

The Success Factors That Impact the Quality of Students’ Persuasive Essays

FAROUS IZWAN ABDUL AZIZ
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)
MALAYSIA
fizwan@live.utm.my

SERIAZNITA MAT SAID
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)
MALAYSIA
Seriaznita.kl@utm.my

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to look at possible factors that influence the poor persuasive writing of students. A sample of 150 students from three different secondary schools in the Klang area was selected for this study. The students were instructed to write essays and fill out a questionnaire pertaining to factors and criteria they believe influence their persuasive writing quality. In addition, an English teacher from each school was interviewed to gather extra data. The results reveal that while most of the students can perform fairly well, they still need improvement as their total average score is quite low. The students’ ability to write persuasive essays can be influenced by the amount of their ‘general knowledge’, ‘reading’ and the activities that prove to be beneficial in developing their persuasive writing skills. The interviews with the teachers also support this as the students need to read more to improve their general knowledge so they can develop better content in their essays.

Key Words: *Persuasive Writing, Secondary School Students, ESL*

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneliti faktor-faktor yang boleh mempengaruhi penulisan persuasive pelajar-pelajar. Sample sebanyak 150 pelajar dari tiga buah sekolah menengah dalam kawasan Klang telah dipilih untuk kajian ini. Pelajar-pelajar diarahkan untuk menulis esei dan mengisi kertas soal selidik mengenai faktor dan kriteria yang mereka percayai mempengaruhi kualiti penulisan mereka. Di samping itu, seorang guru Bahasa Inggeris dari setiap sekolah jugs ditemu ramah untuk mengumpul maklumat tambahan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa sebilangan besar pelajar mempunyai prestasi yang baik tetapi mereka masih boleh meningkatkan kemahiran mereka kerana nisbah markak keseluruhan mereka amat rendah. Keupayaan pelajar untuk menulis karangan persuasive dipengaruhi oleh ‘pengetahuan’ umum, ‘membaca’ dan aktiviti yang berfaedah untuk mengembangkan kemahiran penulisan persuasive mereka. Temu ramah dengan guru juga menyokong kesimpulan ini kerana pelajar perlu lebih banyak membca untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan umum mereka supaya mereka boleh menulis isi kandungan yang lebuah bagus dalam karangan mereka.

Kata Kunci: *Penulisan Persuasive, Pelajar Sekolah Menengah, ESL*

INTRODUCTION

English is a compulsory subject in Malaysian schools (Tan & Miller, 2007; Annamalai, 2016) and writing is one of the four main English language skills being included in the lessons (Tan, 2006; Kaur, 2015). Writing is quite a broad subject as a variety of writing genres are being taught in schools, (Tan & Miller; 2007, Annamalai, 2016), which includes persuasive writing. In the SPM continuous writing section, one of the four questions is a persuasive essay question. Persuasive writing is a fascinating subject with a rich history as the art of persuasion originated in Sicily over 2000 years ago (Hall, 2007). In persuasive writing, strong rhetoric is used to accomplish a goal as persuasive arguments are used to justify a course of action (Van Dijk, 1989; Henderson, 2016).

However, despite being taught in secondary schools, it is quite challenging due to its complex and demanding nature (Hays & Brandt, 1992; Salig, Epting & Rand, 2018). This is confirmed by Zainuddin and Rafik-Galea (2016) who consider persuasive writing to be the most challenging form of discourse for many students to master (Feretti, Andrew-Weckerly & Lewis, 2007, Aertselaer & Dafouz-Milne, 2008). As the process of writing instruction in Malaysia is exam-oriented and instructor-centred (Tan, 2006; Kaur, 2015) the students are often spoon-fed whatever information they need in order to pass their exams (Bipinchandra et al., 2014). This approach, as well as the fact that students are only exposed to persuasive writing during their upper secondary years, prevents them from fully mastering their persuasive writing skills. As a result, students produce weak persuasive essays with insufficient content, poor organization, a badly written introduction without a strong stance, weak reasoning in their arguments and the use of informal language (Crowhurst, 1990; Lam, Hew & Chiu, 2018).

Fortunately, despite its complex nature, persuasive writing is not an impossible skill to learn as numerous models have been formulated over the past several decades but it is the Toulmin's Model (Toulmin, 2003) which stands as the most widely used model to judge the quality of a persuasive essay's content (Connor, 1990; Carrell & Connor, 1991; Matsuda, 2015; Connor & Lauer, 1988) as it presents the elements of persuasive writing in a clear, simple and comprehensive manner.

