IJELS
International Journal of Education
and Language Studies

Identity Research | Full Research Article

Exploring Gender Identity, Argumentation and Rhetorical Appeals Uses within EFL Students' Writing

Jawad Golzar, Herat University;
Rohullah Yousofi, Herat University

Abstract

Persuasive language influences college students dramatically by providing possibilities of presenting their self. The current study examined how EFL college students embodied their gender identity, employed argumentation, and incorporated rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, and pathos) in their EFL writing. The study utilized a mixed-method approach. Using simple and random sampling, the authors selected eight argumentative essays that the EFL students submitted as an academic writing course requirement. Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) is used to measure linguistic properties of the texts, and coding quantitatively is used to analyze the qualitative data collected by interview. The results revealed that the participants did not include the qualifier and counterarguments, and they incorporated rhetorical appeals across gender differently. The study unveiled various underlying constraints sanctioning the EFL students' gender identity presentation within their writing in the Afghan context. The study offered several pedagogical implications to support EFL students to develop as successful writers.

Keywords: Gender Identity, Argumentation, Rhetorical Appeals, Logos, Ethos, Pathos

Introduction

Over the past decades, a plethora of studies has explored language learners' writing styles in different contexts (Hosseini, 2016; Kuntjara, 2004; Seyyedrezaie & Vahedi, 2017; Ting, 2018; Liu, 2005; Nasri et al., 2018; Saaty, 2020; Bacang et al., 2019; Jassim, 2019). Many of them scrutinized how writers use rhetorical appeals in their writing (Hosseini, 2016; Kuntjara, 2004; Ting, 2018; Liu, 2005; Saaty, 2020; Jassim, 2019). For example, Hosseini (2016) found that a small negative transfer from the native language exists in rhetoric and paragraph development, and that it was weakened after teaching L2 paragraph writing structure. In this respect, Kuntjara (2004) found out that Indonesian rhetoric is not as deductive, obvious, and personal as English. However, Ting (2018) reported that teaching "persuasive discourse" to students makes them be able to use rhetorical appeals more efficiently. Liu (2005) studies argumentative writing in the US and China; he disclosed several

rhetorical-argumentative features in both countries. Jassim (2019) revealed that students' preferences in using rhetorical appeals are more deductive in English composition.

Specifically, a few researchers probed how gender identity affects writing style in forming arguments and using rhetorical appeals (Seyyedrezaie & Vahedi, 2017; Nasri et al., 2018; Bacang et al., 2019). Concerning "stance markers" in English compositions, males and females utilized the same pattern apart from "epistemic," and regarding "stance makers" in Persian compositions, they did not use the same "deontic markers" from the rests (Seyyedrezaie & Vahedi, 2017, p. 308). Nasri et al. (2018) observed that using "stance" and "engagement"– Hyland's (2008) framework– in writing argumentative essays by writers of varied gender is differentiable (p. 201). Bacang et al. (2019) asserted that female learners generally use emotional appeals in their argumentative essays, whereas male learners use logic and less hedging and boosters in their argumentation.

Argumentative Writing in EFL Context

Researchers have held various opinions regarding argumentation (Ketcham, 1917; Kuhn, 1991; MacEwan, 1898; Mercier & Sperber, 2011; Haidt, 2012). Argumentation was defined by Ketcham (1917) as the skill of compelling others. It was further explained that persuasion implies influencing others in a specific way to think and act. Argumentation was considered an essential ability of thinking, formulating ideas, solving problems, and reaching a valid judgment (Kuhn, 1991). Similarly, MacEwan (1898) clarified that the procedure of demonstrating and contradicting a proposal – forming truth, causing a new conviction, or correcting mistakes in mind – involves argumentation. However, Mercier and Sperber (2011) believed that argumentation is employing reasoning in an argument that persuades an audience (Haidt, 2012). Argument and rhetoric include various components.

Over the past decades, applications of rhetoric in argumentation have been studied by many researchers who developed their own analytic rhetorical theory and framework (Aristotle, 1991; Toulmin, 1958). Aristotle (1991) believed that rhetoric is the core of an argument. In his rhetorical theory, logos (logical appeal), pathos (emotional appeal), and ethos (ethical appeal) were the elements of an argument. By extension, Varpio (2018) defined rhetorical appeals as the following: Ethos is a writer-focused appeal that discloses the reliability of the writer. However, logos is the argument-focused appeal that the writer uses to allude to the rational integration of the argument. On the other hand, pathos is a reader-focused appeal that provokes the reader's emotions.

According to Toulmin (1958), an argument is comprised of prominent components— claim, data and warrant—and additional components: backing, rebuttal, and qualifiers. He identified the components as the following: (1) a claim is a statement or declaration whose values and merits require to be settled; (2) a data is supportive facts that bring backing to the claim; (3) a warrant is a general reason or statement that shows the relation between the data and the claim; (4) a backing is a primary perception or hypothesis which rationally backs the warrants; (5) a rebuttal is a statement goes against the claim and invalidates it; and (6) a qualifier confines the certainty of the claim. For more clarification, (see Figure 1).
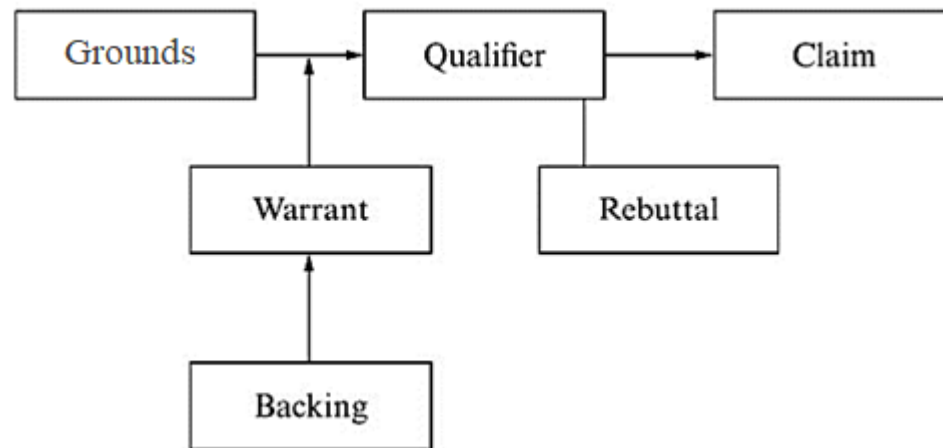
Figure 1. Toulmin's model of argument (2003)

