Applying and Assessing a Genre-Based Approach for Personal Statement Writing in the Context of Thai EFL Upper Secondary Education

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ABSTRACT

This research was an investigation of the application of genre instruction to the unique purpose teaching Thai secondary students to write personal statements for undergraduate university admission. The goals of this small-scale case study were to 1) investigate the effects of genre-based instruction on students' writing abilities and 2) examine students' attitudes toward this instructional method. The participants were eight students in grade 12, four defined as high-ability and four as low-ability. The students completed a didactic sequence developed for this study, beginning with the pre-test and concluding with a comparable and administration of a questionnaire and individual interviews with the participants. The test results revealed that while the overall scores for the entire group showed slight improvement in the students' writing abilities, it was due to the noticeable improvements in the low-ability students' scores, whereas those of the high-ability group decreased. Qualitative analysis of their work revealed interesting but varied improvements in both groups.

The attitude results from the questionnaire and interview data were positive for both groups, yet some concerns were also raised. The study demonstrates both the benefits of and concerns about applying the genre-based approach to this specific context while asserting its possibility for further development.

Keywords: Genre-Based Approach, Thai EFL Writing, Personal Statements, Statements of Purposes, Thai EFL Students

Introduction

It is widely considered important for EFL students to have good English writing skills, as they enhance opportunities in both academic and professional domains. Specifically, in the EFL context of Thailand, university applicants are increasingly required to submit personal statements in English as part of the university admission process, notably those applying to international programmes. Thus, the ability to produce a well-written personal statement as a passport for academic destination implies the necessity for Thai grade 12 students to possess effective English writing skills.

Unfortunately, EFL writing classrooms have been reported to have several challenges, such as the limited use of English outside the classroom, which would support acquisition of all target language skills, and students' negative attitudes towards mastering this skill (Dueraman, 2012). Moreover, a personal statement represents an unfamiliar genre for novice writers, which requires not only awareness of its communicative purposes and adoption of new discourse conventions but also sufficient self-understanding (Ding, 2007; Paley, 1996). In the Thai EFL context of the present study, it is not uncommon to find students' personal statements, although grammatically sound, unsuccessful in addressing the purposes of such writing. Among various factors, this failure can be associated with the writers' limited awareness of their audience and the conventions of the genre. It is therefore crucial for educators and curriculum designers to find effectives approaches to teaching personal statement writing.

While there are three main approaches to teaching writing, namely the product-based approach, the process-based approach, and the genre-based approach (Tangpermpoon, 2008), the last exhibits the greatest promise for teaching the unique characteristics of personal statement writing. To illustrate, genre-based writing instruction (GBWI) highlights the social dimension inherent in writing, as well as the specific purposes and expected outcomes of particular genres (Hyland, 2007) such as personal statements in

application processes. This approach works by gradually familiarising students with both relevant texts and contexts, leading them to develop awareness of the social aspects of writing rather than focusing only control of linguistic aspects and the recursive stages of drafting as practised in other approaches. Moreover, its effectiveness has been reported in studies on both high and low ability learners in EFL tertiary contexts (e.g., Changpueng, 2012; Janenoppakarn, 2016) and a few studies on secondary school students (Mingsakoon & Srinon, 2018), in most of which both participants' writing abilities and their attitudes towards writing instruction have been investigated.

However, due to the growing importance of personal statement writing, the studies of GBWI in secondary school contexts were inadequate; studies on personal statement writing in this context were rare. Moreover, whereas most researchers subscribed to one of the three primary schools of GBWI as presented by Hyon (1996), in the current study an adaptation of a less common Brazilian genre school (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Guimarães, 2009) was adopted, which provides a clearer didactic sequence for teaching, as well as a genre analysis within the English for Special Purposes (ESP) tradition, which complies with the nature of personal statements. The aim of this research was to study the effectiveness of a genre-based approach in a Thai EFL writing classroom at the upper secondary level, from the perspectives of both the students' writing competence and their post-treatment attitudes, as affective factors are regarded as important in language acquisition. This research also addressed the question of whether this approach would be more suitable for high or low ability students.

To address the significance and issues in the context discussed above, the research is conducted in quest of the answers to the following research questions.

1. What are the effects of genre-based approach to Thai EFL high school students both high and low ability groups in terms of personal statement writing competence score and the content of writing?
2. How do the Thai EFL secondary school students, both high and low ability groups, describe their attitudes towards learning personal statement writing through genre-based approach?

