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The Effects of the Genre-Based Approach on Engineering Students' Writing Ability

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ABSTRACT

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) is a teaching writing method that has been discussed recently. Researchers and scholars have successfully employed GBA to help students practice writing in various contexts. The present study aims at investigating the use of the genre-based approach (GBA) and its effects on the writing achievement and attitudes of Thai engineering students. The sample consisted of 40 fourth-year engineering students who were enrolled in an English for engineering course. The study subjects were divided into three groups (high, medium, and low) based on their pre-test scores. Three lessons, which were directly related to writing content concerning engineering work (request e-mails, enquiry e-mails, and reports), were provided in 12 sessions. The post-test, attitude questionnaire, and interview were administered at the end of the experiment. The results of a one-way ANOVA analysis revealed that the writing ability of students in all three groups improved after the experiment with statistical significance. As for their attitudes, the findings showed that the students were satisfied with the teaching method, activities, and exercises. More importantly, they felt more confident in writing.

Keywords: Engineering students, ESP, Genre-based approach (GBA), teaching writing

INTRODUCTION

Research in genre analysis, particularly in the academic context, has been conducted since developments in the genre theory (Miller,

1984; Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1991, 1993; Martin & Rothery, 1980, 1981; Hammond, 1989) were first published. The results have given language teachers an alternative in terms of using the genre-based approach (GBA) in teaching, especially at the tertiary education level. There are three schools or models of genre focusing on different

concepts, namely, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and New Rhetorical Genre (NR) (Hyon, 1996). Their similarities and differences are crucial since they affect practical teaching strategies. In recent years, there have been extensive discussions about using GBA to teach writing. For example, Feedman (1994) and Leki (1995) questioned whether the explicit teaching of genres would enhance learning. In addition, Hyon (1996) suggests that researchers carry out more research on genre studies in order to see the effects of explicit teaching of genre on non-native students' reading and writing performances. However, it seems that most research relating to the explicit teaching of genres has been conducted in the field of academic writing and SFL genre (such as Henry & Roseburry, 1999; Mustafa, 1995; Kongpetch, 2006; Flowerdew, 2000).

As for the area of the ESP genre, there have been a few studies carried out to prove that the explicit teaching of genre helps students write. For instance, Henry and Roseburry (1998) taught their students (L2) how to write tourist brochures. Changpueng (2009) taught a group of Thai engineering students (EFL) how to write request e-mail through GBA. It was found that the students who had various language abilities not only improved their writing ability but also had positive attitudes towards the teaching method. Moreover, there is another point that scholars have discussed concerning teaching through GBA. Some proponents argue that teaching writing through GBA fits beginning and intermediate level language

learners more than advanced level learners. This is because learning to write based on GBA helps these learners to release their deep anxieties about their writing tasks. Also, when people learn something new, they usually like to rely on examples and in this way, students at low levels of proficiency can learn to write English from samples since they have little exposure to English writing (Kay & Evan, 1998; Kim, 2007). However, this point does not seem to have been adequately addressed with a solid base for the genre-based instruction.

Recognizing the existing need for clarification, the present study aimed to employ GBA (ESP genre) in teaching three different groups of engineering students (high, medium, and low proficiency groups). They were divided based on their writing ability in English. Writing reports, request e-mails, and enquiry e-mails were chosen as the contents of this study based on the results of a need analysis (Changpueng, 2009), which showed that these target genres were the top three required genres for engineers, engineering students, and ESP teachers. Additionally, this study aimed to evaluate the attitudes of the three different groups of students toward this particular teaching method.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As this study focuses on the ESP genre, it is necessary to understand the word 'genre' as a concept. Swales (1990), who is a pioneer in the field of the ESP genre and who works on discourse structure and linguistic features of scientific reports, sees genres as a class

of communicative events with some shared sets of communicative purposes recognized by the members of a particular community. Swales (1990) defines genre as follows:

> *A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert member of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choices of content and style* (p. 58).

The quotation suggests that if the participants in a communicative event share a common focus on purposes, the event constrains and shapes the schematic structure, and these events constitute a genre. The purposes are the rationale of the genre, and they help shape the ways it is structured and the choices of content and style it makes available (Hyland, 2007). Swales adds that genre is a crucial concept in professional communication since members of individual professions or discourse communities, share common purposes of communication; that is, genres (Swales, 1990).

