

# **Integrating the Genre-Based Approach into Teaching Writing in Arabic As a Foreign Language**

**Mahmoud Azaz**  
*University of Arizona*

## **Abstract**

Research on teaching writing in Arabic as a less commonly taught language is still in its infancy. Motivated by the dearth of research on the integration of the genre-based approach into teaching writing in Arabic and the absence of such an approach, this paper proposes a genre-based framework for teaching writing in Arabic. Building on conclusions drawn from recent research, it proposes four specific guiding principles. Furthermore, it offers a model lesson plan that shows an instructional sequence of how a single genre, which is congratulation letters, both personal and formal, can be effectively taught. Moreover, results of a survey conducted on a selected group of instructors of Arabic ( $n = 10$ ) showed that they responded very positively to the proposed model. The guiding principles and the lesson plan are aimed to offer the underlying theoretical knowledge and a practical example for teaching this genre and other relevant ones in Arabic.

**Keywords:** Genre; rhetorical moves; teaching writing; personal and formal correspondences.

## 1. Introduction

Since its early introduction in 1980s in the writings of Swales (1981), the genre-based approach has been a central topic in rhetoric and composition studies (Partridge, 1996, 2001). In second language (L2) pedagogy, the Genre-Based Writing Instruction (GBWI) is an offshoot of the genre-based analysis approach that has caught increasing attention in recent L2 writing studies (see Byrnes, 2009; Cheng, 2007; Dovey, 2010; Flowerdew, 2002; Gentil, 2005; Hyland, 2007; Hyon, 2002; Johns, 2008, 2011; Martin & Rose, 2008; Matsuda, et al., 2003; Norris, 2009; Tardy, 2009, among many others). Broadly, the appeal of the GBWI remains in fostering L2 writers' understanding of the relationship between features of texts and their communicative functions. This understanding promotes L2 learners' awareness of the multiple social functions that genres have in different social situations (Pasquarelli, 2006). Furthermore, the GBWI has provided foreign and second language teachers with well-defined landmarks that have guided effective L2 writing classes. This effectiveness is measured in terms of the learners' awareness of genres structure and how this awareness translates into good written texts (see Yasuda, 2011).

Recently, the field of teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language (TAFL) has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of learners. The growing status of Arabic as a critical language after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, has contributed to increasing the number of learners (Al-Batal, 2007; Bergman, 2009; Wiley, 2007). The Modern Language Association (MLA) report in 2002 showed that college and university enrollments in Arabic in the U.S. nearly doubled between 1998 and 2002, from 5,505 to 10,584. By 2009, the number jumped to 35,083. This pushed Arabic enrollments to register "the largest percentage growth" and "the fastest growing" among all foreign languages at U.S. colleges and universities (see the MLA report, 2009). Unfortunately, this great interest in learning Arabic has outstripped the well-designed teaching materials and textbooks that meet the ever-changing needs of AFL learners (Al-Batal, 2007).

Needless to say, the integration of a wide array of genres that have multiple communicative functions is an important component of effective textbooks and materials in foreign and second language education (see Crawford, 2002; Gilmore, 2007; Mishan, 2005). Arabic instruction is no exception. However, in the field of teaching Arabic as a foreign language, there is a dearth of research on the integration of the genre-based approach. The existing body of literature on teaching writing in Arabic examined the deficiencies in essays written in Arabic, especially cohesion and coherence (Shakir & Obeidat, 1992). Moreover, in an online WordReference Language Forum<sup>1</sup>, some AFL learners deplored not studying highly functional genres of personal communication, such as different types of letters.

To address the gap reported above, the following paper proposes a genre-based framework for teaching a single genre, which is congratulation letters, both personal and formal, in AFL. Building on conclusions drawn from recent literature, it proposes four specific guiding principles for the integration of the genre-based approach in teaching writing in Arabic. Furthermore, it offers a model lesson plan that shows how congratulation letters, both personal and formal, can be effectively taught. Moreover, it offers the results of a survey conducted on a selected group of AFL instructors (n = 10) to know their opinions and feedback about the proposed model. The guiding principles and the lesson plan are aimed to offer the underlying theoretical knowledge and a practical example for teaching this genre and other relevant ones in Arabic.

Before doing this, the paper does two things: First, it introduces the reader briefly to the concept of “genre” within three schools of thought: Systemic Functional Linguistics, the New Rhetoric School, and English for Specific Purposes School (ESP).

---

<sup>1</sup>The Wordreference.com Language Forum is an open forum for learners of many foreign languages. The posts that relate to the thread on integrating letters is available through the following link: <http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=338471>

Second, it overviews the contributions of the genre-analysis approach to L2 writing..

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Genres and text types**

In the field of rhetoric and composition studies, the term “genre” was introduced by Swales (1981) in his seminal article about the genres of academic writing. From an ESP perspective that Swales (1990) helped introduce, the concept of “genre” is depicted in the definition below:

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 members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse influences, and constrains choice of content and style (p. 58)

The above quote stresses a number of things. First, the purpose of genre is primarily communicative because genres have social functions that writers seek to achieve. Second, these functions are realized by linguistic and stylistic features that create schematic structures of content and style. This structure is developed using distinct principles and procedures that a speech community shares.

