

Integrating Learning to Argue and Arguing to Learn Instructions: Enhancing English Language Proficiency and Argumentative Writing of EFL Learners

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Abstract: *Argumentative writing has increasingly gained attention in EFL writing, though EFL learners generally have deficiencies in this writing. English language proficiency is one of the main factors that can undermine EFL argumentative writing quality. Integrating learning to argue and arguing to learn instructions along with classroom debates were employed in EFL argumentative writing classes for the 11-week online course. This study aimed to investigate the intervention's effect on the argumentative writing performance and English language competence of Myanmar EFL learners. Twenty-six Myanmar undergraduate students voluntarily engaged in the experiment. The Versant English Placement Test and argumentative writing were administered as pre-and post-tests of this study. The results showed that the integrated instruction could enhance both English language competence and argumentative writing performance of the EFL learners and significant correlations between the gains of certain argumentative elements and English language development. These findings contribute to the implementation of integrated instructions in the EFL context.*

Keywords: Arguing to Learn, Argumentative Writing, EFL, Language Proficiency, Learning to Argue

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1. Introduction

New educational demands and shifting pedagogical values have brought the teaching and learning of argumentative writing as a growing topic in the 21st century. According to the changing shifts in education from what to teach to how to teach, it is no longer sufficient to focus on basic literacy skills; instead, there is now a greater need to cultivate "real world skills" of students (McCoog, 2008, p.89). These skills cover higher-order thinking skills that help learners to think critically, communicate, and collaborate with people from various contexts and cultures in the globalized network. Similarly, there has been a recent move in teaching argumentative writing from traditional concerns focused mainly on structural issues (How can the changes in instruction enhance students' argumentative essay?) to a social practice perspective (How can we utilize argument learning experiences as means for social constructions in classroom contexts?) (Kuhn et al., 2016).

Despite the shifted emphasis on argumentative writing as reflected in the call for 21st-century skills, educational researchers are concerned with argumentative writing instructions that tend to be commonly practiced in classrooms, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing context in which the instructions are not likely to enhance students' reasonable argument talk and writing for the global society.

The traditional approach to teaching and learning argumentative writing involves a focus on the form and structure of an argument. However, less attention is given to developing transfer skills and using argumentation as an inquiry tool beyond the structures. This approach has been criticized for needing to be adequate in preparing students for the demands of the 21st-century workplace, where collaboration, creativity, and communication are essential skills. However, EFL instructors are forced to teach writing by focusing on the five-paragraph essay template due to the increasing requirements for standardized tests and national testing policies, usually related to university admission and studying abroad (Connor & Ene,

2019). In EFL contexts, the goal of students' writing primarily emphasizes practicing learning language and content rather than focusing on how to write (Manchón, 2011). There is no doubt that EFL students mostly lack genuine motivation and a lack of purpose for writing, resulting in deficiencies in argumentative writing ability.

To overcome the challenges of learners in argumentative writing, Hirvela (2017) proposed the appropriate instruction of argumentation to be implemented in teaching second/ foreign language writing. His dichotomy of argumentative writing is as follows: learning to argue and arguing to learn- the distinction between argument as reasoning and argument as inquiry. The argument as reasoning is mainly based on logic. Its ultimate goal is to develop an argument structure in which the claim is well-supported with the elements outlined in the Toulmin model (Toulmin, 1958, 2003). On the contrary, argument as inquiry focuses on applying the components of arguments as tools to explore the subjects in depth.

Approaching the teaching and learning of argumentative writing as a social practice is not to deny the role of cognitive and linguistic perspectives involved in the argument process. The dialogic approach does not ignore attention to argumentative texts and how they are structured, and how they are used. This present study employed the dialogic approach and fostered the classroom debate under the integrated learning to argue and arguing to learn instructions. Debates have been considered potentially effective pedagogical tools for offering meaningful, functional interaction. In debates, students argue with a communicative purpose in mind: defending their proposition and weakening that of their opponents. Debate activities can enhance learners' language proficiency (e.g., speaking) by scaffolding the learning process in ways that can lead to language development (e.g., Lustigova, 2011).

Admittedly, considerable studies have been dedicated to the examination of argumentative writing performance in the EFL context, but those on the intervention of the integrated learning to argue and arguing to learn instructions with classroom debates and exploring the relationship between the impact of the integrated instructions and EFL learners' language proficiency assessed by the standardized tests were definitely scarce. Other investigators (e.g., Majidi et al., 2023) assessed the potential of debate intervention on the quality of argumentative essays but the participants of the study were ESL writers rather than EFL learners. The forgoing experiments (e.g., Zou et al., 2021; Wu & Chen, 2021) investigating the development of students' argumentation in EFL writing have been limited to using the two argumentative instructions (learning to argue and arguing to learn) rather than examining the EFL learners' proficiency. The contribution of their findings would be more effective if the researchers included the factor of the EFL participants' language competency in the target language. On analyzing the previous studies concerning EFL writers and noticing that there is scant information on the use of argumentative instructions for enhancing the learners' proficiency, researchers may inevitably wonder to which extent the use of integrated instructions might be associated with EFL learners' language development, or whether there exist significant gains of argumentative structure and quality of reasoning before and after the treatment. Addressing the research gaps, the present study's findings could help deepen our understanding of the effectiveness of the integrated instructions in the EFL context.

