

A Genre-based Rubric for Peer Feedback

Farhad Jafari Basmenj
University of British Columbia
f.jafari@alumni.ubc.ca

Abstract

Peer feedback in writing is considered an important stage of pedagogy. Peer feedback in L2 writing has been investigated through different lenses. Although a genre-based rubric for writing assessment is offered in the literature of feedback, a well-defined, principled and expert-like rubric with genre specifications is missing from peer feedback literature. This study offers a literature review of peer feedback literature, pinpoints the gaps, and provides a new, student-friendly 3x3 rubric for argumentative genre in writing through the amalgamation of frameworks in the literature. The pedagogical implication and application stages of the new genre-based rubric are discussed at the end.

Keywords: Genre, rubric, argument writing, peer feedback

Feedback: Expert and Peer

Feedback is an important part of teaching which can reinforce the input and help with the prevention of wrong output fossilization. It is that stage of the pedagogy wherein learners negotiate meanings with their experts or their peers, and their learning consolidates. Corrective feedback is defined as “responses to a learner’s nontarget-like L2 production” (Li, 2010, p. 309) and has been empirically shown to have positive impacts on students’ writings (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Bruton, 2009; Greenslade & Felix-Brasdefer, 2006; Hyland, 2003). Often treated as ancillary to instructor feedback, peer feedback has also drawn a lot of attention (Hu & Lam 2010; Liu 2012; Yang 2011; Yu & Lee 2014, 2015; Zhu & Mitchell 2012; Zhao 2010, 2014). Peer feedback is “the use of learners as sources of information and interactants for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other’s drafts” (Liu & Hansen, 2002, p.1). In the literature, peer feedback has been studied from different perspectives with diverse methodological approaches in different contexts: comparisons between instructor and peer feedback with mixed findings about their efficacy and superiority (Birjandi & Tamjid, 2012; Chang, 2012; Chen, 2010; Lam 2013; Memari Hanjani, 2013; Ruegg, 2014), its benefits for feedback givers (Berggren 2015; Rosalia 2010), computer-mediated peer feedback and L2 learners’ perceptions of it (Ciftci & Kocoglu, 2012; Chang, 2012, Chen, 2012), the role of training on writing quality (Rahimi 2013; Yang & Meng 2013), and students’ level and peer feedback (Chong, 2017).

One problem about the current literature is that it either does not provide a well-defined, descriptively detailed rubric for peer feedback (Chong, 2017; Diab, 2010; Hu & Lam, 2010; Lam, 2013) or, if it does, it is heavily embedded in the traditional holistic binary of micro-macro features of the text, and is devoid of any genre-based specifications and guidelines for learners (Birjandi & Tamjid, 2012; Vorobel & Kim, 2017). The penury of rubric in literature emanates from a reductionistic view that strips writing of its generic properties. Writing in the

literature of peer feedback is hardly considered as a genre, and the instruction and training for feedback is rarely based on the rigors of genre. One interesting study on feedback is Anson and Anson's (2017) investigation of a corpus of 50000 peer responses. Their study results confirm that an "expert principled response to writing" is concentrated on audience, organization, focused support, purpose, idea development and coherent structure, features hardly explored in peer feedback rubric and literature. It seems that genre-based pedagogy and SFL (*Systemic Functional Linguistics*) could bridge this gap in peer feedback by the provision of a framework which is inherently grounded on the rules of a genre. In the rest of this article, a basic definition of genre is provided, and conceptualization of argumentation as a genre is explained. A peer feedback rubric for argument genre is developed through integration of three frameworks in the literature, and a new version of Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC) pedagogy with the component of peer deconstruction is provided at the end.

Genre and argumentation

Genre is "a term for grouping texts together, representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations" (Hyland, 2008, p. 544). Writing such texts is a practice based on a series of conventions that communities of practice expect of a writer. The author has a purpose, and the moves that s/he follows should align with the expected conventions. Genre-based writing instruction has many advantages: It is explicit and clear, supportive (in that it scaffolds); systematic (by providing a framework), critical (as it shows resources of discourses, and raises consciousness (Hyland, 2008). And perhaps the biggest advantage of genre is that it is recognizable by the "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998), and that the writer gains a sense of belonging to the community through following the conventions of the genre (Hyland, 2008). The key principle in teaching through genres (genre-pedagogy) is raising students' awareness of textual features and grammatical repertoire that the writer uses to achieve a particular purpose. Here, grammar does not signify the rules that exist independent of texts, but the rhetorical features that bind the text together and help the writer communicate his purpose.

