

THE STUDY OF THE GENRE-BASED APPROACH AND EFL STUDENTS JOURNALISM WRITING

Wannaprapha Suksawas*
Naresuan University

ABSTRACT

The study of Genre-based instruction (GBI) has been used as a valuable resource for teaching writing in ESL and EFL contexts especially in English for Specific Purposes studies (Derewianka, 2003; Martin, 2001; Nueva, 2016). GBI highlights how language is structured to achieve particular social purposes (Hyland, 2007a, p. 148). Building on recent studies, the present paper reports the findings of a research project adopting a systemic-functional approach to analyse EFL students' writing in Journalism. It illuminates the roles of GBI regarding Thai students' understanding whilst writing letters to the editor and news reports, which are genres explicitly taught in the English for Journalism course for tertiary students. The study aims to point out the social interactions and the ways learners construct meaning in their written texts. Though previous literature concerning GBI focuses more on a quantitative perspective, qualitative data will be taken into consideration more in this paper. Not only will these data show the selections of learners' linguistic resources but also this information describes the significance of the socially constructed language learning in writing. The results revealed that the genre-based approach has a positive impact on the organization of the students' written texts and aids learners to establish their relationships with the readers. The approach helps students to develop a better understanding of text structures, enables them to gain control of the genres and heightens their awareness of conventions of writing in journalism. Also, students are able to employ linguistic resources that show their disciplined knowledge gained after the GBI intervention.

Keywords: Genre-based instruction, Metadiscourse, Systemic Functional Linguistic, Journalism

1. INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, there is an urgent need to develop students' English proficiency since though English is taught as a compulsory subject in schools and in tertiary education, many employers complain that university graduates still have limited ability to communicate in English, and they have difficulties applying their knowledge to their work (Bryson, 2004; Payaprom, 2012; Suksawas, 2016). For an individual to successfully engage in the global arena, it has become important for him/her to develop English skills so as to be able to reach the expectations of employers and be able to keep pace with the modern world. Among the language skills required, writing is considered one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning as learners need to have knowledge about grammar rules and understand the linguistic features of different text types (Hyland, 2003; Kongpetch, 2006).

* Naresuan University, 99 Moo9, Thapho, Muang, Phitsanulok 65000, Thailand. Email: wannapraphas@nu.ac.th, Telephone: +66867845906

At present, the teaching of English writing in Thailand has focused more on Process theory, thereby viewing writing as a formal writing exercise. Teachers mostly provide pre-writing activities for the students and the practice focuses on advising several principles, multiple writing practices and peer review (Hyland, 2002, 2003). However, when writing is seen as a process of social communication to convey thoughts and feelings to the readers, learners of Process theory are not able to experience writing as a skill in social communication. To contribute to Process theory, the genre-based approach has become one of the most important and influential concepts in teaching second language writing (Hyland, 2007b, p. 5). As Hyland stated, "genre pedagogies have emerged in L2 writing classes as a response to Process pedagogies, as an outcome of communicative methods, and in consequence of our growing understanding of literacy" (Hyland, 2007a, p. 7).

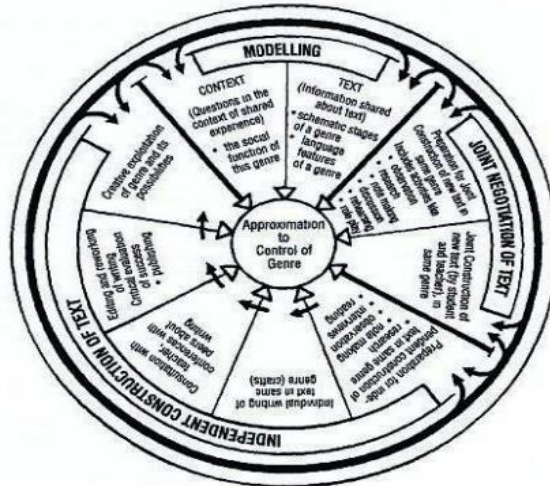
The term genre was first introduced in the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and has been defined and discussed from different viewpoints. Since the publication of Swales "Genre Analysis" in 1990, increasing attention has been given to the concept of genre and its application in language teaching and learning. According to Hyland (2007a) "genre refers to abstract, socially recognized ways of using language" (p. 149). Chandler (1997) states the term genre is generally used in rhetoric, literary theory, media theory, and more recently linguistics, to refer to a distinctive type of text. Richards and Schmidt (2002) state that "a genre can be defined as: a type of discourse that occurs in a particular setting, that has distinctive and recognizable patterns and norms of organization and structure, and that has particular and distinctive communicative functions" (p.224).

