A Genre-based Approach in Teaching Writing to Student Teachers of English Language Teaching in a Digital Context

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ABSTRACT

The current study presents the findings of a pre-test/post-test design to explore the efficacy of a genre-based approach to teaching argumentative essay writing during synchronous classes. The study is conducted with the participation of a group of freshman and junior year student teachers of English Language Teaching enrolled at the course of Writing Skills-II. Forty-five student teachers' argumentative essays on the same topic they wrote before and after the instruction were analyzed. The study focuses on four steps of the teaching-learning cycle of a genre-based approach suggested by Hyland (2007). During eight weeks, setting the context, modeling, joint construction, and individual construction were adapted and developed with the participants. The researchers evaluated the student teachers' essays via the "Rubric for the Assessment of the Argumentative Essay", which centers on introduction, main points conclusion, and mechanics. After the grading completed by the researchers, the interrater reliability analysis was conducted. The overall score and scores on each component of the pre- and post-instruction were compared via Paired sample t-test. The findings showed that the genre-based instruction provided positive results in terms of improving student teachers' argumentative essay writing in synchronous classes.

INTRODUCTION

When we look at the history of modern-day language teaching, we see that in the mid-19th century, scholars emphasized grammar, vocabulary, and reading in language teaching activities. In a sense, the focus and medium of language teaching were written materials. With the emergence of the Direct Method, which is followed by the Situational Language Teaching (SLT) and Audiolingual Method (ALM), there is a shift in focus from written to spoken language.

The period beginning in the 1960s witnessed the advocacy of written language from different perspectives. On the one hand, challenging the suggestions of ALM and SLT, supporters of Communicative Language Teaching drew our attention to the fact the communication is both a spoken and written phenomenon (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). On the other hand, Derrida (1997), mainly drawing on Hjelmslev's criticizing the idea of language naturally bound to the substance of phonic expression, believed all linguistic theories had given undue importance to speech rather than writing, did not see writing as secondary and exterior. While Saussure, Rousseau and Levi

Straus attack writing talking about "tyranny of writing", considering the introduction of writing in Western thought as Original Sin whose function is to facilitate the enslavement of human beings, Derrida argues that writing does not befall an innocent language because writing cannot 'corrupt', 'suppress' or 'distort' real meaning, for there is no real meaning to be corrupted, only an anterior sequence of signs (Almond, 2004).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Genre-based writing approach

Long before Derrida's ideas, the start of teaching writing in schools indicated a major paradigm change in the historical evolution of societies. As Harmer (2004) argues, the ability to read and write had not gained importance until two hundred years ago. Before that time, literacy was considered suitable for rulers of church and state, for too much knowledge was thought to be harmful to the majority of working population. Considering this fact, it is not surprising that, as pointed out by Hyland (2003), not until the 1980s that English as a second/foreign language writing (will be referred to as L2 writing) has become a unique area to be investigated. Like all other skills, classroom practices for L2 writing have been shaped based on the principles of the language teaching methods/approaches over time. Hyland (2003) summarizes the main orientations to L2 writing teaching: 'structure', 'function', 'expressivist', 'process', 'content', and 'genre' (p.23).

Writing can be described as a gradual process completed in four phases, each of which is also espoused by a certain method or movement in language teaching. The four stages of writing:

Mechanics: emphasized in the low beginner stages; in line with structuralism

Extended Use of Language: emphasized in the high beginner or low intermediate stages; in line with cognitivism

Writing with Purpose: emphasized in high intermediate and low advanced stages; in line with functionalist movement

Full Expository Writing: emphasized in the terminal stage and overlaps with writing by native speakers (Bowen, Madsen, & Hilferty, 1985).

Seen in this light, a genre-based approach to writing could be considered a subgroup of full expository writing. In the late 1980s and 1990s, a genre approach that considers writing as a purposeful act and focuses on the analysis of the contextual situation in which writing takes place drew the interest of language teachers around the world because of its promise to make up for the limitations of the process approach, which left students to find the recurring text structures for themselves through experimentation and exploration (Ahn, 2012). The following definition of genre by Swales (1990) shows its features:

[a] genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style (p. 58).