This definition of genre has been influential in ESP work on genre analysis and has been used in the teaching of ESP and academic writing to ESL graduate students (Paltridge, 2004), as Hammond and Derewianka (2002) point out, "the overall concern of ESP is to assist students to gain access to the English language demands they encounter in their studies or professions" (p. 186).

GBA entails how to utilize language patterns to accomplish coherent and purposeful prose. This means that writing does not mean only 'to write,' but also writing to achieve some specific purposes (Hyland, 2003). The definition of GBA involves three parts (Kay & Tony-Dudley Evans, 1998). First of all, it aims to make learners aware of the structure and purpose of texts of different genres–the significant features–and to empower them with strategies necessary to replicate these features in their own composition. Secondly, GBA uses the genre analysis as examples in teaching and learning. Finally, understanding texts in terms of their linguistic features is complemented with attention to their social contexts as well.

Based on the above definitions of genre and GBA, it can be concluded that designing lessons placed on the GBA needs to raise learners' awareness of the following four items:

1. genre analysis (schematic structure of a particular genre or moves) as they are the content of the lessons;

2. the purpose of each genre;

3. the purposes and linguistic features of each move (or each part) of each genre; and

4. social context (sociolinguistic knowledge).

However, there are currently no clear models of how to design a genre-based ESP lesson, including the teaching steps involved (Hyon, 1996). This is addressed in detail in the next section. The present study aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What is the writing achievement of students with different levels of English proficiency receiving writing instruction through the GBA?

2. What are the attitudes of students with different levels of English proficiency toward writing instruction through the GBA?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The participants were 40 engineering students enrolled in one section of the English for engineering course at King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok (KMUTNB) as an elective during the first semester of the academic year 2010. All of them were fourth-year students and were studying in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at KMUTNB. During the first year of their studies, these students were required to take three hours of English per week for two semesters as compulsory courses. Hence, in order to determine whether they have improved in writing ability and in their attitudes toward the teaching method used, they were divided into three groups based on their writing ability (pre-test scores). The groups were high, medium, and low. The criterion set

in dividing the number of students in each group was the 27% technique suggested by Wiboolsri (2008). This technique is normally used to differentiate high ability from low ability students. That is, the top 27% students were in a high ability group and the bottom 27% students was in a low ability group. And those in the middle are in a middle group. That is, 27% of 40 students were in each group. Therefore, there were 11 participants in each group and the number of participants at the end of the study was 33. The seven students excluded from the study were those who were in the middle-level group, and their pre-test scores were not clearly different from those in the high-level and low-level groups. However, it is important to note that these seven students were also taught with the GBA like their friends, but their post-test scores were not calculated as a part of the study. In this way, a relatively clear cut boundary among high, medium, and low ability students can be observed systematically.

Teaching Materials

As stated previously, the participants were enrolled in the English for engineer course, in which three writing lessons were provided during a 12-week period. The content of the courses is directly related to the writing content of their engineering work. This content was chosen from the results of a need analysis, which revealed that the three genres that Thai engineers used most frequently were e-mail (requests and enquiries) and reports (Changpueng, 2009). The results from the genre analysis of those

Move 1 Opening Salutation (obligatory)

Move 2 Establishing Correspondence chain (optional)
Any one of the following steps is acceptable; any combination of the following steps is possible.

Step 1 Referring to the previous events/contacts
Step 2 Introducing themselves
Step 3 Greeting

Move 3 Introducing Purposes (obligatory)

Step 1 Requesting
or/and   Step 2 Providing information

Move 4 Attaching Documents (optional)

Move 5 Closing Correspondence chain (obligatory)
Any one of the following steps is acceptable; any combination of the following steps is possible.