The prevalence of argumentation in SLW (second language writing), evidenced by its appearance in proficiency exams such as IELTS and TOEFL, makes it an important genre to consider in EAP/ESP contexts. As Hirvela (2017) observes, argumentation in the literature is conceptualized as either a form of reasoning (Toulmin, 2001) or inquiry (Kuhn, 2005). In argumentation as a form, the focus is on logic and the reasoning through which the writer renders a persuasive and convincing end product. In inquiry, argumentation is utilized to deepen analytic skills, a vehicle to solve problems. It appears that both concepts of arguments can be useful in EAP/ESP contexts.

Genre-based rubric

Fang and Wang (2009) critique the *6-traits writing Rubric*, prevalent in American schools, on the basis that it is neither objective nor exact. Furthermore, according to them, the rubric is insensitive to genre, functions, and register requirements. Although their critique is targeted at rubric for teachers, as the review of above literature on peer feedback demonstrated, lack of genre-specific rubric is an obvious gap in the literature. Thus, it appears that a generic framework (for argumentative genre) for peer feedback can be devised with reference to literature of genre.

The genre-based rubric has been put forward in several studies. Humphrey et al. (2010) offer a 3x3 framework in the hope that it can be used to "inform the development of genre-

specific frameworks for analysing, modelling, and assessing texts in particular disciplines” (p. 186). It is a “principled overview of resources” to “make it explicit the expectations of academic writing” (Humphrey et al., p. 187). It is a 9-square matrix composed of 3 metafunctions of language (ideational, interpersonal and textual) and 3 linguistic strata (social activity, discourse semantics, and grammar and expression). Ideational meaning represents “experience and connect events” (field), interpersonal metafunctions “negotiate attitude and relationships” (tenor), and textual meaning “weave ideational and interpersonal meanings into a coherent whole” (mode) (Humphrey et al., p. 191). As for stratification, social activity refers to the overall purpose and the staged goals of the genre realized through social registers such as field, tenor and mode, often assessed by content lecturers. At discourse semantics strata, students often use the repertoire of linguistic patterns which construe meaning within phases and paragraphs. The grammar and expression strata refer to linguistic resources which link clauses within sentences. They use the 3x3 framework to analyze a report summary genre in biology discipline. However, the framework, as they suggest, can be exploited and adapted to the requirements of other disciplines. Students can also be scaffolded to create their own resources.

Another less elaborate and more practical framework is the one provided by Mahboob (2015). Drawing on the findings of SLATE project (Mahboob, Humphrey, Webster, Wong and Wong, 2010), Mahboob’s (2015) model proposes the idea of cohesion and coherence in feedback. The project was an online language and literacy program to help students ameliorate literacy skills in core academic units and was founded on Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL), genre pedagogy (Rose and Martin, 2012) and Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC). According to Mahboob (2015), cohesion refers to the “purpose, audience and organization” of feedback, whereas coherence is achieved “when various instances ... on a student’s text work together to scaffold a student into developing a deeper understanding of particular (selected) issues in their writing” (p. 358). He provides a framework and an assessment rubric where three different strata of language are addressed in the provision of cohesive feedback: Purpose and structure of the text (Criteria A), Development of meanings across paragraphs (Criteria B), and Grammar and expression (Criteria C) (p. 359). Findings of SLATE project suggested that Criteria A should be given priority followed by Criteria B and then Criteria C. Coherence, on the other hand, refers to the continuum of explicitness in the feedback and the rationale that the teacher provides. In a feedback, the teacher can provide an overtly explicit remark (such as provision of a correct grammatical form, or another word) or be implicit by just asking question and eliciting a correct form. In doing this, the teacher can also point out to the underlying linguistic reasons why a given form is not allowed in a genre.

Pessoa, Mitchell and Miller (2017) provide a more elaborate framework based on genre pedagogy and SFL. In their examination of university students’ history argumentative essays, they adapt the 3x3 framework originally proposed by Humphrey et al. (2010). 3x3 is an educational toolkit which allows instructors a better understanding of important features of an academic genre and helps them “consider subtle ways that student writing does and does not meet genre expectations” (Pessoa et al., 2017, p.46). This toolkit utilizes three SFL-based metafunctions of language: ideational (resources to expand the form knowledge of the content), interpersonal (resources to posit an authoritative voice) and textual (resources to organize a clear text). These three metafunctions are studied at 3 levels of text, paragraph and sentence. The ideational meaning is concerned with writing in clear stages in response to the prompt “with accurate, relevant, and sufficient content from the source text(s)” (p. 48). The information should proceed from general to specific logically with quotes from the text. Interpersonal meaning refers to the stance that the writer assumes in defending and reinforcing

an overarching proposition in order to persuade the reader. The linguistic resources such as tentativeness, counterarguments, accepting other perspectives or justifying one's own view are considered in interpersonal analysis. The textual analysis is concerned with "the organization of the text and its effectiveness in following, predicting, signposting, and scaffolding the writer's ideas" (p. 48). Although their framework is aligned with a more generalist rubric of the history instructor (based on Argument, Evidence, Clarity, Synthesis and Analysis), it explicitly makes reference to the linguistic requirements for the expectations of a genre.

