

Newspaper Editorial Genre for Teaching Argumentative Writing: Putting Analysis to Classroom Application

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Abstract

Teaching argumentative writing can be challenging for language teachers especially in situations where English is taught as a second language. The genre of newspaper editorials is among the best known argumentative genres with highly rich educational content. Based on the practical utility of genre analysis for academic purposes, this study makes use of the approach of genre-based pedagogy for teaching argumentative writing in general and argumentative essays specifically by making use of newspaper editorials as teaching material. Findings of So (2005) regarding the comparison between the two genres and suggestions for teaching argumentative essay have been utilized to provide some practical applications. Based on the comparison, a structural analysis (from Masroor & Ahmad, 2013) is put to use for proposing an instructional model in four phases for teaching argumentative essays comprising of various exercises meant to lead learners from least genre knowledge to increased command on the genre for successful production of argumentative essays independently. The proposed model in four instructional stages, which can be used independently or together depending upon the purpose, show how newspaper editorials can be used to teach students organisational structure and various rhetorical strategies besides raising meta-linguistic awareness to perceive various functions of writing.

Keywords: *English for Academic Purposes, Genre Based Pedagogy, Argumentative Strategies, Newspaper Editorials, Written Discourse, Argumentative Essays*

1. Introduction

Writing skills are difficult to master especially when writing arguments to convince the audience (Ferris, 1994). The writers of argumentative texts have to be careful about the structure, content, and the use of linguistic devices during their process of composing. The practitioners of English language face difficulty in creating awareness among learners about several processes involved in carrying out argumentation. The teaching of argumentative writing is a demanding task and learners fail to cope up with the challenges faced in such activities (So, 2005). In order to teach students of English these argumentative strategies, the teachers of English should be provided with the authentic models of argumentative discourse and the genre of newspaper editorials makes a perfect choice for that purpose. The genre is among the best known argumentative texts (van Dijk, 1992) with highly rich educational content potentially effective for teaching argumentation (Pak, 1997). Editorials are significant due to their usage of standard linguistic forms suitable for written persuasion (Connor, 1996).

Genre analysis in the framework of ESP (Swales, 1990) is known for its practical applications for academic purposes. Bhatia (1993) has devoted considerable amount of genre research on professional genres for providing teaching materials. Genre analysis has been effectively used for teaching various levels (Candlin, 1993) and can be practically implemented to be used at the school, tertiary or university levels and/or ESP (Bhatia, 2002; Hyon, 1996).

A number of approaches commonly referred to as genre-based approaches (see e.g., Bhatia, 1997) have been proposed, culminating in designing classroom tasks especially for teaching writing for specific/professional purposes (Bhatia, 1993, 1997b; Flowerdew, 1993; Hyland, 2003; Swales, 1990, 2004). Genre-based approaches have been widely experimented for pedagogical concerns (e.g., Bhatia,

1997b; Hyland, 2003; Swales and Feak, 2000; Flowerdew, 1993; Henry & Roseberry, 1998; Badger & White, 2000; Cheng, 2006) by making use of texts such as Chinese sales invitations (Zhu, 2001), university brochures (Osman, 2004), research article abstracts (Swales and Feak, 2010) and essay introductions (Henry & Roseberry, 1999).

Using newspapers as an instructional material is not new. So (2005) discovered various similarities among the genre of newspaper editorial and school argumentative essay and has shown the utility of editorial for the transference of knowledge from one field to the other. She also advocated the genre-based pedagogy for imparting content knowledge coupled with knowledge of structural patterns and use of lexical features. Her teaching plans include providing editorial to the students as a reading material, carrying out analysis, discussing sample texts, producing own texts, getting feedback and making corrections. So's (2005) work provided a sound theoretical basis for further research in the area. This paper complements the findings of So (2005) and provides a practical framework for showing how newspaper editorial can be put to practice in classroom. The paper shows how this rich educational content could be used to teach writing especially argumentative essay besides teaching some linguistic strategies to fulfil argumentative goals. Unlike So (2005), this paper is more focused on imparting knowledge of argument building in students in general and how to train and polish their critical reading and thinking skills besides teaching them to master writing an argumentative essay.

