



## The Effect of Genre-Based Instruction on Iranian Middle School Students' Argumentative Writing: A Mixed-Methods Approach

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### ABSTRACT

*Acquiring writing skills is more difficult compared to other three skills because writing skills require mastery of many different linguistic elements of the language that are beyond what is just taught in the standard curriculum. Therefore, EFL teachers should adopt effective strategies and techniques to develop the students' proficiency to write. This study was conducted to explore the effectiveness of genre-based instruction as a teaching strategy on the Iranian middle school students' proficiency in argumentative writing. To do so, a mixed method design was adopted in which 40 EFL students were selected based on a multi stage sampling procedure from high schools in Varamin. A researcher-made writing test and a perception questionnaire were used to collect the quantitative data. This study also collected qualitative data through an interview and in-classroom observation. The experimental findings of this current study revealed that GBI had a significant effect on the development of argumentative writing ability among EFL students. The results of the qualitative part also indicated that social learning, situated learning, dialogic interaction, and ZPD through GBI encouraged students to develop their writing proficiency.*

**KEYWORDS:** Argumentative Writing; Dialogic Interaction; Genre-Based Instruction; Situated Learning; Social Learning; ZPD

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of globalization and the emergence of the English language as a primary means of international communication and scientific research, the importance of developing competence in English, especially written English, is recognized. Besides its traditional role of assisting students and learners to develop their skills in a new



language, writing has recently been highlighted for its potential to bring the expertise of students into a field (Manchon, 2011; Ortega, 2012).

Most recently EFL and ESL researchers have started to pay much attention to writing-to-learn (WL) dimension, which claimed that writing is an important communication skill not only to master the writing skill but also for language learning progress (Abeer & Al-Zoubi, 2018; Maeso Cano, 2017). Furthermore, some researchers in this field maintained that writing should be taken a central focus in EFL/ESL classes in order to prepare learners to be able to cope with the communicative requirements of real life situations (Khatib & Mirzaii, 2016). Iranian EFL students suffer from weaknesses in writing skills despite the efforts of the Ministry of Education to provide junior and high school students with new English textbooks designed based on CLT principles (Goodarzi, Weisi, & Yousofi, 2020). The newly published English textbooks failed to adequately satisfy communicative, cognitive, and creative potentials, although they were designed to follow CLT approach principles. Therefore, it can be concluded that writing for Iranian students is difficult, as their English competence is not very well developed.

A great deal of the literature on the assessment of English textbooks of Iranian schools reveals, working only on newly released manuals is very inefficient in enhancing learners' ability to produce pragmatically correct sentences, by improving the writing skills of learners, by involving them in learning the target linguistic culture, and in raising the learners' critical thinking, although; they have been produced based on communicative language teaching prioritizing fluency and meaning negotiation at the cost of accuracy (Goodarzi, Weisi, & Yousofi, 2020). To sum it up, to enhance EFL learners' writing proficiency and make them become competent writers in the future, English language teachers or practitioners must prepare an authentic writing task according to the learners' interests and needs in a way that requires them to generate ideas and put these ideas into a readable and well-structured text (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Therefore, equipping students with explicit instruction while writing as a means of turning their attention to form and providing a form-meaning environment, and also improving students' competence in writing through genre-process instruction as a means of providing them specific text types would be fundamental to enhance their writing skill. "This approach involves teaching learners how to use language patterns to achieve consistent and targeted prose writing". Its central belief is that "we are not content to write, we are writing something to achieve a goal" (Hyland, 2002, p. 18).

According to the literature, it seems that most of the previous studies on the effect of genre-based education on improving writing proficiency are focused on experimental aspects and their findings are mainly based on quantitative analysis. In addition, Not only did no research study examine the impact of such a strategy on the improvement of writing proficiency in high school students, but it was also not examined qualitatively from the perspective of teachers and students. Therefore, the present study tried to examine the effect of genre-based instruction on high school students' proficiency in writing English argumentative essays. It also intended to explore the EFL learners' perceptions about the effectiveness and efficiency of genre-based instruction in the EFL classes.



## **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

### **GENRE-BASED INSTRUCTION**

Genre-based Instruction (GBI) is a technique of language training that explores how language is used meaningfully or how its use is connected to meaning and is founded on the premise of how language is employed within a certain social situation (Paltridge, 2007). A genre-based method of writing focuses primarily on the actions writers take when creating a text. This strategy aims to clarify how people react to communication events (Hyland, 2003). Hyland (2019) defined communicative activities as what language users share in everyday conversation, such as explaining, debating, instructing, or narrating, and how they apply this knowledge in language instruction. As a result, this strategy can help writing teachers choose the kinds of texts, students will need to generate in their future social and professional situations. As such, writing teachers need to focus on readers relevant to what learners will need to be successful once they are away from their classrooms (Hyland, 2019). Like writers often write to reach an end in some social setting, genre theorists argue that genre pedagogy allows teachers and students to view writing as an opportunity to engage the reader in a meaningful way. According to Hyland (2004), writing instructors and researchers may see how L2 students use different language resources to participate in communicative settings and how this understanding could be applied in the real world to produce better works. He also believed genre pedagogies have evolved due to the communicative method of language pedagogy.