A number of researchers have reported that students have difficulty forming and writing an argumentative essay (Setyowati et al., 2017; Zhu, 2001; AI-Haq & Ahmed, 1994; Rahmatunisa, 2014). Setyowati et al. (2017) found out that one of the students' struggles in writing an argumentative essay is timing. Specifically, they stated that students had difficulty writing their opinions in 10 minutes. However, Zhu (2001) demonstrated that not having enough knowledge of rhetoric, argumentation development, writing experience, and linguistic features were the problematic issues in forming an argumentative composition. In the same vein, AI-Haq and Ahmed's (1994) examination revealed that the problematic factors in forming an argument are the development and structure of an argument. Similarly, Rahmatunisa's (2014) investigation claimed that students' problems in forming argumentative essays are in three classifications: psychologically is like being indolent, not in a suitable writing mode and difficulties with how to begin writing; how to cognitively arrange paragraphs, conclusions, and punctuation and how to incorporate genre features. Moreover, they encounter linguistic complexity and some restrictions, for example, poor knowledge of word categories, words' formats, syntactic rules, and word choice.

Effects of Gender Identity on EFL Students' Writing Styles

The notion of gender has been defined by many researchers in the past decades (Ounsted & Taylor, 1972; Tannen, 1995; Aydinoglu, 2014; Bussey, 2011; Chambers, 1995). The term 'gender' refers to sociocultural differences (Ounsted & Taylor, 1972). Along the same lines, Tannen (1995) contended that society forms and prescribes genders' characteristics and roles. Also, Aydinoglu (2014) asserted that gender is a "social product" (p. 233). It simply indicates that society determines the masculinity's and femininity's variations. Similarly, Bussey (2011) stated that gender is the basis of society's construction. On the contrary, Chambers (1995) believed that gender somewhat relies upon biological variations. However, Wood and Eagly (2015) said that gender identity represents the interpretation of people about themselves with regard to the cultural meanings of women and men. Also, Johnson and Wassersug (2010) argued that the abstract sense of masculinity or femininity is gender identity. Recently investigators have examined the effects of gender identity on students' writing (Al-Saadi, 2020; Olinghouse, 2007; Zhang et al., 2019; Adams & Simmons, 2019;

Beard & Burrell, 2010; Jones & Myhill, 2007; Williams & Larkin, 2012). Concerning fluency and quality of writing, female writers outperformed male writers (Al-Saadi, 2020; Olinghouse, 2008). Similarly, Zhang et al. (2019) and Adams and Simmons (2019) discovered that male writers performed more dismally compared to their female counterparts in writing processes and components. Likewise, Beard and Burrell (2010) noted that female writers developed well-rounded persuasive and narrative writing. However, some studies found no effect of gender identity on writing as well (Jones & Myhill, 2007; Williams & Larkin, 2012).

Albeit a wealth of studies has explored the impacts of gender identity on the use of rhetorical appeals in writing styles (Bacang et al., 2019), Jones & Myhill, 2007; Nasri et al., 2018), no research particularly examined gender identity embodiment and its effects on EFL students' writing argumentative styles. Hence, this study aimed to explore argumentation components and rhetorical appeals in Afghan EFL university students' writing. By analyzing argumentative essays in the EFL context, this study contributes prominent enlightenments in terms of conceiving gender identity embodiment in shaping EFL students' argumentative styles. Specifically, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent did both female and male Afghan EFL students incorporate Toulmin's model of reasoning in their argumentative writing?
2. To what extent did they use rhetorical appeals? To what extent did they incorporate linguistic features across gender?
3. Is there any significant difference between the male and female EFL writers' argumentation and use of rhetorical appeals?
4. How do both male and female EFL reflect their gender identity when writing an argumentative paper? What are the effects of such a reflection on their argumentative writing styles?

Research Method

The study utilized quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine argumentation components and rhetorical appeals employed in argumentative writings. One of the author's colleagues taught an academic writing course within English Department, Literature and Languages College, Herat University in spring 2020. This course was designed to help English major students develop the academic skills necessary to write an argumentative paper. The teacher utilized various writing activities to teach the students how to form a sound argument and incorporate rhetorical appeals in their writing to persuade the audience. The students were also supposed to submit an argumentative essay at the end of this course after going through a constructive writing process, including brainstorming, outlining, collecting information, drafting, peer-reviewing, revising, and writing the final draft.