2. Literature Review

Developing writing competence in English as a foreign language (EFL) has become increasingly demanding in higher education and competitive job markets (Elsner, 2018). While composing texts poses difficulties for many learners (Graham & Perin, 2007), those who are foreign language learners are particularly challenged (Hinkel, 2011; Silva, 1993). The learners' performance in writing is considered more challenging for non-native EFL writers (Javadi-Safa, 2018). EFL learners also face various difficulties when it comes to writing in English, particularly in argumentative writing. This issue may be crucial for less proficient writers (MacArthur et al., 2004). So far, research has rarely focused on these learners, and insights into students' struggles with writing well-argued essays are scarce.

Several factors were taken into account for overcoming EFL learners' difficulties in argumentative writing. According to the categories of Byrne (1988), as cited in (Pratiwi, 2015), previous studies attempted to approach the issue from cognitive, linguistic, and psychological perspectives (Tasya, 2022). Their findings generally revealed that students' challenges in composing argumentative texts belong to cognitive problems for coherence and organization, structure, spelling, punctuation, and strength of argument; linguistic problems for correct grammatical usage and vocabulary; psychological problems for lack of interaction with readers and lack of knowledge regarding the stages and genre of argumentative writing. The educational researchers in the EFL context have been mostly tied to the studies for those difficulties that mostly appear in students' essays. However, it is now the time to move to the next level of finding the root cause of the issue and preparing for our EFL learners to be able to apply argumentative writing as an effective tool for their in-depth learning and everyday life situations.

Considering argumentation methods for the EFL context, the need to bridge the two subfields of argumentation theory and educational practice has recently drawn scholars' attention. There is still a lack of clarity on how the concepts of philosophy and logic can interconnect and mutually support the educational context despite the common trends of analyzing and producing arguments in education. A tentative way to integrate the two research areas, in particular, argumentation theory and educational practice, can lead to more effective practice-oriented developments of philosophical theories and more comprehensive empirical research in education. Argumentation is usually grounded in two fundamental dimensions_ more precisely, either as a product, namely argument, or as a process of learning. Independent growth of two aspects or comparing them can complicate the case. (Rapanta et al., 2013). It is clear that combining the two approaches can be highly beneficial to both areas.

Under such circumstances, the particular dichotomy of argumentative writing that could help teachers is learning to argue and arguing to learn. The distinction emerging in the L1 argument scholarship approaches argumentation differently: argument as a form of reasoning (conceptualizing arguments to rational criticism through logical reasoning generally in all fields) (Toulmin, 1958; 2003) and argument as a form of inquiry (conceptualizing arguments as tools to deepen thinking skills and understanding subject-specific matter) (Kuhn et al., 2016).

In modern times of the education sector, Deanna Kuhn has been the most influential scholar on treating arguments as higher-order thinking skills that can be enhanced throughout the arguing process. The researchers Andriessen et al. (2003) introduced a new research direction, "Arguing to learn," in their book. The focus of the approach is the interactive dynamics of groups rather than individual learners. The educational researchers working on this approach start from the students' already possessed argumentative skills, for example, using the skills in their daily communication, to the targeted higher-order thinking skills.

Though there are two prevalent approaches to the study of writing: the product-oriented approach and the process-oriented approach, in the argumentative pedagogy, Hirvela (2017) proposed a framework to blend the two core orientations, learning to argue (using arguments as a product) and arguing to learn (using arguments as an inquiry process for deeper understanding of a topic) as part of a curricular continuum in order to address the shortcomings of the writers. Teachers are encouraged not to see these approaches as an either-or choice and to integrate them into argumentative writing instruction.

The traditional orientation of the learning-to-argue approach can enhance the constructive development of logic writing in the EFL context. However, reinforcing arguing to learn from the conceptual box can empower the teaching-learning process beyond argument structure. Thinking of argumentative writing repertoire strictly from an inquiry-driven approach that applies writing as an analytical tool can address critical thinking concerns in EFL writing courses. Being contextualized in the well-developed domain of collaborative learning, arguing to learn is also termed collaborative argumentation-based learning.

To engage the concepts of learning to argue and arguing to learn in a single curriculum, Kuhn et al. (2008) were the first to fully implement the “Argue with Me” (AWM) method built upon earlier versions by Felton (2004) and Udell (2007). The AWM method primarily serves as an approach designed to primarily enhance argument reasoning skills, but it has also been found to significantly contribute to gains in content knowledge. As evidenced by the study of Iordanou et al. (2019), engaging in a single curriculum can lead to the achievement of both learning to argue and arguing to learn objectives. Furthermore, these findings have been supported by other researchers, such as Larrain et al. (2021), who have replicated the results regarding the gains in argumentation skills and knowledge within the context of a single intervention. Another study by Iordanou et al. (2016) revealed a strong connection between constructing argument knowledge and acquiring content knowledge, with reasoning and knowledge mutually supporting each other.

