

TEACHING PERSUASIVE WRITING THROUGH START-UP PITCH CONTENT: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY WRITING FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Persuasive writing is a central component of university-level English instruction; however, it is often taught through decontextualized essay topics that lack relevance to students' academic and professional contexts. As a result, many students struggle to develop authentic rhetorical awareness, audience engagement, and purposeful argumentation. This study examined whether integrating start-up pitch content into a general Exposition and Argumentation course could enhance students' persuasive writing performance. The start-up pitch genre requires writers to articulate a problem, propose a solution, justify its value, and persuade a target audience, making it a potentially effective context for teaching persuasive strategies. Using a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design, the study involved 60 undergraduate students from different academic majors enrolled in a general English writing course. Students completed a traditional argumentative essay as a pre-test and a start-up pitch text as a post-test. Both tasks were assessed using an analytic rubric measuring argumentation, coherence, audience awareness, and language use. In addition, reflective journals, questionnaires, and instructor observation notes were analyzed to capture students' perceptions and learning experiences. The results indicated improvement across all dimensions of persuasive writing, with particularly noticeable gains in argument development and audience adaptation. Qualitative findings further suggested that students became more aware of rhetorical purpose, evidence selection, and persuasive language while also reporting higher levels of engagement and motivation. Overall, the study suggests that start-up pitch writing can provide an effective pedagogical approach for teaching persuasive writing in general English courses by connecting traditional essay instruction with authentic rhetorical practice.

Keywords: persuasive writing; genre-based instruction; rhetorical awareness; start-up pitch; academic writing

Introduction

Persuasive writing is a core area of university-level English studies, especially in Exposition and Argumentation courses, where students are supposed to build arguments, use evidence to support them, and respond to counterarguments. Nevertheless, studies have revealed that students have struggled to apply these skills outside the classroom, often producing formulaic essays that lack rhetorical sophistication and audience/purpose awareness (Hyland, 2019; Tardy et al., 2020). The traditional essay assignment, while being valid and relevant to academic pursuits, often lacks contextual significance that would enable students to appreciate the significance of persuasion in communication.

Recent trends in writing pedagogy stress that writing is more than the production of grammatically correct text, as it is a social and rhetorical act that is determined by purpose, audience, and genre (Hyland, 2007). In this way, students will be able to develop their writing skills better if they are exposed to genres that mirror real-world communication. Genre-based teaching, therefore, is a good way to teach persuasion because it explicitly shows how arguments are constructed, how audiences are addressed, and how language use affects rhetorical purposes.

One professional genre that is necessarily persuasive is the start-up pitch. In a pitch, writers are tasked with identifying a problem, offering a solution, articulating its worth, and persuading a particular audience of its viability and significance. Studies on entrepreneurial communication have shown that successful pitches are highly dependent on narrative framing, logic, and audience-centered discourse (Chen et al., 2009; Parhankangas & Ehrlich, 2014). These characteristics are very much in line with the rhetorical skills that Exposition and Argumentation courses seek to teach.

Though research into start-up pitches has been prolific in business and entrepreneurial studies, their educational potential in general academic writing classes remains under-explored. In many settings, writing classes still emphasize traditional argumentative essays, while research points to the potential of genre-based writing for more rhetorical engagement and writing achievement (Hyland, 2019; Tardy et al., 2020). This research fills this research gap by examining the potential of start-up pitch writing as an effective genre for teaching persuasive writing in general English writing classes.

By including the content of start-up pitches in an Exposition and Argumentation class, this research sought to explore whether students could become more proficient in persuasive writing without needing to take business courses or English for Specific Purposes classes. It also conceptualizes pitch writing not as a professional necessity but as a complex rhetorical device that can help students become more proficient in fundamental writing skills.

The primary aim of this research was to assess the effectiveness of writing start-up pitches as a teaching device to help students become proficient in persuasive writing in a general English writing class. In particular, this research sought to explore whether writing start-up pitches could help students become more proficient in writing logical arguments, presenting ideas in a coherent manner, adjusting their writing to suit their audience, and using persuasive language. Another aim was to investigate the perceptions of students on the use of start-up pitch content in learning persuasive writing. Moreover, the study aimed to investigate whether this genre-based approach can be beneficial for students with different academic majors. This will help to show the appropriateness of this approach in a heterogeneous classroom setting.

