



## Rediscovering Abdurrahman Wahid's Ideas in Today's Indonesia: the Use of Argumentative Devices in English Articles

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### Abstract\*

*Recent issues on social and politics have become so influential in Indonesia that people are divided and become increasingly intolerant. In the era of intolerance it is quite right to rediscover and analyse arguments of the late K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, the fourth president of Indonesia that earned his reputation as an international religious scholar, a defender of pluralism, and a champion of humanity. This paper presents a discourse analysis on argumentative devices used by Abdurrahman Wahid in his English articles published at [www.gusdur.net](http://www.gusdur.net). Wahid used the eight argumentative devices masterfully in his articles. Evaluative expressive expressions were the most frequent argumentative device (31%). Wahid tended to show his value judgments bluntly, either positive or negative, to comment or react to current issues under discussion. Such an emotional tendency potentially came from Wahid's own point of view that was based on things which were ideal for him, not on objective analyses made by other people.*

### 1. Introduction

Current issues on politics have become so influential in Indonesia that other studies are not treated equally in daily life. No branch of English linguistics, for example, will significantly help Indonesian people solve various societal problems sparked by 2019 general election in which the nation was politically polarized, and people become more intolerant. No theories of English literature can ease the plights of people who lost their families and belongings in the aftermath of the recent natural disasters that struck several Indonesian islands. It is, however, quite right that English lecturers and students should ponder about one of the most basic phenomena of language use in public life: *argument*.

The simplest definition of argument is something which is named or talked about (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). Wahab (2003) states that argument is a mode of persuasion that allows someone to persuade others to follow his or her own idea or thought. Viewing arguments this way, people may see that arguments are common features of daily life, for people are often involved in persuading others for things they believe or in giving reasons they want others to

accept. In many cases, arguments also involve measuring and evaluating reasons. To vote for a public figure in general elections or whether to support or oppose pornography rules involve measuring and evaluating reasons. Logic plays an important role in these issues because it is the universal science of argument which differentiates good arguments from the bad ones. The fact that argumentative statements can be extended and analyzed almost indefinitely is covered inclusively in a research discipline called argumentation analysis.

For decades linguists have proposed various models of argumentation analysis. A significant development was the publication by the English philosopher, Stephen Toulmin (1958 cited in Renkema, 2004) of a model which could be used for the analysis of argumentation in everyday language. In Toulmin's approach, the main issue is not the logical form of an argument but the question of how an argument is structured. Another model was developed by Petty and Caciopo (1986 cited in Renkema, 2004). This model, the *Elaboration Likelihood Model*, was widely used in research for persuasion by communication. This study provides a general theory on attitudinal change which contains the following basic idea: The variation in persuasive power is influenced by the likelihood that receivers will become preoccupied with the elaboration of the information presented. In this case, elaboration means the thought given to the topic. Furthermore, Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin (2015) recently proposes a model of argumentation analysis called *Argumentative Devices*. Argumentative devices are words, phrases or sentences that can be utilized to convey arguments or to give reasons for or against claims made by other people. The argumentative devices can be used to analyse people's arguments by classifying their utterances or statements that were inclusive of the eight types of argumentative devices.

Viewing all theoretical definitions above, the writers are interested in conducting an argumentation analysis that is based on the latest theory of *Argumentative Devices*. The writers are specifically interested in analyzing on-line English articles written by the late Abdurrahman Wahid as he is widely known for his controversial statements and actions. People often feel baffled and tended to misunderstand Wahid's opinions and actions. Wahid sayings and acts were frequently treated as a discourse or hot topic of discussion which tempted many people to give comments and interpretations. Some agree and try to socialize Wahid's thoughts, but others disagreed and attempted to eliminate them (Al Zastrow, 1999; Utama, 2019). Barton (2016) who conducted an authorized biographical study of Abdurrahman Wahid believes that controversies surrounding Wahid actually originated from his own perspectives which were often different from others. Regardless of the findings in the previous studies, it is quite right to rediscover and analyse arguments of the late Abdurrahman Wahid who have recently earned his popularity again due to his ideas on corruption scandals in the Ministry of Social Affairs and pluralism issues in Indonesia (Nurita, 2021; Rizal, 2020; Tim Detikcom, 2020). The reemergence of popularity strengthens his reputation as an international religious scholar, a defender of, and a champion of humanity. The authors utilize the analytical theory of *Argumentative Devices* (Sinnott-Armstrong & Fogelin, 2015) to analyze Wahid's arguments as no previous studies using the particular theory have been done, especially in the area of discourse analysis.

## **ARGUMENTATIVE DEVICES**

Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin (2015) state that analyzing arguments in oral utterances or written texts can be done effectively by analysing argumentative devices used by the speaker or the writer. The devices are divided into eight categories, i.e., *warranting connectives*, *assuring*, *guarding*, *discounting*, *argumentative performative*, *evaluative expressive*, *slanting*, and *rhetorical devices*.

## **Warranting connectives**

Here is partial list of connective terms that introduce an argumentative structure into language by marking out reasons for a conclusion, such as *accordingly, thus, since, for, hence, then, because, so, and therefore*. These terms are named warranting *connectives*, because, in various ways, they present one or more statements as the warranting or backing for some other statements. Here is an example: *Since all man are mortal. Socrates is mortal, for Socrates is a man.*

## **Assuring**

When will other people give assurance about the statements they have made? People offer *assuring* when they think that someone might challenge what they say. They sometimes cite authorities: *Recent studies have shown...* and *It has been established that...* Here they do not actually cite reasons; they indicate that reasons can be produced on demand. In a context of trust, this is often sufficient.

## **Guarding**

*Guarding* represents a different strategy for protecting premises from attack. Other people reduce our claim to something less strong. Thus, instead of saying *all*, people say *most*. Instead of saying something straight out, they use qualifying phrases like *‘it is very likely that’*, *‘it is arguable that...’* and so on. This is wonderfully noncommittal, for it really doesn’t indicate how strong the argument is, yet it does get the statement into the argument.

