# IMPLEMENTING A GENRE-BASED APPROACH IN TEACHING ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING TO THIRD-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS AT DONG NAI UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

*This study is an additional endeavor to re-emphasize the impact of the systemic functional linguistic genre-based approach (SFL GBA) on teaching English argumentative genres to the third-year English majors, batch 11, at Dong Nai University's faculty of foreign languages, both in terms of their improved written performances and positive perceptions towards the teaching-learning cycle (TLC). Based on the conceptual framework by Hammond and her colleagues (1992), an experimental study of academic argumentative writing was carried out at a regular class hour from January 8th, 2024, to April 8th, 2024, with 45 English majors, and then these data were analyzed and interpreted in terms of linguistic and content analysis. The findings of this study indicated that student participants gained control of the key features of the argumentative genres in terms of social purposes, linguistic features, and schematic structure and showed their positive attitudes towards the use of the TLC in learning argumentative genres. On the basis of the findings, some further recommendations for future studies were also suggested.*

*Keywords: Systemtic functional linguistics (SFL), genre-based approach (GBA), the teaching-learning cycle (TLC), argumentative genres, EFL, ESL*

## 1. Introduction

The importance of English academic argumentative writing skills has long been emphasized in western cultures (Halliday, 1994; Martin, 1985). Martin (1985, p. 51) argued that "the most prestigious users of languages become writers, not speakers." This implies that EFL and ESL learners should become proficient writers to participate effectively in academic and occupational settings where writing skills are required for their survival.

In Vietnamese tertiary context, the ability to write argumentatively has become more urgent than ever before. This skill is compulsory in the language curriculum of all English majors. Students are instructed to write academic essays based on topics of argumentation, discussion, and problem-solving. This is considered necessary for English majors to pass one of the standardized international exams, such as IELTS and/or C1 in CEFR equivalent or the three-level Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP) in Vietnam. In addition, being able to write academic essays proficiently is a prerequisite for postgraduate courses.

However, academic argumentative writing skills are generally considered to be extremely difficult for EFL and ESL learners (Richards, 1990). Richards & Renandya (2002) asserted that students in non-native-speaking countries often encounter problems in writing in terms of generating, organizing, and putting the ideas into readable texts. As for Vietnamese learners of English, they even face more challenges in writing. They include their low-quality writing

background, low motivation (Pham & Bui, 2021), and approaches to teaching writing, student-teacher's role, cultural impact, and testing and assessment on learners' EFL writing (Luu, 2011; Trinh & Nguyen, 2014).

In terms of writing approaches, two prominent approaches currently applied in EFL writing classes, including Vietnam, are the product-based approach and the process-based approach. While the former focuses heavily on coherent, error-free texts, the latter concentrates on the process of composing the text through several stages, such as planning, writing, drafting, and redrafting. These approaches, however, have drawn a lot of criticism from the researchers (Badger, 2000; Hyland, 2002). Generally, they maintained that these writing approaches do not better prepare the learners for writing communicative purposes in the real world because, according to Hyland, "we write something to achieve some purposes" (Hyland, 2003, p. 18). As such, factors such as context, communicative and social purposes, audiences, lexico-grammar, and text structure must be taken into account in the essay-composing process.

Second, teachers' and students' role in the Vietnamese university writing classes is also problematic. In writing classes, students play a relatively passive role as compared to teachers, who are the sole transmitters of knowledge. There is no room for student-teacher interaction (Truong, 2011). In other words, students are completely dependent on the teachers for language sources (Nunan, 1999). As exam-oriented purposes and language-based writing assessment are still heavily emphasized in Vietnamese tertiary education, grammatical accuracy must be prioritized, while language function,

context, and the messages of the text genres conveyed can be undermined or left forgotten.

Finally, the cross-cultural differences may be a barrier for students learning to write English argumentative essays (Ha, 2001). These studies have pointed out that students from Asian cultures often find it uncomfortable to express their direct opinions in the argumentative essays because of the Confucius ideology (Pham, 2011). Ha's (2001) study, for example, discovered that four Vietnamese postgraduate students at various universities in Melbourne, Australia, were unable to articulate/formulate their thesis statement at the outset of their writings. The data from her interviews revealed that these participants often wrote their thesis statement indirectly, which is typical of their Eastern culture, with the aim to avoid critiquing others, especially those who hold a higher social strata than they do.

