RHETORICAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FROM INSTRUCTION-BASED GENRES TO WRITING A BACHELOR'S THESIS: AN SFL-INFORMED STUDY ON CHINESE ENGLISH MAJORS

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

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สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษโดยใช้ความรู้ทางด้าน SFL

นางสาวยี่หมิน จาง

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Suranaree University of Technology has approved this thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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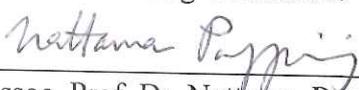
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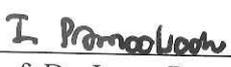
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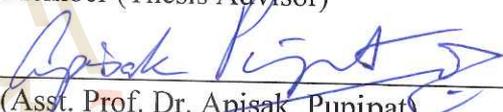
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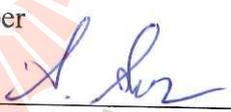
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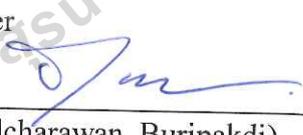
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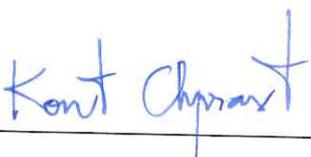
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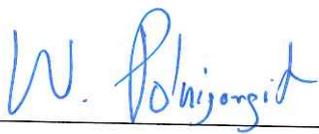
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สำหรับนักศึกษาที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษในมหาวิทยาลัยประเทศจีน การเปลี่ยนจากการเขียน
ที่เกิดขึ้นในการเรียนการสอนในช่วง 2 หรือ 3 ปีแรก ไปสู่การเขียนที่เน้นการฝึกฝนเพื่อการเขียน
วิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีในปีสุดท้ายของการศึกษา เป็นขั้นตอนสำคัญในการพัฒนาความรู้ด้าน
การอ่านเขียน อย่างไรก็ตามจนถึงปัจจุบันความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบริบทการเขียนทั้งสองยังไม่ได้รับ
การศึกษาเท่าที่ควร งานวิจัยนี้จึงศึกษาโดยเริ่มจากการวิเคราะห์วิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรี 40 ชิ้น
ที่เขียนโดยนักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษจากมหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศจีนแห่งหนึ่ง โดยใช้ทฤษฎี
ภาษาศาสตร์เชิงระบบและหน้าที่ ผลลัพธ์เผยให้เห็นความซับซ้อนของประเภทการสื่อสารวิชาการ
มหภาคและได้ระบุประเภทการสื่อสารพื้นฐานใหม่หนึ่งประเภท ได้แก่ การอธิบายเชิงวิเคราะห์
และเผยให้เห็นความแตกต่างในสี่สาขาย่อยของวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ นอกจากนี้ งานวิจัยนี้ได้สำรวจ
เอกสารและสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้างกับผู้เขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ / อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาและพบว่ามีคุณค่า
เชิงโวหาร 3 ประการที่เรียกได้ว่าเป็นลักษณะของการเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ของผู้เขียนเหล่านี้ ประการที่
สอง งานวิจัยนี้รวบรวมงานเขียนจากนักเรียน 40 คน ใน 3 รายวิชาที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการเขียนใน
มหาวิทยาลัยเดียวกัน และวิเคราะห์ความหลากหลายของประเภทการสื่อสารพื้นฐานที่สอนและ
ฝึกฝนในสภาพแวดล้อมแบบการเรียนการสอน แม้ว่าประเภทการสื่อสารแบบโต้แย้งยังคงเป็น
ประเภทที่พบบ่อยที่สุด แต่ก็พบว่านักเรียนถูกชักจูงเพื่อให้เข้าใจประเภทการสื่อสารแบบองค์รวม
และสมดุลที่กว้างขึ้น ประการที่สาม งานวิจัยนี้ วิเคราะห์แหล่งข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพหลายแหล่ง เช่น
เอกสาร สื่อการสอนและการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง พบว่ามีเรื่องราวของประสบการณ์ชีวิต
หลัก ๆ ของผู้เขียนและมุมมองจากคนวงในในรายวิชาการเขียนที่เกี่ยวข้อง ประการที่สี่ งานวิจัยนี้
ศึกษาความสอดคล้องและความไม่สอดคล้องระหว่างกลุ่มวาทศาสตร์ทั้งสอง โดยการเปรียบเทียบ
ชุดข้อมูลทั้งสองชุดที่มีและพบรูปแบบความต่อเนื่องสองรูปแบบ และรูปแบบความไม่ต่อเนื่องสอง
รูปแบบที่เกิดขึ้น ท้ายที่สุดจากการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มสนทนาพบว่า นักเรียนได้ใช้ซ้ำและดัดแปลงและ

ปรับแต่งความรู้เชิงวาทศิลป์ที่ได้มาจากหลักสูตรการเขียนก่อนหน้านี้เพื่อนำทางในการเขียน
วิทยานิพนธ์ที่ซับซ้อนขึ้น นอกจากนี้ยังพบปัจจัยหลักสามประการ ได้แก่ ความสามารถในการ
เรียนรู้ของนักเรียนข้อเสนอแนะของอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาและการอ่านในสาขาวิชาที่มีอิทธิพลหรือ
ส่งเสริมการถ่ายโอนดังกล่าว จากการค้นพบเหล่านี้การศึกษาครั้งนี้นักวิจัยจึงเสนอข้อเสนอแนะ
ที่เป็นประโยชน์สำหรับการวิจัยและการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ

สาขาวิชาภาษาต่างประเทศ   ลายมือชื่อนักศึกษา_____

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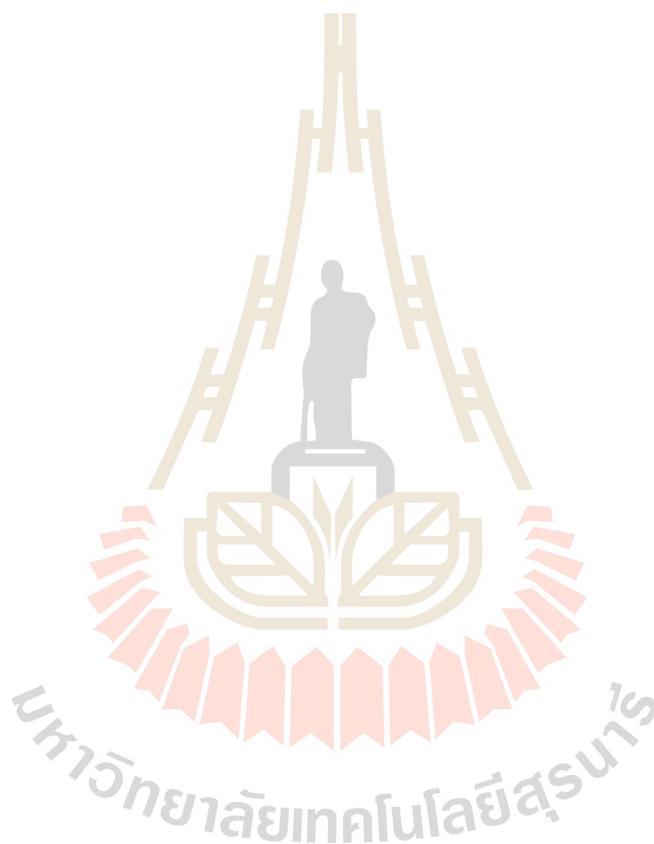
YIMIN ZHANG : RHETORICAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FROM

INSTRUCTION-BASED GENRES TO WRITING A BACHELOR'S THESIS:

AN SFL-INFORMED STUDY ON CHINESE ENGLISH MAJORS. THESIS

ADVISOR : ASST. PROF. ISSRA PRAMOOLSOOK, Ph.D., 297 PP.

BACHELOR'S THESIS/ L2 WRITING INSTRCUTION/ SFL/ RHETORICAL

KNOWLEDGE/ ADAPTIVE TRANSFER

For English-major students in Chinese universities, the move from the
instruction-based writing in the first 2 or 3 years to the more practice-based task of
bachelor' thesis writing in the final year of study is a critical step in their literacy
development. However, to date, between the two rhetorical contexts, a noticeable gap
remains yet to be bridged. To fill in this gap, this study first investigated 40 quality
bachelor's theses written by English majors from a Chinese university based on genre
theories from Systemic Functional Linguistics. Results unveiled the genre complexity
in this academic macrogenre, identified one new elemental genre, analytical
explanation, and revealed the variations across four sub-fields. Through document
examination and semi-structured interviews with thesis writers/advisors, 3 rhetorical
values were teased out as characterising this thesis writing community. Second,
collecting writing assignments from 40 students in 3 writing-related courses in the same
university, this study analysed the diversity of elemental genres taught, learnt, and
practiced in the instruction-based settings. Although arguments remained the most
common genre, it was found that the students were ushered into a holistic, balanced
grasp over a broader range of genres. Thirdly, through examining a myriad source of
qualitative data, such as documents, teaching materials, and semi-structured interviews,

a situated account was offered regarding the core participants' lived experiences and their insider's perspectives in the related writing courses. Fourthly, the match and mismatch between the two rhetorical worlds were examined by comparing the two corpora via log-likelihood tests. Two patterns of continuity and two patterns of discontinuity emerged. Finally, based on a focus group interview, it was proved that students did consciously and adaptively reuse and reshape a range of rhetorical knowledge acquired from the previous writing courses to navigate the complex task of thesis writing. Three main factors, i.e., student cognitive ability, thesis advisor feedback, and reading in the disciplinary field, were found to have influenced or promoted such a transfer. Based on these findings, this study proposes practical implications for L2 writing research and pedagogy.
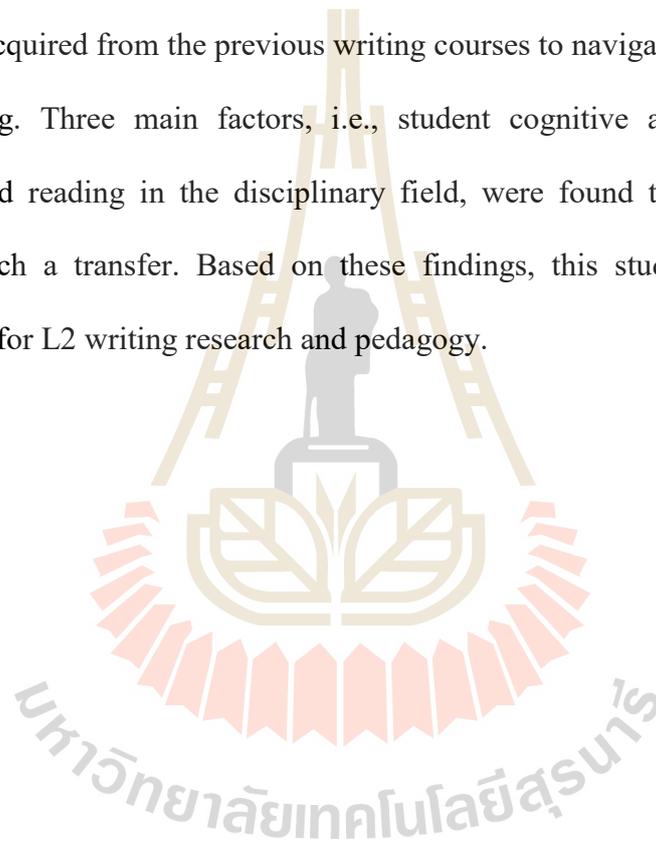
School of Foreign Languages   Student's Signature _Yimin Zhang_

Academic Year 2019   Advisor's Signature _I Romanward_

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insights through interviews for the study. If it had not been for their invaluable support and cooperation, this thesis would never have been completed.

For what I may have managed to get right, the credit belongs to them; if there are errors, the fault is all mine.

My last, and most heartfelt, gratitude is reserved for my beloved family and friends. It is their unconditional love and support, willing but never-spoken sacrifices, and continuous encouragement that sustained me on the road towards the dreams I was, and will always be, chasing.

Yimin Zhang

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAWE   British Academic Written English

EAP   English for Academic Purposes

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

EGAP   English for General Academic Purposes

ELT   English Language Teaching

ESL   English as a Second Language

ESP   English for Specific Purposes

ETSTEM   English Teaching Syllabus for Tertiary English Majors

FYC   First Year Composition

L1   First Language

L2   Second Language

NS   Native Speaker

SFL   Systemic Functional Linguistics

SICAU   Sichuan Agricultural University

TEM   Test for English Majors

TESL   Teaching English as a Second Language

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This opening chapter gives a brief introduction to the present study that centres around the learning of writing by Chinese undergraduate English majors, with a particular emphasis on their transfer of rhetorical knowledge from instruction-based genres to writing a bachelor's thesis, the final academic genre in their undergraduate study. It starts with some background information leading to the identification of several existing problems and the rationale that initially motivates the current undertaking. In the succeeding sections, the research objectives, research questions, potential significance, as well as scope and limitations of the present study are stated and explained. This chapter then concludes with definitions of several key terms.

1.1 Research background

"We are, after all, professional wordsmiths - people with a special affection for writing. Most people do not share our affection for the written word."

(Roen, 1989, pp.194-195)

1.1.1 The place of writing in teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language

Perhaps writing teachers and researchers in English as a Second/Foreign Language would more than readily sympathise with the framing quotation above and so assume that learning to write does or should play a privileged role in learning the language, especially in the post-secondary settings. The rising status of writing in ESL/EFL was first seen in the 1960s and 1970s as a counterbalance to the then

dominating pedagogical approach in language teaching - the audiolingual approach, in which the development of writing skills had been largely overshadowed by other language skills such as listening and speaking. Through the 1970s up to the present, tangible signs have been seen of the overriding significance of L2 writing, for instance, the expanding number of writing textbooks or teacher educational materials coming into the market, the launching of academic journals and international conferences devoted to this specialised field, and the inclusion of written part in a number of entrance or proficiency English tests within academic institutions (see Matsuda, 2003, for a historical review). Every indication is that "writing is extremely important, potentially so meaningful, so powerful that almost no amount of sacrifice is too much to ask our students to make for the sake of learning to write" (Leki, 2003, p. 317).

Alongside these substantial evidences, voices have also been heard in the scholarly works, which put writing in a central place in the whole pursuit of English. It has been argued that a fluency in English, particularly in the written mode, offers those who have acquired this skill more possibility for improved chances of success in their personal, professional, or academic lives. In Sternglass's (1997) account, for example, of a long-term study on the writing development of a group of college students, she asserts that it is writing, not any other language skill, that has become the main catalyst of the students' overall intellectual growth.

Later on, as *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) and *English for Academic Purposes* (EAP) take shape as promising fields of academic inquiry, writing starts to play a major gate-keeping role for the professionals and academics, especially those growing up outside the inner circle, to pursue membership, participation or advancement in their relevant discourse communities (Swales, 1990, 2004; Flowerdew,

1999). It is particularly so when English is recognised as the predominant working language for a large proportion of journal-mediated professional discussions internationally.

However, claims made so far for the salience of writing in the ESL/EFL settings are not without their distractors. Leki (2003) has cautioned, for instance, that it is perhaps our initial interests as writing researchers and practitioners, our personal "blind" love for the written word, that lead us to uplift writing to the central stage. Because writing does play an indispensable role in a wide-range of activities in the workplaces, the academe or the civil life, it does not necessarily mean that we should exaggerate its importance, as much as to suggest that every single success in the earthly world can be reduced solely to the ability to write. Instead, to participate in the academic exchanges, to have our jobs done, or to contribute to the well-being of the human species, there are far more pathways other than writing that lead towards these ends. Writing is, if anything, only one of them. In keeping with Leki's (2003) suggestion, it is more sensible for people who feel a shared concern over writing to take a small step back, viewing the significance of writing in a more modest, situated perspective. It is with the same mindset that the present study zooms in to look at the teaching and learning of writing more closely in an EFL context in China, and more specifically, at the level of undergraduate education.