Genres are often distinguished from text types, although the differences between them are not clear-cut (Paltridge, 1996). One outstanding distinction is in terms of form: whereas a text type is identified in terms of internal structure or linguistic elements, a genre is identified in terms of external features and functions (Biber, 1988). Text types may include procedure, description, exposition, problem-solution, report, and review. These text types represent the following genres respectively: recipes, personal letters, advertisements, formal letters, news items, and film reviews. Although genres and text types

are distinct, both represent complementary features of a systematic analysis of texts.

## 2.2. Three approaches to genre

The Sydney School, known later as school of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed an early approach to genre analysis. SFL viewed genres as social and dynamic processes or activities. As these processes change from time to time according to social values and conventions, genres also change. This view approached language as an automatic system of meanings in social contexts (Halliday & Hassan, 1989). Language is seen as more of a resource for creating meanings than a strict system of grammatical rules and forms. It is a system of choices that allows users to express social functions and interact with other users of the same language. According to this framework, a genre is a “staged, goal-oriented social process” (Martin, 1992: 505) that uses language to achieve social functions in daily contexts. Any context has the capacity to activate a number of texts that enable language users to perform multiple social functions. This capacity was called “generic structure potential” (Hyland, 2004). Importantly, the motivation behind the development of genres in SFL was primarily pedagogical; they can be used as a tool to help instructors teach writing more effectively.

The New Rhetoric (NR) School offered a different perspective on genres, although it shared some preliminary thinking with the SFL School. Although NR agreed on the importance of context in creating multiple texts, it highlighted the role played by social and cultural values in the development of genres. Further, it disagreed on the issue of the teachability of genres. This is because they are “relatively stable types” (Bakhtin, 1986: 60) that are “flexible, plastic, and free” (p.79). Since genres are dynamically changing, they are “stabilized-for-now” forms. In the words of Miller (1994), the nature of genres as a social action is “centered not on the substance or the form of the discourse, but on the action it is used to accomplish” (p.24). Although the NR school brought genres from workplaces to the classroom to be analyzed and taught, analysis was fundamentally “ethnographic” in nature; it focused on the interaction

patterns as shown by texts and the physical setting of those who contributed to the genres. Interview and observation were basic tools.

In short, the NR view of genres as dynamic forms restricted the possibility of teaching them in language classes. In addition, the NR proponents thought that teaching genres in language classes would result in inauthentic texts; once texts are taken out of their original context to be analyzed and taught, they lose their original features. For these two reasons, the NR school was critiqued. For example, Hyland (2004: 37-40), commenting on the NR approach to teaching genres, argued that it would be a mistake to overestimate the flexibility of genres as a factor that constrains its teachability. There is no need to wait for genres to stabilize in order to teach them.

The ESP approach, like that of the Sydney School, was motivated mainly by pedagogical purposes for teaching English writing to nonnative speakers to qualify them for procuring jobs in the market. It explored the demands placed by workplace contexts on the development and teaching of writing skills. Therefore, it investigated the dimension of L2 writing instruction in many pedagogical contexts (see Hyland, 2004) for meeting local needs. Some ESP genre researchers used the frameworks developed by the SFL and the NR schools and did not develop a distinctive approach of their own. They (c.f. Swales, 1990) analyzed the writing needs of students in the academic domain. These needs included writing research articles, conference abstracts, book reviews, grant proposals, undergraduate essays, textbooks, recommendation letters, and doctoral dissertations. Other examples in the ESP school included non-academic genres as direct mail letters, business faxes, engineering exports, legal case briefs, company annual reports, and minutes of meetings.

In summary, despite the different perspectives adopted by each of the three schools, they all meet on common grounds. First, genres are cultural communicative activities or practices that construct meanings within a given context. These activities are identified and mutually understood by the same community of

practice. Second, genres are highly structured with some constraints in terms of context, form, and linguistic features. Third, context plays a major role in framing the structure and the function of each genre. Fourth, although genres are relatively stable, they are important tools in L2 writing classes. L2 learners need to be presented with functional genres and be trained on how to reconstruct and model texts that fall within these genres. Also, all schools within varying degrees have attempted to use to genre-based approach to improve L2 writing skills in multiple pedagogical contexts. The next section brings some of these studies to light.

### **2.3. Contributions of the genre-analysis approach to L2 writing**

In the last decade, many studies have situated the GBWI at the center of L2 writing pedagogy. Research in this area has investigated the potential of teaching genres in L2 writing classes. Given the space limitation, I review some of these recent studies briefly.

Yasuda (2011) explored the effect of activating novice writers' awareness of the email genre. The study focused on emails that have communicative functions as apologies, introductions, and expressing gratitude. It asked two research questions: First, how college-level Japanese EFL writers develop their genre awareness and knowledge in a systematically designed genre-based writing course. Second, how they develop their linguistic knowledge and writing competence. Over a fifteen-week course that built on Byrnes's (2002) concept of task and Norris's (2009) concept of task sequence, interviews and surveys were administered to measure learners' genre awareness. The development of writing skills was evaluated using the pre-test-post-test design. Results showed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test. The genre pedagogy was concluded to be an effective tool for enhancing email-writing skills. This effectiveness was maximized when task-based and genre-based paradigms were integrated.