Literature Review

Genre-Based Approach to Teaching Writing

In comparison with process writing approaches, Hyland (2007) described genre-based approach as emphasising social aspects of writing over process. Underpinned by Vygotsky (1978, as cited in Hyland, 2007), the approach featured the scaffolding stages which gradually familiarise learners

with the target genre until they gain mastery in reproducing the genre. In practice, the writing task begins with establishing the writer's communicative purposes, and then moves to such relevant factors as relationships between writers and their target audiences, appropriate writing conventions for the situation, and text formats. Genre-oriented instruction often features class discussions to help students understand such nuanced aspects as the right balance between formality and informality for targeted audiences and purposes.

Within the broad scope of genre writing instruction, there are various approaches based on different conceptualisations of "genre" and the varying purposes to which it is applied. Hyon's (1996) commonly accepted trichotomy of three traditions of GBWI includes Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), New Rhetoric (NR) by North American scholars or Rhetorical Genre Study (RGS), and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Going beyond Hyon's (1996) tripartite model, however, some scholars (e.g., Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Swales, 2012) have subsequently suggested other practices of genre pedagogy such as Franco-Swiss Socio-Discursive Interactionism (SDI) or Brazilian genre school, as some researchers (e.g., Cristovão & Artemeva, 2018) have formed hybrids comprising more than one tradition. For Swiss SDI, the didactic sequence begins with presentation of situation, initial production, exploration of difficulties, instructional modules, and a final production (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010). For the Brazilian genre pedagogy, the sequence added sessions of revising and editing, along with text circulation and consumption, which allows the students to interactively participate in the social context of the genre. (Guimarães, 2009). It is suggested that genre-based approaches could embrace other practices and generate research that targets specific issues, for example, whether genre awareness should be taught explicitly, implicitly, or interactively (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010), or applies the principles of context and genre analysis as in Cristovão and Artemeva (2018).

Several studies have documented the efficacy of this approach in enhancing both students' writing abilities and attitudes. Changpueng (2012) and Janenoppakarn (2016) reported the effectiveness of GBWI in improving students' writing competence and attitudes in different ability groups. However, Janenoppakarn emphasised the improvements of essay organisation, while Ngamaramarangkul (2016) suggested that the approach primarily enriched the content of essays. Yang (2012) presented the tertiary students' attitudes towards using the ESP-informed GBWI, underscoring its advantages while acknowledging concerns regarding its prescriptive nature.

Mingsakoon and Srinon (2018) and Panjapakdee (2008) studied the effects on GBWI among secondary school students' essay writing. The

former presented the positive impact of the approach on generic structures, whereas the latter highlighted the improvements of accuracy and the students' attitudes. However, these studies varied, mostly in terms of the target genres and contexts; none of these works examined personal statement writing in Thai secondary school contexts.

While the focus of the present study was on composition of a personal statement in a Thai EFL secondary school setting, a task that is ESP in its nature, the approach was built upon a Brazilian didactic sequence. Accordingly, important steps and the advantages of each tradition for creating a meaningful genre lesson for this context were taken into account.

Personal Statements

Essays typically required for university or college admission in which applicants discuss their goals, values, interests, and personal achievements (Smagorinsky, 1991) are variously referred to with terms such as personal statements, application essays, or statements of purpose (Samraj & Monk, 2008). As a self-reflective discourse, these essays may be challenging (Paley, 1996) since they are unfamiliar to secondary students. In this sense, the personal statement is considered what Swales (1996) termed an "occluded genre," one that is meant to be read by specific audience and has attributes and models of writing often hidden from the view of novice writers.

Studies on personal statements have been based on ESP, notably employing move analysis (Ding, 2007; Samraj & Monk, 2008). Myskow and Gordon (2010) reported on ways to teach writing personal statements to EFL school students, but the topic is under-researched and needs further exploration.

Methodology

Research Design

In this small-scale, mixed-method case study, an integrated didactic sequence was applied to explore the effects of teaching the composition of a personal statement to high school EFL students. It began with the development of the integrated didactic sequence (Table 1), primarily form Brazilian genre school (Guimarães, 2009) and ESP genre analysis (Bhatia 2014; Swales, 1990), to serve the objectives of the study, its context, and the nature of the target genre.

Table 1

Integrated Didactic Sequence

Stages	Lessons / N of students*	Instruments / Materials	Details	RQ
0. Giving the General Ideas of the Genre	Lesson A (41)	Worksheet	Teacher presents general ideas of personal statements through selected texts.	
1. Early Production	Lesson B (41)	Pre-Test	Students write based on limited understanding.	1
2. Proposing the Genre		Worksheet	Students practise reading comprehension exercises on selected essays with guidance.	
3. Characterising the Genre	Lesson 1 (8)	Worksheet	Students compare personal statements with other auto-biographical essays.	
4. Collecting Samples			Students find samples from suggested sources.	
5. Genre Analysis	Lesson 2 (8)	Worksheet	Students explore text features, writing techniques, and discourse convention.	
6. Forming Ones' Own Generic Pattern			Students compare move structures from the samples before planning their own.	
7. Preparing for Writing	Lesson 3 (8)	Worksheet	Students do language-based exercises e.g., text rearrangement, grammar-based exercises, or removal of ineffective ideas. They join the discussion sessions particularly on convention.	
8. Writing	Lesson 4 (8)	Post-Test		1
9. Proofreading and feedback	Lesson 5 (8)	Worksheet	Students join editing sessions in class and in pairs and receive individual feedback.	
10. Follow-up		Questionnaire and Interviews		2

*Number of participants in each lesson were provided in parentheses.

