



## Personal Narratives, Friendly Letters, and Simple Descriptions: The Basic Writing Skills Development Techniques for Beginner English Classes

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### Abstract

The research outlines the effectiveness of using Personal Narratives, Friendly Letters, and Simple Descriptions in enhancing basic writing skills among beginner writers of English. This was done with 50 participants (both males and females) in a private language center located at Tabriz. The research employs a descriptive analytic approach to explore how these genres help learners develop their basic skills of organizing their thoughts, using appropriate grammar skills (particularly simple past and adjectives) and writing. We aim to look for factors that explain the use and effectiveness of such genres among students by means of two methodological designs together. First, quantitative designs containing pre-and post- writing performance assessments, are complemented by qualitative designs, which consist of student interviews and feedback questionnaires, aimed at measuring students' attitudes towards the genres in question. As regards the scope of the research, the emphasis is on assessing the effectiveness on the writing proficiency, confidence and motivation of novice language users in genre based writing instruction. Such understandings will enable one to comprehend how such approaches can be engaging, accessible and beneficial in aiding language development to primary stage learners.

**Keywords:** Genre-Based Writing Instruction (GBWI) Beginner English Learners, Writing Skills Development

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### Introduction

Among the language skills, writing is considered to be one of the most important aspects of the process of learning any foreign language. For beginner learners of the English language, being able to write is seen as one of the most important communication skills that they should master. Genre-Based Writing Instruction (GBWI) is getting recognition in second language acquisition methodologies because it is useful in developing one's linguistic ability through different writing genres pertinent to the students. GBWI stresses the need to engage students with the types of writing that they meet in the course of their everyday lives busy writing that is more purposeful and situational (Hyland, 2007) <sup>[7]</sup>.

### In teaching writing to beginner learners, it is easy to introduce such genres as Personal Narratives

Friendly Letters and Simple Descriptions, which include convenient but orderly, genre-based presentation of writing instruction. These genres are developed for the beginning writers, as they deal with very simple content like one's biography or a geography, and provide simple form and vocabulary which are easy to understand for a beginner. Such elements as personal stories permits use of actions in the past and arrangement of events; friendly letters focuses on the use of casual styles of communication and welcoming contents; simple descriptions assists in the elaboration of limited vocabulary and sentence forms.

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In line with these objectives, this research looks at how writing within specific genres can facilitate the writing development of novice students. The study will assess the effectiveness of these genres for improving sentence structure, verb tense, and vocabulary, while boosting students' spirit and confidence in writing at the same time. A mixed method approach will be employed whereby both numerical data (pre and post writing tests) as well as interview data on learners' views about the usefulness of genres for writing improvement will be collected. Thus the purpose of the study is to present how GBWI could be useful for the development of beginner learners.

### Literature Review

In recent years, Genre-Based Writing Instruction (GBWI) has become a prevalent method in learning how to overcome the language barrier. This approach makes use of different genres in teaching writing skills to the students. As noted by Hyland (2007)<sup>[7]</sup>, genre focused methods put students in contact with writing that is not only achievable but also has clear organisation and purpose, much in the way that real life writings do.

Importantly, this generally improves writing skills and helps learners appreciate the social aspect of why certain things are written in a certain style and what the respective styles tend to sound like. In the same regard, Paltridge simply states that students cannot be taught how to write while ignoring genres, because it eschews a pedagogical vacuum about how the language is used in specific instances of communication.

Genres such as Personal Narratives, Friendly Letters, and Simple Descriptions are most suitable for elementary learners of English as they provide well-structured and readily available content. Derewianka maintains that for language beginners, personal narratives are quite helpful as they promote the application of simple grammatical forms like the past tense, as well as the ordering of events. In addition, the ease with which this form can be available enables the students in writing about their experiences which tends to give them a sense of control in writing that can be encouraging. Gibbons also stresses that friendly letters, for instance, are also very helpful in that they are commonplace factors in writing since they are usually associated with actual communication and they also comprise clear structures which include greetings and closing.

