


Vietnamese EFL University Teachers' Beliefs about the Effectiveness of Genre-based Approaches in Teaching IELTS Academic Writing Task 2

Mai Lan^{1*}

¹ Thang Long University, Vietnam

*Corresponding author's email: lanmai6388@gmail.com

*  <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6182-2866>

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ABSTRACT

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Students taking IELTS preparation courses from EFL countries continue to encounter challenges in the examination process, especially with writing skills. To address this issue, this sequential explanatory mixed-method study aims to examine Vietnamese EFL university teachers' beliefs about the applicability of genre-based approach (GBA) in teaching IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 instruction and developing learners' foundational academic writing skills. Data are collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving 58 teachers from four universities in Vietnam. Quantitative data are then analyzed descriptively by SPSS 25 while qualitative data are manually analyzed into themes. The results indicate that most teachers are aware of GBA and believe in its pedagogical value. Their awareness primarily stems from informal sources instead of formal education. Teachers strongly believe that the systematic, explicit teaching of genre conventions helps both improve learners' IELTS writing performance and prepare them for higher academic writing contexts. The study also finds a significant theory-practice gap with implementation constrained by intensive course timeframes and students' test-focused orientations. The study contributes to the current literature of genre-based application in high-stakes test preparation, particularly by offering insights from teacher perspectives.

Introduction

IELTS maintains its position as a leading tool for English proficiency assessment in EFL countries such as China, Korea, and Vietnam (Clark & Yu, 2025; Du, 2024). In Vietnam, IELTS test-takers use their scores as admission requirements for gifted high schools, universities, and international tertiary programs, and as a graduation prerequisite across various academic disciplines. To meet their needs, IELTS preparation courses have become very popular. However, these courses have faced criticism for emphasizing band score improvement rather than fostering genuine language-skill development (Du, 2024). Indeed, many EFL students who

attained requisite band scores for university admission subsequently struggled with academic writing assignments (Clark & Yu, 2025; Dang & Dang, 2021), given the parallel between IELTS Writing Task 2 and university essay formats (Dang & Dang, 2021; Moore & Morton, 2005). Therefore, test preparation pedagogy should focus on two things: improving students' test scores and teaching students the basics of academic writing (Clark & Yu, 2025; Le & Pham, 2026).

In response to these two teaching goals, Dickinson (2013) suggested using a genre-based approach (GBA) in IELTS and TOEFL academic essay writing instruction. This approach would help improve scores and support meaningful language development. Drawing on the substantial body of research documenting the success of GBA in academic writing instruction, Dickinson argued that this pedagogical framework was suitable for teaching the text types commonly featured in standardized assessments. However, his proposal was not validated empirically. To date, only two empirical studies have examined the effectiveness of GBA in IELTS preparation and students' perspectives on its use. This limited body of research provides insufficient empirical evidence to support GBA's implementation; teachers' perspectives, which play a central role in selecting teaching approaches, remain notably unexplored. This study, therefore, aims to explore Vietnamese EFL university teachers' beliefs about the use of the genre-based approach (GBA) in IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 and its potential to support learners' development in academic writing.

Literature Review

IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Overview

IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 (hereafter called Task 2) requires candidates to compose essays on topics relevant to undergraduate or postgraduate study, which cover general social issues. The task encompasses five primary question types: opinion essays (agreeing/disagreeing), discussion essays (examining both viewpoints), problem-solution essays (with various subcategories addressing causes and remedies), advantages-disadvantages essays (evaluating pros and cons), and two-part questions (addressing separate but related inquiries) (IELTS, 2025). To complete the task, test-takers must provide factual information, present solutions, justify opinions, or evaluate evidence and ideas.

Candidates' writings are assessed through a comprehensive framework (called the IELTS writing band descriptor) which evaluates task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical range and accuracy. An academic or semi-formal register is expected throughout responses (IELTS, 2025). Success requires candidates to identify appropriate writing approaches for specific task questions while selecting suitable register, rhetorical organization, style, and content (Barrow, 2007).

Genres and Genre-Based Approach (GBA)

Among the different definitions of the term 'genre', the most prominent was given by John Swales (1990), the pioneer in the field, who defined a genre as a group of communicative situations in which each member shares similar communicative objectives. This

conceptualization elucidates the fundamental characteristics of a genre: its communicative purposes, its structure, linguistic features, and its target readership. Furthermore, Swales contends that each genre is situated within a specific discourse community - characterized as “social-rhetorical networks” - whose members attain the shared communicative goals through the establishment and utilization of genre conventions.

A genre-based approach can be conceptualized as an instructional framework in which teachers explicitly teach text structure and linguistic features to help achieve the text’s purpose (Derewianka & Jones, 2016; Martin & Rose, 2008, as cited in Yang, 2016). This approach aims to enhance learners’ awareness of the structural and purposive dimensions of texts across diverse genres. Specifically, GBA provides learners with strategies to reproduce these characteristics in their own production. The theoretical foundation underpinning this approach is genre analysis research, which teaches genres through the teaching/learning process.

The Teaching-Learning Cycles (TLCs) are structured procedures that facilitate students’ development of reading and writing skills (De Oliveira & Lan, 2014). Simultaneously, the cycles introduce methodological approaches for diverse genres (Ueasiriphan & Tangkiengsirisin, 2019). As a part of pedagogical strategies, TLCs provide teachers with instructional sequences and scaffolding methodologies to support students’ comprehension and mastery of various textual formats (Macken-Horarik, 2002, as cited in Yang, 2016). Despite various existing versions, the TLCs were originally a cyclical framework comprising three core sequential phases: (1) the modeling phase, in which model texts representative of specific genres are presented to students; (2) joint construction, during which instructors and students collaboratively engage in the preparation and construction of new texts within the target genre; and (3) independent construction, in which students individually produce texts in the target genre, drawing upon their genre awareness and accumulated knowledge base.

IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 and Genre-Based Approach

As can be drawn from the genre definition above, there is a discourse community including IELTS test-takers, who share the objective of demonstrating English proficiency across diverse cultural contexts; experts, who establish assessment criteria; and IELTS trainers, who help familiarize learners with such criteria (Chen, 2018). These assessment criteria define structural, content, and stylistic requirements for acceptable responses, which makes Task 2 question types specific genres with distinct conventions that emphasize comprehensive prompt engagement.

Each Task 2 question type is a major genre that serves a specific communicative function within the assessment discourse community. Each major genre encompasses specific sub-genres. For example, advantages-disadvantages tasks require discussion sub-genre for balanced examination, while agree-disagree questions demand exposition for persuasive discourse (Coffin, 2004; Derewianka & Jones, 2016).

Within genre frameworks, IELTS Task 2 requires test takers to master distinct rhetorical modes, including argumentative, discussion, problem-solution, and advantage-disadvantage essays. Each genre is portrayed by specific communicative purposes, organizational structures, and linguistic features. Therefore, an explicit genre-based instruction through TLCs provides learners with systematic approaches to conquer the linguistic form, communicative intent, and

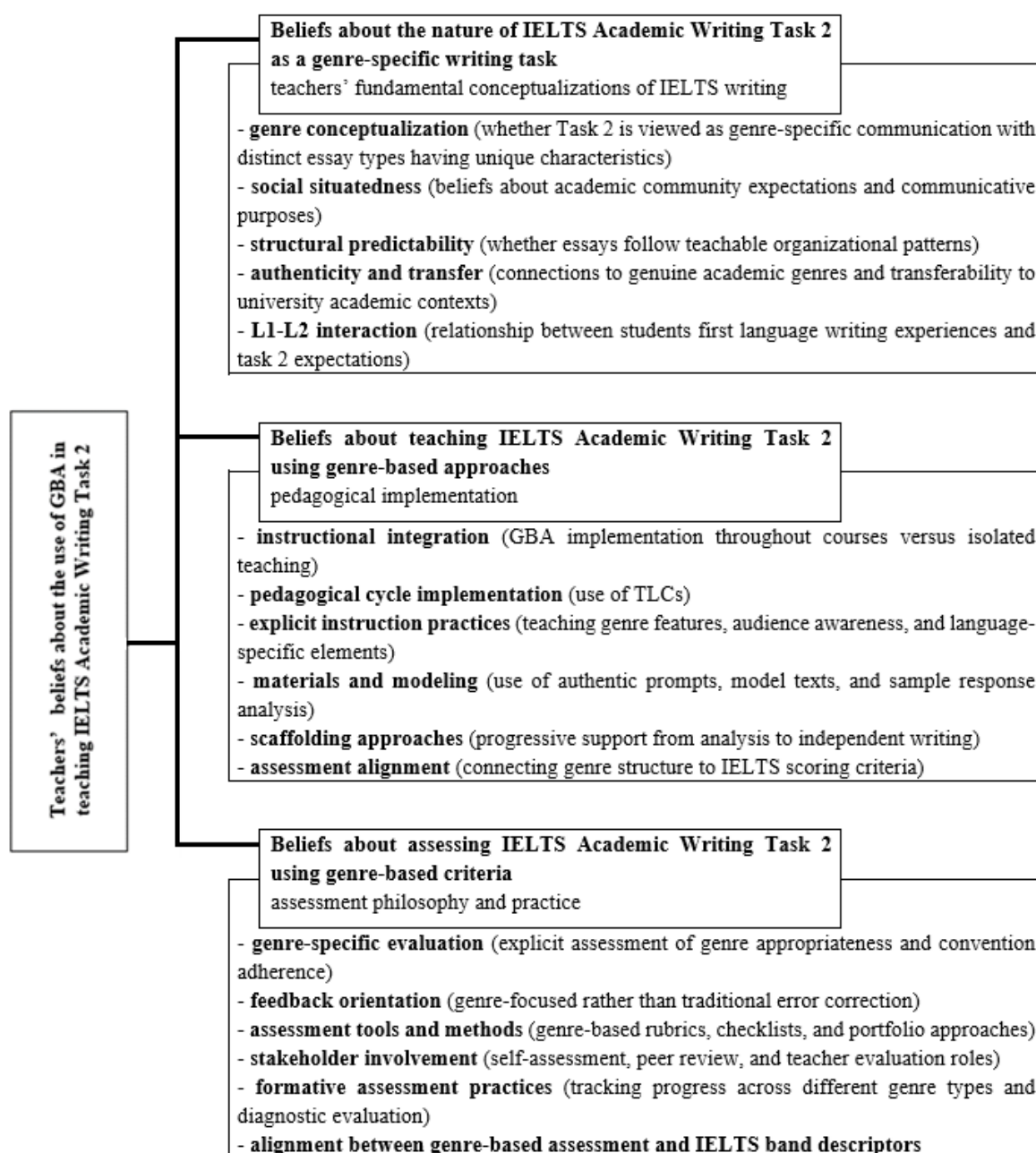
contextual demands inherent in Task 2.

However, the effectiveness of any teaching pedagogy is not determined by its theoretical merits alone. Teachers, the primary decision-makers in the classroom, play a pivotal role in whether an approach is employed or rejected. Teachers' willingness to embrace GBA is inevitably shaped by their beliefs about teaching, learning, and language. Therefore, understanding these beliefs is necessary to evaluate GBA's potential in IELTS preparation contexts.

Teachers' Beliefs

Figure 1

Teacher's beliefs about the implementation of GBA in teaching IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 (adapted from Karaca & Uysal, 2023)



Beliefs are propositions or ideas that individuals accept as true, either consciously or unconsciously, which serve as personal frameworks for evaluating, interpreting, and responding to their experiences and the world around them (Borg, 2011; Le, 2010; Tarman, 2012). In education, teachers' beliefs are multifaceted constructs that encompass teachers' personal theories, values, and viewpoints that they hold about how teaching and learning work (Czerniak et al., 1999), their understanding of their professional identity, responsibilities, and preferred instructional methods that shape how they facilitate student learning (Santos & Miguel, 2019).

