# Exploring the Teaching Effects of Curriculum Cycle on Students' Mastery of Generic Structure of Persuasion

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## Abstract

This study takes one of most common genres in school settings — Persuasion as the target of study to explore Chinese university students' individual genre writing ability development from the perspectives of following the generic structure, with the purpose of providing hints for Chinese university students' genre writing ability development and enriching the studies of genre-based pedagogy. 34 English majors took part in the study and the linguistic analysis based on the designed persuasion generic structure analysis template was used to analyze the writings.

By comparing students' pre- and post-test writings, the study found that the participants made great changes in the post-test, and they had a good mastery of the generic structure of persuasion. Nearly all the writings in the post-test realized the social purpose of persuasion, more writings learned to use effective points and elaborations to illustrate their arguments, more writings added the optional and minor elements of generic structure such as providing background information, stating the problem, previewing, and reviewing the arguments. Besides, there are some creations for the generic structure: some writings had creation in the title; some writings used such questions as the background information or stating the problem in the introduction part to arouse the readers' interests or curiosity; some writings added appeal of actions in the conclusion part except for the important elements listed in the reiteration part.

**Keywords:** Chinese universities, curriculum cycle, generic structure, persuasion

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## Introduction

In the English teaching context of Chinese universities, language input skills of listening and reading are emphasized and practiced more than the output skills of writing and speaking owing to the standards of traditional testing systems. Hence, writing becomes the most difficult skill for students to master and it's usually the lowest score-getting skill in some national university English language tests, such as the College English Test Band 4 and 6 (CET 4 and CET 6) in China. In these decades, researchers and teachers are always finding the most suitable approach to writing and the writing instruction theories have experienced several stages of development.

The first is the product approach to writing, frequently used since the 1960s, emphasizing accuracy of language forms based on the idea that learning is the product of forming habits (Silva, 1990). In this approach, writing is largely about linguistic knowledge with focused attention on correct use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices (Pincas, 1982a). Imitation is the typical feature for students to learn in this approach. But it also has obvious weaknesses, among which, the most obvious one is that students' process skills play a small role, thus making learners' knowledge poorly understood by. In general, under the guidance of the product approach, the teachers usually present language structures in a text and then students imitate. After various experiments and teaching practices, this teacher-focused approach was quickly obsolete.

Then, in the 1970s, people found that the product approach had more and more disadvantages and began to shift to a new writing teaching approach. In the1980s, English as a second language (ESL) writing gradually moved from a language-based approach to the process approach. Process approach focuses on the writer, specifically on the creative thinking that demonstrates the non-linear process a writer uses in writing. It provides much interaction among students, peers, and the teacher. Compared with emphasis on the form of language in product approach, the process approach focuses on the writer's thoughts and the importance of repeated thinking, and pays less attention to readers (Silvia, 1990). For quite a long period, even to now, product approach has been accepted and applied to English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) writing classes because of its effectiveness. However, one drawback of process approach is that all text types (e.g., informal letter, research report) follow the same steps and procedures (i.e. prewriting, composing/drafting, revising, editing etc.). But this approach does not reflect the social context and social purpose of particular text types.

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Then in the early 1980s, genre-based approach evolved and was developed as a reaction to the weaknesses of the process approach, the teaching of which focused on specific features of genres. This approach was first developed by Martin and Rothery (1981) in a disadvantaged school program in Sydney, later by Martin (1992), Matthiessen (1995), Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) and other scholars. Initially, there's no single teaching/learning approach associated with the theory of "genre" or "text types". Practices vary depending on such factors as the students and the emphasis on particular aspects of genres. Inside the genre-based classrooms, a range of methods have been employed including investigating the texts and contexts of students' target situations, encouraging reflections on writing practices, exploiting genre sets, and creating mixed-genre portfolios (Johns, 1997; Paltridge, 2001). In SFL approaches, this teaching/ learning process is typically seen as a cycle which takes writers through modelling, joint negotiation, and independent construction, allowing students' different points of entry and enabling teachers to systematically expand the meanings students can create (e.g., Feez, 2002). This cycle (later called curriculum cycle) model represents a ''visible pedagogy'' in which what is to be learned and assessed is made clear to students, as opposed to the invisible pedagogy of process approach. As a teaching model, the curriculum cycle has gone through several models of adaptations by different researchers for different research purposes in these years. But the key features of it are explicit teaching and collaborative writing. Through explicit teaching, students get familiar with the textual features of genres with teacher's guidance, and through collaborative writing, students learn from peers. This scaffolding from both teachers and peers regulates students' learning and then contributes to their individual writing ability development.

