



## The Effect of Genre-Based Oral Academic Lectures on Writing Achievement among Male and Female TOEFL Learners

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### Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of genre-based oral academic lectures on male and female TOEFL learners' writing achievement. The researcher chose 60 males and female TOEFL students and randomly divided and placed them into four separate classes of equally the same size and then he tested the homogeneity of the groups through a test of TOEFL iBT. All of the participants in the experimental groups took a pre-test followed by the treatment. The treatment duration was six sessions and each session was one hour, the researcher chose six academic lectures for the experimental groups and all of them were selected from 'Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Tests' by Phillips (2007) and then the experimental groups sat for the post-test. After the post-test, the researcher carried out a two-way ANOVA. The results showed a significant difference in the scores of the experimental groups and the control groups. The experimental groups outperformed the control groups. In addition, in genre-based oral academic lectures, the females outperformed the males.

**Key words:** Genre: Lecture, Writing Achievement, TOEFL.

### Introduction

Writing is a fertile ground for gaining communicative competence and it has been one of great concerns to all language learners and consequently it has turned into the principal focus of attention for all pedagogues and language teaching and learning gurus. Chastain (1988) stated that 'writing is a basic communication skill and a unique asset in the process of learning a second language'. Writing is the learned process of shaping thoughts into text, allowing the writer to discover, develop, clarify and communicate thoughts and feelings. . But there is no denying the fact that it is one of the less developed and retarded skills among all. But it goes without saying that writing encompasses a broad spectrum of ideas and interests and there will be no point in painting it with a broad brush. there has been a long running dispute among all language pundits over burning and somehow unresolved issue of teaching writing up until the time the idea of 'Genre' was first introduced into the writing pedagogy by Aristotle as a means of categorizing poems, and then this concept came into use in pedagogies as a social constructivist literacy concept. Chandler (2000) stated that 'the word 'genre' comes from the French (and originally Latin) word for 'kind' or 'class'. In applied linguistics, the term genre has been pondered as a powerful means for grouping and describing discourse. One important genre which has a substantial role in the entire education institutions and communities is lecture. Lecture is a spoken genre that teachers and professors use in schools, universities and other higher level English classes like TOEFL. Vossoughi (2000) identified three conditions under which the use of lectures is justified. First, it may be the best way to disseminate new ideas that aren't yet available in print. Second, most of us enjoy listening to a prominent individual present his or her ideas to an audience. Third, a good lecturer can instill interest into a topic due to his or her enthusiasm and manner of presentation. Thus a good lecturer can sometimes motivate students to learn in a way that printed material cannot.

One of the most important kinds of genre which has a leading role not only in institutes of higher education and in research institutes but also in instructional programs and strategies is lecture. Lecture is a spoken genre that teachers and professors use in institutes, schools and universities and in classes of any level, from elementary to advanced and even in IELTS and TOEFL and its popularity is boosting day by day.

### Review of the Related Literature

#### Writing

Martlew (1983 as cited in Asaro and Behforouz and Saddler, 2008, p. 79) defined writing as an important tool for learning. He stated that in fact, academic progress in school depends on an adequate degree of writing fluency. It is generally agreed that writing is the most difficult skill to master for foreign or second-language learners. The difficulty is due not only to the need to generate and organize ideas using an appropriate choice of vocabulary, sentence, and paragraph organization but also to turn such ideas into a readable text (Renandya and Richards, 2002). Bruce (2013) discussed the use of genre as a theoretical construct in academic writing instruction in the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses considered genre as a way of operationalizing the different elements of discourse competence knowledge for the purpose of writing instruction and verified the construct validity in relation to using the concept of genre in research that relates to writing instruction. He argued that 'performing the complex task of writing extended academic English prose requires the ability to integrate a range of knowledge types. This integrative ability is sometimes referred to as discourse competence, which is a central element of several existing models of communicative competence proposed by applied linguists. In addition, Jing Cai (2013) stated that 'academic writing remains a prominent issue for students and teachers in Asian EFL contexts. English courses offered in mainland China at tertiary levels mostly focus on teaching English for general purposes, and few concern writing for academic purposes, even for English majors'. In her small-scale needs analysis study, she reported on a survey of 50 Master of Arts students in English who were part of the new English for Academic Purposes program at a university in south China, as well as a focus group interview with a smaller group. Results indicated that 70% of the participants had never taken an academic writing course before and that the academic writing skills students found difficult were those less frequently taught.