Step 1 Soliciting response
or/and   Step 2 Ending positively

Move 6 Closing salutation (obligatory)
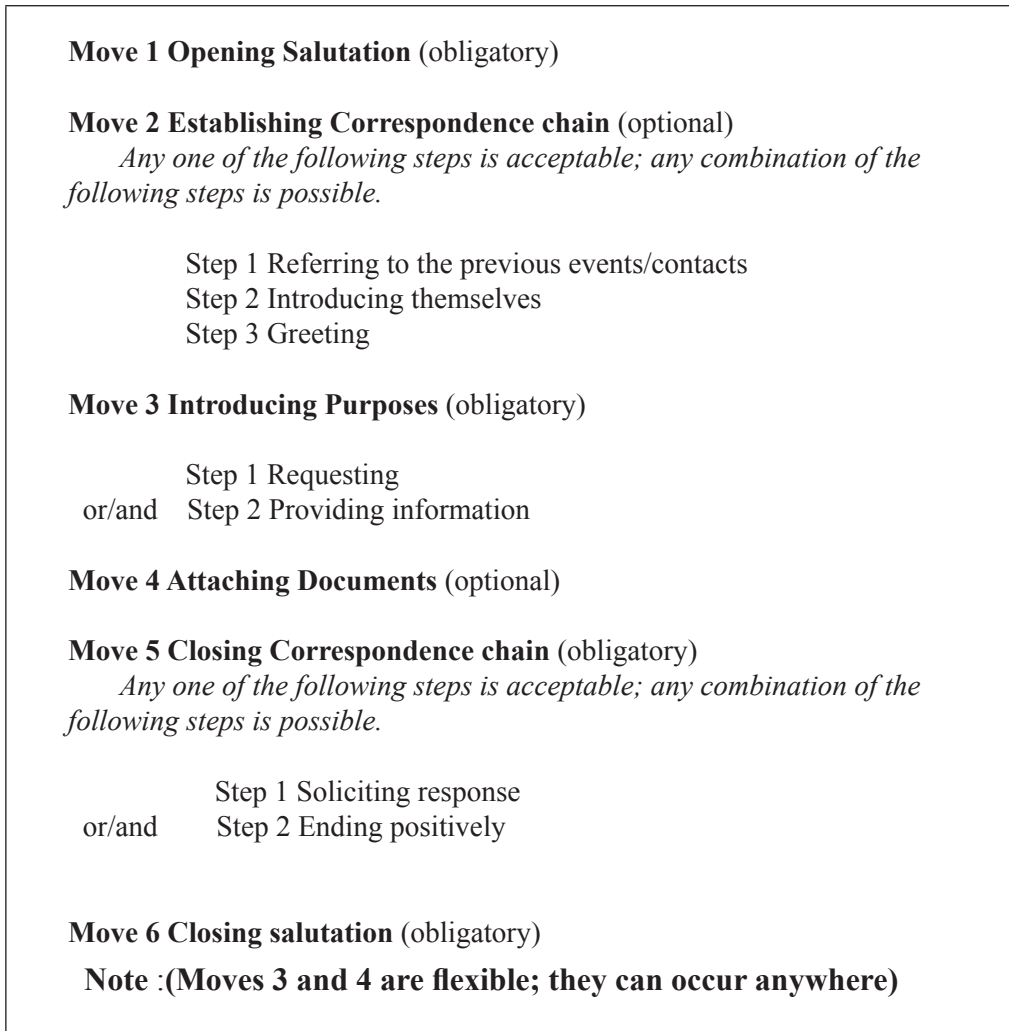 **Note** :**(Moves 3 and 4 are flexible; they can occur anywhere)**

Fig.1: List of Moves and Steps of e-mail requests written by engineers

three different genres, which were analyzed by the researcher of this study, were used as the main materials (see the example in Fig.1). These results were triangulated by two experts in linguistics and one expert in business English teaching. Most of the materials and exercises were created by the researcher of the study, while some of them were adjusted from Bhatia (1993).

The materials were designed specifically to serve each step of teaching, which made the students aware of the purpose and structural features of the genres. The structural features consisted of standards of organizational structure (moves) and linguistic features (Kim, 2007); that is, the lessons focused on the sequencing of texts or genres and linguistic features of

each part of the organizational structure. In addition, the materials and exercises were also created to make students aware of how to use appropriate language (sociolinguistic knowledge) in different contexts and to use writing strategies to achieve their communicative purposes.