Based on these underpinnings, the present study takes the Chinese university students' common classroom writing genre — Persuasion as the target of study to analyze students' individual genre writing ability development from the perspective of following the generic structure of persuasion, so as to provide hints for Chinese students' writing ability development, and to provide empirical evidence for studies in the field of the genre-based pedagogy.

**Literature Review**

Curriculum cycle, also called as the teaching and learning cycle in many researchers' genre-based studies, emerged from genre-based approaches to literacy in the late 1980s, where the initial emphasis was on writing (Rose & Martin, 2012; Rothery, 1994). Since then, this teaching model has evolved to attach closely to the supported reading and viewing of texts and images to build curriculum and field knowledge as well as to provide opportunities for students

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to engage in extended exchanges about language and texts (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). Originally the cycle has three stages (Callaghan and Rothery, 1988) and some researchers adopted the three-stage model in their studies (Feez, 1998; Feez, 2002), then many adapted versions are developed, such as the four-stage model of Derewianka (1990) and Butt et al. (2001), the five-stage model of Sharpe and Thompson (1998), and Derewianka and Jones (2016). The present study incorporates the above-mentioned models of curriculum cycle and adapts it into a four-stage model by linking the teaching context and adopting the new terms, as presented in the following figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*The Adapted Curriculum Cycle Model in This Study*
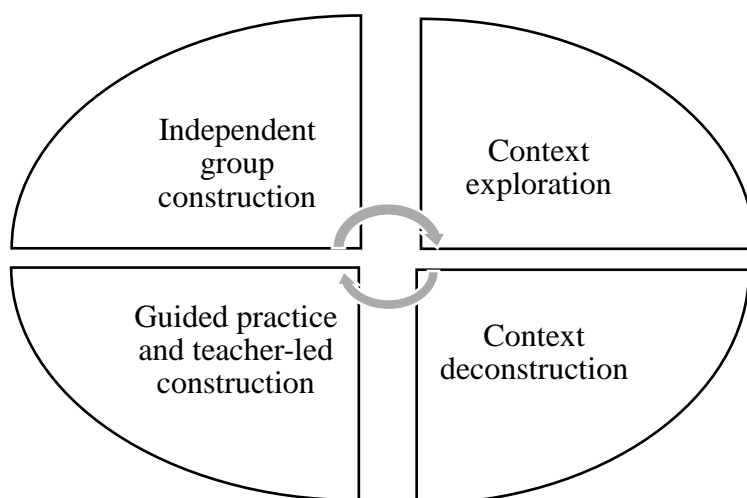


The above figure shows that there are four stages in the cycle: context exploration, text deconstruction/modelling, guided practice and teacher-led construction, and independent group construction. A variety of language activities including listening, speaking, reading and writing are designed to develop students' knowledge of genre as well as to enhance their comprehensive language skills and literacy skills. This study tries to explore how this designed cycle model improve students' individual genre writing ability development from following the generic structure of persuasion.

In the research field of genre-based pedagogy, many studies have reported the teaching effects of curriculum cycle on the writings of different genres, such as exposition (Kongpetch, 2006, Jamrassri, 2018), review report (Payaprom, 2012), recount (Chaisiri, 2010b; Rayupsri & Kongpetch, 2014;), narration (Pribady, 2012), discussion (Srinon, 2010; Nagao,2018; Rajagopalan & Jie, 2016), and summary writing (Chen & Su, 2012) etc. Scanning the previous studies, few studies pay close attention to the genre of persuasion, while in Chinese university English writing teaching contexts, persuasion is not only important in school settings and future

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work fields, but also an important written expression function in CSE. It is an essential skill for Chinese English learners to master. This study intends to take persuasion to carry out the experiment.