At present, there are three prominent movements in teaching and learning of languages based on the GBI, namely, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Numerous L2 studies focus on developing learners' writing in various text types e.g. descriptive essays, argumentative essays, and research articles (e.g. Ahn, 2012; Correa & Echeverri, 2016; Oliveira & Lan, 2014) while other studies focus on writing across discipline or writing English for Specific Purposes (e.g. Correa & Echeverri, 2016; Kurdali, 2012; Martin-Martin, 2013) and writing for Standardized tests (e.g. Dickinson, 2013; Kalali, 2015). Ahn (2012) identified that GBI used in ESP focuses on identifying the key features of genres employed in professional settings. The recursive features in particular genres are believed to clarify structures and moves for students through explicit teaching and linguistic awareness tasks (p. 3). As a result, the research findings underpinning the present study from the aforementioned areas of genre have confirmed the effective use of GBI either as a sole approach or as one combined with Process approach. Compared with the popularity of genre-analysis studies, research on how students analyse and produce genres in ESP genre-based writing classes is still underrepresented in the literature. Since one of the important goals of genre analysis is to improve students' writing, it is especially surprising that many discussions of the ESP genre-based framework rarely explored students' writing performance (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Kongpetch, 2006; Nueva, 2013, 2016; Rose & Martin, 2012). Although the previous studies (e.g. Enli, 2015; Kalali, 2015) showed that a genre-based approach enabled their learners to better texture their writing and to achieve the communicative goals, the majority of the studies employed mostly quantitative approaches, which may not reflect writing as a social process and social phenomenon. Furthermore, the genre taught in Thai education is mainly from English for Academic purposes which does not focus enough on English for students' future career. Therefore, the present study aims to apply a qualitative-oriented approach as well as highlight content from Journalism, which is one of the English for Specific Purposes courses taught at university level.

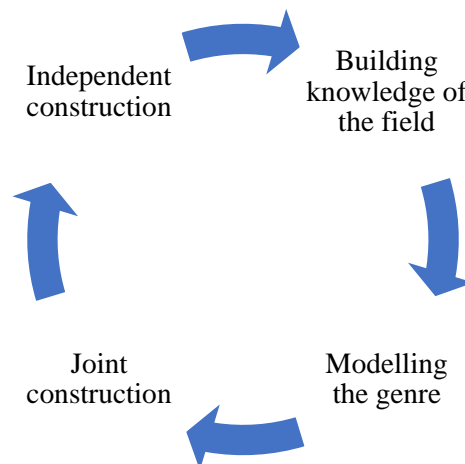
2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Teaching by utilizing a genre-based approach plays an important role in describing functions of language in a social context to learners (Hyland, 2003). The concepts of genre in the study were influenced by the genre-based approach of Halliday (1994; 1985) useful for revealing the context of language teaching. The idea, which has been widely implemented in primary and secondary education, is to focus on Register and Genre (Hyon, 1996) and, with English as a second language, to also help students understand disciplined texts and be able to produce their own texts. In order to help students to understand the specific forms of the curriculum, "the students will gain the knowledge or knowledge related to a specific form of communication so that they are able to respond effectively in their context" (Hyland, 2002, p. 125). As described by Hyon (1996), the application of the genre-based approach emphasizes formal teaching and focuses on the functions of language (p. 712) so that students who have been taught this way are urged to be cautious about the purpose of writing, including the language appropriate to communication. Although writing as social communication is similar to the concept of ESP, this genre-based approach prioritizes linguistic features and the construction of text, namely the substance (Text structure), and analysis of the language at the sentence level.

