

A Genre-Based Approach to Teaching Writing Explanation Text to Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the benefits and values of implementing a Genre-Based Approach (GBA) in teaching the writing of explanation texts to senior high school students. It also aimed to investigate students' perceptions of the implementation of GBA in the context of writing explanation texts. Adopting a case study design, the research collected data from classroom field notes documenting the implementation of GBA, interviews, and students' written texts. Data from the fieldnotes and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, whereas the students' texts were examined through the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) transitivity framework. The findings from the fieldnotes indicated that students initially experienced difficulties in understanding the teacher's instructions delivered in English; however, the use of bilingual instruction during the implementation of GBA helped them to overcome this challenge. With regard to students' writing performance, the GBA was found to be beneficial in improving their writing skills, as evidenced by their final texts, which successfully realized the three stages of the schematic structure of an explanation text and employed a range of linguistic features. Furthermore, the students' responses revealed positive attitudes toward the teaching program, particularly toward the modeling and joint construction stages. Students reported that the explicit instruction provided in these stages was especially helpful for writing explanation texts, and gained new knowledge, experienced the stages of the writing process, and broadened their understanding of grammar.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the essential skills that EFL learners need to master because it enables them to communicate ideas clearly and appropriately in the target language (Graham & Alves, 2021). In the Indonesian context, writing also allows students to engage with a range of genres and to develop their repertoire of language styles, vocabulary, and cultural knowledge (Sari & Fitriani, 2019). Despite its importance, many EFL students continue to experience substantial difficulties in writing. These challenges have been associated with teacher-centered instructional practices, limited opportunities for meaningful writing practice, and insufficient knowledge of grammar and text

organization (Megawati & Anugerahwati, 2012; Toba et al., 2019; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). Such conditions often lead to texts that are weak in coherence, cohesion, and overall communicative effectiveness. In response, scholars have emphasized the need for appropriate instructional strategies that can systematically support learners in developing their writing competence (Masitoh & Suprijadi, 2015). One widely recognized option is the Genre-Based Approach (GBA), which explicitly guides students in understanding how texts are structured and how language is used to achieve particular communicative goals.

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) has been implemented by English teachers since the 1980s and is grounded in the view that students learn to write more effectively by working with and analyzing different types of written texts (Ueasiriphan & Tangkiengsirisin, 2019). In Indonesia, GBA has been integrated into the national curriculum since 2004 through a text-based approach in which students are encouraged to produce a variety of English text types (Emilia, 2011). This approach emphasizes explicit teaching of schematic structure and linguistic features and commonly follows a teaching and learning cycle involving modelling, joint construction, and independent construction of texts, thereby providing systematic scaffolding for learners.

A growing body of research has reported that GBA is effective in enhancing students' writing ability in different genres. Studies have shown, for example, that the approach improves students' exposition essays, argumentative texts, and discussion texts in terms of organization, content development, and the use of specific linguistic resources (Burgos, 2017; Huang & Zhang, 2019; Nagao, 2019). In the Indonesian context, empirical studies similarly indicate that GBA contributes positively to students' writing across various text types (Fanani, 2018; Haeraji & Irawan, 2019; Ilham & Aminullah, 2019; Nurjamin & Nurjamin, 2017). These findings suggest that explicit, genre-oriented instruction can help learners produce more structurally coherent and linguistically appropriate texts.

Nevertheless, research focusing specifically on the use of GBA to teach explanation texts remains limited. Explanation text is a key school genre because it is designed to clarify or describe a concept, process, or phenomenon in a clear and systematic manner and is widely used in educational, scientific, and technical contexts (Culham & Coutu, 2016). Mastery of this genre is particularly important for students who must explain complex phenomena in subjects such as science and social studies, yet explicit pedagogical support for writing explanation texts is not always systematically provided in EFL classrooms. Moreover, relatively few studies have analyzed students' explanation texts in detail in terms of schematic structure and linguistic features using a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, and learners' perspectives on the implementation of GBA in this genre have received comparatively little attention (Emilia, 2014; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008).

Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates the implementation of the Genre-Based Approach in teaching explanation texts to eleventh-grade students at a state senior high school in Bandung, West Java. The study examines students' written products with regard to their schematic structure and linguistic features through an SFL lens and explores students' opinions about the teaching program (Emilia, 2014; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008). Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) What is the impact of the implementation of the Genre-Based Approach on students' ability to write explanation texts? and (2) How do students perceive the implementation of the Genre-Based Approach in writing explanation texts?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review outlines the theoretical and empirical foundations of using a Genre-Based Approach (GBA) to teach explanation texts in an Indonesian EFL senior high school context. It briefly discusses writing as a complex meaning-making process, introduces GBA and its SFL underpinnings, describes the key features of explanation texts, and synthesises previous GBA studies to highlight the limited research on explanation texts and learners' perspectives at this level.

2.1 Writing in EFL Context

Writing is widely regarded as a complex, meaning-making process in which texts are crafted to meet particular genre conventions and communicative purposes (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Pinter, 2006). In EFL settings such as Indonesia, however, students frequently experience difficulties in producing written texts that are coherent, cohesive, and grammatically accurate, despite sustained instructional efforts (Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017; Nugraha, 2015; Toba et al., 2019; Wahyuni & Umam, 2017; Yang, 2016). These challenges have led scholars to argue for more explicit writing instruction that makes visible how grammar and lexis contribute to meaning and how language operates within specific contexts of use (Emilia, 2011, 2022; Hyland, 2007).

2.2 Genre-Based Approach (GBA)

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) emerged from dissatisfaction with purely process-oriented literacy pedagogy and is grounded in Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics, which conceptualizes language as a resource for making meaning in social contexts (Deakin University, 2002, as cited in Emilia, 2011; Hyland, 2004). GBA foregrounds the teaching of context, schematic structure, and linguistic features of different genres so that students can understand how texts are organized and how meanings are constructed (Bruce, 2008; Derewianka, 2004). It also developed partly in response to concerns that grammar had been marginalized in literacy instruction, even though grammatical choices are central to producing texts that successfully engage readers (Martin et al., 1994, as cited in Emilia, 2011; Megani, 2015). By learning to discuss language and its functions in texts, students gain clearer insight into how grammar shapes meaning and how language operates across genres (Derewianka, 2003; Hyland, 2007).

2.3 Basic Principles of Genre-Based Approach

Several core principles underpin GBA. First, language learning as social activity highlights that learning is situated in social practices and grounded in the analysis of genres with specific purposes, structures, and linguistic features in particular contexts; interaction and collaboration are thus central to the development of genre awareness and writing skills (Luu, 2011; Nagao, 2019; Rosário et al., 2019). Second, language learning as explicit teaching stresses the importance of direct instruction on genre features and structures, enabling students to select and use appropriate language resources for particular purposes, audiences, and contexts (Dirgeyasa, 2016; Erlinda, 2008; Hyland, 2003). Third, language learning as a series of scaffolding emphasizes gradual, systematic support through modelling, guided practice, feedback, and collaborative activities, which helps learners move from supported to independent performance and promotes autonomy and confidence as writers (de Oliveira & Smith, 2022; Gebhard & Harman, 2011; Lo et al., 2019). In bilingual educational contexts, GBA may also incorporate the strategic use of both the first language and English to facilitate comprehension and foster critical thinking (Emilia, 2011).

2.4 Teaching Model of Genre-Based Approach

Pedagogically, GBA is typically realized through a recursive cycle of stages that can be entered or revisited according to the students' needs (Emilia, 2011; Hyland, 2007). In Building Knowledge of the Field, students develop relevant background knowledge about the topic, context, and purpose of the target genre, thereby preparing them for subsequent analysis and text production (Feez, 2002; Gibbons, 2009, as cited in Emilia, 2011; Lo et al., 2019; Triastuti et al., 2022). During Modelling, teachers present exemplar texts and guide students to examine their communicative purpose, audience, stages, and linguistic choices, which builds genre awareness and a shared metalanguage for discussing texts (Chappell, 2021; Emilia, 2011; Erlinda, 2008). In Joint Construction, teachers and students collaboratively compose texts, or students work in groups, with the teacher orchestrating the writing cycle of brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading, thereby providing intensive scaffolding (Derewianka, 2007; Emilia, 2011; Yan, 2005). Finally, in Independent Construction, students produce their own texts without direct guidance, drawing on the knowledge and strategies developed in earlier stages and demonstrating increasing control of the genre and confidence as writers (Chappell, 2021; Emilia, 2011; Hyland, 2007; Pujianto et al., 2014).