Within the domain of teaching writing, there has been growing scholarly attention to understanding how teachers think, feel, and perceive the nature of writing, their teacher roles, and classroom teaching. These areas constitute key constructs within theoretical models of teachers' beliefs about writing instruction (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022). Karaca and Uysal (2023) developed a comprehensive framework for investigating teachers' beliefs in writing instruction. This framework is organized around three fundamental dimensions: the nature of L2 writing, teaching L2 writing, and assessing L2 writing.

In the present study, Karaca and Uysal's framework was integrated with a previous literature review of IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 and a genre-based approach to produce a more specialized and context-specific framework of teachers' beliefs, specifically focusing on genre theory application within the context of IELTS test preparation rather than general L2 writing instruction (Figure 1). The components of teachers' beliefs are structured around three fundamental dimensions, including teachers' beliefs about the nature of Task 2 as a genre-specific writing task and its relationship to broader academic writing contexts, teachers' pedagogical beliefs about the implementation of GBA in teaching Task 2, and beliefs about integrating genre-based criteria into IELTS writing evaluation and feedback practices.

This framework provides a structured approach to address the study's research questions. The first dimension, which examines beliefs about Task 2's nature and its connection to academic writing, aligns with research question 3. The second dimension, focusing on pedagogical implementation of GBA, directly addresses research question 2. The third dimension, which concerns assessment practices, alongside the overall framework, supports research question 1. Collectively, these dimensions enable a comprehensive investigation into how Vietnamese EFL university teachers perceive and approach the integration of genre-based pedagogy within Task 2 instruction.

Previous Studies

Although Dickinson proposed genre pedagogy for teaching IELTS essay writing in 2013, only two empirical studies have investigated its effectiveness to date. Both studies confirm that explicit genre instruction enhances students' writing performance. Chen (2018) found improvements in rhetorical moves, register selection, and metacognitive skills, while Damayanti et al. (2023) demonstrated gains in coherence, topical vocabulary, pronoun reference, and paragraph focus. These results suggest genre-based pedagogy successfully addresses the structural and organizational demands of Task 2.

Both studies also indicate that genre approaches benefit diverse learner populations. While Chen examined Chinese novice learners who had resided in Canada for 3 months to 1 year,

Damayanti et al. (2023) included both high- and low-attaining Indonesian EFL students in their study. These studies' scopes suggest that genre pedagogy can be applied across varied learning contexts.

Despite positive effects on rhetorical structure, coherence, and basic vocabulary choices, short-term genre instruction has not led to significant improvements in learners' grammatical accuracy and vocabulary development. As found by Damayanti et al. (2023), grammatical errors persisted after the intervention, while sophisticated vocabulary utility was limited. These findings highlight a noticeable tension in test-preparation contexts between teaching macro-level genre structures and micro-level linguistic precision. Additionally, Chen found that most students prioritized test-specific strategies over long-term academic skill development, although they acknowledged that the genre knowledge learned in the preparation course could be transferred to other types of academic writing. The result reveals an important pedagogical challenge that students may resist detailed genre instruction if they are seeking immediate test success. This means that the inherent value of genre pedagogy may conflict with learners' pragmatic goals.

In sum, prior studies provide empirical evidence that genre-based approaches effectively improve aspects of IELTS writing performance and demonstrate potential for preparing learners for subsequent academic writing. However, the limitations in learners' linguistic development and their attitudes toward transferable academic writing skills require careful consideration by teachers during GBA implementation. Moreover, both studies only examined student outcomes. This leaves a significant gap in understanding the pedagogical perspective. Consequently, teachers' beliefs about GBA employment must be investigated to fully evaluate the effectiveness of GBA in IELTS writing preparation courses.

Within the context of Vietnam, GBA has been applied to teach different academic and non-academic genres, such as recount (Luu, 2011), argumentative (Trinh & Nguyen, 2014), expository (Nguyen & Phan, 2019; Nguyen & Tran, 2022), and email writing (Mai, 2025; Truong, 2017). However, the application of GBA in teaching IELTS or other high-stakes tests remains an uncharted territory. Regarding teacher perspectives, only one recent study by Nguyen et al. (2024) has investigated Vietnamese teachers' beliefs about GBA, but this was limited to college writing instruction rather than IELTS preparation. The above analysis of the existing literature highlights a crucial gap in understanding Vietnamese teachers' beliefs about GBA and its implementation in IELTS Writing Task 2 instruction.

Research Questions

To respond to this lacuna in the literature, the present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are Vietnamese EFL university teachers aware of the genre-based approach as a pedagogical framework for writing instruction?
2. How do Vietnamese EFL university teachers view the implementation of the genre-based approach in effectively supporting students' IELTS Academic Writing Task 2?
3. What beliefs do Vietnamese EFL university teachers hold about the introduction of basic academic writing skills through genre-based pedagogy in IELTS Academic Writing Task 2?

instruction?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in four universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. This population was purposively selected based on two criteria: target participants are Vietnamese EFL university teachers who are directly involved in writing instruction and may incorporate genre-based methodologies. This sampling strategy ensured the inclusion of teachers, a factor fundamental to understanding the manifestation of genre-based approaches in Vietnamese tertiary EFL contexts.

In the first phase, the questionnaire was administered to EFL writing teachers from four different universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. 58 valid replies were received from teachers willing to participate in the study. However, four of them then stopped after the screening question because they did not apply GBA in their teaching practice; therefore, for the questions concerning teachers' beliefs, the total responses were 54. After the quantitative analysis, four teachers representing four groups of genre awareness and application were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews to further explore their beliefs. These teachers' profiles are as follows:

Table 1

Interview participants' information

Teacher (pseudonym)	Teaching experience	IELTS teaching experience	Formal training	Awareness	GBA application
Teacher A	< 5 years	< 3 years	Yes	Yes	No
Teacher B	6-10 years	4-6 years	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teacher C	6-10 years	4-6 years	No	No	Yes
Teacher D	6-10 years	4-6 years	No	Yes	Yes

Design of the Study

This study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), in which quantitative data from a structured questionnaire preceded and directly informed qualitative data collection via semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire could efficiently map the distribution of teachers' beliefs about GBA across the sample; however, it could not explain why teachers with high GBA awareness nonetheless chose not to implement it in practice. That divergence required qualitative elaboration. Therefore, a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was chosen. Integration of the two datasets occurred at the interpretation stage, in which qualitative themes were systematically mapped to quantitative constructs. This integration enhanced the validity and credibility of the findings.