### **SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS AND GENRE**

The idea of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) explains how linguistic views relate to the social environment (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This point of thought holds that the term "genre" relates to a language's cultural context or how language is employed in a context. Because it makes it simple for EFL students to select various lexico-grammar sources by each communicative circumstance, the SFL theory is significant for teaching writing skills (Derewianka, 1992). Derewianka (1992) asserted that a writer can flexibly choose the right lexico-grammar to represent what the writer wants readers to understand. Therefore, writing instructors must explain each genre's purpose in great detail so that EFL students may recognize how these various writing genres contrast.

The idea of register in SFL theory refers to how linguistic decisions are connected to the context of a situation. Field, Tenor, and Mode are three characteristics of a Register connected to the corresponding metafunctions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin & Rose, 2008). The Field aids in our comprehension of specific lexico-grammatical constructions, vocabulary, syntax, and tenses by individuals. We can comprehend what is happening in the text thanks to conceptual meta-functions. We can better grasp the interaction between authors and readers thanks to the interpersonal meta-function of The Tenor. Finally, the Mode serves as a textual meta-function that enables us to comprehend how the text is structured by making it easier to comprehend the theme, rheme, and coherent tools. Martin (2016) asserted that the genre in SFL refers to the networks of social interactions that make up a culture. According to Bhatia (2014), the genre is related to language use in a formalized communicative context that enables speakers and writers to accomplish predetermined communicative objectives.



The employment of lexico-grammatical and semiotic resources are just two examples of the fixed structural forms that genre provides.

Martin and Christie (1984, as cited in Martin, 2016) argued that genre in SFL is intentional and serves a social function: writers and speakers who employ the genre can be viewed as belonging to a particular culture, while Eggins (2004) stated that each genre text serves a specific cultural purpose based on its generic structure and conventional pattern. Realizing the link between (1) social objectives and (2) circumstances as unique linguistic interactions is a key idea in SFL (Fakhruddin & Hassan, 2015). They argued that through comprehending these social settings and goals, writers and speakers might grasp the language's meaning and unique social acts. According to the present study, a genre is a written text that enables us to recognize and comprehend the connection between a text's social objectives and its structural elements, which could enhance writers' linguistic activities.

#### **RESEARCH ON THE GENRE-BASED APPROACH OF WRITING IN EFL CONTEXTS**

Mohseni (2022) in a quasi-experimental study, investigated how genre-based instruction (GBI) affected the writing abilities of Iranian college students who study aviation. Fifty-one students who majored in aviation were split into two groups; an experimental group and a control group for comparison. To compare the two groups and provide more accurate data, the researchers administered a Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) test before the treatment. The control group received conventional writing training while the experimental group received specific instruction using the genre-based instruction (GBI). Writing GBI might greatly enhance coherence, cohesiveness, and organization, according to the independent t-test. This study can help EFL teachers by illuminating the best ways to utilize GBI of writing in a real-world classroom setting. The results of the study indicate that using genre-based teaching could be effective in developing learners' writing competence and skills, in particular in areas of coherence, cohesion, and organization. The study also revealed that, more importantly, explicit use of genre-based teaching could create a more friendly and positive atmosphere where teacher and student would have a better collaboration and cooperation in the writing tasks, teaching, and learning process.

Ariyanfar and Mitchell (2020) discussed the results of two recent Iranian studies, including the Genre-Based Method and Mobile-Assisted Dynamic Assessment, and discussed some recent research on the development of academic writing skills through genre-based instruction as opposed to conventional methods. The concentration on form, language, rhetoric, and cultural contextualization in the genre-based method is stronger and more confident authors and better syllabus development, according to the outcomes. The result of the study showed that, according to the principles of genre based instruction, preparing EFL learners with task-based cooperative coursework including contextualizing texts in their social context, learners can be able to explore genre, connecting them to their audience and their goal. The approach has proven effective for the most successful and interested writers. However, the implementation of such an approach to writing is difficult for teachers who have never had experience with the



genre approach. It is therefore necessary for them to be psychologically and concretely prepared or trained in methodology.

