

The Argumentation in Vietnamese Buddhist Press

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Abstract:

Language is a special signal system functioning as the most effective tool of cognition and communication. Through languages, communities can exchange feelings, aspiration, and belief with each other. In Buddhism, language is the means of mission, the soul of dharma protection. Exposed in the written or spoken forms, the communicative processes in languages are basically monitored by argumentation. Language-involved attributes in the media not only include radio and television language but also consist of advertising and marketing languages, etc. Particularly, the linguistic features in Buddhist press are to transfer religious information to the target communities. As a result, language in Buddhist press must be standard, accurate, and easy for perceives to. However, there has been no intensive research on the argumentation in the Vietnamese Buddhist journalism so far. The pertinence of this topic, therefore, lies in its demonstration of the applicability of the distinct and unique language of the Vietnamese Buddhist press in the integrated period. This research applies the argumentation theory to analyze the argumentation aspects in the Vietnamese Buddhist press and point out linguistic features under semantics and pragmatics.

Keywords:

Buddhism, Buddhist Press, Argumentation, Argument, Premise, Conclusion

1. Introduction

Language is a special signal system - a tool of thinking and communication. Through languages, people can exchange feelings, aspiration, and belief with each other. In Buddhism, language itself is the means of mission and the soul of dharma protection.

In order to preserve and develop the relationship with other religions and communities, Vietnamese Buddhism has chosen to lead a "good life, good religion", which has been deeply rooted in the social activities such as welfare, free medical care and treatment for the poor. One of the principles in Buddhism is "to be able to help an individual is much better than to build a nine-story tower". The beauty of life,

therefore, is not only perceived by the beauty of culture and social morality; but also embraces the faith in good deeds and virtues. Therefore, the transfer of information about Buddhism is a very important task of the Buddhist press.

Language in the press is a part of media such as radio, television, advertising, and marketing, etc. As for informative functions, linguistic features in the press must be standard, informative, and intelligible for perceivers to absorb. However, no one has studied the argumentation in Vietnamese Buddhist journalism so far; therefore, the pertinence of this topic lies in its demonstration of the applicability of the distinct and unique language of the Vietnamese Buddhist press in today's integration period.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Research on Argumentation and on Vietnamese Buddhist Press*

The word 'argument' comes from the Latin word 'argumentum' which means "evidence, support, proof, and a logical argumentation." Hence, the idea of argumentation does not originally bear the negative connotations of quarrel and dissent as it is understood. Logically, it is just a manner of presenting evidence. On the other hand, under a pragmatic perspective, argumentation is defined as a systematic investigation of implementing language, methods of logic, which is called logical culture [16]. The domain that aims at developing this knowledge and skills is termed as pragmatic logic [2,3]. The study on argumentation is associated with a formal-logical perspective, hence, a reasonable argumentation must be deductively valid. The applicability of formal logic or formal deductive logic (FDL) [5,6,9,21] is quite controversial in analyzing and evaluating the day to day argumentations, particularly if these are applied in a piece of writing, short story, play or a novel.

Argumentation has also been examined and researched by a vast number of linguists. It was first considered as aspects of dialectics and rhetoric. The pioneers in this domain were linguists from Western countries. By the 1970s, two French linguists, Jean Claude Anscombe and Oswald Ducrot had specially considered argumentation pragmatics, and thereupon developed a theory [1].

In recent years, Vietnamese linguists, who have applied this theory to examining the Vietnamese language, include Ban (2009), Chau (2007), and Dan (1998). Their works served as the basis for several research works and dissertations on argumentation in Vietnamese such as Nghia (2015) and Trang (2016). A number of works have also been published in Huyen (2014), Huyen (2016), and Trang-Huong (2016), etc.

The portrait of researches on argumentation in Buddhist press is not much, which exists only some studies such as Vietnam Buddhist Press under media theory [18]; Religion in modern life [22]; Buddhist journalism in Vietnam - Current situation and issues [10]; Buddhism in human life [14]; An introduction to Buddhism and its influence in the period of 10th -14th century [11]; Vietnam Buddhist argumentations [15], etc.

