Enhancing EFL Students’ Performance and Genre Awareness in Academic Writing through Genre-based Instruction

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Abstract
For EFL students, academic writing can be challenging, especially in Thailand, where English is taught in formal classroom settings. To become proficient in academic writing, students need to master genre knowledge and develop an understanding of genre variations. This study attempted to figure out how genre-based instruction affected the academic writing performance of EFL students. The main research questions are to what extent students improve their writing performance and their awareness of genre after studying academic writing through genre-based instruction. The study involved fifty-six undergraduate students in Thailand. There were four research instruments, i.e., pretest and posttest, student writing, student reflection, and semi-structured interviews. Students’ writing scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics. An independent-sample t-test was used to analyze the means of the two groups receiving different instruction types. Student reflection and interviews were used to explore the target students’ genre awareness and students’ attitudes toward the instruction. The results of this study showed that the students in the control and experimental group had equal writing abilities, as seen in the pretest. However, the experimental group of students significantly outperformed the students in the control group in all types of academic writing. The findings also revealed that the target students improved their genre awareness in four ways, i.e., audience awareness, purpose awareness, appropriate content, and textual features. In addition, they held positive attitudes toward genre-based instruction. This study provides a guideline for teachers and practitioners to incorporate genre-based instruction into teaching writing to improve students’ writing proficiency.

Keywords: EFL students’ performance, genre awareness, genre knowledge, genre-based instruction, second language writing, teaching and learning cycle,

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Introduction

Academic writing has played a crucial role at all educational levels. Academic texts are reputable sources for students to gain content knowledge. At the same time, students have typically measured their disciplinary knowledge via their writing abilities. Therefore, undergraduate students must have a solid academic foundation to advance their discipline knowledge in the future. Unfortunately, many students find writing challenging to deal with due to several factors such as insufficient vocabulary, and grammar, lack of revising skills and writing styles, lack of motivation, confidence, and negative attitudes toward English learning (Padgate, 2008; Nguyen & Suwannabubpha, 2021; Khamkhong, 2017). Another reason that possibly hinders students from achieving English writing comes from teachers’ perspectives. For example, teachers often avoid writing instruction because of time constraints, lack of content knowledge, insufficient pedagogical knowledge, and adherence to a multiple-choice test format (Darasawang & Watson Todd, 2012; Goldstein, 2017; Luxia, 2007; Taylor, 2005). As a result, writing is often skipped in almost all classes.

Students’ lack of genre knowledge is one of the reasons why Thai and EFL students have difficulties writing. Essentially, genre knowledge is recognizing and categorizing different literary styles. Appropriate genre knowledge assists students in understanding shared conventions and patterns of how members of communities speak or write (McGrath, Negretti, & Nicholls, 2019). A proper understanding of genre is crucial for writers since it allows readers and writers to know what to anticipate from each other’s work. This can help students become more proficient writers (Miller, 1984; Bazerman, 2012). In addition, several studies indicate that many students think all types of writing have similar conventions and language features (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Artemeva & Fox, 2010). It can be said that those students lack awareness of the genre. This causes them to be unable to distinguish between the aims of the target text and to choose the proper conventions and language to use when composing the content. Therefore, developing genre awareness should be one of the main goals for novice students. An understanding of the links between how language functions in various situations and audiences is fostered through genre awareness in students (Johns, 2008; Millar, 2011; Skulstad, 1999; Yayli, 2011).

Subsequently, this study aims to incorporate genre-based instruction in teaching three academic essays. In genre studies, it is essential to understand how EFL students learn genre through various instructional contexts. This will enable teachers to create and choose appropriate and efficient teaching methods to help students better understand how language is used in authentic contexts related to a particular discipline. Thus, the three main research objectives are to 1) ascertain how students’ writing performance improves after studying writing through genre-based instruction, 2) examine how genre-based instruction fosters students’ genre awareness, and 3) determine their attitudes toward genre-based instruction. Therefore, three main research questions were formulated as follows:

RQ1: To what extent does genre-based instruction improve students’ academic writing performance?
RQ 2: How does genre-based instruction raise students’ awareness of genre?
RQ3: What are students’ attitudes toward genre-based instruction?