The effects of teaching Thai engineers how to write professionally using a genre-based method were examined by Ueasiriphan and Tangkiengsirisin in 2019. The research used the pretest-posttest design to examine the 10 Thai students who were in the same subject and had varying skill levels. The paired t-test evaluation of the study's results demonstrated the beneficial impacts of genre-based writing education. Through interviews with four participants, the results also showed favorable attitudes toward the way technical writing was taught. The findings of the study suggest that a clear understanding of how target texts are structured is an important advantage in genre-based instruction, as it clarifies language pattern, content, organization, vocabulary, language usage, and mechanics, thereby helping both teachers and engineers. It also suggests that the teacher plays a central role in learning from scaffolding engineers by using different exercises and providing a framework adapted to the language and context.

De Smedt and van Keer (2018) used an experimental design in which the learners of the experimental group were divided into two groups. In the first group, explicit instruction was given along with collaborative writing and they were asked to write collaboratively, while in the second group, which was called the comparison group, the same direct instruction was given, but they were asked to write individually. Then, both intervention conditions were compared with the control group. The study indicated that the experimental group performed better than the comparison and control groups. The findings revealed that the dialogic interaction between different stages of writing provided a collaborative atmosphere where learners could understand their weaknesses and take action to improve them while assessing their writing tasks. The results also showed that students' attitudes toward teaching methodology, activities and exercises were positive. In addition, students felt more confident in writing as a result of the collaborative and friendly atmosphere.

Negretti and McGarth (2018) studied eight doctorate candidates participating in a genre based course on ESP writing for science research to determine how much genre knowledge may be improved through metacognitive exercises. The metacognitive exercises (visualization and reflection) effectively encouraged students to incorporate many facets of their genre knowledge in their writing of scientific articles, according to qualitative data analysis. The results of this study demonstrated clear ways to develop L2 writing expertise through a genre-based approach. The findings indicate that genre awareness and understanding of the genre and its related elements requires a higher level of metacognition: that is to say, that students learn to recognize, adapt to, and maybe even innovate genre diversity. In order to help with this metacognition, the students will require appropriate genre-related instruction in order to have this level of awareness of the genre and the genre's related elements and content.

The efficacy and effectiveness of the SFL genre-based writing strategy in teaching the explanatory essay genre to L2 learners in the language-integrated courses was examined by Kuiper et al. (2017) These researchers studied how GBWI could be used to assist or support students in writing a specific genre associated with their



particular area of study, or an aspect connected to their specific domain or subject. The study's results showed that after tertiary-level students completed SFL genre-based writing instruction integrated into subject teaching, there was a statistically significant improvement in the effective use of typical linguistic and genre features between pre-intervention and post-intervention. The study's findings also showed that the GBWI benefited students' use of structuring when learning to write in a topic course, which improved students' overall writing competency. The results of the study recommend that writing teachers develop both their knowledge of the language and the genres of their subject to build students' writing skills. To scaffold students' development, they should successfully adapt their support throughout the lessons to the students' needs using interactive scaffolding. The results of the study also suggest that it is crucial to rethink students' starting points before each lesson in order to optimally align instructional activities. Furthermore, allowing ample time for interaction scaffolding within the lessons is crucial, as it is believed that it is in the interaction between teacher and students that actual learning takes place.

Salehpour and Saeidi (2014) also investigated the effect of scaffolded genre-based writing frames and sentence starters on MA students' research paper writing. Twenty MA students with ELT majors were randomly divided into a control and an experimental group to achieve this goal. Both groups underwent genre-based instruction during five sessions, while the experimental group was scaffolded through sentence starters and writing frames. The findings of the independent sample of the t-test demonstrated that genre-based instruction has a significant effect on improving academic writing. Furthermore, the outperformance of the experimental group students indicates the beneficial effect of scaffolding through the starters and frames. The findings of the study showed that the teacher's scaffolding is one of the main factors in creating a fearless environment where students become confident in taking responsibility for learning. Scaffolding was conducted by providing students with explicit knowledge and guided practices throughout the writing tasks. The study showed that during the teaching and learning process, the students and the teacher worked collaboratively as they conducted discussions to complete tasks. This collaboration enabled the students to share information, knowledge and experiences about what they have learned and finally to apply them in the construction of the type of text. As a result, students increased their ability to write.

### **THE NEED TO TEACH ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING**

Argumentative writing is a kind of writing in which the primary assumption of the argumentative genre is audience awareness; therefore, the writer tries to convince the reader about their opinion with logical claims (Sasaki, 2000). Argumentation is considered an inevitable genre of human life (Krause & Obrien, 2001). They believed that children try to persuade others to attain their desires and gain favor at early stages. For this purpose, they apply various strategies such as crying, persisting, and logical reasoning to achieve their aims. Therefore, they keep trying to evaluate themselves regarding their argumentative ability—the arguments made to them. According to Krause and Obrient (2001), audience awareness is the main factor in argumentative writing. Based on this rationale, it is most effective for practitioners and teachers to evaluate their senior secondary school students' argumentative essays



regarding the employment of meta-discourse features to trigger such awareness. The study's findings revealed that the effective teaching of writing as a process and writing an argument requires the development of sophisticated ideas about the nature and sources of data and, therefore, the role of language generally. In addition, the study's results reveal that teaching argumentation is not possible by considering it as a matter of form and text elaboration; instead, it's a matter of idea expansion and interpretation. Therefore, it is necessary to teach argument writing to high school students and prepare them to broaden their knowledge, develop ideas, and communicate effectively using relevant and authentic evidence to be able to argue logically and thoughtfully in real-world situations, get ready for success in college, and meet the needs of their life. That is why students need explicit instruction and feedback in argument writing, as they are not likely to learn to develop strong arguments by themselves.