The structural analysis and valuable insights both at the macro-level for organisational patterns and micro-level for linguistic features (from Masroor & Ahmad, 2013) have been used in this study by making use of genre-based pedagogy to develop a framework comprising of various exercises meant to lead students from the least genre knowledge to increased command on the genre for successful production of argumentative essays independently.

2. Methodology

This study makes practical use of the findings of genre analysis (as proposed by Swales, 1990) by adopting the approach of genre-based pedagogy. The approach gives great emphasis to the role of social purpose in text structuring besides recognizing the role of the context of text-production (Hyland, 2003) and discursive practices of the genre. The understanding of textual patterns also comes from the knowledge of why texts are written the way they are (Hyland, 2003). Bhatia (1997b) has advocated the use of genre-based approach for teaching language since it helps to raise "rhetorical consciousness" (Swales, 1990: 213) of the learner. Instead of acquiring linguistic competency of genres in isolation, the learner is well aware of the contextual use of the genre and the reason behind the preferred linguistic choices adopted by the specific discourse community.

Among genre-based approaches, the process-genre approach proposed by Badger and White (2000) has been the most popular and advocated (such as by Yan (2005) for improving writing skills). The approach moves away from the previously popular product-based that relied more on imitation and process-based approaches that considered writing as an unconscious skill comprising of various stages (see Badger and White, 2000; Hyland, 2003; and Yan, 2005 for details of the models). The approach by Badger and White (2000) held that insights of the genre analysis can improve language acquisition by incorporating more reader-focused and purpose sensitive genre-based pedagogy into writer-centred process based pedagogy (Yan, 2005). By combining the process and genre approach to teaching, the process-genre approach by Badger and White (2000) proposed a number of procedures for teachers to create gradual command over genre knowledge among learners, beginning from the situational awareness and knowledge of genre purpose, to the planning, drafting and finally text generation.

The genre-based approach advocated by Swales and Feak (2000) also considered the main aim of a teaching approach is to develop awareness about the purpose of a genre in the students. It should aim at sensitizing them to both the structural patterns at the organisational level and the lower level lexical choices. The result of the instruction should be a smooth progression in genre-learning among students beginning from the stage of genre analysis towards genre knowledge and finally genre possession.

Henry and Roseberry (1999) developed teaching exercises for L2 learners at the university level. They identified the aim of genre-based instruction is to sensitize students with the key structural patterns and linguistics features of a genre, to make them aware of the preferred strategies used to accomplish communicative purpose, to identify the features used to realize the strategies, and lastly, to provide explanations for the existence of preferred choices with respect to the social context. According to Henry and Roseberry (1999), it is the aim of genre-based instruction to fill the gap between the way learners structure their texts and how texts are actually realized and preferred in their respective social settings.

As the brief survey of genre-based approaches shows, various genres can be successfully used to provide instructional materials for students at the tertiary and university levels. This provides an insight into how the structural analysis of newspaper editorials (From Masroor & Ahmad, 2013) can be turned into useful instructional materials for teaching argumentative writing.

This study presents a sketch to highlight possible ways for teaching argumentative writing to students by making use of newspaper editorials. The exercises presented, however, can be adopted by allowing some variations according to the students' needs. Similar to various genre-based approaches (such as Osman, 2004; Badger and White 2000), this proposed instructional material stresses the role of teacher as a guide and advisor (see Yan, 2005) from the stage of possessing the least genre knowledge towards the increased command on the genre to an independent genre production. Most of the genre-based pedagogies (such as Dudley-Evans, 1997; and Cope and Kalantzis, 1993) have focused on three basic phases of genre learning such as exposure to the genre, joint construction of texts by students and teachers and independent construction by students. This study has provided four basic phases of genre acquisition whereas the proposed step three could be skipped if the genre to be mastered is itself used for teaching in the classroom.