The following sections review relevant literature on genre-based instruction and genre awareness. Then, the research design is provided, followed by the findings, discussion, limitations, and conclusion.
Literature Review

**Genre-Based Instruction**

Several studies have asserted the importance of genre in teaching writing, making it an essential concept in writing instruction. According to Hyland (2007, p. 149), the genre is conceived of as "abstract, socially recognized ways of using language." It is based on the notion that experts or members of the community can easily understand texts. They have minimal trouble spotting similarities in the texts they use regularly. With their genre knowledge, they can read, understand, and create them relatively readily because of their recurrent exposure.

Genre-based instruction is “an approach to teaching that provides students with tools for understanding texts as genres, for analyzing those genres, and for using this insight in their writing” (Tardy, 2019, p.24). Genre-based instruction is an approach that has increasingly gained popularity in response to the notion that different texts require different language features, generic structures, and styles. To produce a composition, a writer considers essential factors and steps, such as the target audience, the purpose of writing, the context, and language choice. This instruction aims to draw students’ attention to these issues (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Hyon, 2018). In instructing writing, teachers must use meaningful activities that foster students’ awareness of the genre and introduce the organization, language choices, etc. Previous studies have proved that genre-based instruction is recognized as one efficient approach in terms of building students’ knowledge of appropriate composition and in raising their consciousness or awareness of key elements of a genre (Fenwick & Herrington, 2022; Dugartsyrenova, 2020; Lo, Liu & Wang, 2014; Acar, 2023; Aunurrahman, Hikmayanti, & Yuliana,2020; Best, Floyd, and McNamara, 2008).

**Teaching and Learning Cycle**

Feez (2002) proposed instructional processes, the Teaching and Learning Cycle to apply Genre-Based Instruction (hereafter TLC). In general, there are five stages of teaching and learning: 1) setting the context, 2) modeling and dissecting the text, 3) collaborative text development, 4) independent text construction, and 5) linking similar texts.

*Building the context:* This stage aims to engage students in the target topics and build a shared context in preparation for working with the genre. Students explore the purposes and expected audiences of the target genre through various activities such as brainstorming, floor-storming, think-pair-share activities, and research activities (Derewianka & Jones, 2016).

*Modeling and deconstructing the text:* The activities at this stage enable students to discuss and explore the moves of the genre and its key grammatical and rhetorical features. Model texts will be evaluated, interpreted, and contrasted to help students understand the distinctions and similarities across different genres. Teachers typically demonstrate patterns of language from representative samples of texts. An analysis can be done at the different levels of text (clause, group or phrase, and word).

*Joint construction of the text:* In this phase, students practice writing texts that incorporate language elements they have studied in prior phases. This stage aims for the students to construct a text collaboratively. The teacher can design activities in the form of small groups, individuals, or whole class groups. While students collaboratively write the text together, the teacher facilitates and scaffolds the students through questions, thinking aloud, and explanations.

*Independent construction of the text:* During this phase, with the instructor taking the role of facilitator, students have the chance to create a text independently. In this stage, students are
expected to apply what they learned in the previous stage to their writing by utilizing their understanding of the target task’s content, procedure, language, context, and genre.

**Linking related texts:** In the TLC’s last phase, students are encouraged to contrast the genre they have been studying with other texts. Another comparable piece of writing with certain modifications, such as those to the audience, goal, or language elements, may be required of the students.

The TLC is flexible and adaptable. It allows teachers and practitioners to adjust following teaching objectives, time, and student levels. Research shows that various versions of TLC have been used successfully in various language curricula (see examples, Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Humphrey & Macnaught, 2011; de Oliveira & Lan, 2014).

**Genre Awareness**

The term genre awareness can be regarded as the ability to notice and recognize how language works at three levels, i.e., context awareness, discourse awareness, and language awareness (Millar, 2011; Paltridge, 2001). Genre awareness can be raised by exploring and analyzing multiple sample texts (Devitt, 2004; Johns, 2008; Millar, 2011; Hyon, 2018). When students are conscious of analyzing various samples of texts within and across disciplines, they can recognize typical language features, conventions, and variations of such genres. Consequently, they can see how the rhetorical context of communication is intertwined with generic norms and practices. Students eventually recognize the link between rhetorical patterns and the culture of the genre rather than as random or decontextualized rules (Tardy, Pawlowski, & Slinkard, 2018). Recent research has emphasized the significance of increasing genre understanding in L2 writing teaching (Viriya & Wasanasomsithi, 2017; Jarunthawatchai, 2010; Turgut, 2013; McGrath, Negretti, and Nicholls (2019). Research on how a genre-based course raises students’ genre awareness was conducted by Tate (2015). Two homogeneous groups—a control and an experimental group—were used for the investigation. Three reflection essays from each of these two groups were examined. The study results revealed that the experimental group’s students developed genre awareness as they progressed through the instruction. In addition, Tate identified four genre awareness themes, including audience awareness, purpose, appropriate content, and grammatical elements, which the students showed awareness of.

