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The Impact of Genre-based Instruction of Narrative Texts on Iranian EFL Learners' Motivation for Writing

Payman Rezvani* (Corresponding Author),
Assistant professor of Applied Linguistics,
Mahabad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mahabad, Iran
Email: Payman.rezvani@gmail.com

Mahnaz Saeidi,
Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics,
Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran
Email: mnsaeidi@yahoo.ca

Abstract

This quasi-experimental study investigated the instructional efficacy of genre-based approach on Iranian EFL learners' motivation for writing. Out of 180 participants, 60 EFL male and female students at university level, with the age range of 19-28, based on a standard profeciency test, Preliminary English Test (PET), were selected and randomly assigned into control and experimental groups. Each group contained 30 students for which a pre-test and post-test (as motivation for writing questionnaire) were administered. The teaching materials of narrative texts were prepared in a way to conform to the genere-based approach. The results of the study, based on statistical analysis of one way of ANOVA, indicated that the genre-based methodology had significant effects on Iranian EFL learners' motivation for writing. The finding is very useful for Applied Linguists and syllabus designers as well as language teachers and learners.

Keywords: Genre-Based Instruction, Narrative Texts, Motivation for Writing, EFL

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Introduction

Genre analysis has become important in understanding the discourse of the disciplines and the workplace, relatively structured frames of social interaction in which, as Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) state "Genres are the intellectual scaffolds on which community-based knowledge is constructing" (p. 24). Genres would, however, suggest that this supposed socio-cognitive activity is over-generalized since a producer's contract with a receiver is not general, but subject to quite sharp genre fluctuations. Orlikowiski (1999) defines genre in an interesting way: "I am at a loss to decode what this sentence means, unless it says only that different genres make different assumptions about what binds writer and reader together" (p. 103). Genre-based approaches, where teaching and learning focuses on the understanding and production of selected genres of texts, have been identified by Rodgers (2001, as cited in Benedict Lin, 2006) as a major trend in English Language Teaching (ELT) in the new century. Such approaches are, of course, not new. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are early examples, extracting from pioneering work in genre analysis written by Swales (1991, 1990) and others. In the genre approach, the knowledge of language is closely attached to a social purpose, and more focus is on the viewpoint of the reader than on that of the writer. Writing is mostly viewed as the students' reproduction and reevaluation of text based on the genre offered by the teacher. It is also believed that learning takes place through imitation and exploration of different kinds of models. In addition, learners should be exposed to many examples of the same genre to develop their ability to write a particular genre. The important issue that the researcher intends to study is motivation, which is closely linked to motivation for writing, without which no learner attempts to step the process of learning. Keller (2007) states that "motivation, by definition, refers to the magnitude and direction of behavior" (p. 389). In other words, it refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the amount of effort they will exert in that respect. Therefore, motivation is the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained. It involves and encompasses two vital and significant components which are direction and effort (Keller, 2007). Consequently, motivation is composed of many interdependent factors such as interest, curiosity, and a desire for something. Motivation influences what people do–meaning their choice of action, as well as how they act, the intensity, persistence, and quality of their actions. Writing is as vital as listening, speaking, and reading in English, although it takes much more time and effort to reach high-level proficiency. Limited exposure to English, especially writing skill in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), causes students to lack motivation to write in English. Test-driven learning also makes them ignore the crucial process of writing in such condition. Therefore, when they are asked to write, they face with many problems in conveying what they want to say: selecting proper words, using correct grammar, generating ideas, and developing them into a proper organizational pattern. More importantly,

they have trouble using an acceptable writing by following the genre of the text type that conforms to a target language and society, so it will be very vital for the EFL students to grasp the whole knowledge of writing as different genres to follow string of central ideas in their writings; that is, the one which is not limited to sentences but holistically cover any discourse in any given text level. Thus, in terms of quantitative part of this study, the purpose of the study is to investigate the effect of genre-based instruction of narrative texts on Iranian EFL learners' motivation for writing. One of the major factors of learning is motivation; if the students are not motivated, they may simply quit. There are two types of motivation: integrative and instrumental.

Referring to the EFL situations the latter is more relevant (Zhao, 2012, as cited in Narumon, 2013). According to Dörnei (2001) motivation is a theoretical concept used to describe and explain how people think and behave. The term motivation is also used for explaining why the pupil did or did not gain knowledge; without the need to go into detail about what factors have contributed to their commitment, the teacher can simply say "Because they are motivated" or "They are not motivated" (p. 8).

