

Writing Ability across Descriptive and Argumentative Genres of Discourse among Moroccan EFL Students

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Abstract

This study compares and correlates descriptive and argumentative writing abilities of 80 undergraduate semester six students studying English as a foreign language. To achieve this objective, a writing proficiency test was used to measure the students' descriptive and argumentative abilities. Subsequently, paired-samples t-tests, Pearson Product-moment correlation, and simple linear regression were run to analyze the data. Although the findings showed that descriptive writing scores are greater than argumentative writing scores, there is still positive correlation between descriptive and argumentative writing ($r = .76, p < .001$). Correlation between sub-components such as grammar, mechanics, vocabulary, content & organization, and syntax across the two genres ranges respectively from strong to weak levels. The study suggests adopting a sequential teaching through which teachers could start with introducing students to descriptive writing. Subsequently they can progress with argumentative genre, identified as more difficult for these students. Following this sequence would enable students to transfer their good command of writing sub-skills from descriptive to argumentative genre. The study concludes with implications for pedagogy and recommendations for future research.

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1 Introduction

Writing ability is an indispensable component in language learning. For language learners, writing provides an important means of personal self-expression (MacArthur et al., 2008). In this regard, writing allows learners to express themselves and overcome psychological barriers such as anxiety and timidity that are sometimes encountered in speaking. Moreover, good writing skills are likely to enhance students' success to accomplish their professional goals (Graham, 2019). Writing is also thought to improve students' grammar and strengthen other language skills like speaking and reading (Akki & Larouz, 2021; Huy, 2015; Larouz, 2012). Certainly, proficiency in writing constitutes a fundamental aspect of achieving success in the acquisition of a second or foreign language (Hyland, 2003; Nickerson et al., 2014).

Despite the importance of writing skills, language learners face many challenges in the writing process. These constraints can be linguistic, cognitive, or pedagogical (Hyland, 2003). For instance, they are supposed to use appropriate language structures as failure to utilize the structures may render the content and comprehension challenging for the readers (Nik et al., 2010; Quintero, 2008). Similarly, incoherence in texts makes it difficult to communicate ideas even if learners have a good command of syntactic, lexical, or grammatical components (Rico, 2014). Other problems stem from teachers' lack of appropriate teaching techniques such as providing effective feedback and the best means to motivate students. Students' transfer from L1 to L2 can also negatively affect writing. Generally, writing constraints have been classified under three main categories: teachers' incompetence (Harmer, 2008), students' lack of interest (Byrne, 1991; Harmer, 2008) and unsuitable teaching methodologies (Javed et al., 2013).

To tackle the writing constraints, researchers argue that at the core of writing skills there are a set of sub-skills/micro-skills that should be taught to EFL students. For instance, Henry (2000) provided an overview of micro-skills such as having a command of writing mechanics (e.g., using the script, spellings, and punctuation correctly), accuracy of grammar aspects (e.g., the ability to apply accurate words to state the right tense, case, and gender; the ability to use major components such as subject, verb, and object appropriately), coherence and cohesion, and taking into account the audience and their prior knowledge about the subject.

In the same vein, Brown (2001) emphasized the importance of similar sub-skills such as producing an acceptable core of words (vocabulary) in writing, using acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), expressing a particular meaning in different grammatical forms, using cohesive devices and conveying links between ideas in written discourse, using rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse, and accomplishing the communicative functions of written texts according to purpose and audience.

Considering previous research on writing sub-skills mentioned above, one of the most important aspects of writing is that it entails various communicative functions. Hyland (2003, 2009) highlighted the importance of explaining to the learners how language functions for different communicative purposes and claims that:

We don't just write; we write something to achieve some purpose: it is a way of getting something done. To get things done, to tell a story, request an overdraft, craft a love letter, describe a technical process, and so on. We follow certain social conventions for organizing messages because we want our readers to recognize our purpose. These abstract, socially recognized ways of using language for particular purposes are called genres (Hyland, 2003, p. 18).

Adhering to the same perspective, Paltridge (2001) proposed using different genres in the classroom. Students, for instance, can write for narrative, descriptive, expository, or argumentative purposes. In this case, writing ability might vary across these genres. Scott (1996) already wondered whether genres could influence writing performance and asked, "Are some writers competent when writing in one mode but less competent when writing in another?" (p.13).