1.1.2 Visibility of writing in tertiary English education in China

In the past four decades or so, there has been an upsurging interest in foreign languages in the higher education system in China. Amongst them, English language education has seen a mass growth and established itself as a specialised discipline. Presently, as reported, out of the total 1,145 institutions of higher education in China,

994 of them offer bachelor's degree for English majors (Jiang, 2014). *English Teaching Syllabus for Tertiary English Majors* (ETSTEM hereafter) (Teaching Advisory Committee for Tertiary English Majors, 2000), a national syllabus serving as the baton to conduct the whole orchestra, explicitly states three expected outcomes on the part of this group of students. They are, specifically, solid English language foundation, broad cultural knowledge, and skilful use of English in professional workplaces. The last objective, the most sophisticated one of course, has highlighted the use of English in a variety of jobs and activities, such as translating/interpreting, teaching, management or research, as relating to wider domains such as foreign affairs, education, economy and trade, science and technology, and military affairs. In spite of its complexity, it has always been the subject of heated debates in the domestic academe, resulting in a profusion of dialogues and discussions among the ELT professionals. Contrarily, the other two objectives, i.e., English language foundation and cultural knowledge, being more straightforward and down to earth, have been unanimously accepted and upheld by ELT researchers and practitioners since the launch of ETSTEM in 2000. In the face of these myriad expectations, lingering questions are: Where should writing be placed in this discipline? What status does it occupy in the so called "English language foundation", especially relative to the other language skills? Is English writing as central and meaningful to undergraduates in China as has seen argued elsewhere? To questions like these, the answer is an unreserved "yes", and it even gets strengthened when a blatant testimony to the visibility of writing in the overall educational scheme is found in the following statement in the ETSTEM:

> *"While encouraging a balanced development of skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating/interpreting, we should place greater stock in writing, speaking and translating/interpreting."*

Given these claims, a basic assumption maintained here and onward throughout this thesis is that writing is unquestionably one of the fundamental constituents of English education in China, a skill that must be taught and learnt for the students to explore their own thoughts and feelings, to participate in dialectical interactions, and to develop language competence and expertise.

1.1.3 Notion of genre as a focal element of writing pedagogy

Over the past three decades, the notion of "genre" has been viewed as a powerful tool in L2 writing as well as traditional L1 composition studies, crucial in particular to developing academic literacy in student writers (Tardy, 2006; Hyland, 2007). Traditionally, writing has been depicted as a mechanic, senseless activity built on vocabulary, syntax, and the incorporation of both to compose longer stretches of texts. This traditional, static view of writing is not without its constant challenges and criticisms, especially from the contemporary genre theorists who, influenced by Vygotsky's theories of social constructivism, have gradually come to a refined understanding of writing as a socially constructed activity in which texts, writers, readers, purposes, and goals interact with each other within a specific socio-cultural context. As this social constructivist view of writing gains greater currency, the notion of "genre" has become, explicitly or sometimes implicitly, a focal element in much L1 or L2 writing pedagogy. As Moore, Schleppegrell & Palincsar (2018) recently emphasised, the writing of genres is an essential form of participation in English language learning and a necessary prerequisite to student literacy success.

The concept of genre, however, like many others in linguistics, has been approached by different theorists and researchers via different routes, with different

definitions, perspectives, and analytic models. The well-known tripartite division of work in genre studies was elaborately outlined in Sunny Hyon's seminal article on *TESOL Quarterly* (Hyon, 1996). These three traditions namely, ESP, SFL/Sydney School, and New Rhetoric/Literacy Studies, have each on their own terms different disciplinary origins, different geographical centres, and targeted very different groups of language learners (Swales, 2011).

In this thesis, which focuses on the literacy journey of undergraduate English majors in China and their rhetoric performance in varying writing situations and development of genre knowledge, the methodologies and frameworks from the SFL tradition will be drawn upon on certain theoretical and practical grounds.

Theoretically, SFL approach to genre has been informed by a sophisticated and mature theory of language known as Systemic Functional Linguistics, developed by Michael Halliday, who views language as a semiotic system with contrasting options for making meaning (as meaning potential) at the levels of phonology, lexico-grammar, and semantics (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Elements at each stratum are realisations of a higher stratum, with meaning of language use being ultimately shaped by context. Drawing on Malinowski's distinction between *context of situation* and *context of culture* (Malinowski, 1923), Halliday (1978) proposes three variables of situational context, field, tenor and mode, which, when put together, determine the register of language. Martin (1997) pushes this one step further, proposing the concept of genre as located at the level of context of culture, defining genre as "the system of staged goal-oriented social processes through which social subjects in a given culture live their lives" (p.13). In other words, genres, shaped by their social, cultural purposes, in turn shape the stages through which the purposes are achieved, giving rise

to the concept of *schematic structure*, or *structural formula* (Hasan, 1977, 1984), or *generic staging* (Coffin, 2006). Raveli and Ellis (2004) note that it is the richness and appliability of Halliday's grammatics and language theories that marks SFL approach as distinctive from other traditions in genre studies.

Practically, research in this camp was initiated from a large-scale text analysis situated in infant, primary and secondary schools in Australia (for example, Martin, 1984, 2002; Martin & Plum, 1997). These genres were labelled by names and stages, along with synopses of their primary social purposes, resulting in seven major *genre families* of *stories*, *chronicles*, *reports*, *explanations*, *procedures*, *arguments*, and *text responses*. Descriptions of these genres, as diverse, complex networks of social processes to a certain overarching purpose (such as delighting, explaining, directing, reporting/informing, or arguing/evaluating, to name but a few), have fed into language teaching in varying disciplinary fields. Since then, SFL genre researchers have given greater stock on pedagogical genres in educational institutions at different levels.

Therefore, the SFL genre research, with their pedagogical orientation and emphasis on explicit teaching of genres, has proved to be of considerable insight and relevance in educational contexts.

1.1.4 From instruction to practice: Paths of developing writing for undergraduate English majors in China

The recognised interest in genre as a fundamental element of writing are easily translated into curricula for English teaching across educational institutions, and more specifically, into syllabi of writing-related courses. Crucial questions remain of how students learn to write by traversing different rhetorical situations and how they cumulatively build such knowledge of genres. In Chinese tertiary institutions, most

English-major students do not read or write texts from the professional genres of the discipline until they are quite advanced in terms of their academic degree or language proficiency. Instead, they receive training on general writing skills and take relevant writing courses in the first two or three years at university, most of the time through classroom-based instructions given by course instructors, and after class they are assigned to write in some basic, pedagogical genres, with a maximum length of 300 words. This type of writing, as produced on the basis of classroom instructions, does not respond to any social purpose that is meaningful to any professional or academic settings, and address a primary readership of the course instructors alone (only occasionally read by peer students). For this reason, they are called "mutt genres" by Wardle (2009), referring to those genres developed primarily for the students to write merely for the sake of doing so, promising no other benefits than to hone their basic English writing skills.

In a review of 60 studies focusing on the development of genre, Tardy (2006) categorised these learning contexts of genre in the classrooms as *instruction-based* (as opposed to *practice-based* contexts that will be introduced later in the subsequent paragraphs).

Based on Tardy's (2006) explanation, fine-tuned with the present researcher's direct experience in teaching and learning writing in similar situations, the following five defining characteristics are listed for instruction-based genres:

1. written in classroom-based instructional context;

2. influenced by some instructional techniques to teach genre - some explicit, others more implicit;

3. written for the sake of writing alone, responding to no external social

    purposes;

4. usually produced as responses to instructor-set assignments;

5. read and evaluated by the same course instructors, only occasionally

    by peer student writers.

The students' literacy journey does not stop there. As they climb up the literacy ladder, these "mutt genres" in the classrooms are surely not a safe, comfortable refuge where they can stay for good and still feel perfectly content. To graduate with a bachelor's degree, according to ETSEM, the students need to complete a 3000 to 5000 word long thesis, devoted to a certain subject matter in the disciplinary fields, such as, roughly divided, British and American literature, cultural studies of English-speaking countries, linguistics and applied linguistics, or translation studies. The bachelor's thesis is written during their final year in the university and as a high-stake genre, normally charges a considerably high number of credits and formulates an essential constituent of assessment. Therefore, it is acknowledged unarguably by students and faculties as a pivotal pass to graduation and the culmination point in the whole undergraduate study. Like the practice in some other Humanities disciplines, the function of bachelor's thesis for English majors is either to engage the students initially with the literature of sub-branches in the discipline, and answer a pre-set question by critically reviewing it, or, in some less common cases, to report on empirical research conducted independently by the students, and demonstrate familiarity with and expertise on a given subject matter. Thus, the bachelor's thesis is often regarded as the students' first attempt at stepping into a field, a first knock on the gate of a disciplinary community. In whichever way the students embark on this practice, it will ultimately

develop into a written thesis disproportionately longer than the earlier assignments composed in the preparatory writing courses.

Unlike the genres in the instructional settings which address only a single readership, i.e., the course instructor, bachelor's thesis writers should, from a social constructivist view of academic writing, negotiate relations and create solidarity with a multi-layered readership. bachelor's thesis writers not only speak directly with thesis advisers as their primary readers, but also make tremendous efforts to pass an oral defense, during which they address three or four thesis examiners - their secondary readers - who have a shared say on whether the theses can be marked as passable or qualified. Each academic year, as is a common practice in most universities in China, a certain number of theses written with a supreme quality will be nominated by the department and submitted to a higher-level committee in the university, who, acting as a more remote, authoritative readership, will ultimately award "*thesis of distinction*" for those outstanding theses from each discipline.

In light of these core characteristics and all its concomitant practices, bachelor's thesis writing is perfectly situated in what Wenger (1998, 2015) defines as a *community of practice*; and in sharp contrast with composition in the classroom settings elaborated earlier, the writing of bachelor's thesis can be depicted as *practice-based*, according to Tardy's (2006) categorisation. In a like manner, the following five defining characteristics are identified for practice-based genres:

1. developed through practice with educational, disciplinary, or workplace domains (professional or academic);

2. written in naturalistic/non-manipulated settings, including research, internship, or other workplaces;

3. not influenced by any overt teaching techniques or approach;

4. fabricated by writers drawing on the various resources available from their writing environment;

5. located in a specific community of practice.

Not incidentally, the move from instruction to practice, as illustrated above, marks a significant leap in the undergraduate English majors' experiences in learning how to write. It poses a great intellectual, rhetorical challenge to these uninitiated writers wrestling along the obstacle course to literacy success.

It is worth noting that such roughly sketched trajectory of how writing is learnt and performed in the undergraduate EFL education in China, chiefly informed by ETSEM from above, is implemented by the myriad of institutions not without their fine-tuning reinterpretations, variations, and adaptations. Yet the core commonality is largely maintained. The varied implementation results, as it does, in the present researcher's incapacity of either tracing every single institution on the landscape or aiming for a sizable sample to represent all of them. For that reason, the present study, in an effort to keep it manageable on the basis of research accessibility and availability, chooses one specific institution to focus on (out of the total 994 institutions that offer bachelor's programme in English discipline). A description of this institution, with a particular attention to how writing is attended in its undergraduate English programme, will be seen in the next section.

1.1.5 Sichuan Agricultural University: The site of the present research

Sichuan Agricultural University (SICAU), founded in 1906, with about 42,000 students enrolled presently, is a comprehensive university under the National Project 211 in China, locating her three campuses in Sichuan Province, a province

celebrated as *the Land of Abundance* in Southwest China. Since September 2017, SICAU is enlisted into the country's construction plan of world-class universities and first-class disciplines, a nationwide strategic plan also known as the *Double-First-Rate* initiative which aims to ultimately build a number of world class universities and disciplines by the end of 2050, in an effort to make China an international higher education power.

With a multi-disciplinary background, SICAU consists of 26 colleges and 14 research centres, offering 84 undergraduate programmes, 77 master programmes, 50 doctoral programmes, and 7 post-doctoral stations, cutting across a broad range of disciplines in technology and natural sciences as well as humanities and social sciences. Amidst this disciplinary diversity, SICAU has gained recognition and reputation mainly through her scientific and academic achievements in the two preponderant disciplines of Bio-technology and Agricultural Sciences.

Given the predominance of the two foresaid disciplines in SICAU, it comes as no surprise that the discipline of English remains largely marginalised, if not entirely invisible, from the university's panorama.

The Department of English, affiliated with the College of Humanities in the University's Main Campus, started to offer undergraduate programme since the year of 1993. As of Spring 2018, at a time when the present study was initiated and continues to be framed, the department is currently accommodating 431 students, with 52 enrolled in Autumn 2014, 108 in Autumn 2015, 150 in Autumn 2016, and 121 in Autumn 2017, respectively, all of them receiving formal education in the language of English as their specialised field from a faculty of 33 teachers. These faculty members are, more often than not, carrying a considerably heavy teaching load, since they are not only

conducting specialised courses for English majors, but also responsible for General English courses for a non-English major population in the same campus totalling up to 16,195. Thus, the department's suffering from a shortage of faculty is self-evident, and has always been a cumbersome issue unresolved.

Directed by the university, the four-year undergraduate programme for English majors, which consists of two semesters each academic year, totalling eight semesters as a whole, is issued by the department normally on a yearly basis, offering a wide range of courses in classroom-based settings and hybrid activities with more practical orientations, manifested in the two major components of the department's curriculum. At the time of the research, English-major students take a mélange of courses falling into three categories that speak to the different levels of their studies (in addition to several common courses and recommended selective courses shared by the whole population of the university students). The first category is *fundamental courses*, which are basically fulfilled by the students within the first two years, focusing on the training of preliminary language skills in *speaking*, *writing*, *listening* and *reading*. The second category is *specialised fundamental courses,* including *Essential English*, *English Phonetics*, *English Vocabulary* and *Grammar*, *Translation Theory and Practice*, *Interpreting*, *Advanced English*, and *Academic Writing*, which aim to give more intensive and more professional training to the students to hone their language skills and expertise. The last category, *specialised courses,* includes an array of discipline-focused introductory courses, setting out to initiate the students into subject matters either *within* the discipline of English language studies, such as *English Pedagogy*, *English Journalism*, *Linguistics*, *British and American Literature and Culture*, or *beyond* to other intricately connected disciplines, such as *Import and Export Practice*

and *International Business Management*. Courses in the latter two categories, unlike those in the first one, are dispersed throughout the curriculum, until the end of the junior year.

Specifically, when it comes to the writing-related part of the curriculum, English-major students receive 28 class hours' instructions on general writing skills in the third (*English Writing I*) and forth (*English Writing II*) semesters, respectively, where the students learn and practice rhetorical skills across "modes of discourse" (Herrington & Moran, 2005), including *narration*, *description*, *exposition* and *argumentation*, as well as some practical genres like notes and letters. As part of the course objectives, the course instructors regularly assign the students to an independent construction of short essays of an average length of 200-300 words. At the sixth semester, the students take the course of *Academic Writing* for 20 class hours, serving as an introduction to MLA writing conventions and preparations for the rhetorical challenges that the students later encounter in writing a bachelor's Thesis. In recent years, two Chinese-speaking teachers are in charge of general writing courses, with assistance from two Peace Corp volunteers from the United States, and another tenure-track full professor, is responsible for lecturing to the students in the academic writing course.

As mentioned earlier, to graduate with a BA degree, the students need to compose a thesis disproportionately longer than the earlier assignments in preparatory writing courses, devoted to a certain subject matter in the disciplinary field (ETSTEM, Teaching Advisory Committee for Tertiary English Majors, 2000). It is interesting to note that in the current department, graduation thesis (or design) is one of the two stated requirements of graduation practice (the other requirement being internship), which,

together with military training, English language skills comprehensive practice, and innovation and entrepreneurship practice, constitutes the practice-based component of the overall curriculum. The fact that bachelor's thesis writing belongs to the more practice-oriented domain in the departmental curriculum, separate from the instruction-based writing courses, also corroborates not incidentally with the distinctions Tardy (2006) has made between instruction-based writing and practice-based writing. According to the *Writing Norms of Bachelor's Thesis for English Majors* issued by the Department, English majors' theses must be written in English only, at a minimum length of 4000 words (slightly different from the 3000-5000 word length stipulated in ETSTEM), conforming to a rigid format that encompasses the following elements: namely, a cover page with thesis title and author/supervisor information, a contents page, an abstract and keywords in both English and Chinese, the body of the thesis, bibliography, acknowledgements, and appendix (if any). At the beginning of the seventh semester, by way of a two-way selection, each student writer is assigned to a supervisor, a teacher with academic title of lecturer or above, and the both parties work together through a number of conferences, drafts, and revisions until it is finalised in the eighth semester. All the thesis writers have to go through an oral defense, and the final grade of each thesis is determined 50% by the thesis supervisor and the other 50% by the defense committee, both of which are based on an assessment rubric formulated in Chinese.

