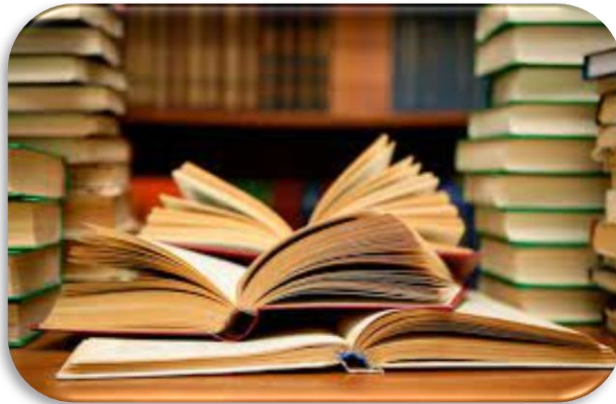**Research Paper**

Exploring the Application of Systemic Genre-Based Rubric for Assessing Expository Writing by EFL Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Systemic functional and genre-based approaches developed by Halliday emphasized the point that language structure is intrinsically interrelated with social context and function. Administering these approaches in EFL situations would augment teachers' and learners' apprehending of the core of language use and usage in dissimilar settings. Teachers can use these approaches in instruction and assessment of language skills and sub-skills grounded on specific genres. The aim of the study is to explore EFL teachers' use of a systemic genre-based rubric for assessing expository writing of EFL learners. The current study is a two-staged quantitative research. The participants of the first stage included 50 male and female EFL teachers holding M.A. and Ph.D. degrees selected using a purposeful sampling method. The second stage was conducted among 105 male and female EFL teachers selected through stratified sampling. The instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire developed grounded on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics including the components of Context of Culture, Context of Situation, and Lexico-Grammar features. The reliability of the questionnaire was ensured through Cronbach's alpha and the validity was examined by content and construct validity. The findings of the first stage showed that the designed questionnaire was localized and confirmed using factor analysis. Moreover, the results of the second stage obtained from one sample t-test revealed that EFL teachers noticeably consider and apply the mentioned components in assessing expository writing. Accordingly, it can be concluded that using systemic genre-based rubric can be effective in accurate assessment of expository texts. The findings are advantageous for EFL teachers and learners.

Keywords: Expository Writing, Genre, Genre-Based Approach, Systemic Functional Grammar, Writing Skill

بررسی کاربرد روبریک ژانر محور سیستمیک برای ارزیابی نگارش انتقادی توسط معلمان زبان انگلیسی

رویکردهای نقش گرای سیستمیکی و مبتنی بر ژانر که توسط هالیدی ایجاد شده اند، بر ارتباط متقابل بافت ها و کارکردهای اجتماعی تأکید دارند. معلمان می توانند از این رویکردها در آموزش و ارزیابی زبان در ژانرهای مختلف استفاده کنند. هدف از این پژوهش بررسی استفاده معلمان زبان انگلیسی از یک روبریک مبتنی بر ژانر سیستمیکی برای ارزیابی نوشتار انتقادی زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی می باشد. پژوهش حاضر یک تحقیق کمی دو مرحله ای است. شرکت کنندگان مرحله اول شامل ۵۰ معلم مرد و زن زبان انگلیسی با مدرک کارشناسی ارشد و دکتری می باشند که با استفاده از روش نمونه گیری هدفمند انتخاب شده اند. مرحله دوم بین ۱۰۵ نفر از معلمان مرد و زن زبان انگلیسی به روش نمونه‌گیری طبقه‌ای انتخاب شدند. ابزار، پرسشنامه محقق‌ساخته‌ای می باشد که بر اساس زبان‌شناسی نقش گرای سیستمیکی هالیدی شامل مؤلفه‌های بافت فرهنگ، بافت موقعیت و ویژگی‌های واژگانی-گرامری تدوین شده است. پایایی با استفاده از آلفای کرونباخ و روایی آن از طریق روایی محتوایی و سازه ای مورد بررسی قرار گرفته اند. یافته های مرحله اول نشان داد که پرسشنامه طراحی شده بومی سازی شده و با استفاده از تحلیل عاملی تایید شده است. نتایج مرحله دوم بهدست‌آمده از آزمون t یک نمونه نشان داد که اساتید زبان انگلیسی بهطور محسوسی مؤلفه‌های ذکر شده را در ارزیابی نگارش انتقادی در نظر گرفته و به کار می‌گیرند. بر این اساس، استفاده از روبریک مبتنی بر ژانر سیستمیکی می تواند در ارزیابی دقیق مؤثر باشد. نتایج برای مدرسان و فراگیران زبان انگلیسی قابل استفاده می باشد.

کلمات کلیدی: نگارش انتقادی، ژانر، رویکرد مبتنی بر ژانر، دستورزبان نقش گرای سیستمیکی، مهارت نوشتاری

INTRODUCTION

According to Farnia, Fatehi Rad, and Shahbi (2024), English as a foreign language (EFL) learning has been turned into a necessity in the global village. Learning a foreign language requires mastery of four major skills including receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (writing and speaking). Among these skills, writing appears to be the most challenging since it necessitates a writer to master particular grammar, vocabulary knowledge, and schematic structures (Pham & Bui, 2021). As stated by Aliakbari, Aslrasouli, and Kuhi (2024), with further international exchanges, connections, and abroad chances of education, the importance of writing capacity is growing. Generally, writing skill follows certain precise features that are revealed in the form of specific genres, and teachers are expected to teach and assess texts and provide the necessary feedback based on the content and genre of the texts. Curiously, the genre-based approach has been executed widely in teaching writing skill worldwide. This approach entails writing educators to be cognizant of the learners' specific learning requirements and the objectives of writing.

