

## **DEVELOPING STRONG COUNTER-ARGUMENTS AND REBUTTALS IN THE ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING**

Lia Safitri<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Zamzam<sup>2</sup>, Lalu Jaswadi Putera<sup>3</sup>, Amrullah<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Universitas Mataram

Email : [liasafitri362@gmail.com](mailto:liasafitri362@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [ahmadzamzam@unram.ac.id](mailto:ahmadzamzam@unram.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>, [elputra@unram.ac.id](mailto:elputra@unram.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>,  
[amrullah@unram.ac.id](mailto:amrullah@unram.ac.id)<sup>4</sup>

**ABSTRAK:** Dalam mempelajari tulisan argumentatif, argumen tandingan dan sanggahan sangat penting untuk meyakinkan pembaca, tetapi mahasiswa sering kali kesulitan mengintegrasikan argumen tandingan dan sanggahan yang kuat ke dalam tulisan mereka karena keterbatasan penguasaan elemen-elemen penting seperti konten dan kemahiran berbahasa. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan kinerja mahasiswa dalam menulis argumen tandingan dan sanggahan yang kuat dalam mata kuliah penulisan argumentatif dan strategi yang digunakan mahasiswa dalam mengembangkan elemen-elemen ini dalam esai argumentatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kualitatif dengan desain penelitian deskriptif. Untuk mengumpulkan data, para peneliti menggunakan alat penelitian utama untuk menganalisis 40 esai argumentatif yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa. Metode analisis konten digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi, mengeksplorasi, dan menginterpretasikan data. Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 92,5% dari total peserta menulis argumen tandingan dan sanggahan, dengan 90% menyusun argumen tandingan yang kuat dan 75% menyajikan sanggahan yang kuat. Penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa model pengajaran yang diterapkan oleh pengajar dapat menjadi alternatif dalam pembelajaran mata kuliah *Argumentative Writing* pada S1 Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris.

**Kata Kunci:** Argumen Kontra; Sanggahan; Penulisan Argumentatif; Kinerja Mahasiswa.

**ABSTRACT:** In learning argumentative writing, counter-arguments and rebuttals are essential to convince the readers. However, students often struggle to integrate strong counter-arguments and rebuttals into their writing due to limited mastery of crucial elements such as content and linguistic proficiency. Therefore, this research aims to describe students' performance in writing strong counter-arguments and rebuttals in argumentative writing courses and the strategies students employ in developing these elements in argumentative essays. This research utilized a qualitative study with a descriptive research design. To collect the data, the researchers are primary research tools for analyzing 40 argumentative essays written by the students. A content analysis method was used to identify, explore, and interpret the data. The research showed that 92.5% of the total participants wrote both counter-arguments and rebuttals, with 90% constructing strong counter-arguments and 75% presenting strong rebuttals. This research proved the applied teaching model in the course is recommended in the teaching of argumentative writing in the English education program.

**Keywords:** Counter-Arguments; Rebuttal; Argumentative Writing; Students Performance.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Counter-arguments are arguments that oppose the thesis or parts of the thesis. They express someone's viewpoint in disagreement with the author's position. This involves acknowledging a conflicting perspective within the arguments and then reaffirming the original arguments. In argumentative writing, the author needs to convince the audience that their opinion is the most valid. To achieve this, the writing must be balanced, incorporating opposing viewpoints (counter-arguments). Authors must effectively address and refute counter-arguments within their writing to strengthen their thesis. However, this remains challenging for students due to their limited mastery of essential writing elements such as content and linguistic proficiency. Moreover, the cognitive burden increases as students attempt to integrate various perspectives, which may overwhelm their mental capacity and make it difficult to produce cohesive arguments (Graham et al., 2018). As a result, students often fail to meet the criteria for substantive arguments. For counter-arguments to be persuasive, they must logically align with opposing perspectives (Iordanou et al., 2019). Consequently, constructing counter-arguments and rebuttals to strengthen arguments in argumentative writing poses significant challenges.

