

PERSUASION IN HIGHER EDUCATION:  
A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION OF ARGUMENTATIONAL  
STRATEGIES IN STUDENT AND EXPERT OPINION ESSAYS

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by

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## **ABSTRACT**

In order to succeed in Higher Education, students need to be able to argue effectively in writing. This thesis focuses on the argumentational skills of international students as manifested in short essays, similar to the written English proficiency tests for university admission.

The study compared these essays to opinion pieces produced by expert academic writers. First, insights from the field of rhetoric were used to compare how the writers argued. An analytical tool was designed to deconstruct arguments into their essential parts to determine the number and distribution of these components in the texts. The results from this analysis then informed an investigation into selected types of cohesive markers and their role in managing writer-reader dialogues. The study found differences in both the argumentational and linguistic strategies used by the writers to persuade their readers, especially with regard to the integration of other voices.

The thesis discusses implications for the teaching of argument in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum and beyond, and advocates a more rhetorical approach. Recommendations include the use of a new generative model of argument in the classroom and the use of the analytical tool for further research across different argumentational genres and academic disciplines.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the memory of my parents, Frieda De Strooper and Paul Van Geyte. They supported me through most of my education, both in Belgium and after my move to the UK. Without that, I would be a different person. I think they would have encouraged me to start and finish this thesis and that they would have been proud to own a copy of it (and have a quick leaf through). This is a haiku for them:

**first they let me go**

**they had no choice, but stayed near**

**even when they went**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BB	Birmingham Brief
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EM	English medium
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First language
L2	Second language
RQ	Research Question
SE	Student Essay
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Second or Other Languages

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

Students in Higher Education (HE) need a variety of different skills in order to succeed in their courses, but one in particular is of crucial importance: the ability to express themselves well in writing. Many students are required to write essays as the essay genre is the most common written genre in HE (Wingate, 2012) and essays are heavily relied upon for assessment purposes (Andrews, 2010). They are used as tangible evidence of a high level of competence in that their social purpose is to “demonstrate/develop the ability to construct a coherent argument and employ critical thinking skills” (Nesi and Gardner, 2012, p. 38) and the readers, commonly the essay assessors, value “independent reasoning and the ability to construct a persuasive argument” (ibid., p. 103). It would appear therefore that students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) need an understanding of what constitutes an effective argument and how language is used to formulate one. However, somewhat surprisingly, the teaching of written argument is not a central component of the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum, or of HE in general, as will be discussed in this chapter.

## **1.1 The status of written argument in Higher Education**

### **1.1.1 The importance of argument**

Andrews (2010) points out that having the skill to argue rationally is highly valued in HE, and that argumentation can help to clarify, develop and further knowledge, thus

making it a worthwhile activity. In fact, the importance of argument is virtually self-evident in HE: it is something that academics “value highly as a goal in teaching and learning” and they “do not need to be convinced that it matters” (Mitchell, 2000, p. 148). Written argumentation, in particular, is generally accepted to be important (Bacha, 2010), especially as assessment is still mainly based on written work in the UK (Groom, 2000).

It is important to point out that not all students have to write essays and that there are disciplines that rely heavily on other formats e.g. reflective writing in Social Sciences or report writing in Engineering. However, essays are the “default in the humanities and in many of the arts and social sciences” (Andrews, 2010, p. 93), and essay writing can be a requirement in all academic disciplines (Hyland, 2009) in which case it constitutes a “key acculturation practice” (ibid., p. 132). For students, essays, writing and assessment are concepts with similar meanings, and students can equate the written assessment with the course itself (Womack, 1993).

In order to produce essays, argumentation is indispensable (Wingate, 2012). In fact, one of the reasons for setting essay assignments at all is to “assist students with the ability to marshal evidence, evaluate it and mount a sustained argument” (Hyland, 2009, p. 131). In essence, because of their ubiquity and the value bestowed on them, argument essays are an important factor in the HE experiences of many students, in particular in certain fields, and they are a likely indicator of their potential success.

### **1.1.2 The need to teach written argument**

With written argumentation playing such a vital part in the trajectory toward academic achievement, one would expect there to be instruction about it, especially as

expectations are often not clear to students. This lack of clarity is a problem which Lillis (2001, p. 58) refers to as the “enactment of the institutional practice of mystery”. Research by Lea and Street (1998) suggests that tutors find it difficult to articulate what well-developed written arguments are and that students cannot recognise whether they have succeeded in producing them in their own writing. Riddle (2000, p. 63) points out that many students do not recognise argument as ‘*the*’ problem, focussing instead on other aspects, such as information transference. Despite the fact that what argument is varies from discipline to discipline (Creme and Lea, 2008), the exact nature of its written manifestation may be unclear to subject tutors, who may not know how to improve their own or their students’ writing (Murray, 2006). This of course makes it difficult, if not impossible, for them to give explicit instructions to students about what exactly is expected in terms of the development of argument.

In short, despite the important role that argumentation plays in HE, students may not be aware of the extent of its importance and may be uncertain about what it actually means. Not learning about argumentation can therefore have a negative impact on students, especially those generally in need of more support: Mitchell (2000) points out that argumentational skill is generally only acquired through acculturation, which some students achieve more easily than others, and she hints that under the circumstances it might be unreasonable to expect students to produce good arguments.

### **1.1.3 The need to teach written argument to international students**

It could be argued that, in comparison to home students, there is a greater need for certain international students to learn about written argumentation. *International*

*students* denotes “individuals who temporarily reside in a country other than their country of citizenship or permanent residence in order to take part in international educational exchange”, and who are “culturally different from their hosts” (Paige, 1990, p. 162). In this thesis the term will be used to refer to a particular subgroup, those that are *L2 speakers*, i.e. second or other language learners, as opposed to those who are *L1 users* and who learnt English before learning any other languages. L2 students may be less familiar with the expectations around argumentation in their new cultural environment: research has shown differences in the ways concepts are formed, developed, and organised rhetorically in L1 and L2 writing (Hinkel, 2010) and so the way the students have learnt to write in their L1 may not be perceived as positively as it used to be. Rhetorical patterns are culturally learned, and this influences how people from different cultures think and write (Carlson, 1988). In comparison to L1 writers, for example, L2 writers “often take moralistic and emotionally appealing approaches to argumentation and persuasion” (Hinkel, 2010, p. 528). Asian students may argue differently because it is “the Western tendency to view everything through the template of a battle metaphor (...), in contrast to the Eastern emphasis on harmony as a way to defuse inevitable conflict” (Tannen, 1994, p. 4). Belcher (1997) also points out that many international students are not used to the “agonistic” (p. 1), and “male” (p. 2) paradigms of academic writing and would prefer to use the ideas of others only in order to cooperate with them and not to criticise them.

However, all students who enter HE are required to become part of an academic discourse community, which is in effect a new cultural environment: even L1 students coming from secondary schooling in the same country will have to adjust to new

educational expectations. Andrews (2010) does not draw a distinction between the needs of L1 and L2 speakers, as “learning the academic rules of the game is the same for any student (...) and seems to be more a matter of the quality of the student than his or her linguistic profile” (pp. 92-93). L1 students can thus be considered in an equally disadvantageous position as L2 students. In fact, there may even be some benefits for international students: for example, while preparing for their English language university entry tests, L2 students may have had explicit instruction that familiarised them to some extent with the essay writing requirements of the British system. Once part of that system, they may be offered more academic literacy support by their universities than L1 speakers because of funding allocation for international students.

The desire to argue is part of human nature: there is no question that all students have the ability to argue, regardless of their backgrounds, because the desire to reason in order to persuade others of our views is both universal and common. As Herrick (2016, p. 5) puts it: “[e]fforts at persuasion mark many, perhaps all, of our interpersonal activities”. In academic writing, persuading others of one’s own views may require reasoned criticism of the ideas of others. If students are reluctant to do so initially, perhaps for cultural reasons, all that should be required is raising the students’ awareness: in my work as an English Language teacher in HE, I have not come across L2 students who argued in a fundamentally different way to L1 writers, or who were unable to change aspects of how they presented a written argument after receiving feedback. I have taught both L1 and L2 speakers who have occasionally been reluctant to criticise or even to make a firm choice between ideas. It is also important to acknowledge that L2 students come from a variety of linguistic

and educational backgrounds, have different levels of experience and maturity, and are not a homogenous group with easily identifiable needs or the same view of argumentation. In short, both L1 and L2 students may benefit from instruction regarding the conventions of written argumentation.

Having said that, L2 students may find arguing in written English more challenging than L1 speakers do, but not necessarily because of what has been mentioned about potential differences in L1 rhetorical patterns or any culturally-determined readiness to argue. Instead, argumentation can be difficult because “an enormous disparity might exist between their disciplinary knowledge and sophistication and their ability to write in English” (Leki et al., 2008, p. 38). For students who have not been through a Western or English medium (EM) schooling system, the challenges of the academic genre are greater (Schleppegrell, 2001), and this can be ascribed to linguistic reasons rather than the ability to argue: “their difficulty is reflected in the lexical and grammatical features they draw on in writing their essays” (ibid., p. 435). Arguing well in writing is a complex process in an L1, but doing so in an L2 results in a “‘double burden’ of language and content” (Salter-Dvorak, 2016, p. 21).

In sum, although the quality of an argument appears to be related more to the capability of individual students rather than to their cultural backgrounds, it is more difficult to argue in a language other than one’s L1. International students, therefore, have a greater need to receive teaching about argumentation in English and are likely to benefit from instruction that focuses both on argumentation and on language, i.e. the explicit teaching of relevant L2 linguistic features and of strategies to realise argument in writing.

#### **1.1.4 The absence of instruction in written argument in the UK**

As discussed above, there is a clear case for teaching argumentation in HE in the UK. However, there is no great impetus for doing so, for several reasons. Firstly, there is a historical explanation. As will be discussed in Section 1.2.1, interest in Rhetoric, “the discipline that deals with all aspects of persuasive speaking or writing” (van Dijk, 1988, p. 28), all but disappeared from the general educational context in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the UK. In contrast, the United States of America has a tradition of college level academic literacy programmes (e.g. freshman composition introductory writing courses, Writing Across the Curriculum / Writing in the Disciplines programmes), and also of degrees in communication and in rhetoric (Toye, 2013); e.g. it is possible to take a major in Rhetoric at HE institutions such as Berkeley and the University of Texas at Austin. In the UK, however, despite the existence of one MRes in Rhetoric (at Royal Holloway, University of London), there are no departments of Rhetoric as such, partially because of the absence of a mass higher education audience until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Andrews, 2010). Where argument does feature on the curriculum, this is often as part of critical thinking courses and academic literacy support, but it may not be explicitly taught to undergraduates (Mitchell and Riddle, 2000). Even at post-graduate level, students are likely to be educated according to a traditional philosophical model, i.e. in a dialectical way, through debate and reasoning, and they do not tend to receive rhetorical instruction in oral or written genres or in how one is to be transformed into the other, therefore requiring them to rely on trial and error (Andrews, 2010).

Secondly, the absence of argumentation in the HE curriculum may be the result of a lack of clarity regarding who should be responsible for the teaching of such skills.

Mitchell (2000) points out that the delivery could be done either within the subject discipline or at a type of writing centre, but that if no one takes real responsibility for teaching argumentation, the mystery around it remains. There are compelling reasons to suggest that teaching argument should happen within the disciplines, as the nature of argument varies widely in different academic fields and is dependent on their values and theories of knowledge (Wingate, 2012). Although argument can be seen as a rhetorical mode (Toulmin, 1958), i.e. a “relatively context-independent logical/rhetorical system” (Groom 2000, p. 71), it has a different appearance in different educational and disciplinary contexts: what is considered evidence varies across disciplines, and “[e]very field is defined by its own special devices and patterns of rhetoric” (Nelson et al. 1991, p. 4). As argumentational processes operate differently in different disciplines, and their purpose is to connect thinking about learning and types of knowledge, argumentation can be said to be about the ability to resolve potential difference and to achieve academic success in those specific fields (Andrews, 2010). However, a clarification of what argument means in the context of a student’s discipline is rarely incorporated in the subject-specific curriculum (Mitchell, 2000). If an HE provider does offer some instruction about argument, it is not likely to be discipline-specific, as most literacy teaching in HE is done by a centralised writing or composition service, e.g. in the library or a student services department. Where previously such literacy services often operated as part of academic departments with research remits, they were centralised to reduce costs (Wingate, 2018) and now have less visibility (English, 2016; Murray, 2016). With academic literacy instruction - which would ideally include reference to argumentation- often being delivered outside

of the discipline-specific curriculum, it would appear again that the teaching of argumentation is not high on the list of priorities on the HE agenda.

Thirdly, even if composition or literacy classes are offered in an HEI, their focus is typically not on argument. The remit of writing tutors is usually to offer remedial language support, rather than rhetorical instruction or an induction into academic literacy requirements in HE (Wingate, 2016). The topic of argument is rarely dealt with directly, possibly because of a focus on text genres or on overt language issues (Groom, 2000). It is also likely that argumentation is seen by subject-specific tutors as a mere writing task, or as too basic or specialised for them to address (Mitchell, 2000). Conversely, generalist writing tutors may see argumentation as a content issue as it is difficult to provide more than superficial advice and to include subject-specific ways of arguing (Andrews, 2010). This relates back to the issue of the lack of ownership that is felt regarding the teaching of argumentation. If it is not clear who should teach writing skills, what the aim of writing classes is, and how central the role of argument is to accomplishing good writing, then the teaching of argumentation cannot be said to be of great concern.

Similarly, in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes, typically offered to international students, the focus is generally not on argumentation. It could be said that the 'E' in EAP actually stands for EFL, i.e. English as a Foreign Language, rather than just 'English'. EAP is a discipline of L2 writing which is a subdivision of ESP, English for Specific Purposes (Paltridge, 2001). It does not address argumentation but is more likely to work with Swales' (1990) discourse analysis techniques, i.e. the identification of 'moves', elements in texts that have specific communicative functions, and with relating texts to the communities that produce them (Johns,

2003). Another focus in EAP and L2 writing research and instruction is what can be examined through corpus linguistics methods. Quantitative analyses allow researchers to identify lexical frequency for example (e.g. Coxhead, 2011; Gardner and Davies, 2014), and corpus analyses can look at the use of certain discourse markers or grammatical forms (e.g. the *get*-passive (McCarthy, 1998)). Neither moves analyses nor corpus linguistic approaches tend to deal directly with argumentation. There is more about the treatment of argument in Applied Linguistics research in Chapter 2.

All in all, there is no longstanding tradition of rhetorical instruction in the UK. The current model in HE is to offer students some remedial writing skills support rather than dedicated tuition about the importance and nature of argument. There is no consensus about who delivers writing tuition in HEIs, though where it exists it is often done through a centralised service. International students are more likely to receive writing instruction than L1 students, but this happens in EAP classes which are unlikely to focus on argumentation, despite the fact that L2 students need to develop this skill and to receive information and guidance about how the English language is used to express arguments.

## **1.2 Argument and argumentation**

So far, I have argued that despite the supposed high value of argumentation in HE, in reality its importance is not sufficiently recognised, and it is not a central component of instruction. In this section, I would like to delineate more precisely what is meant by *argument* and *argumentation*, and to clarify the particular aspects of argument that

this thesis will consider. First, I will outline the wider historical context of the study of argumentation (Section 1.2.1). I will then look at definitions of key concepts (Section 1.2.2) and explain how they relate to the aims of this thesis (Section 1.3).

### **1.2.1 A brief history of the study of argumentation**

This thesis is concerned with two fields: argumentation and L2 writing. These are interconnected, yet separate subject areas, with argumentation being more closely related to philosophy and L2 writing having its roots in pedagogy. In Chapter 2, I will discuss how the subject of argumentation is dealt with from the perspective of Applied Linguistics research into L2 writing. In this section, I give a brief overview of the study of argumentation in non-L2 contexts. This is to give the wider context in which this thesis operates and to introduce some concepts, such as *rhetoric*, which will be referred back to later in the text.

In the West, the field of argumentation is nearly two millennia older than the interest in L2 writing and can be traced back to 5 B.C. Greece (Toye, 2013) to the work of Corax of Syracuse (Lindemann, 1995). Its roots are in the disciplines of *dialectic* (or *inquiry*, which throughout history has usually incorporated the discipline of *logic* (*proof*)), and *rhetoric* (van Eemeren et al., 2014). Dialectic/logic is about finding the philosophical truth through methodical discussions, whereas rhetoric is about persuasion through the skilful use of language (Lindemann, 1995). Rhetoric was described by Aristotle as “a productive art, and only a productive art” (Gross, 2000, p. 24). The discipline provided models, as opposed to rules, so that students could emulate them to learn how to compose good speeches (van Eemeren et al., 2014).

Argumentation encompasses logic, dialectic and rhetoric, as these three strands are concerned with its products, procedures and processes, respectively (Blair, 2002; Andrews, 2010). By the Middle Ages it was believed that “students should first learn how to use language in a correct manner (grammar), then how to reason in a valid manner (dialectic), and finally how to adapt and embellish their reasoning when communicating it to an audience (rhetoric)” (van Eemeren et al. 2014, p. 130). The curriculum at that time thus shows the presence of a clear link between grammar, reasoning and communication in pedagogical theory and practice.

In later centuries, dialectic continued to be studied in the context of discussions, philosophy, argument schemes and logical fallacies. The study of rhetoric expanded in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries to include more classical texts that had been discovered, and to incorporate more European languages. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century important rhetorical works were still being written in Italy and by Scottish Enlightenment scholars (Fahnestock, 2011). The study of rhetoric then started to narrow, with eventually only figures of speech still actively being studied (van Dijk, 1988). By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, interest in rhetoric had significantly waned (Fahnestock, 2011) and it “moved away from the production and evaluation of argumentative discourse to literary criticism” (van Eemeren et al. 2014, p. 134). In England, the study of Literature replaced Classics by 1920, which explains the relative neglect of rhetoric and argumentation since that time (Andrews, 2010). Elsewhere, Toulmin (1958), Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) and American Communication Studies scholars revived the interest in rhetoric to some extent and shifted the focus away from formal logic toward interactional argumentation techniques (van Eemeren et al., 2014). I will discuss Toulmin’s contributions as well

as more recent pragma-dialectical approaches, which reflect insights from Grice and Searle (van Eemeren et al., 1997) in Chapter 2.

The New Rhetoric movement (which includes rhetoricians such as Richards, Burke, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca) sought to bring social context into the study of rhetoric (Toye, 2013). Other 20<sup>th</sup> century educational theorists whose work is relevant to the study of argumentation include Bakhtin, Vygotsky and Habermas (Andrews, 2010), who have made largely theoretical contributions (e.g. cultural and cognitive) to the field; the philosopher Hamblin, who focuses on dialogue analysis; and Govier, Johnson and Blair, who represent the informal logic approach (van Eemeren et al., 1997). More contemporary developments are related to the development of computing. Rhetorical Structure Theory (Mann and Thompson, 1988) is used in Information Science, to analyse written texts, and has often been applied to argumentation (Azar, 1999). In the field of Artificial Intelligence, argumentation mining is a relatively new area of research, the aim of which is to “automatically detect the argumentation of a document and its structure” (Palau and Moens, 2009, p. 98).

Lindemann (1995, p. 53) points out that rhetoric has become increasingly concerned with “contemporary uses of language in a complex society”. It can be linked to pursuits in discourse analysis, the analysis of language in use, done in a number of fields such as philosophical and formal linguistics, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics (Brown and Yule, 1983). Critical Discourse Analysis has a specific focus on the social dimension of discourse, as it investigates power and social inequality as they are expressed in language (Wodjak and Meyer, 2009). Within this approach, political discourse in particular can be seen as a form of practical argumentation in which judgements are made about action that should be taken, and

its study therefore contributes to argumentation theory (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). Despite these links, the focus on rhetoric as a separate field of study no longer exists.

This thesis is about Applied Linguistics, not logic or dialectic, and positions itself on the side of rhetoric. It will be argued that L2 students in HE would benefit significantly if aspects of language, reasoning and communication were reunited in the core of their academic curricula (see Chapter 8).

### 1.2.2 Definitions

The terminology related to argumentation has so far been used in a general sense. However, in order to delineate the position of this thesis, it is important to capture the distinct definitions of *argument*, *argumentation* and *persuasion* with more precision.

#### 1.2.2.1 The definition of argument

A distinction needs to be made between the meaning of *argument* in argumentation theory and the use of the word in more general language. The everyday meaning of the word is *disagreement*, an angry exchange, e.g. two people can fall out because they have 'had an argument'. There are two other common uses, as demonstrated in the following examples, in which I have put the references to argument in bold and underlined the arguments themselves. The first example is taken from an article by Wahnstrom and Sjogren (1982, p. 401) and shows that argument can be used as a synonym for *reason(s)* or *reasoning*:

*They reach similar conclusions about the physical interpretation of the structure of  $A(q)$ , **but their argument seems to be that** the cage effect is introduced via the free particle term.*

The second example, taken from Farris et al. (1995, p. 572) shows that it can also be used as a synonym for *claim* or *viewpoint*:

***My argument is that ancestral area analysis (...) consistently results in correct inferences only when dispersal is irreversible.***

In argumentation theory, each of the notions *claim* and *reason*, need to be present at the same time for an argument to exist. Toulmin et al. (1984, p. 6) define the argumentative uses of language as “those utterances that succeed or fail only to the extent that they can be ‘supported’ by arguments, reasons, evidence, or the like and that are able to carry the reader or the hearer along with them only because they have such a ‘rational foundation’”. They define argument as “the sequence of interlinked claims and reasons that, between them, establish content and force of the position for which a particular speaker is arguing” (Toulmin et al. 1984, p. 14).

The difference between the main everyday notion of disagreement and the specific academic concept of argument is thus the required presence in the latter of reasoning (Russow and Curd, 1989; Thomson, 2009). Put differently, “[a]n argument is made when a conclusion is supported by reasons. An argument is simply reasoning made public with the goal of influencing an audience” (Herrick, 2016).

These distinctions can be summarised as follows:

**Table 1.1: Different meanings of *argument* in different contexts**

Everyday and general academic use	Academic argument
1: disagreement	viewpoint + reason(ing)
2: reasoning	
3: viewpoint	

Although most definitions of academic argument can be seen to relate back to Toulmin's seminal work, they show subtle deviations. Andrews (2010), for example, chooses not to mention the intended persuasive effect of an argument on an audience, which in the definition of Toulmin and colleagues was referred to as 'able to carry the reader or the hearer along'. In his definition, Andrews defines argument as: "a logical or quasi-logical sequence of ideas that is supported by evidence" (2010, p. 3). Schiffrin (1987, p.18) also omits any reference to persuasion and defines it as "discourse through which speakers support disputable positions".

These definitions appear to look at *argument* as a product, the tangible outcome of a thinking process or the record of a dialogue or disagreement. Although I concur that an *argument* is a product, I would say that it also contains evidence of the process: thinking and writing cannot really be seen as separate. In the case of written argument, the writers' considerations of how to best persuade the readers are reflected in their writing and it is therefore important to acknowledge this. For that reason, in the definition of argument used in this thesis I would like to emphasise the critical aspect, the careful deliberation that goes into its construction. In doing so, the writer is brought into the definition. I would also like to maintain the reference to the social dynamic occurring in Toulmin et al.'s definition, which refers to the "reader or hearer" (1984, p. 6), by including the idea of an audience that needs persuading. I therefore define *argument* as *a carefully considered point supported by evidence, chosen with the intent to persuade others*. As *argument* can also refer to a sequence of points rather than just the one (Barton, 1993; Wingate, 2012), the full definition is as follows:

Table 1.2: Definition of *argument* used in this thesis

Argument
a carefully considered point (or series of points) supported by evidence, chosen with the intent to persuade others

#### 1.2.2.2 The definition of argumentation

*Argumentation* and *argument* are often used synonymously, but a theoretical distinction can be made. Unlike *argument*, *argumentation* refers to an interactive process rather than a product, and it can be described as the specific process of arguing in a context (Andrews, 2010). In comparing the two, Fisher (1992, p. 159) points out that *arguments* are usually about “sequences of sentences which present reasons for conclusions in monologue form”, whereas *argumentation* theorists are usually concerned with “the process of argumentative discussion” and the “speech acts which are performed in the course of argumentative dialogue” (ibid.). In van Eemeren’s (2001, p. 11) definition of argumentation, this social purpose of arguing is made explicit: “a verbal, social and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by advancing a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint”. The nouns used in the definitions of *argument* and *argumentation* demonstrate how the two concepts are different:

Table 1.3: Concepts related to *argument* and *argumentation*

Argument	Argumentation
monologue product genre	dialogue / discussion process social activity

Based on the above distinctions, I define *argumentation* as an exchange of views, a social activity which is both cognitive and communicative, and which aims to persuade:

Table 1.4: Definition of *argumentation* in this thesis

Argumentation
a social activity in which a carefully considered point (or series of points) supported by evidence is exchanged, with the intent to persuade others

Some notes about terminology need to be made here. Firstly, I have defined the theoretical differences between *argument* and *argumentation*, with *argumentation* being a social activity and *argument* the expression of that dialogic process as manifested in its product, e.g. an essay; but in practice these terms will sometimes be used interchangeably within this thesis. This is because both the words ‘argument’ and ‘argumentation’ are nouns connected to the verb ‘to argue’, which refers to providing reasons for a claim, and it can sometimes be difficult to draw a distinction between them. Where a division is possible and relevant, e.g. where I discuss the process as separate from the product, this will be made clear. Secondly, like Andrews (2010), I prefer the adjective ‘argumentational’ over ‘argumentative’, as the latter has negative connotations from the meaning of the everyday notion of disagreement. However, most sources use the term ‘argumentative’ so it will be included as a synonym to ensure that ideas from all sources are accurately represented. Finally, the words *claim*, *utterance*, *statement*, *idea*, *conclusion*, and *view* have been used thus far to refer to one part of an academic argument, and *evidence*, *support* and *reason* to refer to the other part. I will provide further examples

of terminology used for the components of argument and explanations of their use in Chapter 2.

It should be noted that essays have here been described as arguments but that the word 'essay' can refer to different types of texts. I go into detail about the different ways of determining what 'essay' means in Section 2.1.

### *1.2.2.3 Argument(ation) and persuasion and the HE context*

People appear to argue naturally from an early age, whenever they feel the need to persuade others. Persuasion is “an important component of our occupational, social, and private lives” (Herrick 2016, p. 5). Walton (1989) gives examples from a variety of spoken and written sources to demonstrate the existence of a common type of reasoning, employed to persuade. *Argumentation*, an activity in which reasons are used with the intent to persuade, and *persuasion* are thus clearly related concepts, and they have often been used interchangeably in research (Varghese and Abraham, 1998) and pedagogy (Gilbert, 2005).

However, *persuasion* and *argumentation* are not synonymous terms. Aristotle (1991 reprint) distinguished three modes of persuasion: pathos (appeal to sentiment), ethos (appeal to credibility, morality, character) and logos (appeal to logic, argument, e.g. evidence). Argumentation relates to the latter mode. It has long been a highly valued method of persuasion: in their overview of the history of persuasive writing, Connor and Lauer (1988) relate how persuasive skills were central in the curriculum from Ancient times to the Renaissance, but note that in many English-speaking areas the subject of persuasion was actually replaced with argumentation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the focus was put solely on logical reasoning, and no longer on the areas

related to credibility and feelings. In other words, argumentation is part of a larger category: it can always be categorised as persuasion, but persuasion can be present without there being an argument. An example that demonstrates the latter is advertising images (Andrews, 2010). Aristotle equates persuasion with appealing to an audience, and as such it is an interpersonal process in which different types of strategies are at the applier's disposal, logical reasoning being one of them.

This view of argumentation as distinct from persuasion, and as one means to achieve it, is shared by Blair (2004). However, in his view, argument is not just used to persuade, but also has other uses, i.e. proof or demonstration (in certain contexts, e.g. philosophy/logic), justification (show grounds for claims, especially controversial ones), inquiry (to determine their relevance to a position) and resolution of disagreement (through dialogue and negotiation) (Gilbert, 2005). However, I would argue that these other uses are still motivated by the need to persuade.

Systemic Functional linguistics (SFL) also makes a distinction between argumentation and persuasion, but in a different way. It is based on the view taken by rhetorical studies that argumentation is "a process of establishing a position which is then defended through the use of evidence, negotiation, logic etc", i.e. "an attempt to make a point of view convincing and credible through a process of reasoning" (Coffin 2004, p. 231). Persuasion in writing is defined as "a process of persuading the reader (either a specific reader or the world generally) to adopt the writer's position and (frequently) carry out an action" or as discourse which tries to provoke a response by the reader (Coffin 2004, p. 231). In other words, the difference between the meanings of argumentation and persuasion is linked to their respective intentions to convince or to provoke a change. Style or study guides (e.g. Permentier, 2016;

BBC, 2014) make a similar distinction: they state that the reasons for the creation of non-fictional texts are to inform or teach (informative texts), to argue i.e. to induce a shared opinion (argumentative texts) or to induce action (motivational / persuasive texts). The suggestion here seems to be that persuasion is achieved through means other than reasoning, e.g. emotive appeals to action. The difference between argumentation and persuasion is seemingly that one response, that of becoming convinced, is based on rationality and occurs in the mind, while the other, that of being persuaded to act, is potentially about evoking feelings that may lead to real-world change. However, the distinction of argumentation being about changing minds and persuasion being about changing situations seems artificial. Both are concerned with providing reasons for a reader to respond to. The writer of the 'persuasive' text does not really expect the reader to act after reading, and even if this were the case, this would depend on whether the provided arguments to do so were convincingly argued. Concomitantly, the writer of an 'argumentative' text does not seek to be convincing merely for the satisfaction of doing so: it is more likely that the purpose of the argument is connected to the desire that it would lead to some form of real-world positive outcome. Ultimately, even if seen as different from each other, at the basis of both persuasive and argumentative discourse is perlocution, the intention to persuade. Perhaps the artificial distinction between persuasion and argumentation is a category error in which a purpose and its execution are put on the same level. As Kinneavy (1971) states, persuasion should not be classed as a mode but as an aim, as it explains the purpose of the language that is being used to persuade.

In this thesis, argumentation is seen as different from persuasion, but not in the SFL way: argumentation is one of many other potential activities through which the overall

purpose of persuading an audience (e.g. in the form of a reader) can be achieved.

This view has been summed up as follows:

**Table 1.5: The view of *argumentation* in this thesis**

<b>Aim</b>	to persuade the reader of the acceptability of (a) conclusion(s), e.g. that something should be believed, felt or done
<b>Desired outcome</b>	persuasion (the reader believes, feels, or does something)
<b>Approach</b>	trying to convince or motivate the reader
<b>Strategies</b>	providing proof, demonstrating, justifying, inquiring, resolving
<b>Method (means)</b>	logical reasoning

Another distinction that SFL makes between argumentation and persuasion that can be challenged relates to the relationship between the reader and the writer. This is seen as more interpersonal in persuasive discourse than in argumentation, as persuasion seeks to make a reader feel or do something (Coffin, 2004). However, I argue that the characteristics of argumentative writing according to SFL - establishing a position and trying to make a point of view convincing - also require the writer to have the reader firmly in mind. Even if trying to convince a reader is done through logical reasoning, and is therefore based on the internal strength of the claim / evidence relationship, there are elements which will be influenced by the reader, e.g. which evidence it may be best to include for that particular audience to be persuaded. I therefore see argumentation as an interpersonal activity in which the reader and writer's relationship is close.

The closeness of the reader-writer relationship in argumentation can also be demonstrated in another way. Lindemann (1995) uses concepts from Jakobson (1960) to define all writing as a communication process with the following six

elements: a writer (addresser) and a reader (addressee), who communicate a subject matter (context) with propositions (message), via a channel (contact) and a writing system (code). She explains that different traditional rhetorical modes of discourse (listed as *narration*, *description*, *exposition* and *argumentation*, see Chapter 2), or methods of viewing reality, emphasise different elements. For argumentation, this is the reader (Lindemann 1995). In my view, both persuasive and argumentative writing, as distinguished by SFL, are concerned with bringing about a change in the reader. In writing which includes a call to action, there may be appeals to sentiment or credibility (e.g. 'Let's all do our bit to save the environment now!'), but although this may give the impression that the writer is close to the reader, this closeness is not inherent in persuasive writing and absent in argumentation. Simply put, the reader is central in argumentation and the reader-writer relationship has to be close regardless of whether the reader is being encouraged to think or act or of the means used to persuade. This is because the aim of argumentation, i.e. persuasion, is dependent on the writer bearing in mind what the reader might need and on employing suitable rational strategies to achieve this.

In this thesis, persuasion is a rhetorical and social aim to induce others, particularly readers, to think (and possibly do) something; argumentation is an activity that focuses on the reader and uses reasoning to effect that aim; and written argument is the physical outcome of that argumentational activity.

The definitions of persuasion can be formulated as follows:

Table 1.6: Definitions of *persuasion* used in this thesis

Persuasion
(1) the purpose to induce others to think (and possibly do) something (2) the positive outcome of that aim

An important point needs to be made here about the HE context. Where written argumentation is required for the purposes of assessment, e.g. in the form of an essay, an extra dimension comes into play. As mentioned previously, essays are used as a means to demonstrate the skill of argumentation, and as such (as per Table 1.5) they set out to persuade the reader of the acceptability of a conclusion. However, the desired outcome, that the reader believes something, i.e. is actually persuaded, may be more difficult to achieve. This is because of the power imbalance inherent in the task and its educational context: the reader and writer have a specific relationship, entrenched within the context of HE. The writers are submitting their ideas to an expert and it is unlikely that a text such as an undergraduate essay will genuinely persuade its reader to maintain or to change their thinking. In reality, the situation is more akin to actors playing roles. The writer is not self-motivated to argue but is instead a willing participant in a scenario in which they are set a task that requires them to argue and in which the aim is to be as persuasive as possible about a topic set by the reader. The reader will judge the argument on its ability to *potentially* persuade an imagined reader of the acceptability of a conclusion, rather than on its having persuaded the actual reader. As Nesi and Gardner (2012, p.26) put it, students need to do more than argue a point, they need to “demonstrate that they can explain or argue their point ... in accordance with the expectations of the

discipline, of the lecturer(s) and of the academic department”: logical reasoning and the argument itself are thus key.

#### *1.2.2.4 Argument and argumentation in this thesis*

As mentioned previously, arguing is about using logical reasoning in order to persuade a reader of the acceptability of a conclusion. Both the process (argumentation) and the product (argument) exist because of their social purpose of persuasion. As persuasion is such an important part of human endeavour, it follows that the researching and teaching of both argument and argumentation are worthwhile pursuits. However, despite the well-documented difficulties that both new and experienced students have with arguing in writing, pedagogic materials often do not deal with argumentational writing except to “emphasise the provision of supporting examples, citation and ‘facts’” (Swain, 2007, p. 166).

Teaching *argumentation* involves helping people improve the ways in which they set out to persuade, for example by considering the types of evidence or discussing logical fallacies. Linking back to argumentation’s Greek origins, argumentation is a dialectical consideration, which uses methodical discussions to find truth, i.e. an activity which is more focussed on knowledge than on ways of expressing it.

Teaching *argument* has a more rhetorical angle because argument is about how the reasoning is expressed and presented to others. As Murphy (1997, p. 188) notes, the intellectual history of rhetoric consists of books which “present their advice to others about future language use”. This is often linked to the purpose for which this language is used: rhetoricians have always been concerned with the way language is employed in persuasive texts, with the goal of instructing others on how to be more

persuasive (Fahnestock, 2011). Rhetoric is thus about the compositional and linguistic techniques that are used to persuade.

This thesis focuses on argument, not argumentation, in that it is about rhetorical considerations, not dialectical ones, and because it takes a particular interest in language. Rhetoricians “focus on texts that influence the attitudes and actions of their audiences” (Fahnestock 2011, p. 12), and in this thesis these texts are pieces of student and expert opinion writing. Although it can be difficult to separate thinking from formulating / writing processes, as they often occur simultaneously, I will not go into the validity or soundness of reasoning, or consider other aspects related to thought processes. Instead, my focus will be on the written artefacts produced as a result of argumentational processes, in other words on the recorded arguments themselves, and on the ways linguistic features, i.e. certain discourse markers (as specified in Chapter 6), are used to link ideas and realise those arguments.

### **1.3 Aims and organisation of the thesis**

Arguments, which have, for the purposes of this thesis, been defined as *carefully considered points (or series of points) supported by evidence, chosen with the intent to persuade others*, are at the core of written assignments across many academic disciplines. I have posited in this chapter that the historical loss of rhetoric from the curriculum and the lack of focus on argument(ation) in education may have had negative consequences for students in HEIs. Some of these are that students experience difficulties in understanding what their tutors require from them in their essays, likely as a result of the lack of academics and academic departments

concentrating on argumentation as a field of enquiry; that there is a lack of instruction in rhetoric, a dearth of academic literacy tuition, and an absence of a focus on argument as part of writing instruction. Students find themselves in a pressurised and difficult situation: the expectations in their educational context make it clear to them that arguing well is important but there is an absence of discipline-specific or other ways of instruction about how to achieve this. Although students are likely to be aware of the importance of arguments, they may not know how to achieve them effectively. This is even more of an issue for international students, who, as noted above, might have come across different views of argumentation, and who in any case face the additional challenge of having to express arguments in a second language.

In this thesis, I will examine how a number of expert academic writers and L2 students argue by comparing corpora of opinion pieces written by them. This is done to identify potential pedagogical applications related to two important elements of persuasive writing: the presence of arguments and the use of certain linguistic features to construct them.

In order to do so I will first discuss research investigating written argument or aspects thereof (Chapter 2). This will incorporate research into how language features enable dialogue between reader and writer, and into how models of argument(ation) have been used for analysis and pedagogy. This previous research allows me to position this study and to formulate Research Questions (RQs) about the two main areas of enquiry: (1) how arguments are constructed (by asking how often and when the writers of the corpora state and defend their points of view) and (2) how the writers use certain cohesive devices in their arguments. These cohesive devices are

selected on the basis of relevance following an initial argumentational analysis (reported on in Chapter 5), and their method of selection is described in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the student and expert corpora that I have gathered. I will describe the collection of pieces of writing by students on a preessional EAP programme in an HEI in the UK. These pieces are short, non-referenced, student essays (SEs) written by a cohort of L2 students from a variety of linguistic and national backgrounds who had only just commenced their UK-based studies. I will describe this genre to some level of detail, in order to justify the comparator corpus, also opinion pieces, but produced in a different context and written by experts. The latter pieces are the 'Birmingham Briefs' (BBs), short texts about policy issues written by academics working at the same institution as the students.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the design of a method to identify arguments in written pieces. I describe how certain techniques, borrowed and adapted from the models described in Chapter 2, were used to develop a pilot to find arguments in texts, and how this trial led to the final method of analysis, which is able to answer the research question about the presence of arguments.

This model of analysis was developed with the specific purpose to uncover insights into the way the texts in my corpora were written, but the creation of this model in itself represents an important contribution of this thesis. The outcomes of my analyses demonstrate that the model has validity across different genres, enabling comparisons and allowing conclusions to be drawn about pedagogical interventions. It could potentially be used to investigate argument patterns across many more genres (see Chapter 8).

The findings of the argumentational analyses are presented in Chapter 5. These findings reveal the differences in the ways in which the discourse is organised and the ideas of others are integrated in the corpora. These are discussed further and conclusions are drawn about the argument realisations in the two different genres.

In Chapter 6, I use the findings from the argumentational analyses as a starting point to reflect on which cohesive devices are most likely to give useful information about the way students and experts argue. Specific markers of organisation and contrast are identified and listed and hypotheses about their use are formulated in this chapter. Interestingly, it is found that these cohesive devices are used by the writers in predictable ways: the hypotheses about their use formulated at the end of Chapter 6 are virtually all confirmed by the end of Chapter 7, which discusses the findings. This is a significant outcome of this study as it would suggest that linguistic analyses of persuasive language features are potentially redundant: an analysis of the construction of argument by itself yields sufficient information and enables conclusions to be drawn about pedagogical implications. In other words, even without explicitly investigating the specific use of markers of contrast and organisation, it is possible to have enough information to instruct students, not just about the construction of arguments, but also about the use of linguistic features to do so (see Chapter 8).

As mentioned previously, Chapter 7 describes how the use of relevant cohesive markers differs in the corpora. This is done in detail and also includes a more general error analysis. Here, therefore, I answer the research question about how certain cohesive devices are used in the corpora.

Chapter 8 considers the meaning of the differences in the composition of arguments and the linking devices, draws research conclusions and makes pedagogical suggestions. I draw conclusions about the study's limitations and its significance and discuss what these may mean for further research into argument, especially for the field of EAP and its pedagogy.

## **2 RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON PERSUASIVE WRITING**

In Chapter 1, I posited that argumentation has a rich history and is still of great perceived importance in Higher Education, but that it is not given the recognition and focus it therefore deserves. I also alluded to the fact that there are different angles that can be applied to argumentation studies, e.g. using a philosophical, rhetorical, or educational lens.

This thesis is concerned with the rhetorical aspects of written argument, in particular compositional and linguistic elements that are used in order to persuade, and not with more dialectical argumentational processes such as critical thinking or logic. Additionally, the thesis considers educational matters and will discuss the pedagogical implications of any findings that suggest differences in the way in which students and experts argue.

Having provided a very brief history of the study of argumentation in Section 1.2.1, in this chapter I will go into more detail about what argumentation research has already contributed to the study of writing (Section 2.1). Within this, I will look at descriptions of written argument, discussing concepts such as ‘essay’ and ‘genre’, and the usefulness of analytical and generative argumentational frameworks. I will also position this thesis against the context of the different concerns of L2 writing research (Section 2.2.1) and discuss the way persuasive language features have been treated both in L2 and Applied Linguistics research (Section 2.2.2), before formulating my research questions in Section 2.3.

## **2.1 The argumentation research perspective**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, argumentation theory has mostly been an American rather than a British research interest. In the US, composition research (Toulmin, 1958; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969; Perelman, 1982) influenced the analysis and pedagogy of argumentational writing in tertiary education. Other areas that have been influenced by rhetorical theory are discourse classification, which is discussed in this chapter and the next, and contrastive rhetoric (Gilbert, 2005), about which there is more in Chapter 3.

According to Coffin (2004), argumentation studies scholars have traditionally been interested in topics such as argumentative strength, audience, evaluation, persuasiveness, and frameworks for analysis. She identifies descriptions of written argumentation as another relevant area. With its focus on written rhetoric and on language in an L2 context, rather than on logic, this thesis is not concerned with argumentational strength and evaluation. It is concerned to some extent with audience and persuasiveness from the point of view of linguistic choices, but it will not consider any dialectical aspects of these topics. The main areas that therefore need to be reviewed are descriptions of written argumentation and frameworks for analysis. These are discussed in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, respectively.

### **2.1.1 Descriptions of written argumentation**

The written outcome of argumentation that warrants description in this thesis is the essay. As will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3, as part of this study students were asked to write short 'essays' in response to a specific question. After collecting

this corpus, I sought short argument pieces written by experts and found an online platform containing 'Briefs', short texts written by academics in response to a self-determined issue or question (see Section 3.3).

The students were not given example essays nor an explanation of what an essay was. As all of the students went on to complete the assignment without seeking clarification, the task requirement seemed to be clear to them. However, as a concept, the term 'essay' is problematic, as will be discussed below.

#### 2.1.1.1 'Essay' in its broader sense

The concept 'essay' has different meanings. As Nesi and Gardner (2012, p.5) point out, this descriptor is "used very loosely" in HE, with comparable assignments sometimes receiving different terms and divergent ones all being classed as 'essays'.

One way to describe what essays are is to see them as part of a larger type of discourse. There are four traditional modes of discourse (Biber, 1989): *narration*, *description*, *exposition* and *argumentation*. Essays can arguably be categorised as belonging to two of these modes: exposition and argumentation, which will be explained below.

Firstly, essays can be categorised as a type of expository text (Henry and Roseberry, 1997). The term *expository* is in common usage, and knowledge of its meaning is often taken for granted, for example, in Lewin et al.'s (2001) book, the term is used in the title but is not explained anywhere in the text. However, opinions do vary on what *expository* means. Generally, expository writing is seen to contrast with narration and "involves conveying facts or describing procedures, sharing basic information, and

relating cause-effect relationships” (Hall-Mills and Apel, 2012, p. 135). Although exposition is thus seen as factual, explanatory and descriptive, there does seem to be a more fundamental process at the basis of it: expository strategies are seen to include “analysis by division, classification; process, comparison and contrast” (Sanderson Cole, 2012, p. 115). Decker (2001) describes exposition as a type of exploration with a predominantly explanatory function, even though it can also use the techniques of narration, description and argumentation (which here includes *persuasion*). McCleary (1982), commenting on an earlier edition of Decker’s work, points out that this overlap is not helpful and that exposition in the above description could be synonymous with any non-fiction. He feels that the term is so vague as to need eradication. Kinneavy (1980) sees exposition less as a form of communication and more as a purpose of the writing, with informative, scientific and exploratory discourse being realisations of this function.

Secondly, essays can be categorised as arguments. In Chapter 1, argument was said to be the manifestation of a dialogic process and defined as a carefully chosen point or series of points, with the intent to persuade an audience. Essays consist of series of points made in writing to potentially persuade a reader.

However, it appears to be difficult to completely separate exposition and argument(ation). Even though the essay categories of *exposition* (including process and cause and effect essays) and *argument* (discussion essays) are often presented as separate, especially in educational materials, longer essays are likely to include both argument and exposition as well as other rhetorical functions (Bruce, 2010). Moreover, an expository essay is expected to contain arguments that justify a thesis

statement (Martin, 1985) as well as evidence and examples (Schleppegrell, 2001). It is no surprise then that some researchers (e.g. Martin and Rothery, 1986) use exposition and argument to refer to the same type of writing, i.e. that which includes a thesis and arguments, and that they refer to opinion essays as both exposition and argument (Varghese and Abraham 1998).

I conclude then that because of the elusive nature and overlap of these categories, and because in academia the term 'essay' is conceptually unstable, it is more useful when defining 'essay' to follow Kinneavy's (1980) lead and to think about its purpose (i.e. persuasion) rather than its mode or composition (i.e. whether essays contain argument, exposition or description). The essay's purpose is "to persuade the reader of the correctness of a central statement" (Hyland, 1990, p. 68) in writing, although, as mentioned previously, where essays are used for assessment purposes in HE, they are more about demonstrating their *potential* to persuade (by constructing good arguments) than about trying to actually persuade. Hyland's statement above then describes the essay in a useful, if broad, way, reflecting the loose usage of the 'essay' label. Both short non-referenced opinion pieces, such as those in my corpora (see Chapter 3) and longer essays at all levels of study are capable of meeting this criterion. This definition also implies that all essays can be classed as argument essays. Having defined argument as point(s) and evidence, this comes as no surprise: it is difficult to imagine how an essay could fulfil its persuasive purpose without the presence of opinion(s) and corresponding support.

#### 2.1.1.2 *Essay in a more specific sense*

Above, essays have been defined in a broad sense, by considering what they have in common: they are written texts in which the writer tries to persuade a reader of (a) statement(s) by means of arguments. I now consider different realisations of this common purpose.

##### 2.1.1.2.1 Genre research

The context of genre research is useful to consider further what 'essay' means, i.e. what different texts described as essays are like: genres are ways of doing things, i.e. conventions, and written texts are manifestations thereof (Nesi and Gardner, 2012). I will first give a brief background of genre research, and then some examples of where it has been used to categorise essays (in Section 2.1.1.2.2).

Genre research has been carried out from three major perspectives: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Australian SFL (both with a focus on linguistics, especially in classroom contexts) and North American New Rhetoric (which focuses more on the functions of genre and the institutional contexts of genres) (Hyon, 1996).

Within the ESP context, Swales (1990, p.58) defines genre as a "class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes", shown in structure, style, content and intended audience. ESP researchers have carried out structural moves analyses to discover organisational patterns in academic and professional genres or investigated grammatical characteristics, to help L2 speakers write according to textual conventions (Hyon, 1996).

The New Rhetoric strand of genre theorists is centred in the L1 disciplines and takes a more ethnographic approach, describing the institutional contexts in which genres are produced. It defines genre as less about the content or form of the discourse; the focus is more on “the action it is used to accomplish” (Miller, 1984, p.151). Areas which students are asked to focus on as part of the rhetorical situation are the purpose and audience of the text and the writing situation (Coe, 1994).

The SFL approach originated in the work of the Sydney School, in particular Halliday’s (1978) work on register, i.e. the *field* (the activity going on), *tenor* (the relationship between participants) and *mode* (the channel of communication) as a basis for analysing language. Others have then built on this to develop genre theories. Martin (2005, p.13) defines genre as “the system of goal-oriented social processes through which social subjects in a given culture live their lives”. SFL focuses thus on social processes as well as linguistic features. Several pedagogical frameworks have been developed, in primary, secondary and ESL contexts.

#### 2.1.1.2.2 Genre research and essay categorisation

##### 2.1.1.2.2.1 *Essay genres: four types*

Coffin (2004) uses the SFL approach of genre research to distinguish four types of argumentational writing commonly employed by students. Her classification of written argument is linked to the purpose of the writer, as shown in Table 2.1. Note that in the table, the term *exposition* has a narrower meaning than has so far been discussed as it specifically refers to a one-sided argument. As explained in Chapter 1, I do not share the SFL view that argumentation and persuasion have different purposes (to convince or to provoke action, respectively) or that they evince a

fundamentally different relationship between reader and writer. However, I agree that argumentation in persuasive discourse can have different desired outcomes (see Chapter 1, Table 1.5). Coffin (2004) proposes that there are two approaches: to present a claim (in order to convince), or to give a recommendation (in order to motivate). Using language from Martin (1985), she categorises student writing genres as follows:

**Table 2.1: Student academic writing genres, adapted from Coffin (2004, p. 232)**

<b>One-sided argument (exposition)</b>	<b>Two-sided argument (discussion)</b>	
analytical exposition	analytical discussion	<b>well formulated claim(s) presented (analytical; ‘persuading <i>that</i>’)</b>
hortatory exposition	hortatory discussion	<b>recommendation(s) given (hortatory; ‘persuading <i>to</i>’)</b>

All four categories contain arguments (evidently used here as a synonym of *reasoning*) and evidence. Some have a thesis (exposition pieces), while others contain a controversial issue (discussion); some have recommendations (hortatory pieces), while others have a reinforcement of the thesis or a judgement at the end (analytical pieces). Whereas the exposition essay genre may have counter-arguments and evidence included as an option (Coffin, 2004), the discussion genre must give two perspectives or more (Nesi and Gardner, 2012).

#### *2.1.1.2.2.2 Essay genres: six types*

There are other ways of dividing essays into categories. Nesi and Gardner (2012) undertook a four-year investigation into written genres in HE. They found thirteen

major assignment types, or university genre families, “whose members *share* central functions or social purposes and key stages” (ibid, p.26), the essay being one of these families. They state that their classification scheme is mainly inspired by the Sydney School, but also by genre research by Swales (1990) and by Lea and Street (2000), who use an academic literacies approach, the pedagogical purpose of which is “to enable student writers to meet the demands of writing in the university” (Lillis & Scott, p.6).

They describe genre families by stating their social purpose (part of the broader social functions of higher education), typical stages, and connections with other genre families, i.e. networks.

To describe essays broadly, they state that their social purpose is “to demonstrate / develop the ability to construct a coherent argument and employ critical thinking skills”, that the stages are “introduction, series of arguments, conclusion”, and that the networks may relate to a “published academic / specialist paper” (Nesi & Gardner, p.38). Building on the SFL tradition, more specifically work by Martin (1992) and Coffin (2006), they subclassify the essay genre family into six essay genres, based on the stages that can be found in them, as shown in the table below:

**Table 2.2: Six essay genres with stages, taken from Nesi and Gardner (2012)**

<b>Genres</b>	<b><i>Exposition</i></b>	<b><i>Discussion</i></b>	<b><i>Challenge</i></b>	<b><i>Factorial</i></b>	<b><i>Consequential</i></b>	<b><i>Commentary</i></b>
<b>Genre stages</b>	thesis, evidence, restate thesis	issue, alternative arguments, final position	challenge, evidence, thesis	state, contributory factors, summary thesis	state, ensuing factors, summary thesis	text(s) introduction, comments, summary

Terminology such as *thesis*, *evidence* and *arguments* indicates the presence of argumentation in some of these genres, but even where this is not explicitly stated, Nesi and Gardner (2012, p. 98) also acknowledge that all essays “share the general aim of developing an argument”.

#### *2.1.1.2.2.3 Essay genres: pedagogical categorisation*

Another way of categorising essays is to consider them as text types with different functions or goals. Applying this specifically to what is traditionally known as the argument essay, or sections thereof, four categories can be distinguished: *definition* argument, *causal* argument, *proposal* argument and *evaluation* argument (Wilhoit, 2009), as follows:

(1) A definition argument is a type of academic argument in which defining an idea is the actual argument, or where a writer argues for a redefinition of a term in order to achieve a desired change. There are two types, stipulative ones, which “tend to focus on new or provisional meanings of words or ideas”, and categorical ones, which “tend to focus on how we classify words or ideas” (Wilhoit, 2009, p. 154).

(2) Causal arguments are defined as those that answer questions of cause or effect.

(3) A third type is the proposal argument, in which the writer’s aim is to “support or oppose an existing policy, critique an existing policy, or propose a new policy” (Wilhoit, 2009, p. 240). Mostly the underlying pattern is problem/solution.

(4) The last type is the evaluation argument. Evaluation arguments have similarities with definition arguments but are more specific as they concern “disputes over something’s quality or value” (Wilhoit, 2009, p. 277). They are usually based on

criteria or standards, and could be making judgments regarding aesthetics, functionality, morality, or combinations thereof.

**Table 2.3: Functional categorisation of essays, based on Wilhoit (2009)**

<b>Genres</b>	<b><i>Definition</i></b>	<b><i>Causal</i></b>	<b><i>Proposal</i></b>	<b><i>Evaluation</i></b>
<b>Argument consists of</b>	defining ideas or terms	identifying cause or effect	proposing, supporting or opposing policy	deciding on quality or value

Comparisons can be drawn between Wilhoit's argument essay types, which were published in a textbook type resource, and rhetorical Stasis theory. This theory is of ancient Greek origin, started by Hermagoras of Temnos and developed by Cicero, Quintilian and Hermogenes (Heath, 1994). It consists of a series of questions, starting with question words, which are produced in a particular order, with the aim of establishing the facts in a legal argument, for example *What happened*, or *Who did it?* (Fahnestock, 1986). It has since been used in a broader sense and can be described as "the process of identifying a debate's core issue" (March, 2006, p.41), with question sets exploring whether something is true (questions of fact), how something should be defined (definition), cause and / or effect (cause and effect), how something should be assessed (evaluation), and courses of action (recommendation) (ibid.).

Definition, Cause and Evaluation are mentioned both in Stasis theory and in Wilhoit's categorisation of argument essays. Although this suggests that this theory may have influenced Wilhoit's categorisation based on argument goals, Wilhoit himself does not suggest that this is the case and mentions Stasis theory only as a method he

recommends to students for identifying a topic, i.e. as a preparatory writing technique, although he does tell them to work with the set of questions “that most closely matches the purpose of the assignment” (p.127). Links between Wilhoit’s work and Toulmin’s (1958) can also be found as the latter links the functions of arguments to field-independent functions that warrants have in common. These are reasoning from analogy, from generalisation, from sign (observations and their meaning), from cause, with some other possible classifications being identified too (from dilemma, from classification, from opposites and from degree), although it is pointed out that this list is not exhaustive. The four types can also be linked to other essay classifications (see e.g. Table 2.2 for similarities). In short, Wilhoit’s groupings are comparable and perhaps influenced by other classifications. I will return to his categories in Chapter 5.

#### *2.1.1.2.2.4 Disciplinary differences*

Another important point to make about the realisation of the essay purpose is that essays vary across disciplines (Hyland, 2009; Wingate, 2012). They are commonly written in all university departments, that is, in the Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities / Arts and in Applied fields (Coffin et al., 2003). However, as mentioned previously, it is possible that the ‘essay’ label refers to different written formats in these disciplines; also, in some of these fields other forms are more dominant than the essay. As Creme and Lea (2008) point out, not only do different fields of study have different requirements regarding the way knowledge is written, these expectations also depend on the type of degree programme and the members of staff who have shaped the course. The authors give examples of essay assignment

questions that encourage the writing of reviews or reflective pieces, i.e. formats that are not associated with what is traditionally thought of as an essay.

The different realisations of writing in different disciplines are because writing is “a powerful and pervasive kind of activity by which disciplines – that is, socio-cultural fields – create and transact their thinking, conduct conversations and advance knowledge” (Mitchell, 2010, p. 135). Writing can thus be seen as a form of discovery. As Lindemann (1995) points out in her book for teachers of rhetoric, essays (used here in the loose sense) are used by academic writers to find out how to communicate in their discipline. The essay is therefore “the sanctioned form for expressing our professional selves” (ibid., p. 7) and has different disciplinary manifestations.

Nesi and Gardner (2012) give examples of disciplinary variations reflecting different norms and expectations. For example, they demonstrate that in disciplines in which lab reports are often required, when essays are written, the writers use headings more frequently than in disciplines that rely mostly on essays. They also show that reasoning is different across disciplines, as illustrated for example by the different ways *if-then* and *therefore* are used.

To summarise, essays can be regarded as belonging to broader categories of writing (e.g. argumentation or exposition). A useful way to conceptualise them is to link them to their social purpose of persuasion through logical means: all essays are argument essays as they are simply written arguments. Their aim is to develop argument and

to do so they usually follow a three-part pattern, with a series of arguments in the middle. Despite these similarities in aim and general composition, essay realisations vary: subgenres with different stages can be distinguished, they can have different goals and therefore realisations, and they have different manifestations across and within disciplines.

In Chapter 3, I will describe the short essays used in this study. These opinion pieces are essays in that they share the common purpose of the essay genre. However, they are not written by students on degree courses and can therefore not be said to fit in with the university essay genre family as described by Nesi and Gardner (2012) (as in Table 2.2 above). In fact, I will argue that they represent yet another realisation of the concept of 'essay' and I will refer to them as 'IELTS-type' essays, or 'preessional essays'. I will describe them in Chapter 3 in relation to English language exams and by analysing their tasks (as opposed to considering the texts themselves, which will be done in later chapters), specifically in terms of rhetorical function, information sources and object of enquiry.

### **2.1.2 Frameworks for analysis and pedagogy**

The second main area of relevance is that of the potential frameworks for argument analysis. Arguments in texts can be studied by examining textual coherence through a description of coherence relations such as problem-solution, claim-evidence, or thesis-antithesis (Redeker, 2000). The latter pattern is particularly useful (Coffin, 2004) because oppositional elements, e.g. alternative positions and rebuttals, are important in argument texts (Crammond, 1998).

More elaborate frameworks of analysis, many of which are useful for pedagogical purposes, have also been developed. The most comprehensive framework is Toulmin's (1958) model. In Sections 2.1.2.1, 2.1.2.2 and 2.1.2.2, I go into some detail about this model because of its popularity in educational contexts (see e.g. Ellis 2014) and because I will use aspects of it to analyse arguments in my corpora (see Chapter 4).

#### *2.1.2.1 An analytical framework: the Toulmin Model*

Toulmin's (1958) model of argumentation was originally written in the context of criticism against the tendency at that time for philosophers to formalise arguments into deductive arguments, but it was soon used for analytical purposes in the field of Communication (Toulmin, 2003). It was never intended as a compositional model (Toulmin et al., 1984) even though it has been used for those purposes (Coffin, 2004).

Toulmin (1958) introduces the concept of different 'fields': "[t]wo arguments will be said to belong to the same field when the data and conclusions in each of the two arguments are, respectively of the same logical type" (p.14), which gives rise to the question which modes, standards and qualifications relating to the assessment of argument are "the same regardless of field (field-invariant), and which of them vary as we move from arguments in one field to arguments in another (field-dependent)" (p.15). Toulmin's examples of fields are diverse, e.g. law, mathematics, biology, general observation and rational process. He explains that many fields use similar stages of argument: an initial stage in which in which different solutions to a problem at hand are suggested, and a second stage in which, unless there is one obvious

solution, probable solutions are found, and impossible ones are ruled out. He criticises formal logicians for framing arguments in field-invariant terms, whereas “the standards for judging the soundness, validity, cogency or strength of arguments are in practice field-dependent” (pp.136-137).