3. Argumentative Genre Acquisition through Newspaper Editorials

This study advocates acquisition of argumentative genre/essays by proposing a four-staged model comprising of various instructional activities. The phases are:

1. Genre Awareness
2. Genre Participation
3. Genre Transition
4. Genre Generation

Phase I: Genre Awareness

This phase is meant to create genre identification and awareness among learners. It would help build familiarity and understanding of the genre by providing students a preliminary briefing about it. Since

this study makes use of newspaper editorial for classroom teaching, this phase could comprise of the following steps.

- a) Teacher involves students by imparting contextualized genre awareness: how editorials are produced; what purpose do they serve; who writes them; who decides what should be written; what influence does newspaper's ideological standing has on editorial's structure; who is the anticipated audience; what is the influence of time or how vulnerable is the genre towards current events, and so on. At this stage, the students could be asked to carry out some research and present this individually or in classroom on the genre in its institutional settings through gathering information from the Internet and books by genre experts. This step would provide awareness of the structural patterns and preferences.
- b) Secondly, the familiarity with the textual structure of the genre could be achieved by imparting knowledge about the functions of various parts of the text (see Masroor & Ahmed, 2013 for structural organisation of editorials). The learning process, however, should be interactional and not prescriptive, so as to stimulate learners' thinking. Teachers could involve students' participation through constant feedback by asking them various questions such as: *What do you think is the purpose of this step or move? Do you think it satisfies the communicative purpose of editorials?* And so on.

Phase II: Genre Participation

This phase would require practical involvement of learners with the genre in the form of various activities aimed at imparting maximum genre knowledge. Several aim-based activities could be devised to achieve various pedagogical goals such as the structure of argumentative texts both at the organizational and lexical levels by highlighting the key salient features of newspaper editorials that form the basis of genre identification (making it distinct from other genres). The phase could also be used to enhance learners' linguistic competency, critical reading and thinking skills, and develop their understanding about form-function relationship. Some sample tasks aimed at differentiating between facts and opinions, learning organisational patterns, and enhancing linguistic competency are provided below to facilitate language practitioners.

Task 1: Differentiating Between Facts and Opinions

Newspaper editorials are opinionated articles, but the opinions expressed are always backed up by facts and background information to enhance their persuasiveness. In terms of van Dijk (1998), opinion discourse is a blend of facts and evaluative content. The instructional material provided below making use of editorial text can be used as a sample to teach students to differentiate between facts and opinions. The teacher could change the contents of the exercise based on the level of students' competency.

A *fact* is the objective presentation of truth that is already known or happened. Meanwhile, *opinion* is a more subjective account expressing one's feelings and judgments about someone or something.

Example:

Fact:	<i>John is tall.</i>
Opinion:	<i>John is a wonderful person.</i>

The physical description of John being a tall person in the first statement is considered as a factual knowledge since it could be measured by some objective criteria. It can practically proven to be a true or false statement by making use of some measuring tools. The second statement is considered as an opinion statement as the descriptive account about John's personality is based on a person's feelings about John and there is a possibility that other people might not feel the same way about John. There are no objective criteria on which we could accept or reject the statement unless it is further proven to be true by some other factual details such as *John is a wonderful person because he manages to do several tasks at the same time.*

The text below is an editorial taken from *The New York Times* on the issue of Israeli attack on Gaza. The controversial nature of editorial compels the writer to make extensive use of evidence to back up his/her opinions. Based on the definitions provided, can you identify the propositions as facts or opinions?