Hidi (2007) states that motivation is not only a construct with multiple meanings, but also the conceptualization of writing is also complex. Psychological research on writing over the past three decades has developed by elaborating and integrating contributions from various theoretical approaches to literacy, from information processing to literary theory to social constructivism. Cognitively oriented scholars view writing as interrelated processes of different levels of complexity (e.g., Harris & Graham, 1992, 1996; Hayes, 1996 as cited in Hidi, 2007) whereas the approach of social constructivism emphasizes the connections of writing activities with the social and cultural contexts in which people are "motivated" to write. If we can prove that the use of scaffolding in pedagogy as well as humorous texts have been fruitful and would yield proper results, and above all promote motivation for writing, it would mean that we, as instructors and administers of any pedagogical curriculum, should utilize scaffolding and humorous texts in an EFL context; and we would be able to solve one of the major problems of English language teaching and learning, that is, teaching writing performance, where the EFL learners suffer more, to the learners who have no opportunity to be exposed with native speakers nor be instructed by those professional native speakers respectively.

It is very effective in preparing L2 students to successfully adapt to any academic setting across various disciplines (Park, 2006). Students need to understand the various text forms and genres, and know how these work, so that they can make decisions about the kind of writing they are going to do. They should be clear about the fundamental differences between factual and fictional texts, and recognize that there are various ways of writing them (Hyland, 2003). The essential

viewpoint shared by most scholars is that all genres control a set of communicative purposes within certain social situations and that each genre has its own structural quality according to those communicative purposes (Martin, 1984). Therefore, the communicative purposes and the structural knowledge should be identified when genres are used in writing classes.

Writing is one of the most important skills, since it covers many communicative needs of learners and even helps to organize thoughts and ideas along with social and academic productive communications. Students will eventually realize that academic writing does not always function as a tool that teachers employ to assess their performance, but it needs to pursue social purposes, as well (Yahya, 2014).

As Ismail (2013) in his study revealed motivation is a desire and also a drive to do the job; thus it is very important to find a way for improving the motivation for writing. Writing is not an easy and fluent skill as the other skills, like reading and listening are. It needs a lot of motivation to be conducted. Motivation is also influenced by learners' sense of agency and feelings of mastery and control over the learning activity and their interest in it. According to Noels (2001, as cited in Julia & Fiona, 2007), three psychological needs have to be met in order to enhance motivation: "(1) a sense of competency achieved through seeking out and overcoming challenges; (2) autonomy; (3) relatedness being connected and esteemed by others belonging to a larger social whole" (p. 220).

Research Question and Hypothesis

RQ. Is there any difference between the experimental group, Genre-based instruction (G), and the control group, in terms of motivation for writing?

According to the above-mentioned research question, the following null hypothesis is considered for the above question:

H0: There is no difference between the experimental group, Genre-based instruction (G), and the control group, in terms of motivation for writing.

Review of the Related Literature

Researchers often discuss the concept of motivation; whether it is affective, cognitive, behavioural, or otherwise, without specifying what kind of motivation they are investigating (Dörnei, 2001). Thus it is difficult to compare research results across different backgrounds and perspectives (Dörnei, 2001). According to Dörnei (2001), by using the word motivation, theoreticians and researchers can more easily relate to the most basic aspects of our mind in areas such as our wills, desires, rational thinking, and feelings. However, motivation is an important aspect to be considered when learning a second language as it can determine success or failure in any learning situation (Lier, 1996 as cited in Dörnei, 2001). According to Gardner

(1985 as cited in Dörnei, 2001) motivation is a "mental engine that subsumes effort, want/will and task enjoyment" (p. 49). According to Margolis (2005 as cited in Mackiewicz, 2013 p. 43) the term of motivation is "the desire to achieve a goal, the willingness to engage and persist in specific subjects or activities". Motivation to write is an important factor in writing competence (Pajares, 1996; as cited in Payne, 2012). Students who lack motivation to write will not readily engage in academic writing activities, thus such students may exhibit high anxiety about writing, low self-efficacy for writing, and a lack of self-regulation and self-determination when writing. Motivation is a very large and well-studied field. In fact, it is so large that sometimes it is hard to draw connections among motivation and specific activities such as math and science, or even writing (Hidi & Boscolo, 2007). With writing being such an integral part of human existence, it is very significant that studies of motivation and writing be conducted. It is even more important that the outcomes of these studies have real-world applications that can be implemented to promote the quality of all students' writing (Payne, 2012).