The researchers formally invited students and teachers to participate in this study. Upon their consent, the students shared 75 argumentative essays submitted as final assignments for the academic writing course. The researchers utilized a simple random sampling method to select the argumentative papers. They then set the essays into two groups based on the writers' gender (32 male and 43 female). They labeled the essays in each group with a unique number; they then ran an online randomizer machine and selected eight essays: four

female and four male students' final drafts. Subsequently, each essay was analyzed considering Toulmin's (1958) model of reasoning, linguistic features, and Aristotle's rhetorical appeals. A computational linguistic analysis website called the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) is used to measure the participants' linguistic features. The analysis included the following linguistic dimensions: personal pronouns (I, me, my), social words, positive emotions, negative emotions, and parameters of analytical thinking, clout, authenticity, and emotional tone. The analytical thinking parameter is derived from eight function word dimensions, which capture the degree to which people utilize words that propose hierarchical and logical thinking patterns (Pennebaker et al., 2014). The clout parameter refers to confidence, social standing, or the degree of leadership which people demonstrate through writing (Kacewicz et al., 2014). The authenticity parameter refers to the quality of being humble and personal when writers display themselves in an honest and authentic way (Pennebaker, 2011). The emotional tone parameter includes both positive and negative emotions, indicating the degree of emotionality (Cohn et al., 2004).

Considering the results of this textual analysis, the researchers interviewed eight college students. They chose two groups of college students from the academic writing course (Group one= 4 females; Group two= 4 males) based on their essay grading. Each group consisted of two students who got excellent grading and two participants who got below-average grading (See table 1.). The researchers interviewed each group to understand how they incorporated argumentation components and rhetorical appeals, reflect their gender identity in their essays, and the impact of such an embodiment on their argumentative writing style. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researchers identified codes, compared them constantly, and categorized them into meaningful and overarching themes.

Table 1

Interview Participants' Demographic Information

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education	Institution
1	Sara	Female	20	Eng. Major	Herat University
2	Wita	Female	20	Eng. Major	Herat University
3	Mitra	Female	23	Eng. Major	Herat University
4	Hadiya	Female	21	Eng. Major	Herat University
5	Ali	Male	24	Eng. Major	Herat University
6	Karim	Male	22	Eng. Major	Herat University
7	Saeed	Male	22	Eng. Major	Herat University
8	Nader	Male	20	Eng. Major	Herat University

Results

In this section, the authors presented the results of textual analysis of the eight argumentative essays considering Toulmin's argumentation framework and rhetorical appeals use. They also presented how both male and female EFL reflected their gender identity and the effects of such a reflection on their argumentative writing styles.

Toulmin's Framework Uses Across Gender

Analyzing the participants' argumentative essays considering Toulmin's framework revealed that both female and male students could not almost identically include qualifiers and form rebuttal to their claims (See Tables 2 and 3).

Female participants' argumentative topics included self-confidence, social media, students' shyness, and efficient study. These topics were potentially argumentative. The participants provided evidence and facts to support their claims (Grounds). For instance, Sara used the following data to support that self-confidence improves students' speaking ability.

> *Deswarni (2017) claims that speaking has a strong correlation with self-confidence and that some students feel nervous when they begin to speak because most of them worry about making a mistake and be mocked by their friends. Gocman (2012) expresses that shyness is a timidity, apprehension, or discomfort feeling in some social situations. So, the result shows that by increasing self-confidence, students can overcome this social problem. Shyness (also called diffidence) is the feeling of apprehension, lack of comfort, or awkwardness, especially when a person is around other people.*

The female participants also included warrant, the assumptions that connect the grounds to their claims. For example, the participants included the following assumptions to make that connection:

"Internet users were lonelier, more depressed, and generally exhibited poorer social skills." (Wita)
"Time management [is an] important method for improving the efficiency of study." (Hadiya)

All the female participants made central claims to form sound arguments. Moreover, they used additional support for their warrants. For instance, Hadiya incorporated a personal example to support the warrant:

> *As I experienced, setting a goal is also really important for having a utility study. For example, last semester, I decided to set goals for every single day separately. Therefore, it is the case that I significantly use each hour and each day, and finally, it occurred efficiently for me.*

Most female students also could not include qualifiers to cast doubt about the claims and that they may not be accurate in all circumstances. Likewise, most female participants did not integrate a rebuttal to present another possible valid view of a situation.

Table 2.

Female Participants' Argumentative Essays Textual Analysis Results

Participant	Grounds	Claim	Warrant	Backing	Qualifier	Rebuttal	Topic
Sara	Present	Present	Present	Present	Lacking	Lacking	Self-confidence
Wita	Present	Present	Present	Present	Lacking	Present	Social media
Mitra	Present	Present	Present	Present	Lacking	Lacking	Ss' Shyness
Hadiya	Present	Present	Present	Present	Lacking	Lacking	Efficient Study

However, male participants' argumentative topics included using games, stress impact, using drama, and using dictionaries. They provided grounds to support their claims. For example, the male students used the following data to back up their claims.

> *"Education is concerned with individuals; drama is concerned with the individuality of individuals, with the uniqueness of each human essence" (Way, 1973).*

> *Students who study English as a foreign language and those who study English as a second language want to form a well-versed in the implication of a word meaning (Dakun, 2001).*

All male participants made different claims to form sound arguments. For instance, Nader claimed that the use of a dictionary has a pivotal role in language learning.

> *According to Rahimi and Miri (2014), English foreign language learners who utilized mobile dictionaries to learn English amend their language ability more than those who used the printed version. Based on the above descriptions, it can be summed up reasonably that using a dictionary plays an essential role in terms of grasping a language.*

Moreover, they also used a warrant to link the grounds to their claims. For example, Saeed used the following warrant to create this connection.