Language education and literacy fields have been interested in genre-based instruction and genre awareness for decades. However, most previous studies of genre awareness and genre-based instruction have focused on one specific aspect. Exploring how these concepts can be adapted and applied concurrently would provide valuable insights into supporting language students to gain, retain, and transfer knowledge of the genre.

**Method**

The current study is quasi-experimental research conducted to examine the impact of genre-based instruction on students’ academic writing performance focusing on three academic text types, i.e., a descriptive, comparison and contrast, and causes and effects essay. Furthermore, two important issues investigated are how genre-based instruction affects students' understanding of genre and their attitudes toward the instruction. The researcher gathered quantitative data first, and then qualitative techniques were used to collect qualitative information relevant to explore students’ genre awareness and attitudes toward the intervention.
Participants
The participants involved in this study were fifty-six undergraduate students studying Mechanical Engineering and Industrial Engineering at Kasetsart University Chalermprakiat Sakon Nakhon Province Campus, Thailand. The participants were enrolled in the English for University Life course as required in the second semester of the academic year 2020. There were a combined 28 students in the experimental and control groups. To find participants, a purposive sampling technique was used. The participants had some prior knowledge of English because they had taken the prerequisite course English in Daily Life, which had given them a foundation in fundamental English abilities. They were given a pretest to ascertain their writing skills, particularly in composing academic essays. The outcomes served as a benchmark for subsequent comparisons.

Research Instruments
Pretest and Posttest
Pretest and posttest were used to trace students’ improvement in writing essays after the intervention and to answer RQ1: To what extent does genre-based instruction improve students’ academic writing performance? This elicitation method determined the participants’ knowledge in composing an academic essay before and after the experiment. Results obtained from the pretest were used to indicate students’ writing ability. Students completed the pretest before the implementation was conducted. At the end of the intervention, around fourteen weeks later, they took the posttest.

Pretest: The test was a written task—a compare and contrast essay. Students needed to complete the task based on the prompt provided. Students had sixty minutes to write two hundred and fifty words of essay in English.

Posttest: The posttest followed the same types of writing as the pretest but differed in a topic. The test was administered after the intervention was completed. The goal of the posttest was to document the students’ changes after the intervention.

Student Essay Writing
Students’ written work was assessed to examine students’ achievements in composing three academic essays (descriptive, compare and contrast, and cause and effect essay). The final draft of each genre was brought into the analysis. The written task results answered RQ1—To what extent does genre-based instruction improve students’ academic writing performance? The information gathered at this stage triangulated the pretest and posttest outcomes in terms of the students’ writing output. Written tasks occurred in the TLC model's final stage—独立文本构建. The tasks were take-home assignments. Each student submitted an essay of at least 250 words based on the assigned topics.

Reflection Writing
Reflection writing provides qualitative information regarding students’ genre awareness and attitudes toward genre-based instruction. Reflection analysis allows the researcher to explore how students composed the essay, what aspects brought about changes in their writing, how they negotiated with the texts, and how they presented their thoughts in the texts. The reflection writing was designed in a written form adapted from the reflection questions in Discroll, Paszek, Gorzelsky,
Hayes & Jones (2020). Students wrote their reflections after composing an essay and submitted three reflections.

**Semi-Structured Interview**

This study employed semi-structured interviews to acquire answers to *RQ 2: How does genre-based instruction raise students’ awareness of genre? and RQ3: What are students’ attitudes towards genre-based instruction?* Nine students took part in the one-on-one interviews through a video conference. Even though certain questions were predetermined as guidelines, the interviewer had considerable latitude to veer off-topic and elicit additional information.

**Data Collection**

There were two groups of students involved in this study. The control group of students learned how to write the three academic essays through the process approach. In contrast, genre-based instruction was implemented in the experimental group. The quantitative phase took place over a fifteen-week course. The class met weekly for a three-period class.