Hence, to shed some new light on the effectiveness of genre-based instruction, the present study was conducted around the following research questions:

1. Does genre-based instruction (GBI) significantly affect the EFL students' argumentative writing proficiency?
2. How do high school students perceive genre-based instruction as an effective means of enhancing their proficiency in writing English argumentative essays?
3. Do the results of classroom observation checklists in the genre-based instruction group verify the results obtained from interviews and perception questionnaire in this group?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

A mixed-methods research was conducted to answer the above research questions. In this research, the researcher 1) collected both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently but separately, 2) analyzed the two data sets separately and independently using typical quantitative and qualitative procedures, and 3) interpreted how the two data sets converged to enable the researcher to make meaning out of their outcomes in order to accomplish better the purpose of the study. To sum it up, the researcher triangulated the data from qualitative analysis of interview, observation and quantitative analysis of students' pretest and post-test test scores. That is why the followed a mixed-methods approach in which students' writing results were quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed and compared after implementing metalinguistic feedback treatments to their initial argumentative writings.

### **PARTICIPANTS**

The population of the current study was 195 pre-university students in humanities, experimental and mathematical fields, who were studying in middle schools of Varamin, located 35 km from Tehran, in the academic year 1399-1400. Both male and female students learning English as a foreign language participated in the study. Based on multi-stage cluster sampling, five schools were first randomly selected out of 35 high-school schools in Varamin, regardless of the gender of the schools. Then from each school, two classes out of 5 or 6, studying pre-university courses, were





randomly chosen. As a result of such sampling, out of these five schools, three boys' and two girls' schools were chosen as participating schools in this study. Finally, one class was selected as an interactive metalinguistic feedback group among the two classes and one class as a control group. Eventually, each class consisted of 20 students. Some of them in each class stood proficient EFL learners, so the researcher needed to be aware of the homogeneity of the participants and reduce the effect of their proficiency level on the study results in both groups in all five schools.

### **INSTRUMENTS AND MATERIALS**

#### **PRELIMINARY ENGLISH TEST (PET)**

To homogenize students at intermediate level, a standardized copy of the PET was used. This test consists of four parts which include: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Each part of the test has the same value- 25% each. The total score is measured by adding the scores from all the parts together. The administration of the whole test takes two hours.

#### **WRITTEN ENGLISH TESTS**

The researcher designed two writing English tests, one test as a pretest and the other as a posttest. The instructions for these tests consisted of three main parts; the first part stated the time limit of the test, the second part specified a topic that test-takers should write about, and the third part stated that the test-takers should write their essays/answers in as few words as possible. The researcher selected two different issues for the tests to avoid practice effects.

#### **RATING SCALE FOR EFL ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING**

To provide precise scoring criteria and to thoroughly and objectively evaluate the quality of arguments/argumentation, the researcher developed a rating system appropriate for classroom assessment of the argumentative writing ability of the participants. This scale was used to mark the pretest and the afterwards essays of the participants.

#### **PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE**

The researcher-made perception questionnaire consisting of ten items was another vital data source for determining an improvement in writing proficiency. The results demonstrated the students' attitudes and feelings towards the teaching intervention and their proficiency levels in writing English. The perception questionnaire was administered to the students after treatment to investigate their perceptions of and feelings towards English writing instruction

#### **SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

In the present study, the researcher selected a semi-structured interview for two-way communication. Participants could easily express their experiences, perceptions, and feelings about this approach to writing argumentative





articles. Thus, 20 students were interviewed after writing the posttest to record their experiences, perceptions, and feelings about the argumentative writing strategies they had learned.

### **OBSERVATION CHECKLIST**

An observation checklist is a set of items that assist an observer to investigate the extent of the effect of interactive metalinguistic feedback on participants' argumentative writing and their active participation in teaching learning process.

### **ESTIMATING THE RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

The following sections demonstrate the results gained from the analysis of the reliability of the instruments used in this study, obtained in the piloting stage.