Genre theory procured from the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Halliday (1994) and his followers developed SFL in Australia. According to Eggins (1994), SFL designates how individuals use language to achieve social drives and get something completed intentionally in definite settings. The framework of SFL is termed functional since it can elucidate how the language is administered (Halliday, 1994), and it regards language as a meaning-making resource (Halliday & Martin, 1993).

Over the past three decades, the application of genre in language instruction has garnered significant attention in the context of foreign languages (Rasyidah Mohd Nordin, 2019). Genre pedagogies in EFL contexts are progressively being recognized as beneficial means to aid teachers in offering targeted training to encounter the language and writing requirements of the learners (Tardy, 2019). A genre approach provides excessive applicability for EFL learners' writing in elementary and advanced proficiency levels. Thus, the identification and exploration of a genre-based approach can train learners with an acquaintance of the linguistic and structural components of diverse types of texts.

Wherever the acquisition of definite language skill is perceived as central, it becomes correspondingly essential to evaluate that skill, and writing is no exception (Weigle, 2009). Meanwhile, writing has a key role in modeling the scientific and academic configuration of human life, as it is the medium to store, retain, and convey technical content; hereafter, teachers and researchers need to find a reliable method for assessing and ensuring quality writing. This is not an exception in EFL contexts and there is a superior mandate for valid and reliable methods to test writing skill, equally for classroom use and as predictors of forthcoming academic and professional accomplishment.

Pham and Bui (2021) proclaimed that writing educators do not pay abundant attention to communicative purposes and contexts in the process of teaching writing. The communicative purposes and contexts of writings influence the selection of language uses to aid communicative functions. The EFL teachers may lack proper realization of the association between texts and contexts. Hence, they need to be aware of this connection and they are expected to transfer their knowledge to the learners and clarify how language is used in authentic settings in various fields. However, EFL learners may not be trained to write texts consistent with a genre-based approach and they may lack adequate knowledge of social function, generic structure, and linguistic features of different genres. Teaching writing, which

definitely entails assessment in this way, must aid learners in producing error-free texts with attention to the context; that is to say, most of the language classes are expected to focus on generating compositions to serve the aim of a variety of actual readers outside the classroom. This procedure contributes to the realization and mastery of such aspects as audiences, purposes, and linguistic conventions of a text. Hence, the way the writing ability is estimated must emphasize not only linguistic and grammatical precision but also generic and social aspects. The genre-based approach selected in this study could support teachers in assessing writing based on a certain genre. Despite a body of work exploring these issues (e.g., Nagao, 2019; Dirgeyasa, 2020; Pourdana & Asghari, 2021) the process of rating the written ability of the learners centered on a genre-based approach needs extra exploration and there is actually the scarcity of systemic genre-based rubrics to evaluate expository texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Genre and Systemic Functional Linguistics

The term "genre" initially appeared in the field of writing in second languages (L2) and then in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the 1980s thanks to studies done in the UK by John Swales (Paltridge, 2014). Generally, researchers like Swales (1990), Bhatia (1993), Paltridge (2001), Hyland (2003), and others have persuasively established the significance of concentrating on genres in several areas of the profession. Tony Dudley-Evans, Ann Johns, and Ken Hyland are among the most important scholars who have claimed the importance of genre concept in teaching writing in ESL/EFL contexts. Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a theory applied to elucidate the association between linguistic perspectives and social context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). SFL is a school founded on Hallidayan functional linguistics (Halliday, 1978) and sociocultural theories of learning (Vygotsky, 1978) that "stresses the interactive, purposeful, and sequential character of diverse genres and the ways language is systematically linked to context through patterns of lexico-grammatical and rhetorical features" (Christie & Martin, as cited in Hyland, 2003, pp. 21-22).

The Prominence and Effects of Genre-Based Approach to Writing

Martin and Rose (2008) specified that the crucial characteristic of SFL genre theory is related to the dialectical associations that exist between context and language. Precisely, the language form is intermediated by the language use context, counting equally the context of the situation where the textual meaning-making arises (register) and the context of culture that adopts the communicative purpose of written texts (genre). Additionally, there are three register variables, how participants interact (tenor), what was happening (field), and through which means (mode). These three constituents are recognized by the use of language to provide three meanings of texts: the interpersonal (i.e., how the writer addresses and expresses the association between the reader and the writer), the ideational (i.e., how the content is expressed), and the textual (i.e., how the text is structured and cohesion is established) (Abdel-Malek, 2020). SFL scholars believed that there are no guidelines that could be applied to all texts across purposes, contexts, and audiences. Writers must identify each of these variables in determining the textual configuration and lexical grammatical of their texts if they want their writings to be acknowledged by the discourse communities for which they are being transcribed.