Creating appropriate counterarguments posed a specific challenge as well. In some instances of flawed counter-arguments, students would disregard the substance of their opposing viewpoint and instead resort to reiterating the reasons that supported their original assertions, or they would drift off-topic. Counter-arguments must engage with the logic of the opposing viewpoint to be persuasive effectively. Consequently, students of this age group may require more guidance to fully grasp the art of persuasion in argumentative writing. To aid students in improving the substantive aspects of their arguments, educators may incorporate pre-writing activities like brainstorming, debates, and group discussions, in addition to the slot-filling exercise employed in this intervention. (F. Liu & Stapleton, 2020)

McCarthy et al., (2021) outline the characteristics of argumentative writing, where the primary stance of the writer, often termed the thesis, is elucidated through the presentation of "supporting evidence." Nevertheless, to offer a comprehensive perspective to the audience, the writer must also contemplate and present the opposing viewpoint, commonly known as the "counter-argument." According to Afrin & Litman

(2023), the development of argumentative writing skills is paramount for students aspiring to become proficient writers and learners. In this context, the term "evidence usage" refers to how students illustrate the examples and details they employ to bolster their arguments, while "reasoning" pertains to how this evidence is expounded upon and connected to the overall argument.

According to El Khoiri & Widiati (2017), in the realm of argumentative writing, the presence of logical fallacies, which can be simply defined as errors in reasoning, indicates unsound arguments or irrelevant points that can undermine the strength of a claim, despite their significant role in determining the quality of arguments. Furthermore, various studies have indicated that students frequently overlook the incorporation of counter-arguments in their written compositions. The lack of language proficiency has led to the students' unawareness of their failure to incorporate counter-arguments and rebuttals in their written work. McCarthy et al., (2022) confirmed that deficiency in the integration of counterarguments can be linked to issues such as students grappling with high cognitive load. The outcomes derived from written arguments indicate that across all educational levels, there is a relatively low prevalence of students who incorporate opposition (counter-arguments) or respond to opposing perspectives (rebuttals or refutations).

According to previous research conducted by McCarthy et al., (2021), the absence of counter-arguments in students' writing appears to be a pervasive issue, irrespective of the student's native language. For instance, as scrutinized by Rusfandi (within the framework of McCarthy et al., 2021) study, the structural aspect of counter- arguments in essays written by Indonesian EFL students was investigated. The research outcomes unveiled that the majority of essays, whether composed in Indonesian or English, typically lacked opposing viewpoints. Similarly, as explored by Qin and Karabacak (in McCarthy et al., 2021) work, the domain of argumentative writing among Chinese L2 English speakers was examined. The findings indicated a notable prevalence of supporting claims over counter-arguments. Such empirical evidence serves as a springboard for the subsequent discourse on the challenges encountered by student writers when it comes to effectively integrating counterarguments into their argumentative compositions.

The research outlined above shows that students may not have incorporated counter-arguments for various reasons. In argumentative writing, most students still do not include counter-argument and rebuttal in their writing. Students also still make mistakes in the process of writing counter-argument and rebuttal, one of which is a logical fallacy. Furthermore, such issues can be compounded by student writers' struggles with metadiscourse awareness. Evidence of this nature has spurred the creation of various guidelines for integrating counter-arguments. In all such cases, it becomes apparent that explicit writing pedagogy and assignment requirements are of paramount importance if student writing is to benefit from the presence of rebuttal arguments.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the student's performance in constructing counter-arguments and rebuttals and to identify the strategies they employ. This analysis is aimed at addressing gaps in current writing pedagogy and providing recommendations for enhancing students' argumentative skills. This study focuses on analyzing how third- semester students in the English Education Department at the University of Mataram perform in developing counter-arguments and rebuttals in argumentative essays. It also seeks to identify the strategies they employ in constructing these elements and the challenges they encounter. By understanding these aspects, educators can better support students in improving their argumentative writing skills, ultimately enhancing their academic performance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

An argument is a set of premises that lead to a conclusion through reasoning. It serves as the foundation of argumentative writing, requiring clear evidence to support claims. According to Warman & Hamzah (2020), an argument consists of assumptions and conclusions that are connected through logical steps. To create a strong argument, writers must ensure that their premises are backed by credible data and reasoning, as argued by Siregar et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of empirical evidence in constructing effective arguments.