In spite of many research works on argumentation, there has been no research on argumentation in the Vietnamese Buddhist press. Accordingly, the argumentation in Buddhist journals will be the research objectives to clarify their semantic and pragmatic features.

2.2. *Argumentative Opinions*

Linguists have a different viewpoint of argumentation, for instance, Ban [4] noted that “in the process of presenting a concept, humans may go from this ideal to another ideal by the inferences. The employment of argumentative argument for a certain convincing conclusion is called argumentation”. Chau [7] stated that “an argumentation is to set common sense and guide the listeners to an ultimate conclusion which the speaker wants in communication”. Whereas, Dan [8] supposes that “an argumentation is a mode of speech act, in which the speaker gives arguments to make the target-audiences accept one or more conclusions”.

Argumentation exists in each utterance, discourse of interlocutors in conversations. The argumentation is an illocutionary speech, which is used to convince the other. An utterance plays a very important role in controlling the communicative activities of humans.

To achieve purposes in the communicative process, interlocutors must take advantage of argumentation. In writing, the aim of argumentation is to persuade the target-readers, so it also plays a decisive role in structuring the text. There are many factors related to text construction, but the argumentation is one of the most crucial parts.

For this reason, the argumentation is the inevitable tool of communication between writers and readers. In order to achieve the communicative purpose, the writer offers several argumentations and convictions to prove and persuade the readers to believe or act in a way which the writer expects.

The argumentative relationship can be shown as follows:

$$P, Q \rightarrow R$$

P and Q are arguments (premise, reasoning) and R is the conclusion. The complex of P, Q... \rightarrow R is called an argumentation. Argumentation normally consists of discourses that could exist either in spoken or written forms. A discourse itself contains argumentation or potential argumentation. Argumentation sometimes has always been unconsciously uttered by the speaker, which means the speaker does not deliberately argue. In brief, the argumentation is presenting serial arguments that persuade others to believe and follow the speaker; it's a directive activity to convince the hearer/reader.

This article emphasizes on the argumentation theory propounded by Ban [4] in communication, discourse, and context construction.

2.3. *Types of Argumentation*

There are two types of argumentation: complex argumentation and simple argumentation. Complex argumentation is formally used in sciences whereas simple argumentation is commonly used in daily routine [4]. Besides, we can also refer to compound argumentation and argumentative network. All of them will be interpreted in the findings and discussion section. The Buddhist press is steeped in religion and day-to-day life so argumentations are logically simple ones.

3. **Research Methodology**

3.1. *Data Collection and Analysis*

The scope of our research is to collect the selective articles which were published within 4 months (12/2016-03/2017) from (<http://phatgiao.org.vn/>) and (<http://giacngo.vn/>).

Based on the articles from the sources mentioned above, the date of the argumentations was extracted and collected. The data was statistically investigated and classified. Finally, each class of argumentation and concrete samples were deeply analyzed under semantics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis aspects

To sufficiently collect the primary data, the following methods and tactics were deployed:

3.2. Method of Description

This method is used to describe the linguistic characteristics of the Buddhist press so as to identify the specific characteristics of the Buddhist language in current media.

3.3. Systematization Method

Systemize different language usages of each newspaper page and among newspapers.

3.4. The Tactics of Statistics and Classification

These tactics helped us to obtain statistical information, then we classify the numbers and the frequency of appearing linguistic phenomena, which are specific to Buddhist journalism.

3.5. Comparative Tactics

Comparative tactics was employed to examine the usage of language in the Southern Buddhist press in comparison with the Northern Buddhist press in Vietnam. To a certain extent, the characteristics of language usage can be compared with non-Buddhist newspapers.