## Genre

Drury and Mort (2012) believed that ‘learning resources and approaches to support students in developing their writing skills need to address both the purpose and context of the writing task as well as the structure and language of the text. Genre analysis and genre-based pedagogies have been influential in developing these resources and approaches. Genre-based pedagogies offer students, “explicit and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in social contexts” (Hyland, 2007, p. 18, as cited in Drury and Mort 2012)’. Khalil Aqdam and Rezvani and Saeidi (n.d.) carried out a study examining the effect of the genre-based Methodology on task-based writing achievement fifty-four EFL university students in Iran, Islamic Azad university of Mahabad. All of the participants were assessed before and after the instruction. The teaching materials developed for teaching writing English description and narration in a genre-based method in their study were prepared in a way to conform to the procedures carried out during class instruction. After five weeks of treatment, a post test was administered and after collecting the data and analyzing the post-tests of control and experimental groups, the fact that the genre-based methodology had a great effect on task-based writing achievement in that setting was self-evident. Khatibi (2014) investigated the effect of genre-based tasks on EFL learners' speaking performance and probed that genre-based tasks may empower EFL learners to perform better on speaking tests. Further he explored the effect of genre-based tasks on speaking ability of EFL different age groups, i.e. teenagers (13-16 years old) and young adults (24-27 years old). To this end, some generic based consciousness-raising tasks (CRT) were adapted from the model proposed by Benedict (2006) to develop control of a genre used as the treatment procedures. Two different speaking tests of different genres (e.g. recount, report, review, etc.), used as pretest and posttest, were administered to 120 senior university students majoring in English language translation. The results indicated that consciousness-raising tasks significantly affected EFL learners' speaking performance. However, the effect of generic-based CRTs did not vary across different age groups. All in all, the findings provided empirical support for the facilitative effect of generic-based consciousness-raising tasks on speaking performance of EFL learners. The findings may promise implications for EFL speaking syllabuses and provide guidelines to designers to accommodate the insights derived from the genre-based instruction perspective. Zare-ee (2009) officially declared that the actual classroom practice and implementation and the possible final upshots of the genre-based approach to writing instruction have not been fully explored yet.

## Genre and Writing

Hyland (2007) stated that genre writing classes are usually planned either around themes, as in many SFL teaching classrooms, or the genres likely to be encountered in a relevant context, as in ESP learning situations. Themes are best seen as real-life activities in which people do specific things through writing, providing potentially relevant and motivating ways into writing by drawing on students' personal experiences and prior knowledge (Feez, 1998). General topics such as Health, Work, Pollution, Relationships, or Crime can be a useful way to contextualize research and report writing skills, although they can also stimulate other kinds of writing. Schulze (2011) aimed to explore how a genre-based approach to writing instruction influenced by both genre theory and systemic functional linguistics supported the academic writing development of English language learners transitioning to middle school. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a tool for pedagogy and linguistic analysis, the teacher-researcher analyzed three instantiations of texts composed by English language learners to determine changes in the register of their texts during the course of genre-based writing pedagogy. Methods were qualitative in nature, involving both analysis of the text and the surrounding context of composition. Data came from multiple resources. They included videotaped observations of classroom interactions, transcriptions of semi-structured interviews with the learners, collection of lesson plans, and materials used in lesson implementation, and field notes made by the participant observer. Findings revealed that a genre-based approach to writing instruction supported English language learners in producing texts that more closely approximated the register of the target genre. Genre between Males and Females

Innes (2006) stated that ‘contrary to statements made by previous researchers, Muskogee women are linguistically active in ceremonial public spheres, though through the use of genres that differ significantly from men’s. One of the genres performed in these contexts is “gossip,” which is described by some Muskogee men as a dangerous genre. She explored why Muskogee women’s and men’s linguistic practices differ so strikingly in the ceremonial sphere, and what women achieve through their use of gossip. It is suggested that consideration of Muskogee language and gender ideologies in regard to these issues shows that gendered language use differences are rational and maintain balance between the genders. Insights from both ideologies also indicate that women’s gossip is a powerful genre, the use of which is generally positive for Muskogee society’.

