

DEVELOPING CONTENT COMPONENT OF ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING THROUGH GENRE PEDAGOGY: IN PAKISTANI CONTEXT

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Abstract

This paper examines the effectiveness of the Reading to Learn (R2L) approach to teaching argumentative writing skills to undergraduate Pakistani English language learners' (PELLs); as researches (Ilyas, Iqbal, & Fazal, 2015) have found out that PELLs face the problem of integrating perception and lexico-grammar on a given issue to convince readers while writing it. The study experimented with R2L *genre pedagogy* with a two-group pre and posttest design on a sample of 36 students in each group. The functional analysis of Pretest revealed that PELLs constructed a viewpoint with inappropriate transitivity selection and low lexical density. They ignored nominalization to develop chains of reasoning within the clause. After a four-month intervention, the posttest analysis showed that the performance of the experimental group has significantly improved. Our experimentation and analysis provide a concrete pedagogic assessment of R2L genre pedagogy in the Pakistani context that can help teachers to develop the argumentative writing skills of their students.

Key Words: Experiential meta-function, grammatical intricacy, lexical density, lexicogrammatical, Nominalization

Introduction

Argumentative Writing is equally vital in different disciplines of academic context (Hirvela 2017). The majority of PELLs are not exposed to an argumentative essay at the secondary and post-secondary level, despite its importance (Javed, Juan, & Nazli, 2013). In Pakistan, Teaching methodologies, as discussed by various works (Ilyas et al., 2015; Iqbal, Mehmood, & Qasim, 2005), are not well equipped to teach the desired lexico-grammatical resources for argumentative writing, and it is still under-researched (Jillani, 2004). Among teaching L2 writing, genre pedagogy has a significant contribution. There are two noteworthy genre-based teaching approaches. One is ESP genre analysis based on the work of Swales (1990), and the other is the genre approach of Sydney school based on SFL. The latter contrasts with the process method, but in the line of literacy researchers (Halliday 2002; Hasan, 1996; Hyland, 2007), scaffolds ELLs linguistically and functionally. Suspending attention to lexico-grammatical resources does not suit ELLs because they do not have sufficient lexico-grammar competency and familiarity with genre expectations to compose it (Christie, 2006; Hoey, 2009). This work draws on R2L genre pedagogy based on the SFL framework to improve the performance of PELLs on the lexico-grammatical efficiency to develop the content of argumentative writing. Furthermore, the study has been delimited to one register variable "field" which is the core linguistic component to develop content building part of argument.

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At international scenario, functional linguists and educationist in Australia (Christe, 1999; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Macken-Horarik, 2002; Martin 1993; Martin, 2000; J. R. Martin 1997) have used SFL genre pedagogy successfully for ELLs' literacy development. Whereas, North American educational linguists (Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Schleppegrell, 2004; Schleppegrell & Go 2007) used genre-based functional analysis of students' text. It facilitated teachers to understand the learning gaps of ELLs and enabled them to plan teaching according to the needs of ELLs. It means genre pedagogy brought positive outcomes not only through teachers' training but also by assisting in developing academic writing skills of ELLs by introducing the concept of text as making meaning with lexico-grammar conversely "traditional view of the text as a display of linguistic forms resources" (Mohan, Leung, & Slater, 2010, p. 218).

English occupies third and many a times fourth-level linguistic literacy among the Pakistani ELLs, therefore, we thought of experimenting R2L genre pedagogy to assess the effectiveness of the method in the Pakistani context where the language literacy pressures on PELLs are multiplied due to Pakistan's diverse ethnic and linguistic demography. Purposively selected undergraduate PELLs' were experimented with two group pre and post-test experimental design. The writings of both groups were analyzed and compared qualitatively and quantitatively for pre and post tests to measure their onset lexico-grammar competency for field construction based on a rubric. The set rubrics cover experiential meanings comprised of transitivity system, lexical density, and nominalization. This rubric helped evaluating PELLs required developments in the use of lexico-grammar resources to construct the desired argumentative content. The following research question guided the research:

• What role does genre pedagogy play in developing the content component of argumentative writing in the Pakistani context?