## **Discounting**

The general pattern of *discounting* is to discount a possible criticism in order to reject it or counter it. A partial list of terms that function as discounting connection includes *although, however, but, nevertheless, nonetheless, yet, still, and though*. People sometimes use discounting to block certain conversational implications of what they have said, for example: *The situation is difficult, but not hopeless. A truce has been declared, but who knows for how long?*

## **Argumentative performatives**

*Argumentative performatives* are used to make moves in arguments. These performatives are obviously concerned with arguments. They are not statements about arguments, since they are not even statements. If I say *‘I doubt that’* I do not thereby doubt it. Whether I doubt something or not is a fact about me. Here the utterance is performative. Usually *‘I agree to...’* is performative, whereas *‘I agree that...’* is not. In a court of law, however, saying *‘I agree that...’* is often performative. It is one way of stipulating facts that will not be contested.

## **Evaluative expressive**

Although some words in our language are relatively neutral, others carry strong positive or negative connotations. That is, in using many words people are not only describing something, but also *evaluating* it or *expressing some attitude toward* it. Generally speaking, *evaluative* terms, as they are called, apply to lines of conduct. They interconnect to form a rich system of terms that allows us to indicate whether (and to what degree) actions are justified or unjustified. For example, those who hold that South Africa’s system of apartheid is morally wrong, hold that there is moral justification for its abolition.

## **Rhetorical devices**

People often use *rethorical devices* in conversations. For instance, the question “Do you want me to call the police?” has the expected answer *no* and because this question conversationally implies the threat, “If you don’t get out of here, I’ll call the police.” Sometimes people do not intend their words to be taken literally or expect their listeners to interpret meaning just the *opposite* of what they say. This occurs, for example, with *irony* and *sarcasm*. Saying the words “Nice work” function as a way of saying, “You’ve really ruined it this time.”

### **Slanting**

*Slanting* involves the important use of evaluation and expressive language to place something in a good or bad light without adequate justification. Ethnic and racial slurs are obviously examples of slanted language. To say that someone is a Muslim is to comment on his/her ethnic origin. In this area, connotations are actually so prevalent that people have to look to scientific language to find more or less neutral language. For example, “*white*” is a positive term, whereas “*whitey*” is negative. “*Caucasian*” is more or less scientific and neutral. Here people must use the guarding expression “more or less” because all the language in this area is highly charged. These tensions in the language reflect deeper tensions in our society.

## **2. Research Methods**

The study relied on the process of collecting argumentative statements in English articles written by the late K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid and published at [www.gusdur.net](http://www.gusdur.net). The late K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid or popularly known as Gus Dur was the fourth president of Indonesia who is also an internationally recognized religious scholar, a defender of pluralism, and a champion of humanity. The English articles were subjectively chosen for two reasons. First, as the writer of the popular articles, Gus Dur is famous for his controversial arguments and actions. During his multifaceted life as a former president of Indonesia, an international Islamic scholar, and an outstanding top political figure. What he said and did were often treated as a hot discussion topic which invited not only public figures but also ordinary people to comment and interpret it.

Secondly, the current political situations in Indonesia have created public intolerance in which people are divided and become more publicly intolerant of each other. The nation is on the brink of disintegration due to highly contested outcome of the presidential election, differing religious interpretations and hoaxes that have gone rampant among Indonesian people. In the intolerance era, therefore, it is quite right to rediscover ideas and analyse arguments made by the late Abdurrahman Wahid who was keen on supporting communication and cooperation between the mainstream and the marginalized societies.

### **Data collection**

In collecting data, at first the authors logged on the website of Abdurrahman Wahid, [www.gusdur.net](http://www.gusdur.net), chose the *English* section and checked the 43 English articles. Those 43 English articles were treated as the ‘population’ of the study. For practical reasons, the authors performed a simple random sampling technique and took only 20% (8 articles) of the total number of English articles as a sample (Arikunto, 2002; Bouma & Carland, 2016; Sukmadinata, 2005). The selected articles were: *In Memoriam: Pope John Paul II*, *The Unsettled Issue, Is NU Capable of Taking Part in National Politics?*, *Islam, Culture and Technology*, *On Democratic Transition*, *Is There Peace in Iraq?*, *Terrorism in Our Country*, *Diversity with No Contradiction*.

### **Data analysis**

As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) say that the key instrument in qualitative research is the researcher alone, the authors decided to have his own instruments, namely *underlining* and *labelling*. Here the authors did a close reading by underlining and labelling words, phrases and sentences of Abdurrahman Wahid's English articles that are inclusive of the *argumentative devices*. The labels were *evaluative expressive (E)*, *rhetorical device (R)*, *assuring (A)*, *discounting (D)*, *warranting connective (W)*, *guarding (G)*, *slanting (S)*, and *argumentative performative (AP)*.

The authors then discussed the data in the form of narrative explanations to classify and describe Abdurrahman Wahid's arguments based on the theory of *Argumentative Devices*. The data were then computed to find out the frequency of occurrence of each argumentative device in order to identify the tendency of arguments used by Abdurrahman Wahid in his English articles. The authors used the following percentage computation:

$$P = \frac{X}{Y} \times 100\%$$

P = Percentage of an *argumentative device* occurrence

X = Type of *argumentative devices*

Y = Total of *argumentative device*

The aims of this study were to elaborate how the *argumentative devices* were reflected in Abdurrahman Wahid's English articles that were published at [www.gusdur.net](http://www.gusdur.net), to find words, phrases and sentences of Abdurrahman Wahid's English articles that were inclusive of the *argumentative devices*, to explain how Abdurrahman Wahid conveyed his arguments through argumentative devices, to find the frequency of occurrence of *the argumentative devices* in Abdurrahman Wahid's English articles, and to discuss the tendency of arguments used by Abdurrahman Wahid in his English articles.

### 3. Discussions

This section presents findings and discussions of *argumentative devices* used by Abdurrahman Wahid in each of his nine articles.

#### In Memoriam: Pope John Paul II

##### Paragraph 2 and 3:

“However,<sup>D</sup> unlike John XXIII, John Paul II was a more conservative figure who maintained a tight grip on Catholic doctrine. But,<sup>D</sup> this conservatism did not cause the church to fall into what some see as the “dark era”<sup>R</sup> that existed before John XXIII ...