In an ESP context, Weber (2001) used a teaching model that integrated the genre-based framework with a concordance-based approach for teaching academic legal essay writing for undergraduate

students. Two steps were used in the model: The first aimed at identifying basic structural features that all legal texts have. Using a small corpus of model essays, the second step aimed at identifying the frequent lexical items that correlated with generic structures. Taken together, the two steps identified the lexico-grammatical regularities used in legal genres. In a follow-up stage, extra activities were used to enhance learner awareness of lexical items in legal genres. In the final stage of the project, L2 learners were asked to write their own short legal essays to reflect the lexico-grammatical features they had learned. The study reported a great improvement in L2 learners' writing skills from a linguistic and a legal point of view.

Bacha (2010), motivated by the difficulty Arabic-speaking learners of English have in constructing academic arguments, used a teaching/learning approach that built on contrastive rhetoric of Arabic and English in argumentative writing (El-Seidi, 2000) and on academic argument structure developed by Jonson et al. (2003). The instructional approach started with building the context for the L2 learners by exposing them to academic argument essays to identify the basic rhetorical components of the targeted genre. Learners then were asked to come up with their first essays without any formal instruction. Their essays were analyzed and graded using an assessment rubric to act as pretests. In the second phase, learners were exposed to more essays with the goal of identifying the authors' purpose, readership, arguments, counterarguments, and refutation of opposing arguments. They were challenged to identify the rhetorical moves that marked each of the previous components. By the end of the second phase, they were instructed to deconstruct the texts. In the third phase, they were required to construct the text jointly. In the fourth, they were asked to construct the texts independently. In the final phase of the project, they were asked to link the related texts. The study concluded that there was a tangible organizational improvement in L2 student writers' essays.

Along similar guidelines of the aforementioned studies, Chen and Su (2012) explored the effectiveness of genre analysis in teaching the narrative genre in English as a foreign language in a summer class. Using the pre-test-post-test design, forty-one learners' summaries of a novel (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain)



were evaluated in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, and language use. Students proceeded with reading the targeted genre, writing a summary, setting the context for genre learning, modeling the targeted genre, joint construction, and finally independent construction. Results of the study demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in writing narrative summaries, suggesting that the genre-based approach is both a feasible and effective model for enhancing student writers' summarization skills.

Many other studies reported great gains for the genre-based approach. Cullip (2009) provided evidence for the positive effects of a genre-based approach on argumentative writing. Wray and Lewis (1997) concluded that the genre-based approach was very effective in creating frames for future writing development. Yayli (2011) concluded that genres not only improved writing skills, but also allowed for feature transfer of (re)contextualization across genres. Pang (2002) found that the genre-based approach had significant impacts on raising novice L2 learners' awareness of the functions of rhetorical moves and patterns in the genre of film reviews. This awareness was translated into better-written reviews. Henry and Roseberry (1998) compared between the effects of traditional instruction and genre-based instruction in improving skills of writing tourist information guides. They reported higher gains for the genre-based approach group.

### **3. Four guiding principles in integrating genres in L2 writing in Arabic**

In summary, most of the aforementioned studies focused on the effectiveness of the genre-based approach in teaching writing in English as a foreign/second language. Second, these studies reported great gains in L2 writing when the genre-based framework was used. In the field of teaching writing in Arabic as a less commonly taught language, research on teaching writing is still in its infancy. Current existing research focused on the comparison between efficient versus less-efficient student writers (e.g., Khaldieh, 2000) or on how to create cohesion and coherence in texts (e.g., Shakir & Obeidat, 1992). To the best of my knowledge, no attempts were made to develop a genre-based framework that can contribute to the development of

writing instruction in Arabic. The next section addresses this gap by identifying four specific guiding principles that inform the integration of genres in writing in Arabic. Furthermore, it offers a model lesson plan for teaching a single genre, which is congratulation letters.

### **3.1 Guiding principle 1: Early integration of genres**

The shortage of research on the integration of the genre-based approach into teaching writing in Arabic motivates the need for early inclusion of highly functional genres in Arabic instructional textbooks and materials. Learners' current needs should be surveyed to identify the text types that they need to study. These text types should consider not only the learners' current needs, but also their future ones. Since genres vary in complexity and social functions, it is important for L2 beginning writers of Arabic to be exposed to various primary genres as stories, personal narratives, picture descriptions, recipes, and different types of letters - such as letters of thanking, congratulation, apology, inquiry, and regret. These genres, as Byrnes (2009) explains, have the potential of prompting L2 writers' awareness of the discourse features. These features achieve the communicative purposes of each genre in and beyond the classroom.

There is always the concern that the L2 learners' limited linguistic capacities may impede their ability to utilize genres as a resource for improving their writing skills. This concern can be effectively handled with the careful selection of certain text types. Building on their existing linguistic resources along with effective pedagogical scaffolds, L2 writers of Arabic can smoothly move from informal and simple genres to more complex and formal ones. Recent work that used genres as tools for developing writing skills (see Byrnes, 2009) concluded that carefully staged writing tasks that present a variety of genres help learners move toward a new stage in their language development.

Importantly, the early integration of genres should be developed in light of a comprehensive and well-informed vision that considers a multitude of genres across different levels. There are many curricular projects in the most-commonly taught foreign languages, which can be used as guides for developing this

comprehensive framework in Arabic. One example is the Developing Multiple Literacies Project 2 at Georgetown University<sup>2</sup>. This project aims at developing multiple literacies through the integration of genres. The importance of this project remains in offering sequenced courses that start off with familiar and simple genres and move to unfamiliar, public, and complex genres.