Data Collection and Analysis

Two research instruments were employed to collect data. The 36-item questionnaire consists of

6 demographic questions and 30 core questions divided into three main parts: teacher beliefs about the nature of IELTS academic writing task 2 as a genre-specific writing task; teachers' pedagogical beliefs regarding the effectiveness and appropriateness of GBA for writing Task 2 instruction; and beliefs concerning the integration of genre-based criteria into IELTS writing evaluation and feedback practices. This instrument was finalized from a 44-item questionnaire following a pilot test involving 31 IELTS writing teachers. The instrument employed a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" (1) to "Strongly Disagree" (6), deliberately excluding a neutral midpoint to encourage participants to take a definitive stance on each statement (Taherdoost, 2019). The Likert scale was chosen because it is "one of the most widely used instruments for measuring opinion, preference, and attitude" (Leung, 2011, p. 412). Quantitative data collected were then analyzed descriptively using SPSS 25.

The semi-structured interview protocol consists of 12 core items adapted from Shi (2015). Four interviews were conducted with four teachers, each representing a different group of genre awareness and application. The interviews aim to elicit comprehensive information regarding teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of GBA in improving learners' band scores and general academic writing competence. Interview results were transcribed and coded manually. Qualitative data were then analyzed thematically and triangulated with quantitative results based on themes.

Results/Findings

Vietnamese EFL University Teachers' Awareness of Genre-Based Approach

The quantitative analysis shows that although only 22 out of 58 survey participants (37.9%) received formal training in the genre-based approach, a substantially higher proportion (84.5%) reported awareness of genres and GBA.

The data collected also reveals an unexpected pattern. Of the nine teachers who reported no awareness of genres and GBA, seven (77.8%) indicated that their instructional practices aligned with GBA principles. Conversely, four teachers who possessed knowledge of GBA, including one who had received formal training, chose not to implement this approach in their IELTS Task 2 instruction.

To understand the rationale behind teachers' diverse decisions, whether to apply GBA given their prior knowledge and training, a follow-up interview was conducted. Teacher A, who chose to avoid GBA despite formal training and acknowledging its pedagogical value, explained: "GBA is pedagogically effective; however, it is considerably time-consuming to implement genre pedagogy in writing classes compared to the condensed nature of IELTS preparation courses. At my institution, one course lasts only 9 weeks, with 5 50-minute writing instruction periods per week. This time includes both teaching two tasks with various question types within each task and progress assessments. It is obvious that time constraint is a considerable barrier." Furthermore, Teacher A noted that GBA was less direct than template-based instruction. Template-based pedagogy equips students with ready-made patterns applicable to various questions. This may help them achieve immediate test-taking strategies, whereas GBA requires substantial time to develop genuine writing competence before this competence can be

transferred to test-specific skills.

By contrast, Teacher C strongly advocated for GBA implementation in IELTS preparation contexts, despite having received no formal training and initially having limited awareness of genres and GBA. This instructor asserted that she had iteratively tried different pedagogical methods before arriving at the GBA-aligned approach. Given its effectiveness, she then consistently applied this pedagogy in her IELTS preparation courses. Meanwhile, Teacher D acquired genre knowledge through formal professional development courses and extensive independent reading, which raised her awareness and subsequently informed her practical implementation of GBA.

Teacher Beliefs about the Effectiveness of Genre-Based Approach for IELTS Writing Preparation

Teacher Beliefs about the Generic Nature of IELTS Academic Writing Task 2

Quantitative data reveal that Vietnamese EFL teachers hold remarkably positive beliefs about the nature of Task 2 through a genre-based lens. The overall section mean was 2.04 on a 6-point scale with an agreement rate of 95.38%. Specifically, teachers showed unanimous agreement (100%) that understanding the purpose and audience of different essay types is crucial to producing effective writing (Q2, Mean = 1.33). Teachers also demonstrated strong belief (100%) that Task 2 essays follow predictable organizational patterns and that such organizations can be explicitly taught (Q6, Mean = 1.81). These positive answers indicate that teachers agree that each Task 2 question has specific generic features. This is crucial for urging them to choose GBA as an appropriate pedagogy for teaching IELTS writing.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics and frequency distribution of teachers' beliefs about the generic nature of Task 2 (N = 54)

Code	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8
Mean	2.26	1.33	2.00	1.96	2.3	1.81	2.56	2.11
SD	.757	.476	.549	.751	.662	.392	1.436	.691
Cumulative agreement (Ratings 1-3)	96.3%	100%	100%	96.3%	96.3%	100%	77.8%	96.3%

Teachers showed only a moderate degree of uncertainty about whether students' L1 writing experiences may conflict with Task 2 essay-genre expectations (Q7, Mean = 2.56, 77.8% agreement). In the interview, Teacher B initially denied the influence of L1 on Task 2 writing, but later stated that the spiral way of thinking among most Vietnamese people may hinder students from developing straightforward, cohesive pieces of writing, as they are not familiar with Western linear thinking. In contrast, Teacher C affirmed that L1 writing experience showed predictive validity for IELTS writing. As her students shared, those who were good at Vietnamese argumentative writing also demonstrated strong performance in Task 2 writing.

Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 Using Genre-Based Approaches

The analysis of teachers' beliefs about genre-based teaching approaches reveals the strongest consensus across all survey sections, with an overall mean of 1.85 and an agreement rate of 98.0%.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics and frequency distribution of teachers' beliefs about teaching Task 2 with GBA (N = 54)

Code	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15	Q16	Q17	Q18	Q19	Q20	Q21
Mean	1.93	2.59	1.96	1.70	1.52	1.63	1.85	1.81	1.63	1.96	1.89	1.78	1.78
SD	.544	.922	.643	.537	.574	.623	.529	.675	.487	.643	.744	.572	.634
Cumulative agreement (rating 1-3)	100 %	85.2 %	96.3 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	96.3 %	96.3 %	100 %

First of all, teachers demonstrated strong commitment to integrating genre instruction into IELTS preparation rather than teaching writing skills in isolation (Q9, Mean = 1.93, 100% agreement), as well as to addressing both macro-structural dimensions (overall text organization) and micro-linguistic features of genre in their Task 2 instruction (Q20, Mean = 1.78, 96.3% agreement). Teachers also strongly supported (96.3%) systematic instructional cycles of genre-based teaching and learning (Q11, Mean = 1.96). The strongest support emerged for the deconstruction stage. Teachers showed unanimous agreement (100%) that model texts representing different IELTS Task 2 essay types should be analyzed in class to identify genre patterns (Q13, Mean = 1.52). Within the deconstruction stage, consensus was equally strong (100%) regarding two key practices: the incorporation of authentic Task 2 prompts and high-scoring sample responses into instruction (Q12, Mean = 1.70), and explicit instruction enabling students to recognize and employ genre-specific language features in IELTS writing (Q14, 16, 17, 18). The high levels of agreement demonstrate teachers' consistent beliefs in applying GBA, particularly the TLCs, in their IELTS writing preparation.

Interview responses further supported these quantitative results. All three participants (Teachers B, C, D) affirmed that sample text analysis played the central role in the GBA classes. These activities provide learners with opportunities not only to work out the generic structure of the target text but also to gain sample ideas, to trigger their critical thinking and brainstorming, and to collect topic-related vocabulary for their own essays. Furthermore, teachers emphasized their care in selecting authentic, high-quality sample texts for this stage, though their text selections differed.

Teacher B stated that she always used actual test prompts for students to practice and tried different high-quality sources for sample questions. She also noted that native speakers' work (e.g., Simon's) was more useful for illustrating linguistic features in use, while verified high-band-score texts written by Vietnamese EFL test takers illustrated better generic structure.

Meanwhile, Teacher C admitted: “I don’t care if the text is written by a native speaker or not; instead, the text is chosen provided that it satisfies my pre-set criteria.” In agreement with Teacher C, Teacher D stated, “The origins of the texts don’t matter to me. I choose texts that are suitable for the current students I teach only.”

Another key finding is that teachers showed exceptionally strong endorsement for scaffolding, with 100% agreeing that instruction should provide scaffolded practice moving from genre analysis to independent IELTS Task 2 writing (Q21, Mean = 1.78). However, they expressed some uncertainty about whether different IELTS Task 2 question types require distinct genre-based teaching approaches (Q10, Mean = 2.59, 85.2% agreement). In the interview, Teachers B, C, and D all agreed that the content about each essay type must be different, but all lessons can be run routinely according to genre-based teaching-learning cycles. These findings appear to reinforce teachers’ beliefs in the systematic employment of TLCs and the gradual removal of teacher support throughout TLCs’ stages.

However, in the context of systematic instructional cycles, a noticeable mismatch emerged between quantitative and qualitative data. While 96.3% of survey participants endorsed systematic instructional cycles (Q11), two-thirds of interviewees stated that they did not arrange collaborative writing as a stage of TLCs. Teacher B said, “It took the students a lot of time to agree on their wording and expression together.” Teacher C added that writing was personal and had to be done individually, as it would be on the test. Teacher D was the only one who claimed to consistently organize joint construction activity with close monitoring. However, all three teachers operated peer/group text analysis, brainstorming, and discussion. They all reached consensus that working with peers increased students’ understanding of the sample texts, their ability to generate relevant ideas, and their ability to collect appropriate vocabulary.

Teachers’ Beliefs about Using Genre-Based Criteria in Assessing IELTS Task 2

Data analysis reveals that Vietnamese EFL teachers hold exceptionally strong beliefs in incorporating genre-based approaches into IELTS Task 2 assessment practices, with an agreement rate of 98.3% and an overall mean of 2.12.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics and frequency distribution of teachers’ beliefs about incorporating genre-based criteria in assessing Task 2 (N = 54)

Code	Q22	Q23	Q24	Q25	Q26	Q27	Q28	Q29	Q30
Mean	2.08	2.08	1.92	2.08	1.96	1.89	2.42	2.11	2.54
SD	.793	.744	.610	.691	.582	.691	1.029	.846	1.000
Cumulative agreement (Ratings 1-3)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	88.9%	100%	96.2%

Teachers demonstrated a strong commitment to incorporating genre considerations into all aspects of Task 2 assessment. They unanimously supported (100%) the belief that assessment of Task 2 should include explicit evaluation of genre appropriateness (Q22, Mean = 2.08), and

that feedback on IELTS writing should address genre-specific strengths and weaknesses (Q23, Mean = 2.08).

However, interview data reveal a pattern that diverges somewhat from survey responses. Although all three interview participants reported incorporating the four IELTS criteria with genre-specific features, they admitted relying predominantly on official band descriptors for in-class assessment and paying unequal attention to different genre features during the feedback process. Teacher B explained: “When I mark students’ writing practices, I give them an overall score and four IELTS-criterion scores only. In giving feedback, task achievement and organization are always prioritized. For other criteria, I divide into different sessions, for example, I focus on cohesion and grammar in one session, while I care more about vocabulary in another session.” Teacher D concurred with Teacher B regarding the marking framework but employed a different feedback approach, consistently providing written commentary on task achievement, structure, cohesion and coherence, vocabulary use (including topical lexical choices and academic register), and grammatical accuracy for each practice assignment. Teacher C reported that she adapted her feedback methodology according to students’ proficiency levels. Specifically, for lower-level learners (band 6.5 or below), she emphasized linguistic accuracy, focusing on grammatical structures and lexical selection, whereas for higher-performing students, she prioritized register appropriateness, cohesion, and coherence.

