What's within a Thesis Statement? Exploring Features of Argumentative Thesis Statements

by

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Abstract

Developing strong academic writing skills often requires years of experience and training within a discipline. When novice writers are asked to write an argumentative essay, they are usually required to draft a thesis statement presenting their position on an issue.

In argumentative writing, a thesis statement addresses the writer's main argument and is the foundation of the entire essay. Features of thesis statements are often defined with respect to their location and length within the essay (e.g., Petric, 2005), or functions. As a result, further research exploring characteristics of argumentative thesis statements could expand understanding about the distinctive features that operationalize the quality of thesis statements. Results of such research would have strong practical implications for instructors regarding what to teach about writing thesis statements.

In the present study, four major features of thesis statements were identified (context, positionality, reasoning, and specificity). Two raters were asked to assess the presence of each feature for the 78 thesis statements, extracted from the argumentative essay outlines of an education course. A set of multiple regression analyses were conducted to investigate whether each feature, and a composite of the four, contributes to the quality of the introduction and the argumentative essay outline.

Key findings indicated that the context feature and the positionality feature are of importance in predicting the quality of introduction and the essay outline. Based on the findings, a revised version of Ken Hyland's model of argumentation is proposed and several important implications for teaching writing are recommended.

Keywords: thesis statements; learning to write; argumentation; propositions; writing instructions

中文摘要

培養優秀的學術寫作技巧需要多年相關領域的經驗及訓練。以歐美體系之英語議論文體為例，寫作初學者需要在內文裡提供主旨句，以表達作者在文中的立場。

議論文之主旨句意在闡述作者的主要論點，同時也是整篇文章的基礎。以英語寫作教學實踐為例，主旨句的特徵通常會受限於議論文中所出現的位置(location)、長度(length)、或是受限於主旨句之功能性(function)。因此如果有更進一步的研究致力於拓展及探討議論文主旨句的特性及品質，那麼此研究成果對指導者來說，將有強烈的英語寫作教學實踐意義。

本研究初步探討四個主旨句之特性：脈絡性(context)、立場性(positionality)、推論性(reasoning)及具體性(specificity)。根據這四種特性，兩位資深教育工作者評估七十八個議論文之主旨句，並判別每個特性之存在性。本研究採用多元迴歸分析(multiple regression analysis)來調查哪種特性可用於預測議論文品質。

主要研究發現指出主旨句之脈絡性及立場性乃決定議論文質量之重要因素。根據本研究發現，本研究拓展 Ken Hyland 的議論文組織架構，進而推薦數種寫作教學方法。

關鍵字：主旨句、學習寫作技巧、議論文、寫作指導

Dedication

To my family, my friends

And

The last milestone at SFU

致敬我的家人、朋友

及

在 **SFU** 最後的里程碑

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I hope that this will be the last time I write the acknowledgement section here at SFU. I want to dedicate all my achievements to my family and my supervisors, Dr. Phil Winne, Dr. John Nesbit, Dr. Amanda Goldrick-Jones, and Dr. Angel Lin. Also, I want to thank the external examiners, Dr. Perry Klein, and Dr. Joel Heng Hartse for offering constructive feedback during the oral examination.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Perspectives of Teaching Writing

Student writers struggle, especially novice post-secondary writers. Developing strong academic writing skills often requires years of experience and training. Having practiced as a writing researcher, a writing consultant, a sessional instructor in a disciplinary course and a teaching assistant at Simon Fraser University, I found writing challenges pervasive across post-secondary levels in multiple disciplines (Chang & Goldrick-Jones, 2019).

There are three major approaches in teaching writing: product-oriented, process-oriented and genre-based approaches. Some writing instructors adopt a traditional, structured, and product-oriented approach in classrooms. For example, student writers are required to have an introductory paragraph, several body paragraphs supporting the claim(s) made within the introduction, and a conclusion. The essay must include perfect grammar and expressions. These instructors assume including a set of prescribed rhetorical essay features benefit a student's academic writing (Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Steele, 1992), leaving student writers on their own to figure out the best writing practices for their disciplines. On the other hand, some other writing instructors adopt a more process-oriented approach in teaching disciplinary writing. Writing is not a first-time perfect product; a composition should undergo a multifaceted, multi-staged, and multi-reviewed cycle of revision processes that serially apply planning, drafting, and evaluating strategies (Graham & Harris, 1997; Graham & Sandmel, 2011). However, a major caveat of this approach is the time that takes to instruct students to engage in the cycle of revision. Recently, a genre-oriented perspective in teaching writing emerged in teaching disciplinary writing. This was in response to criticisms of the product-oriented writing-teaching approach by some scholars specializing in writing research (Mysknow & Gorden, 2009). Genre-based writing pedagogy situates writing within an authentic social situation

(Hyland, 1990; Hyland, 2007). For instance, in teaching business communications, instructors who adopt genre-based writing pedagogy may choose to have the students write a complaint letter to a marketing officer who misrepresents commercial product information. Understanding these perspectives and their differences helps to contextualize the scope of this research project investigating argumentative writing. In the next section, I introduce the current research in relation to the above-mentioned perspectives of writing.

1.2. The Present Study and Research Questions

Having examined structural, process-based, and genre-oriented writing perspectives, I situate the present study within a structural perspective of writing. Therefore, in this study, I will assume that in argumentative writing a thesis statement is required, as it addresses the writer's main argument and is the foundation of the entire essay. From my teaching and tutoring experiences, students often struggle to construct their thesis statements and, perhaps consequently, evidence they select may not support their thesis statements. An essay outline was chosen as the outcome measure in the present study because an outline is the product that best reflects students' original argumentation.

Drawing on my practical and research experiences in at SFU, I explore and answer three questions in my study:

(1) What features does an effective thesis statement have in an argumentative essay outline?

(2) Can experienced raters assess a thesis statement based on these features?

(3) Do these features of thesis statements predict the quality of the introduction to the essay outline and the outline's overall quality?

In Chapter 2, I will situate these questions within writing theories and writing research. The chapter provides a comprehensive review of relevant research on the construction of thesis statements and writing pedagogy. Chapter 3 presents details, procedures and instruments used to collect data for this study. Chapter 4 presents the results, and Chapter 5 will situate the results in connection to previous findings in the literature. The dissertation ends in Chapter 6 with implications for future writing pedagogy and writing research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. What Features Define Thesis Statements?

'*Where is your thesis statement?*' is a question typically asked when an instructor reviews a draft. An introductory textbook used for a foundational academic writing course at Simon Fraser University describes a thesis statement in terms of its length, rhetorical function and location.

"*The thesis statement in an introduction may be made up of one or more sentences and can come before or after the description of the organizational structure of the essay … the thesis statement makes the writer's opinion clear to the reader from the outset, but without diminishing the reader's need to continue reading to learn more*" (Marshall, 2017, p. 153).

Writing a thesis statement seems not a daunting task, yet many instructors are often not very satisfied with the thesis statements students draft. The defining characteristics of a high quality thesis statement seem arbitrary and subjective. According to other writing resources referenced by major post-secondary writing centres in British Columbia (BC), characteristics of thesis statements are (1) its position within an introductory paragraph (location), (2) whether it is arguable (positionality), and (3) whether it is clearly contextualized and sufficiently specific (clarity, context and reasoning). Table 1 summarizes how six major post-secondary institutional writing centres in BC, a likely Google destination for participants in my research, define thesis statements in their online writing resources.

