



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

**DEVELOPING AN ANALYTIC SCALE FOR EVALUATING  
ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING OF STUDENTS IN A MALAYSIAN  
PUBLIC UNIVERSITY**

**VAHID NIMEHCHISALEM**

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ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING OF STUDENTS IN A MALAYSIAN PUBLIC  
UNIVERSITY**

**By**

**VAHID NIMEHCHISALEM**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,  
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**October 2010**



**FOR**

**My parents, who taught me to live**

**My wife, who taught me to love**

**My supervisor, who taught me to learn**

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**Faculty: Educational Studies**

Rating scales are useful tools that can mitigate the validity issues of objective writing tests. In addition, they can reduce the reliability problem of essay tests that are scored impressionistically. The existing instruments are not appropriate for use in Malaysian universities. They are either generic or their grading system is not suitable for this context. The only genre-specific scale developed in Malaysia (Wong, 1989) is suitable for the narrative mode. The lack of adequate scales leads the lecturers to score their learners' written pieces impressionistically (Mukundan & Ahour, 2009).

This developmental study included design, operationalization, trial and validation of an analytic scale of argumentative writing. ESL writing lecturers' views on the importance, wording and inclusiveness of the criteria were investigated (through qualitative and quantitative methods) with the help of a checklist. Parallel with these studies, a number of argumentative samples (n =20) were also analyzed. These



samples had been selected from a batch of 167 argumentative essays written by students from six different faculties of Economy and Management, Health and Medicine, Design, Communication, Agriculture and Ecology in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). Additionally, a focus group study helped the researcher further refine the checklist based on its respondents' views. They included four female senior lecturers from a Malaysian public university. As a result, a prototype scale was developed. Focus group participants reconvened to further refine the prototype, the clarity of its rubrics and their weights, the anchor papers and extended scoring guide. The result was the Analytic Scale of Argumentative Writing (ASAW). It followed an equal-weight scheme with five subscales of 'content', 'organization', 'language conventions', 'vocabulary' and 'overall effectiveness' and could diagnose five levels of performance. The scale was tested for its inter/intra-rater and internal reliability, which resulted in moderate/high coefficients. Concurrent validity tests showed high and significant relationships between the students' MUET bands and the scores assigned to their written samples using ASAW. In addition, the samples were scored using four other well-established writing scales. Correlation tests indicated moderate and significant correlations between these scores and those assigned using ASAW. As for consequential validity, the raters' responses to a questionnaire on usefulness of ASAW indicated their moderate-very high levels of satisfaction with it. The scale can be used as a tool to benefit three main contexts in language instruction "(a) research, that is, theory building; (b) policy development; and (c) professional practice, that is, classroom or curriculum development" (Kiely, 2009:101).

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah.

**PEMBENTUKAN SKALA ANALITIK UNTUK MENILAI PENULISAN  
ARGUMENTATIF PELAJAR DI SEBUAH UNIVERSITI AWAM  
MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Skala penilaian adalah alat yang berguna yang dapat mengurangkan masalah validitasi dari ujian bertulis objektif dan dapat mengurangkan masalah kebolehpercayaan skor ujian esei secara impresionistik. Alat yang sedia ada didapati tidak sesuai untuk digunakan di universiti-universiti Malaysia. Alat yang sedia ada didapati tidak sesuai dengan konteks penggunaan baik segi generik atau dari segi sistem penggredan. Satu-satunya skala aliran yang khusus diperkembangkan di Malaysia (Wong, 1989), sangat sesuai untuk mod penulisan cerita. Kekurangan skala yang sesuai mengakibatkan para pensyarah menilai hasil penulisan para pelajar secara impresionistik (Mukundan & Ahour, 2009). Kajian ini merangkumi reka bentuk kajian, operasionalisasi, percubaan dan validasi skala analitik untuk penulisan argumentatif. Pandangan pensyarah penulisan ESL terhadap kepentingan, penggunaan kata-kata dan inklusifitansi kriteria diselidiki

melalui kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif dengan menggunakan senarai semak. Seiring dengan kajian ini, sejumlah sampel penulisan argumentatif (n=20) juga telah dianalisis. Sampel ini telah dipilih daripada 167 karangan argumentatif yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa daripada enam fakulti yang berbeza iaitu Fakulti Pengurusan Ekonomi, Fakulti Kesihatan dan Perubatan, Fakulti Reka Bentuk, Fakulti Komunikasi, Fakulti Pertanian dan Ekologi di Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). Selain itu, kajian kumpulan fokus membantu penyelidik untuk menyempurnakan senarai semak berdasarkan pandangan responden. Mereka termasuklah empat orang pensyarah kanan wanita dari sebuah universiti awam Malaysia. Secara konklusinya, skala prototaip dan manual penilaian tersebut dihasilkan. Kumpulan fokus peserta bergabung untuk menyempurnakan lagi prototaip. Hasil daripada ini adalah skala analitik untuk skala penulisan argumentatif, iaitu ASAW. Sebagai satu skala lima mata, skala ini menuruti skim keseimbangan pembahagian mata dengan lima sub-skala dari 'isi', 'organisasi', 'bahasa', 'kosa kata' dan 'keberkesanan keseluruhan'. Skala ini diuji dari segi penilaian luaran/dalaman dan kebolehpercayaan yang menghasilkan koefisiensi sederhana/tinggi. Ujian kesahan dengan serentaknyanya menunjukkan hubungan yang tinggi dan signifikan antara band MUET pelajar dan skor penulisan sampel mereka dengan menggunakan ASAW. Di samping itu, sampel tersebut juga disemak menggunakan empat lagi skala penulisan yang mapan. Ujian korelasi menunjukkan hubungan sederhana dan signifikan antara markah yang diperolehi dan skor ASAW. Bagi kesahan bersebab, respon penilai terhadap satu senarai soalan tentang kebaikan penggunaan ASAW menunjukkan tahap sederhana/tinggi kepuasan mereka dengan penggunaan skala ini. Skala ini boleh digunakan sebagai alat yang memanfaatkan tiga konteks utama dalam pengajaran bahasa "(a) kajian, iaitu, pembinaan teori; (b) pembangunan polisi, dan (c) amalan profesional, iaitu, pembangunan kelas atau kurikulum" ( Kiely, 2009:101).

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or any other institution.

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**VAHID NIMEHCHISALEM**

Date: 25 October 2010

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