A counter-argument presents an opposing view that challenges the main argument.

D. Liu (2020) defines a counter-argument as an opposing perspective that questions the validity of the writer's claims, serving to enhance the persuasive power of an essay. The

use of counter-arguments shows that the writer has considered multiple perspectives, increasing the credibility of their argument. According to McCarthy et al. (2021), acknowledging and addressing counter-arguments is crucial for building a comprehensive argument. A strong counter-argument involves not only presenting opposing viewpoints but also providing evidence to support them (McCarthy et al., 2021).

Rebuttals are responses to counter-arguments that aim to refute opposing viewpoints and strengthen the original argument. A rebuttal identifies weaknesses in the counter-argument, such as logical fallacies or insufficient evidence (D. Liu, 2020). A well-crafted rebuttal can enhance the persuasiveness of an argument by directly addressing the concerns raised by the counter-argument. Stefani (2022) emphasizes the need for rebuttals to recognize opposing arguments, refute them with clear reasoning, and provide supporting evidence. This ensures that the rebuttal strengthens the thesis rather than merely dismissing the counter-argument.

Argumentative writing is a form of discourse that presents a particular stance on an issue, supported by evidence and reasoning to persuade the reader. According to Richards & Schmidt, as cited by Bekele et al. (2022), argumentative writing is designed to support or oppose controversial points, often reflecting the argumentation process itself. Toulmin (2003) outlines six key aspects of argumentative writing: claim, data, warrant, backing, rebuttal, and qualifier. The effective use of these components is essential to building a compelling argument. Furthermore, assessments of argumentative writing often focus on the structure and quality of the arguments presented (Siregar et al., 2021).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze students' performance in constructing strong counter-arguments and rebuttals in argumentative writing. The design was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of how students develop these elements in their essays, as qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of the processes and strategies students use in writing (Creswell, 2012). The research focused on analyzing argumentative essays written by third-semester students

enrolled in the Argumentative Writing course at the English Education Department of the University of Mataram.

The participants of this study were 40 third-semester students from the English Education Department at the University of Mataram, Lombok Indonesia. These students had previously enrolled paragraph and essay writing courses, making them sufficiently prepared for the argumentative writing course. The selection of participants was based on their enrollment in the course, ensuring that they had relevant experience in writing argumentative essays. The students' essays were used as the primary data source for this study.

The primary data for this study were collected use a documentation instrument through document analysis. The researcher gathered 40 argumentative essays written by the participants as part of their coursework. The essays were analyzed to examine the presence, strength, and construction of counter-arguments and rebuttals. The document analysis method was chosen as it allowed for a detailed investigation of the students' written work, which is essential for understanding their argumentative writing skills (Sugiyono, 2013).

The students' performance in constructing counter-argument and rebuttal in their writing was analyzed using a rubric proposed by Erduran et al. (2004). This rubric was modified for more practical use of evaluating the students' works presented in Table 1). This rubric evaluated the strength of arguments at different levels, from weak to strong, based on the inclusion of claims, evidence, and rebuttals.

**Table 1. Rubrics of Evaluating (Counter)-Argument and Rebuttals**

Argumentation Level	Score	Argumentation Content (Criterion)
Level 1	1	No clear argument (indirect claim)
	2	A simple argument
	3	A simple argument + no clear counter-Arguments
Level 2	1	A simple argument + weak counter-Argument

	2	A clear argument + medium counter-argument + no clear rebuttal
	3	A clear argument + medium counter-argument + weak rebuttal
Level 3	1	A clear Argument + strong counter-argument + medium rebuttal
	2	A clear Argument + strong counter-argument + strong rebuttal
	3	A clear Argument + strong counter-argument + strong rebuttal + evidence

Then, the data were analyzed by using a content analysis method suggested Moleong (2018), which includes several stages:

- 1) **Counter-Argument:** The presence and quality of counter-arguments in the students' essays were evaluated. This included analyzing whether the counter-arguments were relevant, supported by evidence, and logically connected to the main argument.
- 2) **Rebuttal:** The strength and effectiveness of the rebuttals were assessed. The analysis focused on how well the rebuttals refuted the counter-arguments and whether they were supported by strong reasoning and evidence.
- 3) **Writing Strategy:** The strategies employed by students in constructing counter-arguments and rebuttals were identified, including their use of logical reasoning, emotional appeal, and evidence-based arguments.
- 4) **Challenges:** The common challenges students faced in developing strong counter-arguments and rebuttals were also examined, including (Lack of evidence, Overreliance on personal opinion, Misrepresentation of opposing views and Logical fallacies).

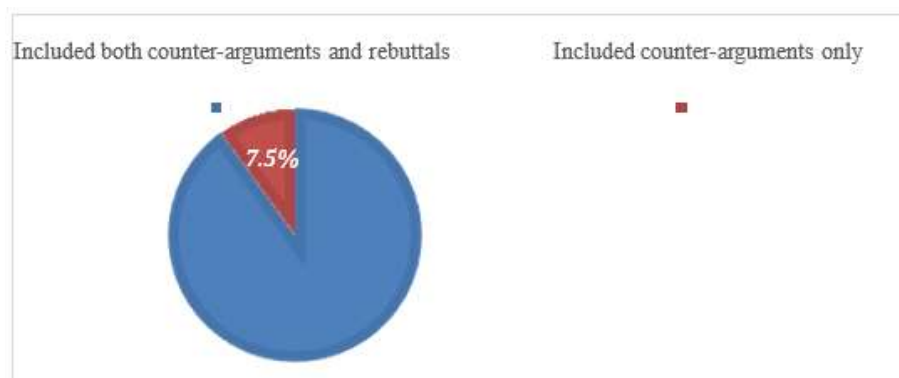
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze students' performance in developing strong counter-arguments and rebuttals in argumentative writing. The findings are divided into two key

sections: students' performance in writing counter-arguments and rebuttals, and the strategies employed in constructing these elements.

To address the research questions, the essays were analyzed to determine whether students included counter-arguments and rebuttals in their argumentative writing. The findings are presented in the following table:

The analysis of 40 argumentative essays revealed that 92.5% of students included both counter-arguments and rebuttals in their essays, indicating that the majority of students understood the structure of argumentative writing well. Figure 1 shows the distribution of students who included both elements compared to those who only included counter-arguments.



**Figure 1. Presence of Counter-Arguments and Rebuttals**

As shown in Figure 1, **7.5%** of the students only included counter-arguments without rebuttals, demonstrating a gap in their ability to fully refute opposing viewpoints. These students require further guidance on how to construct rebuttals effectively.

#### **Example of an essay with both counter-argument and rebuttal (Student #1):**

**Counter-argument:** *"Opponents argue that integrating Adat cloths into official uniforms may lead to division emphasizing cultural distinctions and creating an 'us versus them' mentality which could hinder collaboration and cohesion within diverse environments."*

**Rebuttal:** *"However, celebrating cultural diversity through Adat cloths provides an opportunity for appreciation and understanding, fostering unity and contributing to a shared cultural tapestry that enhances collaboration and inclusivity."*

**Example of an essay that only included a counter-argument without a rebuttal (Student #33):**



**Counter-argument:** *"While besambek activity aims to calm human life, the mind remains clear. Free from all kinds of disturbances (jinns and demons) including to obtain lawful sustenance."*

In the example, the student merely acknowledges a different point of view without providing an effective rebuttal.