### **3.2 Guiding principle 2: Authenticity**

Since genres are presented in the form of multiple text types, a key principle in the selection of genres for Arabic writing classes is text authenticity. Although this construct has been long debated in L2 pedagogies (see Mishan, 2005, chapter I for an overview), some criteria are still key for characterizing it. Authentic texts should be (i) original (i.e., they were not modified); (ii) used for normal communicative purposes in real-life situations; (iii) leads to learner real-engagement; (iv) and conducive to real-language usage.

For teaching correspondences, for example, the selected letters, both personal and formal, should represent the culture of the target community of practice. In addition, they should be up-to-date and of great relevance and interest to learners of Arabic. These authentic texts can be selected from the few existing Arabic corpora. Also, they can be selected from up-to-date newspapers, magazines, advertisements, literary works, broadcast media, songs, and films.

### **3.3 Guiding principle 3: Developing pedagogical interventions and treatments**

When genres are systematically taught, they develop L2 writing quality in low as well as in advanced proficiency levels. For Arabic as a foreign language, there is a pressing need to develop

---

<sup>2</sup>The Developing Multiple Literacies Project is part of a comprehensive curriculum renewal project for foreign language education at Georgetown University. It was initiated in 1997. More information about this project is available through the following link: <https://german.georgetown.edu/page/1242716500101.html>

pedagogical interventions and treatments that focus on teaching a multitude of genres at different proficiency levels. These pedagogical treatments can be conducted either by teachers in small-scale action research studies or by researchers in Arabic pedagogy of wide-scope pedagogical studies. Broadly defined as teachers' endeavor to improve their practice, action research has been recently viewed as a main tool for improving the curriculum (see McKernan, 2013). As the programs of teaching Arabic may vary in their curricular plans, teaching genres may not be their main focus. In these programs, AFL teachers are highly recommended to develop their small-scale action research studies that identify one category of genres and develop a short pedagogical treatment to teach it. To do this, AFL teachers act as researchers who develop clear objectives for their treatments.

Trained researchers of Arabic pedagogy need to develop wide-scope research studies that show the effectiveness of the genre-based approach to teaching writing. In fact, a systematic comparison between the traditional approaches to teaching writing and the genre-based approach would demonstrate the effectiveness of the latter. The pre-test and the post-test design of pedagogical treatments is highly recommended as it allows learners of Arabic to see the improvement of their writing quality. Whether conducted by teachers or by researchers, these pedagogical interventions should highlight the role of genre-based activities. These are further detailed in the next guiding principle.

### **3.4 Guiding principle 4: Explicit teaching of rhetorical moves and lexico-grammatical features**

Activities that raise learners' awareness of the rhetorical moves and their respective lexico-grammatical features across genres are an important component of pedagogical interventions and treatments. L2 writers of Arabic should be explicitly taught how different genres are organized in such a way that achieves their expected communicative purposes and functions (Hyland, 2004). Since rhetorical moves vary across languages and cultures (see Connor, 1996; Kaplan, 1988; Leki, 1991), it is very important to discuss the cultural dimension in the analysis of these rhetorical moves (Beghtol, 2001; Martin & Rose, 2008; Miller, 1994). In

addition, L2 writers of Arabic need to be aware of the lexico-grammatical features (e.g., formulaic expressions and collocations) that characterize each rhetorical move (see Appendix 1 for an example). Typical awareness-raising activities require L2 writers to:

1. group texts into families according to their social functions, contexts of use, and linguistic structures,
2. identify the similarities and the differences between various genres,
3. categorize text types,
4. identify rhetorical moves within some text types,
5. list and then locate structural features within a text type,
6. jointly and then independently deconstruct a text,
7. independently construct a text, and
8. come up with their own text types given some prompts.

These activities move from the simple skills of genre categorization and analysis to the complex skills of genre creation. These activities are further discussed in the model lesson plan in the next section.

#### **4. A Proposed genre-based lesson plan**

Letters in general are highly functional genres. For the purpose of specificity, this lesson plan proposes a model lesson plan for teaching how to write a single genre, which is congratulation letters, both personal (i.e., between friends, family members, etc.), and formal (i.e., in formal settings as in work environments; see Appendix 1 for an example). Personal congratulation letters can be taught for low and intermediate learners, and formal congratulation letters can be taught for high intermediate and advanced learners. The extended population who may benefit from this lesson plan includes students of Arabic as a foreign/second language in North America, Europe, or Asia. It also may be useful for L2 learners of Arabic in study abroad programs. Last, it may also be beneficial for heritage language learners of Arabic who live and study in the US or Europe or in other parts of the globe. This lesson plan is expected to take around 4 hours of classroom instruction in addition to 2 hours of out-of-classroom work.

The structure of this lesson plan follows an effective instructional sequence that consists of six phases:

1. Developing learning objectives
2. Setting the stage
3. Providing linguistic input
4. Providing guided practice
5. Providing free practice for application and expansion
6. Evaluation and assessment

#### 4.1 Developing learning objectives

**Cultural objectives:** By the end of this lesson, learners are expected to be able to:

- identify and analyze the social contexts in which the genre of congratulation letters, both personal and formal, are used,
- differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable congratulation letters in Arabic, and
- compare and contrast between personal and formal congratulation letters in Arabic.