In addition, many studies have reported the teaching effects of applying curriculum cycle to genre teaching. Cornelius and Cotsworth (2015) found that curriculum cycle can be an alternative solution that allows EFL learners to understand how the text is composed using a holistic approach and also allows EFL teachers to teach by explaining purpose, generic structures, and linguistic markers of the target genre text. Jamrassri (2018) experimented 32 English Education students at Phranakhon Rajabhat University by using the curriculum cycle model to learn the exposition genre and her study found that the curriculum cycle model improved students' writing ability as the social purpose, generic structure, and linguistic features were appropriately employed in their essays finally. Syarifah and Gunawan (2015) observed improvement in six EFL learners' writing performance of a discussion genre text. In particular, the social function, schematic structure, and language features improved because of the cycle model. Thus, their results showed that scaffolding was embedded in the curriculum cycle. Walsh et al. (2015) argue that curriculum cycle supports English as an Additional Language or Dialect for students to understand and create different types of multimodal texts, including paper-based, live or digital. Yasuda (2015) used SFL as the research framework to investigate the changes in EFL learners' generic and language features. This author identified changes in learners' understanding of interpersonal and textual meanings through SFL-informed genre analysis tasks.

In addition, some studies reported both the positive effects and limitations of curriculum cycle. For example, the study of Tsou & Lin (2013) reported the benefits of applying curriculum cycle to explore the genre-based teaching in terms of allowing learners to gain genre awareness and improving writing quality, but the control group learners' understanding of genre awareness did not improve significantly. Viriya and Wasanasomsithi (2017) applied the curriculum cycle to writing lessons for a 12-week period. However, there was little improvement in the learners' awareness of the reader-writer relationship and what they should write about. Their study concluded that the limited improvement of the reader-writer relationship awareness is because of the omission of the awareness in the learning classroom context of the study.

To summarize, the previous studies show that although many studies have experimented this model, but agreements on the teaching effects of this cycle have not been reached. How this collaborative writing process can finally lead to individuals' genre writing ability development is an issue deserving further exploration. Thus, the present study intends

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to focus on the teaching effects of this curriculum cycle on students' mastery of generic structure of the genre of persuasion.

## Research Methodology

### *Participants*

The participants of the study are 34 second year English majors in an ordinary-level Chinese university "Chongqing Technology and Business University". They have learned English for 7 years and have taken the course of "Basic English Writing I" before the experimental semester to develop the basic writing skills and the ability to write with accurate grammar and vocabulary. Besides, according to China Standards of English (CSE), the language level of the participants is between level 4 and 5. That means they are able to write with correct grammar and vocabulary. Appendix A "Samples of Pre- and Post-tests Writing Analysis" can also reflect that those participants can write with correct grammar and vocabulary in both the pre- and post-test writings. In the experimental semester, the writing course they took was "Basic English Writing II" focusing on developing students' genre writing ability according to the curriculum. What they need to practice in the experimental study is to write with the appropriate generic structure of persuasion.

### *Research Instrument*

There two research instruments in the study. One is the lesson plans based on the designed curriculum cycle. There were 30 class hours for the experimental semester of writing course, covering 15 weeks, two hours for each week. The arrangement of lessons for the 15 weeks are as follows.

(1) The first week: course introduction and pre-test for individual writing ability. The pre-test was writing a persuasion in 40 minutes and the topic was "Whether it's wise to judge a person by appearance or not?"

(2) The second week: introducing the generic structure of persuasion. To be specific, the introduction included the following aspects:

-- Brief introduction of persuasion: its social purpose and relationship with argumentation and exposition.

-- Persuasion in daily life and study: its importance.