Teaching Methods

The three lessons were taught using the same method, so the explanation of the teaching method, GBA, will be described based on the details of the request e-mail lesson only. The lesson was mainly designed based on the teaching and learning cycle. The teaching and learning cycle is a teaching concept or model used in teaching writing based on GBA, especially for the Systematic Functional genre (SFL genre) (Hyland, 2007). Underpinning the teaching and learning cycle is the notion of scaffolding, which relies on the social constructivism language acquisition theory (Feez, 2002; Hammond, 1992, as cited in Kongpetch, 2006, p. 11). Although the teaching and learning cycle was designed for SFL, it was possible to employ it for these lessons which were based on the ESP genre. This was because both the SFL and ESP genres rely on the concept of scaffolding. The second reason for choosing is genre analysis, which is the core of the ESP genre, is also a part of the second stage of the teaching cycle although details relating to genre analysis in the SFL and ESP genres may be somewhat different. One of the most straightforward representations of this cycle is offered by Feez (2002), as shown in Fig.2. The main purpose of the cycle is to ensure repeated opportunities for learners to engage in activities which require them to reflect on and criticize their learning by developing
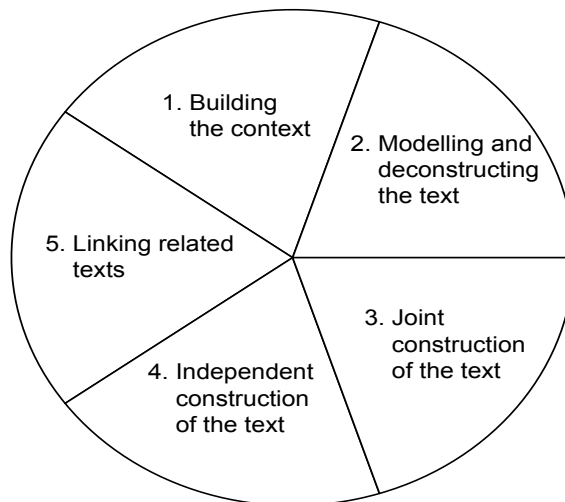

Fig.2: Stages of the teaching-learning cycle (Feez, 2002)

understanding of the texts (Hyland, 2007). Details of each stage are given below (Feez, 2002; Hyland, 2007).

1. Building the Context

This stage reveals the purpose of a genre and the setting in which it is commonly used. The emphasis in this step is placed on the functions of language and how meanings work in contexts. Also, the activities reveal what the text is about and what students already know about it. Thus, students were asked questions for discussion. For example, who writes it, for whom, why, etc.? What is the relationship between the writer and reader? (See Appendix 1)

2. Modeling and Deconstructing the Text

Activities in this stage are important because they have helped students to understand the text thoroughly. This step is focused on involving the teacher and students in discussing and exploring the whole text, clauses, and expressions level as well as the key grammatical and rhetorical features (moves/ structural pattern) used to express specific functions and the social relationship between the reader and the writer, including writing strategies. In order to help students understand key issues, they were asked to do many activities. For example, they were asked to analyze the samples themselves in terms of move analysis and lexico-grammar and were provided with worksheets to help them complete these tasks (See Appendix 2). Moreover, writing request emails requires

strategic skills, and as such, students were trained using practical exercises (See Appendix 3).

3. Joint Construction of the Text

Before writing independently, the teacher and students worked together in class to construct an example of the gerne. This helped them to become familiarized with GBA to writing and developing confidence gradually. Next, each group of students was also asked to outline a writing situation and to practice writing together as the first draft with the teacher's support. Finally, the students revised their work based on the editing and revising checklist, before re-submitting it to the teacher.

4. Independent Construction of the Text

Independent writing is the ultimate goal of the L2 writing class. The purpose of this step was for students to apply what they had learned from GBA in class and groups to write a text independently, while the teacher supervised, encouraged, and advised them.

5. Linking Related Texts

This stage gave students the opportunity to investigate how the genre they had been studying was related to other texts that appeared in the same or similar context, to other genres they had studied, and to issues of interpersonal and institutional power and ideology. This could only be successfully conducted after the students had learned and understood the target genres provided in the

classroom as that would provide them with a basis to make comparisons.

Possibly, teachers can start teaching and learning at any stage and to go back and forth between stages, depending on the teacher's and students' writing ability (Hammond *et al.*, 1992).

Data Collection

Pre- and Post-tests

In order to determine the effectiveness of the teaching method in terms of student learning, the participants needed to complete a pre-test (during the first week of teaching) and a post-test as an achievement test to reveal how much they had improved after attending the course. The test in the subjective format (a criterion-referenced test) was administered. It consisted of three items (request and enquiry e-mails, and reports). The test lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. In this study, the construct of the present test was set based on the components of the ESP test (i.e. Target Language Use (TLU), language ability, and background knowledge) and the principle of GBA (Bachman & Plamer, 1996; Douglas, 2000; Hyland, 2007). Inter-rater reliability had to be considered since there were two raters that marked this test (Alderson, 1996). The reliability of the two raters was assessed by correlating the marks given by two or more raters for the same students. The results of their grading were then calculated using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (Wiboolsri, 2008) and independent samples t-test. The correlation values between the two raters of the test (items 1-3) were .96, .98, and .94, respectively. In addition, the index of difficulty of the test (items 1-3) was .37, .58, and .45, respectively.