Given the distinctive attributes and communicative functions of each genre, research has examined the impact of different genres on writing ability. In this regard, many studies have provided evidence that writing in argumentative genre is more complex and more cognitively demanding than writing in other genres (e.g., Bouwer et al., 2015; Heng et al., 2023; Peng & Bao, 2023; Perron, 1977; Pu et al., 2022; Veal & Tillman, 1971; Yoon, 2018). Nevertheless, a large proportion of available research on writing ability across modes of discourse was conducted in L1 settings. Hence, more ESL/EFL research on this issue is required. In addition, previous studies tended to compare writing scores of these genres holistically. Consequently, these studies ignore the analytic measures that rely upon various sub-components/sub-skills in the assessment of written products.

The current study examines writing performance across descriptive and argumentative genres among EFL undergraduate students from the department of English studies at Moulay Ismail University, Morocco. Specifically, this study compares and correlates writing sub-components across descriptive and argumentative modes of discourse in the Moroccan context where English is learnt and taught as a foreign language. This investigation provides a detailed account of the similarities and differences between the two genres with respect to these sub-components/sub-skills. Accordingly, awareness on genre-specific conventions is likely to be raised to enhance the teaching of descriptive and argumentative writing in EFL contexts.

2 Literature review

2.1 Description versus argumentation traits

Descriptive and argumentative genres are characterized by different attributes. Description, on the one hand, gives detailed traits of objects, people, places and events (Pourdana & Asghari, 2021; Sumarsih & Sanjaya, 2013). Pardiyono (2007) claims that visualizing the object to the reader is the basic function of descriptive genre. Argumentation, on the other hand, is concerned with providing arguments to convince people or change their views (Chen et al., 2016). In this regard, argumentative discourse is based on making a claim about an issue, providing data, reasons, support, and defending oneself (Marashi & Yavarzadeh, 2014). Incorporating distinct attributes, both descriptive and argumentative modes of discourse empower students in EFL classrooms to use language for two distinct communicative purposes.

EFL teachers can use different tasks to teach each genre. For instance, one of the most common descriptive writing activities that EFL teachers assign to students is to describe pictures. This task can provide optimal opportunities for students to use adjectives as well as comparisons and similes. Since learning is visualized in descriptive writing, learners can improve their observations and perception skills through descriptions (Dinkins, 2007).

Concerning the communicative uses of argumentative discourse, written language can be used to express students' point of view and support their perspectives with solid arguments, or even challenge other perspectives. Activities such as discussions and debates are among the tasks that promote learners' argumentative abilities (Dakowska, 2005). Finally, engaging EFL learners in controversial issues can lead students to operate beyond their current level of language proficiency.

2.2 Descriptive versus argumentative writing abilities

Despite the shortage of studies that dealt with the issue of comparing EFL/ESL learners' writing scores across descriptive and argumentative genres, the existing L1 and L2 research indicates that composing for descriptive purposes is easier and less demanding compared to challenges posed by argumentative writing.

Investigating the issue among L1 fourth-grade students, Veal and Tillman (1971) found writing in the argumentative genre to be one of the most difficult tasks compared to other genres. Similarly,

Perron (1977) examined the essays written by L1 secondary school students and asserted that argumentative writing was more difficult than descriptive writing for these students. Bouwer et al. (2015) investigated the effect of genre on the generalizability of writing scores of 11 and 12-year students in their final year of primary education (grade 6). The participants were assigned writing tasks in four genres. Their results showed that a great deal of variance in the learners' scores was due to genre-specific aspects.

In the same direction, Nemati (1999) conducted a study to investigate differences resulting from the effect of discourse modes on writing among Iranian EFL university students. The results showed a statistically significant difference between argumentative and descriptive written products. Argumentative writing was found to be more challenging compared to the descriptive mode.

Delving into syntactic complexity, Crowhurst and Piche (1979) noticed that syntactic complexity varies in texts written by the same writer across various modes of discourse. The subjects of the study were selected from the sixth and tenth grades and were asked to write argumentative and descriptive texts. The results reveal that argumentative essays were more syntactically complex than descriptive essays. In other words, the research revealed that the argumentative mode tends to involve more extended T-units and clauses compared to the descriptive mode. The authors claim that changes in discourse modes yield changes in syntactic complexity. Consequently, argumentative written compositions demonstrated higher levels of syntactic complexity in comparison to descriptive ones.

In another study, Beers and Nagy (2010) found significant differences of syntactic complexity measures between descriptive and argumentative essays written by students from grades three to seven. Rachid and Heng (2008) as well as Yoon (2018) provided further evidence that greater syntactic complexity is typical of argumentative writing. In a Chinese EFL context, Qin and Uccelli (2016) examined the writing performance of secondary school students in argumentative writing. Their findings show that argumentative essays show higher lexico-syntactic complexity. Van Rijt et al. (2021) also claimed that measures of syntactic complexity predicted text quality of argumentative essays, and the degree of this prediction might vary due to the type of genre.