The term genre has become a means of classifying written texts based on the language use they reveal and the style of the writers who have been asked to write in a certain way. The specific purpose, the overall structure and specific linguistic feature are the three major aspects with regard to which each genre is defined. Genre is also a way of categorizing texts and the situations in which

they occur (Hyland, 2009). In genre-based approach, "teachers provide students with opportunities to develop writing through analyzing expert texts." (Hyland, 2003, p.22).

There are "three traditions" in genre pedagogy: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)/the Sydney School, and Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) (Hyon, 1996). Hyland (2007) bases his approach on Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics, which to him is "the most clearly articulated approach to genre both theoretically and pedagogically" (p.153) and sociocultural theories of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The five cycles of genre approach in Hyland's (2007) proposal are: setting the context: revealing genre purposes and the settings in which it is commonly used; modeling: analyzing representative samples of the genre to identify its stages and key features and the variations which are possible; joint construction: guided, teacher-supported practice in the genre through tasks which focus on particular stages or functions of the text; independent construction: independent writing by students monitored by the teacher; and comparing: relating what has been learnt to other genres and contexts to understand how genres are designed to achieve particular social purposes.

A growing body of research studies show how a genre-based approach positively impacts students' writing skills in different essay types ranging from argumentative to narrative in various contexts (Carstens, 2009; Chen & Su, 2012; Gómez Burgos, 2017; Kongpetch, 2006).

Teaching writing in digital contexts

It is quite certain that we live in a time that everyone is required to have digital literacy skills. European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (2019) identifies digital competence as one of the eight key competencies for lifelong learning. Therefore, it has not been surprising that there is a growing body of research investigating the effects of different aspects of technology within the pedagogy.

The potential beneficial effects of ICT of teaching writing are discussed at three levels as text preparation, text composition, and text editing. Less anxiety and more collaboration are the two remarkable features of the preparation stage while the variety of the text types and the wider range of audience provides a better sense of purpose to the students. Lastly feedback received following relating to the draft, and other opportunities as offered by office programs and the internet such as spellcheck, thesaurus and dictionaries are also valuable resources for the students (Department of Education, 2021). In line with those theoretical arguments in an empirical study Ching (2018) investigated how the use of digital writing tools shape the activities and practices of learners using unfamiliar tools and technologies might reveal about writing processes and found that distraction free writing tools, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs may be best suited to exploratory writing in the early stages of composing processes. As the digital contexts are becoming more and more essential in teaching language skills, and it has almost the new paradigm in teaching first/second language writing with the digital technologies (Cole, 2009; Jiang & Zhang, 2020; Li, Chu, & Ki, 2014; Saricaoglu, 2019; Saricaoglu & Bilki, 2021; Yamaç, Öztürk, & Mutlu, 2020), we included the abovementioned and more digital tools in our study.

Genre-based writing approach in digital context

Given that teaching writing has been occurring in digital settings, various research studies have investigated genre-based writing from various dimensions: the effects of technological tools while writing a specific genre (Lu & Zhang, 2013) or writing and talking about a genre (Smith,

Kiili, & Kauppinen, 2016), the effects of genre-based approach in the digital context (Arroyo, Fernández-Lancho, & Martínez, 2021; Hsu & Liu, 2019) and the perceptions of learners (Oskoz & Elola, 2016). However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, there are not any studies tracing the effects of a genre-based approach during synchronous teaching. We wanted to follow genre-based instruction for the Writing Skills 2 class because of the principles of the genre-based instruction presented by Hyland (2004). We were convinced that it would provide us an environment where the students could collaborate and socialize during the Covid19 pandemic.