Editorial Text A Way Out of Gaza? NYT, January 16, 2009		
No.	Propositions	Fact/Opinion
1.	We agree that Israel had to defend itself against Hamas's rocket attacks. But we fear the assault on Gaza has passed the point of diminishing returns.	
2.	It is time for a cease-fire with Hamas and a return to the peace negotiations that are the only real hope for guaranteeing Israel's long-term security.	
3.	We are encouraged that a cease-fire finally seems to be gaining traction.	
4.	Although not much detail is known, reports have focused on an Egyptian proposal for a phased-in truce, followed by a pullout of Israeli forces and the reopening of border crossings to ease the economic blockade of Gaza.	
5.	The sudden diplomatic activity came as Israel unleashed its heaviest shelling of Gaza neighborhoods, including a hit on a United Nations compound where hundreds of Palestinians had taken shelter.	
6.	Israeli officials acknowledge that the 20-day offensive has not permanently crippled Hamas's military wing or ended its ability to launch rocket attacks.	
7.	It is unlikely that Israel can achieve those aims militarily any time soon. The cost in human life and anti-Israeli fury would be enormous.	
8.	Already more than 1,000 Palestinians have died in the densely populated Gaza Strip, where an always miserable life has become unbearable. Thirteen Israelis have died.	
9.	We also fear that the war is further weakening the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, and his Fatah faction — Hamas's sworn enemy. We know Mr. Abbas's limitations, but he believes in a two-state solution. If there is going to be a negotiated peace, he is the best hope.	
10.	As part of a cease-fire deal, Israel is right to demand a permanent halt to Hamas's rocket fire. Israel is also right not to rely on Hamas's promises.	
11.	Hamas used the last cease-fire to restock its arsenal with weapons ferried in through tunnels dug under the Egypt-Gaza border.	
12.	The best protection would be to place monitors on the Egypt-Gaza border to stop the smuggling that is Hamas's lifeline.	
13.	The Israelis also must be ready to ease their blockade of Gaza to allow more food and normal economic activity.	
14.	The Israeli foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, is expected in Washington on Friday	

	where she will sign a hastily arranged deal to accept United States equipment and technical assistance to help monitor the Israeli-Gaza border.	
15.	American and Israeli officials say that Israel would never accept a cease-fire without that help and both are eager to heap praise on Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice for making it happen.	
16.	But Washington could have provided that assistance years ago — just as it should have been pressing harder on every aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.	
17.	President-elect Barack Obama says he will work for a peace deal from Day 1.	
18.	We hope Israel picks a new leader in elections next month who is truly committed to a two-state solution.	
19.	With the support of the new American president, he or she must make an early downpayment on peace by ending settlement construction, cooperating seriously with Mr. Abbas and improving the lives of all Palestinians in the West Bank and in Gaza.	

The activity presented above would sharpen learners’ critical reading and thinking abilities and argument building skills in the long run by enabling them to figure out how facts are different from opinions. The learners could become well aware of how to defend their stand point by making use of facts and to express their opinions by the provision of ample factual knowledge. This activity would also make students understand the needs of their target readers fruitful for independent genre construction.

Task 2: Teaching Macro-Structural Organization of Editorials based on Rhetorical Functions:

Phase two could also be used for teaching structural organization of argumentative texts. The familiarity with the textual structure of newspaper editorials gained by learners in Phase I “Genre Awareness” could be put to practical use through this activity. A sample text given in Table 1 below is originally composed of three paragraphs – a pattern normally found in most of the editorials. However, subdivision of each paragraph into a number of meaningful chunks is further carried out as a guideline for easier identification of various propositions (see Masroor & Ahmed, 2013 for move analysis) that can exist in each move. The three major moves have already been identified in the activity for learners to ease the analysis.

Table 1: A sample text for teaching purpose of various propositions in the structural organization of an editorial

Carefully read the text below and answer the questions provided at the end of the text. After answering all the questions, write the rhetorical functions of each proposition in the column given.