The pretest was given to the students at the start of the course, lasting around 60 minutes. The genre-based instruction was implemented three times, starting from descriptive writing, compare and contrast, and causes and effect essays, respectively. It was mandated that the essay be at least 250 words long. The implementation followed the modification of TCL adapted by Feez (2002). All three rounds of implementation of genre-based instruction followed the same stages, including 1) building the field, 2) modeling and deconstruction, 3) collaborative writing, and 4) independent writing. A teacher and student conference stage was added as an additional stage. Meeting together, the teacher and the students went over their written work. The students provided a written reflection on their work immediately after finishing their essays. After finishing all of the lessons, the students took the posttest.

The interviews were carried out the week after the participants completed the posttest. Nine students from the experimental group participated in the interviews. The interviews were conducted individually in the Thai language to ensure understanding. In addition, the audio was recorded for transcription and analysis.

**Data Analysis**

**Pretest, Posttest, and Student Essays**

The pretest, posttest, and the students’ essays were assessed and analyzed, focusing on overall writing quality and lexico-grammatical resources. To assign scores to the written tests and three assignments, three raters gave scores against the scoring criteria and rubrics. The scoring criterion was an analytic scale. The rubrics included seven criteria: audience awareness, context, genre-driven structure, style, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The maximum score for each aspect of scoring was four. The pretest and posttest results and the student’s essays were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Furthermore, to compare two sets of scores obtained from pretest and posttest, an independent sample t-test was applied.

**Student Reflection**

Information retrieved from student reflections was used to capture the students’ genre awareness in relation to a descriptive, compare and contrast, and cause-and-effect essay. The reflections were coded based on predetermined codes from Tate (2015). Four major codes relevant
to genre awareness included 1) audience awareness, 2) purposes, 3) appropriate content, and 4) textual features. In addition, other qualitative information arising from the student reflections was coded using the thematic coding technique. After the analysis, the categories of coding themes were examined by independent observers to ensure the consistency and creditability of the researcher’s analysis.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

To answer RQ 2: How does genre-based instruction raise students’ awareness of genre? Transcripts were coded following the predetermined codes following the same method as with the student reflection. To answer RQ3: What are students’ attitudes toward genre-based instruction? Thematic coding was adopted.

**Results**

*To what extent does genre-based instruction improve students’ academic writing performance?*

This section discusses the findings of this study to answer RQ1: To what extent does genre-based instruction improve students’ academic writing performance?

Table 1. Students’ improvement in the pretest and posttest across seven aspects in the control and experimental groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of genre: Purpose and development</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>.381</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>.374</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre-driven organization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>.406</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling and punctuation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>2.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total scores</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table one displays the pretest and posttest results from the control and experimental groups of students across seven aspects of scoring rubrics, i.e., audience, purposes and development, contextualization, genre-driven organization, style, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The total score for each assessment sub-scale was four marks. The independent samples t-test was applied to figure out the analysis of mean scores from the pretest and posttest for the control and experimental groups of students. The pretest results reveal that students in the control and experimental groups were broadly equal across all seven subscales to some extent. In contrast, the mean scores in the posttests show that the students in the experimental group earned better scores.
than those in the control group in terms of conveying the purpose of the text and developing effective support (control group $\bar{x} = 2.43$, S.D. = 0.48, experimental group $\bar{x} = 2.77$, S.D. = 0.67), providing reader(s) with sufficient contextualization (control group $\bar{x} = 2.36$, S.D. = 0.55, experimental group $\bar{x} = 2.70$, S.D. = 0.60), appropriate use of organization (control group $\bar{x} = 2.27$, S.D. = 0.53, experimental group $\bar{x} = 2.64$, S.D. = 0.69), writing style (control group $\bar{x} = 2.01$, S.D. = 0.52, experimental group $\bar{x} = 2.48$, S.D. = 0.57), the correctness of grammar use (control group $\bar{x} = 1.92$, S.D. = 0.44, experimental group $\bar{x} = 2.29$, S.D. = 0.66), and spelling and punctuation (control group $\bar{x} = 2.00$, S.D. = 0.50, experimental group $\bar{x} = 2.38$, S.D. = 0.67). However, the students in the control and experimental groups did not differ in their audience awareness. Although the experimental group outperformed the control group, there was no statistically significant difference ($p < .05$).