Questionnaire

The attitude questionnaire was designed to evaluate the attitude of the students toward the teaching method, i.e. GBA. The form was written in Thai to prevent misunderstanding due to language. Then, it was verified by a panel of three experts. Students who enrolled in the course were asked to express their attitudes toward the teaching method at the end of the course. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: attitudes of the students after studying with GBA and comments about the teaching method. The first part (closed-ended questions) consisted of three parts; namely, teaching method, teaching activities, and writing achievement. This part was designed using the 5 points Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree). The second part was an open-ended question that asked the subjects to express their opinion and offer suggestions on the teaching method (See Appendix 4). The reliability of the questionnaire was 0.84.

Interview

The interview questions were somewhat similar to the questions in the questionnaire in terms of the topics, i.e. consisting of three components: teaching method, teaching activities, and writing achievement. Five students from each level group were

randomly chosen to be interviewed one day after they had expressed their attitudes in the questionnaire. Using five students for this purpose was suitable because these formed almost fifty percent of all the students in each group.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to determine the writing achievement of the students, the scores from the pre-test and post-test were compared by using a dependent samples t-test to examine the extent to which the method of teaching writing used could enhance undergraduate engineering students' writing achievement. As for determining the writing achievement of the three different groups, the students were divided based on their English writing ability, whereby ANOVA

was used. Moreover, in order to determine the attitudes of the three different groups of students towards GBA, the mean scores were compared by using ANOVA. In addition, the answers from the respondents in the interview session were analyzed by using content analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Writing Achievement

The first main findings of the study are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 compares the pre-test and post-test scores among the three groups of engineering students. The total score of the test was 60 points (i.e. 20 points each). The results revealed that the mean scores of the post-test were higher than those of the pre-test in each group. It was also found from the

TABLE 1
A comparison between the pre-test and post-test writing scores using t-test among the three groups of engineering students

| Group | N | Pre-test | | Group | N | Post-test | | t |
		Mean	SD			Mean	SD	
high	11	33	2.50	high	11	49.23	2.96	15.09*
medium	11	24.6	1.77	medium	11	48.27	3.01	25.39*
low	11	16.1	4.28	low	11	45.65	3.17	19.92*

*$p < 0.05$

TABLE 2
A comparison among the post-test writing scores of the three groups of engineering students

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F
Post-test Between groups	62.32	2	31.16	
Within groups	278.59	30	9.29	3.35*
Total	340.91	32		

*$p < 0.05$

t-test results that the writing achievement scores from the post-test of the engineering students who were taught using GBA in each group were significantly higher than those obtained from the pre-test (p< 0.05). This means that the method of teaching writing, GBA, was effective.

As presented in Table 2, it was found from the ANOVA results that the writing achievement scores from the post-test among the three groups of engineering students who were taught using GBA were significantly different. It was also found that there was a difference between the groups. There was a significant difference in the writing achievement scores between the high-level group and low-level group. However, there was no significant difference in the writing achievement scores between the high- and medium-level groups or between the medium- and low- level groups. This means that the writing achievement of the three groups of the engineering students improved after receiving GBA instruction.

The Participants' Attitudes towards GBA

According to the research findings, it seemed that most of the students of the three groups favoured GBA, as shown in Tables 3 and 4. In particular, Table 3 shows the mean score of the attitudes of the three groups of engineering students towards teaching writing through GBA. Wiboolsri (2008) suggests that the acceptable value of the mean representing a positive attitude has to be higher than 3.5 for each question of the questionnaire. It was found that the mean scores of the high-, medium-, and

low- level groups were 4.04, 4.05, and 4.18, respectively. Thus, it can be said that all groups of students had positive attitudes towards GBA.

Table 4 shows another results from the questionnaire; no significant difference was observed in the engineering students' attitudes toward teaching writing with GBA in the three groups. This means that these three groups of students were satisfied with the GBA. Meanwhile, analysis of the students' comments on and responses to the questionnaire revealed their positive attitudes toward the GBA. These results were also confirmed by the results of the qualitative data (interview).