The article also uses some linguistic methods such as semantic analysis and discourse analysis, which have been used to describe and analyze utterance meanings in text and to expose the intended information that the writer wanted to transmit to readers. It can be admitted that the tactics also transmit of the figure's thoughts, arguments, and quackeries in their communication.

In a nutshell, these methods and calligraphies were applied for analyzing data on the scope of Buddhist journals.

4. Datas, Finding and Discussion

In Vietnamese Buddhist press, some argumentations have not fulfilled the original structure (argument precedes conclusion), that may have implicit arguments (IP) or an implicit conclusion (IR), argument and conclusion sometimes change in places. Another fact is that argumentation does not only separately consist of the discourses, but they also overlap and cover each other. To meet the linguistic demand, we try to separate and discuss them in order to make more logical and clearer.

The research result can be classified into 4 main types of argumentation.

4.1. Simple Argumentation

Simple argumentation is argumentation with one or more arguments and one conclusion. Simple argumentation normally appears in the nearby utterances in a paragraph or in the nearby paragraphs. The different types of simple argumentation are:

4.1.1. Simple Argumentation Has Same Direction Reasons with Conclusion

- a. Argumentation in which argument and conclusion are consistent.

This is the explicit argumentation that has the same direction argument with the conclusion, for example:

“Bia đâu phải là thực phẩm mặn chế biến từ loài động vật (P) nên có nhiều Phật tử ăn chay uống bia” (R).

(Diệu Thế, Phật tử phải kiên quyết từ bỏ rượu bia, <http://giacngo.vn/>, 20/12/2016)

(As beer isn't non-vegetarian food processed from animal, many Buddhist practitioners eat vegetarian food and drink beer)

Beer is not made from meat or processed from animals, hence it does not violate the Buddhist disciplines on the consumption of meat-originated products. Therefore, many Buddhists drink beer because they think that beer is not banned. However, beer is still classified as an alcoholic beverage. Drinking too much will lead to being drunk and addiction, which means that Buddhists should not drink.

- b. Argumentation containing several arguments consistent with conclusion

This is the most typical form of simple argumentation and the easiest one to identify. Here are some examples:

“Bia là một dạng rượu nhẹ, (P1) ít độ cồn (P2) nhưng vẫn gây say nghiện (P3) nếu như uống nhiều (P4) và thường xuyên, (P5) thiết nghĩ cũng không được dùng... (R)”

(Tổ tư vấn, Bức xúc vì một số quý thầy thiếu oai nghi, Giác Ngộ 21/12/2016)

(In spite of being a kind of low-alcohol liquor, beer may cause addiction and drunkenness, if you frequently overuse it. Accordingly, beer is thought not to be used)

The above argumentation can be generalized in the following model::

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5 → R

Through the replenishment above, we can see that the main argumentation has five supportive arguments towards the conclusion at the end. With this argumentation, the author used a series of equally effective arguments, all of which suppress semantics to lead to a convincing conclusion that beer should not be used.

The example below is an explicit argumentation with a conclusion base before the arguments.

The following is an example of a simple argumentation that has more than one arguments

“Nên ăn chay (R), ăn chay thanh lọc tinh thần, (P1) giúp bạn trở nên yêu đời hơn, (P2) tươi vui hơn, (P3) tránh xa những phiền não, (P4) suy nghĩ tiêu cực trong đầu (P5) và giữ cho cơ thể luôn thon gọn, (P6) tươi trẻ... (P7)”

(P.Q.C, Nhà hàng chay Cổ Nội, <http://giacngo.vn/10/01/2017>)

(It had better to eat vegetarian food to purify the mind, better enjoy the life, be more joyful, stay away from negatively frustrating thought, and keep body well-stacked)

We can see that the above argumentation has seven arguments in the same direction, having an equivalent effect towards the preceding conclusion as the following model:

$$R \leftarrow P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7$$

The author tries to build argumentation around spiritual benefits, youth, and even physical attraction. As a result, the argumentation is very convincing. From these arguments, the author reinforces the conclusion (the recommendation to be vegetarian) stated at the beginning of the discourse...