-- Generic structure of persuasion: the introduction of generic structure and written composition example analysis on the generic structure.

(4) The 3rd to 6th week: the first curriculum cycle on the topic of "garbage sorting",

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with each week focusing on one stage of curriculum cycle.

(5) The 7th to 10th week: the second curriculum cycle on the topic of "travelling", with each week focusing on one stage of curriculum cycle.

(6) The 11th to 14th week: the third curriculum cycle on the topic of "wealth", with each week focusing on one stage of curriculum cycle.

(7) The 15th week: the post-test for individual writing ability on the topic of "Is smart phone beneficial or harmful to us?" within 40 minutes in class time.

The other research instrument in the study is the designed persuasion generic structure analysis template. It is based on the important elements of persuasion in the corpus of persuasion in daily use and school settings. With corpus, people can now distinguish the deterministic approach and probabilistic approach. It is the probabilistic approach on which SFL is based and consequently the "genre". Language by its very nature is probabilistic. That is, given certain contexts and the purpose, we can expect certain forms of language. Besides, Foley (2012, p. 151) summarized the main genre structure used in school settings. The generic structure of persuasion is shown in the following figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Generic Structure for Persuasion*



| | **Social purpose** | To persuade the readers to accept one side of an argument |
|---|---|---|
| **Text Structure** | **Generic structure used in school settings** | Statement of position / Argument / Reinforcement of position |

*Note.* Cited from Foley, 2012, p. 151.

Based on these, the following elements in the generic structure were picked up to establish generic structure analysis template of persuasion as shown in the following table 1.

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**Table 1**

*Persuasion Generic Structure Analysis Template*

**Generic Structure Items**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Social purpose | To persuade one point of view | |
| Text Structure | Introduction | Background information |
| | | Stating the problem |
| | | Preview of argument |
| | | Taking a position |
| | Arguments | Point |
| | | Elaboration |
| | Reiteration | Review of arguments |
| | | Restatement of position |

All the individual writings collected in the study are analyzed based on the above template. And in the analysis process, some principles are adopted. If there are no points of arguments, then there will be no elaborations and the writing does not reach the social purpose of persuading to accept one point of view or to do an action. If there are logical problems, there will be no effective argument points and corresponding elaborations, then the writing fails to reach the social purpose. If the writer does not take a position clearly, that is, the genre of the writing task is not persuasion in strict sense, instead of being an argumentation or others, then the writing fails to reach the social purpose, and no points and elaborations will be counted. Besides, points of arguments in each individual writing are counted and in order to compare the results of pre- and post-tests, the average number of points is calculated.

### *Research Steps*

There are three steps in the study. The first step is carried before the teaching instruction. It focuses on the design of curriculum cycle and the persuasive writing feature analysis template as mentioned in the previous section. The second step is the pre-test and the implementation of the teaching experiment. The pre-test mainly focuses on the individual writing ability test rated by the indicators of persuasion generic structure items. Then, the lesson plans are prepared in this stage to be ready for the teaching instruction. After that, the designed curriculum cycle based on the lesson plans are implemented for a semester. The third step focuses on the post-test. Students' writing in the post-test will be evaluated and analyzed by the same template, and then the differences of writing ability development in adopting the elements of generic structure of persuasion in the pre- and post-tests are contrasted.

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**Findings and Discussions**

In the experiment, 68 individual writings from the pre-test and post-test are collected in total from the 34 participants of the study, with two writings from each participant. After the data collection, all the writings are analyzed by linguistic analysis with the persuasion generic structure analysis template. Two analysis samples respectively from pre-test and post-test are shown in Appendix A as examples to show the data analysis process. In the presentation of the findings, some symbols were also used to indicate the occurrence or frequency of each structure element as shown in the following table 2.