The sequence employed two periods of Foundation English course (A and B) and five afterschool classes (1-5) over a span of 9 weeks. The first two 50-minute classes constituted the preliminary stage, in which an overview of the personal statement was presented to the whole class of 41 students, all of whom composed essays (early production). These were evaluated using

pre-determined criteria and served as a pre-test. Based on the scores of students who volunteered to participate in the study, eight focal students were recruited, including four designated as high ability (S1-S4) and four as low ability (S5-S8). Only these students completed the rest of the integrated didactic sequence outside the regular course in five extra 60-minute lessons. In Lesson 4, a post-test was conducted, and in Lesson 5, a questionnaire was administered and participants were interviewed.

Participants and Context

This study took place in a private secondary school in Bangkok, Thailand, where Thai is the main language of instruction. Due to the demand for personal statements in college application and the nature of the task of writing, purposive sampling was used to select one of the two classes of 12-grade Science-Engineering programme as the participants. The total 41 participants joined the first two lessons. Based on evaluations of initial essays serving as a pre-test, eight focal students were recruited consisting of four high ability and four low ability students who volunteered to complete the rest of the sequence. Research ethics were strictly followed to ensure students' confidentiality.

Research Instruments

Writing Assessment

For both the pre-test and post-test, participants were asked to think about a university to which they planned to apply and write a 300- to 600-word personal statement within 60 minutes, drawing on what they had learned previously. The test instructions were adapted from general guidelines for personal statement writing (Ding, 2007; Paley, 1996) and a training session organised in previous years.

The scoring rubric was adapted from Saddler and Andrade's (2004) multiple trait rubric to include content, organisation, format, convention, and task achievement as criteria for evaluating genre-based written tasks. That is, the raters focused on the comprehensiveness of the subject matter, the logical connections among ideas, the accuracy of textual forms and structures, and compliance with discourse convention, along with how convincing the essay was considered to be for its prospective audience. The rubric, the materials, and the test instructions were validated by two expert EFL writing instructors.

Data sources were essays written by eight focal students, which were then evaluated by three external raters to minimise possible bias. The raters

had over five years' experience teaching EFL writing and helping students write personal statements. They were trained to use the rubric using the personal statements written by students in the previous year.

Questionnaire on Students' Attitudes towards Writing Lessons

Both the structured and open-ended items in the questionnaire were adapted from Changpueng (2012), Janenoppakarn (2016), Ngamaramarangkul (2016), Rashidi and Mazdayasna (2016), Visser (2017), and Yang (2012) and were primarily underpinned by Hyland (2007). These items were categorised into two sections: overall attitudes toward the instruction and attitudes towards specific elements of it, reflecting the students' beliefs, interests, mind-sets, and confidence in writing, as well as perceptions of this approach and feedback. The last part of the questionnaire invited the participants to give comments or suggestions on the specific elements of the instruction, including the stages of didactic sequences, the roles of the teacher, the materials, and the criteria for evaluation of essays. This questionnaire was validated by two experts to ensure content validity.

Interview Questions

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all eight focal students from both high and low ability groups to elicit their opinions and perceptions of different elements of the instruction. The interview protocol comprised five main interview questions, which were based on the questionnaire. All interviews were conducted in Thai, which was the participants' L1. The interview questions were validated by two experts in Thai EFL writing. Interview transcriptions were sent to the participants for member checking.

Data Collection

For the first research question, after an initial overview of the target genre in the presentation stage, all students in the class wrote a 300- to 600-word personal statement as a pre-test. After the essays were evaluated using a scoring rubric, the scores were ranked from the highest to the lowest and separated into the high ability group and the low ability group. Eight students, four from each ability group, were recruited on a voluntary basis to complete the rest of the sequence. Toward the end they followed the same instructions as in the pre-test to write a personal statement, which was assessed with the same rubric.

The second research question attempted to elicit students' attitudes. The eight focal students completed the questionnaire and joined the individual semi-structured interview. The interview data were transcribed for the thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

To answer the first research question, the pre-test and post-test scores were analysed using descriptive statistics to compare the average pre- and post-test scores. To further observe the changes in students' personal statements, the analysis of content, especially move analysis was adopted along with descriptive analysis of students' writing according to the rubric. The framework for move analysis was adapted from Ding (2007), with some additional moves and steps such as introducing oneself, which was found in some of the students' essays, and expression of appreciation of the field, as an extension of understanding of the field in the original pattern. Moreover, the step of elaborating family background was removed as no participants employed it (See Tables 4 and 5).