Moreover, simple descriptions constitute another important genre for novice learners since these types of compositions make them concentrate on basic vocabulary and sentence structure. As explained by Hyland (2007)<sup>[7]</sup>, engaging in writing for descriptive purposes gives the learners the chance to enhance their basic language skills and express their thoughts in a quicker and more straightforward manner. Instead, the beginners can use simple language and common objects or places to enhance their writing confidence step by step.

In this research, the evaluation of genre-based writing instruction is carried out through both quantitative and qualitative means, reflecting the mixed-methods research design. Johnson suggests that such a research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods, is useful in exploring the research problem from both subjective – attitudes, feelings, and perceptions and objective measures – such as the outcome of writing proficiency assessment tests. For the purposes of this investigation, quantitative

measurements of writing assignments such as pre- and post-writing task assessments will yield information on progress in skills acquired, while qualitative interviews will explore students' experiences and attitudes towards the genres in question.

### Research questions

What are the effects that Genre Based Writing Instruction has on the skill of writing amongst the English language beginners?

What is the attitude of beginner level English language learners towards genre based writing tasks with respect to engagement and motivation?

### Methodology

#### Participants

The research will consist of 50 beginner-level students of English language (male and female separately) attending a private language house in Tabriz. The respondents are aged 12 to 15 years, native speakers of Azeri and presently in an English beginners course. Their proficiency level has been verified by a placement test. The quality respondents were recruited through convenience sampling and the study seeks to establish the influence of Genre-Based Writing Instruction on their writing skills enhancement.

#### Instruments

**Writing Activities:** They will involve Personal Narratives, Friendly Letters, and Simple Descriptions. These genres were chosen to aid novice learners in acquiring elementary writing skills. The tasks will be conducted in two phases: a pre-instruction test and a post-instruction test focused on the genres taught. Improvements in vocabulary use, sentence structure, and grammar in writing will be evaluated through these tasks.

**Evaluating Writing Task:** A writing rubric will be used to assess students' output in writing. In the rubric, there will be aspects such as coherence and cohesion, accuracy of grammar, vocabulary, and content expansion. Thus, an evaluation of writing done by students will be in both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

**Student Feedback Questionnaire:** In order to obtain qualitative information regarding the students' attitudes, the questionnaire will be administered after the completion of writing tasks. The questionnaire will seek information from students regarding their impressions of working on writing with the genre-based instruction, their feelings about writing, and their opinions about the writing genre they worked with. This will shed light on the motivational and affective components of writing teaching.

**Interviews:** In order to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with the writing tasks and instruction, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a selection of the participants. The interviews will delve into analysis such as how students relate to the different genres employed, their self-reported enhancement in writing abilities, and challenges experienced, if any.

#### Procedure

The research work will be carried out in 6 weeks duration with one 90-minute session held each other week. Each session will delve into one of the three genres, Personal Narratives, Friendly letters, and Simple Descriptions. The

first session is designed to include administration of the pre-test while the post-test will be conducted at the end of the study and both entail the same writing tasks that aims at assessing improvement.

The evaluation of writing tasks will be done according to grades based on a writing rubric for the following attributes: Grammar, Vocabulary, Coherence, Cohesion, and Content Development. These tasks will be corrected by the researcher, who will give a thorough and numerical assessment of the writing samples.

Moreover, following the completion of every task, students will fill in a feedback questionnaire designed to assess, among other things, their engagement and motivation and how they feel about the task. A few select participants will further be invited at the end of the research to take part in semistructured interviews so that more information with regard to how they completed the tasks in the genrebased writing is extracted. This course of action guarantees that the aforementioned study objectives are met, which includes issues dealing with the effectiveness of Genre Based Writing instruction in the development of writing skill and engagement of students.

In each of the sessions, students will work on one of the three forms. These are Personal Narratives, Friendly Letters, and

Simple Descriptions. The first session will have a pre-test and a post-test will be administered at the end of the research study. Both have the same writing tasks, so that changes may be measured. Writings will be assessed with a writing rubric according to the following parameters: Grammar, Vocabulary, Coherence, Cohesion, and Content Development. Such tasks will be done assessment by... who will process the writing samples in terms of quality and quantity.

