



# An investigation of the effectiveness of genre-based feedback on Chinese University students' argumentative essay writing

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## Table of content

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.1 Definition of academic writing .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.2 Two types of written feedback in L2 writing.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.2.1 Definition of written feedback.....	10
2.2.2 Form-based feedback.....	11
2.2.3 Genre-based feedback.....	15
<b>2.3 Empirical studies on written feedback in L2 writing .....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.3.1 Written feedback employed by L2 teachers.....	20
2.3.2 Effectiveness of written feedback in L2 writing .....	21
<b>2.4 Research gaps .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.1 Research design .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.2 Sampling and participants.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>3.3 Randomisation.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>3.4 Methods for addressing research question 1.....</b>	<b>30</b>
3.4.1 Intervention.....	30
3.4.2 Writing tasks for the experiment.....	32
3.4.3 Data analysis for addressing RQ1.....	33
<b>3.5 Methods for addressing research question 2.....</b>	<b>35</b>
3.5.1 Questionnaire construction.....	35
3.5.2 Data analysis for addressing RQ2.....	36
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS .....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>4.1 Differential effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback .....</b>	<b>38</b>
4.1.1 Effects on overall text scores .....	38
4.1.2 Effects on genre scores.....	40
4.1.3 Effects on accuracy scores.....	41
4.1.4 Summary of findings for RQ1 .....	44
<b>4.2 Students' perceptions of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback.....</b>	<b>44</b>
4.2.1 Developmental aspect .....	45

4.2.2 Usable aspect .....	45
4.2.3 Personalised aspect .....	46
4.2.4 Rationalised aspect .....	47
4.2.5 Reference to the criteria aspect .....	48
4.2.6 Summary of findings for RQ2 .....	48
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>5.1 Discussion of the differential effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback.....</b>	<b>50</b>
5.1.1 Effect on overall score .....	50
5.1.2 Effects on genre scores.....	52
5.1.3 Effect of accuracy score.....	53
<b>5.2 Discussion on the questionnaire finding.....</b>	<b>54</b>
5.2.1 Developmental aspect .....	54
5.2.2 Usable aspect .....	55
5.2.3 Personalised aspect .....	56
5.2.4 Rationalised aspect.....	57
5.2.5 Reference to marking criteria .....	58
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>6.1 Summary of major findings .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>6.2 Implications .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>6.3 Limitations .....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>REFERENCES:.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: MARKING CRITERIA.....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY QUESTIONS .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE .....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: WORKSHEET .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>APPENDIX E:EXPERIMENT RAW DATA.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: CUREC APPROVAL .....</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>APPENDIX G: INFORMATION SHEET.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>APPENDIX H: CONSENT FORM .....</b>	<b>83</b>

## List of Tables

<b>Table 3.1 examples of written feedback provided in each group .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Table 3.2: Description of selected themes for questionnaire construction .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics of overall scores changes.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Table 4.2: Independent samples t-test: result of overall test score changes .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics of genre scores changes .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Table 4.4: Independent samples t-test: result of genre test score changes .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Table 4.5: Descriptive statistics of accuracy scores changes.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Table 4.6: Independent samples t-test: result of accuracy test score changes .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Table 4.7: Paired samples t-test result of accuracy test score changes in genre-based feedback group. .</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Table 4. 8: Paired samples t-test result of accuracy test score changes in form-based feedback group ...</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Table 4.9: Participants perceptions of developmental aspects of written feedback.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Table 4.10: Participants perceptions of usable aspects of written feedback .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Table 4.11: Participants perceptions of personalised aspects of written feedback .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Table 4.12: Participants perceptions of rationalised aspect of written feedback .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Table 4.13: Participants perceptions of reference to criteria .....</b>	<b>48</b>

## Abstract

This dissertation involved the comparison of two types of written feedback that aim to develop second language writers' writing proficiency, namely, genre-based feedback and form-based feedback. To be more specific, this research investigated the effectiveness of genre-based feedback compared with form-based feedback in improving the quality of Chinese University students' English argumentative essays. In addition, this research also enquired about the Chinese University students' perceptions of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback since the students' thoughts on their received feedback may influence their intake level.

The rationality of the implementation of this research is that the traditionally employed form-based feedback, which mainly focuses on improving language accuracy, was insufficient to address the challenges encountered by Chinese university students in academic writing (generic conventions). In responding to such insufficiency, genre-based feedback was established to develop students' generic knowledge, allowing them to produce academic text adhering to academic conventions. Such feedback practice emphasises the connection between linguistic and contextual features, enabling learners to understand the generic features by linking their related context.

In this study, genre-based feedback was compared with form-based feedback regarding their effectiveness in improving the participants writing. In addition, the participants' perceptions were enquired via a questionnaire. The experimental results show that genre-based feedback and form-based feedback both contributed to improving Chinese university students' argumentative essays but on different aspects. The results from the questionnaire illustrate that genre-based feedback is more positively perceived by the participants than form-based feedback. The results indicate that both types of feedback should be utilised for the improvement of academic writing proficiency. However, genre-based feedback should be prioritised, assuming the students have well-developed grammatical knowledge at such a level.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Written feedback in second language writing practice commonly refers to the constructive evaluation of learners' composition from teachers with the objective of improving learners' second language writing proficiency (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Written feedback is considered to be one of the most powerful variables that may contribute to second language (L2) learners' development of writing proficiency, according to Hattie et al.'s (1996) meta-analysis. Written feedback is important in improving L2 writing proficiency because it works as an extension of the classroom (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Such extension provides an extra communication channel between teachers and students, allowing students to relearn, reevaluate and reconstruct their knowledge about L2 writing with teachers' personalised feedback (Hyland, 2007).

Over the past few decades, the focus of written feedback has evolved from mainly concentrating on language accuracy (i.e., form-based feedback, as illustrated below) to combining generic conventions into consideration (i.e., genre-based feedback). Traditionally, feedback is considered to be a tool to correct the students' errors by the authority (e.g., teachers) according to the codified standard of the language (Devrim, 2014). Such type of feedback is called written corrective feedback in the literature, but for the clarity of presentation (and in comparison with genre-based feedback as detailed below), form-based feedback is used as the term in this research. Form-based feedback mainly focuses on improving the accuracy of the produced text, targeting surface error at the sentence level only (Lee, 2008). The ideology behind such feedback practice is that written text is considered to be an object that consists of an accurate organisation of words and sentences (Samsudin, 2016). With such ideology, writing is considered to be a demonstration of stored grammatical knowledge (Hyland, 2016).

However, form-based feedback has received criticism in the past ten years due to its high emphasis on accuracy, especially when it is used to improve university students' academic writing proficiency. Research shows that university students who use English as their L2 mainly face challenges in producing an appropriate text adhering to academic writing conventions rather than understanding grammatical rules (Bian & Wang, 2016). Teachers and researchers involved in English for Academic Purposes training programme

also found that form-based feedback is insufficient to improving students' academic writing proficiency because the students' weaknesses in academic writing genre cannot be adequately addressed by form-based feedback (Mahbood & Devrim, 2013), calling for new ways of giving feedback in L2 writing.

As a newly advocate feedback practice, genre-based feedback is established to complement the insufficiency of form-based feedback in improving L2 university students' academic writing proficiency (Mahbood & Devrim, 2013). Genre-based feedback is developed based on genre theories. Essentially, genre refers to a type of text that shares specific textual features, distinguishing it from other text varieties (Martin, 2009). For example, the textual features of a scientific report are largely distinctive from the textual features of an advertisement. Such distinctive textual features are shaped by the culture that the text is involved in. To be more specific, within each culture, members' routine language use contributes to the establishment of an acceptable communication pattern that is shared by members within the culture. For successful communication, newcomers need to follow those communicative conventions that are pre-established by older members (Halliday, 1978). Such communicative conventions are called genres. Grounded in genre theories, genre-based feedback aims to scaffold learners' development of generic knowledge (Mahbood & Devrim, 2013). When developing learners' generic knowledge, the instructors need to constantly remind the learners of the connection between language and the related culture.

As genre-based feedback gains currency in L2 writing researchers have gradually validated its effectiveness in helping students produce a text that demonstrates more adherence to academic writing conventions (Uzun & Topkaya, 2020; Zhang, 2021). However, no research has been conducted to compare the effectiveness of those two types of feedback on students' academic writing performance. Moreover, students' perceptions of their received feedback largely affect the possibility of students' internalization of the feedback (Amrhein & Nssaji, 2010). Nevertheless, no research has enquired about students' perceptions of those two types of feedback.

To fill these two research gaps, this research has two objectives. Firstly, this research aims to compare the effectiveness of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on

students' argumentative essays. Secondly, this research aims to enquire about the students' perceptions of genre-based feedback and genre-based feedback.

In the following sections of this dissertation, chapter two will first provide definition of key terms in this research (i.e., academic writing, form-based feedback, genre-based feedback), followed by review of empirical studies on the effectiveness and students' perceptions of those two types of feedback. Chapter three will explain what methods this research adopted to fulfil the two objectives explicitly for full replication. Next the results and discussion of the findings will be presented sequentially in chapter four and five. Finally, the implications of the findings, limitation of the research and the conclusion of this study is presented.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Over the past few decades, a body of research has justified the advantage of providing written feedback in L2 writing over no feedback provided (Chong, 2019). However, what type of written feedback is more effective in fostering L2 learners' writing competence is still an empirical question, especially under the shifting condition in which generic conventions of writing is becoming as important as language accuracy (Uzun & Topkaya, 2020). To provide an overview of theoretical background and empirical evidence of written feedback on L2 writing, this chapter will start by defining academic writing, and genre, the focus of this study. Then, two types of written feedback examined in this research, namely, form-based feedback and genre-based feedback, are reviewed in section 2.2. Section 2.3 reviews empirical studies on effectiveness of different types of feedback (i.e., form-based and genre-based feedback) and students' perceptions towards them. Finally, the research gaps that this research aims to address will be outlined and justified in section 2.4.

### 2.1 Definition of academic writing

Academic writing is any written text constructed for the communication of disciplinary knowledge with people in academia (de Chazal, 2014). To be more specific, academic writing involves appropriately organising language by managing meaning to convey sophisticated technical knowledge to specific target audience following certain conventions (de Chazal, 2014). Academic writing is particularly essential in higher education (Jordan, 1997) because it is predominantly used as a channel to communicate newly established research findings among scholars and for students to demonstrate their mastery of the disciplinary knowledge (Nesi & Gardner, 2012).

Academic writing shares specific characteristics distinct from other types of writing. According to Coffin and Donohue (2012), academic writing is more than a list of linguistic forms; it is essentially a medium of communication that is largely shaped by its social context. Within such a social context, there is a group of members involved in the community, in which people who have a body of knowledge to communicate within the

community and gradually establish certain conventions people should adhere to for successful communication (de Chazal, 2014). To be more precise, academic writing as an umbrella term involves a series of text types that are different from each other and are shaped by specific communicative purposes and target audiences (Swales, 1990). For example, an argumentative essay is one specific type of academic writing that requires the writers to persuade the readers of their intended stance (de Chazal, 2014). Such type of writing shares specific communicative purposes, intended audience, and conventionalised writing style that writers should adhere to. Constructing an academic text is challenging for L2 writers, requiring their mastery of linguistic forms and communicative conventions (Jordan, 1997). Such challenges require continuous written feedback and support from instructors to improve their writing proficiency (Jordan, 1997).

## 2.2 Two types of written feedback in L2 writing

Written feedback in L2 writing has experienced changes over the past few decades due to the shifting focus merely from language accuracy to meaningful communication, resulting in different types of feedback in L2 writing practice. This research examines two types of feedback: form-based feedback and genre-based feedback. The former has been well-established and mainly focuses on language form. More recently, the latter genre-based feedback has emerged, moving away from overemphasis on form but more communicative conventions of genre (Devrim, 2014). This section will first define what written feedback is in section 2.2.1, followed by the introduction of form-based feedback taxonomy and its related criticism in section 2.2.2. Then, newly developed genre-based feedback will be introduced in section 2.2.3.

### 2.2.1 Definition of written feedback

Written feedback is often defined as written constructive evaluation of writing that targets specific linguistic and textual features for the students' development in second language writing proficiency (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Such constructive evaluation can be viewed as a 'corrective tool' (Devrim, 2014, p. 1) from the authorities

such as teachers, or it can be considered as a mediation tool for teachers to scaffold the learners' understanding of writing in a dialogic manner (Lantolf, 2006). Written feedback is essential in fostering students' writing proficiency development because it provides valuable communication channels for teachers to provide personalised comments tailored to students' specific areas of improvement (Ferris, 2001). It is found to be one of the most powerful variables that impact learners' learning outcomes, according to the meta-analysis of Hattie et al. (1996). In such cases, the importance of providing effective feedback to stimulate L2 writing improvement should not be overlooked.

Written feedback is considered to be a complementary element of classroom instruction. According to Hyland and Hyland (2006), written feedback is a usable tool to extend the influence of the classroom, allowing students to enhance what they have learned in class and providing opportunities to construct their knowledge of L2 writing independently. In addition, written feedback works as a cyclical process of writing proficiency development since it provides repeated opportunities for learners to constantly be involved in self-critique and self-reflection on their own writing, resulting in a growing understanding of writing (Hyland, 2007). In such cases, suggestions and written feedback can be utilised in the students' future composition, leading to improved writing quality.