Table 1 – Operationalization of thesis statements across three post-secondary writing centres in British Columbia

Institution	Definition	Characteristics
University of Victoria	"*A thesis statement is usually one concise sentence that tells readers what your argument is and how you plan to shed light on your topic. It traditionally occurs*	Location, positionality, specificity, and relatedness to the points made within the paragraph.

	after a more general statement of introduction in the first paragraph of your essay. It may be useful to think of the thesis statement as a road map that familiarizes your reader with the territory that will be explored in the body of your essay." (Proctor & Shea, 2008)	
University of British Columbia	*"The thesis statement is where you give readers the main idea of your piece of writing. If your main idea is straightforward, the thesis may be one sentence, usually presented at or near the end of the introduction; if your main idea is more complex, the thesis may be two or more sentences. When considering thesis statements, focusing on the content and clarity of your main idea is more important than focusing on the length or placement of the thesis."* ("Learning Commons", n.d.)	Length, positionality, originality, clarity, and specificity
Simon Fraser University	*"A thesis statement is a statement of position. In university writing, it is typically a sentence or two which establishes your argument and forecasts the main points your paper will argue. It is the backbone of your paper, because everything that follows should support this central argument."* (Lane, 2020)	Positionality, context, and reasoning.
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	*"A thesis statement is one or two sentences that focuses your ideas for your essay, tells your reader what the paper is about, and helps guide your writing to keep your argument focused. The sentence that captures your position on this main idea is your thesis statement as it will present the topic of your paper and also make a comment about your position in relation to the topic"* ("Writing a Strong Thesis", n.d.)	Specificity, Clarity, Positionality, Location

Capilano University	*"The starting point and governing idea of every essay is its thesis: without the thesis, the essay has no clear purpose. A thesis is a statement or assertion about the topic. It is made near the beginning of the essay, and it controls the whole development"* (*"Thesis Statements", 2013*)	Location, function
Langara College	*"The thesis or thesis statement is a comprehensive summary of everything you say in the essay. It is the main point you are making in the essay. Therefore, it may be best to formulate your thesis after you have written the rest of the essay, so you are aware of what point you want to make. You may, of course, set out with a tentative thesis, allowing it to change as the content in your essay changes."* (*"Composing a Thesis", n.d.*)	Clarity, location, language style

In summary, it seems definitions of thesis statements across the major BC post-secondary institutions vary to some degree, and the features of thesis statements share several common structural features.

Having examined the characteristics of thesis statements presented in local online writing resources, I next consider how thesis statements are operationalized in the research literature of argumentative writing.

2.2. Research on Thesis Statements

In writing research, thesis statements are not often a main focus. In studies that have focused on thesis statement (TS), the research concerned: (a) challenges when writers produce thesis statements within a discipline (Cekiso, Tshotsho & Somniso, 2017; Miller & Pessoa, 2016; Owusu & Yeboah, 2014), (b) whether a particular instructional intervention facilitates student writers' production of thesis statements (Alotaibi, 2014; Al-Haq & Ahmed, 1994; Beyreli & Konuk, 2018; Friend, 2001; Li & Liu, 2019; MacArthur, Philippakos & Ianetta,

2014; Petric, 2005; Wahyuni, 2014), (c) inconsistencies in the form of thesis statements across different professional subject matters (Swales & Najjar, 1987), (d) factors that may influence construction of thesis statements (Ho and Li, 2018; Kobayashi, 1984; Uysal, 2008), (e) problematizing the usual structural placement of thesis statements (Schneer, 2014; Liu, 2007; Kubota, 1998; Mysknow & Gorden, 2013), and (f) attempts to validate a computational algorithm that automatically identifies thesis statements in an essay (Burstein, Marcu & Knight, 2003). In this section, only research evidence related to the present study will be addressed, such as challenges when writers produce thesis statements, effects of instructions on the quality of thesis statement, and factors influencing the form of thesis statements.

2.2.1. Challenges of Writing Thesis Statements

When student writers write their essays, they may sometimes omit a thesis statement (Cekiso et al. 2017; Owusu & Yeboah, 2014). When students produce thesis statements, there is often a mismatch between the thesis statement and supporting points provided within a composition (Cekiso et al. 2017; Miller & Pessoa, 2016). For instance, Miller and Pessoa (2016) investigated difficulties history students encountered when writing thesis statements and topic sentences. Results indicated thesis statements appeared too general, lacked contextualization, or were mismatched to supporting arguments made in the essays. Similarly, Cekiso et al. (2017) found that first-year multilingual writers' (i.e., English language learners who learn English in their home country where the official language is not English) essays evidenced similar coherence problems when asked to produce thesis statements about a controversial current event. Problems with coherence include the absence of thesis statements, conclusions not related to the thesis statements, and long confusing sentences.

2.2.2. Is a thesis statement mandatory?

Some research argues that when students write essays, thesis statements might not be needed as thesis statements might be located at any place in an essay (Liu, 2007; Schneer, 2014), or be expressed implicitly (Mysknow & Gorden, 2009). A similar argument was forwarded by Coe (2002), that thesis statements may not be mandatory due to differing practices in different content areas. Thesis statements written for different genres might serve different purposes or rhetorical functions. When writing introductions for essays describing research in physics or the social sciences, the thesis statement is the sentence that reports the principal findings or hypotheses. When writing introductions to argumentative essays, the thesis statement is the sentence that announces the main argument of the entire essay. Swales and Najjar (1987) surveyed a corpus of introductions written for professional journal articles in two domains, physics and educational psychology. They reported many mismatches between the domain-appropriate publication manual and actual writing practice. In physics, the publication manual does not indicate a need to report principal findings or results in the introduction, yet many did so. In educational psychology, announcing principal findings is optional yet was not common in the discourse community publishing in the 1980s. Additionally, Smith (2010) challenged the structural, product-oriented teaching view that thesis statements are required in an essay. He argued students' ideas sometimes could not be expressed in just one sentence or just placed at the end of the introduction.

Our intellectual culture – particularly in those educational settings in which the teacher is supposed to know the answers and provide them to the students – often puts ideas into tidy cognitive containers. And a thesis that can be stated in a single sentence makes a neat little box … But good writing emphasizes the connections between our mental containers, shows where the lines are blurry, illustrates the spiral interconnections of cause and effect, illuminates the dance and tension between the objective and the subjective … interesting writing is rarely about one main idea. (Smith, 2010, pp. 98)

Taken together, it seems that different writing authorities have different views on thesis statements. Some research has identified challenges of writing thesis statements arising regarding the thesis statement's presence, rhetorical function, location, disciplinary writing practice or genre. However, some other research evidence has shown that perhaps thesis statements might not be needed in particular genres and variability of locating a thesis statement exists. That is, if a thesis statement is required, then the thesis statement is often placed in its conventional position within an introduction.

2.2.3. Effects of Instruction on the Quality of Thesis Statements

To teach how to write a thesis statement, instructors might use various means, such as providing guiding questions (prompts), or having an essay outline that guides the process of arguing and writing. Research that examines effects of instructional strategies on the quality of thesis statements has reported inconsistent findings.

Effects of Instruction

Research has shown positive effects of explicit instruction on thesis statements. For example, Petric (2005) explicitly taught 19 Russian student writers about crosslinguistic writing differences during a writing workshop as part of a writing course; these students included more thesis statements in an argumentative essay assignment. Also, students were more likely to place thesis statements in the conventional position and produced more structured thesis statements after the course. Similar positive results were obtained when Wahyuni (2014) taught medical students about using 5 Wh-questions to construct thesis statements as a framework for essay assignments. In Wahyuni (2014)'s study, the following set of questions guided writers to develop their essay:

- **Who** is involved? At **what** level?
- **What** is your topic?

- **Where** does your subject occur? **Where** is the source?

- **When** does your topic occur? **When** did it begin and end? **What** actions should be taken to deal with it?

- **Why** is your subject of interest? **Why** should others be interested in your subject?

In addition, Li and Liu (2019) examined the effect of using an outline as a pre-writing tool on the quality of essays produced by 24 multilingual writers in China. Results indicated outlining helped these Chinese multilingual students articulate their thesis statements, and further guided them to include supporting evidence related to the main argument (thesis statements). Similarly, Alotaibi (2014) investigated 8 East Asian student writers' essays after a writing workshop, which contrasted cultural features of English and Arabic writing. After the workshop, students produced and placed thesis statements according to the conventional structure of English argumentative essays.

Contrary to the previously cited positive results of instruction on thesis statements is Al-Haq and Ahmed's research (1994), though their research is a corpus study. When they examined a corpus of the college essays written for the Department of English and Translation in an East Asian university, they found students across levels (first to fourth year) did not produce structured thesis statements. These findings may imply that: i) future research should emphasize on the quality of thesis statements (i.e. what makes a thesis statement strong?) and that ii) writing instruction provided to these college students did not help them produce thesis statements, include topic sentences or write better essays.