Several studies have highlighted the positive impact of debate pedagogy on enhancing reasoning and argumentative skills (Oros, 2007; Zorwick & Wade, 2016). Engaging in debates exposes participants to conflicting viewpoints and challenges that necessitate higher-level reasoning. This involvement encourages critical analysis of opposing arguments and identification of inconsistencies. Debate embodies the arguing-to-learn perspective by viewing argumentation as a tool for resolving issues and deepening comprehension of content. Ultimately, engaging in debates facilitates the simultaneous development of argumentation skills and content knowledge. This empirical paper aims to foster debate pedagogy with the integration of two argumentation perspectives, learning to argue and arguing to learn, examining whether the intervention is beneficial for argumentative writing performance and English language proficiency.

3. Methodology

The present study adopted the quasi-experimental research design, which is frequently applied in educational contexts since researchers can examine the impact of interventions within the natural classroom context of the design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Creswell, 2017). According to the purpose of the study, this is a quantitative research. The design comprised an intervention with a pre-test and post-test of the Oxford Versant English Placement Test and argumentative essays.

3.1. Purpose of Study and Research Questions

This study aimed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the impact of integrated instructions on how they can enhance undergraduate EFL learners’ development of argumentative writing and English language proficiency.

In light of the dichotomy of integrating argumentative writing instructions, learning to argue and arguing to learn, plus dialogic teaching and classroom debates, the present study investigates the impact of the integrated instructions on the development of EFL learners’ English language proficiency and argumentative writing performance. The present study addresses the following research questions:

1. Does the writing, speaking, reading, or listening of Myanmar EFL learners who received the integrated instructions improve? If so, which skills were significantly improved?
2. How did the students’ argumentative skills change when they were engaged in the integrated instructions?
3. Is there a correlation between English language proficiency DELTA scores and argumentative writing DELTA scores?

3.2. Participants and Context of the Study

The study consisted of 26 second-year (all females) undergraduate Myanmar students majoring in English specialization from three public universities in upper Myanmar, ranging in age from 19 to 22 years, who voluntarily participated. Before entering university, these students had, on average, received 11 years of learning English language. The second-year group was purposefully selected based on the goal of the intervention. The study was conducted as an online course from October to December 2021 due to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic and political situations in Myanmar.

From the early 1980s, English as a foreign language in Myanmar became compulsory in primary schools and a medium of instruction in certain secondary and post-secondary courses (Kyau, 1993). In recent years, there has been a growing demand for learning English to meet academic requirements and access opportunities for international study or work (Tin, 2014). Today, English is compulsory across various disciplines in undergraduate courses and is a specialized subject in certain fields. Due to the country's current situation, research conducted in Myanmar EFL context is limited. Particularly, the study focused on argumentative writing of Myanmar EFL undergraduates has been largely unexplored. Given the few publications about EFL students in Myanmar, the study aims to fill the research gap.

3.3. Instruments

Prior to data collection, an informed consent letter was given to the students to participate in the study voluntarily. The researcher assured the students that their data would remain confidential and be used only for research purposes and that they could withdraw from the study if they desired. Two instruments were used for data gathering: *The Versant English Placement Test (VEPT, 2021)* and two argumentative timed-essays. VEPT was used to check the participants' English proficiency levels before and after the intervention. VEPT is an online assessment that uses Pearson's advanced technology for automatic scoring, known for its high reliability and credibility. The standardized test, designed for adults and students aged 16 and above, lasts around 50 minutes. It can be taken from any location using a computer. The test evaluates one's proficiency in four skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) in comprehending and responding naturally and appropriately to everyday topics. Its automated scoring system provides instant, fair, and reliable results with CEFR levels.

Two timed-essays of no fewer than 250 words were administered as the pre-test and post-test to assess the EFL learners' argumentative writing performance. The essay topics were taken from ICNALE (Ishikawa, 2013, 2018), a corpus of 5600 argumentative essays composed in English by Asian college students. For the pre-test, the participants were assigned to write an argumentative essay on the topic: "It is important for college students to have a part-time job" within the class period (50 min). For the post-test, they were asked to write on the topic: "Smoking should be completely banned at all the restaurants in the country?" Neither dictionaries nor other references were allowed. Both topics are accessible and interesting to students in this age group. The topics of the pre-test and post-test argumentative writing were not discussed beforehand.

In assessing students' argumentative writing, this study has mainly focused on two factors: the structure of the argument and the quality of reasoning, concerning the argumentative structural elements- claim, data, counter-argument claim, counter-argument data, rebuttal claim and rebuttal data. The rubric applied to evaluate argumentative writing performance was designed following guidelines employed in previous studies (Nussbaum & Kardash, 2005; Qin & Karabacak, 2010; Stapleton & Wu, 2015), which was initially based on Toulmin's model in 2003. All the argumentative essays were assessed analytically according to the Analytic Scoring Rubric for Argumentative Writing (ASRAW) (Appendix A) by the first author and the volunteer EFL teacher independently. We had at least seven years of teaching experience and were quite familiar with the marking criteria of EFL writing. Each composition was anonymously labeled with a code number to avoid bias based on the writers' personal information during scoring. The first author trained the volunteer teacher to code 10% of the data together to ensure coding reliability and

familiarity with the rubric. The inter-rater reliability of the pre-test and post-test reached 0.79 and 0.83, ensuring consistency among the scores given by the raters. The final score for each argumentative essay was the mean of the marks the two raters gave. The statistical analyses in the present study were run with SPSS (Version 24.0), statistical computer software.