4.1.2. Simple Argumentation Having Argument Inconsistent with Conclusion

In fact, argumentation with the arguments against the conclusion is two simple argumentations. They are subdivided into two types:

a. Argumentation with one argument inconsistent with conclusion

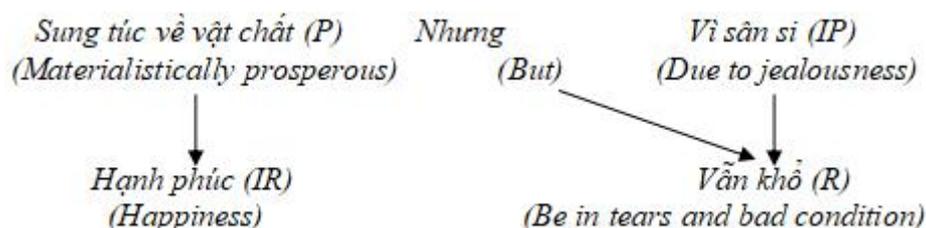
This type of argumentation has an argument indicating an implicit conclusion and an implicit argument leading to a conclusion. We can see a sample of such in the construction below:

“Có những “người giàu cũng khóc”, sống sung túc về vật chất (P) nhưng vẫn khổ” (R).

(Linh Nhi, Hạnh phúc: Kiến tạo hay giành lấy, <http://giacngo.vn/21/03/2017>)

(Leading a materialistically prosperous life, the rich are still in tears and bad condition).

The above argumentation is a simple type of argumentation that has arguments inverse direction with the conclusion. In essence, here are two simple contrary arguments which are full form reconstruct below:



Through this replenishment, we can see that it is common sense: if you are materially prosperous (P), you will be happy (IR). However, because of human jealousy (IP), there is suffering in the human mind (R). Therefore, the author's intention is to prove that harmony, sympathy, and sharing between people is very important and from that, people could achieve true happiness and peace. On the other side, if we still selfish and only thought for our own benefits, we will never be able to escape our karma even if we have a lot of materially possessions, only miserable path waiting for us.

b. Argumentation has two contrary arguments inconsistent with two implicit conclusions

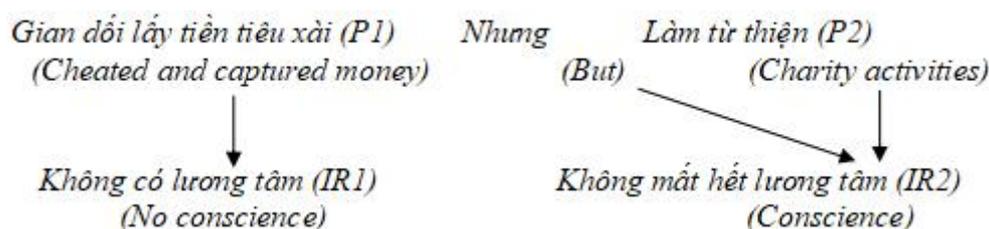
Different from an argumentation has an argument inconsistent with the conclusion, this argumentation has 2 contrary arguments directed towards two contrary conclusions. For instance:

“Người vợ cấu kết cùng kế toán (kê khai gian lận) để lấy tiền của chồng tiêu xài riêng (P1). Điều làm tôi lưu tâm nhất là một phần số tiền đó được người vợ mang đi làm từ thiện” (P2).

(Tổ tư vấn, Từ thiện cũng có năm bày đường, <http://giacngo.vn/>, 31/3/2017)

(A spouse and accountant (cheating in declaration) had coordinately captured her husband's money. The most concerning point was that some of the captured money had been used by the spouse for charity activities)

This argumentation is fully reproduced as follows:



Through this re-enactment, we can see the full form of the argumentation and have been able to explain that: according to common sense, only those who have no conscience, immorality (IR1) can cheat their husband's money to spend on their own needs (P1). However, the wife in the argumentation used a portion of the money for charity (P2), proving to her husband that she has not lost all conscience (IR2).. Hence, This type of argumentation has two contrary arguments indicating two implicit contrary conclusions, similar to the re-enactment and analysis above.