For the second research question, several steps were employed to analyse the data. Firstly, descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data from the questionnaire featuring five-Likert. Secondly, the responses from open-ended items, together with the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews, were analysed using thematic analysis, which was guided by Hyland's (2007) and Yang's (2012) positive and negative characteristics of GBWI. The analyses of the eight cases were examined and re-examined, and the emerging themes were uncovered based on the iterative processes of examining data. The different sources of data were used to provide greater reliability through triangulation.

Results and Discussion

Effects on Students' Writing

Writing Scores

As illustrated in Table 2, a comparison of the pre- and post-test average scores of the combined group demonstrated a slight improvement in the post-test, but the results for the two groups were different. While the average score of the high ability group decreased, the average score of the low ability group showed noticeable improvement in the post-test.

Table 2

Pre-test and Post-test Scores for Each Group

		High (N = 4)	Low (N = 4)	Combined (N = 8)
Content	Post-test	2.25	2.17	2.25
	Pre-test	3.00	1.75	2.50
Organisation	Post-test	2.42	2.33	2.38
	Pre-test	3.17	1.49	2.25
Format	Post-test	2.34	2.15	2.38
	Pre-test	2.92	1.75	2.50
Convention	Post-test	2.58	2.07	2.25
	Pre-test	3.00	1.33	2.25
Task Achievement	Post-test	2.34	1.83	2.13
	Pre-test	3.00	1.33	2.25
OVERALL	**Post-test**	**12.00**	**10.50**	**11.25**
	Pre-test	**15.23**	**6.50**	**10.88**

With regard to individual criteria, the average scores of the combined group were found to have improved only in terms of organisation, while the convention score remained unchanged, and other post-test scores decreased. When the two groups are considered separately, the high ability group had lower average post-test scores, and the low ability group had higher average scores on all criteria compared with their pre-test scores.

Table 3 summarises the pre- and post-test performances of individual students. As the maximum overall score was 20, and each criterion in the scoring rubric varied from 1 to 4, the range of the total scores was divided into levels, each with an equal interval of 4 points for easier understanding and interpretation. Each level was then assigned a letter grade beginning from D (5-8), C (9-12), B (13-16), and A (17-20), as there could be no students with scores lower than five.

Table 3

Individual Pre-test and Post-test Scores

	Content		Organisation		Format		Convention		Task Achievement		TOTAL (Level)	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
S1	3.67	2.00	3.67	2.67	3.67	3.00	3.67	3.33	3.67	2.67	**18.33 A**	**13.67 B**

S2	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.67	1.67	2.67	1.67	3.00	2.00	**14.33 B**	**9.33 C**
S3	2.67	3.33	3.00	3.00	2.67	3.00	2.67	3.33	2.67	3.00	**13.67 B**	**15.67 B**
S4	2.67	1.67	3.00	2.00	2.67	1.67	3.00	2.00	2.67	1.67	**14.00 B**	**9.00 C**
S5	1.67	2.33	1.33	3.00	2.00	2.67	1.33	2.33	1.33	2.33	**7.67 D**	**12.67 B**
S6	2.33	2.67	2.33	3.33	2.67	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	**11.33 C**	**15.00 B**
S7	1.67	2.00	1.33	2.00	1.33	1.67	1.00	1.67	1.00	1.00	**6.33 D**	**8.33 D**
S8	1.33	1.67	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.33	1.00	1.33	1.00	1.00	**5.33 D**	**6.33 D**

For their overall scores, three students, all from the high ability group, were found with lower overall post-test than pre-test scores. The rest, mainly from the low ability group, had higher overall scores in the post-test. The investigation of individuals' criterion-specific scores revealed that, for the high ability group, the post-test scores were lower than the pre-test scores except for S3, who had higher post-test scores in all criteria except organisation, which remained unchanged. For the low ability group, the scores of all criteria were higher in the post-test than in the pre-test, except for S7, whose task achievement score was unchanged, and S8, whose organisation and task achievement scores were unchanged.

Students' Writing

As shown in Tables 4 and 5, the qualitative analysis revealed some similar features between the high and the low ability groups in terms of their moves, which explained changes in the quality of the content and organisation of the students' writing. However, the aspects of format, convention, and task achievement required deeper analyses of the essays.