In recent years, genre-based instruction for teaching writing has gained traction and has been applied widely both in Australia and globally. This approach focuses both on form and meaning, emphasizing the importance of exploring the context of a piece of language in action (Halliday, 1994).

Derived from the theory of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), this approach maintained that language is a resource for making meaning and how language is involved in the construction of meaning (Derewianka, 1990). Genre is a tool to perform a particular social function, and function is realized through writing conventions for focused genres in terms of lexico-grammar and text structure. Writing in this way can meet both the

expectations of plural readers in academic and occupational settings and in a broader language community in terms of social purposes, linguistic features, and schematic structure.

A genre-based approach (GBA) is chosen for this study in the hope of helping third-year English majors at Dong Nai University (DnU) overcome difficulties in learning argumentative essays and simultaneously create positive changes in their perceptions towards learning writing in general and academic argumentative essays in particular. However, before claiming the effectiveness of this approach in academic writing pedagogy, it is necessary to investigate it seriously and carefully in an actual classroom setting through "convincing research and theoretical evidence, preferably before its wholesale introduction" (Freedman, 1993, p. 22).

This present study, therefore, attempts to find the answers to the two following research questions:

1. To what extent can students gain better control of key features of argumentative genres after their exposure to the GBA?

2. What are students' overall perceptions towards the four main stages of the teaching-learning cycle?

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Theoretical framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and SFL Genre pedagogy

The central concept of the SFL is that language is functional and serves three general social functions: to talk about one's experience of the world, to interact with other people, and to organize messages (Halliday, 1994). They are functionally referred to as ideational, interpersonal, and textual, respectively

(Halliday, 1994). Concretely, every language must be understood in context. Diverse text genres are determined by diverse situations, which also convey different meanings. According to SFL, there are two degrees of context that affect the text genres: context of situation (register) and context of culture (genre).

"Context of situation refers to the environment, time, and place, etc., in which the discourse occurs, and also the relationship between the participants" (Song, 2010, p. 877). It determines the formality of language. Its three factors, field (subject area or topic), tenor (relationship between participants), and mode (channel of communication), closely align with the three previously indicated metafunctions. The context of culture, on the other hand, refers to the purposes or social function, attitudes, values, and shared experiences of people living in a particular culture, as well as culture-specific expectations, which are "ways of getting things done." (Paltridge, 2002b, p. 55). As genre is ingrained in the context of culture, learning about genre is to learn about the culture. To put it differently, context of culture is genre, while context of situation pays more attention to lexico-grammar and schematic structure of the text-genre that help function of the required text-genres realized. According to traditional writing perspectives, schematic structure refers to three main parts of an essay in terms of introduction, body developments, and conclusion (Truong, 2011; Luu, 2011).

There are numerous definitions of genres. Derewianka & Hammond (2001), for example, defined genres as predictable and recurring patterns of everday, academic, and literary texts occurring within a particular context. Learning about genres, therefore, is a

fundamental part of language development, and it is our ability to predict the compositional structure and length of genres that enables us to communicate (Bakhtin & White, 2000).

Based on the primary social purposes of the text genre, the SFL Australian genre tradition classified genres into six major school genres (Derewianka, 1990). They include narratives, recounts, information reports, instructions, explanations, and expository texts. The expository texts are of particular interest to this present study because they are commonly taught in tertiary education, where English majors are expected to write essays in their academic classes in order to get ready for standardized international exams like IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, CEFR, VSTEP, and others. Additionally, it also provides a basis for English-majored undergraduates to continue with their post-graduate "Research Methodology Module."

### 2.2. The Teaching-learning cycle (TLC)

The two most important aspects of genre pedagogy are scaffolded learning theory, initiated by Vygotsky (1978), and explicit instruction of writing conventions of a focused genre through a cycle known as the teching-learning cycle (TLC).

Firstly, Vygotskian social-cultural theory views writing as a social activity necessitating dynamic interaction between teachers and learners as well as between peers throughout the entire text-composing process. Teacher, at the beginning, acting as an expert guides novice students through each writing stage so that, at the end of the writing process, they can confidently produce a similar text genre approximating the genre under focus. The writing activities in this mode incorporate many writing steps, such as researching, analyzing the sample texts, joint construction of text, and independent construction of text through exchanging and collaborating activities with their peers in pairs and groups and with teachers to negotiate the meanings to achieve new knowledge for their later independent production of text. "Writing in this way, it is believed, can remove the feeling of isolation that bothers many learners when writing and, at the same time, help student writers have positive reinforcements about their knowledge of linguistics, content, and ideas in the composing of texts." (Truong, 2011, p. 15).