**Table 1**

*Reliability Indices of Research Instruments*

Instruments	Items	R
Written English tests	20	0.78
Analytic rating scale	18	0.83
Perception questionnaire	10	0.85
Observation scheme	13	0.79

As shown in Table 1, the reliability indices/levels of the research instruments proved to be adequate to be applied in the current study. In the second phase of this study, the researcher himself conducted a semi-structured interview with the participants. These interview sessions were conducted in the hope of obtaining reliable and valid results. He initially created a friendly/comfortable atmosphere to make the students feel comfortable. Having presented himself, the interviewer briefly explained the purpose of the interview to the participants but refrained from providing too much disclosing information related to the research study to prevent the formation of biases in the participants. To determine the reliability of the interview questions, two language experts specializing in applied linguistics were consulted.



### **DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE**

After examining all students' homogeneity, the researcher initially gave both experimental and control classes a pretest in the second session. From the second session onwards, in each session, on the one hand, the researcher provided the participants of the control class with conventional methods; on the other hand, the participants of the experimental class were provided with a certain type of argumentative genre text as a model, which was based on student's needs and wants to develop the classroom's inductive and deductive tasks or activities. Next, the learners were persuaded to write on the topic out of class. After writing the essays, the students handed in their products through Shade App, What's App, or Email. The researcher then provided the learners with metalinguistic feedback in the form of comments and explanations of errors. In this study, the researcher taught the argumentative genre text types through genre-based instruction by following Hyland's (2003) and Cope and Kalantzis's (1993) model, including modeling a text, joint construction, and independent construction of a text.

In the modeling stage, the researcher initially chose a particular type of argumentative genre text based on students' needs and wants to develop the classroom inductive and deductive tasks or activities. Then the researcher and the students analyzed and discussed this type of genre through modeling and deconstruction. After discussing the text genre, the students were scaffolded to know and understand the function of the text, the communicative purpose of the text, and the purpose of the writing procedure. After demonstrating the steps of the argumentative essay stage, the researcher's role in the joint construction stage consisted of directing and guiding students to create a new argumentative essay in the target genre. Therefore, genre-based instruction involved collaboration between the researcher and the participants at this stage.

The last stage was called the independent construction of a text. At this stage, the students after they had understood and experienced stages one and two were expected to write a specific genre. At this point in the lesson timeline, the teacher needed to make sure that the students comprehend the features of a specific genre, such as the communicative purpose, structure of the text, relevant vocabulary usage, and rhetorical features. Before completing the treatment period, a perception questionnaire in the quantitative part of the study and a semi-structured interview in the qualitative part were administered concurrently to the GBI class to identify the students' attitudes and feelings towards the teaching intervention and their proficiency assessment in writing argumentative essays. Furthermore, a classroom observation was conducted concurrently to observe the strategies the researcher used in the GBI class to improve the participants' proficiency and to observe the participants' engagement with the intervention received. After finishing the data collection, the received data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and theme-based analysis. At the end of the treatment sessions, writing post-test was given to both classes to determine the effect of the treatment.



### **DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE**

Both qualitative and quantitative data analyses were taken into account in the present study as follows.

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics and a one-way ANCOVA were run to examine whether there was any significant difference between the effects of genre-based instruction (GBI) on high school students' proficiency in writing English argumentative essays.

To answer the second research question, the data obtained from Perception Questionnaire were calculate through descriptive statistics including percentage, standard deviation, and mean scores to investigate students' perceptions towards the kind of intervention they received. To answer the forth research question, first, the data obtained from the interview and observation were gathered and analyzed through thematic analysis, and then their findings were triangulated with the findings of perception questionnaire.

### **RESULTS**

#### **RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY ENGLISH TEST (PET)**

A standard version of PET was used to select a homogenous sample of the participants. Hence, The PET was administeted to 40 EFL learners in five randomly selected highschoools in Varamin city. The descriptive statistics of the PET results were illustrated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Participants' Scores on Pre-test of Argumentative Writing*

	N	Min	Max	M	SD
PET	195	43	62	52.5	1.708

According to Table 2 the mean and standard deviation of PET scores were 52.5 and 1.708, respectively. Based on the PET results, those participants whose scores fell within one SD below and above the mean were selected as the homogeneous research sample. Accordingly, 40 out of 195 Iranian high school students were randomly selected and divided into two equal (n=20) experimental group as genre-based instruction class (GBIC) and control group as control class (CC).

### **ANSWER TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

#### **THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION**

To answer the first research question, descriptive statistics and a one-way ANCOVA were run to examine whether there was any significant difference between the effects of genre-based instruction (GBI) on high school students' proficiency in writing English argumentative essays. The descriptive statistics is presented in table 3.



**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for the Participants' Scores on Post-test of Argumentative Writing*

Test	Classes	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test (Writing)	Control	20	5.11	1.02	0.41
	GBI	20	8.75	2.32	0.28

As the above table indicates, the mean score of the GBI (M= 8.75, SD= 0.28) was considerably higher than the control group (M= 5.11, SD= 1.02) in the writing post-test. To ensure the significance of this difference, the results presented in the one-way ANCOVA table (Table 4) should be scrutinized.