To test the effectiveness of genre-based instruction during online education, we designed an eight-week lesson plan based on Hyland's first four stages for a class of fifty-five students. One of the researchers was the Writing Skills 2 class instructor, but she was not the teacher of the Writing Skills 1 class, which was taught in the first semester. At the beginning of the second semester, she did a needs analysis which indicated that the students had written different types of paragraphs and worked on various organizational patterns, such as narration, description, and reading a table and reporting it. However, most of the students did not know what kinds of paragraphs they wrote, and not all of them were fully aware of the features of the paragraph types. Therefore, we decided to divide the semester into two sections: First, covering the essentials of the paragraph and essay writing, then focusing on a genre. Seven key genres are identified in the genre literature: recount, narrative, report, procedure, explanation, argument, and discussion (Derewianka, 1990). Considering the fact that the students were placed at the university with a high-stakes test, and they were all familiar and comfortable with the multiple-choice test technique, the argumentative essay genre would be a good choice.

As mentioned, the students and the instructor did not work together before, and the students did not seem to have enough knowledge of other genres to compare and contrast. Keeping in mind that information, we skipped the last stage of Hyland's cycle.

Present study

The scope of this study is limited to the effectiveness of a genre-based approach to teaching argumentative essays in a synchronous teaching setting. We tried to find answers to the following research questions:

1. Does online genre-based writing instruction improve students' overall argumentative essay writing performance?
1.1. In what aspect(s) does online genre-based writing instruction improve students' argumentative essay writing performance?

METHODOLOGY

Context

The study was conducted in an English Language Teaching Program in one of the universities located in the eastern part of Turkey. It is a five-year program with one year compulsory English preparatory education at the School of Foreign Languages. The students have to take a test assessing their four skills. If they can pass the test, they start directly to their undergraduate education. The students take classes focusing on language skills, language components, pedagogy, general culture, and teaching English during the program.

In Writing Skills classes, the students learn to write from paragraph to essay, different types of essays, and mechanics. The context of the study was an online setting in which the classes were done synchronously on Zoom, recorded, and uploaded to Moodle, the Learning Management System. The instructor met with the class once a week for two hours. The students were not required to turn on their videos, so only the instructor's camera was open during the classes. The students were encouraged to turn on their microphones when they wanted to state their opinions. The communication occurred via microphones and the chat box.

Participants

The students were freshman and junior year student teachers of the English Language Teaching Program enrolled at Writing Skills 2. While twelve of them had attended a compulsory preparatory school for one year, it was the first year for thirty-one of them.

Forty-five student teachers' (25 females and 20 males) essays were analyzed even though the number of the students who turned in their essays was fifty-five. Although all those fifty-five students took part in Phase 3, the joint construction part, ten students were not regulars, and the researchers were not sure whether those irregular students watched the recordings of the classes later or not. Therefore, their essays were not included in the data analysis part.

Data collection and analysis

The data were collected via argumentative essays written by the student teachers before the instruction in the first week (pre-test) and after the instruction in the eighth week (post-test).

We went through the rubrics for argumentative essays on the internet to assess the students' essays. After a review process, we agreed on the rubric called 'Rubric for the Assessment of the Argumentative Essay' (2021) since it included all the important points. However, we needed to adapt it our context in terms of scores and exclusion of one dimension. The adapted version was created by the researchers. A colleague who was teaching Writing Skills class in another university were consulted to get expert view for the adapted rubric. After working together for three essays, the researchers completed the grading independently. The Cohen's kappa coefficient analysis and paired sample t-tests were run for the data analysis via SPSS 26.

Design and procedure

The study adopts a pre-test/post-test design. The week before the treatment started, the students were informed about genre-based writing and the process they would follow. The details of the procedure are presented below:

Week 1: Writing the argumentative essay

In the first week of the study, the researchers wrote a couple of statements for the students on Google Forms to vote on the topic they would like to write. During class time, they were informed about the procedure and were asked to suggest a topic if they wanted to contribute. After students' suggestions were transformed into statements and written, they voted for the topic they were going to write about. Most of the students were in favor of the topic: 'nature'.

The students were asked to write an argumentative essay about the statement they chose with a maximum of 550 words. They completed the task within two class hours.

Week 2 and 3: Setting the context

In the second week, we wanted to teach the essence of the argumentative essay, i.e., arguments and counterarguments. Before starting the class, we wanted to activate the learners' schemas about argumentation and argumentative essay. The instructor followed a whole-class group discussion technique to get the students' experiences and ideas about arguing an issue in oral and written ways formally and informally. After getting different answers from the students based on their own lives, we had another discussion round focusing on analyzing an argumentative essay. We were trying to set the context; therefore, the questions we prepared centered on how the author supported their arguments; i.e., Did the author only take their side or both sides?, Was the author convincing?, Why/why not? Did the author use any statistical data? etc.