Secondly, explicit instruction of genre is concretized through the TLC to help student writers realize function, grammar of linguistic choices, text structure, and the register (field, tenor, and mode) of the focused genre. As emphasized by Truong (2011, p. 16), "students cannot produce a particular text type successfully if they are not taught explicitly about the linguistic conventions of that text type with respect to language features and schematic structure."

There have been many models of TLC in the literature so far. The first mode proposed by Callahagan & Rothery (1988, p. 39) and later elaborated by Cope & Kalantzis (1993, p. 10) incorporates writing instruction through three main stages: modeling of text, joint negotiation of text, and independent construction of text. Later on, many other versions of TLC were added. Concretely, there are two other versions: the former incorporates four stages of the TLC: preparing or building knowledge of the field, modeling of the text, joint construction of the text, and independent construction of text (Hammond & her colleagues, 1992); the latter incorporates

five stages: building knowledge of the field, modeling of text, joint construction of text, independent construction of text, and linking related text (Feez & Joyce, 2002). These two new versions are extremely important for EFL students who are unfamiliar with western genres. So they need further assistance in terms of preparing and building knowledge of the field as well as comparing other genres to realize the similarities and differences among them. This study adapted the four stages of Hammond & her colleagues's (1992) TLC to convenience the participants of this study. The four stages of the TLC are further elaborated below.

The first stage, buiding knowledge of the field, aims to activate students' prior knowledge of their understanding of the genre through activities such as "brainstorming, watching films, note-taking, oral presentation, and others" to realize the context of situation and context of culture of the focused genre (Kongpetch, 2006, p. 12).

The second stage, modeling of text, concerns teacher's demonstration of how social function, lexicogrammar, and text structure are realized in the sample text. This can be done through a series of guided questions.

• Concerning context, purposes, and audiences of the focused genre, the guided questions can be: "*What is the text about?, How do you know?, Who wrote it?, Why did he/she write it?, Where do you think you would find the text like this one?*" (Kongpetch, 2006, p. 12).

• Concerning the schematic structure of the text, the guided questions can be: "*What did the writer do first, next, and last?, What does the first sentence of the first/ second/ third paragraph give*

*information about*?" (Kongpetch, 2006, p. 12).

• Concerning the analysis of the lexicogrammar of the text genre, student writers will be explained in terms of salient linguistic features (i.e., vocabulary and grammar focus) that are compulsory for the focused genre.

The third stage, joint construction of text, involves teachers and students jointly composing another genre topic that approximates the text genre in the modeling of text in terms of linguistic features and schematic structure. In this stage, the teacher writes down ideas contributed by their students on the board, drawing their attention towards the move-step structure and lexico-grammar manifested in the text genre.

The final stage, independent construction of text, involves student writers' independent production of a similar text genre. During this stage, the teacher does not intervene in the students' writing activities and gives control to the students. To produce a successful similar text genre, student writers are required to undergo many steps, such as "*brainstorming, researching information, writing many drafts, refining their products, conferencing with their peers and their teachers, editing, and finally producing a text of the genre under study.*" (Truong, 2011, p. 23).

### 2.3. Argumentative genre

It is crucial for students to master the schematic structure of the argumentative genre in terms of thesis statement or preview, argument, counterargument and refutation, and restatement (Martin & Rothery, 1980). In the introduction, the writer provides background information on debating issues and then ends his or her introduction with a direct thesis statement. Alternatively, he or she can

outline a plan for the essay or preview the main ideas that shadow the arguments that follow. In body developments, the writer presents his or her arguments through various body paragraphs. Each argument is then supported by concrete, persuasive, objective, and reliable evidence such as facts, statistical figures, examples, and so on. It should also be noted that writing is a social interaction; therefore, the writer needs to take readers' viewpoints into account. That is why he or she must anticipate and acknowledge readers' counterarguments before rebutting them to protect his or her previously mentioned thesis statement. In the conclusion, the writer "reiterates his or her position on the subject of debate to persuade the readers to change their thoughts on the issue." (Dinh, 2018, p. 60) and even included a concluding thought for readers to ponder.