**Language objectives.** By the end of this lesson, learners are expected to be able to:

- identify the structure of personal and formal congratulation letters,
- identify the rhetorical moves in congratulation letters, and analyze variations (if any),
- identify the meanings of vocabulary items (especially formulaic expressions and honorifics) and phrases used in personal and formal congratulation letters,
- jointly and then individually deconstruct congratulation letters and identify the differences between formal and informal ones, and
- jointly and then individually construct appropriate personal and formal congratulation letters in Arabic, highlighting their structural components (i.e., the rhetorical moves) and

contextual information (i.e. the writer, the audience, their relationships, etc.).

#### **4.2 Setting the stage: At this stage, the teacher will:**

- review some key vocabulary items and structures that the students have learned before. Some of these items are integrated into congratulation letters. For example, a letter written to congratulate a colleague or a friend on getting a new job may require the teacher to review frequent words such as ‘job’, ‘obtain’, ‘success’, ‘new’, ‘future’, ‘congratulate’, etc. before introducing the sample letter.
- give out two congratulation letters and ask the learners to identify their overall structure, and
- state the topic of the lesson and its objectives in clear and simple language.

#### **4.3 Providing linguistic input:**

At phase 1 of this step, the teacher will:

- give out a personal congratulation letter to the learners as a reading comprehension task,
- ask the learners general questions that check their understanding of the text followed by specific questions on the details,
- ask the students to discuss their answers with their classmates and to come up with final answers to the comprehension questions, and
- give out a worksheet to the learners and ask them to reread the text and identify its key contextual features. These are provided in table (1) below:

*Table1.* Key contextual features in a text

1.	The purpose of the text	_____
2.	The writer of the text	_____
3.	The intended audience or addressee	_____
4.	The relationship between participants	_____
5.	Key moves in the text that mark the beginning, the content, and the end of the text (see Appendix 1)	_____
6.	Key vocabulary in the text	_____
7.	Key formulaic expressions	_____
8.	Key honorifics and titles in the text	_____
9.	Key structures in the text	_____

At phase 2 of this step, the teacher will give out two more congratulation letters, personal and formal, and ask the learners to compare and contrast between the two in terms of their contextual and discoursal features. These are provided in table (2) below:

*Table 2.* Comparison between contextual and discoursal features in personal and formal congratulation letters

Aspect of comparison	Text 1 (personal)	Text 2 (formal)
1. The purpose of the text	_____	_____
2. Writers	_____	_____
3. Audience	_____	_____
4. Relationship between participants	_____	_____
5. Key moves in the texts	_____	_____
6. Key structures	_____	_____
7. Key vocabulary	_____	_____
8. Key formulaic expressions	_____	_____
9. Key honorifics	_____	_____
10. Reflection	_____	_____



**4.4 Guided practice activities:** These include the following four activities:

**Textual organization:**

The teacher will present a congratulation letter and divide it into discourse segments. These segments will be scrambled. In groups, the learners will attempt to discover the correct sequence of the moves in it.

**Color-coding:**

In this activity, a longer congratulation letter will be given out to the learners. They will be given labels as ‘opening’, ‘greeting’, ‘body’, ‘wishing’, ‘conclusion’, and ‘signature’. They will be asked to code the discourse segments with these colored labels.

**Information gap /Jigsaw:**

In this activity, the class will be divided into groups of three to five. In each group, each learner will have a different component of a longer congratulation letter. They are required to ask and answer questions about the parts that each one has. Then, they are asked to figure out the right sequence of the moves in the text from the beginning to the closing.

**Text creation:**

In this activity, the learners are given table (3) below that provides text creation guidelines. Then, they are asked to write congratulation letters in Arabic.

*Table 3.* Guidelines for text creation

---

1. The purpose of the text	○ Congratulation
2. Writer	○ Michael
3. Audience/addressee	○ Ahmed
4. Relationship between participants	○ Facebook friends
5. Context	○ Ahmed has been awarded a scholarship to study in the U.S.
6. Key moves in the texts: mark the beginning and the end of the text	○ Key moves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Date</li> <li>▪ Greeting Ahmed</li> <li>▪ Opening greeting</li> <li>▪ Content</li> <li>▪ Warm congratulation</li> <li>▪ Recognition of his achievements</li> <li>▪ Wish him great success</li> <li>▪ Closing greeting</li> <li>▪ Signature</li> </ul>
7. Key vocabulary, phrases and expressions	○ Include some of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Received the news of...</li> <li>▪ With great pleasure...</li> <li>▪ Pleased to send you...</li> <li>▪ This achievement implies...</li> <li>▪ This recognition shows...</li> <li>▪ Your achievements</li> <li>▪ Good example</li> <li>▪ Aims and goals</li> <li>▪ We ask God to ...</li> </ul>

---

**4.5 Free practice (expansion activities):** At this stage, learners are asked to:

- present their analysis of two congratulation letters, given the steps they learned. They are also asked to show how similar or different these two letters are from the ones they studied before.

- select two congratulation letters online and present their analysis given the worksheets provided. They are also asked to color code the rhetorical moves in these letters.

**4.6 Evaluation and assessment:** The learners are asked to respond to the following two prompts by writing appropriate congratulation letters. They are asked to pay special attention to whether the context is personal or formal.

- Prompt 1: You are acting as the Provost of the School of Humanities at Cairo University. One of the School's Faculty in the department of Arabic has recently received the School's Distinction Award for his/her recent book. Write a congratulation letter to him/her.
- Prompt 2: Your friend Samy in Beirut, Lebanon has recently got a new job at Google Lebanon. Write a letter to congratulate him on the new job and wish him great success.
- What similarities and/or differences can you report between the two congratulation letters that you will write for the previous two contexts?