Table 4

Changes in Moves among Students in the High Ability Group

	S1		S2		S3		S4	
Moves/Steps	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Move: Introducing oneself			✓					
Move: Giving reasons to apply	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Moves/Steps								
Step: Academic interest	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Step: Understanding of the field	✓							
Step: Appreciation of the field	✓		✓		✓	✓		
Step: Personal experience	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Move: Listing qualifications		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Step: Academic achievement				✓	✓			
Step: Academic experience		✓				✓	✓	✓
Step: Professional experience			✓	✓	✓			
Step: Extracurricular activities						✓		
Move: Discussing life experience								
Move: Stating future goals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Move: Describing personalities					✓			

Table 5

Changes in Moves among Students in the Low Ability Group

Moves/Steps	S5		S6		S7		S8	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Move: Introducing oneself	✓	✓						
Move: Giving reasons to apply	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Step: Academic interest	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Step: Understanding of the field			✓	✓	✓	✓		
Step: Appreciation of the field			✓			✓		✓
Step: Personal experience	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Move: Listing qualifications		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Step: Academic achievement			✓	✓				
Step: Academic experience				✓				✓
Step: Professional experience			✓			✓		✓
Step: Extracurricular activities		✓		✓				
Move: Discussing life experience	✓	✓						
Move: Stating future goals		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Move: Describing personalities	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓

Tables 4 and 5 show the changes in moves employed by both groups of students between the pre- and post-test. One of the most interesting outcomes was the increased number of moves listing qualifications, which were scarce or absent in the pre-test essays. As for the difference, the essays of the high ability students exhibited simpler move patterns, whereas those of the low ability group had a wider variety of moves and steps. Examples (1) and (2) illustrate some differences between S6's pre-test and post-test essays:

(1) Looking back over the complicated in physics and mathematics and try to learn the solution is very simple. So far with the mathematics and physics are my most understandable among other subjects. When it was younger, secondary school, mathematics and physics are the most successful subjects and I haven't failed yet. Furthermore, I am interesting in Computer Engineering which use maths, physics and computer skill mainly. What is more I have studied about Python elementary which is a program for coding in computer.

(S6's Pre-test)

(2) My interest lay in not only programming but coding too. I wish to develop website or software which could help us in daily life. For instance, develop website for information and friendly users.
When I was young I wish to work with computers and programming. So, I started to research and discover what programming is. The knowledge after research I found out that we need Mathematics and Science to do and I did it well with fun of the development in Computer Engineering.

(S6's Post-test)

The fact that in his post-test, S6 decided to place the statement of interest before relating to his background reflected the awareness of the content and organisation of this genre. The above examples also demonstrated the increased awareness of its format which usually set distinguished ideas into small paragraphs, although some students still had not noticed this characteristic. Moreover, the more frequent uses of past tenses, as well as the numbers and length of paragraphs, were improved among the low ability group. However, other improvements regarding format, which included the grammatical accuracy and structure of the text of accuracy, were scarce.

Regarding convention, examples of observable improvements were the more frequent uses of learned formulaic sequence, removal of self-

introductory statements by a student in the high ability group, and the elimination of the move discussing the writer's weaknesses by a student in the low ability group. According to example (2), the sentence patterns learned through GBWI such as 'My interest lay in' or 'I wish to' were found in the post-tests. Other improvements could also be seen from the removal of ineffective or unnecessary parts pertaining to self-introduction and weaknesses. Examples (3) and (4) were the parts from the students' pre-test, which were absent in their post-tests.

(3)   Hello my name is X and my nickname is Y

(S2's Pre-test)

(4)   But, on my weakness, I have the weakness on my health problem, especially for the issue in my digestive system, and the mind and personality weakness.

(S5's Pre-test)

In terms of convention, some students in the low ability group had adjusted their writing technique to conform to the discourse convention as witnessed in examples (5) and (6). S6, for example, chose to avoid using explicit statements of qualifications which was more commonly practised in personal statement writing. In the post-test, he opted for presenting his qualifications through the experience instead of merely stating them.

(5)   … before I started doing everything, I planned first and do it by step. If it has a mistake, I always have a backup plan.

(S6's Pre-test)

(6)   After started in high school I tried to learn Python which is program for coding, user-friendly, and easy to use. I got a chance to take the course and found out that it started to develop my skills. … .

(S6's Post-test)

Under task achievement, as witnessed in the comparison of examples (5) and (6), some students were found to have added more in-depth and tangible details to their moves, which improved the construction of the moves, making them more successful in presenting the writer as a qualified candidate for the programme they were targeting.