**Table 2**

*Symbols Used in the Analysis*

| ✓ | the writing has the element of the structure |
|---|---|
| × | the writing does not have the element of the structure |
| T/A | the total number of occurrences in all writings or the average number of points to illustrate the arguments |
| Per. | The percentage of writings with a particular element in all writings |

### *The Results of Generic Structure Analysis for Pre-test*

The results of the analysis on the generic structure of persuasion in the pre-test are presented in the following table 3.

**Table 3**

*Generic Structure Analysis for the Pre-test*

| Individual writing No. | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social purpose | To persuade one point of view | | × | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Text Structure | Introduction | Background | ✓ | × | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Taking a position | Stating the | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | × | × |
| | | Preview of arguments | ✓ | × | ✓ | × | × | × |
| | | Taking a position | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Arguments | Point | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| | | Elaboration | × | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | × | ✓ |
| | Reiteration | Review of arguments | × | × | × | × | × | × |
| | | Restatement of position | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ |

*Note.* The occurrence of each of the generic structure elements were calculated except the element of "point", the number of which was calculated. Then in the last column, the total

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| Student | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 (No.) | C5 | C6 | C7 | C8 | C9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 1 | ✓ | × | ✓ | × | ✓ |
| 8 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | × | × | × | ✓ |
| 9 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | ✓ | × | × | ✓ |
| 10 | ✓ | × | × | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | × | × | ✓ |
| 11 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 0 | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ | × |
| 12 | ✓ | × | × | 2 | ✓ | × | × | ✓ | ✓ |
| 13 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 0 | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ | × |
| 14 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | × | ✓ | × | ✓ |
| 15 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | × | ✓ | × | ✓ |
| 16 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 17 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 18 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | × | × | ✓ | ✓ |
| 19 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 1 | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 20 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | × | × | ✓ | ✓ |
| 21 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 1 | ✓ | × | × | × | ✓ |
| 22 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 23 | ✓ | × | × | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ |
| 24 | ✓ | × | × | 0 | ✓ | × | ✓ | × | × |
| 25 | ✓ | × | × | 0 | ✓ | × | × | × | × |
| 26 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 1 | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 27 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 28 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | × | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 29 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | × | ✓ |
| 30 | ✓ | × | × | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | × | × |
| 31 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | × | × | ✓ |
| 32 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 1 | ✓ | ✓ | × | × | ✓ |
| 33 | ✓ | × | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | × | × | ✓ |
| 34 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | × | × | ✓ | ✓ |
| **T/A** | 33 | 4 | 26 | 61/1.7 | 34 | 9 | 19 | 19 | 28 |
| **Per.** | 97.0% | 11.7% | 76.5% |  | 100% | 26.5% | 55.9% | 55.9% | 82.3% |

The above table 3 shows that there are some problems in the pre-test writings.

First for the social purpose of persuasion, most of the writings realized the purpose of persuasion, but six students failed to realize this purpose because their writings did not present clear arguments. This means that they were not writing persuasions.

Then for the introduction part, taking a position is the most important part. It was interesting that all of them took a position for the controversial topic, but one student made a logical mistake. The position he took and the arguments he presented to illustrate the position were not in the same side. Thus, his writing was identified as failing to reach the social purpose. For other parts of introduction, although they were not as important as taking a position, they were still quite necessary. There were some problems in this part: 15 students did not mention

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any background information and 15 students did not state the problems. Most of them did not preview the arguments, except nine students.

Next is the body part, seven students did not provide any point of argument for the position they take, six students only mentioned one point, which were obviously not enough to illustrate the topic. The average point they use to illustrate the arguments was only 1.7. That is, they used less than two points on average to illustrate their arguments, which lessens the persuasive value of their writing. Besides, eight writings did not provide effective elaborations for the arguments.

Finally for the reiteration part: most of them (88.3%), except four writings, did not review the arguments. But it is interesting that nearly all of them, except one, had the restatement of position.

In a word, in the pre-test, students had some problems in following the generic structure of persuasion. Most of the writings did not have the complete structure of persuasion and some of the writings even read illogical and were less persuasive for the limited points to illustrate the argument, some writings did not provide background information, state the problem, preview, and review the arguments. Some of the writings even deviate from the genre of persuasion without providing any points for the argument.