“... The conservatism is likely to stem from the pope's belief that any reforms might snowball<sup>R</sup> and change the entire Catholic doctrine ...”

The use of “however” and “but” is an apparent example of *discounting*. Here, Wahid wants to stress on the essential differences between John XXIII and John Paul II. Although Pope John XXIII was also known as a strong Catholic reformist who encouraged extensive changes of the church, Wahid had a tendency to expose a more positive nature of Pope John Paul II (his conservatism). This predisposition is possibly influenced by both his objective point of view and his close relationship with Pope John Paul II.

Wahid deliberately gives a quotation mark to the phrase “dark era” to signal a *personification*. “Dark era” means the policy of Pope before John XXIII to restrict the church's involvement in social issues in the world. The church's social involvement, however, drastically

changed and was performed more actively in the era of Pope John Paul II. Furthermore, Wahid rhetorically utilizes the verb “snowball” to figure out the Pope’s belief in Catholic reforms. Literally, the word “snowball” means some amount of snow which is pressed into a hard ball and used for throwing in a play. Metaphorically, Wahid uses this term to symbolize quick growth of effects of any reformation that might take place in the church.

**Paragraph 4 and 5:**

“As an observer of the church,<sup>A</sup> I have differences of opinion with some of the pope’s attitudes and beliefs. But<sup>D</sup> I fully understand<sup>AP</sup> his way of thinking.

The pope’s action to forgive Ali Agca, the man who shot him in 1980 is worth remembering.<sup>E</sup> His strong opposition to the war in Iraq and war in general shows a warm and humanitarian<sup>E</sup> attitude ...”

By saying “As an observer of the church”, Wahid tries to assure readers that he really knows what he is talking about. It is an ordinary strategy used by writers or journalists when exposing their experiences in politics by saying “As a top figure who has involved in political decisions for years” or illustrating their trustworthy academic capability like “As an experienced scientist who has done various studies in gender. Meanwhile, the *discounting* term “but” is used to cancel out the previous remark “I have differences of opinion with some of the Pope’s attitudes and beliefs”.

The *discounting* term “but” is more effective when it is sustained by the following utterance “I fully understand”. The later expression is included in *argumentative performative*. Wahid makes it clear that he truly comprehends the Pope’s thoughts. This is like a detective saying, “I conclude that he is lying”. Whether the person he’s talking about is lying or not, other people cannot but agree that the detective has drawn a conclusion. This tactical device is used to make an argument moves explicitly and at the same time reserve the argument for opposing others.

The next paragraph contains two cases of *evaluative expressive*. Both expressions: “worth remembering” and “a warm and humanitarian” showed Wahid’s appreciation to the Pope’s positive characters. In this way, Wahid also shows his important role as an international religious leader who needs to acknowledge the Pope’s sincere involvement in social issues.

**The Unsettled Issue**

**Paragraph 1:**

“...The government’s recognition only to five religions has now begun to be protested by people ... such as Confucianism with its huge enough numbers of followers of around 5 million. One day, it is expected that<sup>G</sup> the government of Indonesia will eventually recognize Confucianism as another religion to which the government should support.”

The underlined clause is a concise argument in the form of *guarding*. This is another way of weakening an expression to avoid criticism. By saying “One day, it is expected that”, as if Wahid did not expressly expect the society to recognize Confucianism. In fact, Wahid really expected the recognition very much since he has been widely known as a consistent defender of minority people, including Confucian followers. Nowadays, Wahid’s struggle has proved fruitful as Confucianism is recognized as a new religion in Indonesia. Thanks to that, Chinese traditions (i.e., *barongsay* dance, Mandarin language) is flourishing in Indonesia.

**Paragraph 6:**

“...This supreme power is in the hand of Khubrigan (Board of Religious Leaders) whose amount of its members are 80 people of sleeve perpetuating<sup>R</sup> so<sup>W</sup> that they are beyond the reach of common people’s choice. This is the point why Iranian political system is not accepted by “western parties”<sup>R</sup> and regarded undemocratic...”

On the other hand, the second point “sleeve perpetuating” is a *rhetorical device*. The word “*sleeve*” which literally means part of garment that covers all or part of the arm is used to idiomatically symbolize a permanently closed procedure to decide *imam* (religious leader) as a member of Khubrigan. Furthermore, after utilizing a *warranting connective* “so” to mark out a conclusion, Wahid again rhetorically mentions “western parties” that actually refer to America and its Allies. It has been an international issue that USA and NATO members are reluctant to have a close relationship with Iran. Even, President Bush often calls Iran “axis of evil” due to Iran’s progressive nuclear program.

**Paragraph 9 and 10:**

“Because<sup>W</sup> we are democratic country, by itself we should let the first view be alive in this country, and let the people alone vote for parliament members who have either the first or second view.

“...Nahdlatul Ulama’s (NU) and Muhammadiyah’s Islamic movements with the support of non-Islamic movement, nationalist, ethnic groups and non-Muslim movements which form an invisible<sup>R</sup> political coalition and is not projected by anybody. “Islamization”<sup>R</sup> occurs not only in political system but also in “social awareness”<sup>R</sup>”

This is another use of *warranting connective*. Wahid states “because” to mark out a reason for the remark “we are democratic country” and to sustain his argumentative statement for the following statement containing people’s right to vote for parliament members. Meanwhile, the word “invisible” is inclusive of *rhetorical device* used to figure out secrecy of political deal between Islamic movements with other parties.

It is not astonishing that NU through National Awakening Party (PKB) or Muhammadiyah through National Mandate Party (PAN) have political deals with other political parties and organizations to support one figure for national or regional leaders. Imam Utomo, the Governor of East Java, is a clear case of a fruitful coalition between a ‘religious’ party (PKB) and a nationalists’ party (Golkar). Such a coalition above was rhetorically named after “Islamization” that is beneficial for the sake of public interest (“social awareness”)

**Paragraph 11:**

“That is why, in various groups of “nationalists”<sup>R</sup>, the term “religious nationalist” or “nationalist religion”<sup>R</sup> is frequently brought up ... In fact, the hunt for the two terms are easy to be said but difficult to be realized.”