> *"Speaking and listening are said to relate to language expressed through the aural medium, and reading and writing are said to relate to language expressed through the visual medium" (Widdowson, 1978, p. 57).*

The male students also used personal examples to back up the warrant. Nader added his personal experience as it follows:

> *For example, when I studied linguistics class, I was puzzled by pronouncing the word 'pseudonym'; after checking the dictionary installed on my cellphone, the problem was solved. In the long run, it is signified that the dictionaries can be an extremely beneficial resource, mainly as it makes the learner more autonomous of the teacher.*

Similar to the female participants, most male students could not include qualifiers and rebuttals to their argument. Karim only had one sentence rebuttal to show a possible view of the stress. He did not develop it further. His rebuttal is: "*However, some degree of stress can be good. It can be a challenge that keeps us alert, motivated, and ready to avoid danger.*"

Table 3

Male Participants' Argumentative Essays Textual Analysis Results

Participant	Grounds	Claim	Warrant	Backing	Qualifier	Rebuttal	Topic
Ali	Present	Present	Present	Present	Lacking	Lacking	Using Games
Karim	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Lacking	Stress Impact
Saeed	Present	Present	Present	Present	Lacking	Lacking	Using Drama
Nader	Present	Present	Present	Present	Lacking	Lacking	Using Dictionary

Linguistic Features Analysis

The linguistic analysis argumentative essays revealed that female participants incorporated varieties of linguistic dimensions with varying degrees, including I-words (I, me, my) social words, positive emotions, negative emotions, cognitive processes, summary variables, analytic, clout, authenticity, and emotional tone. The mean score for I-words is 1.6, while the average for professional or scientific writing is 0.63. The mean value of social words is 13.8, which is more than the average value. Positive and negative emotions gained mean scores of 4.2 and 3.0, comparatively higher than the average. Cognitive processes obtained 16.8, which is two times larger than the Average. Analytic thinking score was 69.3, comparatively lower than the average score (92.57), whereas clout gained 73.4, which is slightly higher than the average score (68. 17). The authenticity mean value is 32.6, which is higher compared to the average (24.84). The emotional tone got a mean score of 48.6, slightly higher than average for professional or scientific writing (43.61).

Table 4

Female Students' Argumentative Essays' Linguistic Features Analysis Results

	Sara	Wita	Mitra	Hadiya	Mean Score	Average for professional or scientific writing
I-words (i, me, my)	4.2	0.5	0.0	1.8	1.6	0.63
Social words	13.3	20.2	16.8	4.7	13.8	7.62
Positive emotions	4.6	2.8	6.5	2.8	4.2	2.32
Negative emotions	3.1	2.1	6.1	0.5	3.0	1.45
Cognitive processes	20.4	13.7	18.1	15.0	16.8	7.52
Summary variables						
Analytic	69.3	67.9	63.7	76.3	69.3	92.57
Clout	58.2	94.3	91.9	49.0	73.4	68.17
Authenticity	49.3	18.2	15.8	47.1	32.6	24.84
Emotional tone	53.9	38.9	32.3	69.3	48.6	43.61

However, the male students used various linguistic dimensions differently. I-words obtained 1.2 that is two times more than average (0.63). Social words value got 9.3 that is a little more than the average score. In addition, positive and negative emotions gained 4.2 and 3.0, which are slightly higher than the average. Cognitive processes got a value of 14.8 that is also two times larger than the average. Analytical thinking value obtained 79.2, which is lower than the average score (92.57). Clout gained 69.8 that is a little higher than the average score (68. 17). Authenticity gained a value of 20.7 that is higher compared to the average (24.84). Ultimately, the mean value for emotional tone is 62.1 and higher than average (43.61).

Table 4

Male Students' Argumentative Essays' Linguistic Features Analysis Results

	Ali	Karim	Saeed	Nader	Mean Score	Average for professional or scientific writing
I-words (i, me, my)	1.3	0.0	2.7	0.9	1.2	0.63
Social words	10.3	8.5	8.8	9.5	9.3	7.62
Positive emotions	6.5	1.0	3.3	3.5	3.6	2.32
Negative emotions	1.2	10.4	0.2	1.3	3.3	1.45
Cognitive processes	15.9	17.5	12.4	13.5	14.8	7.52
Summary variables						
Analytic	70.5	72	82.7	91.4	79.2	92.57
Clout	69.3	67.5	64.3	77.9	69.8	68.17
Authenticity	26.9	18.6	25.5	11.8	20.7	24.84
Emotional tone	97.7	1.0	80.8	68.7	62.1	43.61

Comparing the results of linguistic analysis of both female and male participants revealed that the dimensions differ across genders. Female participants used more personal and social words in their argumentative writing (1.6>1.2, 13.8 >9.3). They also expressed more positive emotions compared to their male counterparts (4.2>3.6). Both female and male participants conveyed almost the same negative emotions. Female students also presented more cognitive processes than the male participants (16.8>14.8). The analytical thinking parameter was comparatively low for female students compared to their male counterparts (69.3<79.2). However, the clout parameter was higher for female participants (73.4>69.8). The authenticity parameter was also comparatively higher for females (32.6>20.7). However, the emotional tone was relatively higher for the male participants (62.1>48.6).

Rhetorical Appeals Uses across Gender

Both female and male participants used rhetorical appeals with varying degrees to form sound arguments. They incorporated ethos, logos, and pathos in their essays.

Ethos

Only two female participants used ethos to build credibility and trust as writers. They tried to convince the audience that they are qualified to write about the subject of argument. For instance, Sara used the story of her personal experience and achievement on how she developed her self-confidence and participated in speaking activities. She wrote:

> *I used to fear taking part in a competition when I was at school, thinking about the number of people that would be sitting there looking at me, so instead of causing myself that much stress and worries, I used to give up on taking part at all, but as I grew older and became more experienced, things started changing. The level of my self-confidence increased with the different ways I implemented to increase it, then I found myself more confident taking part in speaking activities.*

Both Sara and Hadiya hesitated to build their own credibility as writers and almost include it at the end of their arguments.