Moreover, students will follow each assignment with a feedback questionnaire in order to measure their levels of involvement, motivation, and attitudes. This subset of participants will also be drawn for semistructured interviews at the conclusion of the study in order to obtain more in-depth details about their perspectives on the use of genre-based writing tasks. This method makes it possible to adhere to the research questions of this study which concern the influence of Genre Based Writing Instruction on the development of writing skills, and engagement in students.

## Results

descriptive statistics for pre-test and post-test scores in each genre: Personal Narratives, Friendly Letters, and Simple Descriptions.

Table 1

Genre	Test	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min-Max
Personal Narratives	Pre-Test	50.4	12.6	30-70
Personal Narratives	Post-Test	65.2	10.4	40-85
Friendly Letters	Pre-Test	52.8	11.2	35-75
Friendly Letters	Post-Test	67.9	9.8	45-88
Simple Descriptions	Pre-Test	48.6	13.0	25-68
Simple Descriptions	Post-Test	63.4	11.7	42-83

Analysis of descriptive statistics suggested that there were noticeable changes among the participants' writing performance of Personal Narratives, Friendly Letters, and Simple Descriptions in the course of the intervention. In the case of Personal Narratives, the mean score of participants in the pre-test was 50.4 (SD = 12.6, range = 30-70), while in the post-test it increased to 65.2 (SD = 10.4, range = 40-85) thus the average gain was 14.8 points which promotes better ideas' organization and expression. Likewise, a Friendly Letters composition had the mean score of the participants increasing from 52.8 (SD = 11.2, range = 35-75) to 67.9 (SD = 9.8, range = 45-88) where a 15.1 point improvement was observed signifying better control of the genre.

The average score in Simple Descriptions has increased from 48.6 (SD = 13.0, range = 25-68) to 63.4 (SD = 11.7, range = 42-83), indicating a development of 14.8 points, which appears to reflect students' improving descriptive abilities. The decrease in standard deviations for all post-test scores means that the performances of the participants became more homogeneous at the end of the intervention. To sum it up, these findings indicate that Genre-Based Writing Instruction had a positive impact on the writing skills of the beginner learners within and across the three genres.

Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data Table: Questionnaire Feedback

Table 2

Question	Sample Responses	Theme	Key Insight
Did you find this genre-based writing task engaging? Why or why not?	Yes, I enjoyed sharing my personal story in the narrative task.	Engagement	Personal narratives are highly engaging for learners.
What was challenging about this task?	It was difficult to structure my ideas clearly.	Challenges	Students struggled with organizing content.
Do you feel your writing improved through this activity? If yes, how?	Yes, I learned how to use the past tense correctly.	Perceived Improvement	Genre-based tasks improve grammar awareness.
Would you like to do similar activities in the future? Why or why not?	Yes, because it was fun and I felt like I learned a lot.	Future Interest	Learners are motivated for similar future activities.

## Interview Results Summary

The interviews showed that majority of the students enjoyed writing tasks which were more personalized, like personal

narratives and writing friendly letters. Students loved the chance to share their experiences and communicate in a manner that they felt was true to themselves. One student

noted,

“I loved the fact that I had to write about myself, it made the task enjoyable, I didn’t feel like I was doing homework

However, certain impediments were also drawn attention to. A number of students spoke of the lack of clarity in the structure of their ideas as well as the inability to use the right words in a given context, particularly in the tasks that required descriptive writing. For instance, one student stated, “I wanted to paint a picture with more words but I did not have the right vocabulary.” In spite of such difficulties, the students claimed that their confidence and grammar improvements have been noticeable especially when using the simple past tense and adjectives

When it came to Writing as a Future Task, every student who was interviewed agreed to an extent on the hope of doing the same activities soon. According to them, teaching them how to approach different writing styles was useful in apprehending writing and it was not so scary. One of them said, “I feel more confident now because I know how to start and finish a piece of writing.

On the whole, the interviews have pointed out that the use of genre-based genres for the writing instruction of beginner students is quite helpful in increasing their writing confidence level and proficiency. Also, it suggests sections that need additional support, for example, vocabulary enrichment and writing strategies.