4.2. Complex Argumentation (Syllogism)

Complex argumentation is also known as syllogism, it is a kind of argumentation that includes two inequivalent arguments: one argument shows the general called major premise while the other indicates the particular called minor premise and one conclusion of the minor premise. the syllogism not only always appears in science but also in daily life. The syllogism is the typical form of argumentation. Let' s consider the following discourse:

“Giáo dục là môi trường đào tạo nhân cách con người từ khi còn nhỏ đến lúc trưởng thành. Giáo dục hướng con người đến với lẽ phải và sự chân thật với chính bản thân mình cũng như cộng đồng xã hội. Việc một người quản lý giáo dục bằng cách này cách khác cố lấp liếm cho hành vi sai phạm của mình là điều không chấp nhận được. Lỗi lầm ai cũng có thể mắc phải. Nhưng dùng quyền để dối trá, lôi kéo đồng nghiệp và trẻ em theo mình, nhất là trong môi trường giáo dục, thì đó là một “cái ác”.”

(Thích Pháp Đăng, Khi người quản lý giáo dục không thành thực, <http://giacngo.vn/>, 06/03/2017)

(Education is a place in which people's personality is trained from the early age to adulthood. Education leads people to justice and the truth to ourselves and communities. An educational manager who deliberately hides his wrong-doings is unacceptable. Anyone can make mistakes, but taking advantage of authority to

deceive children and colleagues, especially in educational context, is thought to be “cruelty”)

This discourse has two syllogisms, which we generalize as follows:

The first syllogism

Major premise: Không ai không mắc phải sai lầm (Anyone can make mistakes).

Minor premise (implicit): Anh là nhà quản lí giáo dục (You are an educational manager).

Conclusion (implicit): Anh phải mắc sai lầm (You definitely make mistakes)

The second syllogism:

Major premise: Mắc sai lầm mà lấp liếm và dối trá là tội ác (Making mistakes and hiding the wrong-doings are cruel)

Minor premise: Người quản lí giáo dục lấp liếm và dối trá (The educational manager hides his wrong-doings)

Conclusion: Người quản lí giáo dục gây tội ác (The educational manager causes cruelty)

Both of these syllogisms are affirms that everyone can make mistakes, and it is not strange for an education manager to make mistakes. But once making a mistake, he needs to admit it bluntly, not to hide it. If the educator deliberately covers up mistakes with lies, he has committed crimes to society. Therefore, the above discourse has applied two syllogisms to justify the crimes of educational administrators. From the premises and conclusions, the writer wants to counsel educational managers in particular and people in general not commit a crime intentionally.

4.3. Compound Argumentation

Compound argumentation is an argumentation mobilized by several discourses, including several inferior argumentations that stand as arguments. These inferior argumentations are related to each other and are all consistent with the main conclusion. On its part, the main conclusion concludes all the textual meanings of the argumentation.

“Người dân ai cũng nghĩ “cho tiền thần linh” thì sẽ được lợi lộc vào mình nên ra sức rải tiền (P1). Đó là biểu hiện của sự không hiểu biết, mê tín mù quáng chứ không còn là tâm linh (R1). Rải tiền lẻ, nhét tiền vào tay Phật là “hối lộ Phật” R2, làm ô uế cửa chùa P2, đó là điều tối kỵ P2 và sai giáo lý nhà Phật P2, vì Phật không cần những thứ đó P2. Các cụ xưa vẫn có câu “Phật tại tâm”. Cho nên, việc làm của nhiều người dân hiện nay đang tạo ra một hình ảnh phản tín ngưỡng và không có văn hóa” (R).