**Table 4**

*Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for Posttest of Writing English Argumentative Essays by Groups with Pretest*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Pretest	91.612	1	51.612	45.616	.000	.222
Group	85.268	1	41.268	53.008	.000	.197
Error	26.988	37	1.330			
Total	1184.000	40				

And finally; Table 4 displays the main results of One-Way ANCOVA. The results ( $F(1, 37) = 41.268, p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .197$  representing a large effect size) indicated that the genre-based group significantly outperformed the CONTROL group on the posttest of writing English argumentative essays after controlling for the effect of the pretest. Thus, the null-hypothesis as "there are no significant differences between the effects of genre-based instruction and control group on high school students' proficiency in writing English argumentative essays", was rejected.

### RESULTS OF THE SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION

The second research question intended to explore the EFL students' attitudes and feelings towards the genre-based instruction as a teaching intervention and their proficiency assessment in writing English. To answer this research question, the data from the questionnaire and interviews were gathered and reported. In the following paragraphs, first, the results of questionnaires are presented, then, the findings from the interview are touched upon.



### RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES

The overall analysis of the questionnaires in GBG indicated that most of the participants in this class favored the genre-based instruction for enhancing English argumentative writing in Iranian EFL context. However, the participants' tendency was presented more in the items with the higher frequency including Item 4 (M=3.98; SD=1.544, *I am able to write English correctly when teachers provide help but allow me to discover answers by myself. (ZPD)*), Item 13 (M=3.81; SD= 1.574, *I can express my feeling towards the things I like and do not like when I construct knowledge with the help of peers. (ZPD/ Scaffolding)*), Item 6 (M=3.74; SD=1.034, *I can clearly understand the procedures of the argumentative essays when learning happens through cooperative or collaborative dialogue. (Social learning)*), Item 10 (M=3.54, SD= 1.765, *It is easy for me to write the first paragraph (thesis) paying attention to the different moves and sequences of the genre discussed in the previous lesson. (Social learning)*), and Item 1 (M=3.45, SD= 1.765, *I will experience a high sense of achievement when I work in group. (Situated Learning)*), respectively. All in all, the results revealed that the participants had positive perceptions and attitudes toward using interactive metalinguistic feedback in the classroom.

### RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEW

The responses of twenty participants of the GBI class to the interview questions were analyzed using thematic analysis to explore their attitudes and perceptions on the GBI approach to writing. The significant themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis of the obtained from the data include *social learning*, *situated learning*, *scaffolding*, *dialogic interaction*, and *ZPD*. It appears that learning in context, learning through cooperation, learning through negotiation of meaning, learning through interactive feedback, and learning through comprehensible input are reflected in the themes. The first theme *\_situated learning\_* refers to how learners feel relaxed when learning is situated. Most of them believed that learning is effective when one can participate effectively in the situation or real setting and the teacher acts as a provider, facilitator, and mediator of knowledge.

The second central theme extracted from the interviews was *social learning*. The participants considered learning through cooperation as an essential technique of writing instruction. Most of them believed that through joint construction phase where they exchange their work in a group, they could give questions, suggestions, and corrections about the content and language used on their partners. The third theme, *\_dialogic interaction\_* showed that most participants believed that dialogic interaction between different stages of writing provided a collaborative atmosphere where they could understand their weaknesses and take action to improve them while assessing their writing tasks. Regarding the fourth theme *\_scaffolding\_* the participants found the teacher's scaffolding more significant during the initial stages related to modeling context and deconstructing exemplar texts. Most of them maintained that such scaffolding from the teacher is especially helpful to those who probably need extra support at the beginning to become more confident.



The final theme was *ZPD*. The results indicated that most participants believed learning to write becomes easy for them when the researcher provided them with support in the form of comments and explanations of errors to the extent that made it easier for them to understand.

### **THE RESULTS OF THE THIRD RESEARCH QUESTION**

The third research question was an attempt to find the extent to which the results of classroom observation checklists in GBIG could verify the results obtained from interviews and perception questionnaire in this group. To answer the question first, the data obtained from the interviews and observations were gathered and analyzed through thematic analysis, and then the findings from the perception questionnaires, interviews, and observation checklists were triangulated.