The genre-based approach as assumed by Suksawas (2018) must center on the organization of text and linguistic features. As asserted by Hyland (2002), each writing genre necessitates distinguishing language and generic structure; hence, EFL writing learners are required to recognize the knowledge connected to "a specific form of communication" to communicate efficiently and unmistakably in context (p. 125). That is to say, the context adopts the organization of each type of writing genre and the use of language.

Expository Genre

Richards and Schmidt (2010) asserted that there are four leading modes of writing: expository, narrative, descriptive, and argumentative. Expository writing offers information, clarification, instruction, explanation, and definition via logical analysis (Tseng, 2001). Expository writing varies from descriptive and narrative writing in that it articulates a clue about a subject and uses supporting specifics to notify or clarify to the reader that the inkling is comprehensive. However, the descriptive or narrative modes try to arouse the reader's feelings or senses; the exposition style exists in the dominion of reason. A struggle with expository writing might be attributable to learners' lack of familiarity with the text organization used in producing and comprehending expository texts (Taylor & Beach, 1984).

Pike and Mumper (2005) argued that expository texts include an extensive genre in most ranges of our lives, as they are the resources for finding explicit information about an issue, places, and people, discovery of solutions to problems, and satisfying one's curiosity and interest. Duke (2003) asserted that exposing learners to expository texts aids them in raising their awareness and understanding of the genre in terms of syntax, vocabulary, and text structure, and similarly empowers them to explore new information, classify, and synthesize the received information to the existing outlines. Having the ability to understand, create and discuss the expository text is a compulsory skill for learners, since at all educational levels, they come upon these texts that require them to extract new information about social studies, the world, health, and their particular discipline from them.

Tassler (2012) mentioned that the most common configurations of expository writings embrace compare-contrast, description, cause-effect, listing and sequence, and problem-solution. Considering their excessive prominence in our existence, learners typically have difficulties in understanding, recalling, and learning from expository writings. The main reasons partially might be structural complexity (subordinate clauses, complex noun phrases), the bulk of knowledge, technical vocabulary, the abstract and logical relation between dissimilar parts of the text, and the organization of material.

Consistent with Dirgeyasa (2020), assessment is crucial to the success of teaching and learning. Using the right assessment tool results in valid and dependable learning outcomes, or not. A common method of teaching and learning writing that takes into account genre-based writing also requires an assessment tool that is appropriate for the genre-based writing itself. Dirgeyasa (2020) offered an overview and examples of common tools for evaluating genre-based literature. He came to the conclusion that in order to produce a valid assessment result, the traits and attributes of genre-based writing, such as communicative purpose, generic structure, grammatical patterns, and vocabulary alternatives, must be taken into account while creating an instrument for assessing genre-based writing. Because of this, each genre-based writing style has a standard assessment tool that varies in terms of the items, content, and number of the items.

With the intention of enhancing Thai learners' abilities to write an English explanation, Sritrakarn (2020) investigated the impacts of implementing the SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistic) genre-based method in an English writing classroom. Twenty-two English majors taking the English Report Writing Course were among the participants. The collection included group interviews, questionnaires, and student writing drafts. The findings demonstrated that the SFL genre-based strategy might be able to assist in giving pupils a better understanding of the targeted genre. The analysis of the students' writing demonstrated that, although they used different language resources at the clause level based on their learning achievement levels, the students wrote the drafts to meet the writing goal and produced explanatory texts with the necessary schematic structure.

Even though several studies have been conducted to provide appropriate assessment rubrics for EFL writing worldwide, in Iran, especially, there are no published studies related to the use of systemic genre-based rubrics by EFL teachers. Thus, the dearth of empirical research in this field gave impetus to the present study to explore teachers' use of the systemic genre-based rubric for assessing the writing of expository texts. The study focuses on the assessment of expository essays and on how SFL and genre-based approaches could essentially be used by teachers and assist both EFL learners and teachers to assume a more applicable view of writing assessment. Subsequently, little is identified about the practicality of this approach for the accomplishment of these objectives in the Iranian EFL context.

Generally, based on the above-mentioned points it can be argued that one of the principal decisions to be made in regulating a structure for evaluating and scoring writing quality is the type of scoring technique to be administered. Inspired by the dearth of investigation on the incorporation of the systemic genre-based approach into evaluating expository essays and due to the limited number of studies, the current study attempted to explore the use of systemic genre-based rubric by the teachers in assessing expository texts written by advanced EFL learners. Thus, to fill this gap, the present study tries to examine the applicability of a researcher-made rubric designed based on the systemic genre in scoring expository essays. Accordingly, the following research question is proposed:

Research Question
What is the current state of EFL teachers' attention to the systemic genre-based features (context of culture, context of situation, lexico-grammar) in assessing expository texts?

METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study (All Capitalized, All Numbers Followed by dot.)
The design of the study is analytical-descriptive. The researchers aim to describe the current situation of teacher training courses held in Iranian private language institutes, thus the design is descriptive. This section should give us information about the design of the study, the research approach, and the variables under study.

