CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 The Outcome of the Study

In essence, the findings discussed in the preceding chapter appear to support the researcher's hypothesis about the processes involved in ESL writing, the writer's concerns and preoccupations when he engages himself in an attempt to write essays in the narrative and argumentative genres. The researcher is of the opinion that irrespective of whether the writer is involved in producing a narrative or an argumentative compositions, he has to undergo similar composing processes.

At the beginning of writing, the writer has no idea of what he wants to say or what the finished essay would be like. He reads the topic given to him over and over again or holds a mental dialogue with himself till he gets some rough ideas about it. In some cases, the writer jots the ideas down on paper during what is called pre-writing phase but in some others, the writer straight away starts writing the draft proper. Once the writer embarks on this task of producing the essay, he tries to generate his thoughts and goes on to explicate them.
Simultaneously to this, the writer also makes effort to crystallize and refine his initial vague notion of the ideas he intends to communicate to his reader. However, while the writer is doing so he may sometimes abandon the idea which he previously thought was important and carry on in a completely different direction.

This process of creating an essay is recursive or cyclical in nature and takes place in three main stages of pre-writing, writing and revising. Therefore throughout the entire process, behaviours such as writing, pausing, revising and in-process planning are a common sight.

While the writer struggles to compose a story or an argument, there exist linguistic constraints which include the linear nature of the target language, the constraints placed upon the writer by attempt to maintain coherence, grammatically, and topic focus as well as the recursive effect on thinking of words the writer lights upon. These constraints cause great difficulty and require much effort on the part of the L2 writer not because he cannot plan his writing and construct a meaning he wishes to communicate but because he faces difficulties at word level. This process of converting unexpected thoughts into understandable language output demands spontaneous language production, using linear, non-hierarchical methods of sentence
generation. As a result, no matter how much content the writer can come up with, linguistic constraints that impinge on the written output do take place.

The arduousness of the L2 writer, indeed, does not stop here. As he wrestles with the above obstacles, he also has to strive to apply his knowledge about a narrative or argumentative genre's unique combination of purpose, audience traits and knowledge reader's expectations, structure and format options, and other questions about the rhetorical situation.

On the whole, it can then be considered that for an ESL writer to be able to write successfully in the narrative or argumentative genre, he has to be familiar with its conventions of content, structure, and style besides to understand the assumptions underlying these conventions. At the same time, he must also be able to deal with the unpredictable nature of the process of composing and overcome linguistic hurdles mentioned above.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The present study is bounded by the following limitations:-
1. This study is an exploratory one in which the method of investigation used is the case study. Since the number of subjects was limited to only four subjects, therefore, the findings drawn are tentative in nature and cannot be generalized beyond the scope of this study. This is because the subjects may not truly be representatives of other Malay, religious-residential school students, or Malay students for that matter. Moreover, the subjects' background variables like the amount of exposure to English, past and present instruction in writing, background knowledge, attitude and others that are likely to influence their writing in the two genres. It is also likely that there may be some dissimilarities if different subjects had been used for the study.

2. The subjects of this study were allowed limited time span of four to five hours to write each essay, and the fact that they were observed as they wrote in response to an assigned topic made the study a laboratory study. As a result, the findings then apply to the subjects in that restricted context alone. In such context, factors like the purpose of the task, the audience the writing is meant for, knowledge of the subject-matter, knowledge and skills to write in the narrative and
argumentative genres, the writers' own interests have a direct impact on their composing processes, concerns, preoccupations at that time as well as the quality of writing they produce. As is known, different demands placed upon purpose, audience, subject-matter, knowledge and ability to write in each genre could generate processes and create concerns and preoccupations that may vary significantly from those that have been observed. A longer study in which subjects are required to do more essays of different topics in each of the genre may also provides sufficient time and opportunity for the subjects to be really involved with the two genres. This could produce data that is more reflective of the subjects' true situations based on the fact that anything that is consistently observed over a period of time can be resolved more confidently.