TABLE 3
The Mean scores of the attitude towards teaching writing using GBA among the three groups of engineering students

Groups	N	Mean	S.D
high	11	4.04	0.51
medium	11	4.05	0.41
low	11	4.18	0.48

TABLE 4
A comparison of the attitudes towards teaching writing using GBA among the three groups of engineering students

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F
Between groups	.13	2	.07	
Within groups	6.58	30	.22	.29
Total	6.71	32		

*p < 0.05

The students thought that GBA was useful because their writing ability improved after attending the course. In addition, they

also felt more confident in writing. In more specific, the method, according to them, was not too difficult to understand. The results from the interview indicated that the students liked GBA. For example:

> I thought that the GBA was a good teaching method since this method helped improve my writing ability (S3, M group).

> I liked the teaching method because it was quite easy to follow. The contents of the lessons were also useful since they related to the work of engineers (S5, H group).

With regard to teaching activities and exercises, it was found from the questionnaire that the three groups of students had favourable attitudes towards the activities and exercises. However, some students in the high- and medium-level groups preferred a greater variety of activities, while those in the low group were satisfied with the variety of activities provided. Moreover, the three groups of students agreed that the lessons should provide more writing samples. The results from the interview confirmed these findings.

> I thought all activities were suitable because they suited my English background knowledge (S3, L group).

> Overall, the activities and exercises were fine for me but I preferred more varied activities and genre samples (S1, H group).

In addition, the students in the three groups thought that the GBA of having students remember moves and steps, analyze samples of written texts, and then asking them to practice writing in class, in pairs, in groups, and individually was suitable for engineering students. The following excerpts were taken from the records of the interviews.

> Studying writing with the GBA was suitable for engineering students since remembering patterns was easy for us. We adjusted what we wanted to write according to the patterns of writing different genres. This way of teaching helped us write with direction because before studying in this course we had no idea how to organize written texts and what we should write (S1, M group).

> Although we have quite good English background knowledge, we do not know how to write appropriately in the community of engineers. Remembering patterns of moves and steps helped us organize our ideas. Now I can write better and I know that I can differently focus in writing each move. Also, I did not fix the order of moves and steps. It depended on what I focused (S1, H group).

In addition, it was found from the questionnaire that most students in the three groups were satisfied with the activities provided, and analyzing samples of texts. They thought that analyzing samples of the texts helped them write better. These results were confirmed by the interview results as well. In fact, most students in the low- and medium-level groups agreed that analyzing samples of the text was important. Three students in the high-level group also had similar thoughts, while two interviewees from the high-level group had different ideas. They thought that analyzing samples of the text was not necessary for them. For example:

Analyzing samples of texts was what we needed. This might be different from students who were good in English because they could express their thoughts according to what they wanted. For students who are poor in English, we need to analyze sentences since we can see more samples of sentence structures. We can learn from those samples of sentences. We remembered them and used them (S5, L group).

Although I can write quite well, I think analyzing samples of texts was required because I still needed to learn from the samples. For me, I didn't feel bored or tired in analyzing those sentences. I thought I learned new vocabulary and sentence structures from those samples (S2, H group).

Remembering move patterns was enough for me to write the target genres. It was not necessary to analyze sentences because we can combine the knowledge of move patterns with our English background knowledge (S1 and S3, H group).

In brief, it was found that the three different groups of engineering students had positive attitudes toward GBA since they had favourable attitudes towards the teaching method, activities, and exercises. Moreover, practicing writing through GBA helped them to improve their writing ability.

DISCUSSION

This study revealed that there was a statistical difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of each group of engineering students attending GBA lessons. This suggested that GBA is an effective method for teaching writing. This is possible because GBA has helped the students to understand the rhetorical move structure of the target genres clearly. In other words, GBA offers writers an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written in the way they are (Hyland, 2007). Also, GBA helps students to identify the moves and strategies that are normally used to meet their communicative purposes (Swami, 2008). This is crucial because one of the difficulties faced by EFL students when asked to produce an academic written text is that they often have an inadequate understanding of how texts are organized to convey their purposes (Hyland, 1990).