### The Results of Generic Structure Analysis for Post-test

The results of the analysis on the generic structure of persuasion in the post-test are presented in the following table 4.

**Table 4**

*Generic Structure Analysis for the Post-test*

| Individual writing No. | | | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social purpose | To persuade one point of view | | ✓ | ✓ |
| Text Structure | Introduction | Background | ✓ | ✓ |
| | | Stating the problem | ✗ | ✓ |
| | | Preview of arguments | ✓ | ✗ |
| | | Taking a position | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Arguments | Point | 3 | 2 |
| | | Elaboration | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Reiteration | Review of arguments | ✓ | ✗ |
| | | Restatement of position | ✓ | ✓ |

*Note.* The occurrence of each of the generic structure elements were calculated except the element of "point", the number of which was

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| Student | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | C5 | C6 | C7 | C8 | C9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 4 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| 8 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 3 | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 9 | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ |
| 10 | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | 2 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 11 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ |
| 12 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| 13 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 14 | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 15 | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 16 | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 17 | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 18 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 19 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 20 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 21 | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | 2 | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| 22 | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 23 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 24 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 25 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| 26 | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| 27 | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| 28 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 29 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| 30 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 31 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 32 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 33 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 34 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 3 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| T/A | 33 | 34 | 27 | 24 | 32 | 92 / 2.7 | 33 | 26 | 33 |
| Per. | 97.0% | 100% | 79.4% | 70.6% | 94.1% | | 97.0% | 76.5% | 97.0% |

In the post-test, their writings have the following features. First, for the social purpose of persuasion, all writings except one, which was written as an argumentation, realized the purpose of persuading readers to accept one side of view for the controversial topic.

Then for the introduction part, taking a position is the most important. All students took a position clearly, except one student who wrote an argumentation to talk about the advantages and disadvantages of the issue. For other parts of introduction, all writings provided some background information, more than 2/3 of the writings stated the problem (27 writings,

79.4%) and previewed the arguments (24 writings, 70.6%).

For the body part: point and elaboration, except one student, all other writings provided effective points and elaborations. The average points they used to illustrate the argument were 2.7, which is between two and three. They used at least 2 points to illustrate their arguments effectively. These can make the writings more persuasive.

For the reiteration part: 26 writings (76.5%) reviewed the arguments and nearly 33 writings (97.0%), except two, restated the position. This means that most of the students had an effective summary in the conclusion part.

All the above indicate that in the post-test of individual writings, the participants had a good mastery of the generic structure of persuasion. Only one student had a misunderstanding for the social purpose of persuasion and did not take one side of the issue to persuade the readers, all the other writings followed the structure well. More than 2/3 of the writings applied every element of the generic structure. Some writings missed certain minor elements of the structure, such as seven students did not state the problem, 10 students did not preview the arguments, eight students did not review the arguments, one student did not restate the position. But these missing parts are not vital for the generic structure and won't affect the realization of the social purpose of persuasion. Some elements such as preview, and review of arguments are optional. But if they can be added, the structure will be more complete and more compact.

### Comparison on Generic Structures Between Pre- and Post-tests

To compare the application of each element of generic structure, some symbols are used, which are summarized as follows in table 5.

**Table 5**

*Symbols for Generic Structure Comparison in Pre- and Post-Tests.*

| ① | Background information | ② | Stating the problem |
|---|---|---|---|
| ③ | Preview the arguments | ④ | Taking a position |
| ⑤ | Point | ⑥ | Elaboration |
| ⑦ | Review of arguments | ⑧ | Restatement of position |

Besides, the frequency, occurrence or percentage for each structure element was counted. For the element of "point", the average frequency was calculated too. For the mastery of generic structures, the results of pre- and post-tests are summarized in the following table 6.