In the third week, we aimed the students to practice arguing an issue from both sides, i.e., arguments and counterarguments. For this purpose, we designed an activity called 'Fishbowl' in which the students were grouped, and they had to discuss some statements according to some participation rules. All students in the groups had to contribute to the discussion except for one student who had to follow the participation of the students and keep score. We designed this activity as we wanted the students to state their arguments and counterarguments in a structured way. The students did not have any experiences with 'Fishbowl' before; therefore, first, they were instructed about keeping scores, taking turns, and discussing. For modeling, the instructor asked for three volunteers to discuss a simple statement, and the rest would be the scorekeepers, including the instructor. After modeling, the instructor shared the statements with the students and wanted them to discuss the following statements considering both sides, respectively in their breakout groups. The abovementioned statements were 'Online education is/is not better than face-to-face education', 'Learning English is/is not easier than other languages.', and 'Having a gap year is/is not better after college.'

The instructor monitored the students while they were discussing and trying to come up with arguments and counterarguments.

Week 4 and 5: Modelling

For the following weeks, the essential motive was to provide a metalanguage to teach writing an argumentative essay. For this purpose, we used a textbook called "Writing Academic English" written by Oshima and Hogue (2006). The pattern we chose was the "point-by-point pattern" between the two patterns presented in the book, but the students were informed about the other argumentative essay types briefly, as well. The reason behind choosing the point-by-point pattern was the researchers' previous experiences with the first-year writing classes. These experiences showed that the students felt more comfortable writing in that pattern.

In the first step, the instructor showed the first argumentative essay from the book and asked some questions, such as 'What is the function of the first sentence?', 'What is the topic in this paragraph?', 'Which side does the author stand for?', 'How did you understand the side?', respectively, about the introduction. After getting the responses from the students, the instructor explicitly talked about the introduction by showing the sentences and their functions. The same procedure was followed for the body and conclusion. How the author stated their

counterarguments and arguments, how the meaning was transferred, and what kinds of transition words were used to make the paragraphs and the essay more coherent and cohesive were analyzed with the students.

While the instructor was talking about the body paragraph, she highlighted the importance of citation and plagiarism issues for all of the academic work the students would do in the future. She showed different citation styles but focused on the APA Style. The instructor did not teach every little detail about it, but the students were shared the website of Purdue University to refer when they needed it. The students were warned that they had to cite resources whenever they used someone else's work or words starting from the argumentative essay they were going to write. The features of the 'Point-by-Point Pattern' are presented below (Oshima & Hogue, 2006).

Table 1. Features of Point-by-Point Pattern of Argumentative Essay

Point-by-Point Pattern		
I.	**Introduction**	Explanation of the issue, including a summary of the other side's arguments
		Thesis statement
II.	**Body**	A. Statement of the other side's first argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument
		B. Statement of the other side's first argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument
		C. Statement of the other side's first argument and rebuttal with your own counterargument
III.	**Conclusion**	Summary of your point of view

After the instruction in the Week 4, the students were assigned some activities on Liveworksheets.com as homework. They were to find the theses statements in the introductory paragraphs of three argumentative essays and reorder the scrambled sentences of the three body paragraphs of an argumentative essay.

Week 5 started with a Kahoot game on citation to refresh the students' memories and continued with analyzing an argumentative essay's patterns and features retrieved from the internet. The students were asked to examine the paper based on the features of the argumentative essay and sent to breakout groups randomly. While they were discussing the topic, the instructor monitored them and asked some facilitative questions when they needed. Otherwise, she just listened to them and took some notes for the whole-class discussion. Following the group discussion, the whole class started stating their views about the essay based on the instructor's questions at the beginning of the group discussions.