### 2.2.2 Form-based feedback

The following section will introduce the aim, taxonomy, and some criticisms of form-based feedback. It should be acknowledged that, in the majority of the literature, written corrective feedback rather than form-based feedback is used as the term to refer to feedback that aims for language error correction. However, due to the evolution of feedback practice, different varieties of feedback have occurred under the term of written corrective feedback (e.g., genre-based feedback). Therefore, form-based feedback is a term coined for this research to refer to feedback that aims to increase language accuracy.

#### (1) Definition of form-based feedback

Form-based feedback generally refers to any form of written comments on students' written text 'indicates that there is an error in their usage of L2' (Kregar, 2011, p. 3 cited in Devrim, 2014). Such a definition is widely used in the research field of L2 acquisition and L2 writing, which indicates errors occur in L2 writers' composition and need to be corrected by the authority adhering to the codified standard of the language (Devrim, 2014). Such feedback mainly focuses on correcting learners' morphological and syntactical errors (Lee, 2008 2017), with the purpose of assisting students to notice the gap between their current linguistic knowledge and the target level, attend to specific linguistic errors and restructure their language system (Diab, 2015; Finn & Metcalfe, 2010). Such notion of form-based feedback has become a convention shared in academia as Chong's (2019) systematic review shows that the majority of research of form-based feedback investigate how such feedback practice impact students' language accuracy at sentence level only.

In form-based feedback, language is mainly treated as a product. From the perspective of form-based feedback practitioners, language is essentially an autonomous object (Ferris, 2003; Lee, 2013; Samsudin, 2016; Zamel, 1985). When language is viewed as an autonomous object, a text is considered to be an organised collection of a body of vocabulary, clauses and sentences adhering to linguistic rules (Samsudin, 2016). Under such ideology, writing is regarded as an illustration of the students' stored linguistic knowledge and how they are realised in a text (Hyland, 2016), which greatly emphasises language accuracy. Influenced by the idea that language is viewed as autonomous object and with the aim to demonstrate high language accuracy in writing, form-based feedback is utilised to correct sentence-level grammatical errors.

## (2) Taxonomy of form-based feedback

Ellis's (2009) taxonomy of written corrective feedback is highly influential in guiding a body of empirical research within the field of L2 acquisition, and L2 writing is worth introducing. Ellis's (2009) categorisation helps this research understand and design form-based feedback intervention (see section 3.1 for details). According to Ellis (2009), form-based feedback includes six types, namely, direct versus indirect corrective

feedback, metalinguistic corrective feedback, focused versus unfocused corrective feedback, electronic feedback and reformulation.

Among these six types of form-based feedback, direct corrective feedback refers to the instructors' explicit correction of the learners' errors, which can be done by crossing out mistaken morphemes, inserting missing morphemes and writing down the correct form of the word (Ellis, 2009). In such cases, students noticed the location of errors and the correct answers that corresponded to them. On the contrary, indirect corrective feedback refers to instructors' indication of error without the provision of the correct answer, which can be done by underlining or other codes that indicate erroneous expressions (Ellis, 2009). Such feedback practice is more beneficial in guiding learners to resolve problems independently (Lalande, 1982). The next strategy for giving corrective feedback is to provide a metalinguistic explanation (Ellis, 2009). Under this category, learners were given specific explanations of grammatical rules to justify the problem with the expression and help to restructure students' understanding of such grammatical rules. The fourth strategy concerns the scope of the error correction, which considers whether all errors should be corrected (Ellis, 2009). Focus corrective feedback is given to one specific type of error (e.g., third person singular), while unfocused corrective feedback corrects all types of grammatical errors (e.g., third person singular, article and plural). Electronic feedback refers to the utilisation of hyperlinks to provide correction of the student's linguistic errors, which has become more common in today's electronic world (Ellis, 2009). The final strategy in this taxonomy is reformulation. The formulation is done by a native speaker's reconstruction of the text, followed by the learners' own judgement to decide which part to maintain in the revision (Ellis, 2009).

The above taxonomy of form-based feedback consists of direct corrective feedback, indirect corrective feedback, metalinguistic explanation, focused versus unfocused feedback, electronic feedback and reformulation, and has been widely cited in academia and drives the implementation of a body of empirical studies.

### (3) Criticism on form-based feedback

The practice of form-based feedback has received certain criticism from both researchers and students as second language writers. From the researchers' perspective, they realised that form-based feedback merely focuses on forms, which is insufficient to develop students' academic writing literacy. On the other hand, from the students' perspective, they report dissatisfaction with form-based feedback due to its overemphasis on form. Those two perspectives responding to issues of form-based feedback will be discussed sequentially in the following.

From the researchers' perspectives, a body of empirical evidence shows that the current well-established written feedback practice that mainly focuses on accuracy is insufficient to assist ESL students in improving academic literacies (Al-Abed & Ahmed, 1994; Bian & Wang, 2016; Jiang, 2013; Qin & Karabacek, 2010; Zhu, 2001). Bian and Wang's (2016) qualitative research involves three university English teachers in China, enquiring their perceptions of the academic writing challenges encountered by Chinese university students according to their teaching and marking experience. Those participants reported that the majority of students have difficulties constructing a text adhering to English academic writing conventions due to their limited generic knowledge (Bian & Wang, 2016). For example, the participants report that their Chinese students usually have issues constructing a clear and explicit topic sentence to express the central meaning of the argument, which does not align with the Anglophone writing conventions (Bian & Wang, 2016). In addition, Zhu's (2001) research involved 14 postgraduate Mexican students studying at a university in America and found that student participants reported their insufficient generic knowledge posed significant challenges in their academic writing processes. Students' academic writing difficulties are not only found in qualitative research requiring stakeholders' perception but also reported in quantitative research that analyses ESL university students' textual features in academic writing. Qin and Karabacak's (2010) study involved 133 Chinese university students. 133 argumentative essays were collected to analyse whether those texts were written following the generic conventions (Qin & Karabacak, 2010). The researcher found that some elements of a well-established argumentation essay structure were missing in those participants' writing (Qin & Karabacak, 2010). Such incompleteness might be attributed to those students' lack of generic knowledge when constructing arguments. Such phenomenon can be explained

by the fact that different cultures share different conventions in writing, ESL students may carry their schematic knowledge of the writing conventions of their first language when writing in L2. Such mismatch of writing expectations may lead to the inappropriateness of ESL students' writing according Anglophone academic writing conventions (Jiang, 2013).

From the students' perspectives, the written feedback ESL students received on their academic writing does not fully satisfy the students' requirement (Lee, 2005; Li, 2016; Seker & Dincer, 2014). For instance, Seker and Dincer's (2014) research investigated 468 Turkish university students' preferences for written feedback they received on their academic writing. The majority of the participants reported that they expected to receive written feedback on both their grammatical errors and on whether their text organisation adhere to the generic conventions (Seker & Dincer, 2014). Such a result indicates that following Ellis's (2009) taxonomy, providing form-based written feedback may be insufficient to meet the learners' expectations. Li (2016) interviewed 6 Chinese university students enquiring about their perceptions of the written feedback they received from their instructors on their argumentative essays. Some participants reported that the feedback they received was mainly form-based, which is insufficient for them to develop academic literacies (Li, 2016). In addition, the student participants report that although their instructor pointed out that their writing are difficult to follow, indicating weak genre awareness, no suggestion was provided on such issues (Li, 2016).

### 2.2.3 Genre-based feedback

Genre-based feedback is proposed by scholars to cope with the insufficiency of form-based feedback in assisting ESL students' academic writing development (Mahbood & Devrim, 2013). To understand what genre-based feedback is, the following section will first define genre and relevant theories, and a taxonomy of genre-based feedback.

#### (1) Definition of genre

Genre is defined as a ‘staged goal-oriented social process’ (Martin, 2009, p. 13) concerning the conventional linguistic features, communicative purpose and social contexts of the language use. In other words, genre refers to specific text varieties with specific textual features that are socially recognised (Hyland, 2003). To understand the meaning of genre as an abstract concept, Martin’s (2009, p. 13) definition will be unpacked below following the sequence of explaining ‘social’, ‘goal-oriented’ and ‘staged’.

‘Social’ in the definition of genre suggests that language use is greatly shaped by its social context, which is also called culture (Halliday, 1978; Hyland, 2003; Martin, 2009). Within each culture, a group of people use the language and gradually enlarge the repertoire they use in their communication and reduce some elements within the repertoire (Martin, 2009; Rose, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2012). When such repertoire has become conventionalised, in which people within the culture have formed certain shared expectations in communication, an external person who wishes to communicate successfully in such culture should adhere to the established conventions (de Chazal, 2014).

In addition, ‘goal-oriented’ in the definition of the genre suggests that language is not only shaped by its related social contexts but also by the specific goal of the produced text that it aims to achieve. Genre is goal-oriented suggests that it is shaped by the communicative purpose of the text to a large extent (de Chazal, 2016; Martin, 2009). Genre theorists believe that language is a semantic unit that is utilised to communicate a specified meaning to the certain audience for an explicit purpose (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Hyland, 2004). Communicative purposes shape genres and distinguish different genres (Hyland, 2004). For example, the communicative purpose argumentative essay that aims to persuade the reader of the writer’s proposition (Schneer, 2014) is different from the communicative purpose of a thank-you note to demonstrate appreciation (Hyland, 2004).

Lastly, ‘staged’ in the definition of genre suggests that it is a staged process (Martin, 2009), which means genre has specific textual features and organised structure as realised in lexical and grammatical patterns that distinguish it from others (Martin, 2013). For example, the exposition genre usually follows three stages in its structure, namely, thesis, argument and reiteration (Martin, 2009). Such linguistics and structural features

are conventions that members within the culture should adhere to since they have been established as a shared expectation.

In sum, genre is essentially a category of text (Hyland, 2004), which is shaped by its social context, communicative purposes and conventionalised textual features.

## (2) Theoretical foundation of genre

Genre studies draw heavily on the early work of register, which works as a foundation of genre research and genre pedagogical practice (Martin, 2009). Register is defined as a variety of language that is shaped by its context (Crystal, 1991). The definition of genre and that of register are similar as they both emphasise the interrelationship between language and social context, but they are distinctive in their conceptualisation. Conceptually, genre theory is developed based on register theory, which is one layer below genre (Martin, 1993). In other words, register is a subordinate term of genre. To be more specific, genre is associated with the language use of a particular category of text that has been conventionalised within the culture, which greatly concerns the ideology and expectation within the culture (Martin, 2001). However, register concerns more of language use in any immediate contexts, in which such context is dynamic and language use in those contexts are not necessarily been conventionalised (Martin, 2001). For example, a father expressing his concern of his daughter's health condition is a register. Similarly, a father having an argument with his daughter is also a register, which is dynamic and emphasises any immediate contexts. Register encompasses three contextual variables as components, namely field, tenor and mode (Halliday & Hasan, 1985), which will be introduced sequentially in the following

Field concerns the meaning that the speaker or writer wishes to convey (Schleppegrell, 2012). Such meaning to be conveyed involves the communication of what is happening in terms of the idea that is intended to be conveyed by describing the nature of the social action participants engaged in such activities (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). For example, a description of John's (participant) travelling (social action) experience is a demonstration of the field in discourse. In academic writing, field involves the appropriate

presentation of scientific facts, theory, arguments and any disciplinary knowledge that explicit communicates the meaning that the writers intended (Hood, 2016).

Tenor concerns the participants taking part in the communication and it concerns the relationship between the language producer and the receiver (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). For example, when constructing an argument in academic writing, tenor involves the manipulation of language to persuade the readers to believe in the writer's proposed central proposition by considering the relationship between the writer and the reader (Hood, 2016; Schneer, 2014). In such cases, the relationship between the reader and the writer is formal and relatively distant, in which the readers may hold a mindset with criticism and expect to be persuaded by evidence. In addition, tenor also involves the use of hedging devices to moderate the level of assertiveness to mediate the relationship with the readers (Bowcher, 2017).

Finally, field refers to the consideration of linguistic and rhetorical features of the text (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). For example, by placing the keyword at the beginning of the sentence and by deploying cohesive devices in a text, readers are more likely to grasp the central meaning of the text (Halliday, 1977).

In sum, the meaning to be conveyed (Field), the relationship between the writer and the reader (Tenor) and specific linguistic features (Mode) work in an interwoven manner in shaping the register of the language (Bowcher, 2017).

### (3) Genre-based feedback taxonomy

Genre-based feedback taxonomy is established by practitioners and scholars involved in the SLATE (Scaffolding Literacy in Academic and Tertiary Environment) project developed by the City University of Hong Kong (Mahboob & Devrim, 2013). Those practitioners and scholars realised the insufficiency of the previous form-based feedback taxonomy in fostering ESL academic writing development and establishing a new typology for their academic training programme (Mahboob & Devrim, 2013). Different from form-based feedback as a means to mainly correct learners' linguistic errors, genre-based feedback is regarded as a mediating tool to scaffold the learners' understanding of the

meaning-making process within specific culture in a dialogic manner (Devrim, 2014). When giving genre-based feedback on students' writing, teachers can constantly remind the students' contextual variables of the text to rationalise their provided feedback. For example, the teacher can suggest students use cohesive devices since they contribute to the information flow of the text (mode); the teacher can remind the students of the relationship between the writer and the reader to change the formality of the language (tenor); and the teacher can remind the students to stick to their central proposition when constructing an argument (field) (Zhang, 2021). Those contextual variables or generic features as justification of language choice can be fitted into the typology of genre-based feedback, which will be introduced in the following.