SFL linguists believe that direct instruction on sentences (Generic structure) and its relation to the nature of language (Grammatical features) can help students, especially non-native learners, to gain insights into the functions and forms of the language required for participation in society (Coffin, 2001, p. 113). The key concept of teaching by using the genre-based approach is direct instruction (explicit teaching) about the nature of the particular forms used in school and in society in order to demonstrate specific characteristics of the language. Model-specific languages (Genres) studies have been conducted, and these include the works of Martin (2001) and Martin and Rose (2003). Martin (2001) has explained that explicit teaching is considered a specialized form of intervention studies. Teachers who are successful in communicating the role of intervention in the course of the study must disclose the control of substances, including the linguistic characteristics for success in communication, thereby highlighting the importance of helping students to gain information about the different writing styles. Therefore, learners will be able to participate effectively in learning (Derewianka, 2003). The genre-based curriculum is influenced by a modern classroom design where support is given to students at the beginning of the learning process. The original design of the wheels introduced by Callaghan and Rothery (1988) is called the Curriculum cycle shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Curriculum cycle (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988, p. 39)

The cycle was developed specifically for teaching writing through the design process focused on the topics of the lessons. It's goal is to help students to communicate using language and to communicate freely using their own expertise in a specific format (Lim, 2004). It consists of three stages: the preview (Modelling), discussion about the task (Joint negotiation of text) and the production (Independent construction of text). However, a later version of the cycle shown in Figure 2 below was elaborated to include four stages: Building the field, Modelling the text, Joint-Construction and Independent-construction (Derewianka & Jones, 2012) and was applied in many recent studies (e.g. Enli, 2015; Najmi, 2015; Pryde, 2015).

Figure 2: A teaching and learning cycle (Derewianka & Jones, 2012, p. 45)

Implementing the curriculum cycle in the class is regarded as a teaching intervention aimed at guiding students to write a particular genre to suit the expectation of the community of practice in terms of stages, conventions of expressions and content through a four-stage pedagogical tool. Stage one is the preparation stage, here the teachers negotiated the topic of task or text types with the learners, plan activities and build learners' background knowledge (Gebhard & Harman, 2011). The second stage, Modelling the genre, is concerned with developing students' conscious knowledge of language and how it works. Apart from learning how it works, students acquire knowledge on the patterns of the language from the samples of the finished written texts shown and explained by the teachers (Derewianka & Jones, 2012, p. 48). In the third stage, teachers and learners jointly construct texts. With the help of teachers, learners can finally complete their assignments. As they are writing, teachers gradually withdraw help and provide supports to learners when needed until they reach the final stage. In the final stage, students are expected to finally produce the texts on their own although the writing process involves the help of teachers and peers on drafting, revising, and editing (Derewianka & Jones, 2012, p. 54). In this particular study, the curriculum cycle informs the stages the teacher as a researcher plan the study and provide supports and resources that learners need in order to write a letter to an editor and a news report. As mentioned earlier, the present study aims to investigate learners' organization of genres and the way they utilize their linguistics resources to interact with their readers mainly in the final texts they produced. Therefore, besides the genre-based instruction, the researcher also requires a linguistics framework to point out how writers opt to engage with their readers.

Metadiscourse is a linguistic framework originally developed to investigate writers' discourse patterns. Scholars have primarily employed the framework in relation to two aspects: the expressions used by the writer to create 'reader-friendly' text (Lee, 2002); and the critical interpretation or theoretical exposition of a given discourse (Mao, 1993, p. 265) or comments about a writer's text made by others (Chrismore, 1989; Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993). This study focuses on the rhetorical actions a writer utilizes to guide readers through the development of his/her argument, the construction of his/her persona, and to interact with readers so as to stimulate reactions to such actions. With the theoretical support of the Systemic Functional theory of language (Halliday, 1994), the current study aims to qualitatively contribute to the categorisation of metadiscourse types that reveal the nature of the interactions of EFL writers. To realize this objective, the researcher seeks answers to the following research questions.

The overarching question: How do EFL learners employ metadiscourse to express their interpersonal and textual meaning when writing in L2?

1. What kinds of metadiscourse do EFL learners select when writing letters to the editor?
2. What kinds of metadiscourse do EFL learners select when writing news reports?

As there has been an immediate need for Thai students to improve more their English proficiency, this study aims to further investigate academic understanding of genre-based approach and EFL students' Journalism writing by focusing on Thai learners' linguistic behaviour. As such, it addresses issues such as the extent in which similarities and differences can be found in the use of metadiscourse markers by EFL learners when writing different text types. To this end, the metadiscourse framework has been discussed in the following section.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

As Hyland claimed that “[i]nformation about genre practices is best approached using small-scale research and qualitative methods” (Hyland, 2007a, p. 208), this study therefore employed a qualitative design in the collection and analysis of data. Case study research has been chosen strategically to uncover in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of genre-based approach mediation of the spoken texts of EFL learners in Thailand. A case study was deemed appropriate because it “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). The participants of the study were 25 English major students enrolled in an English for Journalism course in a Thai university. This research is aimed to study the written development of Thai EFL students by focusing on their writing after the intervention of the genre-based approach. After 15 weeks of genre-based intervention, the students were asked to complete the writing tasks (a letter to the editor and a news report). Then, the students were interviewed to further delve into their attitudes and opinions regarding the teaching approach.