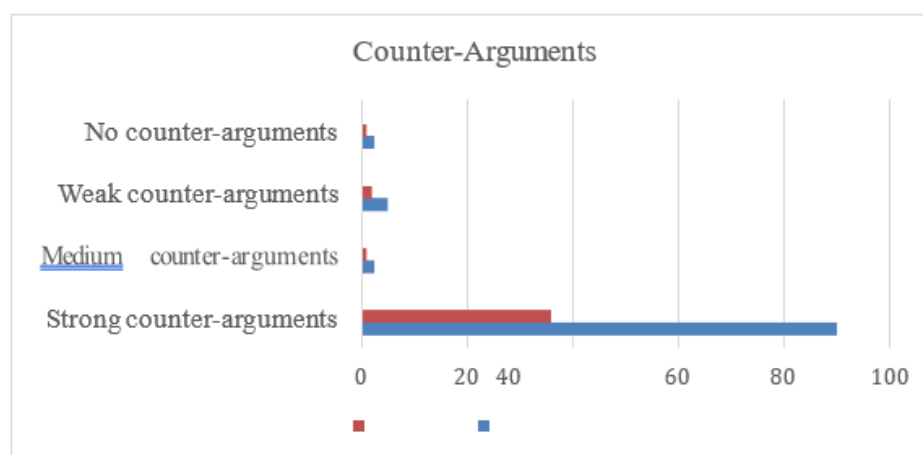
### ***Construction of Counter-Arguments and Rebuttals in Argumentative Essays***

The analysis also focused on how students constructed their **counter-arguments** and **rebuttals**. The students' performance was grouped into several levels. Figure 2 presents students' performance in constructing counter-arguments and figure 3 Presents students' performance in constructing rebuttals.

The majority of students fell into Level 3, with 90% of students constructing strong counter-arguments and 75% producing strong rebuttals. Students in Level 1 struggled to construct both elements or did not include them at all.

#### **1. Strength of Counter-Arguments**

Counter-arguments were evaluated based on their strength and relevance to the main argument. 90% of students were able to construct counter-arguments that directly challenged the main thesis and were supported by strong evidence or logical reasoning. Figure 2 shows the distribution of counter-arguments based on their strength.



**Figure 2. The Level Strength of Counter-Arguments**

**Example of a strong counter-argument (Student #10):**

*"However, many people regret that this happened and underestimate Indonesian workers who work abroad. Many people think that working in their own country or Indonesia is better than working abroad because salaries are still qualify."*

**Example of a medium counter-argument (Student #12):**

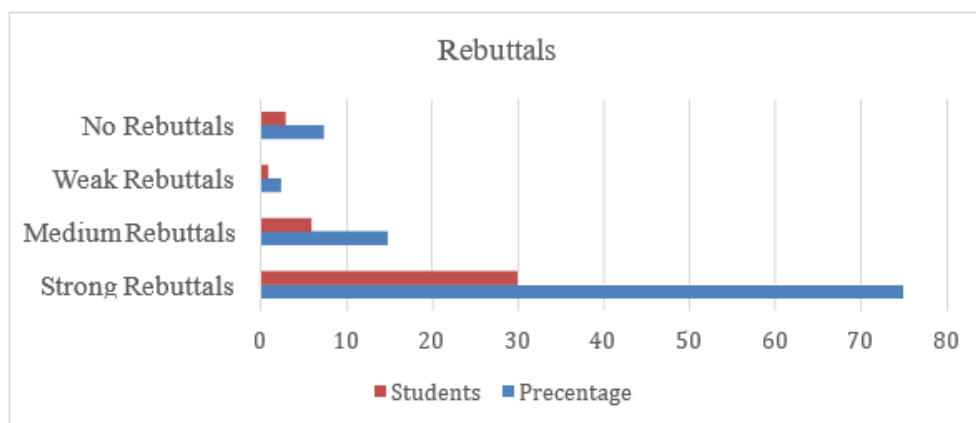
*"Opponents argue that enforcing adat clothing restricts personal expression and comfort."*

**Example of a weak counter-argument (Student #22):**

*"While besambek activity aims to calm human life, the mind remains clear. free from all kinds of disturbances (jinns and demons) including to obtain a lawful sustenance."*

## 2. Strength of Rebuttals

75% of students were able to construct rebuttals that effectively addressed the counter-arguments, with strong reasoning and supported by evidence. Figure 3 shows the distribution of rebuttals based on their strength.