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors which strongly affect the students persuasive writing ability students while they attempt to compose their essays.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to research writing over the past 25 years, composing a persuasive essay is a challenging task for students (Igland, 2009; Myklebust & Høisæter, 2018) as they have difficulties in presenting their ideas in a coherent and cohesive manner. Their lack of persuasive writing skill is likely due to low proficiency (Osman, Lynn, & Bakar, 2009; Goldman, 2019) and the complex nature of persuasive writing, which becomes increasingly challenging as they cannot understand how to argue effectively (Gleason, 1999; Lam et al, 2018). Typical weaknesses of persuasive writing among students include a lack of support for

reasons, a lack of support for evidence, inadequate development of content, poor organization, lacking knowledge of argumentative structures, immature language and failure to recognize and respond to opposing viewpoints (Gleason, 1999; Crowhurst, 1990; Boyle & Hindman, 2015; Lam et al, 2018).

English persuasive writing is particularly problematic for English Second Language (ESL) students in Malaysia as they are hindered by their inability to properly write an essay as their first language linguistics influences their writing ability (Ferris, 1994; Wei, 2001; Tankó & Csizér, 2018). This is supported by Kubota (1998) who affirms that negative transfer occurs when unique features in ESL essays are manifested by the students' L1 (first language) rhetorical conventions (Abdollahzadeh et al, 2017). Hsin-I (2010), however, argues that negative transfer occurs because of the students' lack of confidence while writing an ESL essay (Geng & Wharton, 2016). Stress and anxiety due to a limited vocabulary and a small understanding of English grammatical rules may also constitute poor persuasive writing (Wei, 2001; Rosa & Vital, 2017) as students prioritize language over content (Osman et al, 2009; Goldman, 2019) while the struggle to translate their ideas from their L1 to L2 (second language). Their inexperience in writing their personal opinions can also be a problem, especially if those issues are sensitive, controversial or go against their personal beliefs (Low-Beer, 1999; Pouit & Golder, 2002; Malpique & Veiga-Simão, 2016).

Another challenge faced by students while attempting persuasive writing is their failure to identify with the audience and appeal to them (Connor, 1990). This is important since a persuasive writer's main goal is to change the minds of their audience, urge them think critically, persuade them to consider a course of action or have them follow the writer's point of view (Champaud, 1994; Klein & Rose, 2010; Walton, Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1990; Merand & Darses, 2017). Therefore, the writer must be able to build an effective argument using quality information and strong evidence to change the audience's minds and persuade them to act (Lavine, 1999).

It is suggested by Black (1989) that students should adopt audience analysis skills if they wish to produce an essay to satisfy a specific audience (Newell, Bloome & Hirvela, 2015). According to Durst, Laine, Schultz, and Vilter (1990), ethical appeals can be used to reach towards an audience's emotions and morals regarding an issue while logical appeals, such as examples that illustrate cause and effect, allow them to think critically.

Studies in the past have been done to explore the weaknesses students have demonstrated while composing persuasive essays. A case study was done by Su-Hie, Rasli and Leong-Jie (2011) to compare the texts written by proficient and less proficient undergraduates in a Malaysian university. The more proficient undergraduates are shown to utilize an effective structure for persuasive text while using specific words that demonstrate cause and effect. The less proficient students, however, showed either an absence of a stance or a restatement of the stance for their statements. While the study shows the proficient undergraduates have a firmer grasp of writing an argument compared to their less proficient counterparts, both sets of undergraduates still have many difficult language features they need to master.

Stapleton and Wu (2015) assessed the quality of persuasive essays composed of 125 Hong Kong high school students for their case study. Through analysis of their essays and evaluation of their questionnaires, the students demonstrated an inadequacy in reasoning. While they could write their essays in the pattern presented in Toulmin's Model (Toulmin, 2003), their reasoning in content was likely imperfect. More instruction on critical thinking skills in English should be recommended.

After analyzing 60 essays, 40 from low-scoring students and 20 from high-scoring students, Wingate (2012) concluded in his paper that the low-scoring students' essays lacked the author's stance, evidence and used unrelated information to support their argument. However, the sample size may be too small and unbalanced for this study to form a strong conclusion. The researcher should have used a much larger sample size and an equal number of essays from both the low-scoring students and high-scoring students to formulate a stronger conclusion.