EDITORIAL TEXT Actions speak louder... <i>Dawn, Sunday March 22, 2009</i>	No.	RHETORICAL FUNCTION
Move 1 Defining the Issue PRESIDENT Zardari has said that it is time to forget the past and move on. “We have witnessed our state institutions repeatedly receiving blows from interventions,” he stated at a farewell dinner for Abdul Hameed Dogar. Would that the president realised his own intervention in Punjab has struck another blow to those institutions. Through his proxy Governor Salmaan Taseer		

<p>the president has kept Punjab in a state of near crisis on what appear to be very flimsy constitutional grounds.</p> <p>Governor Taseer has refused to call a session of the Punjab Assembly to elect a new chief minister because, the governor claims, an aspirant to that office must first prove that he has the requisite numbers to win election. But that’s not what the constitution says. Constitutionally, a special session of the assembly is required to determine if a member of the house has the confidence of its members. If successful, that member, usually the leader of the largest party in the house, must be invited by the governor to become chief minister.</p> <p>Governor Taseer is arrogating to himself a discretion that the constitution simply does not give him.</p>		
<p>Move 2 Validating the Claim</p> <p>The blatant illegality is doubly puzzling because now that Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry has been restored the PML-N has ended its boycott of the superior judiciary. Legal experts suggest it wouldn’t take long for the Supreme Court to do away with governor’s rule if an application to such effect is filed.</p> <p>So what is to be gained by prolonging an illegal step that is proving to be politically damaging? The obvious answer is: the president and his team in Punjab are buying time to win over the PML-Q. But the PML-N is clearly not worried about that outcome and has slapped away overtures from the Chaudhries of the PML-Q. The PML-N has reason to be confident. Even if arm-twisting wins back the forward bloc of the PML-Q and a unified PML-Q supports the PPP, the stench of foul play will stay over the assembly — and it will only strengthen the PML-N’s moral upper hand and increase the party’s support among the electorate.</p>		
<p>Move 3 Taking a Stance</p> <p>The one good thing the government is doing is pressing ahead with a review of the disqualification of the Sharif brothers and seeking a stay order in the meantime. Given what’s happening in Punjab it’s clear though that the PPP does not intend to hand the chief minister’s slot back to Shahbaz Sharif. But by being stubborn the PPP is flirting with other dangers too.</p> <p>In recent weeks, the party has sucked the army back into mediating political crises.</p> <p>Gen Kayani has been applauded for his role in the restoration of Chief Justice Chaudhry, but a good choice yesterday can become a bad one tomorrow.</p> <p>Army intervention is bad. Period. One wishes the president would realise that too.</p>	<p>011</p>	

Q1. The above sample editorial has been divided into three parts. Why do you think the text has been divided into three parts? Are you able to identify the function each paragraph performs and how

subsequent paragraphs are different from the previous paragraph in the whole structure of the sample editorial?

- Q2. The first part has been named as “Defining the Issue”. Why it has been named as such? Can you identify the issue raised by the newspaper and the main thesis of the editorial in the first part? What is the purpose of the remaining propositions in the first part of the text?
- Q3. In the light of the main thesis or newspaper’s position identified in the first paragraph, can you identify the purpose of the propositions given in paragraph two? Which one is meant to express the writer’s opinion and which one is meant to state the factual knowledge?
- Q4. Do you think the newspaper becomes more explicit in its opinion in paragraph 3? Identify the propositions as factual and non-factual ones in paragraph three? Identify which propositions pass judgments on the events or actors by explicitly giving opinion about something as good or as bad in paragraph 3? Can you identify the propositions related to the future? How they are different from one another?
- Q5. What is the purpose of the whole editorial piece? Does it work towards changing the thinking patterns of the readers? How successful it is to influence them?

Task 3: Creating Awareness of Linguistic Choices

The analysis of newspaper editorials carried out by this study could be used to make students identify various linguistic choices made by the writers in order to further their persuasive goals. Students could be made aware of a range of linguistic forms that exist to achieve specific persuasive purposes that have varying range of pragmatic effect. Students could learn how the preferred choice could influence the readers differently.

Task 4: Enhancing Linguistic Competency

Other than genre acquisition, the rich editorial text can be utilized to make various language learning exercises.

4. Vocabulary Building

The editorial texts are high in vocabulary content. Though this is not the focus of the present study, however, an activity is designed at the genre participation phase to show how editorials can be used to increase linguistic competency among the learners as a part of their argument building.