Table 2. Students’ performances on descriptive essay writing across seven sub-scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Full scores</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>Mean dif.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Group (N = 27)</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Experimental Group (N = 28)</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of genre: Purpose and development</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre-driven organization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling and punctuation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total scores</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table two shows the findings relevant to writing descriptive essays for the students in the control and experimental groups. The findings show that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in writing descriptive essays across all seven assessment sub-scales. The experimental group demonstrated the greatest achievement in contextualization (mean difference = 0.78) and genre-driven organization (mean difference = 0.69). On some sub-scales, both the control and the experimental groups achieved quite close mean scores, such as on spelling and punctuation (mean difference = 0.43), grammar (mean difference = 0.52), and audience (mean difference = 0.54). However, even on these, the independent samples t-tests still showed a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the control and experimental groups ($p < .05$).

Table 3. Students’ performances in compare and contrast essay writing across seven sub-scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Full scores</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>Mean dif.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control Group (N = 28)</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>Experimental Group (N = 28)</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The students’ compare and contrast essay writing scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics and an independent sample t-test. In table three, the results indicate that the experimental group’s performances in writing compare and contrast essays were significantly better than the control groups in all seven assessment sub-scales. The largest mean differences between the students in control and experimental groups were for audience together with the use of genre (mean dif. = 0.69), contextualization (mean dif. = 0.58), and organization (mean dif. = 0.51).

Table 4. Students’ performances in cause-and-effect essay writing across seven sub-scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Full Scores</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>Mean dif.</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Audience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of genre: Purpose and development</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextualization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre-driven organization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>0.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>1.69</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling and punctuation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total scores</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table four displays the students’ performances in cause and effect essay writing. The results indicate that the experimental group’s performances in writing cause and effect essays were significantly better than the control groups in all seven assessment sub-scales. The largest mean differences between the students in control and experimental groups were for contextualizing (mean dif. = 0.61), the use of genre (mean dif. = 0.47), and the writing style (mean dif. = 0.45).

**How does genre-based instruction raise students’ awareness of genre?**

This part discusses students’ awareness of genre arising from student reflection and semi-structured interviews. The four principal areas of students’ awareness of genre were audience awareness, purpose awareness, appropriate content, and textual awareness.

**Audience Awareness**

Students’ awareness of their audience was captured when the students discussed their target audiences. The analysis of qualitative data, including interviews and student reflections, revealed that the target students had developed an awareness of their audience covering four aspects, namely...
1) drawing readers’ attention, 2) establishing the target readers, 3) establishing connections between the target audience and the language choices, and 4) understanding the distance between the reader and the writer.

The first aspect regarding students’ awareness of the audience was students’ attempts to draw their readers’ attention. Four out of nine student interviewees responded in the interview that their writing had to provide content in a manner that would attract their readers’ attention.

The results of this study indicate that the students were likely to establish their audiences when they composed essays. One-third of the students (three out of nine) in the interviews referred to the presence of their target audiences, most of the time as teachers and friends. However, when it came to writing comparison and contrast and cause and effect essays, their target audiences appeared to include "people in general” more frequently.

The analysis from the interviews and student reflections demonstrates that students’ language choices relate to their target audiences. For example, most students stated that they tended to use some formal language in their essay writing when their readers were their teachers or people in general. On the other hand, they tried to use less formal or informal language in their writing if they wrote the texts for their friends. These findings indicate that most of the students did not only think about their audiences, but they also showed their understanding of how the audience was closely connected to their language choices.

**Purpose Awareness**

Students’ awareness of purpose was coded when they acknowledged the purposes of their essays. The findings from the interviews show that all the students could indicate accurate and appropriate purposes for the texts. Also, they could tell the correct genre names. Nearly two-thirds of the students (five out of nine students) not only explained the purposes of the target text accurately, but they could also differentiate the purposes into the three text types they had written throughout the course. Therefore, it can be inferred that students had acquired knowledge regarding the purposes of the texts. The students explained and compared the purposes of the three text types: descriptive, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect essays.

**Appropriate Content**

The students in this study worked on the content differently across the three text types. The qualitative information illustrates the students’ awareness of content in three aspects: using relevant information for the topics, resources for content development, and students’ content awareness across all three academic texts.

The outcomes of this study reveal that nearly all the students typically examined the assigned topics and planned for what content should be included in their writing. Two-thirds of the students realized that the content had to be relevant to the topics. These findings are in line with the information found in the student reflections. More than half of the students agreed they should not include irrelevant information in their essays.