Similarly, only two male participants tried to build their credibility to some extent by providing some personal examples related to the subjects of arguments. For example, Nader wrote:

I was confused by the word 'pseudonym' in linguistics class, so c my cellphone dictionary to get the meaning.

Ali used one personal experience to build this credibility. He wrote:

I, as a teacher, use games in my grammar classes, and learners just have fun and enjoy games. However, when I check the outcomes at the end of the classes, I find the results surprisingly advantageous.

Female participants slightly built ethos more than their male counterparts by incorporating personal experiences. Moreover, these accounts appeared in the middle of the argument and not in the beginning. The analysis of linguistic properties on clout (presentation of being confident, have authority over the subject) and authenticity (being honest and authentic) corroborate the above finding of ethos (73.4>69.8 and 32.6>20.7).

Logos

Female participants analytically incorporated a number of reasons to support their claims in their argumentative essays (Wita=3, Sara=3, Mitra= 3, Hiyada= 4). For instance, Wita provided the following reasons why social media have adverse effects on Teens:

- *Teens' social skills are decreasing because of their lack of face-to-face communication.*
- *Teenagers get their information and advice from people on their social networking sites rather than through face-to-face communication.*

Male participants also analytically accommodated different lines of reasoning to back up their claims in their arguments (Ali=3, Karim=4, Saeed=5, Nader=4). Male participants comparatively included slightly more reasons in their essays. The linguistic analysis of the arguments also corroborates with the above result (69.3<79.2). In the sample population, the female participants applied slightly less analytical thinking to support their claims in the arguments compared to their male counterparts.

Pathos

Female students incorporated pathos different words to emotionally engage and influence the audience so that they have the audience on board to accept their standing in their arguments. Analyzing the themes and titles of the female participants' argumentative works revealed that most of them did not consider the titles which evoke stronger emotions. Their argumentative essays' titles included, "Having self-confidence is needed for students to take part in speaking activities," "Why Are Some Students Shy?", "Increasing the efficiency of studying in college," and "Social Media has a positive and negative impact on users and families." Moreover, the female participants did not use stories, visuals, analogies, and metaphors to create an emotional appeal. However, they used words that have a different degree of emotionality.

Male participants also limited the inclusion of pathos only to the use of different words that possessed a different degree of emotional loadings. According to the linguistic analysis,

the male participants' writings' emotional tone is higher than their female counterparts (62.1>48.6). However, they did not use emotionally evoking themes and titles in their works. The titles included the following: "Using Games in Grammar Classes," "Stress Impact on Health," "The Effects of Drama in the Classroom," and "Effects of Dictionary Use on Students' Vocabulary Learning." Similarly, they did not incorporate visuals, stories, metaphors, and analogies to evoke strong emotions within their audience.

Interview Results

The participants responded to the questions about the uses of Toulmin's model, rhetorical appeals, and gender identity presentations in their writings.

Reported Use of Argumentation Model

Most participants noted that they employed all aspects of Toulmin's model to form a sound argument except using rebuttal or counterargument. According to the participants, they did not include counterarguments because they did not have enough knowledge to incorporate the opposite positions, or their topics were straightforward and did not potentially invite opposing positions. Saeed said, "I did not include the opposing positions, but it was better to add a rebuttal. It was my first experience writing an argument". However, Sara notes, "My topic was self-confidence; it is not that much controversial? My argument was the one which everybody accepts, and the answer was obvious".

The participants also mentioned that incorporating rebuttal was essential to making their argument stronger. For instance, Nader says, "I did not include counterarguments or opposing ideas, but it helps to give the readers a chance to consider the two possibilities or two sides of a coin, and then they decide themselves which one is right."

Persuasive Appeals

The participants highlighted that they used logos more than other rhetorical moves. They also added that the use of ethical and emotional appeals is limited to their personal accounts within their arguments as well as the quality of their writings. For example, Nader argued:

> *I learned in academic writing that when you make a claim, you need to support it with your real example. I also tried to build trust by adding real examples and by my mature writing. I included great hook sentences and synthesized information effectively to present my expertise. At the same time, I used these examples more realistically. I believe the more you add sensory descriptions, the better students experience emotional connections to the argument.*

Sara also used logos by adding a line of reasoning to support her claim and incorporated ethos by illustrating a firsthand experience that she possessed a low-self-confidence and then developed this personal peculiarity to ensure success in her speaking performance. She also attempted to create mental images in her readers' minds to emotionally connect them with her argument and accept her standing on the issue. She states:

> *I tried to include strong reasons, so I used outside sources to back up my claim. However, to build my credibility as a writer, I incorporated my personal experiences. I shared my own experience when I was in the class at school, I could not participate in speaking due to having low self-esteem. I could gradually develop it and became more involved in classroom discussions. I also included my personal experiences to*

create emotional effects inside my audience; for example, the people who have self-confidence felt worthy deep inside, and it makes them speak more in the class because they are not afraid of being laughed at or making mistakes.

Gender Identity Presentation

Most of the participants mentioned that they did not intend to present their gender identity in their writings, and their existing identity presentations were reserved to a few instances of masculine and feminine pronouns choices, the selection of topics, and their personal accounts. They also noted that the presentation of gender identity positively influenced them to maintain a positive attitude and emotional state. Moreover, the participants concluded that such an identity presentation facilitated the process of developing as a writer; they felt more confident and free to voice their concerns. Hadiya argued:

It is very hard to recognize the gender of the writer through writing, but female authors tend to use feminine pronouns prior to masculine ones. If writers argue the women's rights, the writers are most probably female. The gender presentation in writing gives the signal to other females that they can also voice their views and grow as successful writers. It also creates a mindset that everybody has an equal chance to develop. I wrote this argument for the educated and presumably open-minded audience, so I am not afraid to voice my concerns as a female in my writing. This representation can help other female writers to express their experiences, feelings, and beliefs freely.