In its original form the model asks hermeneutic questions about six elements that can be found in any wholly explicit argument (Toulmin et al. 1984) as follows:

1. *Claims, or “assertions put forward publicly for general acceptance” (p. 29): the destination. They answer the questions ‘What exactly are you claiming?’, ‘Where precisely do you stand on this issue?’ and ‘What position are you asking us to agree to as the outcome of your argument?’*

2. *Grounds, or “statements specifying the particular facts about a situation relied on to clarify and make good the previous claim” (p. 33): the underlying foundation. The questions they answer are, e.g.: ‘What information are you going on?’, ‘What grounds is your claim based on?’. These grounds may include common knowledge, statistical data, and previously established claims.*

3. *Warrants, or “statements indicating the general ways of arguing being applied in each particular case and implicitly relied on as ones whose trustworthiness is well established” (p. 43): a check to see if the grounds provide genuine support. Warrants provide answers to questions such as ‘How do you justify the move from these grounds to that claim?’ and ‘What road do you take to get from this starting point to that destination?’ Depending*

*on the field or forum, these could be, for example, laws of nature, legal principles, or engineering formulae.*

*4. Backing, or “generalizations making explicit the body of experience relied on to establish the trustworthiness of the ways of arguing applied in any particular case” (p. 57): the general body of information that is presupposed by the warrant. It asks questions about what information exists to back up the trust in a particular warrant, e.g. whether the scientific laws have been checked out.*

*5. Modal qualifiers, or “phrases showing what kind and degree of reliance is to be placed on the conclusions, given the arguments available to support them” (p. 69): the degree of certainty with which the claim or conclusion is being supported. There may be qualifications such as ‘possibly’. The question is how reliably the warrant lends weight to the given step from grounds to claim.*

*6. Possible rebuttals, or “the extraordinary or exceptional circumstances that might undermine the force of the supporting arguments” (p. 75): these tell us under what circumstances the present answer might let us down, e.g.: ‘What kinds of factors or conditions could throw us off the road?’*

Only the first four are part of what Mitchell and Riddle (2000) term the first level of analysis; the second level (qualifiers and rebuttals) referring to functions that limit the force of arguments, rather than the arguments themselves.

It is interesting that a journey metaphor is being used throughout these elements (e.g. destination, road), as well as language referring to static concepts (foundation,

weight) and dynamic ones (move). Based on the above information about the six elements, I imagine Toulmin et al.'s (1984) model as follows:

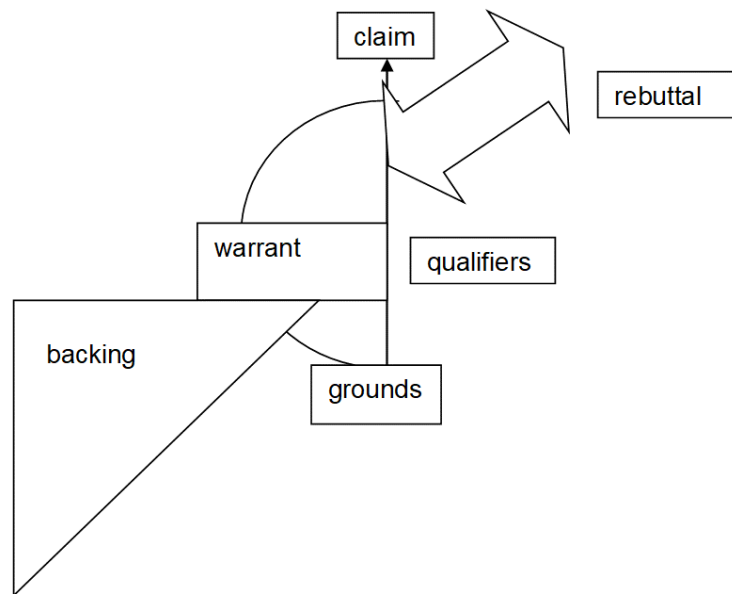


Figure 2.1: A visual interpretation of Toulmin's elements

This figure shows how the grounds support the claim (and are therefore below it) and how they lead to the claim (the small arrow). The warrant provides a justification of the particular route taken (and therefore links grounds and claim), and is itself informed by the backing, a general body of information (the triangle that points to it). The modal qualifiers express the strength of the warrant's support of the claim, and like the rebuttal affect the claim and can point away and back from the route (the large arrow). The model can be further simplified as follows:

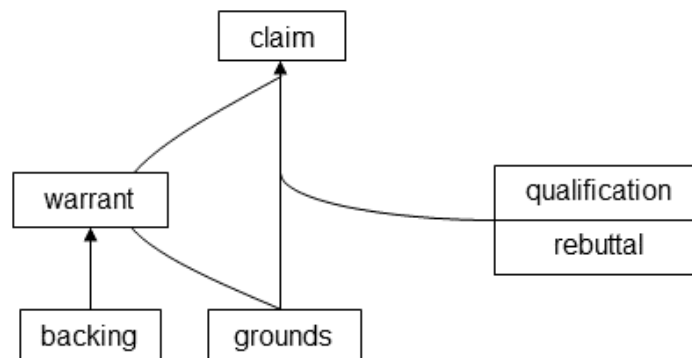


Figure 2.2: A simplified visual representation of Toulmin's model

As this model or an adaptation thereof is useful in a pedagogical context (see also Chapter 8), it is worth trying to simplify it further. It is possible to see the claim as supported by the grounds, which are in turn dependent on the warrant, informed by the backing.

Visually, this becomes a pyramid, in which each layer is supported by the ones underneath:

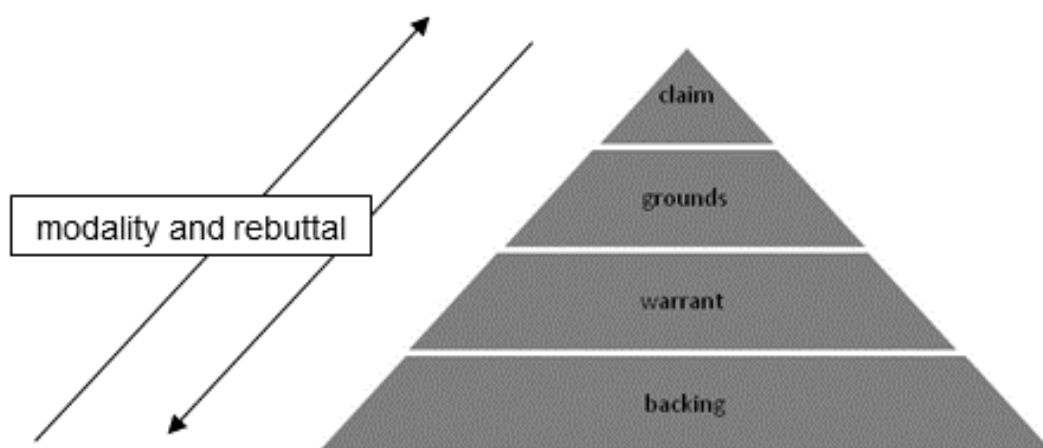


Figure 2.3: An alternative representation of Toulmin's six elements

The advantage of this graphic is that modality and rebuttal, which as previously mentioned refer to a different level, are visually separated, with the use of arrows. They are positioned next to the pyramid as they affect all its levels. The visual shows that modality reflects the strength of the claim, which is affected by the grounds and the warrant and backing on which they rely. Having said that, it is worth noting here that, in practice, it is difficult to separate the propositional content of an argument from the writer's stance toward it (see also Section 2.2.2 below).

Another advantage of representing the model with a pyramid is that it makes the place of rebuttal clearer. Rebuttal leads readers away from the claim. However, as rebuttal relates to the downsides of a position, this path is actually 'faulty' (see Kaufer and Geisler's (1991) argument scheme in Section 2.1.2.5.2), and the readers are likely to be led back to the claim (which is why there is an arrow in the opposite direction).

#### *2.1.2.2 Criticisms and limitations of the Toulmin model*

Toulmin's model was groundbreaking. It offers an alternative to logical approaches to argumentation which had been dominant (see Section 1.2.1) and made the distinction between "the idealized notions of logical-formal arguments as used in mathematics and the use of arguments in linguistic contexts" (Sampson and Clark, 2008, p.450). It has been used considerably in the context of Further Education in North America (Mitchell and Riddle, 2000), as well as in secondary education, making it the most visible model in the curriculum and in teaching materials (Ellis, 2014). The model has also been the subject of numerous studies (Qin and Karabacak, 2010; Stapleton and Wu, 2015). For example, it has been used to study

the features of persuasive texts, to discuss student writing quality, to promote persuasiveness, to investigate the structure of argument, and to address other academic research contexts, for example as a comparator with other models (Mitchell and Riddle, 2000).

However, Toulmin's model has also been the object of criticism, for example because it does not allow for dialectical strategies of persuasion (e.g. Ellis, 2014; Gilbert, 2005). Similarly, Stapleton and Wu (2015) state that the model works at surface level and does not address the quality or in other words the persuasiveness of the arguments in a text. Gilbert (2005), working within the area of contrastive rhetoric (see Chapter 3) argues that it is an adversarial and ethnocentric model and does not accommodate other goals of argumentation e.g. inquiry (in which a conclusion is being sought rather than already determined), which is common in discourse such as coursework essays. However, these criticisms appear to function more as calls for or justifications of additional models rather than as identifications of inherent problems with Toulmin's prevalent model. Some can also be refuted by pointing to the dialogic and field-independent nature of the model, and the in-built questions to justify arguments (relating to warrants and backing), which give it enough flexibility to be used at deeper levels and in different contexts.

Another criticism is that the Toulmin model does not operate above the level of individual claims. Wingate (2012) points out that many authors instead suggest the use of models that also deal with the larger argumentational structure of texts (i.e. Mitchell and Riddle, 2000; Bacha, 2010; Davies, 2008). Previously this has also been suggested by Connor (1990) and Connor and Lauer (1988). Cumming et al. (2005)

suggest that extended claims are more sophisticated than several separate ones. This idea is reflected e.g. in a scheme designed for scoring reasoning, the Moss scheme, in which the most important elements of reasoning skill are not just related to the areas of claims, support, and qualifications/rebuttals but also to integration: “claims as grounds for subsequent claims” (Carlson, 1988, p. 237). However, the Toulmin model does not preclude claims being used as grounds for other claims, or any other connection between its parts. In fact, many of the examples in Toulmin et al. (1984) show the interconnectedness and the complexity of extended sections of discourse, e.g. an exchange about football (pp.11-12) is chosen to illustrate the existence of a central initial claim and other claims, and the authors also identify several grounds and several warrants. As Mitchell and Riddle (2000, p. 37) put it, “any three-part argument can apply to large spans of text”.

However, Toulmin’s model presents some practical problems. One issue is that the distinction between warrant and backing is difficult to understand. Andrews (2010) states that they are easily confused, with the former referring to “the means by which the evidence counts in support of a claim or proposition” (p.45) and the latter to the ideological context in which the evidence is sanctioned, areas which can be difficult to distinguish in fields such as Education, where competing and /or difficult to identify theories operate. This analytical difficulty is remedied by approaches that merge these two concepts, leading to a model with three main elements: claim, grounds and a third one that either encapsulates both warrant and backing or omits backing. There is more about these later in this chapter.

Another issue that makes analysis difficult is that the perspective of the reader allows for different interpretations of the elements. For example, as claims may be implicit in the texts they can be difficult to identify (Simon, 2008). It is also possible for one reader to identify a claim, in a piece of student writing for example, when other readers may classify the same statement as warrant or as rebuttal (Sampson and Clark, 2008). As Fisher (1988, p. 17) puts it, “whether certain claims are to be counted as conclusions or reasons depends solely on the author’s apparent intentions”, and this requires judgement.

Despite the perceived limitations of aspects of the model, there does not appear to be any evidence of a wholesale rejection of its principles. The model maintains its relevance within the context of education.

#### *2.1.2.3 Adaptations and applications of the Toulmin model*

Many authors have suggested frameworks to aid the teaching of argumentation. Several of these are adaptations of Toulmin’s model, designed in response to its perceived deficiencies.

Some of these adaptations do not diverge much from the original but have attempted to clarify the classification of the elements. Varghese and Abraham (1998) use the terms claims, data and warrants. Nemeth and Kormos (2001) prefer claims, support, counter-claims and countersupport. Nussbaum and Schraw (2007) attempt to simplify the Toulmin model by using *arguments*, *counterarguments*, and *rebuttals*.

Others have focused on supplementing the Toulmin model. Simon (2008), Sampson and Clark (2008) and Stapleton (2001) advocate the use of the Toulmin model in

educational contexts but suggest that it is complemented with ways to assess critical thinking or the acceptability of evidence in specific academic disciplines. Salter-Dvorak (2016) argues for a pedagogical model for argumentation with oral presentation of reasoning as an integrated part of a process writing approach. Stapleton and Wu (2015) use the Toulmin model to examine secondary school essays to develop an assessment rubric and model to determine the persuasiveness of argument and advocate a greater emphasis on the quality of evidence and reasoning.

Other models also combine language and content issues, often with a focus on reasoning or evidence from a source. Bacha (2010), for example, uses elements from Toulmin's model and advocates a joint focus on language and logical reasoning (e.g. the use of *always* being linked to generalisations). She proposes a model of context-setting, deconstruction of examples, and scaffolded construction, with a focus on intertextuality and language. Davies (2008) argues for grammatical and logical clarity. His model focuses on clarifying deductive inference patterns. Wingate (2012) provides a staged essay writing framework which encourages undergraduate essay writers to research sources, and to develop and express their position in a well-structured essay.

The main criticisms, then, that have led to adaptations of and additions to Toulmin's model are that the concepts and their terminology need to be fine-tuned, that the model is too narrow, as it only deals with single claims, and that it is not dialectical. Although I have argued above that these criticisms may not always be wholly

justified, they have helped to consolidate the reputation of Toulmin's model by acknowledging it and by developing it in different directions.

#### *2.1.2.4 Generative frameworks: three-part models*

Because of the importance of argumentation in academia (see Chapter 1), models of argumentation are of interest in educational contexts. Models of argument construction, as opposed to analytical models, are particularly useful as they can help students to construct their own arguments. In this section, I will discuss some of these generative frameworks.

##### *2.1.2.4.1 Mitchell and Riddle's (2000) model*

Like many of the aforementioned frameworks, Mitchell and Riddle's (2000) model relies on ideas from Toulmin (1958) and Toulmin et al. (1984) but is an adapted version with only three elements. It was designed to be used in HE in a British context and forms part of the outcomes of a project whose aims were, among others, to "identify the problems faced by students in writing argument in a range of disciplines at undergraduate level", and to develop "materials for improving the quality of argument in a wide range of disciplines" (Mitchell & Riddle, 2000, p.12).

The authors' criticisms of the original Toulmin model led to them designing one that would be "based on everyday language, be process-oriented, and appear relevant from the start" (Mitchell and Riddle 2000, p. 33). They appreciated the applicability of the model to different disciplines but felt that Toulmin's process approach did not go far enough (e.g. the six questions were not intended to be heuristic and generative but diagnostic, and there was no explanation about how a claim should be

supported), and that the language used was too jurisprudential (e.g. 'warrant'). They set out to make their model more relevant, accessible (e.g. rapidly learnt and easily remembered), and applicable to HE and other contexts. It was intended to be “widely accepted”, “targeted at staff in the disciplines” with the aim of “helping students learn to argue better” (Mitchell, 2000, p. 150). They developed the following triangular model:

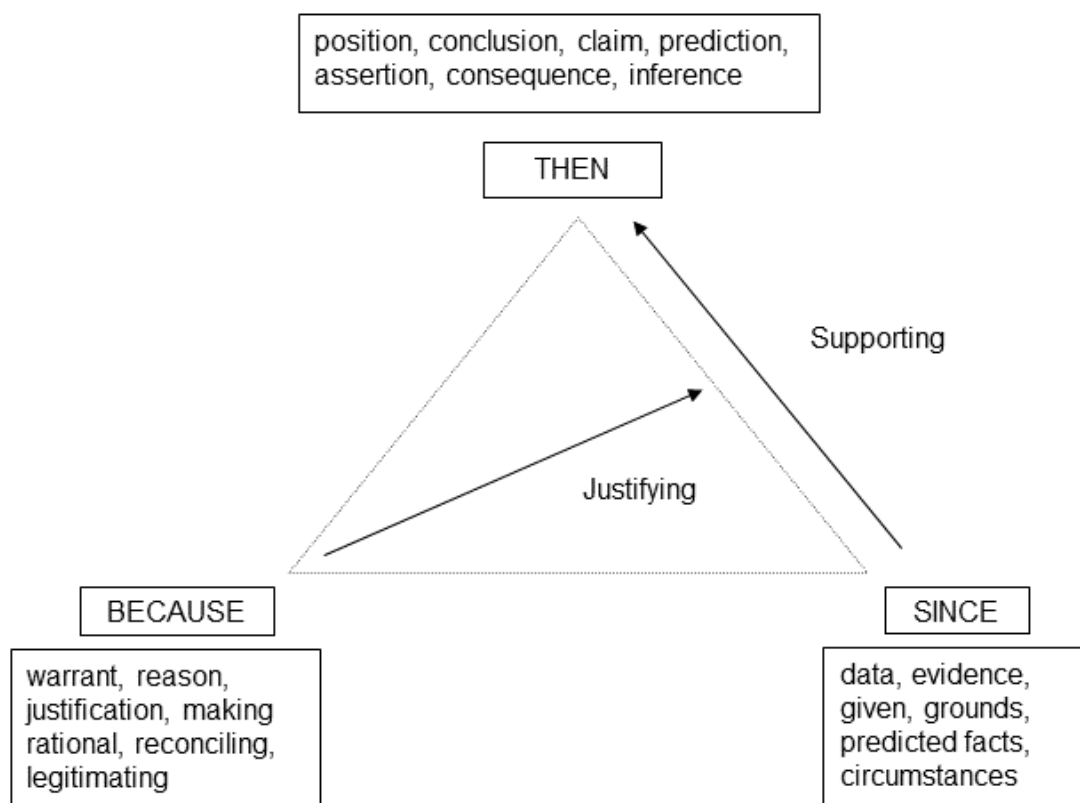


Figure 2.4: Mitchell and Riddle's (2000, p. 34) model

In this model, argument has three parts: conclusion (THEN) and evidence (SINCE) are joined by a third element, warrant or justification (BECAUSE).

The authors explain that the main constituents of the visual they use are firstly, the three everyday language words (SINCE, THEN, BECAUSE) together with the

functions that show the relations between them (supporting and justifying) and secondly, the triangle shape and the directional arrows. They point out that there is no reason why, from left to right, the model refers to BECAUSE, THEN, and SINCE in that particular order, as arguments do not have a fixed order, but if they were moved around, the arrows would have to move accordingly. The three words are capitalised to denote that they are icons and to distinguish them from their literal linguistic equivalents. The words in the rectangles behind the icons form a 'family' (2000, p. 35) of concepts. For example, SINCE is, amongst others, related to evidence and circumstance. It consistently signifies *seeing that* or *given that*. It relates to Toulmin's question, 'What information are you going on?', which leads to 'grounds'.

In a further development of the model, a fourth dimension was added: the movement between differing views. This is expressed through THOUGH (meaning 'in spite of' or 'unless' and which can signal rebuttal, concession or counterclaim) and HOWEVER (which introduces an alternative argument and is therefore situated outside the three-part model) (Mitchell and Riddle, 2004). This can be linked to the concept of 'problematization' (Barton, 1993, p.748), where a writer states that an accepted view needs to be re-examined, often by means of a marker of contrast, thus paving the way for the writer's own and more specific idea.

The model is unique and "generally applicable across disciplinary contexts" and "abstract enough to allow it to be manifested in different ways" (Mitchell 2000, p. 151). It shows how relational reasoning forms an argument in any context but does not prescribe what content, order, language, or level of explicitness is required

(Mitchell, 2000), which is context-dependent and something that this model can potentially encourage subject tutors to discuss with their students.

The model has been used in analysis. For example, Riddle (2000) uses it to analyse parts of student essays to illustrate how they formulate complete and incomplete arguments using three-part, two-part and one-part structures. It is a useful educational model, and I will return to it in Chapter 8.

#### 2.1.2.4.2 Other pedagogical three-part approaches and their terminology

Other three-part generative approaches have been used elsewhere in the context of education. One example of a three-part structure is the Point/ Evidence/ Explanation (P.E.E.) model, which is used as part of the secondary school curriculum for English in Britain (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009). It appears to draw its inspiration from Toulmin's model, but its origin has not been disclosed. In it, the equivalent to Mitchell and Riddle's BECAUSE (referring to warrant, reason, justification etc.) is referred to as 'explanation', suggesting a wider conceptual category.

Pupils are taught to use P.E.E. when interpreting literature in order to generate their own arguments. It is introduced in Year 7 as follows:

**Table 2.4: Excerpt explaining P.E.E. approach** (Department for Children Schools and Families, 2009)

Explain to pupils that when they make a *point* (have a view) about a character, theme, situation, etc, they should expect to support that with *evidence* from the text they are studying. For example, when studying *Macbeth*:

**Point**

Early in the play Macbeth is unsure whether to go through with the murder of the king.

**Evidence**

We will proceed no further in this business (Act 1 scene vii).

**Explanation**

Macbeth says he wants to put a stop to things straight away.

By Year 9, the pupils are expected to also reorder P.E.E. (e.g. E.P.E., where they might start with a quotation), reorganise it (i.e. embedding the evidence into their Points) and extend it (adding background).

It could be argued that this particular example is not the best one for pupils: the evidence seems to support that Macbeth has decided not to proceed, rather than that he is unsure. Also, the explanation only functions as a warrant in that it serves to justify how the evidence (or grounds) leads to the point (or claim) in very general terms: the focus is not so much on the relationship between evidence and point but just on clarifying the point.

The use of P.E.E. in the classroom has received criticism from different sources. Examples include a student reporting feeling confused about how to execute the explanation (Aisbitt, 2017); an examiner saying the approach was meaningless, formulaic, and that it reduced writing quality and encouraged complacency and brevity (Enstone, 2017); Ofsted (2012) reporting overuse and incorrect uses of P.E.E. in classrooms, and teachers claiming that far from helping students improve their thinking about good evidence and argument, it contributed to making the issue worse (Foster and Gadd, 2013). The use of P.E.E. as a cross-curricular model also gives the impression that there are no disciplinary distinctions regarding what constitutes evidence (Foster and Gadd, 2013). McIntyre and Jones (2014) point out that P.E.E. was originally intended to help weaker students but that it has become ubiquitous in

spite of teachers being critical of it. Aisbitt's (2017) research suggests that P.E.E. does not encourage students to infer, and that students are not shown how to analyse and explain.

In summary, despite it being a common pedagogical tool, P.E.E. has been described as an ineffective, reductionist and mechanic paragraph structuring method, not a scheme that will help students generate better arguments, although it is often used with that intention. There appear to be no examples of this model being used for the analysis of argument.

Other secondary school based three-part models exist, but the distinction between them and P.E.E. seems to be based on emphasis and terminology, rather than on substantive differences. One is referred to as P.E.A.: Point/ Evidence/ Analysis (see e.g. Brighton High School, Colorado, no date), another as PQC, Point/ Quote/ Comment (Ellis, Fox and Street, 2007). There sometimes is a fourth element: the acronym 'P.E.E.L.' is also used, to remind students to signpost how one paragraph relates to the next (as 'L' stands for 'Link') (see e.g. Vercher, no date).

All versions appear to refer to the same technique, yet their terminology suggests a slightly different emphasis. When applying PQC, students need to be specific when providing evidence ('Quote'), but 'Comment' allows them to expand. 'Explanation' and 'Analysis' (in P.E.E. and P.E.A. respectively) seem to make a more specific link to the 'Point' than 'Comment' (in PQC) does, but they relate to 'Evidence', which is more general than 'Quote'. All three methods thus provide a good balance of general and specific observations about the point that is being made. Their differences seem

to be related to the contexts in which they are used, e.g. 'Quote' is relevant in the context of literature studies.

In this thesis I will use a number of synonyms, for example, *evidence* and *support*, interchangeably. However, in my analysis I will use the labels *Point* and *Support* virtually exclusively to refer to the essential parts of arguments, because these are the most general and the least technical words, which may be useful for discussions in a classroom context.

Although P.E.E. and its variations originated in a secondary school context, research based on case studies has shown that it can be used to improve essay cohesion and coherence in IELTS preparation classes (Velasco, 2015).

The three-part framework has also been used in the American Further and Higher Education context. For example, as mentioned previously, in *A Brief Guide to Writing Academic Arguments* (2009), Wilhoit presents a model that offers advice on how to produce academic arguments and which is thus generative, rather than analytical in intent. It uses much of Toulmin's (2003) terminology, for example 'claims' and 'grounds'. However, he usefully also redefines the term warrants -denoting the underlying assumptions that link grounds to a claim and explaining the relationship- as 'explanations' of how grounds support a claim. As in Mitchell and Riddle's model, this means that backing and warrant are no longer separated, which leads to a three-part structure of argument: claim, support, and explanation.

In the table below, I have made a summary of the terminology used in three-part approaches.

Table 2.5: Terminology ‘equivalents’ to claim/ grounds/ warrant and backing

	‘Equivalent’ of Toulmin’s...		
	Claim	Grounds	Warrant/Backing
<b>Mitchell and Riddle</b>	THEN	SINCE	BECAUSE
<b>P.E.E.</b>	Point	Evidence	Explanation
<b>P.E.A.</b>	Point	Evidence	Analysis
<b>P.Q.C.</b>	Point	Quote	Comment
<b>Wilhoit</b>	Claim	Support	Explanation

Although the table above refers to ‘equivalents’, it needs to be noted that these terms are not interchangeable and do not necessarily refer to the same concepts. The table is useful in that it demonstrates that post-Toulmin pedagogical views of argument appear to converge: arguments tend to be seen as consisting of three distinct but connected parts, assumedly or explicitly a reduction of Toulmin’s concepts. However, as mentioned above, in schools the three-part models are about paragraph construction, and may not help with the development of argument; in contrast, both Mitchell and Riddle’s and Wilhoit’s work have theoretical underpinnings and pedagogical relevance for the construction of argument in HE.

It is also important to note that many of the Toulmin adaptations, including the three-part models, are rooted in L1 research and are relevant to academic argument in general. Although Toulmin’s and related models have been investigated in the context of L2 (e.g. Bacha, 2010; Qin and Karabacak, 2010; Rusfandi, 2015; Salter-Dvorak, 2016), for the vast majority of research this is not the case. The reason for this could be that argumentational models are deemed to be relevant to all students. However, this means that there is no consideration in some of these argument

schemes of any specific or extra difficulties L2 students may have with argumentation in language and educational environments that are foreign to them.

#### *2.1.2.5 Approaches with a focus on the ‘dissenting other’*

Other perspectives on argumentation are not so much frameworks as ways of describing what argumentation is. They are based on the notion of argument as a dialogue. The idea that argumentation is a social activity was already introduced in Chapter 1. Argument was defined as points and evidence that have been chosen in order to persuade others. Argumentational writing relies on arguments to fulfil its purpose of persuasion. These arguments involve both the writer and the potential reader, who needs to be persuaded of the writer’s carefully considered views.

Argumentational essays thus need to present different views, that is, they must provide support for a particular angle as well as other standpoints. According to Wolfe and Britt (2008), the reason for this is that their “very nature (...) implies the potential for credible opposition and reasonable arguments on two or more sides of the issues” (p. 2). The presence of these views and the counter-argumentation also aid knowledge building, as they allow writers to develop their ideas in light of those of others (Leitao, 2000).

Many researchers regard the production of argumentational texts as a problem-solving process (e.g. Toulmin 1958, Connor 1986) in which the writer tries to persuade the reader to change their opinion to that of the writer’s. As this means that academic texts are records of problem-solving interaction, any examination of their use of argumentation requires a focus on its social and dialogic characteristics.

In fact, all communication is in essence dialogic (Bakhtin, 2010), and all texts can be classed as records of dialogues (Thompson, 2001). In the absence of a 'live' audience, written texts necessitate the writer to fulfil the role both of writer and reader(s) (Widdowson, 1984). Academic texts in particular are characterised by their use of dialogic reasoning (Ryshina-Pankova 2014).

As the actual reader is not present in a text, 'reader(s)' refers to how the writer imagines the reader(s) to be: that is, the "anticipated audience" (Bazerman 1981, p. 362) or "Imagined Reader" (Coulthard, 2001, p. 4). In the in-text 'dialogue' between academic writers and their readers, writers need to find the right balance between their own views and those of other "authorial voices" (Groom, 2000, p. 68), or "knowledgeable participants" (Ryshina-Pankova, 2014, p. 288). Writers will include views that others either hold, or could reasonably hold (Garssen, 2014). In this thesis, I will usually refer to these as the 'views of others'.

There are two ways of viewing the opinions of others in texts that are worthy of further discussion. They cannot be described as 'models' like the ones discussed above: one (pragma-dialectics) is more accurately described as a theory, or approach, and only a small part of it will be discussed here (see Section 2.1.2.5.1); the other is more of a pedagogical tool (Kaufer and Geisler's main path/faulty path scheme) (see Section 2.1.2.5.2).

#### 2.1.2.5.1 The pragma-dialectical approach

Pragma-dialectics is an approach for the analysis and reconstruction of argument, in which all arguments, also described as discussions, have a protagonist and an

antagonist. It is a theory that situates itself in two areas: pragmatics (the study of communication and interaction, concerned with the rhetorical concept of effectiveness) and dialectics (the study of dialogue, concerned with reasonableness) (van Eemeren et al., 2014). As such it follows a long tradition of argumentation theory, and like Toulmin's model, it tries to find ways of examining logical problems to find out "how they apply in practice, and what connections they have with the canons and methods we use when, in everyday life, we actually assess the soundness, strength and conclusiveness of arguments" (Toulmin, 1958, p.2).

Pragma-dialectics distinguishes a number of genres of communicative activity. The name for the genre of scholarly communication is 'disputation', defined as "a strongly institutionalized genre of inherently argumentative activity in which the parties are aimed at determining the acceptability of a standpoint by critically testing it" (Wagemans, 2014b, no page number). In other words, academic discourse is defined as intrinsically argumentational. The concepts of the protagonist and antagonist do not need to be taken literally in this genre: the antagonist's views are represented in the discourse by the protagonist. This makes what could be perceived as a one-author monologue actually a dialogue (Wagemans, 2014a).

In the dialogue with imagined antagonists, protagonists will use counterargumentation, that is, they will consider (and reject) arguments against their own conclusion. In a pragma-dialectical reconstruction of an argument, counterargumentation thus functions as a defence against criticism: it is directly related to the protagonist's argument and functions as another argument in its favour.

In other words, bringing in different ideas from others, the imagined readers, and refuting them, strengthens one's own argument.

The idea that incorporating alternative views is integral to argumentation and that doing this strengthens one's own argument is well-established. Research has repeatedly shown that messages that do not deal with counterarguments are perceived to be less persuasive and that they negatively affect the quality of the argumentation (Stapleton and Wu, 2015).

#### 2.1.2.5.2 Kaufer and Geisler's (1991) main path / faulty path scheme

Kaufer and Geisler's (1991) main path / faulty path representation of written argument was developed against a backdrop of criticism of Toulmin's scheme for not being specific enough about the content of argument, i.e. of calls for less abstraction. However, it presents another abstraction in the form of a scheme that focuses on what had been missing from previous research: it shows how authors develop their own reasoning by using that of others (Kaufer and Geisler, 1991). Thus, it is a model that focuses on analysis and it presents an interesting take on the balance between the ideas of the writer and the ideas of dissenting others. It is aimed at students, and it could be particularly relevant to L2 speakers who may not yet be aware of expectations regarding argumentation in HE.

The scheme emerges from an empirical and comparative study into novice and expert writing. Using sources from the field of ethics the authors discovered patterns that appeared "to be common to a great many texts in the Western essayist tradition" (ibid., p. 107).

The idea of contrast, in the form of rebuttal and refutation, was already present in classical rhetoric, but Kaufer and Geisler (1991) point out that the arguments of others are often not dismissed, as is traditionally suggested, but that they are instead explained, critiqued and depended upon for the development of the author's own ideas:

*Faulty paths (...) may be claims an author ultimately judges fallacious or otherwise difficult to accept. But by deciding not to ignore them and, indeed, by weaving them into the larger design of their argument, authors acknowledge their utility. (p. 10)*

Other people's ideas are not added for "democratic reasons" but to "make their own more clear or fair-minded or persuasive by way of background or contrast" (Kaufer and Geisler 1991, p. 12). In short, as in pragma-dialectical theory, the authors show that the ideas of others are only there to serve the writers' own.

With respect to terminology, the 'main' path refers to directly endorsed claims advanced by an author in a written argument. The name suggests that the claims are directional. It offers the writer's perspective in the form of a narrator:

*While the author may choose to move in and out of various perspectives ... readers can be assured they will meet the author's own perspective reasonably early into the argument and will be escorted from the text by that same perspective at its conclusion. (p. 7)*

It is worth noting that the authors point out that the writer's view comes relatively early and then again in the conclusion, suggesting that it is made quite clear. The 'faulty paths' refer to detours in between: arguments that fall outside the perspective. In order to organise main paths and faulty paths into one argument, authors use 'return paths': mechanisms to help readers see the limitation in faulty path claims,

that is, reasons for resuming the main path, for example a word that shows the writer's stance, such as 'ill-informed'. The following figure shows their scheme:

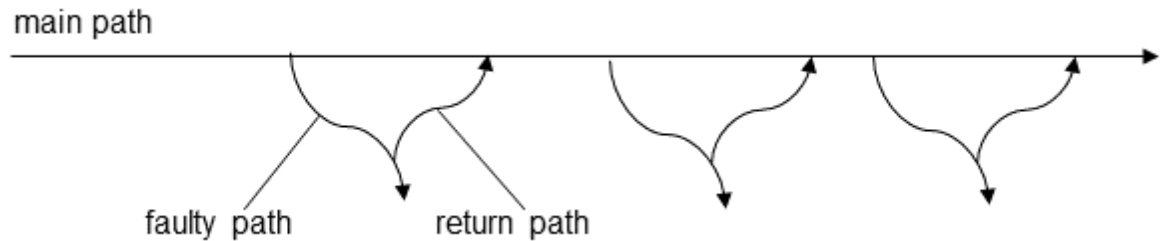


Figure 2.5: Kaufer and Geisler's (1991) scheme

This scheme shows how the ideas of others relate to the writers' ideas and it explains how language and structure are used to signpost their inferiority to them. The study has pedagogical implications in that it moves away from the traditional textbook recommendations for students to use the ideas of others in the main "to *support* their own position" (ibid., p. 109) and shows how in the Western essayist tradition sources might also often be used to frame an author's final conclusion.

## 2.2 The L2 writing research perspective

Argumentational frameworks such as the ones described above inform some of the decisions made in this thesis about the ways in which to analyse arguments and to instruct students about them (see Chapters 4 and 8, respectively). However, research into writing, both from L1 and L2 perspectives, has also been instrumental to this thesis, mainly in that these perspectives have influenced which aspects of

argumentation were useful to research (and about which there is more information in Chapters 4 and 6). In the next sections I position this thesis against these backdrops.

### **2.2.1 A brief overview of the history of L2 writing research**

L2 writing research is a relatively young field of enquiry. It is preceded by research into L1 writing, which Grabe and Kaplan (1996) describe as being related to four disciplines: education/educational psychology, psychology, linguistics, and rhetoric/composition. Although L1 and L2 writing research both have writing as their focus, L2 research has more affinity with the field of applied linguistics (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Much of the early research into L2 writing focused on contrastive rhetoric (see Chapter 3), i.e. the differences between L1 and L2 discourse (Hinkel, 2010) but L2 writing is an object of enquiry in its own right, albeit an interdisciplinary one, overlapping with education, linguistics and foreign languages (Matsuda, 2003).

L2 writing research came to the fore in the 1960s at a time of growth in the numbers of international students at universities in the USA and the UK (Matsuda, 2003). Until then, both L1 and L2 writing research had been mostly concerned with text organisation and with correct grammar, spelling, and usage (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Teaching had placed the focus on sentence level issues, and paragraphs (Matsuda, 2003). Until the mid-60s English teaching in HE focused on controlled writing as a method (Paltridge, 2001), in which students were given some information about content or form to help them write. From the mid-1960s to the late 1970s, the focus turned from sentence to discourse level (Matsuda, 2003). Students learned about rhetorical patterns (such as generalisations, cause and effect), and performed extended writing tasks (Paltridge, 2001). In the 1970s, the focus on form disappeared

in favour of more learner-centred communicative approaches (Paltridge, 2001), with syllabi becoming, for example, functional-notional (centred around communicative functions such as giving descriptions or apologies) and situational (focusing on contexts in which the L2 would be used) (Canale and Swain, 1980). Teaching writing was no longer just about products, but also incorporated cognitive processes (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996), for example planning and redrafting.

A criticism of formalist and cognitive approaches was that the writing context had not been considered, something which the genre approach wanted to redress. It looked at academic writing expectations and focussed on language and discourse features in genres such as essays and research reports (Paltridge, 2001). Genres can be distinguished by their communicative purpose and their discourse community (Bondi, 2016), which in the case of academic texts is made up of various academic communities. EAP tuition currently still tends to focus on genre analysis, based on work by Swales (1990) (Bondi, 2016).

Silva and Brice (2004) reviewed turn of the century literature about L2 writing and found that they could classify contemporary approaches into three main areas, which I have summarised below.

The first area consists of research into the phenomenon of L2 writing itself, which is concerned with composition (e.g. L1/L2 comparisons, sub-processes such as revising and idea generation, variables such as task difficulty and writing experience, and national contexts), assessment (e.g. results, the role of stakeholders, assessment modes, variables, and contexts), and written texts (e.g. cohesive devices and organisational patterns). According to Hinkel (2010), the literature regarding L2

texts tends to relate either to global textual considerations (such as communication strategies, organisational patterns (e.g. Mauranen, 1996), genre awareness, rhetorical strategies and written discourse analysis) or to local foci (such as student errors in writing (e.g. Cutting, 2000), cohesion and coherence, and syntactic and lexical features).

The second area concerns research about the applications of L2 writing instruction, which covers content-based writing (especially in instruction programmes), voice and identity, reading and writing (aspects of their connection), computers and technology (e.g. their role in composition and effects on the writing, online tasks and curricula), grammar and vocabulary (e.g. accuracy and the effect of error treatment at sentence level and below), peer interaction, plagiarism, teacher response (e.g. the role and effect of types of feedback), and literature and film (e.g. the role of literature in the writing classroom or curriculum).

The third domain, more general research, is concerned with foreign language (FL) writing (as opposed to Second Language (SL) / L2), teaching techniques, approaches and curriculum design; L2 writing programmes; ideology (e.g. critical theory and cultural angles); history and development; and early L2 writing.

This thesis is concerned with several of the above-mentioned research interests. It is concerned with both applied linguistics and composition studies. In particular, two of the three contemporary areas mentioned are of relevance: L2 writing itself, specifically the nature of academic written texts, and L2 writing instruction. However, I will not be making a distinction between these areas of text and teaching, for two reasons. First, my interest in writing is motivated by a desire to teach it. This is not

uncommon: it has been argued that “the overarching goal of research on second language (L2) writing has been to create pedagogical models for teaching L2 writing” (Hinkel, 2010), suggesting that the actual purpose of the study of L2 discourse is to teach it.

The second reason is that language is about meaning; i.e. it is “the powerhouse of meaning-making, and language, teaching and learning are therefore inseparable” (Coffin and Donohue, 2014). This view of language as a social semiotic system is based on work by Halliday (1978), Halliday and Hasan (1985), Hodge and Kress (1988), Martin (2009), and Kress (2013), and it centres language in a pedagogical context, linking its meaning inextricably to purpose and context. It is the basis of SFL, developed by Halliday (1985), in which “language consists of a set of systems, each of which offers the speaker (or writer) a choice of ways of expressing meanings” (Bloor and Bloor 1995, p. 2), and in which the purposes of language use, which are called metafunctions (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004), are the organising principle. Although this thesis does not use SFL analysis, it does subscribe to the view that understanding how language is used to create meaning informs how it is taught.

I will investigate both global and local foci, in particular the interaction between rhetorical strategies and cohesive language features. Firstly, this is because rhetoric is under-investigated. As Hinkel (2010, p. 523) says: “Although much research on first language (L1) English-language writing has been carried out in such disciplines as rhetoric and composition, on the whole, the study of rhetoric has had a minimal influence on the investigations of L2 text”. I believe that it is worthwhile to redress this

balance, as the rhetorical functions of L2 texts are inextricably linked to the language chosen to fulfil them.

Secondly, as the choice of language items is determined by their rhetorical purpose, it is important to consider them within their context. For example, if a corpus linguistic study reveals that the most frequent linker in a certain text type is *however* (see e.g. Vogel, 2008), that does not necessarily mean that writers should be encouraged to use it more. In order to make the right choices and to apply them correctly and effectively, writers need to use the language items that fulfil their rhetorical purpose, that is, to persuade the reader of a point of view. The local items are linked to the wider purposes of the texts.

To summarise, I am interested in both L2 writing and its instruction and will consider the global textual strategy of argumentation as well as how this is realised through the more localised matter of cohesive marker use within argumentational text. I address this localised focus on language features in Section 2.2.2 and go into more detail regarding cohesive markers in Chapter 6.

### **2.2.2 L2 and Applied Linguistics research into persuasive language features: metadiscourse**

On the surface, the lack of interest in argument in HE is evident more specifically in areas of English Language Teaching (ELT), e.g. in EAP and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). For example, in the specialised *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* (JEAP), which has published nearly 300 articles between January 2002 and April 2016, the words *argument*, *argue*, *argument* or

*argumentation* appear only twice in the list of titles until 2005. They are not mentioned again until 2010 and make only a further eight appearances between 2010 and 2016.

Similarly, in the past 20 years, only 12 articles appearing in the *Journal of Second Language Writing* have used a term connected to *argument* in their titles. Journals about L2 teaching have even less of a focus on argumentation: the *TESOL Journal* has two articles to date, *TESOL Quarterly* even fewer. Unsurprisingly, American journals that focus on rhetoric in an L1 context have more of a focus on argumentation, but perhaps not as much as expected. *College Composition and Communication* has fewer than 20 articles with ‘argument’ (or a form thereof) in the title in as many years.

However, this lack of emphasis on argumentation need not be taken as evidence of a lack of interest. Aspects of argumentation are explored, in L2 and ELT literature, but often without an explicit reference to *argumentation* or *persuasion*. In Applied Linguistics, persuasive intention did become a topic of discussion in the research into writing in the mid-1990s, but specifically in relation to the social interaction between writer and reader (Hyland, 2005b). As Mauranen (1993) points out, academic writing in particular is “discourse with both a persuasive intention and persuasive effect” (p. 34). She explains that its rhetorical dimension is effected through language choices.

Linguistic features that are crucial in establishing the relationship that writers have with their readers and with their texts, and that are therefore about persuasion (Stapleton and Wu, 2015), have been investigated from a variety of points of view. They have been conceptualised by corpus linguists (e.g. Hunston and Thompson,

2000; Conrad and Biber, 2000; Adel, 2006; Winter, 1992 and Hoey, 1993), systemic functional linguists (e.g. Martin, 2000; White, 2015; Swain, 2007), researchers into education and/or academic writing (e.g. Ivanič, 1998; Tang and John, 1999; Hyland, 1999) and into second language acquisition and/or writing (Ryshina-Pankova, 2014; Matsuda, 2001; Canagarajah, 2004) and comparative linguists (Mauranen, 1993; van Hell et al., 2005; Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen, 1993).

Concepts that can be said to relate to a writer's attitude are:

(1) Evaluation: "the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about" (Hunston and Thompson, 2000, p. 5).

(2) Appraisal/attitudinal stance: "the semantic resources used to negotiate emotions, judgements and valuations, alongside resources for amplifying and engaging with these evaluations" (Martin, 2000, p. 145).

(3) Stance: "personal feelings, attitudes, value judgements, or assessments" (Biber et al. 1999, p. 966), whose functions express "attitudes towards their messages, as a frame of reference for the messages, an attitude toward or judgment of their contents, or an indication of the degree of commitment towards their truthfulness" (Conrad and Biber 2000, p. 57).

(4) Engagement (Martin and White, 2005): this relates to the way writers express their "evaluative stance on an issue in relation to other alternative positions" (Ryshina-Pankova, 2014). White (2015, no page number) defines engagement as "all those resources by which the textual or authorial voice is positioned inter-

subjectively”, which includes conjunctions/connectives of expectation and counter-expectation.

(5) Writer identity: Ivanič (1998) lists four aspects of writer identity. One in particular, the ‘Self as author’, that is, the self who originates a position or stand in the writing, relates to the persuasive dimension of academic writing.

(6) Voice: “the amalgamative effect of the use of discursive and non-discursive features that language users choose, deliberately or otherwise, from socially available yet ever-changing repertoires” (Matsuda, 2001, p. 40), or “a manifestation of one’s agency in discourse through the means of language” (Canagarajah, 2004, p. 267). In other words, voice refers to “authorial presence” (Hyland, 1999, p. 115): language choices that give the author a voice can add persuasiveness.

The linguistic features that have been examined as part of investigations into these concepts have included hedges (e.g. *suggest*, *may*), boosters (e.g. *obviously*, *surely*), attitude markers (e.g. attitude verbs, sentence adverbs, adjectives), self-mention (first person pronouns, possessive adjectives), reader pronouns (e.g. *we*), directives (imperatives: e.g. *see*, *consider*), modals of obligation (e.g. *should*, predicative adjectives), questions (e.g. rhetorical questions), appeals to shared knowledge and personal asides (Hyland, 2005b).

The same language items can be and often have been investigated from different perspectives, for example, pronouns can be indicators of engagement (Hyland, 2004), stance (van Hell et al., 2005) or identity (Tang and John, 1999). Connectives

can also be looked at from different perspectives related to writer attitude, as conjunction can be seen as negotiation (Winter, 1982; Hoey, 1983).

There is also some overlap between the concepts themselves. For example, stance and voice are related, as stance contributes to the construction of voice (Thompson, 2012). Textual voice, part of Martin and White's 2005 appraisal theory, is also known as 'stance' and 'interpersonal style' in SFL (Swain, 2007).

An important area of language that is relevant to the study of argumentation and that is concerned with some these concepts is *metadiscourse*. Mauranen (1993) posits that at text level, persuasive features include the use of pronominal referents, choices about theme and rheme, text structure (e.g. the way in which the main point is presented), and text reflexivity, or metadiscourse, the latter being an area of language that has been extensively researched, especially in the context of academic discourse. However, there is no consensus regarding the exact nature of metadiscourse, its workings, contextual variations and subdivisions (Adel 2006).

Metadiscourse refers to the instances where the text refers to itself (Mauranen, 1993), in other words, "the writer's explicit commentary on her own ongoing text", i.e. "non-topical material", or "linguistic items which reveal the writer and reader's (or speaker and hearer's) presence in the text, either by referring to the organisation of the text or by commenting on the text in other ways" (Adel 2006, p. 2). Metadiscourse is thus by definition used to help the reader make sense of a text's structure and intended meaning (Crismore, Markkanen and Steffensen, 1993).

There are two distinct areas here, both of which relate to helping the reader make sense of the text; one method does this by commenting to make the meaning clearer, the other by means of making text organisation explicit. Thompson (2001, p. 58) distinguishes these as *interactional* resources, which “involve the reader collaboratively in the development of the text”, and *interactive* elements, which “help to guide the reader through the text”.

Adel (2006) explains that a broad view of metadiscourse incorporates all language features that express an attitude toward what is said, that is, it includes markers that express stance. In fact, in some definitions of metadiscourse, stance is explicitly referred to as: “linguistic resources used to organize a discourse or the writer’s stance towards either its content or the reader” (Hyland and Tse 2004, p. 157). A more narrow view excludes stance markers, as they are not text-reflexive (Adel 2006).

In this thesis, a broader view of metadiscourse is taken for pragmatic reasons: it is useful to have one term referring to a broad spectrum of linguistic features that relate to the social and persuasive dimensions of academic writing. Both stance and organisation are crucial to persuasive writing. As Chandrasegaran (2008, p. 240) explains: “expository writing in academic settings is characterised by the social interaction acts of stance taking and stance support”. Taking a stance, or a position, is an essential part of arguing and developing a stance “can also be regarded as equivalent to the development of an argument” (Wingate 2012, p. 146). Organisation is also important: for writers to present their position coherently, there needs to be an “‘arrangement and re-arrangement’ of propositions at the macro level (Andrews

1995, p. 29) so that the development of the position is reflected in a logical text structure” (Wingate 2012, p. 147).

Many of the markers that can be examined to investigate metadiscourse (e.g. connectives, hedges) can be functionally classified as an ‘evidential’: “a nonpropositional word or phrase used to express an attitude toward knowledge” (Barton 1993, p. 746). The link with persuasive writing is clear: “evidentials of all types function to mark claims and counterclaims in the development of specific arguments” (Barton 1993, p. 747). In essence, evidentiality “centers around the sources of information or sources of knowledge behind assertions” (Dendale and Tasmowski 2001, p. 340). Barton’s (1993) definition of evidentials makes a clear distinction between the entity that is being talked about and the writer’s thoughts about it. This division has been present since the first mentions of metadiscourse, found in materials such as style guides (Vande Kopple, 1985), one of which describes metadiscourse as “the language we use when, in writing about some subject matter, we incidentally refer to the act and to the context of writing about it” (Williams 1981, p. 40). These definitions characterise metadiscourse as distinct from what is being stated about the topic of the text itself, i.e. the propositional or primary content, relating to the real world rather than the text.

However, the distinction between metadiscoursal elements and the propositional content of texts can be questioned. Hyland and Tse (2004) convincingly argue that the propositional and metadiscoursal functions can often be found in the same chunks of text, that metadiscourse is not a stylistic tool that writers deploy randomly but is “the means by which propositional content is made coherent, intelligible, and

persuasive to a particular audience” (p. 161) and therefore more than just commentary on the primary content.

In short, metadiscourse consists of language features that express the view of the writer and can relate to social interaction (i.e. they are interactional) and the organisation of text (i.e. they are interactive) and are inextricably linked to the message that the writers are taking a stance on. Taking a stance and commenting on text organisation are dialogic and deliberate actions by writers who seek to persuade their readers (Stapleton and Wu 2015). This is evidenced by the fact that metadiscourse markers are commonly found in editorials and in academic writing (Hyland, 2017). They are more than stylistic devices and have an important role to play in the study of argument. In this thesis, aspects of metadiscourse i.e. linguistic elements, will therefore be part of the analyses, but the decision as to which ones will be delayed until more global aspects of argumentation have been discussed. I say more about this in Section 2.3.

## **2.3 Research Questions**

In this chapter I have discussed how research into argumentation is by definition research into the social interaction between reader and writer. In texts, the relationship between the writer and the imagined reader is manifested in the choices the writer has made. As Kaplan and Grabe (2002, p.194) state in their discussion of the nature of texts in the context of discourse analysis, they are “the negotiated communicative achievements of the participants (the writer and reader)”. Texts such

as essays can thus be seen as written records of dialogues, showing the result of discussions between the writer and imagined others, in which the writer is using the opinions of others (whether these are actually held or could reasonably be held) to develop their own opinions and assign them more persuasive power.

Investigations into L2 writing, however, have not had any noteworthy focus on the nature of these persuasive arguments. Instead, research into the relationship between the reader and the writer has often been investigated through metadiscoursal studies. The focus of these types of studies, often carried out with quantitative corpus linguistics methods, tends to concern particular language items and their roles in text. While this is valuable, it takes a rather narrow approach. Understanding more about the nature and construction of argument first may provide useful insights about those areas of language that are particularly relevant.

This study therefore has two parts: it first investigates the construction of arguments in novice and expert writing. Using information about the differences, it then analyses those metadiscoursal elements that are most relevant to identify further pedagogical implications.

### **2.3.1 Research Questions about argument construction**

My research questions about the construction of argument will reflect the dialogic nature of text, and particularly argument, as identified in the literature, and will not only ask about the writers' point of view but also explicitly refer to how they manage the opinions of others.

In order to learn more about the nature of argument, approaches that deconstruct and construct argument may have much to offer. Although they have not been widely used in education (with some notable exceptions concerning three-part construction models at secondary school level), their models of argument structure can be adapted and used to investigate how writers in an HE context create arguments. The research questions will focus on the construction of arguments. Based on the definition of argument as containing a minimum of two elements, they will ask both about points of view and the support that is provided for them. In Chapter 4, I will give further reasons why I have chosen to investigate Point and Support, rather than using all the categories of three-part models (which include e.g. 'Explanations', as mentioned above).

Using insights from argumentation studies in an L2 context enables this study to contribute towards narrowing the aforementioned research gap (see Section 2.2.1), which is that rhetoric has had a negligible impact on L2 discourse research. The aim of this thesis is to find out more about the nature of L2 arguments, specifically how and when the writers argue. This will be achieved by identifying how expert writers and L2 students argue in persuasive pieces of writing and by comparing the two in terms of argumentational and linguistic features.

Thus, the Research Questions about argument construction are:

Table 2.6: Research Questions 1 and 2 (argument construction)

Research Questions (argument construction)
<p><b>1. How do the writers make their point of view clear?</b></p> <p>1.1. How often and when do they state their opinion?</p> <p>1.2. How often and when do they deal with the (imagined) opinion of others?</p> <p><b>2. How do the writers defend their point of view?</b></p> <p>2.1. How often and when do they give support for their opinion?</p> <p>2.2. How often and when do they deal with the (imagined) support given by others?</p>

### 2.3.2 Research Questions about language

For the linguistic analysis, I will investigate elements of metadiscourse. I will examine what is traditionally categorised as textual metadiscourse, which “can help us show how we link and relate individual propositions so that they form a cohesive and coherent text and how individual elements of those propositions make sense in conjunction with the other elements of the text in a particular situation” (Vande Kopple, 1985, p. 87). To further narrow this down, I have chosen to examine certain cohesive devices only. However, the exact interactional and / or interactive discourse markers that will be studied are not decided a priori but will instead be decided once the Research Questions about argument construction have been answered. This ensures that the most relevant language features will be investigated, that is, those that are used differently in arguments by student writers and expert writers and which may affect the persuasive power of the pieces. The following question will be investigated:

Table 2.7: Research Question 3 (metadiscoursal markers)

Research Question (metadiscoursal markers)
<b><i>3. How do the writers use certain cohesive devices to signal the relationships between propositions?</i></b>

I will investigate the grammatical and semantic functions of the selected markers, and any erroneous uses of any cohesive markers that relate to the communication of ideas. In Chapter 6 I will provide more information about which cohesive devices have been chosen for examination and why, and about the methods for this linguistic analysis.

As the first analysis, about the construction of argument, draws upon some of the models described in this chapter, I will return to those in Chapter 4. However, I shall first expand on the nature of the corpora in Chapter 3. This is necessary for the following reasons:

- (1) it is useful to be able to illustrate the methods being described with the actual data that are being analysed, to avoid having to explain the context of the data in order to demonstrate the methods, and
- (2) if the nature of the corpora is better understood, then the method of analysis can be better designed to maximise their relevance to the corpora.

### **3 THE COLLECTION AND THE CONTENT OF THE CORPORA**

As mentioned in previous chapters, the ability to argue in writing is of utmost importance in HE, and essays in particular represent an argumentational genre that is often relied on for assessment purposes in academia, even though what is meant by 'essay' varies considerably. Unfortunately, expectations regarding arguments are rarely made explicit.

In order to know what could usefully be taught to students about arguments, logic suggests that (1) it is important to understand what argumentational skills the students already have and to build on these, and (2) to provide expert exemplars or, if they are not wholly suitable for pedagogical purposes, adaptations of these or information gleaned from them, so that students know what they should work towards. It is therefore useful to compare the differences between a student and an expert corpus, to consider the implications of those differences for the teaching of writing skills, and to formulate pedagogical suggestions about the role of argument in EAP.

The student corpus in this study consists of 32 short Student Essays (SEs), written by international students in their first weeks on a presessional course, in response to a prompt about the funding of education. The expert corpus used in this study comprises 22 opinion pieces written by academics from a variety of disciplines for the

purposes of a university news website. Each corpus contains over 10,000 words of semi-academic argumentational writing. This chapter will explain the corpus design.

First, I will justify the use of the student and expert corpora as a research tool by discussing what comparative approaches can offer (Section 3.1). I discuss two approaches in particular: contrastive rhetoric (Section 3.1.1) and the comparison of expert and novice writing (Section 3.1.2). I then expand upon the collection method and provide details on the nature of the student corpus (Section 3.2) and of the expert corpus (Section 3.3) before drawing general conclusions (Section 3.4).

### **3.1 The purpose of collecting corpora**

Academic discourse has been investigated in different ways, the most pedagogically relevant being genre analysis, corpus-based studies, contrastive rhetoric and ethnographic paradigms (Flowerdew, 2002). Comparative approaches constitute a commonly used research method. For example, able writers are often juxtaposed with groups of lesser skilled writers (e.g. Sommers, 1976; Hasselgård, 2016), referred to as “basic” writers (Bizzell, 1986), or “poor” writers (Flower and Hayes, 1980). Writers who operate in different contexts are also often compared, for example students of different disciplines (Dahl, 2004; Kuteeva and Airey, 2014; Hasselgård, 2016), or academic vs. workplace contexts (Dias et al., 2013). Studies have also compared writing by students from different backgrounds, e.g. those with different L1s (Dahl, 2004; Hasselgård, 2016), or immigrant / “generation 1.5” writers vs. those educated in the US (Matsuda et al., 2003). Of particular interest for this

study are (1) contrastive rhetoric, because of the different cultural backgrounds of the L2 writers vs. the more homogeneous comparator group, and (2) the comparison of expert and novice academic writing, because this is the principal method employed in this thesis.

### **3.1.1 Comparison through contrastive rhetoric**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the contrastive rhetoric method has its roots in L2 writing research. The meaning of 'rhetoric' in this particular context is "associated with text organisation in units larger than the sentence" (Mauranen, 1993, p. 29). The method's traditional, but not exclusive, focus is student essays, as it "examines differences and similarities in ESL and EFL writing across languages and cultures as well as across such different contexts as education and commerce" (Connor 2002, p. 493). The approach was first proposed by Kaplan (1966), whose work on intercultural education was a reaction against traditional Applied Linguistics methods centred on the sentence. Instead, he looked at paragraph organisation, positing that both logic and rhetoric are culture and time dependent and that foreign students' ways of organising ideas are therefore likely to differ from the expectations of L2 readers. Kaplan (1966) claimed that, even in English, writers with Semitic languages as their L1 develop paragraphs based on parallelism, Oriental writers develop paragraphs in an indirect way, and that writers with Romance languages as L1 are more likely to include digressions. Although in this thesis the participants do not share the same L1 (see Section 3.2.2), contrastive rhetoric does inform this study. The participants' L1 is not English and they have not naturally encountered what Kaplan (1966, p. 12) calls

“Anglo-European cultural patterns” or “Platonic-Aristotelian” systems of logical thought.

Admittedly, Kaplan’s claims about paragraph organisation of students with different L1s are questionable (e.g. see You and Liu (2009) and Liu and Furneaux (2014) about Chinese contrastive rhetoric) and the approach itself has become the subject of criticism (see e.g. Pennycook, 2002; Zamel, 1997; Kubota, 2001). Criticisms centre around the teaching of Western norms as opposed to respecting existing cultural differences, which reinforces power imbalances (Connor, 2002). The approach is suggested to be too ethnocentric in general (Connor, 2003), and the nature of the descriptions of language patterns too static (Kubota and Lehner, 2004).

However, the underlying idea persists that the ability to write in one language does not translate into the L2 (see e.g. studies by Lee and Deakin, 2016; Xu and Liu, 2012; Yeung, 2009; Hinkel, 2003; Cutting, 2000) and contrastive rhetoric is likely to “continue in one reincarnation or another as long as educators feel compelled to understand the linguistic and educational backgrounds of their students in order to teach them as well and effectively as possible” (Li, 2014, pp. 111-112). Contrastive rhetoric tends to favour the “explicit teaching of the rhetorical norm” (Kubota 2010, p. 268) in order to “acculturate EFL writers to the target discourse community” (Connor 2002, p. 505). In a social constructivist view of EAP, students are “novices undergoing socialisation into the culturally appropriate texts of their host academic communities” (Salter-Dvorak 2016, p. 20) and as such it is appropriate to teach students what the academic writing expectations are in their new academic environment. This is especially pertinent for L2 international students, for whom the

new academic culture is part of the wider cultural setting which they have entered. What persuasive writing is, for example, differs depending on perceptions in the writer's original culture (Adel, 2006).