A study conducted by Ka-kan-dee and Kaur (2014) on sixty 4th year English Major Thai students found that the students encountered difficulties writing persuasive essays in the following areas: vocabulary, grammar structure, providing solid evidence, time constraint, organizing ideas, fulfilling task demands, understanding questions, L1 transfer and translating, and writing thesis statements. As the results of this study have revealed the students' problem areas, a strategy needs to be created to improve their persuasive writing level.

Yakob (2015) conducted a research study to identify and investigate the factors affecting student writing skills in primary school. The target population was the year four students from a primary school in Gombak, Selangor, namely Sekolah Kebangsaan Sungai Pelong. Data was collected from interviews with teachers and data analysis result from students' questionnaires. The researcher acknowledged that it was evidently true that learning writing skills poses a number of problems to the students (Yakob, 2015), as it is a skill that is difficult to master. Teachers also face great challenge to teach writing skills as students may sometimes find it confusing and difficult to understand or fail to produce effective writing in English. The findings of the study revealed that there were numerous factors that contribute to poor writing skills which include grammatical errors, lack of knowledge and understanding of the topic, lack of practice and lack of self-motivations. As such, these factors affected the quality of student writing and the issues need to be addressed if the students' writing skills are to be improved. Grammatical errors can be fixed through practice while their lack of knowledge and understanding of the topic can be improved through in-class activities such as group discussion, which allows them to share knowledge. The teacher can also help to motivate the students who lack self-motivation by encouraging them to read more and practice writing.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, a mixed-mode method was utilized for data collection and analysis. Due to time constraints only schools that were close to the researcher's place of residence were considered. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling. The main criteria for the participants was that they needed to be in the upper secondary years. Since Form 5 students

were busy preparing for SPM, that meant only Form 4 students could be used. The total number of student participants is 150. In addition, an English teacher from each school was also selected. The teachers were chosen based on their significant years of teaching experience.

Data was collected using the following items:

- i. A set of four persuasive essay prompts from past SPM papers.
- ii. A questionnaire for the students to fill out.
- iii. A set of interview questions for the teachers.

The essay prompts allow the students to write persuasive essays based on the following questions:

Q1: The more A's we score in our examination, the better students we become. What is your opinion?

Q2 "Teenagers today are only interested in entertainment." Do you agree? Support your opinion.

Q3: School children should not have long holidays. Do you agree? Support your opinion.

Q4: The internet is mostly a good thing. Do you agree? Support your opinion.

The essays were marked based on a combination of the marking rubric provided by Tunku Abdul Rahman University College for their critical thinking class and the mark range for SPM English continuous writing as seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Mark Range, Grade, Criteria for SPM English Continuous Writing

Mark Range	Grade	Criteria
44-50	A	Excellent
38-43	B	Good
32-37	C	Satisfactory
26-31	D	Fair
20-25	E	Unsatisfactory
14-19	U(i)	
8-13	U (ii)	Poor
0-7	U (iii)	

The marking rubric provides a more specific marking criteria for 'organization', 'content' and 'language' to determine if they are 'excellent', 'good', 'fair', 'weak'. After the students have written their essays, they filled out the questionnaire with their responses before submitting them to the researcher. Questionnaire, which used a Likert scale to record the students' responses, were analysed using a multivariate principal component analysis method. This method was used to find the variables which provide the most information as it correlates to the first principal component, second principal component, third principal component and so on. For this to be possible, the correlation levels must be positive (+). Table 2 displays the correlation levels and corresponding strength levels.

TABLE 2: Correlation Range and Strength Levels

Correlation Levels (+)	Correlation Strength
0.0-0.19	Very Weak
0.2-0.39	Weak
0.4-0.59	Moderate
0.6-0.79	Strong
0.8-1	Very Strong

As shown in Table 2, an acceptable correlation level is between 0.4 and 1.

The interviews with the teachers were done face-to-face in order to prevent delay between questions and answers, which would normally happen if the interview was done via e-mail messages (Opdenakker, 2006). Using a tape recorder during the interview allows the report to be more accurate. The researcher also took note of the questions and answers during the interview. The interviewees consisted of three secondary school English teachers. The researcher aims to find out how English persuasive writing is being taught by them and what affects the quality of the students' writing. The interview questions were as followed:

1. What do you focus on while teaching English writing?
2. How do you teach the students persuasive writing? (do you use a specific model/strategy)
3. What weaknesses can you find in their persuasive writing texts?
4. What hinders the students in their persuasive writing from your own observation?
5. Do you have any ideas to help them improve their persuasive writing skills?