One reason why research yields inconsistent results may be the instructional tools or methods used to scaffold writers' process of constructing thesis statements. It seems when student writers are actively and metacognitively engaged in crosslinguistic comparison (also known as contrastive rhetoric), they produce better essays and thesis statements (e.g., Altaibi, 2014) because they can use their primary language resources. Similarly, when student writers are presented with the 5 Wh-questions or an outline, they

have produced better essays. This may be because they are metacognitively engaged in thinking about the structure of the essay when they are asked to answer the 5 Wh-questions or to fill out the outline. Thus, MacArthur, Philippakos and Lanetta (2015) have argued that explicitly teaching about metacognitive strategies relating to planning, drafting and revising will help students to "make their cognitive processes visible" (p. 857); thus, their essay quality will be better.

Taken together, while research findings are inconsistent about the effects of instructions on the quality of thesis statements, these studies imply that if several features or standards are developed to help students develop stronger thesis statements, these features may then serve as a writing tool that can guide students' writing processes.

2.2.4. Factors That Influence the Construction of Thesis Statements

Language Background and Location of Thesis Statements

Kubota (1998) examined the potential negative effects of one's first language on students' second language writing. No statistically detectable difference was observed for essays written in Japanese by American student writers and essays written in English by Japanese student writers. Japanese writers were observed to locate thesis statements in the conventional position when they wrote essays in English. Furthermore, Liu's research (2007) also observed that when Chinese writers wrote in English, their thesis statements could appear in any position within essays.

Language Background and Choice of Argumentative Reasoning Approach

In the setting of English language learning classrooms, students might prefer a certain argumentative reasoning approach, such as deductive versus inductive. According to Alotaibi (2014), the deductive approach often begins with a general statement of an argument, followed by relevant supplementary ideas to support the general statement. The inductive reasoning method, on the other hand, begins with the introduction of related ideas, which gradually leads to a

major argumentative statement in the end. Kobayashi (1984) found that American writers preferred using the deductive reasoning structure to develop narrative and expository essays, whereas Japanese writers preferred a more inductive approach in writing their essay assignments. Similarly, in Uysal's study (2008), when Turkish students were assigned to write an argumentative essay in their first language (Turkish), they tended to use the deductive reasoning approach to develop their essays. In contrast, when these Turkish writers wrote in English, they tended to develop the essay using a more inductive reasoning approach.

Use of Metadiscourse Markers

One's preferences to use metadiscourse markers might rely on how one constructs thesis statements. Metadiscourse markers are defined as writers' "… linguistic resources used to organize discourse or the writers' stance towards either its content or the reader" (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 157). Functions of metadiscourse have been subcategorized by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004). For instance, when a student writes a thesis statement such as, "*In my view, I agree that university students should all take EDUC 199*", metadiscourse markers indicate circumstances (in my view), mental projections (I agree), and modal auxiliaries (should).

Writers' proficiency level may mediate the use of metadiscourse markers in constructing a thesis statement (Ho & Li, 2018; Gholami, Nejad, & Pour, 2014; Intaraprawat & Steffensen, 1995). In the context of essays written for a timed examination, Ho and Li (2018) observed that student writers who obtained a lower score on the examination (unskilled writers) tended to have fewer metadiscourse markers in thesis statements and structuring supporting arguments. However, skilled student writers used more metadiscourse markers involving a mixture of simple and complex sentential constructions. They made appropriate appeals to various rhetorical functions (e.g., egos, pathos, and logos), and generated thesis statements using formulaic utterances or model sentences, such as "*The paper will argue…*".

In summary, various factors have been reported in the literature as correlated with the use and form of thesis statements. For instance, a writer's language background might affect their choice of thesis statement location (e.g. Liu, 2007) and their choice of reasoning method (e.g. Uysal, 2008). In addition, a writer's writing proficiency might affect their choice to include metadiscourse markers in thesis statements. However, not much evidence has been found about training writers to use metadiscourse markers in essay compositions. Further research might be needed to examine the effect of training on metadiscourse markers on essays.

2.2.5. Summary

The research investigating factors relating to thesis statements often defines thesis statements by location within an essay and length (e.g., Petric, 2005) or functions (e.g., Alotaibi, 2014). Further research exploring characteristics of argumentative thesis statements could more thoroughly operationally define distinctive features relating to the quality of thesis statements. The results of such research could provide instructors with more precise ideas of what to teach about writing thesis statements.

Instruction about thesis statements embedded within writing courses may not receive much emphasis (Alotaibi, 2014). Moreover, instruction focused on teaching Wh-questions (Wahyuni, 2014), or using general planning strategies (i.e., outlining; see Li & Liu, 2019) neither explicitly nor directly address the task requirement of constructing well-structured thesis statements. This suggests that if instructors expect writers to write argumentative essays, more instructional attempts should be made to explain what a high-quality argumentative thesis statement really is. It seems that past research focused on the tool or instructions for writing an essay, rather than qualities that make a thesis statement strong, or what requirement writers need to achieve so their thesis statement can be considered a strong claim. New research also might seek to represent underlying

cognitive processes proficient writers use to develop strong thesis statements and why less skilled writers overlook those processes.

My study aims to bridge these gaps in research about thesis statement by exploring key characteristics of disciplinary argumentative thesis statements and how these key characteristics relate to the quality of an argumentative essay outline.

2.3. Theoretical Perspectives

In this section, there are three interconnected, yet separate multidisciplinary theoretical perspectives that explain (1) writers' processes of generating thesis statements, (2) the structure of argumentative writing, and (3) taxonomies describing argumentative thesis statements.

2.3.1. The Processing Model of Text Comprehension and Production

Kintsch and van Dijk's theoretical model of text comprehension and production organizes cognitive processes people use to comprehend textual input and formulate "gist" from reading materials (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978; van Dijk, 1980). Semantic information readers and writers consider while comprehending and generating text can be divided into two levels of representation: macrostructure information and microstructure information. According to this model, thesis statements in argumentative writing correspond to macrostructural information. Several questions could be asked in relation to compositional studies about theses in argumentative essays:

a. Do writers engage in the generalization process before they construct the macrostructural proposition?

b. Do they determine which information is irrelevant before they form a macrostructural proposition?

c. Most importantly, what features (or characteristics) does a macrostructural proposition have that distinguishes it from microstructure?

2.3.2. Structure of Argumentative Composition

Expert writers might structure texts according to a disciplinary convention that structures gist and information that supports the gist. These conventions or schemas (Bartlett, 1932) are patterns of knowledge that support encoding and retrieval (Carrell, 1983; Dosher & Corbett, 1982). Writers' use of formal schemata help readers identify relevant information according to disciplinary conventions (Carrell, 1983).

Much theoretical discussions and research about schemata are found in argumentation literature. Ken Hyland (1990) generalized these in his genre-based theoretical description of an argumentative essay. He has detailed a linear rhetorical structure or schema for written argumentation: thesis-argumentation-conclusion. In the thesis stage, writers should include an attention grabber – a controversial statement that triggers readers' interest in reading, should introduce a background sentence which contextualizes controversy, should evaluate the controversial issue, and should introduce reasons for supporting or disproving the controversial topic. Table 2 summarizes Hyland's (1990) genre-based argumentative structure.

Table 2 – Ken Hyland's (1990) genre-based argumentative essay structure

Stage	Features
Thesis	a. Attention Grabber b. Information c. Evaluation d. Marker
Argumentation	a. Restatement b. Claim c. Support

	a. Consolidation
Conclusion	b. Affirmation
	c. Close

Criticisms of Hyland's Model

Schneer (2014) problematized Hyland's (1990) genre-based theoretical account for argumentative essays. Collecting authentic argumentative blog posts from 50 students, Schneer observed the conventional 3-staged model of argumentative essays was not strictly followed. The thesis might be placed at various places within blog posts (Coe, 2002; Mysknow & Gorden, 2009).

Although writers may indeed produce an argumentative text different from Hyland's (1990) model, when teaching novice writers, Hyland's suggested sequence may be an effective approach by simplifying understanding of required components of argumentation and their location (Miller & Pessoa, 2016; Wingate, 2012). As suggested by Hyland (1990), this type of genre analysis also may offer student writers useful rhetorical language to talk about their writing, helping them develop a stronger argumentative stance. In summary, writing pedagogy might help a student writer by developing both content-related schemata plus formal schemata for argumentation.