In a Korean context, Lee (2021) compared descriptive and argumentative essays written by EFL learners to determine the effect of genres on writing performance. The analysis revealed significant differences between the two modes. The learners produced more subordination, more particular structures, and more sophisticated vocabulary in argumentative written products than in descriptive ones. Alternatively stated, argumentative essays showcased a greater degree of linguistic complexity when compared to descriptive writing. The author attributed these findings to the cognitively demanding nature of argumentative discourse.

Whereas most studies of genres' effect on writing performance were conducted in L1 settings, more studies in EFL/ESL settings are needed. Moreover, most of previous studies have solely focused on comparing the participants' overall writing scores across descriptive and argumentative modes of discourse using holistic measures instead of analytic ones. Although recent research (e.g., Brookhart & Chen, 2015; Lipnevich et al., 2022; Ozfidan & Mitchell, 2022; Yoon, 2018) states that rubrics are an efficient way of scoring students writing performance, previous studies on the issue at hand have overlooked the importance of analytic measures.

Similarly, most of previous research, as examined in this section, focused mainly on the writings of less proficient students either from primary or secondary schools. No previous research has been conducted to examine the relationship between descriptive and argumentative writing genres in the Moroccan context, where most students start learning EFL only late in their secondary school. Therefore, the present research aims to investigate the comparison and correlation of descriptive and argumentative genres within an unexplored context -. This research is anticipated to enhance our understanding of the topic by providing new insights into uncharted territory.

Considering this significance, the purpose of this study, on the one hand, is to compare descriptive and argumentative writing abilities of EFL participants relying upon five discrete and analytic

measures (i.e., writing mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, content and organization). On the other hand, the study is intended to correlate the writing scores and the above five subcomponents in the two genres.

This study is guided by the following two research questions:

RQ1: Is there any significant difference between the students' descriptive and argumentative writing scores?

RQ2: Is there any significant correlation between the students' descriptive and argumentative writing scores?

3 Method

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative correlational design was adopted to compare and correlate the students' writing scores in description and argumentation. This design allowed us to examine the degree of association between descriptive and argumentative scores. In addition, it enables us to predict argumentative writing based on descriptive writing scores. To set up the correlational design for the present study, the variables (Descriptive Writing and Argumentative Writing) were measured using a writing proficiency test.

Subsequently, statistical tools like paired-samples t-tests, Pearson product-moment correlation and simple linear regression were conducted using SPSS to answer the address the research questions posed in this study. The t-test was used to check the significance of the difference in descriptive and argumentative writing means for the same group of participants. This test allowed us to draw conclusions on whether there is a statistical and significant difference between the overall scores of descriptive and argumentative paragraphs. Pearson product-moment correlation allowed us to check if the two writing types and the five sub-components (i.e., writing mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax and content & organization) correlate with each other. By using a simple linear regression, this study examined the level of prediction and variance across the two genres and across the five sub-components which are used for the evaluation of students' writing.

3.2 Sample

The sample consists of 80 undergraduate students from the department of English studies at Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco. The participants in this study were randomly selected from a population of 759 students who are studying English as a foreign language and are in their sixth semester. The sample includes 42 females and 38 males. Participants' ages ranged from 21 to 25 years old. They all have a formal English learning experience of approximately 6 years (three years in secondary school and three years at university).

Moroccan EFL undergraduate students studying English are enrolled at university after holding the Baccalaureate certificate (three years of study at secondary school). After enrollment, they study for three years at the university (From semester 1 to Semester 6) to get their bachelor's degrees. The participants of the current study are enrolled in semester six and are in their third year at university.

3.3 Instruments and Procedure

A writing proficiency test was used to measure descriptive and argumentative abilities of the participants. The test consists of two parts in which students were asked to write one descriptive and one argumentative paragraph. In part one, the participants were required to describe a picture depicting people, objects, or places. In part two, they were asked to respond to a controversial issue

by providing arguments. The first part one measures descriptive writing abilities by tasking the participants to write a descriptive paragraph within a designated 45 minutes time frame. Conversely, the second part aims to measure the argumentative writing abilities by tasking the participants to write an argumentative paragraph within a comparable allotted time.