Table 6

Responses to the Questionnaire by the Students in All Groups

Item	Content	High	Low	Combined
	Overall attitudes towards the genre-based personal statement writing lessons			
1	I am satisfied with the overall experience in learning to write a personal statement through this approach.	4.50	4.50	4.50
2	I feel that my writing skills improve and feel more confident after learning through this approach	4.25	3.50	3.88
3	I understand how to write personal statements after learning genre-based lessons.	4.50	3.75	4.13
4	Genre-based lessons give me a clearer picture of what personal statements are.	4.75	4.50	4.63
5	I feel that this approach is different from other writing instructions I have experienced.	4.75	4.25	4.50
6	I became more motivated to learn writing through this approach.	4.25	3.75	4.00
7	Genre-based lessons were enjoyable.	4.75	4.00	4.38
8	The lessons are suitable for my background knowledge considering the levels of difficulty.	4.00	3.50	3.75
9	Genre-based lessons are suitable for my learning styles.	4.50	3.75	4.13
10	I think this way of teaching is suitable for teaching personal statement writing.	4.75	4.50	4.63
11	I feel that genre-based lessons unnecessarily complicated the writing instruction.	3.50	2.75	2.88
12	I feel that genre-based lessons do not allow me to think creatively.	3.00	2.50	3.25
13	I am sure what I learn from genre-based lessons can be adapted for my future uses.	4.25	4.25	4.25
14	I feel that this approach helps me become an autonomous learner.	4.50	4.00	4.25
	Attitudes towards specific elements in the genre-based personal statement writing lesson			
15	I am satisfied with the teacher's roles in the classroom.	4.75	4.75	4.75
16	I am satisfied with the materials used in the lessons.	4.75	4.25	4.50
17	I think it is important to explore the context before writing, for example, audience, purposes, or convention.	4.75	4.75	4.75
18	I am satisfied with the acivities where I analyse the context of writing.	4.50	4.25	4.38
19	I think comparing the similar types of text helps me see a clearer picture of what the personal statement is like.	4.75	3.75	4.25
20	I have trouble finding the sample suitable texts for my writing.	3.00	2.50	3.25
21	I think reading the auhentic samples is useful.	4.25	4.25	4.25
22	I am satisfied with the activities when I got to analyse the text structures individually.	4.25	3.75	4.00
23	I am satisfied with the activities when I got to analyse the text structures with my friends.	4.50	3.75	4.13
24	I have been adequately prepared for writing.	3.75	3.00	3.38
25	I have been provided with enough exercises before writing.	4.00	2.75	3.38
26	I am satisfied with the feedback, revising, and proofreading session.	4.00	3.75	3.88
27	I think feedback, revising, and proofreading session is useful.	4.25	4.00	4.13
28	I like the collaborative working during the lessons.	4.75	3.50	4.13
29	The evaluation criteria are clear and suitable.	4.75	3.75	4.25
30	I am satisfied with the final product of my personal statement.	3.50	3.75	3.63
	Total	**4.29**	**3.88**	**4.07**

Effects on Students' Attitudes

Table 6 shows the quantitative results of the students' attitudes towards the lesson form the three categories are shown in below.

The results from the questionnaire revealed that the combined group, as well as the high ability group, had high levels of satisfaction towards overall experience, whereas the low ability group's satisfaction was at a moderate level. All the groups strongly agreed that the approach was suitable for teaching personal statement writing and provided a clear picture of the target genre. They also viewed GBWI with potential for future uses. Regarding specific aspects of the lesson, all the groups expressed very high satisfaction with the facilitative roles played by the teacher and the stage in which they explored the context before writing.

Turning to aspects the students found less satisfactory, the combined group tended to regard the approach as unnecessarily complicated. The low scoring responses of both the high and low ability groups implied concern that this approach might limit writers' creativity. From the specific aspects of the lesson that had the lowest scores on specific aspects of the lesson, it can be inferred that all three groups might have had difficulties finding suitable samples of personal statements.

In their open-ended questionnaire responses and interviews, the low and the high ability students' comments showed few notable differences in their overall attitudes towards the lesson. The qualitative data were analysed into themes including the advantages and disadvantages of the GBWI lesson. The positive qualities of the approach include the following six themes: systematic pedagogy, supportive factors, applicability, awareness-raising, needs-based nature of the lessons, as well as uncategorised positive comments pertaining to satisfaction of either the overall experience or changes in final products. Meanwhile, three negative themes were observed, involving the propensity of the approach to be restrictive and difficult, together with unclassified dissatisfaction and the limitations.

Advantages

Firstly, almost every participant regarded the lessons as systematic, starting from an overall picture of the genre to its specific elements. Some participants made comparisons with other writing classes they had experienced, which were mostly product oriented.

Next, some participants regarded various scaffolding stages as supportive. The stages of early production (S4 and S8), characterising genre (S5), preparation for writing (S5 and S8), sample finding and genre analysis

(S1, S2, S3, S5 and S7) were claimed to help familiarise the participants with the text and context of personal statements. Example (7) illustrated how sample finding and genre analysis could enhance student's confidence in deciding the appropriate content for their writing.