1.2 Research problems

Along the literacy journey as sketched above, English-major students are involved in the production of a chain of genres responding to varied, yet interrelated, writing

contexts, traversing from the classroom-based genres to the more practice-oriented, intellectually demanding genre of bachelor's thesis. Therefore, the transition from the prior "mutt" rhetorical contexts to the later more academic ones is a critical step in the overall writing development. However, up to the present, between the two rhetorical contexts, there seems to be a noticeable gap that has yet to be bridged. Supervising bachelor's thesis writing in SICAU for almost 4 years, the present researcher has a direct experience that this group of student writers have often complained that they feel quite uneasy, insecure, and sometimes even overwhelmed, when the general instructions on English composition they have received from writing courses in the first 2 or 3 years suddenly culminates in a 4000-word (or more) graduation thesis.

The feeling of uncertainty, or even that of threat, experienced and so expressed by the students as they enter the new, unfamiliar rhetorical context of writing a bachelor's thesis, calls into attention two critical and problematic issues. The first is an observation that the students approach bachelor's thesis writing with nearly "blind eyes". In other words, they possess scanty knowledge about the genre in terms of its rhetorical patterning, generic features, as well as the potential readerships it targets. Second, the daunting look that this group of writers wear when they dive into "the strange sea" leads us to question the actual effectiveness of the general writing classrooms as preparational sites for the rhetorical challenges they later confront. At the heart of the latter problem, to be more specific, lies a concern over two exigent questions: to what extent the way varieties of genres are addressed in the classroom-based curriculum can readily accommodate the subsequent, more challenging writing tasks required in the bachelor's thesis completion; and equally important, whether and how the prior rhetorical knowledge learnt in the instructional settings can be referred back to when the students

move into another rhetorical context.

All these problems, pertinent but yet unresolved at this moment, point further to the issue of transfer in the learning of genres. As a theory of learning central to the domain of educational psychology, education and human resources development (see, for example, Detterman, 1993), the notion of transfer has triggered a deeply conflicted literature and abundant theoretic discussions, which result in varied conceptulisations of the term itself. Since "how we define 'transfer' will influence what we look for (and find) in any study of it" (Wardle, 2007, p. 66), the present study will draw on the framework of adaptive transfer (DePalma & Ringer, 2011, 2013, 2014) which encourages a more dynamic, cross-contextual view of transfer especially when it comes to genre knowledge and rhetorical skills. This is, of course, consistent with the recent scholarly discussions in which writing itself is increasingly acknowledged as a dynamic, fluid and context-specific activity of social interactions (Hyland, 2015).

Note that the articulated concern over the issue of transfer, or transferability of rhetorical knowledge, for Chinese undergraduate English majors, is not without its ramifications. In any of our pedagogical efforts, success is not to enable students to succeed in that single course alone, but rather to accommodate a possibility for such a transfer of knowledge, generating a reliable knowledge base that they can constantly refer back to in future rhetorical situations. In other words, the goals of ESL writing instructions, in any form, should be "transcendent" (Leki & Carson, 1997).

At this juncture, it might be appropriate to close this subsection by quoting a heart-warming remark by Ann. M. Johns in her celebrated book, *Text, Role, and Context*:

> *"At some point in their professional lives, most literacy instructors must have asked themselves a question similar like this:*

> *Given the short time I have to work with my students, how can I best prepare them for the varied and unpredictable literacy challenges that they will confront in their academic and professional lives?"*
>
> *(Johns, 1997, p.114)*

After more than 20 years, Johns' remark above still resonates, losing none of its strengths and liveliness. It is with a concern of a similar nature that the present study is initiated. As Johns (1997) has continued to argue in the same book, encouraging students to balance what they have learnt from previous contexts with the demands of the current or future situations is one of our chief responsibilities.

1.3 Research rationale

In search of a possible solution to the problems pinpointed in the preceding section, or at least a deeper understanding of their causes, the present study sets out to unlock several of "unsolved mysteries" that lie behind the English-major students' genre learning and literacy evolution, which are inadequately presented, if not totally absent, in the extant research reservoir.

Firstly, compared with the widespread attention paid to postgraduate theses and the published, privileged academic genres like research articles, the thesis at the undergraduate level remains inadquately explored, especially in the discipline of English. One arguable reason for the scanty attention to this genre comes from the (mis)belief that undergraduate theses transmit received wisdom rather than create new knowledge (Grobman & Kinkead, 2010; Xu et al., 2016). In this relatively unexploited field, a couple of studies examined micro-level linguistic features (e.g., hedges, stance and voice marker, in Feng & Zhou, 2007; Hyland, 2012) or reasoning patterns (Xu et al., 2016) employed by undergraduate thesis writers. On the other hand, a few more

studies, mostly conducted in the Mainland China, have been concerned with issues like students' difficulties in finding an appropriate topic, obstacles in gaining access to literature/research recourses, lexico-grammatical errors in the theses, or the deficiencies in policy making and quality control on the administrative side (Sun, 2004). On all accounts, every effort is to make the whole practice of thesis writing more effective in terms of its potential usefulness for research, rhetoric, and assessment purposes.

Despite the aforementioned literature, the macro-level generic composition of bachelor's theses is still quite foreign to most thesis writers, supervisors and researchers. bachelor's theses normally encompass a complex macrostructure, divided into separate sections under specific headings, each having distinct purposes, rationales and language (Nesi & Gardner, 2012), resonating in some way with *part-genres* in Swalesian terms. This obvious characteristic of bachelor's theses at the macro level maps with what is called *macrogenre*, which refers structurally to large-scale texts comprised of more than one elemental genres (Martin, 1994, 1997; Martin & Rose, 2008). Then, what elemental genres are involved in the construction of a bachelor's thesis is yet to be uncovered.

Secondly, up to this point, the present researcher is not aware of any single piece of research that gives a systematic, across-the-board description of the elemental genres that Chinese undergraduate English majors learn and perform in the instruction-based writing courses, which provide essential rhetorical resources that they can capitalise on when developing the macrogenres of their bachelor's theses. Research interests in instruction-based writing of this uninitiated population has been incredibly diverse and kaleidoscopic, for example, the "texture" of students' written products (e.g., Ma, 2009; Wang, 2010; Xu, 2010; Liardét, 2018); the effects of peer/teacher feedback on writing performance, in argumentative writing in particular (Qi, 2004; Liu, 2015);

textbook/material development (Tang & Su, 2009); the effects of certain experimental teaching activities involving genre-based analysis and development of critical thinking (Zhang & Xu, 2011; Sun et al., 2011; Li, 2011); and the design of writing curriculum from a sociocultural perspective (Zhang & Sun, 2014; Shao, 2016). Despite this rich stock in the scholarship, there is yet a dearth of attention paid to the varieties of instruction-based genres that Chinese tertiary English majors are put through in the authentic classroom settings.

Thirdly, to gain a fuller picture of the writers' lived experiences in the two correlated rhetorical situations, an SFL-informed study focusing on the classifying and structuring of the texts alone, without a finer description of the contexts where they are written, would be found lacking. To know what does or does not happen there necessitates, as it does, wider lenses to contextualise the writing in their pedagogical and institutional environment and capture the insiders' perspectives. This contextual approach is characterised by sustained engagement and multiple sources of qualitative data, such as participant and non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversation, and document analysis, all of which, as Starfield (2011) points out, "enable triangulation and promote the 'trustworthiness' of the research" (p. 177). Surprisingly, contextual perspectives have been quite slow in filtering through to writing at the undergraduate level (Paltridge et al., 2016), and even more so to non-English-dominant contexts. In this regard, English education, and writing in particular, in Chinese universities is just a case in point.

Fourthly, much less discussed is how compositional preparations in the earlier stages, taking the form of various writing-related courses, can accommodate the rhetorical challenges in bachelor's thesis writing. Unfortunately, no study to date has

been undertaken to map the genre networks (and how they are taught, learnt, and written) between the two interrelated writing situations, so less has been known about their connects or disconnects.

Finally, the issue of transfer or transferability of rhetorical knowledge in L2 writing, which has been taken up in many empirical studies on genre learning in L1 or L2 EAP/ESP contexts (e.g., Dias et al., 1999; Parks, 2001; Wardle, 2007, 2009; Brent, 2012). Findings from the above studies, however, are disparate, and sometimes even contradictory, indicating that the issue of transfer continues to be a perplexing one for both research and pedagogy (Tardy, 2006). As a consequence, more empirical endeavours are needed to revisit this vexing issue within a new frame of time and space, and/or on the part of a new population. It is for this purpose that the current project attempts to re-examine the issue of transfer, by capturing how Chinese tertiary English majors transfer the rhetorical knowledge as they move from instruction-based writing tasks to writing a bachelor's thesis on the more practice-oriented end.

1.4 Research objectives

To address the concerns articulated in the previous sections, centring around SICAU English majors' transfer of rhetorical knowledge from instruction to practice, five research objectives will be specified, each having a unique stroke to contribute to the bigger picture:

1. To identify the generic structures of bachelor's theses written by SICAU English majors, by deconstructing the macrogenres into elemental genres that are combined;

2. To analyse the instruction-based genres the students write in their earlier writing-related courses;

3. To explore how instruction-based genres are addressed in the current educational context;

4. To examine how the instruction-based compositional preparations, textual and contextual, (dis)associate with the culminating task of bachelor's thesis writing; and

5. To investigate the adaptive transfer (or the lack of it) of rhetorical knowledge when the students move from instruction-based genres to writing a bachelor's thesis.

1.5 Research questions

For the objectives set in the previous section to be accomplished, the following research questions are accordingly formulated:

1. What elemental genres do SICAU English majors use to construct the macrogenres of bachelor's theses and what are their schematic structures?

2. What elemental genres do the students write in the instruction-based writing courses and what are their schematic structures?

3. To what extent and in what manner are instruction-based genres addressed in the current educational context?

4. To what extent does genre learning in the instruction-based settings connect or disconnect with the generic demands in writing a bachelor's thesis?

5. To what extent and how do the students transfer the rhetorical knowledge learnt from the instruction-based settings to suit the rhetorical demands in bachelor's theses?

1.6 Significance of the study

To ensure that these questions will not be asked in vain, there are several ways that the present study is anticipated to contribute to the current knowledge base and that

people who have vested interests, such as student writers, L2 English writing teachers and researchers, curriculum designers, or textbook developers, would benefit.

First and foremost, results from the current efforts to unveil the generic composition of bachelor's theses will allow future final-year English-major students to approach this academic genre sitting at the zenith of their undergraduate education with a clearer "rhetorical vision" rather than a pair of "blind eyes". This rhetorical vision, embodying not only an increased knowledge about the rhetorical patterning of bachelor's theses, but also a heightened meta-awareness of genre, can also be of potential use to thesis advisors when they sit down with their advisees and supervise over their writing. The intention here, however, is not to claim that the success to bachelor's thesis counts solely on the ability to write; quite to the contrary, it is fully recognised that getting a thesis done usually taxes a greater all-rounder - a person who is an inexhaustible reader, a critical thinker, an independent researcher, as well as an elastic cooperator or negotiator, apart from being an eloquent writer. The rationale for attaching much, if not undue, emphasis to writing *per se* is that whatever the way the task is undertaken, everything the students get from the library, the research field or simply their own mind will only get disseminated when it is put down on a 20-or-so-page book, black and white. The simple expectation therefore is that students empowered with a clearer "vision" will have rhetorical means to produce a more articulate, fluent, and well-structured bachelor's thesis, writing from the outset with a lower degree of fear, timidity, and insecurity.

Secondly, tracing from what the students learn to write in the writing-related courses to the mélange of elemental genres embedded in the culminating bachelor's theses, the present study attempts to sketch out an integral, systematic pathway of how

students are apprenticed into a detour of genres, which would eventually give them the power to navigate different rhetorical worlds. Therefore, both the students and English writing teachers in Chinese universities will have a clearer view, at any point along the literacy journey, of where they have come from and where they will soon enter into.

Thirdly, going beyond texts and embracing wider contexts of students' writing by drawing on a broad range of qualitative data, richer insights can be gleaned on how key genres are being taught, learnt, produced and valued, and what emic point of views are held by the core participants. Adopting this multi-method approach, whose power has been increasingly recognised in the field of genre analysis (Tardy, 2001; Flowerdew, 2011; Paltridge et al., 2016), the present study will further narrow the gap between text and context by promising a more nuanced understanding of writing and the teaching and learning of it, in its complexity as a "human activity" (Russell, 2001) embedded in and interacting with the interconnected social, institutional, and pedagogical contexts.

Fourthly, concerning the questionable effectiveness of general compositional preparations on bachelor's thesis writing, the present study seeks to make stronger claims based on more concrete evidences, specifically through mapping what genres the students experience initially in the instructional settings and what, later, as more mature thesis writers, they are more likely to confront. The match or mismatch between the two writing episodes within this educational context will be of particular significance to curriculum designers and textbook/material developers. Supposedly, when the current curriculum in operation and L2 English writing textbooks or materials in circulation need to be revised or updated, they can make more informed decisions, especially when a mismatch is detected and considered better to be bridged. In so doing, the whole writing curriculum can probably be rendered more coherent, the literacy

journey designed for the students be as seamless as possible, and the compositional preparations in the classrooms be more effective. In other words, the "mutt genres", as coined by Wardle (2009), will be of less "mutt", literally.

Finally, examining the students' transfer of rhetorical knowledge (or the lack of it) within a new conceptual framework of adaptive transfer also has some potential rewards, theoretical as well as pedagogical. For one thing, the framework of adaptive transfer, which proposes an extended view towards transfer as dynamic, context-specific, and idiosyncratic, will lead to a more fine-tuned understanding of the phenomenon *per se*. For another, making explicit how the transfer of rhetorical knowledge occurs (or not), it is hoped that both the students and L2 writing instructors will have a heightened awareness of how a particular genre, when first encountered, attended and preformed, can possibly be reused, revised, and reshaped to suit the demands of future writing situations. By doing this, the students will be encouraged to develop an understanding of "text histories" (Johns, 1997), with a sense of how old texts are different from or similar to the new ones, and build up a generic repertoire ("ontogenesis" in SFL terms, Martin, 1999) from their past experiences without becoming slaves to them. Thus, they will be able to wrestle with writing in analogous contexts with ease and boosted confidence. In sum, the ultimate goal for any of our pedagogical efforts in L2 writing should be to promise the students an ability to transfer the learnt rhetorical knowledge to any possible new and unfamiliar writing situation throughout their overall literacy lives, in either academe or workplaces. Within this spectacle in mind, the bachelor's thesis, serving as the culminating point in the present undertaking, is but a proximate and readily accessible stop, not in any way the literacy terminal.

1.7 Scope and limitations

Given the enormous number of universities that offer bachelor's degree programme in the discipline of English (as stated briefly in *Section 1.1.2*), scattered all over the vast land of Mainland China, it is impossible for the present researcher to cover every single one of them, not even feasible for her to select a random sample representative enough for the whole population. Given this limitation, the present study will be conducted on a single research site, i.e., the English Department within the College of Humanities, Sichuan Agricultural University (SICAU). As currently practiced in the Department, students enrolled for English programme take two general writing courses (*English Writing I* and *English Writing II*) in the third and forth semesters, respectively, and another *Academic Writing* in the sixth semester, before they are required to complete a 4000 word bachelor's thesis in the final year of their study.