Regarding the scoring process, two raters coded the written paragraphs to account for inter-coder reliability. The results showed a good degree of reliability between the two raters; the average measure ICC was .82 with a 95% confidence interval from .71 to .88 of agreement between the two raters, $F(79) = 5.49, p < .001$.

The descriptive and argumentative paragraphs were rated using a 5-point scale rubric consisting of writing mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and content & organization (4 = 'done very well', 3 = 'done well', 2 = 'average', 1 = 'done poorly', 0 = 'not done at all'). 'Writing mechanics' is used in this study to refer to the student's ability to use accurate spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. The criterion of 'vocabulary' entails the use of a variety of lexical items which reflects a rich lexical repertoire on the part of the student. This criterion was evaluated by the raters by judging the extent to which the student's writing reflects lexical diversity or variety and the extent to which the lexical items are used appropriately. In the current study, 'grammar' involves the use of correct language rules with respect to aspects such as tense, verb-subject agreement, pluralization, the use of correct articles, correct quantifiers, etc. Grammar is also used in this study for the use of grammatical constructions such as the use of passive construction to express a particular meaning. For the criterion of 'syntax', the raters focused on the students' ability to deploy a variety of syntactic structures and constructions in their writing. This includes aspects of sentence length, subordination, coordination and the ability to use a variety of phrases through embedding. The final aspect used to evaluate students' writing is 'content & organization' (the sign & is used here to indicate that these two aspects are evaluated together as one criterion). This criterion examines the extent to which the writer uses relevant ideas in relation to the assigned topic. This criterion also examines whether the ideas are sequenced in a logical way, which contributes to the overall coherence of the written text and to the overall intended argumentation/description objective. In this regard, the arrangement of ideas within the introduction, body, and conclusion of the written products was also scrutinized by the paragraph raters.

4 Results

Before introducing the main findings of the study, a Shapiro-Wilk test was utilized to check the normal distribution of both descriptive and argumentative writing scores, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Tests of normality

	Shapiro-Wilk	
	Statistic	Sig.
Descriptive Abilities	.97	.133

The results above showed a p-value of 0.133 for descriptive writing and 0.235 for argumentative writing. As the results of the Shapiro-wilk's test for descriptive and argumentative writing are suitable for the normality ($p > .05$), both datasets are normally distributed. The normal distribution of both variables allows the use of parametric tests to answer the research questions of this study.

Subsequently, the descriptive statistics revealed that the overall scores for description surpassed those for argumentation. Detailed comparisons of the means of writing mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and content & organization in descriptive and argumentative writing are displayed in Table 2 below

Table 2. Comparisons of the means of descriptive and argumentative writing

	Over- all Score	Writing Me- chanics	Vocabulary	Grammar	Syntax	Content& or- ganization
Description	12.22	2.94	2.54	2.55	2.33	1.83
Argumentation	10.72	2.58	2.26	2.23	2.05	1.58

The above results clearly demonstrate that descriptive writing scores are greater than the argumentative ones. The students' descriptive writing scores in the five subcomponents of mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, as well as content and organization are greater than their argumentative counterparts. Additionally, key information including the minimum, maximum, and standard deviation of the two datasets are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of descriptive and argumentative writing

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Descriptive Writing	80	6.25	16.50	12.22	2.24
Argumentation	80	6.00	16.25	10.72	2.48

The descriptive statistics above showed that descriptive writing scores ranged from a minimum of 6.25/20 to a maximum of 16.50/20, and argumentative scores ranged from a minimum of 6/20 to a maximum of 16.25/20. The mean of descriptive scores is 12.22, whereas the mean of argumentative scores is 10.72.

The results showed a standard deviation of 2.24 for description and 2.48 for argumentation. Since 2.48 is greater than 2.24, it was indicated that there is more variance in argumentative scores. In this case, descriptive scores are closer than argumentative ones to the mean and argumentative scores are more scattered and farther from the mean.

Subsequently, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the means of descriptive and argumentative writing as illustrated in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Paired samples test

	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Descriptive Writing Ability-Argumentative Writing Ability	-1.50	1.64	-8.17	79	.000

The results above showed that there is a statistically significant difference between descriptive writing ($M = 12.22$, $SD = 2.24$) and argumentative writing ($M = 10.72$, $SD = 2.48$) scores ($t(79) = -8.17$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.91$). The Cohen's d effect size indicates that the observed difference reflects a large effect size (Cohen, 1988).