The student’s responses to each written task were not identical. In the first piece of essay writing (a descriptive essay), the students expressed that they found writing descriptive essays effortless because they could use their subjective experience to write the essays. Conversely, they thought composing the final essay was the hardest for generating content. When composing their cause and effect essays, they made significant efforts to find sufficient information and screen for
the most suitable content. They tended to analyze and make judgments about whether the information they received was accurate or not.

**Textual Features**

Textual features are conceptualized as the target genres' language features, vocabularies, and generic structures. In this study, it was found that the students slightly improved their awareness of textual features in four different ways, namely students’ awareness of linguistic features, students’ awareness of language choices and their audiences, students’ awareness of language choices and genres, and students’ awareness of generic structures.

The responses from the interviews show that the students considered sentence structures, word choices, tense, and cohesive devices and that they implemented these in their essay writing. Some students (around one quarter) considered the appropriate use of syntax. Their awareness of the appropriate use of sentence structures can be seen in their discussions regarding word order and sentence structures. Further analysis of the student reflections reveals that some students were aware of using cohesive devices in composing essays. Although the findings indicate that the students were aware of the linguistic features in their essay writing, they did not explain such aspects in detail. The students realized that the different text types needed different language choices. Most students thought writing descriptive essays required basic word choices. Typically, the vocabulary used in descriptive essays originated in word lists. The students tended to use simple sentences in their writing. In contrast, they seemed to increase their range of language choices in the other two essays (comparison and contrast and cause and effect essays). Most students considered using more transitional words, pronouns, and cohesive devices in their writing. Moreover, the students perceived the importance of textual organization. Most students carefully followed the convention of the target texts they were writing.

**What are students’ attitudes toward genre-based instruction and genre awareness?**

This study's results illustrate that the experimental group students held positive attitudes towards genre-based instruction. Based on information from the interviews, the students found the genre-based instruction course relaxing. The classroom atmosphere was friendly, and the workloads were appropriate. Some students found the tasks challenging, but they helped improve their writing ability. Moreover, the students were appreciative when the instructor explicitly informed them of the teaching objectives before each class. They stated that knowing what they were about to study and the expected outcomes of each lesson made them feel less nervous or worried about the lessons.

**Discussion**

Regarding the first question, the results of this study demonstrate that during the fifteen weeks of instruction, the experimental group's students' writing skills increased. On all three forms of writing, students in the experimental group significantly outperformed those in the control group. The results from the pretest and posttest demonstrated that the application of genre-based instruction enables the students in the experimental group to produce better quality text spelling and punctuation, organization, and grammar. The outcomes of this study are similar to Fenwick and Herrington (2022), Dugartsyrenova (2020), and Aunurrahman et.al. (2020). This might result from explicit teaching on identifying textual features concerning social context. One of the most important tenets of genre-based learning is explicit teaching. Explicit instruction is systematic,
direct, engaging, and success-oriented—and has been shown to promote student achievement (Anita & Charles, 2011). It is based on the notion that writing teachers cannot presume that all students have the necessary language, cultural, and social background to succeed in their writing (Hyon, 2018). To assist students in acquiring and practicing target language points appropriately and accurately, explicit teaching encourages teachers to utilize clear, concise, and consistent language (Gunn, Smolkowski, Strycker, & Dennis, 2021). With an explicit awareness of clear social activity, the purpose of the texts, and an understanding of how language is used, students attune to the target texts. This helps them maintain their focus. Hyland (2007) asserts that teaching is more effective when teachers make lessons explicated to students.

Additionally, students' posttest mean score clearly illustrates how much they have learned about writing style. When the pretest and posttest results were compared, it was discovered that the students receiving genre-based instruction had improved their writing style the most. The connection between reading to writing might explain this. The students have sufficient opportunity to learn from diverse model texts while in the constructing, modeling, and deconstruction stages. These encourage students to learn writing styles from these examples of texts. Brown (2001) asserts a positive effect of connecting reading and writing that reading can reinforce writing skills. By exposing students to relevant types of target essays, the students will gain insight into topic selection and other features of “good” writing. Derewianka and Jones (2016) argue that model texts or supported reading give writers solid knowledge of language patterns for later bringing these patterns to writing. By reading example texts, students can become familiar with the subject matter and be exposed to the literary elements they might use in their writing.