2.3.3. Taxonomy of Argumentative Thesis Statements

Writing is idiosyncratic. During writing, writers choose a particular way to approach their arguments and develop their thesis statements. Tankó and Tamasi (2008) surveyed 225 argumentative essays and developed the typology of argumentative thesis statements shown in Table 3. Their typology first distinguished between relational and non-relational thesis statements. In non-relational thesis statements writers simply focus on one element. An example of a non-relational thesis statement is, "*global warming is getting worse*". In relational thesis statements, writers link two or more schemata. An example of a relational thesis statement is "*global warming causes climate change.*" In this example, two schemata are introduced – global warming, climate change – and

these are related as cause-and-effect. A causal relationship is only one of the many types of relationship that can be asserted in a relational thesis statement.

Table 3 – Tankó and Tamasi's (2008) classification of thesis statements

Type	Sub-types	Purpose	Example
Non-relational	Evaluation	evaluate one and only one schema	*Teaching K-12 students is hard.*
	Policy	claiming a simple policy	*Schools should be inclusive.*
Relational	Categorical	categorizing a schema to another schema	*Teachers are sometimes biased towards good students.*
	Similarity	making comparison between two schemata	*Flying an airplane is not like flying a kite.*
	Complex Evaluation	evaluate two or more schemata	*Rewarding students can effectively motivate students to learn better.*
	Sign	presence of one schema has a direct relationship with other schemata	*Posting insulting comments online is a form of cyberbullying.*
	Causal	one schema causes the other schema	*Global warming causes climate change.*
	Complex Policy	claiming two or more policies involving multiple schemata	*Instructors should pay attention to grades rather than a student's learning process.*

Criticisms of Tankó and Tamasi's Classification

A complexity that exists in Tankó and Tamasi's (2008) pragmatic classifications of thesis statements is that some sub-types in relational thesis statements can be combined to create a more complex one. For example, let us take the example, "*Global warming causes climate change, so the government should pay more attention to the emission of polluted air.*" In this example, the writer is making up a relational thesis by establishing a cause-and-effect

relationship between two schemata: global warming and climate change, while making a policy claim that the government should execute a certain action on another schema – the emission of polluted air. Therefore, while such pragmatic classifications of thesis statements might be useful for students, the most important step that writing instructors should take is to develop a set of features that qualify strong thesis statements, instead of gearing the student writers' attention to the pragmatic functions of thesis statements.

2.4. Summary

In summary, most research examining thesis statements examines their presence and location within the introductory paragraph. Writing instructions intending to help students generate thesis statements produce mixed results. The theoretical accounts that are reviewed above explain the underlying processes of generating thesis statements or situate writing within a structured and genre-based sequential template. If a structured thesis statement is needed in argumentative writing, what are the features of strong thesis statements? This research investigates the rhetorical components of thesis statements to determine which the quality of argumentation.

Chapter 3.   Method

3.1. Overview

The present study employs quantitative methodology to investigate four features of argumentative thesis statements (context, positionality, reasoning and specificity). Quantitative methodology was chosen for the present study to explore the possibility of measuring the quality of thesis statements. Seventy-eight thesis statements were extracted from students' argumentative outline assignments submitted for an introductory educational psychology course. Two raters (one of them is the author of the present dissertation) judged the 78 thesis statements using the four features. The four features were identified based on the review of the writing centre handouts in section 2.1.

3.2. Course information

Student participants in this research were enrolled in EPYSC 001 (a pseudonym), an introductory educational psychology course surveying major educational psychology theories, research methods, research findings and teaching practices in education. Once a week, each student attended a one-hour tutorial session supplementary to the two-hour lecture component. There was no prerequisite for this course. Enrolled students came from various disciplinary majors and years of academic residency.

For a required term paper, students were to identify a specific teaching practice that could motivate student learning by applying motivational theories described in the textbook. They were to argue why this teaching practice was effective in motivating students. Before the essay itself was to be handed in, a prior requirement was a draft argumentative outline in a word/text format of their essay that included: an introduction, a thesis statement, three arguments with descriptions of supporting evidence, one counterargument with a rebuttal, and a conclusion. This outline served to structure the final term paper.

3.3. Text Materials

From argumentative essay outlines written by consenting students in the Fall 2018 semester 50 thesis statements were randomly extracted. Another 28 thesis statements were extracted for the same assignment made in the Spring 2019 semester. In the Spring 2019 semester, the instructor changed the outline format to dialectical map (D-map), a visual writing tool that potentially helps writers to develop argumentation (Nesbit, Niu, & Liu, 2019). The cohort in the Spring 2019 semester thus handed in a D-map instead of an outline in the text format. To retain consistency of the essay outline instructions between the two semesters, the instructor purposefully amended the supplementary text of the D-map tool. In other words, the students in both semesters received the same instructions and wording prior to their submission of their outlines regardless of the tool they used – See Table 5 for the text instructions that the students received. The corpus for this study consisted of these 78 thesis statements (n = 78).

Each thesis statement was evaluated by two experienced graduate students in Education with either experience as a teaching assistant in the course or graduate coursework Educational Psychology in the last two years. Each rater marked the presence or absence of four features – context, positionality, reasoning, and specificity – of the 78 thesis statements.

3.3.1. Features of Thesis Statements

Based on my survey of thesis statements handouts from the writing centres of six western Canadian universities, described in Chapter 1, four common features were identified: context, positionality, reasoning and specificity (Lane, 2020). Context, positionality, and reasoning were chosen because these features were included in SFU's writing centre online resources. My assumption was that when students encounter difficulties in writing, they often consult SFU's web pages and book an appointment with SFU's writing centre. Specificity

feature was chosen because this feature was common in other writing centre resources.

Context is the scope or declaration about what a writer intends to investigate. Positionality of a thesis statement is the writer's stance on the issue, and it should be contestable. Reasoning is information designed to help readers to understand the writer's argumentative stance by exposing logical relationships among elements of the argument. Specificity refers to the extent to which writers use terms and language features appropriate to the discipline. Specificity also includes the logical qualities of an argument. In other words, for a thesis statement to be specific, the thesis statements must include disciplinary vocabulary to some extent.

3.4. Feature Rating & Analysis of Reliability

The author of this dissertation was the first rater. I trained a second rater (a fellow graduate student) to identify the four features of thesis statements. First, the rater was given a brief introduction to the nature of the study. Then, operational definitions of each feature were presented. This was followed by a calibration activity involving five example thesis statements. I presented one example thesis statement at a time. Then, with definitions on the side, the rater coded the presence (1) or absence (0) of each feature as illustrated in Table 4. Codes were briefly discussed to clarify their application. Upon completion of the training session, the rater and I independently coded the 78 thesis statements to identify presence or absence of each feature of thesis statements.

Percent agreement and Cohen's kappa (κ) were calculated to examine the extent to which raters reliably and consistently judged the presence and absence of each feature. In this exploratory study, $\kappa > 0.6 \sim 0.7$ will be considered acceptable given the statistical approach to compensating for expected random agreements and its downward bias for a 2×2 contingency table.

Table 4 illustrates the example sentences and rating method.

Table 4 – Example sentences and features rating (0=absence; 1=presence)

Example Sentence	Context	Positionality	Reasoning	Specificity
Rewarding is effective because it motivates students to learn.	0	1	1	1

The writer establishes an argument, provides reasoning by using 'because', and knows to use disciplinary vocabulary, "rewarding", and "motivates". The context feature is missing because the writer does not define how rewards should be given, to whom, and under what condition(s).

Example Sentence	Context	Positionality	Reasoning	Specificity
Rewarding is to give students a prize when they behave well, so it will make them learn well.	1	0	1	0

From this example, the writer attempts to provide context and reasoning by establishing a cause-and-effect relationship: Because a teacher gives students a reward, it makes them learn well. However, the thesis statement itself only defines what it means by rewarding literally, nor does it provide a specific argument that captures an important issue in educational psychology. That is, the statement itself may sound like general knowledge. How rewarding should be given? In what sense is rewarding an effective practice.

Example Sentence	Context	Positionality	Reasoning	Specificity
Rewarding is effective for pre-school children because it can make them learn.	1	1	1	0

From this example, the writer contextualizes the statement by referring to a specific population where reward should be given (i.e., pre-school children) and establishing a cause-and-effect reasoning relationship (i.e. ,because). The writer establishes a claim where reward may be applied to pre-school children as this reward can be a motive for them to learn. However, the writer does not meet criteria for using disciplinary language as the phrase "make them learn" can easily be replaced by a term in educational psychology such as "motivation", or "motivate."