## Lecture

Mariotti (2012) stated that ‘the first extensive studies on the salient features of lectures delivered in English were carried out with the purpose of helping non-native speaking students develop effective listening skills based on the observation and the description of authentic speech events’. Khaldi (2013) highlighted the vehicular significance of listening in language learning, especially in the university as a means of accumulating content information from lectures. She attempted to investigate whether EFL first-year students at Tlemcen University (Algeria) have the necessary strategies which help them comprehend their lectures. For this purpose, she administered a questionnaire to uncover the strategies of the participants, in addition to a test to measure their comprehension of lectures. The results showed that the subjects do not employ the necessary strategies, and their performance on the test is poor.

## Statement of the Problem

Knowledge of the writing system of a language is among one of the fundamental components that holds up language and takes most of its weight, the one which underlies the notion of communicative competence. Second

language learners are often conscious of the extent to which deficiencies in their writings affect their communication skills because writing carries rudimentary information they wish to comprehend and express.

## The Purpose of the Study

The major objective of this study is to provide a picture of how TOEFL students try to riposte to the implementation of a genre-based approach to writing. By conducting this research, the researcher hopes to identify pertinent pedagogical issues that may arise during genre-based implementation in Iran. 1.4. Research Questions

The research questions addressed in the study are:

1. Do genre-based oral academic lectures have any effect on writing achievement of male TOEFL students?
2. Do genre-based oral academic lectures have any effect on writing achievement of female TOEFL students?
3. If genre-based oral academic lectures have any effect on students writing achievement, which gender will benefit more?

## Research Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: Genre-based oral academic lectures have no effect on writing achievement of male TOEFL students.

H<sub>02</sub>: Genre-based oral academic lectures have no effect on writing achievement of female TOEFL students.

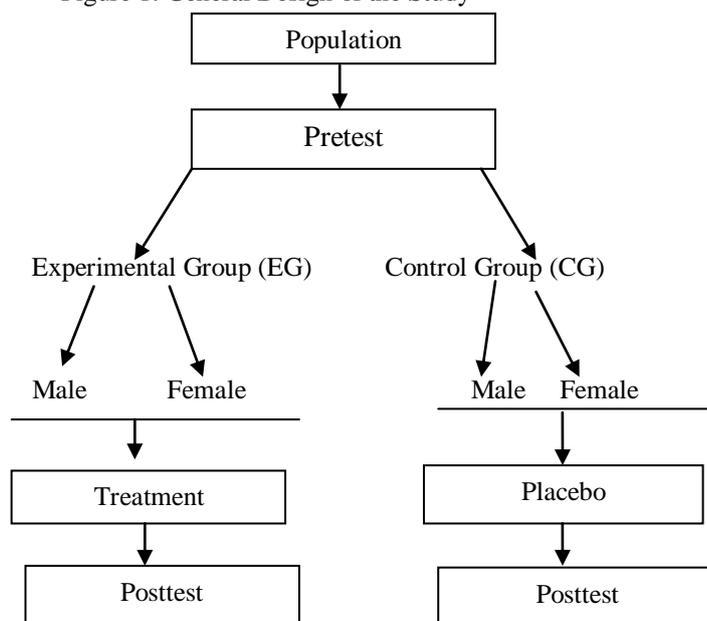
H<sub>03</sub>: In genre-based oral academic lectures, gender of students has no effect on their writing achievement.

## Methodology

### Participants and Design

The researcher had the total of 60 male and female students to do the research. All of them were TOEFL students in one of the language institutes in Ardabil. The students randomly divided and placed into four separate classes of equally the same size, that is to say two-15-male-student classes and two-15-female-student classes. The study aimed to explore the effect of genre-based oral academic lectures on writing achievement among male and female TOEFL Learners. All of the participants in the experimental groups sat for a pre-test followed by the treatment. The treatment duration was six sessions, and each session was one hour- and a post-test. And all of the participants in the control groups had a pre-test followed by the placebo, and a post-test. Figure 1 below shows the general design of the study.