## 5. Teachers' views and feedback

### 5.1 Participants

To know the teachers' views and feedback of the aforementioned genre-based lesson plan, a survey was prepared and uploaded to a Qualtrics webpage. An email was sent to an initial pool of 17 teachers of Arabic to know their willingness to participate in the survey. A final group of 10 teachers (3 females and 7 males) of Arabic in the U.S. responded with great interest in taking the survey. Their years of experience in teaching Arabic ranged between 4 and 9 years. They received an official email that further showed the purpose of the study, some instructions, and the link to the survey.

## 5.2 Survey Result

The survey consisted of 13 items in addition to an open-ended question that asked the participants about their overall comments (see Appendix 2). For each of the 13 items, they were asked to rate their opinions on a Likert scale that had five levels: Strongly agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

The 13 items were divided into three parts. The first part consisted of 3 items. The first asked whether congratulation letters have high communicative functions for learners of Arabic. The second asked whether the genre of congratulation letters is integrated as writing tasks in the current textbooks they are using. The third asked whether their students might respond positively to teaching the genre of congratulation letters, formal and informal, in their Arabic classes.

The second part consisted of 8 items that asked about the teachers' views of the proposed lesson plan. The 8 items elicited responses about whether the lesson plan raises the learners' awareness of the contextual, rhetorical, and linguistic features of the genre under consideration. The third part consisted of two items that asked about the teacher's views of the pedagogical sequence in the lesson plan and whether it met their expectations and further developed the way they approach teaching letters in Arabic.

### 5.3. Survey results

Results of the survey showed that 4 teachers disagreed strongly and 4 disagreed that the current textbooks integrate the genre of congratulation letters as writing tasks. Further, 3 teachers agreed strongly and 7 agreed that the proposed genre has a high communicative function for learners of Arabic. Similarly, 3 teachers strongly agreed and 3 teachers agreed that their students would respond positively to teaching congratulation letters. Four teachers were uncertain.

With regard to the proposed lesson plan, 7 teachers agreed strongly and 3 agreed that the proposed lesson plan raises the

learners' awareness of the particular contextual features of the genre under study. Also, 6 teachers strongly agreed and 4 agreed that the proposed activities in the lesson plan raise the learners' awareness of the differences between the formal and informal congratulation letters. Furthermore, 8 teachers strongly agreed and 2 teachers agreed that the proposed activities in the lesson plan raise the learners' awareness of the rhetorical moves in formal and informal congratulation letters. When asked whether the proposed activities in the lesson plan can raise the learners' awareness of the linguistic features of congratulation letters, 5 teachers agreed strongly and 3 agreed with this statement. Also, they responded very positively (4 strongly agreed and 6 agreed) that the proposed lesson plan moved from modeling the particular genre to the actual creation of similar ones.

Importantly, 6 teachers strongly agreed and 4 agreed that the lesson plan raises the learners' awareness of the address forms and honorifics that are common in Arabic letters. Also, the 10 participants responded very positively (8 strongly agreed and 2 agreed) that the proposed lesson plan raises the learners' awareness of the structure and function of the genre under consideration. Similarly, they responded very positively that the overall instructional sequence in the proposed lesson plan meet their expectations; 4 agreed strongly and 6 agreed with this statement. Last, 3 teachers strongly agreed and 4 agreed that the proposed lesson plan changed their way of thinking about how the genre under study should be taught. Only 2 teachers were uncertain about its importance and only 1 teacher disagreed with this statement.

Overall, the aforementioned results of the survey showed that the selected sample teachers responded very positively to the proposed lesson plan. Importantly, the open-ended comments showed the lesson plan to be 'extremely helpful', 'truly superb and well-designed', has a sequence that 'is an excellent example of scaffolding', 'an outstanding way to transmit valuable skills', and 'an excellent lesson plan and project'.

## 6. Conclusion

The above genre-based lesson plan can be modeled for teaching other genres in Arabic as a foreign language. It maximizes some pedagogical activities that offer further opportunities for raising the learners' awareness of genre structure. Also, it is noteworthy that the previous lesson plan integrates reading and writing. Despite the strengths outlined above, there are some cautionary points that need to be considered when using the genre-analysis approach in L2 writing classes in Arabic. First, L2 learners should not be viewed as passive producers of sample genres. Rather, they need to be encouraged to be flexible in embracing variations in their writing. Contexts vary and so do learners' written pieces. Second, to overcome some of the weaknesses of the genre-based approach (such as strict prescriptivism, see Kay & Budley Evans, 1998), learners need to be immersed in a pedagogical context with a variety of texts within one genre to allow for variation. Third, the process-based approach needs to be integrated with the genre-based approach to allow for the conventional modes of planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

### Notes

- The Wordreference.com Language Forum is an open forum for learners of many foreign languages. The posts that relate to the thread on integrating letters is available through the following link:  
<http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=338471>
- The Developing Multiple Literacies Project is part of a comprehensive curriculum renewal project for foreign language education at Georgetown University. It was initiated in 1997. More information about this project is available through the following link:  
<https://german.georgetown.edu/page/1242716500101.html>