1. Read the paragraph below taken from an editorial published in *New Straits Times*. Based on the contextual clues, figure out the meaning of the underlined words and circle the correct answer among the options available:

Editorial Text

Heads in the clouds
NST, January 01, 2009

It also suggests that the pre-March 8 populist zeal for public participation in the decision-making process may be waning in the light of the cold realities of the actual difficulties of governing a state. To

be sure, the statutory provisions in the Local Government Act 1976 are a stumbling block. Nevertheless, having made the restoration of elections of local councils a major campaign plank, there seems little urgency to deliver the pledge in the states ruled by Pakatan Rakyat. Indeed, the composition of the local authorities in these states reflects party representation and not community voices.

1.	Zeal	enthusiasm	hatred	Anger
2.	Wane	Burn	decrease	Increase
3.	Statute	Ruling	sculpture	Shelter
4.	Stumble	Huge	amaze	Stagger
5.	Pledge	Groceries	promise	Mail

2. Now look up the words in dictionary and use them in sentences of your own.

Phase Iii: Transition Phase

This phase is optional and can be omitted if the text used in the first two phases is the target text to be mastered. In such case, Phase IV can be accessed directly. However, as in this situation, the genre of newspaper editorials has been used in the classroom to teach argumentation or more specifically, argumentative essay. Therefore, in such cases where the usage of a different genre is favoured upon the target genre, this phase could be used to transform the strategies learned in the previous phases to generate a variety of desired texts by the students.

It is highly unlikely that students would be required to produce editorials in future unless they turn out to be editorialists in future. Yet, it would be unfortunate not to benefit from this rich argumentative text. All argumentative texts have some common features basic to argument building as they all involve taking a stance, defending a position, providing facts, making judgements and giving recommendations. The rich use of these strategies by experts in editorials can be put to use in teaching various argumentative genres by pointing towards the similarities and differences between editorials and the target genre to be mastered.

So (2005) studied the differences and similarities between argumentative essays and newspaper genres, and recommended the usage of newspaper genres for teaching argumentative essays to the students provided the students are made aware of the differences and overlaps and knowledge of generic conventions and communicative purpose of the two texts.

So (2005) has reported similarities between editorial and argumentative essays. Both are considered as argumentative genres and share similarities in generic structure. They have common generic organization beginning with the introduction of an issue, arguments and followed by conclusion and recommendations. Both are interwoven with facts and opinions. Both genres require the usage of similar linguistics strategies such as opinions, evaluations, evidence, and advice. Both involve taking a stand on an issue, mostly social which is materialized by firstly introducing an issue, making evaluations, giving pros and cons, backing up with facts and evidence and lastly concluding with recommendations. The common linguistics features include evaluative lexis, modality, use of 'we' as an involvement strategy, rhetorical questions and logical connectives (So, 2005).

Little emphasis has traditionally been given to imparting explicit generic knowledge in the classrooms which results in making students generate unsatisfactory genre samples (So, 2005). The nature of

argument building reflected explicitly in the professional argumentative genre of editorials can be well captured and put to use by students in the classroom for writing argumentative essays. This would require imparting explicit genre knowledge and explicit awareness of the differences that exist among both genres such as differing target audience, and audience expectations. Editorial written for general public is more detached and personal references to the writer do not exist. Argumentative essay meanwhile might be aimed at a specific audience and is more personal with greater usage of personal pronoun such as “I”. Despite of different situational contexts, editorial can be used to transfer both schematic structure and content knowledge to teach writing argumentative essay based on the similarities in the communicative purpose, schematic structure and linguistics features (So, 2005).

In order to achieve this, the first step in the transition phase would be to introduce students to the genre of argumentative essay. The students are already familiar with the genre of newspaper editorial at this stage. The teacher needs to explain explicitly at this point what the purpose of argumentative essay is – to persuade readers about one of the conflicting point of views over an issue. A comparison here needs to be drawn by the teacher to show how this genre is similar to the genre of newspaper editorial and what the distinctions are that set this genre apart from it. The following hand out outlining the similarities and differences (adopted from the findings of So, 2005) between the two genres could be put to use by teachers in pointing that to the students.

