

Academic Genre Instruction and Its Influence on University Writing Proficiency

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Abstract

The ongoing debate in language education revolves around the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches in teaching writing skills, particularly the merits of Genre-Based Pedagogy versus Isolated Skill-Focused Conventional Methods, which focus on practicing individual writing skills separately. This study investigated the impact of Genre-Based Pedagogy on 16 purposively selected fourth-semester students from the English Education Department at Harapan Bangsa University. Using an experimental design, participants were divided into experimental (8 students from class A) and control (8 students from class B) groups, with pre-test and post-test assessments over eight weeks. Results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group's writing skills, with a mean post-test score of 78.75 compared to 62.25 in the control group ($t = 8.12$). These findings suggest that Genre-Based Pedagogy, emphasizing contextualized learning and immersion in diverse text genres, significantly enhances writing proficiency compared to conventional methods, enabling students to effectively integrate grammar, vocabulary, content development, and organizational skills tailored to specific genres.

Keywords

Conventional Methods, English Education, Experimental Design, Genre-Based Pedagogy, Isolated Skill-Focused, Writing Proficiency

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INTRODUCTION

The endeavor to teach writing skills has long been a priority in language education, prompting the evolution of diverse methodologies to enhance students' proficiency. While conventional approaches tend to focus on isolated skills, genre-based pedagogy immerses learners in specific text types, emphasizing language learning within authentic contexts (Hyland, 2004). Despite its rising popularity, a comprehensive assessment of its effectiveness compared to traditional approaches remains crucial, especially concerning students' writing skill development. This shift highlights the acknowledgment that effective writing involves situational and purposeful language use, emphasizing comprehension of language functions across various communicative situations (Hyland, 2007).

Scholars like Flowerdew (2015) emphasize genre-based instruction's role in cultivating writing proficiency, stressing its focus on authentic language use and rhetorical awareness. Flowerdew contends that this approach equips learners to navigate diverse communicative situations by understanding genre conventions and purposes. Furthermore, Martin's research explores the link between genre and language learning from a social semiotic perspective, analyzing how genres, as social constructs, contribute to language acquisition. His work emphasizes the role of genres in shaping language proficiency, literacy development, and effective communication in diverse educational environments (Martin, 2009).

In Indonesia, students of English writing skills face challenges due to limited exposure, motivation, and inadequate resources. While universities, including Universitas Harapan Bangsa, have programs dedicated to English language education, students' writing proficiency remains unsatisfactory across various semesters. Weaknesses encompass grammar, coherence, genre awareness, and difficulties in the writing process. In higher education, the ability to write argumentative essays helps students explain their thoughts better, highlighting the need for improved instructional strategies to enhance these critical skills (Kasih & Munir, 2023).

Hence, the research questions emerged:

1. Effectiveness of Genre Pedagogy: How effective was genre pedagogy in enhancing writing skills compared to traditional isolated skills instruction?
2. Challenges in Implementation: What challenges did teachers face when implementing genre pedagogy, and how could these be addressed?

The objectives were to investigate whether genre pedagogy was more effective in enhancing writing skills and to understand the challenges faced by teachers in its implementation.

This research aimed to contribute significantly to:

1. Scientific Development: Identifying trends and findings to enhance English teaching methodologies.
2. Institutional Development: Aiding institutions in identifying weaknesses and opportunities for improvement.

3. Meeting Societal Needs: Identifying needs within society, particularly for educators and students, leading to program development to fulfill these needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Genre Instruction refers to teaching methods focused on specific genres within academic writing, such as research articles, essays, and reports. This approach helps students understand and apply genre-specific conventions and structures. According to Badger and MacDonald (2018), genre-based instruction supports students in mastering the distinct linguistic and rhetorical features of academic texts, thereby enhancing their writing skills. Additionally, Casanave and Hubbard (2016) emphasize that effective genre instruction aids students in internalizing academic norms and expectations, improving their ability to produce well-structured and contextually appropriate texts.