## References

- Al-Batal, M. (2007). Arabic and national language educational policy. *Modern Language Journal*, 91(2), 268-271.
- Bacha, N. (2010). Teaching the academic argument in a university EFL environment. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 9, 229-241.
- Bakhtin, M. (1986). The problem of speech genres. In C. Emerson & M. Holquist (Eds.), V. Gee (Trans.), *Speech genres and other late essays* (pp. 60–102). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Beghtol, C. (2001). The concept of genre and its characteristics. *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 27,2, 19-17.
- Bergman, E. (2006). Arabic: Meeting the challenges. *Journal of the Less Commonly Taught Languages*, 6, 1-14.
- Biber, D. (1988). *Variation Across Speech and Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Byrnes, H. (2002). The role of task and task-based assessment in a content-oriented collegiate foreign language curriculum. *Language Testing*, 19, 419–437.
- Byrnes, H. (2009). Emergent L2 German writing ability in a curricular context: A longitudinal study of grammatical metaphor. *Linguistics and Education*, 20, 50–66.
- Cheng, A. (2007). Transferring generic features and recontextualizing genre awareness: Understanding writing performance in the ESP genre-based literacy framework. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26, 287–307.
- Chen, Y, & Su, S. (2012). A genre-based approach to teaching EFL summary writing. *ELT Journal*, 66, 2, 184-192.
- Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second language writing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Crawford, J. (2002). The role of materials in the language classroom: Finding the balance. In Jack C. Richards, Willy A. Renandya (Eds.) *Methodology in language teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*, (pp.80-90). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cullip, P. (2009). A Tale of two texts: Tracking developments in learner writing. *RELC Journal*, 40, 2, 192-210.

- Dovey, T. (2010). Facilitating writing from sources: A focus on both process and product. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 9*, 45–60.
- El-Seidi, M. (2000). Metadiscourse in English and Arabic argumentative writing: a cross-linguistic study of texts written by American and Egyptian university students. In I. Zeinab, S. Aydelott, & N. Kassabgy (Eds.), *Diversity in language: Contrastive studies in Arabic and English theoretical and applied linguistics* (pp. 111-126). Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.
- Flowerdew, J. (2002). Genre in the classroom: A linguistic approach. In A. M. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 91–102). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gentil, G. (2005). Commitments to academic biliteracy: Case studies of francophone university writers. *Written Communication, 22*, 421–471.
- Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language teaching, 40*, 2, 97-118.
- Halliday, M. & Hasan, R. (1989). *Language, context and text: Aspects of language in a socialsemiotic perspective*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Henry, A. & Roseberry, R. (1998). An evaluation of a genre-based approach to the teaching of EAP/ESP writing. *TESOL Quarterly, 32*, 147–156.
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and Second Language Writing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Hyland, K. (2007). Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy, and L2 writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16*, 148–164.
- Hyon, S. (2002). Genre and ESL reading: A classroom study. In A. M. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 121–141). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Johns, A. M. (2008). Genre awareness for the novice academic student: An ongoing quest. *Language Teaching, 41*, 237–252.
- Johns, A. M. (2011). The future of genre in L2 writing: Fundamental, but contested, instructional decisions. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 20*, 1, 56-68.



- Jonson, T., Thompson, L., Smagorinsky, P., & Fry, P. (2003). Learning to teach the five-paragraph theme. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 38, 2, 136-176.
- Kaplan, R.B. (1988). Contrastive rhetoric and second language learning: Notes toward a theory of contrastive rhetoric. In A. Purves (Ed.), *Writing across languages and cultures: Issues in contrastive rhetoric* (pp. 275-304). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Kay, H. & T. Dudley-Evans. (1998). Genre: what teachers think. *ELT Journal*, 52, 4, 308-314.
- Leki, I. (1991). Twenty-Five Years of Contrastive Rhetoric: Text Analysis and Writing Pedagogues. *Tesol Quarterly*, 25,1, 123-143.
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2008). *Genre relations: Mapping culture*. London: Equinox.
- Matsuda, P. K., Canagarajah, A. S., Harklau, L., Hyland, K., & Warschauer, M. (2003). Changing currents in second language writing research: A colloquium. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12, 151-179.
- Martin, J. (1992). *English text: systems and structure*. Philadelphia; Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- McKernan, J. (2013). *Curriculum action research: A handbook of methods and resources for the reflective practitioner*. Routledge.
- Mishan, F. (2005). *Designing Authenticity into Language Learning Materials*. Bristol: Intellect.
- Miller, C. (1994). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 151-167.
- Modern Language Association (2009). *Foreign Language Enrollments in United States Institutions of Higher Education*. Available online at: [https://www.mla.org/content/download/2872/79842/2009\\_enrollment\\_survey.pdf](https://www.mla.org/content/download/2872/79842/2009_enrollment_survey.pdf) on November 22, 2012.
- Norris, J. (2009). Task-based teaching and testing. In M. Long & C. Doughty (Eds.), *The handbook of language teaching* (pp. 578-594). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Paltridge, B. (1996). Genre, text type, and the language-learning classroom. *ELT Journal*, 50, 3, 237-243.
- Paltridge, B. (2001). *Genre and the language classroom*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Pang, T. (2002). Textual analysis and contextual awareness building: A comparison of two approaches to teaching genre. In A. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 145–161). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Pasquarelli, S. L. (2006). *Teaching writing genres across the curriculum: Strategies for middle school teachers*. Greenwich, Connecticut: Information Age Publishing.
- Shakir, A, & Obeidat, H. (1992). Aspects of Cohesion and Coherence in AFL Student-Written Texts. *Al-<sup>l</sup>Arabiyya* 25, 1-28.
- Swales, J. (1981). *Aspects of article introductions (Aston ESP Monographs 1)*. Birmingham: Aston University.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tardy, C. (2009). *Building genre knowledge*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press.
- Weber, J. (2001). A concordance-and genre-informed approach to ESP essay writing. *ELT Journal*, 55,1, 14-20.
- Wiley, T. G. (2007). Heritage and community languages in the national language debate. *Modern Language Journal*, 91, 2, 252-255.
- Wray, D., & Lewis, M. (1997). *Extending literacy: Children reading and writing non-fiction*. London: Routledge.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Move analysis in a formal congratulation letter