In addition to integrating genre conventions, teachers endorsed a holistic, process-oriented, learning-focused approach to assessment. They strongly agreed (100%) that regular diagnostic assessment of genre awareness helps inform IELTS instruction planning (Q29, Mean = 2.11), that portfolio assessment, including multiple Task 2 essay types, helps evaluate genre competence development (Q26, Mean = 1.96), and that formative assessment should track students’ progress in mastering different IELTS genre types (Q27, Mean = 1.89).

Regarding stakeholders in the assessment and feedback process, survey participants showed unanimous agreement (100%) that students should be taught to self-assess their IELTS writing using genre-based checklists (Q24, Mean = 1.92) and that peer review activities should focus on genre features of Task 2 (Q25, Mean = 2.08). However, the qualitative data reveal slightly different opinions concerning self-assessment. Two out of three interviewees stated that they had never considered letting students assess their writing. Teacher C said, “It’s common sense for people to be proud of their own work, so they cannot recognize their problems. I never think of asking students to evaluate their own writing.” Teacher D was the only teacher who consistently asked students to review their writing with a given checklist. Despite this gap in self-assessment, all three teachers reached a strong consensus on peer feedback. They all reported it as a common practice in their classes.

One area of relative uncertainty concerned the comparative effectiveness of different feedback approaches. While teachers still showed substantial agreement, they were somewhat less certain that genre-based feedback is more effective than traditional error correction for IELTS writing improvement (Q30, Mean = 2.54, 96.2% agreement). Interview data reveal that teachers employed genre-focused feedback to address rhetorical and organizational issues and traditional feedback to address linguistic accuracy. Teacher B explained: “Those who commit vocabulary and grammatical mistakes can hardly recognize their problems, so I correct them

immediately. They can learn directly by comparing their version and mine.” Teacher D added: “I often ask questions to activate students’ prior knowledge about the essay’s generic structure, idea flow, and cohesion for them to identify their problems and self-correct before I give my feedback or correction.”

Teacher Beliefs about Introducing Basic Academic Writing Skills through GBA in IELTS Task 2 Instruction

The quantitative results reveal that teachers strongly agreed (Q8, Mean = 2.11, 96.3% agreement) on the transferability of genre knowledge from IELTS preparation to other academic contexts. This result was reinforced and illustrated in detail by interview responses.

As presented earlier, Teacher A opted to implement template teaching rather than GBA in practice, despite having formal training and awareness of GBA. Nevertheless, she admitted that GBA produced more sustainable outcomes than template-based instruction. She said that GBA enabled learners to develop authentic writing competence that could be transferred across diverse academic contexts rather than merely achieving test success.

Other teachers who implemented GBA in their IELTS classes believed that integrating GBA into high-stakes test preparation could effectively prepare students for future academic writing. Both Teachers B and C emphasized that GBA particularly benefited lower-proficiency students and those lacking background knowledge and life experience necessary for academic skill development. According to these instructors, this pedagogical approach helped students develop a basic understanding that academic writing must demonstrate logical structure (Teachers B and C), with each paragraph centered on a main idea (Teacher B). Furthermore, GBA was identified as an instrument to develop students’ metacognitive skills (Teachers B and C). Through deconstructing sample texts, students could understand genre expectations while acquiring both topical knowledge and the lexical resources essential for the target discourse. Teacher D added that GBA enables students to master the target text’s generic structure and improve critical thinking skills.

Teacher C even articulated her teaching principle: “Preparation courses must equip students with knowledge and skills both to achieve high IELTS band scores and establish foundational academic writing competencies as the ultimate purpose of IELTS certification is to facilitate success in tertiary education contexts.” This perspective suggests that preparation courses must be designed with long-term goals of academic writing improvement.

In addition to the positive impact of GBA on the introduction of academic writing skills, participating teachers also identified common challenges in implementing this approach. Beyond time constraints, as emphasized by Teacher A, the most significant obstacle was students’ attitudes and learning orientations. Teachers B, C, and D reported that the majority of students did not pay sufficient attention to developing academic writing competencies for future application. They asserted that students who were aware of the writing requirements they would encounter during their specialized training phase seemed to place greater emphasis on establishing foundational skills relevant to their future academic pursuits.

Teacher C consistently integrated features and requirements of higher-education academic writing into preparation classes to demonstrate the alignment between current instruction and

future academic requirements. In her experience, this approach somewhat enhanced students' awareness and increased their engagement in developing foundational academic writing.

Discussion

The study found a gap between teachers' GBA awareness and its implementation; however, the majority of participating teachers believed that IELTS essays were a genre-specific communication task and that GBA was appropriate for supporting students' band score gains and preparing learners for their later academic journey.

The Theory-Practice Gap in GBA Awareness and Implementation

The large gap between the percentage of teachers formally trained in GBA (37.9%) and those who understand this pedagogical approach (84.5%) reveals that teachers acquire knowledge of GBA through multiple channels beyond formal education. This finding confirms previous literature indicating that teacher beliefs are shaped not only by early schooling experiences but also by personal experiences and ongoing professional development throughout their teaching careers (Borg, 2003; Melketo, 2012; Richardson, 2003; Shi, 2015). As the interview found, Vietnamese EFL teachers engaged in both formal training and informal, self-directed professional learning through interactions, independent reading, and reflective practice.

However, the study findings also reveal a gap between awareness and practices. The contrasting cases of Teacher A and Teachers C and D exemplify the tension between immediate test preparation and long-term competence development objectives. Teacher A attributed the decision to avoid GBA despite acknowledging its pedagogical value to time limitations in intensive IELTS preparation courses. This explanation highlighted how contextual constraints created barriers to implementing pedagogically sound approaches. Her preference for template instruction over GBA teaching practice resonates with Chen's (2018) findings. In that study, students similarly prioritized achieving target band scores over long-term competence development, although they acknowledged GBA's effectiveness in preparing academic skills. This suggests that the washback effect of high-stakes testing shapes teachers' pedagogical choices even when these choices conflict with their theoretical understanding of effective instruction. This conclusion, to some extent, aligns with Tong and Pham (2024) the idea that teachers' choice of teaching methods is one of the many aspects of teaching affected by high-stakes tests.