In some studies of interest in writing, topic attractiveness has been viewed as the basic motivational source of writing. Interest has tended to be viewed as to be almost static: students were thought to be interested or uninterested in a particular topic about which they wrote. Interest in writing on a specific topic is an example of situational interest, that is, triggered by a stimulating or involving topic. However, the type of task in which the topic is manipulated, it can also be an aspect of situational interest. Hidi, Berndorff, and Ainley (2002, as cited in Hidi, 2007) hypothesized that interest would emerge in social activity viewed as meaningful by the students themselves, as they performed tasks in a fashion that they viewed themselves as competent. From this perspective, interest is a student's orientation to writing, which is triggered, stimulated, and to some degree maintained, by attractive features of the activity which emerge in a specific situation, such as the possibility of using writing in an unusual and enjoyable way, a writing task of which students can perceive the usefulness, collaborative planning, and writing of an important document (Hidi, 2007). Keller (1983) states that motivation is the direction of behavior. In other words, it refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or aims they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect.

Sadighi and Maghsudi (2006) have studied the effect of two types of motivation, integrative and instrumental, on English proficiency of the EFL senior students in Iran, and the results of their study showed a significant difference between the means of the English proficiency scores of integratively motivated students and the instrumentally motivated ones. Considering the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation, Lightbown and Spada, (2000, as cited in Khodashenas, 2013) identified that integrative motivation refers to language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment, while instrumental motivation

refers to language learning for more immediate and practical goals. Although both integrative and instrumental motivation are essential in language learning, Gass and Selinker (2001, as cited in Khodashenas et al, 2013) claim that integrative motivation is superior to instrumental motivation for predicting the success of second language learning. In another view, Oxford, R. & Shearin J. (1994) claim that instrumental motivation is meaningful for the learner who has had limited access to L2 culture, or foreign language settings. Winke (2005, as cited in Khodashenas et al, 2013) suggests that teachers make an effort to understand their language learners' levels of integrative and instrumental motivation by asking them specifically about their language connections. Writing is one of the most important skills, since it covers many communicative needs of learners and even helps to organize thoughts and ideas along with social and academic productive communications. The rationale and justification for adopting a genre-based framework is that it facilitates and supports clear links to the students' purposes for writing beyond the writing classroom (Osman, 2004). Genre-based teaching offers learners an explicit understanding and motivation of how texts in target genres are structured and why they are written in certain ways.

In a related study conducted by Jalilifar (2010, as cited in Amirsheibani, 2015), an analysis of research article Introductions from three related sub-disciplines of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for General Purposes (EGP), and Discourse Analysis (AD) was reported. According to the research findings, "the comparison of this type allows one to see how a genre is treated in a more established or in a less established sub discipline" (p. 31).

Arthur Firkins (2007) in his studies concludes that genre approach, if paired with a sequenced and well-structured teaching methodology, in a motivating theme of activities, can be an effective way to teach writing to students. The approach clearly leads students to organize their writing and understand the nature of a text within an activity or task based context with texts that can be deconstructed and reconstructed using concrete examples. By asking these four questions, students were able to get access to the stages of writing a narrative. The stages incorporated the content of the text as follows Wu and Hailin (2009).

1. Orientation:	Who, where?
2. Complication:	What happened? What were the problems or crisis in the event?
3. Evaluations:	The impact of the event
4. Resolutions:	The result and outcome

Figure 1. Narrative genre adopted from Wu and Hailin (2009)

Method

Participants

The participants of the study were male and female Iranian EFL students at intermediate level at Islamic Azad Universities, Orumie, Mahabad, Sardasht, Bukan Branches. Two classes, studying writing courses at these universities, comprised the two groups of the study. There was one experimental group, Genre-based (G), and one control group, for which there was none of the treatments used in experimental groups; that is, there was no genre-based instruction. The standard proficiency test, Preliminary English Test (PET), which is used for intermediate level students, has been used to homogenise the students in both intact classes, comprising 180 students, out of whom 60 students were selected as the participants of the study. This selection was based on the criterion of one standard deviation above and below the mean. The participants' age range has been around 19-28. Since the participants needed to have a basic command of English, especially in writing skill, they have passed their first semester and Basic Writing course, and they were studying Writing 1 course. The number of the participants in each of the two intact classes has been 30.

Instrumentation

The first instrument which was used in this study has been a standard proficiency test (PET), at intermediate level. Also, there was a need for a reliable questionnaire of motivation for writing (Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire Adopted from: Ashley Payne, 2012). After piloting and validating have been used in this study, the mentioned questionnaire was piloted with the sample and similar groups in the abovementioned universities. After piloting and validating the questionnaire, which consisted 26 questions with 60 pilot study learners, about 20 proper questions for the present research were chosen and remained. The type of the questions included motivation for writing; for example, do you enjoy writing in English?