The recorded interviews were transcribed, read through and marked for specific common features that may contribute to this research. The common features are then analysed and discussed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Essays

After marking the students' essays using Tunku Abdul Rahman University College's marking rubric, each essay was graded based on the SPM mark range. The grades are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Essay Scores for all three schools

Grade	Number of Students	Percentage (%)	Scores for each Grade
A	0	0	0
B	10	6.67	188
C	43	28.67	1237
D	52	34.67	1209
E	18	12	534
U(i)	12	8	394
U(ii)	10	6.67	353
U(iii)	5	3.3	33
Total	150	100	4100
Total Average Score		27.33	

Table 3 displays the grades from the essays collected from the students.

The essays were scored by combining two different sets of rubrics. The first rubric was taken from Tunku Abdul Rahman University College which was devised to accommodate essays of the persuasive genre for their critical thinking course. The rubric was helpful as it provides specific criteria scores for Organization, Content, and Language & Vocabulary. The second rubric is the standard rubric for SPM which was very broad but provided a letter grade system that could be used to divide the essays post-marking.

As shown in Table 1 none of the students earned an A Grade. The highest grade achieved by the students is a B (Good), which was earned by only 10 students. The highest frequency of students scored a D (Fair) grade. 45 students are shown to score poorly for their essays, mostly for being incomplete. The overall average score for all the essays is 27.33 (D) which is very low. This is due to the large number of low-scoring essays.

On average, the high-scoring essays received ‘Good’ score for Organization, a ‘Fair’ score for Content and ‘Good’ score for ‘Language and Vocabulary’. The total average score for the high-scoring essays is 40, that is considered a B, which matches up to all the high-scoring essays only receiving a ‘B’. The students demonstrate an effective use of organizational skills while composing the content for their essays. In addition, they provided effective and clear arguments which were coherent. Nevertheless, problems were found in the low-scoring essays which include a weak grasp of grammar and spelling errors

The low-scoring essays suffer failing grades mainly because many of them were left unfinished and there were some that barely went past the first sentence. In addition, they could not provide a clear stance in their arguments. Either the students were unmotivated to attempt

to write the essays as it was not an official school assignment, or they were unable to produce enough content of the topic they have chosen. The students were provided sufficient time (one hour) to compose their essays, but it would appear that most of them could not complete the essays within the allotted time as most of it was used by them to try and think of what to write instead of actually writing. They may even struggle to translate their ideas from their native language to English which may have taken up the time they needed for actual writing (Osman et al, 2009; Goldman, 2019). As the essays were either short or incomplete, their writing lacked support for reasoning, lacked support for evidence, showed inadequate development of content, displayed poor organization, and showed immature language (Gleason, 1999; Crowhurst, 1990; Boyle & Hindman, 2015; Lam et al, 2018). Nevertheless, the high-scoring essays show that the students do have the potential to compose a good persuasive essay.

Questionnaires and Principal Component Analysis

The findings for the multivariate principal component analysis are shown in Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6 which displays the correlation levels between numerous variables and the principal components (PC). As shown in Table 3, a correlation level between 0.4 and 1 is acceptable. A level above 3.9 is also considered acceptable. Priority is given to correlation levels that are the closest to the first principal component.

TABLE 4: Correlation between Factors that are Responsible for Students Persuasive Writing Level in All Three Schools with Respective Principal Components

Variables	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5
Teachers	0.308	-0.178	-0.439	0.481	0.445
Learners	0.309	-0.500	-0.291	0.120	-0.196
Writing Practice	0.392	-0.123	0.003	-0.268	0.366
Motivation	0.292	-0.373	0.526	0.167	-0.304
Strategies/Methods	0.343	-0.212	0.402	-0.143	0.026
Reading	0.314	0.487	0.235	0.295	0.297
General Knowledge	0.371	0.437	0.169	0.078	-0.097
Time	0.332	0.093	-0.247	-0.725	0.053
Topic	0.326	0.287	-0.373	0.120	-0.661

Table 4 shows that the correlation between factors which are responsible for the students' persuasive writing levels with their respective principal components. As seen in Table 4, 'Writing Practice', 'Reading', 'General Knowledge', 'Motivation', 'Strategies/Methods' contribute the most to the information. Therefore, based on the high correlation level, they are prioritized as the most important factors which are responsible for influencing the students' persuasive writing level. However, 'Writing Practice' is given the highest priority due to its correlation with the first principal component (PC1). Therefore, students believe highly that these factors are responsible for affecting their persuasive writing skill level.