3.5. Argumentative Essay Outline Quality Measure

In the course, three teaching assistants graded the argumentative essay outlines in the course. Before grading, the instructor calibrated the consistency of scoring via a two-hour training meeting. During the meeting, the teaching assistants were introduced to the marking criteria, then each scored the same student's outline. The instructor repeated the process until the teaching assistants achieved consistency. During the time the students submitted their

essay outlines, I was one of the three teaching assistants of the course in the Fall 2018 semester. The rating of extracted thesis statements was conducted almost 6~10 months after this course. It was unlikely that my memory of prior evaluation influenced my ratings.

Two achievement measures were used in the present study as the quality measures of argumentation: grades assigned the introduction section (out of 3) and the overall grade assigned to the argumentative essay outline (out of 10). The marking criteria for the essay outlines is presented in Table 5:

Table 5 – Marking criteria for the argumentative essay outline

Introduction		
0.25	Introduce the teaching practice (name & description)	
0.25	Relate this practice to its theoretical foundations	
0.5	Provide a brief presentation of the theory (Key factors of the theory and how it explains behaviour)	
1	Describe explicitly how the theory's key factors appear in the teaching practice	
1	Present your thesis statement arguing for the teaching practice. "Write your paper on a teaching practice you judge is particularly useful to motivate students."	
Argument 1:		
0.5	Why this practice is useful in teaching.	
0.5	Relate argument to theory.	
0.5	Provide empirical evidence to support it.	
Argument 2:		
0.5	Why this practice is useful in teaching.	
0.5	Relate argument to theory.	
0.5	Provide empirical evidence to support it.	
Argument 3:		
0.5	Why this practice is useful in teaching.	
0.5	Relate argument to theory.	
0.5	Provide empirical evidence to support it.	
Counterargument:		
0.5	Why this practice is ineffective in teaching	
0.5	Relate counterargument to theory	
0.5	Provide empirical evidence to support it	
Rebuttal:		
1	Rebut the counterargument	
10	Total	

Chapter 4.   Results

The research examined the degree to which features of thesis statements predict (1) the quality of the introductory paragraph and (2) the quality of the essay outline.

The main research questions were: (1) What are features of an effective thesis statement in an argumentative essay outlines? Can these features be reliably used to assess thesis statements? (2) Can experienced raters reliably score features of a thesis statement? And (3) Do these features of thesis statements predict the quality of the essay outline's introduction and the essay outlines' overall quality?

Four features are identified in the present research: context, positionality, reasoning and specificity. Two experienced raters were given the definition of each feature, and each marked thesis statements for the presence or absence for each feature. A sum of scores from each rater generated a score ranging from 0 to 4 in increments of 1 for the presence of the features, the **sum of features score**. Also, for each rater, the average for each rater's feature scoring of 78 thesis statements was also computed - the **average feature score**.

Scores were available for the introduction section of students' essays and the overall essay outline. These served as dependent variables reflecting the quality of students' essays. Some students' scores on these variables were adjusted to return marks the course instructor deducted for late submission or grammatical mistakes.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Feature Scores

Table 6 and Table 7 displays percent agreement and values of Cohen's κ for each feature of thesis statements. Scoring was judged reliable.

Because instructors commonly assign a total score to sectors of essays, such as the introduction in which thesis statements are presented, the sum of scores for the four features was calculated. Thus, each rater had a score out of 4 per thesis statement. The Cronbach coefficient of internal consistency for the thesis statement scores was α = 0.871.

Table 6 – Descriptive statitistics for 78 thesis statements per feature for each rater

Feature\Rater	Rater 1 Mean (SD)	Rater 2 Mean (SD)	Raters' Average Mean (SD)
Context	0.22 (0.42)	0.17 (0.38)	0.19 (0.36)
Positionality	0.99 (0.11)	0.96 (0.19)	0.97 (0.14)
Reasoning	0.44 (0.50)	0.46 (0.50)	0.45 (0.47)
Specificity	0.53 (0.50)	0.56 (0.50)	0.55 (0.46)

Table 7 – Interrater agreement for features of thesis statements

Features	*Agreement*	к
Context	90%	0.67
Positionality	97%	0.78
Reasoning	87%	0.74
Specificity	83%	0.66

Table 8 – Introduction Grade and Essay Outline Grade

Artifacts	Score	SD
Introduction Grade	2.52	0.55
Essay Outline Grade	7.99	1.64

4.2. Does the Sum of Feature Scores Predict the Quality of Introduction?

A bivariate linear regression was calculated to predict the grade assigned the introduction using the averaged feature score as a sole predictor. A statistically detectable regression model was found, $F(1, 76)$ = 6.485, p = 0.013. The linear model predicting the introduction grade was 2.163+ 0.165 (average feature score).

Table 9 – Regression analysis of the quality of introduction

Model Summary		
R	*R²*	*SE*
.280	.079	.533

ANOVA					
	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Regression	1.844	1	1.844	6.485	.013
Residual	21.608	76	.284		
Total	23.452	77			

Coefficients					
	b	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Average feature score	.165	.065	.280	2.547	.013
Constant	2.163	.152		14.20	<.001

4.3. Does the Sum of Feature Scores Predict the Quality of Essay Outline?

A bivariate linear regression was calculated to predict the grade for the essay outline using the averaged feature rating as a sole predictor. A statistically detectable regression model was found, $F(1,76) = 17.191$, $p = 0.01$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.071$. The linear model predicting the essay outline grade was 6.9 + 0.504(sum of feature score).

Table 10 – Regression analysis of the quality of essay outline

Model Summary		
R	*R²*	*SE*
.289	0.083	1.58

ANOVA					
	SS	*df*	*MS*	*F*	*p*
Regression	17.191	1	17.191	11.992	.010
Residual	189.334	76	2.491		
Total	206.526	77			

Coefficients					
	b	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*
Average feature score	.504	.192	.289	2.63	.010
Constant	6.90	.451		15.29	.000

4.4. Which Thesis Statement Features Contribute to the Quality of Introduction and the Quality of the Essay Outline?

In sections 4.2 and 4.3, statistically detectable relations were observed predicting scores for the introduction and whole essay when the sum of feature scores was the predictor. This motivates investigating which feature(s) account for these relations. In the following analysis, each average feature score was a potential predictor examined using multiple regression.

Context, positionality, reasoning and specificity were used in a standard multiple regression analysis to predict the quality of introduction and the quality of the essay outline. Correlations among predictors are shown in Table 11. Only one pair, specificity and reasoning ($r = 0.467$**), was statistically detectably correlated. These results suggest multicollinearity will not unduly affect a multiple regression analysis.

Table 11 – Correlations of thesis statement features (N=78)

Pairwise	Context	Positionality	Reasoning	Specificity
Context	1	0.035	0.780	.182
Positionality		1	0.182	-0.850**
Reasoning			1	.467**
Specificity				1

*Note: **p<0.01*

4.4.1. The Quality of Introduction

The simultaneous entry regression model for the quality of the introduction was statistically detectable, $F(4,73) = 2.814$, $p = 0.051$, and accounted for approximately 12% of the variance of the introduction grade ($R^2 = 0.120$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.072$). The context feature of thesis statements was the only statistically detectable predictor in this model ($p = 0.045$).

Table 12 – Regression analysis of scores on the essay Introduction

R	R^2 (adjusted)	SE
0.346	0.120 (0.072)	0.531

Table 13 – Regression results for introduction grades

Model	b	SE	β	t	p	sr^2	R^2
Context	0.347	0.170	0.228	2.039	0.045*	0.05	0.52
Positionality	0.689	0.459	0.171	1.501	0.138	0.027	0.33
Reasoning	0.152	0.152	0.129	1.002	0.319	0.012	0.31
Specificity	0.040	0.155	0.033	0.255	0.799	0.000	0.12
Constant	1.692	0.456	-	3.709	0.000	-	-

4.4.2. The Quality of the Essay Outline

The simultaneous entry regression model for quality of the overall essay outline was statistically detectable, $F(4,73) = 25.897$, $p = 0.042$, and accounted for approximately 12% of the variance of the overall grade ($R^2 = 0.125$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.077$). The positionality feature is the only statistically detectable predictor in this model at levels near the conventional threshold of $p < .05$; positionality, $p = 0.042$.