Although persuasive writing is a crucial aspect of higher education, it has been observed that many students are unable to write persuasively, especially when they are supposed to think about the audience, purpose, and rhetorical effect. In most Exposition and Argumentation classes, persuasion is taught through traditional essay topics that are not related to any practical

communication context. Therefore, students tend to perceive persuasive writing as a mere academic task rather than a purposeful act of communication.

This gap makes it difficult for students to achieve authentic rhetorical awareness and transferable persuasive skills. Therefore, there is a need to develop instructional approaches that make persuasion more tangible, engaging, and relevant to practical communication contexts while staying within the boundaries of academic writing instruction. However, there has been relatively limited research on how authentic professional genres, such as start-up pitches, can be used to address this issue in general writing classrooms.

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Does the use of start-up pitch writing improve students' persuasive writing performance in a general Exposition and Argumentation course?
2. To what extent does start-up pitch writing enhance students' argumentation, coherence, audience awareness, and language use?
3. How do students perceive the use of start-up pitch content in learning persuasive writing?

Based on these questions, the study tested the following hypotheses:

H1: Students who engaged in start-up pitch writing demonstrated higher persuasive writing scores in the post-test compared to the pre-test.

H2: Students showed improvement in argumentation, coherence, audience adaptation, and language use after completing the start-up pitch intervention.

H3: Students reported positive perceptions of the start-up pitch approach in terms of engagement, clarity of purpose, and understanding of persuasive writing.

This study is important in that it offers a new avenue for teaching persuasive writing in general English classes by using authentic genres. By using the content from a start-up pitch, this study offers students a meaningful rhetorical context in which persuasion is used as a communicative practice. This could improve students' understanding of how persuasion is related to other aspects of writing, such as argument, evidence, audience, and language.

This study is important in writing instruction in that it offers evidence that genre instruction is successful in heterogeneous classes without requiring any special knowledge. Students from various academic majors could use the genre of pitches as a rhetorical task. This means that they could use this genre to improve their writing skills in academic and professional settings. In addition, this study offers evidence that using authentic genres in writing instruction could improve student engagement and motivation in writing classes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Persuasive Writing as a Core Academic Skill

Persuasive writing is an essential aspect of academic literacy, as it allows students to make claims, assess evidence, and shape readers' understanding of knowledge. In academic settings, writing is not merely descriptive; it involves taking a position, engaging with previous works, and persuading readers to interpret knowledge in specific ways. According to Hyland, academic writing is always persuasive, as writers are required to make claims, assess evidence, and establish themselves as credible writers in specific academic discourses. Graff and Birkenstein also contend that academic writing requires students to engage with previous works, make claims, and support claims with evidence.

Although academic persuasive writing is an essential aspect of academic literacy, many students face challenges in developing this skill, especially at the higher levels of academic learning. Studies show that students' inability to write persuasively does not stem from grammatical problems, but rather from poor rhetorical awareness and understanding of audience expectations (Hyland, 2005). Persuasive writing requires writers to consider the readers' perspectives, take a position, and organize ideas persuasively, depending on the

academic discipline. However, when students lack this awareness, they may write coherent essays that are poorly persuasive.

The conventional teaching of persuasive writing has been based on generic essay writing, which does not offer enough contextualization of rhetorical communication. This has led to the perception of persuasive writing as an academic exercise, as opposed to genuine communication with the audience in mind (Tardy, Sommer-Farias, & Gevers, 2020). This has created an environment that has prompted researchers to seek alternative approaches to teaching persuasive writing.

2.2 Genre-Based Approaches to Teaching Writing

Genre theory has been a significant framework for analyzing writing as a social practice that is influenced by communicative purposes and audience expectations. According to Swales (1990), genre is a type of communicative act that shares certain purposes, structures, and conventions in specific discourse communities. In this way, genres assist writers in understanding the functions of language in fulfilling particular communicative purposes.

Genre-based teaching has thus emerged as a significant approach to writing instruction. According to Hyland (2007), genre teaching involves making the rhetorical patterns and linguistic features of successful texts overt. Through the analysis of exemplary texts and the examination of rhetorical patterns, students can develop an understanding of how arguments are organized and how language use affects meaning and persuasion.