Mitra, emphasized that topic selection and her real examples depicted her gender identity as a female writer. She noted:

I chose the topic "shyness" because this is the woman who is underrepresented and underscored in our society. They are dealing with shyness more than men. I tried to use examples from female schools. I felt happy inside because I could depict women's situation rather than being silent and denying it. This presentation helps me to improve my self-confidence as a writer.

Ali, a male participant, also claimed that his identity as a male writer is presented through the topic he had chosen for his argument, using more logical appeals than emotional moves and incorporating more emphatic words.

I chose my topic based on my personal experience. In my opinion, gender identity has an important role in writing because female and male participants have a different set of values and beliefs, and they think differently. They would come up with different solutions. For example, male writers might use logical points to persuade the readers, while female students may use emotional appeals to influence the readers. As a male writer, I tried to include logical appeals to persuade my readers rather than emotional moves. I used personal examples and used emphatic words to present my identity as a male writer.

Constraints of Depicting Gender Identity in Writing

The participants encountered a number of limitations to present their identity as a male or female writer. First, the current status quo and the gender-based misconceptions sanction

gender identity presentation within the participants' writings. It was rampant for female participants compared to the males. For instance, Mitra noted in the personal interview:

> *In our society, this is difficult to present our identity as a female writer within our argumentative essays. Our community is struggling with many gender biases and stereotypes. I was afraid my work would be given harsh criticism or readers undermine my written work because I am a female, so I did not completely present my beliefs, values, feelings, and experiences as a female writer in my essay.*

Besides these sociocultural hindrances, the participants noted that they did not have enough writing skills and knowledge to depict their identity in their arguments. For example, Saeed stated, "I did not know how to express my identity as a male writer in my argumentative paper. I was not familiar with different voice markers, vocabulary, and techniques." Nader also noted that he did not know how such a presentation influences him and his writing and why he needs to express his gender identity as a male writer. Or Hadiya claimed that there were no specific writing rules by which she could have presented her identity in her argumentative essay.

Discussion & Conclusions

The present study investigated gender identity, argumentation, and uses of rhetorical appeals in EFL students' writing. One of the salient findings is how and to what extent students integrated Toulmin model in their argumentative writing. The textual analysis proved that both genders almost incorporated all Toulmin's components the same apart from qualifiers and rebuttal. However, participants in the interview claimed that they used all components except rebuttal—counterargument—in their writings. On the other hand, Liu and Wan's (2020) study on two groups of English learners showed that both groups incorporated almost all Toulmin features except warrant and backing.

Furthermore, they found out that participants have had more than a little difficulty employing rebuttal in their writings (Cheng & Chen, 2009; Qin & Karabacak, 2010; Liu & Stapleton, 2014). Particularly, Nussbaum et al. (2005) claimed that having persuasive aims diminishes using counterargument in writings. According to Wolfe and Britt (2008), writers may avoid adding rebuttal because of a poorly designed argument scheme and fears of undermining an argument if the writer introduces the opposing side. Perkins et al. (1991) coined the word "myside bias" to describe students' propensity to support only their preferred perspective while denying facts to the contrary.

Another prominent finding is that different genders utilized linguistic features variously. Males utilized less personal and social words in their argumentations. Similarly, Etaywe (2018) stated that personal and social words were used by males less than females in their writings. The study also revealed that males conveyed less positive emotions. However, in the case of expressing negative emotions, males and females did the same. By contrast, Etaywe (2018) found out that males used less negative emotions and more positive emotions than females in their writings. Female writers expressed higher clout parameters

and lesser emotional tone than males, whereas Etaywe (2018) found that they incorporated a low degree of confidence, social standing, or leadership.

On the contrary, males reflected to be better writers than females since they wrote longer sentences—a characteristic of excelling writing (Jones & Myhill, 2007). Correspondingly, Subon (2013) asserted that males had longer speech forms than females. As Wang et al. (2000) said, English speakers who use more conjunctions [make long sentences] have a higher analytical thinking. The interpretation that contradicts the findings is that males have a greater degree of analytical thinking, using longer speech and writing longer sentences. Also, Subon's (2013) study revealed that females used polite discourses more than their counterparts in their language. Likewise, Parviz and Gorjian (2014) observed that both genders presented linguistic features' differences textually, contextually, and interpersonally.

The findings revealed that both genders used all rhetorical appeals in their argumentations but variously. Females and males used logic to support their claims far more than ethics and emotions; however, Isai et al. (2020) found out that students tended to use emotional appeal in their formal writing rather than other rhetorical appeals. Surprisingly, the textual analysis demonstrated that males displayed more emotions within their arguments; however, female writers applied analytical and logical dimensions more than their male counterparts. In contrast, Bacang et al. (2019) perceived that female writers lengthily employed emotional appeals in their argumentative writing. Their findings have also corroborated with the results of this study since logical moves were incorporated more by the male writers. Similarly, Flynn (1988) claimed that men are primarily responsible for the mental processes involved in contemplating the abstract and impersonal, while women are primarily responsible for the mental processes involved in dealing with the intimate and emotional, which are referred to as "emotions." Females used a high degree of clout parameter or ethos in their argumentative essays in this study. Wei (2004) asserted that western ethos is based on individuality; therefore, the necessity is to compose more individual clout to convey the appeal of individuality.