Although I would not expect the student participants in this study to write in a uniform way, it is conceivable that because of their L2 backgrounds they may write in a way which is unconventional in British HE, and that differences are likely to be found between their writing and that of expert academic writers. It is important to note that the students' cultural and linguistic 'otherness' will not a priori be considered as a "deficit or an obstacle to learning to write in a second language" (Kubota, 2010, p. 282) as such a deficit model "fixates on perceived student insufficiencies" (Pinnow, 2011, p. 384). Therefore, differences in writing will be acknowledged and then scrutinised to determine which features of argumentational writing seem to present challenges for *either* set of writers. However, the students are L2 writers; therefore, they are inexperienced in English compared to the professionals, are likely to face more challenges and thus likely to make language mistakes. EAP students are required to work towards integrating into a new academic discourse community. Therefore, raising their awareness of the argumentational features of more expert writing is concomitant with student expectations in the EAP classroom and is thus a reasonable action for teachers to take; it need not be seen as an attempt to fix a deficiency.

### **3.1.2 Comparing expert and novice writing**

The comparison of expert and novice writing offers an approach which does not contrast different languages, unlike contrastive rhetoric. Products from writers at

different proficiency levels have previously been compared (e.g. by Lee and Deakin, 2016; Sun and Yang, 2012; McCann, 1989; and Crowhurst, 1987). Research that is of particular relevance has been carried out in pedagogical contexts, for example as done by Scardamalia and Paris, 1985; McNamara et al., 2010; Mansourizadeh and Ahmad, 2011; and Hartig and Lu, 2014. Such research has provided insights into differences regarding outcomes of instruction, textual features, and types and functions of rhetorical devices. Hartig and Lu (2014) found that legal professionals use fewer passives and nominalisations than do students in legal memoranda but conclude that it is more important for students to understand the connection between grammatical form and meaning to communicate clearly than to try and mimic how the professionals write. Mansourizadeh and Ahmad (2011) looked at the rhetorical function of citation in the field of engineering and found that novice writers used citations more for attribution, and in isolation, whereas experts synthesised more and used them for supporting and justifying their position. The authors suggest that EAP instructors raise awareness by asking students to examine discipline-specific literature. McNamara et al. (2010) compared the features of high- and low-rated undergraduate student essays and found that more complex texts and language are more highly valued than texts that are easily understood. They suggest that students should be taught writing strategies to increase their level of their language sophistication.

Kaufer and Geisler focus in a number of studies (e.g. 1989) on comparing source use in student and expert writing, always motivated by an interest in classroom applications.

The results from the above-mentioned studies suggest that comparing novice and expert writing can lead to useful pedagogical insights regarding the teaching of EAP, with regard to academic writing in general and in discipline-specific contexts.

In this thesis, I will be comparing novice and expert writing while taking into account, particularly when formulating pedagogical implications, that the student writers' educational and linguistic experiences differ from those of the members in their new academic community. In Chapter 4, I will explain the exact method that will be used to analyse and compare my texts; first, I shall provide more details about the two corpora.

### **3.2 The student essay corpus**

Students write essays at different stages during their courses. The most useful essays to analyse are likely to be those that have been written at an early stage before the students have received much instruction in their new cultural and academic environments, i.e. as near to the start of their studies in the UK as possible. Collecting essays at the start of the pre-sessional stage makes it possible to determine how students argue before they are potentially given EAP tuition in an English-speaking environment, and it can then be assumed that any ability to argue will not be attributable to recently acquired skills in the UK but to existing abilities, and that any findings will help determine what they can most usefully be taught in the EAP classroom.

### **3.2.1 Collection procedure**

I followed the University of Birmingham's ethics clearance procedure and obtained permission to collect essays from students on preessional EAP courses. These courses are preparatory and have a focus on the English language; students follow these courses before starting their accredited degree courses. Although I worked at the University as an EAP Tutor and Coordinator, I was not involved in teaching at the time of the data collection and did not personally know any of the potential data contributors. I obtained permission from the course management to use the students' work and information, and the course administrator sent me details about the students' backgrounds: entry grades, gender, nationalities and L1s (see Section 3.2.2). I also wrote to the students to obtain their individual permission to use their work. This letter is provided in Appendix 2.

There were two attempts at data collection. The first attempt consisted of essays written in the academic year 2011-2012. I was able to collect pieces that had been written as homework early in the term and that were kept on a shared drive. However, there were a number of problems with this initial corpus: (1) some of the essay titles were missing so I could not always establish the exact task, which made it difficult in some cases to follow the arguments; (2) the essays were from different cohorts and some students seemed to have been asked to include sources while others had not; and (3) it was not clear how long the students had been able to work on the essays and it was possible that some of the pieces were second or third drafts, most probably done after receiving teacher feedback. Despite asking several of the teachers, I could not obtain all the missing information and was therefore not

confident about the nature and consistency of my data. I anticipated that there would be irregularities in my results if I continued.

The second attempt to collect data culminated in the student essay corpus that was eventually used in this research. I emailed all the preessional students who were enrolled on a new two-term long preessional course in January 2014. All 33 students emailed back with permission to use their work.

I provided an essay question to the students via their teachers. In return for their cooperation, the students were promised detailed feedback on their use of arguments and language. I provided this by email, copying in the teachers, so that no extra work was required on their part. This was done for all 33 essays, but only 32 essays were suitable for inclusion in the corpus (see Section 3.2.4).

### **3.2.2 The student writers**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the six elements that constitute the writing process is the writer. In this section, I provide information about the writers who collectively produced the student corpus.

#### *3.2.2.1 Language and nationalities*

The student writers who contributed to the corpus were 32 international students at the University of Birmingham in the academic year starting September 2013. The distribution of nationalities was as follows: 11 Iraqi, six Saudi, four Libyan, three Chinese, and two Vietnamese students, with one of each of the following backgrounds: Kuwaiti, Omani, Bulgarian, British, Malay, Greek, and Japanese (Table 3.1). There were thus 12 different nationalities represented. There were also eight L1

languages represented in the cohort. The most common language, Arabic, was used by nearly 70% of the students (22 people). Other languages spoken were Chinese (3 students), Vietnamese (2 students) with Bulgarian, Malay, Greek, Japanese, and Kurdish each spoken by one student. Less than 20% of the students identified as female (6), the majority being male (26 out of 32).

**Table 3.1: Background information about the student writers**

<b>Language</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Gender</b>
22 Arabic	9 Iraqis 6 Saudis 4 Libyans 1 Kuwaiti 1 Omani 1 British	4 female 18 male
3 Chinese	3 Chinese	3 male
2 Vietnamese	2 Vietnamese	2 male
1 Bulgarian	1 Bulgarian	1 male
1 Malay	1 Malay	1 female
1 Greek	1 Greek	1 male
1 Japanese	1 Japanese	1 female
1 Kurdish	1 Iraqi	1 male
<b>8 different languages</b>	<b>12 different nationalities</b>	<b>6 female and 26 male writers</b>

### *3.2.2.2 Writing level at course entry point*

To be accepted onto the preessional courses at the University of Birmingham, the students had to be at level B1 and B2 of the Common European Framework (Council of Europe (a), no date) before the start of their course. Typically in HE the language

levels of L2 students are measured through an international test of English, taken in a local centre. IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is the most commonly taken proficiency test. It has an academic module whose results are used by English-medium Further and Higher Education Institutions to assess their applicants' English language ability (Panahi, 2015). It is issued by British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Panahi, 2015; Green, 2005). The IELTS test assesses the test takers' ability to read, write, speak and listen in English (Cooper, 2014) and is "deemed to predict their competence in managing the English demand of academic study" (Coffin, 2004, p. 230). Depending on which level (known as 'band') they reach, the applicants may be admitted onto an undergraduate or postgraduate course or may be asked to complete more language study at the institution (Green, 2005) by taking a preessional course of a specified duration. Another popular test is the TOEFL test, issued by the non-profit ETS organisation.

As the volunteers for this study had taken tests to gain admission onto the preessional course at the University of Birmingham, information regarding their writing ability was available. Most of them had taken the IELTS test, the writing component of which consists of two tasks, one being a 250+ word argument essay to discuss "a point of view, argument or problem" (Cambridge English, no date, no page) for which 40 minutes are recommended (Cambridge English (b), no date). The few students who had instead sat TOEFL had written 300+ words in a suggested time of 30 minutes (ETS, no date). The student information confirmed that the students' English levels were typically between bands 4 and 6 of IELTS or its

equivalent. Five of the 32 students' writing exam scores suggested they were 'competent language users' (band 6) whose writing would still have 'some inaccuracies'; another 8 were 'limited users' (band 4) whose language has 'frequent problems'; and the rest were 'modest users' of English (band 5), who make 'many mistakes' but are able to handle 'basic communication in own field' (all terminology taken from the IELTS website). The mode was band 5: 'modest' users of English, with 'partial command' of the language; none of the students' written English could be described as 'extremely limited' (band 3) or 'good' (band 7).

Most of the students were hoping to progress to postgraduate discipline-specific University of Birmingham courses and had previously completed an undergraduate course in their own countries. Although they were, therefore, mature students who had already successfully completed some higher studies, they could be considered novice writers for the following reasons: (1) they had not been exposed much to argumentation as used in Western educational systems because they had not yet received any instruction in the UK; (2) they had not studied through the medium of English before; (3) their IELTS exam score required them to take a long preessional course in order to reach the necessary level of English language; and (4) in comparison to the UK, HE in their home countries does not rely heavily on the submission of written work: frequently, international students "will have done no independent writing before embarking on UK postgraduate study" (The Higher Education Authority, 2014, p. 5).

To summarise, the students had not yet had time to adapt to the expectations and requirements of their new EM educational system abroad. In terms of writing skills,

they had partial command of English, but were not deemed ready for UK university studies until they completed their language instruction.

### **3.2.3 The subject matter**

Another important element of the writing process is the context, or subject matter. The essay set for this study required a minimum of 250 words, as the students were familiar with such lengths, as aforementioned. I considered offering a choice of questions for the students to select from, but that would have resulted in the further division of an already small set of texts. In order to obtain a unified corpus in terms of subject matter I assigned all students the same essay question. The task was:

**‘All governments should pay for the university education of their people.’** *Do you agree? Discuss this topic by writing about different aspects, stating the benefits and drawbacks of different points of view, giving evidence and explanations and drawing your own conclusion.*

The task proposes a statement (‘All governments should...’), asks for an opinion (‘Do you agree?’), and gives specific instructions about what is expected (‘Discuss... by writing about...’). This question was chosen because it concerned the students’ own circumstances, Higher Education, meaning that they probably had an opinion and therefore were likely to have something to contribute to the topic. Although the instructions do not explicitly mention the words ‘argue’ or ‘argument’, I deliberately referred to elements of argumentation such as ‘different points of view’, ‘evidence’, and ‘explanations’ to encourage the inclusion of argument in the essays. I also

explicitly stated that students needed to draw their own conclusion to discourage them from simply listing the (real or imagined) views of others.

#### **3.2.4 The nature of the Student Essay (SE) corpus**

It was important for the students to be able to produce their work to a standard with which they could be satisfied. I therefore gave them a deadline of one week to complete the task. Thirty-three students agreed to participate and did not appear to have any difficulty meeting the deadline; however, one of the submitted essays was incomplete, as evidenced by bullet points and the use of 'etc' at the end of the essay, and it was therefore omitted from the study. Thirty-two texts were subsequently included, comprising a total word count of 10,754 words. The average word count per essay was 336 words, but there were considerable differences in length: the shortest essay comprised 173 words and the longest 625. Appendix 2 gives the full texts of the 32 Student Essays (SEs), presented in order of length from the shortest to the longest.

In the next section, I discuss these essays by first exploring the context in which they have been written and then by using a classification scheme based on the essay task. Understanding the nature of the student essays offers the following benefits: (1) it enables a discussion of relevant literature, that is, research about similar pieces of writing; (2) it allows the identification of a suitable comparator corpus; and (3) it can be useful later to interpret the outcomes of the analyses.

#### 3.2.4.1 *The student argument essay corpus: IELTS-type essays*

As aforementioned, the essays produced by the L2 student cohort were written at the start of a long preessional English course. Students' work at this stage does not reflect the type of essay required for their academic courses in terms of length and task. The SEs are not IELTS essays either: they have not been written under exam circumstances and have a different intended audience. I refer to the SEs as 'IELTS-type essays' for the following reasons: (1) the students had previously written an IELTS (or TOEFL) essay as part of their entry exam; (2) the students tell their EAP tutors that they prepared for their high stakes admission tests by writing practice essays, either on preparatory courses and/or by using self-study materials; and (3) the instructions they were set (as described above) were similar in nature to the instructions given for an IELTS test, in terms of task type, essay topic and length.

As students had extensively practised writing IELTS-type essays previously and were being set a similar task for this study, their schematic knowledge about the test is likely to have encouraged them to write a type of essay in English about which they felt confident: an IELTS-type essay.

Taking a more theoretical approach, as I will do next, will also confirm that the SEs can be categorised as IELTS-type essays. As mentioned in Chapter 2, essays are pieces of writing whose purpose it is to argue. An overview of the different types of academic assignments in Britain (Nesi and Gardner, 2012) revealed 13 different genres, including the university essay family. However, the types of non-referenced opinion essays that constitute the corpus for this thesis are not produced in these insessional university contexts. Although the students were asked to write an essay,

the nature of this essay is different to the types of essays normally found in HE. It can be seen as a very specific genre, only written in IELTS preparation classes and before students write assignments in their disciplines, e.g. on preessional courses. In order to describe what this preessional genre is like, it is useful to distinguish the similarities and differences between the SEs, IELTS essays, and university essays. This can be done by means of a classification scheme, such as the one designed by Moore and Morton (2005) for written texts, based on the essay task. Although it is different from analysing the texts themselves, studying the tasks set is still an option and a useful endeavour in order to classify academic writing (Nesi and Gardner, 2012).

The scheme distinguishes four broad categories: *genre* (here simply defined as the task set e.g. an essay, a case study report), *information source* (e.g. prior knowledge, primary sources, secondary sources, collected by the student), *object of enquiry* (*phenomenal* i.e. practical, related to the real world, or *metaphenomenal*, i.e. more abstract and concerned with ideas, laws, theories etc.) and *rhetorical function*. Rhetorical function is what the task is instructing the writer to do. This could be *epistemic*, i.e. more descriptive (about what is happening) and analytical, or it could be *deontic*, i.e. more practical (about what should happen), with a recommendation. This distinction between *descriptive* and *deontic* sounds similar to the descriptions in Table 2.1 (Chapter 2), where the terms *analytical* and *hortatory* are used. However, the terms *deontic* and *hortatory* appear to be used slightly differently and I therefore do not use them interchangeably with the other two.

In the table below, I have classified typical IELTS argument essays, SEs, and university assignments, in order to give an overview and comparison of their features. University essays are included because they are what students may ultimately be required to produce during their academic courses. Additionally, at one point I had considered collecting longer university essays for my expert corpus (see Section 3.3.1), and their inclusion in the table helps to identify similarities and differences between them and the SEs (and demonstrates that they would not have been a suitable comparator).

The IELTS essay and university assignment information in the table is based on Moore and Morton (2005), who developed the categorisations using a corpus of Australian university essays. I justify my classification of the SEs below the table, where I also compare the three types of writing.

**Table 3.2: Classification of types of writing**

	<b>Typical IELTS essay</b>	<b>SEs</b>	<b>University assignments</b>
<b>Genre (task)</b>	essay	essay	most commonly essay
<b>Information source</b>	prior knowledge	prior knowledge	mainly primary and/or secondary sources
<b>Object of enquiry</b>	phenomenal	phenomenal	phenomenal (more often) and metaphenomenal
<b>Rhetorical function</b>	deontic	deontic	far more often epistemic than deontic

In terms of genre, Moore and Morton (2005) classify IELTS essays and university assignments as essays, here defined as a “task requiring the presentation of an argument in response to a given proposition or question” (Moore and Morton, 2005, p. 50). I have added 'task' between brackets in the table, to show the distinction with other conceptualisations of genre already mentioned (see Section 2.1).

At first, it might appear controversial that Moore and Morton state that essays are the most commonly used type of university assignment, given for example that Nesi and Gardner have identified 13 genre families of assessed writing in HE. However, as mentioned previously, the word 'essay' is used very loosely in HE. It is also worth noting that Moore and Morton (2005) define 'essay' by its task instructions and therefore its aim, to produce argument. This broad definition refers to all types of written argument and therefore also relates to texts that traditionally may not be classified as an essay. One example of this could be Problem Questions, which Nesi and Gardner (2012) describe as a different genre in which “a situation is described and students have to analyse it from a professional perspective to produce recommendations ...” (p. 39)). Given their inclusive definition of 'essay', Moore and Morton's assertion that it is the most commonly used genre at university is not as contentious as it might appear. Following their definition of essay, I categorised the SEs as essays too, as their task poses students a question and requires them to argue in their answer.

Regarding the information source, Moore and Morton (2005) contrast the IELTS essay and the university essay. Unlike university essay writers, the writers of the IELTS essays do not rely on external sources, only on their own prior knowledge,

and they are concerned with the phenomenal rather than with abstract concepts or theories. I have come to the same conclusions about the SE writers, whose object of enquiry in this study was a real-world practice, the funding of HE.

The rhetorical function of both SEs and IELTS essays can also be said to be the same, i.e. deontic. The SE writers were essentially asked: '*Who should pay for X?*', meaning they are required to judge the desirability of an action. The reason for setting a deontic SE question was that it facilitates giving an opinion and is likely to require less knowledge than an epistemic task. The latter reason is probably also why hortation is common in the IELTS exam (Moore and Morton, 2005). University essays, however, are different from SEs and IELTS essays in that they are much more likely to be epistemic, more likely to be metaphenomenal and are expected to consider external sources.

One important conclusion to draw from this categorisation is that SEs and IELTS essays share the same features and that findings about SEs could arguably be extrapolated to IELTS essays. Moreover, as SEs have been shown to be IELTS-type essays, it is worth considering what the literature says about the IELTS essay.

#### *3.2.4.2 Research into the IELTS essay genre*

Much research into the essay writing component of the IELTS test has focused on principles of testing such as reliability and validity (e.g. Uysal, 2009; Veerappan and Sulaiman, 2012), the effectiveness of teaching methods (e.g. Sanonguthai, 2011) and duration (e.g. Green, 2005). Other articles investigate the link between IELTS test performance and university results (e.g. Cooper, 2014) or consider the difficulties

faced by certain nationalities of test-takers (e.g. Panahi, 2015). As IELTS is a test taken by students, the focus on teaching and on test design is not surprising. As the test requires the writing of an argument essay, it would also be reasonable to expect some interest in this genre. However, there is a distinct paucity of research on compositional or genre analyses of IELTS essays, and few enquiries into how IELTS writers argue. Instead, published types of academic discourse have been much more researched (Coffin and Hewings, 2005). There has been some research into the relative importance of language, such as syntactical, rhetorical or compositional features in the assessment of IELTS essays; however, much of this research has been hindered by the difficulty in separating assessment variables and has proven inconclusive (Coffin, 2004).

It is therefore worth looking instead at research about argumentation in contexts where students are being prepared for writing in Higher Education or are in the early stages thereof. This has found that arguing in writing presents a challenge in a number of ways. For example, Wolfe and Britt (2008) found evidence of the 'myside' bias (Perkins, 1985): that less skilled writers did not sufficiently explore arguments against their own opinion. Imbrenda (2008) found that many writers did not provide clear and relevant warrants. He posits that the political climate of anti-intellectualism and schooling may have contributed to how the writers view facts and opinions as binary opposites. He also feels that schooling may be responsible for conceptualising persuasive and informational text types as wholly distinct. It is possible to identify 'school-based genres', which include academic papers (Schleppegrell, 2001), and which appear to shape how academic writing is perceived. Instructional materials

consolidate or cause these perceptions by teaching students particular essay types as distinctive forms. Evans (2000) for example, refers to three types of discursive essays: for and against, problem/solution, and opinion essays. The 'for and against' essay structure requires the presentation of two equally balanced views, with the writer's opinion at the end, whereas the opinion essay presents an opposing view but only in the last but one paragraph. All of these discursive essay forms are contrasted with the argumentative essay, which argues for *or* against. Argument is thus seen as separate rather than as a mode that is present in any essay, and only certain types of essays are presented as requiring a clear point of view from the writer. In other words, instructional materials appear to present a reductionist and arguably flawed view.

It is possible that because of previously received instructions and practice, students have specific views of the type of essay they are being asked to write, which influences their choices regarding the writing format.

Research into how the IELTS essay compares with essays written in HE has concluded that IELTS essays have more in common with hortatory genres than with professional academic texts (Coffin, 2004; Moore and Morton, 2005; Coffin and Hewings, 2005): Coffin (2004) likened IELTS essays to letters to the press, and Moore and Morton (2005, p. 64) consider the IELTS essay similar to "such public non-academic genres as the *letter to the editor* or *newspaper editorial*". Other researchers have found that L2 students prefer hortatory over analytical arguments, for example Liu and Furneaux's (2015) contrastive study of argumentative writing by Chinese university students. In short, IELTS essays, and by extension preessional IELTS-type essays are quite hortatory in nature.

#### *3.2.4.3 Conclusions about the nature of the SE corpus*

I have argued that the SEs are preessional essays that are similar to IELTS essays, which are in turn similar to letters written to or by editors. They tend to include recommendations and can be said to have a deontic rhetorical purpose. In other words, I argue that the SE corpus consists of IELTS-type argument essays, comparable in some ways to journalistic pieces of hortatory opinion writing.

### **3.3 The expert essay corpus**

#### **3.3.1 Locating a suitable expert comparator corpus**

In this study, the writing produced by student writers is compared to a written professional corpus. Professional corpora are “corpora made up of data that has been written or spoken by professional academics”, and are mostly “based on research articles, lectures and textbooks” (Flowerdew, 2017, p. 92). Although writing produced by academics seems to be promising as a comparator corpus, their usual work, such as text books and articles, represents very different genres to SE opinion pieces.

In order to find expert writing that would be suitable for comparison, I considered a variety of text types which, like the SEs, could be expected to contain opinion and argument. I read texts written by student academic writers, L1 students who were undergraduates and therefore more experienced at academic writing than the SE writers. I examined editorials from the student newspaper, online blogs about relatively academic subjects such as education or business, and third year students’ essays. I also looked at non-academic professional writing, such as tribunal judges’

determinations. However, these pieces of writing did not prove similar enough for a useful comparison: they were too different in terms of style, subject, and/or length. For example, the student editorials were very informal in style, and the blogs and determinations had no discernible patterns in terms of length and approach.

I gave most consideration to using undergraduate student essays. These are longer and more sophisticated essays, reflecting a standard that the study participants would be required to achieve once embarking on their academic courses, and that might therefore elucidate the relevant skills. Undergraduate essays are written by L1 and L2 students who are not experts, but who are more experienced at academic writing in English than the preessional students participating in the study.

Furthermore, I noticed similarities between the undergraduate essays and the IELTS-type essays: as Moore and Morton (2005) demonstrate, the IELTS essay is more similar to the university essay than to any other written genre typically required in HE, such as a research report or a literature review. However, there are also considerable differences between the IELTS essay and the university essay, such as the objects of enquiry, the rhetorical functions and the information sources (see Table 3.2). The latter, in particular, present a great challenge for students as using sources involves the complex task of balancing their own claims with those of others (Groom, 2000).

Given that one of my aims was to have the outcomes of the comparison inform classroom instruction, I felt that a more suitable course of action would be to compare pieces of writing that had more commonalities than the IELTS essay and the university essay appeared to have. For example, I felt that it would be useful to

know what experts would write if, like the students, they had been asked to give their opinion on an issue without relying on external sources, as this would make it possible to establish how they argue in pieces with intentions that were not wholly dissimilar. A comparator corpus of pieces of similar lengths would also be useful in that it might reveal what students needed to learn before they were asked to write longer and therefore more challenging texts such as the university essay. Whilst the corpora would still contain different specific genres, ideally they would both contain non-referenced short opinion pieces.

### **3.3.2 A suitable comparator corpus: the Birmingham Briefs (BBs)**

Having established the nature of the SEs in some detail, I was able to formulate criteria for selection for the expert corpus: a useful comparator corpus would consist of short opinion pieces without sources, not unlike editorials or letters to the editor, but written by experienced academic writers.

These criteria for selection led me to the *News* section of the Birmingham University website (<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/thebirminghambrief/index.aspx>) which posts short opinion pieces called ‘Birmingham Briefs’ (hereafter referred to as BBs), which are described as providing ‘intelligent thought on policy issues’. Each BB is “a comment piece written by a different academic each week and sent to relevant policy-makers, stakeholders and journalists” (Communications Team 2014, p. 10).

The table below shows the similarities in intentions (not in realisations) between the SE and BB corpora. It compares the features of the IELTS-type essay to those of the

BBs, based on the writing guidelines i.e. the instructions provided to the writers. The information about the intended content, language and style, and length of the IELTS-type essay is based on information on the IELTS test issuers' website (Cambridge English, no date); respective information regarding the BBs is based on personal correspondence (Mack, 2011) (see Appendix 3). The assertions made in the table about genre, information source, object of enquiry and rhetorical function have either been taken from Table 3.2 in the case of the student writing, or are justified below Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3: Features of the corpora based on writing guidelines**

	<b>IELTS type essays</b>	<b>Birmingham Briefs</b>
<b>Genre (task)</b>	essay / opinion piece	essay /opinion piece
<b>Information source</b>	prior knowledge	prior knowledge
<b>Object of enquiry</b>	phenomenal	phenomenal
<b>Rhetorical function</b>	deontic	deontic and/or epistemic
<b>Length</b>	250 words minimum	400-600 words; concise
<b>Content</b>	- a discursive consideration about most relevant issues related to a topic:	- a response to a current policy issue; an opinion piece, critique or insight related to a given policy area:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* evaluate and challenge ideas, evidence or argument</li> <li>* compare/contrast evidence, opinions, implications</li> <li>* justifying opinion</li> <li>* problem/solution</li> </ul> <p>- a clear, relevant, well-organised argument, giving evidence or examples to support ideas.</p> <p>- relevant examples (can be from personal experience, if relevant) or evidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* a new insight into a given policy area related to a new piece of research</li> <li>* an opinion piece or critique on a specific policy area</li> <li>* a case studies (sic) that shed new light on a specific policy area</li> </ul> <p>- not a press release; a briefing, expert insight</p> <p>- no complex academic detail, but links to more detailed information are acceptable</p>
<b>Language and style</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- accurate use of language</li> <li>- academic or semi-formal/neutral style</li> <li>- clearly organised, full, connected text</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- specialist language should be avoided if possible, or explained</li> <li>- written for an intelligent and informed audience but neither expert nor academic</li> </ul>

When comparing the task instructions of IELTS-type essays (SEs) and the BBs, there are clear similarities. The genres of both corpora, again following Moore and Morton's (2005) definition based on their instruction tasks, is that of the essay. More specifically, they can be said to consist of opinion pieces with a persuasive purpose. Like the SEs, the BBs are based on prior knowledge as they do not rely on external sources, or "complex academic detail" (Mack, 2011, personal correspondence, see Appendix 3). The object of enquiry of both corpora is phenomenal, or practical; for example, the BBs are about actual policies existing in society. Another similarity between the intended text types is that neither are truly academic. The writers of IELTS-type essays have not yet commenced their academic degree courses, so their

essays cannot be expected to have a consistently formal, academic style. The Birmingham Briefs, although written by academic authors (mainly departmental staff at the university, and the occasional postgraduate researcher), and published on a university website to be read by the academic community, have the wider public as their intended audience (Mack, 2011). The BB guidelines specify that no specialist language or academic detail should be included nor any references to sources. Like the SEs, the BBs can therefore be expected to be at most semi-academic in style. This is also evidenced in the following comment by a BB writer, as part of her reply to my request for permission to use her Brief, which explained that her piece uses “not really the kind of language (use of things like ‘dangers’) that I would recommend to my students” (Gale, 2011, see Appendix 3).

Where the corpora can be expected to differ is in their rhetorical function: the BB writers are approached by the website editors for their expertise on a topic and therefore do not receive instructions in the way that the SE writers did. Instead they have the freedom to choose and answer their own question. What has been said about newspaper opinion pieces is also true for the BBs: they represent “a form of reportage which bridges professional realms of political, social or scientific discourses and the interests and understandings of general readers” with “the broad purpose of informing and convincing an audience of non-experts of particular claims about the world” (Fu and Hyland, 2014, p. 123). As the academics write about policy, they may well choose hortation or other deontic functions, e.g. instruction (what must be done to achieve something) or recommendation (what can be done about something). Alternatively, they could opt for epistemic categories such as evaluation (how valid /

important / relevant something is), explanation (what causes something) or prediction (what will happen to something) (terminology taken from Moore and Morton, 2005).

In short, the BB writers have a greater choice of rhetorical functions, and they are encouraged to write somewhat longer pieces (albeit still short), but both SE and BB writers set out to achieve similar goals. These are to argue in writing (and thus to produce a type of essay), more specifically by writing a relatively short opinion piece in a semi-academic style, in which they will rely on prior knowledge only and will discuss real-world practice. These similarities in intention make them interesting to compare.

However, it is worth noting that the corpora cannot be said to be similar in nature in that they do not constitute the same genre as per the definitions employed in genre theories (see Chapter 2, section 2.1.1.2.1). Some of the relevant areas that were mentioned in Chapter 2 to discuss genre differences include structure and style (ESP); the action a genre is used to accomplish and the writing situation (New Rhetoric); and the activity, relationship between participants, and channel of communication (SFL's *field*, *tenor* and *mode*). Nesi and Gardner (2012, pp. 24-25) express this concisely by referring to differences in “purpose, audience, writer role and context” as particularly central to identifying genres. Using these dimensions to reflect on the corpora, they demonstrably represent different genres. As shown in Table 3.3, the BB writers produce their pieces to offer insights or opinions about policy to a non-expert but informed audience who they do not know and who will read their pieces on a university website. They are likely to be asked to write or want to do so because of the increasingly common requirement in academia to demonstrate

impact and engage with wider audiences (see Section 8.2.3). The BB writers use a language they are comfortable writing in. Their role is to inform and offer professional expertise on a subject of their choice. Conversely, the SE writers are in a much less powerful position: they write in their L2 to respond to a task they had no say in which was given to them in a classroom context. Their audience is one person, not an expert in the subject matter but someone who will judge them on their responses, in particular their use of language and also the persuasive potential of their arguments.

In short, the specific purposes of the writing, the contexts in which the writing is produced and received, and the roles of the writers and readers are very different, and thus according to genre theories so are the corpora's genres. If, however, genre is defined broadly and by its task instruction and/or aim only (as Moore and Morton (2005) did), then both sets of texts can be said to represent the argument essay genre.

Below, where I am discussing how texts compare, I will refer to genre in this broader sense as 'genre (task)', and in the more specific sense as 'genre (writing context)'. My corpora have the same intention, to produce an argument essay, i.e. their genre (task) is similar. However, looking at the realisation of these essays, they are clearly different in nature, and this is because of their differences in genre (writing context).

My choice of corpora can be likened to Barton's (1993) in her discourse analysis comparing Point of View essays written by experienced academic writers to essays written by students as a university writing proficiency test. Like her, I would say that "[i]n spite of the many differences between the writing situations of these two groups, both groups are constructing arguments for a general audience of academic readers,

thus the data reflect (...) a genre common to academic writing [i.e. argument]" (Barton, 1993, p.747).

Both of my corpora can be said to have in common that they consist of opinion essays of short lengths which are meant to discuss real-world issues without including references, which are aimed at a non-expert audience, and which contain claims that need to be substantiated. When justifying her comparator corpora, Barton (1993, p.747) says: "the arguments they [i.e. these two groups of writers] construct presumably hold what the writers believe to be general appeal, so the texts for this discourse analysis were chosen to investigate what may be similar or different in the construction of academic argumentation by experienced writers and student writers". This is also why I chose my texts.

### **3.3.3 Collection procedure**

Collecting the BBs was straightforward, as they are published on a public-facing website. As argumentational and language features might be different depending on the length of a piece of writing, the shortest Briefs were selected, as they were closest in length to the students' pieces. The chosen Briefs appeared on the website between 2011, when the BB initiative started, and April 2014. I emailed the authors (see Appendix 1) to obtain permission to use their texts for research purposes. Most of the authors agreed and the final Briefs that I selected are simply the shortest ones for which I had received permission. Their length varies between 259 and 521 words, with an average of 470 words.

As the 32 SEs comprise 10,754 words, I selected Briefs until I had reached a similar total word count without exceeding it. This resulted in a corpus of 22 Briefs with a total word count of 10,331 words. This represents a <4% difference in word count between the two corpora, meaning that when tallies are made across the corpora, the comparative data are quite transparent, which is useful. Unfortunately, this also means that due to the longer average word count of BBs compared to SEs, there are a differing number of pieces in the corpora, rendering statistical comparisons of the texts more difficult.

Appendix 1 gives the full texts of the 22 Birmingham Briefs, ordered from the shortest to the longest.

#### **3.3.4 The expert writers**

Appendix 1 lists the authors, the author information as given at the bottom of each BB, the titles and the word lengths of the pieces. Based on this list, eight of the writers can be identified as female (just over a third), and 14 as male. Unlike for the student study contributors, no information was available regarding nationalities and first languages, and I did not deem it relevant or appropriate to ask.

The background and gender of all participants is provided for the sake of interest and transparency but will not be used in the analyses to correlate with writing features. Gender is considered solely in order to use 'he' or 'she' when discussing a BB or SE writer.

### 3.3.5 The subject matter

The SEs all contain the same subject matter as set by their essay task: to discuss whether governments should pay for university education. Therefore, they have been classed as belonging to the academic field of Social Sciences, Education in particular. However, it is worth noting that student writers' undergraduate degrees are likely to represent a variety of fields (details of which were not part of the data I was provided with) and that they were therefore not necessarily writing from the disciplinary perspectives of scholars of the field of Education.

The Birmingham Briefs are not limited to a particular topic and represent a variety of fields. Using information from the BB web page (the School or Department where the writers work, and their job titles) and from the Briefs themselves (the chosen titles and topics), four disciplinary areas are identified: Politics, Social Sciences, Health, and Natural and Engineering Sciences (Table 3.4):

**Table 3.4: Disciplinary areas of the BBs**

<b><u>Disciplines</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b>BB number</b>
<b>Political Sciences</b>	9	41%	2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 14, 17, 21
<b>Social Sciences</b>	6	27%	6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16
<b>Health Sciences</b>	4	18%	4, 18, 19, 22
<b>Natural and Engineering Sciences</b>	3	14%	1, 11, 20

Political Sciences are most commonly represented in the BB corpus, followed by Social Sciences, then Health Sciences and lastly Natural and Engineering Sciences.

### 3.4 Conclusions about the corpora

The nature of the two corpora is summarised as follows. The SEs were written by university students, the BBs by lecturers and researchers at the same university. The SEs, because of the nature of the prompt question, belong to the subject discipline of Social Sciences. The majority of the BBs concern Political and Social Sciences, and the others fall within the disciplines of Health and Natural and Engineering Sciences. There is only a 4% difference in total word counts of the two corpora, but the average number of words per piece is lower in the SEs (Table 3.5):

Table 3.5: Statistical information about the SE and BB corpora

	The SE corpus	The BB corpus
<b>Number of pieces</b>	32	22
<b>Total word count</b>	10,754	10,331
<b>Range of words</b>	173 - 625	259 - 521
<b>Average number of words per text</b>	336	470
<b>Median number of words per text</b>	290	481

Both corpora consist of opinion pieces and therefore contain semi-academic, argumentational writing; they can be compared to journalistic writing and to forms of essay writing. Judging by their intentions, their genres (task) are similar, but the BBs may be more epistemic. There are likely to be differences between the corpora which can be ascribed to the differences in the backgrounds of their writers, in particular their language competence and experience of writing, and these will be discussed in Chapters 5 (components of arguments) and 7 (how certain cohesive features help

realise arguments). Next, in Chapter 4, I will describe the methods used to carry out the argumentational analysis, to answer the Research Questions about the presence of arguments in the pieces described in this chapter.

## **4 DESIGNING A METHOD TO ANALYSE ARGUMENTS**

The aim of this chapter is to describe the process of designing a method that can answer the Research Questions that relate to the composition of argument, i.e. RQs 1 and 2. Question 1 asks about the points being made by the writers, specifically how often and when they state either their own views or those that others may reasonably hold. Question 2 asks the same about the evidence for each of these types of points. These RQs refer back to the models of argumentation that were discussed in Chapter 2, in particular those that identified arguments by deconstructing texts, which interpret the argumentational intention of the writers and reconstruct it. I will use insights from such frameworks of argumentation, as well as from other literature, to examine how arguments can be located in texts.

Some of the aforementioned models of argumentation are the product of theoretical or pedagogical considerations and have not been designed with argument analysis in mind (e.g. Kaufer and Geisler's model); others are very precise and require extensive training to apply them correctly (as I was told by advocates of the pragma-dialectical method at the 2014 'Argumentation in Context' Summer School). It is reasonable to assume that many of these models take an all-encompassing theoretical view of how argumentation takes place, and may not practically apply to certain specific contexts, or alternatively they may address a particular context but not be generalisable. Instead of testing this, it seems more prudent and practicable to draw on and adapt



In order to incorporate different perspectives ranging from logical to rhetorical in my own methods of analysis, I will draw on resources that are located on different parts of this spectrum, such as approaches found in reports, articles, books, and instructional materials. I have summarised and visualised these as follows:

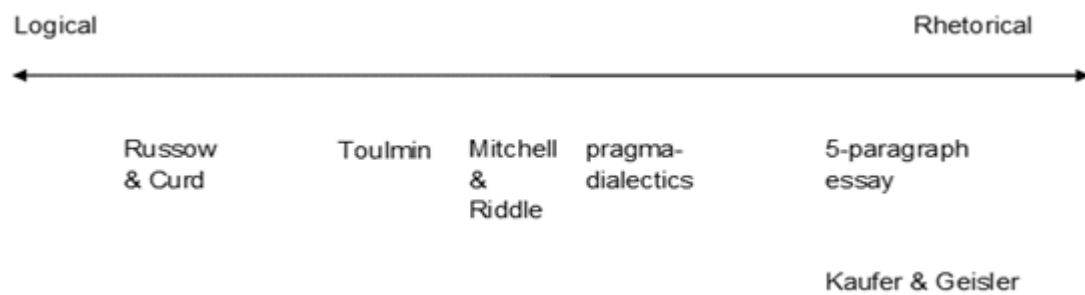


Figure 4.2: A spectrum of argumentation models and schemes

Figure 4.2 shows how, going from left to right, a first resource is Russow and Curd's *Principles of Reasoning* (1989), which has not been reviewed previously as it is more mathematical in nature than the rhetorical frameworks that have been discussed. It is a student book with an informal logic slant. Andrews (2010) situates Toulmin's model near the middle of the spectrum, and Mitchell and Riddle's (2000) model resides in the middle itself. Pragma-dialectics, as its name suggests, is also situated near the middle, but leans toward the rhetorical side (van Eemeren et al., 2014). The rhetorical perspective itself is represented by Kaufer and Geisler (1991) and I will also refer to the five-paragraph essay, a staged model of writing that is often taught to students in the American schooling system (Lindemann 1995).

#### **4.1.1 Using text structure to locate arguments**

One way of identifying arguments is to consider the organisation of texts and to hypothesise where the arguments would be located. By looking in the right places for the principal arguments, these are more likely to be identified. For example, an introduction is less likely to contain a full argument, i.e. a point with corresponding support, than the middle of a text: writers may use the beginning of their texts to set the scene for the forthcoming arguments by framing them in a wider context.

Authors from all areas of the spectrum agree that full arguments are most likely to be found in the middle of argument pieces. An example from the rhetorical side of the spectrum is the five-paragraph essay. Although it is generally seen as too prescriptive and restrictive for HE, it continues to be used in US tertiary education, possibly because of its familiarity and popularity with students (Miller, 2010). This organisational device can potentially be traced back to Quintilian, who lived c. 35 - 100 AD. His original model was based on speeches (Lindemann, 1995) and was inspired by Cicero (106 - 43 BC). It is in essence a tool to aid with argument construction, having been used for a guide to arguing in ancient Rome and more recently to organise essays (Andrews, 2010). Quintilian's model consisted of exordium (introduction), narratio (statement of thesis or facts), confirmatio (the central argument, e.g. a connected series of claims, or claims and evidence), refutatio (theoretical or actual opposition to the arguments), and peroratio (conclusion) (Andrews, 2010). Having defined arguments as claims with support, locating arguments in an essay in this tradition would involve studying the confirmatio and refutatio sections, with parts of arguments (points without evidence) being located in the narratio. Similarly, in its modern configuration, the five-paragraph theme has an

introduction and a conclusion, with three paragraphs of expansion and examples in between (Kubota, 2010). These three middle paragraphs each contain a distinct argument (Nesi and Gardner, 2012), and are thus where the argumentation is most likely to be found.

Pragma-dialectics, a theory near the middle of the spectrum, also suggests that this is where argumentation is most likely to be. It distinguishes four stages of interaction between a protagonist and antagonist. The theory specifies an overview of the stages and moves of a critical (dialectical) discussion, which can occur in speech or in writing. According to this theory, the stages in which the participants in the discussion are involved are Confrontation (with moves such as advancing a standpoint, offering a definition), Opening (challenging, agreeing on premises), Argumentation (advancing argumentation, accepting or non-accepting of argumentation) and Concluding (upholding or retracting a standpoint) (van Eemeren, 2010). Again, according to the definition of an argument, only the Argumentation stage itself could be said to contain complete arguments. The other stages are concerned with setting the scene or focussing on the standpoint. The pragma-dialectical stages demonstrate that not every proposition in an argumentational piece of writing needs to be part of an argument. For example, a definition at the start of the writing may be an important contributor to making an argument but is not part of an argument itself.

Russow and Curd (1989) also point out that the main functions of introductions and conclusions are respectively to situate the topic and to sum up ideas rather than to argue. They make it clear that introductory remarks, and restatements or elucidations, do not qualify as evidence for claims. As mentioned previously, Kaufer

and Geisler (1991) expect the writer's point of view to be mentioned for the first time early in the narrative.

Although the consensus from these sources is helpful in locating arguments, there are some caveats. Firstly, most of these sources are prescriptive or advisory in that they offer guidance about where writers should situate argument. They may well be based on research into the genre and offer good advice to writers, but their usefulness for the purposes of analysis is not guaranteed, except perhaps when the writers have been trained to write using the same guidance. Secondly, writers may decide not to follow this advice. Lastly, even if writers intended to follow a particular pattern, for example, to write three paragraphs containing three arguments in the middle of their essay, they will not necessarily have succeeded in doing so.

In conclusion, text organisation can be a useful indicator of where arguments may be located, but this can only be a starting point.

#### **4.1.2 Identifying micro-arguments**

##### *4.1.2.1 Two-part arguments*

Aside from using text patterns in order to identify where arguments are most likely to be found, the structure of the arguments themselves can also be used to locate them.

Russow and Curd (1989) define an argument as “a set of statements – one the conclusion and the rest premises – with the premises intended to support the conclusion or give reasons for thinking that the conclusion is true” (p. 2). As with the definitions given in Chapter 1, this emphasises an argument's minimum requirement

of two elements: an idea / conclusion, and evidence / reasons. This two-part division can be used to construct and analyse arguments, and I refer to these arguments as micro-arguments, using terminology that Toulmin (1958) employed to denote single arguments and which is also used by Mitchell and Riddle (2000).

Russow and Curd (1989, p. 11) suggest the following steps:

- 1. Ask if there is an argument at all. If there is no explicit or implicit conclusion, there is no argument.*
- 2. After finding the conclusion, find statements that provide evidence that the conclusion is true.*

Finding a micro-argument thus involves first locating a conclusion and subsequently the evidence that leads up to it.

In order to find these argument parts in a text, I believe the text questioning method proposed by Toulmin (1958) to be particularly useful (see Chapter 2). To find a conclusion, the reader can ask on what position the writer seeks agreement, what the writer is claiming or what position they are taking. Evidence can be found by questioning the information they are going on. However, the text must be considered carefully: for example, Russow and Curd (1989, p. 10) point out that remarks that simply discount a statement or possible criticism (e.g. “One might think that taxes should be increased, but I oppose any such measure”), are not evidence.

Arguments can thus be found by questioning the content of texts to find points and support.

#### 4.1.2.2 *Three-part arguments*

Although the minimum requirement for an argument is for there to be two components, generative models used in educational contexts in particular identify three: not only claims and evidence, but also some type of reasoning that elucidates and/or justifies the relationship between the other two. As mentioned previously, this third component can be referred to as explanation, analysis, or comment, and can be seen to be an amalgamation of Toulmin's concepts of warrant and backing. Mitchell and Riddle (2000) refer to it as BECAUSE (see Chapter 2, Figure 2.4), denoting the activity of justification, reconciling, making rational, or legitimating. This third component can be found by identifying these rhetorical purposes in texts.

#### 4.1.2.3 *Using language to identify parts of arguments*

Regardless of whether an argument is seen to contain two components or more, language can be used as a signpost the presence of argument. Russow and Curd (1989) point out that cue words can help identify the premises (e.g. *since*, but not in the temporal sense; *because*, but not in the sense of cause rather than reason; *as shown by*; *seeing that*; *for the reasons that*; *may be deduced from*; *follows from*; *may be inferred from*; *is suggested by*). However, the authors acknowledge that a statement and an argument can be difficult to distinguish from each other. Sentence grammar does not give a clear indication of the difference because an argument can be expressed in a single sentence if the sentence contains at least two appropriately linked statements (linked with *since* for example). Conversely, sentences with two parts (e.g. *either...or* constructions, which assert that one of two alternatives is the case or *if...then* structures, which assert only a single conditional statement) express

a single statement, not an argument. In short, cue words can help with the identification of arguments, and these arguments can be wholly formed within one sentence or realised across more than one.

Other sources also emphasise the fact that language can signpost to the presence of arguments. For example, pragma-dialectics uses language to help in the reconstruction of argument by looking for linguistic markers of argumentative moves linked to the structure of argument (see van Eemeren et al. 2007), such as indicators of stages such as Confrontation (e.g. language related to standpoints such as *it is clear that*), of starting points in the Challenging part of the discussion (e.g. *naturally, I regret that*), of Argument structure (*since, so, for*), and of Conclusions (*I agree*) (examples taken from Kienpointner 2010).

Another example of the emphasis on language can be found in Mitchell and Riddle's (2000) model. They use the icons SINCE, THEN and BECAUSE to represent meanings such as those expressed by the subordinating conjunctions of the same name as well as other language, for example, *seeing that, given that, it being the case that, the circumstances are such*, for SINCE (pp. 33-34), which relates to evidence, grounds and facts.

On the rhetorical side of the spectrum, Kaufer and Geisler (1991) also discuss linguistic devices that point at a main path, in particular the author's own point of view: this could include the use of direct language (as opposed to distancing language for a faulty path), the use of the first person, or phrases such as *the second reason is, the solution is*.

All sides of the spectrum thus share the view that language is a useful indicator of the presence of argument. However, it is worth noting that linguistic indicators are not always present in an argument and they can be ambiguous (e.g. *because* can offer an explanation rather than a reason (Fisher, 1988)).

#### **4.1.3 Identifying macro-arguments**

As mentioned above, a micro-argument exists when there is a claim and support for that claim. Arguments may consist of more than one claim: the definition of argument used in this thesis acknowledges the possibility of a *sequence* of arguments. When micro-arguments are part of such a sequence, I refer to the main, or overall, claim of a piece of writing and the support (which may consist of supported claims) as the macro-argument.

Wingate (2012) identifies three aspects of argument that students need to master in order to produce argumentative essays. The first two relate to the micro-arguments in a text: (1) the writer's development of a position (based on the definitions of argument as containing a point); and (2) the analysis and evaluation of content knowledge (which she has based on Wu, 2006), which is related to the use of sources as evidence for the point. In my corpora, it is not sources, but other types of evidence that the writers need to manage (see Chapter 3). The third aspect identified by Wingate (2012) is the presentation of the writer's position in a coherent manner, which can be related to the idea of a sequence of arguments that support the main claim in a piece of writing: the construction of a macro-argument.

Some models of deconstruction and construction of argument (e.g. Russow and Curd 1989; van Eemeren et al. 2002) visualise how claims are interconnected by means of an outlining technique. The following is an example of such a technique:

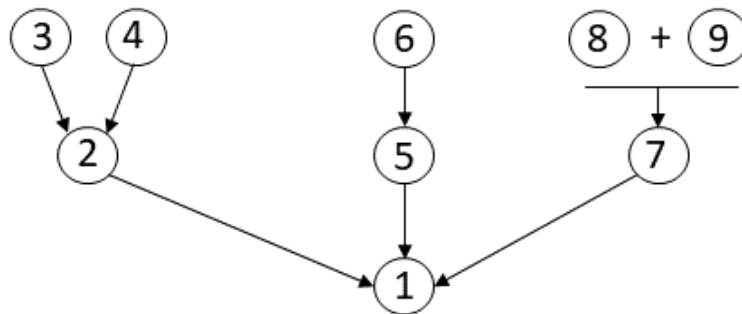


Figure 4.3: Visual outlining technique based on Russow and Curd (1989)

In this representation of the arguments in a text, the numbers represent distinct thoughts. The final conclusion is at the bottom (1). Ideas 3 and 4 both independently support conclusion 2; idea 6 leads to conclusion 5; ideas 8 and 9, taken together, support conclusion 7; and each of the three interim conclusions (2, 5 and 7) lead to final conclusion 1. This illustrates the definition of argument as one point or a series of points, supported by evidence.

The pragma-dialectical reconstruction method is similar. It involves finding the conclusion of an argument (numbered (1)) and indicating what leads to it (e.g. numbered ((1).1) or ((1).1')). The following presentation of argumentation is from an advertorial for tobacco (taken from Wagemans 2014b):

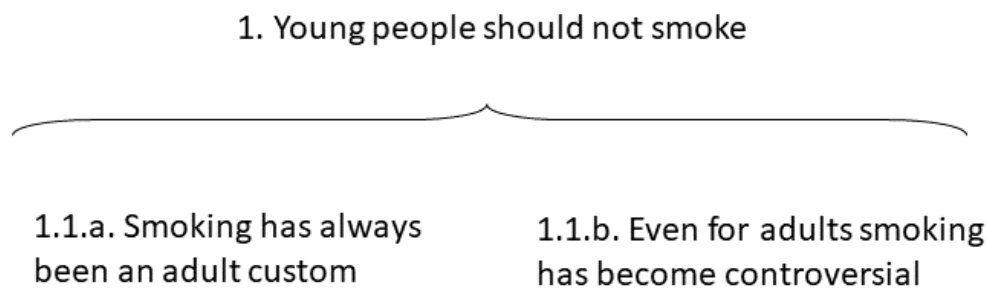


Figure 4.4: A visual outlining technique based on Wagemans 2014b

#### 4.1.4 Summary: methods of argument reconstruction in this thesis

Based on the insights offered by the aforementioned approaches, I will reconstruct argument in the following way. I will determine the presence of arguments first by trying to find a point of view and then evidence for it. I will do this by looking for explicit and/or implicit propositional content through questioning, and by examining co-text and language cues. I will seek arguments both at the supra-sentential and the sentence level. I will not assume that if a point is present, there must be support for it, or that if reasoning can be found that it relates to a point. Points and evidence must be related to each other to constitute a micro-argument. As mentioned previously, it is not within the scope of this thesis to address considerations about the strength, soundness or validity of arguments. Therefore, if a writer explicitly states that one statement supports another, then this is accepted without challenging the logic of this statement or the strength of the evidence.

Once the individual micro-arguments are found, it is possible to infer and summarise what the writer's main, or macro, argument is. Although I will include this summary in the analysis of each piece, it is not my main consideration, as the RQs focus on the quantity and occurrence of micro-arguments in the corpora.

As mentioned above, certain parts of texts are more likely than others to contain arguments, for example, introductions tend to set the scene rather than contain argument; and conclusions may focus on points of view rather than evidence. However, although it is helpful to know where arguments are less likely to occur, there are no restrictions to their potential locations. I therefore kept an open mind and examined where the arguments were in my corpora.

My RQs ask how often and when opinions and support are given; their own (1.1. and 2.1) and those of others (2.1 and 2.2). How often they occur can be established by counting. The 'when' aspect can be examined by dividing the pieces up. As all types of academic genres tend to have initial, medial and final stages (Nesi and Gardner, 2012), the 'when' RQs (1.1. and 2.1) can be formulated specifically to ask whether aspects of argumentation can be found in the introductions, middle parts and conclusions as follows:

**How often do (a) the introductions, (b) the middle sections, (c) the conclusions contain the following elements: points, support for own points, points of others, support for the points of others? What (if anything) else can be found in these sections? What are typical introductions, middle parts and conclusions like in terms of argument occurrence?**

The information related to these questions will be shown in tables. A visual outlining technique will not be used, as it adds a level of complexity to the analysis, i.e. it creates the need to say specifically how micro-arguments are linked to each other and/or to the macro-argument in the texts. The RQs in this thesis do not require

schematics; they can be adequately answered by identifying and labelling the elements of the micro-arguments in the text. Moreover, making chains of micro-arguments can be considered as a “way of checking that the main relational points have come across” (Mitchell and Riddle, 2000, p. 39), as an extra activity that can be used as a verification method, but it is not necessary to use it to identify parts of arguments.

Having decided on the main techniques to carry out the analysis, the next step consists of testing them by using them on the corpora and ensuring that the opinion pieces can be satisfactorily analysed in this way. Below, I describe the process of piloting the techniques and the changes that were made before the final method was decided upon.

## **4.2 Pilot**

In the pilot, micro- and macro-arguments were identified, with a focus on three parts of the argument: Point, Support and Explanation. The reason for identifying these three parts was that three-part models have often been used in educational contexts (see Chapter 2). These models have included an Explanation, in addition to the two items that are required for an argument to exist, Point and Support, and I hypothesised that this third element might demonstrate one of the differences between the corpora.

As part of the identification and labelling of the argument parts, I decided to visually distinguish (by using different bullet points) between the arguments that the author

makes and those that originate elsewhere, in order to be able to answer RQs 1.2 and 2.2, which concern the opinions of others. The legend used for the labelling is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Legend for pilot analysis

•	This introduces one of the three elements of the writer’s argument (Point, Support, Explanation)
➤	This introduces one of the three elements an argument that others (may) hold (Point, Support, Explanation)
a	This refers to a Point
b	This refers to Support
c	This refers to Explanation
1:	Numbers are used to identify a separate argument

4.2.1 Example analysis from the pilot

The text in Table 4.2 is an excerpt from BB16, “In defence of death taxes”. The full text is presented in Appendix 1.

Table 4.2: Excerpt from BB16

Such views are due largely to it [inheritance tax] being seen as a ‘double tax’ which penalises those who have saved in order to pass something on to their families. The ‘double tax’ argument is that people have saved money from their income which has already been taxed so why should they pay tax again on this money?
There are a number of counter arguments here, not least that dead people can’t actually pay taxes! It is their estate which pays or, in effect, their heirs.

I use this excerpt here to demonstrate how the initial analysis was labelled, using the legend in Table 4.1. The analysis is shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Analysis of excerpt from BB16 (pilot)

Argument 1

- inheritance tax is a double tax (a)
- it is a tax on the already taxed saved income and again on the inheritance (b)
- it penalises savers (c)
- people should not pay tax twice (c)
  
- it is not a double tax (a)
- nobody pays twice (b)
- the estate receives money once and pays tax, and the deceased paid tax once, on their income (c)

#### 4.2.2 Difficulties with the pilot

##### 4.2.2.1 Single rater problems with interpretation

Initially, I worked on my own to trial the model. I began with the BBs and found that often there were multiple ways to label particular sections. Although this confirms the often-reported difficulty with analysis mentioned above (e.g. Mitchell and Riddle, 2000; Simon, 2008; Sampson and Clark, 2008), I felt it still required a reassessment of the analytical and labelling methods I was using. Below I give some examples of difficulties with BB16 and the decisions they led to.

##### (1) *‘Such views are due largely to’*

This expression at the start of the section suggests that what follows can be seen as support for a point made earlier on (which was that the tax should be abolished). This would suggest that there is potentially a bigger point which is supported by chains of

other points and support. One option would be to label this statement as support for a previously made point. The title of the piece, 'in defence of death taxes', also suggests that the main dispute between the protagonist and antagonist in this text is 'should inheritance tax be abolished?' and therefore the question 'is it a double tax or not?' could receive a secondary ranking. Resolving this secondary dispute then gives an answer to the main dispute. However, carried through to its extreme, this potentially reduces every essay to one main point with many pieces of support in its defence. If all essays can be said to have that same structure, an analysis of the kind being applied here becomes rather pointless. Therefore, here, the point that inheritance tax is not a double tax is considered part of a new, separate argument. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the main points in the pieces, taken together, indicate the overall position that the writer takes regarding the essay question and form part of the macro-argument.

(2) *'why should they pay tax again on this money?'*

I interpreted the rhetorical question 'why should they pay tax again on this money?' to mean 'it is unfair to pay tax more than once'. It is possible to label this statement as Point, Support or Explanation depending on different interpretations of the role it plays in the argument. It has here been labelled as '(c)' (explanation) because it clarifies the implicit point that a double tax is wrong. This explanation is necessary because it stops the reader questioning why the writer would want to give support to the point that death taxes are double taxes. However, it could also plausibly be labelled as Support or Point. Both this idea and 'it is a double tax' (labelled here as Point) could be seen as support for the point that 'inheritance tax is wrong'. It can

also be seen as a point in its own right, supported by the idea that it penalises savers.

I analysed the pieces repeatedly until I felt confident in my understanding of the P, S and E labels and in my decisions of when to use them to label the elements of argument in the pieces. I then decided that the method of analysis and the interpretations that I had made required further testing through the involvement of others.

#### *4.2.2.2 Toward inter-rater reliability*

To establish how practical the analytical method was, I needed to see how other people would deploy it.

##### *4.2.2.2.1 Trial 1: workshop with postgraduate students of linguistics*

In a seminar for postgraduate research students (the 'PG-Tips' group), I tested whether these students would identify the same Point, Support and Explanation sections as I had. After a short presentation which explained micro-arguments, presented the general procedures of analysis (as explained in Section 4.1.4) and offered examples, I asked the students to analyse a sample from each of the corpora. These samples were randomly selected Birmingham Briefs, as the seminar took place before I had determined which pieces to include in the final corpus, and from the student writing from my first collection attempt. I handed out the following instructions and examples:

Table 4.4: Instructions for trial 1

<b><u>Method:</u></b>	<b><u>Labels</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at the text as a series of arguments.</li> <li>• Identify the first point (P) and, if present, the related support(s) (S) and explanation(s) (E).</li> <li>• Then keep doing the same for each NEW point.</li> </ul> <p>- If there are language mistakes, <u>ignore</u> them and work out the writer's meaning</p>	
<p>1. What is the point that the writer makes: what are they trying to persuade the reader of?</p> <p><i>e.g. Working from home can benefit employees, ...</i></p>	<p><b>P</b> (Point)</p>
<p>2. What does the writer offer to support the point? Use language to help you.</p> <p><b>e.g. appeals to values, reasons or evidence (facts, examples, statistics, expert opinion, experiments, personal experience, ...)</b></p> <p><i>e.g. ... as it gives them the opportunity to arrange their own hours.</i></p>	<p><b>S</b> (Support)</p>
<p>3. What else does the writer say about the <u>same</u> point (and/or support)?</p> <p><b>e.g. explanation of point, of support, of link between both; exceptions, implications, precedents, interesting commentary; establishing the authority of the source materials, ...</b></p> <p><i>e.g. Employees are still expected to do the same amount of work, but they are not being told when or where it should be done.</i></p>	<p><b>E</b> (Explanation)</p>

Most students in the seminar completed the task, but they reported having had much difficulty with both the student and the expert samples: (1) some did not fill in many answers because they were looking for Point, Support and Evidence in that order and could not find them (despite being told in the presentation that there was no specified order); (2) they were working at sentence level (although they had been told that they could look for statements at supra- and super-sentential levels); (3) they felt unsure in general of their answers; and (4) in particular they were not sure how to label introductory or concluding summarising sentences which state the presence of evidence as Points (e.g. 'There are many advantages'); in other words they were

unsure whether the related ideas were Points in their own right or Support for the summarising statements.

