

# The Impact of Genre-Based Pedagogy on Students' Reading Ability and Critical Thinking Quality Development in Content and Language Integrated Learning

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**ABSTRACT.** This paper seeks to examine the effect of genre-based pedagogy on the students' reading ability and critical thinking skills development in Content and Language Integrated Learning. The study is based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) Model of Chinese EFL learners' ability in writing, thinking critically as well as the general autonomy. According to the above situation, the study chose forty intermediate EFL learners from eighty L2 learners based on their performance about the language understanding of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Further, the researcher divided the learners into two groups. Between the two groups, the first group was set to act as a control group while the other one as an experimental group. The number of learners was twenty learners per group. After analyzing the collected data, it is clear that students in the experimenting group who were receiving the genre-based writing instruction outperformed the control group on the two tests. In addition, post-observation results showed that participants' behavior showed that the frequency of all autonomy criteria increased more on the experimental learner group. Therefore, this study supports the decisive role of genre teaching in second language education.

**KEYWORDS:** Genre instruction, Critical thinking, Writing achievement, Autonomy

## 1. Introduction

Writing can be denoted as a complex communicative task in which meaning is socially constructed. Like other modes of communication, it presupposes a purpose, a context, and an (or some) audience(s). Learning to perform this social activity in L1 or L2 then requires learning the social and cultural conventions, writing tasks on which the text is generated the needs and purposes of the organization, and finally the selection of appropriate linguistic means for communication and information transfer. However, according to Lin, and Lo, learners were requested to only undertake grammar as a test in traditional teaching methods, which was expected to perform only at the level of sentences with dire needs of recording high marks in the trials but even those who scored high on English tests, reported difficulties in expressing themselves on writing and poor performances on even small writing tasks [2]. As such, when L2 learners were asked to write, they had to wrestle with a lot of problems related to what they want to say, like appropriate word-choice, correct use of grammar, creating ideas, as well as developing those ideas into the proper systematic sequence. Lo further found that L2 writers were mostly dependent on their teachers at different points of their learning process. They did not have any reflection on their learning or the potential ways of improving their writing skills [3]. This is in contrast with the ultimate end of the teaching, which is, as specified by Lin & Lo, to rear independent learners with strategy-oriented behavior [1].

## 2. Background to the Study

Additionally, critical thinking ability, which is considered to be the required skill for students' success in their higher-rank educational, occupational endeavors, and the desired outcome of learning, was not emphasized in traditional ways of language teaching in general and writing skills in particular. There are different approaches to genre-based instruction, namely Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), New Rhetoric, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) [3]. The SFL approach, which constitutes the groundwork of this study, is based on insights from functional grammar and is the basis of the work by, who has, accordingly, proposed an SFL model for genre instruction [3]. With this model, moreover, the stages are clearly defined as well as the model, which is applicable. The model provides the teacher with appropriate means to instruct the text in the classroom at three well-defined stages of genre instruction: purpose, structure, and grammar. The SFL model proposed by was then used in this study because of its feasibility of application and pertinence to classroom purposes [1]. The SFL approach and the other two will be

reviewed in the remainder of this section.

### **3. Review of the Literature**

To define genre means to look at it from the vantage point of different schools of genre theory. This constitutes the most outstanding traditions in this regard, which due to different educational contexts, different pedagogical implications, and applications are assigned to each [1][3]. Martin defined genres as socially acknowledged ways of achieving certain communicative goals by employing languages [7]. Distinctive patterns of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure and discourse organisation are usually employed by a genre usually with the aim of achieving those goals [8]. For instance, the prevalence of abstract subject-specific terms, nominalisation and the use of passive voice are typical in science texts, which often contain procedures, procedural recounts, reports and explanation texts [9].

In SFL tradition, genre-based pedagogy is primarily aimed at helping the students achieve the goals of the school curriculum. To this end, argues that school as well as the workplace genres, which include the reports, narratives, discussions, and explanations, are emphasized with this ideological motivation at the background that these explicit linguistic and typological resources empower students for later social successes [1]. Moreover, this school of thought has its roots in socio-cultural dimensions of language learning [4]. As a result, the viewpoint towards language and education, in this tradition, is implemented within socio-cultural, functional, and educational settings in which genre instruction offers.

The idea of scaffolding teacher as one of the factors involved in learning enhancement was developed by Vygotsky, who states that there are two crucial developmental levels of learning namely, "actual developmental level" as well as "level of potential development" and a stage between these two which is called "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD). Lin, & He, echoes the role of scaffolding teacher in genre-based pedagogy and states that the first degree of scaffolding depends on the learners' development in writing as well as the level of independence [1].