Four subcategories are included in the genre-based taxonomy, namely hand holding, bridging, carrying and base jumping (Devrim, 2014). (a) Hand holding refers to feedback with explicit instruction on how to revise the text and the rationality of revising in such way (Madbood & Devrim, 2013). Using such a strategy, learners are provided with specific suggestions on text revision and are offered the opportunity to understand why such revision is appropriate under the influence of the established generic conventions (Madbood & Devrim, 2013). (b) Carrying refers to explicit suggestions for revision, but no rationale is provided (Madbood & Devrim, 2013). Such feedback practice is more compatible with concentrating on linguistic issues below the clause level, which are mainly lexical, syntactical and morphological errors (Madbood & Devrim, 2013). (c) Bridging is a feedback practice with low explicit revision suggestions provided, but they are provided with justification on why changes are necessary (Madbood & Devrim, 2013). In this way, learners realise what where needs to be revised and why it needs to be revised, but they are left to revise the text on their own responsibility (Madbood & Devrim, 2013). Using this strategy, students are provided the opportunity to take the initiative to revise the text so that they are more likely to actively engage with the feedback rather than passively waiting for answers. (4) Base jumping refers to feedback with no explicit suggestion and no rationale provided (Madbood & Devrim, 2013). Such a strategy is employed when the teacher simply points out places that need to be revised with the presupposition that the students have sufficient knowledge about the genre and understand how to improve the text (Madbood & Devrim, 2013).

The genre-based taxonomy encompassing four components can be utilised to assist students in understanding the generic conventions of writing as well as correcting their linguistic errors (Devirm, 2014).

### 2.3 Empirical studies on written feedback in L2 writing

Research on written feedback can be broadly categorised into three main strands. The first strand investigates the naturalistic written feedback strategies employed by teachers, usually following a qualitative exploratory paradigm (Li, 2016). The second strand of research mainly focuses on the effectiveness of the feedback strategy using an experimental design (Chong, 2019). The last strand focuses on students' perception of the feedback they received from their instructors (Saragih et al., 2021). Those three strands of research will be reviewed sequentially in the following.

#### 2.3.1 Written feedback employed by L2 teachers

A body of research investigates the nature of practitioners' feedback practice, suggesting that form-based feedback is widely used in English as an L2 context (Cheng et al., 2021; Lee, 2008; Li, 2016; Wei et al., 2020; Zamel, 1985). Cheng et al.'s (2021) research investigates the feedback practice implemented by four Chinese university English teachers. Ten marked writings with feedback were collected for analysis from each teaching, resulting in forty texts in total (Cheng et al., 2021). The researcher analyses the written feedback provided by the teachers on the students' argumentative essays and found that the majority of the provided feedback is correcting sentence-level grammatical errors (Cheng et al., 2021). Although students involved in this study encounter challenges in constructing an argumentative essay following the generic conventions, minimal feedback is provided to help students develop generic knowledge (Cheng et al., 2021). A similar finding is echoed in Lee's (2008) research involving 174 students' writing. Lee's (2008) research found that feedback focused on correcting form accounts for 94.1 per cent of all the provided feedback, while feedback on content and generic convention is very limited.

Research demonstrating genre-based feedback is very limited, and it is mainly found in higher education settings when providing supervisory feedback for academic writing (Bitchener et al., 2010; Saeed et al., 2021). Bitchener et al. (2010) research investigates the focus on university tutors' written feedback practice on their students' dissertations. This research involved 35 tutors from New Zealand. The questionnaire, interview transcript and written feedback sample were collected for analysis (Bitchener et al., 2010). The researchers found that genre-based feedback is a common practice employed by university tutors to familiarise students the conventions of writing a dissertation (Bitchener et al., 2010).

### 2.3.2 Effectiveness of written feedback in L2 writing

This section will review empirical studies investigating the effectiveness of form-based feedback and genre-based feedback sequentially.

#### (1) Effectiveness of form-based feedback

A body of empirical studies was conducted enclosing the effectiveness of form-based feedback, typically following a quasi-experimental design. Some compare its effectiveness with no feedback provision, while others compare the effectiveness of different sub-types of form-based feedback.

Research shows that providing form-based feedback is effective in improving students' second language accuracy (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Bitchener et al., 2005; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Shintani & Aubrey, 2016; Shintani & Ellis, 2013; Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Yeh et al., 2014; Zhang, 2017). Bitchener's (2008) study involved 75 pre-intermediate international students studying in a private language training centre in Auckland. The participants were randomly assigned into five groups, in which four received different types of form-based feedback, and one controlled group had no feedback provided (Bitchener, 2008). Following a pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test experimental design, the researcher found that the treatment groups that received corrective feedback outperformed the control group in varying degrees and

achieved statistical significance even in delayed post-test, demonstrating the effectiveness of providing corrective feedback (Kitchener, 2008).

For another, research investigates the effectiveness of different strategies for providing corrective feedback, yielding various findings. Research shows that direct corrective feedback is more effective than indirect feedback since it is more explicit by providing the correct answer (Chandler, 2003; Mirzaii & Aliabadi, 2013); focused feedback is more effective than unfocused feedback as learners can concentrate on the specific type of grammatical errors (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009). In terms of metalinguistic explanation, it is effective in improving language accuracy, but its effects can be boosted together with direct corrective feedback (Chong, 2019). The effectiveness of electronic feedback and reformulation can be found in some studies, but those two strategies are relatively unresearched (Chong, 2019). Although a body of research illustrates the effectiveness of the provision of form-based feedback, that research mainly focuses on improving linguistic error at the sentence level, but how such feedback practice helps to improve learners' ability to construct a meaningful text adhering to certain conventions of discourse community is less researched (Chong, 2019; Devrim, 2014).

## (2) Effectiveness of genre-based feedback

Since the taxonomy of genre-based feedback was established no long ago, empirical studies testing the effectiveness of such feedback are very limited (Uzun & Topkaya, 2020; Zhang, 2021)

In the available limited research, Zhang's (2021) research investigates the effects of genre-based feedback on Chinese university students' argumentative essay and expository writing. Following a qualitative exploratory paradigm, Zhang (2021) closely analyses students' writings, teacher-student conversations, students' self-reflection and interview enquiring about their perceptions throughout the intervention. The research finds that genre-based feedback is beneficial to developing students' generic knowledge and contributes to their writing proficiency by adhering to generic conventions (Zhang, 2021). Another study investigating the effectiveness of genre-based feedback was conducted by Uzun and Topkaya (2020). Uzun and Topkaya's (2020) study involved 78

Turkish ungraduated students studying English Literature, and their writings were analysed after a 14-week-long intervention receiving genre-based instruction and genre-based feedback. Students' writings were rated by experienced raters for statistical analysis. The result shows that genre-based instruction and genre-based feedback is effective in improve students' academic writing with statistically significant achieved (Uzun & Topkaya, 2020).

### 2.3.3 Students' perception of written feedback in L2 writing

Moving beyond merely focusing on the effectiveness of feedback according to text quality, students' perceptions of the written feedback they received in their L2 writing have attracted scholarly attention (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). Students' perceptions of specific types of feedback they receive are essential since they significantly affect the possibility of intake the feedback (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). For example, when the students perceived the feedback to be useful, they are more likely to pay attention to the given feedback and utilise it in next writing (Schulz, 2001). Due to the significance of students' perception om written feedback and such topic as a growing research field, the following section will review empirical studies enquiring students' perceptions on form-based feedback and genre-based feedback sequentially.

#### (1) Students' perception on form-based feedback

Research shows that ESL students hold a positive attitude towards the form-based feedback provided by their teachers (Chen et al., 2016; Irwin, 2017; Jodaie et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2020; Saragih et al., 2021; Trabelsi, 2019;). Saragih et al.'s (2021) research involved 387 Indonesian students enquiring about their perceptions of the form-based feedback given for their L2 writing using a questionnaire as the instrument. The researchers found that the majority of the participants value the form-based feedback they received and consider it as an important mean to improve their writing accuracy (Saragih et al., 2021). Research also investigates which sub-type of feedback is more valued by the students within Ellis's (2009) taxonomy. Although there is some

inconsistency within the literature, the majority of research shows that ESL students prefer direct feedback over indirect feedback (Chung, 2015; Irwin, 2017; Jodaie et al., 2011; Sahmadab & Hasan, 2023; Saragih et al., 2021; Tangkiengsirisin & Kalra, 2016) and unfocused feedback over focused feedback (Irwan, 2017; Jodaie et al., 2011; Trabelsi, 2019). Direct feedback is preferred because it allows learners to realise the error and provide ways to revise it, which reduces the learners' burden, and unfocused feedback is valued because correcting all errors enables learners to improve in all aspects of their L2 writing accuracy.

However, some negative perception is reported by ESL students about form-based feedback (Chen et al., 2016; Li, 2016; Irwin, 2017), although it is being reported to be perceived positively in a large body of empirical studies. Chen et al.'s (2016) research involved 64 Chinese university students, enquiring about students' perception of the form-based feedback they received from their teacher via questionnaire. The questionnaire includes elements enquiring about students' perception of the preferred timing to be provided feedback, the preferred correction technique and the preferred area to be corrected (e.g., grammar, content). The researchers found that although the participants favoured the practice of form-based feedback, they also expected feedback on their generic organisation of their writing since it is a challenging area to improve (Chen et al., 2016). Research also shows that form-based feedback sometimes poses challenges for students to understand. Irwin (2017) enquire 38 Japanese university students' perception of form-based feedback. Approximately 50 per cent of the participants report having difficulties understanding the feedback provided by the teacher (Irwin, 2017). Such difficulties might be due to the corrective nature of form-based feedback that provides very limited opportunities for teachers to provide explanations and justification of the feedback, making it challenging for students to understand.

## (2) Students' perception on genre-based feedback

Research investigating students' perception of the genre-based approach provided by their teacher is very limited since such taxonomy has not been established

for very long. The current limited literature suggests that students generally hold a positive attitude towards genre-based feedback. Uzun and Topaya's (2020) research involved enquiry of students' perception of genre-based feedback and genre-based instruction as an integrated intervention via semi-structured interviews. The participants hold a positive attitude towards the intervention as they report their increased genre awareness in analysing literary analysis and perceive such awareness as transferable to other genres (Uzun & Topaya, 2020). Although a positive perception is found, this research shares certain limitations. Firstly, the sample size is too limited to discover a generalisable finding. Although Uzun and Topaya (2020) did not report the number of participants they interviewed, it can be predicted from their very limited reported data that the sample size is very small. Secondly, this research enquires the students' perception of genre-based instruction and genre-based feedback as integrated pedagogy (Uzun & Topaya, 2020). Therefore, it is hard to interpret the students' positive comments on genre-based feedback are attributed to genre-based instruction or genre-based feedback.

#### 2.4 Research gaps

According to the review of literature, two research gaps are identified that will be filled in this research, namely, the lack of experiments to compare the effectiveness of form-based feedback and genre-based feedback in developing L2 learners' argumentative writing quality and the lack of research comparing students' perception on form-based feedback and genre-based feedback.

Firstly, seldom does any research compare the effectiveness of genre-based feedback with form-based feedback, the most common type of feedback in current ESL writing practice (Cheng et al., 2021; Lee, 2008; Wei et al., 2020; Zamel, 1985). As reviewed in 2.3.2, although Zhang's (2021) research shows that genre-based feedback contributes to participants' generic knowledge development, his research design is perhaps insufficient to draw a convincing conclusion. Zhang (2021) drew heavily on the students' self-reporting data to demonstrate the effectiveness of genre-based feedback rather than objective and tangible data such as changes of text quality rated by scores. In addition,

Uzun and Topkaya (2020) found that genre-based feedback contributes to students' writing improvement. However, the causal relations cannot be strongly established due to the lack of comparison group. Without group comparison demonstrating weaker evidence because there is possibility that students; writing improved due to more opportunities of practising rather than being attributed to the intervention. More importantly, form-based feedback and genre-based feedback, as two main types of written feedback in L2 writing, have not been compared for their effectiveness on L2 learners' writing proficiency.

Secondly, there is a dearth of research comparing students' perceptions of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback. Although Uzun and Topkaya's (2020) research involved some investigation on genre-based feedback, the reported data is very limited to provide a thorough understanding of students' perception of such feedback practice. In addition, there is a lack of empirical studies comparing students' perceptions of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback.

To fill these gaps, this research aims to compare the effect of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on the quality of students' argumentative essay writing with a pre-test post-test experimental design. In addition, this research aims to enquire about students' perceptions of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback to understand the effects of different feedback practices. This research hopes to answer the following two research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What are the differential effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on the quality of Chinese university students' argumentative essay writing?

RQ2: What are the students' perceptions on the feedback practice for their argumentative essay (i.e., genre-based feedback/form-based feedback)?

## Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will describe how this research answers two RQs. Overall, RQ 1 was addressed by comparing the relative effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback through a pre-test/post-test comparison group design. To answer RQ2, a questionnaire was distributed to collect the participants' perceptions on the feedback they received. For a clearer presentation, this chapter will begin with an introduction of the overall design of this research (i.e., pre-test/post-test comparison group design). Then the sampling process and the characteristic of the recruited participants will be described. After this, specific method to address RQ1 and RQ2 will be presented sequentially. Specifically, for RQ 1, the following section will describe the intervention given to the participants, the writing tasks assigned to the participants and the data analysis process. For RQ2, the construction process of the questionnaire and the data analysis process will be introduced.