Literature Review

According to Halliday, SFL explains the theory of language functions and its link between text and context at two levels: intrinsic and extrinsic. Meta-functions realize the former level, and various genres configure the latter (Martin & Rose, 2008). Meta-functions perform three essential social functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. All meta-functions work together to construct a text. This work focuses on experiential metafunction, which expresses how the experience is construed (Eggins, 2004a, p. 254). R2L genre pedagogy expounds on the schematic structure of an argumentative essay. It assists PELLs to present their viewpoint in such lexico-grammar resources that conform to the norms and ideology of the L2 discourse community (Martin 2001a). The schematic structure of an argumentative, analytical essay has "Thesis ^ Argument + Evidence ^ Reinforcement of thesis" (Coffin, 2004). The writer introduces the topic and position in the thesis stage, then presents arguments that support perception about the given issue; next, the writer explains pieces of evidence to support and develop the view. Lastly, the writer restates the position to reinforce his viewpoint (Coffin, 2004, p. 237). Hence a text is shaped by both contexts of culture and situation. It means that PELLs need to have lexico-grammar proficiency in constructing "objective rhetorical strategies" (Knapp & Watkins 1994) to present their perception of the given issue to achieve persuasion regarding various audiences.

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For Pre and Posttest, this work used topics that dealt with to justify the efficiency of the integrated reading process and to justify the position of a character in a given literary text, respectively. Accordingly, PELLs need to use abstraction, generalization, technical terms, and Nominalization to achieve objectivity and persuasion. R2Lgenre pedagogy (Martin, 1985; J. Martin & Rothery 1986a) facilitated PELLs to understand the demand of discourse and contextual aspect of language by focusing on linguistic resources use and their functions (Hyland, 2003, p. 18) first in reading and then in writing a text.

In the experiential function perspective, the clause acts as a representation of experience. It presents patterns of experience with three components: process, participants, and circumstances. There are six types of processes. The material process represents outer world experience; mental processes stand for experience of inner consciousness; relational processes define classification and identification of two separate entities; behavioral processes are "physiological and psychological behavior"; verbal processes are processes of "saying" and existential processes are "existing" processes. The choice of process depends on participant role and experience configurations to construe experiential meanings (Eggins, 2004b).

Ergativity and transitive interpretations are two ways to interpret the meaning of a clause. Ergativity interprets process as self-engendering or engendered outside, which is not sufficient to explain the text construal of experience. Thus this work used transitivity interpretation, as it provides detailed information about different processes, each participant, and the variety of surrounding circumstances. It reveals the intricate interrelation of meaning, function, and form and explains how a text works to persuade a reader. Out of all processes, Relational processes play a vital role in building argument by distilling specialized knowledge through technicality and old knowledge through abstraction with nominalization.

Nominalization is a grammatical feature of an argument. It plays a vital role in packing information. Mature writers maintain a balance between packing and unpacking information; however, struggling writers cannot maintain this balance. (Derewianka, 2003; Painter, Derewianka, & Torr, 2007). It suggests they have not yet grasped certain language features. Nominalization deals with abstract knowledge, and discourse of humanities rely mainly on abstraction in interpreting the world. Nominalization grammaticalizes abstraction as things. Nominalization converts events into participants, then intensive attributive relational processes are used by mature writers to classify, assume or describe abstraction. Abstraction leads to impersonality, which deals with facts and things that target the debate on truth or falsity, presenting the writer's interpretation. Hence, it is primarily used to "bury reasoning" and pack more lexical content per sentence.

Different works based on genre pedagogy in ELLs' context reported significant development in content construction of the argumentative essay. For instance, Kongpetch (2006) used genre pedagogy to teach argumentative essays to Thai university students. He found a noticeable improvement in students' control of its generic and propositional content structures. Similarly, Emilia (2005) improved Indonesian ELLs' control of generic and lexico-grammar resources by adopting the genre-based approach. The various perspective of argumentative text such as the impact of lexico-grammar on an argument (Hoeken & Hustinx 2009), audience role (Maneli 1994) argument assessment about strength, logic, and persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo 1986).