In order to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of this study, Inter-Rater Reliability and multiple methods including both observation and interview were also used. The use of multiple cases in this study strengthened the external validity of the result (Yin, 1994), while the relationship between the case study and the theoretical framework helped to enhance the generalizability (Hood, 2009). In addition, in order to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher provided the participants with ‘the opportunity to review the interpretation of the data’. (Holliday, 2011)

It is based on the view of writing as a social and communicative engagement between writer and reader that this research sought to explore the metadiscourse markers employed by EFL learners. The aim of this paper is to explore the processes of L2 writing in the journalism genre; specifically, letters to the editor and news reports. Particular focus is on the way L2 writers select metadiscourse as their interpersonal resources. Letters to the editor and news reports of 25 third-year English major students were collected. The data were analysed using Hyland’s taxonomy to determine whether EFL writers used different interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers when writing different textual genres. Grammatical errors were not corrected to preserve the originality of the data and to reflect authentic L2 use. The model is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: An interpersonal model of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005, p. 49)

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive	Help to guide the reader through the text	Resources
Transitions	Express relations between main clauses	In addition; but; thus
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	Finally; my purpose is
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	Noted above; see fig; in section 2
Evidentials	Refer to information from other texts	According to X; Z states
Code glosses	Elaborate propositional meanings	Namely; e.g.; such as

Interactional	Involve the reader in the text	Resources
Hedges	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	Might; perhaps; about
Boosters	Emphasise certainty or close dialogue	In fact; it is clear that
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to proposition	I agree; surprisingly
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to author (s)	I; we; my; me; our
Engagement markers	Explicitly build relationship with reader	Consider; note; you can see that

In order to obtain information on descriptive analysis, the gathered data were entered into Microsoft Excel for the purpose of analysing the frequency of metadiscourse markers and lexical density. The data were counted, identified and analysed by this researcher, a graduate student and a native inter-rater, to prevent miscounting the frequency. A colour-coding technique was also used to present the data and to make them more manageable. However, in this particular paper, the researcher also used the Superscript (also shown in Appendix 1) to show the data in black and white presentation. The results were used to dissimilarities between the different writing genres. Finally, the frequencies of metadiscourse markers used by EFL writers were calculated. The results of the data analysis are discussed in the following section.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After gathering and analysing the linguistic data obtained based on linguistic theory, the researcher would like to conclude the findings of the study in two prominent areas: the generic structure of a letter to the editor and a news report and the selection of learners' use of metadiscourse in letters to the editor and news reports.

In analysing micro-genre, the results have shown the detailed elements of a letter to the editor and a news report as presented in table 2 below. The data clarify the written form of each component type and stage of a universal practice. Each letter to the editor and news report is unique in the style in style, content, and format. Therefore, in designing lesson plans and activities to help students understand how to write more, the overview of the work of each category was explained.

Table 2: Rhetorical Structure of a letter to editor and a news report

Generic Structure	Rhetorical Structure
Letter to editor	Title^Background^Attribution^Proposal
News report	Headline^Lead development^Background ^ [Attribution]^ Consequences

The genre-based approach was applied to teach students how to write each text type. The content of the lessons was based on a specific theme of a letter to the editor to reflect on current news and a news report. The procedure is as follows: Stage 1: Background information from the news was given to the learners including vocabulary and basic grammatical points for their understanding of a specific type of the news: local news, international news, sport news. Supports provided are

beneficial for students' writing particularly when learners reflect their opinions and report news (Field Building). Stage 2: Previewing the text (Modelling) pieces of letters to the editor and news reports were shown and explained to the students in detail. This gave the students the opportunity to see the completed work. Then, learners worked amongst themselves and with the teacher to highlight things they needed in order to reach the professional standard in writing for journalism. Stage 3: learners started writing with the help of the teacher and their peers (Joint Construction). In this stage, students experienced writing as a group task with guidance from the teachers. Finally, Stage 4: Writing process, learners finally produce a piece of writing themselves (Independent Construction). They write a part of a news report on their own. At this stage, they demonstrated the ability to write, and to apply specialized skills and knowledge to their writing.