Procedure

Before the treatments, in the first session, a reliable and valid questionnaire of motivation for writing was administered for both experimental and control groups. In Experimental Group 1 (i.e., Genre-based group or G group), the students read a short narration written in the textbook. In this phase, the teacher helped the students to identify and underline the genre moves along with the social purposes of the text. The learners were required to identify the references, antecedents, social relations among characters, and events. It took about 10 to 15 minutes in each session respectively. The next phase of the lesson had been the teacher's explanation of each move, its functional orientation, the practice of identification of coherence and cohesion, and the linguistic forms used in it. About 10 to 15 more minutes were needed for this phase. In the third phase of the lesson, the learners were asked to read another narration and identify and elaborate their moves, social purposes, and

events along with other characteristics of the narrative genre. This took about 10 minutes, too. In the last phase, the students individually wrote their own narrative composition, based on a topic similar to the theme of the reading passages in the text-book, in about 20 minutes; it was based on what they had learned about genre characteristics (e.g., certain moves, social purposes ...). They had about 25 to 30 minutes to prepare the final draft and edit it individually. Thus, the writing phase was about 50 minutes. Then they handed it in to the teacher. Finally, each student wrote another composition at home, based on the topic offered by the teacher and delivered it to the teacher for further comments and feedback. The researcher then analysed their composition and next session the students were noticed about their own writing and the awareness about genre classifications and functions. The topic of these compositions were similar to the topics on which they had written composition in the class. In the last session, the same questionnaire of motivation for writing was administered. The control group had the same texts as the other group but there were no genre-based instruction. In other words, the participants in the control group did not receive the treatments applied to experimental group. They just fulfilled the normal requirements of the curriculum for BA students of English during the course of this study.

Results

A questionaire of motivation for writing was used both before and after the sessions and treatment; in order to analyse data, one way ANOVA was used.

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for two groups in terms of writing motivation scores in both pretest and posttest.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for two groups in terms of scores of motivation for writing in pretest and post test

	Pre test				**Post test**			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
			Lower	Upper			Lower	Upper
G	37.73	10.06	33.98	41.49	53.33	12.15	48.80	57.87
Control	39.37	10.41	35.48	43.25	46.47	12.09	41.95	50.98

As indicated in Table 1, the results show that means of motivation for writing scores in pretest are *G = 37.7, and control = 39.37*. SDs for pretests are *G = 10.06; control = 10.41*. The means of motivation for writing scores in post-test without

controlling intervention variable are *G = 53.33 and control = 46.47*, respectively. SDs for posttests are: *G = 12.15; control group = 12.09.*

Table 2. Shows the analysis of covariance for the comparison of the motivation for writing scores in four groups.

Table 2: Analysis of ANOVA for the comparison of the motivation for writing scores in both groups

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P value	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Group	4161.321	3	1387.107	24.772	.000	.393	1.000
Pretest score	6868.021	1	6868.021	122.654	.000	.516	1.000
Error	6439.446	115	55.995				

As indicated in Table 2, results of ANOVA analysis reveal significant differences for motivation for writing in four groups under investigation (*F = 24.77, p < 0.05).* Square of eta equals *0.39* implying that *39%* of variance of motivation for writing scores relate to the groups' members. Table 3 shows final estimates, after controlling pre-test motivation for writing scores in four groups. Here, the pretest scores are statistically controlled. That is to say, the effects of pre-test scores on motivation for writing scores are removed and, consequently, groups are compared based on the remaining variance.

Table 3: Final estimates after controlling pre-test motivation for writing scores in both groups

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
G	53.871	1.367	51.163	56.578
control	45.847	1.367	43.138	48.555

As indicated in Table 3, the results denote that the means of motivation for writing scores after controlling for intervention variable are *G = 53.87, control = 48*, SDs for motivation for writing are: G = 1.367; control group = 1.367, which show significant differences (*F = 24.77, p < 0.05*). Thus, the results show that the null hypothesis claiming that "There is no significant difference among the experimental group, Genre-based (G), and the control group, in terms of motivation for writing" was rejected.

Discussion

The results of motivation for writing indicated that genre-based instruction had significant effect on motivation for writing. This finding confirms the results of few conducted studies in the field, such as Tran's (2007) study on motivation and learners' identity in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classroom in Vietnam; Boscolo, Favero and Borghetto (2007) studies on motivation for writing and interest. The processes of GBI with narrative texts along with the very specifications of text analysis and genre awareness raise the interest and motivation for learners to simply write skillfully. They have never used writing as a means to narrate the events, ideas or notions, since the learners were reluctant to write fuzzy and unrelated paragraphs. But once the learners are taught genre-based writing, they find the clue to writing and it opens a new cognitively motivated path to simply go on writing so that their desires are met.