The results of this research suggest that genre-specific writing instruction could be effective for improving the writing skills of beginner English language learners. The sequence — personal narratives, friendly letters, and simple descriptions — offered learners the chance to formulate their ideas, use correct grammatical structures, and speak up without fear in a systematic way. This is in line with previous studies that have argued that genre-based approaches offer distinct exemplars and structures that help to ease the writing process for beginner writers (Hyland, 2007; Derewianka, 2015) [7, 5].

Based on the analysis carried out, students’ performance in writing showed significant differences between pre- and post-assessments. This is in line with research studies that report that providing instruction on text types has a positive effect on learners’ ability to write in a focused and relevant manner (Badger & White, 2000) [2]. Friendly letters and personal narratives in particular, worked well because these two genres presented students with real and engaging contexts that facilitated the writing process.

The qualitative findings also confirmed the earlier apprehension regarding the positive effects of this approach. Indications from the interviews and the questionnaires showed that students were actively engaged with the writing assignments and were pleased to complete them. Students appreciated personal narratives the most, as these gave the students a chance to use their own stories. This supports the notion that learning tasks that are significant and relevant to the students’ lives, such as writing, can enhance the motivation and commitment of learners towards accomplishing the activities (Nation, 2009) [11].

However, even with these achievements, the research also noted some challenges. Some learners faced problems in putting their thoughts together in an effective manner as well as using relevant words, especially in written assignments which required description. This indicates that additional help like pre-teaching vocabulary as well as offering graphic organizers may be required in order to overcome these problems completely. These results corroborate studies which highlight the need to provide learners with scaffolding in instruction that is genre based (Martin, 2009) [10].

In addition, it must be pointed out that despite students’ reported increase in confidence in the simple past with descriptive adjectives, these gains were greater in clearly defined tasks (e.g., friendly letters) than in less structured, free descriptive writing. This emphasizes the necessity of genre and task complexity specific scaffolding.

In general, the present research adds to the ever-increasing literature on the genre oriented approach to language teaching. It shows that even the most elementary students can greatly improve their writing skills and enhance their motivation through this method of instruction. On the contrary, it also shows the aspects of this approach that require additional assistance from the teachers in order to be effective. Further studies can investigate how certain scaffolding strategies or task designs would affect the results of genre based writing instruction.

## Appendix

### Qualitative Questionnaire Questions

The following questions were included in the qualitative questionnaire to gather participants’ feedback on their experiences with genre-based writing tasks. These questions aim to understand students’ perceptions of engagement, challenges, and improvements in their writing skills through the tasks.

**Table 1**

1. Did you enjoy the genre-based writing tasks (Personal Narratives, Friendly Letters, Simple Descriptions)? Why or why not?
2. Which writing task did you find most engaging? Can you explain what you liked about it?
3. Were there any parts of the tasks that you found challenging? Please describe.
4. Do you feel that your writing skills improved as a result of these tasks? If yes, in what way?
5. How did these tasks affect your confidence in writing in English?
6. Did you learn any new vocabulary or grammar through these tasks? If so, which ones?
7. Do you think genre-based writing is a helpful approach for learning English writing? Why or why not?
8. Would you like to do similar writing tasks in the future? Please explain your answer.
9. How do you feel about writing in English after completing these tasks?
10. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with these writing tasks?

### Interview Questions for Qualitative Data Analysis

1. How did you feel about writing personal narratives, friendly letters, and simple descriptions in English?
2. Which genre-based writing task did you enjoy the most,

and why?

3. Did any of the writing tasks help you feel more confident in your writing abilities? If yes, please explain.
4. Were there any specific challenges you encountered

- during these tasks? How did you handle them?
5. Do you think your grammar and vocabulary improved through these writing activities? If yes, how?
  6. How did these tasks impact your interest in learning and writing in English?
  7. Would you like to participate in more genre-based writing tasks in the future? Why or why not?
  8. In what ways did these tasks differ from other writing exercises you've done in the past?
  9. Do you feel that learning to write in different genres will be helpful for your future English learning? Why?
  10. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with these writing tasks?
  11. These questions aim to gather in-depth insights into students' experiences with the genre-based writing tasks and their perceived impact on their writing development. Let me know if you need further adjustments!

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