The term “nationalists” refers to people, organizations, and political parties that hold nationalism as ideological platform. Meanwhile, the term “religious nationalist” or “nationalist religion” refers to people, organizations, and political parties who mixed up their nationalism ideology with religious ideology (especially Islam) for political purposes. Political parties usually use these compounded terms as a political strategy to gain as many voters as possible, covering both nationalist and religious followers on the ‘grass-root’ level. *Golkar* party is an obvious model for this political tactic, especially under the leadership of by Yusuf Kalla, a *Nahdlatul Ulama* figure who was then elected the Vice President of Indonesia.

## Is NU Capable of Taking Part in National Politics?

### Paragraph 1:

“Many people doubt whether or not the largest Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) through the National Awakening Party (PKB) as well have the capacity to lead a national government. “Aren’t NU people like ‘a hunchbacked who longs for the moon?’”<sup>R</sup> they say ... Kyai in urban societies, meanwhile, exhibit low-valued morality:<sup>E</sup> they can survive sorrow, but they can’t help being rich.<sup>R</sup> Then, what if those kyai of both from rural and urban areas mistakenly choose national leaders who are fond of seeking benefits<sup>E</sup> by bootlicking<sup>E</sup> It must be admitted<sup>A</sup> that such a question is valid in this complicated<sup>E</sup> life ...”

In the case of *figurative language*, the word “like” in the interrogative remark “Aren’t NU people like ‘a hunchbacked who longs for the moon?’” is a classic example of *personification*. It rhetorically explains that the capacity of *NU* and *PKB* figures is low and, consequently, it is a waste of time and energy for those figures to expect such a high, national leadership. In reality, this fact is an *irony*. Since the independence of Indonesia up to the present time, the highest political position an NU leader could ever get was the post of Minister for Religious Affairs. Even, Abdurrahman Wahid himself who was elected the fourth president of Indonesia only ‘enjoyed’ his presidency for less than two years after being impeached by the House of Representative for his controversial decisions and actions. Therefore, it is no wonder that many political observers are always doubting the national leadership of *NU* and *PKB* leaders.

On the other hand, the quartet expressions “low-valued morality: they can survive sorrow, but they can’t help being rich”, “fond of seeking benefits” and “bootlicking” were used by Wahid to show his negative value judgment toward some materialistic *kyais* (religious leaders) living in Indonesian big cities. It has been a public rumor for years that urban *kyais* are often manipulated by government officials to give justifications and support to their public policies. The legalization of *PORKAS* and *SDSB* (both of them are Indonesian national lotteries) was a clear example of *kyais*’ wrongful justification of public policy resulting from their ‘tryst’ with government officials. Wahid, therefore, uses the fact as a basis for his *assuring* remark “It must be admitted that such a question is valid in this complicated life”

### Paragraph 2:

“Furthermore, when we add to question another fact that most of our people<sup>G</sup> have low education that they cannot enter an industrialized era which we require to develop. However,<sup>D</sup> when they achieve that phase sometime in the next five year, will they be loyal still to their kyai? ... Leaders of other religions also ask the same question<sup>A</sup> when an industrialization is begun in a country. At least, observers have raised those questions<sup>A</sup> which seem to corner those religious leaders...”

Wahid states “most of our people”, instead of saying *all people*. This is another *guarding* strategy used to back up an argument. Regardless the growing number of *NU* educated people, Wahid refers to the fact that the majority of *NU* followers were not well educated. This fact is probably a result of *NU* founding fathers’ decision that took politics as their first priority in the beginning of the organization establishment. *NU* was the second biggest political party in Indonesia in 1950’s. As a result, compared to *Muhammadiyah* which prioritized education since its first public appearance, *NU* lags behind in the world of education.

Following the use of a *discounting* term “however” to cancel out the previous statement, Wahid assures readers by citing authorities “Leaders of other religions...” and “observers...” to

sustain that he has a good reason to ask the previous question “will they be loyal still to their *kyai*?” In this case, Wahid offers an assurance as he might think that others potentially challenged his argumentative question.

**Paragraph 3 and 7:**

“...The meaning is that should Islam enter all fields of life with no exception? This is a complicated<sup>E</sup> question whose answer feels bitter<sup>E</sup> to us. The honorable<sup>E</sup> Al-Sheikh Mohammad Hasjim Asj’ari, NU Great Leader, led a discussion on problems related to religious matters... In this case, all of us have ever ignored one or more religious decisions decided seriously by clerics through open and hot<sup>E</sup> debate.”

“...all the country’s people marked with the disposal of Piagam Jakarta ... and changed to the term “Pancasila State”<sup>R</sup> which was even legitimated in *fiqh* law. The decision has been effective till the present day and, hopefully, to the future. Thus,<sup>W</sup> again it is an evidence that<sup>A</sup> the power of *fiqh* is unchallenged by other ideas.”

The two words: “complicated” and “bitter” are Wahid’s emotive expressions. Those words represent a predicament whether or not Islam is supposed to be a central regulation for all issues in life. Wahid illustrates this dilemma in the next paragraph regarding *Piagam Jakarta* that was rejected and changed to term “Pancasila State” – a state that is based on Pancasila, the five basic principles of the nation. At this point, Wahid does not only assure readers (“Thus, again it is an evidence that the power of *fiqh* is unchallenged by other ideas”), but also shows his consistency in defending Pancasila as the national ideology. This decision can be derived from Wahid’s ancestors (K.H. Hasjim Asj’ari and K.H. Bisri Sansuri) who did not agree with the idea of establishing Indonesia as an Islamic state. As a substitute, Wahid’s grandfathers chose and supported the “Pancasila State”.

Meanwhile, Wahid states the word “honorable” as a positive value judgment for his grandfather. Then, the phrase “open and hot” is also an *evaluative expressive* term that was used by Wahid to clarify the nature of democracy in *Nahdlatul Ulama*. Perhaps, Wahid makes this statement to counter a common opinion that NU leaders were authoritarian, and their actions were followed unquestioningly by the NU community. In fact, the common opinion is not always true. The recent case, the dualism of PKB, is an obvious example that NU people do not always follow their religious leaders’ decisions.