**Figure 3. The Level Percentage Strength of Rebuttals**  
**Example of strong rebuttals (Student #10 ):**

*"But if it is compared with the amount of salary, Malaysia's salary is more than the minimum wage of Nusa Tenggara Barat. Based on WageIndicator.org, minimum wage of Nusa Tenggara Barat is Rp.2,371,407. Meanwhile, work in Malaysia, the salary*

*can reach 1,500 RM – 2,000 RM and if it converted into rupiah, it can reach 5 - 6 million per month only work as palm oil workers.”*

**Example of medium rebuttals (Student #16):**

*"However, celebrating cultural diversity through Adat cloths provides an opportunity for appreciation and understanding, fostering unity and contributing to a shared cultural tapestry that enhances collaboration and inclusivity."*

**Example of weak rebuttals (Student #12):**

*"However, uniforms are accepted for the sake of unity and discipline. Adat clothing allows individuals to express their cultural identity while maintaining formality."*

**Example of no rebuttals (Student #36):**

*"As mentioned in a proverb Sasak Remove sweet figsRasen-pedis pedis nce Thesweet taste of figs Sour-sour taste rice."*

***Strategies Used in Constructing Counter-Arguments and Rebuttals***

The analysis revealed several strategies employed by students in constructing counter-arguments and rebuttals presented in the table. The analysis revealed several strategies used by students in constructing counterarguments and rebuttals which are presented in Tabel 2.

**Table 2. Strategies Used in Constructing Counter-Argument and Rebuttals**

Category	Student Code	Percentage
Evidence-based Approach	1, 2, 5, 8, 13, 14, 18, 25, 26, 39, 7, 9, 17	34%
Logical reasoning	3, 10, 20, 23, 24, 27, 31, 35, 38	22.5%
Emotional appeal	4, 6, 12, 16, 21, 30, 32, 37	20%
Compromise or middle-ground	11, 15, 19, 22, 28, 29, 33, 34, 36, 40	23.5%

- 1) Evidence-based approach: Students using this strategy supported their counter-arguments and rebuttals with facts, statistics, or expert opinions. Example (Student#39 ):

Counter-argument: *"These believers argue that going to a prestigious university sets you up for a better job with a higher salary. Studies by Smith and Johnson in (2014) back this up, showing that graduates from these big-name universities tend to land higher-paying jobs because these schools have a great reputation"*

Rebuttal: *"Lee et al., (2018) found that success in careers isn't solely linked to the university's prestige. People from diverse educational backgrounds can achieve success based on their personal qualities and efforts. The idea that the reputation of a university alone determines job success neglects the influence of an individual's personal qualities and efforts. While prestigious universities may provide advantages, success is multifaceted, involving a combination of personal determination and ambition, rather than solely relying on the institution's name."*

This example demonstrates an evidence-based approach because it references specific studies (Smith and Johnson, 2014; Lee et al., 2018) to support both the counter-argument and the rebuttal. By citing research findings, the student backs up their assertions with factual evidence, enhancing the credibility of the argument.

- 2) Logical reasoning: These students constructed their arguments using deductive or inductive reasoning to support their claims. Example (Student #31):

Counter-argument: *"Some contend even peaceful groups enable extremists by spreading problematic ideas."*

Rebuttal: *"However, no evidence directly links mainstream Muslim groups to terrorism. Guilt by loose association jeopardizes all belief groups and risks governmental overreach into policing thoughts themselves. When all Islamic organizations are down, then nothing can prevent or fight the fall of extremism like this ISIS. According to Dubes Mulya Lubis, big organizations like NU and Muhammadiyah have a huge role in preventing radicalism and extremism from growing in society."*

That the presence and active role of large Islamic organizations like NU and Muhammadiyah are crucial in preventing the growth of extremism. The student connects the decline of such organizations with the potential rise of extremism, employing deductive reasoning to support the assertion.

