

## Written Argumentative Texts in Elementary School: The Development of Text Structure and Its Relation to Reading Comprehension

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**Abstract :** Text structure is a parameter of text quality. This study investigated the structure of written argumentative texts produced by elementary school age children. We set two objectives: to identify and trace the structural components of the argumentative texts and to investigate whether reading comprehension skills were correlated with text structure. 293 school children from 2nd to 5th grades were asked to write two argumentative texts about informal or everyday life controversial topics and completed two reading tasks that targeted different levels of text comprehension. The findings indicated, on the one hand, significant developmental differences between mature and more novice writers in terms of text length and mean proportion of clauses produced for a better elaboration of the different text components. On the other hand, with certain fluctuations, no meaningful differences were found in terms of presence of text structure: at all grade levels, elementary school children produced the basic and minimal structure that included the writer's argument and reasons or arguments' supports. Counter-arguments were scarce even in the upper grades. While the children captured that essentially an argument must be justified, the more the number of supports produced, the fewer the clauses the children produced. Last, weak to mild relations were found between reading comprehension and argumentative text structure. Nevertheless, children who scored higher on sophisticated questions that require inferential or world knowledge displayed more elaborated structures in terms of text length and size of supports to the writer's argument. These findings indicate how school-age children perceive the basic template of an argument with future implications regarding how to elaborate written arguments.

**Keywords :** argumentative text, text structure, elementary school children, written argumentations

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