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

April 2006
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.
KESAN LATIHAN MENGGUNAKAN STRUKTUR PENDAPAT KEPADA PERKEMBANGAN KARANGAN PERBAHASAN MURID-MURID

Oleh

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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 perbahanan.
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Working on this research has been extremely invaluable and a rewarding experience. This was made possible by the support, encouragement and guidance from many people. I would like to express my gratitude to Associate Professor Dr. Shameem Rafik Galea for her constant encouragement and guidance throughout this study; Dr. Noritah bt Omar for her brilliant views and Associate Professor Dr. Mohd. Majid b. Konting for his invaluable guidance and comments in the contents and statistics of this thesis; the Principal of SMK Abdul Jalil, Hulu Langat, Pn. Hj. Amnah bt Hashim for her support and encouragement; my husband, both my sons and my parents for their undivided support and concern and to all my students who have offered their time to make this thesis possible. Finally, I want to thank Universiti Putra Malaysia for awarding me the Fundamental Research Grant in order to carry out this research.
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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