Methodology

This research used two groups with pre and post-experimental design. A pretest was conducted on the sample population. Then it was divided equally into two groups based on their performance. It has 36 undergraduate PELLs in each group. The researcher used pretest assessment information to plan teaching sessions. This research aims to measure the change in experiential, meaning construction of argumentative essay before and after the implementation of genre pedagogy. The control group was led according to the prevalent lecture-based teaching methodology, and E-group was taught with R2L genre pedagogy. It followed a detailed reading of a literary text, joint construction, and independent construction (reference), as proposed by Humphery and Macnaught (2011). In critical reading, the researcher used different activities to raise PELLs' consciousness about content knowledge of the text by explaining how the writer expressed experiential meanings in various lexico-grammar resources. Next, the researcher helped PELLs with instructional scaffolding construct desired experiential meaning by introducing alternative lexico-grammar resources in joint construction before the independent writing of an argumentative essay. They were analyzed by quantitative and qualitative analysis, social activity, and grammar & expression based on the rubric for content analysis developed for this research. It aims to evaluate the difference by R2L implementation in lexico-grammar resources use for experiential meanings construction in pre and posttest essays of undergraduate PELLs.

Analysis and discussion

The following section describes Quantitative and Qualitative functional linguistic analysis of experiential meta-functions, before the intervention of genre pedagogy.

Pretest Functional linguistic Analysis

The researchers used the pretest prompt, "Interactive reading model is the best description of what happens when we read. Do you agree?" Pretest aims to understand how PELLs chose transitivity resources to delineate the propositional contents (field) for the argumentative essay. Table 1 represents the Pretest Experiential Meaning (Transitivity analysis) of the E-group and C-groups.

Table 1

Pretest Transitivity Analysis of E-group and C-group

C-group	Clauses	Material	mental	verbal	Relational	Behavioral	Existential
	2434	1657	238	62	411	0	13
% age		68.077	9.778	2.547	16.885	0	0.5341
E-group	1286	867	113	37	240	0	10
% age		67.418	8.803	2.857	18.610	0	0.772

Table: 1 presents that both C-group and E-groups used material processes (68.077%; 67.418%) in greater frequency in Pretest. They employed material processes to show happenings and

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experience in the real world. It means PELLs were not aware of organizing experiential meanings. Their performance has followed previous studies (Halliday, 2001; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, 2014; Martin, 1989b, 2008), demonstrating that ELLs realize experiential meaning differently. They construct experiential meaning in the dynamic nature of spoken text rather than the synoptic mode of written text. Consider the example of the following student exemplar 1

"As an English language learner, we use (Pr. Material) many top-down techniques as well. For instance, we use (Pr. Material) our prediction to read and comprehend the printed material. When we read (Pr. Material), we combine (Pr. Material), these two models naturally."

As evident in student exemplar 1, PELL explained the cognitive process of a reading phenomenon rather than taking a stance to logically prove with arguments that either interactive reading model is better or not. It reveals that they are not familiar with the rhetorical functions of argumentative prompt to argue and convince the reader to a specific stance. Next, for developing arguments, writers need to identify relational processes to elaborate on the efficiency of the integrated model by the relating experience of one reading model to another. Students only used 16.885% and 18.662% relational processes in both C-group and E-groups. These results are similar to those reported by Mann , Matthiessen , and Thompson (1992) rhetoric linguistic analyses of text produced by linguistically diverse participants. However, PELLs used relation processes' sub-categories, which were unable to produce the desired result of a cause-effect relationship in a clause, as shown in Table 2

Table 2

Pretest Relational Processes types of E-group and C-groups

	Identifying	Attributive	Intensive	circumstantial	possessive
C-group Rel. Processes types	0	316	0	0	91
%age		77.641	0	0	22.358
E-group Rel. processes types	0	212	0	0	28
%age	0	88.333	0	0	11.666