### 3.1 Research design

The research consists of two parts to answer the two research questions. The first part of the research is an experiment that aims to test the comparative effectiveness of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback with the aim of answering RQ1. The second part of the research includes a questionnaire for the student participants to report their perceptions on the written feedback practice they received in this study, hoping to answer RQ2.

To answer the two research questions, this research was designed in the following sequence. Firstly, a teaching session of argumentative essay writing was prepared for all participants. Secondly, the participants were instructed to complete an independent writing task (pre-test), which was identical for all participants. After this, participants were randomly assigned into two treatment groups; one received genre-based feedback on their pre-test writing, and the other received form-based feedback. Then, the participants were instructed to complete the post-test writing task with new topic independently.

Finally, the questionnaire was distributed to the participants to enquire about their perceptions of the feedback intervention they received.

The design of this research allowed RQ1 to be answered via the pre-test/post-test experimental design to investigate the differential effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback (Mackey & Gass, 2016). It also contributed to the answer to RQ2 since the questionnaire is widely acknowledged as an effective way to enquire about participants' perceptions (Dörnyei, 2003).

### 3.2 Sampling and participants

38 Chinese university students meeting eligibility criteria were enrolled through the technique of snowball sampling. Specific eligibility criteria for enrolling participants in this research and procedures of snowball sampling are detailed below.

Eligibility criteria were first established to recruit participants who could help answer the research questions. Firstly, the participants should speak English as their second language and have achieved 120 out of 150 in their college entrance examination in China. Such criteria allow the participants to have sufficient English proficiency to complete the pre-test and post-test in the experiment. Secondly, the participants should speak Chinese as their first language. This was mainly because different cultures share different conventions of writing that may be transferred in their second language writing. This research only aimed to investigate how certain types of written feedback may contribute to solving certain language issues related particularly to Chinese students. The third criterion is that those participants should study in Chinese with no systematic academic writing training adhering to anglophone countries' conventions. Such criteria help to recruit participants who may face generic challenges in English academic writing, allowing the treatment to have some effects. Lastly, the participants should have certain intentions of studying in anglophone countries in the future. This criterion deals with ethical considerations since it would be less necessary for students to learn English academic writing if such training is not beneficial to their future.

Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. Initially, the researcher reached out to personal connections that fulfilled the criteria, resulting in eight initial participants. Those eight participants helped to recruit more students who fulfilled the criteria to participate in this experiment. In the end, 38 Chinese universities volunteered to participate in this research and signed a consent form. The participants were at different levels of undergraduate studies at the time of participation, with 10 freshmen, 10 sophomores, 10 junior students and 8 senior students.

### 3.3 Randomisation

Participants were randomly assigned to two groups with different treatments. One group received genre-based feedback as the intervention, and the other received form-based feedback.

To increase the comparability of these two treatment groups, the participants were randomly assigned into two groups to reduce the systematic difference between the groups (Chalmers, 2019). Randomisation is important in education research because human beings are complex and each individual shares distinctive characteristics. For example, some students receive more language training than others, resulting in higher test scores. When the groups are not randomly assigned, it could be one treatment group having more participants with higher language proficiency, making the groups less comparable and reducing the internal validity of the experiment results. Following a randomised trial, participants with diverse characteristics can be more fairly distributed within the groups, which reduces the possible effect of 'allocation bias' (Chalmers, 2019, p. 12). In such cases, the researcher can be more confident to report that the participant's test score changes are due to the intervention rather than other variables (Chalmers, 2019).

Stratified randomisation was employed for grouping because the participants included undergraduate students from different academic years (see section 3.1.2). Participants from different year levels may have different English proficiency; for example, participants in senior year may demonstrate slightly higher English writing proficiency

than others. To mitigate such issues, the participants were stratified into four age groups and were randomised at the level of individual with a one-to-one ratio.

To ensure allocation concealment, each participant was given a unique number for randomisation. Such numbers match the participants' names and are stored in a separate document so that the researcher does not have access to participants' names during the randomisation process. When implementing group allocation, the researcher only used the numbers for randomisation so that the researcher did not have any information of which groups the participants would be in. In such cases, the researcher's knowledge of the participants' characteristics as personal bias might be reduced to some extent.

Participants from each group were randomly allocated into two groups using a digital randomiser (Random.org, 2023). The participants' unique numbers were entered into the randomiser first. The randomiser randomly orders those numbers. On the list of the randomised numbers, the top half was allocated to the genre-based feedback group, while the bottom half was allocated to the from-based feedback group. Such a process was repeated four times to allocate participants at four different levels into the two treatment groups. Such a stratified randomisation process enabled the number of participants of the same educational level to be evenly divided into the two treatment groups to receive different types of feedback for comparison.

### 3.4 Methods for addressing research question 1

The following section will describe the how the experiment was implemented, including the intervention given to the participants, the writing tasks assigned to the participants, and how the collected writing samples was analysed to test the effectiveness.

#### 3.4.1 Intervention

The participants received one of two treatments that may have effects on their argumentative essay. The intervention consisted of a taught session on how to write an argumentative essay, which was prepared for all participants. The intervention also

included written feedback provided for their pre-test writing. The provided written feedback intervention is either genre-based feedback or form-based feedback depending on group allocation, which is the independent variable in this experiment.

The teaching session of argumentative essays was prepared for all participants in both groups (see Appendix C for the worksheet used in the lesson). The purpose of a teaching session is to allow students have some knowledge about argumentative writing before their writing tasks. The teaching section followed the sequence genre pedagogy, allowing students to have a certain generic knowledge of the writing (Hyland, 2007). Essentially, participants were first instructed to discuss the contextual features of argumentative writing (e.g., communicative purposes and target audience). Then participants were involved in a text analysis activity to deconstruct the textual features of a sample text. After this, participants were instructed to jointly construct a text with the teachers' scaffolding. Finally, the participants were instructed to independently write a text to use what they had learned from the lesson. This treatment allowed students to gain some knowledge about argumentative essay writing before they construct their text. Such a sequence of teaching, writing and feedback follows the conventional way of teaching in a naturalistic classroom, which contributes to the ecological validity of this research to some extent.

Then, written feedback was given on the participants' argumentative writing (i.e., their pre-test writing). One treatment group received genre-based feedback, and the other received form-based feedback. Genre-based feedback focused more on generic features of argumentative essays, while form-based feedback concentrated more on language accuracy. In this research, all four sub-types of genre-based feedback introduced in 2.2.3 were used in the intervention. For form-based feedback, direct feedback, indirect feedback and metalinguistic explanation were employed as introduced in 2.2.2. Such intervention is the independent variable of this experiment, which is being tested for its effectiveness on participants' writing. For a clearer presentation of the difference between those two types of written feedback, see the table below.

Table 3.1 examples of written feedback provided in each group

Participants' original writing	Teacher's written feedback
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Genre-based feedback	As a student, devote most of our time on the main subjects is an incumbency, but it is firmly correct that a balanced approach, incorporating both main subjects and extended curriculums is crucial for a holistic education.	This is your claim responding to the prompt. It would be better if you can briefly introduce the topic of this essay and some debates over the topic. In such case, your readers can follow your information from smoothly and are more likely to be convinced because you are developing the ideas step by step.
Form-based feedback	For personal development, learning variety of subjects allows student to development their creativity.	A variety of. This is a fixed phrasal expression.

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In the intervention, the teaching session of argumentative essay mainly works to provide some generic and linguistic knowledge for the participants before the pre-test. The written feedback intervention (i.e., genre-based feedback/form-based feedback) is the variable that is being tested for their comparative effectiveness.

### 3.4.2 Writing tasks for the experiment

Argumentative essay was chosen as the target genre for this research. The participants were instructed to construct two argumentative essays in this research. One before the written feedback intervention and one after to test the effectiveness of the feedback provided.

Argumentative essay was selected as the genre of this study. This is mainly because such a genre is widely adopted in higher education (de Chazal, 2014). Argumentative essay is a genre that aims to persuade the readers to be convinced by the writer's central proposition with sufficient amount of evidence as justification (Schneer, 2014). Such genre is dominant in higher education assignments, particularly in social science, in which students are required to synthesise evidence to support their claim in responding to the prompts in the assignment (de Chazal, 2016). In addition, the majority

of genres in academia are essential 'argument-driven' (de Chazal, 2016). For example, in a scientific report in the discipline of biochemistry, the writer needs to justify their research methodological choice, which is an argument essentially. Since constructing an appropriate argument is critical in academia, this research has selected this genre for investigation.

Participants' two argumentative essays were the outcome that was used to test the effectiveness of written feedback. Two prompts for argumentative essays were selected from IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exams (see Appendix C for selected prompts). IELTS, as the most widely acknowledged and adopted language testing system, can ensure the tests have similar complexity to the participants, making the results from the pre-test and post-test more comparable (Huang & Zhang, 2020; Mackey & Gass, 2016). Those two prompts were selected according to the participants' backgrounds and ages to ensure they had sufficient topical knowledge to answer the question. In such cases, they faced fewer challenges in considering the content of writing and could maximise their possibility to focus more on language-related (e.g., accuracy) or rhetorical-related (e.g., generic organisation) issues, contributing to the validity of the study. Participants were given 30 minutes to complete each writing and were required to write between 300 and 400 hundred words. The data collection process was implemented online via Microsoft Forms.

### 3.4.3 Data analysis for addressing RQ1

Data analysis for addressing RQ1 include two parts, blind rating the quality of participants' pre-test and post-test argumentative writing and comparing their writing quality in pre-test and post-test through statistical analysis.

After collecting argumentative essays from each participant in pre-test and post-test tasks, namely, before and after they received feedback intervention, participants' essays were rated in a blind review with carefully designed criteria as a reference. Superficially, the participants' writings were given a unique number, which is stored in a separate document with their names can be identified. The writings were stored in another document with the participants' unique number. Following this procedure, the

rater was not able to identify the writers of those argumentative essays, resulting in increased reliability of rating. To further enhance reliability, a 50-point scale was designed as rating criteria informed by previous research (Hyland, 2004; Lundstorm & Baker, 2009; Ruegg et al., 2011). Among these criteria, half were allocated to assess the participants' generic knowledge, while the other were allocates to language accuracy (see Appendix B). In other words, the participants had a grade on their generic performance, a grade on language accuracy, and an overall grade by adding the former two. The rating criteria involved equal assessment weight of whether the students' writing adheres to generic convention and whether the students' writing is linguistically accurate. This was mainly devised for the fairness of assessment since each type of feedback may contribute to different aspects that affects writing quality. For example, genre-based feedback might be more beneficial to assist students in writing a text adhering to generic convention, but not much on accuracy. If the grading mainly assesses one aspect (e.g., genre), the grades of participants who received another treatment might be disadvantaged, resulting in unfairness of assessment. Therefore, assessing genre and accuracy separately and equally contributes to the fairness of assessment and enables the research to implement post hoc analysis.

Statistical analysis was utilised to compare participants' writing quality in pre-test and post-test tasks, as to quantify the differential effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on writing quality (i.e., the focus of RQ1). Specifically, independent t-test was employed to compare the scores of participants' pre-test and post-test argumentative essays, as blindly rated in previous step. The statistical analysis began with the calculation of test-score changes between pre-test and post-test of every participant. After this, descriptive statistics was employed to analyse the tendencies and variability of the participants' score changes. Such analysis involved the calculation of mean and standard deviation. After this, two sets of data obtained from both treatment groups were checked whether they meet the assumptions of parametric texts. When the data was confirmed as normal distributed, independent samples t-test was used to compare whether the difference in mean scores reached statistical significance. In addition, effect sizes (Cohen's D) were calculated, allowing the research to investigate the magnitude of the difference. Finally, post hoc analysis using independent samples t-test was conducted

by comparing the changes in genre scores and also in accuracy scores between two conditions. This is mainly because there might be the possibility that each type of feedback only contributes to one aspect of the writing quality. Such analysis allowed the researcher to gain more insights about the effect of the feedback in terms of what particular aspect it contributed to (i.e., genre/accuracy). When independent samples t-test were not sufficient to demonstrate the comparative effectiveness of each feedback practice, which is the case when comparing accuracy scores, paired sample t-test were implemented to compare test score changes within groups. Such post hoc analysis contributed to more detailed analysis of the effectiveness of different types of written feedback.

### 3.5 Methods for addressing research question 2

The following section presents the methods that were employed to answer RQ2. This section, specifically, explains how a questionnaire was constructed, distributed, and analysed to probe into the student participants' perceptions of form-based feedback and genre-based feedback.

#### 3.5.1 Questionnaire construction

The questionnaire to collect the participants' perceptions of the feedback they received on their argumentative essay mainly consisted of 15 five-level Likert scales questions. The questions were constructed according to summarised themes extracted from the literature enquiring teachers' and students' perceptions on qualified written feedback in higher education.

