

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF
COMPOSING PROCESSES,
ARGUMENTATIVE ELEMENTS
AND RHETORICAL STRATEGIES
EMPLOYED BY SKILLED AND
LESS-SKILLED WRITERS IN
ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAYS**

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ABSTRACT

Writing skill is one of the important skills for learners in mastering the English language especially when they enter tertiary education. They are required to write the written assignments academically. Moreover, the learners are also encouraged to portray their critical thinking ability when writing argumentative essays. However, these are a few issues and challenges that are faced by the learners when writing argumentative essays. The learners experienced difficulties to write argumentative essays due to a few reasons such as learners might not be familiar with the structure of the argumentative essays, have a low level of proficiency, might be unfamiliar with how to write argumentative essays and lack of emphasis on the suitable strategies needed when writing argumentative essays. Therefore, this study would like to investigate the argumentative elements used in argumentative essays by skilled and less-skilled writers, examine the composing processes done during the writing of argumentative essays by skilled and less-skilled writers, and determine rhetorical strategies used during the writing of argumentative essays by skilled and less-skilled writers. To obtain the data, the study employed a qualitative method where the data was collected via Think-Aloud Protocol (TAP). There were seven participants who volunteered to be involved in this research, and they were from Akademi Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam. The data was later analysed using discourse and content analyses. The findings show that for composing processes, most of the sub-processes in the Translating process were used by both skilled and less-skilled writers while the majority of the sub-processes in the Reviewing process were not utilised by both skilled and less skilled writers. Moreover, for argumentative elements, both skilled and less-skilled writers did not utilise most of the sub-elements under the Self-regulation element. Furthermore, the rhetorical strategies that were not employed by both skilled and less-skilled writers were from Ethos strategies where writers should focus on credibility of the writers. Nonetheless, both skilled and less-skilled writers managed to use all Pathos rhetorical strategies. From the analyses, it can be inferred that there were constructs used by both skilled and less-skilled writers, used only by skilled writers and there were also constructs that both writers did not utilise. The study also revealed that both writers used the constructs differently. Based on the findings, the implications for educators are they may teach and expose students/writers with the knowledge of composing processes, argumentative elements and rhetorical strategies in order to write argumentative essays and students/writers themselves need to know and equip themselves with all three constructs and utilise them when composing argumentative essays. On top of that, this research contributes theoretically and pedagogically where it suggests a framework for students/writers to use when composing argumentative essays and the framework could also be translated as rubrics which can be used to assess argumentative essays. This research also contributes in terms of methodology where TAP is used as a data collection tool instead of an intervention in a research. Thus, it can be assumed and concluded that all three constructs (argumentative elements, composing processes, rhetorical strategies) are crucial for the learners to learn and for the educators to expose them to the learners in the classroom.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In writing essays, writers will go through a composing process that they may follow to write better compositions. According to Abdel Latif (2021), Kobayashi and Rinnert (2018), and Zetterholm and Lindström (2022), composing process refers to the actions done by the writers to produce the essay or composition, which involves the process of planning, formulating, and revising. Previously, in a classroom context, essay writing was treated following a linear process (Sharp, 2016). However, composing process is a recursive process which means writers can go back and forth within the process of writing where they will generate ideas, rehearse to write, and search for suitable words and vocabulary to compose an essay (Abdel Latif, 2021; Humes, 1983; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2018; Zetterholm & Lindström, 2022). Understanding the processes involved in writers' writing helps them to plan and organise their ideas. According to Brown and Briggs (1991) and Perl (1979), composing processes are used by writers to generate ideas, to have a purpose, to plan, to convey message and meaning, to assess and revise, and lastly to edit the composition. Through the composing processes, writers would be cognizant of the specific structure of an essay including argumentative essays.

Argumentative essays are considered important for writing skills as they help writers hone critical thinking skills at the tertiary level. Writers, therefore, need to know the argumentative elements in argumentative essays. Argumentative elements are the patent writers may follow to construct their argumentation or arguments in argumentative essays such as premise-based argument (evidence, individual claims, counterarguments, rebuttals), hypothesis-based argument (rule, hypothesis or theorem, equation, explanation, proof) and exposition-based argument (purpose, description of research process, statement of findings, explanation) (Walkova & Bradford, 2022). Having this knowledge would enhance the writers' skills to be critical and reflective thinkers (Bipinchandra et al., 2014; Lustyantie et al., 2022; Ma & Li, 2022). At the same time, writers need to prepare themselves for the real world by equipping themselves with critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Moreover, argumentative essays are