Regarding the linguistic resources, the student writer should know how to use the lexicogrammar flexibly in terms of generic participants, a variety of processes, nominalization, technical terms, tenses, passive voices, casual conjunctions, and so on (Martin & Peters, 1985) that are required of this genre.

## 2.4. The previous studies of GBA to teaching writing in EFL context

Various studies have been conducted in EFL settings concerning the effectiveness of SFL GBA on the improvement of the student participants' writing skills as well as their perceptions towards the use of this approach in learning writing skills. The findings from these previous studies, on the whole, indicated that students learned writing better thanks to the assistance of GBA, and they also expressed their positive attitudes towards it (Kongpetch, 2003; Luu, 2011; Truong, 2011; Trinh & Nguyen, 2014; Truong, 2017; Dinh, 2018; Pham & Bui, 2021).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

This present study took place in an academic writing class in three months (from January 8th, 2024, to April 8th, 2024), with 45 third-year English majors (batch 11, DnU) participating in learning the argumentative genres based on GBA. The researcher acted as the teacher because he was the only lecturer in DnU's English department who had received training in SFL GBA.

The two core coursebooks used for teaching the argumentative genres in this present study were "Great Essay 4", written by Keith S. Folse, Elena Vestri Solomon, and April Muchmore-Vokoun and published by Heinle Cengage Learning in 2023, and "Writing Academic English" by Oshima & Hogue, published by Longman in 2006. They aim at teaching writing students to write academic essays such as cause-and-effect essays, compare/contrast essays, argumentative essays, discussion essays, problem-solution essays, and so on.

### 3.2. Procedures

A carefully selected essay topic is a decisive factor for the successful implementation of GBA. Hence, the chosen topics should not be beyond students' understanding in terms of their level of confidence and motivation, prior knowledge, linguistic and cultural knowledge, and the familiarity of the genre topics under the study (Kongpetch, 2003; Nunan, 1990). In this study, three chosen argumentative essay topics included "The Right to Die" (for preparing and building knowledge of the field and modeling of the text phase), "Students' part-time job" (for joint construction of the text phase), and

"School Uniform" (for independent construction of the text phase). The first topic might be of interest to student participants because it refers to a human right (whether or not terminally ill patients should be allowed to die if it is his or her wish). The second topic is a social issue because it touches university students' lives and work. Finally, the uniform topic is chosen for students' independent writing phase because it concerns the individual rights of each student in voicing their opinions of proper dressing codes when attending classes at the university.

### 3.3. Research methods

The two main approaches in this present study were linguistic analysis and content analysis. The former aimed at 45 student essays written on the same topic, "**Should school uniform policy be made mandatory for university students**?" and the latter was on students' oral responses in the focused group interview at the end of the study to seek their opinions on the use of the TLC in teaching and learning writing.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

*Linguistic analysis of students' essays* focused on the three evaluative criteria of the argumentative genres (Martin & Rothery, 1980; Martin, 1985).

o Students' control of the social purposes of argumentative genres: To argue for or against a controversial issue.

o Students' control of the schematic structure of argumentative genres. These include the thesis statement or preview, arguments and supporting evidences, counterarguments and refutations, and conclusion.

o Students' control of the key linguistic features of the argumentative genre. These include focusing on the generalized participants, a variety of process types (i.e., material process, relational process, mental process, verbal process, existential process, saying process, etc.); circumstantial elements; and the present tenses of verbs, passives; technical terms, casual conjunctions, etc.

*Content Analysis of the students' open-ended interview questions*

The focused group interview aimed at eliciting student participants' opinions on the four main stages of the TLC in the literature review. The purpose is to give participants abundant opportunities to express their viewpoints on issues regarding the four main stages of the TLC. In this study, student participants' responses to the interview questions were processed in the form of qualitative data by identifying and summarizing the key contents, ideas, and/or thematic contents provided by the student participants.