The following rubric is based on the three frameworks and is intended to use for peer response purposes. Students can make use of this rubric to comment on each other's writings.

	Whole text	Paragraphs	sentences/Clauses
Ideational Meanings	Ideas are developed to form an analytic framework.	There is a main claim and sub claims to support it.	Noun groups in topic sentences.
	The answer to the prompt is consistent.	The information moves from general to specific, point to elaboration, evidence to interpretation, claim to evaluation.	Technical and formal vocabulary Verb tenses are consistent.
Interpersonal Meanings	Answer to the question is convincing and critical. The position is reinforced, justified and defended to persuade the reader.	Authoritative sources are used to support the claim.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal objective metaphors (It is clear instead of I think) • Subject and verb agreement
	The language is impersonal and objective. Response to the question is persuasive and shows a critical stance.	Writer's stance is developed through patterns of evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modality (may, can, might), hedging devices (probably, likely) and booster (clearly, obviously) are used appropriately. • The transitional markers are used to create a logical flow: • Add (besides, in addition, etc.) • Compare and concession (whereas, however, although, conversely) • Justification (since, because, for the same reason) • Example (for instance, in this situation, on this occasion) • Summarize (to sum up, therefore, accordingly) • Correct use of conjunctions • Justification (because)
Textual Meanings	The text has an introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs.	Topic sentences in sub-claims match the ideas in the introduction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articles are used properly. • Active and passive voice are used properly
	The text is cohesive and signposted.	Cohesive devices create a logical flow of information. Information flows from abstract to concrete.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronouns are used properly in referencing. • Punctuation and spelling are used properly.

Figure 1. Argumentative Genre Peer Feedback Rubric

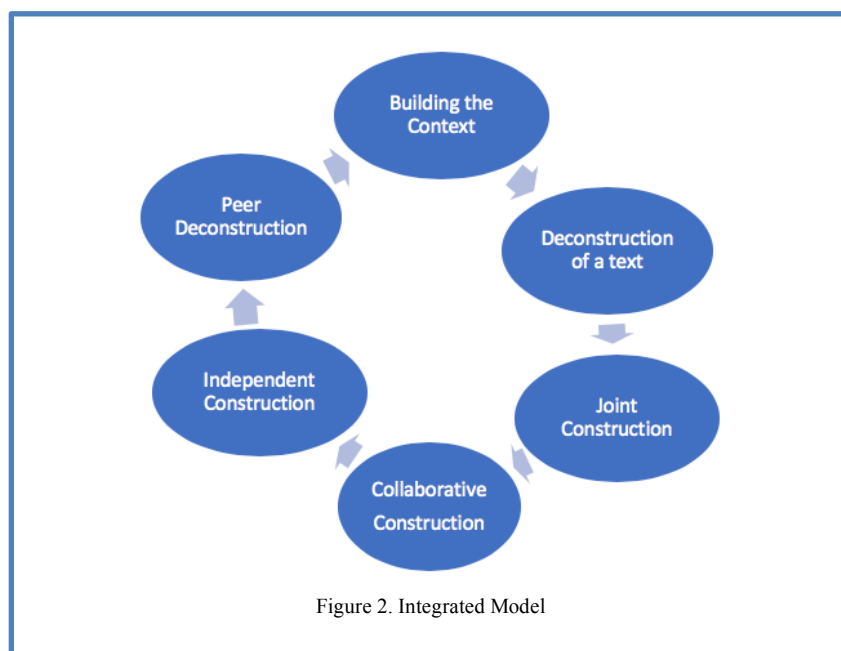
The rubric in Figure 1 is an amalgamation of three frameworks intended to provide L2 writers with a more student-oriented rubric. Three levels of ideational, interpersonal and textual levels are the prominent features of this framework. The three traditional rhetorical moves of logos, ethos and pathos are included in the interpersonal at both whole text and paragraph levels. Through these moves, the writers first establish an authoritative claim and sets out to persuade the reader through evaluation and engagement. Micro features of the text such as the hedgers, booster and transitional markers are placed at sentence level. Although this adapted framework lacks the elaborateness of original frameworks, it should not be forgotten that it is designed for students who are not expert in either genre or its SFL-based grammar. It is also assumed that students are already familiar with the terminology of genre pedagogy; and in

order to achieve this purpose, adoption of Teaching and Learning Cycle in pedagogy is imperative.