In order to write by means of genres, the students would need to learn to think about the values of others and different beliefs along with testing their own ideas, and these enhance their wants and consequently their motivation for writing; this view is very similar to Hasan (2002) who states that different forms of semiotic mediation give rise to varied forms of human consciousness, and emergence of an ideological consciousness is seen as fundamental to a writer's genre development; accordingly, this triggers the socio-cognitive competence of learners to grasp a cumbersome skill like writing. On the other hand, GBI has the very notion of social purpose and consciousness-raising inherited in its underlying framework (Hyland, 2003), so the application of such strong instructional technique has enhanced the learners' motivation for writing, in particular, in an EFL setting like Iran. The results of motivation for writing indicated that genre-based instruction had significant effect on motivation for writing. This finding confirms the results of few conducted studies in the field, such as Tran's (2007) study on motivation and learners' identity in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classroom in Vietnam; Boscolo, Favero and Borghetto (2007) studies on motivation for writing and interest.

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

In terms of motivation for writing based on the results, it can be concluded that genre-based instruction motivated the learners to perform writing. Motivation is one of the significant factors for learners not to quit language learning and language writing consequently (Dörnei, 2001). This fact indicates that all attempts to have insights into what students need and what motivates them to write are increasingly recommended for teachers themselves in classroom-based research and pedagogy. According to the results of GBI, it enhances the motivation for writing as a strong and powerful incentive for learners to follow through the process of text writing and revision of their own drafting. For EFL learners, motivation plays a great role in language acquisition since none of the learners desires might not be met outside

classrooms. Moreover, when focusing on genres in their classrooms, teachers need to understand better the impact of genre-based instruction on the teaching and learning of writing. They have a clear, whole picture of genre-based writing instruction through better understanding the settings, functions, and social implications of particular genres. They also have to play an active role in helping students bring their own individual voices into their work and keep their personal tendencies within the context of recurring genre patterns. Also, by means of enhancing motivations in GBI, a considerable progress can be achieved in the construction of narrative compositions and paragraphs in the writings of the students in Iran which is an EFL context.

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Appendix

Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree
0.1 I enjoy writing.	0	1	2	3	4
02. I like to write down my thoughts.	0	1	2	3	4
03. I use correct grammar in my writing.	0	1	2	3	4
04. I complete a writing assignment even when it is difficult.	0	1	2	3	4
05. Being a good writer will help me do well academically.	0	1	2	3	4
06. I write as well as other students.	0	1	2	3	4
07. I write more than the minimum on writing assignment	0	1	2	3	4
08. I put a lot of effort into my writing.	0	1	2	3	4
9. I like to get feedback from an instructor on my writing.	0	1	2	3	4
10. I easily focus on what I am writing.	0	1	2	3	4
11. I am more likely to succeed if I can write well.	0	1	2	3	4
12. I enjoy creative writing assignment.	0	1	2	3	4
13. I like classes that required a lot of writing.	0	1	2	3	4
14. I plan how I am going to write something before I write it.	0	1	2	3	4
15. Becoming a better writer is important to me.	0	1	2	3	4
16. Being a better writer will help me in my career.	0	1	2	3	4
17. It is important to me that I make a 20 on a writing assignment.	0	1	2	3	4
18. I enjoy writing assignments that challenge me.	0	1	2	3	4
19. I revise my writing before submitting an assignment.	0	1	2	3	4
20. Punctuation is easy for me.	0	1	2	3	4

Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire (AWMQ).Adopted from: Ashley Payne (2012)

Authors' Biographies



Payman Rezvani (Ph.D.) is presently faculty member and Head of English Department, Islamic Azad University, Mahabad Branch, Mahabad, Iran. He has presented and published many research papers in Applied Linguistics. He has been teaching English and Applied Linguistics for 22 years in many Iranian universities. His main interests are Discourse Analysis, Genre-Based Instruction, Contrastive Analysis, Phonology, Teaching Skills, and Language Assessment. He can be accessed via his email address: payman.rezvani@gmail.com



Mahnaz Saeidi is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch, Tabriz, Iran. She is the Editor-in-Chief of *The Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, the director of Academic Translation Center, and in charge of holding IELTS Exam. She was awarded for being the best researcher from 2007 to 2011 and won the best translator prize in the Fourth Round of Scientific, Research, and Technology Ceremony (in Persian, Chaharomin Jashnvare Farhikhteghan) of Islamic Azad University in 2016. She has published many books and articles and presented papers at national and international conferences. Her research interests are Multiple Intelligences, Feedback, MALL, and Intercultural Competence.