Such single-site case study will assist in capturing the particularity and particulars of the very educational context under investigation, but risks at the same time losing its generalisability to other contexts. That said, SICAU English majors nevertheless can be regarded as fairly typical exemplars of this student population, whose enculturation into the discipline of English is likewise informed by the same national syllabus and governed by the same educational administration system. In this sense, any insights drawn from this single institution can also be of some reference value to other institutions who will likely take a similar path.

As point of departure, a corpus of 40 bachelor's theses produced over the past five years will firstly be examined, which consists of only quality bachelor's theses awarded 85 points or above, as so to represent the most recent established practice in this small local community, measuring up to an anticipated, if not perfect, standard imposed on

the prospective thesis writers. In the meantime, the students' written products and other qualitative data generated in the instructional settings, i.e., from the three writing-related courses in the curriculum, will be drawn cross-sectionally, instead of longitudinally, from three comparable groups of students, framed within the time span from Spring semester of academic year 2017-2018 to Autumn semester of academic year 2018-2019 (please see *Chapter 3* for more detailed explanation of data collection design).

While assuming the comparability of the three groups of students in the three writing-related courses, the present researcher is also aware of a variable that exists in the departmental curriculum. Normally, the departmental curriculum for undergraduate English programme goes through assessment on a yearly basis, usually resulting in some minor changes or necessary revisions due to the students' needs, faculty availability and/or any other changes informed by the higher administrative agents. This fluidity in the departmental curriculum is something beyond the present researcher's control, making inroads into the potential value of the present study as to how much of what may be found on the current students can be easily generalised into students that come before or after them. To counterbalance this limitation, the present researcher has precautiously observed and compared the three curricula offered to the three groups of students from whom the cross-sectional data will be gathered, and found, to a great relief, that they share nearly equivalent components, with only minimum adjustments, in that part for English writing. Such minor adjustments include: (1) the old course names, i.e., *Fundamental English Writing* and *Advanced English Writing* as used in Curriculum 2015 and before, are replaced by *English Writing I* and *English Writing II*, correspondingly, in Curriculum 2016 and Curriculum 2017 (and will most probably

remain so henceforth), whereas the courses maintain similar teaching contents and activities via same course instructors; (2) *English Writing I* and *English Writing II* in Curriculum 2017 each contain a total of thirty hours of formal class time, that is, two hours' extra than their counterparts in Curriculum 2016 and Curriculum 2015. Consequently, the present study will take a precautious move and build up claims only confined within its current time frame, showing the least intention to reach a generalisable conclusion. Nevertheless, in defending against such foreseeable charges, there are more two things worth noting. First, it is inherently impossible, nor necessary, to pursue a positivist ideal of "absolute", "universal", "permanent" truth about what goes on in such an ever-shifting, multifaceted enterprise as L2 writing education, where a single change in one of many variables can alter the specific dynamics of any given practice; and second, when research of a similar nature is initiated, it intends NOT for the current practice in the research site to remain unchanged nor stay unchallenged. Contrarily, as envisaged earlier, by provoking new thoughts and reflections over the current operating scheme, the findings from the present study may offer suggestions that people involved, such as teachers, department directors, decision-makers, or those who share a similar concern over L2 writing, may find potentially useful to refer to, when the on-going curriculum or writing pedagogy needs to be changed - not only changed, but changed for the better.

Meanwhile, when asking the question of how the students are prepared for writing in the instructional stages, the present researcher keeps a single eye on what happens (or not) in the writing-related courses and leaves the other covered to any writing tasks arising from other essential courses (for instance, those courses for reading and translating skills where students are also given written assignments). The consideration

is that although writing activities do take place in those non-writing courses and are likely to have an implicit, unexamined impact on the students' overall literacy development, they focus primarily on developing subject-specific arguments or the mastery of course contents, bearing little if any of the responsibility for fostering the students' rhetorical knowledge or writing skills, thus sitting beyond the scope of the present study.

One last issue addressed in passing here is that no attempts will be made to discuss Chinese students' writing in terms of its conformity with or deviation from the native-speaker norms. Connor (2008) argued that texts be studied in their specific social and institutional contexts, an idea more fully developed in what is called an intercultural rhetoric framework (Canagarajah, 2006; Connor, 2008, 2011; Kubota, 2010; Belcher & Nelson, 2013), which pays due recognition to the rhetoric prowess of multilingual writers (Xu et al., 2016). By the same token, the Chinese students' writing practices and written texts in the present case will only be studied within three interacting dimensions of contexts embedded in their immediate educational environment: namely, the national context, the institutional context, and the pedagogical context. These local contexts, used as the location of research within the target scenario, constitute a "*small culture*" in Holliday's (1999) terms. Within this *small culture* point of view, English language learning is better placed around the professional-academic, organisational, and institutional cultures for understanding the emergent, cohesive behaviour, thus avoiding the ethical, national, and international stereotyping which derives from the default notion of "*large culture*". Through this lens, it is hoped that L2 writers, especially those located in the Expanding Circle (Kachru, 1990), will be encouraged to value their diversity in linguistic resources, and appreciate their own rhetoric savvy as multilingual

writers (Canagarajah, 2006), in their own small cultures.

1.8 Definitions of key terms

Unless otherwise stated, the following key terms in the present study will be defined in the ways presented below:

Systemic Functional Linguistics

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is a theory of language developed by Michael Halliday, also widely known as Sydney School. At the heart of SFL is an idea of language as semiotic resources for meaning making in social contexts (Halliday, 1978). It is *functional* in that it focuses on what language does within particular contexts, and *systemic* in that language is modelled as "systems of choice" representing a culture's "meaning potential" available to language users for the realisation of meanings.

Instruction-based genres

As a working definition, the term "instruction-based genres" is used to refer to genres that are produced on the basis of classroom instructions and used primarily as instructor-set assignments to hone students' writing skills in the general writing courses.

Bachelor's thesis

Bachelor's thesis in the present study refers specifically to the academic macrogenre composed by undergraduate English majors in China during the final year of their study. According to ETSEM, the thesis should be 3000 to 5000 word long, written with a coherent, logical organisation, while articulating critical, substantial ideas based on independent thinking over a certain subject matter in the discipline of English language studies. Therefore, the primary communicative purpose of this macrogenre is for the potential graduates to demonstrate to the institution, or the thesis

examiners in particular, their proficiency in basic English language skills, fluency in articulating original ideas in the written mode, ability to conduct and present a piece of research, as well as general knowledge in a selected subject matter.

Practice-based genre

Following Tardy's (2006) categorisation, genres that fall into the practice-based end are developed through engagement with knowledge or empirical activities in certain educational, disciplinary, or professional communities. In the present study, the bachelor's thesis is deemed to fit into this category. Although in the process of writing a bachelor's thesis, the student writer regularly negotiates with and receives guidance and feedback from a thesis advisor, the bachelor's thesis is conceived of as practice-oriented, differentiated from the instruction-based genres, on the grounds that its main function is for the student writer to address a topic meaningful to the discipline by conducting research activities or by drawing on different sources of insights from the relevant literature rather than to respond to pre-set assignments that cater to what the instructors teach in the classrooms.

Rhetorical knowledge

For the purposes and exigencies of this study, the present researcher draws upon Tardy's argument in perceiving rhetorical knowledge within the domain of genre knowledge (hence it comes as no surprise that in previous sections these two terms are sometimes used interchangeably), defining it, specifically, as explicit recognition of the social purpose of a particular text, and an ability to unfold it in a recognisable and appropriate generic form through writing within a particular writing context.

Adaptive transfer

The focus in this study is the transition that the undergraduate English majors

experience as they move from instruction-based writing courses to the task of writing a bachelor's thesis. Towards this end, discussion of transfer in the present case will be reframed within the theory of adaptive transfer proposed by DePalma & Ringer (2011). Specifically, for the purpose of the present research, an operational definition of transfer is presented as "the conscious or intuitive process of applying or reshaping knowledge about elemental genres learned in the instruction-based context in order to compose the macrogenre of bachelor's thesis, which lies at the more practice-oriented end and represents a more challenging, potentially unfamiliar writing situation."

Compositional preparations

"Compositional preparations" is adopted here as an umbrella term that canvasses a variety of teaching and learning activities experienced by the undergraduate English majors in the writing-related courses, which are supposed to prepare them for the subsequent rhetorical challenges, such as the writing of bachelor's thesis. On the basis of data accessibility and research foci, these preparatory efforts are specifically narrowed down to include the written texts for course assignments on the one hand, and teaching materials used in the classrooms on the other. All of these preparations are, in turn, reifications of certain higher-level syllabi and official documents from the national and institutional levels.

1.9 Summary

This chapter offers an ushering gesture to the project at hand. Firstly, some background information has been provided, with a particular emphasis on English writing in the Chinese tertiary education, followed by a depiction of the residual problems that point to the necessity of carrying out the present endeavour. Then, the

research objectives and research questions are accordingly stated, as well as its significance, scope and limitations. As a final note in this chapter, several key terms were defined. Next chapter will move on to review the related literature, synthesising both theoretical discussions and empirical studies that have been evoked on relevant issues. These scholarly efforts of theorists, researchers and practitioners, as perceived, have properly laid the groundwork for the present work.
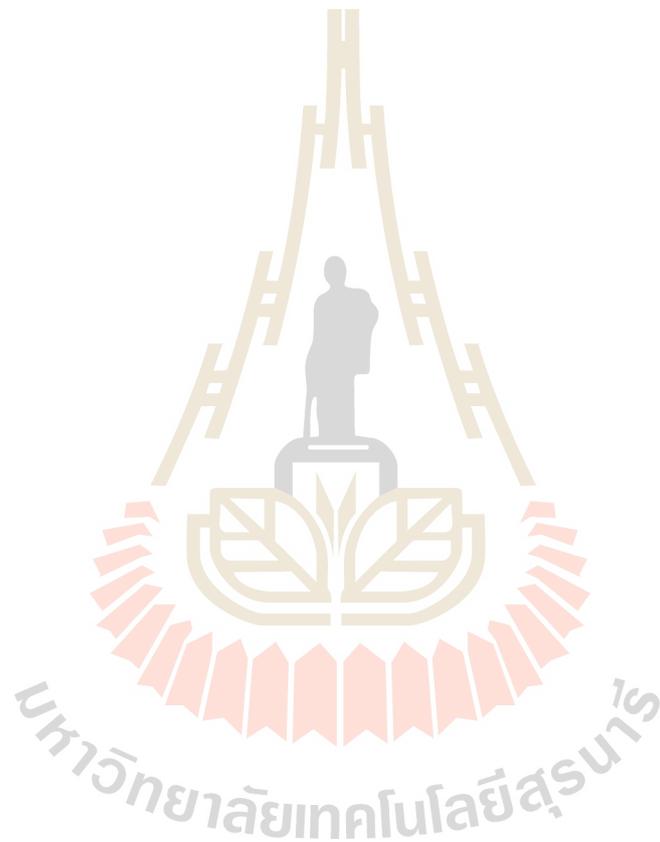
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to offer a systematic review of the existing literature in a number of interrelated domains where the present inquiry is located. It is organised into five main sections. *Section 2.1* presents the core tenets of the genre theories from the architecture of Systemic Functional Linguistics, which underpins genre analysis in the present study. Particularly, the system networks of seven genre families described in this tradition will serve as major analytical frameworks for investigating the instruction-based genres and bachelor's theses. *Section 2.2* reviews relevant literature on one of the significant genres in the present research - bachelor's thesis, in regards to its definition and primary social functions as well as previous studies on Chinese English majors writing this genre. *Section 2.3* discusses three most salient approaches to L2 writing pedagogy, followed by previous empirical studies on instruction-based genres by Chinese undergraduate English majors. In *Section 2.4*, the focus will be on the notion of learning transfer. Specifically, several different conceptualisations of this concept will first be introduced, before focusing on the theory of *adaptive transfer* with which the current discussion on transfer from instruction-based genres to bachelor's theses will be framed, and finally previous efforts exploring transfer in the fields of genre learning and L2 writing will be revisited. This chapter closes with some concluding remarks wrapping up the implications drawn from the previous insights, which point to the research niches in the existing literature that the present endeavour can potentially occupy.

2.1 Genre studies in Systemic Functional Linguistics

"... cultures seem to involve a large but potentially definable set of genres, that are recognizable to members of a culture, rather than an unpredictable jungle of social situations. To us cultures looked more like outer space than biospheres, with a few families of genres here and there, like far flung galaxies. We wanted a theory that accommodated all this empty room."

(Martin & Rose, 2008, p.17)

2.1.1 Definition of genre

In teaching and learning of L2 writing, and in related areas such as composition studies, rhetoric, and literacy education, few theories in literature have had a greater impact than that of genre. As Bakhtin (1986) points out, every text is in some genre. It is particularly so when writing and the learning of it are increasingly conceptualised as a social activity which incorporates an understanding of how language is used and structured to achieve social purposes in particular contexts. Despite its ubiquity and elevated recognition, the term *genre* itself remains fraught with competing views, which is even traceable to the etymology of the word. Through its related word *gender, genre* can be traced, on the one hand, to the Latin word *genus*, which refers to "kind" or "a class of things", and on the other hand, to the Latin cognate *gener*, meaning "to generate". Reflecting its etymology, genre has been understood and used as *both* a classificatory tool, sorting and organising different types of texts, *and* a powerhouse, generating and shaping texts, meanings, and social actions within various situations.

The theoretical framework used to analyse texts in the present study, as already noted in *Chapter 1*, is drawn from the SFL approach to genre (which is often called the "Sydney School"), which is, as Hyland (2007) comments, "perhaps the most clearly articulated approach to genre both theoretically and pedagogically" (p.153).

With its theoretical basis in Hallidayan language theories, i.e., *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Halliday & Hasan, 1989; Halliday, 1994, 2014), and sociocultural theories of learning (Vygotsky, 1978), genre scholarship in this tradition is more fully developed and represented in the works of J.R. Martin, David Rose, Frances Christie, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis, Gunther Kress, Brian Paltridge, Joan Rothery, Eija Ventola, and others.

At the heart of Systemic Functional Linguistics is an idea of language as semiotic resources for meaning making in social contexts - what Halliday (1978) calls the "social semiotic". It is *functional* in that it focuses on what language does within particular contexts, and *systemic* in that language is modelled as "systems of choice" representing a culture's "meaning potential" available to language users for the realisation of meanings.

Michael Halliday argues that the way into understanding about language lies in the study of texts in their social contexts. He then further describes social context as "the total environment in which a text unfold", which, building on his mentor John Rupert Firth and the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, is stratified into two levels - "context of situation" and "context of culture". The relation between each of these strata of language and social context is illustrated by Rose (2012) as such:

> *"Looked at from above, we can say that patterns of social organisation of a culture are realised ('manifested/symbolized/encoded/expressed) as patterns of social interaction in each context of situation, which in turn are realised as patterns of discourse in each text." (p.210)*

Halliday models context of situation as varying on three general dimensions: the social activity that is actually taking place (the *field*), the relationship among the participants (the *tenor*), and the role language is playing (the *mode*). In Martin's terms,

the configuration of these three contextual variables, taken together, constitutes the *register* of a text. Each dimension of the context of situation is realised by what Halliday refers to as the three metafunctions of language: ideational metafunction to construe experience, as realises the *field*; interpersonal metafunction to enact relationships, i.e., as realises the *tenor*; and textual metafunction to organise discourse and flow of information, as realises *mode* - a strata of language referred to as discourse semantics by Martin (1992).