### 4. Results and discussions

### 4.1. Results

#### 4.1.1. Linguistic analyses of argumentative essays

#### 4.1.1.1. The initial analysis of 45 argumentative essays

**Table 1:** *A summary of the key features of 45 argumentative essays*

| Essays (1-45) | Social purposes | Schematic structure | | | | Linguistic features | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Thesis | Arguments | Counter-argument | Conclusion | Generalized Participants | Process Types | Present-tense of Verbs | Passive voice | Technical terms | Transitional devices | Circumstantial adverbs |
| No | 45 | 40 | 38 | 40 | 40 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 | 45 |
| % | 100% | 88.9% | 84.4% | 88.9% | 88.9% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table 1 indicates students' success in gaining control of key features of the argumentative essays. Specifically, they incorporated all stages of the schematic structure in their argumentative essays: the thesis statement (**88.9%**), arguments followed by reliable and persuasive supporting evidence (**84.4%**), counterarguments and rebuttals (**88.9%**), and conclusion (**88.9%**). Most notably, 100 percent of the students demonstrated their competency in conveying linguistic aspects successfully throughout the move-step framework of their essays. All things considered, it is clear that students were able to fully comprehend the instructed argumentative essays.

*4.1.1.2. Detailed analysis of one selected Argumentative essay*

**Table 2:** *A summary of the key features of one selected argumentative essay*

| Stages | *An original essay written by one male student participant* |
|---|---|
| **Title** | **SCHOOL UNIFORMS** |
| **General Statement & Thesis/preview** | Education **is** the issue *that **has been concerned** most in every country all over the world*. It **is *widely*** known *that the government **must take care of** many fields related to education*. One of these **is** the school uniform policy. It **is** the problem *that **causes** many debates nowadays*. Some people **agreed** *with the implementation of the school uniform policy on students, whereas others **disagreed with this or expressed their reservations towards the success and feasibility of this policy***. Supporters of school uniforms **believe** that students will benefit *a lot if school uniforms are introduced into the school context*. **In my opinion**, *school uniforms **can** greatly **benefit** the students*. Below **are** the three main reasons ***to demonstrate*** my thought. |
| **Argument Stages** **Argument 1** | **First**, uniforms **can make** students *equal on an economic level*. It **is** an obvious fact *that many students **come** from different backgrounds*; **however**, *inside the walls of school, with uniforms*, no one **can tell** *whether a student **comes** from a poor family or a rich family as all students wear the same clothes*. This **can reduce** embarrassment, **raise** self-consciousness, and **minimize** bullying or teasing among peers. **Besides**, it **can** *also* e**ncourage** students *to build up friendships based on personality instead of stylish clothes*. It **is** easy *to **see** that applying uniforms **is** a good choice*. |
| **Argument 2** | **Second**, school uniforms **may have** an impact *on crime prevention. When all students wear the same uniform*, there **will be** no place *for* the gang members to **tease** or **coerce** them *into doing the bad things.* The reality **show** that many gang members *often* **use** their particular types of clothes *to **show** their membership to a certain gang*. **However**, *when every student **wears** the same dress code*, gang members **will not be able** *to **establish** a rivalry at school*. **Thus**, conflicts among |

| Stages | An original essay written by one male student participant |
|---|---|
| **Argument 3** | gangs will be lessened. **As a result**, school violence can be eliminated. **Moreover**, uniforms **can reduce** violence *because students **should act** like the way they **dress**.* **Last but not least**, students **will have** more time *for studying if they **wear** school uniforms. With uniforms*, they **do not have to spend** time **wondering** *what to **wear** before **going to school** or how to **make** their clothes more fashionable*. **In addition**, students **can avoid** the pressure of **catching up with** the latest fashion *every day*. **Hence**, they **can devote** more time to **getting** a good education. Studies **have shown** *that forty-four percent of the families in which the children **wear** uniforms **believe** that uniforms **keep** their children more focused on schools.* |
| **Counterargument & Refutation** | Other people **may say** that *uniforms **cannot** entirely **prevent** crime or school violence*. **There may be** some truths in it. **However**, we **should look at** the bright side of the picture. The benefits *that students **can get** from school uniforms* **outweigh** their disadvantages. Crime and school violence **are** the problems *that we **cannot change** immediately*. It **takes** a long time. **Therefore**, we **should do** it step by step, **and** the starting point **is** with **uniforms.** |
| **Conclusion & Final Thought** | **All in all**, it **is** very useful for students to **wear** uniforms. It **helps to eliminate** socio-economical barriers in class **and make** school safer, as well as **support** more learning time for students. I **think** all schools **should implement** school uniform policy ***so that** we **can take** all its advantages*. **Thus**, our education **will be getting** better and better. |

(Note: The symbols used in this essay content are coded as follows: **Processes** are in **bold;** participants are underlined; circumstantial elements are italics, passives are in box, transitional devices are in box and in bold.)