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**Table 6**

*Comparison of Generic Structures in Pre- and Post-tests*

| Items | Social purpose | Introduction | | | | Arguments | | Reiteration | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ | ⑧ |
| **pre-test** | 28 | 19 | 19 | 9 | 34 | 61/1.8 | 26 | 4 | 33 |
| **post-test** | 33 | 34 | 27 | 24 | 32 | 92/2.7 | 33 | 26 | 32 |

The above table 6 shows that students had made progress in many aspects of following the elements of generic structure of persuasion in the post-test.

Firstly, for the social purpose, in the pre-test, six writings failed to reach the purpose while in the post-test, only one writing had that problem. That is to say, after a semester's instruction, they had a clearer understanding about persuasion.

Secondly, for the introduction part: for the first two elements of introduction, students made progress in the post-test compared with that of the pre-test. In the pre-test, only 19 writings provided some background information, nearly half of the writings (15 writings) did not state the problem, while in the post-test, all writings provided background information and 27 writings stated the problems. But for the elements of previewing the arguments and taking a position, students also made progress. Besides, only nine writings previewed the arguments in the pre-test, while 24 writings contained this element in the post-test. For taking a position, two students still had problems in the post-test. This is because one student misunderstood the direction of the writing task and followed the pattern of argumentation, and the other student actually took a position, which was shown in the body and conclusion part, but the language used to take a position in the introduction part was missing. That does not mean they two did not know the generic structure of persuasion. In a word, for the introduction part, most students had a clear idea about the important elements of persuasion.

Thirdly, for the body part, students learned to use effective points of arguments and elaborations to illustrate the position they had taken. They made progress in this part by increasing the effective points of arguments. In the pre-test, some writings did not have any point or have only one point, but in the post-test, nearly all writings had two or three points to effectively illustrate their position by using corresponding elaborations.

Fourthly, for the reiteration part, most writings (26 writings, 76.5%) in the post-test had a review of arguments, which can constitute a very important part of the summary. While in the pre-test, only four writings reviewed the arguments. For the restatement of position element, students did a good job in the pre-test, so there was no progress, only one student did not write this element. But this was not a retrogression, because this student was a special case: he had a misunderstanding on the genre of the writing task, so in his writing, he did not take a position, then there was no restatement of position.

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Besides, there are other creations for the generic structure in the post-test. Some writings had creation in the title, for example one writing was titled "No Phone Is Smart but You Are"; some writings used such questions as "Can you imagine a world without smartphones?", "Can you live for a second without your cell phone?", "How can we live without the smartphone?......" as the background information or stating the problem in the introduction part to arouse the readers' interests or curiosity; some writings added appeal of actions in the conclusion part except for the important elements listed in the reiteration part.

**Conclusion**

This study develops a four-stage curriculum cycle to help Chinese university students learn persuasive writings. A quasi-experiment was designed: before the experiment, a pre-test for individual persuasive writing ability was carried out, then three iterations of curriculum cycle were implemented and finally a post-test for individual writing ability was done at the end of the experiment. Through the linguistic analysis of students' individual writings in the pre and post-tests, the study found that participants learned more on the genre writing pattern through the designed curriculum cycle model. The language activities designed in the teaching cycle can enhance their understanding of each of the features of persuasion and contributes to their genre writing ability development. But this pattern of teaching may lead to stereotyped writings, so in the future writing practice, innovations in writing, even a slight element of creation should be encouraged after they have mastered the basic structure in writing.

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**Appendix A: Samples of Pre- and Post-tests Writing Analysis**