Participants
The statistical population of the research included the EFL teachers of the different language institutes in Tabriz in 2021-2022. The participants of the study included two groups. Initially, 50 male and female

EFL teachers of different language institutes (Goldis, ILI, Chitsazan, Safir Danesh) in Tabriz were selected based on a convenience sampling technique to answer the researcher-made questionnaire developed based on Halliday's SFL framework. This group of teachers included male and female EFL teachers teaching advanced and upper-intermediate proficiency levels holding M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in TEFL, Translation, and English Literature majors with at least five years of teaching experience. Their age range was 29-45. The second group of participants included 105 male and female EFL teachers from different branches of Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Tabriz selected through stratified sampling to participate and fill out the questionnaire. These teachers had almost similar features in terms of age range, academic major and degree, and level of teaching. They were selected based on Cochran's formula (1977). In total, there were around 160 advanced and upper-intermediate teachers teaching in the selected centers. After running the calculation, the obtained final sample size was 113; however, 8 of the questionnaires were not completed so they were disregarded.

Instruments

The main instrument of the study is related to a researcher-made questionnaire (rubric) developed based on the components of SFL. This questionnaire included three indexes with 39 questions designed based on a 5-point Likert Scale. The validity was ensured by content and construct validity and reliability was estimated by Crobach's alpha. The following table displays the results of factor analysis and separation of the factors and the reliability of the obtained factors. Table 1 displays the results of factor analysis related to the researcher-made questionnaire (rubric) regarding the Context of Culture component.

Table 1

Factor Analysis, Separation of Factors, and Reliability of the Obtained Factors for Context of Culture

Components	Sub-components	Reliability	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
	Semantic Formatting	0.94	Q1: I pay attention to whether the thesis statement is clarified clearly and concisely near the end of the introductory paragraph.	0.88		
Context of Culture			Q2: I consider seeing whether the thesis statement states the topic and motifs for writing.	0.83		
			Q8: I consider whether there are any deviations from the	0.77		
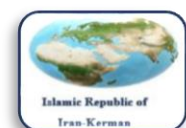
main topic or irrelevant information.

	Q11: I consider the essay should be engaging, clear, reader-friendly, and effective.	0.75	
	Q10: I consider the smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs to be important.	0.75	
	Q6: I consider whether every paragraph in the main body focuses on a single point and whether each includes a topic sentence and supporting evidence.	0.74	
	Q4: I consider whether the writer uses relevant evidence and examples to support the thesis.	0.73	
	Q3: I reflect to see whether the paper follows a logical flow of information and gives an unbiased analysis of the topic.	0.59	
Content Formatting	0.87	Q7: I consider whether all the facts and supporting arguments are valid.	0.94
		Q5: I consider whether the text exposes the facts and supplies the reader with concrete details.	0.75

			Q9: I consider if the conclusion highlights the importance of the thesis and summarizes the key arguments.	0.69	
			Q12: I consider the essay must be formatted based on expository genre instructions.	0.60	

KMO>0.5, S^2>50%, Extraction>0.5, α>0.7

According to Table 1, the component of Context of Culturehas acceptable reliability and validity; thus, the questionnaire is confirmed. Table 2 displays the results of factor analysis related to the researcher-made questionnaire (rubric) regarding the Context of Situation component.

Table 2

Factor Analysis, Separation of Factors, and Reliability of the Obtained Factors for Context of Situation

Components	Sub-components	Reliability	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Context of Situation	Tenor	0.93	Q9: I consider expository texts to require a noticeable frame to show where the author is placed.	0.89		
			Q5: I consider the relationship between the author and the audience to be personal or impersonal.	0.81		
			Q8: I consider whether the essay is written using formal language, colloquial language, and/or slang.	0.704		
			Q6: I consider the relationship between the author and the audience in terms of	0.701		

Category		Question		
		being formal or informal.		
		Q7: I consider whether the essay is written in first person, second person, and/or third person.	0.67	
		Q4: I consider the relationship between the author and readers in a text produced by the learners.	0.57	
Mode	0.87	Q11: I consider the status and function of the texts should be taken into account.	0.83	
		Q10: I consider I must pay attention to the symbolic organization of the text.	0.74	
		Q12: I think the role language plays in an interaction must be considered.	0.55	
Field	0.86	Q3: If the content is specialized, I consider the use of technical terms.		0.87
		Q2: I consider whether the text content is general or specialized.		0.72
		Q1: I consider the content of the written text.		0.55
		Q12: I consider the thematic choices of texts, composed of Theme, the onset of a clause, and rheme, the	0.90	

Components	Sub-components	Reliability	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
			newly expanded information around its Theme.			
			Q15: I consider the direct and indirect semantic relations between lexical items and sentences.		0.88	
			Q14: I consider graphological devices to be essential elements (paragraph structure, correct spelling, and punctuation) of expository essays.		0.65	
	Textual	0.71	Q11: I consider the use of types of modalization and modulation including probability, obligation, inclination, and usuality.			0.84
			Q10: I consider the realization of Mood types including declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences.			0.58

KMO>0.5, S^2>50%, Extraction>0.5, α>0.7

As indicated in Table 2, the component of Context of Situation has acceptable reliability and validity; thus, the questionnaire is confirmed. Table 3 displays the results of factor analysis related to the researcher-made questionnaire (rubric) regarding the Lexico-Grammar Features component.