- *Control of the schematic structure*

This student's essay represented a successful instance of the argumentative genre (See table 2 for more details). This essay started with a thesis statement or preview, which was followed by a series of arguments supported by persuasive and reliable evidence, counterarguments followed by rebuttals, and ended with a conclusion. In the first paragraph, the thesis statement was clearly established, leaving the readers with no doubts as to the purpose of the text, i.e., to persuade them about the benefits of the school uniform policy on students. The last sentence in the first paragraph functioned as a preview, foreshadowing the subsequent arguments to be presented in support of the issues proposed in the thesis statement. This enabled the readers to predict that the arguments will be concerned with the student writer's approval of the school uniform policy in terms of making students equal on economic terms (body paragraph 1), preventing crime rates (body paragraph 2), and saving time (body paragraph 3).

Specifically, most arguments focused on the respective issues of the significance of the implementation of school uniform policy on students. Argument 1 is about equal opportunities in economic terms. Argument 2 mentions crime prevention, and finally, argument 3 deals with the time-saving issue. In addition, this student also considered his opponents' counterarguments and then successfully defended his early-mentioned stance of preserving the school uniform policy for students. This counterargument and refutation function as the bridge of social interaction between the readers and the author of the argumentative genre. Indeed, each of his arguments in the developmental paragraphs (paragraphs 02–04) contained a topic sentence followed by a series of well-written supporting ideas through facts, examples, statistical figures, and in-depth research. Finally, he concluded his arguments by reaffirming his stance in the conclusion as well as indicating his final thoughts towards the school uniform for readers' consideration. All in all, this student succeeded in controlling the schematic structure of the argumentative genre.

**Table 3:** *Breakdown of the linguistic features from table 2*

| Stages | Material Process | Relational Process | Mental Process | Verbal Process | Present Tense | Circumstantial Elements | Transitionl devices | Passives | Total count |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Thesis | 7 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 1 | 3 | 37 |
| Argument 1 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 35 |
| Argument 2 | 17 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 41 |
| Argument 3 | 17 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 41 |
| Counter argument & refutation | 6 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 27 |
| Conclusion & Final thought | 8 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 22 |
| **Total count** | 59 | 19 | 6 | 5 | 49 | 33 | 19 | 5 | 195 |

• ***Control of the key linguistic features***

Analyses of the essay written by this student also revealed his awareness of the linguistic features typical of the argumentative genre (see table 2 & 3 for more details). He frequently used the present tenses to project his argument (total count: 49 times). He also sparsely used simple future tenses to forecast the positive effects of school uniforms if they become standardized norms for all universities in the future. Passive voices are also mostly utilized to condense the information (total count: 05 times). His choices of participants are mainly generic participants to justify his objective arguments. Consequently, they are more generalized, abstract, and impersonal, which is typical of argumentative genres. The majority of processes were material (total count: 59). Some other processes, such as relational, mental, and verbal processes (relational: 19 times; mental: 6 times; saying: 5 times), were also effectively made use of. He also used transitional devices (total count: 19) competently to make his text achieve coherence, cohesiveness, and unity. Finally, circumstantial elements of the cause-effect chain (total count: 33 times) were effectively deployed in this essay. All in all, his awareness of the linguistic

features was evident, which helped his text achieve its purposes successfully.

• *Tentative conclusion*

The initial analyses of the 45 essays, plus the detailed analysis of an essay by one male representative student above, indicated that all student participants have actually demonstrated a good understanding of key features of the argumentative genre. Indeed, they have displayed a sound understanding of the social function, linguistic features, and schematic structure of this genre. They began their argumentative essays with an adequately formed thesis statement, followed by a series of logical arguments, and concluded with a good conclusion. Moreover, they have displayed a good command over a wide range of linguistic features, as expected of this genre, in terms of the generalized participants, process types, present tenses of verbs, circumstantial elements, surface grammatical points, and etc. Overall, the improvement of students understanding of the salient features of the argumentative genre was evident throughout their whole texts.