Building on Halliday's model of language, text and context of situation, J. R. Martin proposes *social purpose* as an additional variable to analyse social context. He notes that these register variables, i.e., *field, tenor,* and *mode*, cannot be associated with the social purpose of texts (e.g. Martin, 1984, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012), as this would place too much pressure on only one stratum. As such, these ideas are then theorised into a stratified model of language and social context, where *genre* is located, in a "superordinate" relationship to register variables, at the stratum of *context of culture*, which is reflected in the structural patterns through which a text unfolds to achieve its social purpose. This stratified model can be illustrated, as in the convention of the SFL tradition, as a series of nested circles, as in *Figure 2.1*.
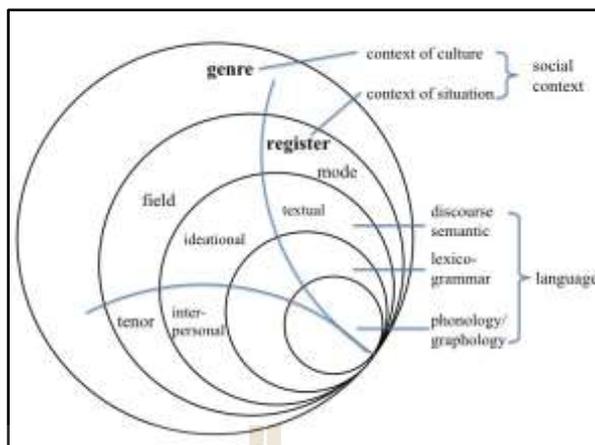
Figure 2.1 Stratified model of language and social context

(Martin, 1992; Rose, 2017a)

The relation between each of the strata of language and social context is that of *realisation*, which is an essential concept running across the overall architecture of SFL. To be more specific, socio-cultural context is modelled   as genre, in turn realised through field, tenor and mode (collectively   known as register), realised in turn through language/discourse (and other modalities of meaning). At the same time, language itself is organised in three strata, as discourse semantics, realised through lexico-grammatical patterns, realised as phonology (in speech) or graphology (in writing).

The essential assumptions the functional linguists have continually made about language and social context have stimulated the generation of the notion of *genre*. As a working definition that underpins this whole thesis, genres are characterised in this research tradition as *staged, goal-oriented, social processes* (Martin, 1984, 1997; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose, 2015): *social* since texts are always interactive events and wedded in the social context; *goal oriented* in that a text unfolds towards its interactants'

purposes; *staged*, because it usually takes more than one step to accomplish the goal. In SFL terms, this means that genres are defined as a recurrent configuration of meanings, that enacts the social practices of a culture (Rose, 2010).

Culture, in this interpretation, is a universe of meaning, which involves a large but potentially identifiable set of genres, much like the way in which billions of galaxies make up our physical universe. By this romantic analogy, we see genres manifest themselves into innumerable texts, in varying lengths, that characterise most of human interactions; just as when we look up, there are countless stars, in varying sizes, twinkling and dancing in the midnight blue sky.

2.1.2 Analytical frameworks: Key written genres and genre families

Like how many stars can be found, arranged into how many galaxies, using what technology, from which point of view, are questions very much to the curiosity of the astronomers, how many texts are produced, assigned into how many and what genres, using what criteria, from whose interpreting position, are questions that most of SFL genre theorists share an interest in. Research endeavours in this genre approach, led by J.R. Martin and based mainly on a series of large-scale action research across the primary and secondary school curricula and then expanding beyond to further education and associated workplaces, has richly contributed to the identification of key written genres through which knowledge is transmitted. These genres are named and grouped into genre families, with a synopsis of their primary social purposes and fine descriptions of their staging/phasing possibilities. The term *family* is first used by Swales (1990), who, drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein, discusses family resemblance among members of a genre, and their variation in prototypicality. However, for Martin, genres belong to a family because they share a general, central purpose, or they may

have evolved in the same disciplinary context.

A global sketch of genres described in the SFL approach is presented in *Figure 2.2*, with references mainly made to the previous typologies of genres developed in Martin & Rose (2008) and further developed in Rose (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2017b). Here, seven genre families are grouped into three general categories, according to their most general social purposes: (1) to engage and entertain through *stories and historical chronicles*; (2) to inform, i.e., to provide information, through some factual genre families, such as, *explanations, reports,* and *procedural genres*; (3) to evaluate, opinions/issues in the case of *arguments*, and texts in the case of *text responses*. However, how the different genre families respond to the three general functions is not a clear-cut, one-to-one mapping, but instead better characterised as operating along a continuum. As indicated by the arrows in *Figure 2.2*, various genres can perform the functions to engage, to inform, and/or to evaluate, to varying extent, with one foregrounded more than the others.
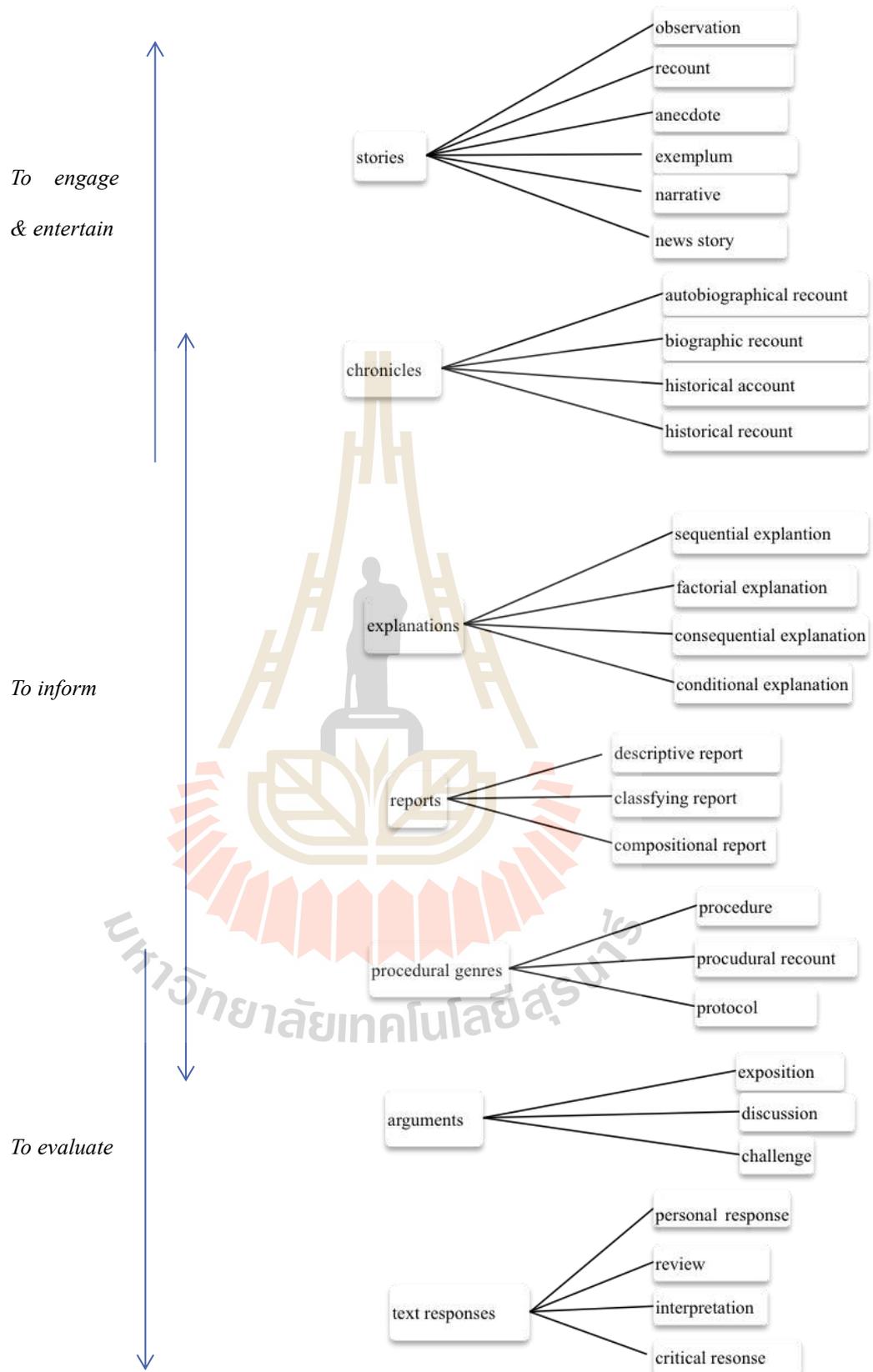
Figure 2.2 Key written genres described in SFL (adapted from Rose, 2010)

To be sure, *Figure 2.2* does not canvass the full range of genre families and the members of each. Lying outside, there is probably an on-going list of genres emerging, evolving and/or even decaying, well beyond perhaps what have been already studied within SLF framework. "No single book can be the final word on genre", as recognised by Martin and Rose (2008, p. 47) in their seminal book on the subject, "especially if mapping culture as a system of genres is the game we want to play". Let alone a single diagram. The key point here is that these genres listed above are the genres attracting the most attention in school and academic curricula, the heart of our Milk Way as it were, and the efforts put into identifying and describing them are driven by the shared educational concerns within SFL genre scholarship. Therefore, the network of genre families presented in *Figure 2.2*, as argued here, serves as a theoretically-robust starting point from which the texts produced either in *instructional* settings or in the *community of practice* for thesis writing, with both of which the present study is concerned, can be appropriately assigned to genres. However, *Figure 2.2* by far is still a crude representation, and each of these key genres calls for more elaborate descriptions of their primary social purposes and the common stages and phrases deployed to accomplish them that help both unite and distinguish them as belonging to different genre families.

2.1.2.1 Story genres

According to Martin & Rose (2008), story genres are central in all cultures and also the most widely studied genre family. They are intimately woven into the minutiae of everyday life, to interpret life's chaos and rhythm, to evaluate and help mould people's behaviour, to educate and entertains children, and to ignite and grip the imagination of children and adults alike. Accordingly, the key social functions of the

family of story genres, suggested by Martin and Rose (2008), are to (re)construe real or imagined events/experiences and evaluate them in such a way that enacts, shapes, or maintains social relationships between participating interlocutors.

Amongst the functional linguists, their fist contact with genre, as far as Martin & Plum (1997) recall, was Labov & Waletzky's (1967) analysis of the (Orientation) ^Complication ^ (Evaluation) ^ Resolution ^ (Coda) structure of spoken narratives of personal experiences, with Complication and Resolution as the obligatory stages, and other stages optional (Note that parentheses are used to signal optional stage). Over the years, however, SFL based research has expanded to explore variation in types of stories, their social purposes, and linguistic realisation, which were initially dismissed by Labov & Waletszky (1967) as "not well-formed" or "individually based language deficit". Six major story genres are systematically identified and described in SFL genre research, that have been found in large corpora of oral stories (Plum, 1988/1998; Martin & Plum, 1997), children's written stories (Rothery, 1994, Rothery & Stenglin, 1997), casual conversation (Eggins & Slade, 1997), literary fiction (Macken-Horarik, 1996; Martin 1996), stories of illness and treatment (Jordens, 2002; Jordens & Little, 2004; Jordens et al., 2001)), and traditional stories across language families (Rose, 2001, 2005a). These six story genres differ and relate to each other along various dimensions - what J. R. Martin refers to as functional parameters, which are modelled in SFL as systems of choice, so that the story family can be compared and contrasted in a system network - a conventional SFL fashion of theorising, as outlined in *Figure 2.3*.
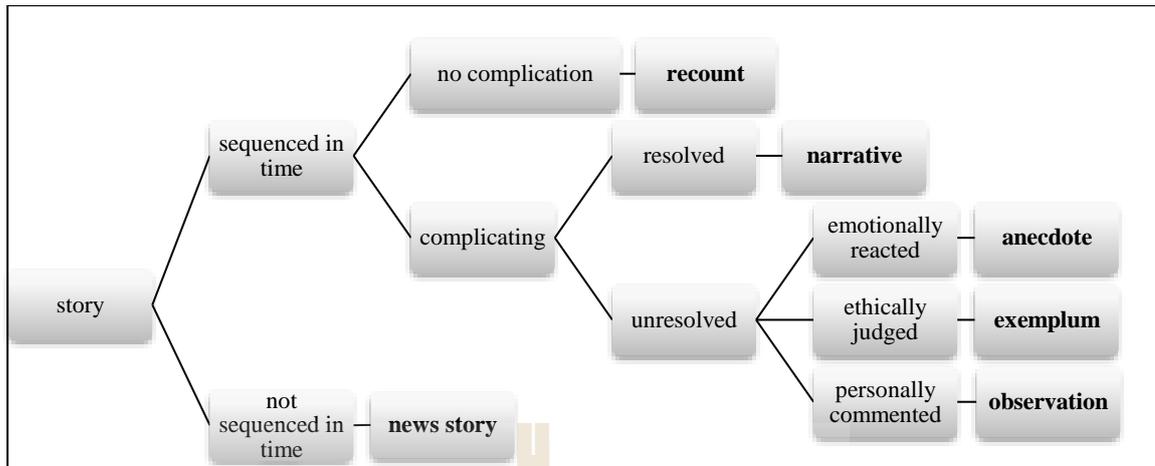
Figure 2.3 System network of story genres (adapted from Martin & Rose, 2008)

The network opposes news stories, which privileges textual organisation, with the others that are sequenced in time. Within the time-sequenced stories, recount records an experience unproblematically, whereas the others involve a disruption to the expectant cause of events. Then narratives, in which an complication is resolved to restore order, are opposed to those that terminate with an attitudinal response to make their point, emotional reaction in anecdotes, moral interpretation in exemplums, and personal comment in observations.

How these six story genres perform different social purposes of their own and thus display varying schematic structure, which is in turn realised through a common set of phases, is now summarised by drawing on the wide range of existing resources as listed above, and presented in *Table 2.1 below.*

It must be noted that while the stages of a single genre are relatively stable components of its organisation and may be repeatedly recursively, phases within each stage are much more variable, and may be uniquely labelled to the particular text. In other words, stages unfold in highly predictable sequences, whereas phases may or

may not occur within any stage, and in variable sequences, and are by no means exhaustive. For this reason, it is the SFL convention that stages are denoted with Initial Capitals and phases with lower case and put undifferentiated into a single cell. Note that the same format of presentation will be applied hereinafter to other genre families.

Table 2.1 Typology of story genres (social purposes, stages and phases)

	genre	social purpose	schematic structure	common phases
story	**recount**	to recount personal experience in an unproblematic way	(Orientation) ^ Record of Events ^ (Reorientation)	setting, description, events, problem, solution, result/effect, reaction, comment, reflection, …
	anecdote	to share an emotional response to an extraordinary event	(Orientation) ^ Remarkable Event ^ Reaction ^ (Coda)	
	exemplum	to invoke a moral judgment through a noteworthy event	(Orientation) ^ Incident ^ Interpretation ^ (Coda)	
	observation	to make a personal comment on an event	(Orientation) ^ Event Description ^ Comment	
	narrative	to resolve a complication	(Orientation) ^ Complication ^ Evaluation ^ Resolution ^ (Coda)	
	news story	to report current events	Lead ^ Angles	

2.1.2.2 Chronicles

Another family of event-oriented genres are **chronicles**, but, unlike **stories** which have a shared interest in events, as discussed in the foregoing section, chronicles draw out significant events from *history* – set in a timeline that is farther away, both to inform and to entertain, and have evolved to construct and maintain social order on a wider scale of peoples and their institutions. Within SFL-based research on genre, this family of historical genres have evolved largely from *history* as one of the academic disciplines. Coffin (2006), for instance, provides a systematic, thick description of historical discourse, particularly oriented towards secondary schooling, in which she shows that recording genres are the focus of earlier years in the school

history while explaining and then arguing genres tend to be privileged in the later years. This enables her to propose a learner pathway along which students develop control of the discourse of history and apprentice into this secondary school discipline. The genre family under focus in this section is what Coffin (2006) refers to as reporting genres (the explaining and arguing genres will be addressed in subsequent sections accordingly), the key social functions of which include recording the events of the past as they unfold through time and bringing out their historical significance (Coffin, 2006). However, instead of adhering to Coffin's naming, the term "**chronicles"** is used here as aligned with the recent publications on SFL genre research (e.g. Rose, 2015a, 2017b). The reasons for this terminological choice are twofold: firstly, the term "reporting" is not differentiating enough as story genres, as seen above, also record events and personal experiences; and secondly, the term "**chronicles**" helps highlight how time is manipulated in reconstruing the past events.