Table 3

Factor Analysis, Separation of Factors, Reliability of Obtained Factors for Lexico-Grammar Features

Components	Sub-components	Reliability	Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
		0.95	Q5: I consider grammatical cohesion	0.88		

Lexico-Grammar Features	Ideational	consisting of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction to be needed in expository text.	
		Q9: I consider processes (verbs) types in transitivity systems including Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioral, Verbal, and Existential.	0.86
		Q1: I consider the proper and precise word choice to be important.	0.86
		Q4: I consider a well-written exposition to remain focused on its topic and list of events in chronological order.	0.84
		Q7: I consider expository text to be characterized by the use of declarative verbs (define, exemplify, compare, contrast, analyze).	0.83
		Q3: Using certain words that evidently express what the author is talking about is necessary.	0.807
		Q8: I think the verbs must be mostly in present tense and indicative mood.	0.805

		Q6: I consider lexical cohesion (repetition, collocation, synonymy, superordinate) to be required.	0.77
		Q2: I consider the language of expository text must include domain-specific vocabulary to explain the notions and information.	0.75
Interpersonal	0.89	Q13: I consider connectors to be needed in an expository text.	0.93
		Q12: I consider the thematic choices of texts, composed of Theme, the onset of a clause, and rheme, the newly expanded information around its Theme.	0.90
		Q15: I consider the direct and indirect semantic relations between lexical items and sentences.	0.88
		Q14: I consider graphological devices to be essential elements (paragraph structure, correct spelling, and punctuation) of expository essays.	0.65
	0.71	Q11: I consider the use of types of	0.84

Textual	modalization and modulation including probability, obligation, inclination, and usuality.	
	Q10: I consider the realization of Mood types including declarative, interrogative, and imperative sentences.	0.58

KMO>0.5, S^2>50%, Extraction>0.5, α>0.7

As illustrated in Table 3, the component of Lexico-Grammar Features has acceptable reliability and validity; thus, the questionnaire is confirmed. Generally, Tables 1 to 3 display the results of factor analysis related to the researcher-made questionnaire (rubric). Accordingly, the components of Context of Culture, Context of Situation, and Lexico-Grammar Features have acceptable reliability and validity; thus, the questionnaire is confirmed.

PROCEDURE

In the current study, a questionnaire was designed by the researcher that covers the major components and indexes of the SFL framework. The questionnaire consisted of 39 items designed based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree. The questionnaire measures the three components of Context of Culture (12 items), Context of Situation (12 items), and Lexico-Grammar (15 items).

To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire in identifying the features of scoring of the learners' expository texts, including Context of Culture, Context of Situation, and Lexico-Grammar, a pilot study was conducted with the sample population of 20 EFL teachers who were selected based on purposeful random sampling. The results of Cronbach's alpha indicated an acceptable reliability for each of these three features (α>0.7). Moreover, the content validity of the questionnaire was ensured through consulting with different professors and experts in the field of TEFL. Additionally, the construct validity of the questionnaire was estimated through Confirmatory Factor Analysis to confirm the components and subcomponents of the developed questionnaire. The gathered data was analyzed through confirmatory factor analysis, which confirmed the rubric. The most important goal of the confirmatory factor analysis is to determine the power of the predetermined operating model with the set of observed data. In other words, the confirmatory factor analysis attempts to determine whether the number of factors and variables measured on these factors is consistent with what was expected based on theory and theoretical models. In other words, this type of factor analysis examines the degree of conformity and consistency between the theoretical construct and the empirical structure of the research.

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After ensuring the reliability of the questionnaire through Cronbach's alpha, it was distributed among 50 male and female EFL teachers with at least five years of experience teaching advanced and upper-intermediate proficiency level learners to decide whether it needed to be refined. The sample size for this stage was calculated by using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling. The KMO> 0.5 and sig < 0.05, and thus the appropriate and sufficient sample size of the population was 50. The teachers were provided with the online link through email, Whatsapp, and Telegram to fill out the questionnaire. The teachers' voluntary involvement was solicited, and the participants' identity and confidentiality were ensured in the sense that the collected data were considered private, and names would not be revealed at any time. As mentioned earlier, the data was analyzed and validated by confirmatory factor analysis for the components identified based on SFL.

Finally, the second stage, which was the complementary stage, was related to examining the applicability of the developed questionnaire and estimating the extent of teachers' knowledge toward considering the components in assessing learners' expository texts. To this end, the developed questionnaire was distributed among 105 EFL teachers. In doing so, Cochran's formula (1977) is used to estimate the appropriate sample size of the population. In total, there were around 160 advanced and upper-intermediate teachers teaching in the selected centers of ILI Tabriz branches. After running the calculation, the obtained final sample size was 113. However, the final number of the gathered and completed questionnaire was 105, since 8 of them were not complete to be used in data analysis.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The well-known linguist Michael Halliday, one of the earliest theorists in the Sydney School of thought to connect language use with society, provided the theoretical basis for the research approach used in the current study. The relationships between linguistic patterns in various contexts serve as the foundation for Halliday's theory. According to Bawarshi and Reiff (2010, p. 29), "Systemic" refers to the way language is structured or organized, and "Functional" relates to how language is used in certain settings. Many linguists, like J. R. Martin, have been influenced by Halliday's interpretation of the Systemic Functional approach to the genre in an attempt to support the efficacy of student-centered and process-based literacy teaching, which places an emphasis on "learning through doing" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010).

