

## Combating the Production of Stereotypes in Undergraduate Writing

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### Abstract

Although there has been a lot of research into stereotyping in published materials, such as in magazines and children's books, there has been little investigation of stereotyping in student writing in a tertiary setting. This paper sets out to identify and categories the stereotypes found in the examination scripts of 110 first year Bruneian students studying at the University of Brunei Darussalam. It was found that stereotyping occurred in 60 out of the 110 scripts. An investigation of the race and gender of the 60 scripts containing stereotyping found that there was no significant difference in the amount of stereotyping between the various racial groups or gender of students. The paper identifies four possible reasons for the production of the stereotypes: a lack of linguistic knowledge of how to develop an argument; a possible misunderstanding of their own national philosophy; the use of circular argument as a form of argument; and the possibility of actual prejudice. The paper concludes that the compulsory courses in academic writing and logic and thinking taken by the students were not effective in imparting the necessary knowledge, or developing the skills necessary for appropriate academic communication. The paper suggests the types of activities which may help prevent the production of stereotypes.

*Keywords:* Argument, stereotyping, second language writing