Because of the students' lack of confidence in their own labelling, I decided that the analytical approach required some amendments before the second trial. I therefore changed the instructions to include the following:

- (1) P / S / E do not need to appear in that order
- (2) Sentences have been split into clauses. You can label the clauses separately or together, depending on their meaning
- (3) Ignore any summarising introductory sentences (e.g. 'There are three advantages': or summarising conclusions ('These were the advantages'). These are already labelled as 'summ.'

#### 4.2.2.2.2 Trial 2: workshop with EAP tutors

As part of staff-led workshops on a short preessional summer course for Business students I asked 16 Business English teachers to analyse the same pieces as the first trial group, but with the amended instructions. This did improve the process, but there still was much discussion about the possible labels. The main points seemed to be easier to recognise (e.g. there was consensus that 'Personal freedom is an important matter...' at the start of one of the essays was a Point) but there was much less consensus regarding Support and Explanation. The teachers remarked that viewpoints are sometimes repeated and explained in different ways, which makes it hard to distinguish between Points and Explanations, and between old Points and new Points.

There was consensus on some of the answers but certainly not on all. For example, there was a nearly equal split of the choices for Point, Support and Explanation for the BB1 section 'That challenge was moved forward, again, to next year's meeting in Durban' (for full text see Appendix 1). To me, however, this statement was clearly not crucial to the argument, and therefore could only be labelled Explanation. The BB1 sentence 'Cancún demonstrates the challenge for international climate policy' was seen by some as containing both Point (there is a challenge) and Support (Cancún demonstrates the challenge); while others, including myself, identified the succeeding sentence as containing Support and Explanation for the Point being made in this one (by stating the challenge: achieving fair outcomes (S); and explaining it: it takes time, goodwill and effort (E)).

The teachers felt that the label Explanation was confusing and raised suggestions as diverse as narrowing it down (dividing Explanations up into categories such as Examples) and widening it out (using the broader label of Commentary). From my observations during the workshop and based on the outcomes of the teachers' analyses, it became clear that the distinction between Support and Explanation was the most challenging.

During the post-trial discussions, another issue was raised regarding the distinction between Support and Explanation: as Explanations are about justification (whereas Support is more about evidence), they concern how arguments can be 'made strong' (Mitchell and Riddle, 2000, p. 38). Upon reflection, I realised that this is why the three parts are usually part of *generative* models: they encourage writers to think about the suitability of their evidence. This third, optional element of an argument is really about considerations of the validity or soundness of arguments, which are not relevant to

this study. For the reconstruction of argument, the Explanation component appeared to confuse rather than aid interpretations: it risked obfuscating new Points or more Support.

## **4.3 Changes in approach**

### **4.3.1 Changes based on workshops**

Both my independent work and the trials with different colleagues suggested that analysing arguments by labelling their components in the suggested way was not straightforward or reliable enough. Aside from the tweaks that had already been made (see 4.2.2.2.1), the following amendments, based on feedback from the workshops, were applied to the guidelines for analysis:

1. There are two parts to look for: Point (P) and Support (S). If a statement cannot easily be described as either of these components, it should be labelled 'Other' (O).
2. It is important to bear in mind that a statement might read like a Point but could actually be Support for one that comes after. It helps to use a top-down approach. Rewriting the title in the form of a question can help with this. The next step is to find the other main Points in the text, linked to this question, and to identify the corresponding Support later.
3. Statements such as 'There is evidence to support this' are summarising statements and appear to be intended as Support by the writer, and therefore should be labelled as such.

4. It needs to be clear which parts of the text are Point, Support, or Other. Therefore, the labels should be put next to the appropriate statements and the boundaries between these elements should be indicated in the text.

5. If the analysis proves difficult, it is important to make notes to clarify why certain inferences or interpretations were made. Asterisks should be added next to the labels to refer to a note underneath the text, where line numbers need to be given to refer back to the notes.

#### **4.3.2 Further changes to approach and labelling**

The corpora were analysed using this amended approach. Although the new method worked better, I discovered following further and repeated analyses that more changes to the labelling were required. The process was thus repeatedly fine-tuned in response to the analytical challenges presented by the different pieces.

To explain these changes, I give an overview of the labelling conventions for ease of reference in Table 4.5. These are the ones used for the finalised method and are the result of trial and error with the labelling. For examples of analyses done with this type of labelling, see Appendices 4 and 6. The numbers in the right-hand column in Table 4.5 refer to analytical problems or queries, which are described below.

Table 4.5: Labelling conventions: final method

label or symbol	explanation of use	see issue number
<b>P</b>	This is the label for Point (the section this label refers to is put in bold in the text)	1
<u>S</u>	This refers to Support (the Support section is underlined in the text)	1
<i>O</i>	Other (in italics in text): a statement that is not P or S.	1, 3
numbers after labels (e.g. P1, S3)	Each new Point receives a number; the corresponding Support is given the same number.	2, 3
[P]	Square brackets are added to a Point that is mentioned when a writer is exploring a view that is not necessarily their own.	1, 4, 12
(S)	Round brackets are put around summarising statements in the text which do not reveal the content of the argument, for example 'there are three reasons for this'.	5
-S	The minus sign is used for counterevidence, which is here used to mean one of two possibilities: - a concession to an opposite Point - an acknowledgement of a negative aspect of a Point Note that there is no -P.	6, 12
/	The slash is used to indicate where one item can be labelled twice, e.g. it functions as both S1 and S2.	7, 8
*	An asterisk will be used after a label if the section it refers to is worthy of comment. An explanation is provided in the notes underneath the text.	9
numbers at the start of lines	The introduction is set apart and receives its own number, as does the conclusion. The middle part of the text needs to be divided into smaller parts, each of which receives a consecutive number.	10
_____	An uninterrupted line is used after the first paragraph and before the last paragraph to indicate where the writer has demarcated an introduction and conclusion section through the use of paragraphing.	11
Space	Space between lines of text in a middle section denotes that the writer has divided the text into paragraphs, either through indentation or line spacing.	11
.....	A dotted line is drawn to show a suggested text division. If the introduction or conclusion is deemed to be either longer or shorter than the length indicated by the author's paragraphing, a dotted line needs to be used where, based on their content, the introduction actually ends, and/or where the conclusion starts.	11

As can be seen in Table 4.5, there were 12 issues in total that needed to be resolved. Eleven of these, and their solutions, are listed in Table 4.6. The twelfth one needs a longer explanation and is described below the table.

**Table 4.6: Labelling issues and solutions**

	<b><u>Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Solution</u></b>
1.	The labelling was not visually clear enough. Using bullet points to distinguish between the Points of the writer and those of others, which necessitated copying them out, was quite an elaborate process.	Using bold (for Points), underline (for Support) and italics (for Other) in the text allows for a clear demarcation of these elements; the labels can be put in a column next to the text. The distinction between the different points of view can be shown by using square brackets where the ideas of others are explored, and no brackets for the writer's own ideas.
2.	If bullet points are no longer used, and the arguments are not copied but left in the text (where bold, underline, and italics are used), it is not always clear which statements of Point and Support belong together.	Points and Support will be numbered to show when new Points are introduced and to distinguish which data go with which Points.
3.	As Point and Support are numbered, it seems sensible to number Other, but there is not always a clear link between an Other section, which might give information about a political background, for example, and a specific argument.	It does not seem to be feasible to relate the Other sections to specific arguments, so there will not be any numbering of the Other sections.
4.	In cases where a Point made by others is given (labelled [P1], [P2], [P3], etc.), there are two possibilities: (a) it emerges that the writer agrees, or (b) it becomes clear that the writer's point of view differs from the [P]. This needs to be indicated somehow.	In the case of (a) the Points will need the same numbers to show that they relate, e.g. P1 and [P1]. As for (b), whether the writer's view is completely opposite or whether it just differs to some extent from [P1], it will be given a different number, e.g. P2.
5.	The pieces often contain statements such as 'There are many reasons for this idea'. These could be labelled Other and considered not to be part of an argument. However, they could also be considered Support, because saying that there are reasons for a Point can be accepted as evidence for that Point, even if there are no specifics given. Note that they cannot be labelled P as they do not contain the main idea itself but instead they say something about it.	As the strength of the evidence is not being evaluated in the analysis, the best label appears to be Support. However, these statements are different from the usual Support, as they are devoid of content. They will be considered to be 'empty summary statements' and will be labelled as Support, but distinguished by giving them round brackets: (S).

	<b><u>Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Solution</u></b>
6.	In cases when the views of others are explored, e.g. [P1], it raises the question whether the corresponding Support should be labelled as S1 or [S1].	The label [S] (e.g. [S1], [S2]) will not be used. This is mainly because doing so avoids potential problems of interpretation as it is not always possible to distinguish between the writer's view and the other view. It is also because making the distinction is not necessary and may complicate matters. For example, the writer may later agree with the [P] in which case the [S] would start to function as S and there would need to be extra annotation to show this. S (and a number) is enough to show the relationship with the corresponding P or [P]. Also, not using the [S] label has proved to have no negative consequences.
7.	Sometimes one line can appear to function as Support for two different Points, or it can function both as Support for a Point and a new Point.	Where a statement can be deemed to fulfil more than one role, a slash will be used for labelling, e.g. S1/S2, to indicate that both labels apply at the same time.
8.	In cases where [P1] is opposite to P2, evidence in favour of P1, i.e. S1, will also function as counterevidence for P2, i.e. -S2, and S2 will function as -S1. This raises the question whether that needs to be made explicit.	The label should make it clear that neither Point (in favour or against) is left undefended, i.e. that there actually is an argument. This can be done by using a slash as follows: -S2/S1.
9.	Sometimes an interpretation of the text has to be made in order to determine the label. At other times, there are a number of plausible labels and a choice has to be made between them.	Where a decision is made after some thought, its justification needs to be noted for verification purposes; an asterisk can be used to indicate that there is a comment at the bottom of the analysis.
10.	Numbering the lines would be helpful to show the sections that labels refer to, and to be able to talk about particular ideas.	Numbering lines is useful and can be done by the analyst along clausal or sentence divisions. It has a practical motivation in that it is done to indicate the start of a new idea. Every new line receives its own label, even when the same label as the one immediately above is repeated. The introduction and conclusion do not need the same level of detail as they are less likely to contain arguments.

	<b><u>Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Solution</u></b>
11.	The paragraphing from the original pieces can be a hindrance rather than a help in some cases, especially in the middle sections. The workshop discussions about where arguments started and ended indicated that perhaps the BB website did not present the pieces exactly how they had been submitted or that some of the writers (of the BBs and the SEs) had not necessarily given paragraphing much thought.	The original line spacings will not necessarily be shown. Instead, the pieces will be divided into three elements: introduction (labelled (1)), middle (where there will be as many numbers as there are lines of labelled text) and conclusion (with the numbering continuing there). These divisions are as in the original pieces (indicated with an uninterrupted line), or where necessary, adjusted based on their content (indicated with a dotted line). Signals in the co-text are used to do this, and the function of the particular section is considered in relation to the piece's overall purpose. Although there is a degree of subjectivity in doing this, there are only a small number of cases where changes to the demarcation of introduction and conclusion are required. I made it clear in the instructions that an analyst could change the divisions to suit their interpretations if they differed from the divisions already present.

One area that has already been mentioned under Problems/Solutions 4 and 6 is the use of counterargumentation. This complex area also created a final issue, concerning the fact that, perhaps controversially, I do not label rebuttal arguments. The reason for this is mainly that my data did not lend themselves easily to this. Below, I explain which decisions I made about the labelling of counterargumentation and why, and I exemplify this with my data where appropriate.

Stapleton and Wu (2015, p. 22) define elements of counterargumentation as follows:

**Counterargument claim:**

*'The possible opposing views that can challenge the validity of a writer's claim'*

**Counterargument data:**

*‘Evidence (...) to support a counterargument claim’*

**Rebuttal claim:**

*‘Statements in which the writer responds to a counter argument’*

**Rebuttal data:**

*‘Evidence to support a rebuttal claim which include (sic) the identification of possible weaknesses in the counterargument claim, data or assumptions (...)’*

These definitions can be illustrated as follows:

Table 4.7: Elements of counterargumentation, based on Stapleton and Wu (2015, p. 22)

Claims		Support
X is a good idea <b>claim</b>		X is a good idea because of x <b>data</b>
[some say]	X is not a good idea Y (not X) is a good idea <b>counterclaim</b>	X is not a good idea because of y Y is a good idea because of y <b>counterdata</b>
I do not agree with what some say <b>rebuttal claim</b>		there is a weakness in Y and/or y <b>rebuttal data</b>

I have not maintained these distinctions and will now justify this by discussing how these counterargumentational elements are manifested in my data. Table 4.8 shows the complete analysis of SE10, which can be used to illustrate labelling choices related to counterargumentation.

Firstly, the counterclaims in my data are arguably labelled [P]. For example, in SE10, line 1 is labelled [P1], as the writer explores a view which is held by others: 'in many countries, the government pays'. At this point, we do not know whether or not the writer agrees with this.

In the next line of SE10, the fact that university education is costly is an argument against governments paying for education. If the writer agrees with [P1], this would be Support for her own view, but as we do not know this, we can only say that this is an example of evidence against [P1]. It is therefore labelled as counterevidence: -S1. Another way of resolving the labelling issue would have been to search for the writer's own view elsewhere in the piece, in order to decide if the example supports the writer's view or is counterargument data. However, as will be shown in Chapter 5, there are occasions where writers sit on the fence or where the writer's view cannot be found.

One contributing factor to this may be the fact that some of these pieces are written in the writers' L2, e.g. because of language mistakes and/or different perceptions of argument because of cultural or other experiences (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3). Another possible reason for this is that (as mentioned in Section 3.2.4.2.) schooled textual forms may have played a shaping role. If students are used to writing for-and- against essays, for example, they would not necessarily believe it necessary to add a point of view.

In short, the writer's own view may be unclear, and this may be for cultural or educational reasons. In any case, where it cannot be clearly identified, labelling counterclaims and therefore also counterdata becomes guesswork.

Continuing with the SE10 example, the opposing view to [P1], that governments (should) pay for education, is explored in line 6. The way it is introduced again does not reveal whether the writer agrees. As it is presented as one possible view, held by others, this Point has been labelled [P2]. The next line appears to give Support for this view, that is, if governments do not pay, then students are motivated to work hard, so this is labelled S2. The next line, introduced with 'In contrast', shows a clear problem with view [P2], that poor people cannot have an education unless it is paid for, and has therefore been labelled with the minus sign: -S2. In other words, the minus sign, or the lack thereof, does not refer to Support or countersupport of the author's view, but indicates whether a previously stated view with a corresponding number (which may or may not be known to be held by the writer at this stage and is therefore labelled either P or [P]) is receiving evidence in favour (in the case of P2 this would be S2) or evidence against it (e.g. -S2). Counterevidence, -S, in my analysis refers thus to evidence against a corresponding view.

So far, the treatment of counterclaims and counterdata has been discussed. Rebuttal is another element of counterargumentation. It has not been labelled in my pieces, the main reason being the same as above concerning counterargumentation: unless a writer takes a clear position in favour or against a view that they state, it is virtually impossible to identify rebuttal.

The student corpus in particular required instead a labelling system that would (1) acknowledge the claims the writers wrote about without clearly indicating whether or not they agreed with them, i.e. views that were being explored, and (2) subsequently indicate whether the writers agreed with those views, disagreed with them, or ignored them. For example, in SE10, [P1] is used to label the idea of the government funding

HE completely. The writer does not come back to this idea but explores [P2]: the government not funding it. There is no clear agreement with this either, so instead of P2, there is a compromise view, labelled P3.

Not identifying rebuttal did not appear to have negative consequences and may even offer advantages. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the views of others are there to strengthen the writer's own, and I wanted the labelling system to acknowledge that. The rebuttal data, suggesting that there is a weakness in what other people have said (a claim which the writer disagrees with), can be legitimately categorised as Support for the writer's own view. In the corpora, the writers sometimes admitted that there is evidence against a Point they have made or alternatively that their own data can be perceived as weak, often as a lead-in to the presentation of a counterclaim. I have referred to evidence against a claim or a counterclaim as counterevidence and labelled it -S.

In short, rather than using labels that refer to counterargument and rebuttal, I will indicate which points of view are expressed and the writer's view, where possible. I label as Support, S, any evidence that is in favour of a labelled view (whether or not the writer agrees with that view) and with -S any evidence that goes against that view. The -S label will be referred to as 'counterevidence', and in Chapter 5 I will indicate what forms this type of evidence takes.

Table 4.8: Analysis of SE10

**SE10:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [P1]: the government should fund HE</li> <li>• [P2]: the government should not fund HE</li> <li>• P3: the government should only fund HE under certain circumstances</li> </ul> <p><u>Overall argument:</u> there are many disadvantages if governments pay for education (financial and economic implications, lack of competitive spirit in students, less knowledge, other areas being neglected, lower standard of human resources in a world market), but if governments do not pay then only the rich can be educated. Therefore, the government should only pay in certain individual circumstances.</p>		
1.	<p><b><i>In many countries the government pays for university education of their people, in these countries the government may pay all or part of education fees such as registration fees, teaching fees, transportation fees, books, cloths, ...etc.</i></b></p> <p><u>In spite of the problem of the cost of the university education and it's influence on the national economy.</u></p>	Intro O/[P1]*  -S1*
2.	<u>Many students in the countries which has free university education believe that they will complete their university education depending on their government funding, so they will loss the competitive between each other.</u>	-S1*
3.	<u>In Iraq, for example, the government pays for university education of Iraqi students, therefore, many students does not care about their education level and developing their skills and this may cause defect in their scientific background.</u>	-S1
4.	<u>In addition, the paid university education costs the government well worth, these money can be used in developing many other domains such as national health system, highways network, transportation system and provide a lot of opportunities for do-nothing people.</u>	-S1
5.	<u>What is more, most countries need a high standard of human recourses in order to compete in the world market.</u>	-S1
6.	<b><i>On the other hand, there are many governments does not pays for their people university education.</i></b>	[P2]
7.	<u>In these countries, the students must work strongly to achieve the university education.</u>	S2
8.	<u>In contrast, there are many poor families and they do not have the ability to pay the university education fees i.e. only the rich can complete the university education.</u>	-S2
9.	<p><b>In my point of view, the government should pay the university education under circumstances such as student level, funding ability, talent and successful condition.</b></p>	Conc. P3*

**Notes:**

- (1) At first sight, this could simply be 'O'. However, given that (6) is clearly exploring a particular situation, the P in (1) has also been labelled with square brackets: [P1].
- (9) Although this is a new P, some of the areas given have been briefly touched upon before.

## 4.4 The final method

### 4.4.1 The final procedure

This section presents the 12-step procedure that was followed to analyse the pieces. It is written in the form of instructions, in order to effectively function as guidelines for the analyst, to be used to divide the pieces into their argumentational parts. Where the instructions refer to something that has already been done, for example, numbering, that action has been done by me.

**Table 4.9: Instructions for analysis (final)**

1. Look at an example of a completely labelled piece of writing first. Before analysing a new piece, read it repeatedly: it is important to look at the larger picture. Ask the question 'what is the writer trying to say about the essay topic or question?' before starting to label any Points in the text.
2. The essays have already been divided into three parts (introduction, middle part, conclusion) where possible by putting an uninterrupted line after the first paragraph and before the last one. If you do not think that the author's use of white space demarcates the different sections in the piece, insert a dotted line to indicate where an introduction ends and / or a conclusion starts.
3. The introduction of each piece has been numbered '1'. Each middle part has been divided up into smaller sections with consecutive numbers, and the final consecutive number has been given to the conclusion. The sections in the middle parts will correspond to sentences (the default), clauses or short paragraphs, dependent on where new ideas seem to start. The division in smaller numbered sections is just a tool to make it easier to see how ideas are put together. You can make changes to the divisions and numbers to reflect your interpretation of how the text can be divided into argument parts.
4. Assume each essay to contain arguments. For an argument to be present there needs to be a main Point and Support for that point. Each line in the essay will need to be given a label: P (for Point), S (for Support) or O (for Other). You will need to indicate the extent that labels apply by using respectively bold (for P), underline (for S), and italics (for O) in the text. The labels go in the right-hand column and there needs to be a label for each line.
5. You will need to provide a number for each P and S. Ensure that any Point and its Support have matching numbers. The first P you find in the essay needs to be labelled P1. Once you have identified P1, ask yourself if a line could be interpreted as S1. If not, check if it is a new P (P2), or whether it might represent Support for a new P (in which case, find out what the number would be for that P e.g. if it is the third Point that is being made in the essay (P3) then the label for the Support is S3). If a section is not P or S, label it O. Examples of Os are sections that organise the essay, that introduce the general topic, or that give undisputed facts that are not related to P or S. Do not number the Os.
6. By definition, introductions are likely to introduce the argument and therefore do not necessarily contain argument already. If that is the case, label those lines with O. If you do find that a main Point is explicitly stated, label it P (with the appropriate number). If you find Support, label it accordingly.

7. When there are statements such as 'There are many reasons to support this idea', the writer is indicating that there is Support, but the Support itself is not given. These types of statements are considered 'empty summary statements', as they do not actually give the Support, just state that it exists. They are indicated with an S in round brackets, e.g. (S1). If there is content in the statement, i.e. the summary actually mentions what some of the Support is, then do not put the label in brackets.
8. If a line functions as two labels at once, e.g. it provides support for two separate Points, use a slash when labelling, e.g. S1/S2, to indicate that both labels apply at the same time.
9. Square brackets need to be used where writers indicate that they are exploring an alternative situation or a point of view that is put forward by others (whether they later agree with it or not). Label the Point that is being made as [P] and corresponding Support, i.e. Support for that idea that others give, as S with the corresponding number. The writer can either agree with this view later, in which case this new Point needs to be labelled P (with the same number as the corresponding [P]) or disagree with it (either completely or partially), in which case it needs to be labelled with P with a different number.
10. As mentioned previously, an idea in favour or in defence of a point is labelled S. If an idea is a concession to a Point (e.g. P1 or [P2]), or argues against the Point, e.g. by listing a disadvantage, it is labelled with a minus (e.g. -S1 or -S2). In cases where there is a [P1] (or [P2], etc.), there are two possibilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the writer's own Point is the same as the other point of view that is presented. The use of the same numbers in the labelling makes this clear (e.g. P1 and [P2])</li> <li>- the writer's point of view differs from [P1]. It will be directly opposite or differ to some extent and will therefore be given a different number, e.g. P2. In cases where [P1] is directly opposite to P2, S1 will also function as -S2, and S2 as -S1. The label will therefore combine both with a slash, e.g. -S2/S1.</li> </ul>
11. Use an asterisk after the label if you want to make a comment about a particular line. The comments need to be put in a box underneath the analysed essay and state the number of the section they refer to. Comments are likely to be necessary if you have to make an interpretation of the text in the line in order to label it, or to justify a decision you have made about the label in case of more than one possibility.
12. Write all the [P]s and Ps in a box above the analysed piece. Based on these, also write down the macro-argument there, by giving the writer's overall point of view and a summary of the main Support for this.

#### 4.4.2 Mitigation against subjectivity

Any analysis that relies on interpretation of text is necessarily subjective to some extent. This subjectivity is mitigated by using the following safeguards:

(1) I analysed each piece of writing a minimum of five times. These intra-rater analyses were repeated at intervals of increasing durations and led to a more

detailed understanding of the likely intention of the writer as well as the method of analysis, therefore ensuring that the interpretation and labelling were performed as accurately as possible.

(2) The analysts (a volunteer and I, see (1) and (4)) compiled a list of Points and a summary to subsequently check against the impressions left by the pieces to ensure that the analyses had been done appropriately. This listing was done for each piece and noted above each of the breakdowns (see step 12 in Table 4.9).

(3) A random sample of eight of my own analyses from each corpus was checked by another linguist, thus equalling nearly a third of the corpus.

(4) Another highly educated volunteer did four complete analyses from each corpus and read through and checked the remainder of the corpora.

The comments from the verifiers (the people described in (3) and (4)) were used to adjust the overall method and the analyses of the pieces themselves.

#### **4.4.3 Evaluation of the final method compared to the pilot**

In order to demonstrate that the final method is the most robust, I will show the difference in outcomes between the first attempt and the final approach through the use of an excerpt from BB1 (see Appendix 4 for the full analysis of the BBs):

Table 4.10: Example of pilot analysis (BB1)

<p>1. The 'results' Figueres is referring to are processes not outcomes. Her choice of words can be read as a critical comment on what happened in Copenhagen, where nations failed to 'work together under a common roof' and reach an agreement 'in a transparent and inclusive process'. Much of what has been agreed relates to the functions of new institutions and the start of processes to create these institutions.</p>	<p><u>Argument 1</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Point:</b> the Executive Secretary gave a critical comment about the previous meeting in Copenhagen</li> <li>• <b>Support:</b> her choice of words (quote given)</li> <li>• <b>Explanation:</b> 'results' [in the quote] refers to processes, not outcomes: the start of processes to create new institutions and their functions [explanation of the link between claim and support: clarifying the support]</li> </ul>
<p>2. The big omission, as NGOs were quick to point out, was on concrete and legally binding emissions reduction targets. That challenge was moved forward, again, to next year's meeting in Durban.</p>	<p><u>Argument 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Point:</b> there was an omission in what was agreed at Cancún: concrete and legally binding emissions reduction targets</li> <li>• <b>Support:</b> what the NGOs said</li> <li>• <b>Explanation:</b> this will be discussed next year in Durban [explanation of the link between claim and support: clarifying the claim]</li> </ul>
<p>3. Cancún demonstrates the challenge for international climate policy. It is very difficult to achieve fair outcomes without procedural justice, but the latter takes a lot of time, goodwill and collaborative effort to establish.</p>	<p><u>Argument 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Point:</b> it is difficult to achieve fair outcomes for international climate policy without procedural justice</li> <li>• <b>Support:</b> what happened in Cancun</li> <li>• <b>Explanation:</b> it takes a lot of time, goodwill and collaborative effort to establish procedural justice [explanation of the link between claim and support: clarifying the claim]</li> </ul>
<p>4. The Cancún agreement isn't nearly good enough, but what are the alternatives? Until some a way is found to deliver global security to future generations without the need to first build institutions for global environmental governance, the UNFCCC is the only show in town.</p>	<p><u>Argument 4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Point:</b> the agreement in Cancún is not good enough but there is no better alternative to the UNFCCC</li> <li>• <b>Support:</b> global security cannot be delivered yet without first building institutions for global environmental governance</li> </ul>

As shown in Table 4.10, four arguments were found in BB1, three of which contained P, S and E, and one which consisted of P and S. The analyses of this pilot study initially appear to be precise, with neat divisions between Point, Support and Explanation provided. However, when listing just the actual Points that are being made using both the pilot method and the final method, it becomes apparent that the overall point of view of the author is better reflected using the final method, as demonstrated in Table 4.11 below:

**Table 4.11: Comparison of pilot and final analysis based on an example (BB1)**

<b>Pilot (1)</b>	<b>Final method (2)</b>
<p><b><u>Points:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Executive Secretary gave a critical comment about the previous meeting in Copenhagen</li> <li>there was an omission in what was agreed at Cancún: concrete and legally binding emissions reduction targets</li> <li>it is difficult to achieve fair outcomes for international climate policy without procedural justice</li> <li>the agreement in Cancún is not good enough but there is no better alternative to the UNFCCC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P1: The agreement made in Cancún is not good enough yet</li> <li>P2: There are no better alternatives at this stage/ it is good enough for now</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Macro-argument</u></b></p> <p>Cancun is about starting processes to create new institutions, not about outcomes: there are no concrete and legally binding emissions reduction targets yet. It takes time and effort to achieve procedural justice, which is necessary for fair climate change policy outcomes. The agreement in Cancún is not good enough but there is no better alternative to the UNFCCC yet.</p>	<p><b><u>Macro-argument</u></b></p> <p>Despite the fact that the Cancún conference on climate change did not lead to comprehensive and immediate outcomes, the agreement has achieved something by making a good start.</p>

The macro-argument from the pilot study presents like a list of summaries of subsections of the writing, whereas the final method portrays the argument in a more concise and clear way.

The final method identifies just Points and Support, made by protagonists and antagonists, and does not aim to find separate explanations. It also shows whether the ideas of others correspond to those of the writer. Despite, or perhaps because of, its simplicity, the final method allows for a detailed description and comparison of the way the parts of the argument are presented in the corpora. As always with the analysis of writing of others, there is some subjectivity involved because of the need for interpretation, but specific guidelines have been provided, facilitating a consistent and efficient approach. The final method is superior for finding answers to the RQs about how and when the writers of persuasive pieces build their arguments. It is this model that was therefore taken forward.

All the argumentational analyses of the Birmingham Briefs and Student Essays performed for the actual study are included in Appendices 4 and 6, respectively. The answers to the specific research questions, found through these analyses, will be given in Chapter 5. In Chapters 6 and 7 I turn to linguistic elements of arguments.

## 5 THE REALISATION OF ARGUMENTS IN STUDENT AND EXPERT WRITING

Research Questions 1 and 2 investigate how the student and expert writers argue, and how their arguments compare. The questions concern micro-arguments, in particular (a) *how often* and (b) *when* the writers state and defend their opinions (RQs 1.1. and 2.1), and (a) *how often* and (b) *when* they deal with the opinions that others may hold and the support that exists for them (RQs 1.2. and 2.2). In other words, they ask about (a) the number and (b) the location of the micro-arguments. The corpora under investigation have been described in Chapter 3, and in Chapter 4 I discussed the development of a method to answer the above RQs. Appendices 4 ('Micro-argument analysis of each BB') and 6 ('Micro-argument analysis of each SE') present the results of that analysis, providing information about each individual piece of writing: the main Points, the overall (i.e. summarised) argument, the micro-argument analysis and notes about the analysis for each piece.

In this chapter, before discussing the amount of micro-argumentation (in Part II), and its location (in Part III), I first need to consider the bigger picture. In Part I, therefore, I will examine what the SEs and BBs set out to do in terms of the functions of their arguments (as shown in their argument types) and their answers to the essay question (as determined by the complexity of their opinions). In this way, each individual corpus can be better understood, which is important in order to perform effective comparisons.

There are several reasons why it is important to look at broader aspects to obtain an enhanced understanding of the corpora before discussing the outcomes of the analysis of the micro-argumentation. The corpora have so far been summarised as opinion pieces written by two different groups of writers: students and professional academics. It would therefore be tempting to ascribe differences between the corpora to the level of expertise of their writers. However, other reasons for differences are expected, because of the differences in genres (writing contexts) and those related to the topic of the piece: research about disciplinary argument patterns suggests that these differ in different disciplines (Hyland, 2013), therefore, somebody writing in the field of Engineering may write differently from a Social Scientist. This relates also to what Toulmin (1958) said about field-dependency (see Chapter 2).

The organisation of the pieces may also differ depending on their focus, for example, a text is likely to be composed differently depending on whether it aims to redefine a concept or to classify information. The focus is the same for all the SEs, as the writers were set the same task: to discuss the benefits and drawbacks of different points of view regarding the funding of HE. The BB writers, on the other hand, had a free choice of topics and approaches at their disposal and therefore there can be expected to be much more variety in the expert corpus. The argument types of those pieces will be described and grouped in Part I below.

The pieces may also differ depending on the writer's overall answer to the essay question. Here, the BB and SE writers both have a choice: whether or not they were able to set their own question, they are all free to express agreement or disagreement with a proposition to some extent, or to sit on the fence. Whichever view they choose to take, their response may have an impact on how they set out their argument.

Therefore, in Part I, the pieces are also grouped according to their overall response to the essay questions. In Parts II and III, I am then able to discuss whether the textual organisation, complexity of the question responses and the writers' disciplines appear to have had an impact on the quantity and / or the location of arguments.

Appendix 7 ('Macro-argument patterns in the SEs') gives an overview of the argument patterns found in each SE, giving the writer's opinion, commenting on complexity, stating the overall argument, and containing notes about the development of the arguments in each piece. Appendix 5 ('Macro-argument patterns in the BBs') does the same for the BBs, but also includes the title formulated as a question, states the type of argument and includes the writer's discipline/field.

Appendices 8 ('Overview of the BBs') and 9 ('Overview of the SEs') draw together information from Appendices 4-7: they summarise the micro-argumentation in the introductions, middle parts and conclusions; list all the Points made in the pieces, and note the opinion and argument types. Appendices 10 ('Groupings of the BBs') and 11 ('Groupings of the SEs') reorder information extracted from other appendices. They facilitate the drawing of conclusions about the nature of pieces that belong to particular groups (disciplines, argument types and type of opinion).

## PART I: MACRO-ARGUMENTATION

In Chapter 2, macro-argument was defined as the main, or overall, claim of a piece of writing and its support, which may consist of supported claims. This was linked to the coherence of the presentation of the writer's position. How micro-arguments are arranged into a coherent macro-argument depends on the argumentational aims of the writer. In this section, I explore how types of arguments and the complexity of the response to the question that is being answered may relate to the macro-argumentation in the texts.

### 5.1 Argument types in the BBs and SEs

Different categorisations have been proposed to distinguish between text types, or "groupings of texts which are similar in terms of co-occurrence of linguistic patterns" (Paltridge, 1996, p. 237). For example, Meyer (1975) suggests *time order*, *collections of descriptions*, *comparisons* and *cause and effect*. Hoey (1983) mentions the following rhetorical patterns: *problem - solution*, *general - particular*, *matching contrast*, *hypothetical - real*, which McCarthy (1991) refers to as larger patterns in texts, and Hoskins (1986) as organisational strategies for longer texts. Hoskins herself lists *comparison / contrast*, *cause / effect*, *time order*, *list structure*, and *problem / solution*, as well as *narrative*, *description*, *example*, *process*, *definition*, and *classification*. Hedge (1988) identifies *static descriptions*, *process descriptions*, *narratives*, *cause and effect*, *discussion*, *compare and contrast*, *classifications*,

*definitions* and *reviews*. Although there appears to be partial consensus between these authors regarding textual patterns, there is no definitive list, and it is not always clear whether these concepts refer to whole texts or parts of texts, structural patterns, rhetorical patterns, text strategies, genres, or a combination of these.

As my corpora consist of argumentational opinion pieces, a “subclass of persuasive texts” (Neff-van Aertselaer and Dafouz-Milne, 2008, p. 88) it is more appropriate to distinguish textual patterns based on the function of the argument. I will therefore use Wilhoit’s categories, as defined in Section 2.1.1.2.2: Definition argument (Stipulative Definition (labelled as SD) and Categorical Definition (labelled as CD)), Causal arguments (shortened to C), Proposal Arguments (Pr), and Evaluation arguments (E). Although these are clearly defined categories, the context in which they were originally described was instructional, to facilitate the construction rather than the analysis of arguments. This may be one of the reasons why matching texts to them can be problematic: when seeking consensus for categorisation in a workshop with my peers (see Chapter 4) I found that agreement was difficult to reach. Discussions centred on the potential existence of other argument types, and the feeling that more than one categorisation was possible. The consensus was that there was often a main type and a potential other function, or secondary type.

The SEs are all proposal arguments, often with a secondary function of Evaluation. They are Proposals, because the writers were asked to discuss the principle of action whereby governments pay for HE, and they are also Evaluations when the writers’ views were based to some extent on the value they placed on education.

When using Wilhoit's categories to determine the types of argument structure within the BBs, it is evident that all four categories can be identified in the corpus. Their distributions are summarised as shown in Table 5.1 with the secondary functions shown between brackets.

**Table 5.1: Argument types on the BBs: main and secondary functions**

	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b><u>BB number:</u></b>
<b>Evaluation</b>	8	36%	<b>Just E:</b> 7, 8, 11, 20, 21 <b>E(Pr):</b> 1, 16 <b>E(C):</b> 5
<b>Proposal</b>	7	32%	<b>Just Pr:</b> 9, 12, 13, 18, 22 <b>Pr(CD):</b> 6 <b>Pr(E):</b> 15
<b>Causal</b>	5	23%	<b>Just C:</b> 3, 14, 17, 19 <b>C(Pr):</b> 10
<b>Categorical Definition</b>	2	9%	<b>CD (E):</b> 2, 4

Another way to look at the distribution of argument types in the corpus, is to extract all the instances of the argument types, regardless of whether they have a primary or secondary function (see Table 5.2).

**Table 5.2: Main and secondary argument types in the BBs by main or secondary type**

<b>Characteristic of the BBs: By main or secondary type</b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of total instances this represents (out of 29)</b>	<b>BB number</b>
<b>All Evaluation</b>	11	38%	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 20, 21
<b>All Proposal</b>	9	31%	1, 6, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 22
<b>All Causal</b>	6	21%	3, 5, 10, 14, 17, 19
<b>All Categorical Definition</b>	3	10%	2, 4, 6

Table 5.2 shows that the most popular argument type is Evaluation, as it is the main or secondary rhetorical purpose in 11 of the pieces, representing half. This is closely followed by Proposal, which features in nine of the pieces. The next most popular category is Causal (six pieces), followed by Categorical Definition: the main or secondary argumentational aim of three pieces was to re-categorise a particular idea. Interestingly, like in the SE corpus, Evaluation and Proposal are the main argument types. The corpora are reasonably similar in terms of argument types.

## **5.2 Complexity of opinion in the BBs and SEs**

The organisation of texts is related to their writers' aims. As discussed in Section 5.1, the questions the writers are trying to address may encourage them to use a particular argument type, which will affect the macro-organisation of the text. It is also possible that the organisation of their response depends on whether their answer is simple (yes or no), or more complex than that.

The writers of the SEs responded to one specific question. The BB writers often formulated their own questions, either as part of their text or in their titles. Even when there was no explicitly stated question, it was still possible to formulate one by examining the texts. In fact, in the procedures for the analysis (see Chapter 4), the analyst is asked to do exactly that. The questions thus identified for each BB piece can be found in Appendix 5.

Three possibilities were identified in the ways in which these identified questions were responded to. The writers gave one of the following types of responses:

(1) the writer responded yes or no to the question, e.g. they expressed the opinion that ‘yes, the government should sponsor HE’ (**Y or N**)

(2) the writer responded yes or no to the question, but qualified this, e.g. ‘yes, the government should sponsor HE but only in certain cases’ (**Y+**), or ‘no, the government should not sponsor HE, unless ...’ (**N+**). The qualifications can consist of adding new ideas (e.g. a call to action, an alternative solution) or choosing a kind of compromise where the writers agree or disagree with the statement but add extra conditions or provisos.

(3) the writer did not answer the question by stating a clear yes or no, but remained neutral by presenting reasons in favour of both opinions, e.g. ‘some people say that the government should pay; others say that individuals should pay for their HE studies’ (**Y and N**)

I have labelled these types of opinions as simple (**Y or N**), complex (**Y+; N+**), or neutral (**Y and N**). It does not make any difference to rhetorical complexity whether the writers have chosen yes or no. For example, the opinions of a writer who thinks that the government should fund HE, but only for those people who cannot afford it, are of the same level of complexity as those of a writer who believes that the government should not pay for HE, except for students who cannot afford it. In the tables below (Table 5.3 and Table 5.4)), the ‘yes’ and ‘no’ pieces are therefore grouped together, and so are the ones that communicate the message ‘yes, but’ and ‘no, but’.

The following table presents the types of opinions found in the BBs.

**Table 5.3: Complexity of the opinions in the BBs**

<b><u>Type of opinion</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b><u>BB number:</u></b>
<b>Simple opinion: Y or N</b>	14	64%	<b>Y:</b> 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20 <b>N:</b> 3, 4, 15
<b>Complex opinion: Y+ or N+</b>	8	36%	<b>Y+:</b> 1, 8, 12, 13, 16, 21, 22 <b>N+:</b> 10
<b>Neutral opinion: Y and N</b>	0	--	--

Table 5.3 reveals that none of the writers expressed a neutral opinion. BB21 comes the closest to a neutral opinion, as it concludes that specific election results are unpredictable, but the writer is not saying that there is a balance of opinions or that it is impossible to draw a conclusion.

Nearly two thirds of the pieces have a simple opinion. It is not surprising that the experts often choose to write about a topic on which they have a clear opinion. Over a third of the pieces contain a complex opinion. Only one of those (BB1) expresses a compromise; the others answer the question as well as adding ideas.

Table 5.4 shows the breakdown of types of arguments in the SEs:

**Table 5.4: Complexity of the opinions in the SEs**

<b><u>Type of opinion</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>% of SEs this represents</b>	<b><u>SE number:</u></b>
<b>Simple opinion: Y or N</b>	14	44%	<b>Y:</b> 1, 2, 4, 9, 17, 20, 24, 27, 28, 29 <b>N:</b> 6, 13, 18, 26

<b>Complex opinion: Y+ or N+</b>	13	40%	<b>Y+:</b> 3, 7, 10, 19, 23, 25, 30, 31 <b>N+:</b> 8, 11, 21, 22, 32
<b>Neutral opinion: Y and N</b>	5	16%	<b>Y/N:</b> 5, 12, 14, 15, 16

There are 14 pieces which express a simple opinion: they answer the essay question with a simple yes or no. Another group of writers opted for a more complex opinion: there are 13 pieces which propose a compromise. The remaining five writers did not choose yes or no, and/or specifically stated that there needs to be a balance or that there are benefits both to saying yes and to saying no. For example, in SEs 5, 14, and 15 the writer declares that it is difficult to give an answer, and in SEs 12 and 16 the author mentions opposing views but does not declare an unambiguous preference for any one of them. They thus maintain a neutral opinion.

A picture emerges here of a clear difference between the corpora, summarised in Table 5.5:

**Table 5.5: Comparison of the complexity of the opinions**

<u><b>Types of opinion</b></u>	<u><b>In % of BBs</b></u>	<u><b>In % of SEs</b></u>
<b>Simple opinion: Y or N</b>	64%	44%
<b>Complex opinion: Y+ or N+</b>	36%	40%
<b>Neutral opinion: Y/N</b>	--	16%

The main difference between the corpora in terms of the type of opinion expressed is that none of the BBs expressed a neutral opinion, whereas approximately one in six

of the SEs did. This is somewhat unexpected, as the instructions to the student writers included the requirement to '*Discuss this topic by (...) and drawing your own conclusion*'. Possible explanations for why these student writers remained neutral include: they may not have read the instructions carefully, they may have read the instructions but wrote what they felt was an adequate IELTS-type essay, they may have been writing in a style suited to the for-and-against essay, in which no personal view needs to be added (as also mentioned in Section 3.4.2), they may have thought that they had made their preference clear, they may have been more used to writing expository essays, or may not have appreciated that a neutral opinion is not generally accepted as an 'own conclusion'. Unsurprisingly, experts who were asked to choose and comment on a topical issue did include a clear personal view on the issue.

In addition, students might prefer to remain neutral rather than giving their own opinion because they are afraid of being 'wrong'. If this is the case, this potentially indicates the writers' awareness of their reader, who is a teacher. Being more experienced in the topic they write about than their target readers, experts are not likely to be worried about disagreement: they are aware that their readers represent many different disciplines and that, rather than judge them for holding opposing opinions, they are likely to be willing to engage in discussion about them.

Another difference worth mentioning is the relatively high frequency of complex arguments in the SEs (40%, vs. 36% in the BBs). It is possible that these writers felt that it was important to represent the ideas of others in their texts, which led them to qualifying their views.

### **5.3 Conclusions about macro-organisation in the BBs and SEs**

Over two thirds of the BBs propose or evaluate policies, and they more often than not include a clear view in favour or against a particular issue. About two thirds give a straightforward yes or no answer to the question they set themselves, about one third add provisos, and none of them take a neutral position.

The SEs also contain Proposal and Evaluation arguments. The student writers, however, are less likely to give an unqualified 'yes' or 'no' opinion, and one in six of the writers sit on the fence in terms of their response to the set question.

As mentioned previously, summaries of the micro-argumentation in the introductions, middle parts, and conclusions of respectively the BBs and SEs are shown in Appendices 10 and 11. The BBs and SEs are no longer in numerical order in these appendices; instead they have been subdivided depending on the patterns discussed above. The SEs have been re-ordered according to the complexity of the opinions that they express. The BBs have been subdivided according to (1) discipline, (2) argument type and (3) complexity of opinion. These overviews, in which micro-argumentation summaries are shown within the subcategories, make it possible to forge links between micro-argumentation and larger textual considerations. These links will be discussed in Parts II and III below where appropriate.

## **PART II: THE NUMBER OF ARGUMENTS**

Micro-argument refers to the individual arguments that are present in an argumentational text. As single arguments consist of Points and Support, this section is subdivided into two main parts. These are, firstly, the findings related to Points, which look at the Points the writers hold (labelled P) and those that they explore but may not hold themselves (labelled [P]); and secondly, the findings related to Support, which relate to evidence for the writers' own points of view (labelled S), counterevidence (-S), and those parts of a text where a writer states support has been or will be given (labelled (S)).

To be able to tally the relevant labels, overview tables were compiled in which the outcomes of each BB and SE analysis are shown in numerical order. The number of Points made, the type of opinion, and for the BBs also the type of argument are given for each piece. The presence of Points, Support and Other sections are given for each introduction, middle part and conclusion, and the cases where new points have been made in the conclusions are noted. These overviews can be found in Appendix 8 for the BBs and Appendix 9 for the SEs. The tables and information given in Part II are based on these summaries as well as on the individual analyses (Appendices 4 and 6).

## 5.4 Points: P and [P]

### 5.4.1 Own Points: P

#### 5.4.1.1 The BBs

As shown in Table 5.6, the writers of the BBs have made a total of 48 Points in their pieces, which equates to one Point per 215 words. There are 2.2 Points made on average per piece, and most pieces include two or three. The minimum is one Point; the maximum is four Points.

Table 5.6: Number of Ps in the BBs

<b><u>Characteristic of the BBs</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>BB number</b>
<b>Number of Points</b>		
<b>0</b>	--	--
<b>1</b>	5	1, 4, 5, 7, 18
<b>2</b>	8	2, 8, 9, 12, 15, 16, 20, 21
<b>3</b>	8	3, 6, 11, 13, 14, 17, 19, 22
<b>4</b>	1	10

The pieces with a simple opinion (i.e. Y or N) have two Points on average, whereas the complex ones (Y+ or N+) have 2.4, which equates to 20% more. This may be because the complex pieces present a qualified point of view or add ideas rather than just answering the question with a clear-cut answer.

The types of argument contain the following number of Points on average: Causal 3, Proposal 2.3, Evaluation 1.75 and Definition 1.5. The fact that Causal and Proposal

have more than two Points per piece on average can be explained by the fact that they have two-part patterns and each part necessitates at least one Point: cause and effect, problem and solution.

All the disciplinary areas have exactly two Points on average, except Social Science, which has 2.7. This difference appears to be meaningful. The Social Science pieces do not express more complex opinions than the other fields, nor do they include disproportionately more Proposal and Causal arguments, which tend to include more Points. As there are no other factors contributing to the presence of Points, it may be that Social Science topics lend themselves to this. However, these observations are based on relatively small amounts of data and may therefore not be representative of other opinion pieces. Whether Social Science writers tend to include more Points would be an interesting question to investigate on a larger scale.

#### 5.4.1.2 The SEs

**Table 5.7: Number of Ps in the SEs**

<b><u>Characteristic of the SEs:</u></b> <b>number of Points</b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>0</b>	1	12
<b>1</b>	17	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32
<b>2</b>	12	3, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 21, 22, 23, 25, 30, 31
<b>3</b>	2	7, 19
<b>4</b>	--	--

As is shown in Table 5.7, the writers of the SEs made a total of 47 Points in their pieces, which equates to one Point per 214 words. On average, each SE makes 1.5 Points, and most pieces include one Point. The minimum is zero Points; the maximum is three.

In the group expressing a simple opinion, nine SEs only make one Point (SEs 1, 4, 6, 9, 17, 26, 27, 28, 29), while the other five (SEs 2, 13, 18, 20, 24) make two Points. In the group expressing a complex opinion, only one piece (SE32) makes just one Point, the other 12 use more. Of those 12, two pieces also make a third Point (SEs 7 and 19). The writers that give a balanced opinion state two or fewer Points of their own. SE12 does not state any Points apart from those made by others. All of this suggests that giving a complex opinion involves making more Points, which is unsurprising.

#### 5.4.1.3 Comparison of the number of Points in the BBs and the SEs

**Table 5.8: Comparison of the Number of Ps**

<b><u>Characteristic</u></b>	<b><u>BBs</u></b>	<b><u>SEs</u></b>
<b>Average number of Points per piece</b>	2.2	1.5
<b>Points per number of words</b>	1/215	1/214
<b>Number of pieces in which 0 Points were made</b>	--	1 (3%)
<b>Number of pieces in which 1 Point was made</b>	5 (23%)	17 (53%)
<b>Number of pieces in which 2 Points were made</b>	8 (36%)	12 (37.5 %)
<b>Number of pieces in which 3 Points were made</b>	8 (36%)	2 (6%)
<b>Number of pieces in which 4 Points were made</b>	1 (5%)	--

The average number of Points per BB is 2.2; for the SEs this is 1.5. However, this difference may well be due to the BB pieces being longer, and the distribution of Points is almost the same for both corpora, at approximately one Point per 214 or 215 words.

A clear difference between the two corpora is that the SEs have proportionally many more pieces that make just one Point (53% vs. 23% of the BBs), suggesting that student writers are more likely than experts to make just one Point and develop their essay from that. This correlates with the shorter essay length.

In both corpora, over a third of the pieces develop two Points, but 77% of the BBs make two or more Points, versus 43.5% of the SEs, which may again be due to length: the BBs are on average nearly 1.5 times longer: there are 456 words per average BB and 315 per average SE. In both corpora, giving a complex opinion necessitates presenting more Points.

#### **5.4.2 The opinion of others: [P]**

As shown in Appendices 8 and 9, there are a large number of instances of [P] in the corpora. [P] relates to views that others hold or could reasonably hold. As described in Chapter 4, The label [P] is given when writers explore a view that is not necessarily their own: they state a point of view without indicating whether or not they agree. Sometimes it becomes clear further into the piece that the writer actually agrees with the view; at other times this is not the case, either because the writer takes the opposite point of view or does not state a preference.

Further examination of the pieces shows that these [P]s fall into two categories. One of these options is that the writer mentions a real situation, for example, actions that have been taken elsewhere, perhaps in another country. The point of view itself is not expressed but can be deduced from the stated actions. An example of this can be found in SE10:

*On the other hand, there are many governments does not pays for their people university education.*

At this stage in the piece, we know that some governments do not pay for university education, i.e. their view is that university education should not be paid for by governments. The writer of SE10 is exploring an actual situation but does not say whether she agrees.

Another possibility is that the writers explicitly state what views other people hold or might hold, without saying if they agree with this. An example of this can be found in SE2:

*In contrast, many of people agree with the governments should pay for the University education of their people.*

Table 5.9, Table 5.10 and Table 5.11 show to which of these categories the [P]s identified in the texts could be assigned.

### 5.4.2.1 The BBs

Table 5.9: Number of [P]s in the BBs

<b><u>Characteristic</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>BB number</b>
<b>Exploring the view of others:</b>	8 (36%)	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 16, 19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>by exploring an actual situation, e.g. in another country</li> </ul>	--	--
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>by exploring the opinion of others (e.g. by looking at what 'some people believe/say/agree/think/suggest ...')</li> </ul>	8 (36%) (12/12 instances)	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 16, 19

More than a third of the pieces include some views put forward by others. All of them do so by considering potential points of view rather than an actual situation.

It appears that the pieces that incorporate other views are relatively equally distributed among the different groups. It is worth noting though that none of the pieces about Natural Science and Engineering explore the views of others. Although this is only a small group of three essays and is unlikely therefore to be representative, this may be because Natural Science and Engineering topics tend to be more factual than opinion-based. In these BBs they concern climate change (BB1), cholera (BB4) and quantum technology (BB20).

Similarly, none of the Proposal arguments mention the opinion of others. Rather than to critique or oppose a policy, as is by definition often the case in Proposal arguments, many of them appear to merely mention the past and to focus on a call to action (e.g. BBs 9, 12, 13, 22).

### 5.4.2.2 The SEs

Table 5.10: Number of [P]s in the SEs

<b><u>Characteristic</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>Exploring the view of others:</b>	18 (56%) (41 instances)	2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 29, 30, 31
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>by exploring an actual situation, e.g. in another country</li> </ul>	5 (6 of the 41* instances)	4, 10, 14, 15, 31
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>by exploring the opinion of others (e.g. by looking at what 'some people believe/say/agree/think/suggest ...')</li> </ul>	13 (35 of the 41 instances)	2, 3, 5, 8, 12, 13, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 29, 30

*\*Where two labels applied simultaneously (indicated with a slash in the analysis), the occurrence was only counted once as an individual instance. There were 41 individual occurrences, and 42 actual ones.*

More than half of the essays include the opinion of others. This is mostly achieved through stating what people's possible opinions are, but occasionally also by looking at how views are realised in an actual situation. It is not surprising that the SE writers explore what happens elsewhere; their topic is the funding of education, and as they are international students they all have experience of living and studying in other countries.

The opinions of others are incorporated often and are distributed fairly evenly across the groups with simple, complex and neutral opinions. Even when taking into consideration whether this is achieved through stating the opinion of others or exploring a real situation, the occurrences are spread across the three groups. This

would seem to indicate that the type of opinion expressed does not affect the interaction with the views of others.

#### 5.4.2.3 Comparison of the opinion of others in the BBs and the SEs

Table 5.11: Comparison of the Number of [P]s

<b><u>Characteristic</u></b>	<b><u>BBs</u></b>	<b><u>SEs</u></b>
<b>Exploring the view of others:</b>	8/22 (36%) (12 instances)	18/32 (56%) (41 instances)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>by exploring an actual situation, e.g. in another country</li> </ul>	--	5/32 (15% of the 41 instances)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>by exploring the opinion of others (e.g. by looking at what 'some people believe/say/agree/think/ suggest ...')</li> </ul>	8/22 (100% of the 12 instances)	35/41 (85% of the 41 instances)

Table 5.11 shows that the views of others are explored in more than half of the SEs, whereas for the BBs this is just over a third. There is a considerable difference in the number of instances in the corpora: the SEs explore the views of others more than three times as often as the BBs. It was not possible to link the complexity of the opinions to the extent to which the opinions of others are engaged with in either corpus. It is possible that the discipline makes a difference, for example, a writer might state opposing views less often when dealing with certain subject matters, but this would have to be further investigated.

In all 12 instances where the views of others are explored in the BBs, the writers discuss what people believe. In the SEs 85% of instances do this; the other 15% explore these views as evidenced through an existing situation.

As academic argument is a social activity (see Chapter 1) in which different views need to be presented (see Chapter 2), exploring the views of others can be seen as an academic convention. Yet, in these semi-academic corpora it is the students who follow those academic conventions more than the experts (56% vs. 36%), probably because despite the task instructions of both corpora being the same, i.e. the writing of an opinion piece, their specific genres are different because of the writing context: the students were asked to write 'essays' and to look at different points of view, whereas the academics were asked to write their opinion pieces from a position of expertise. Interestingly, exploring the views of others by looking at what happens elsewhere is not something that the academics in this corpus partook in. The students may well have done so both because of their personal experience and knowledge to draw upon and their lack of expertise on the topic.

## **5.5 Support: S, (S) and -S**

For an argument to exist, each Point needs to be followed or preceded by corresponding evidence, and so there should be at least as many Support sections as there are Points. The presence of Support where there is a Point is therefore to be expected in a piece of argumentational writing. In this section, I look at the more unusual cases of Support provision: where more than the minimum amount of Support is provided (Section 5.5.1) and where the minimum amount of Support is not

provided (Section 5.5.2). To obtain the required data for both of these sections, a tally was made of the Support given in each piece. For each Point of view that an author stated, its corresponding Support was identified. If, for example, there was a P1 with no S1, there was deemed to be 'missing' Support. Where P1 was found with multiple corresponding instances of S1, either given in different parts of the piece, or as a list of different pieces of Support in the same section (indicated in the table in Appendices 8 and 9 with *R*, for 'repeat', e.g. SR1), this was deemed to be 'extra' Support.

It is also interesting to consider how the authors summarise their Support, that is, whether they say that Support has been given, or that Support will be given for a Point. In these cases, there is a semblance of argument, but unless the Support that is referred to is actually given somewhere in the text, the statement in itself does not contribute to the argument, as it is empty of content. This is referred to as an 'empty summary statement' and the occurrence of these, labelled (S) in the analyses, is referred to in Section 5.5.3.

The final aspect to consider is the provision of Support that contradicts Points that have already been made (P or [P]). In the analysis, these Support statements have been labelled with -S. They were found to have two functions: (1) a concession to an opposing view, or (2) an acknowledgement of a negative aspect of a Point.

For example, in BB3, there is evidence of function (1), concession to an opposing view. The writer's opinion is that separation presents a risk of violence. The statement *'whilst he [Sudan's President] has recently played down threats of*

*violence*' can be seen as evidence for the opposite point of view, which is conceded, but then refuted: *'there remain disputes in the Darfur regions and other areas'*.

BB4 shows an example of function (2): the writer 'weakens' her point of view with the acknowledgement *'Although the mechanisms of such associations are not yet fully understood'*, but subsequently she emphasises her Point by relying on Support based on the existence of literature: *'the growing literature associated with low stress responses suggests that we need to rethink our understanding'*.

The use of counterevidence is discussed in Section 5.5.4.

### 5.5.1 Extra Support

#### 5.5.1.1 The BBs

Table 5.12 shows that the BB writers make 48 Points (P). For 45 of these Points, (94%) more than one item of Support, or piece of evidence, is provided; the remaining three pieces have an instance where the writer only gives the minimum amount of Support. As providing extra Support is achieved throughout the corpus with few exceptions, no correlation can be found with argumentation pattern, discipline or complexity of opinion.

**Table 5.12: Extra Support in the BBs**

<b><u>Characteristics of the BBs</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b>BB numbers</b>
<b>Contain extra Support for one of the points made</b>	19 (45 out of 48 instances)	86% (94% of instances)	all but 13, 16 and 19

### 5.5.1.2 The SEs

As can be seen in Table 5.13, the SE writers make 47 Points (P). For 33 of these, (70%) more than the minimum amount of evidence is provided.

Eight out of the 12 pieces which do not provide more than one item of Support for each Point are in the 'complex opinion' group (see Appendix 9). This suggests that where opinions with provisos are given, the student writers do not tend to give more than the minimum requirement of Support for their own Points, possibly because they are concentrating their efforts on incorporating other points of view.

Table 5.13: Extra Support in the SEs

<b><u>Characteristics of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>% of SEs this represents</b>	<b>SE numbers</b>
<b>Contain extra Support for one of the Points made</b>	20 (33 out of 47 instances)	62.5% (70% of instances)	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32

### 5.5.1.3 Comparison of Extra Support in the BBs and SEs

Table 5.14: Comparison of Extra Support

	<b>BBs</b>	<b>SEs</b>
<b>Extra Support</b>	for 94% of the Ps	for 70% of the Ps

The BB writers tend to provide more than one piece of evidence for each Point they make. Providing only one item of Support per point appears to be the exception rather than the rule. The SE writers tend to move on to another Point readily after

supplying just one item of evidence for a Point (in about 30% of the cases). This could be because the SE writers do not have sufficient knowledge of the evidence, as they are writing about a subject they are not an expert on, whereas the BB writers know a considerable amount about their chosen topics. It may also be because SE writers give comparatively more attention to the views of others. As the BB writers are so consistent in providing more than the minimum quantity of evidence, it is possible that they consider this necessary to display their knowledge and expertise or to convince readers of their Points.

### 5.5.2 Missing Support

Arguments only exist where Support for a Point exists. It is therefore interesting to discuss where writers fail to make an argument, that is, those instances where Support should be forthcoming but is not.

#### 5.5.2.1 The BBs

**Table 5.15: Missing Support in the BBs**

<b><u>Characteristics of the BBs</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>BB number</b>
<b>Missing support</b>	0 (0% of total)	--

As Table 5.15 shows, without exception the BB writers provide Support for each of their views. In other words, no Points are formulated without them being evidenced.

### 5.5.2.2 The SEs

Table 5.16: Missing Support in the SEs

<b><u>Characteristics of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>Missing support</b>	5 (15.5% of total)	3, 10, 11, 21, 22

As Table 5.16 shows, where writers give their own Points (P rather than [P]) most of the time they provide corresponding Support.