- 3) Emotional appeal: Some students appealed to emotions or values to strengthen their arguments. Example (Student #16):

Counter-argument: *"Some may argue that adding Adat cloth to official uniforms might make things complicated. They think it could create divisions between people who don't know about that culture. They're concerned it might not look professional or practical in places like schools and government offices."*

Rebuttal: *"However, including Adat cloth doesn't have to make things complicated. Instead, it's a chance to learn and respect different cultures. By adapting smartly, it can make our places more diverse and welcoming without losing professionalism. Incorporating Adat cloth into official uniforms isn't just about fabric; it's a vibrant tapestry weaving together cultural heritage, inclusivity, and economic support. It's a call to honor our past, unite diverse communities, and empower local artisans - a thread connecting us to our roots while embracing a more inclusive future."*

This example appeals to emotions by highlighting the cultural significance of Adat fabrics and linking their preservation to personal expression, pride, and solidarity. The focus is on evoking feelings of cultural identity and community, rather than strictly factual arguments.

- 4) Compromise or middle-ground: A few students attempted to find a balance between opposing views. Example (Student #13):

Counter-argument: *"Although the migration of Indonesian migrant workers (TKI) promises higher wages, it cannot be ignored that not all of them achieve economic success. Some cases, especially those involving female labor, highlight negative impacts, including exposure to the risk of workplace harassment."*

Rebuttal: *"However, efforts can be made to enhance the protection of migrant workers through strong bilateral agreements and regulations between Indonesia and Malaysia. These measures may include ensuring workers' rights, access to healthcare services, and improved working conditions for migrant workers."*

This example represents a compromise or middle-ground approach by suggesting practical measures to address the issue of protecting migrant workers. Instead of advocating for extreme positions, the student proposes bilateral agreements and

regulations as a balanced solution that considers the interests and rights of both countries involved. This approach seeks common ground between potentially conflicting viewpoints.

### ***Common Challenges in Developing Strong Counter-Arguments and Rebuttals***

The analysis of students' essays revealed several common challenges they faced when constructing counter-arguments and rebuttals. This analysis focuses on the students who received lower scores or were at lower levels. The following is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Common Challenges in Developing Strong Counter-Arguments and Rebuttals**

Category	Students Code	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of evidence	15, 19, 22, 28, 37	5	12.5%
Overreliance on personal opinion	21, 29, 33	3	7.5%
Misrepresentation of opposing views	12	1	2.5%
Logical fallacies	36	1	2.5%
Total students in these categories: 10 out of 40			25%

- 1) Lack of evidence: Students struggled to provide concrete examples or specific evidence to support their counter-arguments and rebuttals (Student #15):

Counter-argument: *"The argument put up by critics is that Cilokak has a significant obstacle in keeping its attraction among younger people, particularly in light of globalization and the rise of a wide variety of musical genres."*

Rebuttal: *"However, In contrast to the fleeting character of many modern musical expressions, Cilokak's historical profundity and cultural resonance provide a distinctive and essential element, notwithstanding the criticism leveled at it."*

Both the counter-argument and rebuttal make broad claims without providing specific data, examples, or sources to support their statements.

- 2) Overreliance on personal opinion: Some students based their arguments primarily on personal beliefs without providing sufficient external evidence or logical reasoning.

(Student #29):

Counter-argument: *"Doesn't always meet expectations"*

Rebuttal: *"Work in Malaysia is something that is promising, the offer of a large salary does not necessarily mean that things will go according to plan. Every year young people are sent to work in Malaysia but some of them are abandoned. When they get there they have to pay for several things which make them run out of their wealth and have to pay for it. them to return or be stranded there"*

This example shows an overreliance on personal opinion because the student makes sweeping statements about the experiences of workers in Malaysia without providing any statistical data, specific case studies, or credible sources. The claims about abandonment and financial struggles are presented as factual but appear to be based on personal beliefs or anecdotal evidence rather than substantiated facts.