<i>Sender's name</i>	حسين العذل	Move 1
<i>Addressee's name and title</i>	سعادة الأستاذ تركي بن عبدالله السديري سلمه الله رئيس تحرير صحيفة الرياض" رئيس مجلس إدارة هيئة الصحفيين السعوديين	Move 2
<i>Opening greeting</i>	السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته.. وبعد:	Move 3
<i>Purpose</i>	يسعدني ان أزجي لكم أخلص التهاني بمناسبة فوزكم المستحق رئيساً لمجلس إدارة هيئة الصحفيين السعوديين وما حازتم عليه من ثقة كبيرة من أوساط الصحفيين، وهو ما يحمل الدلالة العميقة على ما تتمتعون به من رصيد ضخم في ميدان العمل الصحفي وتقديراً لإسهامكم البارز كأحد فرسان الكلمة وتطوير الممارسة الصحفية وحرية التعبير في بلادنا الغالية.	Move 4
<i>Content details</i>	ولعل هذا النجاح الباهر الذي تجلّى في التجربة الثانية لانتخابات الصحفيين السعوديين وممارسة حرية التعبير داخل الوسط الصحفي في المملكة وعلى هذا النحو الذي شاهدناه من رقي في السلوك ما تمخض عنه من نجاح للانتخابات ليعطي أبلغ الدروس على ان القاعدة الصحفية السعودية مدركة لمسؤولياتها ومستوعبة لأرقى قيم التعبير ويؤكد أننا سائرون على درب التطور الحضاري بكل ثقة وثبات.	Move 5
<i>Wishing (context-bound)</i>	إننا نتطلع إلى نجاحكم في قيادة الهيئة بما يرتقي بمستوى العمل المهني الصحفي في بلادنا وتشجيع الطاقات الخلاقة لدى الصحفيين والمفكرين ويعطي المثل والقوة في شكل ممارسة حرية التعبير وهو ما سيكون رصيداً جديداً يضاف لرصيد عطائكم في ميدان العمل الصحفي..	Move 6
<i>Wishing (context-free)</i>	والله يوفقكم لما فيه مصلحة الصحفيين والوطن الغالي،،،	Move 7
<i>Closing</i>	محبتكم،	Move 8
<i>Sender's name, title, and signature</i>	الأمين العام للغرفة التجارية الصناعية حسين بن عبدالرحمن العذل	Move 9

The source text was taken (with no adaptation) from Al-Riyadh newspaper: <http://www.alriyadh.com/399262>. The main page has more than one congratulation letter that can be used to show variation.

## Appendix 2: Survey

1. Do you think that current textbooks that you are using effectively integrate the genre of congratulation letters, both formal and informal, at the beginning and the intermediate levels? Particularly, are these letters presented as writing tasks?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

2. To what extent do you agree that the genre of congratulation letters, formal and informal, has high communicative functions for learners of Arabic as a foreign language?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

3. In your view, will your students respond positively to teaching the genre of congratulation letters, formal and informal, in Arabic classes?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

4. To what degree do the proposed activities in this sample lesson plan raise the learners' awareness of the particular contextual features (e.g., purpose, audience, etc.) of formal and informal congratulation letters?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

5. To what extent do the proposed activities in this sample lesson plan help in raising the learners' awareness of the *differences* between the particular contextual features of formal congratulation letters in contrast to informal congratulation letters?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

6. To what degree do the proposed activities in the sample lesson plan raise the learners' awareness of the rhetorical moves (e.g., opening, greeting, message, wishing, closing, signature, etc.) and the conventional forms entailed in formal and informal congratulation letters?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

7. To what degree does the proposed lesson plan develop the learners' awareness of the linguistic features (e.g., lexical items, formulaic language, and grammatical structures) that are frequently used in formal and informal congratulation letters?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

8. Address forms and honorifics in the Arabic language and culture are particularly important in formal letters. Do you agree that the proposed model lesson plan develops the learners' awareness of these address forms and honorifics and their functional value in writing formal congratulation letters?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

9. To what degree do you think the pedagogical activities provided in the sample lesson plan (e.g., textual organization, color-coding, and information gap) raise the learners' awareness of the structure and function of the genre under study?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

10. To what degree do you think the instructional sequence proposed in the lesson plan moves from modeling the particular genres to the actual creation of similar ones?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

11. Overall, do you think that this proposed lesson plan as a whole develops the learners' awareness of the genre under study?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

12. To what degree do you think that you have changed your way of thinking about teaching this genre after reading this proposed lesson plan?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

13. Overall, does the proposed instructional sequence meet your expectations?

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
-----------------------	--------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------

14. Overall comments:

Please add your any comments that you may have.

---



---



---



---



---

Thank you