Research indicates that genre awareness can enable students to gain more control over rhetorical patterns and text organization. According to Tardy (2009), students who are able to analyze and apply genre knowledge are able to adjust their writing to suit different contexts and audiences. Likewise, Paltridge (2013) indicates that teaching genres can enable students to progress beyond the surface features of language and develop a deeper understanding of how texts work in communicative contexts.

Empirical research has also supported the effectiveness of genre-based writing instruction. For instance, Cheng (2011) discovered that the explicit teaching of genre structures enhanced students' organization, coherence, and argumentation skills in academic writing tasks. These findings indicate that the teaching of persuasive writing through authentic genres can potentially improve students' rhetorical skills more than traditional essay writing instruction.

2.3 Authentic Writing Tasks and Rhetorical Engagement

Besides genre knowledge, there is a growing concern about the role of authentic writing tasks in fostering rhetorical competence. Authentic writing tasks refer to writing activities that mimic real-life writing contexts, giving students the opportunity to write for authentic purposes and audiences (Herrington, Reeves, & Oliver, 2013). When students feel that the writing tasks are authentic, they are more likely to connect with the rhetorical aspects of the writing task. Ferris and Hedgcock (2023) suggest that authentic writing tasks help students see writing as a purposeful act of communication rather than a strictly evaluative process in the classroom. Likewise, Hyland (2019) suggests that authentic writing tasks help students become more interested in revising their ideas more thoughtfully, taking into consideration the audience's expectations and improving the structure of argumentative writing.

Studies also suggest that authentic writing tasks help students become more involved in rhetorical activities and improve skills transfer. Beaufort (2012) showed that students who learn to write in authentic rhetorical contexts improve their ability to adapt their writing in different contexts. Likewise, Tardy et al. (2020) suggested that students who are given authentic genres such as proposals, reports, and public communication texts show more attention to audience and more effective persuasive strategies than students who were only asked to write traditional academic essays.

These studies suggest the importance of incorporating authentic genres in writing pedagogy. By placing writing in authentic rhetorical contexts, teachers can help students develop skills in persuasive writing that go beyond the classroom.

2.4 Start-Up Pitch as a Persuasive Genre

One genre in this domain is that of a start-up pitch. In entrepreneurial communication, pitches are generally aimed at influencing or persuading others to invest in or support a new business idea. Effective pitches generally involve defining problems, outlining solutions, creating value, and finally, creating persuasion for their feasibility.

Studies on entrepreneurial communication and communication sciences have revealed that successful pitches are generally based on narrative coherence, logical persuasion, and audience-centered framing. In their study on entrepreneurial pitches, Chen, Yao, and Kotha (2009) revealed that rhetorical clarity and narrative structure significantly influence investors' evaluations. Another study by Pollack, Rutherford, and Nagy (2012) revealed that framing entrepreneurial ideas from a persuasive viewpoint significantly influenced investors' decisions. Parhankangas and Ehrlich (2014) revealed that entrepreneurial pitches based on clear arguments and audience-centered narratives are more likely to influence positive evaluations from potential investors. Thus, pitching is essentially a rhetorical practice aimed at persuasion through strategic uses of language.

From a pedagogical viewpoint, the rhetorical structure of pitches in entrepreneurial communication is similar to that in persuasive writing. Persuasive writing generally involves defining problems, justifying solutions, providing evidence, and addressing the audience. These rhetorical processes in pitches are similar to those in academic persuasion. Thus, pitches in entrepreneurial communication could be a valuable genre for instructional purposes.

2.5 Professional Genres and the Teaching of Persuasive Writing

Recent research suggests that professional genres might be an essential element of teaching academic writing to students. Unlike abstract writing prompts, professional genres provide rhetorical purposes and audiences, which might be beneficial to the development of persuasion concepts. According to Hyland (2019), applied genres such as proposals, reports, and persuasive writing provide students with concrete writing tasks to develop rhetorical skills such as argumentative reasoning. Tardy (2009) emphasizes that working with actual genres enables students to comprehend the concepts of persuasive writing. Research on teaching writing has demonstrated that rhetorical skills might be more efficiently promoted through writing tasks aimed at actual audiences. Beaufort (2012) emphasizes that writing tasks based on actual contexts might be beneficial to the development of rhetorical knowledge transfer.