2.5 Systemic Functional Linguistics as Text Analysis Tool

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) conceptualizes language as a network of meaning-making resources organized around metafunctions and embedded in social contexts (Halliday, 1994a). It forms the theoretical basis of GBA-oriented text analysis and has been shown to provide a high level of delicacy and specificity in describing student writing, allowing researchers to trace how linguistic choices construct meaning and develop over time (Aidman, 1999; Christie, 1985; Derewianka, 1995; Emilia, 2014; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, as cited in Emilia, 2014; Martin & Rothery, 1984). Within this framework, the transitivity system is particularly relevant to the present study because it operationalizes the ideational metafunction by classifying processes, participants, and circumstances in clauses (Eggins, 2004; Emilia, 2011, 2014; Halliday, 1994a; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Transitivity distinguishes process types such as material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioral, and existential, and examines how these encode experiences and events; as such, it is a powerful analytical tool for examining the linguistic features of students' explanation texts (Butt et al., 2000, as cited in Emilia, 2014; Eggins, 1994, as cited in Emilia, 2014).

2.6 Explanation Text

Explanation text is one of the key genres mandated in the Indonesian curriculum and is particularly emphasized at the senior high school level, including grade eleven (Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 64, 2013; No. 37, 2018; Suhendar et al., 2020). It is used to explain how or why phenomena occur by presenting information in logically sequenced stages and is commonly found in textbooks, encyclopedias, and other educational materials (Anderson & Anderson, 2016; Derewianka, 2007; Martin & Rose, 2007; Suhendar et al., 2020). The social purposes of explanation texts vary according to type, including sequential, cyclical, causal, system, factorial, and consequential explanations that focus on different kinds of processes or relationships (Derewianka, 2007). In terms of schematic structure, these texts typically comprise a phenomenon stage that introduces the process or phenomenon, followed by an explanation stage that outlines how or why it occurs, and an optional conclusion that summarizes or evaluates the explanation (Derewianka, 2004; Emilia, 2014; Martin & Rose, 2008). Their linguistic profile is characterized by technical vocabulary, causal and logical connectives, passive constructions, and use of the simple

present tense, often accompanied by diagrams or visual aids to clarify complex processes (Derewianka, 2007; Emilia, 2011; Feez & Joyce, 1998; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Martin & Rose, 2007).

2.7 Previous Related Research

A substantial body of research has investigated the implementation of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) in teaching writing across different genres and educational contexts (Ahn, 2012; Burgos, 2017; Fanani, 2018; Haerazi & Irawan, 2019; Huang & Zhang, 2019; Ilham & Aminullah, 2014; Nagao, 2019). Studies in EFL settings have shown that the scaffolding embedded in the GBA learning cycle helps students to understand how texts are organized for different communicative purposes and enhances their writing performance in genres such as reports, expositions, and argumentative texts (Ahn, 2012; Burgos, 2017; Huang & Zhang, 2019; Nagao, 2019). In the Indonesian context, research has reported that GBA can improve students' writing skills, offer more effective opportunities for practicing writing, and support the development of schematic structure and linguistic features in genres such as descriptive and discussion texts (Fanani, 2018; Haerazi & Irawan, 2019; Ilham & Aminullah, 2014). Nonetheless, relatively few studies have focused specifically on GBA for teaching explanation texts at the senior high school level or on learners' responses to its implementation, indicating a gap that the present study seeks to address.

3. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate how the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) was implemented in teaching explanation texts and how students responded to this approach in an Indonesian EFL senior high school context (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2018). A case study was appropriate because it enabled an in-depth examination of a specific teaching method within an actual classroom, using multiple data sources to obtain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

The research was conducted during a teaching practicum at a state senior high school in Bandung, West Java, where the researcher served as a preservice teacher and participant observer (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2005). The participants were eleventh-grade students from one class of 36 learners. From this class, six students were purposively selected based on their initial writing performance to represent lower-, middle-, and higher-achieving groups, with pseudonyms used to maintain confidentiality.

Data were collected from three sources, included fieldnotes, students' texts, and a focus group interview. Classroom observations across seven meetings, including two preliminary observations and five GBA-based lessons covering Building Knowledge of the Field, Modelling, Joint Construction, and Independent Construction, were documented through fieldnotes to capture the implementation of GBA and students' engagement (Creswell, 2013; Liu & Chen, 2022). Students' explanation texts were collected as documentary data, consisting of twelve texts (one diagnostic and one final text from each of the six focal students) aligned with the explanation text competences specified in the 2013 curriculum for grade XI. These texts were used to examine changes in students' writing in terms of schematic structure and linguistic features following the GBA implementation.

Students' perceptions were explored through a semi-structured focus group interview with the six selected students, conducted online via Google Meet for approximately 60 minutes after the teaching programme had been completed (Creswell, 2013; Percy et al., 2015). The interview was

held in Indonesian language to facilitate rich responses, audio-recorded for accuracy, and preceded by informed consent to ensure voluntary participation and ethical compliance (Creswell, 2013). Data analysis combined thematic and linguistic procedures. Fieldnotes and interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, involving transcription, iterative coding of salient words and phrases, and categorisation of codes into themes related to GBA stages and students' experiences (Creswell, 2014). Students' texts were analysed within a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework following Emilia (2005), focusing on identifying the genre, examining schematic structure (stages and phases), and analysing linguistic features using the transitivity system to capture how processes, participants, and circumstances were realised in the explanation texts.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study in relation to the two research questions: (1) the impact of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) on students' ability to write explanation texts and (2) students' perceptions of the implementation of GBA in an Indonesian senior high school classroom. The findings draw on classroom fieldnotes, students' texts, and focus group interview data, and are discussed in light of genre pedagogy and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

4.1 Classroom Implementation of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA)

The preliminary observation revealed that prior to the intervention, writing instruction tended to be product-oriented in which students were asked to write directly based on the topic with limited explicit guidance on planning, drafting, or the schematic structure of explanation texts. This approach did not fully reflect the view that writing should be taught as a staged process supported by explicit modelling and feedback (Emilia, 2011).

During the intervention, the teaching program was restructured according to the stages of the Genre-Based Approach: Building Knowledge of the Field, Modelling, Joint Construction, and Independent Construction. In the Building Knowledge of the Field stage, students engaged in topic-focused discussions and reading activities that helped them activate background knowledge; however, time limitations constrained the range and depth of these activities. In the Modelling stage, the teacher introduced explanation texts through visual prompts, sample texts, and explicit explanation of schematic structure and linguistic features, which appeared to be pivotal in helping students understand what constitutes an effective explanation text.

The Joint Construction stage allowed students and teacher to co-construct a text, share ideas, and experience the writing cycle, including brainstorming, revising, editing, and proofreading. Fieldnotes indicate that this collaborative work made expectations more visible and helped students notice and correct errors, especially in organization and grammar. In the Independent Construction stage, students produced their own explanation texts; while some still experienced difficulties with accuracy and vocabulary, they were able to draw on the models and joint constructions that had been developed earlier.

A notable classroom issue concerned students' comprehension of instructions delivered in English. Several students struggled to follow explanations when only English was used, which sometimes slowed down the activities. The strategic use of bilingual instruction (Indonesian and English) helped address this challenge and enabled students to remain engaged in the learning process. This finding underscores the value of bilingual scaffolding in EFL classrooms, particularly when learners are expected to handle cognitively demanding writing tasks.