3.4. The Intervention

The first author started teaching intervention in the first week after the pre-test. The intervention focused on argument-based inquiry and took place from October to December 2021. The procedure emphasized the development of argumentative writing structures during the first four weeks (learning to argue instruction) and highlighted the use of argumentation as an inquiry tool for critical thinking (arguing to learn instruction) in the following seven weeks. The intervention procedures followed the studies reported by Hirvela, (2017); Iman (2017); Iordanou & Rapanta, 2021; Kuhn et al., 2016; Majidi et al., 2020; Majidi et al., 2021, Zou et al., (2021) with some modest variations. Argument-based inquiry represents instructional approaches that encourage students to construct arguments while engaging in investigative tasks. According to the intervention guidelines, each phase targets the specific function of argumentative writing, which reflects the purpose of using argumentative writing as a tool.

From an initial set of seven controversial topics polled before the start of the intervention, five argumentative topics were chosen based on the students' votes. The two topics were selected for the first phase (learning to argue instruction). The topics were "Is it appropriate to keep animals in zoos?" and "Should the youth listen to the elderly for future career choices?" In the second phase, dialogic classroom debates were practiced under arguing to learn instructions. The titles for debates were "Is tourism good or bad for the environment", "Is technology making us more distant than connected to people? And "Are women better leaders than men?" During the lessons, the students were required to use English to give reasons, express likes and dislikes and explain their preferences. The classroom materials and tasks were selected to match the interests and levels of the participants. The students were required to attend the online classes regularly. The first author gave the absentees the extra classes so as not to be left behind.

The procedures of the first phase for four weeks (learning to argue instruction) are as follows: Introducing the basic argumentative elements (claim and data) and evidence of reasoning, identifying argumentative elements in the given reading articles and from controversial topics of TED Talk and analyzing the acceptability and relevance of the support used in argumentative writing, approaching the opposing side of the arguments (counter-arguments and rebuttals) with collaborative reasoning practice and composing individual argumentative essays after developing collaborative writing practice for the chosen topic 1 and 2.

The second phase deals with applying the knowledge of argumentation in classroom debates (arguing to learn instruction) for seven weeks as follows: Gathering data to support one's claims, counter-argue and refute and evaluate the ideas in small group work, Considering the argumentative topic from different points of views by using reflection sheet of Kuhn et al. (2016) (Appendix B), Practicing the classroom debates (Topic 3, 4, and 5) with the World School Debating Championship format (Wirawan, 2010), presenting individual argumentative writing, using Peer-assessment among the students and getting feedback from the first author, finalizing the individual argumentative writing and doing the overall reflection on the learning process of the integrated instructions.

Prior to the research debate, the students received preparation time of 1 week. Since the students were allowed to vote the topics they found interesting, they were motivated to prepare for the topic. The students had to prepare for both sides of the issue since they had to draw lots for protagonists or antagonists of the debate. We dedicated one session to each topic, and we used two debate formats: debating in a group of six debates (three students in favor and three against) and a one-to-one debating format. Every debate followed a structured sequence comprising three phases: pre-debate, debate, and

post-debate. Students were given a reading assignment related to the debate topic and tasked with finding and reading an additional article. They were then directed to summarize these articles and construct a case defending their viewpoints.

This intervention was conducted in 33 teaching sessions in which each session lasted for 50 minutes excluding the pre-test and the post-test.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. The Impact of the Integrated Instructions on EFL Students' English Language Proficiency

In order to answer the question of whether implementing the integrated instructions is effective in developing English language proficiency of EFL learners, the Versant English Placement test was administered. Based on the findings of the Paired-Samples Statistics, there was improvement between the students' pre-test and post-test scores of English language proficiency, as shown in Table 1. The results showed that the students improved in all of their four skills.

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Writing skill (Post-test)	66.0385	26	7.36739	1.44486
	Writing skill (Pre-test)	60.1154	26	9.45443	1.85417
Pair 2	Speaking skill (Post-test)	46.3462	26	11.45755	2.24701
	Speaking skill (Pre-test)	44.5000	26	11.59051	2.27309
Pair 3	Reading skill (Post-test)	55.9231	26	6.79955	1.33350
	Reading skill (Pre-test)	52.2692	26	8.07741	1.58411
Pair 4	Listening skill (Post-test)	57.5769	26	9.95258	1.95186
	Listening skill (Pre-test)	53.8846	26	8.90989	1.74737

Table 1: Paired sample statistics for pre-test and post-test results of EFL learners' English language proficiency