TABLE 5: Correlation of Importance of Criteria in All Three Schools with Respective Principle Components

Variable	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5	PC6
Task Fulfilment	0.250	0.372	0.074	0.009	-0.257	0.451
Syntax	0.286	0.159	0.234	0.114	-0.254	-0.091
Spelling	0.265	-0.174	0.584	0.056	0.100	0.018
Grammar/ Vocabulary	0.291	-0.122	0.512	0.101	0.139	-0.137
Essay Length	0.148	-0.515	-0.166	-0.432	-0.067	-0.132
Organization	0.259	-0.316	-0.133	-0.130	-0.459	-0.332
Audience Awareness	0.235	-0.252	-0.295	0.270	-0.236	0.518
Emotions	0.216	-0.335	-0.204	0.515	0.336	0.116
Logic	0.285	0.021	-0.175	0.300	0.210	-0.352
Credibility	0.310	0.052	0.029	-0.087	-0.382	0.056
Strong Claim	0.305	0.232	-0.238	0.093	0.084	-0.126
Strong Stance	0.279	0.400	-0.199	-0.072	0.047	-0.263
Strong Support	0.307	0.164	-0.185	-0.338	0.327	0.006
Strong Conclusion	0.261	-0.084	0.035	-0.455	0.387	0.384

Table 5 shows the correlation between the importance of specific criteria with the principal components. As shown in Table 5, the highest correlation levels are demonstrated by ‘Spelling’, ‘Grammar/Vocabulary’, ‘Emotions’ and finally ‘Task Fulfilment’. Therefore, these criteria are the most important as they highly influence the students’ persuasive writing level. Spelling and Grammar/Vocabulary are given the highest priority in their importance due to their correlation with the 3rd principal component (PC3). Therefore, students highly believe these criteria are important for their persuasive writing skills.

TABLE 6: Correlation of Factors that Influence Students Persuasive Writing in All Three Schools with Respective Principal Components

Variable	PC1	PC2	PC3	PC4	PC5
Speaking English outside Classroom	0.314	-0.281	-0.405	-0.199	-0.474
Watch English TV	0.406	0.125	-0.323	0.011	-0.265
Watch Movies/TV without English subtitles	0.259	0.105	0.441	0.683	-0.360

Watch Movies/TV with English subtitles	0.273	0.249	-0.378	0.251	0.591
Reading English Books	0.270	-0.475	0.074	-0.010	0.349
Listening to English Radio	0.307	-0.201	0.443	-0.506	0.083
Playing English Games	0.299	0.412	0.195	-0.115	0.240
Listening to English Songs	0.365	0.368	0.257	-0.256	-0.116
Interacting with people online in English	0.392	-0.027	-0.250	0.077	0.005
Participating in English writing contests	0.226	-0.510	0.162	0.301	0.163

Table 6 shows the correlation between the factors that influence students English persuasive writing and their respective principal components. Priority is given to “Watch English TV” due to its correlation with the first principal component. Following this, “Playing English Games”, “Listening to English Radio”, “Watching Movies without English Subtitles’ and ‘Watching Movies with English Subtitles” also have high correlation levels to their respective principal components. Therefore, these factors contribute the most to the information, showing that students believe they highly influence their persuasive writing level.

According to the questionnaire responses, students acknowledge that ‘Reading’ and ‘General Knowledge’ are factors that most influence their persuasive writing skills. The students also perceive that ‘Grammar and Vocabulary’, ‘Task Fulfilment’ and ‘Spelling’ as important criteria for writing a good persuasive essay. As stated by Wei (2001), students become too stressed by their limited vocabulary and poor understanding of English grammatical rules to produce quality persuasive writing. The students put too much importance on language skills than over the content of their essay (Osman, Lynn & Bakar, 2009; Goldman,.2019). During exams, this can cause students to waste time and fail to fulfil the requirements for the task. There should be more focus on critical thinking and generating ideas, but students also need a much broader vocabulary to present their ideas and better grammar to make their ideas more coherent.

The final item measures how much students agree on specific factors that may affect the quality of their persuasive writing. The students claim that ‘Watching a lot of English TV programs’ can affect the quality of their persuasive writing. While doing this allows the students to passively and subconsciously absorb English, this does not guarantee its effectiveness in improving their English persuasive writing. There is a matter of the kind of programs they watch on television and if they provide any sort of benefit to their English and persuasive writing skills. Most likely, the students would watch something non-educational to relax and take their mind off their studies.