4.2 Development in Students' Explanation Texts

Analysis of students' texts indicates that the implementation of GBA was associated with clear improvements in students' explanation writing, particularly in terms of text organization and linguistic features. Diagnostic texts written before the intervention showed partial control of the genre: some texts were written as a single paragraph, with limited differentiation between the phenomenon and explanation stages, and with incomplete or loosely connected ideas.

After the intervention, students' final texts displayed more systematic organization and clearer realization of the three main stages of explanation texts: phenomenon, explanation, and (where present) conclusion. Paragraphing became more consistent, and ideas were sequenced more logically to show how or why the phenomenon occurred. In this sense, the program appears to have helped students move from loosely structured compositions toward more recognizable and coherent explanation texts.

From an SFL perspective, the linguistic analysis also suggests meaningful development. In some diagnostic texts, students already used certain explanation-text features, such as simple present tense, some technical vocabulary, and a limited range of processes, but their control was uneven and often accompanied by grammatical errors. In the final texts, students displayed broader and more consistent use of key linguistic resources, including:

- a) more frequent and appropriate use of simple present tense and, where relevant, passive constructions;
- b) richer technical vocabulary related to the explained phenomena;
- c) a wider range of process types (e.g., material, relational, mental, and existential) to describe actions, states, and conditions; and
- d) increased use of casual and logical connectives to signal relationships between events and stages.

Overall, students' final texts were described in the thesis as more mature explanation texts, suggesting that explicit genre-based instruction supported them in gaining greater control over both schematic structure and language choices. This aligns with previous research reporting that GBA facilitates improvement in the organization and linguistic realization of student writing by making genre expectations explicit and providing scaffolded practice. Furthermore, the main differences between students' diagnostic and final text as reported is summarized in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Summary of Changes in Students' Explanation Texts

Aspect	Diagnostic Texts	Final Texts
Text organization	Some texts lacked clear paragraphing and did not fully realize the stages of explanation text	Texts showed clearer paragraphing and more complete realization of phenomenon, explanation, and optional conclusion stages
Schematic structure	Partial or inconsistent control of genre stages	Stronger and more systematic control of the three-stage explanation structure
Linguistic features	Limited but emerging use of present tense, technical terms, and selected process types	Expanded use of present tense, passive voice, causal connectives, technical vocabulary, and varied process types
Overall writing quality	Less mature explanation writing with fragmented ideas	More coherent and genre-appropriate texts with improved flow of ideas

These findings indicate that the teaching cycle, particularly the Modelling and Joint Construction stages, played an important role in helping students internalize the structural and linguistic patterns of explanation texts. By drawing attention to how meaning is realized through schematic structure and transitivity choices, the program appears to have fostered a closer connection between students' understanding of the genre and their actual writing performance.

4.3 Students' Perception of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) Implementation

Interview data show that students held generally positive views of the GBA-based teaching program and perceived that it helped them improve their writing of explanation texts. Students reported that the lessons were easier to follow and more engaging than previous English classes, which had rarely involved detailed support for writing. They also felt that their final texts were better than their initial drafts, attributing this improvement to the explicit explanations and step-by-step guidance provided by the teacher.

Students mentioned that before the intervention they had difficulties with grammar, vocabulary, and generating ideas, and they did not clearly understand how to write explanation texts. After participating in the GBA lessons, they believed that they had gained a clearer understanding of how to structure explanation texts and which language features to use, and that they felt more confident about writing in English. These perceptions suggest that students not only recognized changes in their written products but also appreciated the process-oriented and supportive nature of the program.

4.4 Perceived Usefulness of Genre-Based Approach (GBA) Teaching Stages

When students were asked which stages of the teaching cycle they found most helpful, they highlighted modelling and joint construction as particularly beneficial. In the Modelling stage, they valued the teacher's explicit explanation of the definition, schematic structure, and linguistic features of explanation texts, as well as the use of example texts and slides that illustrated how an explanation text should be organized. This reflects the central role of explicit teaching in genre pedagogy, where learners benefit from clear models and a shared metalanguage to discuss texts.