While start-up pitch writing has been extensively researched within the field of business and entrepreneurship studies, there has been little research on using start-up pitch writing within the broader field of teaching academic writing. This might imply that there are potential research areas to be considered within the field of entrepreneurial communication.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The rationale for this research was to explore the effectiveness of using the content of the start-up pitch in teaching persuasive writing in Exposition and Argumentation courses. Given that the students came from different academic majors and that there was a need to incorporate business communication into the English writing courses, as ESP courses were not formally offered in the college, the research took an interdisciplinary approach. It examined whether the genre of the start-up pitch was effective in improving the persuasive writing skills of the students. It also aimed to offer insights into the viability of genre-based interventions in multi-disciplinary settings.

3.2 Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were comprised of 60 undergraduate students who were enrolled in Exposition and Argumentation courses with different academic majors, ranging from humanities, sciences, to engineering disciplines. Both male and female students participated in this study to ensure that the sample would be representative of the larger population with regard to this variable. All the students who participated in this study gave informed consent to be part of this research.

The students who participated in this study were chosen through the purposive sampling technique, which ensured that the classes came from similar instructional backgrounds and lacked formal training in business communication and ESP courses. This allowed the study to examine the effect of start-up pitch tasks on persuasive writing skills with reasonable consistency between the students' abilities.

3.3 Research Design and Framework

The study employed a quasi-experimental mixed-methods approach, as it used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study framework was informed by a combination of genre-based pedagogy and content from inter-disciplinary fields, such as business communication.

The independent variable was the instruction using content related to start-up pitch as a genre-based writing intervention, while the dependent variable was the performance of students in persuasive writing, as reflected in argumentation, audience, coherence, and persuasive language use.

The research process for this study involved the following stages:

1. Pre-test: The students were given an argumentative essay as a form of traditional writing to assess their baseline performance in persuasive writing.
2. Intervention: The students were given instructional content related to writing a start-up pitch as a form of genre-based writing intervention.
3. Post-test: The students were given an assignment to write a start-up pitch script or document as a form of persuasive writing.
4. Evaluation: The students' texts were evaluated using an analytic rubric as a quantitative method, while a qualitative approach was used for the study.

3.4 Research Instruments

Several tools were employed to gather data for the study.

a. Writing Tasks

Two writing tasks were conducted.

Pre-test:

Students were asked to write an argumentative essay of about 300-400 words on a general topic based on their academic background.

Post-test:

Students were asked to write a start-up pitch text of about 300-400 words that included a well-articulated problem statement, solution, and value proposition to convince a target audience.

b. Instructional Materials

Instructional materials were designed to facilitate the teaching intervention. These consisted of:

- Start-up pitch templates that articulated the general structure of a persuasive pitch
- Sample persuasive pitches in written and video formats
- Guided worksheets that pointed out features of persuasive language, audience adaptation, and organizational structure

These materials enabled students to grasp the role of persuasive language in the pitch genre.

c. Assessment Rubric

Students' writing tasks were assessed using an analytical rubric that was designed from existing frameworks of writing assessment (Hyland, 2019; Tardy, 2020). The rubric evaluated four key areas:

- Clearness and coherence (organization and logical structure of ideas)
- Persuasive language (claims, evidence, and reasoning)
- Audience adaptation (tone, engagement, and audience awareness of reader expectations)
- Language use (vocabulary selection, grammar, and stylistic appropriateness)

These areas were scored to enable a comprehensive evaluation of students' performance in persuasive writing.

d. Reflective Journals and Questionnaire

In order to gain some qualitative understanding of the students' experience, reflective journals and questionnaires were used as an assessment tool at the end of the intervention. The students' perception of the pitch writing tasks, the difficulties they experienced, and the impact of the activity on the students' understanding of persuasive writing were also gathered through this tool.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly adhered to during the entire study. The subjects of the study were informed of the purpose of the research, the procedures used, and that they were not obligated to take part in the study. The students were informed that the responses they provided would be used only for the purpose of the study.