Teaching and Learning Cycles

In order to familiarize students with the grammar of a text, genre-based pedagogy follows Teaching Learning Cycle (TLC) (de Oliveira & Lan, 2014; Feez, 2002; Rose & Martin, 2012). TLC comprises three phases: first, a text is deconstructed with the students; second, a new text is jointly constructed with the teacher scaffolding the students; and third, students are encouraged to construct their own text. The use of the word “construct” instead of “produce”, “create”, or “write” is noteworthy here since it evokes the construction of a building with an architectural plan in which everything is at work in order to achieve the purpose of constructing a building similar to other structures. The teacher presents a model, argumentative genre for example, and analyzes it. During the Deconstruction phase, the focus is on the “genre’s social purpose and typical organizational structure” at a whole text followed by decoding the text at a sentence-level during which the resources that help create the content, meet audience expectations, and present a coherent message are illuminated (Ramos, 2019, p 51). At this stage, the teacher builds metalinguistic awareness through introducing SFL-based terms such as nominalization and processes, strong modality, causal links, conjunctions, synonyms and referents. During the Joint Construction, the teacher scaffolds the students to write a generic text by providing academic language resources. This stage involves collaboration and is another opportunity for a discussion on how the academic and linguistic resources help realize a coherent message. Students write their own genre-based text at the Independent Construction stage since they now have a growing knowledge about textual functions, rhetorical features and linguistic resources of a genre. Ramos (2019) practiced TLC with ELL students from different backgrounds in a secondary school setting. Her experience showed that students managed to master academic resources in argumentative genre, and that their language shifted away from conversational register in their writing to more academically genre-endorsed style.

TLC has slightly different versions, too. For instance, in de Oliveira (2017), the element of “collaborative construction” has been added to the cycle on the rationale that it is “a bridge between the joint construction and independent construction phases” (p.3). The collaborative construction follows joint construction during which students discuss, negotiate, brainstorm and write together in groups (de Oliveira, 2017). This new phase could be particularly useful in EFL contexts where students’ exposure to language outside classroom is severely constrained and this intermediary stage between joint construction and independent construction can scaffold students with further exposure to genre requirements. In Feez (2002), the process comprises 5 stages: a) building the context, b) modelling and deconstructing the text c) joint construction of the text d) independent construction of the text and e) linking related texts. Different from other TLC formats is the inclusion of the first and last stages. In the first stage, the teacher “designs opportunities for learners to experience and explore the cultural and situational aspects of the social aspect of the target text” (p. 66) through activities such as listening or chatting to others, brainstorming, video, realia and pictures. In fact, before the text, the teacher at this stage activates the schemata and prepares them for the next stage. In linking related texts, students compare texts and discuss their different effectiveness.



For the purpose of this study, Feez's (2002) TLC version is integrated with that of de Oliveira (2017) and a new phase is added. The new integrated model comprises six stages: Building the Context, Deconstruction, Joint construction, Collaborative Construction, Independent Construction, Peer deconstruction (Figure 2). The new model borrows Building the Context from Feez's (2002) and Collaborative Construction from de Oliveira (2017). The rationale for the integration of Building the Context is that it is "foundation step for second language learners" (p.66). Here, the "teacher designs opportunities for learners to experience and explore the cultural and situational aspects of the social context of the target text" (p. 66). These activities may include brainstorming, reading and discussing relevant material, discussing pictures, guided research and fieldtrips. In order to train L2 learners to use the rubric, it seems scaffolding at every stage of the lesson is indispensable. Scaffolding is realized at every stage of the new model through the instructor at the Building the Context, Deconstruction, Joint Construction, the peer at Collaborative Construction and Peer Deconstruction, and the rubric at all levels (Except Creating the Context). The elements of the new rubric need to be repeated at every stage of a genre pedagogy, and in the new model this is realized in all five stages except for Building the context. In the peer Deconstruction phase, students' writings are deconstructed by their peers through comments on the text scaffolded by a rubric. In fact, this stage is the mirror phase of Deconstruction where the instructor analyzes different features of the text with students. Here, it is not the teacher but the learner-expert who deconstructs the text written by their peers. This Peer Deconstruction stage has several advantages: the generic features of a student-produced-text will be critically analyzed by students. In this way, the peer feedback offers further opportunities for students to engage with the genre. Since at this stage each learner has access to the rubric, the constant reference back and forth the text and the framework will consolidate the generic features. Furthermore, the students will assume the role of an expert and this expertise is a guarantee of the achievement of learning goals. Finally, students will obtain a sense of agency as the peer feedback in the model not only provides an opportunity to grapple with the generic features but also transpositions them from peripheral to full participation in the practice of text construction.

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About the Author

Farhad Jafari Basmenj is a graduate student of TESOL at the University of British Columbia, with over ten years of worldwide experience in the field. His areas of interest are genre-based writing, peer feedback, digital literacy, vocabulary learning, and computational assessment of vocabulary.