Figure 1: General Design of the Study



### Instrumentation

Two sets of TOEFL tests were employed to do the research: a pre-test to verify the homogeneity of the groups and then right after bringing the whole research to a close the researcher put the independent variables under discussion with a post-test to make sure that the observed outcome is the natural consequence of the implementation of genre-based oral academic lectures. These tests asked the participants to listen to a lecture and then to write. All these things were done under constant supervision during six weeks.

### Procedure

The researcher tested the homogeneity of the groups through a test of TOEFL iBT duplicated from pp. 272-273 of Barron's TOEFL iBT (2010) by Sharpe (13<sup>th</sup>) edition which is provided in [appendix A](#). The pre-test scores revealed that all of the students were homogeneous with respect to the variable under discussion. The genre-based oral academic lectures were selected from 'Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Tests' by Phillips (2007) which is presented in [appendix B](#).

## Data Analysis and Results

Theory (A Theory section should extend, not repeat, the background to the article already dealt with in the Introduction and lay the foundation for further work)

### Data Analysis

As it is illustrated in table 5, the Descriptive Statistics of the Test Results of the post-test for the genre oral male writing ( $M=24.1333$ ,  $SD=1.35576$ ) is significantly different from the mean score of the pre-test for that group ( $M=10.6667$ ,  $SD=1.04654$ ) and there is a considerable difference between the mean score of the post-test for the genre oral female writing ( $M=26.7333$ ,  $SD=1.53375$ ) and the mean score of the pre-test for that group ( $M=10.9333$ ,  $SD=1.22280$ ). There is also a slight difference in the mean score of the post-test for the conventional male writing ( $M=13.9333$ ,  $SD=1.03280$ ) and the mean score of the pre-test for the conventional male writing ( $M=10.3333$ ,  $SD=1.39728$ ) and there was a slight difference between the mean score of the post-test for the conventional female writing ( $M=19.0667$ ,  $SD=1.09978$ ) and the mean score of the pre-test for that group ( $M=10.2667$ ,  $SD=1.43759$ ).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of the Test Results				
Descriptive Statistics				
Dependent Variable: Score				
Method	Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Genre oral male writing	pre test	10.6667	1.04654	15
	post test	24.1333	1.35576	15
Genre oral female writing	Pre test	10.9333	1.22280	15
	post test	26.7333	1.53375	15
Conventional male writing	pre test	10.3333	1.39728	15
	post test	13.9333	1.03280	15
Conventional female writing	pre test	10.2667	1.43759	15
	post test	19.0667	1.09978	15

In addition, there is a substantial difference in the mean score for the genre oral male writing ( $M=24.1333$ ,  $SD=1.35576$ ) and the mean score for the genre oral female writing ( $M=26.7333$ ,  $SD=1.53375$ ) meaning that females have outperformed the males, and the difference in the mean score of these two groups with the control groups is a clear indication of the fact that the experimental groups have outperformed the control groups.

The assumptions underlying parametric tests (dependent and independent paired samples t-tests) are as follows:

Independent t-test:

1. Homogeneity of the variances of both groups
2. Making use of interval scales for assessing the variables
3. Normality
4. Randomization

Dependent t-test:

1. Homogeneity
2. Making use of interval scales for assessing the variables
3. Normality
4. Randomization

In order to answer the first research question, we ran a paired samples t-test, but before that, it is important to take into account the above mentioned assumptions underlying paired samples t-tests.

Table 7 illustrates the results of the paired samples statistics which shows the mean difference of the genre oral male group. As the table shows, the mean for the post-test is 24.1333 which is greater than the pre-test and the SD for the post-test is 1.35576 which is greater than the SD for the pre-test.

Table 7

Paired Samples Statistics				
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	10.6667	15	1.04654	.27021
Post-test	24.1333	15	1.35576	.35006

Table 8 on p. 55 illustrates the results of the paired-samples t-test between the pre-test and post-test for the genre oral male group, as we can see  $t=-34.643$  and the  $df=14$  and the  $sig=.000$  which is smaller than 0.05, so we conclude that the differences between the means in pre-test and post-test are meaningful, and the ES for the pre- and post-tests of writing is .988. In order to interpret the ES, we must take a look at the normal distribution curve. The calculated ES of .988 equals the percentile of 83<sup>th</sup>. In other words, while the experimental (post) has the percentile of 83<sup>th</sup>, the control (pre) has the percentile of 50<sup>th</sup>. Hooman (1996) stated that the effect size of 0.3 or more is an indication of a major difference. So, in an answer to the first research question we can say that genre-based oral academic lectures had a significant effect on the writing achievement of male TOEFL students.