Confidentiality of the subjects was ensured by anonymizing the data of the subjects of the study at the time of collection, analysis, and report generation. The study was conducted with the ethical guidelines of the institution, which are at par with international standards. Academic integrity was ensured by only accepting original work for the writing tasks, and plagiarism detection was also implemented to ensure fair assessment of the tasks.

3.6 Research Procedure

The study adopted a structured procedure to examine the effect of start-up pitch writing on the progress of students' persuasive writing.

First, the materials were prepared, including pitch templates, actual examples of start-up pitches, and worksheets that highlighted various persuasive techniques.

Next, the pre-test procedure was adopted. All the students were asked to write an argumentative essay of approximately 300-400 words on a selected topic that linked to their areas of academic interest.

After the pre-test, the students were exposed to the study intervention. In this phase, the students were introduced to the concept of a start-up pitch, which is a form of persuasive text. In this phase, the students learned how to structure a persuasive text to communicate to a selected audience. In this phase, the instructor provided guidance to help the students develop various strategies to persuade the audience.

After the students had been exposed to the intervention, they were given the post-test procedure, in which they had to write a start-up pitch that demonstrated their ability to use various techniques to persuade.

3.7 Data Collection

Data was gathered from various sources to ensure a well-rounded evaluation of the students' development in persuasive writing.

The main quantitative data was gathered from the pre-test and post-test writing exercises, which were assessed using the rubric mentioned above. The scores obtained from these tests offered concrete evidence of the students' development in persuasive writing.

The qualitative data was gathered from the reflective journals and questionnaires completed by the students, in which they were required to share their experiences with the pitch-writing exercises, the difficulties they faced, and their observations of their own improvement in persuasive writing abilities.

Observational notes taken by the instructor during the intervention phase also offered valuable information about the students' participation and use of rhetorical devices. The use of multiple sources for data collection allowed for triangulation, making the results of the study more reliable and accurate.

3.8 Data Analysis

The gathered data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the instructional intervention.

The quantitative data gathered through the pre-test and post-test writing tasks was analyzed using the analytic rubric to score the writing tasks. Paired-samples t-tests were carried out to check whether there was significant improvement in the persuasive writing skills of the students through the intervention. Descriptive analysis was also done to check the trend of performance.

The qualitative data gathered through reflective journals and questionnaires was analyzed using thematic analysis. The themes of persuasive writing, awareness of the audience, and the engagement of the students were identified and categorized. The observational notes of the sessions were also analyzed to support the findings of the research.

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative research helped to ensure that there was significant improvement in the persuasive writing skills of the students through the intervention, as well as an understanding of the development of persuasive writing skills through start-up pitch writing tasks.

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Introduction

This section includes the findings of the study conducted to investigate the effects of performing writing tasks related to start-up pitch writing on students' persuasive writing skills in Exposition and Argumentation classes. The findings were analyzed to address the research questions, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative findings were based on students' scores obtained in the pre-test and post-test writing assessments using an analytic rubric measuring four aspects of persuasive writing: argumentation, coherence, audience adaptation, and language use. The qualitative findings were grounded in students' journal reflections, questionnaires, and instructors' observations.

4.2 Quantitative Findings

4.2.1 Overall Improvement in Persuasive Writing Performance (RQ1)

The first research question was whether the use of start-up pitch writing tasks could enhance the persuasive writing skills of students. A total of 60 undergraduate students ($N = 60$) participated in the study and completed both the pre-test argumentative essay and the post-test start-up pitch writing task.

Table 4.1 above shows the descriptive statistics and results of the paired-sample t-test for each dimension of the rubric.