The findings also revealed that participants did not have the motive for presenting their gender identity in the argumentative compositions. Overall, the gender identity presentations, which were considerable, were some examples of male and female pronouns, the topics they choose, and their personal values. Nevertheless, they did not want to display their gender identity due to sociocultural impediments, yet they assuredly asserted that presenting gender identity influenced them to maintain a confident and emotional competence. Furthermore, it also helped them to improve themselves as a writer and express their voices. Similarly, Van Doorn et al. (2007) discovered that presenting the gender identity is connected to everyday practices and life perceptions which shape the self. Problematizing the existing sociocultural peculiarities requires conscious awareness and time to be properly sedimented in this context.

The results of the present study propose different pedagogical implications. First, it will be highly effective if the English teachers provide in-depth scaffolding to support students in writing a well-structured argumentative essay incorporating Toulmin's model and Aristotle's rhetorical appeals. Such support can be built up by assigning students to analyze successful argument samples and report their results, nurturing criticality in students' minds.

Moreover, if the teachers aim to help their students form sound and high-quality arguments, they could offer them various strategies and techniques to enhance analytic thinking, clout, authentic, and emotional tone parameters. This awareness-raising and inductive approach will remarkably improve both female and male students' writing performance to employ and incorporate qualifiers, counter-arguments, ethical and emotional moves.

Second, gender identity as an indispensable part of self should not be negated in EFL writing. If teachers pursue and aim to engage students to reflect on hands-on emotions, hardships, psychological labors that they perceive and grappled with inside society as female and male individuals, they ought to train them to present their values and beliefs freely and experiences to persuade their audience to accept their claim. However, some social misconceptions and hidden agendas exist that seriously impede EFL students, especially female writers, from voicing their feelings and concerns, question power relations, gender biases, and injustices through their own writings. The democratizing and emancipatory approach to EFL writing will empower college students to develop and grow as successful writers and transform them into change agents.

Caveats and Limitations

To contextualize and situate the study's results and implications, it is paramount and of essence to point out its limitations. First, the study only examined a small number of EFL writers with their argumentative texts. Increasing the sample size will give a better representation of the total population and its idiosyncrasies. Second, this study only explored the students' reported experiences in presenting their gender identity through writing and measured argumentation components and rhetorical appeals. However, the writing teachers' voices and views are missing. Including the teachers' perspectives will sketch a more robust and precise representation of gender identity through writing and gender-based fluctuations regarding argumentation and rhetorical moves across gender.

Funding

About the Authors

Jawad Golzar is a faculty member at the English Department, Herat University, Afghanistan. He holds a master's degree in TESOL, and he has obtained it through Fulbright Scholarship from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA. He has participated in numerous academic, personal and professional development programs within the past few years. His research interests include teacher identity, educational technology, writing self-efficacy, and issues related to giving voices to others.

Rohullah Yousofi is a student of English Department at Herat University, Afghanistan. His research interests include identity, technology integration, and L2 Writing.

References

Adams, A. M., & Simmons, F. R. (2019). Exploring individual and gender differences in early writing performance. *Reading and Writing, 32*(2), 235–263. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-018-9859-0

Al-haq, F. A.-A., & Ahmed, A. S. E. A. (1994). *Discourse problems in argumentative writing. World Englishes, 13*(3), 307–323. doi:10.1111/j.1467-971x.1994.tb00318.x

Al-Saadi, Z. (2020). Gender differences in writing: The mediating effect of language proficiency and writing fluency in text quality. *Cogent Education, 7*(1), 1770923. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1770923

Aristotle, G. A. (1991). Aristotle on Rhetoric a Theory of Civic Discourse.

Aydinoglu. (2014). Gender in English language teaching coursebooks. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 158*, 233-239.

Bacang, B. C., Rillo, R. M., & Alieto, E. O. (2019). The gender construct in the use of rhetorical appeals, hedges, and boosters in ESL writing: A discourse analysis. *Online Submission, 25*, 210-224.

Beard, R., & Burrell, A. (2010). Writing attainment in 9- to 11-year-olds: Some differences between girls and boys in two genres. *Language and Education, 24*(6), 495–515. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2010.502968

Bussey, K. (2011). Gender identity development. In *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 603-628). Springer, New York, NY.

Chambers, J. K. (1995). *Sociolinguistic Theory: Linguistic variation and its social significance*. Oxford, UK, & Cambridge, USA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Cheng, F. & Chen, Y. (2009). Taiwanese argumentation skills: Contrastive rhetoric perspective. *Taiwan International ESP Journal, 1*(1), 23-50.

Cohn, M. A., Mehl, M. R., & Pennebaker, J. W. (2004). Linguistic markers of psychological change surrounding. *Psychological science, 15*(10), 687-693.

Etaywe, A. S. (2018). A Computerized Analysis of Gender Linguistic Patterns as Reflected in Jordanians' Facebook Statuses: Lexical Items, Affect, Theme, Identity and More. *International Journal of Computer Applications, 975*, 8887.

Flynn, E. A. (1988). Composing as a Woman. *College composition and communication, 39*(4), 423-435.

Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind. Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. England: Penguin.

Hosseini, M. (2016). Rhetorical transfer among young EFL learners: The first experience of paragraph writing investigated. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research, 7*(5), 876-885.

Isai, K. I. A., Lin, T. M., Ching, H. S., Selvajothi, R., & Maruthai, E. (2020). Using Rhetorical Approach of Ethos, Pathos and Logos by Malaysian Engineering Students in Persuasive Email Writings. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 5(4), 19-33.