**Paragraph 8 and 9:**

“...Agree or not,<sup>G</sup> in reality morality will take its determinant role in the outcome of next general election especially regarding the election of members of legislative bodies...”

... The state takes decisions under state consideration: there are those of legal considerations, and most of them<sup>A</sup> are political ones ... That is why we still need the role of religious leaders ... Their voice should be taken into account because<sup>W</sup> they who become the guard of a “country’s inner self.”<sup>R</sup> ...”

Saying “agree or not” is another strategy of *guarding* an argument. When someone says something like this, he expects the addressee to agree with his or her opinion. In this case, therefore, Wahid’s argument seems to be strong. This strategy is different from the one used in the phrase “most of them”. The later used a ‘camouflage’ strategy as if the argument had been weakened. As an alternative of saying *all of them*, Wahid says “most of them” to counter other people’s argument.

## Islam, Culture and Technology

### Paragraph 2 and 3:

“It is the fact before our eyes which we can’t deny,<sup>A</sup> although people rarely think about it. ... Though<sup>D</sup> the use of modern technology, in many sides, has forced us to accept its characters and leave some traditional elements, in some ways, however,<sup>D</sup> it has also strengthened the tradition. Thus,<sup>W</sup> in this case we can see symmetrical relation between traditions and modernity, ...

... What I heard during my way to Marriott Hotel was a concrete evidence no body can’t argue.<sup>A</sup> It was one of many forms of tradition-strengthening as in the use of loudspeaker in mosques to voice *tarhim*, *Al Quran* readings, and *adzan* at least five times a day...”

Both expressions “It is the fact before our eyes which we can’t deny” and “a concrete evidence no body can’t argue” follow the same pattern of *assuring*. Here, Wahid convinces readers to follow his idea that modern technology does not always contradict traditional culture. The revitalization of traditionalism by the use of modern technology (i.e. *sholawat* concert by Emha Ainun Nadjib or Opick) is a clear example that modern technology can support and improve traditional culture.

This way of assuring is also supported by other *argumentative devices*, such as “though”, “however”, and “thus”. Those devices are mainly used to support Wahid’s argument. In reality, the argument is not wrong. Regardless the different opinion in *fiqh*, some modern Islamic boarding houses in Indonesia allowed students to use modern music equipment (i.e., electric guitar, drum, organ, sound system, etc.,) when performing traditional Islamic cultures on stage, such as reciting *sholawat* (praises and prayers to Prophet Muhammad), reading the *Qur’an*, performing *javin* (Arabic dance), and so forth.

### Paragraph 4:

“The same thing actually occurs in developed countries. In West Europe, for instance, Christian democrat parties have made their re-emergence in politics ... The resurgence of these Christian groups is, indeed, the result of the destruction of social structures by the evilness of personal political ambition of people like Adolf Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, and Josef Stalin in Uni Soviet<sup>S</sup>...”

Here, Wahid uses a *slanted* statement to express his own bad feeling toward past international leaders who used their ideologies to destroy modern civilization. In the case of *slanting*, however, this remark needs a further justification. The connotations of the remark are not always negative. For instance, being a communist for most Chinese people is not evil since Communism is their national ideology that is, somehow, beneficial for their economic development. Also, for Neo-Nazi activists in Germany or Neo-Fascism supporters in Italy, their separatist ideology is right because it strengthens their nationalism identity and character. Thus, the connotations vary with context; they depend on who is saying and to whom is being said.

### Paragraph 7:

“It is not surprising that modern technology is used in “cultural battle”<sup>R</sup> in some societies... That sort of traditionalism has, in fact, existed since the early time of our country as shown in the speeches of national figures of the past such as Moch. Yamin and Sanusi Pane<sup>A</sup> who made an appeal to “return to the glory of the past.”<sup>R</sup> They were, certainly, not conservative

people who rebuff modern technology; they were, on the contrary, people who know how to use it to strengthen their traditionalism ...”

Putting the phrase “cultural battle” in quotation mark clearly indicates that the remark carries a certain, intended meaning. In this first point, Wahid symbolically uses the phrase to represent a confrontation between modern technology and traditional culture. In fact, modernism tends to have a better position than traditionalism. For example, young generation today would prefer modern forms of entertainment (i.e., movie, Play Station, MP3 player, etc.) to the old, traditional ones (i.e., *Wayang Kulit* (traditional puppet show), traditional dance, etc.).

The second point is an *assuring* case. Wahid states “in the speeches of national figures of the past such as Moch. Yamin and Sanusi Pane” to ensure readers by providing a convincing example. He cites these two authorities to show that those people utilized modern technology to support traditionalism, although they were from the side of traditionalism. Furthermore, the phrase “return to the glory of the past” is a common expression used by Indonesians’ leaders referring to the effort to establish a victorious nation like our forefathers did during the reigns of Sriwijaya and Majapahit kingdoms, etc. Such an appeal was very inspiring in the beginning of the independence of Indonesia, but unfortunately, it has never been brought to life.

## On Democratic Transition

### *Paragraph 1:*

“...When I became president I have experience<sup>A</sup> how to deal with the military. Of course, we should recognize that there were many wrong things done by the military... But,<sup>D</sup> you know, the military has changed their attitude to respond to civil society movement... If there are so many bad things done by military, for me, this is not because of<sup>W</sup> the person, the military personals, but<sup>D</sup> it because of<sup>W</sup> the bad system of the military institutions...”

By saying, “When I became a president, I have experience”, Wahid uses another strategy to assure readers that he really knows what he is talking about. His argument, in fact, is true. Wahid has had a very long experience dealing with Indonesian military, even before he was elected a president. During the era of Soeharto, the former President of Indonesia, Wahid was often forced by military figures, including the late Benny Moerdani, Try Soetrisno, and Prabowo Soebianto, to do what Soeharto wanted or at least to avoid a direct confrontation with the former president. History, however, proves that such an aggressive pressure failed to corner Wahid. Perhaps, the most critical military experience of Wahid was to discharge General Wiranto from his position as the Coordinating Minister of Politics and Security Affairs in 2001. Later, this decision was a starting point used by Wahid’s political opponents to impeach him.