Interview with the Teachers

Data were also collected from three secondary school English teachers through a set of interview questions. Initial questioning reveals that the teachers possess years of experience teaching in English and are qualified. Teacher A possesses a bachelor’s degree in TESL, Teacher B has a Masters in Education and Teacher C has spent a year studying TESL to become a certified teacher. Each of the teachers provided their own views and answers during the interview which are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7: Interview Questions and Responses

Interview Questions	Responses
What do you focus on while teaching English writing?	<p>Teacher A: Focuses on the basics: grammar, spelling, verb forms and writing structure. The teacher also focuses on easier writing genres such as descriptive and narrative.</p> <p>Teacher B: Focuses on content writing and elaborating ideas.</p> <p>Teacher C: Focuses on directed and continuous writing, including audience awareness.</p>
How do you teach the students persuasive writing? (do you use a specific model/strategy)	<p>Teacher A: Asking students questions that encourage critical thinking.</p> <p>Teacher B: Focuses on persuasive language and tone.</p> <p>Teacher C: Conduct brainstorming sessions and in-class discussions.</p>
What weaknesses can you find in their (the students’) persuasive writing texts?	<p>Teacher A: The students do not properly understand the questions and unable to provide any evidence to support their argument.</p> <p>Teacher B: Students lack elaboration and strong content in their essays.</p> <p>Teacher C: Students are weak in making their essays coherent and cohesive. Weak motivation and prefer to avoid persuasive writing.</p>
What hinders the students in their persuasive writing from your own observation?	<p>Teacher A: Limited vocabulary.</p> <p>Teacher B: Students lack the proper attitude and refuse to listen to the teachers.</p>

Teacher C: Students do not read enough.

Do you have any ideas to help them (the students) improve their persuasive writing skills?

Teacher A: Students should read English newspapers more often.

Teacher B: Students should read more and avoid activities that waste time and distract them.

Teacher C: Suggests reading and more in-class discussions to share ideas. Also, keep up to date to events happening around them.

The data from the interview was meant to supplement the questionnaire with additional data. As the questionnaires were meant to collect responses based on the students' perspective, the interview questions were designed to collect information from the teachers' perspective. First of all, the teachers start by teaching persuasive writing by providing lessons on the fundamentals of writing such as grammar, spelling, verb form and writing structure. They also focus on developing the essay's content for continuous writing formats. After this, the teachers conduct lessons to encourage critical thinking which is one of the needed skills for persuasive writing as it allows students to evaluate and write strong arguments to solve a problem, which is why these skills should be nurtured (Rafik-Galea et al., 2016). A brainstorming session would be beneficial in encouraging critical thinking as it urges the students to share ideas and opinions while forming an argument aimed towards solving a problem (Farrell, 2015).

The teachers have observed that their students do not completely understand the questions presented to them and fail to provide any evidence for their persuasive arguments and lack strong content to support their views. This mostly stems from the students not reading enough or possessing a large amount of general knowledge. The teachers propose that the students should read more and stimulate their minds, even if some of the information may seem controversial (Rachwan & Nicolas, 2018). By innovating the lessons and in-class activities, the teacher can prevent the students from becoming unmotivated which should encourage them to write more.

CONCLUSION

As persuasive writing is unpopular for being too complex and demanding (Fei-Fix Wen & Yueh-Miao, 2009), students are unmotivated and prefer easier genres to write such as descriptive and narrative essays. Students also lack the critical thinking skills that can be applied in their persuasive essays, preventing them from generating strong and meaningful content. The principal component analysis and the interviews reveal the factors which strongly impact the quality of the students' persuasive essays, taking into account the students responses from the questionnaires and the answers from the teachers, allowing this researcher to receive data from both the learners' and instructors' perspective. As seen in the students' responses,

they consider numerous external and internal factors that strongly impact their persuasive writing quality.

As persuasive writing is complex and unique, an instructional model tailored to teaching the genre should be introduced in secondary school and it should be done as early as their first secondary school year to provide significant exposure. The teacher can introduce the Toulmin's Model to the students by presenting, explaining and discussing the details of the model and how they fit together to build an argument. A model essay with the persuasive elements labeled can be used as an example to help the students understand the persuasive writing process more clearly. This way the students will be able to understand why the persuasive elements are important to the construction and development of their arguments. As the students learn how to identify the elements within a persuasive essay, they can also learn how to properly organize the elements as they develop their writing skills. As the Toulmin's Model can be used as a framework and guide for persuasive writing, the students can improve their persuasive writing skills by properly applying the persuasive elements together in the proper pattern. Therefore, classroom practices and training of persuasive writing based on Toulmin's Model need to be planned and implemented.