Table 2 shows that writers used mostly possessive and attributive relational clauses (x has a) to describe different qualities of top-down, bottom-up, and integrated reading models individually. There was no use of a relational circumstantial process (x is at a) to develop a causal relationship between an integrated reading model and reading text comprehension or classify the integrated strategy as a better one by developing logical relationships. Writers of both groups did not use

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relative intensive attributive (x is a) processes to portray the efficiency of an integrated model for reading comprehension to achieve persuasion, the communicative purpose of the argumentative genre. Moreover, ELLs were unaware of how to pack information according to the needs of different stages of an argumentative essay. These results are similar to the result of Hanafiah and Yusuf (2016) work on ELLs argumentative writings.

Few students used mental clauses in both groups, 9.977% in the C-group, and 8.803 % in the E-group. Mostly students combined material process with a mental process unaptly to describe the reading process as shown under in students' exemplars 2 and 3:

- 2. "... When we use prediction (Pr. Material) to read and comprehend (Pr. mental) the printed material."
- 3. "...When you use (Pr. Material) the text in a detailed manner you analyze (Pr: mental) all the sounds, word formation, structure and paragraph making and standards in printed material."

The examples 2 &3 clearly show that the writers were incompetent to use mental with material processes to represents their viewpoint about the given question to support their claim/ sub claim. Similarly, writers used a few verbal processes in E-group (2.547 %) and C-groups (2.857%) but not in the desired manner, as explained under in example 3:

4. "So we can say (Pr. Verbal) that interactive reading approach as the best approach because it contains both top-down and bottom-up models."

In example 4, the sayer is the writer, whereas the prompt requires an external quote or agent as an endorsement to validate the argument. However, a few students used verbal processes like "argues, state" as shown under in examples 4 and 5:

- 5. "Eskey and Grabe in Morales argue that both top-down and bottom-up processing have important implication to interactive approach reading"
- 6. "Paran in Aleyousef states that a modern interactive reading model enabled L2 readers to less relied on top-down processing."

Examples 5 & 6 used external agents like "Eskey and Grabe" and "Paran in Aleyousef." They used it to define the efficiency of the interactive model. They did not use them as an objective source to support their claim like "according to a study by" Behavioral processes were absent in their Pretest.

The researcher calculated Lexical Density and Nominalization of Pretest argumentative essays of both E-group and C-group. Table 3 presents them.

Table 3

E-group and C-group linguistic features of experiential meta-function

	C-group	E-group
Lexical density	48.066 %	48.641%
Nominalization	16.941%	18.264%

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Table 3 indicates there was high lexical density, which might be comparable to an academic article following Ure's collected text (1971, cited in Ventola (1996). However, it did not contributes to the compact construction of information to achieve precision. Writers used Nominalization like "combining information," "comprehensive description," "building up comprehension," to pack the information. These Nominalizations are not the desired ones. They could not construct "buried" or overt reasoning, as recommended by Martin (1993) for developing argumentation. They are non-elaborated NPs, which increase lexical density. These NPs could not create an anaphoric construal network employed for the chain of reasoning among the clauses. Hence, there was an absence of a cause-effect link between NGs within clauses, as argued by Liardet (2016). These results corroborate with Cornelius and Cotsworth (2015) work on ELLs who were unaware of how to achieve argumentative essay purpose with lexicogrammar resources

In short, pretest evaluation reveals that Pakistani undergraduate writers know various linguistic features like Transitivity selection, Nominalization, and high Lexical Density. However, PELLs were unaware of exploiting them to position, build arguments, develop precision, and achieve the communicative purpose for an argumentative essay.

Posttest Functional Linguistic Analysis

The researchers, in light of the above learning gaps, planned teaching sessions. After fourmonths of teaching sessions, students wrote an argumentative essay independently—the following sections present changes in PELLs posttest writings in Table 4.