Whereas the double *discounting* terms “but” are used by Wahid to reject those statements preceding them, the twofold “because of” were utilized to mark out reasons following them. In this case, Wahid employs those *argumentative devices* to acknowledge that there were ‘positive people’ (reformists) in the armed forces. The late General Agus Wirahadikusumah, the former *Pangkostrad* in the era of Wahid’s presidency, was possibly a perfect example of the argument. Unfortunately, he met his early grave before he had enough time to reform the Armed Forces, in particular Generals’ commercial businesses.

### *Paragraph 2:*

“Another problem is how we respond to terrorism ... Of course, this is part of the problem of religion, especially Islam, in this region ... But,<sup>D</sup> I believe that<sup>A</sup> Islam is not violent religion ... Terrorist usually come from fundamentalism and in case of Indonesia and Mindanao they got a

support and assistant from Middle East ... But,<sup>D</sup> you know, this is just a minority people although they are outspoken ... This is why I felt a little bit skeptical<sup>E</sup> about the bomb case in Bali that was exploded by Amrozi, ... But,<sup>D</sup> you know, the majority Muslim in this country are actually moderate. They accommodate western value without lost their beliefs ...”

This is another *assuring* way used by Wahid. When someone says “I believe that”, he or she actually expects others to believe what he or she says. In this way, he persuades others to follow his claim that Islam is a peaceful religion. Although for the sake of argument this remark is not too convincing, at least it is sufficient to revitalize the image of Islam. This is because nowadays any form of terrorism is always connected with Islam. Indeed, this judgment is not always right. The recent fact in the border of Gaza simply shows a different direction. The way Israelis treated Palestinians by bombing and destroying Palestinian civilization is an undeniable fact that terrorism is also committed by non-Muslims.

Then, stating, “I felt a little bit skeptical” is actually similar to say “I felt skeptical” or even “I felt very skeptical”. It is just merely an indirect strategy or *guarding* to conceal a real argument. Wahid chooses the quantifier “a little bit” because the adjective “skeptical” has already carried negative connotation of *evaluative expressive*. In reality, Wahid’s skepticism on the Bali Blast case is reasonable. Although the actors of the Bali Blast (i.e., Amrozi, Imam Samudra) have been sentenced to death, the verdict has not been implemented yet. They are still imprisoned and have not been executed up to now.

Furthermore, the triple *discounting* terms “but” were employed by Wahid to reject premises preceding them that were disadvantageous for Islam. Using this *discounting* tactic, Wahid actually wants to reemphasize that only minority people (followers of Islamic fundamentalism) conducted terrorism attack. In fact, the majority of Islamic followers are nonviolent and adjustable with Western culture.

## Is There Peace in Iraq?

### *Paragraph 2 and 5:*

“... The answer is, in fact, because of<sup>W</sup> the interest of the U.S. in oil or, in other words, the attack against Iraq is merely based on geopolitical consideration: “Creating a counter-balance against Saudi Arabia, -with its possession of 260 billion barrels resource of crude oil-,<sup>A</sup> which begins to confront the U.S. foreign policy on Israel.”

With objective and rational<sup>E</sup> way of thinking, one can understand it.<sup>A</sup> In effort to establish a stable peace between Palestine and Israel, there should be a strong State of Palestine... Israel, on the other hand, can have strong industrial and trade sectors...”

In paragraph 2, Wahid uses a *warranting connective* term “because of” to provide a reason coming after it (“the interest of the U.S. in oil”). This way of reasoning is more argumentative when it is followed with an *assuring* remark “with its possession of 260 billion barrels resource of crude oil”. In this case, Wahid’s remark seems to be irrefutable because the statistical data point out two rationales. First, it strengthens Wahid’s previous argument, which has also been an international rumor, that America attacked Iraq because of its oil. Secondly, it supports the preceding argument “Creating a counter-balance against Saudi Arabia”. The fact shows that after the death of King Fath bin Abdul Azis, Saudi Arabia which is under Prince Abdullah – the new, more religiously ardent king – has begun to confront the foreign policy of U.S.A. on Middle East, on Israel in particular.

Meanwhile, the next paragraph shows another strategy of *assuring*. By stating positive *evaluative expressive* phrase “objective and rational” in the remark, “With objective and rational way of thinking, one can understand it”, Wahid assures readers that his argument is reasonable and logical to understand and, therefore, people are expected to follow it.

**Paragraph 7 and 8:**

“As an outsider and observer of Middle East region, I believe<sup>A</sup> ... to continue our effort in making peace in Middle East and in any other places of the globe.

I presented the above suggestion in many forums,<sup>A</sup> some of them was an international peace-making conference organized by Inter-religious and International Federation for World Peace (IIFWP) in March 2003 in Washington D.C, and a series of lectures in Michigan University,...”

The two underlined expressions are inclusive of *assuring*. The first expression, “As an outsider and observer of Middle East region” is used by Wahid to ensure readers that he really knows and masters the most important issues in the Middle East. In other words, by stating the remark, he expects readers to have no doubt in his capacity as an international trustworthy source of the subject matter in Middle East. Meanwhile, the second comment, “I presented the above suggestion in many forums” is another *assuring* model used to justify the reasonableness of Wahid’s argument regarding the correlation between peace-making efforts in Iraq and Palestine-Israel conflicts. It is right that the proposal has been presented in many international forums, but whether or not it is implemented is another matter. As an international Islamic public figure, at least, Wahid has been trying to give his insight for the solution of conflicts in Middle East.

**Terrorism in Our Country**

**Paragraph 5:**

“Mathematically, our export-import balance is obviously hit by the incident and so the tourism industry is. However,<sup>D</sup> mathematic account speaks nothing<sup>R</sup> in the matter of how many innocent people were killed in the bombing. We lose the international trust in our capacity in protecting foreigners from being the target of any attack. ... There is only one thing that amuses us, that “the incident was a “force majeure<sup>R</sup>””

Utilizing the transition signal, “however” is a common way to *discount* or to annul the previous premise of argument. At this point, Wahid ironically compares the use of “mathematic account” for calculating the profit loss of economic businesses (i.e., tourism industries, export-import trades) to its ‘more important’ function for counting how many people were killed in the Bali Blast. In other words, Wahid criticizes business observers who tend to prioritize their views on effects of the bombing to commercial industries in Bali. Indeed, tourism industries are important in Bali but those who fell victim to the bombing deserve more consideration.