This researcher proposes a new study to implement a prototype persuasive writing model. This new in-depth study will require a much larger sample size needs to be conducted and will include a comparison of the students' persuasive writing skills before (pre-test) and after (post-test) they are trained using the Toulmin's Model. The teacher will also be involved as they will receive training and instruction to understand the Toulmin's Model which they will teach to their students. By comparing the students' persuasive writing skills based on their pre-test and post-test essays, the effectiveness of Toulmin's Model can be determined for it to be utilized for classroom practices.

References

- Abdollahzadeh, E., Farsani, M. A., & Beikmohammadi, M. (2017). Argumentative writing behavior of graduate EFL learners. *Argumentation*, 31(4), 641-661
- Annamalai, N. (2016). Exploring the Writing Approaches in the " Facebook" Environment. *Teaching English with Technology*, 16(1), 71-87.
- Black, K. (1989). Audience analysis and persuasive writing at the college level. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 23(3), 231-253.
- Boyle, J. R., & Hindman, A. H. (2015). Scaffolding the persuasive writing of middle school students. *Middle Grades Research Journal*, 10(3), pp . 43-60.
- Champaud, C. (1994). L'argumentation [The argumentation]. *Psychologie Française*, 39 (2), 193-203.
- Connor, U. (1990). Linguistic / Rhetorical Measures for International Persuasive Student Writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 24(1), 67-87.
- Crowhurst, M. (1990). Teaching and Learning the Writing of Persuasive / Argumentative Discourse. *Canadian Journal Of Education*, 15(4), 348-359.
- Durst, R., Laine, C., Schultz, L. M., & Vilter, W. (1990). Appealing Texts The Persuasive Writing of High School Students. *Written Communication*, 7(2), 232-255.

- Farrell, T. S. (2015). Encouraging critical reflection in a teacher education course: A Canadian Case Study. In *International Perspectives on English Language Teacher Education* (36-50). Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Ferris, D. (1994). Rhetorical strategies in student persuasive writing: Differences between native and non-native English speakers. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 28(1), 45–65.
- Geng, Y., & Wharton, S. (2016). Evaluative language in discussion sections of doctoral theses: Similarities and differences between L1 Chinese and L1 English writers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 22, 80-91
- Gleason, M. M. (1999). the Role of Evidence in Argumentative Writing. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 15(1), 81–106.
- Goldman, J. (2019). Six High-Leverage Writing Practices for Teaching English Language Learners in English Language Arts. In *Teaching the Content Areas to English Language Learners in Secondary Schools*, 65-84. Springer, Cham.
- Hays, J. N., & Brandt, K. S. (1992). Socio-cognitive development and students' performance on audience-centered argumentative writing. *Constructing rhetorical education*, 202-229.
- Henderson, R. E. (2016). *Media, advertising and other influences on decisions to enter residential care*(Doctoral dissertation, Auckland University of Technology).
- Hsin-I, C. (2010). Contrastive learner corpus analysis of epistemic modality and interlanguage pragmatic competence in L2 writing. *Arizona Working Papers in SLA & ...*, 51, 27–51. Retrieved from <http://slat.arizona.eduncoh.slat.arizona.edu/sites/slat/files/page/2contrastivelearnercorpusanalysisofepistemicmodalityandinterlanguagepragmaticcompetenceinl2writing.pdf>
- Iglund, M. A. (2009). Negotiating problems of written argumentation. *Argumentation*, 23(4), 495–511.
- Ka-kan-dee, M., & Kaur, S. (2014). Argumentative Writing Difficulties of Thai English Major Students. *The 2014 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings Bali, Indonesia*, 193–207.
- Kaur, K. (2015). The emergent nature of strategic mediation in ESL teacher education. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(3), 374-388.
- Klein, P. D., & Rose, M. a. (2010). Teaching Argument and Explanation to Prepare Junior Students for Writing to Learn. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 45(4), 433–461.
- Kubota, R. (1998). An investigation of L1–L2 transfer in writing among Japanese university students: Implications for contrastive rhetoric. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7(1), 69–100.
- Lam, Y. W., Hew, K. F. T., & Chiu, K. F. (2018). Improving argumentative writing: Effects of a blended learning approach and gamification. *Language Learning & Technology*.
- Lavine, H. (1999). Types of Evidence and Routes to Persuasion: The Unimodel Versus-Dual Process Models. *Psychological Inquiry*, 10(2), 141-144.
- Low-Ber, A. (1999). Teaching controversial and sensitive issues in history education for secondary schools, Birmingham, United Kingdom.
- Malpique, A., & Veiga-Simão, A. M. (2016). Argumentative writing by junior high school students: discourse knowledge and writing performance/Esritura argumentativa en alumnos de secundaria: conocimiento sobre el discurso y rendimiento en la escritura. *Infancia y Aprendizaje*, 39(1), 150-186.
- Matsuda, P. K. (2015). Identity in written discourse. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 140-159.