The questionnaire includes 15 questions to enquire students' perceptions on the written feedback they received on their writing. The design of this questionnaire was informed by Chalmers et al. (2024). Their questionnaire was constructed by searching relevant literature and consulting professional knowledge to derive themes. After searching relevant literature regarding students' and teachers' perceptions on written feedback that may contribute to writing improvement, five themes that recurring occur in the literature was selected and utilised for questionnaire construction in this

research. The themes are developmental (Dawson et al., 2019; Lizzio & Wilson, 2008; Weaver, 2006), usable (Weaver, 2006), rationalised (Dawson et al., 2019), personalised (Can & Walker, 2011; Dawson et al., 2019; Weaver, 2006) and referring to the criteria (Can & Walker, 2011; Poulos & Mahony, 2008; Weaver, 2006). For specific descriptions for each theme, please Table 3.2 below. Following Chalmers et al.'s (2024) practice, this research generated three questions for each theme, resulting in fifteen questions in total for the participants to rate on a five-level Likert scale.

Table 3.2: Description of selected themes for questionnaire construction

Theme	Description
developmental	Whether the feedback help to provide information that the students do not know or whether the feedback foster students' deeper informational processing.
Usable	Whether the feedback provide explicit guidance and suggestion of how to improve the writing.
Rationalised	Whether the feedback provide justification of why such feedback is provided.
Personalised	Whether the feedback is tailored specifically to the students
Referring to the criteria	Whether the feedback refers the marking criteria or the markers' expectation of such type of writing.

Having drafted 15 questions, this questionnaire was first piloted to four students, who shared similar backgrounds with the participants in this study, to see whether the expressions of the questions were clear, explicit and intelligible. Any expressions that caused ambiguity reported by them was edited and checked by the students until they reported they can understand the questionnaire without much effort. This questionnaire was also checked by professionals in the field of applied linguistics for higher reliability of its construction. Once the questionnaire was finalised, it was distributed to all participants via Microsoft form after their completions of the post-test writing tasks.

### 3.5.2 Data analysis for addressing RQ2

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed via descriptive statistics to compare the student participants' perceptions from the two treatment groups (i.e., genre-based feedback/form-based feedback).

Firstly, data collected from Microsoft form were organised by allocating the participants' answer into two treatment groups. Secondly, the organised data were entered into the statistical analysis tool to calculate the mean the standard deviation of each question for both conditions (i.e., genre-based feedback group/form-based feedback group). Such calculation allows the researcher to understand the central tendency of the data and compare the perceptions reported by participants in the two conditions. After this, the mean and standard deviation of each questions from the two treatment groups were compared to analyse the student participants' perceptions towards the written feedback practice they received for their argumentative essay writing.

## Chapter 4: Results

Chapter Four will present the findings of two RQs. Section 4.1 will first present the differential effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on the quality of participants' argumentative essay writing (RQ1). Then, how participants perceived the feedback practice they had received for their argumentative essays (RQ2) will be reported in section 4.2.

### 4.1 Differential effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback

The following section will firstly present the effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback through statistical analysis (i.e., descriptive and inferential statistics) of changes in participants' overall writing scores before and after receiving feedback intervention. Then, following a similar structure, the differential effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on participants' genre scores (in section 4.2) and accuracy scores (in section 4.3) are reported.

#### 4.1.1 Effects on overall text scores

Both genre-based feedback and form-based feedback had positive effect on the participants' overall improvement according to the descriptive statistical results (see Table 4.1). The mean pre-test score in the genre-based feedback group (N=19) was 31.474 (SD=8.154). Following the genre-based feedback intervention, the mean score of the post-test increased to 38.158 (SD=7.559). The mean of score changes in this treatment was 6.684 (SD=5.175), indicating noticeable improvement of overall in this treatment group. In the form-based feedback group (N=19), the pre-test mean score was 29.579 (SD=6.826). Under the influence of form-based feedback, the mean score of post-tests in this treatment group increased to 33.316 (SD=6.540). The mean of score changes in the form-based feedback treatment group is 3.737 (SD=4.026). The descriptive statistics showed that in both groups, overall scores increased between pre-test and post-test. The genre-based feedback group (M=6.684, SD=5.175) slightly outperformed the form-based

feedback group (M=3.737, SD=4.026) in improving the overall score of the participants' argumentative essay as presented in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics of overall scores changes

Comparison groups	N	Pre-test score		Post-test score		Score changes	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
GBFG	19	31.474	8.154	38.158	7.559	6.684	5.175
FBBG	19	29.579	6.826	33.316	6.540	3.737	4.026

*Note:* M= mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N= number of participants, GBFG= genre-based feedback group, FBBG= form-based feedback group.

Though genre-based feedback contributed more to participants' overall writing scores, no significant difference was found between the overall mean scores of genre-based feedback group and form-based feedback group according to the inferential statistics results. Both the test score changes in genre-based feedback group (Skewness= .156, Kurtosis= .005) and form-based feedback group (Skewness= .043, Kurtosis= -1.508) were fairly normally distributed, which fulfilled the assumption of parametric test. The skewness and kurtosis of those data suggests that they fulfilled the threshold of normal distribution (Skewness from -2 to +2, kurtosis from -7 to +7) according to Curran et al.'s (1996) standard. Similar procedures were implemented for all the statistical analysis.

The result of the independent samples t-test demonstrated no statistically significant difference ( $t(36) = 1.959, p = .058$ ) in the overall score changes between the genre-based feedback intervention group (M=6.685, SD=5.175) and form-based feedback intervention group (M=3.737, SD=4.026). Medium effect size (Cohen's D= .635) was found in the data, as shown in Table 4.2, indicating a medium magnitude of the differences.

In sum, the results show that genre-based feedback and form-based feedback make no difference in improving the overall score.

Table 4.2: Independent samples t-test: result of overall test score changes

Comparison groups	M	SD	95% Confidence interval of the difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's D
			Lower	Upper				
GBFG	6.685	5.175	-.103	6.00	1.959	36	.058	.636
FBFG	3.737	4.026						

*Note:* M= mean, SD= standard deviation, t=t value, df=degree of freedom, Sig=significance (p value), GBFG=genre-based feedback group, FBFG= form-based feedback group.

#### 4.1.2 Effects on genre scores

To analyse whether the method of feedback affected different elements of the writing task differently, a post-hoc analysis was performed to investigate the effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on the participants' genre scores and accuracy scores respectively.

The data showed that genre-based feedback outperformed form-based feedback in improving the participants' generic quality of argumentative essay. As shown in Table 4.3, the pre-test means scores of genre in the genre-based feedback intervention group (N=19) was 14.316(SD=4.321). Under the influence of genre-based feedback, the post-test genre score increased to 19.158(SD=3.804). The mean score change is 4.842 (SD=2.834). On the other hand, the pre-test mean scores of genre in the form-based feedback intervention group (N=19) was 13.632 (SD=4.072) and increased to 14.000 (SD=3.681). The mean of score change is .369 (SD=2.006)

Table 4.3: Descriptive statistics of genre scores changes

Comparison groups	N	Pre-test score		Post-test score		Score changes	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
GBFG	19	14.316	4.321	19.158	3.804	4.842	2.834
FBFG	19	13.632	4.072	14.000	3.681	.369	2.006

Note: M= mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N= number of participants, GBFG= genre-based feedback group, FBFG= form-based feedback group.

When compared the effects of genre-based feedback (M=4.842, SD=2.834) and form-based feedback (M=2.834, SD=2.005) on the participants score changes of genre, statistically significant difference is found ( $t(36)=6.619$ ,  $p < .001$ ) with a large effect size (Cohen's  $D=1.822$ ) detected as presented in Table 4.4. This results indicates that genre-based feedback statistically significantly outperformed form-based feedback in developing students' score of genre in argumentative writing with statistically significance difference achieved. In addition, the large effect size indicate that the magnitude of the difference is large, suggesting the effects of genre-based feedback over form-based feedback in participants' genre scores.

Table 4.4: Independent samples t-test: result of genre test score changes

Comparison groups	M	SD	95% Confidence interval of the difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's D
			Lower	Upper				
			GBFG	4.842				
FBFG	.368	2.005						

Note: M= mean, SD= standard deviation, t=t value, df=degree of freedom, Sig=significance (p value), GBFG=genre-based feedback group, FBFG= form-based feedback group.

#### 4.1.3 Effects on accuracy scores

The following section will present the findings that compare the accuracy score changes between the two conditions via independent samples t-test. In order to obtain more insights of effectiveness of each feedback on language analysis to answer research question 1, within group score comparison was implemented via paired samples t-test.

According to the data, form-based feedback intervention group slightly outperformed genre-based feedback intervention group in improving the participants' accuracy scores of argumentative essays (see Table 4.5). The mean pre-test score of language accuracy in the genre-based feedback intervention group is 17.158 (SD=4.086). With the intervention of genre-based feedback, the accuracy score increased to 19.000 (SD=4.137). The mean score change is 1.84 (SD=2.873). The mean pre-test score of language accuracy in the form-based feedback treatment group is 15.947 (SD=3.290). Such score increased to 19.316 (SD=3.250) under the influence of form-based feedback. The mean score change is 3.368 (SD=2.431). It can be seen that the increase of mean accuracy scores in the form-based feedback group is larger than that in the genre-based feedback group.

Table 4.5: Descriptive statistics of accuracy scores changes

Comparison groups	N	Pre-test score		Post-test score		Score changes	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
GBFG	19	17.158	4.086	19.000	4.137	1.842	2.873
FBBG	19	15.947	3.290	19.316	3.250	3.368	2.431

*Note:* M= mean, SD= Standard Deviation, N= number of participants, GBFG= genre-based feedback group, FBBG= form-based feedback group.

Via independent samples t-test, no statistically significant differences in the accuracy score changes between the genre-based feedback condition (M=1.842, SD=2.873) and the form-based feedback condition (M=3.369, SD=2.431) were found ( $t(36)=-1.768$ ,  $p=0.086$ ) with a medium effect size (Cohen's  $D=-.574$ ) (see Table 4.6). These numbers suggest that although the form-based feedback outperformed genre-based feedback group in improving the participants' writing accuracy, this difference cannot be attributed to the intervention and may have occurred by chance.

Table 4.6: Independent samples t-test: result of accuracy test score changes

Comparison groups	M	SD	95% Confidence interval of the difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's D

			Lower	Upper				
GBFG	1.842	2.873	-3.277	.225	-1.768	36	.086	-.574
FBFG	3.369	2.431						

*Note:* M= mean, SD= standard deviation, t=t value, df=degree of freedom, Sig=significance (p value), GBFG=genre-based feedback group, FBFG= form-based feedback group.

Further analysis revealed that genre-based feedback did not significantly improve participants' language accuracy scores (see Table 4.7). In the genre-based feedback intervention group, no statistically significant difference was detected ( $t(18)=-2.795$ ,  $p=0.12$ ) between the pre-test score ( $M=17.158$ ,  $SD=4.086$ ) and the post-test score ( $M=19.000$ ,  $SD=4.137$ ) in the accuracy score with a medium effect size (Cohen's  $D=-.641$ ). In other words, before and after the receiving genre-based feedback, the participants did not make significant improvements in the language accuracy of their argumentative essay under the influence of genre-based feedback.

Table 4.7: Paired samples t-test result of accuracy test score changes in genre-based feedback group.

Comparison groups	M	SD	95% Confidence interval of the difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's D
			Lower	Upper				
Pre-test	17.158	4.086	-3.227	-.458	-2.795	18	.012	-.641
Post-test	19.000	4.137						

*Note:* M= mean, SD= standard deviation, t=t value, df=degree of freedom, Sig=significance (p value).

As can be seen from Table 4.8, form-based feedback made significant difference in improving participants' language accuracy score of their argumentative essay. In the form-based feedback intervention group, there is statistically significant difference detected ( $t(18)=-2.795$ ,  $p<.001$ ) between the pre-test score ( $M=15.947$ ,  $SD=3.290$ ) and

post-test (M=19.316, SD=3.250). In addition, large effect size was found in those data (Cohen's D=-1.385), indicating a large magnitude of the differences between the pre-test and post-test accuracy score.

Table 4. 8: Paired samples t-test result of accuracy test score changes in form-based feedback group

Comparison groups	M	SD	95% Confidence interval of the difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Cohen's D
			Lower	Upper				
Pre-test	15.947	3.290	-4.540	-2.196	-6.038	18	<.001	-1.385
Post-test	19.316	3.250						

*Note:* M= mean, SD= standard deviation, t=t value, df=degree of freedom, Sig=significance (p value).

#### 4.1.4 Summary of findings for RQ1

The above statistical analysis shows that genre-based feedback and form-based feedback make no difference in improving the participants' overall score of their argumentative writing. However, genre-based feedback significantly outperformed form-based feedback in improving the participants' genre score. The superiority of form-based feedback over genre-based feedback on language accuracy score is detected in within-group comparison but not in between-group comparison.

#### 4.2 Students' perceptions of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback

The following section will present the findings of the participants' perception on the written feedback they received (i.e., genre-based feedback/form-based feedback), specifically on developmental, usable, personalised, rationalised, and reference to the criteria aspects of written feedback.