Week 6 and 7: Joint construction

In Week 6, we wanted the students to work in groups and write argumentative essays of five paragraphs. The week before the class, they were asked to suggest argumentative essay topics on the Forum section of Moodle and identify their group members. One group member from each group sent a message to the instructor, and a lot of students came up with the topic suggestions and shared them on Moodle. All suggestions were written on Google Forms in the form of statements for the poll. Most of the students opted for the topic' Covid19 pandemic'.

The instructor was planning to send the students to breakout rooms on Zoom, but its limited time would have been inefficient, so the groups were asked to start meetings on Google Meet and share the links with her.

The instructor visited each group twice or three times based on the amount of help they needed. Each group, first, decided upon which side they would support. Following that, they wrote about the categories they would include in the body part of their essays. While some groups worked in every section together, a few groups divided the sections among themselves. After completing writing their own parts, they discussed their writings. The instructor monitored the groups in order of group numbers as a facilitator. Sometimes the groups asked for help, then she visited them and answered their questions. It was observed that all the group members and the instructor, when she was needed, scaffolded (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) the person who got confused. These moments were actually precious to witness the negotiation of meaning and the collaborative dialogue among the students (Donato, 1994; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Swales, 2006). All groups worked on their drafts and completed in Week 6 and uploaded them to the shared Google Folder of the Writing Skills 2 class. Each group was assigned to give feedback to one group till Week 7, which was the week for the revision and publication of the essays.

In Week 7, the groups opened their meeting rooms and shared the links with the instructor. They evaluated their peers' comments and worked on the suggestions they received. Some of the groups did not receive specific constructive feedback, but they got only positive feedback. In those groups, we discussed where they could improve in terms of content and mechanics. After we reviewed their works with each group, they completed their works.

Week 8: Independent construction

In the last week, the students were given 2 class hours to write about the same topic as they did at the beginning of the study. The students submitted their essays on the quiz section of Moodle as a Word document or online text.

All submissions were downloaded using the blind marking feature of Moodle and numbered. The researchers adapted the rubric to their contexts. In the original version, there was another section called 'Work Cited'; however, most of the students did not use any research studies or mention any specific study. If we had included that section, we would have to give the lowest point to those students, so we decided to exclude it. The final version of the Rubric for the highest grade can be seen below, but the whole rubric can be found in the Appendix.

Rubric for the assessment of the argumentative essay

Introduction (Background/History; Define the Problem; Thesis Statement): Well developed introductory paragraph covers the explanation of the subject with summarizing the counterarguments and the thesis statement.

Main Points Body Paragraphs with Refutations: Other side's three arguments are presented in every paragraph. Three counterarguments (author's arguments) are well developed with supporting details.

Conclusion: Conclusion summarizes the main topics without repeating previous sentences; the writer's opinions and suggestions for change are logical and well thought out.

Mechanics (Sentence Structure Punctuation & Capitalization): The sentence structure is correct. Punctuation and capitalization are correct.

On the rubric, each section has 25 points which makes a score of 100. The sections were already divided into four units indicating their levels from 1 to 4. We assigned a score for each level to reach 25: 1: 6.25 points; 2: 12.50 points; 3: 18:75 points; 4: 25 points. The researchers worked on three papers together, and then they graded the essays independently to provide inter-rater reliability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Cohen's kappa coefficient analysis indicated that the interrater reliability coefficients were 0.81 on the pre-test and 0.94 on the post-test, respectively. As these values are considered satisfactory since McHugh (2012), who claims that Cohen's kappa is a robust statistic useful for either interrater or intrarater reliability testing, suggests that an interrater agreement value over .81 is an almost perfect agreement.

By means of paired sample t-test, a comparison of the overall score and scores on each component (introduction, main points, conclusion, and mechanics) pre- and post-instruction shows a significant overall improvement in the four components while significance levels vary from component to component, as presented in Table 2. The scores of the overall analysis indicate a significance level of $P<0.01$, which suggests that the genre-based approach had a positive effect on the students' overall writing performance where students made significant progress in all four of the components investigated. The present research findings are in line with the results of genre based writing instruction (i.e. Chen, 2012; Kongpetch, 2006; Uzun, 2019) in terms of showing how genre based-instruction helps students improve their writing skills.