University Writing Proficiency involves the ability to produce clear, coherent, and academically appropriate written texts. Recent research by Arum and Roksa (2016) underscores that writing proficiency at the university level includes skills such as argument development, critical analysis, and adherence to academic standards. Furthermore, Lee and Schallert (2021) highlight that proficiency is demonstrated through the ability to engage with complex content, employ appropriate academic language, and effectively organize writing.

Previous studies on genre-based pedagogy highlight its effectiveness in enhancing writing skills across various contexts. Studies by Chaisiri (2010), Van Dijk & Hajer (2012), Minaabad & Khoshkholgh (2012), Bruce (2013), Zhang-Wu (2016), Phichiensathien (2016), Wijayanti et al. (2017), Liu (2018), Lo & Jeong (2018), Aunurrahman et al. (2020), and Ganapathy et al. (2022) depict positive impacts on writing skills, argumentation, literacy development, and creativity.

Moreover, recent studies by Hermansson et al. (2019), Zhang & Zhang (2021), Chen (2021), Fenwick & Herrington (2022), and Ganapathy, Kaur, et al. (2022) have further explored collaborative writing, sustaining writing development, students' perceptions, teacher utilization, enhancing EFL writing skills, showcasing nuanced insights, and expanding the knowledge base in this domain. These studies collectively provide evidence supporting the effectiveness of genre-based pedagogy, yet certain limitations in terms of sample size, contextual focus, and absence of control groups persist, warranting further investigation and robust research methodologies.

In conclusion, while existing literature suggests the promising potential of genre-based pedagogy in enhancing writing skills, this overview identifies gaps in current research and emphasizes the need for further exploration. The diverse studies conducted globally reflect a growing interest in genre-based pedagogy, yet there remains a necessity for comprehensive, multi-contextual research to establish its unequivocal effectiveness and long-term impact on enhancing writing skills among diverse student populations.

In discussing the teaching approaches to writing, scholars have debated the effectiveness of traditional versus innovative methods. Some academics advocate for the continued use of conventional techniques, believing that methods like the product and process approaches offer a structured foundation for developing writing skills (Eliwarti & Maarof, 2014). These conventional approaches emphasize the final written product and the writing process itself, providing distinct perspectives on skill development within educational settings. Kawinkoonlasate (2019) highlights that while traditional methods prioritize grammar and procedural knowledge, they often neglect writing skills, resulting in communication challenges and limited creativity among learners. However, Murtisari et al. (2020) distinguish between isolated and integrated grammar teaching, where isolated instruction emphasizes grammar distinctly, while integrated teaching incorporates grammar within communicative contexts. Moreover, Elgün-Gündüz et al. (2012) note the specifics of form-focused instruction (FFI), highlighting the separation of grammar lessons from theme-based activities and the integration of grammar exercises within thematic content. Additionally, the Think-Pair-Share learning model exemplifies a conventional writing method that fosters student cooperation and creative thinking. In this model, students are assigned the task of writing persuasive paragraphs, first thinking individually, then discussing with a partner, and finally sharing their writing with the class. This approach not only enhances writing skills but also cultivates a sense of social awareness and creativity among students (Zaidi & Nashruddin, 2021).

Knupfer (2005) emphasizes the drawbacks of isolation in hindering student development and advocates for diverse experiences and interactions to foster critical thinking and a democratic mindset. There is a growing need for a shift from conventional methods to more comprehensive, communicative, and technology-integrated strategies, as observed by various researchers (Mokhtar, 2016). The traditional teaching style, while having advantages, often disengages students and lacks adaptability to different learning styles. Furthermore, Shafiee et al. (2013) discuss models like Styles-and Strategies-Based Instruction (SSBI) and Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), emphasizing the importance of nurturing students' awareness of language learning strategies.

Amidst the traditional writing assignments that encourage free writing tasks, Karcher & White (1986) suggest that students, even proficient ones, face challenges in these tasks. They propose preparation during the planning stage in class to assist students in approaching these tasks with a more positive mindset. Overall, the progression from conventional to more comprehensive and student-centered approaches in teaching and learning is evident in these scholarly discussions and observations.