When Wahid says “the incident was a “force majeure”, he actually shows another *irony*. Using a technical term “force majeure”, which means an unexpected event that prevents people from fulfilling their obligations. Wahid actually the inability of Indonesian government and military officials to prevent terrorists’ attack.

In this case, Wahid denotes Bali Blast as if it was an unexpected incident happening merely in the wrong time and place.

**Paragraph 6:**

“...Whether the police failure is the result of its personnel number which is too small, or whether it reflects the complexity and mess<sup>E</sup> of our political system. With the conflicting<sup>E</sup> stance and statements of government officials, the government is not prepared to anticipate any possible violence conducted by terrorist groups in our country...”

This is the continuation of argument in paragraph 5. Here, Wahid shows his negative value judgment (“complexity and mess” and “conflicting”) of the gross misconduct by Indonesian police and people’s representative in handling and anticipating any forms of terrorism in the country. In fact, lack of facilities in intelligence technology and poor mastery of information technology were the reasons why Indonesian military could not do anything to prevent the catastrophe.

To make things worse, Indonesian government and the house of representatives showed dissenting opinions about the case. Some officials suggested that all personnel should have anticipated the possibility of the terrorists' attacks, while others insisted on being unmoved until enough evidence was obtained. Those conflicting statements suggest harrowing uncertainty in the country’s security and order. Situation like this was favorable for the proliferation of terrorism in Indonesia.

***Paragraph 8 and 10:***

“Vice President Hamzah Haz's stance in this case is odd.<sup>E</sup> ... he even visited some leaders of radical Muslim groups like Ja'far Umar Thalib when he was being in police detention for his alleged involvement in Ambon conflict. He should, at least,<sup>G</sup> delay his visits until the legal proceedings finished with those people being judged innocent.

He was also reckless<sup>E</sup> as he was willing to meet some law violators at Vice Presidential Palace...”

Again, Wahid expresses his personal resentment toward someone else’s action. At this time, the adjectives “odd” and “reckless” are used to describe Hamzah Haz’s inappropriate position in the issues on terrorism. Wahid seems to argue that Haz could not see the line separating his position as a chairman of a political party from his position as the nation’s vice president. This “odd” and “reckless” stance might encourage followers of Islamic fundamentalism to freely implement their wrong interpretation of *jihād* in Indonesia.

In addition, saying “he should, at least, delay his visits” is actually an indirect way of saying *hesould not visit*. Here, Wahid opposes Haz’ decision to visit public figures of ‘radical’ Muslim groups. Haz brazenly visited them in favor of his United Development Party (*PPP*). In other words, those visits were made on behalf of his political interest. Those visits, as a blatant attempt to gain political support, are actually normal in politics. However, it would have been better if Hamzah Haz had waited for the right moment to do that.

**Diversity with No Contradiction**

***Paragraph 5:***

“...With the position of those Eastern and Western intellectuals, politicians, and journalists, it's been clear that<sup>A</sup> Huntington concept has been scrutinized together openly and accurately.<sup>E</sup> Huntington used double standard in the concept, but<sup>D</sup> he also reminded us to diversities of cultural systems that must be respected. It raises great expectation to the future of human race civilization...”

The underlined dependent clause above is another strategy of *assuring*. The sub-clause “it's been clear that” is used to indirectly invite readers to believe that Huntington's concept is rejected through a fair process (“openly and accurately”) involving “those Eastern and Western intellectuals, politicians, and journalists.” At the same time, the *discounting* term “but” is used to cancel out the disadvantage of Huntington's concept in the previous statement. Meanwhile, the statement coming after “but” is made to show Wahid's fair judgment. Wahid did not only manage to pinpoint the fallacy of Huntington's theory, but is also keen on presenting the strength of the concept reasonably.

**Paragraph 8 and 9:**

“...That's why, diversities of way of life are normal. It's mentioned in the holy Koran: "And I've created you all into nations and tribes, so you will learn one to another." (Waza'alnakum Syu'uban Waqabaila li Ta'arafu)<sup>A</sup> ...”

... The Koran stipulates, "Hold the 'string' of Allah, and don't disintegrate," (wa'tasihmu i ablallahijamian wa-la-tafarrqu).<sup>A</sup> ... Islam, in fact, only allows the use of force if the Muslims are forced to leave their homes (idzaukhriju min diyarihim).<sup>A</sup> ...”

Those three underlined verses of the Holy Qur'an above have the same *assuring* function. Wahid aptly uses them to ensure readers that diversity is acknowledged in Islamic teaching (“Waza'alnakum Syu'uban Waqabaila li Ta'arafu”). In other words, Islam discourages and rejects disintegration (“*wa'tasihmu i ablallahijamian wa-la-tafarrqu*”) because discord or “the use of force” – as is the case of Israel-Palestine conflict – should be the last resort when the other diplomatic options fail to deliver the desired results (“*idzaukhriju min diyarihim*”).

Wahid needs to convey this *assuring* to counterbalance Western's biased perspectives, including Huntington's concept, on Islam and terrorism. Thus, the terrorists who claim they act on behalf of Islam actually never represent Islam itself. They, and everything that they do, defy the core of Islamic tenets on the importance of diversity of views and opinions. If only this principle were well implemented, Islam would be free from stigmatization resulting from the terrorists' acts.

**Paragraph 10:**

“... In my perspective, either the concept or the view was originated from the same thing: "minder wearing heading complex" (inferiority complex).<sup>E</sup> Being covered by the arrogant<sup>E</sup> perspective, the concept and view is really disturbing<sup>E</sup> the mutual understanding amongst diverse cultures in the actual life of human being.”

This paragraph contains Wahid's blunt rejection to the Huntington's concept. The remark “minder wearing heading complex” (inferiority complex) followed by two adjectives “arrogant” and “disturbing” clearly explained Wahid's negative value judgment of Huntington's theory. Perhaps, those negative *evaluative expressive* comments represent Wahid's bitterest disappointments at Western people's perspectives about Islam, especially those related to terrorism issues.