RESULTS

In order to answer the research question of the study, one sample t-test was administered and the results related to each component of the questionnaire including Context of Culture, Context of Situation, Lexico-Grammar, and their sub-components are illustrated in the following tables. Table 4 shows the teachers' attention toward Context of Culture and its sub-components.

Table 4

Mean Score and One-Sample T-Test Results of Teachers' Consideration Toward Context of Culture

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value = 3

				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. I pay attention to whether the thesis statement is clarified clearly and concisely near the end of the introductory paragraph.	105	4.0952	.92533	12.129	104	.000
2. I consider seeing whether the thesis statement states the topic and motifs for writing.	105	4.1905	.73505	16.596	104	.000
3. I consider whether there are any deviations from the main topic or irrelevant information.	105	4.1905	.96172	12.684	104	.000
4. I consider the essay should be engaging, clear, reader-friendly, and effective.	105	4.3810	.65605	21.569	104	.000
5. I consider the smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs to be important.	105	4.5238	.66644	23.430	104	.000
6. I consider whether every paragraph in the main body focuses on a single point and whether each includes a topic sentence and supporting evidence.	105	4.2381	.92533	13.711	104	.000
7. I consider whether the writer uses relevant evidence and examples to support the thesis.	105	4.0000	.69338	14.778	104	.000

8. I reflect to see whether the paper follows a logical flow of information and gives an unbiased analysis of the topic.	105	3.5714	1.29983	4.505	104	.000
Content Formatting	105	4.1488	.52523	22.413	104	.000
9. I consider whether all the facts and supporting arguments are valid.	105	3.2381	1.7484	8.644	104	.010
10. I consider whether the text exposes the facts and supplies the reader with concrete details.	105	3.0476	1.7432	8.340	104	.035
11. I consider if the conclusion highlights the importance of the thesis and summarizes the key arguments.	105	4.3810	.78912	17.932	104	.000
12. I consider the essay must be formatted based on expository genre instructions.	105	4.0000	.75955	13.491	104	.000
Semantic Formatting	105	3.6667	.90183	7.575	104	.000
Context of Culture	105	3.9077	.64616	14.395	104	.000

The results of Table 4 reveal that the status of teachers' consideration and attention toward the feature of Context of Culture and its components including Content Formatting Sematic Formatting items in assessing expository texts are above the average level (Mean > 3, p<0.05). Table 5 shows the teachers' attention toward Context of Situation and its sub-components.

Table 5

Mean Score and One-Sample T-Test Results of Teachers' Consideration Toward Context of Situation

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value = 3		
				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. I consider the expository text to require a noticeable frame to show where the author is placed.	105	3.0952	1.23665	9.789	104	.043
2. I consider the relationship between the author and the audience to be personal or impersonal.	105	2.9524	1.40316	-.348	104	.732
3. I consider whether the essay is written using formal language, colloquial language, and/or slang.	105	4.1429	.89258	13.120	104	.000
4. I consider the relationship between the author and the audience to be formal or informal.	105	3.9524	.90278	10.810	104	.000
5. I consider whether the essay is written in first person, second person, and/or third person.	105	3.5714	1.22362	4.785	104	.000
6. I consider the relationship between the author and readers in a text produced by the learners.	105	3.4762	1.18561	4.116	104	.000
Tenor	105	3.5317	.78654	6.928	104	.000
7. I consider the status and function of the texts should be taken into account.	105	3.5238	1.40805	3.812	104	.000
8. I consider I must pay attention to the symbolic organization of the text.	105	3.6190	.84786	7.482	104	.000

9. I think the role language plays in an interaction must be considered.	105	4.0952	.92533	12.129	104	.000
Mode	105	3.6032	.97303	6.352	104	.000
10. If the content is specialized, I consider the use of technical terms.	105	4.3333	.89514	15.263	104	.000
11. I consider whether the text content is general or specialized.	105	4.2857	.82874	15.897	104	.000
12. I consider the content of the written text.	105	4.3810	.72564	19.501	104	.000
Field	105	4.3333	.70104	19.489	104	.000
Context of Situation	105	3.8228	.64908	12.989	104	.000

The results of Table 5 reveal that the status of teachers' consideration and attention toward the feature of Context of Situation and its components including Tenor, Mode, and Field items in assessing expository texts are above the average level (Mean > 3, p<0.05). However, the second item in the Tenor component has a mean score of less than the average level (Mean<3, p>0.05). Table 6 shows the teachers' attention toward Lexico-Grammar Features and its sub-components.