Table 4.1

Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores Across Persuasive Writing Dimensions (N = 60)

Writing Dimension	Pre-Test (SD)	Mean Post-Test (SD)	Mean Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Argumentation	16.2 (3.5)	21.8 (2.7)	+5.6	10.42	<0.001
Coherence	15.7 (3.2)	21.1 (2.9)	+5.4	9.87	<0.001

Writing Dimension	Pre-Test (SD)	Mean Post-Test (SD)	Mean Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Audience Adaptation	14.8 (3.9)	20.4 (3.1)	+5.6	10.05	<0.001
Language Use	17.1 (3.1)	22.0 (2.5)	+4.9	9.52	<0.001
Overall Score	63.8 (10.3)	85.3 (7.5)	+21.5	15.21	<0.001

From the results, it is evident that there is a significant improvement in students' scores in all four aspects of persuasive writing. The overall mean score improved from 63.8 in the pre-test to 85.3 in the post-test, indicating a mean improvement of 21.5 points. Results from paired sample t-tests revealed that this improvement is statistically significant for all aspects ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that there is improvement in students' persuasive writing skills due to the start-up pitch intervention. Thus, Research Question 1 is confirmed, and Hypothesis 1 (H1) is confirmed.

4.2.2 Dimension-Wise Improvement and Performance Distribution (RQ2)

In order to further investigate the effect of the intervention, changes in each dimension of the two rubrics, as well as changes in performance bands, were analyzed. The students were grouped into three performance bands according to their overall writing scores:

Low: ≤ 60

Medium: 61-80

High: > 80

Table 4.2

Performance Band Distribution Before and After the Intervention (N = 60)

Performance Band	Pre-Test Students	Post-Test Students
Low (≤ 60)	18	5
Medium (61–80)	37	17
High (> 80)	5	38

The performance bands indicate a significant change in the achievement levels. In the pre-test, most students scored in the medium performance category, while relatively few students scored in the high category in terms of persuasive writing. After the intervention, the number of students in the high-performance category increased significantly, from 5 to 38, and the number of students in the low category decreased, from 18 to 5.

Dimension-wise analysis of the data revealed that the greatest improvement occurred in argumentation and audience adaptation, followed by coherence and language use. All three areas increased by 5.6, while coherence and language use increased by 5.4 and 4.9, respectively. This indicates that the intervention helped the students improve their argumentation and audience adaptation.

The findings have addressed Research Question 2, and the result indicates that the intervention in the form of a start-up pitch helped the students improve various areas of their persuasive writing. Hence, the result has supported Hypothesis 2 (H2).

4.3 Qualitative Findings (RQ3)

In addition to this quantitative study, qualitative research was conducted using students' reflective journals, questionnaires, and instructors' observations. The quantitative study revealed five themes related to students' experiences in writing start-up pitch.

Table 4.3
Summary of Qualitative Themes Identified in Student Reflections (N = 60)

Theme	Example Student Comments	Students Mentioning Theme
Argumentation	“I learned to structure my arguments logically rather than just listing ideas.”	45
Coherence	“My ideas are more connected now; the flow improved compared to essays.”	42
Audience Adaptation	“I focused on what the audience cares about, not just my opinion.”	48
Language Use	“Choosing persuasive words made my writing stronger.”	40
Engagement and Motivation	“The task felt more real and interesting than a normal essay.”	50

Students frequently mentioned that the pitch format assisted them in organizing their arguments more strategically. For instance, students mentioned that by identifying the problem and developing a solution, they were able to organize their arguments more clearly. For example, a student mentioned, “Using the pitch format forced me to focus on the strongest evidence first.”

Students were able to identify the audience’s expectations. For instance, some students mentioned that they were able to adjust their tone and explanation to make the ideas more persuasive for the audience. The students’ reflections, therefore, indicate that the students were able to identify the significance of adapting to the audience in persuasive writing.

Another significant reflection was the students’ engagement and motivation. The students mentioned that the exercise was more realistic and motivating than other assignments, such as essays. The students’ engagement was also evident in the observational notes made during the classroom sessions, where students were actively engaged in the process.

The qualitative findings, therefore, address Research Question 3, indicating that students generally responded positively to the start-up pitch writing approach. The hypothesis, therefore, is supported, and Hypothesis 3 (H3) is true.

4.4 Discussion

The results of this study suggest that start-up pitch writing activities can be used to improve persuasive writing skills in multi-major English writing classes. The quantitative data showed that there were positive improvements in all four aspects of persuasive writing, especially in argumentation and audience adaptation. The results suggest that the pitch type of writing can be used to improve students’ argumentative reasoning and audience awareness.