Conversely, Teachers C and D's consistent integration of GBA in practice proves that implementation barriers are not insurmountable. The success of GBA implementation depends on teachers' strategic adaptation that accommodates both pedagogical principles and practical realities, rather than on a one-size-fits-all adoption of idealized teaching-learning cycles. This finding highlights the role of teachers and their adaptive expertise in navigating constraints.

Teachers' Sophisticated Beliefs about Genre-Based Approach and Its Pedagogical Implications

Teachers' Conceptualization of IELTS Writing as Genre-Specific Social Practice

Vietnamese EFL teachers' strong consensus (95.93% agreement) regarding the genre-specific nature of Task 2 essays reflects a shift in how they conceptualize IELTS writing tasks.

First, teachers unanimously agreed that understanding the purpose and target audience is crucial to producing effective Task 2 essays. This finding suggests that teachers consider IELTS writing as communicative events that serve certain communicative objectives. The result aligns with Swales' (1990) conceptualization of genre as responses to recurrent rhetorical situations. However, it runs counter to Evans' (2019) conclusion about the common writing instruction long applied in Vietnam's higher education. He reported that writing activities were often treated as linguistic development activities. This contrast reflects a positive change in teachers' conceptualization of writing.

Second, the universal agreement (100%) that Task 2 essays follow predictable organizational patterns that can be explicitly taught indicates that teachers view genre knowledge as learnable through systematic instruction. This perspective aligns closely with Martin and Rose's (2008) advocacy for explicit genre instruction and the Sydney School's principle of making the conventions of academic discourse visible.

From a theoretical perspective, the above beliefs demonstrate that Vietnamese EFL teachers have recognized writing as communicative and purposeful rather than as decontextualized language production. In essence, they have moved toward understanding writing as a social practice that requires mastery of discourse-community conventions. This sophisticated understanding facilitates curriculum reform that emphasizes explicit genre instruction over traditional approaches focused on grammatical correctness or formulaic test-taking strategies.

In addition to the above high level of consensus, there was still a relative discrepancy among teachers regarding the influence of L1 on L2 writing. The contrasting views of Teachers B and C regarding whether Vietnamese writing experiences support or hinder English academic writing performance suggest an insufficient understanding of contrastive rhetoric and cross-cultural writing conventions. Therefore, teachers must understand how students' L1 writing experiences both facilitate and potentially contradict English academic writing conventions, so they can deliver effective genre-based instruction in EFL settings.

Translating GBA Theory into Practice: Teachers' Beliefs and Readiness

Teachers' responses to both the survey and the interview demonstrate that they are aware of and believe in GBA's effectiveness in Task 2 instruction.

Teachers' unanimous support (100%) for the central role of model text in GBA instruction reflects their understanding that genre competence develops through recursive exposure to exemplars rather than through discrete lessons. This belief aligns with the systemic functional linguistic principle, especially Halliday's emphasis on the relationship between language choices and social contexts (Figueiredo, 2010), because linguistic analysis of model texts helps learners identify how language choices realize communicative purposes. This finding also concurs with Nguyen and Le's (2022) finding that students can make better and more accurate lexical choices through exposure to model essays. However, there is a gulf between the current study results and the existing literature. While previous researchers employed native-speaker models (Bagheri & Zare, 2009; Nguyen & Le, 2022; Tieu & Baker, 2023), participating teachers in this study focused on the authenticity of the sample responses rather than their origins. Furthermore, the finding that teachers value native speakers' models for linguistic features and

high-scoring Vietnamese EFL texts for structural illustration reveals that effective instruction requires diverse models to address different dimensions of genre competence.

Teachers also demonstrated understanding of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development by agreeing on the role of scaffolding in Task 2 instruction. They believed it was important to gradually transfer responsibility to students as they develop genre competence. This belief indicates that teachers appreciated the structured progressions that systematically guide students from supported analysis to guided practice and finally to independent performance. The findings align well with previous research conducted by Nguyen et al. (2024), Nguyen and Truong (2024), and Pham (2022) regarding the effectiveness of scaffolding in genre-based L2 writing instruction.

In addition, although teachers showed some uncertainty in their survey responses, those interviewed agreed that all IELTS essay types belong to a larger family of argumentative genres. They share basic features such as thesis-driven argumentation, evidence-based support, and logical flow of ideas. The difference among IELTS question types is how ideas are organized. It therefore suggests that teachers identify both similarities and differences among essay types, so they can address shared features systematically while providing targeted instruction for type-specific variations.

However, the discrepancy between the quantitative finding of strong endorsement (96.3%) and qualitative data on collaborative writing indicates important implementation challenges. The survey responses may reveal what teachers think should happen in a perfect world, but their actual practices are shaped by contextual factors. Therefore, teachers' omission of the collaborative writing stage reflects the conflict between pedagogical ideals and practical constraints. This result also raises a significant question about the correlation between teachers' reported beliefs and their classroom practices. What they believe may not be translated into practice in the classroom. This gap between theory and practice requires that professional development address both theoretical principles and practical strategies for employing GBA within the limited time and space of intensive IELTS preparation courses.

Assessment Practices: Navigating the Tension between Genre-Based Principles and Standardized Testing

These study findings reveal different aspects of teachers' beliefs and practices regarding the employment of genre criteria in assessing IELTS essays.

First, the gap between survey and interview results reflects the challenge faced by IELTS trainers, who must balance pedagogical principles with the practical demands of test preparation. Although the teacher acknowledged the need to incorporate genre assessment principles alongside IELTS assessment criteria, they relied more on the official IELTS guidelines. Their reliance may stem from their fear that deviating from official criteria could disadvantage students in actual testing situations. This practice aligns with previous studies' stance on the powerful influence of high-stakes testing washback (Afzal, 2016; Cheng & Curtis, 2004) and confirms the influence of long-standing test orientation in both teaching and assessment in Vietnam (Evans, 2019; Hoang et al., 2025).