Table 14 – Regression analysis of scores on the essay outline

Model	R	R^2 (adjusted)	SE
1	0.354	0.125 (0.077)	1.57

Table 15– Regression results for essay outline grade

Model	b	SE	β	t	p	sr^2	R^2
Context	0.696	0.504	0.154	1.381	0.171	0.023	0.28
Positionality	2.803	1.357	0.235	2.065	0.042*	0.051	0.51
Reasoning	0.378	0.449	0.108	0.842	0.403	0.008	0.34
Specificity	0.346	0.459	0.097	0.754	0.453	0.007	0.19
Constant	4.765	1.350	-	3.531	0.001	-	-

4.5. Summary of the Findings

Several key findings were observed:

(1) Interrater agreement was achieved in scoring features of thesis statements.

(2) The averaged features score predicts the quality of the introduction to an essay.

(3) The averaged features score predicts the quality of the argumentative essay outline.

(4) The context feature is the best predictor of the quality of the introduction to the essay.

(5) The positionality feature is the best predictor of the quality of the essay outline.

These findings are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5.   Discussion

Findings reported in Chapter 4 address the following questions: (1) What features does an effective thesis statement have in an argumentative essay? Can these features be reliably used to assess thesis statements? (2) Can experienced raters score a thesis statement based on the features? (3) Do these features of thesis statements predict the quality of the introduction and the overall quality of the essay outline?

5.1. What Features Does an Effective Thesis Statement Have in an Argumentative Essay? Can Experienced Raters Score a Thesis Statement for Presence of these Features?

Four thesis-statement features – context, positionality, reasoning and specificity – were identified based on reviews of writing centre resources webpages published by major post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.

van Dijk's (1980) theoretical model is well-regarded as an account of text production and comprehension. It posits that macrostructural information grounded in analysis of source materials captures a writer's support for an argument. What has not been clarified is the types of information comprising argumentative microstructure. Identifying these types is a preliminary step toward specifying macrorules (or macroprocesses) writers might apply to formulate coherent elements within arguments, such as thesis statements. In the present study, a theoretical move was made to supplement van Dijk (1980)'s model by identifying features of thesis statements to fill a gap in describing the macrostructure of thesis statements.

Writers encounter challenges when they draft their thesis statements. Past studies revealed thesis statements produced by international writers are often decontextualized and lack clarity (Cekiso et al. 2017; Miller & Pessoa, 2016). When teaching writing, practicing instructors often define thesis statements

according to a rhetorical function (i.e. "the main idea" or "a central argument that controls the essay") or location (i.e. "the last sentence of introduction). From this perspective, features comprising an effective thesis statement remain weakly specified. My analysis of literature generated more specific features describing thesis statements: context, positionality, reasoning and specificity. Two raters were able to achieve substantial agreement (κ range from 0.66 ~ 0.78) when judging the presence of each feature. A composite of the four features together showed high internal consistency, $α = 0.871$.

Hyland's (1990) genre-based model of argumentation proposed that effective argumentation contains three sequential components: thesis, arguments, and conclusion. My findings align to Hyland's model (1990) and invite a conjecture that a composite of four features that I identified provide details about one of Hyland's components – The Thesis Stage.

5.2. Do Features of Thesis Statements Predict the Quality of Introduction and the Overall Quality of Essay Outline?

Multiple regression analyses indicated the composite of four features predicted the quality of both the introduction and the overall essay outline. In argumentative writing, one might expect thesis statements alone might not carry enough information about the ideas and the robustness of an argument. Conventional argumentative essays supply readers with other essential kinds of information, such as supporting evidence, backing, rebuttal, and warrants. All these kinds of information are theorized to contribute to the quality of argumentation (Karbach, 1987; Toulmin, 1958). Results from the current study indicate thesis statements with the features of context, positionality, reasoning, and specificity modestly predict whether students produce strong introductions and an overall essay outline. These four features – context, positionality, reasoning, and specificity – may have roles as metacognitive standards writers use to guide drafting of argument essays.

A follow up question is whether particular features contribute to the quality of introduction and of the essay outline. Multiple regression analyses using scores of each feature averaged over two raters as predictors indicated the context feature predicted the quality of the introduction, and the positionality feature predicted the quality of the essay outline. These results support two conjectures. First, monitoring the introduction for whether it establishes context improves other qualities of the introduction. Second, positionality of the thesis statement provides a useful metacognitive anchor for monitoring the development of the argument throughout the essay.

The findings of this study advance the theoretical argumentation model proposed by Hyland (1990). In Hyland's three stage model of argumentation (1990), writers often set a context within the introductory paragraph. Later, in the body of the essay, writers often explain their arguments by providing reasons, relating them to the context they set earlier. In the thesis development stage, writers can explain their idea by *contextualizing* information, evaluating their reasons of a particular claim, and marking their position based on the contextual information and evaluation of the claim. In the argumentation stage, based on the position they take, writers make several claims with *reasons* and supporting evidence by referring back to the *contextualized information* set earlier. In the conclusion stage, writers consolidate these sets of information to affirm *a debatable proposition and refer back to the marked position in the thesis statement*. Also, the findings imply that argumentation has a recursive nature. After writers define their thesis statement in writing, writers may engage in a recursive process of argumentation instead of a sequential process as suggested by Hyland (1990). Figure 1 below illustrates a revised version of Hyland's model of argumentation to identify how key features of thesis statements may play roles within this revised framework.
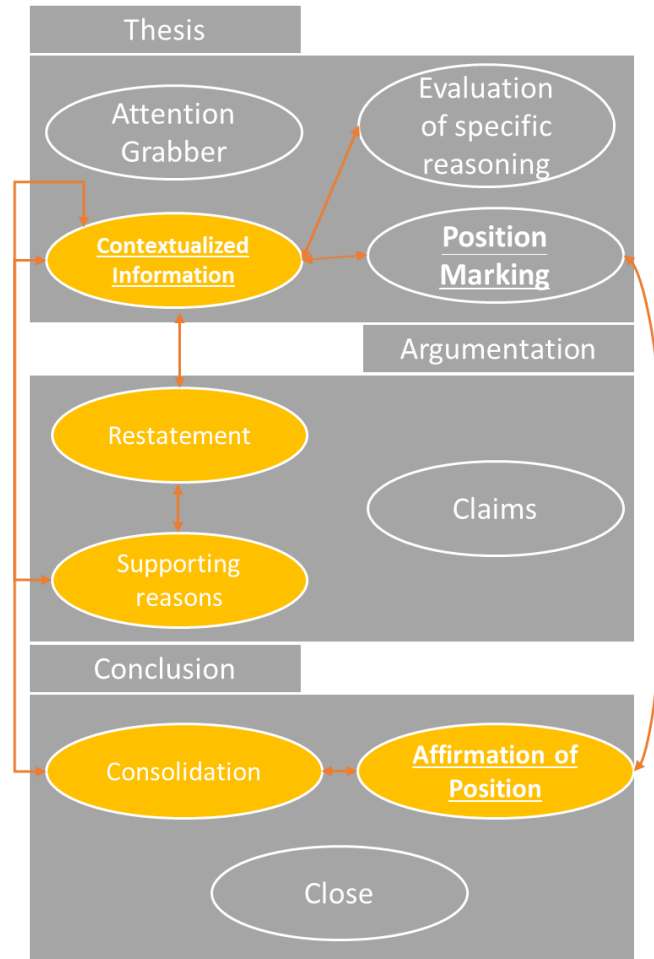
Figure 1 – Revised version of Ken Hyland's model of argumentation

5.3. Implications for Teaching Writing

Several instructional strategies for teaching argumentative writing have been developed and researched. For example, when Wahyuni (2014) taught medical students to use 5 Wh-questions to construct thesis statements for their essay assignments, they constructed better thesis statements. Findings from the present study suggest instructors should create another set of guiding questions to be used with the Wh-questions. These questions may establish standards for metacognitively monitoring the quality of the launching point for an argument, the thesis statement(s). These 5 Wh-questions could be:

(1) **Context:** What is your topic? Have you provided enough contextual information for your thesis statements?

(2) **Positionality:** Are you making a factual claim or debatable claim in your thesis statements?