Table 2: **Similarities and differences between the structure of newspaper editorials and argumentative essays**

Similarities	Distinctions
1. Both genres have the same communicative purpose of convincing the audience of the writer's opinion/position.	1. Argumentative essay is less formal and can include the reference to personal pronoun 'I'. Meanwhile, newspaper editorials are mostly formal and there can be use of editorial 'we' for showing authority and inclusive 'we' for involving the audience.
2. Being opinionated discourse, both genres involve presentation of subjective views backed up by facts/objective information.	
3. Both genres follow the same schematic structure. Mostly, there is a three-part structure comprising of introducing the issue, projection of stance through argumentation and evaluation and conclusive remarks involving judgments or recommendations.	
4. The lexical devices employed are also the same. Both the genres involve the provision of evaluative lexis, modals, connectives and transition vocabulary to show connection between ideas and rhetorical questions for the purpose of emphasis.	

The students need to be taught that similarities outweigh the differences and how they can produce successful argumentative essays by transferring those intrinsic similarities while taking into consideration the minor differences.

The students could be made aware of the overlaps and distinctions in a number of ways. They could be shown sample argumentative essays and now that they are already familiar with the structure of editorials, they could themselves make comparisons as a step towards an independent text production to be accomplished in the next phase. This stage could involve continuous reference back to the editorial texts to provide them an example to illustrate a point.

Conversely, a sample argumentative essay and newspaper editorial could also be provided as a reference and similarities and differences could be already be highlighted between the two genres to clarify this to the students. The teacher could point out various parts and strategies of both genres by giving explicit examples of both. They could also be pointed out to lexical choices besides showing them argumentative strategies at the global level. They could be asked to look at the use of modals, emotive language, logical connectives, transitions, rhetorical questions and personal pronouns.

Another more useful way is to require students, as a group task or home assignment to annotate the sample texts by highlighting the similarities and differences between the two text types. This would enable them to think critically and they would be able to relate to and interact with the texts more readily. They could be asked as a part of their assignment to annotate texts in order to show rebuttals, connectives, thesis statement, how opinions are defended by facts and how writers of both genres are judgemental in their conclusions and give recommendations as a part of solution to the issue. The teacher could ask them to highlight modality, evaluative lexis, and number of facts per point of defence. Later on, the teacher could point out towards any difference or similarity that is left out.

Phase iv: Genre Generation

The students at this stage are already familiar with the purpose of argumentative essay and its structure as learned through various strategies aimed at imparting argument building through editorial texts. This is the time to assemble all acquired knowledge and put to use in independent text generation.

The fourth phase aims to make students write an argumentative genre and more specifically an argumentative essay independently through the knowledge acquired from the previous three phases. This stage would involve explicit instructions for writing and various stages involved in the process. The students are expected at this stage to be aware of the basic essay writing skills such as brainstorming, planning, outlining, drafting, paragraph building, revising, editing, peer-reviewing and so on. A little revision might be provided on need basis.

The students could be provided a number to topics to choose from or be required to come up with the issue they would like to debate on related to their real life problem or dilemma. The task could be accomplished either independently by the students or by some facilitation depending upon the requirements of the course and level of the students. This might include the provision of an outline of the essay or the required number of body paragraphs and/or the number of sentences required in each paragraph based on the course requirements and marking criteria.