Table 4

Transitivity analysis of C-group, pre, and posttests of E-group

	Clauses	Material	Mental	Verbal	Relational	Behavioral	Existential
C-group	1322	498	252	127	210	0	1
%age		45.108	22.621	11.400	18.850		2.42
Pre-E-group	1286	867	113	37	240	0	10
%age		67.418	8.803	2.857	18.610	0	0.772
Post E-group	2430	1187	389	237	732		0
%age		48.85	16.01	9.753	25.39		0

Table 4 shows that there was a significant improvement in the construction of experiential meanings in the E-group posttest as compared to the C-group and pretest E- group values. The dominance of material processes remains constant in the pre and Posttest of both groups. However, in the Posttest, many material processes were causal and abstract. Consider the following examples 7 and 8:

- 7. "...His insanity and lunacy for science separated (Pr. Material) her daughter (Pt. Beneficiary) from the world";
- 8. "....His evil not only lasted (Pr. Material) to him but spread (Pr. Material) in Baglioni and Giovanni (Pt. Beneficiary)".



PELLs assigned different attributes to the role of non-human actors for developing an argument in examples 7 and 8. Consequently, humans became beneficiary (her daughter, him, Baglioni, and Giovanni). Like mature writers, PELLs employed material processes to show external experiences of people in the real world and to assign actions to non-human beings to show their effect on human beings as proposed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Martin (1991).

In the Posttest, PELLs used relational processes (25.39%), mental processes (16.01%), and verbal processes (9.753) strategically. First, they built a hyper claim with a relational process, then provided evidence and next elaborated evidence with material processes or sometimes with verbal and mental processes. Consider student exemplar 3

Student Exemplar: 9

"He was a rival to nature (relational hyper claim). Rappaccini was so engrossed (Pr: Rel) in his scientific experiments that he did not hesitate to contaminate (Pr: Material) Nature. He interfered (Pr. Material) in nature's power."

The student exemplar 9 shows the writer's use of relational, material, and verbal processes to achieve persuasion. Similarly, example 10 below, mental processes are used astutely to build up an argument

10. "Nick showed adherence for humanity. As we can see when George said to him, "you stay out of it," but he replied, "I'll go see him."

Example 10 indicates the relational process use to build hyper claim, "Adherence was shown by Nick for humanity," which was supported by the evidence in the mental process. In posttest experimental group used different sub-categories of relational processes as shown under in Table 5:

Table 5

Posttest Relational Processes types of E-group and C-groups

	Attributive			Identifying		
	Intensive	Circumstantial	Possessive	Intensive	Circumstantial	Possessive
E-group Rel. Pr. types						
%age	80	4.445	15.556	80.488	12.195	7.317
C-group Rel. Pr. types	73.413	0	26.587	0	0	0
%age						

Table 5 shows that in the Posttest, all three main types of relational processes were present in E-group in contrast to C-group. In E-group, posttest essays, PELLs used different relational processes to reach interpretation and conclusion through abstraction, which is recommended by Halliday and Martin (1993). In E-group, there were dominant use of relational intensive attributive (80%) and relational intensive identifying (80.488) processes. Their frequent use might be attributed to the requirement of prompt: character analysis. Consider student exemplars 11.



11. "Undoubtedly, Rappaccini was an evil (Pr. Rel. Intensive identifying). His lifestyle and dress choice was a suggestiveness for evil (Pr. Rel. Intensive identifying). His ambitions to change nature results in the devastation of human beings and animals (Pr. Rel. Intensive identifying)"

Student example 11 shows that in posttest essays, writers used mostly relational intensive attributive clauses to characterize different traits of the protagonist based on other interpersonal relations and reactions given in the literary text to build an argument to support their main claim for the given prompt. Consider another example 10 for cause-effect relationships.

12. "In other words, he was engaged (Pr. Rel. attributive circumstantial) in the strong inner feeling and emotions."

Example 12 shows PELL used relative circumstantial clauses to develop a cause-effect logical relationship in their argument to sustain their hyper claims with supporting assertion.

13. ".....They had (*Pr. Rel. possessive attributive*) insufficient to eat, but they were happy."