The results of the present research support those of the previous studies (Swami, 2008; Henry & Roseburry, 1998, 1999; Mustafa, 1995). Another possible reason supporting the conclusion that GBA helps improve students' writing is the development of their cognitive processes after the students have done the required activities and exercises reflecting and thinking critically about the order of moves, the communicative purposes of each move, as well as the linguistic features and sociolinguistic knowledge. This is because understanding the ordering of moves, the communicative purposes of each move, and linguistic features helps familiarize students with parts of the authentic texts written by people in the engineering community, so that the students will, in turn, be able to write similar texts with all necessary parts/moves. In addition, students can also use the appropriate linguistic feature for each move and suitable language in terms of sociolinguistic knowledge. The impacts of the development of these cognitive processes could be seen in the students' ability to transfer their awareness of the move analysis results of each genre in writing effective request e-mails, enquiry e-mails, and reports. Swami (2008) mentions that effective improvement in writing requires doing tasks that helps to develop cognitive processes.

The students were also found to have positive attitudes towards GBA. This finding is similar to that of the previous studies by Henry and Roseburry (1998, 1999), Flowerdew (2000), Udomyamokkul (2004), and Swami (2008). This is probably because the teaching method has helped them to improve their writing ability, so they gained more confidence in writing. The contents of the lesson are also directly related to the work of engineers. Mansfield (1993, as cited in Swami, 2008) states that GBA helps equip learners with knowledge about writing target genres in order to be able to participate in the real world of writing and this motivates them to study in ESP classes. Also, GBA provides the students with the confidence to handle genres. Moreover, they have favourable attitudes towards the activities and exercises of the lessons, especially the sentence analysis activities, since they thought that practicing writing via those activities had helped them to write better. However, some proponents have stated that the GBA fits beginning and intermediate language learners more than advanced learners because when people learn something new, they usually would like to find some samples that they can rely on (Kay & Dudley Evan, 1998; Kim, 2007). This means that advanced learners may not need to do sentence structure analysis activities since they know and have used those structures well. However, it seemed that the findings of this study somewhat differed from this argument because the results revealed that not only did the students in the low and high level groups have a positive attitude toward the sentence analysis activity, but also the students in the high level group shared a similar thought; that is, they learned how to write from the sentence samples.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study provide benefits to EFL teachers, especially those teaching English writing to Thai engineering students. First, with regard to teaching activities, the results pointed out that more emphasis should be placed on using a greater variety of activities. Comparing several examples of each genre and reviewing vocabulary can be examples of additional teaching activities. Moreover, asking students to categorize the grammar points, sentence structures, and sociolinguistic knowledge they can use in each move of each different genre can also be a choice for additional activities to help students show the extent to which they understand the linguistic features and sociolinguistic knowledge of each move. In order to prevent the students from feeling bored with analyzing sentence samples, the number of samples of text in the second and third lessons should be fewer than in the first lesson. In addition, adding more samples of each genre in the appendix of the course textbook should also be taken into consideration. The students can learn about sentence structures, grammar, and vocabulary by reading and analyzing those examples by themselves. Second, in order to make sentence analysis easier for students with low proficiency in English language, reviewing sentence structures and grammar should be focused on at the beginning of the course. As a result, students who are in the medium- and low- levels should have attended a basic writing course before taking the English for engineer course. In addition, it would be better if students could learn how to write narrative and descriptive texts. This is because they need the skills to describe situations, features of equipment, and retell events that happen in writing e-mails and reports of engineers.

At the same time, more research should be conducted in the area using the GBA in teaching speaking skills to engineering students. This is because there are various genres in the area of speaking that engineers normally use in their work, such as presenting the results of their work, telephoning, and presenting problems at work.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that GBA is effective in enhancing writing abilities. In particular, the students could learn how to write from explicit teaching and developing cognitive processes, which had helped them become aware of the outline of each genre, communicative purposes, linguistic structures, and sociolinguistic knowledge. In addition, the three groups of students with different levels of proficiency's positive attitudes towards GBA have supported the effectiveness of its use. Also, it was found that this study did not support the argument that GBA fits beginning and intermediate language learners more than advanced learners (Kay & Evan, 1998; Kim, 2007). This is because most students thought that learning from sentence samples was necessary for them. As a result, it is concluded that GBA could be an effective alternative to teaching writing to students with different levels of language proficiency.

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APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE OF LESSON 1: TEACHING STAGE 1

E-mail No. 1

In the following e-mail the parts are not in order. Re-order these parts by providing the numbers in the blanks.