However, to the researchers' best of knowledge, there have not been any studies conducted on the effect of genre-based instruction on learners' autonomy and critical thinking ability [4]. Considering all the above, and after delving into the previous research studies about the genre-based approach, this research aimed at investigating the following research questions:

- a. To which extent does the approach on genre-based in teaching writing improve Hechuan students' writing ability?
- b. To which extent does the genre-based approach, as seen and applied in teaching writing, improve EFL and Hechuan learners' critical thinking ability?
- c. To which extent does a genre-based approach in both teaching and writing improve EFL students' learner autonomy with regard to the understanding of language?

### **4. Methodology**

#### ***4.1 Participants***

In this study, forty Hechuan student participants from the intermediate level, aged between fifteen and seventeen, were selected from among eighty L2 learners. The selection was based on their overall performance during the Oxford Placement Test (OPT). Afterward, they were randomly assigned to two groups, one control, while the other was the experimental group, twenty in each. Moreover, it's also worth considering that these students had all the knowledge required as well as experienced in the English language [3]. Moreover, all the participants' L1 was Chinese and none had the experience of living in any country whose native language was English.

#### ***4.2 Critical Thinking Ability Test***

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the study considered the Enis Weir Critical Thinking Essay Test. The experiment was set and applied to measure out critical thinking ability of students. This test was presented in the form of a letter drafted to the editor of any fictional paper or magazine. While writing the essay, the students were required to come up with a proposal that offered various arguments, where the support of each case was supposed to be having support. There are eight paragraphs. In some of the sections, at least there exists one error or type of reasoning [4]. The participants were supposed to read this letter as well as writing nine paragraph compositions to assess the argument of each eight paragraphs separately as well as critiquing the message in general. The time which was considered for the test was almost 40 minutes. Ten minutes to read and ponder the letter and 30 minutes to write the nine paragraphs, analyzing and evaluating the argument of the letter. This test presents a situation that has problems. These provided

problems make chances for assess essential areas of participants' critical thinking ability.

The same five individuals, who were piloted on the composition test, participated in the piloting test of critical thinking ability. The elements of time, instruction, and wordings were taken into consideration. The results showed instances of misspelling and language problem, which were modified before the administration of the test to the target study groups [4]. Moreover, three senior high school teachers examined the test for validity, and as such, the final version of the test preparation for data collection.

**4.3 Observation**

sought the determinants of lifelong learning (LLL) and autonomy within the educational context and found the factors affecting them [4]. The factors affecting LLL were posed to be three: first motivation beliefs including, goal-orientation, interest as well as self-efficacy, performance/voluntary control, including monitoring and strategies, and self-reflection, including assessment and criticism. Besides, two more factors were considered as the ones affecting language autonomy, which are individual autonomy during the learning period, joint responsibility under social perspective based on the criteria given Lo, and Jeong [4]. Moreover, the factors were applied while designing a questionnaire to examine Hechuan learners' perception of learning in an autonomous educational context.

**5. Procedure**

**5.1 Data Collection**

The collection of data process took a total of 13 sessions. In the first two sessions and before the treatment, the participants in both experimental, as well as control groups, were asked to take the composition and critical thinking essay tests as the pretest, each in one separate session. To exclude the probable effects of ordering and participants' inattentiveness, the prompts for the three genres were put in different orders, and the students in each group received the test of composition in different rules. The same tests were used as the post-test at the last two sessions to measure any difference in performances of the participants after the treatment [5]. The counterbalancing design was applied for the post-test of composition, too.

Accordingly, the teacher had to bring each component to the attention of the participants. As such, three sessions were allocated for instructional purposes of each genre. The teaching experiment sessions started with the teaching of the narrative style first because it seemed more accessible and more familiar to the learners than the other two. By considering the genre, they were asked to recognize the purpose, structure, and grammar stages. In the third session, they were asked to write a similar example. The other two genres were taught and practiced, each in three sessions and in the same way [5]. Learners' compositions of both experimenting, as well as control groups, were corrected by the teacher and handed over to the participants to consider their mistakes, strengths, and weaknesses.

**5.2 Data Analysis**

To analyze the data, the three raters scored the writing tests based on Jacob's scoring criteria. This included the rating of organization, content, vocabulary, and language. Each measure was graded from excellent to very poor. For example, for the content criterion: Excellent scored: 30-27 scores. Good to Average: 26-22 scores). Fair to Poor: 21-17 scores. In this way, the total score in the criterion of the content was 30 [4].