- 3) Misrepresentation of opposing views: Some students presented weak or oversimplified versions of counter-arguments, making them easier to refute but less representative of genuine opposing viewpoints. (Student #12):

Counter-argument: *"Opponents argue that enforcing adat clothing restricts personal expression and comfort."*

Rebuttal: *"However, uniforms are accepted for the sake of unity and discipline. Adat clothing allows individuals to express their cultural identity while maintaining formality."*

This example demonstrates a misrepresentation of opposing views because the counter-argument oversimplifies the opponents' position, focusing only on personal expression and comfort. The rebuttal then fails to directly address these concerns, instead shifting to discuss unity and discipline, which weren't part of the original counter-argument. This misrepresentation makes it easier for the student to argue against the opposing view but doesn't accurately engage with the actual concerns raised.

- 4) Logical fallacies: A few students employed logical fallacies in their arguments, weakening the overall strength of their essays. (Student #36):

Counter-argument: *"Some contend even peaceful groups enable extremists by spreading problematic ideas."*

Rebuttal: *"However, no evidence directly links mainstream Muslim groups to terrorism. Guilt by loose association jeopardizes all belief groups and risks governmental overreach into policing thoughts themselves."*

This example contains logical fallacies, specifically a straw man argument and a slippery slope fallacy. The counter-argument presents a simplified version of the opposing view, making it easier to refute (straw man). The rebuttal then uses a slippery slope fallacy by suggesting that associating peaceful groups with extremism will lead to policing thoughts, without providing evidence for this extreme outcome. These logical fallacies weaken the argument by relying on flawed reasoning rather than addressing the core issues at hand.

The findings of this study align with research conducted by McCarthy et al. (2021), which emphasized that counter-arguments and rebuttals are critical in strengthening argumentative writing. Similarly, Liu and Stapleton (2020) reported that interventions improved L2 learners' ability to construct strong rebuttals in their writing, with a notable enhancement in both counter-arguments and rebuttals after explicit instruction. This study also found that 92.5% of the students included both counter-arguments and rebuttals in their essays, consistent with the results of Warman & Hamzah (2020), who highlighted the importance of logical reasoning in argumentative structures.

However, these findings diverge from the research of Sundari & Febriyanti (2021), who observed that Indonesian EFL learners often avoided using counter-arguments and adopted simple argumentative structures. This contrast might stem from differences in curriculum design or instructional methods. Additionally, despite the strong presence of counter-arguments, some students struggled with logical fallacies and reliance on personal opinion, as also highlighted by El Khoiri & Widiati (2017), which suggests a gap in students' critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning skills.

Further contradictions were found in relation to Ozfidan & Mitchell (2020), who reported difficulties among culturally diverse students in constructing rebuttals. While the majority of students in this study demonstrated proficiency, 7.5% failed to include



rebuttals, reinforcing the notion that effective rebuttal construction remains a challenge for some learners, particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse settings

## CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed 40 argumentative essays written by EFL students, focusing on the presence and construction of counter-arguments and rebuttals. The results demonstrate a high level of proficiency in argumentative writing among the students, with 92.5% of them successfully incorporating both counter-arguments and rebuttals into their essays. This indicates a solid understanding of the structure and requirements of argumentative writing, aligning with previous research, such as McCarthy et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of these elements in creating persuasive arguments.

The analysis also revealed four main strategies employed by the students when constructing counter-arguments and rebuttals: evidence-based approach (34%), compromise or middle-ground (23.5%), logical reasoning (22.5%), and emotional appeal (20%). The evidence-based approach was the most frequently used strategy, indicating that students are becoming proficient in utilizing facts and logical reasoning to strengthen their arguments, which echoes Liu's (2020) emphasis on the importance of evidence and reasoning.

Despite the overall success, some challenges were identified, including a lack of evidence, overreliance on personal opinion, misrepresentation of opposing views, and logical fallacies, though these issues were present in a minority of the essays. Addressing these challenges in future instructional approaches could further enhance students' abilities in argumentative writing. Therefore, a further reserach is needed in exploring more details about the challenges that the students face in constructing counter-argument and rebuttal in their argumentative essay to convince the readers.

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