**Tabulation and Discussion of Occurrence Frequency of Argumentative Devices**

Table 1 presents the frequency of occurrence of all eight argumentative devices used by Abdurrahman Wahid in his nine articles.

**Table 1.** Occurrence Frequency of *Argumentative Devices*

No	Type of Argumentative Devices	Quantity	Percentage (%)
1	<i>Evaluative Expressive</i>	37	31
2	<i>Rhetorical Devices</i>	24	20
3	<i>Assuring</i>	23	19
4	<i>Discounting</i>	15	13
5	<i>Warranting Connectives</i>	10	9
6	<i>Guarding</i>	6	5
7	<i>Slanting</i>	2	2
8	<i>Argumentative Performatives</i>	1	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>118</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on data, it can be inferred that Abdurrahman Wahid masterfully uses all eight *argumentative devices* to convey his arguments. Here, *evaluative expressive* expressions are the most frequent *argumentative device* (31%) used by Wahid. This is because Wahid tends to show his value judgments bluntly, either positive or negative, to comment or react to current issues. Such an emotional reaction presumably comes from Wahid's own point of view that is based on things which are ideal for him, not on objective analyses made by other people (Barton, 2002).

The second most frequent *argumentative device* is *rhetorical device* (20%) that is followed slightly with *assuring* (19%). In this case, Wahid uses *rhetorical devices* to insinuate or to make an analogy for things that can be interpreted in two ways, either literally or figuratively. Those *rhetorical devices* are mostly in the form of irony (e.g. "to fill their empty bellies"), personification (e.g. "like a juggernaut"), and metaphor (e.g. "the tip of the iceberg"). Then, in the case of *assuring*, Wahid uses various expressions to ensure readers that his arguments are rational and reasonable. Frequently, Wahid cites authorities, such as verses of the Holy Qur'an, public opinions, (e.g. "News organizations report that"), and statistical data to support his argumentation. This is in accordance with the study done by Mahfud (2003) that Wahid defends what he believes to be right and criticizes what he believes to be wrong. In addition, Wahid uses his *assuring* strategies mostly to defend the image of Islam that is often associated with terrorism.

In relation to *discounting* terms (13%), Wahid employs some conjunctions, such as *yet*, *however*, *though*, and *but* to reject or counter possible criticisms to his arguments. In most cases, those *discounting* terms are utilized to cancel out the previous statement (e.g. "However, unlike John XXIII, John Paul II was a more conservative figure who maintained a tight grip on Catholic doctrine"). Meanwhile, he uses *warranting connectives* (9%) to signal reason for statements preceding and following those connectives (e.g. "Their voice should be taken into account because they who become the guard of a "country's inner self."). Those *warranting connectives* are *thus*, *because of*, *because*, and *so*.

The last three argumentative devices include *guarding* (5%), *slanting* (2%), and *argumentative performatives* (1%). Firstly, Wahid uses *guarding* expressions to defend his arguments from the opposing ideas. He reduces his claim to something less strong. For example, instead of saying, "*all of these advantages*", he says "*most of these advantages*". Secondly, he conveys *slanting* remarks to show his personal judgments on things without adequate justification. Those *slanting* remarks tend to carry his negative connotations, such as "Religious fanatics ... pervert Islam into a dogma of intolerance, hatred and bloodshed". Thirdly, Wahid utilizes *argumentative performative* expressions to make a direct argument without ambiguity. For instance, by saying, "I have differences of opinion with some of the pope's attitudes and

beliefs. But I fully understand his way of thinking", Wahid makes it clear that he comprehends the Pope's thoughts. This tactical device is used to make an argument moves explicitly and at the same time reserve the argument for opposing others.

Finally, it can be concluded that Abdurrahman Wahid uses a large number of *argumentative devices* (total: 118) diversely in his nine articles. All Sinnott-Armstrong and Fogelin's (2015) eight *argumentative devices* are found, although some have low percentages of occurrence. *Evaluative expressive, rhetorical devices* and *assuring* were utilized much more frequently than other *argumentative devices*. While *discounting* and *warranting connectives* were employed evenly, other three devices (i.e., *guarding, slanting* and *argumentative performatives*) are hardly used. The fact that Wahid tends to use *evaluative expressive* as the most frequent *argumentative devices* is in accordance with Barton's (2002) ideas that Wahid's value judgment is a matter of personal perspectives. His ailing eyesight heightens the risk that his statement will spark controversies. Wahid's dispute over religious extremism with Habib Rizieq (the front man of *FPI*) that was followed by a series of skirmishes involving their respective supporters and followers a perfect illustration of controversies arising his personal judgments.

#### 4. Conclusion

Abdurrahman Wahid or Gus Dur is an international public figure who has deep knowledge and wide perspectives on current national and international issues. He can give comments and argumentation on various subject matters including religion, terrorism, culture, politics, democracy, technology and others. As a human being, however, Wahid has his weaknesses. He is handicapped by his poor eyesight and limited physical movement due to a stroke attack prior to his presidency. Above all, the highest percentage of *evaluative expressive* significantly shows that Wahid is frequently snarled by his own proclivity to emotionally express his personal value judgments without adequate proof and justification. Consequently, many people often criticize and, even, manipulate his statements in the mass media. His argumentative style is certainly a potential source for misinterpretations and controversies.

Due to its limitations, the results of the study are open for criticism and verification. For the future researchers, we would like to make two suggestions. Firstly, the best possible way to enrich the findings of the present study is by analyzing other articles written by Abdurrahman Wahid that have been published in newspapers or magazines and his commentaries on television. By incorporating these two kinds of data source, the question on how Abdurrahman Wahid conveys his arguments can be addressed to in a more unbiased and objectively fashion.

Secondly, it is advisable that future researchers conduct a comparative discourse analysis of the ideas of other public figures, such as Amien Rais, Megawati, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, B.J. Habibie, and others. By conducting such comparative studies researchers can help Indonesian people figure out which one has better argumentation in presenting their programs for the sake of Indonesia's future development. Thus, research in this area is not only useful for teachers and students of English Education Department, but also for Indonesian people in general.

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