Four subtypes of genres constitute the family of chronicles, namely, autobiographical recount, biographical recount, historical recount, and historical account. Relating them along parameters such as particular participant vs. generalised participant, first person vs. third person, temporal links vs. causal links, the system network of chronicles can be displayed via a four-way typology, as shown in *Figure 2.4* below.

Whereas the four historical genres are bonded around a central, primary social function, i.e., *to record the past*, each can be assigned to a more subtle social purpose that distinguishes one from another and is achieved by moving through a sequence of stages and phases thereof, as illustrated in *Table 2.2* below.
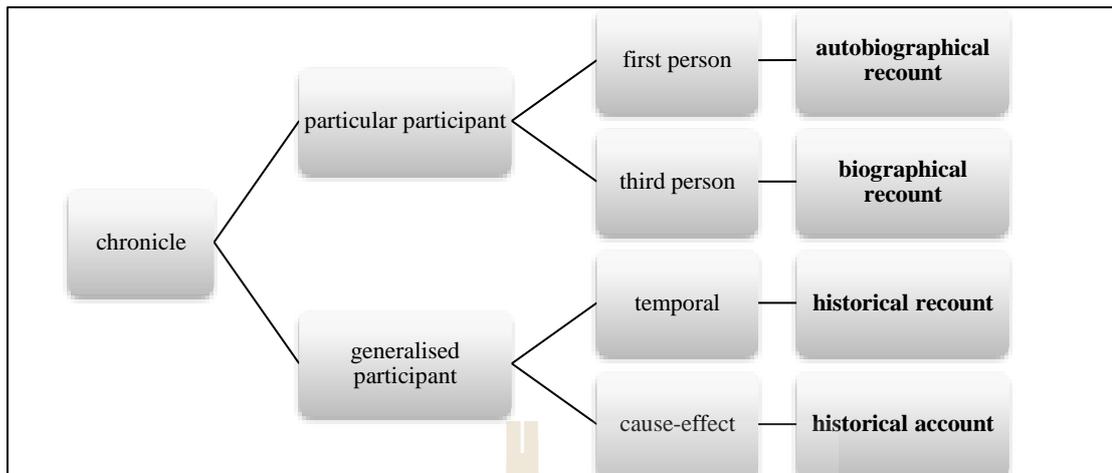
Figure 2.4 System network of chronicles (adapted from Coffin,

2006; Martin & Rose, 2008)

Table 2.2 Typology of chronicles (social purposes, stages and phases)

	genre	social purpose	schematic structure	common phases
chronicles	**autobiographical recount**	to retell the significant events of the author's life	(Orientation) ^ Life Stages ^ (Reorientation)	life/history episodes
	biographical recount	to tell the life story of a significant historical figure	Orientation ^ Life Stages ^ (Evaluation of Person)	…
	historical recount	to chronicle past events regarded as historically significant	Background ^ Record of Events ^ (Deduction)	
	historical account	to present past events in a temporal sequence while making causal links between them	Background ^ Account Sequence ^ (Deduction)	

2.1.2.3 Explanations

The overall social function that binds the family of explanations is to explain how processes happen. Towards this end, they examine and imply cause-effect relationships (Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 150), which often involve a type of logical pattern termed as implication sequence (Wignell, Martin & Eggins, 1993). Explanation

genres are of four subtypes: a sequence of causes and effects (sequential), multiple causes for an outcome (factorial), multiple consequences from an input (consequential), and multiple conditions with effects (conditional). A system network of explanations is presented in *Figure 2.5*.
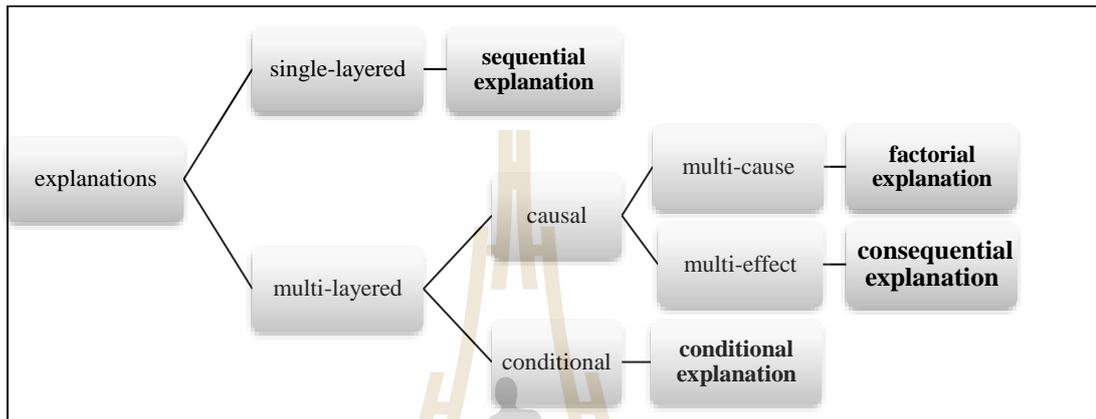
Figure 2.5 System network of explanations (adapted from Coffin, 2006; Martin & Rose, 2008)

As with chronicles, explanation genres have also evolved, in part, along the institutional context of history. For example, Coffin's (2006) study reveals that factorial explanations and consequential explanations are equally important genres in history education and tend to be particularly prized at the intermediate phase (and onward) of secondary schooling, as students at this stage are often expected to determine the cause and effect relationships between historical events. At the same time, explanation genres (together with reports and procedural genres that will be addressed in the subsequent sections) have also been prevalent in scientific discourse, as they are commonly used to explain natural and/or social phenomena.

Table 2.3 below sets out the social purposes of each of these explanation genres and typical stages and phases that operate to realise them. It is

noteworthy that in the earlier phase of SFL-based genre analysis, factors and consequences were originally labelled as genre stages while the recognition of phases was largely left to intuition, which was sufficient for the early genre-based writing pedagogy, since it was initially developed from analysing short texts written by and for primary and secondary school students. However, as the impact of SFL genre research has expanded into further education and even professional domains, which entails a higher level of support for students to recognise and appropriate instantial patterns of genres in longer texts, phasal analysis across genres becomes much more detailed. As a consequence, the schematic structure of each type of explanations is identified as one that starts with the phenomenon to be explained, followed by the implication sequence that explains it, i.e., Phenomenon ^ Explanation, with factors and consequences (and the like) treated as types of phases within the Explanation stage (see also the new developments in SFL genre pedagogy in Rose, 2015b, 2017b).

Table 2.3 Typology of explanations (social purposes, stages and phases)

	genre	social purpose	schematic structure	common phases
explanation	**sequential explanation**	to explain a series of events, in which an obligatory causal relation is implied between each event	Phenomenon ^ Explanation ^ (Extension)	steps
	factorial explanation	to explain the reasons or factors that contributed to a particular event or outcome	Phenomenon ^ Explanation: factors ^ (Extension)	factors
	consequential explanation	to explain the consequences or effects of a single cause/event	Phenomenon ^ Explanation: consequences ^ (Extension)	outcomes, consequences, effects
	conditional explanation	to explain alternative causes and effects as contingent on variable factors	Phenomenon ^ Explanation: conditions ^ (Extension)	("if…then..") conditions, effects

2.1.2.4 Reports

As with explanations, reports draw on resources that language affords for construing relations between phenomena and facilitate control over the natural and social world. However, according to Martin & Rose (2008), explanations focus on activities/processes through sequences of cause and effect, while in contrast, reports focus on entities in terms of their description, classification and composition. In a broad sense, the social function of reports is to describe and classify things, and within this genre family, three types of reports have been identified, namely, descriptive reports that classify an entity and then describe its features, classifying reports that subclassify a collective of phenomena with respect to a given set of criteria, and compositional reports that describe the components of an entity. The typical structure of reports involves an opening stage of Classification of the entity followed by a Description stage, but the phases within the Description stage may vary with the type of reports and the entity being described. The stages and phases through which these three report genres unfold to achieve their specific social purposes are illustrated in *Table 2.4.*

Table 2.4 Typology of reports (social purposes, stages and phases)

	genre	social purpose	schematic structure	common phases
	descriptive reports	to describe the characteristics of one class of entity	Classification ^ Description	characteristics
explanation	classifying reports	to subclassify and describe members of a general class	Classification ^ Description: types	types
	compositional reports	to describe parts of wholes	Classification ^ Description: parts	components/parts,

2.1.2.5 Procedural genres

While reports and explanations are concerned with describing and explaining the world, another family referred as procedural genres are concerned with directing people "how to act in it" (Marin & Rose, 2008). Procedural genre family is a diverse realm with agnate variations that are endemic in many contexts: domestic, recreational, educational, scientific, industrial, bureaucratic and administrative. In broad outline, three categories of genres have been established within this extended family, i.e., procedures and protocols proposing what to do and how to do it, as opposed to procedural recounts retelling what has been done. They are modelled here, with some key subgenres under each, in a system network in *Figure 2.6*.
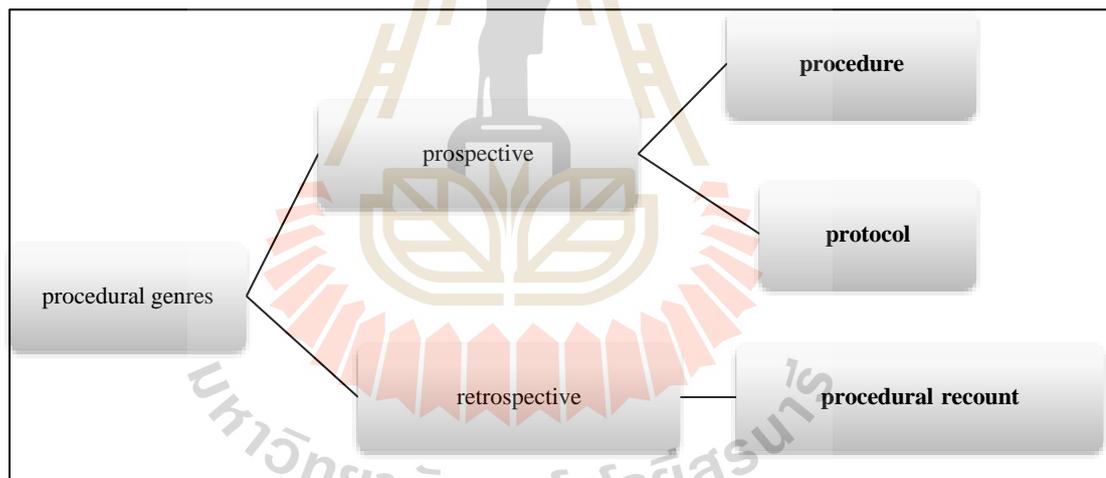
Figure 2.6 System network of procedural genres

(adapted from Marin & Rose, 2008)

Space precludes anything more than a brief, general outline of the social purposes and generic structures of the three main types of procedural genres as the one shown in *Table 2.5* below. More detailed analysis and thicker descriptions, concentrating on one or more certain subtypes of procedural genres, can be found, for

instance, in Veel (1997, 1998) in the discourse of secondary science, Martin & Rose (2003) in legislation, Iedema (1995, 1997) in bureaucratic and administrative discourses, and Rose (1997, 1998) in the specialised fields of technology and science-based industry.

Table 2.5 Typology of procedural genres (social purposes, stages and phases)

	genre	social purpose	schematic structure	common phases
procedural genres	**procedures**	to direct how to perform a specialised sequence of activities in relation to certain objects and locations	(Purpose) ^ Equipment & Material ^ Method	hypothesis, scope, definition, preparation, ingredients, equipment, steps, command, explanation, testing, calculation, …
	protocols	to restrict behaviour by imposing what to do or not to do	(Purpose) ^ Rules	
	procedural recounts	to recount how an activity has been done or how a problem has been solved	(Purpose) ^ Equipment & Material ^ Method ^ Results ^ Discussion ^ (Conclusion)	

2.1.2.6 Arguments

Reports, explanations and procedural genres reviewed above all deal with factual texts that perform, to a more or less extent, the function of informing the readers. At this point, the focus shifts from genres organised around entities, events and activities as they unfold in the world to genres that involve assessing, negotiating, and debating different perspectives in interpreting this world as well as justifying their own - that is, in other words, from genres of reporting, explaining and directing to genres of arguing. Arguing genres have been found across several disciplines and domains, such as science (Veel, 1997, 1998), business (Harvey, 1995; Yeung, 2007), activist literacies

(Humphrey, 2013), and history (Coffin, 2006; Matruglio, 2014). Coffin's (2006) study, for instance, as already stated earlier, has revealed that arguments are fundamental to the success in the subject of history, particularly in the years of secondary schooling. Within this genre family, a three-way classification has emerged depending on whether they are *one-sided* versus *multi-sided* and whether they are arguing *for* or *against* a particular proposition, as illustrated in the system network in *Figure 2.7*. The three arguing genres share the overall social function of evaluating differing interpretations of the world and justifying their own position. To construct an arguing genre, according to Coffin (2006), entails the ability "to reconfigure the resources of abstracting and reasoning in order to persuade" (p. 77).
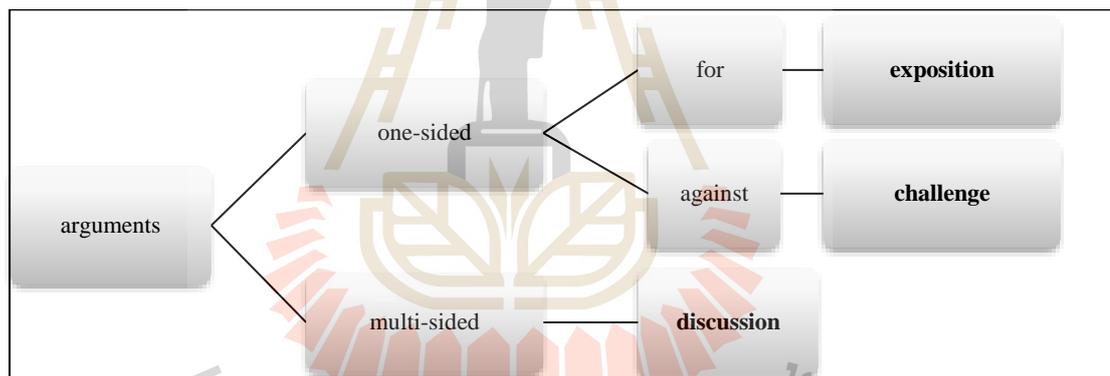
Figure 2.7 System network of arguments (adapted from Coffin, 2006; Martin & Rose, 2008; Humphrey, 2013)

Table 2.6 below summarises the specific social purposes the three arguing genres are entitled to perform, with the typical rhetorical structures their purposes predict.

Table 2.6 Typology of arguments (social purposes, stages and phases)

	genre	social purpose	schematic structure	common phases
arguments	**exposition**	to expound and argue for a particular position	(Background) ^ Thesis ^ Arguments ^ (Reiteration)	preview, review,
	challenge	to demolish and arguing against a position	(Background) ^ Position Challenged ^ Rebuttals ^ Anti-thesis	topic, elaboration, evidence,
	discussion	to present and discuss more than one position on an issue	(Background) ^ Issue ^ Sides ^ Resolution	example …

2.1.2.7 Text responses

Where arguments set out to evaluate an idea, a proposition, or a particular way of thinking about and conceptualising this world, the other major strand of evaluating genres – text responses, have as their primary goal the responsibility to respond to a range of texts constructed in a variety of modes (e.g. literary, visual, or musical texts). Examining English curriculum throughout primary and secondary schooling in Australia, Rothery & Stenglin (2000) have distinguished four general types of response genres, namely personal response, review, interpretation and critical which differ from one another in the nature of the responses they pose towards the source texts. These differences, as critical as they are to the identification of genres within this family, are also reflected in the schematic structure that each genre unfolds, illustrated below in *Table 2.7*.