If we look at what the writers believe, as indicated by the Ps in the 'Points' column (see Appendix 9), and check for all corresponding Support, we find that the following pieces have missing Support sections: SE3 (S3), SE10 (S1 and S3), SE11 (S2), SE15 (S3), SE21 (S2), SE22 (S3). On closer examination, it is revealed that some of those pieces do provide the apparently missing Support, in a more roundabout way, and this is not necessarily a less effective approach. For example, in SE10, there is a -S2 which can serve as an S1 as [P2] is the opposite of P1; in SE15 two Points are accompanied by equal numbers of evidence of advantages and disadvantages, which can be interpreted as provision of Support for the conclusion that it is hard to choose between them; and in SE21 the writer could have better emphasised the Support using an explicit link, but there are ideas in the text that lead to P2.

However, a further five of the pieces (16%) genuinely do not provide any support for some of the claims they make (i.e. SEs 3, 10, 11, 21, 22). As all of these are in group 2 (complex opinions) we can conclude that when writers gave simple or neutral opinions they supported their ideas, but not always when they gave complex opinions, implying that this may be a more difficult skill to acquire. It is possible that

complex opinions complicate the structure of a piece, thus making it harder for the writer to manage the argument.

### 5.5.2.3 Comparison of missing Support in the BBs and SEs

**Table 5.17: Comparison of Missing Support**

<b><u>Characteristic</u></b>	<b><u>Number of instances in BBs</u></b>	<b><u>Number of instances in SEs</u></b>
<b>Missing Support</b>	0 (0% of total)	5 (15.5% of total)

As shown in Table 5.17, SE writers omitted to provide support for some of the claims they made about one in six times, but there was no missing Support in any of the BBs. BB writers therefore do not appear to make any claims that they cannot justify. In contrast, some student writers occasionally fail to make a full argument, which has a negative impact on the ability of the essay to fulfil its purpose and to persuade. However, those students do know how to argue: all those who made these incomplete arguments also succeeded in making arguments elsewhere in their essays. Rather than not knowing the requirements to formulate arguments, they are inconsistent in meeting them.

### 5.5.3 The use of empty summary statements: (S)

Empty summary statements are propositions in which writers state that support is available, but do not then give that Support.

#### 5.5.3.1 The BBs

**Table 5.18: Empty summary statements in the BBs**

<b><u>Characteristic of the BBs</u></b>	<b><u>In number of BBs (out of 22)</u></b>	<b><u>BB number</u></b>
<b>Empty summary statements</b>	2 (9%)	8, 16

The occurrence of empty summary statements was rare in this corpus, so it is not possible to draw conclusions between this area and the larger categories. Only two pieces (BBs 8 and 16) include an empty summary statement (see Table 5.18), which corresponds to an occurrence in less than 10% of the corpus. In these pieces, the statement is given in the middle part to project forward and announce the later provision of multiple pieces of Support.

### 5.5.3.2 The SEs

The use of empty summary statements is quite common in the SEs, and they are observed to serve two functions in the corpus: to look forward or to sum up. The following table shows the distribution of these functions.

**Table 5.19: Empty summary statements in the SEs**

<b><u>Characteristic of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>Empty summary statements</b>	21 (66% of total) (28 instances)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 32
<b>Looking forward (announcing)</b>		
• in the introduction	1 (3.6% of 28 instances)	26
• in the middle part	16 (57% of 28 instances)	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 21, 23, 24, 25, 29, 32
• in the conclusion	N/A	N/A
<b>Looking backward (summing up)</b>		
• in the introduction	N/A	N/A
• in the middle part	1 (3.6% of 28 instances)	21
• in the conclusion	10 (36% of 28 instances)	3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 22, 23, 26, 28

The table shows that empty summary statements are mainly used in the middle part of an essay to project forward and in the conclusion to look back. For example, in SE1, *It has numerous of benefits* (followed by *such as* and later *also*) announces that the essay will look at advantages; and in SE3, the following statement is used: *In conclusion, to sum up there are arguments for both.*

The use of empty summary statements is fairly equally divided in between essays comprising a simple opinion (10 essays), those with a complex opinion (9 essays) and the smaller group of essays with a neutral opinion (2 essays; Appendix 9) and so cannot be correlated to those categories.

### 5.5.3.3 Comparison of the use of empty summary statements in the BBs and the SEs

Table 5.20: Comparison of empty summary statements

	BBs	SEs
<b>Empty summary statements</b>	2 instances (in 9% of total BBs)	21 instances (in 66% of total SEs)
<b>Looking forward (announcing)</b>		
• in the introduction	--	3.5% of instances
• in the middle part	100% of instances	57% of instances
• in the conclusion	--	N/A
<b>Looking backward (summing up)</b>		
• in the introduction	--	N/A
• in the middle part	--	3.5% of instances
• in the conclusion	--	36% of instances

As shown in Table 5.20, empty summary statements occur 10 times more often in the SE corpus than in the BBs and feature throughout the pieces, particularly occurring in the middle parts of essays to look forward and in the conclusions to sum up. They are rare in the BBs, but where they exist they announce Support.

One possible reason for the scarcity of such statements in the BBs may be that avoiding them helps the writers keep to their word limits. Alternatively, the BB writers may not deem it necessary or desirable to sum up in short pieces of writing.

SE writers may simply be using these signposts because they are helpful to the reader. Empty summary statements that announce support can be seen as text organisation strategies which illustrate Sinclair's (1993) concept of *prospection*, "where the phrasing of a sentence leads the addressee to expect something specific in the next sentence" (p. 12), and which encourages the perception of the text as coherent (Álvarez de Mon y Rego, 2001). The view that it is helpful to announce what is to come is reflected in academic writing resources, some of which take quite a mechanical view of paragraph construction, suggesting that they should consist of topic sentences, subtopic sentences and evidence. Traditionally, topic sentences tend to be defined in composition resources as the presentation of a core idea, usually in one sentence, most often at the start of a paragraph, although they can be strengthened or refined in one or two more (e.g. Gorrell and Laird, 1967). They can have a signposting function, as suggested by advice to students such as "the topic or subject of the paragraph often gives the reader a clue to the specific information the paragraph will contain" (Smith-Palinkas and Croghan-Ford, 2010, p. 65). Exemplar topic sentences are "Computers have become essential in the home these days for three major reasons", "Television benefits children in three major ways" (Harris

Leonhard, 2002, pp. 69–70), “People study anthropology for several reasons” (Smith-Palinkas and Croghan-Ford, 2010, p. 65). These are very similar in nature to the empty summary statements that the SE writers use to announce the presence of Support, which suggests they may have been included to inform and guide the reader.

#### 5.5.4 Counterevidence: -S

Examination of the use of counterevidence shows that it is used in two ways: to concede that there is Support for an opposing view or to give a drawback for one’s own view.

##### 5.5.4.1 The BBs

Table 5.21: Counterevidence in the BBs

<u>Characteristic of the BBs</u>	<u>In number of BBs (out of 22)</u>	<u>BB number</u>
<b>Counterevidence:</b>	17 (77%) (34 instances)	in all but 11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
• concession to opposing view	16 (73%) (25 instances)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 22
• negative aspect of a view	3 (14%) (9 instances)	5, 6, 7
• both	3 (14%)	5, 6, 7

Table 5.21 shows that counterevidence (labelled -S) occurs 24 times in 22 BBs; that is, on average, more than 1.5 times per BB. A total of 77% of the BBs consider either a negative aspect of a proposed view and / or give a concession to an opposing view; three of those pieces include both.

Concession is used in nearly three quarters of the BBs. Negative aspects of own views are only mentioned in 14% of the BBs (but this represents 26% of the instances of counterevidence, as pieces that include counterevidence usually list more than one example of it).

In terms of the division into categories, the following could be observed. Eight of 13 pieces with a simple opinion include counterevidence, most often through concession. All but one (BB21) of the pieces with a complex opinion include counterevidence, and this is always through concession. This suggests that counterevidence, especially concession, is not dependent on whether the writer is trying to express a straightforward answer to a question or has new ideas or provisos to add: including counterevidence can simply be seen as a common writing technique.

In terms of type of argument, all but one (BB18) of the pieces that include Proposal arguments also include counterevidence, all through concession. Both of the Categorical Definition pieces include concession. This may be because both of those types of argument are likely to react against existing views. The other argument categories cannot be linked to the use of counterevidence.

All but one of the Political Science essays (BB17) contain concession, and just under 10% of them contain both concession and negative aspects. All of the Social Science pieces contain concession, and one of them (BB6) also exhibits negative aspects. A total of 60% of the Health Sciences essays contain concession while none contain negative aspects. Only one of the three Science and Engineering pieces contain counterevidence, in the form of this type of concession.

In other words, in this particular corpus, Political and Social Science topics tend to include concession, Health Sciences pieces more often than not include concession, but Science and Engineering pieces are less likely to contain counterevidence. This follows a spectrum from ‘soft’ to ‘hard’ sciences. Differences between these areas of inquiry have been found in the past, with soft science articles using more interactional metadiscourse than hard science articles (Fu and Hyland, 2014). Soft sciences are traditionally seen to have more tolerance for the inclusion of opinion as well as just fact in contrast to the hard sciences. If that is indeed the case, then the higher level of engagement with the opinion of others is not surprising. It would be interesting to investigate if this would be the case on a larger scale.

#### 5.5.4.2 *The SEs*

The following table (Table 5.22) shows an overview of the functions of counterevidence in the different SEs. Counterevidence (as represented by the minus sign in the table in Appendix 9) is used in around 60% of the pieces expressing a simple and a complex opinion, and 40% of the group of pieces expressing a neutral opinion.

**Table 5.22: Counterevidence in the SEs**

<b><u>Characteristic of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>Counterevidence:</b>	19 (59%) (61 instances)	1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 29, 31, 32
• concession to opposing view	7 (22%) (7 instances)	6, 10, 16, 17, 24, 27, 29

• negative aspect of a view	15 (47%) (54 instances)	1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 31, 32
• both	3 (9%)	6, 10, 24

Nearly 60% of the essays look at negative aspects and/or give concessions to opposing viewpoints. On average, there are slightly fewer than two instances of counterevidence per SE. Negative aspects are mentioned in just under half of the pieces, and account for nearly 90% of the instances of counterevidence. This is not surprising as an essay can be expected to contain more than one advantage or disadvantage.

#### 5.5.4.3 *Comparison of the use of counterevidence in the BBs and the SEs*

As Table 5.23 and

Table 5.24 show, counterevidence occurs in relatively more BBs than SEs, but there are more actual instances of it in the SEs, suggesting that those SE writers that use it as a technique do so quite prolifically in comparison to other student writers. The main difference between the corpora is that the BBs rely mainly on concession (in 73% of the BBs, and 74% of the instances of counterevidence), whereas the SEs prefer to list negative aspects (in 47% of the pieces and 89% of the instances). Concession is only used in 22% of the SEs and in only 11% of instances of counterevidence. The BBs look at negative aspects in 14% of the pieces, accounting for 26% of the instances of counterevidence.

Table 5.23: Comparison of counterevidence: presence in the corpora

<b><u>Characteristic</u></b>	<b><u>BBs (%)</u></b>	<b><u>SEs (%)</u></b>
<b>Counterevidence:</b>	77	59
• concession to opposing view	73	22
• negative aspect of a view	14	47
• both	14	9

Table 5.24: Comparison of counterevidence: instances in the corpora

<b><u>Characteristic</u></b>	<b><u>Number of instances in BBs</u></b>	<b><u>Number of instances in SEs</u></b>
<b>Counterevidence:</b>	more than 1.5 per BB	nearly 2 per SE
• concession to opposing view	74% of the total instances	11% of the total instances
• negative aspect of a view	26% of the total instances	89% of the total instances

The corpora contrast regarding the way they use counterevidence: the natural choice is concession to opposing views in the BBs and considering negative aspects of views in the SEs. This can be linked to what was discovered earlier about taking a stance: all the BBs contained the writers' own views, whereas some of the SEs only balanced views of other people, without drawing their own conclusion. When using concession rather than stating someone else's view, BB writers are able to remain firmly with their own beliefs, while making mere allowances for dissenting voices. This raises the question why students do not do this: it may be that they are not

aware of the value of concession, or that they lack the confidence or ability to use language effectively to realise concession. The implications of this for teaching are discussed in Chapter 8.

Other research has also found that students tend to balance views, which Hinkel (1999) links to textbook advice. In my student corpus this may have played a part, but I argue that it could also be due to the task instructions, which ask for advantages and disadvantages. The sentence-level juxtaposition pattern “*Some people believe xxx, and others think yyy; I have some friends who do xxx, but I also have friends who do yyy*” pattern is commonly employed by L2 writers (Hinkel 1999, p. 98), which could suggest that students may interpret giving balanced arguments as simply presenting opposing views (Chandrasegaran, 2008), without elaborating on evidence for those views.

This concludes Part II, which addressed the quantity of arguments in the corpora. In Part III, I will discuss where these arguments can be found. Subsequently, I will draw conclusions both about the location of arguments and their quantity.

### **PART III: THE LOCATION OF ARGUMENT**

In this third part of the chapter, I describe and compare the content of the pieces with regard to the location of the arguments. This will provide answers to aspects of Research Questions 1 and 2, more specifically the RQs relating to ‘when’: when the writers state their opinion, support their opinion, and deal with the opinions of others and the associated Support.

By examining the introductions, middles and conclusions of the pieces, it is possible to determine where exactly the argumentation takes place and how this compares between the corpora. Each of the pieces was divided into three parts as part of the analyses: the introduction and conclusion were separated with a horizontal line. This demarcation was carried out as described in Chapter 4: the author’s use of white space was taken as a guideline, unless there was none or if the analyst felt that the content of the pieces suggested otherwise.

Appendices 8 and 9 show an overview of the characteristics found in the separate sections of the BBs and SEs, respectively. In Part II, where the focus was on individual arguments, aspects of Points and Support were discussed. In this part, I take a wider view in order to consider not only where argumentation happens but also where it does not. I therefore also examine what happens in the non-argumentational sections (labelled O) of the pieces of writing.

The tables in this part are based on the information in the aforementioned appendices, but they do not refer to numbered Points and Support (e.g. P1 and S1),

as they present a summary of the relevant information rather than referring to specific arguments. The tables below show (1) in how many of the pieces the components were present, and (2) what percentage of the total number this represents. These percentages allow for a comparison between the corpora. The tables also show in which pieces the functions can be found. For both sets of essays, I have indicated if the following were present: Points (P), Points that are or can be ascribed to others ([P]), Support (S), counterevidence (-S), other functions (O), and combinations thereof.

#### **5.5.5 The BB and SE introductions**

Introductions set the tone of the pieces of writing. In terms of argument analysis, it is interesting to consider where the argumentation starts and whether the introductions foreground argument or are mere preludes to it. For this reason, the functions of the non-argumentational sections in the introductions were examined. The roles of the Os could be divided into:

- introducing the general topic (e.g. with a definition or by setting it in a wider social context)
- narrowing the focus of the topic (e.g. by asking a specific question)
- referring to the central idea of the piece (e.g. by stating a fact, but not the author's view (P) itself yet).

These areas are broadly similar in nature to the functions of essay introductions in a model designed by Henry and Roseberry (1997), based on genre analysis.

#### 5.5.5.1 The BB introductions

As can be seen in Table 5.25 below, the vast majority of BB writers (91%) include some non-argumentational sections in their introductions, and more than half of all pieces contain just non-argumentational sections with no argument at all. All BB writers introduce the topic in their introduction and most of them go on to narrow the focus (over 60%). In all but four BBs (9, 17, 19, and 20), the writers introduce the central idea in the introduction, and 50% do so through an introductory statement, often in combination with their point of view (in 27% of the total pieces). In 14% of the pieces, non-argumentational sections can be found in combination with the views of others.

**Table 5.25: Presence of non-argumentational sections (O) in the BBs (introductions)**

Characteristic of BBs	In number of BBs (out of 22)	% of BBs this represents	BB numbers
<b>Contain O</b>	20	91%	all but 7 and 22
• introducing the topic	20	91%	all but 7 and 22
• narrowing the focus	14	64%	1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
• central idea of the essay	11	50%	1, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 21
<b>Contain O only</b>	12	55%	1, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
<b>Contain the combination of O and P</b>	6	27%	2, 4, 6, 10, 14, 15
<b>Contain the combination of O and [P]</b>	3	14%	3, 4, 5

Table 5.26 shows that four of the pieces introduce the views of others, and seven include their own opinion. Six contain Support and three give counterevidence; two (SEs 10 and 15) contain both evidence in favour of their view (S) as well as counterevidence (-S); two (SEs 4 and 22) just mention Support in favour (S), and two (SEs 2 and 7) present only counterevidence (-S).

**Table 5.26: Presence of argument (P, [P], S, -S and (S)) in the BBs (introductions)**

<b>Characteristic of BBs</b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b>BB numbers</b>
<b>Contain [P]</b>	4	18%	3, 4, 5,7
<b>Contain P</b>	7	32%	2, 4, 6, 10, 14, 15, 22
<b>Contain S (and also the combination of P or [P] and S)</b>	6	27%	4, 10, 15, 22
<b>Contain -S (and also the combination of P or [P] and -S)</b>	3	14%	2, 7, 10, 15
<b>Contain (S) or (-S) or both</b>	--	--	--

#### *5.5.5.2 The SE introductions*

The vast majority of SE writers (94%) include non-argumentational sections (labelled 'O') in their introduction (see Table 5.27) and nearly a third of all essays contain no argument in their introductions. The main function of text sections that do not contain argument is to introduce the topic in general (in 28 of the 32 SEs), which often goes together with a narrowing of the focus: in 17 SEs both functions are found. In nearly half of all SEs, O is used to relate the central idea of the essay to the reader. About a sixth of the pieces use introductions to give general comments and their opinion (O

and P), with a few more writers presenting general comments together with the opinions of others (O and [P]).

**Table 5.27: Presence of non-argumentational sections (O) in the SEs (introductions)**

<b>Characteristic of SEs</b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>% of SEs this represents</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>Contain O</b>	30	94%	all except 7 and 27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introducing the topic</li> </ul>	28	87.5%	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 32
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>narrowing the focus</li> </ul>	17	53%	3, 4, 6, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 25, 26, 29, 31, 32
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>central idea of the essay</li> </ul>	15	47%	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19, 21, 23, 25, 28, 30
<b>Contain O only</b>	10	31%	2, 3, 4, 12, 13, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23
<b>Contain the combination of O and P</b>	5	16%	11, 16, 17, 25, 31
<b>Contain the combination of O and [P]</b>	6	19%	4, 5, 14, 22, 29, 30

As Table 5.28 shows, in terms of P and S, half the writers made their opinion clear in the essay introduction, and a quarter of writers also started to provide Support for their Points. The writer of SE6 includes counterevidence for the main Point in the introduction, as does the writer of SE10, but in the latter essay the -S relates to a point of view the writer does not share, and it can thus be said to function as S.

Table 5.28: Presence of argument (P, [P], S, -S and (S)) in the SEs (introductions)

Characteristic of SEs	In number of SEs (out of 32)	% of SEs this represents	SE number
Contain [P]	10	31%	4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 14, 18, 22, 29, 30
Contain P	16	50%	1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26, 28, 31, 32
Contain S (and also the combination of P and S)	8	25%	1, 7, 9, 18, 24, 26, 28, 32
Contain -S (and also the combination of P or [P] and -S)	2	6%	6, 10
Contain (S) or (-S) or both	1	3%	26

#### 5.5.5.3 Comparison of BB and SE introductions

The following table shows an overview of the content of the BBs and the SEs:

Table 5.29: Comparison of the BB and SE introductions

Introductions	BBs (%)	SEs (%)
<b>Contain O</b>	91	94
• introducing the topic	91	87.5
• narrowing the focus	64	53
• central idea of the essay	50	47
<b>Contain O only</b>	55	31
<b>Contain [P]</b>	18	28
<b>Contain P</b>	32	50

<b>Contain the combination of O and P</b>	27	16
<b>Contain the combination of O and [P]</b>	14	16
<b>Contain S (and also the combination of P or [P] and S)</b>	27	25
<b>Contain -S (and also the combination of P or [P] and -S)</b>	14	6
<b>Contain (S) or (-S) or both</b>	3	3

The introductions of BBs and SEs are relatively similar in nature. This does not support the findings of previous research, that there are major differences in the *move structures* (text components with different communicative purposes, as first used by Swales, 1990) used in introductions. These differences in move structures have not just been found in different disciplines but also in related fields (Samraj, 2002) and subfields of the same discipline (Ozturk, 2007).

Although the pieces have similar introductory patterns, BBs are more likely to just include non-argumentational preamble (55% vs. 31%) whereas SEs are more likely to also include their point of view (P). BB and SE writers are nearly equally as likely to explore a point of view that they may not agree with themselves (approximately 15% of each contain [P]), but BBs are more likely to also include counterevidence (14% vs. 6%).

Although Henry and Roseberry (1997) did not identify argument as a typical component of essay introductions, the presence of a relatively low amount of opinion (in 32% of BBs and 50% of SEs) is surprising within the context of what is generally assumed about the genre of the argument essay, defined by its intention “to persuade the reader of the correctness of a central statement” (Hyland, 1990, p. 68). Researchers have expected to find this thesis statement, i.e. the writer’s opinion,

near the start of good essays (e.g. Al-Haq and Ahmed 1994; Kamimura 2000) and this is also what textbooks recommend (e.g. Oshima and Hogue, 2006; Blass and Pike-Baky 2007). Opinion pieces in general have been said to have “a clear perspective towards both their topics and their readers by establishing a stance early on in the piece” (Fu and Hyland, 2014, p. 125). However, an evaluative statement was not present at the start in the case of half of the SEs and it was even less visible at the start of the BBs (68%).

Other research has suggested that the lack of stance at the start is in fact not unusual for opinion pieces. Schneer (2014) examined 50 opinion blogs from news websites, in other words, pieces of writing belonging to a similar genre (in terms of task) to the BBs and SEs, and found that the thesis statement, also known as proposition move, occurred more often at the end than at the beginning. He concludes that the introductory stage of an argumentative essay consists of an opening gambit and background information for the whole essay, and that the thesis stage, which includes a proposition move, can occur in any section (beginning, middle, or end) of the essay. Research into political briefs (Coe, 2001) and into university applications (Myskow and Gordon, 2010) has also found that the author’s opinion is not always found near the beginning of the written piece.

The differences that were identified between the BB and SE corpora do not appear to correlate with the complexity of the opinions expressed, the disciplines or the types of argument, but it is possible to link them to the different rhetorical/dialogic perspectives of the pieces. In other words, the differences between the corpora in terms of their genres (i.e. the different writing contexts) may have influenced the differences that were found in the texts.

Firstly, the writers' tasks and purposes are different. The BB writers have chosen to comment in writing on an issue of interest to them. They are specialists in their self-chosen topics, which may be the reason why they introduce and explain it more, without engaging much with arguments related to them. In many cases, the BB writers discuss current, real-life, policy issues, meaning that there is actual background to refer to rather than background specific to the argument(s) about these topics. There is a clear purpose to inform and an authenticity to the tasks, which is not the case for the student writers. In theory, argument essays provide a bridge from the educational environment to the real world (Schneer, 2014) but here the student writers are answering a specific set question which they have not been asked to research and which has some relation to their situation but is not necessarily related to their study specialism nor their general sphere of interest. They may therefore be more inclined to come to their Point more quickly and engage with the argument at an earlier stage.

Secondly, the target audiences and contexts are very different. The BBs have potential 'real-world' readers, attracted by the topic of the piece, whereas the SEs have one reader, who has set the task and is committed to reading the piece. Writing for 'genuine' readers, as the BB writers do, requires strategies for keeping their attention. Ways of keeping the readers interested may include setting the scene by linking the topic to current events and keeping readers waiting to find out the writer's position.

The following examples of introductions illustrate these different strategies.

**Table 5.30: Examples of introductions**

<b>BB1</b>	<b>SE1</b>
Unlike the previous meeting in Copenhagen a year ago, the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancún, which finished last Saturday, did produce an agreement. In the words of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres, 'The beacon of hope has been reignited and faith in the multilateral climate change process to deliver results has been restored'. The key question is - is it good enough?	In recently events there are many discussions about responsibilities of education in term of payment. I agree with this view which said that the government should pay for the university education of their people and give more opportunity for their people to develop them self. The reason for this idea will be discussed during the writing.
OR	O P1 S1 O

BB1 has a real-life context that is worth exploring: it gives background to a previous meeting about climate change and compares it to a more current meeting. It talks about the recent outcomes, gives an evaluation of this by means of a quote and it raises a related question. By contrast, the writer of SE1 presumably has nothing concrete in real life on which to report and therefore gives a brief context to the assignment question about HE funding by saying that there have been discussions about this. This may be true, but is more likely to be a stock phrase, used because there is no other information available to the writer, or because phrases without much meaning also add to the word count. Meeting the word count is something that students who have taken an IELTS writing test would have had to work at. After briefly exploring the context, SE1 gives an argument in the form of P1 and S1, followed by a preview of the essay structure.

In short, although the introductions are quite similar in nature, the differences can be explained by viewing them from the point of view of purpose and dialogue. Student writers are more likely to bring arguments into their introduction, probably simply because there is not much else they can do. At a later stage in their education, when they write more about real-life topics and / or their own specialisms on their subject-

specific courses, they may become more likely to include more non-argumentational sections in their introductions. If EAP teachers felt that doing so was important, they could devise strategies to encourage students to delay the start of argumentation in essays, for example, by raising awareness of or exploring the issues through classroom and coursework tasks. I will return to the differences between the corpora and debate the desirability of pedagogical intervention in Chapter 8.

#### **5.5.6 The BB and SE middle parts**

Flowerdew (2000), writing about understanding genre structure, points out that it is important to consider how parts of texts relate to each other. By its very nature the middle part of a text is closely connected to the other two parts, and the results of the BB and SE analyses should therefore be interpreted with this in mind. For example, where the middle part of a piece only contains S before P, and not P before S, it is possible that there was a P in the introduction that precedes the corresponding S.

Unlike introductions and conclusions, which may comprise traditional patterns, middle sections are not as readily defined as their content is more dependent on the individual writer's choices (Bruce, 2010). However, logically the body of the text is where the reader can expect to find most of the argumentation. This is made explicit by Yang and Allison (2004): they divide their study articles into introduction – argumentation - conclusion, with *argumentation* being used synonymously for *main body* and relating to sections of the texts containing what I have termed micro-arguments. A similar three-part structure is also commonly proposed for argumentative essays. For example, Hyland (1990) suggests *thesis-argument-conclusion*, and this can be linked to the five-paragraph essay, where the argument

stage is developed over three paragraphs in the middle (Schneer, 2014). As mentioned in Chapter 4, argument theory also suggests that the argument is to be found before the conclusion (e.g. van Eemeren 2010).

The corpora were found to contain more than argumentation: it was possible to identify sections that were not providing Points or Support. In the middle parts of texts, these Other sections were scrutinised and found to belong to three main categories: (1) facts, explanations, or asides, (2) signposting, and (3) questions.

#### 5.5.6.1 The BB middle parts

The BB middle parts contain a fair amount of non-argumentational propositions (see Table 5.31): these can be found in half of the pieces. Their most prevalent function is to add, illustrate, or explain (without supporting a specific point), (found in 9 pieces), although these propositions also serve to formulate questions (in 3 pieces).

**Table 5.31: Presence of non-argumentational sections (O) in the BBs (middle sections)**

<b><u>Characteristic of the BBs</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b>BB numbers</b>
<b>Contain O</b>	11	50%	1, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22
• giving an aside and/or factual information or explanation	9	41%	1, 3, 6, 8, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22
• signposting	--	--	--
• asking or stating a question	3	14%	6, 10, 12

Table 5.32 shows that the middle parts of the BB pieces offer a place for argumentation, as expected. Each middle part contains Support, and 95% have

sections where different items of Support are listed or elaborated on. Points also feature heavily. The BBs do not often explicitly mention the ideas of others ([P] occurs in 23% of the total pieces), but half contain counterevidence. The Points are usually given before the Support (in 77% of the cases), but the inverse pattern also occurs frequently (59%). Where Support is given and countered, the writers start marginally more often with counterevidence than with Points (45% and 41% respectively). In about a third of the pieces both orders occur.

There are only two occasions where writers use only empty statements, (S), assertions used to say that Support exists without stating what it is.

The last row in the table refers to the non-consecutive presentation of elements. This information has been added because the middle sections appeared to contain many different elements often with repetition. It is an interesting aspect of the argumentation in the pieces. Examples of non-consecutive elements are S1 in the series 'O S1 P1 S1 P2 S1', or P1 in the series 'P1 S1 P1 S2 P2'. As the table shows, more than 70% of pieces contain two or more sections with the same function with other elements mentioned in between. In other words, the structure of most pieces does not consist of clearly demarcated sections in which specific elements are handled. Instead, Points and their corresponding Support are often repeated in different places in the essay. Those pieces are fairly evenly distributed in that they are just as likely to be among the shorter essays as among the longer ones.

Table 5.32: Presence of argumentational sections (P, S, -S and (S) in the BBs (middle sections)

<b><u>Characteristic of the BBs</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b>BB numbers</b>
<b>Contain S (and/or SR)</b>	22	100%	All
<b>Contain P (and/or PR)</b>	20	91%	all but BBs 1, 20
<b>Contain [P] (and/or [P]R)</b>	5	23%	2, 4, 10, 16, 19
<b>Contain -S (and/or -SR)</b>	11	50%	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 16, 22
<b>Contain just S or -S (with or without O)</b>	1	5%	20
<b>Contain SR or -SR</b>	21	95%	all but BB11
<b>Contain P (or [P]) before corresponding S or -S</b>	17	77%	all but BBs 1, 10, 13, 20, 21
<b>Contain S or -S before corresponding P (or [P])</b>	13	59%	4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22
<b>Contain -S before corresponding S</b>	10	45%	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 16, 22
<b>Contain S before corresponding -S</b>	9	41%	3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 16, 22
<b>Contain (S) or (-S) or both</b>	2	9%	8, 16
<b>Contain the same element more than once non-consecutively</b>	16	73%	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22

#### 5.5.6.2 The SE middle parts

As can be seen in Table 5.33, only three of the SE pieces contain Other comments in their middle parts: one of these is an aside, a statement that relates to the general

topic of the essay but that constitutes a digression from the argument. The other two announce what is yet to come in the text. Interestingly, all three of the pieces that contain 'O' express a simple opinion. The number of occurrences is too small to draw conclusions from this, but it may be that in pieces where a straightforward 'yes' or 'no' answer is being given, there is more space for preamble before the argument starts.

**Table 5.33: Presence of non-argumentational sections in the SEs (middle sections)**

<b><u>Characteristic of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>% of SEs this represents</b>	<b>SE numbers</b>
<b>Contain O</b>	3	9%	6, 13, 27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>giving an aside and/or factual information or explanation</li> </ul>	1	3%	27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>signposting</li> </ul>	2	6%	6, 13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>asking or stating a question</li> </ul>	--	--	--

Table 5.34 shows that, as was to be expected, the middle parts of the SEs provide much Support, and this without exception. In a quarter of the cases, the Support relates to Points made elsewhere, so in those SEs the middle parts only serve to offer Support. As Support appears to be central to this section, it is not surprising that 91% of the texts contain longer sections offering nothing but Support.

Just over 40% of the SE writers make Points in the middle part, while more of them (50%) mention the ideas of others; just under 20% of writers do both. Two out of three student writers make a Point before they provide Support for it, and one out of three provides Support leading to a Point. In six of the pieces, both orders exist, that

is, nearly 20% of writers use a mixture of both S before P (or [P]) and P (or [P]) before S.

When it comes to providing Support against their own Points (either by stating a negative aspect or giving counterevidence), 25% of students start with the argument against, before providing the argument in favour. More students (37.5%, i.e. 12 people) do this the other way around: they start with Support for what they believe in before adding arguments against. Three student writers (less than 10%) do both.

Table 5.34 also shows that in 37.5% of the SEs the same element, most typically S1 or -S1, occurs more than once, with another function in between. The non-consecutive recurrence of the same functional element happens both in the shorter and longer essays, and does not follow a pattern related to length, whereas intuitively one might have assumed that this would happen more in longer pieces.

**Table 5.34: Presence of argumentational sections (P, S, -S and (S)) in the SEs (middle sections)**

<b><u>Characteristic of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>% of SEs this represents</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>Contain S (and/or SR)</b>	32	100%	all
<b>Contain P (and/or PR)</b>	13	41%	2, 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 22, 25, 26, 27, 31
<b>Contain [P] (and/or [P]R)</b>	15	47%	2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 29, 30, 31
<b>Contain -S (and/or -SR)</b>	13	41%	6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 24, 31

<b><u>Characteristic of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>% of SEs this represents</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>Contain just S or -S (with or without or O)</b>	9	28%	1, 4, 5, 11, 17, 21, 23, 28, 32
<b>Contain SR or -SR</b>	29	91%	all but 11, 15, 19
<b>Contain P (or [P]) before corresponding S or -S</b>	20	62.5%	2, 3, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31
<b>Contain S or -S before corresponding P (or [P])</b>	8	25%	6, 7, 13, 14, 16, 19, 31
<b>Contain -S before corresponding S</b>	9	28%	6, 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, 21, 24
<b>Contain S before corresponding -S</b>	13	41%	1, 4, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 29, 31, 32
<b>Contain (S) or (-S) or both</b>	16	50%	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 21, 23, 24, 25, 29, 32
<b>Contain the same element more than once non-consecutively</b>	11	34%	2, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 25, 31

### 5.5.6.3 Comparison of BB and SE middle parts

Table 5.35: Comparison of the BB and SE middle parts

<b><u>Middle parts</u></b>	<b>BBs (%)</b>	<b>SEs (%)</b>
<b>Contain S (and/or SR)</b>	100	100
<b>Contain P (and/or PR)</b>	91	41
<b>Contain [P] (and/or [P]R)</b>	23	47
<b>Contain -S (and/or -SR)</b>	50	41
<b>Contain just S or -S (with or without or O)</b>	5	28
<b>Contain SR or -SR</b>	95	91
<b>Contain P (or [P]) before corresponding S or -S</b>	77	62.5
<b>Contain S or -S before corresponding P (or [P])</b>	59	25
<b>Contain -S before corresponding S</b>	45	28
<b>Contain S before corresponding -S</b>	41	41
<b>Contain (S) or (-S) or both</b>	9	50
<b>Contain O</b>	50	9
• giving an aside and/or factual information or explanation	41	3
• signposting	--	6
• asking or stating a question	14	--
<b>Contain the same element more than once non-consecutively</b>	73	34

The middle parts of the BBs and SEs can be seen as being more divergent than their introductions. BBs are more than twice as likely as SEs to contain Points in the middle part (91% vs. 41%), and half as likely to contain the ideas of others (23% vs. 47%). SEs are more than five times as likely to contain only Support or counterevidence (28% vs. 5%). BB writers prefer to put evidence or counterevidence

before the Point it refers to (in 59% of pieces, compared to 25% of the SEs) and they are also much more likely to mention counterevidence before presenting the evidence they agree with than the SEs (45 vs. 28%, respectively). A clear difference between the corpora is the use of summary statements that announce the presence of Support or counterevidence: 50% of SEs include (S) but only two of the BBs had one instance of it (9%).

Another major difference between the corpora is the use of non-argumentational sections. A total of 41% of the BBs give asides in the middle section, compared to 3% of the SEs. The latter also use some signposting (6%) but the BBs do not do this at all. Conversely, BBs raise questions (in 14% of the corpus) and SEs do not.

Also, an important discrepancy between the corpora is the extent to which they contain the same element more than once non-consecutively in the middle sections: BBs do this more than twice as much as the SEs (73% vs. 34%).

Again, these results could be explained by considering the writers' identities and purposes. BB writers are experts and even where they acknowledge opposing views, they give more emphasis to their own. Although the middle section is used to present Support in all pieces, SE writers are much more likely to dedicate this area solely to evidence. As writers with little authority on their topic, they may feel that much Support needs to be offered to convince their readers of their Points. Announcing that there is Support can be seen in that light, as a strategy to emphasise the existence of Support. It can also simply be a strategy to manage readers' expectations by guiding them with "explicit predictive markers" (Johns, 2001, p. 104). However, it can also be a filler strategy, to increase the word count. BB writers on the

other hand intersperse their Support sections with other information. Chandrasegaran (2008, p. 241), commenting on student writing, theorises that “the influence of a personally felt argument goal arising from writing on a self-selected topic” may encourage the writer to use their topic knowledge as part of their evidence; in the BBs this knowledge seems to have more of an informative than an argumentational function.

The intermingling of Support and non-argumentational sections may make the argument more difficult to follow, yet BB writers do not often signpost. A predisposition of students towards organising their discourse more than other writers has been identified by several studies. For example, Hasselgård (2016) found that discourse-organising metadiscourse is more frequently used by learners than by professional academics, and Ozdemir and Longo (2014) demonstrated that Turkish L2 students use metadiscourse transitions more in their thesis abstracts than do American students.

It is possible that signposting and announcing Support (through the use of summary statements) are devices that students are taught to use. These are usually predictive strategies which consist of ‘Advance Labelling’ and represent a commitment of the writer as to what will come later in the text (Tadros, 2001, p. 73). Although helpful to the reader, academics evidently do not deem the inclusion of summary statements indispensable. This may be related to the low word count of the pieces in comparison to traditional forms of academic writing, such as research articles. A possible explanation is also that they are not a common feature of academic genres in general, as suggested by the fact that summary statements or topic sentences are devices which have long been discussed in the specific context of *student* essay

writing (e.g. Taylor, 1981; Moore & Readence, 1980) but not in wider writing contexts. Research into professional expository essays, in particular, has found no evidence that professional writers tend to begin paragraphs with explicit topic sentences (Braddock, 1974), although subsequent research into non-fiction genres has not always found the same (Aikman & O'Hear, 1997). There is more about that research in Sections 5.8.2 and 8.2.3.

Another difference between the corpora, the use of questions, can also be linked to the identity of the writers. In the corpora, questions are often labelled Other, because their purpose could not be unambiguously linked to Point or Support, but there are also examples of questions functioning as P and S. Students are often taught to avoid direct questions and asides in their writing (e.g. see Lia, no date; Swales and Feak, 1994). The following advice about the use of questions in academic writing, which is an excerpt from the tape script from an instructional video in a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course), 'Introduction to Research for Essay Writing' from the Coursera company, illustrates this:

*You also should avoid questions, you might have learn (sic) before that a question can be used as a thesis statement. This is not true in advanced academic writing. A thesis statement, remember, should be an arguable statement, so don't use a question. You also should not use questions as topic sentences. Again, your topic sentence should have the topic and controlling idea for the paragraph. If you write a question, it seems like you don't know what you're writing about. So try to avoid questions. (Chapman and Nam, 2017)*

This advice contradicts what actually happens in academic writing. Hyland (2002) analysed articles, L2 student essays and text books and found that questions have seven functions: “arousing interest, framing purposes, establishing a research niche, organizing the discourse, expressing an attitude or evaluation, conveying a claim, and suggesting further research” (p. 533). They demonstrably promote reader-writer dialogue centred on argumentation, “claiming solidarity and acknowledging alternative views” (ibid.) and writers use them to steer the readers to their favoured views, particularly in the soft sciences. In the BB corpus, the questions were indeed found in BBs with Political or Social Science topics (BBs 6, 10, and 12) rather than in the hard sciences; but the eight BBs with an interrogative form as their title are spread fairly evenly across the different disciplines. They represent over a third of the corpus, and these interrogative titles can be seen to create interest and frame the Brief’s purpose in this way. The posing of the question can in itself be an indication of the writer’s point of view; as Schneer (2014, p. 633) puts it: “the title is sometimes a more direct indication of the writer’s position than the actual proposition”. In the BBs, the titles of BBs 2, 8, 16 and 18 (which do not contain a question) can be said to have a thesis statement, for example, BB2: *Lobbying -a necessary part of politics*.

Questions are used to express a number of functions in the pieces. One of these is framing the purpose, or setting up the claim:

*The key question is - is it good enough? (BB1 in the introduction)*

In BB5, there is a flurry of questions, some of which can be interpreted as sarcasm, and whose function is to support claims in the piece (and were labelled -S):

*There is a problem with organised crime in Russia? The Chinese are fed up with North Korea? The Saudis are opposed to an Iranian bomb? Chris Patten is sceptical about the EU ever becoming a real power? (BB5)*

This is evidence for a view that the writer does not hold, which is that on one level we should not care about Wikileaks. This then gets dismissed: "It does not take a genius to figure any of this out". The second cluster of questions is evidence for the writer's Point that Wikileaks is actually very dangerous (and was labelled as S):

*How is exposing leading Arab politicians for taking a rather grim view on the Iranian nuclear programme going to help to prevent a very dangerous escalation in the Middle East and beyond? Will North Korea now suddenly play nice knowing that its only supposed ally has had enough? (BB5)*

It is not uncommon for a number of questions to appear together in Support of a claim:

*Has the focus on security threats instigated by radical Islamic movements distracted policy-makers from other ways of approaching the complex societies of the Arab world? What are the best ways to ensure that Euro-Mediterranean initiatives are not limited to security questions but also genuinely help local populations out of poverty? Bearing in mind that the rationale for most undemocratic regimes is that they bring stability and relative prosperity in exchange for civil liberties, what happens when governments cannot deliver their side of the deal, especially as a result of the global economic crisis? (BB17)*

Other writers also use questions to support (counter) claims:

*The 'double tax' argument is that people have saved money from their income which has already been taxed so why should they pay tax again on this money? (BB16)*

Questions are also used to create interest and genuinely project forward:

*- Where can Higher Education (HE) find an injection of £14billion over the next decade? (BB6 in the introduction)*

*- Labour is currently ahead of other parties in national opinion polls and has done well in by-elections so the question is – will that good performance be reflected in local election results? (BB21)*

The students do not use questions in the middle parts of their essays, but the SE corpus does contain two questions:

*- I do believe that everyone should have the opportunity to learn but, should the governments pay for all their people to go to the university free? (SE6 in the introduction)*

*- So what is right? Is a government responsibility to provide free university education or is not? (SE30 in the introduction)*

These questions problematise the topic and function to announce evaluation and to create interest. In Hyland's (2002) study the majority of student writers also used their report introductions for questions to position themselves and guide their readers. The use of direct questions is sometimes more prolific in L2 than in L1 student writing, but

is discouraged in pedagogical materials because of their subjectivity (Hinkel, 1999) and because they sound less formal than alternative ways to introduce the topic (e.g. SE30 would sound more formal if instead of the question it stated “This essay will consider whether or not the government is responsible for providing free university education”).

It is not the first time in this study that a discrepancy is found between what students are taught and the actual existing academic practice (see e.g. the discussion around the use of topic statements) but the use of questions is a strong example. This finding has important pedagogical implications and it would be interesting to investigate it further.

Questions create a close relationship and put the reader and the writer at an equal level (Fu and Hyland, 2014, p. 133), which may explain why novice writers are reluctant to include them. However, questions have a persuasive function, as “they invite direct collusion, addressing the reader as an intelligent interactant with an interest in the issue raised by the question and the good sense to follow the writer’s response to it” (Fu and Hyland, 2014, p. 132). Hinkel (1999), looking at issues of credibility and objectivity from a contrastive rhetoric point of view, found that questions are more used by non-native speakers, and reports that they are used in Chinese for hedging and as indirect thesis statements. She also reports that they are seen as too subjective in the Anglo-American writing tradition and that they are probably more acceptable as a journalistic strategy.

Questions can thus be said to strengthen the relationship with the BB’s ‘real-world’ audience, so enhancing the persuasiveness of the pieces. The main difference

between the use of questions in the BB and SE corpora, apart from the frequency, appears to be that the BB writers do indeed use questions as part of their argumentation, especially as Support for Points.

The more extensive use of non-consecutive elements can also be related to the writers' identities. The students, writing shorter pieces about a prescribed topic, may have less that they genuinely want to communicate, and as L2 language users they may be aware of the need for their readers to follow their arguments. The academics have a demonstrable interest in their topic and may be more confident to write about it. However, the lack of clearly demarcated areas that discuss one aspect of their arguments, as evidenced by non-consecutive elements, potentially makes it harder for the reader to follow their arguments.

The following examples of middle parts illustrate some of the differences in the pieces:

**Table 5.36: Examples of middle parts**

BB9	SE11
<p>The significance of this 'achievement' is underlined by the fact that 77% of seats at Westminster are occupied by men. This means that the make-up of Parliament does not reflect the wider population, in a substantive or symbolic sense and thus questions are often asked about the representative capacity of our elected representatives. Worryingly, this lack of parity reinforces perceptions that consider women in positions of power to be an 'abnormal state of affairs'. In this sense, powerful women are assessed differently to men and often held to higher standards. Indeed, one only has to reflect on the experiences of Estelle Morris, who left government for the last time in 2005, to see that women are not permitted to fail in the way that men are.</p> <p>A recent parliamentary report suggested that on an international level, the UK ranks 65 out of 190 for female representation and with reference to EU member states, its average of 33% places it 15th (average representation being 35%). Yet, a report by the 'Centre for Women in</p>	<p>There are many good reasons that the governments support all university students. All students can not only take good education, but also concentrate on their class because they don't need to care about money. Perhaps the number of crimes might be decreasing because of them. Moreover, the governments could built the amazing facilities for students to support promoting their studies. Consequently, supporting the education would lead to their countries' development in the future.</p> <p>On the other hand, we have to</p>

<p>Democracy' this year suggests that the trend has been one of decline, particularly since 2010. Women make up less than a quarter of each House and of the 31 MPs entitled to attend cabinet, 26 are men. Of the parties, Labour boasts the greatest female representation at just over 30% while the Conservative and Liberal Democrats lag behind with 16 and 12.5% respectively.</p> <p>Despite all three party leaders articulating a verbal commitment to increasing female representation, Labour is the only party to have introduced all-women short lists, though only in a proportion of constituencies (the NEC has agreed a goal of around 50%). Disappointingly, men have won almost all open selection contests and as a result dominate the winnable seats to be fought in 2015.</p> <p>With the exception of the Northern Ireland Assembly which has only 10% female representation, the picture is slightly better outside the Westminster village. In Scotland, 35% of MSPs are women, while in Wales, women account for 40% of the Welsh Assembly.</p>	<p>think the reality once. If all governments support all students, not only the governments' budgets would be increasing, but also most of students wouldn't appreciate they can take the university education because of no their money. The students whom they think it is natural to study in universities don't always study very hard. Furthermore, the governments might not have a choice to raise their countries' taxes to give good education for students except some rich countries. If it is true, the countries, it mistakes the means for the end.</p>
S1 P1 S2R S1R -S2 S2 -S2 S2 S1R S2R	-S1R S1R

The middle section of this BB starts by discussing the fact that there is only one constituency in the UK to have had a female MP for 60 years and subsequently questions how representative parliament is, what that means for perceptions, and gives an example of how female MPs are treated differently. It then moves on to evaluate the situation in the wider international and historical context and gives statistics about different political parties and election results. Subsequently it mentions the situation in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In this process, the piece goes from evidence to corresponding Point, to evidence for another Point (that is not mentioned until the conclusion), more evidence for the first Point, interspersed with some counterevidence, before giving more evidence for the second Point. There is no signposting; in other words, there is no use of markers or enumeration or ranking (such as *firstly*). The reader is likely to get the impression that there is a lot of information, which may reinforce the writer's Point (that there is a lack of female

representation), but alternatively may be overwhelming. It is debatable whether the reader is able to see this information for what it is, mainly Support for a concluding comment (that initiatives are needed).

The SE in this example is more straightforward. The middle part starts by announcing that there are reasons for financial support and then states them, using *Moreover* to indicate when a new reason is given. It then uses *On the other hand* to indicate that the opposing view will be explored. Again, reasons for this view are given. *Futhermore* (sic) is used to indicate the start of a new reason. The focus is on evidence throughout, and there is no other type of information present. The reader is likely to get the impression that the writer has thought the issues through and has been able to identify Support for two opposing views and is thus able to argue in favour of both. A sense of balance is achieved, but there is no transparency about the view that the writer herself holds.

### **5.5.7 The BB and SE conclusions**

Conclusions give writers a final opportunity to express their views. As with the introduction, it is interesting to investigate if there is argument present at this stage. In addition, it is relevant to determine whether repetition of previously formulated ideas might be found here, especially Points, and what roles any non-argumentational content might fulfil.

#### *5.5.7.1 The BB conclusions*

The conclusions of four of the BBs contain non-argumentational propositions, but in all of those some argumentation is present, as can be seen in Table 5.37.

Table 5.37: Presence of non-argumentational sections (O) in the BBs (conclusions)

<b><u>Characteristics of the BBs</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b>BB numbers</b>
<b>Contain O</b>	4	18%	9, 11, 13, 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>giving an aside and/or factual information or explanation</li> </ul>	4	18%	9, 11, 13, 15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concluding the topic (e.g. summing up or rounding off)</li> </ul>	0	--	--
<b>Contain O only</b>	0	--	--

Table 5.38 shows the presence of argument in the conclusions. In one piece (BB16) a solution suggested by others is introduced. However, the vast majority offer their own views in the conclusion, and 23% of the total mentions one of their points of view for the first time at this stage. A small number of writers (14%) only offer Points (with or without an aside) in the conclusion. Support is even less likely to feature on its own (5%), but 77% of the pieces have a combination of Points and Support in their concluding sections. Support is therefore also common in the conclusions, and sometimes counterevidence is found as well (in 18% of cases). None of the pieces explicitly state that evidence is being summed up.

Three out of the four BBs that give asides or explanations express a simple opinion. This may be coincidental or might reflect the fact that there is more room for asides in these types of pieces.

Table 5.38: Presence of argumentational sections (P, S, -S and (S) in the BBs (conclusions)

<b><u>Characteristics of the BBs</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b>BB number</b>
<b>Contain [P]</b>	1	5%	16
<b>Contain P</b>	20	91%	all but 15 and 17
<b>Contain S</b>	19	86%	all but 3, 10 and 17
<b>Contain -S</b>	4	18%	1, 4, 7, 8
<b>Contain (S) or (-S) or both</b>	0	--	--
<b>Contain P (with or without O) <i>only</i></b>	3	14%	3, 10, 18
<b>Contain S or -S (with or without O) <i>only</i></b>	1	5%	15
<b>Contain the combination of P and S or -S</b>	17	77%	all but 3, 10, 15, 17, 18

As can be seen in Table 5.39, some of the conclusions contain elements of arguments that were not mentioned previously. Points are the most commonly used new elements to be found. In BB10, for example, a new Point (P4) is made in the conclusion, one which had not been mentioned elsewhere in the piece. It is a Point that clearly serves to round off the piece with a recommendation or warning, although it does not serve to answer the question in the title (*Why doesn't work pay?*):

*Until we address the root causes of low pay, reforms such as Universal Credit will, at very best, merely ameliorate the problem and, at worst, serve to perpetuate it.*

Table 5.39: New information in the BB conclusions

<b><u>Characteristics of the BBs</u></b>	<b>In number of BBs (out of 22)</b>	<b>% of BBs this represents</b>	<b>BB number</b>
<b>Contain new information</b>	12	55%	1, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22
• <b>P only</b>	5	23%	9, 10, 20, 21, 22
• <b>S only</b>	3	14%	8, 14, 19
• <b>P and S</b>	4	18%	1, 11, 13, 16
• <b>-S</b>	2	9%	1, 13
• <b>[P]</b>	1	5%	16

#### 5.5.7.2 The SE conclusions

As can be seen in Table 5.40, four of the SE pieces end with non-argumentational propositions: one gives an aside at the end and three round off their essays with general comments. These latter three pieces do not contain any argument parts in the conclusion. Three out of the four pieces express a neutral opinion, and one a simple opinion, which may be coincidental, or might suggest that there is not much room to give asides at the end of pieces that express a complex opinion.

Table 5.40: Presence of non-argumentational sections (O) in the SEs (conclusions)

<b><u>Characteristic of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>% of SEs this represents</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>Contain O</b>	4	12.5%	9, 12, 15, 16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>giving an aside and/or factual information or explanation</li> </ul>	1	3%	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concluding the topic (e.g. summing up or rounding off)</li> </ul>	3	9%	12, 15, 16
<b>Contain O <i>only</i></b>	3	9%	12, 15, 16

Table 5.41 shows that no SEs continue to engage with the potential viewpoints of others [P] in their conclusions, although there is counterevidence present (in 5 SEs). Over 80% of the essay conclusions contain Points made by the writer, most of which are being reiterated, but more than a third of the pieces contain Points in the conclusion that are being made for the first time. An even higher percentage of the conclusions (84%) contain S, -S or both; 25% of the pieces contain Support in the conclusion that is being mentioned for the first time. Unsurprisingly given this high occurrence of Points and Support in the conclusion, 75% of the pieces contain a combination of both those elements at the end. Five of the pieces (over 15%) contain a new Point with corresponding Support (SEs 5, 7, 8, 23, and 30).

Table 5.41: Presence of argumentational sections (P, S, -S and (S) in the SEs (conclusions)

<b><u>Characteristic of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>% of SEs this represents</b>	<b>SE number</b>
<b>Contain [P]</b>	0	0%	--
<b>Contain P</b>	27	84%	all but 9, 12, 15, 16, 17
<b>Contain S</b>	22	69%	all but 3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 22, 32
<b>Contain -S</b>	5	16%	4, 6, 18, 24, 27
<b>Contain (S) or (-S) or both</b>	10	31%	3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 22, 23, 26, 28
<b>Contain P (with or without O) <i>only</i></b>	7	22%	3, 10, 11, 13, 19, 22, 32
<b>Contain S or -S (with or without O) <i>only</i></b>	1	3%	17
<b>Contain the combination of P and S or –S</b>	20	62.5%	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31

Half of the conclusions contain new information (see Table 5.42): Points (22%), Support in favour (6%), some concession or a negative aspect (-S) (also 6%), and both Point(s) and Support (over 15%). One example of a new Point that was made in the conclusion can be found in SE29:

*In conclusion, I strongly disagree with the idea supporting this statement.*

This statement answers the essay question. Previously, ideas in favour of this statement (as well as counterevidence) were explored, but the reader has had to wait until the conclusion for the writer's point of view to be revealed. It has been suggested that this particular pattern may be due to differences in rhetorical expectations in the L1 (Chandrasegaran, 2008). In a Japanese case study, for example, English (1999) found examples of reasons rather than arguments being stated, leading up to an essay conclusion in which the answer to the set task was finally answered.

**Table 5.42: New information in the SE conclusions**

<b><u>Characteristic of the SEs</u></b>	<b>In number of SEs (out of 32)</b>	<b>% of SEs this represents</b>
<b>Contain new information</b>	16	50%
• <b>P only</b>	7	22%
• <b>S only</b>	2	6%
• <b>P and S</b>	5	16%
• <b>-S1</b>	2	6%
• <b>[P]</b>	0	--

### 5.5.7.3 Comparison of BB and SE conclusions

Table 5.43 shows how the BB and SE conclusions compare.

**Table 5.43: Comparison of the BB and SE conclusions**

<b><u>Conclusions</u></b>	<b>BBs (%)</b>	<b>SEs (%)</b>
<b>Have no conclusion</b>	5	--
<b>Contain O</b>	18	12.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>giving an aside and/or factual information or explanation</li> </ul>	18	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concluding the topic (e.g. summing up or rounding off)</li> </ul>	--	9
<b>Contain [P]</b>	5	0
<b>Contain P</b>	91	84
<b>Contain S</b>	86	69
<b>Contain -S</b>	18	16
<b>Contain (S) or (-S) or both</b>	--	31
<b>Contain O only</b>	--	9
<b>Contain P (with or without O) only</b>	14	22
<b>Contain S or -S (with or without O) only</b>	5	3
<b>Contain the combination of P and S or -S</b>	77	62.5
<b>Contain new information</b>	55	50
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P only</li> </ul>	23	22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>S only</li> </ul>	14	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P and S</li> </ul>	18	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-S</li> </ul>	9	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[P]</li> </ul>	5	--

The table shows that both the BB and SE corpora contain some non-argumentational sections in the conclusions (18% vs. 12.5%) but that the BBs use these to give asides, factual information and / or explanations, whereas the SEs are much more likely to use them to sum up. Nearly one in three SEs contain summary statements whereas the BBs do not sum up Support in this way at all. The BBs are somewhat more likely to contain Points than the SEs (96% vs. 84%) and Support (86% vs. 69%). The presence of Points in the conclusion of more expert writing may be related to the writers' familiarity with genre (task) expectations: in a study that examined MBA 'thought essays', Loudermilk (2007) found that high-scoring student essays explicitly stated their position in the conclusion more than observed in poorly-written essays, which he links to the writers' potential knowledge of the five-paragraph essay structure.

Nearly 10% of the SEs finish off with a purely non-argumentational section, but none of the BBs do this. More SEs than BBs finish with argumentational sections only containing Points (22 vs. 14%). There is not much difference in the amount of new information included in the conclusions, with BBs exhibiting slightly more than the SEs (55% vs. 50%), which is mainly due to there being more new Support present. This goes against advice traditionally given about essay writing, that there should not be any new ideas in essay conclusions (see e.g. University of Brighton, 2015; University of Sunderland, no date). However, it is common to have summary or final comments and points of view in opinion pieces, textbooks and argumentative essays (Schneer, 2014).

Although the conclusions in the corpora are not as divergent as the middle sections are, the impression given by the conclusions supports much of what was said about

the rest of the pieces: the SE writers focus more on argumentation whereas the BB writers continue to inform their readers about real-life situations. The BB writers do not dedicate any of their word count to summing up evidence, possibly because they do not see the need or opportunity to do so in short pieces of writing. Remarkably, both BBs and SEs often contain new Points or Support in their conclusions. Either other Points have led to these ideas, or they are totally new, but in any case, they are accentuated because of their position near the end. As opinion pieces often answer a genuine question for a real audience, it does not seem surprising that some level of suspense is sustained before that question is answered.

The following examples of concluding parts illustrate some of the differences between the BBs and SEs:

**Table 5.44: Examples of conclusions**

<b>BB15</b>	<b>SE17</b>
However, do not look to the Big Six to bring such technologies to the mainstream. They want to make money out of conventional power stations. They are failing in their bid to have new nuclear power stations built because nuclear is simply uncompetitive when given the same incentive system as renewables, and coal is seen as too environmentally damaging. So they are happy to have a system that gives them a virtual monopoly of the renewables market and a system that helps them maximise returns from building gas fired power stations. But lots of independent companies and proponents of new technologies are out to challenge this situation. These issues will be discussed at the 'Feeding Renewables' Conference held at the University of Birmingham on Friday 18th January.	In brief, the government payment will treat the education level dramatically. And extract a lot of benefit from the educated people.
<b>S2R OR</b>	<b>S1R</b>

SE17 consists mostly of a list of advantages of funding HE. The conclusion sums up by stating the overall advantage. BB15 on the other hand argues that the government should not be giving as much power as they do to the big electricity companies. In its conclusion, the BB continues to provide evidence for the fact that independent companies are the only ones that can push new technologies to balance the grid. It then gives some practical information about where more information can be obtained. The reason the conference is mentioned may also be for advertising purposes where the argumentation regarding the topic will be further discussed. In any case, where the SE is rounding off, the BB seems to still be in the middle of its argument.

## PART IV: THE DIFFERENT REALISATIONS OF ARGUMENT IN THE BBs AND THE SEs

In this part of the chapter, I use the information gleaned from the analyses to describe a stereotypical BB and SE. This is done for several reasons. Firstly, by devising these prototypes it is possible to clearly describe the argumentation in the corpora and identify differences and similarities. The theoretical prototypes can then be checked against the corpora to see which of the pieces are the most representative. The representative pieces can serve as shortcuts to illustrate the differences between the BBs and the SEs and therefore have the potential to be used in pedagogical contexts (see Chapter 8). By juxtaposing the representative samples of each corpus, the similarities and differences between the two are illustrated, which contributes to answering the Research Questions (given in Section 5.7), and leads to the final section, a summary of Chapter 5, in which a comparative approach is taken to establish the differences between the realisation of argument between the two corpora (see Section 5.9).

### **5.6 Typical BBs and SEs**

#### **5.6.1 A typical BB**

Based on the analyses performed on the BB corpus, a typical BB would consist of an Evaluation or Proposal argument that expresses an unqualified opinion by making two Points and providing more than one item of evidence for each one. Typically, no Point would be made without associated Support. It is possible that the views of others are also explored.