(Châu An, Dúi tiền lẻ vào tay Phật: Văn hóa người Việt ở đâu? <http://phatgiao.org.vn/23/02/2017>)

(All residents keep on thinking that donation to the Gods will benefit them, so they do their best to donate. This is the motivation of misunderstanding, blind superstition and not spirit. Spreading changes and giving money to Buddha are to bribe the Buddha and contaminate pagodas, which are thought to be against the Buddhist ideology and the Buddha do not need that stuff. The pioneers had a saying “Buddha

in your soul”; the residents’ religious activities, therefore, are currently forming a picture opposing religion and culture)

The discourse has the following inferior argumentations:

The first argumentation:

“Người dân ai cũng nghĩ “cho tiền thần linh” thì sẽ được lợi lộc vào mình nên ra sức rải tiền (P1). Đó là biểu hiện của sự không hiểu biết, mê tín mù quáng chứ không còn là tâm linh” (R1);

(All residents keep on thinking that donation to the Gods will benefit them, so they do their best to donate. This is the motivation of misunderstanding, blind superstition and not spirit)

The second argumentation:

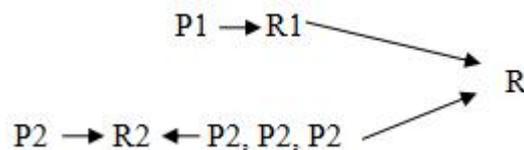
“Rải tiền lẻ, nhét tiền vào tay Phật là “hối lộ Phật” (P2), làm ô uế cửa chùa (R2), đó là điều tối kỵ (P2) và sai giáo lý nhà Phật (P2), vì Phật không cần những thứ đó” (P2);

(Spreading changes and giving money to Buddha are to bribe the Buddha and contaminate pagodas, which are thought to be against the Buddhist ideology and the Buddha do not need that stuff).

We can see, for the first argumentation, the author has raised a fairly common phenomenon in this society: it is possible to use the money to bribe Gods, thus everyone tries to bribe Buddha with as much money as possible (P). Regardless, there is an obvious fact that Gods do not need money (IP), therefore, giving money to a spirit is an act of ignorance and blindness (R). The second argumentation is that the spreading of loose charge, giving Buddha money is an act of bribery. According to common sense, bribery is unrighteous and blameworthy, hence bribing for Buddha is an indescribable incident. The following arguments include the taboo (P2), wrongly understanding the Buddhist teachings (P2), because Buddha doesn't need those things" (P). All lead to the final conclusion that it is actually defiling the Buddha (R).

Both of these argumentations support the main conclusion that the long-term activities of the people are anti-religion and can't be blamed on culture. This is the lack of Buddhist culture in the mind of each person.

For a closer look, here is the model of this compound argumentation:



4.4. The Network of Argumentation

The argumentative network can be understood as a chase of argumentation following each other in a chain relation, in which the conclusion of the previous argumentation takes the role of the argument for the next argumentation and so on until the final conclusion.

A network of argumentation can be considered below:

“Người biết tu là người ngủ yên, người ngủ yên là người không nghĩ hơn thua. Nếu thấy mình thua mà oán hờn người hơn thì tức quá ngủ không yên. Còn hơn người thì bị người oán. Người thật tu không giành hơn, không cho thắng người là thành công.”

(HT. Thích Thanh Từ, Nhìn rõ lẽ thật, <http://giacngo.vn/>, 30/01/2017)

(Those who know how to cultivate sleep well. Those who sleep well do not think of gain and loss. Those who blame the losers sleep furiously. Those who are better than the others will be blamed. The virtue-cultivated people who do not capture loss and gain are successful ones)

The above discourse has the following argumentation:

Người biết tu (P) là người ngủ yên (R)

(Those who know how to cultivate virtue sleep well)

Người ngủ yên (P) là người không nghĩ hơn thua (R)

(Those who sleep well do not think of gain and loss)