#### **RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEWS**

The responses of twenty participants of the GBI groups to the interview questions were analyzed using thematic analysis to explore their attitudes and perceptions on the GBI approach to writing. The significant themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of the data include *social learning*, *situated learning*, *scaffolding*, *dialogic interaction*, and *ZPD*. The significant themes derived from the interview questions can be encapsulated in the following paragraphs. The first theme *\_situated learning\_* refers to how learners feel relaxed when learning is situated. Most of them believed that learning is effective when one can participate effectively in the situation or real setting and the teacher acts as a provider, facilitator, and mediator of knowledge. Some of them believed that modeling phase can provide us with a learning environment that reflects the culture and tools used in real-life situations. As one of the participants maintained, in pre-writing activities the researcher helped us become aware of the social objective of the selected genre, as well as other contextual factors influencing the production of texts, including the subject of the discourse, the tenor of the relationship between the authors and the readers involved, and the manner of the discourse.

The second central theme extracted from the interviews was *social learning*. The participants considered learning through cooperation as an essential technique of writing instruction. Most of them believed that through joint construction phase where they exchanged their work in a group, they could give questions, suggestions, and corrections about the content and language used on their partners. The third theme, *\_dialogic interaction\_* showed that most participants believed that dialogic interaction between different stages of writing provided a collaborative atmosphere where they could understand their weaknesses and take action to improve them while assessing their writing tasks. Regarding the fourth theme *\_scaffolding\_* the participants found the teacher's scaffolding more significant during the initial stages related to modeling context and deconstructing exemplar texts. Most of them maintained that such scaffolding from the teacher is especially helpful to those who probably need extra support at the beginning to become more confident. They also reported that it allowed them to explore the correction of some errors independently.



The final theme was *ZPD*. The results indicated that most participants believed learning to write becomes easy for them when the researcher provided them with support in the form of comments and explanations of errors to the extent that made it easier for them to understand. Some of them also asserted that through comprehensible input, we are enabled to develop from our actual levels into potential level during which we can acquire and learn the required abilities that help us to become more independent writer at later stages.

### **THE RESULTS OF THE OBSERVATION**

After analyzing the results of the interviews, the results from the GBIC observations were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis and reported to either verify or nullify the previous findings. After analyzing the results of the interviews, finally these significant themes derived from the classroom observation can be encapsulated in the following paragraphs. The findings from the observation revealed that all of the participants favored the theme *Situated Learning*, where the researcher provided an authentic sample of an argumentative essay with the participants who are asked to read it and analyze it with the help of the researcher, and the theme *Social Learning*, where participants exchange their work in pairs, construct their knowledge in interaction with peers, reconstruct an argumentative essay through cooperation.

Other important outcomes from the observation were the theme *Scaffolding*, where the participants are asked to answer questions with the help of the researcher in order to model context of culture, situation, and text features, the theme *Dialogic Interaction*, where the researcher interacts with students to motivate participants to the topic of the sample essay by relating it to their lives, the theme *ZPD*, where the researcher explains the purpose, the function, the generic structure, and the language features of the sample essay to provide suitable input in order to make them understand them and allowed them to discover solutions by themselves, and the theme *Meaning Construction*, where the researcher gives the participants one topic to write argumentative essay in class in joint construction phase and participants are then asked to compose their first draft carefully, find, and edit their grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors before delivering their final work in independent construction phase.

### **DISCUSSION**

The present study was an attempt to compare the likely effect of genre-based instruction on Iranian high school students' argumentative writing. With respect to the data analyzed to answer research questions addressing different aspects of the study, the researcher drew the following conclusions. The results of One-Way ANCOVA indicated that the genre-based group significantly outperformed the control group on the posttest of writing English argumentative essays after controlling for the effect of pretest. Therefore, the answer to first research question points to the superiority of genre based instruction over traditional instruction in the L2 writing classroom.

The reason to explain the results obtained in the present study is that through a genre-based approach to writing, students are not left alone, trying to achieve and discover native rules and structures which may be beyond





their capability, especially for those with limited linguistic proficiency. Likewise, teachers are not left indecisive about their role in the classroom (Ariyanfar & Mitchell, 2020). Unlike the other approaches to writing, in the genre-based approach, the teacher is required to intervene to provide explicit instruction and productive feedback on forms and how patterns of language early on during classroom instruction (Ariyanfar & Mitchell, 2020).

Another noteworthy point in the findings of the present study was that the genre-based approach to writing was able to create a clear understanding of the role of language in the educational context and the linguistic description of the main genres in high school students, so that, as expected, the students almost after 12 sessions were able to learn how to write. This is in line with the findings of a good number of researches conducted in the Iranian context (e.g., Mohseni, 2022) who found that relying on a genre-based approach to teaching L2 writing leads to better and more confident student-writers because of its focus on the elements of structure, language, rhetoric, and cultural contextualization.