In this typical BB, the introduction consists mainly of preamble which introduces the topic and narrows the focus. It may or may not convey the central idea of the piece in the introduction and there is a one in three chance that a Point is already made there. It is much less likely that Support or counterevidence is present. The typical middle part contains one or more Points and a series of Support statements. Counterevidence may or may not be present. Points are more likely to appear before Support is given than the inverse pattern but both orders are possible. Factual information may be included in the middle section, but no signposting of Support sections is included. There is no clear division of where specific Support or Point sections are handled: these appear in different parts of the piece. Occasionally there is also a non-argumentational comment. The conclusion contains one or more Points, one of which may well be new, and Support. There is just over a one in three chance that the ideas of others are mentioned in the conclusion.

### **5.6.2 A typical SE**

Based on the analyses of the SE corpus, a typical SE would give a simple or qualified opinion in the form of a Proposal and/or Evaluation argument. It is likely to make two Points with more than one item of associated Support for each one.

In a typical SE, the writer is likely to start with an introduction with general comments about the topic, followed by a narrowing of that topic. There may well be an opinion in the introduction, perhaps with some justification. In a typical middle part, Support in favour of the writer's own view and evidence against it are given, most probably in that order, and this Support is expressed across numerous consecutive sentences. It

is more likely than not that there will be a statement in the middle part, announcing that the (dis)advantages of a view will be considered next. It is possible that the SE writer looks at the negative aspects of one or more views that they actually subscribe to. The writer's Points may be mentioned or repeated in this part, but it is slightly more likely that the Points of others are (also) mentioned and responded to. In other words, there may well be a dialogue between the writer and an imagined 'other' and the views of both parties are considered. There is no room for much else apart from argumentation in the middle part. The typical conclusion focuses on the Points of the writer, some of which may be mentioned for the first time. Support is also still present in the conclusion, but mainly because it is being summed up. There is a small chance that a Point has been included that has no accompanying Support, and a smaller chance that the writer includes a general comment in the conclusion.

### 5.6.3 Comparison of typical BBs and SEs

The table below has been compiled based on the features of the corpora and suggests a prototypical BB and SE. Based on the corpus averages, the typical BB would have 18 sentences and 25 words per sentence on average; the SE would have 15 sentences of 22 words per sentence on average.

**Table 5.45: Comparison of the typical BB and SE**

	<b>BB</b>	<b>SE</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	OR	OR P1 S1
<b>Middle part</b>	P1 S1R O P2 -S2 S2 -S2 S2	S1R (-S1) -S1R [P2] -S2 S2R
<b>Conclusion</b>	P1 P2 S2	P2 P1 (S1)

Unsurprisingly, none of the pieces in both the corpora fit the prototypical mould exactly, but the most representative samples are BB12 for the Briefs, and SE24 for the Student Essays. A closer look at these pieces can exemplify the main differences in the corpora.

(1) BB12, the most prototypical BB, has a title which is formulated in the form of a yes/no question (*Impact of Events in Egypt on the EU: Can any lessons be learnt from the Arab Spring?*), which is answered in the affirmative in the Brief. The main idea is that the EU's focus in Egypt should shift: it can still play a limited role in terms of democracy promotion but needs to concentrate on economic development and on state building based on modern principles (e.g. women's rights, laws regarding NGOs, and police force reform). There are two Points: that the EU's response to the dramatic events in Egypt has not been as expected from a global player, and that its focus in Egypt should no longer be on democracy promotion but on economic development and state building on modern principles in certain areas. The piece does this by stating dramatic facts from recent history and asks what role the EU should play in Egypt's new future. Following this introduction, the argumentation starts, with evidence and counterevidence being given for the first Point and dismissed where necessary (*reality struck*). An indirect question (*Whether this assistance is rightly tailored is another question*) provides the link to the second Point, and evidence is given. In the conclusion, the main ideas are reiterated, with the main position of the piece being refined. The full text is given in Table 5.46:

Table 5.46: A typical Birmingham Brief: BB12

<b>BB 12: Impact of Events in Egypt on the EU: Can any lessons be learnt from the Arab Spring?</b>
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2011 was a truly historical turning point – it was a year which fundamentally changed the European Union's (EU) previous assumption about the Middle East and North African (MENA) region – that the fall of Arab autocrats was not imminent and that the dictators of the region would remain the partners to cooperate with in the near future. The Arab Spring events in Tunisia, Egypt, and beyond since December 2010 have successfully challenged the institutional order. Egypt is now embarking on a long and uncertain journey towards a more democratic future. But questions remain regarding the role of the EU towards nascent democracies.

The EU's response to the dramatic events in Egypt has been rather weak and belated, showing that in a fast-moving environment the Union has difficulty reacting in the way required of a serious global player. The first tangible action the EU took didn't come until the 21 March 2011 (Council Regulation (EU) No 270/2011) when the Council decided to freeze the assets of Mubarak, his immediate family and close associates. Initially, Egyptians were keen to take the transition process forward on their own, with as little external assistance as possible (for instance, they refused EU offers to send an election observation mission). However, reality struck and new demands have been made, directed in particular at the EU and the IMF, along with the US and regional actors like Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

The indicative budget from the EU European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) 2011–2013 for Egypt shows that the EU has agreed to devote a meagre €449 million for the most populous country in the Middle East (82,999,393). Whether this assistance is rightly tailored is another question. The Egyptian parliament's greatest challenge is that the newly empowered public expects results – not rhetoric. Just as the Egyptian people themselves ousted a three decade dictator, they will themselves have to build a new country on the legacy Mubarak left behind.

The EU must recognise this shift and make a collective response to the demands of Egypt's newly elected leaders, who face great expectations from the Egyptian people living, as they are, through an ailing economy and delayed reforms. The ballots in Egypt's parliamentary election reflect a vote of confidence for the parties/independents perceived as best able to deliver on the public's priorities: economic development, employment, stability. The EU will be well advised to focus its efforts on support for economic development and to shift from democracy promotion to state building. Egyptians must feel the economic dividends of their revolution soon, and they must develop trust in the state in order to avoid anarchy and chaos.

Areas where the EU could fruitfully contribute include women's rights, laws regarding Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and police force reform. These are areas which need a total overhaul and which must be rebuilt on modern principles, especially in terms of rule of law, respect for basic rights and freedoms.

(2) SE24, the prototypical Student Essay, also starts with an explanation of recent history, but the writer keeps this short and then immediately provides his main argument by means of reasoning and an answer to the essay question. In the middle part, he develops this reasoning. He then states that another point of view is possible and lists Support for this view. He gives counterevidence for his own view, but this gets dismissed in the conclusion, in which he repeats his main viewpoint, that governments should pay for HE. The full text is given in Table 5.47:

Table 5.47: A typical Student Essay: SE24

SE24
<p>In the past most government paid for higher education of their people. However, in the last few years some countries paid for their students but most of them don't pay. As a result, some of young people could not complete their studies especially poor pupils. Therefore, I agree that all governments should pay for the university education of their people.</p> <p>First of all, it is important to remember that studies at the university (undergraduate or postgraduate) needs much money therefore, many parents could not pay this fees. Consequently, young people can't enter the university you like and this may be affected their oppotunity in the future. For instance, some of those students are extremely intelligent and talent and it is unfair such as those pupils lose their higher studies. Furthermore, all government should encourage young people to go to university for many reasons, they can get benefit from them after graduated to build the scientific and technological basis to their counties. Some of them become doctors, engineers, lawyers and others.</p> <p>Having said this, many people have different opinion. They say that the governments and students together should pay this fees or students alone for the university education. For example, if pupils paid half or all of this fees then they study more and more to success in their studies and they appreciate the value of this money, may be come from parents or from part-time working.</p> <p>On the other hand, governments must put plan for the number of students enter the universities and graduate from them to prepare enough jobs for them. Also some people prefer to learn practical skills such as plumber, mechanic, farmer and tailor or work in trade exporting or importing for themselves so they can earn much money without studying in higher education.</p> <p>To sum up, although some people encourage their young people to learn different type of skills to earn more money, I strongly believe that all government should pay for the university education to obtain more benefit for society.</p>

## 5.7 Answers to Research Questions 1 and 2

In this section, I first summarise the comparative findings in response to Research Questions 1 and 2. I then highlight the most important research outcomes in order to determine what language features are the most suitable for a further investigation.

### 5.7.1 Research Question 1

RQ1 concerns the writers' points of view and was as follows:

#### RQ 1. How and when do the writers make their point of view clear?

RQ 1.1. How often and when do they state their opinion?

RQ 1.2. How often and when do they deal with the (imagined) opinion of others?

#### *5.7.1.1 Writers giving their own opinion*

In the BB and SE corpora the average number of Points made over a number of words is virtually the same (one Point per 215 and 214 respectively). Half of the SEs and slightly more than half of the BBs include new Points in their conclusions, especially where writers are expressing a complex opinion. There is no major difference in the way in which this is done. More SEs than BBs finish with argumentational sections only containing Points, but it is still relatively rare. Given that the BBs and SEs represent divergent genres because of the differences in their specific purposes, the contexts in which they were produced and received, and the roles of their readers and writers, the high level of similarity in the ways in which writers state their opinion is interesting. It would be worth investigating whether this is something that also applies to other types of opinion pieces.

**In conclusion, in answering RQ 1.1, there is not much difference between how often and when the two sets of writers state opinions.**

#### *5.7.1.2 Writers incorporating the views of others*

SEs look more at the opinion of others compared to the BBs (half vs. just over a third, respectively). This may be because of the phrasing of ‘different points of view’ and ‘own conclusion’ in the task instructions, or because the student writers have been taught to do this when writing essays. Alternatively, the BB writers may explore the views of others less because they have been asked to write from their position of expertise.

**In answering RQ 1.2, my conclusion is that in general, other voices have more of a platform in the SEs than in the BBs.**

#### *5.7.1.3 Answer to RQ1*

**In answer to Research Question 1, the SE and BB writers state their own opinions in very similar ways, for example, they include the same number of Points in any given length of text. However, the SE writers incorporate the views of other people more often into their writing.**

#### **5.7.2 Research Question 2**

##### **RQ 2. How and when do the writers defend their point of view?**

RQ 2.1. How often and when do they give support for their opinion?

RQ 2.2. How often and when do they deal with the (imagined) support given by others?

##### *5.7.2.1 Writers supporting their own opinions*

Most of the views held by the BB and SE authors are supported. However, 16% of the SEs omitted to provide support for some of their claims, while there was no missing Support in any of the BBs. The SEs tend to use empty summary statements whereby they state that evidence is available and will be or has been given, but the BBs do not include such statements. In the middle section, SEs are more likely to put Points before Support than the inverse. In the conclusions, both BBs and SEs are equally or more likely than not likely to add more Support for their views.

**Therefore, in answering RQ 2.1, my conclusion is that the most important difference between the corpora is that the relative amount of actual evidence is lower in the SEs.**

#### *5.7.2.2 Writers supporting views that they may not share*

Although counterevidence is used in both corpora, a higher percentage of the BBs contain some. Whereas the SEs rely more on the examination of negative aspects of their own views, the BBs prefer to make concessions to opposing views. The lower amount of counterevidence in the SEs could be due in part to the instructions given to the student writers, whereby they were asked to state benefits and drawbacks; however, this does not explain the low presence of concession.

**In answer to RQ 2.2, one conclusion is that counterevidence, especially concession, is less prominent in the SEs.**

#### *5.7.2.3 Writers expressing neutral opinions*

It is important to note that it is not always easy to make a distinction between the writers' own views and those of others. When considering the macro-arguments in the texts, it was found that nearly two thirds of the BBs expressed a simple opinion, giving a straightforward yes or no to the underlying question asked in their pieces, compared to less than half of the SEs doing so. However, one out of every six of the SEs has a balanced view and no clear opinion shared by the writer. This does not occur in the BBs at all.

Therefore, another conclusion about RQ 2.2 is that it is much easier to identify in the BB corpus where the writers stand on a topic. The views of others are noted more in the SEs, but it is the BB writers who engage more with dissenting views, by making concession to some of the evidence provided for them.

#### *5.7.2.4 Answer to RQ 2*

In answer to Research Question 2, in comparison to those in the SEs, the BB arguments appear to be more ‘solid’: they express a clearer overall opinion, they are never neutral, and they say less about what other people may think. When they do mention the opinion of others, they are more likely to consider the evidence others may put forward and make some concession to it rather than admitting to weaknesses in their own evidence.

## **5.8 Other study outcomes: how do writers argue?**

The overall Research Question, which was divided into the questions above, concerning Points and Support, asked in general how the writers of the study argue. Those subquestions have now been answered. However, the analyses also revealed some information that does not address those specific questions but provides relevant insights of a more general nature into the differences in argument construction. I have listed these other important findings below.

### 5.8.1 Writers not arguing

Just as important as how and when the writers argue is where they do not, especially as the overall aim of opinion pieces is to persuade through argumentation. Missing Support has already been discussed, and this leads to the failure of argument. The omission of Support is more likely to be because of a writer's oversight or inability to find Support rather than as the result of a deliberate decision not to include any. However, there are Other sections in the pieces that do not proffer argument and whose inclusion appears to be deliberate. Many of such non-argumentational sections were found in the corpora, especially in the BBs.

The analyses revealed that BBs tend to have more non-argumentational preamble in the introduction whereas SE writers are more likely to use their introduction to provide Points. This may be because the SEs are, on average, 141 words shorter than the BBs, or because students believe their introductions should not be too long and that they should come to the point quickly. Another likely reason is that the expert pieces tend to be reactions to a real-life topic which they may feel is worth exploring at the start. Another major difference between the corpora is the use of non-argumentational sections in the middle parts, which is rare in the SEs (3%) but common (41%) in the BBs. BBs also use interrogative clauses (in 14% of the corpus) but SEs do not. Both BBs and SEs occasionally contain non-argumentational sections in the conclusions (18% vs. 12.5%) but the BBs use these to give asides, factual information and / or explanations whereas the SEs are much more likely to use these to sum up. Nearly 10% of the SEs finish off with just a non-argumentational section, but all of the BBs have additional arguments at the end.

#### *5.8.1.1 Other study outcomes: non-argumentational information*

**In comparison to the SEs, BBs add considerably more extra information with an expository rather than an argumentational focus. This happens throughout the pieces, but especially in the middle sections.**

#### **5.8.2 Writers organising their ideas in a coherent manner**

The middle parts of the SEs are more organised than those of the BBs in terms of how well the components of argument are kept together: in two thirds of the student essays the writers do not mention the same component in more than one place (e.g. all the Support (S1, S2, S3) for a particular Point is found together), whereas this is only true for just over a quarter of the BBs. Overall, more than twice as many BBs had non-consecutive recurrences of the same functional elements compared to the SEs (73% vs. 34%), suggesting that the SEs had a clearer organisation with more demarcated sections. As previously mentioned, this may make the arguments in the BBs more difficult to follow.

The more easily identifiable structure in the student essays can be partly explained by the homogeneity of the pieces: all the writers responded to the same instructions. Some of the perceived disorganisation in the BB corpus may be because of the complexity caused by writing longer pieces that have both argumentational and non-argumentational sections. As mentioned previously, the latter are quite frequent, and include asides, facts, explanations and questions.

Another reason for the ideas not being clearly discernible in the BBs was due to the organisation of some of the pieces. BB19 (see Appendix 4 for the analysis) is a good illustration of a piece where the analysis is not straightforward. It is not immediately clear, for example, that the defence of using a sports psychologist relates to the question asked in the title ('Was science the secret behind Murray's success?'). The same can be said about the topic of the coach's motivational style, and the flexibility Murray has displayed. The link, or lack thereof, of these topics to 'science' was not made explicit. It is also not clear where the non-argumentational introductory topics end and where they could be seen as part of the argument. The same is true for some of the concluding comments, such as 'But this decision allowed him to recuperate in time for Wimbledon this month, and secure his place in history'.

This conflation of ideas manifested itself throughout the BB corpus, for example in pieces where more than one Point was made in a piece, the Support sections related to both ideas at once on some occasions, but not on others. In fact, the conflation of ideas was specifically noted in the comment boxes (see Appendices 1 and 2), for example for BBs 1, 2, 4, 6 and 9.

Although the difficulty in identifying the structure in some of the BBs was not surprising because of the complexity of the topics, it seems disproportionate: the BBs proved to be more unpredictable than expected. This may be because, as noted in Section 5.5.6.3, discourse-organising metadiscourse is used less by academics than by students. However, structured text is useful to readers: the use of topic sentences for example is common in a variety of professional journals (Aikman & O'Hear, 1995) and in non-fiction prose (Aikman & O'Hear, 1996), and readers will expect to find them in the texts they read.

The overall impression in some of the pieces was of the presence of a great amount of information, which may be enough to convince the reader that the writer has knowledge and authority and that their points of view are supported. However, unless such large amounts of information are presented in a clearly structured way, there is a risk that the reader would not be able to identify the main Points and their corresponding Support, thus making the arguments less persuasive.

Conversely, although the SEs were relatively short and more clearly demarcated, the writers often chose to be explicit about their organisation. They guided the reader by using empty summary statements to signpost their use of evidence, thus promoting the coherence of their writing. In the student work, the difficulty with the analysis related to linguistic errors, some of which were easily compensated for (e.g. spelling errors, word choice errors, grammatical infelicities), whereas others were more serious and resulted in wrong-footing the reader with regard to the argument. These errors appeared to be mainly caused by the wrong choice of linking word. For example, where a writer uses *however*, the reader expects contrast, but if this is not forthcoming, it takes a concentrated effort to discover whether the linking word was incorrectly used, whether one or both of the linked clauses had been misunderstood, or whether there was another issue. There is more information about errors in the SE corpus in Chapter 7 and Appendix 13.

#### *5.8.2.1 Other study outcomes: organisational issues*

**To sum up, in comparison to the SEs, the BBs tend to move more from one part of the argument to the next rather than discussing them in delineated sections. The SEs have both a more ordered structure and more signposting.**

## 5.9 Summary of findings about the realisation of arguments

Now that the first two RQs have been answered and other argument-related insights have been discussed, it is possible to summarise the main differences between the ways in which arguments are realised in the corpora. The most remarkable differences between the corpora are:

- (1) **extra information:** BBs have more non-argumentational sections in their introductions, middle parts, and conclusions
- (2) **empty summary statements:** SEs often announce (or sum up) that there is evidence for their Points
- (3) **organisation of ideas:** BBs are less likely to have clearly demarcated sections (e.g. support sections with similar functions often occur with different elements between)
- (4) **neutral opinions:** about a sixth of the SEs express a neutral opinion, whereas none of the BBs do so
- (5) **the views of others:** SEs engage much more with the views of others but tend to balance them. They also explore negative aspects of their own views, whereas the BBs are more likely to make concessions to opposing views than to criticize their own
- (6) **missing support:** about a sixth of the SEs omit Support for one or more of their Points, whereas none of the BBs do so

The last point is important: the lack of Support for some of the views in the SEs means that some of the arguments were not realised. This is relevant as it has an

impact on the persuasive power of the piece. However, this issue does not need further investigation as the solution is simple: students should be reminded not to leave any of their Points unsubstantiated. Having said that, the implementation of this solution may be quite a challenge for some students, and instruction about valid evidence may be useful.

Another area which is worth discussing in the classroom but does not require further investigation is the use of empty summary statements. These prospective and summarising devices are certainly useful to promote text cohesion and the higher frequency in the student writing can therefore be regarded as positive. Where there is a possibility that particular students are using such statements disproportionately, perhaps to reach a certain word count, this can be dealt with easily in the classroom.

The other four main differences (1, 3, 4 and 5) lend themselves to a thematic division and I have categorised them in Table 5.48 as follows: differences relating to (a) the organisation of the text and (b) the integration of the views of others.

**Table 5.48: Categorisation of the main findings**

<b>Organising the discourse</b>	<b>Integration of other views</b>
Extra information	Neutral opinions
Organisation of ideas	Concession to opposing views

As these areas represent the main argumentational differences between the corpora, they warrant further investigation and will provide the starting point for the language analysis. In Chapter 2 it was discussed how linguistic choices help to establish

dialogue, in particular metadiscoursal features, which make the writer's presence in the text known. The chapter also mentioned the particular importance of both taking a stance and of commenting on text organisation in persuasive discourse. However, the outcome of the argumentational analyses shows that it is exactly these two areas where the experts and the students write differently. Both interactive features, which relate to text organisation, and interactional features, related to social interaction regarding differing views, therefore merit further investigation. In the next chapter, I will justify the particular choice of linguistic features chosen to investigate (1) discourse organisation and (2) the integration of other views, and I will specify the extent and method of language analysis. In Chapter 7, the outcomes of that language analysis will be discussed.

## 6 DEVISING A METHOD FOR THE LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

As explained in Chapter 5, there are two main differences in the way the authors of the corpora argue in writing: the organisation of their discourse and their interaction with the ideas that others hold. In this chapter, I discuss the aspects of language analysis that are most useful to consider, with the aim of finding out how the BB and SE writers use language features related to the organisation and contrasting of views to argue differently.

It is important to acknowledge an element of circularity here: the argumentational analysis was carried out with the help of language features (see Chapter 4). It would not have been possible to determine the writers' opinions and the evidence they draw upon without examining their words and using them as signposts to the location of these elements. Using language in this way has contributed to finding out how writers build their arguments in different ways. Subsequently using these findings to examine language may on the surface appear convoluted. However, such an examination will reveal specific information about **how** language contributes to the argumentation and in particular how certain expressions have done so. This circularity, rather than being an issue, therefore, serves as a confirmation of the fact that propositional and non-propositional content are hard to separate, as was discussed in Chapter 2: language can signpost the presence of argumentational elements and be part of the argument itself.

In Part I of this chapter, I present which language features will be the focus of the analysis. Three main criteria were used to determine the choice of cohesive devices for the analysis: semantic (two areas based on results from the argumentational analysis), syntactic (expressing clausal relationships only), and, based on both of those, data-driven (what the relevant devices seemed to be in the texts).

Although the semantic areas and specific cohesive devices were not chosen a priori, the fact that clausal relationships were specifically focussed on was not just because conjunctive cohesion is metadiscoursal (in that it establishes reader-writer relationships and has a persuasive function (see Chapter 2)); it was also because L2 writing research, L2 English textbooks, and especially my experiences as an EAP tutor have made it clear to me that for students the appropriate deployment of signals of conjunctive cohesion is one of the most difficult aspects of creating a written argument. Examples of studies that investigated cohesive devices will be given in this chapter and in Chapter 7; examples of textbook materials in Chapter 8.

After the justification in Part I of this chapter for the choice of the specific cohesive devices that will be examined, I explain the method that will be used in Part II.

## PART I: SELECTING THE ITEMS FOR THE LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

In Chapter 2, I stated that I would investigate cohesive devices to answer the third Research Question:

*3. How do the writers use certain cohesive devices to signal the relationships between propositions?*

My focus on cohesive devices is not motivated by an interest in cohesion itself. Cohesion in texts is generated through a multitude of language devices, including articles, conjunctions, the occurrence of related lexical items (Halliday and Hasan, 1976), as well as classification and categorisation nouns, demonstrative pronouns (Biber, 1988; Myers, 1989; Hinkel, 2001) and enumerative or shell nouns (Tadros, 2001; Hunston and Francis, 1999; Aktas and Cortes, 2008), to name a selection. This study is not about text cohesion but about argument and will consider certain types of cohesive devices because of the role they can play in building an argument. These are connectors “such as sentence transitions and coordinating conjunctions intended to conjoin ideas and sentences overtly” (Hinkel, 2001, p. 112). The terminology used to describe linking devices varies, with researchers referring on one hand to *connective adjuncts*, *connectives*, *linking adjuncts*, and *logical connectors*, that is, to generic devices including adverbials and conjunctions; and, on the other hand, to more specific devices, those which relate more specifically to adverbials, for example *conjunctive adverbials*, *conjuncts*, *connective adverbs* and *linking adverbials* (Liu, 2008). However, it needs to be noted that there is a lack of agreement on their identification and classification (Liu, 2008), and I will be using the generic terms

*cohesive devices*, *linking devices*, *linkers*, *connectors*, and *(cohesive) markers*, synonymously, as well as referring to specific types, which will be defined when introduced in Section 6.1.

The fact that cohesive devices such as coordinating conjunctions, conjuncts (also referred to as logical-semantic conjunctions (see e.g. Hinkel, 2001)) and sentence-level transitions are used to establish the connection between ideas in text is not in doubt. For example, textbooks describe coordinating conjunctions as devices to connect ideas of equal importance and to coordinate and organise ideas, and textbooks on academic writing include lists of cohesive devices and emphasise their use to express logical relationships between sentence elements (Hinkel, 2001). The use of logical connectors in L2 and L1 writing has frequently been compared, for example by Bolton et al. (2002), Narita et al. (2004), and Liu (2013), leading to the finding that L2 writers tend to employ a higher frequency of stylistically inappropriate markers; that is, usually, more informal markers (Liu, 2013), and a more frequent use of certain types of connectors (Narita et al. 2004). Research has also compared the use of connectors in different genres and registers, for example, Ramos (2010) found that argumentational writing has more connectors of contrast and consequence than does descriptive writing. Similarly, Zhang (2016) showed that editorials and prose (academic and general) contain more metadiscourse markers than do more concrete or narrative registers. Particularly relevant to the BB and SE corpora of opinion pieces is that in editorials they can be used to construct and present argument (Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Zhang, 2016), and to represent public opinion or intellectual tradition (Le, 2004).

For this study, the question remains as to which of the cohesive devices that explicitly join ideas should be examined: it is necessary to narrow down the selection for reasons of space and focus. One demarcation that is clear from the start is semantic. As the results of the argumentational analysis showed that the student and expert writers argue differently in terms of discourse organisation and integrating ideas of others hold, the most relevant connectors to examine have to be those that express organisation and contrast (and its subcategory concession).

As regards syntax, my starting point is the graphological sentence, a semantic sequence that in lexicogrammar is called the 'clause complex' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004), consisting of a head clause and the clauses that modify it, attached paratactically or hypotactically. I examine the types of connections that are interesting because of the information they provide about the authors' opinion of the ideas they are expressing. Therefore, the syntactical criteria for inclusion in the analysis are that they are elements which are loosely attached to a clause i.e. not part of its structure (in the way that subject, verb and object are), and which either manage the information that is expressed in sentences (1) by commenting on a head clause to which it relates, or (2) by joining a clause with another clause. It needs to be noted that these connectors often relate to information beyond the clause complex. For example, adverbials can join whole paragraphs or larger sections.

A third way of narrowing down the investigation is to consider what the data suggest is important. Therefore, in order to establish which connectors of contrast and discourse organisation are worth investigating, I selected a text from each corpus that clearly contains examples of markers of both contrast and organisation, namely BB3 and SE12. Using specific language examples in the context of a full essay of

each corpus in the first instance, it is possible to get an indication of what needs further investigation, and in Section 6.1 I develop a wider framework for the analysis.

In Table 6.1 I have indicated in bold the language elements that express contrast or discourse organisation in both pieces and I subsequently discuss them and their relevance.

**Table 6.1: Examples from the corpora**

Birmingham Brief 3: Sudanese independence	Student Essay 12
<p>On 9 January polling started in Southern Sudan in a referendum to determine whether one of the largest states in Africa will divide. The result of the referendum is so certain that the South's Independence Day has already been set for 9 July, six months after the start of polling. Many see this as the culmination of the peace process and the agreement signed in 2005 that ended almost 22 years of civil war which had resulted in around two million deaths.</p> <p>When secession happens, it will result in two new countries. South Sudan will become the 196th country in the world and one of the poorest despite its potential resources. The North, <b>meanwhile</b>, will be greatly diminished by the loss of those resources, particularly 80% of Sudan's oil reserves and revenue.</p> <p>Separation presents a risk of violence. Sudan's current President, Omar al-Bashir, is the only Head of State wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and <b>whilst</b> he has recently played down threats of violence, there remain disputes in the Darfur Region and other areas. A parallel referendum on joining the north or south, due to be held in the oil rich region of Abyei, has been abandoned as a result of lack of agreement over voter eligibility. These disputes are likely to rumble on.</p> <p><b>Even if</b> independence happens without further incident, it faces <b>not only</b> border disputes with the North, <b>but also</b> factionalism across the South. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the North and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). The SPLM/A, <b>whilst</b> being the largest political faction, is not the only one. The North-South divide, between an Islamic North and an animist and Christian South, masks significant</p>	<p>The society depends on improvement of education <b>and also</b> education can develop the well-being of societies. <b>But</b> it is really how much affect the society. In this essay I will discuss how education has effected the national government.</p> <p>Some people believe that should pay for the university education. Beacuse the high edcaution groups could protect the national lifeblood what is the base of development of a country such us enera, economy and foodstuff. People were educated by high education could plan a country more beautiful rather than environmental pollution. In the same way, it can make people more law-abiding. Then the social order will has improved and it reduce the crime rate. A higher education could help others who does not received a good education. And they will support some poor students to receive education. The country's development will be improved by circle of the education.</p> <p><b>However</b>, government should pay for the unniversity education, which brings heavey burden to our government and society and so on. As the higher education grou, more and more taxes will be</p>

<p>differences between groups within the South that were untied (sic) against Khartoum but lack a united post-independence ideology.</p> <p>Sudan's secession makes a number of African governments nervous. The last country to gain independence was Eritrea in 1993 and this resulted in a series of violent disputes with Ethiopia. Somaliland has been campaigning for independence from the world's perpetual failed state, Somalia, and may now look to South Sudan, as will Darfur, the Delta in Nigeria, Cabinda in Angola, Ogaden in Ethiopia and the northern Sahara in Nigeria. These regions may look for political independence along with the resources they control <b>despite</b> the received wisdom that integration brings greater economic, security and political rewards than atomisation. The drive to new statehood therefore makes domestic rulers and international agencies nervous for the future of the continent as a whole.</p>	<p>needed to support it. Some people main that more and more high education people could reduce the social foundation work. The high education people leads more competitive, which your odds of lending one of these jobs are poor. It the higher education were affected by bad benifit, which will lead to higher crime. For example, they can use the spreading of viruses in the internet.</p> <p><b>To sum up</b>, promoting edcation is a longstanding goal and key for social stability. <b>In fact</b> the education will ensure our prosperity and progress.</p>
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It is possible to identify adverbial clauses introduced by subordinating conjunctions, coordinating conjunctions and conjuncts. In BB3 there is a conjunct (*meanwhile*), a correlative conjunction (*not only, but also*), there are subordinating conjunctions (*whilst, even if*), and there is a preposition that introduces an adverbial phrase (*despite*). In SE12, there are conjuncts (*and also, however, in fact*) and a coordinating conjunction (*but*).

It is interesting to note that on closer inspection, *however* in SE12 appears to have a conditional function in the sentence (i.e. if the government pays for education, this places a burden on society) rather than a contrastive one. Another example of a possible error concerns the use of *in fact* (SE12), which normally has a verificative use, but its main use here is additive reinforcing.

The markers that express contrast in BB3 are *meanwhile, whilst* (used twice), *even if, despite*; in SE12 these are *but* and *however*. The markers that have an organisational function are *not only ...but also* in BB3 and *and also* in SE12.

However, some of these markers appear to have both functions: (1) *meanwhile* (in BB3) which is used to contrast North and South Sudan and signposts the start of a different topic and (2) *however* (in SE12), which normally has a contrastive use and is here used to start the counterargument in a new paragraph.

*To sum up* (in SE12) has a summarising function. Linkers that summarise can also be transitional, but here the only function appears to be to conclude the essay by summing up what was said and reiterating the point that was made in the introduction.

These examples give a good indication of what should be analysed, for example, items such as conjuncts and conjunctions, but they will not necessarily include **all** items of interest. To determine a more robust analytical framework for the language analysis, I will consider how ideas are linked in text and attempt to justify the inclusion or exclusion of language items. I will discuss the types of language devices that can frame ideas and their grammatical functions (in Section 6.1.1), examine the ways in which these items expand clauses by going into more depth with regard to their semantic functions (in Section 6.1.2), and discuss how errors in the corpora will be examined (see Section 6.1.3). These discussions will lead to the formulation of the framework for the analysis (see Section 6.1.4), and once this framework is piloted (Section 6.2), to developing hypotheses (Section 6.3).

## 6.1 A framework for analysis

### 6.1.1 Grammatical roles

The following table acknowledges the different ways of framing similar ideas and gives some example sentences that include the types of elements that are included in this thesis and some that are not (based on aforementioned criteria):

Table 6.2: Included and excluded markers

<b><u>Included:</u> elements which are loosely attached to a clause</b>	<b><u>Excluded:</u> elements that are part of the sentence structure</b>
<u>adverbial clauses</u> <i><b>Although this is an important issue,</b> we will consider it later.</i>	<u>key sentence elements</u> <i><b>What needs to be considered first</b> is the reason for disagreement.</i>
<u>adverbial phrases</u> <i><b>In the first instance,</b> we need to consider the reasons for disagreement.</i>	<i><b>It is important that we first consider the reason for disagreement.</b></i>
<u>sentential relative clauses</u> <i>The reason for this is very important, <b>which is why we will need to consider it immediately.</b></i>	<i><b>The first aspect to consider</b> is the reason for disagreement.</i>
<u>coordinators (coordinating conjunctions)</u> <i>This is an important issue <b>but</b> we will consider it later.</i>	
<u>adverbials</u> <i><b>Nevertheless,</b> we will consider it later.</i> <i><b>Firstly,</b> we need to consider the reason for disagreement.</i>	

In the next section I will provide more information about adverbials, conjunctions and relative clauses, to clarify which are of particular interest and why. Any factual information about grammatical items is taken from Quirk et al. (2010), except where indicated otherwise.

#### 6.1.1.1 Adverbials

Adverbials are optional elements in a clause that are loosely attached to the sentence. They have an important discoursal function as they can relate clauses, sentences, paragraphs and potentially larger sections. They can consist of single adverbs, adverbial phrases (e.g. an adverb with an intensifier), prepositional phrases and adverbial clauses (Crystal, 2004). They have four grammatical functions: adjunct, subjunct, disjunct, and conjunct. Not all of these will be relevant for the analysis. Below I will discuss and justify which ones are relevant and which are not.

##### 6.1.1.1.1 Conjuncts

Conjuncts can be defined as “sentence adverbials that indicate logical relationships between sentences or between clauses (...) mainly adverbs (...) or prepositional phrases” (Greenbaum, 1996, p. 620), e.g. *nonetheless*, *alternatively*, *in addition*. They have a superior and detached role in the sentence (Quirk *et al.*, 2010) as they conjoin clauses, sentences or paragraphs (Crystal, 2004). Unlike adjuncts, we cannot focus on a conjunct nor can we answer a question with it (see Section 6.1.1.1.2 below for examples of how that works for adjuncts).

Conjuncts can be divided into seven semantic categories: listing (*next*), summative (*overall*), appositive (*for instance*), resultative (*consequently*), inferential (*else*), contrastive (*rather*, *more precisely*, *on the other hand*), and transitional (*incidentally*). The categories that are likely to include markers of organisation are the listing and transitional categories. The listing category includes enumerative and additive markers.

These transitional markers denote “a move away from the normal sequence in a narrative” (Quirk et al. 2010, p. 640) and are therefore appropriately termed “attention shifting” by Crystal (2004, p. 187). There are two subdivisions: temporal and discoursal, and although conjuncts from the latter category are more likely to be found in spoken discourse, they can occur in writing and are thus included in the analysis.

The summative category may also include markers of text organisation, as the organisational function can overlap with the summarising function. However, summative markers will only be included in the analysis if the context in which they are found suggests that they are used for organisational purposes, not just for summing up. They are treated in the same way as markers such as appositive *for example*: if they are demonstrably used for text organisation (as well as any other function, such as exemplification), they are included.

Markers of contrast will be found in the contrastive category, with its subdivisions such as reformulatory, replacive, antithetic and concessive markers.

In Table 6.3 below, the categories of the conjuncts are listed along with examples of conjuncts that may be found in the corpora.

#### 6.1.1.1.2 Adjuncts

Greenbaum (1996, p. 615) defines an adjunct as “an adverbial (optional element) that is integrated to some extent in sentence or clause structure”, a sentence element that is different from sentence adverbials, such as conjuncts or disjuncts. Adjuncts (e.g. *afterwards, often, when we arrived there, because it was late, fast, next month*,

*in order to succeed*) can be used to comment on or to link to ideas expressed elsewhere in the sentence. Like other sentence elements, they can be the focus of the sentence when it is paraphrased (*it was **tomorrow** that we ...*) and they can be the answer to a question (***When*** ...?)

There are two types, predication and sentence adjuncts. Predication adjuncts, e.g. *regularly*, are integrated into to clause structure and relate to the meaning of the verb (Crystal, 2004). Sentence adjuncts can occur in initial and end position and relate to the whole sentence. The difference is illustrated by the examples below. In (a) the predication adjunct (underlined) cannot be placed elsewhere in the sentence; whereas in (b) the sentence adjunct (underlined) could also be placed in end position. The connotational meaning of the sentential adverb *eventually*, or ‘after a long time’ (rather than the more neutral meaning, ‘at a later time’), gives the whole utterance a different tone:

(a) She did not turn up at the agreed time.

(b) Eventually, she did turn up.

As predication adjuncts are by definition strongly, not loosely, attached to a clause, only sentence adjuncts will be included in the data analysis. These sentence adjuncts can have a variety of semantic functions, but many do not relate to contrast or organisation and are therefore excluded (e.g. space, process, respect, contingency).

Those that are potentially relevant to this analysis are adjuncts of time, in particular the subcategory of time-position, which can answer the question ‘when?’, as those

are adjuncts that may be used to organise the discourse. Time-position adjuncts can be categorised along two “modes of orientation” (Quirk et al. 2010, p. 530):

(a) those denoting a point or period in time, especially ‘before’, e.g. *then* (‘at that time’), *when I get back home*, and *nowadays*, *presently* (both in the meaning of ‘at the present time’); and

(b) those which in addition imply attention to another period of time, especially ‘after’, e.g. *next* and *then* (both meaning ‘after that’), *subsequently*, *first*, *at first*, *recently* (‘a short time ago’), and *eventually*, *finally*, *last* (all meaning ‘in the end’).

Of particular interest are the ones in category (b): those in (a) have only one point of reference and are therefore less likely to be useful in structuring discourse. However, the category (b) adverbials will only be included in the analysis if they organise the discourse, which Halliday calls their ‘internal’ interpretation (2004, p. 545) as opposed to referring to an external reference to the timing of processes. In the following two examples, the underlined adverbials in (a) would qualify, but the those in example (b) would not:

(a) First, we will look at the benefits. Next, we will discuss the disadvantages.

(b) First, they built a dam. Next, they discussed what still needed building.

However, time-position sentential adjuncts are very difficult to distinguish from enumerative conjuncts. Words such as *first*, *at first*, *next*, *after that*, *subsequently*, *then*, *eventually*, *finally*, and *last* could operate as either adjuncts or as conjuncts, depending on their individual contexts. However, to distinguish between each category every time would entail very technical decisions about whether, for

example, these words can be the focus of the sentence they appear in when it is paraphrased. There appears not to be any benefit going into this level of grammatical detail for an analysis that focuses on how arguments are built. There is a case for categorising these markers of time-position with the enumerative conjuncts rather than with the adjuncts: they would be the only adjunct category, whereas conjuncts qualifying for this analysis consist of a large classification, which is usefully subdivided. Therefore, these connectors are categorised together with the enumerative conjuncts, and I do not look for adjuncts in the corpora.

#### 6.1.1.1.3 Subjuncts

Subjuncts (e.g. *even*, *please*) are adverbials that are subordinate to other clause elements (Crystal, 2004). Unlike adjuncts, they cannot be the focus of a sentence or be used to answer a question.

Subjuncts are excluded from the analysis because of their ‘inferior’ status: “even subjuncts of a wide orientation typically relate specifically to an individual element or even to a constituent of an element”. This status can be demonstrated by an alternative paraphrase (Quirk et al. 2010, p. 568):

*Visually*, a film should present experience of a kind not assimilable by the ears alone.

~ A film should be a *visual* presentation of experience ...

As subjuncts are subordinate to other elements and relate to an individual element they cannot be used to connect ideas. Additionally, neither can they be used to modify the meaning of an utterance: the following examples (taken from Quirk et al.

2010, p. 473) can be used to show that unlike a sentence adjunct (see example (a) below), a subjunct cannot be said to modify the whole utterance, only part thereof (see example (b) where the subjunct has a special relation with the subject):

(a) Leslie greeted the stranger *casually*. [in a casual offhand manner, his *greeting* was casual]

(b) *Casually*, Leslie greeted the stranger. ['Leslie was casual, offhand, when he greeted the stranger']

For these reasons, subjuncts are not included as part of the analysis.

#### 6.1.1.1.4 Disjuncts

Disjuncts are sentence adverbials, known as *mood adjuncts* in Hallidayan terminology. Like conjuncts, they have a detached role in a sentence. Examples are *frankly, honestly, fortunately, in short, interestingly*. As they are not highly involved in internal clause structures, it is not possible to focus on them or use them to answer a question, as can be done with adjuncts (Crystal, 2004).

There are many reasons why disjuncts deserve to be included in the analysis. Firstly, unlike adjuncts, which have equal weighting to other sentence elements, and subjuncts, which are 'inferior' because they relate to individual elements or constituents thereof, disjuncts are 'superior', that is, they make comments on the rest of the sentence. Secondly, they can express types of contrast: disjuncts such as *admittedly* show concessive relations and *arguably* show alternative relations (Thompson and Zhou, 2000). Thirdly, they can be used for organisational purposes: as Hunston and Thompson (2000, p.122) point out, as well as having evaluative and

communicative functions, disjuncts can be used to “move the argument from one stage to the next”. Moreover, Thompson and Zhou (2000) convincingly argue that disjuncts (e.g. *obviously* and *unfortunately*), which according to Quirk et al. (2010) relate to the sentence in which they appear and are therefore seen as clearly distinguishable from conjuncts (see Section 6.1.1.1.1), actually do have a textual and cohesive role, so that in many cases disjuncts can be seen as “conjuncts with attitude” (Thompson and Zhou 2000, p. 124).

This connection between disjuncts and conjuncts means that when examining the corpora, categorisation decisions will need to be made. For example, words such as *admittedly* could function as a conjunct or as a content disjunct in a sentence. On each occurrence, a judgement will be made concerning which category it belongs to, and although accuracy is sought, consistency will be the most important consideration in the analysis of each corpus.

There are two types of disjunct: style disjuncts and content disjuncts. Style disjuncts consist of the writer’s comment about style or form, that is, the conditions for the interpretation of the clause (e.g. *honestly*) and can express modality / manner or respect. Style disjuncts of modality and manner are included in the analysis where they express concession, e.g. *strictly*, *truthfully* or transition e.g. *simply*, *in short* (where these phrases are not just used to summarise but to advance the discourse).

As is the case for adjuncts, disjuncts of respect (*figuratively*, *generally*) are not expected to be used for organisation or contrast, except perhaps where they are reformulatory and have a hedging effect that may have a concessive function (*strictly speaking*, *speaking purely for myself*, *if I may say so*).

Content disjuncts comment on the truth of a clause or give a value judgment on it (e.g. *possibly*). A first subgroup comments on the extent of the truth expressed in the sentence or the conditions for it. The disjuncts in this group convey conviction (e.g. *undeniably, evidently, admittedly, assuredly, indeed, undoubtedly, obviously, clearly*), degree of doubt (*arguably, apparently, conceivably, doubtless, most likely, possibly, presumably, reportedly supposedly*), or the degree to which the speaker feels the utterance to be true or false (*actually, really, formally, hypothetically, ideally, nominally, officially, theoretically, basically, essentially, fundamentally*). This group is likely to contain some contrast/concession markers, and some examples are given in Table 6.3.

The disjuncts in the second subgroup evaluate what is being stated in the sentence or express a certain attitude towards it. Such judgments can focus on whether something is right, wise, expected, appropriate, satisfactory, or fortunate, e.g. *rightly, wisely, surprisingly, unfortunately*. Other evaluative content disjuncts include *obviously, certainly, to my regret, on paper, even more important*. It is unlikely for examples of organisational or contrastive markers to be found in this second group of content disjuncts but if they are, they are included.

Table 6.3 below lists the disjunct categories that are included in the corpus search, with some examples.

#### 6.1.1.1.5 Adverbials: summary

The table below lists the adverbial categories included in the data analysis and provides examples of phrases. The following should be noted:

(1) There is overlap between these categories, and expressions can have more than one function, e.g. resultative *therefore* could be used as a transition marker, and so could the inferential or appositive *in other words*.

(2) Each adverbial in the data will be considered within its context to decide whether it merits inclusion in the analysis. Conversely, where (sub)groups of adverbials have been omitted from the table, if a member of that group is found in the data and has an organisational or contrastive function, it will be included. In other words, the table merely presents the theoretical starting point for the analysis.

(3) The list consists of examples and is therefore not comprehensive.

(4) The adverbials also have clausal realisations. For example, *if I am honest* is a style disjunct, *although this is possible* is a content disjunct, and *to begin with* or *to sum up* are conjuncts. The analysis will include the clausal realisations of these adverbials.

Table 6.3: Types of adverbials included in the analysis, with examples

Types	Subtypes and examples
<b>Disjuncts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• style disjuncts: <i>strictly, truthfully, speaking for myself</i></li> <li>• content disjuncts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- extent of truth: <i>arguably, conceivably, possibly, supposedly, admittedly, actually, officially, essentially, in fact, of course</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Conjuncts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enumerative: <i>in the first place, one, first, first of all, for one thing</i></li> <li>- additive: <i>in addition</i></li> <li>- equative: <i>similarly, by the same token</i></li> <li>- reinforcing: <i>also, besides, further, moreover, what is more</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• contrastive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reformulatory: <i>better, rather, more accurately, alternatively</i></li> <li>- replacive: <i>alternatively, rather, on the other hand</i></li> <li>- antithetic: <i>conversely, instead, by contrast, on the other hand</i></li> <li>- concessive: <i>however, nevertheless, still, yet, admittedly, of course, that said</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• transitional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- discorsal: <i>incidentally, by the way</i></li> <li>- temporal: <i>in the meantime, subsequently, eventually</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

#### 6.1.1.2 Conjunctions

Conjunctions can have subordinating and coordinating functions. Those with a clear coordinating function are *and*, *or* and *but* (Quirk et al., 2010), expressing addition, alternative and contrast respectively. They will be included in the analysis where they express organisation (e.g. where *and* is used in such a way) and contrast (e.g. through the use of *but*, or where *or* expresses contrast). Conjunctions which do not

provide a link between clauses but instead connect words or phrases will not be incorporated in the analysis.

Other words considered to be coordinating conjunctions by some grammars are *yet*, *so*, *for*, and *nor*. In cases where *yet* and *nor* express contrast and alternative, respectively, they are included in the analysis. Correlative conjunctions such as *not only... but*, or *neither...nor*, which can have additive functions, are also included in the analysis. However, subordinating conjunctions are of interest only insofar as they signal adverbial clauses. Examples in BB3 were subclauses introduced by *while* or *even if*.

#### 6.1.1.3 *Relative clauses*

Most types of relative clauses are excluded from the analysis, as they are part of sentence elements. The exception is the sentential relative clause, as it is loosely attached to the sentence and modifies it in its entirety, in a similar way to (adverbial) comment clauses. Examples of relative clauses that are included comprise the nominal relative clause *What is more* which is reinforcing and can have an organisational role, and *That is to say*, an apposition marker (Quirk *et al.*, 2010) that can have a concessive function.

#### 6.1.1.4 *Summary: grammatical roles*

Based on the above discussions, the analysis that follows will include the following items, provided that they express contrast or organisation: certain adverbials (style disjuncts, content disjuncts, listing conjuncts, contrastive conjuncts, transitional

conjuncts), certain adverbial clauses introduced by subordinating conjunctions, coordinating conjunctions, and sentential relative clauses.

These items will be identified in the texts and labelled according to their grammatical functions and semantic roles (see Appendices 12 and 13). These labels are not pre-empted; for example, although it could be expected that words such as *lastly* would have an enumerative function and *similarly* an additive or equative function, these labels will only be assigned if their use in their BB or SE confirms these expectations.

### 6.1.2 Semantic roles / clause expansion

In the previous section, I determined which grammatical roles need examination when analysing markers that express contrast between ideas or organise the discourse. In that discussion, a number of possible semantic roles were mentioned. Table 6.4 provides an overview of the different meanings I would expect to find in the corpus, based on the description of language found in Quirk et al. (2010):

**Table 6.4: Overview of semantic roles**

Organisation	Contrast
additive (general)	alternative (includes variation)
listing: additive equative	extent of truth
listing: additive reinforcing	contrast (general)
listing: enumerative	contrastive: reformulatory (includes exposition and clarification)
summative (if mainly organisational)	contrastive: replacive
transitional: discorsal	contrastive: antithetic
transitional: temporal	contrastive: concessive
time-position	modality/manner: concessive
modality/manner: transitional	

These semantic roles could potentially be further explored by linking them to their purpose. For example, when writers use a grammatical item that expresses addition, they can do this for different reasons, for example, to add a new idea or to expand on a previous one. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), writers can expand main clauses through adding equivalent information (elaboration), extra information (extension) or circumstantial information (enhancement).

Table 6.5 provides an overview of the functions of the three types of expansion (based on Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), pp. 396-412):

**Table 6.5: The functions and meanings of clausal expansion**

Type of expansion	Meaning
<b>Elaboration:</b> further characterisation (=)	exposition, exemplification, clarification e.g. restating, clarifying, refining, adding a descriptive attribute or comment
<b>Extension:</b> adding something new (+)	addition (additive positive, additive negative, antithetic), variation/replacement (replative, subtractive), alternation
<b>Enhancement:</b> qualifying (x)	reference to time, place, manner, cause or condition

In a preliminary study I identified the amounts and types of clausal expansions in the BBs and the SEs. The students used expansion much more often, but it is difficult to comment on the significance of this: Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) do not link expansion to writing proficiency for example. It is possible that, as the terms suggest, enhancement is a sign of greater sophistication than elaboration or extension. It is also possible that elaboration and extension feature among the tools of more knowledgeable writers with more information to add. In the corpora, the different

types of clausal expansion were distributed similarly, with elaboration being the least used (3% in the SEs, 2% in the BBs), extension the most (64% vs. 66%) and enhancement accounting for about a third of the expansion (33% vs. 32%). As there were no noteworthy differences in the proportion of the different types of expansion used in the BB and SE corpora, and it would be difficult to interpret the significance of the amount and distribution, I state only the semantic roles of the markers but do not add information regarding their purposes.

### **6.1.3 Errors**

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the argumentational analyses of the SEs were sometimes hindered because of linguistic errors, in particular those related to the choice of linker. For this part of the analysis, I do not restrict myself to markers of contrast or organisation, but instead look at how the incorrect use of any type of connector can impede the communication of ideas. This is done for a number of reasons. Firstly, errors in the corpora may have obscured findings that would otherwise have been revealed, thus preventing a discussion of aspects of argumentation that deserve attention. Secondly, errors specifically regarding contrast and organisation could be overlooked if the error analysis were limited to them: writers could mistakenly choose words that do not express contrast or organisation when they had intended to do so, or they may choose a marker that contrasts or organises ideas when that had not been their rhetorical intention. Finally, although there clearly are some errors relating to cohesive markers in the SE corpus, restricting the analysis to those related to organisation and contrast may result in too small a number for a meaningful discussion.

I will make a note of any incorrect semantic or grammatical uses with a potential impact on the communication of ideas, for example, wrong footing or confusing the reader. These are based on the errors that were found during a preliminary examination, and are as follows:

- (1) wrong choice of marker: the marker expresses one type of relationship (e.g. contrast) while the context expresses another relationship (e.g. addition)
- (2) other word choice issue related to cohesive markers
- (3) duplication of markers (the same meaning is expressed twice)
- (4) sentence combination error

Where an error is made (e.g. a writer uses *however* but the expression of contrast is not a plausible interpretation based on the context), a description of its role for the purpose of the analysis will depend on its function in the text (e.g. enumerative rather than contrast). In cases where there is no real mistake, labelling will be used to highlight an unexpected use of a marker. For example, in BB9, the conjunct *By implication*, which would normally be expected to express result, has been labelled as additive equative, as in the piece it can be replaced with *similarly*.

Excluded from the analysis are errors which may be related to the use of cohesive markers but are not likely to cause any problems with the communication of ideas, for example, incorrect use of capitalisation (e.g. using *in addition* after a full stop, without a capital I).

### 6.1.4 Overview of language framework and hypotheses

The following table sums up the areas that will be examined, which includes the ways in which ideas are framed through markers of organisation or contrast, their grammatical and semantic roles, and the errors that result from the use of cohesive markers of any type.

**Table 6.6: Overview of items included in the analysis**

<b>Grammatical roles:</b>	<b>Semantic roles: only those related to <i>organisation</i> or <i>contrast</i></b>
adverbial clauses	any related to organisation/contrast
sentential relative clauses	any related to organisation/contrast
Coordinating/ correlative conjunctions	addition, alternative, contrast
adverbials:	
- style disjuncts	any related to organisation/contrast
- content disjuncts	extent of truth
- conjuncts	- listing (enumerative, additive, equative, reinforcing) - contrastive (reformulatory, replacive, antithetic, concessive) - transitional (discoursal, temporal)
<b>Error types: all those related to the communication of ideas</b>	
- duplication of marker (use) - sentence combination error	- wrong choice of marker (meaning) - other word choice issue

The argumentational analysis has already highlighted differences in the organising and contrasting of ideas by student and expert writers. It is therefore possible to

formulate some hypotheses, based on the answers to the Research Questions and other information provided in Chapter 5, Part IV.

(1) As other voices have more of a platform in the SEs than the BBs, I expect relatively more markers of contrast in the SEs, in particular antithetic markers that juxtapose ideas or balance them (rather than concessive ones, which express priority).

(2) Based on the observation that concessions to the views of others are made more frequently in the BBs, I expect a higher percentage of markers of concession in the BBs than SEs, and possibly also of content disjuncts (extent of truth).

(3) Because SEs have a more identifiable structure with clearly demarcated sections than BBs, I expect relatively more discourse organising enumerative markers and transitional discursal markers in the SEs.

(4) Conversely, as the BBs contain more informative sections, there may be relatively more additive (equative and reinforcing) markers in that corpus.

These hypotheses are summed up and presented Table 6.7.

**Table 6.7: Hypotheses for the language analysis**

<b><u>Most likely to have markers with the following functions:</u></b>	<b>BBs</b>	<b>SEs</b>
<b>Markers of contrast</b>		
(1) antithetic		✓
(2) concessive/ content disjuncts (extent of truth)	✓	
<b>Markers of organisation</b>		
(3) listing enumerative/ transitional		✓
(4) listing equative / listing reinforcing	✓	

In brief, the BBs are expected to have relatively more concessive markers, content disjuncts, listing equative markers, and listing reinforcing markers; the SEs more antithetic, listing enumerative, and transitional discoursal markers.

## PART II: METHOD OF LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

### 6.2 Pilot

The language analysis was less complicated than the argumentational analysis, but it also required some iterations. Below I explain the difficulties that were encountered and how they were resolved.

#### 6.2.1 Example analysis from the pilot

SE3 is one of the shorter essays in the corpus; I use it to justify some of the changes that were made to the language analysis approach. Table 6.8 presents the full text of SE3, with the lines numbered as in the argumentational analysis.

Table 6.8: Example essay: SE3

Student Essay 3 (SE3)
1. Recently, in many countries around the whole world, it has become an extremely controversial issue that all the governments should pay university fees. Consequently, the concept of helps student has to be taken into account, therefore, for the purposes of this essay, I shall confine the discussion to some arguments about this topic.
2. It's easy to understand why some people believe that the government must be cover university fees
3. it can be helps themselves
4. because some people can't afford it
5. and if they really are showing interest in getting a higher education they should be able not having to worry about the cost and give students the opportunity.
6. And also reflect to their behavior thereby can be reduce the crimes.
7. The opponents of this proposal might argue that If the government can provide free education for students
8. most of them would to enter the university, because there are also other skills asked for some jobs which you can't learn at the university

9. for example technical institutes and handiwork.
10. If we offer free education to everyone maybe we lost these jobs which is affects the employment
11. thus the governments should import of foreign labor to cover these jobs
12. also may be students do not focus on their studies.
13. This is exactly what happened in my country.
14. In conclusion, to sum up there are arguments for both. However, I admit that the governments should help students but I support an increase in salaries and development the education.

The analytical results are shown in the following tables. In Table 6.9, markers identified as relevant are divided into organisation or contrast, and their semantic and grammatical roles are noted. The numbers between brackets refer to the numbered lines in SE3.

**Table 6.9: Example of analysis table (SE3): grammatical and semantic roles**

<b>Marker</b>	<b>Organisation ?</b>	<b>Contrast?</b>	<b>Semantic role</b>	<b>Grammatical role</b>
<b>SE3</b>				
(6) and	✓		additive reinforcing	conjunction
(6) also	✓		additive reinforcing	conjunct
(12) also	✓		additive reinforcing	conjunct
(14) However		✓	antithetic	conjunct
(14)* but		✓	additive reinforcing	conjunction

The next table displays the errors. When an error appears to have been made by a writer, the analyst uses an asterisk in the first table (see *but* in line 14), thus flagging the error for inclusion (see Table 6.10). As aforementioned, error analysis is not restricted to markers of cohesion and contrast. In the example in Table 6.10, markers of result have been used incorrectly in line 1. The column on the right contains the type of semantic relationship normally expressed by the marker, followed by a slash, and then the actual relationship that is expressed in the context of the discourse. For example, result / -- indicates that a marker of result was used where no relationship is present, and reason / contrast denotes the use of a marker of reason where the content suggests the need for a marker of contrast.

**Table 6.10: Example of analysis table (SE3): errors**

<b><u>Legend:</u></b> - x / y: expresses x but context shows that it is intended to mean y, e.g. addition/reason - x / --: expresses x but the context shows that the role of x does not fit e.g. contrast / - - 'duplication' refers to the error whereby two phrases are used when normally there would be one	
<b>SE3</b>	
(1) Consequently	result / --
(1) therefore	result / --
(8) because	reason / contrast
(14) In conclusion, to sum up	duplication
(14) However ... but	duplication
(14) but	contrast / result or additive

## 6.2.2 Difficulties with the pilot and modifications to the approach

### 6.2.2.1 Challenges with the identification of semantic roles

The analyses revealed that some markers of contrast also function as markers of organisation. For example, when a Point is made and another is introduced by *in contrast*, there could be said to be a cohesive or organisational function as well as a contrastive one. The following extract from SE17 illustrates this:

*At the beginning, the benefit of educational grant is widely and massive. Although the fees or cost of study is very expensive. But it is can be a main reason to make different types and levels of education in the society. Besides of that enhance and improve the knowledge. However, the most important thing is the encourage and help the student to complete their education easily. For instance of that after five years since the grant educational decision has been made it, the percentage of graduated increased gradually. Additionally to that all those graduated are a good example given for the children school or other student.*

In this excerpt, the writer lists three benefits of grants, i.e. having different types and levels of education, enhancing and improving knowledge, and encouraging or helping students to complete their education, thus setting a good example. The marker *however*, commonly described as a one of contrast, here introduces the third of these reasons and thus has a listing function. However, its main function is still contrast, as it sets apart the most important reason from the minor ones, and has thus been labelled as an antithetic conjunct.

This dual meaning was previously identified by Halliday and Hasan (1976), who state that: “in addition to the meaning ‘adversative’, *but* contains within itself also the logical meaning of ‘and’; it is a sort of portmanteau, or shorthand form, of *and however*” (p. 237).

In instances where markers of contrast can arguably also act as markers of organisation, I decided to ascribe them with one function, except if multiple functions were clearly equally present. However, no cases with equal functions emerged in the analysis. As these markers of contrast have organisational roles as their secondary functions, and because their occurrence is so common, they were labelled by their primary function, i.e. contrast.

#### 6.2.2.2 *Challenges with the identification of grammatical roles*

There were two challenges in the identification of grammatical roles. Firstly, identifying the markers required a clear understanding of the criteria for inclusion. For example, the coordinating conjunction ‘and’ features more than once in SE3, but (as per Section 6.1.1.2), it is only included where it is not part of a subclause (i.e. in line 6).