Table 6

Mean Score and One-Sample T-Test Results of Teachers' Consideration Toward Lexico-Grammar Features

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test Value = 3		
				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1. I consider grammatical cohesion consisting of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunctions to be needed in expository text.	105	4.6667	.47367	36.056	104	.000
2. I consider processes (verbs) types in transitivity systems including Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioral, Verbal, and Existential.	105	3.9524	.65605	14.875	104	.000
3. I consider the proper and precise word choice to be important.	105	4.4286	.58601	24.980	104	.000
4. I consider a well-written exposition to remain focused on its	105	4.3810	.78912	17.932	104	.000

topic and list of events in chronological order.						
5. I consider the expository text to be characterized by the use of declarative verbs (define, exemplify, compare, contrast, analyze).	105	4.1905	.66644	18.304	104	.000
6. Using certain words that evidently express what the author is talking about is necessary.	105	4.2857	.54973	23.966	104	.000
7. I think the verbs must be mostly in present tense and indicative mood.	105	3.5714	.79490	7.366	104	.000
8. I consider lexical cohesion (repetition, collocation, synonymy, superordinate) to be required.	105	4.2857	.70321	18.735	104	.000
9. I consider the language of expository text must include domain-specific vocabulary to explain the notions and information.	105	4.0952	.75350	14.894	104	.000
Ideational	105	4.2063	.39477	31.313	104	.000
10. I consider connectors to be needed in an expository text.	105	4.4286	.79490	18.415	104	.000
11. I consider the thematic choices of texts, containing Theme, the onset of a clause, and Rheme, the lately extended data around its Theme.	105	3.9524	.84786	11.510	104	.000
12. I consider the direct and indirect semantic relations between lexical items and sentences.	105	3.8095	.79778	10.398	104	.000
13. I consider graphological devices to be essential elements (paragraph structure, correct spelling, and punctuation) of expository essays.	105	4.4286	.73193	20.000	104	.000
Interpersonal	105	4.1548	.58258	20.311	104	.000
14. I consider the use of types of modalization and modulation including probability, obligation, inclination, and usuality.	105	4.0000	.75955	13.491	104	.000
15. I consider the realization of Mood types including declarative,	105	3.8571	1.13025	7.771	104	.000

interrogative, and imperative sentences.						
Textual	105	3.9286	.74817	12.718	104	.000
Lexico-Grammar Features	105	4.0966	.50633	22.192	104	.000

The results of Table 6 reveal that the status of teachers' consideration and attention toward the Lexico-Grammar feature and its components including Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual items in assessing expository texts are at a high level (Mean > 3, p<0.05).

Tables 4 to 6 demonstrate the results of the one-sample t-test, which examines the knowledge of the teachers toward the use of generic and systemic features in assessing expository texts. Accordingly, the level of teachers' consideration and knowledge of systemic genre-based features is more than average. The following continuity shows the findings. However, the teachers' consideration toward the first and second items in Context of Situation and the ninth and tenth items in Context of Culture are at a low level compared to other items.

Continuity 1

The Status of Teachers' Attention to the Characteristics of the Systemic Genre in the Assessment of Learners' Writing
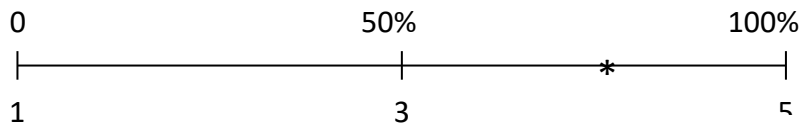
DISCUSSION

The present article was carried out with the aim of exploring the applicability of using SFL theory and systemic genre-based rubric in assessing and scoring texts of expository genre written by Iranian EFL learners. The research findings exposed that the researcher-made questionnaire (rubric) developed based on SFL embraces three components of Culture Context, Context of Situation, and the Lexico-Grammar Features in the form of eight subcomponents including Semantic Formatting, Content Formatting, Field, Tenor, Mode, Ideational, Interpersonal, and Textual. The results of factor analysis and construct validity confirmed the developed rubric in this study. These components evidently fit in the framework and approaches developed by Halliday and Martin.

Based on the obtained results it can be argued that the fundamental notion of a genre-based approach toward writing reveals the argument that texts have different purposes, thus, the intended meanings could be transferred via language in dissimilar grammatical and linguistic elements based on the discourses and contexts, which prevail in diverse cultures. While recognizing teachers' awareness of these features is a constructive stride, it is essential to understand if this translates into operative teaching practices and targeted feedback addressing genre-specific features of learner writing.

The findings revealed that EFL teachers are mostly aware of the generic features of the texts and they believed that these elements must be considered in the assessment of EFL learners' expository text writing. With the emergence of new methods and technology in the EFL context most of the

teachers are trying to escape the traditional methods of writing assessment. This will lead them to develop their professional and academic knowledge and status by studying particular rubrics with powerful theoretical and empirical foundations such as New Rhetoric, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approaches. Furthermore, recently, most of the teachers are educated instructors with related degrees in TEFL, Translation, and Literature majors at M.A. and Ph.D. levels. Their educational level certainly guarantees their high knowledge of language learning theories and skills in general and writing in particular. In addition, their academic knowledge along with their teaching experience enable them to transfer their theoretical knowledge into practice. Additionally, the results indicated that teachers pay less attention to the validity of the facts and arguments in the expository texts and whether the text exposes the facts and supplies the reader with concrete details. Moreover, less attention is paid to having a noticeable frame in expository writing to show where the author is placed and the relationship between the author and audience in terms of being personal or impersonal.