The results of data analysis pertained to the observation and interview data revealed that genre-based instruction and interactive metalinguistic feedback instruction had a positive effect on the improvement and development of the student's writing skills when they were based on *situated learning, social learning, ZPD, scaffolding, and dialogic interaction*. Based on the results of the qualitative part of the study, students were expected to be actively involved in their learning process. They were called to take charge of their writing by selecting their topics to write about and by deciding how their topics would be developed and what the end product might be. Because the instruction was based on interaction and synergy, based on the principles of such instruction, the teacher needed to create a safe and collaborative atmosphere, encourage students to participate in class activities, transfer their learning experiences to others, and correct their mistakes and classmates. An elemental aspect of a successful classroom is that learners feel the minimum amount of anxiety in the L2 classroom (Salehpour and Saeidi, 2014).

Second, through the dialogic interaction and ZPD that emerged during the various stages of teaching writing, the teacher conversed with students to motivate them on the topic of the argumentative essay, encouraged them to exchange their opinions on peers' writing, and provided scaffolding opportunities for the students to create or refine their arguments. In line with De Smedt and Van Keer (2018), who indicated that the process of feedback or assistance has to be in the form of dialogic and entail a continuous assessment of the learner's ZPD and adjusting of help to best facilitate developmental progression from other-regulation to self-regulation. Accordingly, ZPD' claim on the ground that what one will be able to do independently in the future is the result of what one can do presently with assistance, has been followed in both the study groups in the present research.

Third, the instructions embedded in GBI allows the learners to meet and learn what is required in writing an argumentative essay. Based on the principles of such approach, in each session, the teacher gives the learners an example of an argumentative essay model and then explains its purpose, function, generic structure, and language



features to make the learners understand those elements (Mohseni, 2022). After getting some practical experiences, the learners are asked to write an essay in groups. Then, the teacher asks them to exchange their work in pairs. At this stage, they are told to give comments, questions, suggestions, and corrections about their partner's content, organization, vocabulary, and language use. Finally, they are asked to write the first draft individually based on their friend's questions, comments, and corrections (which signify the peer feedback). Therefore, these instructions would increase students' self-confidence and provide them with positive attitudes toward writing. The reason is that the discovery of the generic features and structures of an argumentative essay through explicit analysis of the written texts would assist them in becoming aware of how to take on the act of writing argumentative essays. These findings are also consistent with a study reported by Ganapathy et al. (2020) showing that most learners preferred direct feedback because they could understand errors more clearly. The results also showed that learners tended to focus on forms such as grammar, paragraph organization, content, and idea clarity.

As it was already mentioned, the results obtained from the interviews and perception questionnaire revealed that firstly some strategies had a more significant role in improving high school students' writing proficiency and secondly what strategies students favored and acknowledged more than others, therefore; through classroom observations the researcher practically observed those strategies within students' classroom interactions. First of all, the thematic analysis from the interview and observation transcripts revealed that based on *situated learning*, several authentic samples of an argumentative essay were presented to the participants who were asked to read the text and analyze it with the help of the researcher. Second, it was seen that the researcher provided the learner with a sample of an argumentative essay aiming at familiarizing them with an authentic piece of writing to immerse participants into the actual usage of English communication, verifying the principles of *situated learning*. Third, the researcher interacted with students to motivate them to the topic of the sample essay by relating it to their lives. Here, a kind of *dialogic interaction* was provided. Fourth, it was observed that the participants were asked to answer questions with the help of the researcher to model the context of culture, situation, and text features so that the learning context was *scaffolded*. In the fifth place, to have a kind of ZPD, the researcher explained the purpose, the function, the generic structure, and the language features of the sample essay to provide suitable input to make them understand how to write. In the sixth place, it was seen that the researcher allowed the participants to consult with him to practice the task. Thus, *scaffolding* also occurred in the writing developmental process. In the seventh place, based on *social learning*, the participants were asked to exchange their work in pairs. They could give comments, questions, suggestions, and corrections about their partner's content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The qualitative results of this part also take support from Fithriani's (2019) study, in which the findings indicated that social learning, situated learning, ZPD, and dialogic interaction through productive feedback could encourage students to develop their writing skills as they co-constructed knowledge with others.



## CONCLUSION

After a careful review of the theoretical and empirical research in second language acquisition and getting the idea that writing is an important communication skill for language learning progress, this study was designed to investigate the effects of genre-based instruction (GBI) on high school students' proficiency in writing English argumentative essays. The results indicated that GBI positively affected Iranian high school students' proficiency in writing argumentative essay in English. The main value of genre-based writing instruction is that genre pedagogy has real benefits for learners as it brings together language, content and contexts. Genre-based education also empowers teachers to present students with explicit and systematic explanations of how writing works to communicate. The results of the qualitative part of the study also revealed that both genre-based instruction will have a positive effect on the improvement and development of the student's writing proficiency when they are based on situated learning, social learning, ZPD, scaffolding, and dialogic interaction. This implies that any instruction (feedback or assistance) that is in the form of dialogue which is in line with the learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD), consequently could facilitate students' progression from other-regulation to self-regulation (Social Learning, ZPD, and Scaffolding).

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