*4.1.2. Content anlyses of the focused group interview*

**Table 4:** *Students' opinions towards four main stages of the TLC*

| Stages | Students' responses | Total Count |
|---|---|---|
| **Preparing and building knowledge of the field** | **Positiveness**: Incorporate reading comprehension skills and researching skills into the writing process; realize the importance of exploring factors such as context of situation and context of culture on text; raise collaborative skills; connect prior knowledge to the current knowledge of the field and Vietnamese current situations. | **40/45** |
| | **Negativeness**: Time-consuming; need to read exhaustive sources of data outside classroom setting. | **5/45** |
| **Modeling of text** | **Positiveness**: The deconstruction of a sample texts helps them realize function, lexico-grammar, and generic structure of the argumentative genre; help them know how to and what to write in each stage to achieve the social purpose of this genre in their later phase of writing. | **30/45** |
| | **Negativeness**: Seems to be tedious because they had to conform strictly to each stage of the argumentative essay; stifle their creativity; had to think about the compulsory linguistic features of this argumentative genre; it's like a recipe where they were required to follow rigidly to all language features to be accepted by the community of academic readers outside the the wall of the classroom. | **15/45** |

| Stages | Students' responses | Total Count |
|---|---|---|
| **Joint construction of text** | **Usefulness**: Working in groups and in pairs helped them realize writing is a social activity. They learnt much from their peers through shared experience. | **20/45** |
| | **Uselessness**: They had a feeling that teacher did everything for them. After asking them to spend over many writing activities, teacher rewrote the essays for them. They felt that what they did in the previous activities was useless. | **25/45** |
| **Independent construction of text** | **Drafting**: help improve writing skills in terms of content, organization, lexico-grammar, and surface grammatical aspects. | **45/45** |
| | **Peerfeedback**: Receive assistance in terms of ideas, contents, word choice, and salient grammatical aspects; helpful in terms of peers' pointing out mistakes, as well as suggestions for correction. | **45/45** |
| | **Teacher's feedback**: Really helpful; teacher not only pointed out the mistakes in terms of the sentence level but also in terms of the text level; make writing much easier with errors pointed out and explained. | **45/45** |
| | **Feedbacks towards peers' essays**: Having a chance to review salient linguistic features and schematic structure of the argumentative genre; know how to evaluate the success of the required argumentative genre. | **45/45** |

Almost all students in this present study (40/45) expressed their high satisfaction with the first stage of the TLC. From their viewpoints, this stage helped them realize the importance of incorporating reading comprehension skills and researching skills into their writing processes, especially the exploration process of situational context and the context of the culture in the texts. Other activities in this stage, such as discussion questions among pairs and groupwork, watching films, and reading a vast collection of reading materials related to the topics under discussion, also get students' attention. All of them shared their opinion that this was a useful activity to increase collaborative skills, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving skills, along with vocabulary enhancement. Most importantly, they could connect their prior knowledge to the current knowledge of the field. However, 5 out of 45 students said that it was a time-consuming practice because, in order to perform this stage well, they needed to research the topic in depth outside the classroom setting.

Like the first stage, the second stage of the TLC also received both favorable and unfavorable opinions from students. First of all, 30 out of 45 students agreed on the potential benefits of this stage. They opined that, by breaking down each stage of the argumentative essay, the teacher taught them to know "what to write and how to write" to achieve the social goal of each phase. Further, they also realized the concrete linguistic aspects typically found in argumentative essays. In the meantime, 15 students expressed their hesitations about this stage. This principally belonged to creative stifleness and rigidity. They posited that writing in this way put them under constant worry over move-step structure and required language input.

The third phase, joint construction of text, did not receive much agreement from the student participants. Only twenty of them expressed their satisfaction with it. They came to understand that writing was a collaborative activity achieved through shared experiences in pairs and groups. However, the other twenty-five of them expressed doubts over the practicality of this stage. They showed their disappointment when their essays were corrected and rewritten for them by the researcher. They wondered why they had to spend a lot of time discussing and contributing ideas in pairs and groups, which eventually proved useless. They felt that this phase was not particularly beneficial.

The last phase of the TLC received the total agreement of all student participants (45/45). This could be explained in light of the fact that, because they had spent over three previous stages of the TLC, they could be confident enough in producing their own texts that corresponded closely to the text genre taught. In concrete terms, 45 out of 45 student participants expressed their high satisfaction towards such activities as drafting and redrafting, peer feedback, teacher's feedback, and their very own feedback towards their friends' writing performance. To be more specific, in terms of drafting, students claimed that writing many drafts better refined their final argumentative writings in terms of content, text organization, linguistic features, and even the surface grammatical aspects. They said that their teacher and friends not only gave constructive comments at sentence levels but at discursive levels as well. Thanks to this, they confidently corrected their errors in the second draft, third draft, before refining the final written products. They also expressed their delight in being given the opportunity to give feedback on their peers' papers. What they learned from this activity is that people can learn from one another's mistakes and errors to avoid their own mistakes and/or errors in their later phases of writing.