#### 4.2.1 Developmental aspect

Developmental aspect of written feedback in L2 written refers to students' perceptions of whether the feedback provide information are crucial to improve their writing proficiency (Dawson et al., 2019; Lizzio & Wilson, 2008; Weaver, 2006). In all three questions measuring participants' perceptions on the developmental aspect of written feedback, the genre-based feedback treatment group outperformed the form-based feedback treatment group as presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Participants perceptions of developmental aspects of written feedback

Questions	GBFG (N=19)		FBFG (N=19)	
	M	SD	M	SD
1. The written feedback contributes to my understanding of academic writing	4.579	.507	3.739	1.195
2. The written feedback provides insights into improving my writing proficiency	4.579	.607	3.684	1.204
3. The written feedback fosters my development as a proficient academic writer	4.368	.684	6.684	1.157

*Note:* M=mean, SD=standard deviation, N=number of participants, GBFG=genre-based feedback group, FBFG=form-based feedback group.

#### 4.2.2 Usable aspect

Usable aspect of written feedback refers to students' perceptions on whether the feedback they received can be employed in their revision or can be transferred to their next composition (Weaver, 2006). As presented in Table 4.12, the mean scores rated by participants in genre-based feedback group are higher than the mean scores rated by participants in the form-based feedback group in all three questions measuring participants' perceptions of the usable aspect on the feedback they received. Such results

suggest that the participants perceived genre-based feedback provides more usable suggestions that can be used directly in their upcoming argumentative writings.

Table 4.10: Participants perceptions of usable aspects of written feedback

Questions	GBFG (N=19)		FBFG (N=19)	
	M	SD	M	SD
4. The written feedback provides achievable action on areas to be improved.	4.737	.452	4.000	.943
5. The written feedback provides clear guidance for revision	4.737	.452	4.000	1.155
6. The written feedback was practical enough that helps to improve writing quality	4.631	.597	3.842	1.167

*Note:* M=mean, SD=standard deviation, N=number of participants, GBFG=genre-based feedback group, FBFG=form-based feedback group.

#### 4.2.3 Personalised aspect

Personalised aspect considers whether the written feedback is tailored to the participants 'specific cases (Can & Walker, 2011; Dawson et al., 2019; Weaver, 2006). As presented in table 4.13, the mean score rated by participants in the genre-based feedback group is higher than the mean score in the form-based feedback group in all three questions enquiring participants' perception on whether their received feedback are personalised.

Table 4.11: Participants perceptions of personalised aspects of written feedback

Questions	GBFG (N=19)		FBFG (N=19)	
	M	SD	M	SD
7. The feedback was tailored to my specific writing	4.632	.597	4.158	1.119

8. The feedback explicitly addresses areas that need to be improved specifically in my writing	4.526	.612	3.790	1.437
9. The feedback takes my writing style and content into considering when suggesting for revision	4.211	.713	3.737	1.240

*Note:* M=mean, SD=standard deviation, N=number of participants, GBDG=genre-based feedback group, FBBG=form-based feedback group.

#### 4.2.4 Rationalised aspect

Rationalisation refers to whether the written feedback offers justification on why such suggested changes are provided (Dawson et al., 2019). The results of questions enquiring the participants' perception of the feedback they received showed that the score genre-based feedback group is higher than the score of the form-based feedback group. The results suggest that the participants perceive genre-based feedback provide more rationalisation on the suggested changes compared with form-based feedback.

Table 4.12: Participants perceptions of rationalised aspect of written feedback

Questions	GBFG (N=19)		FBBG (N=19)	
	M	SD	M	SD
10. The feedback provide justification on why such changes are recommended	4.474	.772	3.526	1.306
11. The feedback contributes to my understanding of the underpins behind such changes	4.526	.700	3.369	1.342
12. The feedback include explanation for the suggested changes	4.526	.700	3.316	1.376

*Note:* M=mean, SD=standard deviation, N=number of participants, GBDG=genre-based feedback group, FBFG=form-based feedback group.

#### 4.2.5 Reference to the criteria aspect

Reference to the criteria refers to whether the feedback provide insights of the marking criteria or the expectation of markers on such type of writing. From the participants' perspective, genre-based feedback provides them more opportunities to understand readers' expectation of argumentative essay compared with form-based feedback. The results, as shown in Table 4.15, showed that the mean scores rated by participants in the genre-based feedback group outperformed the mean score rated by the participants in the form-based feedback group in all three questions.

Table 4.13: Participants perceptions of reference to criteria

Questions	GBFG (N=19)		FBFG (N=19)	
	M	SD	M	SD
13. The feedback make reference to the criteria of a well-written essay	4.158	1.068	3.473	1.467
14. The feedback offers me understanding of marker's expectation	4.474	.612	3.631	1.300
15. The feedback contribute to my understanding of how my writing can be improved according to the marking criteria.	4.579	.607	3.790	1.084

*Note:* M=mean, SD=standard deviation, N=number of participants, GBDG=genre-based feedback group, FBFG=form-based feedback group.

#### 4.2.6 Summary of findings for RQ2

The results obtained from the questionnaire suggest the participants perceive more positively in all five aspects of genre-based feedback than form-based feedback. The participants perceived that genre-based feedback provides more developmental information, usable suggestions, personalised comments, rationality for suggested changes and insights of markers' expectations.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter five will discuss the major findings of RQ1 (i.e., the effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on the quality of argumentative essay writing) and RQ2 (i.e., participants' perceptions of genre-based feedback or form-based feedback that they had received) sequentially.

### 5.1 Discussion of the differential effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback

This section will first discuss the effects of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on the participants' overall scores of argumentative essays. Then, the effect of those two types of feedback on participants' genre scores and accuracy scores will be discussed.

#### 5.1.1 Effect on overall score

The findings show that both genre-based feedback and form-based feedback effectively improve participants' overall argumentative writing quality according to descriptive statistics, but there is no statistically significant difference between these two types of feedback in improving the students' argumentative essays. These results suggest that each type of feedback practice contributes to different aspects of the participant's writing (i.e., genre/accuracy), and both result in the improvement of overall scores in both conditions. To be more specific, such improvement can be identified in the data in descriptive statistics as genre-based feedback mainly contributes to the increase of genre scores. In contrast, form-based feedback mainly contributes to accuracy scores. Based on these results regarding the effects of those two types of written feedback on the participants' argumentative essays, it can be interpreted that both kinds of feedback are valuable in developing students' academic writing proficiency.

Since argumentative essay is a genre of academic writing, language accuracy and adherence to generic conventions are critical in the assessment of qualified academic

writing (Jordan, 1997). To be more specific, constructing a text with accurate lexical choice and grammatical structure is crucial in academic writing because a linguistically inaccurate text may be difficult to be comprehended by the readers, resulting in perceived lower quality by markers (Llach, 2011). Equally, writing a text following a generic convention by considering the communicative purpose, target audience, and conventionally employed linguistic features is essential in academic writing (Martin, 2009). This is because language use is shaped by the routine language practice of members within a culture (Martin, 2009; Rose, 2012; Schleppegrell, 2012). Therefore, constructing a text that fulfils the expectations of members within a culture may result in the increased perceived quality of the text.

The results indicate that both types of feedback should not be seen as a dichotomy. Instead, both should be considered important and should be used in an integrated manner to meet the multifaceted requirements of academic writing. Theoretically, genre-based feedback and written corrective follow distinctive ideologies. Genre-based feedback highly emphasises the interconnection between language and the related context, which holds the belief that the appropriate organisation of linguistic features is for the purpose of successful communication of the intended meaning to the target readers (de Chazal, 2014; Martin, 2009). While form-based feedback is decontextualised in nature, it holds the belief that writing is a demonstration of mastery of linguistic rules (Ferris, 2003; Zamel, 1985). Such dichotomy can be identified in previous research as the one strand of enquiry only investigates the effects of form-based feedback on students' writing accuracy (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) and the other strand only evaluates the effects of genre-based feedback on students' changes in academic writing conventions (Uzun & Topkaya, 2020; Zhang, 2021). Such strict distinctions should be reconsidered since both feedback practices contribute to different aspects of students' writing, as evident in the results of this study.

The statistically non-significant results indicate that both types of feedback are beneficial in improving the participants' overall quality of argumentative writing. In such cases, both types of feedback are encouraged to be employed in an integrated manner to develop students' argumentative writing proficiency.

### 5.1.2 Effects on genre scores

The statistical results illustrated that genre-based feedback outperformed form-based feedback in developing participants' ability to construct a qualified text that fulfilled the conventions of argumentative essays. Such findings echo the results of previous research investigating the effectiveness genre-based feedback (Uzun & Topkaya, 2020; Zhang, 2021).

The effectiveness of genre-based feedback in improving participants' genre scores can be attributed to the fact that it scaffolds the students' understanding of how the conventionalised language used is shaped by its surrounding contexts (Madhood & Devrim, 2013). With the utilisation of the genre-based feedback strategy established by scholars at the City University of Hong Kong (Madhood & Devrim, 2013), the participants have the opportunity to understand how different genres are organised linguistically and how those linguistic features are encompassed in a larger context (i.e. writing for specific purposes to specified audience). Such feedback practice allows the students to constantly consider the contextual features of their writing and construct a text that is acceptable within this culture. When students are prompted by genre-based feedback to consider the connection between contextual features and linguistic features and utilise such thinking in their composition, their constructed text may be more likely to be accepted by members of the discourse community for whom they are writing. When their writing is more accepted by members of the culture, their intended information is more likely to be accepted by the targeted audience and their communicative purpose is more likely to be achieved, resulting in higher genre scores.

The results of genre-based feedback significantly outperformed form-based feedback in improving the participant's genre score, suggesting that genre-based feedback can be used to remedy the insufficiency of form-based feedback to a large extent. ESL university students face significant challenges in constructing writing adhering to academic conventions. Still, the predominant written feedback (i.e., form-based feedback) they receive from their instructor is insufficient to resolve their issues since most feedback is form-related at the sentence level only (Seker & Dincer, 2014; Lee, 2005;

Li, 2016). With the help of genre-based feedback, such issues can be remedied since this feedback practice goes beyond sentence level and enables students to understand the organisation of different genres and the rationality behind the generic features.

The statistically significant results demonstrate genre-based feedback's superiority over form-based feedback in improving participants' genre performance, suggesting the comparative benefits of genre-based feedback and the necessity of employing such feedback practice.

### 5.1.3 Effect of accuracy score.

Form-based feedback outperformed genre-based feedback in improving the participants' language accuracy as detected in within-group comparison only but not in between-group comparison. For the effects of accuracy scores, the results are fairly complicated and worth unpacking.

The higher effectiveness of form-based feedback over genre-based feedback is not identified in between-group comparisons but in within-group comparisons. The between group comparison shows that each feedback practice is not superior to one another in improving language accuracy. However, the within-group comparison that compared the mean score of the pre-test and post-test in both conditions found no statistically significant improvement in the genre-based feedback group but in the form-based feedback group.

The statistically insignificant results of between-group comparisons might be attributed to the fact that both types of feedback contribute to the improvement of language accuracy to a varying degree. The difference in the improvement in those two conditions is too subtle to be detected by statistical analytical tools in the relatively small sample size used in this study. In addition, although form-based feedback may contribute to language accuracy, as evident in previous empirical studies (Shintani & Aubrey, 2016; Shintani & Ellis, 2013; Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Yeh et al., 2014; Zhang, 2021), its effect is relatively small with just one episode of treatment (Frear & Chiu, 2015). In this study, with just one treatment episode, the effect of form-based feedback does not significantly

outweigh genre-based feedback and achieves statistical significance. Another potential reason is that although genre-based feedback was not designed to improve language accuracy, it may have some implicit influence on language form. Yasuda's (2011) research shows that the increase of generic knowledge may contribute to the development of linguistic knowledge because the form is the realisation of the genre. When generic knowledge is developed, language accuracy may be beneficial since linguistic knowledge can be positively affected. In such cases, when both treatments contribute to language accuracy to some extent, the difference in score improvement may be too minor to be detected by the statistical analysis.

The statistically significant results were found in the within-group comparison on the form-based feedback treatment but not the genre-based feedback group. Although no significant result is found between-group comparisons, the relative superiority of form-based feedback over genre-based feedback in improving accuracy is identified within-group comparison. Such findings echo previous research findings demonstrating the positive effect of form-based feedback on accuracy (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener et al., 2005; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Shintani & Aubrey, 2016; Shintani & Ellis, 2013; Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Yeh et al., 2014; Zhang, 2021).

## 5.2 Discussion on the questionnaire finding

The following section will discuss the findings obtained from the questionnaire enquiring about the participants' perceptions of the feedback they received in this experiment. Five aspects that were explored with the participants will be presented in the following section: developmental, usable, personalised, rationalised, and reference to marking criteria.

### 5.2.1 Developmental aspect

The developmental aspect of written feedback refers to whether the feedback can contribute to students' knowledge development, narrowing the gap between the student's current level and ideal production (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). Essentially, if written

feedback is considered to be developmental, it should provide certain information that the students have not yet mastered but is essential in their writing proficiency development.

The results obtained from the survey demonstrate that the participants perceived genre-based feedback as more developmental in enhancing their writing knowledge than form-based feedback. One possible explanation for such findings is that students at the university level face more challenges in developing their knowledge of English academic writing conventions rather than linguistic knowledge. All participants involved in this research are university students who have sufficient knowledge of linguistics. With sufficient linguistic knowledge, the participants' linguistic errors can be categorised as slips that can be self-corrected (Harmer, 2015). In such a case, form-based feedback that mainly focus on sentence-level errors might not provide information that students have not developed.