3. By not imposing a word limit and allowing the subjects four to five hours to complete their essays, it was felt that enough naturalistic environment had been provided for them to write their essays. However, it still cannot be denied that the laboratory conditions of the study persisted as the subjects had to complete their essays under the conditions set up.
Moreover, the researcher's close presence and observation, the subjects' inability to do the essay in their own home and pace suitable to their individual self served to strengthen the laboratory influence on this study. Consequently, the subjects' essays that resulted were a cross between one produced under examination conditions and one done at their own leisure. They were not identical to the writing carried out during an examination because there is no anxiety of being graded. Although they were not allowed to do each essay at their own 'best' time, they were given more time to complete the task and could complete those within the broad time limit set for them. In other words, they were not given the freedom to leave their writing to tend to other errand and to come back to it later.

5.3 Implications For Further Research

This study was carried out using a limited number of subjects as sample. As a result, it is then neither possible nor advisable to draw a general conclusion from its findings. Perhaps further research in this field of writing involving these two genres could consider to increase the number of subjects or to use the same number of subjects but to
lengthen its duration so as to enable the subjects to write more essays in each genre. Both these ways can be used to lend more credibility to the findings of such a study.

Besides this, the study of composing processes involving different genres by ESL school students should also be used to look into cases with different types of subjects such as those subjects of the same race but from different locality - urban as opposed to rural; types of schools - religious-residential, non-religious residential, religious non-residential and ordinary day schools; subjects of different gender; and subjects of different races. It is necessary to carry out further research with all of the factors mentioned in the earlier paragraph as well as here in this paragraph so as to be able to identify features that keep recurring, regardless of the context of the studies. These would definitely add to the store of existing knowledge of ESL writing and facilitate the task of drawing up a composite picture of ESL writers across developmental stages in writing proficiency.

Other than that, the studies of the composing processes involving different genres by ESL school students are lacking at present. As such, this field is wide open for further research especially those that pertain to how these processes work where different age groups are
concerned. An area worth investigating, but which would require longitudinal studies are to determine when these composing processes involving different genres begin to take place in the life of an ESL school students and how these processes change and develop throughout his school attending years until he reaches form five. The findings of studies of these kinds would undoubtedly be greatly beneficial to the teaching as the insights gained could be utilized in the teaching of writing in the classroom. Cross-sectional studies of different age groups writing in response to similar topic in each genre would also provide enlightenment about the features that are prominent with different age groups as well as the types of concerns and preoccupations that are primarily attended to.

There are also other equally important variables that have undeniable effects on the composing processes that involve different genres like self-versus-teacher-initiated topic, mode of audience, prior knowledge with regard to subject-matter and genre of a writing assignment, time constraints, interests and attitude of the student writers themselves. A writing assignment is inevitably influenced by these variables and it would be good if investigation on how they affect the ESL school students' composing processes involving different genres could be undertaken.
As the present study is still essentially a laboratory study, there is a need for studies that are naturalistic in nature. This is because data obtained from such a study are less artificial and more reflective of the actual processes that occur during the composing of a writing assignment in a particular genre. This, however, would entail a close working relationship between researcher and subjects in order for the various facets of the process to be revealed and fully documented. Owing to its ethnographic nature, this type of study must be carried out over several months.

Another area that calls for investigation is that which concerns the schema theory put forth by Ploegder (1994) (Section 2.2.5, Chapter 2). It is extremely beneficial if further studies can be carried out to re-examine her claims as to gain more insights to her theory and at the same time ascertain the truth in it. Since the processes of forming a schema take place cognitively, it is very difficult to observe them. Therefore, there is a necessity to come up with an instrument or method to enable, researchers to see these processes. Unless someone can do this, we have but to content ourselves with implications of what happen rather than observing the actual events themselves.
In addition to the above, perhaps a look into the role and effect of translation on the composing processes of ESL writers is also highly recommended as the findings of this current study have indicated that the subjects seemed to rely on translating their thoughts from Bahasa Melayu to English. It is then important to find out whether translation is a strategy used by all ESL writers or only by individual ones regardless of their general proficiency and writing ability in English. A corollary to this is to determine whether translating facilitates or impedes the flow of ideas, and how it contributes qualitatively to the composing process. Other than that, it is also practical to ascertain if translation is synonymous with low level proficiency and if it is so then what kind of relationship exists between them.

Research should also be carried out to examine the relationship, if there is any, between a certain genre and how ESL writers revise and the kinds of revision strategies they use when writing in that particular genre.