In the Joint Construction stage, students appreciated the opportunity to write together with the teacher and peers, exchange ideas, and observe how a text evolves through drafting and revising. They felt that this collaborative process helped them notice their own mistakes and learn how to improve them, which provided an important bridge to writing independently.

By contrast, although the Independent Construction stage was necessary to assess individual performance, no students mentioned it as the stage that helped them the most. This suggests that while independent writing is crucial for demonstrating learning outcomes, it may offer less explicit guidance than earlier stages, particularly for lower-achieving students who still need more support.

Table 2. Students' Perception of GBA Stages

GBA Stage	Students' Main Comments	Interpretive Note
Building Knowledge of the Field	Helped them understand the topic and provided initial examples of texts	Useful for activating background knowledge and preparing for later stages
Modelling	Seen as the most helpful stage; explicit explanation and examples made the structure and language of explanation texts clearer	Confirms the importance of explicit teaching and genre modelling

Joint Construction	Helped them share ideas, correct errors, and understand how to write collaboratively	Functioned as strong scaffolding toward independent writing
Independent Construction	Necessary but not perceived as the most supportive stage	Indicates a need for continued scaffolding for some learners

4.5 Overall Interpretation

Overall, the finding suggests that GBA had a positive impact on students' ability to write explanation texts and on their perceptions of writing instruction in English. The classroom implementation showed that a structured teaching cycle can transform writing lessons from largely product-oriented tasks into process-oriented, scaffolded activities that foreground genre awareness. The development observed in students' texts, especially in terms of schematic structure and SFL-based linguistic features, demonstrates that explicit genre instruction can support learners in producing more coherent and genre-appropriate explanations.

At the same time, the data highlight the continuing challenges faced by some students, particularly in understanding English-only instructions, managing technical vocabulary, and sustaining accurate and fluent independent writing. These challenges point to the importance of maintaining bilingual support where appropriate, allocating sufficient time for each stage of the teaching cycle, and providing differentiated scaffolding for learners with different proficiency levels. Taken together, the results reinforce the value of SFL-informed genre pedagogy in EFL contexts and suggest that well-implemented GBA can not only improve students' written products but also enhance their engagement, confidence, and understanding of writing as a purposeful, staged activity.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the implementation of the Genre-Based Approach (GBA) contributed positively to senior high school students' ability to write explanation texts in an Indonesian EFL context. The findings from classroom observations and students' written texts indicate that students' writing improved from diagnostic to final drafts, particularly in terms of schematic structure and linguistic features. After participating in the teaching program, students were better able to organize their texts into the stages of phenomenon, explanation, and conclusion, and to use relevant language features such as generic non-human participants, present tense, passive voice, connectives, and a range of process types, including material, mental, relational, and existential processes (Derewianka, 2004; Emilia, 2011, 2014; Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Martin & Rose, 2008). These findings suggest that GBA provides effective pedagogical support for helping students develop greater control over explanation writing.

The study also found that explicit teaching, scaffolding, and bilingual support played a crucial role in the success of the program, particularly for lower-achieving students who required more support in understanding the schematic structure and linguistic features of explanation texts. Among the stages of the teaching cycle, modelling and joint construction appeared to be the most beneficial, as they enabled students to observe how explanation texts are structured, participate in guided writing, and experience the writing process more systematically. In addition, the interview data revealed that students responded positively to the teaching program. They reported that the approach helped them better understand the organization and language features of explanation texts, while also allowing them to learn more about grammar, vocabulary, ideas development, spelling, and punctuation.

Taken together, these findings reinforce the value of the Genre-Based Approach as an effective framework for teaching writing in EFL classrooms, particularly for genres that require clear schematic organization and specific linguistic resources. The study also suggests that future implementations of GBA may be strengthened by allocating more time for the modelling stage, providing richer learning materials, and extending the approach to other text types or language skills. Further research may also examine other dimensions of Systemic Functional Linguistics, such as interpersonal and textual meanings, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' writing development.

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