The online statistics test of Spring (2022) was employed to further examine the effect size of the data. Despite the continuous data, the Shapiro-Wilk test for normal distribution indicated that at least one of the data sets did not meet the criteria for normality. Consequently, the data was treated as ordinal rather than assuming a normal distribution. Given that the data was paired, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was employed for the analysis instead. Regarding the effect size, writing skill suggests a large effect ($Z = 3.40, p < 0.01, r_s = 0.69$), and speaking skill reveals a medium effect ($Z = 2.06, p = 0.04, r_s = 0.40$). However, there was a small effect on reading skill ($Z = 1.36, p = 0.17, r_s = 0.27$). Due to the continuous and normal nature of the data of listening skill as checked by a Shapiro-Wilk Test and the fact that the data was paired, a dependent (or paired) t-test was used. There is no significant difference in the two tests (pre-test and post-test): $t(25) = -1.92, p = 0.07, d = 0.38$. As measured by Cohen's d , the effect size suggests a small effect. In summary, the students improved their English language proficiency from pre-test to post-test, regardless of their beginning levels.

4.2. The Impact of the Integrated Instructions on EFL Students' Argumentative Writing Structure and Reasoning

The comparison of students' performance revealed a significant overall improvement from the pre-test to the post-test of argumentative essays. The analytic scoring rubric for argumentative writing (ASRAW) of Stapleton and Wu (2015) was employed. Concerned with specific elements of argumentation, improvements were observed in all aspects except for the claim, which received full credit (5 points) if students stated points of view. The improvements in the use of argumentative elements from the pre-test to the post-test were shown in Table 2 as follows: data (from 12.02 to 14.33), counter-argument claim (from 5.97 to 9.61), counter-argument data (from 4.13 to 12.79), rebuttal claim (from 0.77 to 7.60), and

rebuttal data (from 0.58 to 5.38). Particularly noteworthy gains were seen in counter-arguments and rebuttals. Overall, these gains indicate that continued emphasis on argumentation in the intervention significantly students' mastery of argumentative elements and their ability to provide evidence-based reasoning, aligning with the course's objectives.

	N	Pre-test		Post-test	
		M	SD	M	SD
Argumentative Elements and Weightings					
Claim (5%)	26	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00
Data (25%)	26	12.02	3.08	14.33	3.97
Counter-argument Claim (10%)	26	5.96	4.69	9.61	1.36
Counter-argument Data (25%)	26	4.13	5.29	12.79	4.43
Rebuttal claim (10%)	26	0.77	2.32	7.60	4.15
Rebuttal data (25%)	26	0.58	2.16	5.38	5.73

Table 2: Students' performance on pre-test and post-test of argumentative writing

After Paired samples statistics tests, we investigated the effect size of the gains in students' argumentative elements in this intervention by applying the online statistics test of Spring (2022). Despite the continuous nature of the data, at least one of the data sets failed the Shapiro-Wilk Test of normalcy, and therefore the data was treated as ordinal. Since the data was paired, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used. The effect size of the argumentative elements reveals a large effect (data, $Z = 2.77, p = 0.01, r_s = 0.64$), (counter-argument claims, $Z = 3.07, p < 0.01, r_s = 0.85$), (counter-argument data, $Z = 4.17, p < 0.01, r_s = 0.83$), (rebuttal claim, $Z = 3.90, p < 0.01, r_s = 0.92$) and (rebuttal data, $Z = 3.45, p < 0.01, r_s = 0.89$). It is noteworthy that all the argumentative elements except claims suggest significant development after implementing the integrated instructions.

4.3. The Correlation between the Impact of Integrated Instructions on EFL Students' Argumentative Writing Performance and English Language Proficiency

The main objective of this research question was to investigate whether the individuals who showed advancement in their English language proficiency were the same individuals who exhibited improvement in specific elements of argumentative writing. If these two groups of people overlap, the finding strongly suggests that enhancing English language skills can contribute to developing students' ability to write effective arguments. The present study demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between the enhancement of EFL learners' argumentative writing performance and English language proficiency. The data shown in Table 3 indicated that the correlation coefficient between the two variables, gains of the argumentative element data and English language proficiency speaking skill had a value of 0.612, which is significant at 0.01 level ($r=0.612, P \leq 0.01$). The two variables are correlated with each other significantly and positively. Furthermore, the development of counter-argument claims revealed a statistically significant correlation to the gains in writing skill in the post-test of the standardized test at 0.01 level ($r=0.549, P \leq 0.01$). And the correlation was also evident between the enhancement of counter-argument data and writing skill. The next interesting finding of the rebuttal data is the result of correlation at 0.05 level with listening skill ($r=0.398$) and the significant relationship with writing skill ($r=0.421$). It was found that the coefficient correlation was not significant between the remaining argumentative elements and English language skills, although there is a trend towards a positive relationship. Based on the findings of the study, English language proficiency plays an important role in EFL undergraduates' argumentative writing. Therefore, it can be generally concluded that the more proficient EFL learners are in the target language, the more persuasive and effective argumentative writing they can compose.