Second, teachers' different feedback practices show that they understand how important it is to

tailor their assessment to fit the needs of specific students and the teaching contexts. These different methods show that genre-based assessment in IELTS contexts needs to be flexible rather than adhering to a single set of rules. However, the lack of a common framework might also signal inconsistency, leading to confusion among students or unequal learning opportunities.

In addition, teachers' strong support for diagnostic, portfolio, and formative assessment indicates that they have changed their thinking about assessment. Teachers now do not view assessment as a one-time event, but an important part of the teaching-learning cycle that is always changing. This orientation concurs with contemporary assessment theory proposed by previous scholars, such as Black and Wiliam (2009) Merritt (2021). They all prioritize assessment for learning over assessment of learning. Teachers also understand that genre competence requires evaluation across multiple contexts over time, supported by assessment methods that monitor progress across genres and contexts. This approach to assessment creates feedback loops that directly inform and improve lesson planning, helping teachers be more responsive and adaptable.

There is an interesting pattern that every teacher (100%) agrees with peer review, but is hesitant to use self-assessment. Teachers' strong support for peer assessment aligns with sociocultural theory's emphasis on collaborative knowledge construction and suggests understanding that students can develop sophisticated genre awareness through evaluating others' writing. However, the gap between theoretical endorsement and practical reluctance suggests a possible issue: there is insufficient understanding of how to scaffold self-assessment effectively. Teacher C's belief that "people are proud of their own work, so they cannot recognize their problems" shows that she does not believe students can think about their own thinking, even though self-assessment is a skill that can be learned with the right guidance and support. Teacher D's success in consistently implementing self-assessment demonstrates that this practice is feasible in Vietnamese contexts when teachers commit to it. This suggests a need for professional development that demonstrates how structured self-assessment tools can help students critically evaluate their own writing.

Finally, the 96.2% agreement that genre-based feedback is more effective than traditional error correction shows that teachers know, from experience, that good writing requires both genre competence and linguistic proficiency. In fact, they were very flexible in employing different types of feedback in practice, such as genre-focused feedback for rhetorical and organizational issues and traditional feedback for linguistic accuracy. This finding indicates that teachers recognize that genre-based and traditional approaches can work together to improve writing performance in many ways.

GBA's Dual Function: Test Preparation and Academic Literacy Development

The finding shows that teachers believed genre knowledge could be transferred from IELTS preparation activities to academic literacy development; nevertheless, their implementation of GBA are constrained by various factors.

All the teachers who were interviewed, including Teacher A, who did not apply GBA in practice, agreed that genre pedagogy gets students ready for academic writing in school. This

belief helps address the issue posited by Clark and Yu (2025) Dang and Dang (2021) the fact that IELTS preparation courses need to move beyond the immediate testing context. That means preparing students to join academic discourse communities. Unlike Teacher A, Teacher C insisted on equipping students with foundational writing competencies and test-taking skills simultaneously. Her consistency suggests that the teacher can manage the tension between immediate test preparation and long-term skill development effectively through clear goal-setting and explicit connections between current instruction and future application.

However, the applicability of GBA to academic competence development is constrained by students' attitudes and learning orientations. According to participating teachers, high school candidates and early-stage tertiary students focused predominantly on test performance. This finding echoes Chen's (2018) result, which indicates that students (high school students and high school graduates) prioritize achieving target band scores over long-term competence development. This alignment across studies shows that student motivation is a systemic challenge. Additionally, this study found that learner engagement with GBA may be sensitive, as more mature students are better able to appreciate long-term benefits. Again, Teacher C's above-mentioned approach demonstrates that student motivation is not fixed but can be influenced through strategic pedagogical approaches. In sum, teacher mediation plays a crucial role in helping students understand the value of GBA beyond immediate test performance.

Conclusion

This study investigated Vietnamese EFL university teachers' beliefs about the applicability of the genre-based approach in IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 instruction. Findings reveal that teachers were positive about GBA's pedagogical value, strongly endorsed systematic instruction, explicit teaching of genre conventions, and scaffolded learning. They recognized Task 2 as a genre-specific communication event and affirmed GBA's capacity to develop foundational academic writing skills. However, implementation faces considerable constraints, particularly time limitations within intensive preparation courses and students' test-focused orientations. In summary, although Vietnamese EFL teachers show strong readiness for GBA integration, its successful integration depends on adequate teacher training, curriculum development that harmonizes pedagogical ideals with the realities of high-stakes assessment, and purposeful approaches to addressing learners' motivational concerns.

The study's findings provide empirical evidence on the applicability of GBA in preparing EFL learners for IELTS essay writing and future academic paths. It also expands theoretical understanding of GBA application in test-preparation contexts. The contribution is significant because the results come from teacher perspectives that have long remained untouched. It suggests that GBA can be widely implemented in high-stakes test preparation in other EFL contexts.

Nevertheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample size was small (only 54 questionnaire respondents and 4 interviewees), and participants mainly came from two large cities; therefore, it is difficult to generalize the results of the present study. Second, the study relied entirely on self-reported data through questionnaires and interviews, which may not

accurately reflect teachers' actual classroom practices. Future research should address these limitations through several complementary approaches. Observations are needed to document how teachers implement GBA in actual IELTS preparation classes, thereby collecting evidence about the belief-practice relationship. Longitudinal studies tracking student outcomes in both IELTS performance and subsequent higher-education academic writing would yield essential evidence of GBA's effectiveness over time.

The findings also carry implications for educational policy. Policy frameworks that recognize the dual purpose of IELTS score improvement and academic literacy development would create more enabling conditions for GBA implementation. Teacher education guidelines should incorporate genre pedagogy into writing teacher preparation.

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Biodata

Mai Lan is a lecturer at Thang Long University, Hanoi, Vietnam. She is currently a PhD candidate at Hanoi University, Vietnam. She has worked as an EFL teacher for 15 years. She is interested in language teaching methodologies and teaching English for Specific Purposes.