(3) **Reasoning:** What reasons can you offer to support your arguments? How are your reasons logically connected?

(4) **Specificity:** What important terms and vocabulary can be used in your thesis statement and reasoning?

The present study reveals that context predicts the quality of introduction and positionality predicts the quality of the essay outline. In pedagogy, teachers can lend emphasis to the process of helping students to develop arguments by suggesting these questions that guide monitoring the quality of claims and the logic of the essay. Similarly, the proposed thesis statement features may also be helpful in the planning stage of argumentative writing. Teachers might choose to adopt the definitions of the features to fit the genre's purposes. For example, in a literary analysis, a form of argumentative writing for literature, a teacher may choose to adopt the definition of 'context' by showing writers that they have to first select a character in a short story, interpret the important characteristics of the character, and examine the changes in the character's personality. Furthermore, Li and Liu (2019) reported that outlining helps Chinese multilingual students, who learn English in their home country, articulate their thesis statements. The four features can be used as the additional prompts for outlining, and these prompts might also be helpful for self-assessment or during the peer review process (Yang, 2010). As well, these four features or at least those statistically detected in the regression analyses might stimulate teachers to operationally define guides for grading and evaluation (Kubota, 1998; Miller & Pessoa, 2016).

5.4. Concluding Remarks, Limitation, and Future Directions

Four features of thesis statements were identified: context, positionality, reasoning and specificity. This study indicated a composite measure reflecting all the four features predicted the quality of the introduction and an overall argumentative essay as represented in an outline of the essay. Considering features separately, the context feature predicted the quality of the essay's introduction, and the positionality feature predicted the quality of overall argumentative essay outline.

The present study is observational in nature. Factors other than those reported here certainly played a role in the quality of argumentation. For example, stronger verbal and reasoning ability may facilitate better quality of argumentation (i.e. Nippold & Ward-Lonergan, 2010). In addition, prior academic experiences likely affected students' ability to develop argumentation, particularly considering the educational psychology course had no prerequisites and can be taken by undergraduates in any year and from any specialization.

Future composition research might explore additional features of thesis statements that depend on the disciplinary genre (e.g. literary analysis, expository essays, or lab reports), seeking to incorporate other external online resources for sharpening the definitions of the features (e.g., Purdue OWL). Research also might seek to differentiate features of topic sentences and investigate their predictive power. A challenge attending this recommendation may arise because thesis statements are considered macrostructural propositions, yet topic sentences are considered as microstructural propositions (Faigley & Witte, 1981; van Dijk, 1980). It can be hypothesized that a possible distinction of these classes might be the use of disciplinary vocabulary and ideas (Alexander, Schallert & Hare, 1991). Macrostructural propositions might introduce a general disciplinary idea whereas microstructural propositions rely on more discipline-specific reasoning methods and language. Future research may guide practice if future research findings illuminate how a wider array of features

shape argumentative writing. Continuing this line of research in the direction of argumentative writing will also help teachers develop ways that support students' process of argumentation.

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Appendix

A List of Thesis Statements Used in the Study

ID	Thesis statements
TH1	I argue adding humour to a lecture creates a comfortable learning environment which encourages active learning.
TH2	I argue that token reinforcement is an effective teaching practice that motivates students in the classroom.
TH3	In this paper I will be discussing cooperative learning and how it stems from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and why this is the most beneficial teaching style for students and their motivation to learn.
TH4	providing explanatory feedback can significantly improve students' motivation to develop higher-order thinking, particularly for critical thinking.
TH5	In light of this, the student-centred approach to learning should be used in classrooms more than the standard teacher-centred approach for its optimal opportunities to learn through socialization.
TH6	I will argue that providing unexpected rewards such as stars and stickers is useful to motivate students to efficiently accomplish a given task.
TH7	The Premack Principle is an effective teaching practice as it increases students' motivation, self-discipline, and focus towards tasks they may not prefer. By using an activity that the students would rather do as incentive, teachers can motivate students towards activities that are less desirable.
TH8	Today, I am arguing that homework is an effective teaching practice that further develops the information processing theory.
TH9	Using the teaching practice of rewards in an educational environment enhances motivation in many different effective ways. Students prefer different types of rewards whether it is verbal, or tangible, to keep them motivated.
TH10	In this paper, I will argue that rewards can have a positive effect on a student's motivation, provided they are given under the right circumstances and for the right reasons.
TH11	The implementation of token reinforcement systems in the classroom serve to boost student motivation by means of increased class participation, timely assignment completion/accuracy, and encouraged positive classroom behaviours.
TH12	Guided participation and its related applications are effective teaching methods for motivating students.

TH13	The use of positive reinforcement by teachers cause an increase of compliance, desired behavior and task performance within students.
TH14	Differentiated teaching is beneficial in increasing student's motivation and retention of class material by providing various strategies for students to learn, making the material relative to each student, and facilitating student's competency with the material.
TH15	Choice-making opportunities will increase learners' motivation through increased classroom engagement, enhanced performance and greater autonomy exercised through choosing topics of interest.
TH16	Teachers should always try to use multiple representations of a task in their teachings, wherever possible, to ensure all students understand the topic in a relatable manner.
TH17	I argue that goal setting when facilitated by a teacher encourages students to have more confidence and better engagement thus increasing motivation.
TH18	Tying the interest of the student with classroom activities as a teaching practice motivates the student to learn more.
TH19	Problem-based learning is an effective way to encourage students to use their own personal knowledge of the world and create solutions that they see to be best fit. The involvement of one using their own ideas and imagining they are in a real life situation motivates them to think of the best way to solve the problem(s) and helps them learn at a deeper level.
TH20	The use of cognitive apprenticeship as a teaching strategy for teachers enhances the motivation of students to engage, learn and develop as it not only encompasses the use of cognitive abilities but also social and hands on abilities to learn. Therefore, giving students multiple mediums to engage and apply their learning in real life situations which allows them to see the value and use of what they are learning.
TH21	Self-regulated learning helps students achieve proper goal setting through self-monitoring, exercising high self-efficacy, and self-judgements of performance abilities, while activating and sustaining thoughts and behaviours in order to increase motivation.
TH22	Through the teaching practice of Reinforcement, students are able to modify or create appropriate behaviour, improve and increase motivation, as well as helping to establish the student's autonomy and self efficacy.
TH23	Taking notes is an effective teaching practice because you are able to determine what is the important information, organize the information in an easy way for yourself, and it provides another source of material for review.

TH24	Through evidence I indicate how active learning is an effective teaching practice which helps students retain knowledge longer through deeper processing and is beneficial towards all students rather than traditional lecture
TH25	For teachers, in order to help the student to learn and and grow, scaffolding will be a good choice as it is a motivating and useful practice.
TH26	Having a goal orientated classroom that engages students in cooperative learning will promote intrinsic motivation in students. Cooperative learning along with the use of different learning strategies such as problem-based learning will better improve student's understanding and learning.
TH27	Feedback from teachers and peers enhances students' knowledge, skills, and self-reflection (Kourgiantakis, 2018); feedback from students motivate a teacher to adjust their teaching process and materials; feedback can be thought as the primary component of the teacher-student relationship (Lake, 2012).
TH28	Because rewarding students for their achievements and learning efforts is beneficial in their motivation at school, I argue that rewards for students (positive reinforcement) can increase their intrinsic motivation, as well as improving their behaviours.
TH29	Using rewards in classrooms should be used more often to promote continuous great performance and motivation, and to create a better learning environment.
TH30	The use of inquiry learning in the classroom increases critical thinking skills, communication, self-directed learning and goal setting to promote motivation within students.
TH31	This paper asserts that verbal praise is an effective and useful tool in increasing student motivation.
TH32	I argue that students should participate in collaborative learning activities because they promote both the benefits of interaction and individual learning while working towards a goal.
TH33	Token reinforcement stimulates changes in student behaviour, improves the ability to learn with intellectual disabilities, and enhances instructional teaching practices.
TH34	I argue that authentic tasks are effective in enhancing student's motivation.
TH35	Teachers and well-educated adults should actively assist students with their learning and development. Instead of the child proactively inventing new ideas and perceptions on their own. Because they need to be able to produce the suitable standards set by an adult rather than themselves.
TH36	Scaffolding is one of the most effective, and versatile teaching practices available to teachers, to help their students learn the material.