Since the principle of writing for a newspaper is mainly to attract the readers' attention, the language used is informal, concise, and unique in terms of terminology. Students need to be able to understand and practice the necessary skills to meet the expectations of the discipline knowledge community. In addition, newspaper writers mainly state the facts and report on what happened. Besides the text itself, there are times when images need to be inserted to provide more contextual information. As a result, writing captions is also an important skill that needs to be developed. Learners have difficulties explaining things and situations since their linguistic resources are limited and they lack information about the news. It seems difficult for the readers to link or summarize what happened in the news and the image shown in the newspaper. However, after GBI, learners could describe the photo by writing captions explaining what was shown and report what happened in news reports. Besides, learners were also able to write a reaction to the news by expressing their personal views in letters written to the editor.

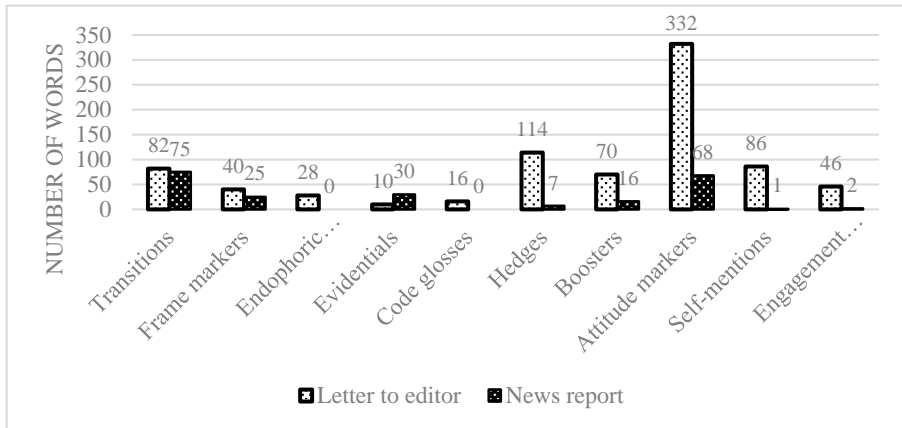
The results of learners' use of metadiscourse in writing letters to the editor and news reports are illustrated in a form of descriptive data shown in Table 3 and Figure 3 in this part. In addition, an explanation of the results is also provided. After calculating word density, the results in Table 3 show that when writing letters to the editor, learners produced 3,626 words and 288 sentences while they produced 2,417 words and 170 sentences reporting factual information. Learners produced more words when they expressed their feelings, argued their points and negotiated their stances. They wrote fewer words when they reported what happened in a form of a recount without indicating their personal views. Figure 3 below illustrates learners' selection of each metadiscourse item to communicate meaning in both letters to the editor and news reports.

Table 3: The summary of learners' linguistic resources selection

Linguistic resources	Letter to editor	News report
Transitions	82	75
Frame markers	40	25
Endophoric markers	28	0
Evidentials	10	30
Code glosses	16	0

Hedges	114	7
Boosters	70	16
Attitude markers	332	68
Self-mentions	86	1
Engagement markers	46	2
Total number of words	3626	2417
Total number of sentences	288	170

Figure 3: A comparison of Metadiscourse used by EFL learners



EFL learners used attitude markers the most when they expressed their personal opinion to react to the news, followed by hedges, self-mentions and transitions respectively. They used both positive and negative attitude markers to reveal their feelings. They also prompted readers to interact through the choices of hedges as a heterogloss. There is evidence of self-mentions to show personal involvement in the writing. Lastly, not only did the learners express their feeling, they also used transitions to show the readers relations of each main clause as shown in extract 1 below.

Extract 1: Example of EFL writers' letter to editor

Dear Editor Re^{EM}: Monk's luxurious lifestyle under fire (Bangkokpost.com on Sunday)^{EM} (No coding on given headline)

As we know^{EngM}, the monks have to^{EngM} live their lives sufficiently^{AM}. They have to^{EngM} restrain^{AM} to desires about materialism. But^T why the renowned^{AM} monks in Thailand have luxurious^{AM} lifestyle. It is not appropriate^{AM} for the monks that they rode a private^{AM} jet, used expensive^{AM} items or luxurious^{AM} cars. Even if the monks said the cars were given items. They should^H live

sufficiently^{AM}. Their actions defaced^{AM} images of Buddhism. And Buddhists will not name faith in^{AM} Buddhism. If they desire to live luxuriantly^{AM}, they shouldn't^H be the monk. ISMhope^B that they should^H be punished.