Although sharing a central goal of evaluating certain significant texts, these four response genres are brought into play across academic disciplines and institutional contexts with different values placed on them. For instance, while personal responses are pervasive in many school classrooms as students are often encouraged to

express how they feel about a text (sometimes only orally), they still remain actually the least valued genre in for formal settings. According to Rothery & Stenglin (2000), more highly valued in school English are reviews and interpretations, which are also common genres in literature/arts studies, and entertainment coverage in the media, while critical responses, going beyond interpreting to challenge the message of the text and hence taxing more intellectual resources, are critical to the domain of academic literary criticism.

Table 2.7 Typology of text responses (social purposes, stages and phases)

	genre	social purpose	schematic structure	common phases
text responses	**personal response**	to express a personal feeling about a text	Context ^ Reaction	themes, techniques, preview, topic, evidence, example, attitude …
	review	to describe, summarise and evaluate a literary, visual, or musical text	Context ^ Description ^ Judgment	
	interpretation	to articulate the dominant message (the theme) and cultural values presented in a text	Evaluation ^ Synopsis ^ Reaffirmation	
	critical response	to challenge the message delivered in a text	Evaluation ^ Deconstruction ^ Challenge	

2.1.3 A note on macrogenres

So far in *Section 2.1.2*, the considerable SFL research on genre families has been reviewed in brief outline, which has been proved invaluable to the identification of salient genres in any significant text and convenient for writing teachers to explicitly share with their students. This extensive work, on the other hand, has been based mostly on primary and secondary school texts, which means most of the texts the functional

linguists have been developing their genre theory around are short - "fit snugly into a page" (Martin, 1994, p. 29) and "have relatively simple purposes" Martin & Rose, 2012, p. 1). Hence, they are generally glossed as "elemental genres", work on which has paved the way for much of the later developments in SFL genre scholarship.

However, as Martin (1994) remarked, life is full of texts that are longer than a page. Beyond the restricted context of primary and secondary schooling, the purposes of texts become more complex, and the texts may have to be responsive to a broader range of contextual pressures, thus clustering around sets of canonical genres to accomplish their complex goals. In other words, sometimes a combination of genres will be assembled into longer texts (possibility even in combination with other modalities of communication such as images that forms multimodal texts). Such longer texts, getting bigger than one page by combining more than one canonical elemental genre such as *recount*, *report*, *explanation*, *exposition* and so on, have been termed as macrogenres (e.g. Martin, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2002a; Martin & Rose, 2008). Examples of such macrogenres can be found in textbooks, web pages, magazines or newspapers that clearly consist of series of shorter texts and images, as well as full-length novels that comprise numbers of smaller stories. Each of these smaller, shorter texts is an element of a macrogenre (Martin & Rose, 2012).

As SFL-based work on genre has expanded beyond primary and secondary education and reached out into tertiary environments (e.g., Hood, 2010; Ravelli & Ellis, 2004; Humphrey, Martin, Dreyfus & Mahboob, 2010; Martin, 2011; Nesi & Gardner, 2012; Gardner & Nesi, 2013; Tribble & Wingate, 2013; Coffin & Donohue, 2014; Dreyfus, Humphrey, Mahboob & Martin, 2015; Humphrey & Economou, 2015; Humphrey & Macnaught, 2015), a common argument is that students need to move

from controlling elemental genres to writing longer, more sophisticated texts that draw on various genres to reach more complex goals (Szenes, 2017). That being the case, then, the issue the present thesis focuses on, i.e., the transitioning from instructional genres with an average length of 200-300 words to writing a 4000-word or-so thesis, may not be unrelated. While it is suggested that the system networks of elemental genre families as outlined in *Section 2.1.2* do provide an effective model to analyse and represent "short texts" in the instruction-based writing, they would be insufficient to explore the generic structuring principles of "longer texts", i.e., what and how elemental genres are combined into a macrogenre such as the bachelor's thesis in the present study. By way of illustrating this issue, an attempt will be made here to revisit SFL's model for macrogenres that theorises the ways in which texts "get bigger than a page".

Before that, two points need to be noted in passing. First, terms such as "short texts", "longer texts" and "longer than a page" are put into quotation marks because their uses are metaphorical and can be misleading if taken literally. It is a common fallacy that longer texts are automatically treated as macrogenres. In fact, admittedly, a macrogenre is instantiated by including not only one but also several genres into a single text, thus in most cases can be longer than a single elemental genre. However, the length of a text is not always important in identifying a macrogenre. Martin & Rose (2012), for instance, have shown that writers can also extend a canonical genre to form longer texts by replaying potentially recursive stages, expanding phases within a generic stage, and adding dialogues, to name a few. They think of this as stretching out an elemental genre as opposed to combining elemental genres with one another to form macrogenres. Similarly, Szenes (2017), in exploring the generic structure of tertiary business reports, has also pointed out that large texts do not necessarily form

macrogenres. For this reason, research cannot solely rely upon length alone to identify a macrogenre, but must look for major shifts in sequence of discursive activities. On the other hand, since the focus of this study is on verbal/written texts, exploration into macrogenres occurring in multimodalities, which combine verbal and visual elements as different genres, is beyond the scope of present study and will not be reviewed here.

2.1.3.1 "From little things big things grow": how macrogenres are developed?

In fact, much of Martin's reasoning about macrogenres rests on Halliday's analogy that "a text is like a clause" (Halliday, 1982, cited in Martin, 1996), and building on Halliday's tripartite metafunctional interpretation of the organisation of grammatical systems, Martin (1994, 1996) proposed the particulate, prosodic, and periodic structuring principles to explain how macrogenres are developed in association with the ideational, interpersonal, and textual meaning accordingly. Given that one of the purposes of the present study is to use SFL-based genre theories to deconstruct bachelor's theses, a macrogenre culminating the undergraduate study, into their instantiated elemental genres, the ideationally-oriented particulate realisations are more relevant to this end as they offer important theoretical tools to represent the segmentation of macrogenres.

Ideationally, macrogenres are constructed by combining several elemental genres as distinct segments, i.e., a particulate form of realisation. Following on from Halliday's theorising, Martin (1994) breaks down the ideational strategies for developing macrogenres into logical and experiential sub-components. Logically, elemental genres are assembled into a part/part univariate structure, with each elemental genre instantiated in the text representing a part in a serial sequence and linked with

one another by logical-semantic relations, i.e., projection and expansion. With projection, one text instantiating an elemental genre can be seen to quote another as a locution (projecting wording) ['] or to report another as an idea (projecting meaning) ['], combined together to form a macrogenre. With expansion, one text instantiating an elemental genre expand another by elaborating it, extending it or enhancing it. Following Halliday (1985), elaboration involves restating in other words, specifying in greater detail, commenting or exemplifying [=]; extension involves adding new elements, giving an exception or offering an alternative [+]; enhancement involves qualifying with circumstantial features such as time, place, cause or condition [×] (pp. 196-197). For detailed analysis and exemplifications, see Martin (1994, 1995, 1996) and Martin & Rose (2008, 2012). Experientially, alongside projection and/or expansion, elemental genres can also function in such a down-ranked way as to realise stages of another genre, giving rise to a part/whole multivariate structure. Szenes (2017) offers a complementary glossing, with **complexing** corresponding to the univariate structuring and **embedding** the multivariate structuring. A schematic outline of these ideational strategies for developing macrogenre is presented in *Figure 2.8*, SFL notational conventions [=, +, ×, ', '] indicating the way in which elaboration, extension, enhancement, projecting meaning, and/or projecting wording may be used to develop macrogenres.
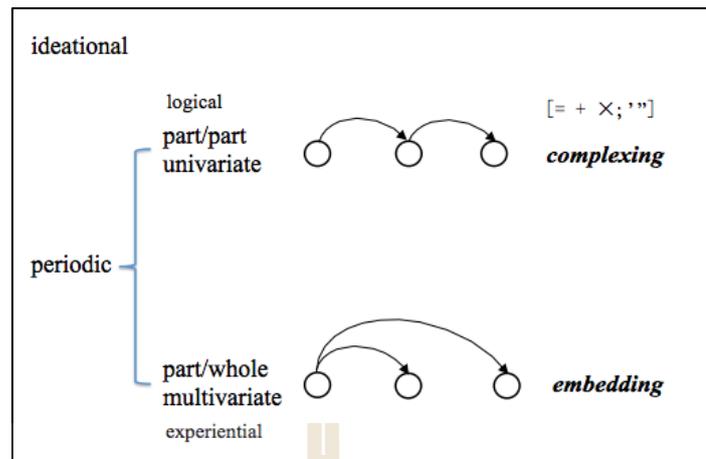
Figure 2.8 Particulate realisation of ideation in macrogenres

(adapted from Szenes, 2017)

2.1.3.2 Previous works on macrogenres

J. R. Martin's general framework for macrogenres as outlined above has served as building blocks for much of the later excellent work on macrogenres across diverse institutional/disciplinary contexts.

For instance, Christie (2002) dealt insightfully with these issues in the context of classroom discourse as she developed her intensive work on curriculum genres. She has found that over extended periods of time curriculum genres form a genre complex, which unfolds, from a logogenetic perspective, in a univariate sequence of Curriculum Initiation, Curriculum Negotiation/Collaboration and Curriculum Closure, with the genre of Curriculum Initiation being elaborated by Curriculum Negotiation/Collaboration genre, which is in turn extended by Curriculum Closure.

Jordens (2002) looked at a macrogenre in the clinical discourse that he termed as *illness narrative* as it unfolds in his interviews with cancer patients, their family, and the health professionals involved in their treatment. The research has found

that the core element of the illness narratives - a Story stage, incorporates five time-structured genres from the family of story genres, i.e., recounts, narratives, anecdotes, exemplums and observations, and the illness narratives can be ranked according to what Jordens has termed as "generic complexity" depending on what and how many story genres are included. The most significant finding from this research is that generic complexity is strongly correlated to life disruption and chaos that the cancer patients have experienced. In the later furtherance of this research (Jordens & Little, 2004), closer genre analysis of the interviews has also found genres other than stories occurring in the illness narrative macrogenre, such as expositions, discussions, explanations, descriptions, procedures, as well as what the authors have glossed as spoken policy genres (Jordens & Little, 2004, p.1638). Interestingly, the use of policy genres has been found to be playing a more visible role in the construction of professional ethical identity than story genres.

Muntigl (2004) also conducted an intensive study of the narrative counselling macrogenre in the field of psychotherapy as it unfolded over several counselling sessions for couples experiencing marital distress. Muntigl (2004) has illustrated the global structure of the narrative counselling macrogenre as a multivariate structure: at the highest level, the macrogenre unfolds through a [Test Recording ^ (Preliminaries) ^ (Abstract) ^ Narrative Counselling Interview ^ Negotiate Closure ^ (Sign-off)] schematic structure, while the Narrative Counselling stage is also a macrogenre on its own right as it compasses two sub-genres, namely, a Problem Construction genre and a Problem Effacement genre, linked together by an extending relation, with elemental genres such as recounts and narratives further embedded to realise certain stages of the two sub-genres.

Hood (2010) analysed the generic structure of the Introduction sections of published research articles in three different disciplines, i.e., Education, Chemistry and Cultural Studies. Based on analysis of field shifts and shifts in thematic progression, she termed this types of texts as "research warrant macrogenres" (p. 39). She found that the Introduction sections in Education and Chemistry combined descriptive reports, while in Cultural Studies a range of story genres were embodied (e.g. exemplum, anecdote) within the global structure of the research warrants. Hood (2010) argued that while the generic composition of research warrants tended to be discipline-specific, they shared the same social purpose to establish the significance of the object of study, and contributed in similar ways to the construction of the research warrant.

Despite these abundant research endeavours in the SFL tradition, the bachelor's thesis remains an underexplored macrogenre. To date, no such scholarly efforts have been made to deconstruct its macrostructure.

2.2 Studies on bachelor's thesis writing

This section critically reviews of the scope of existing studies on bachelor's thesis and its writing, uncovering some of the strengths, controversies and perennial challenges that have signposted its supreme status in the overall tertiary education. Here, the definition and social functions of bachelor's thesis as a form of graduation assessment to obtain the corresponding degree is acknowledged and clarified, before tracing some of the related research that has explored undergraduate thesis writing in and across a wide range of disciplines, student populations, geographic contexts and foci of investigation. This section then draws a particular attention to bachelor's theses

written by students majoring in the discipline of English (as a foreign language) in Chinese universities, which leads to revelation of the silences that have veiled this field of academic inquiry up to this day.

2.2.1 Definition and social functions of bachelor's thesis

The term *bachelor's thesis* itself is a contestable concept, especially when the term *thesis*, or its equivalent *dissertation*, has been more associated in many cases, though not exclusively, with degree papers written by graduate students at the master's or doctoral levels rather than those at the bachelor's (e.g. James, 1984; Dudley-Evans, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1994; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Swales, 1990, 2004; Shaw, 1991; Belcher, 1994, Paltridge, 1997, 2003; Hart, 1998; Starfield, 2003; Aitchison, 2003; Turner, 2003, Allison & Race, 2004; Thompson, 2013). This not only colours thesis writing at the undergraduate level with a fine shade of inferiority, but also makes an all-embracing definition of the forms and functions of such texts almost elusive. This issue is further problematised by the fact that the practice of thesis writing, if ever required as a precondition to graduate with a bachelor's degree, varies in the way it is implemented, adapted and evaluated in different disciplines and educational systems across national or regional borders.

There is not yet a general consensus how texts of a similar nature or purpose can best be named. A search into the existing literature has generated a list of labels once used in a broad range of research contexts, such as *graduation thesis* (Wang, 2004), *final-year report* (Hyland, 2012), *undergraduate dissertation* (Lee & Chen, 2009; Nesi & Gardner, 2012), and *Bachelor's Thesis* (Yang, 2014). The present author, however, sees this purely as a terminological difference, which has nothing substantive to do with how this type of writing is accomplished or conceptualised. That is, that which is called

a *Bachelor's thesis*, by any other name listed above, would serve as substantially to qualify its writer for a bachelor's degree of Arts upon leaving the university. Therefore, an attempt will only be made here to provide a context-specific definition of bachelor's thesis and its most general functions in the discipline of English under the Chinese tertiary educational system.

Bachelor's thesis is a major assessment genre for English majors in Chinese universities. It is a product of a supervised research project spanning the entire final year, varying between 3000 and 5000 words in length. According to Tian & Duan (2006), there are two major types of research involved: *empirical/field research*, for one, which is the exploration of a particular issue or problem by way of first-hand investigation and collecting date via experiments, surveys, interviews, observations, or case studies, etc., and *library research,* for the other, which depends largely on making use of resources from the library, searching and reviewing critically the accessible literature, and voicing their own arguments through theoretical reasoning or philosophical speculation.

As mentioned in *Section 1.1.4*, bachelor's thesis is regarded in the present study as a practice-based genre, whose primary social functions include to enable students to apply theories or methods learnt in and/or outside their courses and to demonstrate an ability to conduct and present research to thesis examiners. As an assessment genre, to repeat what is stated in English Teaching Syllable for English Majors (ETSEM) in China, bachelor's thesis also serves as an important window to show not only the thesis writer's proficiency in basic language skills but also his/her ability to solve problems, think independently, and generate original ideas. It is, then, an extremely high-stake genre and by far the most substantial and sustained piece of

writing that students do in their undergraduate study.

2.2.2 Related research into thesis writing in and across undergraduate spaces

Compared with some higher-level academic genres, such as postgraduate theses or dissertations, published research articles, and textbooks, the undergraduate-level thesis, though an important academic genre in its own right, has been left relatively marginalised.

To our best knowledge, two major projects, i.e., Nesi & Gardner (2012) and Hyland (2012), have insightfully examined the undergraduate theses, both building on large corpora that embrace a broad range of disciplines.