TH37	The teaching practice of using games and interactive activities increase motivation to learn by providing a more engaging way to present material.
TH38	This paper will focus on the mental structures and process that it takes to learn and change new and pre-existing behaviors. Also, the cognitive perspective of learning will introduce topics related to the idea of self-regulated learning which focuses on personal, behavioral and environmental factors (Yilmaz, 2011). In other words, when people's strategies are the basis of their outcomes and the way they act in a certain situation can be attributed to persons self efficacy, intrinsic motivation and one's academic achievement ability (Yilmaz, 2011).
TH39	Thus, being metacognitive about one's own learning is a very important skill to possess for every person, and teachers must make sure that their students employ metacognitive strategies during learning.
TH40	I believe Differentiated instruction is the ideal way to successfully teach a classroom of individuals.
TH41	Self-efficacy is important to be able to learn, particularly to keep students motivated in the classroom. A sense of high self-efficacy will lead to greater effort and persistence, more challenging goals and higher confidence. These, in turn, will yield a more successful overall academic achievement
TH42	I argue that retrieval practice is the best form of studying in terms of mastery of material due to the fact that it helps with memory retention and confidence in one's mastery of material.
TH43	I argue that direct instruction can effectively improve the attitudes and overall comprehension of exceptional students—namely those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder—while also contributing to their integration into general classrooms.
TH44	Implementing progressive goal-setting for learning based on accurate attributions of achievement and failure increases motivation in students.
TH45	I argue that jigsaw method is a great teaching practice to help students learn and it motivates students to do better, because self-efficacy has a close relationship with motivation. If a person think he or she can do accomplish something, they might be more motivated to do so.
TH46	When cooperational learning is managed by peer tutoring motivation is promoted and students are more likely to succed at completing a task.
TH47	This paper will argue that AfL as teaching practice has a positive impact on student motivation as it develops self-efficacy, which has been coined by Bandura. According to Woolfolk, Winne & Perry (2016), "greater self-efficacy leads to greater effort and persistence in the face of setbacks" (p.268). It is significant that

	as well as providing learners with a taught curriculum; it is our role as educators to ensure that students are becoming independent and self-regulated learners. By having influence on motivation, students would become less afraid of failure and achieve through goal-setting, drawing on theoretical concepts linked directly to self-efficacy.
TH48	Self-regulated learning is a useful teaching strategy to use as it engages students in coursework, increases intrinsic motivation, and gives students the tools needed to succeed as they continue their education.
TH49	Therefore, I argue that using low-stakes quizzes are beneficial for learning since they allow the information to become more resistant to change, be retained for longer periods of time and be accessible when attentional processes are overwhelmed.
TH50	Collaborative learning is crucial within classrooms as it allows students to create relationships with other students, brainstorm new ideas, and elaborate on existing ideas; which as a result, increases intrinsic motivation for students to learn and excel academically.
THD1	Classroom group discussion is an effective social constructivist tool for teachers to facilitate diversification of knowledge acquisition through increasing social interaction, active participation, and encouragement of critical thinking
THD2	Thesis: "Modelling of mastery oriented goals will motivate students because it shapes their behaviour and learning by conditioning them to develop intrinsic attitudes toward learning." Previous literature has shown that even fear can be acquired through modelling, and so I will argue that intrinsic attitudes can be learned and internalized through modelling as well (Gerull & Rapee, 2002).
THD3	In this paper I will argue that adaptive teaching is a motivational strength-based practice which supports the learning needs of those with ADHD because it encourages the development of self-efficacy and self-regulation
THD4	Research on teacher efficacy shows that the developmental processes of educators (external behaviors and internal states) can significantly influence how teaching practices are executed to foster intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in students.
THD5	I believe that a particularly useful method of motivating students is Through self-management because it can be applied to any age level, as well as even outside of The education system and into when they are adults later on. In addition, students are able to visibly see their progress grow, and by constantly having high standards In practice and work, they will habitually maintain high standard work no matter what they subject may be.

THD6	Meanwhile negative feedback could lower motivation or increase it as the student learns about what to improve on for next time. Feedback does not have to be limited to teachers as feedback from peers, students, or friends could have a bigger impact on a student's motivation.
THD7	My thesis statement is that I will argue that learning should be constructed with interactive and engaging activities that make learning fun because this will promote intrinsic motivation in which makes students personally and emotionally invested and connected to their education. Teachers should actively construct the students' learning environment and activities to facilitate students to learn what they want and most importantly, be whom they want in a comfortable and fun way.
THD8	To motivate students, teachers should support giving their students more autonomy and a range of choices in the classroom.
THD9	Teachers must promote autonomy in high school classrooms by allowing high school students to make their own choices, by helping students set goals and accomplish them and by providing positive and constructive feedbacks so that students may build and develop their confidence.
THD10	By showing enthusiasm for what they teach, high school and university instructors can improve the learning and motivation of the majority of students.
THD11	Hands-on learning is useful for increasing a science student's motivation and interest because it engages them, it helps them develop problem solving skills, and it shows them how concepts and theories can be applied to real life.
THD12	Extrinsic motivation, specifically response cost, is the ideal form of motivation for elementary aged students. By providing a reward or punishment for unwanted or wanted behaviour, students are motivated to behave appropriately.
THD13	Low self-efficacy in a certain task can be daunting for student. They may not even wish to begin to try and solve the challenge they are faced with. However, a good teacher can change the student's mindset and raise their self-efficacy - effectively helping the student feel more motivated and ready to complete the task.
THD14	Project-based learning is an effective pedagogical practice that motivates high school and college students through collaboration with others, ownership of their learning, as well as supplemental representations of content.
THD15	In this essay, I will argue that Differentiated Instruction is an effective teaching practice for diverse classrooms because it will help to foster confidence and motivate the students. I believe that this teaching practice can help students succeed in their classes by providing them with the tools they need to understand the course content and learn the material effectively.

THD16	The best way for younger students to be motivated to learn is through positive reinforcement in terms of praise, encouragement of self-directed learning, and rare material rewards.
THD17	Cultural tools should be an initiative used to increase student motivation, more specifically in elementary school aged children, as it encourages class participation by students of all different learning styles resulting in an overall willingness to discuss and learn in a classroom setting.
THD18	Vygotsky's social/situated-constructivist theory can explain the efficiency of cooperative learning through the intersection of its main idea - knowledge is co-constructed between students and teachers.
THD19	Teachers should continue using the teaching practice cooperative learning in order to increase motivation in student development, student participation, and student involvement.
THD20	Clearly demonstrated and organized teacher modeling should be implemented from Kindergarten to Grade Five by the British Columbia Education system because it increases the levels of student motivation through reducing student anxiety, building communication and increasing student interest.
THD21	Premack principle is an effective teaching practice as it reinforces the use of rewards and motivation by prompting students to complete less-desired tasks beforehand.
THD22	I will argue that encouraging self-regulation through reciprocal teaching in a primary school classroom will increase intrinsic motivation among students.
THD23	Motivating students to learn from elementary school to high school can be done through positive reinforcement because if teachers encourage them with small personal praises and acknowledgements, then the student will be more willing to learn. Praises relating to the person and the process are deemed effective, additionally, it is better to use reinforcements compared to punishments in classroom settings because it is more ethical. Motivating students may be challenging at times, but it is more manageable when positive reinforcements are used.
THD24	Encouraging students to create mastery-oriented learning goals is key to successfully motivating them in the classroom. Creating these learning goals boosts feelings of competence, fosters feelings of autonomy and belongingness, and sparks self-determination within the student.
THD25	Overall, reward systems are particularly influential in motivating students and should be used in the classroom. Through greatly improving extrinsic motivation in school performance and behaviour, motivating student self-determination and confidence in approaching difficult tasks, and proving to increase intrinsic

	motivation, using rewards systems as a teaching practice is an essential classroom tool.
THD26	Freedom of choice is an excellent strategy for teachers to employ to motivate students of all ages to learn, because it increases intrinsic motivation, increases task value, and it helps them satisfy the three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.
THD27	Observational learning is evident in conducting field trips when students are introduced to new information and they have to learn through using observation. The implementation of field trips in a student's environment can positively affect their motivation towards academic success.
THD28	Inquiry-based learning has the potential to increase motivation and engagement, by encouraging higher levels of student autonomy and connection to everyday life.