(7) Analysing both the samples you provided and the ones I found was beneficial. It was like a kind of suggestion which helped me decide on what content to include in the post-test.

(S1)

Another advantage of the approach was its applicability for future use. Participants, especially those in the low ability group (S2, S5, and S7), asserted the possibility of applying the stages for their own uses when writing unfamiliar genres.

(8) It begins with getting to know the type of writing you want to write. Then you look at the samples you found but don't just copy from them. Next, look at the order of the moves; for example, if you want to write an email to your teacher, you should begin with, for example, Dear Teacher, and you start by introducing yourself, and then you ask for permission to submit the work. The next paragraph might be a description of your work. Although the styles of writing might be different, I think it [this approach] also works.

(S5)

Moreover, the GBWI lessons were viewed as having the potential to help writers raise their awareness of the genre. The increased understanding of content (S2, S3, S8) language style (S1, S6), and communicative purpose (S5) were referred to in the interviews.

(9) I feel that the work in the post-test has improved in terms of content. There are some important ideas which were not included in the pre-test, and the order of ideas was also improved.

(S3)

The needs-based nature of the GBWI lessons was another characteristic highlighted as outstanding by S3, S5, and S6. The participants pointed out that the approach was suitable for preparing grade 12 students to apply for university admission.

Apart from these observations, other positive comments expressed the participants' satisfaction with the overall experience (S3 and S4) and their final products in the post-test (S3, S5, and S8), as demonstrated in example (10).

> (10) I am happy with the final product. In the pre-test the ideas were scattered; the length was inadequate; and the beginning and the ending were wrong. … The improvements were in the structure and the content. I removed irrelevant ideas, which did not align with the purpose of a personal statement.
>
> (S3)

Disadvantages

The first negative aspect of this GBWI lesson was its levels of difficulty and complexity. While S3 from the high ability group considered the systematic stages as suitable for students with limited background knowledge, the students in the low ability group reported that the lesson was difficult (S6, S7, and S8) and complicated (S3). It is important to note that the difficulty was associated with the inherent challenges of personal statement writing as a self-exploratory process.

> (11) Writing personal statements was more difficult than I previously thought because it was about expressing our own story. It turns out that I myself couldn't clearly answer why I chose the [university's] programme.
>
> (S7)

The response of one participant (S5) to the open-ended question expressed concern that heavy reliance on sample texts risked limiting writers' creativity.

> (12) I was aware that I adopted a lot of ideas from [sample texts]. This might have limited my creativity compared with when I wrote on my own.
>
> (S5's answer to open-ended question)

Other comments expressing dissatisfaction targeted the time constraints of the lesson, which resulted in insufficient preparation for writing (S4, S6, S7, and S8); the small group learning environment (S6); preference for the pre-test writing (S1); and unclear improvement in the post-test writing (S2, S6, and S7).

(13) Studying in the afternoon in the very end of the second semester was quite difficult. We should have more time for each session, too.

(S8)

(14) I still prefer my writing in the pre-test. I must admit I paid more attention at that time than in the post-test. I realised that I forgot to include some elements in the second writing, maybe because I was too focused on some moves I missed in the pre-test and failed to write as I wanted.

(S1)

(15) I was not sure how to comment on [my classmates' writing]. Most of my comments were based on my feelings, but I wish I had known how to give them good feedback."

(S4)

Discussions of the Effects on Students' Writing

Judging from the writing scores, unlike the results of some former studies (e.g., Changpeung, 2012; Janenoppakarn, 2016), the average improvement in this study was modest for the whole group. Clearer evidence of improvement in the low ability group might suggest that GBWI is more suitable for beginning and pre-intermediate writers than advanced writers, which supports Al-Baimani's (2019) findings. However, the analysis of content and moves revealed that GBWI also benefited high ability students in different ways, although the low ability students' improvements were greater.

The effectiveness of GBWI was most clearly demonstrated in the wider variety of moves in the post-test, implying improvements in generic structures, which affected content and, to a lesser extent, organisation. The improvements in content aligned with Ngamaramwarangkul (2016) and in generic structure with Mingsakoon and Srinon (2018). However, unlike Panjapakdee (2008) and Thongchalerm and Jarunthawatchai (2020), improvements in format, especially grammaticality, were less notable among all participants, except for more appropriate uses of tenses and a few low ability students' improved length and number of paragraphs. Moreover, some students did not conform to the format of the genre; for example, one high ability student produced two long paragraphs in both the pre- and the post-test. This outcome might be linked with the less-explicit nature of the interactionist approach (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010), as opposed to the explicit teaching of genre as practised in SFL or ESP. Regarding conventions, as reported by Haryanti and Sari (2019), the writing styles in the current study exhibited such developments as the adoption of learned expressions,

elimination of ineffective writing techniques, and a shift of style to a less direct way of stating qualifications.