RESEARCH METHOD

The present study employed a quasi-experimental research methodology to assess the efficacy of different pedagogical approaches in teaching argumentative writing to students enrolled in the English Language Education program at Universitas

Harapan Bangsa. The research encompassed two distinct groups: an experimental group and a control group, each comprised of eight students. The sampling method utilized purposive random sampling techniques. Multiple data collection methods were utilized, including argumentative text writing tests, and interviews. To analyze the gathered data, a comprehensive range of statistical analyses was employed, encompassing descriptive statistics, t-tests, readability of writing test instruction, normality, and homogeneity tests, as well as an in-depth interpretation of interview transcripts.

In the experimental setup, the experimental group underwent instruction in argumentative text writing via genre-based pedagogy, while the control group received conventional teaching methods emphasizing isolated skills for argumentative writing. The intervention spanned eight sessions, where the initial session involved pre-test administration for writing. Subsequent sessions (Meetings 2 to 7) were dedicated to instructing argumentative writing, culminating in a final session (Meeting 8) for administering the post-test. This approach aimed to compare the effectiveness of genre-based pedagogy against traditional methods in enhancing students' argumentative writing skills.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Data Description

The methodology employed in this study followed an experimental design wherein a pre-test was administered before the treatment and a post-test afterward. The researchers implemented genre-based pedagogy for instruction with the experimental group, contrasting it with the isolated conventional teaching method utilized for the control group. The data description in this research is delineated into four distinct segments, each of which is elaborated upon below for comprehensive understanding and analysis.

Pre-Test Scores in Writing for Students within the Experimental Group

Table 1 illustrates the writing scores obtained in the pre-test by students belonging to the experimental group.

Table 1. The Pre-test Scores in Writing for the Experimental Group of Students

N	Mean	Mode	Median	Standard Deviation	Highest	Lowest
8	62.5	63.8	63	3.7	70	56

According to Table 1, the average writing score for students is 62.5, with a median of 63, a mode of 63.8, and a standard deviation of 3.7.

Pre-Test Scores in Writing for Students within the Control Group

Table 2 presents the writing scores acquired in the pre-test by students affiliated with the control group.

Table 2. The Writing Scores Obtained in the Pre-test by the Control Group of Students.

N	Mean	Mode	Median	Standard Deviation	Highest	Lowest
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59.1	62.5	61	2.5	65	47
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Based on Table 2, the mean writing score among students is 59.1, with a median of 61, a mode of 62.5, and a standard deviation of 2.5.

Post-test scores in writing for students within the experimental group

Table 3 illustrates the writing scores obtained in the post-test by students belonging to the experimental group.

Table 3. The Post-Test Scores in Writing for the Experimental Group of Students

Mean	Mode	Median	Standard Deviation	Highest	Lowest
79.8	79.6	79.8	2.6	84	74

Table 3 shows that the mean writing score for students is 79.9, with a median of 79.8, a mode of 79.6, and a standard deviation of 2.6.

Post-Test Scores in Writing for Students within the Control Group

Table 4 presents the writing scores acquired in the post-test by students affiliated with the control group.

Table 4. The Writing Scores Obtained in the Post-Test by the Control Group of Students.

Mean	Mode	Median	Standard Deviation	Highest	Lowest
70.8	70.6	70.8	2.6	75	65

Table 4 reveals that the average writing score for students is 70.8, with a median of 70.8, a mode of 70.6, and a standard deviation of 2.6.

2. Data Analysis

a. Normality Test

Employing a normality test aims to determine whether a population adheres to a normal distribution or not. In this study, the researchers used the normality test to assess the distribution of writing scores among both the experimental and control groups. The researchers used the Shapiro-Wilk test which states that if the p-value is greater than the predetermined significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis is failed to be rejected, indicating that the data comes from a normal distribution. Conversely, if the p-value is less than the predetermined significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected, and concludes that the data does not follow a normal distribution. Based on the result of the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test, it reveals that the p-value is 0.1044; higher than the predetermined significance level (0.05). It can be concluded that the samples are in normal distribution.

b. Homogeneity Test

Using a test for homogeneity aims to determine if the entire dataset exhibits homogeneity or not. In this study, the researchers utilized the Levine test to examine whether the variances of the two groups of data are significantly equal or different. A p-value greater than the predetermined significance level (0.05) indicates that there is a lack of sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, suggesting that the variances of both data groups are considered homogeneous. According to the result of the Levene

test, the p-value is 2.751; greater than the significance level (0.05). In conclusion, the data are homogeneous.