The qualitative data also helps to shed more light on the positive improvements in persuasive writing. Students found that the pitch type of writing activity helped them to better organize their arguments, choose better supporting details, and emphasize persuasive language. The students’ comments suggest that the genre structure of the start-up pitch type of writing activity may offer a helpful rhetorical structure for improving persuasive writing skills.

The results of this study support previous research that has emphasized the importance of genre-based instruction and authentic writing activities. Previous studies have demonstrated that when students are placed in authentic rhetorical contexts, they are more likely to improve their audience awareness and argumentation skills (Hyland, 2019; Tardy et al., 2020). Additionally, research on authentic learning environments has suggested that when students

are involved in activities that are related to real-world communication, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged (Herrington et al., 2014).

The interdisciplinary character of the task for creating a start-up pitch might also play a role in its effectiveness. By incorporating aspects of business communication into a writing class for English, this intervention gave students a chance to practice their skills in persuasive communication in a real-world context. This might help bridge the divide between academic writing and communication in a real-world context.

In summary, the results support the idea that incorporating professional or applied genres into writing classes might help students improve their effectiveness in using persuasive writing strategies. Although limited to one institution, this is preliminary evidence that using start-up pitch tasks might prove valuable as a pedagogical tool for improving persuasive writing in general in English classes.

5. Conclusion

This research project investigated the application of start-up pitch writing as a teaching method to develop persuasive writing skills in a class of Exposition and Argumentation. By incorporating a real-world writing task into a broad English writing course, this project investigated whether pitch-related activities could improve students' skills in building arguments, arranging ideas in a coherent manner, adjusting writing to suit a particular audience, and using persuasive language effectively.

The results of the quantitative analysis showed that there were significant improvements in students' performance in persuasive writing skills after the intervention. Students' scores were higher in all four aspects of persuasive writing skills assessed: argumentation, coherence, audience adaptation, and persuasive language use. The greatest improvement was seen in the aspect of argumentation and audience adaptation. Moreover, the number of students in the high-performance group increased dramatically in the post-test, and the number of students in the low-performance group decreased significantly. These findings suggest that the intervention of start-up pitch writing activities was linked to improvements in students' performance in persuasive writing skills.

The qualitative findings also supported the results. Students' comments and responses to the questionnaire revealed that the pitch structure assisted students in arranging arguments in a more logical manner, adapting writing to suit the audience's expectations, and using persuasive language effectively. Many students also found the task more authentic and interesting than other essay-writing tasks. The teacher's observation also revealed that students actively participated in the intervention sessions.

Taken collectively, these results indicate that the integration of start-up pitch writing into academic writing pedagogy may offer a practical rhetorical context for teaching persuasive writing skills. The start-up pitch rhetorical form demands that writers articulate problems, offer solutions, and explain their ideas to a particular audience, which are all tasks that are highly similar to the goals of persuasive writing pedagogy in post-secondary education.

In conclusion, the current study illustrates the pedagogical potential of authentic, interdisciplinary writing tasks in general English courses. By integrating academic writing pedagogy with real-world rhetorical practices, start-up pitch writing tasks may assist students in improving their rhetorical awareness and persuasive writing practices.

However, several limitations exist in the current study that must be addressed in future research. First, the current study only examined a small sample of students from one particular institution, which may restrict the generalizability of the current results to other educational settings or populations. Future studies examining larger and more diverse samples may be able to provide more robust evidence regarding the generalizability of this teaching approach.

Second, the current study's writing assessment design is a further limitation. Specifically, the pre-test writing assessment asked students to compose a traditional argumentative essay, while the post-test writing assessment asked students to compose a start-up pitch text. Although both writing tasks were assessed using the same analytical rubric and addressed the same persuasive writing skills, the two writing tasks are quite different in terms of genre structure and rhetorical context. Therefore, a portion of the improvement in post-test writing performance may be due to the effect of the start-up pitch genre itself, in addition to the teaching approach. Future studies may be able to address this limitation by using similar writing tasks for both assessments, or by including a control group to facilitate more direct comparisons.

Finally, the research was carried out within the time frame of a single semester, which makes it difficult to evaluate the long-term development and transfer of persuasive writing skills. Further research could investigate whether the skills acquired through start-up pitch writing tasks can be retained over time and transferred to other academic or professional writing tasks.

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