Jassim, L. L. (2019). Analysis of the Rhetorical Patterns in Iraqi EFL Students' Writings. https://dx.doi.org/10.22606/als.2019.11004

Jones, S. M., & Myhill, D. A. (2007). Discourses of difference? Examining gender difference in linguistic characteristics of writing. *Canadian Journal of Education, 30*, 456e482. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20466646.

Jones, S., & Myhill, D. (2007). Discourses of difference? Examining gender differences in linguistic characteristics of writing. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue canadienne de l'éducation*, 456-482.

Kacewicz, E., Pennebaker, J. W., Davis, M., Jeon, M., & Graesser, A. C. (2014). Pronoun use reflects standings in social hierarchies. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 33*(2), 125-143. DOI: 10.1177/0261927X1350265.

Ketcham, V. (1917). *The theory and practice of argumentation and debate*. New York: Macmillan.

Kuhn, D. (1991). *The skills of argument*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kuntjara, E. (2004). Cultural transfer in EFL writing: A look at contrastive rhetoric on English and Indonesian. *K@ ta, 6*(1), 13-29.

Liu, D., & Wan, F. (2020). What Makes Proficient Writers' Essays More Persuasive? A Toulmin Perspective. *International Journal of TESOL Studies, 2*(1), 1-14.

Liu, F. & Stapleton, P. (2014). Counterargumentation and the cultivation of critical thinking in argumentative writing: Investigating washback from a high-stakes test. *System, 45*,117-128.

Liu, L. (2005). Rhetorical education through writing instruction across cultures: A comparative analysis of select online instructional materials on argumentative writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 14*(1), 1-18. doi:10.1016/j.jslw.2004.11.001

MacEwan, E. (1898). *The essentials of argumentation*. Boston: D. C. Heath.

Mercier, H., & Sperber, D. (2011). Why do humans reason? Arguments for an argumentative theory. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 34(2), 57–111.

Nasri, M., Biria, R., & Karimi, M. (2018). Projecting gender identity in argumentative written discourse. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature, 7*(3), 201-205. http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.7n.3p.201

Nussbaum, E. M., Kardash, C. M., & Graham, S. E. (2005). The Effects of Goal Instructions and Text on the Generation of Counterarguments During Writing. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 97*(2), 157.

Olinghouse, N. G. (2008). Student- and instruction-level predictors of narrative writing in third-grade students. *Reading and Writing, 21*(1–2), 3–26. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-007-9062-1

Ounsted, C., & Taylor, D. C. (1972). The Y chromosome message: a point of view. In C. Ounsted, & D. C. Taylor (Eds.), *Gender differences: Their ontogeny and significance* (pp.241-262).

Pennebaker, J. W., Chung, C. K., Frazee, J., Lavergne, G. M., & Beaver, D. I. (2014). When small words foretell academic success: The case of college admissions essays. *PloS one, 9*(12).

Pennebaker, J.W. (2011). *The Secret Life of Pronouns: What Our Words Say About Us*. Bloomsbury.

Perkins, D. N., Farady, M., & Bushey, B. (1991). Everyday reasoning and the roots of intelligence. In J. F. Voss, D. N. Perkins, & J. W. Segal (Eds.), Informal reasoning and education (pp. 83e106). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Qin, J. & Karabacak, E. (2010). The analysis of Toulmin elements in Chinese EFL university argumentative writing. *System, 38*, 444-456.

Rahmatunisa, W. (2014). Problems faced by EFL learners in writing argumentative essay. *English Review: Journal of English Education, 3*(1), 41-49

Setyowati, L., Sukmawa, S., & Latief, M. A. (2017). Solving the Students' Problems in Writing Argumentative Essay through the Provision of Planning. *Celt: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching & Literature, 17*(1), 86-102.

Seyyedrezaie, Z. S., & Vahedi, V. S. (2017). Projecting gender identity through metadiscourse marking: Investigating writers' stance taking in written discourse. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 6*(2), 301-310.

Subon, F. (2013). Gender differences in the use of linguistic forms in the speech of men and women in the Malaysian context. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 13*(3), 67-79.

Tannen, D. (1995). *You just don't understand: Females and males in conversation*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

Ting, S. H. (2018). Ethos, logos and pathos in university students' informal requests. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies, 18*(1). http://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2018-1801-14.

Toulmin, S. E. (1958). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Van Doorn, N., Van Zoonen, L., & Wyatt, S. (2007). Writing from experience: Presentations of gender identity on weblogs. *European journal of women's studies, 14*(2), 143-158.

Varpio, L. (2018). Using rhetorical appeals to credibility, logic, and emotions to increase your persuasiveness. *Perspectives on medical education, 7*(3), 207-210. doi:10.1007/s40037-018-0420-2

Wang, J. et al. (2000). *Touring China: Selected Tour Commentaries.* China Travel & Tourism Press.

Wei, Y. K. (2004). *Rhetoric as collective ethos: From classical Chinese texts to postmodern corporate images* (Doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University).

Williams, G. J., & Larkin, R. F. (2012). Narrative writing, reading and cognitive processes in middle childhood: what are the links? *Learning and Individual Differences*. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2012.08.003. Advance online publication.

Wolfe, C. R., & Britt, M. A. (2008). The locus of the myside bias in written argumentation. Thinking & Reasoning, 14, 1e27.

Zhang, M., Bennett, R. E., Deane, P., & Rijn, P. W. (2019). Are there gender differences in how students write their essays? An analysis of writing processes. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 38*(2), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1111/emip.12249

Zhu, W. (2001). Performing argumentative writing in English: Difficulties, processes, and strategies. *TESL Canada Journal*, 34-50.