This is in proportion to the findings of Correa and Echeverri (2016), which revealed teachers' emerging understanding of context, purpose, and audience. The findings demanded extra knowledge of teachers toward cultural and situational aspects of a written performance. Essentially, Halliday's (1994) SFL teaching framework was similarly found to be effective with regard to the present study, equally, the pedagogical implications related to Martin's (2009) genre-based view of language learning. Accordingly, the teachers who partook in the present paper were qualified to realize the generic elements and lexico-grammatical characteristics of the target writings. They also discerned that writers need to implement fitting terminology and syntax with the intention of creating meaning. Moreover, regarding the importance of genre-based teaching and its effective role in developing learners' writing Nagao (2019) found that the implementation of a genre-based method and a teaching-learning cycle in writing training could develop EFL learners' attentiveness to generic structure and interpersonal meaning in writing argumentative compositions. In similar vein highlighting the applicability of genre-based assessment, Pourdana (2021) proved the positive impact of genre-based portfolio assessment on improving the components of explanation of narrative, language and vocabulary, organization, performance, and convention in narrative writing of the learners. Results of Gomez (2017) equally gave evidence that a genre-based approach to teaching expository essays is effective. In a comparable vein, Hamman-Ortiz et al., (2023) illustrated the potential of SFL genre pedagogy to shift teachers' writing training toward social semiotic viewpoints of language and literacy.

Generally, it can be argued that English is a foreign language in Iran, so most of the Iranian learners need to achieve high proficiency in English to attend various international exams including IELTS, TOEFL, PTE, etc. with the aim of entering global educational and professional settings. In these exams, writing is regarded as a significant skill. Thus, learners are required to achieve knowledge of generic features of certain texts to perform well in these tests, as the writing topics of the exams cover a wide range of expository and argumentative varieties. In a similar vein, teachers are expected to be aware of these features and apply them in their assessments of the learners' texts and familiarize the learners with certain elements.

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In addition, the rubric proposed in the present study helps the teachers to stay away from imprecise descriptors and subjective ways of assessing. Genre and SFL stipulations empower teachers to perform more efficiently in providing feedback on the writing of the learners. Accordingly, both teachers and learners would be capable of responding more specifically and effectively to the produced writings by emphasizing the particular generic elements rather than decontextualized and improvised feedback to error.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

The attention of EFL to the systemic genre-based features, such as the context of culture, context of situation, and lexico-grammar, in assessing expository texts has been the subject of research. According to the findings, EFL teachers' conceptualizations of grammar shifted from a traditional sentence-level, form-focused perspective to a more functional comprehension that works in interconnected ways across lexico-grammatical, discourse semantic, and generic text structures. Moreover, it can be stated that considering the purpose of certain writing and the specified stages in developing texts of a particular genre can be effective in providing unbiased and reasonable feedback about EFL learners' writing.

The concluding remarks addressed in the current research study may propose several theoretical and pedagogical implications for TEFL scholars, practitioners, and educators. Theoretically, the advocates of the due consideration of genre-based approach, as evidenced by the current study, provided additional support to Halliday's (2001) SFL theory, which put a counterbalanced emphasis on both linguistic elements and social contexts. This study corroborated the perspective of genre-based language teaching and SFL predominantly proposed by Halliday (1978) on language learning and assessment, who presumed that language is a functional and meaning-making tool. The rubric proposed here draws on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) principles to assess writing based on its genre characteristics. SFL views language as serving social purposes and existing in dissimilar genres each with distinct features. A systemic genre-based rubric would hence evaluate expository writing based on criteria related to the specific expository subgenre (e.g., explanation, definition, report) and its expected communicative goals.

The study findings are likely to bear several implications for English language pedagogy. Given the importance of writing in academic contexts, this study provides the required information for test developers and revisers who deal with test construction for a wide range of learners. In addition, learners can benefit from the present study in the way that they can be acquainted, in effect, with different types of genres and their applications in their written productions. Moreover, the current study proved the efficacy of a genre-based approach in boosting the quality of writing assessment, especially, the genre of expository. The rubric goes beyond general writing skills to assess understanding and application of genre conventions like structure, lexis, and cohesion specific to expository writing. It provides clear and specific feedback aligned with the genre's expectations, aiding learners in targeted improvement and provides a framework for understanding the potentials for developing genre awareness, particularly advantageous for non-native speakers. By delving profounder into these ranges, teachers could move yonder merely recognizing their consciousness and construct a wealthier understanding of how systemic genre-based features are presently exploited in EFL expository text

assessment. This would be valued for enlightening practices and eventually profiting both teachers and learners.

As a novel instance of scientific endeavor, the current study attempted to develop and validate a rubric in the form of a questionnaire based on a systemic genre-based approach. The rubric presented in this study can be applied by EFL teachers in assessing writing skill, especially the expository genre. Replicating the study in diverse EFL contexts using a larger participant sample may shed more light on what has been found and developed in the current study. Since the study was targeted only at assessing expository writing, to generalize the overall applicability of the rubric, there is a need for further research on EFL teachers enjoying the assessment of different genres and learners at different language proficiency levels, age ranges, and learning styles. Moreover, the further studies are recommended to consider the potential variability among teachers grounded on experience, training, and educational contexts and explore specific features that EFL teachers struggle with in writing assessment or instruction.

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