The study's results also showed that students' writing abilities in the three written genres of descriptive texts, compare and contrast texts, and cause and effect texts had significantly improved. According to the findings, students' performances vary across three activities. Duke, Caughlan, Juzwik, and Martin (2012) explain that students always respond to each text in a particular way. Because each genre has unique characteristics, students cannot approach each genre similarly. This aspect appears to be supported by Best et al.‘s (2008) study. They examined how effectively the students comprehended narrative and expository literature. According to the study, students were more successful at understanding narrative texts than expository writings. In addition, they found that the students’ word knowledge and decoding abilities varied as they comprehended texts of various genres.

To answer research question two, the findings of this study demonstrate that throughout the genre-based course, practically all students gradually modified their understanding of the intended genre purposes. For example, in the initial reflection, some students wrote essays to complete the course assignments and to develop their writing skills. In contrast, in later reflections, almost every student attempted to communicate with perceived audiences actively. The results are consistent with Tate (2015) in that students may not be aware of the purposes of the text in their initial writing. However, when they reflected on their writing in the following stages, their awareness of purpose rose significantly.

There was no statistically significant difference in the students' average audience awareness scores in the control and experimental groups. Additionally, the score results support the findings from the interviews and reflections. When asked to consider their target audiences, most students identified a teacher and their peers as their readers. They also presented themselves as writers who were students. The teacher and their friends remained the students' primary readers, even though they tried to incorporate readers from outside the class, such as their potential
audience from the broader public, in their reflections. The students' unclear understanding of the target audience is consistent with earlier research by Turgut (2013), Viriya and Wasanasomsithi (2017), Jarunthawatchai (2010), Tate (2015), and McGrath et al (2019).

Regarding content awareness, emphasis was placed on students intentionally choosing appropriate content to fulfill the communicative purpose. Most students stated clearly that the information had to be pertinent to the topics. The students were conscious of their target audience while they engaged with the content. For instance, the students reported that managing the content for a descriptive essay was simple. This was possible because the topic and information contained in descriptive essays directly affected their personal experiences. They considered their readers as people they knew, such as their classmates and teachers. After completing the descriptive essay, the students appeared to be more careful in choosing relevant and reliable information to complete the compare and contrast and cause and effect essays. It appears that they spent more time reviewing the content. The students seemed aware of genre variations after being taught through genre-based instruction.

The student’s awareness of textual elements varied. Almost all students could demonstrate their comprehension of the genres’ underlying structures. Clear evidence of the student’s understanding of genre structures can be found in the interviews and reflections. The students could discuss the differences in textual forms according to each distinct aspect. Despite being aware of language use in a particular genre, the students did not offer insight into language aspects employed in writing. Instead, the students casually discussed a few grammatical issues. In their interviews, all of the students in this study stated that they learned and practiced writing by concentrating on form and usage rather than working on a lengthy essay. It is implied that writing a reflection about essay writing may be their first experience, and so they were unable to provide in-depth detail on this aspect.

To answer research question three, the participants in this study had favorable opinions on instruction in genre-based writing. The findings of the interviews indicated that they were typically satisfied with the instruction. In addition, they believed the course had given them an understanding of the targeted genres.

**Limitations**

Some limitations should be mentioned. First, this study’s sample size and number of students might not accurately reflect the entire undergraduate student population. Because the study's findings were collected in a specific setting, they might not be relevant to the broader Thai tertiary context. In addition, students in engineering were the only discipline among the target students that participated in this investigation. In this study, genre-based instruction was implemented for only one semester. It was challenging to document how students changed over this semester regarding their linguistic expertise and how they perceived their audience awareness. A better case scenario would be to apply genre-based writing instruction over at least two academic semesters, allowing teachers to monitor changes in their students' writing ability. Finally, due to time restrictions and the large number of writing assignments needed to be examined, this study focused only on the students' general writing development and their understanding of the genre. Although it is clear that students' performance in terms of language features increased, additional research should be done to determine how well students are doing regarding language usage and forms.
Conclusion

Although there is evidence that genre-based instruction and awareness of genre help enhance writing abilities, there is a requirement for further studies to explore in what way genre-based instruction could foster students' learning process. In addition, a fuller understanding of how students acquire knowledge of the genre and transfer it to different writing contexts would contribute to a deeper understanding of the sustained effects of genre-based instruction. Thus, this study aimed to implement genre-based instruction in tertiary students who were learning how to write academic essays. The results show that the target students benefited from the instruction. They demonstrated progress in their writing skills in three types of essays: descriptive, compare and contrast, and cause and effect. The outcomes of this study also reveal that the students gradually developed their awareness of the genre and showed favorable attitudes toward the instruction.

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