Argumentative elements DELTA	Overall English language proficiency	Writing DELTA	Speaking DELTA scores	Listening DELTA scores	Reading DELTA
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scores		scores			scores
Claim	^a	^a	^a	^a	^a
Data	.506**	.333	.612**	.330	.126
Counter-argument claim	.417*	.549**	.150	.165	.373
Counter-argument data	.539**	.518**	.346	.382	.240
Rebuttal claim	.385	.295	.318	.275	.237
Rebuttal data	.517**	.421*	.228	.398*	.351
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
a. Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant.					

Table 3: Correlation between English language proficiency DELTA scores and argumentative writing DELTA scores of EFL learners

5. Discussion

The present study used the Versant English Placement test to measure how students' English proficiency changed after the intervention. As shown in Figure 1, the results indicate that the integrated instruction led to the students' English language improvement within 11 weeks. Based on test findings, the large effect size of significant difference in two tests (pre-test and post-test) was found in the students' writing scores. Some may argue that the considerable impact of writing skill is not surprising due to the emphasis on improving argumentative writing in the integrated instructions. However, it is essential to note that the writing genre of the proficiency tests did not include argumentative writing questions. According to the official guide for the Versant English test (2021), the writing skills assessment evaluates how proficient the test-takers are in writing about everyday topics in English. The scoring is determined by the ability to express ideas and information coherently and organized, employing a diverse vocabulary and sentence structures. Thus, this study supported the idea that teaching integrated argumentative writing instructions can boost the general English proficiency of EFL learners. In other words, we can propose to have found a possible transfer of argumentative learning to other tasks and contexts in our study of integrated instruction. In line with earlier studies on argumentative learning (e.g., Kuhn & Crowell, 2011; Zou et al., 2021), students mentioned the potential transfer of applying their argument skills, such as addressing counter-arguments and structuring ideas logically, in various contexts beyond the classrooms.

Considering the descending order of large effect size, the next skill is speaking, the productive skill. In the speaking section of the Versant test, test-takers are evaluated on their ability to form complete sentences in English. The scoring criteria for the speaking test prioritize how well we produce consonants, vowels, and stress naturally and incorporate rhythm, phrasing, and timing appropriately. A possible explanation of the medium effect size of the gains in speaking skills could be implementing online classroom debate in the interactive argumentation lessons.

To enhance students' speaking in the EFL context, various ways have been used as the method of teaching and learning English to make the students understand easily. One of the effective methods to teach speaking skill is the debate method. Researchers such as Jost (2018) have provided theoretical support for using debate in EFL classrooms. For instance, the study conducted by Fauzan (2016) reported that EFL students employing debates improved their speaking skills from poor to strong levels. The findings of our present study also indicate that the debate method can improve students' speaking ability. It can be assumed that studies with debates may demonstrate a notable improvement in students' speaking proficiency. For the EFL context in Myanmar, where students are used to remaining silent and listening to the teachers, speaking is not an easy skill to enhance. For an open-ended question to share their feelings before the intervention, students commented that they were shy to participate and afraid of making mistakes since they did not have much experience in joining classroom debates. At the same time, some students were motivated to practice English in real-life communication. After the intervention, the present

study found that using debate could help students overcome their fear and improve their speaking competency. The current study's finding aligns with the study of Fukuda (2003), who conducted a debate study with Japanese students. Before debate practice, only about one-third of the students were unafraid to present their opinions when their ideas contradicted others. After the debate, the percentage increased to over half of the students, making them familiar with expressing different ideas. Generally, the debate method, viewed as a modern teaching strategy for speaking skills, involves active learning through communicative group activities, where two teams with speakers construct and counter-arguments on specified topics. Dobson (1981) supported various instructional types, like dialogues, small-group discussions, and debates, to enhance students' speaking skills. Dobson also endorsed the idea that engaging in debates facilitates enhanced speaking fluency among students, providing them with opportunities to express their feelings and thoughts on specific issues.

On the other hand, there are some challenges in EFL speaking classes. According to Padmadewi (1998), students experience anxiety when they are required to speak spontaneously and individually within limited time constraints. Tutyandari (2005) suggested that students may stay silent due to a lack of confidence, unfamiliarity with certain topics, and poor teacher-student relationships. Based on the findings of previous research, the present study carefully designed the classroom debate intervention, established a strong rapport between teachers and students, and provided ample time for students to prepare before conducting debates.

Despite the significant improvement in productive writing and speaking skills, a small effect size was found in the gain of receptive reading skills from the pre-test to the post-test in the present study. Though the students' listening skills scores were improved, there was no significant difference based on the data of the effect size. The Versant English Placement reading and listening tests administer the test-taker's ability to comprehend written English texts on everyday subjects, the capacity to grasp the meaning of the text, infer the underlying message, and respond appropriately. Since the questions test inferential comprehension and listening skills, which require higher-level questioning and critical thinking skills, students may need more time to train and become familiar with it.