By comparison, writing an argument adhering to academic writing conventions is challenging for Chinese university students, as evident in the comparatively lower scores for genre in the experiment pre-test and the literature (Bian & Wang, 2016; Qin & Karabacak, 2010). When the students encounter issues of genre, genre-based feedback is perceived to be highly developmental because it provides essential information on academic writing that the students have not fully acquired. When the feedback is perceived to be more developmental, students may become more motivated to internalise the feedback and employ it in their upcoming compositions.

In sum, genre-based feedback is perceived to be more developmental because students at the university level face more challenges in understanding English academic writing conventions rather than linguistic rules.

### 5.2.2 Usable aspect

The usable aspect of the feedback refers to the consideration of whether the provided feedback can be utilised in the students' future writing (Weaver, 2006). The results from the questionnaire suggest that the participants who received genre-based

feedback rated higher on the usable aspect of feedback compared with participants who received form-based feedback.

According to the findings, the participants from the genre-based feedback group rated the usable aspect of feedback higher. Compared with participants from the form-based feedback group. One possible explanation of the perceived higher usability of genre-based feedback can be attributed to the fact that its comments are highly explicit with a relatively specific focus (i.e., the generic organisation of an argumentative essay). In genre-based feedback, the participants are mainly guided to understand how an argument is constructed in context with the introduction of conventional generic features of argumentative essays. For example, when giving genre-based feedback, the instructor may comment that key information should be included in a topic sentence (i.e., generic feature) because the readers are expecting this information while reading (i.e., contextual features). Such explanations not only enhance students' understanding of the generic features but also provide specific suggestions on how to improve. This feedback practice mainly focuses on the generic organisation of argumentative essays, which is more likely to be used in the students' next composition, resulting in perceived higher usability. However, the situation is slightly different in form-based feedback. When giving form-based feedback, different types of linguistic errors may be corrected (e.g., third personal singular, subject-verb-object sentence structure and conditional sentence) in one piece of students' writing. Following such a process, students may need to understand different errors and their underlying rules. In such case, one episode of treatment in this research might not be sufficient for students to fully internalise the feedback and use them accurately in their next composition (Frear & Chiu, 2015), resulting in lower perceived usability.

It can be interpreted from the results that the participants perceived genre-based feedback to be more usable than form-based feedback. This is mainly because the comment provided in genre-based feedback is more likely to be used directly by the participant compared with form-based feedback with just one episode of treatment.

### 5.2.3 Personalised aspect

The personalised aspect refers to the consideration of whether the provided feedback is constructed according to the participants' specific case of writing (Can & Walker, 2011; Weaver, 2006; Dawson et al., 2019). The results obtained from the questionnaire showed that, compared with form-based feedback, genre-based feedback offers more personalised comments on participants' writing.

One possible explanation lies in the fact that genre-based feedback is constructed more tailored to students' specific case of composition. To be more specific, when giving genre-based feedback, the instructors not only need to integrate the contextual features (e.g., communicative purposes) and the linguistic features (e.g., generic organisation of argumentative essay), but they also need to combine the written content into the feedback. For example, the instructor may comment on the students' selected supporting evidence that does not contribute to the topic sentence, which closely relates to the students' written content. When the comments are closely related to students' written content, the students may perceive the provided feedback to be more tailored specifically to their writing. However, the situation is different when giving form-based feedback. Although form-based also offers students personalised suggestions on linguistic errors that occur in their composition, the correction of surface-level errors is decontextualised in nature. The decontextualised nature is attributed to the fact that form-based feedback is given based on the codified standard of language rather than students' specific case of writing (Devrim, 2014), resulting in a lower perceived personalised aspect.

It can be interpreted from the findings that genre-based feedback is perceived to provide more personalised comments because it is constructed according to the students' written content. Form-based feedback is constructed according to standardised linguistic rules, resulting in a lower rated score for the personalised aspect.

#### 5.2.4 Rationalised aspect

The rationalised aspect of written feedback refers to the consideration of whether the feedback provides justification for the suggested changes (Dawson et al., 2019). The results show that genre-based feedback is perceived to be more rationalised than form-based feedback in presenting justification for the suggested changes.

One possible explanation is that when giving comments on the suggested changes, the contextual factors of writing (e.g., communicative purpose, target audience) were constantly used as justification in genre-based feedback. For example, the instructor may comment that the last sentence of an argument should summarise the key information because the readers need to be reminded. However, in form-based feedback, in most situations, the instructors mainly underlined the students' errors (indirect feedback) or correct the error directly with the accurate formulation (direct feedback). Although in one sub-category of form-based feedback, metalinguistic explanations were provided to explain the underlying grammatical rules of detected errors, the amount of explanation is usually limited. Thus, students perceived genre-based feedback to be more rationalised. When students perceive the feedback to be more rationalised, they are more likely to believe in the comment because the justification is provided (Li & De Luca, 2014) because they understand the necessity of the suggested revision plan.

The results show that genre-based feedback is perceived to be more rationalised because the contextual variables were constantly used as justification compared with form-based feedback, which heavily relies on explicit correction.

#### 5.2.5 Reference to marking criteria

Reference to marking criteria refers to the consideration of whether the feedback provide insights into the marking standard or the expectation from the readers (Can & Walker, 2011; Weaver, 2006; Poulos & Mahony, 2008). According to the findings, genre-based feedback was considered more informative than form-based feedback in that it offered more insights into marking criteria or reader expectations.

Such results can be partially explained by the fact that when giving genre-based feedback, the participants were constantly reminded that their text is constructed for specific audiences, an important criterion for evaluating argumentative essays. For example, when giving genre-based feedback, the students were reminded that the readers might expect to see some evidence that directly supports the topic sentence. From such feedback, the participants may have obtained better insights into readers' or markers' expectations. However, such insights may be hard to obtain from form-based

feedback because the participants might have already known that producing a linguistically accurate text is essential from a very young age, which is the main focus of most form-based feedback.

In sum, genre-based feedback is rated higher on the aspect of reference of marking criteria compared with form-based feedback because it offers more insights into readers' generic expectations.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This chapter will first summarise the major findings of this research, followed by implication derived from the research finding and the limitation of this research.

### 6.1 Summary of major findings

This research compared the differential effect of genre-based feedback and form-based feedback on the quality of Chinese university students' English argumentative essays and their perceptions of different types of feedback.

This research found that genre-based feedback and form-based feedback have no statistically significant difference in improving the participants' overall score because each type of feedback contributes to different aspects of the participants' writing. To be more specific, genre-based feedback significantly outperformed form-based feedback in improving the Chinese ESL university students' genre score of their argumentative writing. This is mainly because genre-based feedback emphasises the connection between context and language use, allowing students to understand the linguistic features and the contextual features of the genre, which is not able to be achieved via form-based feedback. Conversely, form-based feedback is more effective in improving Chinese ESL university students' language accuracy of their argumentative writing than genre-based feedback, but the comparative superiority is relatively small. The effectiveness of form-based feedback on increasing language accuracy found in this research echoes with previous literature. The relatively small superiority might be due to the fact that genre-based feedback has some effect on accuracy because form, as the linguistic feature, is encompassed in the genre. For example, reminding participants that an argument is situated in the here and now may implicitly remind them to use the present tense form of verbs. The increased generic knowledge may also enable students to pay attention to form, increasing some accuracy.

The questionnaire found that genre-based feedback received more positive comments than form-based feedback. The findings show that Chinese ESL university students perceive that genre-based feedback provides more developmental information,

usable revision suggestions, personalised feedback, justification for the revision and insights into readers' expectations. This is mainly because students at this level have sufficient proficiency in linguistic knowledge. Giving feedback on the form is less valuable to them compared with feedback that scaffolds their development of generic knowledge.

## 6.2 Implications

Based on the findings of this research, some implications can be derived to guide classroom practice. Overall, genre-based feedback and form-based feedback should not be considered contradicting despite their somehow distinctive ideologies. Instead, they should be employed in an integrated manner to foster students' development of L2 academic writing proficiency.

The results obtained from this research suggest that when targeting university ESL students with the need of improving L2 argumentative writing proficiency, both genre-based feedback and form-based feedback should be utilised. This is mainly because producing a linguistically accurate text and producing a text adhering to the generic convention are both important for the text to be successfully understood by the readers. Bearing such importance in mind, both types of feedback should be utilised because they contribute to different aspects of the students' writing as demonstrated by changes in genre and accuracy scores.

Between genre-based feedback and form-based feedback, instructors are suggested to attach more importance to the former when targeting ESL students at the tertiary level. This is because, according to the findings of this research, students perceive the genre-based feedback to be more beneficial. When the feedback is more positively perceived, the students are more likely to actively engage to internalise feedback, resulting in more effectiveness. In this research, the participants who received genre-based feedback considered that such feedback provides more developmental information, usable suggestions, personalised comments, justification of the suggested changes and insights of markers' expectation. On the other hand, the participants who received form-based feedback provided relatively fewer positive comments. Though it may not be immediately clear that genre-based feedback is superior to form-based

feedback, the findings suggest that genre-based feedback is more appropriate for university students. These students have obtained sufficient linguistic knowledge but are still developing their proficiency in producing texts that adhere to the generic features of argumentative essay writing. Thus, when targeting student as such level, genre-based feedback should be prioritised, while form-based feedback should not be completely abandoned if recurring linguistic errors occur in students' composition.

In sum, this has potential pedagogical implication. When targeting L2 students who possess sufficient linguistic knowledge but have issues with writing generically appropriate texts in higher education, genre-based feedback is suggested to be employed primarily along with form-based feedback as a complement.

### 6.3 Limitations

Although this research yields important pedagogical implications, its limitations still need to be acknowledged, such as the lack of a second marker in the assessment of the writing quality and the validity of the questionnaire.

For the assessment of the participants' pre-test/post-test argumentative essay quality, although a well-designed rubric was established based on the previous literature and blind marking was conducted to ensure the objectivity of the marking process, only one rater was involved. A second marker will add more credit to the reliability of writing scores and the research findings. Such a double-marking process was not able to be completed in this study but is encouraged to be done in future empirical studies to obtain more reliable findings.

For the construction of the questionnaire, this study has followed the practice and suggestion of previous research (Chalmers et al., 2024) to, for example, generate items, but more measures should be taken to enhance the validity of the questionnaires such as factor analysis (Goodwin, 1999). Factor analysis may contribute to the increase of construct validity, which ensures items in the questionnaire can measure what the questionnaire intends to measure. Via factor analysis, the validity of the questionnaire can be guaranteed.

Therefore, in future research, double marking should be employed to enhance the reliability of writing scores in data analysis. Furthermore, measures such as factor analysis are expected to higher the validity of questionnaires.

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Appendix A: Marking Criteria

	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25
Genre	<p>The argument does not follow the generic organisation. Incomplete information in the thesis statement that does not contribute to paragraph development. Arguments are not properly organized and do not support the thesis statement. No counterargument proposed. The consolidation of the previous information does not contribute to text summary. Information between sentences does not flow well and it is hard to follow. Cohesive devices are not employed appropriately.</p>	<p>The argument slightly follows the generic organisation. Largely incomplete thesis statement that only slightly contribute to paragraph development. Some arguments are developed to slightly support the idea of thesis statement, but it is not specific enough. No counterargument proposed. Consolidation is essentially the topic sentence with no added information related to the argument. The majority of the sentences are hard to follow, and the majority of the cohesive devices are not employed properly.</p>	<p>The argument partly follows the generic organisation. Fairly complete thesis statement and partly contribute to paragraph development. Arguments are developed to moderately support the thesis statement although some argument is too general. Counterargument is proposed but not successfully rebutted. Consolidating sentence provide a fairly relevant summary of the argument. Sentences in general are intelligible although some sentences do not flow smoothly. The majority of cohesive devices are employed appropriately.</p>	<p>The argument generally follows the generic organisation. Largely complete thesis statement and largely contribute to paragraph development. Arguments are developed to largely support the thesis statement. Counterargument is proposed and partly rebutted. Consolidating sentence provide a relevant summary of the argument. Sentences in general are easy to follow. Cohesive devices are employed appropriately.</p>	<p>The argument follows the generic organisation. Complete thesis statement and contribute to paragraph development. Arguments are developed to support the thesis statement. Counterargument is proposed and successfully rebutted. Consolidating sentence provide a highly relevant summary of the argument. Sentences are easy to follow. Cohesive devices are employed appropriately.</p>
	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25
Form	<p>Sentences with a large amount of grammatical errors, which is very hard to</p>	<p>Sentences have limited variety but mostly accurate. Some sentences are hard to follow</p>	<p>Sentences have some variety and mostly accurate. Sentences are short but</p>	<p>Sentence structure varies and accurate. Sentences are completed and</p>	<p>Significantly varied sentence structure. Sentences have no grammatical</p>

<p>understand. Sentences are fragment. Inaccurate employment of missing or transition. Vocabular choice is very limited and inaccurate to express the meaning. A large number of spelling and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>Sentences are short but completed. Some Inaccurate employment of missing or transition. Vocabular choice is limited and some are inaccurate to express the meaning. Some spelling and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>completed. Very limited sentences are hard to understand. Few inaccurate employments or missing of transition. Vocabular choice is rich and are mostly accurate to express the meaning. Very few spelling and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>easy to understand. Very Few inaccurate employments or missing of transition. Vocabular choice is rich and are accurate to express the meaning. Very few spelling and punctuation errors.</p>	<p>errors. Sentences are completed and easy to understand. No inaccurate employments or missing of transition. Vocabular choice is complex and are accurate to express the meaning. No spelling and punctuation errors.</p>
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## Appendix B: Argumentative essay questions

Pre-test essay question:

IELTS 18 (2023)

Some university students want to learn about other subjects in addition to their main subjects. Other believe it is more important to give all their time and attention to studying for a degree. Give you own opinion around this topic.