Người không nghĩ hơn thua (IP) là người thật tu (R)

(Those who do not think of gain and loss is a virtue-cultivated people)

Người thật tu (P) không giành hơn (R),

(The virtue-cultivated people who do not capture loss and gain)

Không cho thắng người (không giành hơn) (P) là thành công (R)

(Those who do not capture loss and gain are successful ones)

This network of argumentations demonstrates the continuity and sequence of the previous argumentation with the following one. The conclusions of the previous argumentation are to be the next argumentation’s argument. The pattern repeats itself until the final conclusion, pent up semantic to the final conclusion.

The above argumentative network shows us that the true cultivator is a person who sleeps quietly, his mind is as light as a feather. In his heart lies no ambition, hence he never thinks about winning or losing. He does not occupy more and never tries to win others, because a person who cultivates has a very humble nature. If you find yourself losing but resenting the winner, then you have not yet attained the level of a true religious practitioner, as the result, your mind will end up with jealousy, resentment, and cannot sleep peacefully.

The illustration above shows the research result of the types of argumentations:

Table 1. A table showing the number and ratio of argumentative types.

No	Argumentations			Quantity	Rate
	types	Subtypes	inferior subtypes		
1	Simple argumentation	Argumentation(s) consistent with conclusion	One argument consistent with conclusion	24	11.65
			More than one arguments consistent with conclusion	116	56.31
		Argumentation(s) inconsistent with conclusion	One argument inconsistent with conclusion	14	6.80
			Two opposite arguments inconsistent with two implicit conclusions	12	5.82

		Plus	166	80.58
2	Complex argumentation	Syllogism with full explicit elements	4	1.94
		Syllogism with implicit premise or implicit conclusion	8	3.88
	Plus		12	5.83
3	Compound argumentation		12	5.83
4	Argumentative network		16	7.77
Total (1+2+3+4)			206	100

Hence, on two online newspapers of the Vietnam Buddhist Association, we collected 206 argumentations. Through the statistics on the above table, it can be seen that in the four types of argumentations (simple, complex, compound, and network of argumentation), the simple argumentation has the largest number with 166 argumentations, accounting up to 80.58%. The topics in the Buddhist press are drawn from day-to-day life, the author's word-use is characterized by simplicity comprehension and closeness to the masses. For this reason, the authors' used mostly the simple types of argumentations, which had the highest incidence. Typically, this type of simple argumentation has many arguments that are consistent with the conclusion with a total of 116 argumentations. On the contrary, the network of argumentations is rarely used in which a total number is 16 argumentations, accounting for 7.77%. The last and the least used ones are the complex and compound argumentations which occupy 12 argumentations with 5.83%. Because in everyday life people hardly have a chance to access scientific research, therefore, they have a lot of limitations in understanding complex information such as complex, compound, and multilayered argumentation. However, the authors have also flexibly used different types of argumentations to convey the Buddha and their motivation/intention to readers.

5. Conclusion

This article has outlined the history of argumentation theory and presented the methods and tactics applied to solve the problems of the research.

Argumentations in Buddhist press have been established and analyzed in statistical forms. These argumentations were classified into categories such as simple, complex, compound, and network of argumentations. In each type of argumentation, there are small categories of each type of argumentation. For example, in simple argumentation, there are 3 inferior types: Argumentation having argument consistent with the conclusion, argumentation having argument inconsistent the conclusion, and argumentation having several arguments consistent with conclusion. All of these argumentation types create a panoramic view of flexible application and diversify them, which expose through the Vietnam Buddhist Association and Enlightenment Online.

The cases of argumentation types were analyzed in terms of pragmatics, semantics, and partly from the perspective of discourse analysis. The results have shown the profound and subtle intentions of Buddhist Dharma. These imply meanings are difficult to perceive without considering the linguistic perspective, which allows us to appreciate the beauty, the specialty, and the miraculous spirituality of the Buddhist press.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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