**1. Samples of pre-test writing analysis**

**(1) The analysis of textual feature for an individual pre-test writing**

| It's unwise to judge a person by appearance | Text structure |
|---|---|
| As is universally acknowledged that judging a person just by appearance is constituted as a rude and superficial behavior since the outward is congenital while disposition is more likely determined by upbringing. This kind of misjudgment can really contribute to the barrier in establishing relationships. Here come the reasons. | Stating the problem<br><br>Taking a position<br><br>Preview of arguments |
| First of all, we may be unable to make friends or inclined to make toxic friends. Betrayal, gossip, selfishness, all these defects are invisible according to a charming appearance and vice versa. A true friendship is heart to heart rather than appearance to appearance. Secondly, we may be incapable of collaboration. Appearance disagreement can give rise to ideas disagreement, and end up squabbling even disbanding. Last but not least, the majority of us long to share the trip through life with a perfect companion, but that perfect companion is worth questioning. | First argument:<br>Point<br>Elaboration<br><br>Second argument:<br>Point<br><br>Third argument:<br>Point |
| The Little Prince, a famous book, says "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly". Little could we know until we see beyond appearance since what is essential is invisible to eyes. When we make the acquaintance of someone, of course, it is wise to judge a person by disposition. | Restating the position |

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**(2) Summary of the textual feature for an individual pre-test writing**

| Generic Structure Items | | | Individual writing: Occurrence/frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social purpose | To persuade one point of view | | ✓ |
| Text Structure | Introduction | Background information | ✗ |
| | | Stating the problem | ✓ |
| | | Preview of argument | ✓ |
| | | Taking a position | ✓ |
| | Arguments | Point | 3 |
| | | Elaboration | ✗ |
| | Reiteration | Review of arguments | ✗ |
| | | Restatement of position | ✓ |

**2. Samples of post-test writing analysis**

**(1) The analysis of textual feature for an individual pre-test writing**

| No Phone Is Smart but You Are | Text structure |
|---|---|
| Nowadays, smartphones have gradually become a necessary part of life for the majority. It is undeniable that smartphones really bring us some convenience in daily life, such as available latest news, online learning, etc. However, it would be a better choice to not use smartphones in daily life. The reasons are as follows. | Background information <br> Stating the problem <br><br> Taking a position <br><br> Preview of arguments |
| First, over-using smartphones to communicate has directly influenced social connections. All sorts of apps for conversation offer amounts of informal words and expressions to tell the accurate feelings so people can communicate with others easily online. Nonetheless, short of skills to talk with others logically and sensibly in reality would be the only consequence if too much depending on this method. Incorrect behavior and expression would actually trouble people themselves no matter where it happens. It must be surprising for you to have great changes when you get rid of the limitation of your | First argument: <br> Point <br><br><br> Elaboration |

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| | |
|---|---|
| smartphones and go out to have communication with others. | |
| Second, smartphones would be a great intrusion in your learning or working process. People are always pursuing a quiet environment to settle down or study in such a modern country. Now smartphones have turned a new obstruction to them. All of us are familiar with the situation that smartphones should be muted so we could pay enough attention on works. But it is still a tough process for the majority to ignore the slight vibrations from smartphones. Though vibrations are slight, they could be the temptation informing people to see what messages they receive. Constantly interrupted by smartphones, people are unavailable to manage work in high efficiency. | Second argument: Point  Elaboration |
| Last but not least, smartphones provide us with a large amount of complicated news reports which may make us lose ourselves. As the saying goes "There are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand people's eyes" so every piece of news is definitely different for everyone. The reports we read from smartphones often mislead us into wrong values because editors in different platforms or countries have some prejudice to some extent. It is difficult to keep a sensible position for identifying that complex information all the time. The best way is to avoid using smartphones in daily life thus we could receive the least mixed information. | Third argument: Point  Elaboration |
| In conclusion, the life we live depends on how we shape it. No using smartphones gives you the chance to feel the real world and effort you pay for improving yourself. Avoid using smartphones and be yourself! | Review of argument  Restating the position |

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**(2) Summary of the textual feature for an individual post-test writing**

| Generic Structure Items | | | Individual writing: Occurrence/frequency |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social purpose | To persuade one point of view | | ✓ |
| Text Structure | Introduction | Background information | ✓ |
| | | Stating the problem | ✓ |
| | | Preview of argument | ✓ |
| | | Taking a position | ✓ |
| | Arguments | Point | 3 |
| | | Elaboration | ✓ |
| | Reiteration | Review of arguments | ✓ |
| | | Restatement of position | ✓ |

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