EFFECTS OF TRAINING IN THE USE OF ARGUMENTATIVE STRUCTURES ON ESL STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING ABILITY

BY

SITI ZAIDAH BINTI ZAINUDDIN

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Shameem Rafik Galea for being the force behind this project. My utmost appreciation for the guidance and unconditional support in helping me to complete this thesis. But above all, deepest gratitude for waking me up from my deep slumber. If not for her, this thesis would not be possible.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts

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Chairman: Shameem Rafik-Galea Khan, PhD

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This study mainly investigated the effectiveness of training in the structure of arguments based on Toulmin's (1958) model of argument on ESL students' argumentative writing. In addition, this study was carried out to find out the contributing factors on the students' poor performance in writing arguments. Twenty-one Form Five students were selected based on their Form Four English Language result. The instruments used were pretest composition questions, posttest composition questions, and in-depth interviews. The data and results collected were analyzed using the SPSS for the percentage, mean, standard deviation and t-tests. The experimental group showed a significant difference in the mean scores for each element of arguments after the treatment suggesting that the students demonstrated greater knowledge of argument criteria. The findings also exhibited significant pre- to posttest gains based on the Holistic Critical Thinking Rubric and SPM Marking Band. Besides that, the subjects showed positive response to the use of argumentative structure. The results of the interviews with the teachers

proved that teachers seldom teach argumentative writing in class and prefer students to choose either narrative or descriptive essays. The interviews also suggested that there were no specific methods in their argumentative writing class. The results of the brainstorming session concluded that the Toulmin model helped them in developing and organizing their writing. When interviewed, they agreed knowing the structure of arguments helped them in writing argumentative essays better. Thus, these results proved that knowledge of argumentative structure sharpens students' judgment regarding the content and organization of writing argumentative essays.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk mendapatkan ijazah Master Sastera

KESAN LATIHAN MENGGUNAKAN STRUKTUR PENDAPAT KEPADA PERKEMBANGAN KARANGAN PERBAHASAN MURID-MURID

Oleh

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Rekabentuk kumpulan eksperimen tidak rawak, praujian-pascaujian eksperimen-kuasi ini ingin menyelidik kesan latihan struktur bahas berpandukan kepada model pendapat Toulmin (1958) ke atas pelajar-pelajar. Selain daripada itu, eksperimen ini juga bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti sebab-sebab pelajar tidak mahir di dalam penulisan karangan perbahasan. 21 orang pelajar dipilih berdasarkan keputusan Penilaian Akhir Bahasa Inggeris Tingkatan Empat. Alat ukur yang digunakan untuk mengumpul data adalah soalan karangan praujian da pascaujian serta temuduga terperinci. Data dan keputusan yang dikumpul dianalisiskan dengan menggunakan SPSS untuk mendapat peratus, min, sisihan piawai dan ujian-t. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa ada perbezaan yang signifikan bagi kumpulan eksperimen keatas setiap elemen bahas. Selain daripada itu, keputusan daripada respon subjek ke atas latihan struktur bahas dalam penulisan karangan lebih positif. Analisis dari temuduga terperinci ke atas guru-guru mendapati bahawa mereka jarang mengajar penulisan karangan perbahasan di dalam kelas. Pelajar-pelajar mengakui bahawa model pendapat Toulmin ini membantu mereka dalam

mengorganisasikan karangan pendapat mereka. Kesimpulan daripada kajian ini, dengan adanya pengetahuan tentang struktur bahas, pelajar dapat menajamkan lagi kebolehan mengadili isi-isi serta organisasi penulisan karangan perbahasan.

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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 5th April 2004 to conduct the final examination of Siti Zaidah binti Zainuddin on her Master of Arts thesis entitled "Effects of Training in the use of Argumentative Structures on ESL Students' Argumentative Writing Ability" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the examination Committee are as follows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for other degree at UPM or other institutions.

_____

SITI ZAIDAH BINTI ZAINUDDIN

Date: 5 April 2006

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