Having a look at each component, it is seen that students revealed a greater improvement in the introduction, main points, and conclusion than in mechanics. It is seen that the improvements in the introduction, main points and conclusion components reached significant levels (t=-5.822, t=-7.066, and t=-2.847, $P<0.01$) with the mean scores rising 3.96, 4.46, and 4.00, respectively. The paired comparison shows that among the four components the students benefited most from the genre-based instruction in the aspects of introduction, stating main points, and in writing the conclusion while with only .93 points improvement, the aspect of mechanics exhibits almost no improvement.

Table 2. Results of Paired Sample T-test for Pre and Post Instruction Components

Components	Mean		SD		t	df	Significance
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post			
Introduction	14.77	18.73	5.35	3.55	-5.822	44	0.000**
Main Points	12.00	16.46	4.01	3.44	-7.066	44	0.000**
Conclusion	12.51	16.51	5.65	4.01	-5.781	44	0.000**
Mechanics	18.20	19.13	2.42	1.56	-2.847	44	0.007*
Overall	56.8	70.0	14.47	9.96	-7.862	44	0.000**

*P<0.05; **P<0.01.

The improvements in the three components on the post-test could be attributed to the focus of the writing class students attended throughout the whole semester. During the course sessions, one of the researchers spent a large portion of the class time discussing how to write introductions, how to state an argument in the body, how to provide contradictory argument and how to conclude an argumentative essay best. In addition to the statistical results, the student progress in these three components can be further verified by analyzing the argumentative essay they wrote before and after the treatment process. We saw that the students' argumentative essays produced on the pre-test exhibited major deficiencies both in terms of the essay format and the points discussed in three parts of an essay. The following excerpt exemplifies the introduction paragraphs written before the instruction:

> *Humans, animals and plants have lived together in nature for centuries. However, unfortunately, the human race has always exploited nature, animals and plants for their own interests and needs. With the increasing human population, this exploitation has increased more and more. The end of this exploitation looks like it will end us.*

As it can be seen from the excerpt, the student talks about the problem and comes to a conclusion quickly without giving background information or writing a proper thesis statement. The students generally had a tendency to state what they thought about the topic directly. The majority of them only wrote causes and effects in the introduction paragraph. While some students were quite good at writing thesis statements, some had problems like in the example which was a surprise to us considering the writing classes they took in the first semester and at the beginning of the second semester, and in the preparatory year for some of the students.

The following excerpt shows how the students developed their introductions:

> *Since the day humans walk the earth, they have been interacting with the natural environment because humans are dependent on environment for food, water, shelter, clothes and medicine. Although historically the early hunter gatherers had some negative impacts on the environment, especially animals' population, their sheer number and limited capabilities did not allow them to cause a big destruction. However, over the years, situation has drastically changed. Human population increased, and humans developed new technologies. Especially arrival of agriculture first and then industrialization in modern times has increased human capabilities to cause much bigger impact on the natural environment. Today, saving the environment has become one of the most important priorities in the world. In this essay, I will explore human's negative impact on animals, land and atmosphere.*

The paragraph given above hints us how the students' writing evolved. Unlike the introduction paragraph written in the pre-test, we can see the background information, problem, and the thesis statement in which we have knowledge about the points the writer will write. Additionally, we can clearly understand the side the writer supports.

After the instruction, various features got improved in the students' argumentative essays, including essay organization. For instance, there were so many students who did not follow the prompt and wrote three paragraphs even though they were told to write a five-paragraph essay for the pre-test. However, they all wrote five paragraphs after the treatment. Furthermore, they stated their arguments and counter-arguments in a more organized way in the post-instruction.

The current study has not solely focused on feedback; however, feedback has been an important part of the study. After the first phase of *the joint construction,* the students worked on their essays for the publication based on the feedback they got from their peers and the instructor. In writing contexts, the teachers mostly work on the structural errors the students make and try to minimize them for future work, which is also reflected in the studies as stated in Mahboob and Devrim (2013). The feedback in genre-based studies should focus on how to create meaning (Mahboob & Devrim, 2013) which covers more than structure. In the present study, all of the students could see their peers' first drafts. The feedbacks generally focused on organizational issues which was a positive outcome. Probably, this was also related to the students' grammatical knowledge which can be seen in the pre-test results.