Post-test essay question:

IELTS 13 (2018)

Living in a country where you have to speak a foreign language can cause serious social problems as well as practical problems. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement.

Reference:

Cambridge Assessment English (2023). *IELTS 18*. Cambridge University Press.

Cambridge Assessment English (2018). *IELTS 13*. Cambridge University Press.

## Appendix C: Questionnaire

Questionnaire: rate from 1-5 for the following statements

### Developmental

1. The written feedback contributes to my understanding of academic writing
2. The written feedback provides insights into improving my writing proficiency
3. The written feedback fosters my development as a proficient academic writer

### Usable

4. The written feedback provides achievable action on areas to be improved.
5. The written feedback provides clear guidance for revision
6. The written feedback was practical enough that helps to improve writing quality

### Personalisation

7. The feedback was tailored to my specific writing
8. The feedback explicitly addresses areas that need to be improved.
9. The feedback takes my writing style and content into considering when suggesting for revision

### Rationalisation

10. The feedback provides justification on why such changes are recommended.
11. The feedback contributes to my understanding of the underpins behind such changes
12. The feedback include explanation for the suggested revision

### Reference to marking criteria

13. The feedback make reference to the criteria of a well-written essay
14. The feedback offer me understanding of marker's expectation.
15. The feedback contribute to my understanding of how my writing can be improved according to the marking criteria.

Link for the questionnaire:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=G96VzPWXk0-Ouv5ouFLPkawh5ggVLM9AkxvedM\\_ybv5UMklwM005MINaRE8zUEFMSE5TVFI00FNBQS4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=G96VzPWXk0-Ouv5ouFLPkawh5ggVLM9AkxvedM_ybv5UMklwM005MINaRE8zUEFMSE5TVFI00FNBQS4u)

## Appendix D: Worksheet

### Worksheet

#### 1. Lead-in

- a. Read the following prompt and think about how would you respond to the question?

Should university education concentrate more on practical skills training rather than merely on academic subjects?

- b. Imagine you are writing an essay responding to this question

- 1) What is the communicative purpose of the essay?
- 2) Who might be the target audience reading the essay?
- 3) What might be the structure of the essay?

#### 2. Text analysis

- a. Read the following two texts, which one is more appropriate as an argumentative essay? Why?

A	B
University education should place more emphasis on training students' practical skills rather than solely on academic subjects to better prepared students to enter the labour market. Companies nowadays value employees' practical skills to solve real-world problems, which are often not being developed sufficiently under the system of traditional academic training. To become a qualified teacher, theoretical knowledge is not sufficient. It requires additional teaching practice. Therefore, incorporating practical skills into the curriculum in university education can equip students to be better prepared in their employment.	Practical skills are becoming more and more important nowadays. Companies nowadays value employees' practical skills to solve real-world problems, which are often not being develop sufficiently under the system of traditional academic training. To become a qualified teacher, theoretical knowledge is not sufficient. It requires additional teaching practice. In such cases, it is very important for universites to prepare students for their future employment.

- b. Read the text again, and identity three sub-components within the text

- 1) Thesis statement: establish the claim
- 2) Argument: develop argument to support the claim
- 3) Consolidation: re-emphasise the claim

Text A:

University education should place more emphasis on training students' practical skills rather than solely on academic subjects to better prepared students to enter the labour market. Companies nowadays value employees' practical skills to solve real-world problems, which are often not being developed sufficiently under the system of traditional academic training. To become a qualified teacher, theoretical knowledge is not sufficient. It requires additional teaching practice. Therefore, incorporating practical skills into the curriculum in university education can equip students to be better prepared in their employment.

c. Read the following text (C), what are the key differences from text A?

University education should place more emphasis on training students' practical skills rather than solely on academic subjects to better prepared students to enter the labour market. Company nowadays value employees' practical skills to solve real-like problems, which is often not being develop sufficiently under the system of traditional academic training. To become a qualified teacher, theoretical knowledge is not sufficient, requiring additional teaching practice. Some people argue that the concentration on practical skills may sacrifice the quality of academic subject learning. However, although theoretical understanding of the subject is essential, it is not enough when encountering complex issues that require practical skills and experiment. In such case, it is crucial is integrate academic subjecting and practical skills training into university education. Therefore, incorporating practical skills into the curriculum in university education can equip students to be more prepared in their employment.

d. Label 1) thesis statement 2) argument 3) counterargument 4) rebuttal 5) consolidation in text C.

3. Match the following stage of argument to letter A-E regarding the topic of 'English should be the main language in academia, to what extent do you agree with this statement?'

Thesis statement	A: Opponents argue that when English becomes the main language of academic communication, people from other cultures who does not speak English as a first language will be marginalised in such communication
Argument	B: English should be the main language of communication in academia.

Counterargument	C. Emphasising English as the main language of academic communication is beneficial to foster international collaboration in academia.
Rebuttal	D. English is already the dominate language of international communication. Making it the main language in the academic world contributes to more efficient collaboration and communication among scholars from different countries
Consolidation	E. While the concern is valid, using English as the lingua franca in the academic world does not indicates the exclusion of scholars from countries that does not use English as the primary language. Translation services can be used to foster international communication if necessary.

4. Independent construction

Respond to the following prompt in no more than 400 words.

Do you think globalization benefits all nations involved in such process, or it mainly benefits developed countries?

Appendix E: Experiment raw data

Raw data

Scores of genre-based intervention group

Student	Genre Pre	Form Pre	Overall pre	Genre post	Form post	Overall post
1	18	18	36	20	19	39
2	17	19	36	22	19	41
3	11	14	25	21	22	43
4	15	18	33	20	22	42
5	15	18	33	24	19	43
6	13	16	29	14	12	26
7	11	13	24	12	14	26
8	6	8	14	15	10	25
9	8	18	26	16	20	36
10	21	25	46	23	25	48
11	15	16	31	19	20	39
12	16	17	33	23	23	46
13	18	20	38	20	17	37
14	11	13	24	18	18	36
15	8	13	21	13	14	27
16	16	19	35	18	20	38
17	13	15	28	18	19	37
18	20	23	43	24	24	48
19	20	23	43	24	24	48

Scores of form-based feedback group

Student	Genre pre	Fom pre	Overall pre	Genre post	Form post	Overall post
1	20	22	42	18	22	40
2	8	12	20	9	16	25
3	13	18	31	12	19	31

4	16	15	31	17	22	39
5	10	12	22	13	18	31
6	7	17	24	7	15	22
7	11	12	23	13	18	31
8	14	15	29	14	17	31
9	12	11	23	12	12	24
10	10	15	25	15	20	35
11	19	20	39	17	22	39
12	16	18	34	18	22	40
13	10	15	25	8	17	25
14	16	20	36	15	23	38
15	18	20	38	18	25	43
16	18	17	35	20	23	43
17	8	12	20	10	18	28
18	16	14	30	16	18	34
19	17	18	35	14	20	34

## Appendix F: CUREC approval

**SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES  
INTERDIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE  
DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Department of Education  
15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY  
[student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk); [staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk)



9 April 2024

### Research ethics approval

**Research title:** An investigation of the implementation of genre-based feedback its effectiveness on argumentative essay and students' perceptions towards the feedback.

**Research ethics reference:** [REDACTED]



The above application has been considered on behalf of the Education Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the University's procedures for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to confirm that, on the basis of the information provided to the DREC, ethics approval has now been granted for this study.

Please note the following:

**Personal data:** It is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that all personal data collected during the project is managed in accordance with the University's [guidance and legal requirements](#).

**In-person activities:** Any data collection involving in-person interactions with participants must have an up-to-date fieldwork risk assessment in place; further guidance is available from the Safety Office's [website](#).

**Amendments:** Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the information in your ethics application as submitted at date of this approval, as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available on the [SSH IDREC webpage](#).

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to [staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:staff.curec@education.ox.ac.uk) / [student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.curec@education.ox.ac.uk) or [ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

*Ian Thompson*

Ian Thompson Associate Professor of Education

DREC member

## Appendix G: Information sheet



**[An investigation of the implementation of genre-based feedback its effectiveness on argumentative essay and students' perceptions towards the feedback.]**

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Central University Research Ethics Committee Approval Reference 

]

#### Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

#### 1. Why is this research being conducted?

This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of genre-based feedback (focusing on conventions of writing) compared to form-focused feedback (focusing on language accuracy). This is mainly because many students speak English face challenges when studying in anglophone countries when writing essays. Therefore, this research is conducted to test what kind of feedback are more effective in developing students' academic writing. This research also interested in whether the feedback is favoured by the students.

#### 2. Why have I been invited to take part?

The criteria of the research when recruiting participants is 1) aged 18 and above 2) studying in a Chinese university and 3) intend to study in an English-speaking country in the future. Since you have fulfilled this criteria, you are invited to participate in this research.

#### 3. Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether to take part. You can withdraw yourself from the research, without giving a reason, by advising me of this decision. The data will be deleted when after your notice of withdrawal. However, withdrawal will become impossible if the research has been submitted, which is 15/Aug/2024.

#### 4. What will happen to me if I take part in the research?

You are required to attend one teaching session on essay writing, produce two pieces of writing and one questionnaire throughout this research.

Firstly, you will be participated in one teaching session on argumentative essay (1 hour), then you will be instructed to write a piece of essay (250 words, 45 minutes). You will then be given feedback on your writing, which should be carefully read. After digesting the feedback, you will be asked to

write another essay (250 words, 45 minutes). After this, you will be asked to fill in a questionnaire (10 minutes) asking your perceptions towards the feedback you receive.

Before the start of the research, you will be asked to sign on a consent form, which will be sent via email.

#### **5. What are the possible disadvantages and risks in taking part?**

In general, there will be no risks participating in this research. Please be reassured that you can withdraw your consent without giving reasons, and it won't result any negative impact. You also don't need to worry about your writing quality, just write what you want to write since I am testing the intervention not your writing proficiency.

#### **6. Are there any benefits in taking part?**

Taking part in this research might be beneficial to improve your academic writing, which adhere to academic conventions. Such writing is very likely for you to encounter in your future education.

#### **7. What information will be collected and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research objectives?**

Your personal data (i.e. consent form and contact information will be collected) which will only be used when asking for consent and contact during the research. However, such information will be deleted when the research has completed. Such information will be stored safely at Microsoft one drive, which access from the research only.

For researching purposes, two pieces of your writings and a questionnaire asking your perceptions towards the feedback you receive will be collection. Firstly, as this research is interested in whether the feedback will have impact on your writing, your writing samples will be collected. Secondly, this research is also interested in your perceptions towards the feedback, a questionnaire enquiring your opinions of the feedback you receive will also be implemented. These data will be stored in pseudonymised manner, which will not be identifiable. The pseudonyms will be stored in a sperate file with identifiers. Such data can be accessed by the researcher and the supervisor. In addition, due to university regulations, such data need to be stored for three years. Since I will be leaving the university in one year, the data will pass to my supervisor and will be stored safely in one drive, which is a platform authorised by the university.

*e they will be from the data. It can be difficult/ impossible to anonymise data, particularly qualitative data, and participants may not understand terms like pseudonymisation.*

#### **8. Will the research be published? Could I be identified from any publications or other research outputs?**

This research is written for my dissertation only. Your information will not be identifiable in the final written work.

#### **9. Data Protection**

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the research. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from the University's Information Compliance web site at <https://compliance.admin.ox.ac.uk/individual-rights>.

**10. Who has reviewed this research?**

This research has received ethics approval from a subcommittee of the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. (Ethics reference: **xxxxx**).

**11. Who do I contact if I have a concern about the research or I wish to complain?**

we will do our best to answer your query. we will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

The Chair, [Department of Education Research Ethics Committee, Dr Elizabeth Wonnacott](#).  
Email: [elizabeth.wonnacott@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:elizabeth.wonnacott@education.ox.ac.uk)

**12. Further Information and Contact Details**

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:



## Appendix H: Consent form



### Consent to take part in [An investigation of the implementation of genre-based feedback its effectiveness on argumentative essay and students' perceptions towards the feedback]

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) approval reference



Purpose of Study: This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of genre-based feedback (focusing on conventions of writing) compared to form-focused feedback (focusing on language accuracy). This research also interested in whether the feedback is favoured by the participants

Please initial each box if you agree with the statement

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above research. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point until 15/Aug/2024 without giving any reason.

I understand who will have access to personal data provided, how the data will be stored and what will happen to the data at the end of the project.

I understand I will not be identifiable from any publications (dissertation)

I give permission for you to contact me again to clarify information.

I understand how to raise a concern or make a complaint.

I agree to take part.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In certain projects researchers may want to add an additional statement: [I hereby assign to the researcher all copyright in my contribution for use in all work stemming from this project and future projects.]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participant

dd / mm / vvvv  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent

dd / mm / vvvv  
Date<sup>2</sup>

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
<sup>2</sup> To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant. Once this has been signed by both parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form. The original signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents, which must be kept in a secure location.

Template written consent form, version 4.2, November 2022