## 4.2. Discussions

The results of this study claimed that GBA, with the four stages of the TLC, actually impacted the improvement of students' writing skills and attitudes. They were consistent with those of the previous studies (e.g., Kongpetch, 2003; Luu, 2011; Truong, 2011; Trinh & Nguyen, 2014; Truong, 2017; Dinh, 2018; Pham & Bui, 2021). Student participants realized function, linguistic features, and the generic structure of the targeted genre and wrote their own texts successfully, as well as their positive attitudes towards the four stages of the TLC. This success was partly due to the

researcher's explicit teaching of the TLC. Hammond et. al. (1992) asserted that "each of the four stages in the TLC has its own function in supporting learners in their writing." (cited in Trinh & Nguyen, 2014, p. 84). Although some activities in the TLC might not be warmly welcomed by the participants, it did not affect much the results of the study. These reservations chiefly came from students' inadequate understanding of each step of the TLC and their over-reliance on teachers' help in the writing process.

**5. Conclusion**

To this end, it could be concluded that genre pedagogy based on the four main stages of TLC had tremendously positive impacts on students, both in terms of writing quality and attitudes. However, in order to successfully implement GBA in writing classes, writing teachers should heed the following suggestions:

First of all, there should be an incorporation of many more well-written sample reading texts in the writing classes. This study helped the researcher realize that an expertly and well-selected sample of argumentative genres enabled his writing students to have a better understanding of the function, language features, and text structure of an argumentative genre, thereby successfully applying this knowledge to producing their own similar genre. For this reason, there is concrete evidence to believe that the same procedures could reap similar success. Second, explicit instructions for the four stages of the TLC must be stringently observed. As genre is embedded within a particular culture, students need instruction on how to achieve the stated goals of the genre through the lexico-grammar and generic structure of that genre. Last but not least, the choices of topics and genres should be taken into account in future writing classes. Christie (1984) noted that this is crucial to students' success in writing because, if the topic is of interest and relevant to their needs, they will not only be motivated to study it, but they will also be able to write their texts better.

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# ỨNG DỤNG PHƯƠNG PHÁP THỂ LOẠI VÀO DẠY VIẾT LUẬN TRANH LUẬN CHO SINH VIÊN NĂM BA CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC ĐỒNG NAI

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**TÓM TẮT**

*Nghiên cứu này là một nỗ lực nhằm tái khẳng định ấn tượng của phương pháp thể loại theo trường phái ngôn ngữ chức năng hệ thống vào dạy viết luận tranh luận cho sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh, năm 3, khóa 11, Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Trường Đại học Đồng Nai, về hai phương diện: bài luận viết luận được cải thiện và nhận thức tích cực của sinh viên về chu trình dạy và học viết. Dựa trên mô hình dạy viết của Hammond và các đồng nghiệp (1992), tác giả đã tiến hành nghiên cứu thực nghiệm về dạy viết thể văn tranh luận tại một lớp học chính khóa gồm 45 sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh năm 3, khóa 11, từ ngày 8/01/2024 đến 8/04/2024; phân tích và diễn giải dữ liệu trên phương diện phân tích ngôn ngữ và nội dung. Kết quả chỉ ra rằng những sinh viên này đã thụ đắc được các đặc điểm chính của thể văn tranh luận về phương diện mục đích xã hội, ngữ pháp - từ vựng, bố cục thể loại đặc trưng cho thể văn tranh luận; bày tỏ sự hài lòng của mình về bốn giai đoạn chính của chu trình dạy viết này. Dựa trên kết quả nghiên cứu, tác giả cũng đã đưa ra một số đề xuất cho hướng nghiên cứu tương lai.*

*Từ khóa: Ngôn ngữ chức năng hệ thống, phương pháp dạy viết dựa trên thể loại, mô hình dạy và học viết, luận văn tranh luận, tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ, tiếng Anh như một ngôn ngữ thứ hai*