construct argumentative text. Based on the stages in critical discussion, the researchers found three groups of discussants in using critical discussion stages related to van Eemeren et al. (1984) such as confrontation, opening, argumentation, and conclusion. This research shows that the students apply every stage in critical discussion in different ways. No specific rules in applying stages in critical discussion, so some students use confrontation and opening stage in the introduction and use four stages in every next developing paragraph, and a conclusion ends all. Some students use argumentation in developing paragraphs, and all argumentation ends at the conclusion stage. And, also some students use stages disheveled.

On another point, the students' result discussion shows the pragmatic insight which focuses on speech acts introduced by Searle (1969). Four speech acts are used in students' argumentative writing, such as commissive, assertive, directives, and declarative, but the variations are only shown in the topic development stage. It is because the students do not have enough knowledge of pragmatics. The implication of this Declarative speech acts research is it can help students write argumentative writing systematically using critical discussion stages. In addition, speech acts are very important for students, so they can know the purposes of writing the argumentation. It helps them build brief, reasonable, logical argumentation to prove to the reader.

**CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION**

The stages in constructing argumentation help the students write the argumentative text systemically. They can place the stages based on argumentation purposes. Implementing the Declarative speech acts theory enhances the comprehension of argumentation texts from a pragmatic and dialectical perspective. Besides, this approach helps students to have good critical thinking in resolving different opinions. Through this approach, the students are trained to discuss and explore their opinion by showing ideas, evidence, and data. Also, the students
must give a rebuttal, defend the standpoint of the case and refuse the opposite argumentation. Sometimes, they can show that other arguments are weak and unconvincing to prove others with students' arguments. The finding shows that not all students follow the stages of critical discussion in sequence, so this is very important to introduce the use of the stages in critical discussion very well.

Besides that, understanding pragmatics is very needed here because it explains the purposes of using argumentation. In this research, the use of speech acts does not vary in some stages because the students lack understanding of the use of language. For the next research, the teacher should understand how to use speech acts in argumentative writing and why the students use them. This way will help the students to have clear arguments when they do critical discussions with others.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Universitas Islam Malang, which has provided the funding to conduct this study, Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Universitas Islam Malang, and student participants.

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