Sincerely^{AM}

Writer (1)

In contrast to writing letters to the editor, writing news reports had the most number of selected transitions, followed by attitude markers and evidentials. Learners showed their attempts to make a connection of clauses and sequence with what happened in the news. There was evidence of attitude markers, but the positive and negative markers found did not reflect the writer's personal view as shown in the extract 2 below. The markers were reflections of the participants in the news, while evidential markers were used to refer to the news and to the agents involved in the news.

Extract 2: Example of EFL learners' a news report

Headline: Getting lose irks medical student shoot 3 foes.

Photo: Mr. Danot Preweenmet, 27 years old.

A medical student drove to his dorm and^T bought a short gun 9 mm to shoot his foes in front of the restaurant. Getting the loser in fighting caused a medical student shoots 3 foes. He was arrested in his house and accused a case "attempt to kill." He finally^{FM} denied. At 12:30 pm. June 22, the police "Winai Rawidech"^E claimed there was shooting in front of a restaurant "Ban Din", Nimmanhamin Road Soi 13 and Winai suddenly^{AM} arrive the event. The police investigated witnesses the restaurant and announced^E that the suspect was "Mr.Danot Preweenmet, 27 years old, a medical student who quarrelled with Mr. Moris in the restaurant. The suspect was knocked at left eye forcedly^{AM}. Then, he got angry^{AM} and drove a car to his dorm to bring his short gun 9 mm. and came back to shoot his foe who was just injured.

Writer (1)

These findings displayed learners' ability to sequence their written texts in relation to the genre of letters to the editor and news reports after the GBI intervention. Furthermore, the metadiscourse found in the written texts revealed how EFL writers constructed meanings in different text types. Through linguistic resources, the learners' written texts reflected how they organized their texts and how they negotiated their interpersonal meaning. In addition, these findings also showed the nature of interaction of the case studies when students expressed their views and reported factual information to their readers by showing their selections of textual and interpersonal resources.

5. CONCLUSION

The metadiscourse model provides a comprehensive and integrated way to examine how interaction is achieved and how discursal preferences of different communities are constructed by both writers and readers. The main finding of this study reveals that EFL writers' selections of metadiscourse markers for interactive and interactional purposes are in accordance with the social purposes of the particular written genres. The researcher has also found out that the metadiscourse enables the writers to structure their text cohesively through the use of interactive and interactional markers and thus shape the interaction between the writers and the readers. These findings reinforce the need to ensure that these linguistic resources are promoted in L2 teaching since many

scholars in the field of L2 teaching writing pedagogy argued about the advantages of implementing genre-based methodology. As a consequence, GBI can be seen as a response to the needs of EFL teachers and learners in the process of creating meanings while writing their text. In response to this, teachers and educators should give serious consideration not only to the topic and purpose of writing, but also to language as a medium of communication through the process of filed building, modelling texts, joint-construction and independent construction of the texts through explicit teaching and awareness raising. Given the impact of metadiscourse on writing outcomes, further research is needed to address the use of metadiscourse markers across the various genres used by EFL writers to determine if any differences exist in the construction of their identity in society. Also, it needs to be noted that the results of this small scale case study cannot be generally applicable to all EFL learners and the news or news resources employed in this particular study were limited within the Thai context only. Therefore, the use of international news, or other local news from other countries, and consideration of other norms from other social contexts can be highlighted in future studies.

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APPENDIX 1: Code for transcription

Interactive	Superscript
Transitions	T
Frame markers	FM
Endophoric markers	EM
Evidentials	E
Code glosses	CG
Interactional	Superscript
Hedges	H
Boosters	B
Attitude markers	AM
Self-mentions	SM
Engagement markers	EngM
NUMBERS OF WORDS	
NUMBERS OF SENTENCES	

APPENDIX 2: Abbreviation List (order of appearance)

1. GBI = Genre-based instruction
2. ESL = English as a Second Language
3. EFL = English as a Foreign Language
4. L2 = Second language
5. ESP = English for Specific purposes
6. SFL = Systemic Functional Linguistics
7. EAP = English for Academic Purposes

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