Therefore, the current study supports previous studies indicating that GBWI has potential to improve students' writing competence. As for the decrease in the post-test writing scores of some high ability students in group, it might be associated with decreased motivation due to task repetition as discussed by Lázaro-Ibarrola and Villarreal (2021). Moreover, it was observed that most students in the high ability group had been accepted by their desired programmes by the time the post-test was conducted and so were under no compulsion to compose personal statements soon.

Discussion of the Effects on Students' Attitudes

The questionnaire data on the advantages and disadvantages of GBWI corroborated the findings from the interview, which aligned with Hyland's (2007) and was similar to Yang's (2012) findings. It was found that GBWI had such advantages as systematicity, supportiveness, applicability, and needs-basis, which were in line with Hyland (2007). While the systematic feature of GBWI reflected the students' comparison with product-based approaches, supportiveness, in accordance with previous studies such as Ngamaramwarangkul (2016) and Panjapakdee (2008), was linked with different elements such as teacher's roles, materials, and scaffolding stages. Regarding adaptability and awareness-raising, the results supported those of Yang (2012) in terms of the transferability of the genre awareness to other unfamiliar genres. However, unlike Hyland (2007), the characteristics of explicitness were absent from this study, which could be attributed to the less-explicit practice of genre pedagogy in the interactionist school as discussed by Bawarshi and Reiff (2010). Overall, the positive attitudes towards GBWI were in accordance with other studies such as Changpueng (2012), Janenoppakarn (2016), Ngamaramwarangkul (2016), and Panjapakdee (2008).

As to the disadvantages of GBWI, unnecessary complexity and prescriptiveness were mentioned. Arguments regarding complexity could be related to the inherent challenges of personal statement as a self-exploratory genre (Paley, 1996; Swales, 1996) and the different stages and levels of difficulty in GBWI. Having limited writing experience mostly with product-oriented instruction, a few students, mostly in the low ability group, described the approach as complicated and/or difficult, which suggests that simplified materials and adjustments of the stages should be applied with this group. Moreover, as cautioned by Hyland (2007) and Myskow and Gordon (2010), the use of prescriptive risks limiting writers' creativity, a problem expressed by S5, with regard to GBWI's heavy reliance on the and analysis of sample texts although the benefits of reading and analysing sample essays were also

acknowledged. These conflicting perspectives on prescriptiveness underscore the need to help the students balance between writing in one's own authentic voice and meeting the communicative purposes of a personal statement. To address these reports of dissatisfaction related to time constraint, insufficient preparation for writing, the small group learning environment, and unclear improvement of writing competence, the students offered some insights for improvements.

Implications and Limitations

Based on the effects of GBWI on students' writing competence and attitudes, the study presents the application of the didactic sequence with ESP-informed stages as another possible teaching approach for personal statement writing and other relatable genres. However, to maximise the advantages and minimise the disadvantages and limitations, some adjustments were recommended as follows.

The unclear improvements of format and the attitude results suggested that adjustments could be on level of explicitness of genre pedagogy at some stages of the sequence as well as the levels of difficulty of materials. For instance, simplified personal statements could be used as alternatives to authentic texts. Furthermore, it is advised that teachers should provide effective preparation for such aspects as feedback giving strategies and editing techniques. With reference to the integrated didactic sequence, the findings also suggest the possibility for teachers to integrate or customise the frameworks from various genre schools by selectively incorporating elements that are appropriate for their purposes and contexts.

Given the limitations of a small-scale case study, it is suggested that further investigations involve larger numbers of participants. It is also advised to consider managing the effects of extraneous factors such as the time constraints, which in this case, affected the need and attitudes toward writing personal statements among high ability students. Lastly, ways to adapt instruction to different ability groups should be explored so that the approach is less daunting for low ability groups, more advanced for high ability groups, and more effective for both.

Conclusion

This study of the effects of using GBWI to teach personal statement writing to high and low ability groups using a framework adapted from the Brazilian genre school and ESP's genre analysis yielded mixed results. While the pre- and post-test writing scores suggested that the approach was more suitable for low ability students, the analysis of content and moves indicated

that advantages were derived by both groups, although the positive effects on the low ability group were more definite. While whether or to what extent the perceived effectiveness of the approach was due to students' increased familiarity with core aspects of the genre such as its language, purpose, or audience, the improvements in their writing and overall attitudes may at least be taken as a sign that the approach offers some advantages.

With regard to the effects on students' attitudes, the results from the questionnaire revealed that overall attitudes toward the approach were positive, with the high ability group expressing a slightly higher level of satisfaction. The results from the questionnaire supported the themes that emerged from the interview, which highlighted more advantages than disadvantages of GBWI.

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