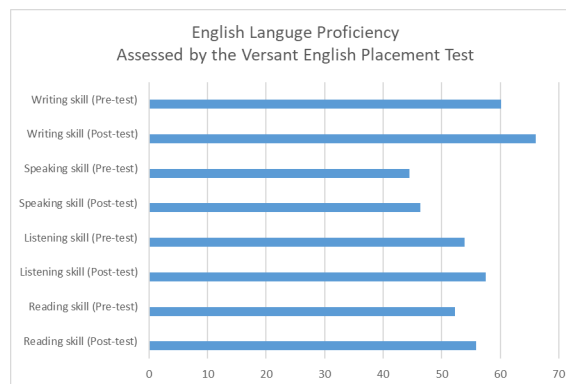


Figure 1: EFL learners' English Language Proficiency at pre-test and post-test

In answer to the research question of the impact of the integrated instructions on the students' gains in argumentative structure and reasoning, the analytic rubric ASRAW was applied. The significant distinctions of the scores were seen in all elements of the argument but claim, for which the rubric was designed (5 or 0) for mentioning the students' standpoints. The findings can offer more interesting data if the rubric provides score levels for analyzing the claims more in detail. The significant distinctions of data, counter-arguments, and rebuttals showed that the integrated instructions enabled students to improve their argumentative performance. Such a finding supports previous studies (Zou et al., 2021; Wu & Chen, 2021) in that both learning to argue and arguing to learn instructions positively affected students' argumentation in EFL writing.

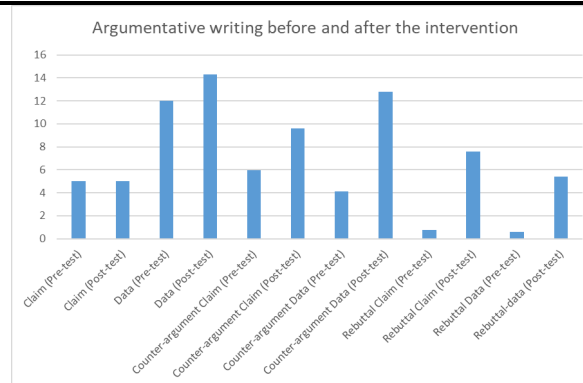


Figure 2: EFL learners' argumentative writing at pre-test and post-test

Prior to the intervention, the general absence of counter-arguments and rebuttals in Myanmar EFL students' argumentative essays could be affected by several reasons. One possible explanation is that elaborating counter-arguments is cognitively challenging, often requiring higher-order thinking skills, as indicated by research (Crammond, 1998; Qin & Karabacak, 2010). Various studies have noted a limited inclusion of opposing side arguments (refutation) in argumentative essays composed by the majority of students, not only in the research of native English learners, L2, and EFL contexts. This limitation is particularly prominent among students with different cultural backgrounds who are unfamiliar with refuting someone's opposing ideas. As shown in Figure 2, the argumentative elements, including the challenging aspects such as counter-arguments and rebuttals, significantly improved after the intervention. It is noteworthy that the obtained effects in this study resulted from participating in 11 weeks, within a short period of intervention. The longitudinal study of the intervention would be more beneficial for low-proficiency EFL learners.

In the present study, implementing the integrated argumentative instructions and classroom debates could foster the significant correlation of the development of English language proficiency and argumentative writing performance of EFL undergraduates. The findings revealed that the intervention impacted in a positive way to help EFL learners overcome their challenges. While acknowledging the potential impact of consistent practice, we contend that the significant improvements observed in the present study could not be solely attributed to the practice alone. The intervention sessions occurred in an authentic, meaningful, and interactive setting that could foster the learners' collaborative reasoning and ability to compose argumentative writing with relevant evidence and acceptable reasoning and raise their awareness of applying argumentation as a tool beyond the focus on argumentative structures. This finding of the present study is a response to the call of Hirvela (2017) and Newell et al. (2015), who encourage L2 and EFL instructors to approach argumentative writing from both dimensions: learning to argue and arguing to learn and integrate them in writing pedagogy so that learners can transfer argumentative learning to other academic contexts everyday life situations.

6. Limitations and Conclusions

While our findings show promise, they should be considered alongside several limitations. Assessing students' essay writing that relied on just two essays (pretest and posttest), potentially not fully capturing their complete writing abilities. Our study's sample was restricted to second-year students without control groups, warranting future research to encompass other levels or graduates for experiments. Additionally, our focus was solely on the impact of debate pedagogy on argumentative writing. Investigating how this pedagogy might enhance other writing genres could be a valuable avenue for further exploration.

Despite recognizing the limitations, we consider our study's findings to offer significant insights into how debate teaching under the integrated instruction of argumentative writing can contribute to the

advancement of EFL learners' proficiency and argumentative writing. While implementing the intervention in EFL classes may pose additional demands on instructors, the results are worth the time and effort. We hope the present findings of the study have important implications for EFL argumentative writing pedagogy.