Finally, the correlational results between the overall ratings of descriptive and argumentative writing and between the five writing subcomponents across the two genres are displayed in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Correlation of overall ratings and the five subcomponents across the two genres

Description	Overall	Descriptive Writing Mechanics (DWM)	Descriptive Writing Vocabulary (DWV)	Descriptive Writing Grammar (DWG)	Descriptive Writing Syntax (DWS)	Descriptive Writing Content & organization (DWCO)
Argumentation						
Overall	R=.76*** R²=.58	R=.63*** R²=.40	R=.55*** R²=.30	R=.70*** R²=.49	R=.57*** R²=.32	R=.57*** R²=.33
Argumentative Writing Mechanics (AWM)	R=.62*** R²=.38	R=.58*** R²=.34	R=.50*** R²=.25	R=.51*** R²=.26	R=.41*** R²=.17	R=.47*** R²=.22
Argumentative Writing Vocabulary (AWV)	R=.60*** R²=.36	R=.50*** R²=.25	R=.54** R²=.29	R=.46*** R²=.21	R=.47*** R²=.22	R=.42*** R²=.18
Argumentative Writing Grammar (AWG)	R=.69*** R²=.47	R=.59*** R²=.35	R=.52*** R²=.27	R=.68*** R²=.46	R=.48*** R²=.23	R=.45*** R²=.20
Argumentative Writing Syntax (AWS)	R=.38*** R²=.15	R=.27* R²=.01	R=.11 R²=.01	R=.40*** R²=.16	R=.34** R²=.11	R=.41*** R²=.17
Argumentative Writing Content & organization (AWCO)	R=.59*** R²=.34	R=.43*** R²=.19	R=.37** R²=.14	R=.61*** R²=.37	R=.45*** R²=.21	R=.44** R²=.20

Note. * Indicates that correlation is significant at $p < .05$, ** indicates that correlation is significant at $p < .01$ and *** indicates that the result is significant at $p < .001$

The findings displayed in Table 5 above showed that there is a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between the overall scores of descriptive and argumentative writings. The Pearson's coefficient ($r = .76, p < .001$) demonstrates that these abilities are strongly related to each other. In addition, the findings showed that descriptive writing could strongly predict argumentative writing ($R^2 = .58$), which suggests that descriptive writing can account for 58 percent of variance in argumentative writing.

In a more detailed way, the findings in Table 5 above demonstrate that the correlation between the five subcomponents across descriptive and argumentative genres ranges from strong to weak levels. Initially, there is a strong positive correlation between descriptive and argumentative writing in grammar ($r = .68, R^2 = .46$). Accordingly, descriptive writing grammar can predict 46 percent of variance in argumentative writing grammar.

In a similar way, the correlation between descriptive and argumentative genres in writing mechanics is closer to a strong positive level ($r = .58, R^2 = .34$), which suggests that descriptive writing mechanics can account for 34 percent of variance in argumentative writing mechanics.

Regarding vocabulary usage across the two genres, there is a moderate positive correlation ($r = .54, R^2 = .29$). In this case, descriptive vocabulary can account only for 29 percent of variance in argumentative vocabulary.

Concerning content and organization across the two genres, the results show a moderate positive correlation ($r = .44, R^2 = .20$), which suggests that descriptive content and organization can predict only 20 percent of argumentative content and organization.

Finally, the results show a weak positive correlation between description and argumentation in syntax ($r = .34, R^2 = .11$), which indicates that descriptive syntax cannot predict a great proportion

of argumentative syntax.

4 Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that descriptive writing scores of EFL semester six students are greater than their argumentative writing ones, and the difference between the two sets of data is statistically significant. Moreover, the scores of the five criteria of writing mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and content & organization are greater in descriptive writing. These detailed results agree with previous research on the issue which already demonstrated that language learners encounter more difficulties in argumentative writing compared to its descriptive counterpart (e.g., Bouwer et al., 2015; Lee, 2021; Nemati, 1999; Perron, 1977; Yoon, 2018).

Despite the significant scores difference between the two genres, there is positive correlation between the overall scores of descriptive and argumentative written compositions, which shows that descriptive and argumentative writing scores are strongly related to each other. In this case, descriptive writing can account for 58 percent of variance in argumentative writing. Furthermore, the positive correlation between the five subcomponents of mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, as well as content and organization across the two genres ranges from strong to weak levels.