Table 8  
Paired Samples T- Test

Pair 1	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-ES tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% CI				
				Lower	Upper			
Pre test-Post test	-13.46667	1.50555	.38873	-14.30041	-12.63292	-34.643	14	.000 .988

Table 10 on p. 56 shows the results of the paired samples statistics which illustrates the mean differences of the genre oral female group as it illustrates the mean for the post-test is 26.7333 and for the pre-test is 10.9333 and the SD for the post-test is 1.53375 which is greater than the SD for the pre-test:

Table 10  
Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 pre test	10.9333	15	1.22280	.31573
Post test	26.7333	15	1.53375	.39601

Table 11 illustrates the results of the paired samples t-test between the pre-test and post-test for the genre oral female group, as we can see  $t = -29.961$  and the  $df = 14$  and the  $sig = .000$  which is smaller than 0.05, so we conclude that the differences between the means in pre-test and post-test are meaningful, the calculated ES is .984 which equals the percentile of 83<sup>th</sup>. In other words, while the control group (pre) has the percentile of 50<sup>th</sup>, the experimental group (post) has the percentile of 83<sup>th</sup>. So, in an answer to the second research question we can say that genre-based oral academic lectures had a significant effect on the writing achievement of female TOEFL students.

Table 11  
Paired Samples T- Test

Pair 1	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-ES tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
pre test - Post test	-15.80000	2.04241	.52735	-16.93105	-14.66895	-29.961	14	.000 .984

A two-way analysis of variance and F distribution can be used under the following conditions: a) normal distribution of the scores and b) homogeneity of variances. According to Shavelson (1981), if the sample sizes are the same, the two-way analysis of variance is resistant to the normal distribution of scores and the homogeneity of variances so we can use it without worrying about this assumption. According to the observed Fs and the sig which is 0.000 and according to the fact that Bonferroni adjustment  $\alpha = \frac{0.05}{2}$  (the number of dependent variable or the level of variances) and according to the adjusted  $\alpha$  the difference between the two variables in the groups is meaningful ( $P < .025$ ).

Table 12 shows the result of the two-way ANOVA: The Tests of Between-Subjects Effects which is shown in the table below and it shows whether either of the two independent variables or their interaction is statistically significant. The rows we must pay attention are the "method", "Gender" and "method\*Gender" rows. These rows inform us whether our independent variables (the "method" and "Gender" rows) and their interaction (the "method\*Gender" row) have a statistically significant effect on our dependent variable, "writing achievement". It is important to take a look at the "method\*Gender" interaction as this will determine how we can interpret our results. Since the p value is .000 which is less than the alpha level of .05.

Table 12  
Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Score						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1445.400 <sup>a</sup>	3	481.800	298.021	.000	.941
Intercept	26376.067	1	26376.067	16315.093	.000	.997
Method	1197.067	1	1197.067	740.454	.000	.930
Gender	224.267	1	224.267	138.722	.000	.712
Method * Gender	24.067	1	24.067	14.887	.000	.210
Error	90.533	56	1.617			
Total	27912.000	60				
Corrected Total	1535.933	59				

It also attempted to reflect the effect size of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The calculated eta squared for the method (genre-based oral academic lecture) is .930 and for the gender is .712 and their interaction is .210. Now we should take a look at the normal distribution curve, the calculated ES of method is .930 which equals the percentile of 82<sup>th</sup> and the ES of gender is .712 which equals the percentile of 76<sup>th</sup>. Finally, as mentioned in table 12, the calculated ES of interaction between method and gender is .210 which equals the percentile of 58<sup>th</sup> while the control groups' percentile is 50<sup>th</sup>.