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Appendix A: Analytic Scoring Rubric for Argumentative Writing (ASRAW)

Analytic Scoring Rubric for Argumentative Writing (ASRAW)

1. Claim(s) (5%)	Score: 5 States point(s) of view			Score: 0 Does not state point(s) of view	
	Score: 25	Score: 20	Score: 15	Score: 10	Score: 0
2. Data (25%)	a. Provides multiple reasons for the claim(s), and b. All reasons are sound/acceptable and free of irrelevancies	a. Provides multiple reasons for the claim(s), and b. Most reasons are sound/acceptable and free of irrelevancies, but one or two are weak	a. Provides one to two reasons for the claim(s), and b. Some reasons are sound/acceptable, but some are weak or irrelevant	a. Provides only one reason for the claim(s), or b. The reason provided is weak or irrelevant	a. No reasons are provided for the claim(s); or b. None of the reasons are relevant to/support the claim(s)
	Score: 10 Provides counterargument claim(s)/alternative view(s)			Score: 0 Does not provide counterargument claim(s)/alternative view(s)	
3. Counterargument Claim(s)/Alternative Point(s) of View(10%)	Score: 25	Score: 20	Score: 15	Score: 10	Score: 0
	a. Provides multiple reasons for the counterargument claim(s) /alternative view(s), and b. All counterarguments/reasons for the alternative view(s) are sound/acceptable and free of irrelevancies	a. Provides multiple reasons for the counterargument claim(s)/alternative view(s), and b. Most counterarguments/reasons for the alternative view(s) are sound/acceptable and free of irrelevancies, but one or two are weak	a. Provides one to two reasons for the counterargument claim(s) /alternative view(s), and b. Some counterarguments/reasons for the alternative view(s) are sound/acceptable, but some are weak or irrelevant	a. Provides only one reason for the counterargument claim(s)/alternative view(s), or b. The counterargument/reason for the alternative view is weak or irrelevant	a. No reasons are provided for the counterargument claim(s)/alternative view(s); or b. None of the reasons are relevant to/support the counterargument claim(s)/alternative view(s)
4. Counterargument Data/Supporting Reasons for Alternative Point(s) of View(25%)	Score: 10 Provides rebuttal claim(s)			Score: 0 Does not provide rebuttal claim(s)	
	Score: 25	Score: 20	Score: 15	Score: 10	Score: 0
5. Rebuttal Claim(s) (10%)	a. Refutes/points out the weaknesses of all the counterarguments, and b. All rebuttals are sound/acceptable c. The reasoning quality of all the rebuttals are stronger than that of the counterarguments	a. Refutes/points out the weaknesses of all the counterarguments, and b. Most rebuttals are sound/acceptable, but one or two are weak c. The reasoning quality of most rebuttals are stronger than that of the counterarguments, while one or two are equal to that of the counterarguments	a. Refutes/points out the weaknesses of all the counterarguments, and b. Some rebuttals are sound/acceptable, but some are weak c. The reasoning quality of some rebuttals are stronger than that of the counterarguments, while some are weaker than that of the counterarguments	a. Refutes/points out the weaknesses of some counterarguments, or b. Few of the rebuttals are sound/acceptable; most of them are weak, or c. The reasoning quality of most rebuttals are weaker than that of the counterarguments	a. No rebuttals are provided; or b. None of the rebuttals can refute the counterarguments
	Score: 25	Score: 20	Score: 15	Score: 10	Score: 0
6. Rebuttal Data* (25%)	Score: 10 Provides rebuttal claim(s)			Score: 0 Does not provide rebuttal claim(s)	
	a. Refutes/points out the weaknesses of all the counterarguments, and b. All rebuttals are sound/acceptable c. The reasoning quality of all the rebuttals are stronger than that of the counterarguments	a. Refutes/points out the weaknesses of all the counterarguments, and b. Most rebuttals are sound/acceptable, but one or two are weak c. The reasoning quality of most rebuttals are stronger than that of the counterarguments, while one or two are equal to that of the counterarguments	a. Refutes/points out the weaknesses of all the counterarguments, and b. Some rebuttals are sound/acceptable, but some are weak c. The reasoning quality of some rebuttals are stronger than that of the counterarguments, while some are weaker than that of the counterarguments	a. Refutes/points out the weaknesses of some counterarguments, or b. Few of the rebuttals are sound/acceptable; most of them are weak, or c. The reasoning quality of most rebuttals are weaker than that of the counterarguments	a. No rebuttals are provided; or b. None of the rebuttals can refute the counterarguments

Note: * An implicit requirement of rebuttal data is subsumed under the requirements of row 4 "Counterargument Data", that is, each piece of rebuttal data should be aligned with each piece of counterargument data in terms of both quantity and logic.

Appendix B: Reflection Sheets of Kuhn et al. (2016)

158 ◆ Appendix 1: Supplementary Materials


B. Reflection Sheets (Own & Other)

Team members _____
Date _____

Let's think... Starting with our argument

One of our MAIN ARGUMENTS was:

Their COUNTERARGUMENT against our argument was:



Our COMEBACK was:

How can this COMEBACK be improved?
Is there a more effective comeback?

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Appendix 1: Supplementary Materials ◆ 159

Team members _____
Date _____

Let's think... Starting with the other side's argument

One of the other side's MAIN ARGUMENTS was:

Our COUNTERARGUMENT against their argument was:



Give a specific example of an improved, more effective COUNTERARGUMENT

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