Secondly, analysing texts is challenging where mistakes obscure the intended output. For example:

*(6) And also reflect to their behavior thereby can be reduce the crimes.*

In this sentence, the subject of the first clause is missing, and *thereby* is not followed by an -ing form, which would normally be expected. In the previous section *they* referred to ‘the government’ and ‘the students’. A number of different interpretations of the writers’ intentions are possible: *And also* can be expanded into the following grammatically correct sentences:

*[Also, education makes students] reflect on their behaviour, thereby reducing crime.*

*[Also, education makes students] reflect on their behaviour, which can reduce crime.*

*[Also, education makes students] reflect on their behaviour. This can reduce crime.*

*[Also, if students study and] reflect on their behaviour, crime can be reduced.*

*[Also, education makes students] reflect on their behaviour, whereby crime can be reduced.*

Here, *also* could be included in the analysis, as it functions in a similar way in all the intended possibilities. Instead, for reasons of accuracy, the decision was taken to exclude from the analysis any such items where too much interpretation was needed or too many interpretations were possible to be confident of their function in the text. One other change was made to the original design: subclauses can be subdivided into finite (F) or non-finite (NF) and it seemed interesting to do so as this might help identify another area of difference in the corpora.

#### 6.2.2.3 Challenges with the identification of errors

It was not difficult to identify mistakes, but it sometimes proved challenging to interpret them.

The following is an example of a straightforward case:

Table 6.11: Excerpt from error analysis of SE3 (1)

- (7) The opponents of this proposal might argue that If the government can provide free education for students  
(8) most of them would to enter the university, because there are also other skills asked for some jobs which you can't learn at the university,  
(9) for example technical institutes and handiwork.

The meaning of the word *because* (in line 8) is contrast, whereas it normally introduces a reason.

The following example demonstrates a higher level of complexity:

Table 6.12: Excerpt from error analysis of SE3 (2)

(14) <b>However</b> , I admit that the governments should help students <b>but</b> I support an increase in salaries and development the education.
---

*However* contrasts with the previous idea that there are arguments on both sides, suggesting that the student will now give his own opinion. He clearly states that governments should fund education, and then states that he supports educational development (and an increase in salaries, but it is not clear how this could fit with the topic of student funding, unless the writer means ‘scholarships’). The subsequent use of *but* would normally denote another contrast, but in this case *so* and *and* would be better suited. To solve this issue (and others like it) in the error table, two errors are stated: duplication (e.g. of *but* and *however* in the same sentence) and an inappropriate marker (e.g. *but* that indicates contrast and should be replaced with a marker of addition (see Table 6.10)).

## 6.3 The final method

### 6.3.1 The final procedure

The procedure detailed in Table 6.13 was followed to analyse language aspects in the corpora. These instructions functioned as guidelines for the analysts and verifiers to ensure consistency in approach.

**Table 6.13: Instructions for language analysis (final)**

1. Read each new piece repeatedly, in order to understand what the writer is trying to say about the essay topic or question.
2. Look at an example of completed tables, related to (a) semantic and grammatical roles and (b) errors.
3. (a) Use the overview table [Table 6.6] to find relevant cohesive markers for each piece. List these in the blank tables provided, indicating whether the marker expresses organisation or contrast by putting a tick, and noting the semantic roles and grammatical roles (full lists to choose from are in the overview Table). Note whether any subclauses are finite or non-finite.  (b) Fill in the blank error tables: indicate what types of errors have been made (full lists to choose from are in overview Table 6.6), using the legend to ensure consistency in the way these are noted.

The tables in Appendices 12 (for the BBs) and 13 (for the SEs) show the results of the analyses. No errors were found that related to cohesive devices in the BB corpus, therefore, only Appendix 13 also includes an error table.

### **6.3.2 Mitigation of subjectivity**

Although the language analysis was more straightforward and less reliant on interpretation than the argumentational analysis, steps were taken to reduce subjectivity as follows:

(1) I analysed each piece of writing four times. These intra-rater analyses were repeated at intervals that increased in duration, without referring to the previously performed analyses, to confirm consistency of labelling and to thus maximise accuracy.

(2) A random sample of eight analyses from each corpus was checked by another linguist, thus approximately a third of the pieces. A highly educated volunteer with the

required knowledge of grammar performed four complete analyses from each corpus and checked all remaining analyses. The labels and comments assigned by these verifiers were used to adjust the analyses where required and ultimately to produce a better understanding of the method.

### 6.3.3 Example of the final method

The following is an example of the analysis tables (for full tables see Appendices 12 and 13). Firstly, each piece comprises an overview as follows:

**Table 6.14: Sample of the language analysis table (BB1) - semantic and grammatical roles**

Marker	Organisation?	Contrast?	Semantic role	Grammatical role
<b>BB1</b>				
(9) but		✓	antithetic	conjunction
(9) but		✓	antithetic	conjunction
(9) albeit ...		✓	concessive	adverbial clause (non-finite)

There are also error tables for the SE corpus (see Table 6.10 for an example).

Next for each piece I compiled overviews of the occurrences of markers of contrast and organisation. The markers were arranged in order of frequency, indicating in which pieces they had been found, and identifying their grammatical functions (e.g. conjunction) and semantic purposes (e.g. additive reinforcing). These overviews can be found in Appendices 14 (organisation) and 16 (contrast) for the BBs; and in Appendices 15 (organisation) and 17 (contrast) for the SEs.

The following is an excerpt from the overviews of markers in the BBs (Appendices 15 and 17). The number of occurrences of each marker is provided in brackets.

**Table 6.15: Sample of markers of organisation in the BBs**

INDEED (4)

<b>BB8</b>	conjunct	additive reinforcing
<b>BB9</b>	conjunct	additive reinforcing
<b>BB10</b>	conjunct	additive reinforcing
<b>BB13</b>	conjunct	additive reinforcing

**Table 6.16: Sample of markers of contrast in the BBs**

WHILST (5)

<b>BB3</b>	adverbial clause (finite)	concessive
<b>BB3</b>	adverbial clause (non finite)	concessive
<b>BB4</b>	adverbial clause (finite)	concessive
<b>BB14</b>	adverbial clause (finite)	concessive
<b>BB17</b>	adverbial clause (finite)	antithetic

To summarise, the appendices list semantic and grammatical roles and errors (Appendices 12 and 13) and reorganise these tables into overview tables that focus on the markers themselves, organised by frequency (Appendices 14 - 17).

This enables a wealth of comparative data to be gathered: the numbers of markers used in the corpora, the focus on organisation and contrast in the texts, the types of errors made, the different semantic relationships expressed, the grammatical choices made, and the preferred specific markers. These results will be described and discussed in detail in Chapter 7, where I will also be able to test the hypotheses stated in Section 6.1.4 and answer Research Question 3.

## **7 THE USE OF MARKERS OF ORGANISATION AND CONTRAST IN STUDENT AND EXPERT WRITING**

As discussed in Chapter 6, cohesive markers are linguistic devices that can be used to help realise arguments in texts. In that chapter, I delineated which particular cohesive markers were of interest and why, and I explained the methods used to identify and describe them.

In order to discover how student and expert writers use language differently I have used a comparative approach. In this chapter, I discuss the findings of these analyses. In Chapter 8, I subsequently discuss the implications of these differences for the teaching of academic writing skills.

The current chapter is divided into three parts. Part I gives overall information about the markers: the total number, their grammatical functions, the ratio of markers of organisation vs. markers of contrast in the corpora, and the errors related to cohesive devices found in the pieces. Part II focuses on the markers of organisation and Part III on the markers of contrast. For both sets of markers I compare their semantic purposes and discuss which specific markers are used and why.

The information in this chapter is based on the tables of Appendices 12-17, which show the language and error analyses of the pieces. Note that any percentages given are rounded to the nearest half or whole number, with a few exceptions where transparency might otherwise be impeded. For ease of reference, when graphs are included, the comparison of absolute numbers is done via bar charts, whereas percentages are compared with the help of pie charts.

## PART I: OVERALL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MARKERS

### 7.1 The number of total markers of organisation and contrast

#### 7.1.1 The BBs

There are 160 markers of organisation and contrast in the BBs. This means that there are on average seven per BB, or one marker of organisation or contrast per 65 words. Expressed as a percentage, just over 1.5% of the words are markers of contrast or organisation.

#### 7.1.2 The SEs

There are 207 markers of contrast and organisation in the SEs. This means that there are on average 6.5 per SE, or one marker of organisation or contrast per 52 words. Expressed as a percentage, nearly 2% of the words are markers of contrast or organisation.

#### 7.1.3 Comparison of the number of markers of organisation and contrast in the BBs and SEs

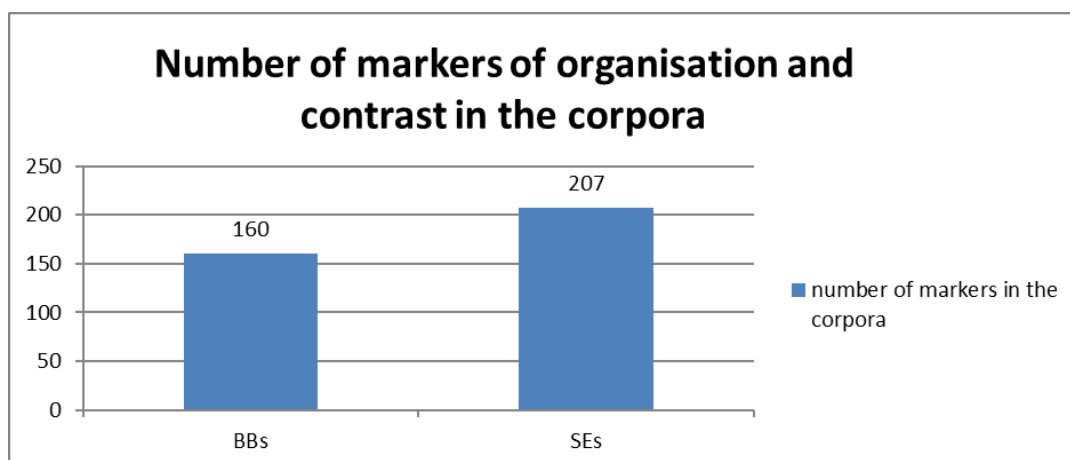


Figure 7.1: Number of markers in the corpora

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the corpora are similar in length: the BBs contain only about 4% more words than the SEs. However, the SEs use about a quarter more markers of organisation and contrast than the BBs (207 vs. 160, respectively). Adjusting for the word count difference, the SEs still use nearly a fifth more of these markers than the BBs (approximately 1.9% of the words in the SEs vs. 1.5% in the BBs being markers).

Similarly, previous research has found that many L2 learners use cohesive markers at higher rates of frequency than do L1 language users (see e.g. Hinkel, 2001; Reid, 1993). The more frequent use of metadiscourse has been interpreted as an L2 learner strategy motivated by those learners' greater focus on language (Adel, 2006).

The ratios of markers of organisation and of contrast are different between the corpora. I will discuss this in Section 7.3, but first I will describe the grammatical functions of these markers.

## **7.2 The grammatical function of the markers of organisation and contrast**

As explained in Chapter 6, I identified in the corpora adverbial clauses, sentential relative clauses, coordinating conjunctions and adverbials (style disjuncts, content disjuncts and conjuncts) that expressed semantic functions related to organisation and contrast. In the event, only adverbial clauses, coordinating/correlative conjunctions, conjuncts and content disjuncts were found. I also added whether or

not the adverbial clauses had a finite verb in them. The information for the BBs and SEs is given in Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2, respectively.

### 7.2.1 The BBs

**Table 7.1: Grammatical functions of the markers of organisation and contrast in the BBs**

<b><u>Total markers</u></b>	<b>160 (100%)</b>		
adverbial clauses (subordinating conjunctions)	41 (25.5%)	<b><i>finite</i></b>	<b>24</b> <i>(59% of the clauses)</i>
		<b><i>non-finite</i></b>	<b>17</b> <i>(41% of the clauses)</i>
coordinating/ correlative conjunctions	71 (44.5%)		
conjuncts	42 (26%)		
content disjuncts	6 (4%)		
style disjuncts	0 (0%)		

In the BBs, coordinating or correlative conjunctions are the most popular (representing over 44%), followed by conjuncts and adverbial clauses, which each account for just over a quarter of the markers. Content disjuncts feature less prominently (4%). Three out of five adverbial clauses have a finite verb, two out of five do not.

### 7.2.2 The SEs

Table 7.2: Grammatical functions of the markers of organisation and contrast in the SEs

<b><u>Total markers</u></b>	<b>207 (100%)</b>		
adverbial clauses (subordinating conjunctions)	18 (9%)	<b><i>finite</i></b>	<b>14</b> (78% of the clauses)
		<b><i>non-finite</i></b>	<b>4</b> (22% of the clauses)
coordinating/ correlative conjunctions	55 (26.5%)		
conjuncts	133 (64%)		
content disjuncts	1 (0.5%)		
style disjuncts	0 (0%)		

In the SEs, conjuncts are the most popular devices (accounting for 64% of the markers), followed by coordinating or correlative conjunctions, which account for just over a quarter of markers. Adverbial clauses, the vast majority of which are finite, make up 9% of the markers, and one content disjunct was present in the corpus (0.5% of the markers).

### 7.2.3 Comparison of the grammatical functions of the markers of organisation and contrast in the BBs and SEs

Table 7.3: Comparison of the grammatical functions of the markers of organisation and contrast

Grammatical roles	BBs (160=100%)	SEs (207=100%)
Adverbial clauses (subordinating conjunctions)	25.5% 59% finite 41% non-finite	9% 78% finite 22% non-finite
Coordinating/ correlative conjunctions	44.5%	26.5%
Conjuncts	26%	64%
Content disjuncts	4%	0.5%
Style disjuncts	0%	0%

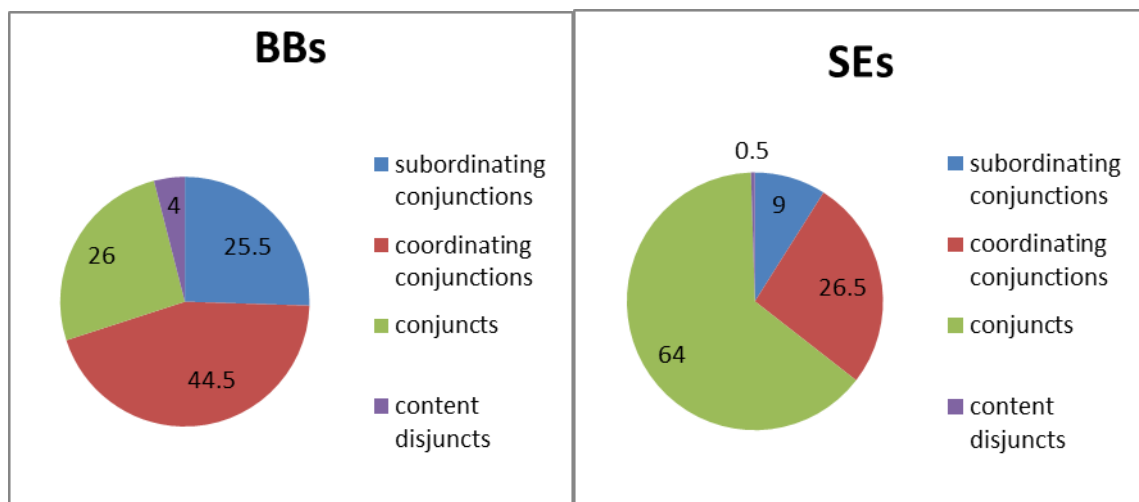


Figure 7.2: Comparison of the grammatical function of the markers of organisation and contrast (percentages)

Table 7.3 and Figure 7.2 show the relative prominence of the grammatical functions in the corpora. The BBs rely much more on coordinating conjunctions than the SEs (44.5% vs. 26.5%, respectively), and the SEs rely heavily on conjuncts (64% compared to 26% in the BBs). Subordinating conjunctions introducing adverbial

phrases are used 2.5 times more in the BBs than in the SEs (25.5% vs. 9%). Content disjuncts are not very popular in either corpus but are extremely rare in the SEs.

Hinkel (2001) reports that students may use coordination where subordination would be more appropriate because of the differences between English and some Asian languages. Her study also shows that Arabic speakers use coordinators more than L1 speakers, probably because of the high value accorded to parallel constructions. There is an apparent discrepancy between Hinkel's findings and those of this study: in the SE pieces, more than half are written by Arabic speakers, but there is no such propensity for coordination. Perhaps this is because of the generalisability of Hinkel's study or because my data comprise only two subcategories of markers, or because the writers represent eight different L1s between them (see Chapter 3).

The subordination is realised more through finite than through non-finite clauses in both corpora. The SEs rely on them more than the BBs (78% vs. 59%), which is not surprising as they are grammatically less complex and therefore easier to construct.

The relatively high level of the occurrence of coordination in the BBs and SEs, both representing (semi-) academic corpora, is not unexpected: Biber et al. (1999) found that coordinating conjunctions are a common feature of academic texts.

The ratio of conjuncts vs. disjuncts is also interesting. As a proportion of all the grammatical functions, the disjuncts represent 4%, and the conjuncts 26% in the BBs; for the SEs, the figures are 0.5% and 64% respectively. Disjuncts tend to be associated more with negotiation and require the reader's collaboration to establish coherence, whereas conjuncts may be more directional (Thompson and Zhou, 2000);

this therefore suggests that the SE writers' voices are stronger than those of the BB writers in terms of overtly directing the reader.

## 7.3 The ratio of markers of organisation and contrast

### 7.3.1 The BBs

Table 7.4: The number of markers of organisation and contrast in the BBs

Function of markers	Number
Organisation	64 (40%)
Contrast	96 (60%)
<b>Total markers</b>	<b>160 (100%)</b>

When comparing the ratio of markers of organisation and contrast in the BBs, it appears that the BB writers are more concerned with expressing contrast between ideas than with ordering them.

### 7.3.2 The SEs

Table 7.5: The number of markers of organisation and contrast in the SEs

Function of markers	Number
Organisation	129 (62%)
Contrast	78 (38%)
<b>Total markers</b>	<b>207 (100%)</b>

As shown in Table 7.5, the SE writers use more markers of organisation than of contrast, suggesting that their focus is on ordering their discourse rather than on linking contrasting ideas.

### 7.3.3 Comparison of the number of markers of organisation and contrast in the BBs and the SEs

Table 7.6 shows how the ratios of the markers of organisation and contrast compare; Figure 7.4 shows this in percentages and Figure 7.3 in numbers.

Table 7.6: Comparison of the ratio of markers of organisation and contrast

Function of markers	Number in BBs	Number in SEs
<b>Organisation</b>	64 (40%)	129 ( <b>62%</b> )
<b>Contrast</b>	96 (60%)	78 ( <b>38%</b> )
<b>Total markers/</b>	160 (=100%)	207 (=100%)

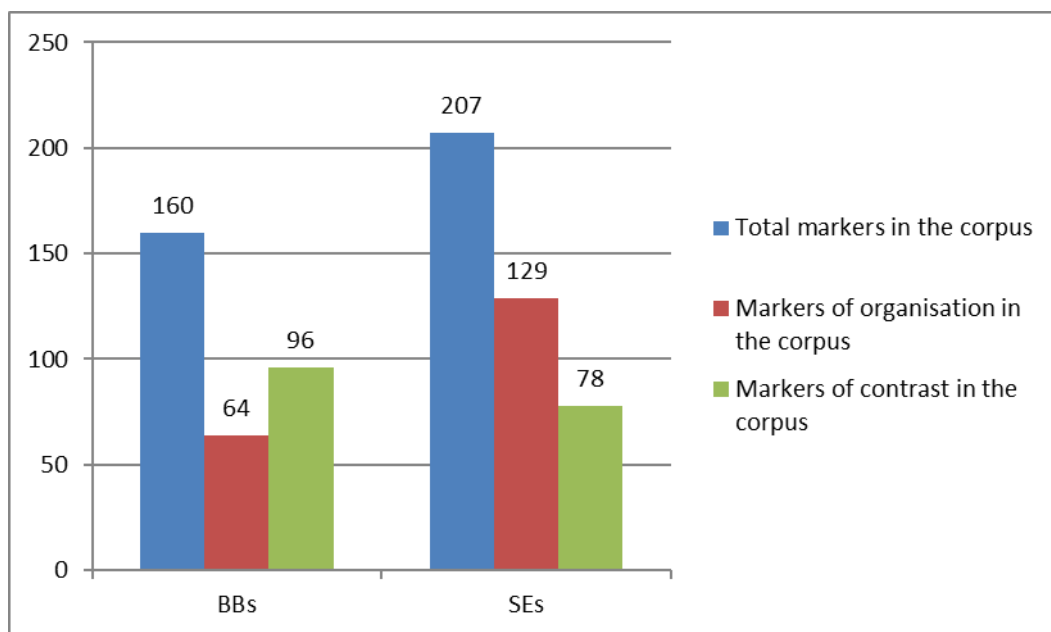


Figure 7.3: Comparison of the number of markers of contrast and organisation in the corpora (numbers)

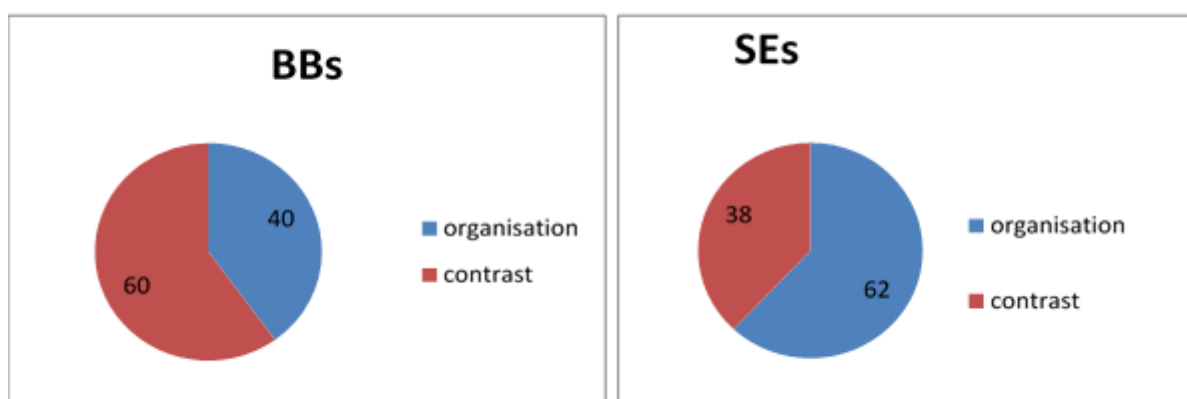


Figure 7.4: Comparison of the ratios of the markers of organisation and contrast (percentages)

Figure 7.4 shows that the ratio between the markers of organisation and contrast is similar in both corpora: the split is approximately two fifths and three fifths of the total markers. However, in the BBs the greater proportion (3/5) refers to markers of contrast and in the SEs to markers of organisation. In other words, the BB writers are as dedicated to contrasting ideas as the SE writers are to ordering them.

The fact that BB writers focus more on contrasting ideas whereas SE writers focus on ordering ideas in their discourse represents a major difference between the corpora. As Table 7.6 shows, there are more markers in total in the SEs. In fact, not accounting for the 4% difference in length of the corpora, there are 23% more markers in the SEs. However, there are also 19% *fewer* markers of contrast in the SE corpus: the higher ratio of markers overall is therefore solely because the SE writers use nearly double the number of markers of organisation than the BB writers.

As has been mentioned in Chapter 5, research has found that L2 students use discourse-organising metadiscourse more than some other groups of writers (Hasselgård 2016, Ozdemir and Longo 2014). It is possible to link the lower frequency of contrast markers in the student pieces to an epistemological stance in

which knowledge is shared rather than the result of a critical stance. As Barton (1993) found in a comparison between student essays and opinion pieces written by academics, students generalise more, for example, by not using markers of contrast to develop their arguments. However, this can have an impact on their studies: “the representation of a contrastive and competitive epistemological stance seems to be privileged implicitly by the gatekeepers of the American university” (Barton, 1993, p. 765), a view which she believes may be unfair, but arguably still holds true in current HE, and not just in America. Coffin's (2004) research on IELTS essays also links a knowledge sharing rather than a competitive stance to lack of academic success. She found that candidates preferred one-sided expository pieces over two-sided discussions and that this was more so among low-scoring candidates. Similarly to Barton (1993), she found pronounced evidence of students including generalised statements in their work. The generalisation and lack of the use of contrast can also be expressed using terms from Kaufer and Geisler's (1991) research: students stay more on the main path, rather than explore the faulty paths populated by the views of others. The authors state that in student instruction the focus is on their evidence and criticality (“Is it warranted and for whom?” (p.119)) rather than on following the arguments of others and designing their own and on learning to capture the complex relationships and dependencies between their views and the positions of others.

The frequency of the use of markers of contrast has been linked to the forcefulness of the argumentation (Hyland, 2012). Expert writers, by contrasting ideas, can present more authoritative arguments.

In Liu's (2008) study based on the British National Corpus (BNC), which focussed on linking adverbials only, additive adverbials were found overall to be more frequent

than adversative adverbials, and specifically so in the academic and news registers (roughly between 10 - 15% more). As I have demonstrated above that the SEs and the BBs to be situated between these two genres, I would expect the BBs to either have fewer adversative markers than they did or more additive ones. However, given what was said above about the value accorded to contrastive epistemology in academic contexts, the latter is more likely. In short, markers of organisation appear to be relatively underused by the BB writers.

## 7.4 Errors made in the use of the markers in general

### 7.4.1 The BBs

No errors were found in the use of markers in the BB corpus.

### 7.4.2 The SEs

There were 48 errors in the use of markers in the SE corpus (Table 7.7).

**Table 7.7: Errors in the use of markers in the SE corpus, in order of frequency**

<b>Total errors</b>	<b>48 (100%)</b>
Incorrect meaning is expressed	23 (48%)
Error in sentence combination or clause structure	12 (25%)
Duplication of meaning	6 (12.5%)
Word choice	5 (10.5%)
Other	2 (4%)

On average, there were 1.5 mistakes in each SE. However, when the 12 pieces containing none of these types of errors (i.e. SEs 1, 4, 5, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 21, 24, 28 and 29) are disregarded, the average mistake per piece is nearly 2.5. In the 20 pieces with mistakes, there are eight in which only one mistake was made (SEs 8, 9,

10, 13, 22, 23, 25 and 30), and 12 pieces containing over 4 mistakes on average. These 12 represent nearly 40% of the SE corpus. This therefore suggests that although some students (12 out of 32) use markers well, the same number of students find markers very challenging and another 25% have some difficulty using them.

The most common error in the SEs is the use of a marker that expresses a different meaning from the one intended; in other words, the wrong marker has been chosen. The second most common mistake is of a more technical nature: the grammatical structure is incorrect.

Any of these errors has the potential to confuse the reader, but the most commonly made error, where a marker is used that expresses a different meaning from the one that is intended, is likely to have the most negative effect, as it requires the reader to guess what was meant. These types of mistakes may well be detrimental to the reader's comprehension of the writer's ideas and the way in which they are connected or relevant to the argument.

Hinkel (2001) gives examples of incongruously used linkers in the data of her study comparing L1 and L2 writers' texts, e.g. the use of *however* without opposition being expressed, and the use of *thus* without consequence. In doing so, she demonstrates the inability of even some advanced L2 students to use cohesive devices effectively and she points out that the lack of skills in using these devices is to the detriment of the cohesion of the text. I would argue that this lack of text unity affects the comprehensibility and thus the persuasive power of the discourse, which is likely to impact on the students' success.

In the following parts of this chapter I provide more detail about the two sets of markers. First, I discuss the markers of organisation (Part II) and subsequently the markers of contrast (Part III).

## PART II: MARKERS OF ORGANISATION

### 7.5 The semantic roles of the markers of organisation

#### 7.5.1 The BBs

As Table 7.8 shows, nearly all markers of organisation (over 95%) play an additive role, the vast majority of those having a reinforcing function (84%). Others (9.5%) have an equative role, and one marker is enumerative (1.5%). There are also some transitional discoursal markers (5%).

Table 7.8: Semantic roles of markers of organisation in the BBs

Markers of organisation (64 total) (100%): semantic roles	
Additive reinforcing	54 (84%)
Additive equative	6 (9.5%)
Transitional discoursal	3 (5%)
Additive enumerative	1 (1.5%)

#### 7.5.2 The SEs

As can be seen from Table 7.9, most of the markers of organisation in the SEs are additive; 77% are reinforcing and 19% enumerative. There are also some transitional discoursal markers (4%).

Table 7.9: Semantic roles of markers of organisation in the SEs

Markers of organisation (129 total) (100%): semantic roles	
Additive reinforcing	99 (77%)
Additive enumerative	25 (19%)
Transitional discoursal	5 (4%)
Additive equative	--

### 7.5.3 Comparison of the semantic roles of the markers of organisation in the BBs and SEs

Table 7.10: Comparison of the semantic roles of the markers of organisation

Semantic roles	BBs (64 = 100%)	SEs (129=100%)
Additive reinforcing	84%	77%
Additive enumerative	1.5%	19%
Transitional discorsal	5%	4%
Additive equative	9.5%	--

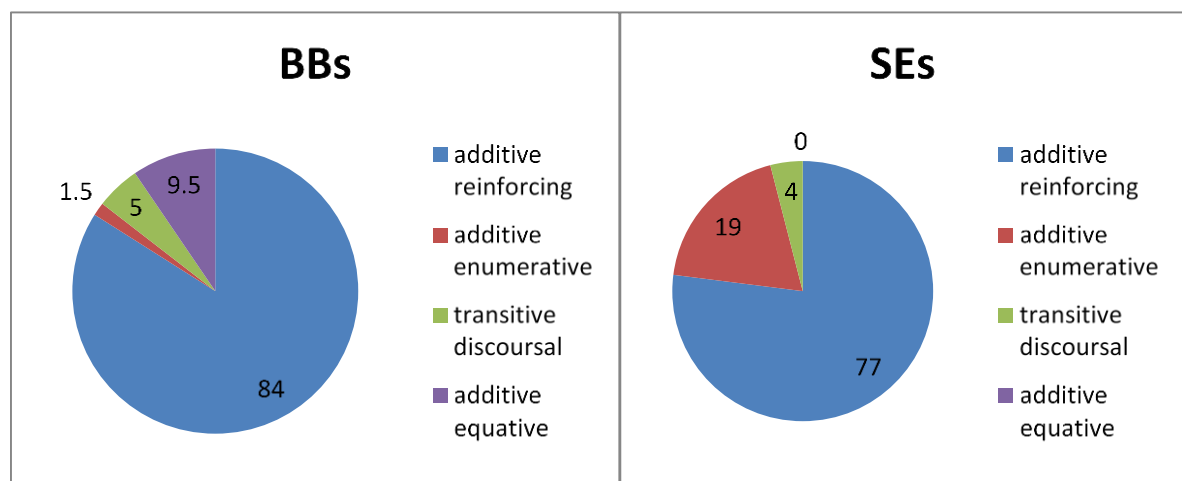


Figure 7.5: Comparison of the semantic roles of the markers of organisation

As can be seen above, in both corpora, most markers of organisation function to add and to reinforce (around 4 out of 5). In the SEs, there is also much enumeration (nearly 1 in 5 markers do this), but not so in the BBs. There, nearly 10% of the markers express an additive equative relationship (through markers such as *in the meantime*, *while*, and *and*), but this meaning is not expressed in the SEs (where *and*

for example always has a reinforcing function). In both corpora around 5% of the markers have a transitional function.

In Liu's (2008) BNC study, emphatic linking adverbials (which from his examples appear to equate most closely to what I have labelled 'additive reinforcing' and 'enumerative' markers) were highest in frequency in the academic genre, as opposed to speaking, fiction, news, and 'other'. It is therefore not surprising that they were also popular among the markers of organisation used by the BB writers (85.5%) and the SE writers (96%), but considering the difference in those ratios, perhaps the academics could have been expected to include more.

In the same study, linking adverbials of similarity (which I have labelled 'equative') are at a much higher frequency in the academic than in any other genre, and this may explain why the academic professionals who produced the BB corpus appear to be more confident using them than the SE writers (9.5% of the markers in the BB corpus are equative, but the SE corpus includes none).

The higher percentage of additive enumerative linkers in the L2 student writing is consistent with research that found higher frequencies of those types of markers in L2 vs. L1 writing (e.g. Narita et al., 2004; based on a Japanese L1). In writing done by L1 Arabic and L2 English language users, additive transition words were also found to be more frequent than other types, e.g. adversative and temporal ones (Mohamed-Sayidina, 2010). Neff-van Aertselaer and Dafouz-Milne (2008) found that novice writers used more sequencers in comparison to expert writers, but that Spanish students used considerably more in English than did American writers, which they link to Spanish L1 features. Mur-Dueñas (2010), in response to the

observation that Spanish business scholars using more additive markers and fewer contrastive ones in their research articles than their English-speaking counterparts, also believes that this is because the Anglo-American tradition prefers antithetical idea development over cumulative patterns.

## 7.6 The specific choices of markers of organisation

Table 7.11 and Table 7.12 below show the specific markers of organisation that were used in the corpora, in order of frequency.

### 7.6.1 The BBs

Table 7.11: Specific markers of organisation used in the BBs

<b><u>Markers of organisation</u></b>	<b>Number of instances (total: 64)</b>
<i>and</i>	35 (55%)
<i>also</i>	4 (6.5%)
<i>indeed</i>	4 (6.5%)
<i>while</i>	3 (5%)
<i>so</i>	2 (3%)
<i>more importantly</i>	2 (3%)
[14 other markers]	1 (1.5%) [X14]

Twenty different markers of organisation are used in the BBs. More than half of these markers of organisation in the corpus consist of *and*. *Also* and *indeed* are the next two most popular markers, but only account for 13% of all markers. *While*, *so* and *most importantly* also feature in the corpora, two or three times each. Another 14 markers of organisation appear just once.

## 7.6.2 The SEs

Table 7.12: Specific markers of organisation used in the SEs

<b><u>Markers of organisation</u></b>	<b>Number of instances (total: 129)</b>
<i>and</i>	36 (28%)
<i>also</i>	26 (20%)
<i>in addition</i>	9 (7%)
<i>furthermore</i>	5 (4%)
<i>on the one hand</i>	4 (3%)
<i>first of all</i>	4 (3%)
<i>moreover</i>	4 (3%)
<i>secondly</i>	3 (2.5%)
<i>finally</i>	3 (2.5%)
<i>in fact</i>	3 (2.5%)
<i>not only... but ...</i>	3 (2.5%)
<i>first</i>	2 (1.5%)
<i>second</i>	2 (1.5%)
<i>what is more</i>	2 (1.5%)
<i>besides</i>	2 (1.5%)
<i>of course</i>	2 (1.5%)
<i>but</i>	2 (1.5%)
[17 other markers]	1 (0.75 %) X [17]

In the SEs, the most popular marker is *and*, representing 28% of the use of markers of organisation. The next most frequent marker is *also* (20% of instances). Reasonably frequent is *in addition* (9%). A number of markers appear between three and five times (between 2.5 and 4% of the instances). In order of frequency, these are: *furthermore*, *on the one hand*, *first of all*, *moreover*, *secondly*, *finally*, *in fact* and *not only...but*. Another 23 markers appear once or twice in the SE corpus. In total 34 different markers of organisation are used, but some of these are used incorrectly (e.g. *but* is normally adversative, not organisational in nature).

### 7.6.3 Comparison of the choice of markers of organisation in the BBs and SEs

Table 7.13: Comparison of the specific markers of organisation chosen

<u>Specific markers of organisation</u>	BBs (64 = 100%)	SEs (129=100%)
<i>and</i>	55%	28%
<i>also</i>	6.5%	20%
<i>indeed</i>	6.5%	--
<i>while</i>	5%	1% (appears once)
<i>so</i>	3%	1% (appears once)
<i>more importantly</i>	3%	--
<i>in addition</i>	1.5% (appears once)	7%
<i>furthermore</i>	1.5% (appears once)	4%
<i>on the one hand</i>	1.5% (appears once)	3%
<i>first of all</i>	--	3%
<i>moreover</i>	1.5% (appears once)	3%
<i>secondly</i>	--	2.5%
<i>finally</i>	--	2.5%
<i>in fact</i>	1.5% (appears once)	2.5%
<i>not only... but ...</i>	1.5% (appears once)	2.5%
<i>first</i>	--	1.5%
<i>second</i>	--	1.5%
<i>what is more</i>	--	1.5%
<i>besides</i>	--	1.5%
<i>of course</i>	1.5% (appears once)	1.5%
<i>but</i>	--	1.5%
markers appearing just once	another 7 [14 total]	another 15 [17 total]

A divergence between the two corpora is the range of markers used. In the BB corpus, there are 20 different markers out of a total of 64; in other words, nearly one in three markers are different; in the SE corpus, there are 34 different markers out of a total of 129, so just over one in four markers is different. In other words, a greater variety of markers is used in the BBs. This is consistent with literature that suggests or confirms the premise that language users of higher proficiency levels have a larger repertoire of connectives (e.g. Council of Europe, 2001; Carlsen, 2001; Crossley and McNamara, 2012).

A number of markers are quite popular in one corpus, but do not appear in the other. In the BB corpus, these markers are *indeed* (6%) and *while* (4.5%). For the SEs, these are *in addition* (7%), *furthermore* (4%), *on the one hand* (3%), *first of all* (3%), *moreover* (3%), *secondly* (2.5%), *finally* (2.5%), *in fact* (2.5%), and *not only ... but* (2.5%). The absence of *indeed* and *while* in the SE corpus is not surprising as these are quite formal words and research has found that L2 writers use a higher frequency of informal logical connectors (e.g. Liu 2013).

Interestingly, the corpora have only two markers of organisation in common, as shown in Table 7.14:

**Table 7.14: Markers of organisation the corpora have in common**

<b><u>Markers in common</u></b>	<b>BBs</b> (64 markers of organisation=100%)	<b>SEs</b> (129 markers of organisation=100%)
<i>and</i>	55%	28%
<i>also</i>	6.5%	20%

The markers *and* and *also* frequently appear in both the BBs and SEs, but *and* is particularly popular in the BBs, accounting for at least every other marker of organisation in the corpus (55% of the markers). The second most popular marker, *also*, is much less frequent (6.5%). In the BBs, the distribution of these two most popular markers is more even: *and* is the most popular with 28% of the markers being *and*; *also* follows quite closely, representing 20% of the markers of organisation.

Research into linking adverbials (Liu, 2008) gives frequency information about specific adverbials in the BNC. Liu found that *additionally* appears twice as frequently

in the academic genre than in genres on average; conversely, *in addition* is only half as popular in academic contexts than elsewhere, but overall it is much more frequent than *additionally*. Given their frequency, these markers can be expected to appear relatively often in the corpora. In the SEs, *in addition* is found nine times, and *additionally* once. However, the single occurrence of each phrase in the BBs is unexpectedly low.

Similarly, the higher frequency of the appearance of *moreover* and *furthermore* in the SEs than in the BBs goes against expectation; *moreover* is nearly three times as frequent in the academic genre than in the average genre, for *furthermore* this is twice as frequent (Liu, 2008). To some extent the BBs conform to expectation: by far the most frequent marker of addition found across the BNC is *also*, which is consistent findings from both the BBs and SEs (- note that the conjunction *and*, most popular in both corpora, was not part of the BNC study). However, figures from the SEs are more consistent with the corpus linguistics data from the BNC study than are the figures from the BBs, with *also* appearing over three times as often in the SEs as in the BBs.

## PART III: MARKERS OF CONTRAST

### 7.6.4 The BBs

Table 7.15: Semantic roles of markers of contrast in the BBs

<b>Contrast (96 total) (100%)</b>	
Antithetic	49 (51%)
Concessive	25 (26%)
Replacive	15 (16%)
Reformulatory	5 (5%)
Verificative	1 (1%)
Admissive	1 (1%)

As shown in Table 7.15, just over half the markers of contrast in the BBs (over 51%) have an antithetic role and just over a quarter are concessive. Another 16% of the markers have a replacive function. There are some other semantic functions in the corpus: reformulatory (5%), and to a lesser extent verificative and admissive (1% each).

### 7.6.5 The SEs

Table 7.16: Semantic roles of markers of contrast in the SEs

<b>Contrast (78 total) (100%)</b>	
Antithetic	56 (72%)
Concessive	10 (12.5%)
Replacive	10 (12.5%)
Reformulatory	2 (3%)
Verificative	--
Admissive	--

In the SEs, nearly three quarters of the markers of contrast have an antithetic function (see Table 7.16). The concessive and replacive markers together make up a quarter of the markers of contrast. There are also some with a reformulatory role (3%).

### 7.6.6 Comparison of the semantic roles of the markers of contrast in the BBs and SEs

Table 7.17: Comparison of the semantic roles of the markers of contrast

Markers of contrast	BBs (96=100%)	SEs (78=100%)
Antithetic	51%	72%
Concessive	26%	12.5%
Replacive	16%	12.5%
Reformulatory	5%	3%
Verificative	1%	--
Admissive	1%	--

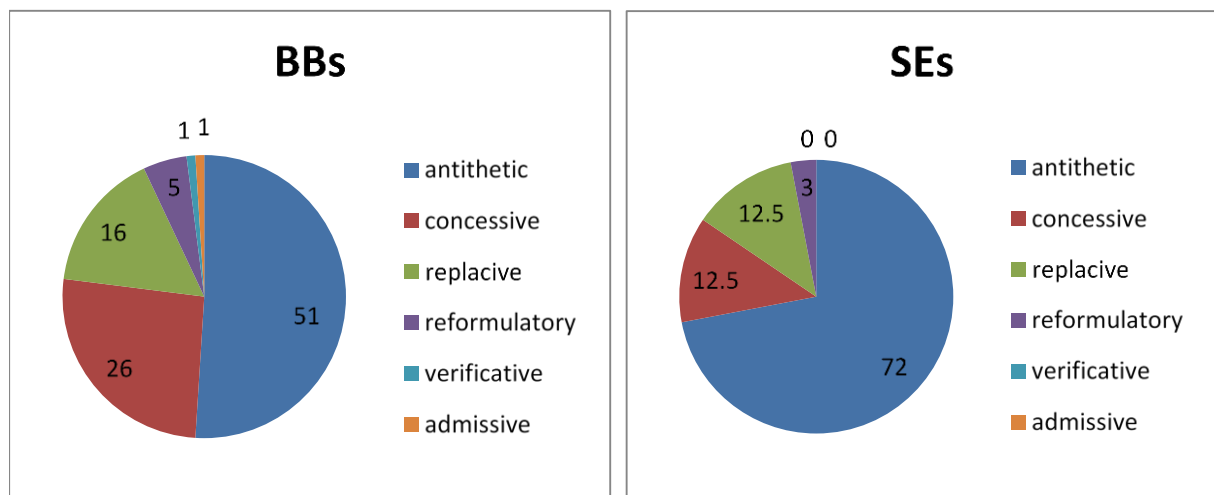


Figure 7.6: Comparison of the semantic roles of the markers of contrast

As shown in Table 7.17 and Figure 7.6, the most popular semantic relationship expressed by the markers of contrast is the antithetic one (representing 51% and 72% of the BB and SE corpora, respectively). The concessive function is much more common in the BBs than in the SEs (26% vs. 12.5%). Both corpora use markers of contrast with replacive and reformulatory functions to a lesser extent. There is some presence of markers that are verificative and admissive in the BB corpus, but they are quite rare. In the SE corpus, these do not feature at all.

In Liu's (2008) BNC study, adversative and concessive linking adverbials were highest in frequency in the academic genre, compared to speaking, fiction, news, and 'other' genres. The popularity of these adverbials among the markers of contrast in the semi-academic BBs (77%) and the SEs (84%) of the present study is consistent with this finding.

The fact that concessive markers are used more by experts and antithetic markers more by students is consistent with research by Aull and Lancaster (2014) in which the features of essays written by first year students were compared with those of more advanced writing by professional academics and advanced students. The authors link this finding to the advancing abilities of the writers to develop a complex academic stance.

## 7.7 The specific choices of markers of contrast

### 7.7.1 The BBs

Table 7.18: Specific markers of contrast used in the BBs

<b><u>Markers of contrast</u></b>	<b>Number of instances (total: 96)</b>
<i>but</i>	29 (30%)
<i>however</i>	12 (12.5%)
<i>while</i>	9 (9.5%)
<i>yet</i>	8 (8.5%)
<i>although</i>	6 (6.5%)
<i>whilst</i>	5 (5%)
<i>despite</i>	5 (5%)
<i>even if</i>	2 (2%)
[20 other markers]	1 (just over 1%) [x20]

Twenty-eight different markers of contrast are used in the BBs (see Table 7.18). The most popular is *but* (accounting for 30% of instances), followed by *however* (12.5%), *while* (9.5%), *although* (6.5%), *whilst* and *despite* (each 5%). Another 21 markers are used once or twice each.

### 7.7.2 The SEs

Table 7.19: Specific markers of contrast used in the SEs

<u>Markers of contrast</u>	<b>Number of instances (total: 78)</b>
<i>but</i>	18 (23%)
<i>on the other hand</i>	18 (23%)
<i>however</i>	15 (19%)
<i>while</i>	4 (5%)
<i>although</i>	4 (5%)
<i>nevertheless</i>	3 (4%)
<i>or</i>	3 (4%)
<i>also</i>	2 (2.5%)
<i>in fact</i>	2 (2.5%)
<i>in contrast</i>	2 (2.5%)
[7 other markers]	1 (over 1%) [x 7]

As shown in Table 7.19, 17 different markers of contrast are used in the SEs. *But* and *on the other hand* are equally as popular (accounting for 23% of the instances each), and *however* is also used frequently (19%). *While*, *although*, *nevertheless* and *or* each account for 4 or 5% of the instances, and another 10 markers of contrast appear once or twice each in the corpus. Note that some of the markers have been used incongruously; for example, *also* is not normally a marker of contrast.

### 7.7.3 Comparison of the choice of markers of contrast in the BBs and SEs

As mentioned previously, 28 different markers of contrast are used in the BBs and 17 in the SEs. Taking into account the total number of markers, this represents more variety in the BBs (nearly one in three markers is different in the BBs, vs. one in five in the SEs).

In a few cases, markers that are quite popular in one corpus do not appear in the other (or only used once). In the BB corpus, these markers are *yet* (8%), *whilst* (5%), and *despite* (5%). For the SEs, these are *on the other hand* (23%) and *nevertheless* (4%).

Table 7.20: Comparison of the specific markers of contrast chosen

Specific markers of contrast	BBs (96 = 100%)	SEs (78=100%)
<i>but</i>	30%	23%
<i>however</i>	12.5%	19%
<i>while</i>	9.5%	5%
<i>yet</i>	8.5%	--
<i>although</i>	6.5%	5%
<i>whilst</i>	5%	--
<i>despite</i>	5%	--
<i>even if</i>	2%	1.5 % (appears only once)
<i>on the other hand</i>	1% (appears only once)	23%
<i>nevertheless</i>	--	4%
<i>or</i>	1% (appears only once)	4%
<i>also</i>	--	2.5%
<i>in fact</i>	1% (appears only once)	2.5%
<i>in contrast</i>	--	2.5%
other markers appearing just once	17 [20 in total]	6 [7 in total]

Four markers are used in both corpora (Table 7.21).

Table 7.21: Markers of contrast the corpora have in common

<b><u>Markers in common</u></b>	<b>BBs</b> (96 markers of contrast=100%)	<b>SEs</b> (78 markers of contrast=100%)
<i>but</i>	30%	23%
<i>however</i>	12.5%	19%
<i>while</i>	9%	5%
<i>although</i>	6%	5%

Both corpora contain *but* and *although* as their two most often used markers of contrast. *But* is the most popular marker, although it is used proportionally more in the BBs than in the SEs; *however* is the second most common marker, used more in the SEs than in the BBs. *While* and *although* also feature in both corpora, but are used more in the BBs than in the SEs.

These results are unsurprising in the light of the literature that explains how a language user's range of connectives grows as their language proficiency progresses (e.g. Council of Europe, 2001; Carlsen, 2001). The same research suggests that low frequency connectives are used more by advanced learners than by lower level learners, which may explain some of the usage in the corpora. For example, *whilst*, and *despite*, used by the BB writers but not by the L2 student writers, are low frequency connectives and do not even feature in the top 5000 words listed in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (CCAE; Davies, 2010), whereas *but*, *or* and *although*, words that do feature in the SE corpus, appear in 23<sup>rd</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup> and 379<sup>th</sup> place in the CCAE respectively.

Another reason for the higher popularity of markers such as *while*, *despite*, *although* and *even if* in the BB corpus, is that they introduce concessive clauses, which the writer can use to balance arguments, i.e. to include opposing views (Hinkel, 1999),

something that L2 students may often prefer to do through sentence-level juxtaposition (see Chapter 5).

Looking at BNC-based research into adverbial linkers (Liu, 2008) (which therefore does not include information about the conjunction *but*), markers such as *however*, *nevertheless* and *on the other hand* appear twice as often in the academic genre as they do on average in all genres. *However* is by far the most popular marker in academic contexts, being used ten times as often as *on the other hand*, for example. *Despite* is used somewhat more than the average for all genres in academic contexts, but substantially more in the journalistic genre. Comparing the BBs and the SEs to these statistics, it would have been reasonable to expect a higher percentage of the use of *nevertheless* and *on the other hand* in the BBs, and especially the usually popular *however*, which is more frequent in the SEs. The complete absence of *despite* in the SEs is interesting; as the same is true for *whilst* this may be related to the fact that these markers introduce subordinating adverbial clauses, which contain more complex grammatical structures than other markers (e.g. single-word conjuncts). As mentioned previously, it could also be because students may not yet have come across these words much.

## 7.8 Responses to the hypotheses and Research Question 3

The findings above can now be checked against the hypotheses formulated in Chapter 6. Table 7.22 below gives an overview of the hypotheses. The relevant findings are entered alongside and demonstrate that the hypotheses have largely been confirmed:

Table 7.22: Overview of hypotheses

HYPOTHESES	confirmed?	BBs vs. SEs
<b>The BBs have more of the following markers:</b>		
concessive	<b>YES</b>	26% vs. 12.5%
content disjuncts	<b>YES</b>	4% vs. 0.5%
listing equative	<b>YES</b>	9.5% vs. 0%
listing reinforcing	<b>YES</b>	85% vs. 77%
<b>The SEs have more of the following markers:</b>		
antithetic	<b>YES</b>	51% vs. 72%
listing enumerative	<b>YES</b>	1.5% vs. 19%
transitional discoursal	<b>NO</b>	5% vs. 4%

The hypotheses were based on the outcomes of the previous analysis of arguments in the texts. The table above shows that the language analysis does indeed confirm what was suggested by the argumentational analysis; in fact, most of the hypotheses are confirmed. Both sets of writers often use markers of reinforcement. In comparison to the SEs, when ideas are listed in the BBs, this is done more often to equate them to other ideas and to reinforce ideas. BB writers are far less likely to enumerate ideas than are SE writers. Both the BB and SE writers often express antithetic relationships, to distinguish their ideas from those of others, but the SE writers do this more often, and BB writers are twice as likely to make concessions to the ideas of others than are SE writers.

One unconfirmed hypothesis was that there would be more transitional markers in the SEs; in fact, the ratios between corpora are not that different (5% in the BBs vs. 4% in the SEs). This suggests that it is a paucity of enumerative rather than

transitional markers that gives the BBs their distinct character in terms of the way in which ideas are organised.

As well as helping confirm virtually all hypotheses, the data can also contribute to answering Research Question 3, which was as follows:

3. *How do the writers use certain cohesive devices to signal the relationships between propositions?*

This question can be answered by summarising the findings about the use of certain cohesive devices in the corpora, as discussed in this chapter.

The main point to note is that there are marked differences between the corpora. SE writers use nearly 20% more markers of organisation and contrast than the BBs. This is due to the fact that SE writers use nearly double the number of markers of organisation, and in spite of the fact that they use far fewer markers of contrast than the BB writers. The SE writers can be concluded to focus on ordering and listing their ideas, whereas the BB writers contrast their ideas more with those of others.

Comparatively speaking, the BB writers use a greater variety of markers to organise their ideas. Except for one marker, *and*, which accounts for 55% of the total, the markers of organisation in the BBs are used only up to four times, with the majority being used only once. They are more equally distributed in the SEs: the top four markers there are *and* (28%), *also* (20%), *in addition* (7%) and *furthermore* (4%). In both corpora, markers are often used to add to ideas and to reinforce them. Markers used in the BBs that do not appear in the SEs are the additive (and reinforcing or equative) *indeed* and *while*. SE writers enumerate more than do the BB writers (nearly 20% vs. 1.5%), using quite a few enumerative markers that do not appear in

the BBs (such as *furthermore*, *moreover*, and *secondly*). On the whole, SEs include nearly half as many more markers of organisation than the BBs (62% vs. 40%), and enumerative markers in particular are common. This is perhaps because the writers feel that the reader needs to be signposted through the work, or because the writers find it useful to do so as they move between different views more in their pieces.

As was the case for the markers of organisation, the BB writers use a wider range of markers when it comes to contrasting their ideas. In both corpora, the antithetic function is the most commonly used. The concessive function, however, is employed more than twice as often in the BBs than the SEs (26% vs. 12.5%). Unsurprisingly therefore, some markers that tend to express concession appear in the BBs but not in the SEs: *whilst*, and *despite*. Somewhat more surprising is the fact that antithetic *yet* also does not appear in the SEs, but this may be due to it being of relatively low frequency. The most popular marker of contrast in the SEs, used 18 times, *on the other hand*, only appears once in the BBs, but popular in both sets of data are *but* and *however*.

As evidenced by errors made against the use of cohesive markers in general, the students appear to have difficulty using them. Twenty out of 32 SE writers (over 60%) made mistakes, and 60% of those (nearly 40% of the total pieces) made four mistakes on average. Nearly half the mistakes were related to understanding the meaning of the linkers, with over one in 10 relating to other word choice issues. These semantic errors suggest that some students may use connectors rather randomly or that they mistakenly think they understand the meaning of certain markers. Another quarter of errors are made because of more technical issues such as the duplication of linkers and the inability to use them in a grammatically correct

way in a sentence. With so many mistakes being about sentence combination, it seems that using markers to link clauses is difficult for students. The grammatical linking of clauses can be avoided by using sentence-level juxtaposition (as described in Chapter 5), and this may explain its high frequency in the SEs: opposing views are often stated separately, through variations of the pattern '*Some people think / Other people think*'. The grammatical difficulty presented in clause linking can also explain why conjuncts are used much more in the SEs than in the BBs (26% in the BBs; 64% in the SEs). This is consistent with much research that has shown that students have a preference for conjuncts (see e.g. Paquot 2010). These often consist of a simple sentence-initial single word or short phrase followed by a comma (e.g. *Also, In addition*), making them easier to use than many adverbials. Adverbial clauses require more thoughtful construction and a grammatical competence that some of the students have seemingly not yet obtained. When the students formulate adverbial clauses, they use more of the ones that are easier to construct, i.e. finite clauses, than the academics.

The BB writers use mostly coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions that introduce adverbial phrases (accounting for a total of 70% in the BBs and just over half of that figure in the SEs). Adverbials are used in less than 10% of instances in the SEs, but in over 25% in the BBs.

Another contributing factor to the grammatical choices made by the SE writers is that they use the most well-known, high-frequency, linking devices and that these are conjuncts and conjunctions. The latter are used less by the SE writers than the BB writers, but they still account for over 25% of instances. In fact, both sets of writers frequently use conjunctions and conjuncts. For example, the four most popular

markers of organisation in the SE corpus (*and*, *also*, *in addition* and *furthermore*) are a conjunction and three conjuncts, respectively; the three most popular markers of contrast are *on the other hand*, a conjunct, *but*, a conjunction, and *however*, a conjunct.

It is also worth noting that all the enumerative markers, which are relatively overused in the SE corpus, are conjuncts, which may also help explain the large presence of conjuncts in the corpus.

The main differences between the corpora are summarised in the following table.

**Table 7.23: Overview of the main language differences**

Relatively overused in the SEs	Relatively underused in the SEs
Markers of organisation and contrast in general	A wide range of markers of contrast and organisation
Markers of organisation	Markers of contrast
Enumerative markers	Concessive markers
Conjuncts	Adverbial clauses
<i>on the other hand</i>	

In the table, ‘overuse’ and ‘underuse’ are quantitative, not qualitative, statements: rather than to judge, they denote the differences between the corpora. It is equally as correct to say that the academics underuse markers of enumeration as it is to say that the student writers overuse enumeration. In fact, it may well be reasonable to suggest that the BB writers should be encouraged to use these markers more: as suggested in Chapter 5, it would be helpful to the reader to have more structure and signposting in the BBs.

However, I have chosen to compare the SEs to the BB model rather than the other way around, based on the assumption that the SE writers would not object to having

the academic writers' output as a desirable standard: the students are academically-bound L2 learners on a preessional course and it is fair to say that they are at a lower stage of proficiency than the expert writers.

If the BBs are taken as a model, then Table 7.23 suggests that students might not need to use as many cohesive markers as they do, especially not the organisational ones. It also indicates that they should explicitly enumerate their ideas less, and contrast them more to those of others, increasing their use of concessive markers to emphasise the ideas they prefer, rather than using markers such as *on the other hand*, which offer a more equitable view. Doing so would provide clarification of their stance.

However, providing this instruction to students is unlikely to lead to better essays, even if it were simple to implement this advice. It would be more productive to regard these linguistic outcomes as symptoms of an underlying rhetorical issue. If the problem is addressed, then the symptoms might disappear. In other words, if students are aware of the academic expectations of argumentation, they will be more likely to choose appropriate linguistic means to realise arguments. This connection between arguments and language is further explored in the next chapter.

It is worth noting that the fact that students and experts argue differently is not surprising, but that the findings in this chapter, together with those concerning the composition of arguments (see chapter 5), highlight with some level of precision the nature of the variation. The logical next step is to ask what this means in terms of pedagogical practice. Chapter 8 will address this question and will offer a more general assessment of this study, including suggestions for future research.

## **8 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND CONCLUSIONS**

My study has compared rhetorical and linguistic aspects of two corpora of opinion pieces. It was noted that there were clear differences in rhetorical aspects such as the inclusion of non-argumentational sections (which academics did more), empty summary statements (included only by students), the organisation of ideas (less demarcated in the BBs), the neutrality of opinions (only found in the SEs), the engagement with the views of others (seen more often and in more balanced ways in student writing) and the inclusion of support (sometimes omitted by the students). These findings were described in Sections 5.7 and 5.8 and summarised in Section 5.9. I will refer back to them below, in Section 8.1.2, where I also comment on their significance.

The most salient rhetorical differences were found to be related to text organisation and the integration of the views of others. A subsequent linguistic investigation into markers of organisation and contrast/concession confirmed and emphasised these differences. The linguistic findings were detailed in Chapter 7 and summarised in Section 7.8. specially. Relatively speaking, students were found to use more markers overall, but employed a narrower range. In comparison to the expert writers, they overused markers of organisation, e.g. enumerative markers and conjuncts and they underused markers of contrast, most notably concessive markers and adverbial clauses.

## **8.1 Implications of the research for teaching**

In this first part of the chapter, I summarise the outcomes of the research in terms of potential implications for teaching (Sections 8.1.1. and 8.1.2) and then situate these in the wider EAP teaching context (Section 8.1.3). The rest of this chapter goes into more detail about what this means in practice, i.e. when and how argument should be taught (Section 8.2) before drawing conclusions about the contributions and further directions of the research (Section 8.3).

### **8.1.1 A focus on argument rather than on language (outcome of RQ3)**

One major implication of the research is that the focus of teaching needs to be on argument rather than language: the findings from Chapter 7 show that the use of certain cohesive devices differs between expert and L2 student writers and that students demonstrate some difficulty in using them correctly.

Previous research has linked similar findings to students' L1s: students may know some devices in their L1 that do not translate into the L2 and for which they need to learn alternatives, students may use markers differently in their L1; they may find the L2 system of connecting text difficult to understand, and even advanced learners use cohesive markers with unnecessary frequency and not always effectively (Hinkel, 2001). A logical conclusion of this would be that L2 students would benefit from instruction about the use of cohesive devices, and this has indeed been suggested by previous commentators. For example, Vande Kopple (1985) proposes that raising students' awareness of metadiscoursal features will enable them to recognise when they use them too often or too infrequently, will give them deeper insights into text structure, will allow them to become more aware of the reader's needs, to understand

the effect their choices may have on their tone, and even to make more ethical rhetorical choices through the clear and honest use of certain markers.