The Multiple comparisons procedure was conducted using Tukey HSD in order to control the error rate and to compare the means of the groups. Table 13 shows the results of Tukey HSD ran in order to compare the means of the experimental and control groups.

Table 13  
Results of the multiple comparisons

Dependent Variable: Score

Tukey HSD

(I) Method	(J) Method	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Genre oral male writing	Genre oral female writing	-2.6000*	.46428	.000	-3.8294	-1.3706
	Conventional male writing	10.2000*	.46428	.000	8.9706	11.4294
	Conventional female writing	5.0667*	.46428	.000	3.8373	6.2960
Genre oral female writing	Genre oral male writing	2.6000*	.46428	.000	1.3706	3.8294
	Conventional male writing	12.8000*	.46428	.000	11.5706	14.0294
	Conventional female writing	7.6667*	.46428	.000	6.4373	8.8960
Conventional male writing	Genre oral male writing	-10.2000*	.46428	.000	-11.4294	-8.9706
	Genre oral female writing	-12.8000*	.46428	.000	-14.0294	-11.5706
	Conventional female writing	-5.1333*	.46428	.000	-6.3627	-3.9040
Conventional female writing	Genre oral male writing	-5.0667*	.46428	.000	-6.2960	-3.8373
	Genre oral female writing	-7.6667*	.46428	.000	-8.8960	-6.4373
	Conventional male writing	5.1333*	.46428	.000	3.9040	6.3627

As it is illustrated the difference in means of the experimental groups is more significant than the control groups and they had higher mean than the control groups and also the mean of females was higher than that of males, so we can conclude that the genre based oral academic writing for female group had the highest mean. In other words, genre based oral academic lectures had a significant effect on writing achievement of TOEFL learners especially female learners.

Table 14 illustrates the results of Tukey HSD. As we can see, the difference between the subtracted mean of groups is more than the HSD and this difference is meaningful at the sig of 1.000, so we conclude that the difference between the two means is meaningful at the determined  $\alpha$  level. So, in an answer to the third research question we can say that in genre-based oral academic lectures, gender of students had a significant effect on their writing achievement since females had outperformed the males.

Table 14  
Results of Tukey HSD

Score			
Tukey HSD			
Method	N	Subset 1	2
Genre based male writing	15	24.1333	
Genre based female writing	15	26.7333	
Conventional male writing	15		13.9333
Conventional female writing	15		19.0667
Sig.		1.000	1.000

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 1.617.

## Discussion and Conclusions

### Positive Effects of Genre-based on Language Learning

#### A Summary of the Findings

We did this study to explore the effect of genre-based lectures on writing achievement among male and female TOEFL learners in Iran. The statistical analysis indicated that genre-based group's scores and means were higher in their

posttest than non-genre group. Data analysis showed that genre-based lectures were effective on learners writing achievement. The present study demonstrated that experimental group who received genre-based lecture used more interactive and interactional in their essays than control group who received lectures without genre-based instruction. Hence the findings revealed that there was a significant relation between gender of participants and writing achievement since the females outperformed the males.

## Conclusions

It is clear that genre based approach is an effective way of learning a language since it provides a straight path for the use and learning of a language. Practically genre based approach is student-centered and focuses on a communication problem which is related the students' real life and learning experience so that it will interact and stimulate them to participate actively and be involved in their classes. During the lecture, learners' problems can be easily found by the teachers and the teachers can be always getting ready to offer help to learners who need a hand at different settings. Since genre based approach is both fascinating and stimulating and since there is more and more substantial and empirical evidence that lectures can produce better results it can contribute to language teaching and learning.

## Pedagogical Implications

Therefore, this study can be a convincing evidence for those who pled lack of evidence for not putting it to use nationwide. The implication in this study is that genre-based approach is head and shoulders above the conventional methods being employed in all our educational institutes in Iran and the goal is to convince government and educational policymakers of the superiority of genre-based approach to the traditional methods and ask them to divert their attention from those old methods and instigate a program of educational reform and try to take a long-term view of the development of genre-based approach in Iran and do their best to revamp curricula, to update English syllabi and to produce new methods of teaching.

## Further Research

This study tended to concentrate mainly on writing, the results might be different if other skills were focused, too. In this study only lectures were deployed, if other activities were used, the results could be different.

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