Example 13 presents relational possessive clauses to show different attributes to develop an argument to back up their hyper themes. Next Table 6 presents linguistic features of experiential meanings in Table 6:

Table 6 Posttest E-group and C-group linguistic features of experiential meanings

	Pretest E-group	Posttest E-group	Posttest C-group
Lexical density	48.641	44.428	48.642 %
Nominalization	18.264%	68.684 %	16.941%

However, Table 6 shows posttest essays were lexically dense as per academic classification proposed by linguists (Ure's cited in Johansson (2008). The high lexical density in the Posttest was due to compact construction of information with the help of pre and post-modification of the headword, clause complexes (39.799%), and Nominalization (68.684%) as presented in example 14 under:

14. "Overall, his behavior towards the old (pre-modification) man (headword), the way he dismembered the dead body, moreover his (headword) strong senses (post-modification) verifies his (head) symptoms of paranoia (post-modification)."

In example 14, the headword "man" was pre-modified by "the old" and post modified by "for the resemblance of his eye to the vultures." It increased lexical density along with grammatical intricacy in a written text, contrary to the recommendations claimed by Halliday and Martin (1993).

Moreover, Nominalization in clause simplex use is another indicator of improved lexical density as presented under example 15:

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15. "...His ambitions to change Nature (nominalization) results in the devastation of human beings and animals' life (nominalization)."

Table 6 shows that there was increased use of Nominalization as compared to Pretest in the posttest essay (50.42%). A variety of Nominalization in the above examples made even clause simplexes intricate and compact. They used covert reasoning termed as "buried" by Halliday and Martin (1993), indicating mature Writing. Consider table 7:

Table: 7

Nominalization packing and unpacking of reasons

Covert (Buried) Reasoning	His ambitions to change Nature (<i>Nominalization</i>) results in the devastation of human beings' and animals' life (<i>Nominalization</i>).
Overt Reasoning	He was ambitious (adj.) to change nature, and he changed (verb) Nature, which results (verb) in devastation for human beings and animals' life

Table 7 presents Nominalization, as Martin (1985) states, allows a writer to use an idea as a fact and targets the debate towards the strength of the proposition (Martin, 1985) instead of considering it as writer's interpretations. The increased nominalization usage (50.42%) in the Posttest suggests PELLs' argumentation maturity. This work confirms that R2L genre pedagogy improved the strategic use of nominalization in the posttest argumentative essay, as proclaimed by Derewianka (2003) and Painter et al. (2007) works on ELLs.

In short, the difference in pre and post argumentative writings indicates the positive effect of genre pedagogy with the R2L approach supported ELLs to "become discourse analysts" and understand a text by decoding its rhetoric functions as claimed by Desiree (2009). For experiential meanings, there was a noteworthy improvement in relational, mental, and verbal processes despite the dominance in material processes as it was in pertest. However, its use in the Posttest is causal and abstract to develop a logical argument. There was a noticeable increase in relational intensive, circumstantial processes, and possessive identifying processes to establish cause-effect relationships with macro and hyper theme. PELLs constructed experiential meanings with higher lexical density and Nominalization (Derewianka, 2003).

Conclusion

This work assesses the importance of R2L genre pedagogy developing PELL for, knowing how different lexical and grammatical resources are involved in constructing experiential meaning. Secondly, it advocates the importance of scaffolding ELLs when they grapple with building the disciplinary knowledge (field) and lexico-grammar resources for argumentative essays in the L2 context. The findings of this research proclaim that R2L genre pedagogy is likely to improve PELLs experiential meaning construction by increasing knowledge of lexico-grammar structures and their use to PELLs for an argumentative response. R2L Genre pedagogy in its reiterative teaching cycle increased knowledge of lexico-grammatical resources and genre schematic structure by exposure through reading and by scaffolding writing skills as endorsed by Humphery and Macnaught (2011).



Note: This research work is a part of the researcher's thesis, "Integrating Critical Reading and Argumentative Writing: An experimental study" for the partial fulfillment of a Ph.D. degree.

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