Studies have indeed shown that explicit instruction into how metadiscourse is used can benefit L2 students (Steffensen and Cheng, 1996; Hyland, 2005a; Tavakoli et al., 2010; Ahour and Maleki, 2014). An example of a pedagogical suggestion is the following research-informed teaching technique related to transition markers (Hinkel 2001, p. 129):

*To highlight the function of sentence transitions as a relatively superficial cohesive device, students can be asked to produce text without using transitions at all. As the next step, they can be requested to identify meaning-based relationships that exist between sentences or paragraphs in terms traditionally used in the semantic groupings of transitions found in many L2 writing texts, e.g. additional information, result, new idea, or continuation of the same idea. After students identify relationships between portions of text, they can be asked to decide which sentence of paragraph would be easier to understand with the addition of a sentence transition and which seem to be clearer without one. In this way, learners can be taught that sentence transitions alone cannot make the text cohesive but can merely enhance textual cohesion that exist largely independently of transitional words and phrases.*

Although Hinkel's suggestions are practical, the first focuses on markers and their effects rather than on their role in the formulation of ideas, and although the second one makes the link between text purpose and markers, it does not seem to go far enough.

Perhaps a better conclusion to draw regarding cohesive markers is that they are not problems that need to be fixed, nor discrete items that need to be taught as such. As Johns (2003) points out, language should be seen in its context and not taught without considering its rhetorical function. Metadiscourse, in particular, "should not be

seen as an independent stylistic device which authors can vary at will” (Hyland and Tse, 2004, p. 174-175). I conclude that the link between markers and their rhetorical functions and effects can only be made clearer by explicitly focusing on the ideas that writers want to communicate and by putting these first.

As mentioned at the end of Chapter 7, the relative underuse and overuse of certain linguistic devices and techniques can be seen as symptomatic of the lack of understanding of expectations around the formation of argument. Evidence for this view can be found in the fact that it was possible to formulate and validate hypotheses about cohesive markers based on how writers argue; the markers operated quite predictably once it was clear how the writers put arguments together (which was determined in Chapter 5). Thus, the main value of the linguistic analysis is not that it has discovered any new insights into mistakes made by L2 students, but that it has confirmed the link between their use of language and the way they construct arguments. It would be an error to think that if students increased their range of markers and understood the meaning of every single one that they used, that they would argue more effectively in writing; in fact, it would be a logical fallacy, known as the inverse error, which can be explained as follows.

Assuming it is fair to say that using cohesive markers incorrectly causes arguments to fail ( $p \rightarrow q$ ), all we can deduce is the contraposition: if the argument has succeeded then we know that the markers have been used well ( $\text{not } q \rightarrow \text{not } p$ ). It would be a fallacy to say that if cohesive markers were used correctly, the arguments would succeed ( $\text{not } p \rightarrow \text{not } q$ ). The aim in the classroom should therefore not be to improve the use of cohesive devices, which is only one factor in the construction of argument. Instead, the focus should be on improving the writing of arguments, thus

providing an opportunity to address any issues with markers by linking them to their purpose.

By concentrating on arguments and addressing questions about when to guide the reader and how much emphasis to give to the opinion of others, the writers will maintain their focus on the persuasiveness of the writing. This in itself may eliminate some incorrect word choices but would also give more meaning to discussions about why certain ways of using language are better than others. It will also ensure that students think about language issues throughout their drafts, and not just at the end, which will be beneficial to them (Frodeson and Holten, 2003).

The link between linguistic features and the communication of ideas can be related to the debate about cohesion and coherence. As Carrell (1982) demonstrates, cohesive relationships are often clear in texts without the need for cohesive devices, and she argues for an emphasis on coherence, on the flow of ideas. Halliday and Hasan (1976) had pointed out previously that cohesion is about content and ideas, not just about the presence of linguistic items such as conjunctions.

Overall, even in language classes, instead of scrutinising the use of specific language features, a focus on coherent arguments would be more beneficial.

### **8.1.2 Teaching argument by focusing on the interaction between one's own views and those of others (outcome of RQs 1 and 2)**

This study has contributed to research that reveals differences between how student and expert writers argue in opinion essays. My research showed that comparatively speaking L2 students wrote pieces that despite being easy to follow structurally

(through the use of signposting), did not always offer clarity about the point of view being expressed. Although the writers often referred to the availability of evidence (through empty summary statements), they did not always substantiate their views. The writers also mentioned the views of others more, often presenting them in a balanced way. They did not seem to be as able to take a stance or to be as aware of rhetorical strategies such as problematisation (see Chapter 2) as the expert writers.

This suggests that students may require instruction about the nature of argument, e.g. to be made aware that it is about having a point of view, and taught how to integrate the views of others in such a way that they are subordinate to their own opinion, rather of virtually equal value. Students will be most likely to understand what argument is if they appreciate its importance, and this can be done by linking it to its purpose (see Section 8.1.3). As stated in Chapter 1, the aim of an argument is to persuade the reader of the acceptability of a conclusion by using logical reasoning. Although in academic writing the actual reader is an expert who may not be genuinely persuaded by the argument to change their thoughts, actions or beliefs (see Chapter 1), they must be persuaded that the argument has the potential to do so. The writer's persuasive intention has a more likely prospect of success if appropriate rhetorical strategies are employed to make the point clear and to develop it throughout the piece, and if other people's views are given a less important role, but as my study shows, doing so presents difficulties for students. As I will explain in more detail in the next section, the focus in the classroom must therefore be on communicative strategies.

### **8.1.3 Shifting the focus of EAP teaching to communication and purpose**

The provision of EAP cannot be said to be a central concern in HE. In Chapter 1, I mentioned that EAP is often provided in central departments rather than being embedded in the delivery of instruction in academic departments. The provision of EAP “is widely seen as a service or support activity that is incidental to the main work of the university rather than as part of its core business” (Murray, 2016, p. 440). Whereas previously it was common for EAP to be taught in academic departments, it is now often situated in so-called third spaces, e.g. units that deal with student support, service learning and academic skill development. The focus of these centres is on delivering training in language skills, and this because of the process of the neoliberalisation of HE, in which education is becoming less about expanding the mind and more about economic markets (Hadley, 2015). Tutors of EAP often get paid 20% less than teachers of subjects such as Arts and Design, Biology or ICT, who hold the same levels of qualifications (see e.g. the recruitments ads at [jobs.ac.uk](http://jobs.ac.uk), no date). This marginalisation of EAP may well be as irreversible as the disappearance of the study of rhetoric in the UK. However, that does not mean that EAP practitioners do not have the power to influence their curriculum, nor does it reduce the value of their contribution to guiding their students towards becoming better scholars.

Teaching EAP to international students has been defined as “the teaching of English with the specific aim of helping learners to study, conduct research or teach in that language” (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001, p. 8), and similarly but more concisely as “any English teaching that relates to a study purpose” (Hyland, 2006, p. 2). However, it has also been said that EAP “takes practitioners beyond preparing learners for

study in English to developing new kinds of literacy: equipping students with the communicative skills to participate in particular academic and cultural contexts” (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002, p. 2). This broader definition shifts the focus from language to communication.

Perhaps EAP teachers could usefully think of themselves not as teachers of English but as facilitators of communication. Instead of the *E* of EAP receiving most emphasis, perhaps the focus should shift to the *P*. If tutors teach English for Academic *Purposes*, and the purpose of academic endeavour is to persuade, then EAP may as well stand for **English for Academic Persuasion**, and thus what is taught should focus first and foremost on communicative competence. Once students understand the requirements for communicative and persuasive strategies, it becomes more achievable to use suitable language to do so. This prepares students for the discipline-specific curriculum, in which they will be able to develop their awareness of what it means to argue as a subject specialist and to reason in accepted ways. In this way, aspects of language, reasoning and communication would be united in the curriculum, as was the case from Aristotle’s day to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In an HE context, teaching writing is understood to be important for the personal and academic progress of students (Ganobcsik-Williams, 2006). Doing so under the umbrella of English for Academic Persuasion would set out to empower students, because helping them to write persuasively “enables them to produce, evaluate, and act on the professional, ethical and political discourse that is central to our democratic society” (Crammond, 1998, p. 230). The EAP practitioners’ role, then, is not to “fix” problems with student learning” (Street, 2010, p. 347), or to deal with

writing as a “technical activity involving rules of punctuation and grammar” (Mitchell and Evison, 2006, p. 68) but to discuss argumentational strategies with students and to raise their awareness of the need to persuade in academic contexts.

In the next section (8.2), I will suggest (1) what a focus on argument, rather than on language would mean in practical terms, and (2) what types of activities would be useful in the classroom to discuss and raise awareness of the role of the views of others. I will make suggestions for different pedagogical contexts: I discuss the EAP classroom both in preessional contexts (Section 8.2.1) and insessional contexts, when the students are already studying in their disciplines (Section 8.2.2). I also look at the teaching of argument in the context of continuous professional development (Section 8.2.3), as my research showed that the expert writers could potentially also benefit from developing their writing. I will incorporate suggestions based on the outcomes of the argumentational analysis that were discussed in Chapter 5; I will also revisit some of the theories, especially some models and schemes that were explained in Chapter 2; and I will make suggestions for adaptations.

## 8.2 Argument as part of pedagogical practice

Below I will discuss the teaching of argument on preessional and inessional EAP courses. However, before doing so, I would like to add a caveat. Students are not expected to be expert writers. Especially at the start of their courses they are more likely to be judged against their peers than held to a standard of expertise. Furthermore, instruction on how to write arguments may not be critical: a study examining academic writing through immersion only (Storch, 2009) showed that the number of well-developed and coherent arguments increased with time. It is possible that studying will naturally lead to better scholarship: as students are exposed to more academic texts they may develop a better understanding of how ideas are put together, both in terms of argument composition and in the use of certain language elements. For example, they may observe that the sources they read do not often employ the phrase *some people say* but instead use concessive subclauses (e.g. *although there is some evidence of ...*). As mentioned in Chapter 5, students may employ a large number of enumerative markers and empty summary statements because they have no genuine response to the question or much to say about the subject, because they have been taught to use such strategies in these types of essays and / or to meet the word count. Therefore, if such filler features are used phatically, to continue with the discourse (Adel, 2006), these are likely to naturally decrease as students begin to write in their own discipline, and as they read more within their fields and develop as scholars. Moreover, essay writing training in itself does not make students more scholarly or knowledgeable: study and research activities, including those to prepare for essay writing, enable that. As students learn more and have more to say, they are likely to construct more fully formed opinions

and to take a clearer stance. Finally, for practical and historical reasons, any teaching of argumentational skills done on EAP courses is likely to be generic, meaning that practising stance-taking or other endeavours to enhance the students' argumentational skills would only be one step in a much broader process of becoming a scholar in a specific discipline.

However, developmental studies have shown that a combination of teaching and immersion is better than the latter alone (Norris and Ortega, 2000) and that becoming a good writer takes time (Storch, 2009). Writing instruction about arguments is therefore likely to facilitate the process. Students are more likely to become persuasive academic writers sooner if they receive explicit instruction about what they will be expected to achieve and are equipped with strategies to accomplish this.

### **8.2.1 Teaching argument as part of preessional EAP provision**

#### *8.2.1.1 The current situation*

Before receiving EAP instruction, students normally take general English courses. The teaching materials for these obviously focus on language with an aim to improve the students' use of English. However, some resources featuring in these courses may contribute to the difficulties L2 students have with linkers, as identified in this study.

One reason for this can be a focus on certain other aspects of language rather than on sentence patterns such as clausal constructions. Bestselling EFL course books (such as English File (Oxenden, 2007), Cutting Edge (Cunningham, 2007), Headway (Soars and Soars, 2012)) are organised into thematic chapters with a language focus

on verbs and tenses, and less emphasis on clauses. Unit 1 traditionally covers the Simple Present, Unit 2 the Present Perfect, and subsequent units focus on another tense or mood based on its perceived complexity for students. This suggests that syntagmatic issues, related to word order and sequence, are currently portrayed as less important than paradigmatic ones, which relate to singular grammatical functions, thus resulting in difficulties with clauses and linkers remaining.

Secondly, teaching materials do not always manage to effectively convey the uses of linking words, as they constitute a difficult area of language. By way of illustration, it is not easy to explain the use of the word *although* in language that a person who does not already comprehend the meaning of that word would understand. The following is a real example from an academic writing course book that I argue could be difficult for a student to interpret:

***Although** and **even though** are subordinators that introduce a dependent clause showing a contrast to the idea in the independent clause. They have the same meaning as the sentence connectors **however** and **nevertheless** (Oshima and Hogue 1997, p. 184).*

Similarly, advice given to teachers in Teacher Guides about linking words is not always helpful. For example:

*Students often overuse one way of connecting ideas, typically **however** and **in addition**. Point out that the more variety they have in their writing, the more marks they will get in their [IELTS] exam (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd 2014, p. 26).*

The advice to bring variety into their writing and not rely too much on a particular linker is not wrong, but students may be relying on familiar linkers for good reason,

because they know they can use them correctly. Using other linkers increases the risk of error, for example in the case of *nevertheless* and *however*, which the students may mistakenly consider to be exact synonyms.

The authors of some textbooks may want to increase the students' vocabulary or try to simplify matters for them by providing lists they can refer to. However, this may give students the impression that variety is more important than correct usage. The examples below (in Table 8.1, Table 8.2, and Table 8.3), the first two from university hand-outs available on the internet and the third from an IELTS blog, contain mistakes. The issue in Table 8.1 is that to be useful the headings need explaining. The same is evident in Table 8.2; furthermore, the linkers *none the less* and *never the less* should each be spelled as one word, and there is a lack of punctuation and notes and examples about usage indicating the different ways in which these connectors are used. Table 8.3 reveals similar issues, and this small excerpt includes a mistake (*Differ from*). However, this particular blog post has received nothing but positive reactions, with 21 people commenting on its usefulness.

**Table 8.1: Example of free online source about signposting words (1)**

<b>Acknowledging something and moving to a different point</b>	<b>Changing direction or creating a comparison</b>
Although ... Even though ... Despite ... Notwithstanding ...	However, ... Rather, ... In contrast, ... Conversely, ... On one hand, ... On the other hand, ... In comparison, ... Compared to ... Another point to consider is ...

(Massey University Centre for Teaching and Learning, no date)

Table 8.2: Example of free online source about signposting words (2)

Contrast	Reformulating your idea
all the same by way of contrast conversely despite that however in contrast instead never the less none the less on the other hand	again alternatively/an alternative is in other words on the other hand or rather that is

(Open University, 2012)

Table 8.3: Example of free online resource about linking words for IELTS essay writing

Contrast
However, On the contrary, Differ from Although Otherwise Alternatively, But On the other hand, Nevertheless Though Instead Even though

(Modi, no date)

Overall, it is clear from these tables that subordinating conjunctions such as *although* are not distinguished from conjuncts (e.g. *however*) or coordinating conjunctions (e.g. *But*), rendering the chances of correct use of these types of materials by a typical user fairly slim. There are four contrastive connectors that may be particularly difficult for L2 students to master, namely *in / by contrast*, *on the other hand*, *on the contrary* and *however*, and “if one uses the wrong connector, the cohesion and coherence of the text is impaired” (Celce-Murcia, 2002, p. 151). Also, if students use markers

indiscriminately or incorrectly based on the advice that they should use certain language features, then that only creates “an impressionistic sense that an argument is being made” (Davies, 2008, p. 331).

Some academic writing materials claim to bridge language and ideas. However, the following example of a self-study resource shows that, despite claims to the contrary, language is often put before argument. In ‘They say / I say’ (Graff and Birkenstein 2010), templates are given that are designed to represent the basic moves of academic writing, for example, on page 2:

- *Many Americans assume that ...*
- *On the one hand,... On the other hand ...*
- *This is not to say that ...*
- *Author X contradicts herself. At the same time that she argues ..., she also implies ....*

While templates are undoubtedly useful for, and welcomed by, novice L2 academic writers, the authors appear to present a philosophy that puts language before argumentation. In the introduction (Graff and Birkenstein 2010, p. 2), this is acknowledged to some extent and justified as follows:

*It is true, of course, that critical thinking and writing go deeper than any set of linguistic formulas, requiring that you question assumptions, develop strong claims, offer supporting reasons and evidence, consider opposing arguments, and so on. But these deeper habits of thought cannot be put into practice unless you have a language for expressing them in clear, organized ways.*

The authors also stress the importance of presenting ideas by summarising and responding to the ideas of others. However, the above quote demonstrates the assumption that there are ‘habits of thought’ to be ‘put into practice’ rather than conversations to be had about the nature of argument and the different expectations

around these in different cultural and educational contexts. These cognitive writing and thinking practices themselves are strategies that need to be made explicit, encouraged and practised before the language templates can become helpful. Linguistic phrases cannot be used effectively unless students understand their purpose; in other words, they need to have learned argumentational skills first. The risk of using templates is that they may constitute 'fill the gap' exercises instead of encouraging real engagement with other texts. Although the language patterns appear to direct the reader towards the rhetorical requirements, they are potentially more likely to be used as poor substitutes.

In the last few decades, there has been an increase in the availability of materials dedicated to EAP and to essay writing that tend to discuss argument in sections about critical thinking (e.g. Cox and Hill, 2004; Hewings, 2012). Many resources mention claims and evidence, but as tools to organise paragraphs. For example, finding main ideas and supporting details is suggested as an outlining technique to enhance reading comprehension in Smith-Palinkas and Croghan-Ford (2010). In Harris Leonhard (2002), writers are encouraged to have one topic sentence per paragraph, and then subtopic sentences with support and more specific support. This is a limited view of argument.

In the following section, I will give some suggestions for centralising argument within the teaching of preessional EAP.

### *8.2.1.2 Putting argument at the heart of EAP*

The ideal time to teach L2 students about argumentation would appear to be when they first arrive, which is typically when EAP instruction starts. There is a critical period during which they would expect to be inducted about the demands of their new environment and therefore would be most receptive to unlearning any unhelpful habits which may have formed during their practice for the IELTS test. This may be a good time to reframe their understanding of the IELTS writing test: they probably consider it a test of language and essay writing skills. Instead it can be presented to them as a language test which takes the form of a very specific and semi-academic genre, while pointing out to them that the types of essays they will be required to write in the future will be of a different nature. However, this does not mean that they should be encouraged to stop writing IELTS-type essays. In fact, studying and writing opinion pieces can be of considerable benefit at different stages of EAP courses, as will be explained below.

#### *8.2.1.2.1 The pre-writing stage: working with genre-based approaches*

One useful method in EAP instruction is to focus on genre. Genre-based approaches are common in L2 and EAP pedagogy, especially in the UK, Australia and New Zealand (Hinkel, 2010), and aim to “enable L2 learners to analyze academic discourse while reading and to produce academic writing that adheres to the sociocultural norms of a particular academic (or professional) genre” (p. 534).

As mentioned in Section 2.1.1.2.1, in the ESP tradition genre was introduced as a tool for tertiary curriculum design and pedagogy by Swales (1990), who understood its potential to develop L1 and L2 writers’ “academic communicative competence”

(p.9). His concept of genre links organisational and linguistic features with their rhetorical effect, and his pedagogic approach is a “task-based, consciousness-raising one, with a notable emphasis on consideration of audience (discourse community)” (Flowerdew, 2015, p. 105).

The link between analysing the texts of others and improving one’s own writing has often been made explicit. Loudermilk (2007, p.202), for example, posits that whether academic writing is of good quality depends on “exposure and experience with academic discourse, and genre sensitivity to core disciplinary texts”. Models are useful in teaching students about good arguments and can be used to raise awareness (Ryshina-Pankova 2014); furthermore, they can enable conversations about the relation between language and rhetorical aims (Chang and Schleppegrell, 2011).

One way of achieving this exposure to academic discourse within and beyond the classroom is to ask students to read appropriate texts. Teachers who are aware that the IELTS-type essays that the students write are similar in intention to opinion pieces, can guide students from reading these, to progressively reading more texts that include citation and that are more discipline-specific, and to work on noticing the differences and the similarities.

#### *8.2.1.2.1.1 Genre and the taking of stance*

By showing students other short texts of similar and different genres to the ones they are required to write, they can be guided through discovery exercises to notice argumentational aspects, e.g. interactive features that aim to persuade, or that point to the authoritative stance that is often found in opinion blogs. Students would benefit

from knowing that “expository writing in academic settings is characterised by the social interaction acts of stance taking and stance support”, as Chandrasegaran (2008, p. 240) puts it. Specifically, it is worth showing them that guiding the reader is not (just) about listing views, for example, through the use of enumerative markers, but is also about showing which views have most merit, and which can be presented as having some value before they are rejected.

Kaufer and Geisler's (1991) ‘faulty path’ / ‘main path’ scheme (as discussed in Chapter 2) can be a useful tool to carry out genre analysis in the classroom. One of the benefits of the scheme is that the focus is on the argument, but with language playing a part. L2 students themselves are often focussed on language so this would be a way to address any language issues without changing the rhetorical focus of the instruction. Questions would centre around:

*What is the author’s main point of view? How do you know?*

*What other views are there? How do you know this is not what the author agrees with?*

Through working with models and being guided towards asking the right questions, students will improve their academic writing; the weaker students in particular will be helped if they have been shown well-supported arguments, rather than being told about them (Groom, 2000). Students could also be directed to materials that incorporate good discussions and advice about argumentation. An example is Crème and Lea’s (2008) *Writing at University* book, which is explicit about organisation and argumentation.

Students could improve their awareness of rhetorical strategies if exposed to a series of exercises in which they are asked to identify what the writer believes using language clues. Table 8.4 below illustrates how this can be achieved in the classroom: students are presented with examples and are asked to complete columns two and three; in other words, they are asked to note rhetorical and language clues.

**Table 8.4: Example of exercise**

<b>Examples [adapted from BBs]</b>	<b>What does the writer believe?</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Lobbying is once again a bad word. The recent political problems have led to questions being asked about the honesty of British politics.  Yet lobbying is longstanding and relatively harmless part of politics.	lobbying is not bad: it is a 'longstanding and relatively harmless part of politics'.	-it is stated at the end of the paragraph  - writers often start by problematising, by saying something they will disagree with  - 'Yet' introduces what the writer's opinion is in contrast with what was said before.
Christmas is always said to be one of the most stressful times of the year, and stress is thought to be bad for our health.  However, our research is showing that reacting to stressful situations is healthy.	'reacting to stressful situations is healthy'	-it is stated at the end of the paragraph  - writers often start by problematising, by saying something they will disagree with  - 'always said to be' is language used to explore what other people say or what is generally believed  - 'However' introduces what the writer's opinion is in contrast with what was said before.  - 'our research': this shows what side the writer is on and gives evidence for the point
Misguided and irresponsible, – these are just some of the words used by critics to describe the information the website, WikiLeaks. But is this website really a problem?	the WikiLeaks website is not as much of a problem as people say	- writers often start by problematising, by saying something they will disagree with  - 'these are just some of the words used by critics': this is said to explore what other people say or what is generally believed

		<p>- 'But' indicates that the writer does not agree with the critics</p> <p>- 'is this really a problem?': asking a question is a way of problematising what was said and indicating that the answer will not be what is expected</p>
Although latest evidence demonstrates that there have been improvements in adult oral health since 1998, the same evidence identifies that there are social differences and that there is a link between poverty and bad oral health.	'there are social differences'/ 'there is a link between poverty and bad oral health'	<p>- writers often start by problematising, by saying something they will disagree with to some extent ('improvements')</p> <p>- 'Although': this introduces a concession and is in contrast with the main point.</p>

Analysing the ways in which people argue will demonstrate to students that there are established rhetorical patterns, and that the reader will have expectations because of these. This should enhance the students' reading comprehension and inform their writing.

The example exercises above used adapted extracts from the BBs. Not all BBs are necessarily suitable for L2 classroom use, especially not in their full forms. For example, BB16 addresses inheritance tax and does not comply with what is traditionally seen as an academic style (e.g. it includes an exclamation mark), the level of vocabulary is too technical (*unearned windfall*, *severe fiscal constraint*, *frontline public services*) and it arguably uses complex constructions (*not least that*). However, there is scope for extracts of some of the BBs to be used in the preessional EAP classroom, especially for students whose IELTS band is higher than the class average. For preessional students, the BBs, or similar opinion pieces, can offer a more accessible alternative to other types of academic writing, which may be too challenging and subject-specific, such as research articles. They can be used

to ask the students to focus on argument, for example, by asking them questions such as:

*What is the main point the writer is making? Do they answer yes or no to the question they answer?*

*One of the points the writer is making is x. Where is the support for this point?*

*Does the writer make any points or give any evidence in the introduction? Why (not)? What is the writer's purpose in the introduction?*

The BBs can also be used to enhance the students' understanding of markers. Students could be asked to find the clauses that are being linked by markers by answering questions such as:

*Is this idea more important than that one?*

*Does the information in this clause reinforce or contradict the information in that clause?*

Furthermore, teachers could discuss concession and ask students to find examples of concessive markers. Selected sentences from the BBs could be used to give examples of a variety of markers that tend not to be used much by students (according to my research these are *yet*, *despite*, *while*, *whilst*) and to examine meaning and grammatical context.

Students will also learn the importance of effective marker use. However, even when their attention is being focused on language features, it is important to keep referring to their purposes. For example, they could be asked to find the markers of organisation in a number of the BBs and subsequently be asked to consider the following:

*Would the piece benefit from having more markers of organisation? Why (not)?*

*Does the number of markers of organisation increase in longer pieces? Why do you think that is?*

Students could also receive examples of conjuncts such as *nevertheless*, *moreover*, and *on the other hand*, and be tasked with finding examples in a number of the BBs.

They could subsequently be asked the following:

*How many conjuncts did the writer use in total?*

*How many conjuncts from our list did the writer use? Which ones were not used? Does the writer express the same idea that the conjunct expresses in a different way?*

Another possible task is to ask students to find markers of concession and to note the variety of uses. However, before introducing any of the exercises mentioned above which focus on language features, it is important to discuss the rhetorical reasons for using them, for example, the benefits of conceding to others in academic writing.

#### *8.2.1.2.1.2 Genre and the strategy of problematisation*

One particular aspect of argumentation, which was briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, and which is illustrated in the examples in Table 8.4, is the rhetorical strategy of problematisation. This would be a useful strategy to teach. It can be defined as “showing that a prevailing assumption, idea, view, or situation needs reexamination, reconceptualization, or reevaluation of some kind; in academic argumentation ... problematization takes place in order to provide a ground for the more specific purpose, thesis, point or argument of an essay”, by stating a problem and optionally

adding a marker of contrast to initiate argumentation (Barton, 1993, p. 748). Some students do state problems. Here are some examples from the student corpus:

*Recently, in many countries around the whole world, it has become an extremely controversial issue that all the governments should pay university fees. (SE3)*

*Whether or not all governments should pay for the university education of their people has become an issue that attracts significant concerns from the general public. (SE18)*

*Students in many countries should pay for their higher education but not in others. So people often argue whether governments should pay for university education or not. (SE21)*

However, the students appear to use the same technique, merely stating that something is a controversial issue, and (with the possible exception of SE24) not re-evaluating a prevailing issue. Where the students do challenge the status quo, this is not directly related to the essay question about who should pay fees, for example, in SEs 19 and 29 the increase in demand is first stated; in SE19 the implications of this are then introduced with *However*; in SE29, the difficulty in funding this is introduced with *Nevertheless*.

The BB writers used problematisation as a technique comparatively more often and more clearly. It can be found in BBs 2, 4, 5, 7, and 16 and is also present in BBs 3, 10, 12 and 19, but in a less overt way (e.g. in BB3 “Many see this as the culmination of the peace process” is not immediately challenged).

A way to make students aware of this common pattern is to guide them to noticing it in the writing of others. Using examples of this pattern in the classroom is likely to

improve their reading comprehension and raise their awareness of the different ways in which the views of others are introduced in texts. This strategy of problematisation can be discussed in the context of other signals of *prediction* (such as the aforementioned strategy of signposting), which involve “a commitment at one point in the text to the occurrence of another subsequent linguistic event” (Tadros, 1985, p. 6), signals which, if missed, may lead to misinterpretation (ibid.).

#### *8.2.1.2.1.3 Genre and content*

After heightening the students’ awareness of the genre features of the type of writing that they are aiming for, through genre analysis, time should be spent on generating ideas. Techniques such as brainstorming, asking students to read particular pieces with relevant content, and giving students time to do their own reading can help here, as well as pair and group work to challenge and develop each other’s ideas.

Working with texts can also help address the lack of engagement that students may feel with the topic they are being asked to write about. Chandrasegaran (2008) suggests helping students to actively engage with the issue at hand so that they develop a point of view and a real rhetorical intention to persuade. This would include discussing acceptable evidence in their disciplinary contexts. She also suggests encouraging students to approach ideas in texts with a view to using them as parts of claims or evidence, rather than seeing them as mere facts. She advocates the genre-based pedagogical method of *deconstruction*, or “teacher-guided observation of stance taking and stance support moves in well written expository essays” (p. 251).

Schneer (2014) also advocates the use of a genre analysis method to achieve authenticity, in other words, analysing first and then using what has been learned to

write similar texts, and proposes that students write for genuine audiences. This should not be too difficult to arrange in the UK context, where opportunities exist for social and political involvement through university societies as well as a proliferation of social media sites facilitating the sharing of real views in the format of opinion pieces. Although these pieces may be discipline-specific only to some extent, the use of genre analysis as a method to produce them will be a helpful tool for the students to achieve their future aim of writing in their discipline.

#### 8.2.1.2.2 Drafting arguments

As discussed above, working with examples that demonstrate common techniques such as problematisation and main / faulty paths in the pre-writing stage, puts students in a better position to work on writing their own texts. At the next stage, when they are drafting their arguments, they could then be asked to work as follows. Students could be asked to write their own opinion about a topic and explain in pairs which ideas are their own, which ideas of others they have incorporated into their own argument, and how they have clarified the difference. There is no need to talk about linkers specifically; however, they are likely to come up in these types of conversations. The drafting stage is also the point at which the incongruous use of any linkers would need to be discussed. If students know what they are trying to achieve through their texts, it becomes possible to explain more clearly why a particular linker may be hindering them to do so. The focus needs to remain on the aim of making an argument.

Continuing the discussion about genre, I would suggest that students should write IELTS-type essays for quite some time in their preessional classes, even though

they differ greatly from the undergraduate-type essay (see Chapter 3). This is, firstly, because what Ryshina-Pankova (2014) states about blogs is also true of IELTS-type essays: they contain demonstrations of stance taking regarding old and new knowledge claims and of evaluation, i.e. they present choices and justifications, and they therefore have a role to play in promoting academic learning. One of the major aims of academic writing is “persuading the disciplinary community to accommodate new claims” (Woodward-Kron, 2002, p. 516). This is because “scholarly research is framed not by common questions but by critical reconceptualizations of prevailing ideas or situations” (Barton 1993, p. 754). Even if ideas are not completely rejected or adapted, they need to be part of a dialogue: to argue, writers need to “engage with, reconcile or distance themselves from other conflicting stances on the subject matter” and thus contribute to academic knowledge building (Ryshina-Pankova, 2014, p. 283). As IELTS-type essays are a familiar format for learners, they are an ideal base to work from. They enable the students to learn about and experiment with making their stance and voice clearer before embarking on longer and more sophisticated undergraduate-style essays. Familiarity with stance-taking strategies is important.

A second, and related, reason for working with IELTS-style essays is that this stance taking is fraught with difficulties and that finding the right balance between one’s own voice and those from the literature requires a high level of skill (Groom, 2000). Developmental studies have found that children can formulate arguments in writing before they are twelve years old, but that it can take another two years before they are able to integrate counterarguments (Chandrasegaran, 2008). If students are asked to incorporate quotes and paraphrases, there is a risk that their making these

views of others more visible in their work will also inadvertently strengthen them. It therefore seems wise for students to continue writing non-referenced pieces of writing (such as IELTS-type essays) until they understand how to make the arguments of others serve their own purposes. However, once students are able to integrate the imagined voices of others in an appropriate academic way into their non-referenced opinion pieces, they will be in a better position to start integrating real opinions from literature. Therefore, one clear conclusion from my research is that citation should only be taught to students after they have learnt to write IELTS-type essays in which the voices of others are used as tools to emphasise their own ideas.

#### 8.2.1.2.3 Revising arguments

As previously stated in this chapter, many materials teach 'linking words' as a discrete point and they are usually taught in order to expand the variety of linkers, which is a lexical approach. This thesis has shown that students make mistakes in this area and that their arguments are consequently at risk of being weakened in meaning and impact. As meaning is dependent on context (see Chapter 2), instruction should use examples that can help clarify the impact of the language on the rhetorical strength of an argument.

The student corpus reveals that students struggle with the meaning of certain markers. A combined rhetorical and linguistic approach can help students to better understand what is expected of them and also allows a teacher to acknowledge what a student already knows. I would like to look at some examples to show how this

could work at the stage when students have already written their essays but are working on improving them.

The following example from SE3 shows that the student gives their motivation for the essay and recognises the need for a problem statement and some negotiation. However, the argumentational and language skills are not yet adequately developed:

*... it has become an extremely controversial issue that all the government should pay university fees. Consequently, the concept of helps student has to be taken into account, therefore, ... I shall confine the discussion to ...*

In the classroom, students' essays could be used in pair work in which they give and receive peer feedback. Students could be asked to discuss fact and opinion and the role of the linking words. Here, pertinent questions about fact vs. opinion would be:

*Is this really a 'controversial' issue? If so, why is it controversial?*

and about cohesive markers:

*Does the fact that is controversial really mean that we need to discuss it (and/or are there better reasons than that)? Do we need to consider helping students because it is a controversial issue? Why are you really confining the issue, and do you need to state this?*

There is a great value in having oral discussions: questions such as these will raise the student's awareness of the occurrence of random linking words and statements they do not really subscribe to. Actual engagement with the topic will not just generate real ideas rather than fillers; it will also motivate the students to discuss the topic in writing.

An example that shows a student writer's emerging awareness can be found in SE2, where the student is trying to engage with the ideas of others through contrasting opinions:

*The University education plays significant role ... to be able to get a good job... However, some people believe that the University education must be paid by students... In contrast, many of people agree with the government should pay ...*

The use of *however* denotes contrast, where the writer is merely making a transition. The later use of *In contrast* is more successful. A discussion about this with the student would improve their genre awareness. The use of *however* could be challenged, but it might be more useful to work on the rhetorical device of setting up a clear faulty path and then coming back later to the linguistic markers required to do so.

If we look at the most representative piece in the corpus, SE24, there is a clear learning opportunity for the writer, who announces his beliefs early on, but lists evidence at the end of the piece that contradicts his point of view, thus making the conclusion feel wrong. Rhetorically, the reader would expect to find the faulty path and then be led back from it, but this does not happen. Again, before any language issues can be dealt with, this student needs to understand the wider academic context and rhetorical expectations.

#### *8.2.1.2.3.1 A revised pedagogical model for presessional EAP*

One way to encourage students to think more systematically about their arguments and the quality thereof is to use a three-part model, because these models can help

students consider issues related to content, level of explicitness etc. as they generate their own arguments.

For the analysis of the data in this thesis, the three-part model was rejected in favour of a basic model with two parts, mainly to make the method more robust (see Section 4.2.2). However, analysis is different from construction: when writers formulate arguments, they can be confident about their intentions and need to consider aspects of argumentation such as the strength of their evidence. To encourage students to develop their reasoning, rather than concentrate on justifying what they already believe, dialogic questioning is important, for example, *what might other people think about what you have just said?*, or other questions that would enhance criticality, such as “*Are you making a cause and effect argument (...) or an argument by analogy?*” (Ellis 2014, no page number).

By suggesting the use of a three-part model in the preessional classroom, I am widening the concept of argument in two ways. Firstly, in my analysis of argumentation, I based my framework on Toulmin’s model and linked the micro-claims identified in the essays to the overall arguments (see Appendices 4-7). Academic argument can be considered broader, however; it is about topic development, that is, a signposted logical structure, a critical analysis of academic literature, and the development of personal stance based on primary and/or secondary evidence (Wingate, 2009).

Secondly, as van Eemeren (2013) states, examining argumentation involves both a consideration of its reasonableness (i.e. the dialectical concept of soundness or non-fallaciousness) and of its effectiveness (i.e. the persuasiveness, as judged by rhetoricians through description and evaluation of the means intended to achieve

this). However, he points out that, despite this intrinsic connection, the former takes place in departments of philosophy, and the latter by communication scholars and pragmatists, and he thus advocates more collaboration, a desire also shared by others (e.g. Liu and Zhu, 2011). I would argue that both the reasonableness and effectiveness of argument can be addressed in departments of argumentation and places that offer writing instruction, and that both areas can contribute to the development of skills modules and resources for HE transition and induction programmes, including preessional EAP.

Mitchell and Riddle's (2000) generative triangle model (see Chapter 2) enables students to consider the construction and composition of their arguments and was used in disciplinary contexts. However, it could also be incorporated into the L2 EAP classroom, especially as the model can be simplified for students at the lower IELTS band levels. I propose it be adapted in three ways for use at the preessional stage: terminology, design and the incorporation of counterevidence.

## **Terminology**

When using a model in the classroom to assist L2 students in creating argument, it may be better to reformulate terms such as 'THEN', 'SINCE' and 'BECAUSE' (or Point, Support, Explanation) to consider argument more from the point of view of its originator, the writer. I therefore suggest using the following language when talking to students:

- (1) *'I'm saying that'*
- (2) *'I base this on'*
- (3) *'I want to explain that'*

These phrases focus on the dialogue between the writer and the reader and illuminate the persuasive intention that I feel it is important to include in the definition of argument. The underlying questions (see Chapter 2), based on the descriptions by Toulmin et al. (1984), are:

*(1) What point(s) are you are making? / What are you saying?*

This will allow the writer to reflect on the different points they want to make and whether these points are separate or whether they are related to each other.

*(2) What support are you relying on? / On what do you base this?*

This will allow the writer to reflect on what type of evidence they are providing, on the nature of the evidence and to consider how valid, strong and, therefore, appropriate this evidence is.

*(3) Do you need to explain anything about your point, about your support, or about how you get from the support to the point to make your argument clearer or stronger? / What do you need to explain or clarify?*

This will allow the writer to check if they have made assumptions, for example concerning the readers' knowledge, or the transparency and sureness of the route from support to point.

I would envisage this to work well in pairs and small groups, with peer discussion and feedback taking place during the planning stage, to discuss ideas, and after writing, to check whether the plan has been transformed into a piece of writing that reflects it clearly enough.

## Design: from triangle to circle

The triangle model is based on solid rhetorical principles, has succeeded in its aim to be a practical tool to approach written argumentation in HE and has functioned both analytically and generatively (Andrews, 2010). The visual representation of the model (see Chapter 2, Figure 2.4) is, on the whole, self-explanatory. However, there were some alternatives suggested to the triangle in trialling workshops. Because of the Western convention of reading from left to right, making the triangle harder to conceptualise, workshop participants suggested different shapes, such as the one I have tried to visualise below (Mitchell and Riddle 2000, given on p. 39):

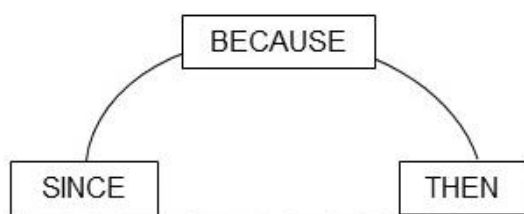


Figure 8.1: A simplification of the Mitchell and Riddle (2000) model

The parabolic link between SINCE and THEN is a useful way of expressing the relationship between the two, so this shall be incorporated in my adaptation.

A circle was also suggested, which seems to be a useful way to avoid the natural left-to-right bias. However, even with a circle, there is a tendency to start reading from the left. Conversely, some international students may be more likely to start on the right because of the notation of their first language. In either situation, it is a good idea to emphasise to students that circles have no beginning nor end points.

Losing the triangle means that the relationship between SINCE and THEN, supporting, and the relationship of BECAUSE to this link, justifying, need to be

clarified in another way. I have attempted to achieve this visually and added a legend (see Figure 8.2).

Bearing in mind the changes in design and terminology, I made two versions of a circular, or 'rings' model, with the second being a simplified model for classroom use.

The more theoretical model is as follows:

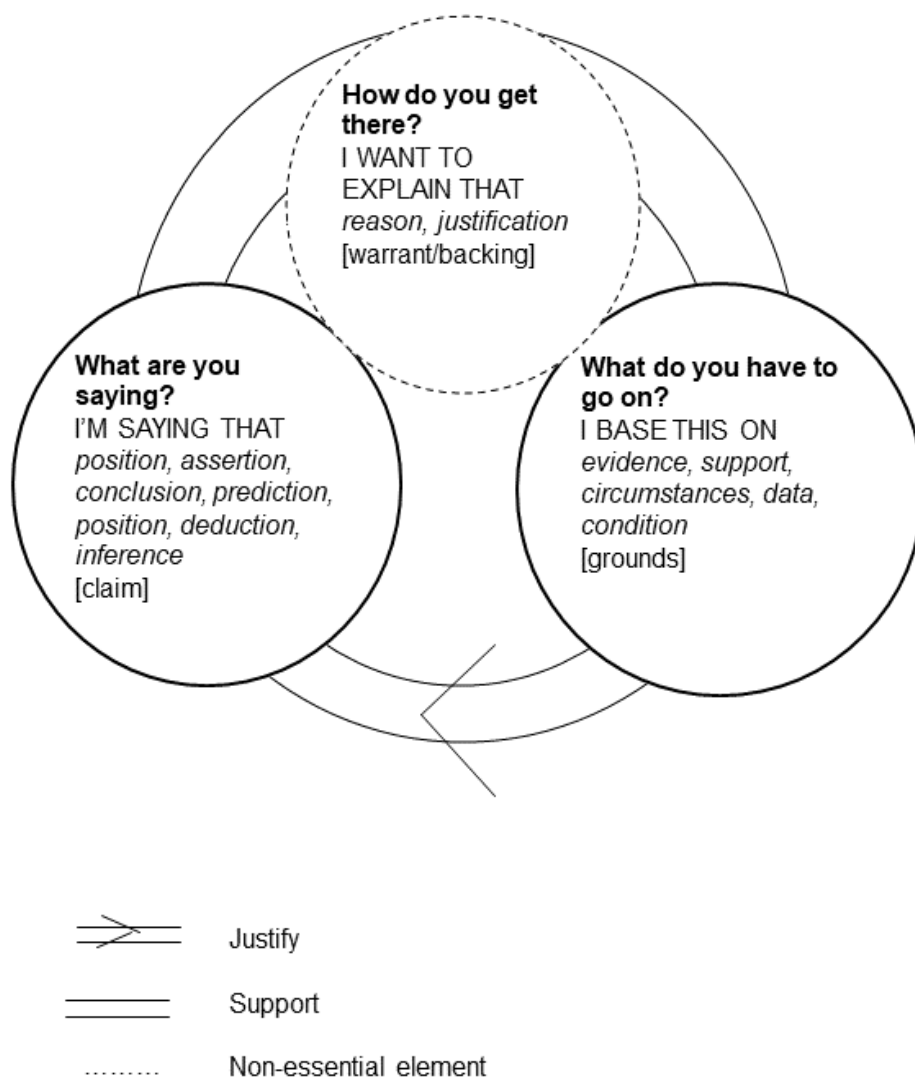


Figure 8.2: The rings model (theoretical version)

The second model (Figure 8.3) does not include the Toulmin questions and terminology. It does not have a legend either but instead relies on its visual clues.

The double arrow is similar to the mathematical symbol 'follows that' ( $\Rightarrow$ ), which should not be necessary to explain.

A simpler working model is memorable and easy to use in the classroom. In Figure 8.2, the claim is on the left, but in the classroom model (Figure 8.3), the claim is on the right, to demonstrate both possibilities. The optional element, Explanation, is always in the middle, between claim and grounds, and is visually connected to both.

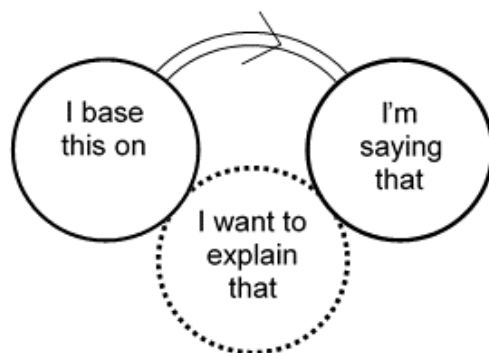


Figure 8.3: The rings model (classroom version 1)

An alternative version can also be useful in case teachers want to emphasise the terminology of Point, Support and Explanation, for example, because they wish to use these at other points of instruction:

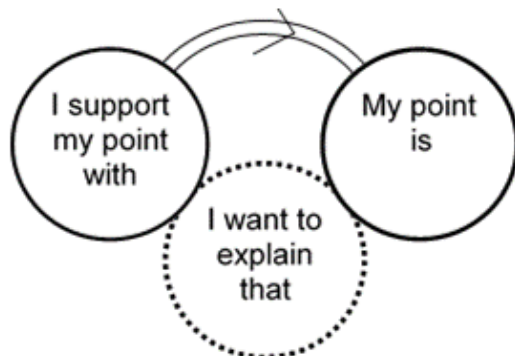


Figure 8.4: The rings model (classroom version 2)

## **The inclusion of counterevidence**

Finally, I propose adaptations relating to the views of others. The rings model can be expanded to show where the opposing ideas of others fit. Mitchell and Riddle (2004) did this with their triangle model by adding **THOUGH** and **HOWEVER** (see Section 2.1.2.4.1). My aim was to show visually that the arguments of others are depended upon for the development of the author's own ideas (as per Kaufer and Geisler, 1991). As Figure 8.5 shows, the arguments of others are composed in the same way as the writer's own arguments. They may or may not have an explanation section, but an indication is required in the text that the reader is being led (back) to the main argument (see arrow). A text could start with the argumentation of others, or with the author's own reasoning, hence the optional arrow (with the dotted lines). When using this model in the classroom, the arrows are helpful visualisations of the fact that there is a main argument: that of the writer. The points and support from others need to lead back to the writer's own arguments. The full classroom model visually emphasises to students the need to bring the reader back from the inferior, and visually lower, faulty path, rather than to balance views.

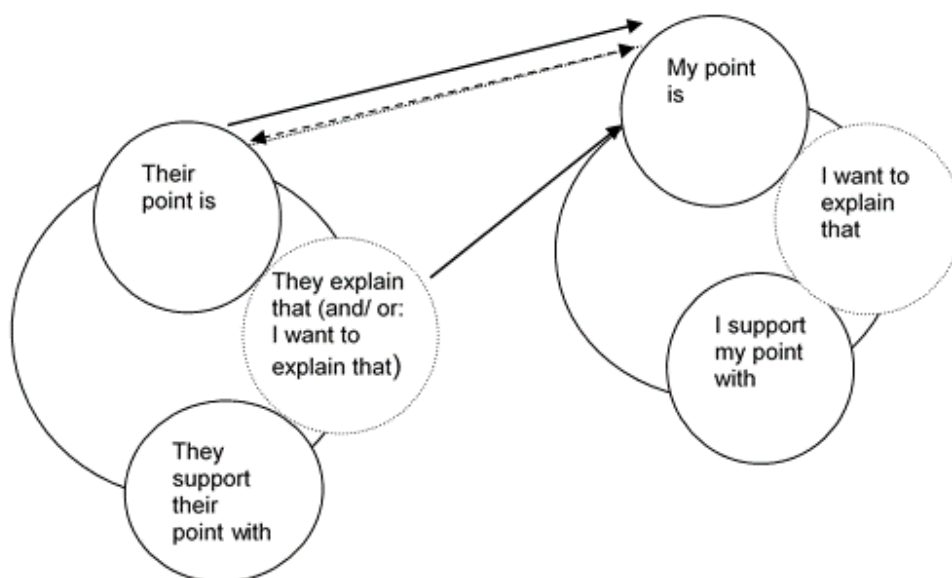


Figure 8.5: The rings model: full classroom version

Using this visual and simplified model in the EAP classroom should lead to productive discussions in which students are guided to producing better arguments.

It will also allow them to discuss arguments in different genres as and when they are introduced to new types of writing and/or are required to produce new types of texts.

### 8.2.2 Teaching argument as part of insessional EAP provision

Writing is “linked to the production and communication of knowledge” (Mitchell, 2010, p. 185) and writing development is “part of acquiring the discourse of a discipline, including its hard intellectual content and its abstract knowledge” (ibid., p. 186). The aim of teaching argument in an academic context should be to socialise students into disciplines and academic genres (Chandrasegaran, 2008, p. 240). When L2 students have left their preessional courses and progress to courses in their own specific

disciplines, they are usually still able to access insessional provision, usually from a central department for the duration of their courses. In contexts where this is the case, I suggest that the following approaches enhance the transition into the students' disciplinary contexts.

#### *8.2.2.1 The pre-writing stage*

As L2 students embark on their subject-specific courses, they may be able to access EAP insessional classes or one-to-one language support. In such teaching contexts, the two-part model of argument reconstruction, as used for the analysis in this thesis, can be employed to help students understand the discipline-specific genres required of them. Traditionally, students may have been asked to find a 'topic statement' and evidence in given paragraphs, but the model could be used to reframe this and to examine how writers argue in their field. The idea is not to reconstruct whole essays, or to agree on interpretations of the Points and Support, but rather to have a framework from which arguments can be constructed. The findings of this study suggest that the following types of questions would be useful:

*Do writers in your field start straightaway with argumentation or does the introduction include non-argumentational sections? What is the nature of these sections?*

*Do writers provide claims before evidence or the other way around?*

*What points can you identify? How much evidence is given for each point?*

*Do writers use rhetorical questions?*

*Are there new ideas in the conclusions?*

Working together to find answers to these questions would give students insights into how subject-specific writing is different from the generic writing required for the IELTS exam. The focus on Points and Support will also help them precis texts, a useful practice for these writers as they will be required to paraphrase the ideas of others.

#### *8.2.2.2 Drafting arguments*

The argumentational rings model is also useful at the drafting stage to consider the balance of ideas before starting to write. Students could be asked to separate their ideas and evidence from those of others, and to organise them before writing. They can plan their ideas by focusing first on the points they want to make and then on the evidence they have for these.

#### *8.2.2.3 Revising arguments*

The rings model can also be used to examine aspects of their arguments in more depth. For example, students can work on their essay drafts to identify their own views, the ideas of others, the evidence given for these ideas and the sections that remain, e.g. introductory comments and summary statements. They can also consider the weighting given to the ideas of others, the function of introductions, and the linguistic features that could have been employed to communicate the writer's own beliefs. This is also a natural point at which to discuss the acceptability of evidence in the field in which they are working. Whereas the IELTS-type essay accepts personal experience and suppositions as evidence, referenced essays rely on robust research.

In sum, using the rings model with students who have already progressed onto their degree courses should help them think about how to construct arguments in their discipline and to consider the appropriate types of evidence, content, order and language when they are generating and revising their own discipline-specific arguments.

### **8.2.3 Continuing Professional Development**

The answers to RQs 1 and 2 suggested that expert writers' ideas were not always presented in a very organised way in their opinion pieces. However, these types of texts are increasingly becoming part of academics' professional lives, despite being both journalistic and semi-academic in nature (see Chapter 3). The opinion piece has recently become a much more ubiquitous format, as witnessed by publishing platforms such as The Conversation (see *theconversation.com*), which focuses on news and commentary written by academics and researchers, having started in Australia in 2011 and expanded to a variety of countries since, including the UK in 2013. The rise in popularity of these types of blogs is unsurprising in an HE context in which the impact of research is an important consideration; for example, in the allocation of research funding (Russell Group, 2012), and in which dissemination to the public plays a part (Boddy et al., no date).

Despite these increasing demands, there does not appear to be much training in how to 'translate' complex information into laypeople's terms. Yet, there is no reason to assume that the features of this public-facing opinion genre are clear or obvious to professional academics. There would, therefore, seem to be a case for offering instruction in the form of workshops for academics interested in developing writing

skills for this genre. Blogs, such as the BBs, would be useful to demonstrate how argument is developed in these types of pieces.

One of the issues that could be explored is the extent to which the reader needs guidance: the findings of the analyses in this study revealed that the BB writers did not always organise their ideas in ordered ways, nor did they use many enumerative markers, suggesting that the reader is not always guided to the number and order of their ideas. They also underused topic statements, yet these are a characteristic of non-fiction and are expected by readers (Aikman & O'Hear, 1996). Although the BBs were effective in terms of overall organisation and did not display any errors in the mechanics of joining ideas, it could be argued that there is scope for an enhanced focus on the needs of the reader in some of the pieces.

## **8.3 General conclusions**

### **8.3.1 Overview of the study**

Through this study, I have broadened my understanding of how students and professional academics write short opinion pieces. Rather than focusing on specific linguistic details, I took a top-down approach, allowing the text analyses to discover how ideas were expressed, thus making it possible to identify which aspects of language were likely to have contributed to this, and which therefore deserved more scrutiny. The language analysis revealed interesting data regarding the semantic and grammatical functions of certain linkers in the corpora. Interestingly, the linguistic analysis confirmed almost all the study hypotheses, thus suggesting that the

argumentational analysis provided sufficient information by itself regarding the way language and ideas work together in texts to interact with the reader.

I found that students and academics organise their arguments in divergent ways and give different prominence to the views of others. I suggested pedagogical ways of working on these issues, in preessional and insessional EAP classrooms for international students, and as part of workshops for those at more advanced stages of academia. Central to all these pedagogical activities is the need to think about the readers and the strategies required to persuade them.

In this thesis, I made the following Points, and provided Support for them:

- (1) L2 students are rarely taught how to argue in their new English medium HE contexts.
- (2) There is much useful research into aspects of L2 academic writing, but there is a research gap in that the study of rhetoric has not contributed much.
- (3) Despite any essay's purpose being to persuade the reader, little research has focused directly on the nature of argumentation and persuasion.
- (4) L2 students argue differently in argument pieces compared to professionals. This is mainly related to how they incorporate the views of others and it has an impact on the language they use.
- (5) Instruction needs to include a scaffolded approach, in which students learn about the nature of argumentation and the importance of persuasion. It is important to do this before discussing the use of language to achieve this persuasive aim.

### **8.3.2 Limitations of the thesis and suggestions for further research**

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Firstly, the analyses were based on relatively small corpora. The number of people involved in independent and verifying analyses was also relatively small because of the limitations of this being a PhD study. For the same reason, not all the research findings could be discussed at length.

Secondly, there are issues inherent in any argumentational analysis: although the method of analysis was fine-tuned in collaboration with others, its very nature demands “judgement and imagination” (Fisher, 1988, p. 22), which entails the possibility of different interpretations. Regarding the findings, every effort was made to distinguish between those due to contextual issues and those related to writing ability, but others might judge differently.

Lastly, a narrow definition of argument was used, with the analysis concerning the composition and location of argument and the use of a specific group of cohesive devices only. Although I have justified this in the context of this study, it is important to acknowledge that argumentation and persuasion pertain to more than those elements. It would be particularly interesting to explore the optional third elements and to uncover their value in strengthening arguments and the differences in how they are used by different writers and in different argumentational genres.

Further research could endeavour to compensate for some of the limitations of this study. In terms of reducing potential subjectivity, a broader corpus would allow the current research findings to be tested on a more representative scale, for example, involving large cohorts of UK-based preessional students. Moreover, if a larger

group of analysts could be trained to use the method to reduce the scope for differences in opinion about the identification of the components of arguments, it may be possible to investigate three parts of arguments and the evidence base would expand. Another way to reduce subjectivity is to set up studies that include interviews. These could be used as follow-ups to the analyses, to ask the writers if they would agree that the claims and evidence identified correspond to their intentions.

Regarding the study outcomes, some minor research findings that have not yet been discussed in detail could be tested with a larger corpus, and their effects checked. Examples of these are the order of P and S (and its effect on text comprehension), the use of questions, the introduction of new ideas in conclusions, and the potential variations in soft and hard disciplines.

Finally, as mentioned in Chapter 2, L1 students also encounter a new cultural and educational environment when they start their HE studies, and they may be expected to write essays that are different to those they have written as part of their secondary education. A corpus of L1 student argument essays could be compared to professional academic opinion blogs to determine whether the way they compose and distribute their arguments resembles the approaches of the L2 writers more than those of the professionals.

### **8.3.3 Contributions of the thesis and future directions**

This study has made several important contributions. Firstly, it has identified a need and has made a case for the teaching of argument and argumentation in HEIs in the first chapter. I have also, through the investigations of my corpora, been able to show

that argument deserves to be a central component in the delivery of EAP. The findings revealed that novice L2 students and experts compose arguments differently in terms of organising their discourse and integrating the views of others. It is therefore necessary to consider arguments when teaching academic writing skills, and language features need to be discussed in the context of the persuasive purpose of the texts. Through understanding L2 writers' assumptions of what essays are and knowing what they typically produce on entry in HE, which I discovered by examining their texts, it is possible for teachers to employ a scaffolded approach to guide students from the production of IELTS-type essays to fully referenced and subject-specific longer pieces of writing in which the arguments are carefully constructed, and appropriate language is used to express well-founded ideas.

Secondly, the study led to the identification of a corpus of persuasive texts written by expert academic writers, which raises possibilities. To date, corpora written by academics have mainly been composed of journal articles, textbooks and lectures (Flowerdew, 2017). Research into opinion pieces has been limited, except where it concerns argument essays or blogs written by students, e.g. ICLE, the *International Corpus of Learner English* (Granger et al., no date) (Ryshina-Pankova, 2014). More research into IELTS-type essays and other opinion pieces would acknowledge the academic context of these texts and would validate their importance to research. Researching opinion pieces as a valid professional format opens more areas for research and with more researchers communicating their opinions to the wider public (see Section 8.2.3), there is scope for the collection of large corpora of these pieces. Further comparative research could include other aspects of academic writing, not just argumentation.

A third contribution is the design of an analytical tool, built on existing models of argumentation but adapted into new ones for the purpose of studying persuasive writing. This offers potential applications for other types of persuasive writing, not just academic writing. The argumentational reconstruction model facilitates a different way of looking at (sub)genres of persuasive writing. It deconstructs arguments into their basic elements of Point and Support, which means that their number, order and nature can be established, and arguments can be studied in detail. This allows for a description of subgenres in a way that has not as yet been done, and for a comparison of these genres. It could be used to examine professional persuasive writing (e.g. texts from legal, religious, marketing, journalistic and political fields), and in non-professional contexts such as social media disputes. 'Texts' can also include visual argumentation such as that used in political cartoons.

Fourthly, this reconstructive method can yield deeper insights into discipline-specific writing: as argument varies between disciplines, argumentational analyses would be able to describe these differences. In Chapter 5 it was suggested that argumentation may differ in the soft and the hard sciences and it would therefore be interesting to collect corpora from academic fields at different ends of this spectrum to further analyse how writers argue.

Fifthly, the analytical tools used in this study would enable developmental investigations, for example, to examine whether the writing characteristics of L2 students come to resemble those of the experts over time, or whether they start to write more 'Other' sections and take care to substantiate all claims. Researching longer texts, for example essays written by third year undergraduates would allow for different types of comparisons. For example, it would be possible to investigate

whether the number of arguments, the amount of Support, or both, increase relative to the word count.

Other contributions of the study are pedagogical:

(1) the rings model suggested in this chapter can be used to facilitate dialogue in the classroom and to support students in improving the way they argue in their essays at both preessional and inessional stages. I suggested tasks that guide L2 students from working with models written by others, to drafting, discussing and revising their own writing. In terms of future research, some of the techniques suggested above, for example peer discussions at the revision stages and the use of the rings model, could be implemented and their effects observed. This could be achieved either by comparing students' ability before and after instruction, or by comparing the work of an experimental group of writers having received instruction using these techniques with that of a control group, such as the SE writers'.

(2) My research has shown that certain habits or beliefs that appear to be present in EAP teaching may not be helpful. I have found, for example, that questions are used more often than perhaps thought, that new ideas are often found in conclusions, and that full arguments are quite often present in introductions and conclusions. I have also found evidence for the fact that cohesive language features should not be taught in isolation but in the context of persuasive arguments, and that citation should not be taught or encouraged unless and until students can write non-referenced argumentational texts in which the views of others are incorporated well. The focus in the classroom should be on the purpose of the writing and I conclude that EAP needs to take a more rhetorical approach.

Finally, this thesis has investigated ways in which L2 students write and the implications of its research outcomes have contributed to the field of the teaching of EAP. Although, as I explained in this chapter, the EAP profession has been marginalised in HE, the role it can play should not be underestimated. Even if EAP teachers operate independently of any particular disciplines and on the fringes of HE, I have argued that by teaching English for Academic Persuasion they will be an integral part of the professional HE community that encourages and enables students to broaden their knowledge, to achieve academic success in their chosen disciplines and to participate more effectively in a democratic society.

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