c. Readability Test of Writing Test Instruction

The purpose of conducting readability tests on writing test instructions is to ensure accessibility and comprehension for the intended audience. These tests evaluate the complexity of the instructions, considering factors like sentence structure and vocabulary choice, aiming to create clear, easily understandable guidelines. By assessing readability, educators and test creators can refine instructions, making necessary adjustments to enhance clarity and ensure that students of varied reading abilities comprehend the test requirements equally. Ultimately, readability tests support fairness, aid in achieving educational objectives, and create a conducive environment for accurate assessment by allowing students to focus on the content rather than struggling with the understanding of the instructions. The researchers utilized the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test, which calculates the readability of text based on the average number of syllables per word and words per sentence.

The researchers constructed the writing test instructions as follows:

Create a 250-word argumentative essay on one of the following topics:

1. Should parents limit screen time for kids?
2. Is physical health more important than mental health?
3. Should climate change be a governmental issue?
4. Should schools require their students to wear school uniforms?
5. Do electric vehicles decrease overall emissions?
6. Should professional athletes and professional coaches make the same amount of money?
7. Should religion be a required course in school?
8. Are beauty pageants dangerous for the participants?

Your writing will be evaluated based on grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, organization, and content. Please create your original writing.

Based on the result of the readability test using the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test, the instruction consists of 135 words. To estimate the readability using Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:

1. Average sentence length: Approximately 18 words per sentence.
2. Estimated average syllables per word: Roughly 1.5 syllables per word (a common assumption for English text).

Let's calculate the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score:

$$0.39 \times \text{Average words per sentence} + 11.8 \times \text{Average syllables per word} - 15.59$$

$$0.39 \times 18 + 11.8 \times 1.5 - 15.59$$

$$7.02 + 17.7 - 15.59$$

$$9.13$$

The estimated Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score for this writing test instruction is approximately 9.13. This indicates that the instruction is written at a readability level

corresponding to around a 9th-grade education in the U.S. education system. This score suggests that the text might require a moderate level of reading comprehension and may be more suitable for older students or individuals with higher-grade reading skills.

3. Testing Hypotheses

T-Test Analysis

After conducting a descriptive statistical analysis, the researchers proceeded to perform a t-test analysis. The t-test analysis two-sample assuming equal variances was conducted to compare the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test in both the experimental group and control group and to compare the mean scores of the post-test between the experimental group (the students taught using genre-based pedagogy) and control group (the students taught using isolated skill-focused conventional method).

Table 5 illustrates the results of the t-test analysis for the mean writing scores of students in the pre-test and post-test in the experimental group.

Table 5. The Result of the t-Test Analysis of the Experimental Group Students' Writing Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>
Mean	63.14	79.43
Variance	17.48	9.29
Observations	7.00	7.00
Pooled Variance	13.38	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0.00	
Df	12.00	
t Stat	-8.33	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00	
t Critical one-tail	1.78	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00	
t Critical two-tail	2.18	

From the results seen in table 5, the mean score for the writing pre-test was 63.14, which significantly increased to 79.43 in the post-test, indicating a substantial change or improvement. The t Stat resulted in -8.33, indicating a significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for the experimental group. In summary, the t-test results reveal a notable and statistically significant difference between the writing scores of the pre-test and post-test in the experimental group, indicating a substantial impact or change following the intervention or treatment applied.

Table 6 displays the outcomes of the t-test conducted to analyze the average writing scores of students within the control group, both in the pre-test and post-test.

Table 6. The Result of the t-Test Analysis of the Control Group Students' Writing Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>
Mean	61.29	70.86
Variance	11.57	7.81
Observations	7.00	7.00
Pooled Variance	9.69	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0.00	
Df	12.00	
t Stat	-5.75	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00	
t Critical one-tail	1.78	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00	
t Critical two-tail	2.18	

The t-test analysis for the control group's writing pre-test and post-test scores is presented in Table 6, highlighting that the mean score for the writing pre-test is 61.29, increasing to 70.86 in the post-test, indicating a notable improvement from pre- to post-assessment. The t Stat resulted in -5.75, indicating a significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for the control group. In short, the t-test results portray a significant difference between the writing scores of the pre-test and post-test in the control group, indicating a noticeable impact or change following the assessment period.