To: Choakchai/Company name

Subject: C346 FSB Breakdowns

Date: 08/06/2010 06.23 PM

Choakchai,

Thanks in advance.　　(a) _____

Please forward the breakdowns to support these prices, and provide Frame Assy details THB 30.510. in Excel format (preferably in PDF).
(b)_____

Referring to your mail dated May 7 providing information on breakdowns from Wisdom about the FSB, the subsequent review in Thailand identified different prices:

　　1 ************
　　2 ************
　　3 ************

　　　　　　　　　　　　　(c) _____

Brandon Bucher

Complete version of e-mail no.1

Situation: a senior engineer of a car seat company in Europe & an engineer of branch office in Thailand.

To: Choakchai/ Company name

Subject: C346 FSB Breakdowns

Date:08/06/2008 06.23 PM

Choakchai,

Referring to your mail dated July 7 providing information on breakdowns from Wisdom about FSB, the subsequent review in Thailand identified different prices:

    1. XXX
    2. XXX
    3. XXX

Please forward breakdowns to support these prices, and provide Frame Assy details THB 30.510. in Excel format (preferable in PDF).

Thanks in advance,

Brandon

Comprehension Questions

1.   Why did Brandon write to Choakchai?

2.   What was the problem?

3.   What did Choakchai do on 7 July ?

4.   What is the relationship between them?

5.   Do you think Chokchai is senior, junior or approximately equal to Brandon?

6.   What parts of the text indicate their relationship?

APPENDIX 2

SAMPLE OF LESSON 2: WORKSHEET FOR ANALYZING E-MAIL (TEACHING STAGE 2)

Worksheet no. 1 for analyzing e-mail no. 3

Writing context:

1. What is the text about?
2. What is the tone of the text? (Formal, Informal)
3. Who is the author of the text?
4. Who is the intended reader of the text?
5. What is the relationship between the author and reader?

Move Analysis:

6. How many moves does the sample consist of and what are the move details?
7. What are the steps in each move?
8. What are the linguistic features of the request step?
9. What are the grammatical points of each move ?

Tenses:

Modal:

voice:

10. What are verbs in each move?
11. What are the language choices used in terms of sociolinguistic knowledge (formality, informality)?
12. What are the writing tactics used in the sample?

APPENDIX 3

SAMPLE OF LESSON 3: WRITING STRATEGY LESSON (TEACHING STAGE 2)

Exercise 8: Read the request e-mails or working situations provided below (exercise A-B) and write or add reasons to make the requests stronger.

A. *Email no.4*

Situation: engineer manager of paint dept. of an automotive company in Japan & an engineer of purchasing department of the branch in Thailand

Instruction: Rewrite this request e-mail to the same reader and ask for the same action. Add one more reason to make the request stronger.

Dear Yatabae san,

Could you please decide ASAP on the estimate total cost for packaging additional information because the maker needs lead time. We are concerned that HCAT may not finish on time if we do not get started urgently. I would appreciate your urgent response.

Best Regards,

Nuchporn
Engineer (purchasing dept.)

B. Situation 1: You are a test engineer. You would like to request a special tester time for program debugging and proving-in your samples HIUY-2 from the supplier. You are going to write to the factory manager who you have known for about 2 years. HIUY-2 is your new code and also belongs to one of your key customer. Think of reasons or strategy you should explain to the factory manager to be sure that he will provide tester time for you because the tester is very busy.

APPENDIX 4

SAMPLE 4: ATTITUDE SURVEY QUESTIONS

Part I: Attitude on the teaching method

5 means strongly agree

4 means agree

3 means neutral

2 means disagree

1 means strongly disagree

Content	Level of attitude				
	5	4	3	2	1
1. The content is useful, as it can be used in the work of engineers in the future.					
2. Activities and exercises in each unit can improve my writing ability in each type of genre.					
3. Activities and exercises of each unit are suitable for my English background knowledge.					
4. There is a wide variety of activities and exercises.					
5. The teaching method of having students analyze samples of written texts and then asking students to practice writing in class, in pair, in groups, and individually are suitable.					
6. Studying through analyzing samples of genre before the independent writing stage helps me to write well.					
7. I can write because I understand and remember the genre analysis.					
8. Practicing thinking is useful because it helps the writer plan writing organization and its details appropriately.					
9. I like this teaching method because it is easy to understand and it helps me write better.					
10. I like the way that the teacher provides broad instruction because students are free to create the details of what they want to communicate.					
11. It is easy to understand how to write each different genre because the teaching method helps me to see the organization clearly, and this makes me write better.					

12. I think that I can write English better.					
13. I feel more confident in writing English.					
14. I feel confident in working as an engineer in the future.					

Part II: Suggestion on the teaching method

_____
_____
_____
_____