Even though we excluded the 'Work Cited' from the rubric, it is a very crucial feature of writing an argumentative essay as pointed out by Hyland (1990) in terms of developing the research skills. We have inferred from the essays that some students used some of their time to find resources to support their arguments. However, this was not the case for all of the post-essays. Interestingly, when the students worked in groups and composed their essays, they referred to other works and used citations. The pressure of the time limit to finish the writing on time may have caused not including the sources. The students could have developed more research skills if they had had more time to complete their tasks.

CONCLUSION

With this empirical study on the genre-based approach to teaching EFL writing during synchronous classes, we tried to show how to improve students' essay writing performance. During the treatment process, we introduced a few argumentative essay templates and, through individual and group studies, guided the students on each component. We also introduced thesis statement, topic sentence, and supporting details directly relevant to this genre. We tried to help the students through feedbacks and scaffolding to foster their growth as autonomous writers.

We witnessed the students improve the organization of the argumentative essays. However, the current study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the interaction during the lecture parts of the class was limited because the students were not required to turn on their videos even though the classes were synchronous. The students were attending the classes via their microphones and chat box, but not all of them were raising their hands. Therefore, the instructor was not sure whether all the students were present during class time. Extra precautions could have been taken for the participation.

Second, concerning the pre- and post-tests, although the participants' knowledge of the argumentative essay was enhanced, this was not the case for the Work Cited part. This was likely about the instructional design of the course. From the students attending the class and participating in the Kahoot Game, the researchers were convinced that the students have the knowledge of citation. The joint construction phase confirmed their thoughts, but the independent construction phase did not indicate that kind of knowledge.

Thirdly, the researchers did not prepare any specific questions to inquire about the experiences of the students during the treatment process. The students wrote course evaluation papers at the end of the semester, and they mentioned their experiences during genre-based teaching, but retrospective questions should have been prepared, and oral or written interviews could have been conducted to get answers about the process.

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Appendix A

Rubric for the Assessment of the Argumentative Essay (Adapted)			
	4 (25 Pts)	**3 (18.75 Pts)**	**2 (12.50 Pts)**	**1 (6.25 Pts)**
Introduction Background/History Define the Problem Thesis Statement	Well-developed introductory paragraph covers the explanation of the subject with summarizing the counter arguments and the thesis statement.	Introductory paragraph contains some background information and states the problem, but does not explain using details. States the thesis of the paper.	Introduction states the thesis but does not adequately explain the background of the problem. The problem is stated, but lacks detail.	Thesis and/or problem is vague or unclear. Background details are a seemingly random collection of information, unclear, or not related to the topic.
Main Points Body Paragraphs Refutation	Other side's three arguments are presented in every paragraph. Three counterarguments (author's arguments) are well developed with supporting details.	Other side's three arguments are present but may lack detail and development in one or two. Three counterarguments (author's arguments) acknowledges the opposing view, but doesn't summarize points.	Other side's three arguments are present, but all lack development. Three counterarguments (author's arguments) are missing and/or vague.	Less than three main points, with poor development of ideas. Refutations are missing or vague.
Conclusion	Conclusion summarizes the main topics without repeating previous sentences; the writer's opinions and suggestions for change are logical and well thought out.	Conclusion summarizes main topics. Some suggestions for change are evident.	Conclusion summarizes main topics, but is repetitive. No suggestions for change and/or opinions are included.	Conclusion does not adequately summarize the main points. No suggestions for change or opinions are included.
Mechanics	Sentence structure is correct. Punctuation and capitalization are correct.	Sentence structure is generally correct. Some awkward sentences do appear. There are one or two errors in punctuation and/or capitalization.	Work contains structural weaknesses and grammatical errors. There are three or four errors in punctuation and/or capitalization.	Work contains multiple incorrect sentence structures. There are four or more errors in punctuation and/or capitalization.

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