- Merand, J., & Darses, F. (2017). ARGUinDSM—A model of argumentation in team problem-solving situation: An application to nuclear control room teams. *Naturalistic Decision Making and Uncertainty.*, 131.
- Myklebust, H., & Høisæter, S. (2018). Written argumentation-online and off. A study of addressivity in argumentative students texts. *Acta Didactica Norge*, 12(3), Art-10.
- Newell, G. E., Bloome, D., & Hirvela, A. (2015). *Teaching and learning argumentative writing in high school English language arts classrooms*. Routledge.
- Opendakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 7(4) Date of Recovery: 11th July 2017 from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/viewArticle/175/391&sa=U&ei=FdsJTdDCGYOnrAer0YjVDg&ved=0CP4BEBYwXg&usq=AFQjCNEsC2J0wILvNuH7LEhQaA2znBkKvw>
- Osman, W. H., Lynn, A., & Bakar, A (2009). Learning To Write an Academic Paper Among Medical Students of Universiti Malaysia Sabah, (IctI), 1–21.
- Pouit, D., & Golder, C. (2002). Idea retrieval in argumentative text writing by 11–18 year old students. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 17, 309–320.
- Stapleton, P., & Wu, Y. A. (2015). Assessing the quality of arguments in students' persuasive writing: A case study analyzing the relationship between surface structure and substance. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 17, 12-23.
- Rachwan, L., & Nicolas, M. O. D. (2018). Perceptions of the Effects of Simulation Methodology on the Learning of English in a Remedial Level Course: A Case Study. *The Journal of Language Learning and Teaching*, 8(2), 12-27.
- Rosa, J. P. O. D., & Vital, R. A. D. (2017). The Use of Facebook in Argumentative Writing: Towards an Instructional Design Model. *AsTEN Journal of Teacher Education*, 1(2).
- Salig, L. K., Epting, L. K., & Rand, L. A. (2018). Rarely Say Never: Essentialist Rhetorical Choices in College Students' Perceptions of Persuasive Writing. *Journal of Writing Research*, 9(3).
- Su-Hie, T., Rasli, H., & Leong-Jie, J., (2011). Case Study on Persuasiveness of Argument Texts Written by Proficient and Less Proficient. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 8, 71–92.
- Tan, K. E., & Miller, J. (2007). Writing in English in Malaysian High Schools: The Discourse of Examinations. *Language and Education*, 21(2), 124–140.
- Tankó, G., & Csizér, K. (2018). Individual Differences and Micro-argumentative Writing Skills in EFL: An Exploratory Study at a Hungarian University. In *University Writing in Central and Eastern Europe: Tradition, Transition, and Innovation*, 149-166.
- Toulmin, S. (2003). *The Uses of Argument*. Cambridge University Press.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1989). Structures of discourse and structures of power. *Communication Yearbook* 12, 18–59.
- Walton, D. N., Chaiken, S., & Maheswaran, D. (1990). What is Reasoning? What Is an Argument? *The Journal of Philosophy*, 87(8), 460–473.
- Wingate, U. (2012). “ Argument ! ” helping students understand what essay writing is about. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11(2), 145–154.
- Wei, Z. (2001). Performing Argumentative Writing in English: Difficulties Processes and Strategies. *TESL Canada Journal/Revue TESL Du Canada*, 19(1), 34–50. Date of Retrieval: January 3rd, 2016 from: <http://www.teslcanadajournal.ca/index.php/tesl/article/view/918>

Yakob, S. B. (2015). *Factors Effecting Students' Writing Skills in Primary School*. Universiti Teknologi Mara.