The results obtained from statistical analysis of the participants' performance on pre/posttests of writing and critical thinking ability were fed into SPSS (IBM SPSS statics, version 16.0). and for the comparison of scores t-test procedure was used. The next section illustrates the results.

**5.3 Results**

The results, as obtained from analyzed statistical of the collected data, are reported as follows. Pre/posttest scores of composition tests were analyzed with the use of independent t-test procedures concerning participants' writing performance on narrative, procedural, and persuasive genres. Table 1 below illustrates the results obtained from pre/post-test scores on t-tests.

*Table 1 Descriptive and Inferential Results for the Performance on Pre/Post-Tests of Writing Ability for Three Genres*

	Experimental	Control	T-tests (pre-test)	T-tests (post-test)
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Narrative SD	Mean 10.46	64.65	65.90 8.20	df: 38 t: -.42 sig: .67	df:37 t: .25 sig: .80
Procedural SD	Mean 11.37	64.85	67.75 6.91	df: 38 t: -1.48 sig: .14	df: 38 t: -.441 sig: .662
Persuasive SD	Mean 11.82	58.05	58.25 6.05	df: 38 t: .04 sig: .96	df: 38 t: .000 sig: 1.00

Therefore, to investigate the effects of the treatment, the participants' performances primarily on pre as well as post-tests of composition in each genre were set and compared with the use of a paired sample t-test. The table below shows the results.

*Table 2 Descriptive and Inferential Results for Paired Sample t-Test*

		Mean	SD	t-tests
Narrative Post-test	Pre-test	65.27 66.95	9.30 8.65	df: 39 t: -3.61 sig: .001
Procedural Post-test	Pre-test	68.02 69.65	9.39 9.12	df: 39 t: -3.60 sig: .001
Persuasive Post-test	Pre-test	60.17 61.00	10.11 10.67	df: 39 t: -2.23 sig: .031

Table 2 , Shows That Post-Test Mean Scores Were Higher and That Each Pair Performed Significantly Different after the Treatment: Narrative (t: -3.61; Sig: .001), Procedural (t: -3.60; Sig: .001), and Persuasive (t: -2.23; Sig: .031).

Table 3 is an Illustration of the Frequency of the Observed Autonomous Behavior of the Participants.

*Table 3 Frequency of Five Criteria of Learner autonomy's Observations*

	The first three sessions	The second 3 sessions	The third three sessions
Monitoring	79	82	89
Individual autonomy	66	80	81
Criticism	91	76	61
Social responsibility	74	72	86
Confidence	59	45	73
Total score	369	355	390
Overall mean	73.8	71	78

The scores in table 3 are the indication of the increasing trend of the frequency of each of the observed criteria but the criticism, which has had a descending growth. Based on these findings, the researchers came to the conclusion that the instructional procedures positively affect the autonomous behavior of all participants in an experimental group.

The results obtained in this study showed that the application of a genre-based approach to the teaching of language and writing on the experimental group achieved high levels of language use, writing, and critical thinking ability, as well as also exhibited higher frequencies of autonomous behavior. This speculation is discussed and elaborated in detail in the next chapter.

## 6. Discussion

From the findings of the study, it's clear that genre-based pedagogy provides a lot of "real benefits for learners as they pull together language, content, and contexts, while offering teachers a means of presenting students with explicit and systematic explanations of the ways writing works to communicate"[1]. Through genre-based writing instruction,

learners have a more precise map at their disposal based on which they can be more specific about why to write, how, and with what means to express their ideas. The SFL model, which was applied in this study, was beneficial for producing meaningful passages.

Explicit instruction of purposes, structures, and grammar of the genres, on the other hand, set the grounds for the learners to shape a mental picture about the writing task, which in turn enables them to analyze and evaluate different texts and also their writing performances. For example, they have to decide what language features to include or exclude from their piece of writing to match the genre they are dealing with; or they have to keep constant the context and the purpose for which they have started the writing task<sup>[6]</sup>. In this way, critical thinking ability is exercised and the inadequacy of students' thinking skills, which was emphasized as well as being confirmed by the findings of this study.

## 7. Conclusion

The main concern of this research was to examine the impact of genre-based pedagogy on students' reading ability and critical thinking quality development in Content and Language Integrated Learning. Thus, the study has tried to address the shortcomings of the traditional teaching methods concerning writing instruction and propose an effective teaching way instead. The results proved that students on the experimenting group who had a chance to become familiar with different genres and had the opportunity to move towards independence outperformed the ones in the control group and thus provided the study with the evidence of a practical teaching approach. The overall findings of the study verified the advantages of genre-based pedagogy over traditional methods as a way of improving writing ability, critical thinking ability, and learner autonomy.

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