

## ABSTRACT

This exploratory comparative investigation attempts to examine the cognitive processes, concerns and preoccupations involved in writing out narrative and argumentative compositions among ESL Malay upper secondary school students Malaysia.

The subjects are selected from two different Islamic fully-residential schools in Selangor. From them, the following six sets of data have been obtained :-

- i) observation of the subjects writing behaviour.
- ii) the subjects' think-aloud protocols.
- iii) the subjects' narrative and argumentative compositions.
- iv) the subjects' answers to the questions in the Process Log.
- v) the subjects' answers to the questions in the background variable questionnaire.
- vi) the subjects' comments, during the follow-up interviews.

The findings indicate that the narrative genre differs in a few aspects from the argumentative one. However, irrespective of whichever mode a writer is involved in producing, he has to undergo similar composing processes. Besides, there also exist identical linguistic constraints. In addition, if the writer is an ESL learner, there are difficulties to continually produce correct language in circumstances that he has no full control. Indeed, the list of problems does not stop here. Simultaneously, as the writer wrestles with the above mentioned obstacles, he has to strive to apply his knowledge about the narrative or argumentative genre's unique combination of

purpose, audience traits and knowledge, reader's expectation, structure and format options, and other questions about the rhetorical situation. Only then, the ESL writer is able to write successfully in these two genres.

Last but not least, it is hoped that the findings of this study could serve to provide pedagogical enlightenment to ESL teachers and educators.