The writing process of the argumentative essay could be taught to the students in the form of a flow chart as illustrated in Figure 1:

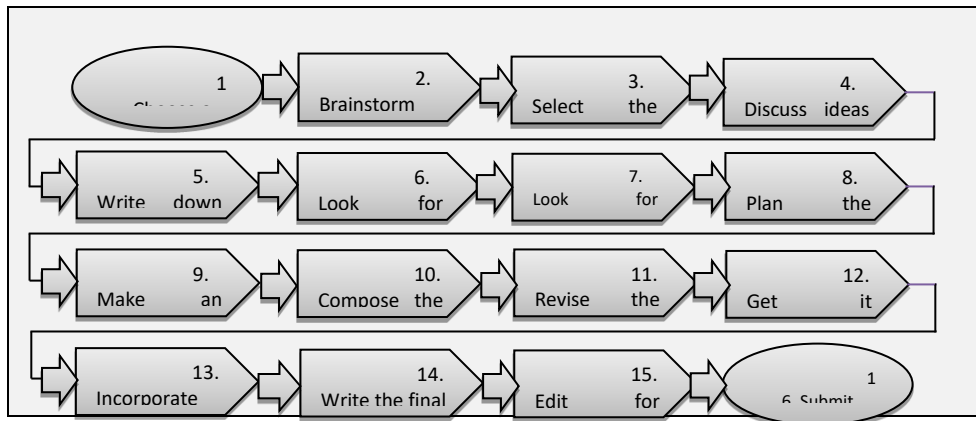


Fig. 1: A Flowchart of the Writing Process of an Argumentative Essay

A checklist could also be provided to the students as a reference point before turning in their argumentative essays and having an idea about the scoring criteria of the argumentative essay by the teacher. A sample checklist has been given in the Table 4 below:

Table 3: A Sample checklist before the submission of argumentative essay

A Checklist before the Submission of Argumentative Essay	Tick ✓
Have you developed a clear and comprehensive thesis statement which clearly outlines the position adopted with respect to the issue?	

Is the title linked to the main idea and position of the essay?	
Have you properly introduced the issue and your position to your audience (based on your idea of their grasp on the issue with respect to audience profile) in the introductory paragraph?	
Have you allocated a separate paragraph for each reason of defence? / Is your each body paragraph providing a reason for defending your position?	
Have you followed a proper structure in building each paragraph (topic sentence, supporting sentences and a concluding sentence that provides a link to the next paragraph)?	
Have you used adequate facts/examples/evidence to back up your claim?	
Have you used counter arguments to strengthen your arguments? Are there valid responses or rebuttals to the counter arguments?	
Are your ideas well connected with enough usage of transitional words and phrases? / Is there a link between ideas?	
Have you used <i>appropriate</i> modals with respect to the desired pragmatic effect on the audience and audience profile?	
Have you provided a sound conclusion which sums up the argument and provides a recommendation or a look to the future?	
Have you revised and edited your essay?	
Has it been peer reviewed?	

Provided below is a sample exercise asking students to write an argumentative essay on a given topic. The writing activity could be devised by the teacher as illustrated in the sample.

Task 5: Independent Writing of Argumentative Essay

Write an argumentative essay on the topic below:

“Is watching TV bad for children? Why or why not?”

Follow the guidelines provided by the teacher regarding argumentative writing such as newspaper editorials. The structure should address the three essential moves of introducing the issue, arguments and conclusion. Clearly introduce the topic and your main thesis. Defend your point of view with arguments and then conclude it afterwards by providing your opinionated remarks on the topic. Make use of facts to support your opinion in order to achieve your persuasive goals.

5. Conclusion

The above pedagogical exercises, proposed in four instructional stages, have shown that newspaper editorials can provide highly rich educational content. They could be used to teach students rhetorical structures at the macro-level; enhance their critical reading and thinking; make them identify form-function relationships, and enrich their vocabulary. The various phases could make students acquire genre knowledge and enable them to produce similar kind of persuasive texts, perhaps their own editorials for the school’s newspaper/magazine, or any argumentative writing such as argumentative essay as shown in this paper. More importantly, however, the benefit of genre-based study is much more than that. The genre-based pedagogy raises meta-linguistic awareness and enables learners to perceive various functions of writing. As So (2005) rightly points out, classroom teaching should be capable of making students use the knowledge beyond the class-room walls. The skills acquired through genre-based approach can help achieve this by enabling students to tackle any kind of writing situation and produce the appropriate text as required by the context.

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