In the first place, the strong positive correlation between descriptive and argumentative writing in grammar ($r = .68$; $R^2 = .46$) reveals that grammar can be transferred from descriptive to argumentative writing. Accordingly, students with a strong command of grammar can effectively apply this skill in both descriptive and argumentative genres. This, in turn, might highlight the importance of this sub-skill in writing for descriptive and argumentative purposes. Henry (2000) and Brown (2001) already considered grammar as one of the most important writing sub-skills. Hence, from a pedagogical perspective, emphasizing grammar in language classes may enhance students' writing skills both in descriptive and argumentative genres.

In a similar way, the strong positive correlation between descriptive and argumentative writing mechanics ($r = .58$; $R^2 = .34$) suggests that writing mechanics can cut across descriptive and argumentative written compositions. Accordingly, demonstrating a good command of writing mechanics in descriptive genre might predict a similar command in argumentative writing, and students with a strong command of mechanics can similarly apply this proficiency in both descriptive and argumentative genres.

Regarding vocabulary across the two genres, the moderate positive correlation ($r = .54$; $R^2 = .29$) between the two genres could be attributed to the distinctive traits of both genres. While description requires vocabulary such as adjectives to give a detailed and visualized depiction of objects (Pardiyono, 2007; Pourdana & Asghari, 2021; Sumarsih & Sanjaya, 2013), argumentation is more inclined to opinions and values (Chen et al., 2016; Marashi & Yavarzadeh, 2014).

In a similar way, the moderate positive correlation between descriptive and argumentative writing in content and organization ($r = .44$; $R^2 = .20$) suggests that descriptive content and organization cannot predict a great proportion of argumentative content and organization. This lower value could be attributed to the different content areas of the two genres as well as the topical knowledge that is needed to write descriptive and argumentative paragraphs.

Finally, the weak positive correlation between description and argumentation in syntax ($r = .34$; $R^2 = .11$) shows that descriptive syntax cannot predict a great proportion of argumentative syntax. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that argumentative genre tends to be more syntactically complex than descriptive genre (e.g., Qin & Uccelli, 2016; Rachid & Heng, 2008; Van Rijt et al., 2021). Accordingly, possessing a good command of syntax in descriptive genre may not necessarily predict a similar proficiency in argumentative genre.

5 Conclusion

The current study revealed several areas that merit special attention. First, the findings showed that descriptive writing scores are greater than the argumentative ones; and the students' scores in the five sub-skills of mechanics, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, as well as content and organization are greater than their argumentative counterparts, suggesting that EFL students face more writing difficulties in argumentative genre. In this case, EFL teachers can adopt a sequential teaching approach that starts with introducing students to easier genres such as description before delving into more difficult ones like argumentation. For instance, students need to initially grapple with the simple linguistic structures in descriptive genre to be adequately prepared to producing more complex structures typical of argumentative genre.

Second, the study revealed a noteworthy positive correlation between the overall scores of descriptive and argumentative writings. Descriptive writing can predict a great proportion of students' argumentative writing. While the correlation of grammar and writing mechanics across the two genres is strong, the correlation of vocabulary, content and organization, and syntax across the two genres ranges from moderate to weak levels. Consequently, having a good command of grammar and mechanics can contribute to generating good descriptive and argumentative written compositions. Conversely, students who have constraints in these two sub-skills are likely to have the same difficulties in both genres. Teachers, in this case, are invited to give more attention to these two sub-skills and provide optimal opportunities for students to equally use them in both genres. In addition, the other three sub-skills of vocabulary, content and organization, and syntax might require separate and target-specific teaching strategies to enhance genre-specific vocabulary, content, and syntactic structures. Our results indicate that these three components of writing (i.e., vocabulary, content & organization, and syntax) may not transfer from one genre to another probably because each genre requires the use of each component in a genre-specific manner. Hence, it is recommended that teachers raise students' awareness of how each of these components is employed in both genres. This is likely to highlight key differences between how, for instance, vocabulary and syntax are deployed differently in descriptive and argumentative writings. Further training of EFL students on how to write with a particular focus on these genre-specific conventions is likely to enhance students' writing skills with respect to these components.

While the current findings are interesting, the present study suffers from a set of limitations. Due to the participants being asked to write only a paragraph for each genre, the two short paragraphs might not provide a comprehensive understanding of the students' proficiency levels in both genres. Despite this, clear differences emerged across the two genres in the written compositions. With longer written essays, the results would have been more robust. Another limitation of this study is that it focuses on measuring writing ability at a particular point of time and thus ignores the developmental trend in writing. In this case, using more sophisticated and longitudinal approaches might provide more compelling results in the future. Finally, future research can also examine the relationship between narrative, descriptive, expository, and argumentative genres across speaking and writing.

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