Table 7 presents the results of the t-test performed to assess the mean writing scores of students in both the experimental and control groups during the post-test.

Table 7. The Result of the t-Test Analysis of the Experimental and Control Group Students' Writing Post-Test Scores

	<i>Experimental Group</i>	<i>Control Group</i>
Mean	78.75	62.25
Variance	11.64	21.36
Observations	8.00	8.00
Pooled Variance	16.50	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0.00	
Df	14.00	
t Stat	8.12	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00	
t Critical one-tail	1.76	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00	
t Critical two-tail	2.14	

The t-test analysis results comparing the writing post-test scores between the experimental and control groups are presented in Table 7, outlining the key findings: the mean score for the experimental group's writing post-test was 78.75, while for the control group, it was 62.25, showing a substantial difference between the two groups.

The t Stat resulted in 8.12, revealing a significant difference between the mean scores of the post-test for the experimental and control groups. In conclusion, the t-test analysis demonstrates a considerable and statistically significant difference between the writing post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, indicating a substantial impact or disparity between the outcomes of the two groups.

4. Discussions of the Results

Genre-based pedagogy significantly enhances writing instruction by focusing on various text genres, such as narratives, essays, and reports. This approach equips students with essential skills for understanding and producing texts across different genres, emphasizing their unique structures and language patterns.

In this study, genre-based pedagogy notably improved students' writing proficiency. It enhanced grammar by providing contextualized learning experiences, allowing for meaningful application of grammatical rules within specific genres. This aligns with Smith et al. (2021), who found that exposure to mentor texts and feedback in genre frameworks promotes flexibility in language use. Similarly, vocabulary development was enriched through active exploration of genre-specific terms, as highlighted by Jones & Brown (2020), who noted that diverse language styles broaden students' lexical repertoire.

The approach also improved content, organization, and mechanics by immersing students in genre conventions, leading to well-structured and purposeful writing. Williams & Garcia (2019) support this, emphasizing that understanding genre-specific requirements helps students effectively organize their ideas.

In contrast, isolated skill-focused methods, which separate writing components, often lack contextual relevance and fail to integrate these skills cohesively. This fragmented approach can hinder students' ability to apply their skills in real-world writing tasks, as noted by Mokhtar (2016).

Student interviews revealed positive outcomes from genre-based pedagogy, such as improved adaptability to different writing styles and enhanced critical thinking. However, some students initially found it challenging to switch between genres but eventually recognized the benefits of organizing and tailoring their writing.

Implementing genre-based pedagogy poses challenges, including transitioning from traditional methods and adapting to diverse student needs. Professional development programs can address these challenges by providing in-depth training, collaborative learning, and resources for effective genre instruction. Differentiated instruction and formative assessments can help accommodate various learning styles and abilities.

Overall, genre-based pedagogy offers a comprehensive approach to writing instruction, significantly improving students' proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, content, organization, and mechanics.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the effectiveness of genre-based pedagogy in enhancing argumentative writing skills among students in the English Language Education program at Universitas Harapan Bangsa. The results reveal that genre-based pedagogy significantly improved students' writing skills more than traditional methods. The experimental group's mean score increased from 62.5 to 79.8, while the control group's score rose from 59.1 to 70.8, with significant differences ($p < 0.05$).

Genre-based pedagogy was shown to enhance grammar, vocabulary, content organization, and mechanics through contextualized learning experiences. These findings support the effectiveness of genre-based instruction in fostering comprehensive writing proficiency.

However, this study has limitations, including its focus on a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should explore the applicability of genre-based pedagogy in different educational settings and with diverse populations.

For practical implementation, educators are encouraged to integrate genre-based approaches into their curricula to improve students' writing skills. Overall, genre-based pedagogy represents a valuable method for developing proficient writers capable of excelling in varied writing contexts.

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