Nesi & Gardner's four-year study has provided an overview of the genres of student writing in British higher education, which are represented in the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus. The corpus consists of roughly equal numbers of assignments from four levels of study (first-year undergraduate to taught master level) and four disciplinary groupings (Arts and Humanities, life Sciences, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences), which, put together, amounts to 2,761 assignments in total, all collected from four different universities in England. One of the central aims of their investigations is to develop a genre family classification system that describes and distinguishes different types of tertiary-level writing tasks. This classification system draws on the works of Sydney School (the SFL-based genre approach), and results in the identification of thirteen genre families grouped under five broad social functions of university education that they are supposedly responding to, as briefly outlined in *Table 2.8* below. Within the five broad categories, each genre family has its own social purpose, typical unfolding stages, critical linguistic features and genre networks it forms with other professional/academic genres.

Table 2.8 Thirteen genre families in BAWE corpus grouped by social functions (adapted

from Nesi & Gardner, 2012, p. 36)

Social functions	Genre families
1. demonstrating knowledge and understanding	Explanation; Exercise
2. developing powers of independent reasoning	Critique; Essay
3. building research skills	Literature Survey; Methodology Recount; **Research Report**
4. preparing for professional practice	Case Study; Design Specification; Problem Question; Proposal
5. writing for oneself and others	Narrative Recount; Empathy Writing

It is worth-noting that Nesi & Gardner's genre families in *Table 2.8* are apparently different from those in the SFL genre classifications (For detailed description of the canonical genre families in the SFL tradition, see *Section 2.1.2* above). The rationale for this adaption, as they have explained, is on the one hand that they aim to develop a classification of genre families which is grounded in the BAWE corpus, rather than imposing a predetermined classification developed for other contexts, and that they are also influenced by research on academic genres in the ESP tradition (e.g. Swales, 1990, 2004) and in the field of academic literacies (e.g. Lee & Street, 2000) on the other.

In the BAWE corpus, a limited number of longer texts which mostly come from the Level 3 research projects and represent the culmination of undergraduate study (thus considered as substantially equivalent to what we refer to as bachelor's theses in the present study), are grouped into a genre family labelled as Research Reports responding to the broad social function of developing research skills (indicated in **bold** font in *Table 2.8*), whose function is, more specifically, as Nesi & Gardner (2012) contends, "to report on research conducted independently by students, individually or in teams, and to demonstrate familiarity with and expertise in the research methods of

the discipline." (p.137) By way of capturing the subtleties of disciplinary differences, they further divide Research Reports included in the BAWE corpus into two distinct types: the first type has a complex, topic-based macrostructure, which are found primarily in literature-based research presented as dissertations and long essays; the second type has a complex, genre-based macrostructure, with headings that point to the IMRD part-genres, which are presented as project reports and experiment reports that draw on first-hand information from empirically conducted research (see also Gardner & Holmes, 2009). This classification system of Research Reports is illustrated in *Figure 2.9*. Here, note passingly that the two distinct types of Research Reports correspond somewhat with the traditional division between empirical research and library research as briefly mentioned in *Section 2.2.1* above.
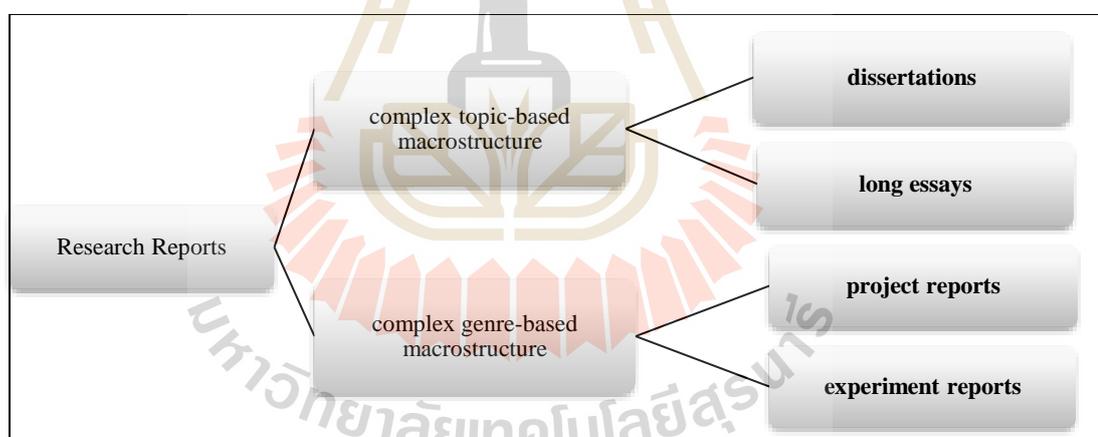
Figure 2.9 Classification system of Research Reports in the BAWE corpus

This corpus-assisted research project by Nesi & Gardner (2012) is undeniably unprecedented, extending the scope of SFL-based genre research beyond school discourses into tertiary education. As far as the Research Report genre family is concerned, more specifically, the most important insight from this study is that the classification system, as shown in *Figure 2.9* above, has remarkably embraced the

subtleties of variations, i.e., similarities or differences, within the genre family across the diverse disciplinary contexts, most of which have been obscured and neglected in previous studies.

Although the contributions and strengths of Nesi & Gardner's (2012) study are undeniable, it falls short in some significant ways. Firstly, the boundaries between the members of Research Reports, i.e., dissertations *vs.* long essays, project reports *vs.* experiment reports, are not explicitly articulated. The criteria employed by Nesi & Gardner to distinguish members of the Research Report genre family are in some points narrow in scope and less than systematically developed. Secondly, in the BAWE corpus the numbers of Level 3 projects are quite small. This is, acknowledged by the two researchers (Nesi & Gardner, 2012), partly due to corpus design reasons and partly due to practical reasons like accessibility to target assignments. Thirdly, given the large scale of the BAWE corpus, i.e., covering four levels of study across four disciplinary groupings among four universities in England, it is no longer manageable for the researchers to provide detailed analysis of any individual genre or genre family they have categorised. To some extent, it is the realisation of this research niche that has inspired the present effort in seeking a finer description of bachelor's theses written in the English discipline. Lastly, there remains an uncertainty whether the frameworks developed from as extensive a collection of textual data as the BAWE corpus, encompassing nearly every disciplinary scenario in the British higher education, can be easily or usefully applied into any other "smaller", more concentrated research context.

Hyland's (2012) study, on the other hand, focuses on the ways in which Hong Kong undergraduate students project their *stance* and *voice* in their final-year reports/dissertations. Following other genre analysts, he understands *stance* as a

writer's rhetorically expressed attitudes and assessments to the propositions and *voice* as his or her authorised ways to address readers as a community member. Both notions, according to Hyland (2012), address the interpersonal aspect of language and are operationalised by drawing on his own interpersonal model of metadiscourse, within which *stance* and *voice* are realised by the deployment of six critical linguistic features, i.e., *questions*, *reader references*, *directives*, *hedges*, *boosters*, and *attitude markers*.

To illustrate, Hyland (2012) has examined the use of these features in a 630,000-word corpus of 64 project reports written by final-year Hong Kong undergraduate students from eight disciplinary fields. This learner corpus was referenced to a larger corpus of 1.3 million words composed of research articles written by "expert writers" from closely related disciplines, and both were searched for 320 key items of stance and voice as mentioned above. The corpus data, quantified by frequency findings, were then triangulated by a series of 45-minute *discourse-based* focus group interviews with 23 final-year student writers. Some interesting findings have emerged from this study. For one thing, it has shown that the stance and voice devices employed by these students suggest an awareness of the academic conventions as well as the impact of the institutional powers; that is, students are found to suppress their distinctive social and cultural identities to foreground disciplinary arguments and subject matter, taking "disciplinary validated" stances rather than personal ones. For another, it has also been found that the students' choices differ considerably from those of "expert writers" in the reference corpus in the expression of attitude markers and, in particular, the frequencies of reader references, hedges and boosters. This reveals, as Hyland (2012) contends, how writers project themselves in this genre and in this culture, and more significantly, how the wider culture and the immediate context both intrude

into the acts of writing.

Compared with Nesi & Gardner's (2012) project introduced earlier, Hyland's (2012) work is relatively smaller in scale, especially in regard to the corpus size and the scope of investigation. Underlining the social aspects of *voice* and *stance* in the final-year undergraduate reports, it concentrates almost exclusively on the micro-level linguistic features represented in and distributed throughout this genre, leaving the rhetorical/generic structure at the macro level entirely outside its central concern.

Besides the two significant research projects reviewed above, there has always been a serious concern with the quality of bachelor's thesis and its related writing practice by students majoring in English in the domestic Chinese academe. This continuous interest has stimulated a great number of studies seeking to uncover the rhetorical organisation or critical linguistic features of this high-stake genre, or to explore more effective measures to overcome the existing weaknesses and problems in the thesis writing administration. Some of these works get published internationally towards a broader audience, while a worthy number of academics see their works published locally to address a narrower but more relevant range of scholarship, both of which will be subject of review in the next section.

2.2.3 Previous studies on bachelor's theses written by Chinese undergraduate English majors

Over the past one or two decades, bachelor's thesis in the discipline of English has been investigated through a diversity of perspectives and methodologies. These investigations, in a broad outline, fall into two main strands, contextually oriented or textually oriented. The first strand concentrates on the institutional context of bachelor's thesis writing in this discipline, with special attention being paid to diagnosing the

problems and weaknesses that plague this community of practice in various respects, such as departmental administration, management, teacher-student supervision, assessment, students' motivation, as well as those involved in the writing processes (e.g., Sun, 2004; Wang, 2004; Wu, 2009; Zhu, 2013). Large-scale surveys are the main research methodology commonly adopted in this type of studies, and based on data collected from structured or open-ended questionnaires, they have proposed some strategies and relevant suggestions to improve the quality of bachelor's thesis and its effectiveness as culmination in the overall curriculum. The other strand of research, on the other hand, has been influenced by the new developments in the field of discourse/genre analysis and English for Academic Purposes, drawing on insights, in particular, from the corpus-assisted approaches. Central to this strand of research is the creation of a sizable corpus of the target genre. From there, certain aspects of the rhetorical features of bachelor's thesis have been discussed with textual evidences, for example, *reasoning patterns* involved in knowledge making (Xu et al., 2016), *moves* and *steps* in Abstract (Lu, 2007), and the use of linguistic devices to realise interpersonal meanings (Feng & Zhou, 2007; Pan, 2007; Wu, 2010; Yao, 2010).

Xu et al. (2016) examined the reasoning patterns of 75 highly rated undergraduate theses in translation studies at a Chinese university. Their study adopted an intercultural rhetoric framework which views English writing as a local practice in which students appropriate resources from national, professional-academic, and instructional cultures, as opposed to the deficit model which essentially measures EFL learners' writing against the language standards in those Anglo-American nations. This study revealed that the translation students navigated and appropriated the rhetorical concepts and values in their writing community, such as the problem–solution pattern

encouraged in the rubrics, as well as the textbook suggestions for using deduction (thesis–elaboration). Meanwhile, integrating local and translocal rhetorical concepts and values, the thesis writers developed reasoning patterns that were both appreciated by their supervisors and conducive to knowledge making grounded in local and disciplinary concerns. This study further demonstrated that academic writing handbooks based solely on native speaker writing practices were insufficient, especially in academic disciplines where students are often multilingual, thus pointing to the importance of developing local teaching materials that reflect local values and resources and of resisting commercially published textbooks from Anglo-American nations.

In stark contrast, another three studies (Feng & Zhou, 2007; Pan, 2007; Wu, 2010) have drawn on a deficit model and examined some micro-level rhetorical features, like hedges and subject in reporting clauses in this case, in a corpus of bachelor's theses (or only a part-genre) written by Chinese English-major students in comparison with a reference corpus composed of similar academic texts written by native speakers. More specifically, Feng & Zhou (2007) compared the abstracts of 25 Chinese English majors' bachelor's theses and those of 25 research articles published on international journals, while Pan (2007) compared the conclusion/discussion sections of 20 bachelor's theses written by English majors from three universities in Beijing and 10 by Psychology majors in Hofstra University, USA. Both studies revealed a marked difference in the two groups' respective ways of using hedges, arriving at a conclusion that Chinese English majors examined were probably not fully aware of the pragmatic functions of hedges and were less competent in applying them appropriately in academic writing. Wu (2010), on the other hand, analysed the subjects of reporting clauses in 40 bachelor's theses written by English major students in one Chinese university, covering research

areas such as Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, Business English (international trade, business communication, etc.), British and American Literature, and British and American Culture, in comparison with a reference corpus of 23 bachelor's theses written by students in Haverford College, USA., from similar or related disciplines, such as Linguistics, Economics, Literary Studies and Cultural Studies, etc. The results suggested that the Chinese thesis writers tended to use more "*human subjects*" and fewer "*research-related nouns*" in reporting clauses than their American counterparts, which rendered their theses less objective in style, and their claims less persuasive to the readers.

With theories of genre analysis as a point of departure, Yao (2010) examined 80 abstracts of bachelor's theses written by English major students, randomly collected from two universities in Shanghai, China, spanning from the year of 2006 to 2009. The corpus was analysed from both macro and micro perspectives: at the macro level, the researcher analysed the rhetorical patterns of the 80 abstracts in terms of their *moves* and *steps*, based on Swalesian IMRD model of abstracts in published research articles; at the micro level, however, the researcher veered into the Sydney School camp of genre theories, and drawing upon the Appraisal System developed by Marin & White, as well as the results from the prior move analysis, he examined the distribution of *engagement markers* across the four *moves* included in the 80 abstracts. The overall findings from this study suggested that Chinese thesis writers were influenced not only by the rhetorical structures of Chinese academic papers when organising the English theses but also by the traditional Chinese cultural values when they chose different linguistic devices, engagement markers in this case, for various communicative purposes. Interestingly, Yao's (2010) study on bachelor's thesis has presented an initial, successful

attempt to marry the strengths of both ESP and SFL traditions to genre studies, indicating the way that different approaches to genre can be synthesised, both theoretically and methodologically.

Reviewing studies above on bachelor's thesis, a straightforward observation is that bachelor's thesis as the culminating genre in undergraduate education has been approached by academics working in related fields via different routes through different theoretical lenses in different institutional or disciplinary contexts. Though work on this genre has been impressively extensive in its own right, it can hardly ever be exhaustive. As remarked earlier in *Section 1.3*, its rhetorical pattern as a macrogenre, in the SFL sense of the word, remains yet to be unveiled up until now. Still less is known about how students are prepared to move readily from instruction-based writing courses to thesis writing. For these reasons, questions of what elemental genres are appropriated (and how) to develop this macrogenre and to what extent they connect with the genres that the students are exposed to in the earlier instructional settings will be taken up as central concerns in the subsequent chapters. In the next section, the developments in L2 writing pedagogy and related work on instruction-based genres will be reviewed.

2.3 L2 writing pedagogy and instruction-based genres

2.3.1 A historical overview of L2 writing pedagogy

In the earlier years of second language studies, writing was neglected partly due to the predominance of audiolingual approach in ESL/EFL classrooms in the mid-twentieth century, and partly due to the applied linguists' strong commitment to the application of scientific descriptive linguistics - with an almost exclusive emphasis on the primacy of spoken language (e.g., Passy, 1929; Sweet, 1964; Allen, 1973; as cited in

Matsuda, 2003). Writing, in that era, was defined merely an orthographic representation of speech. With an increasing number of ESL students in higher education, however, many researchers see the 1960s as the beginning of second language (L2) writing as a discipline (e.g., Silva, 1990; Raimes, 1991; Leki, 1992; Matsuda, 2003). By the mid-1960s, instruction in L2 writing had gradually become a serious concern in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL), and a number of pedagogical approaches were proposed and implemented, each representing a different epistemological assumption of the nature of L2 writing. Matsuda (2003) provided a historical account of the developments in the field of L2 writing by examining how this academic specialty has been shaped by the interdisciplinary relationship between composition studies and second language studies, and in a more recent review, Atkinson (2018) has similarly teased out the major theoretical umbrellas that have framed L2 writing and its evolution. The goal in this section is to present a brief review of major pedagogical approaches that have emerged and influenced the field during this history, since, as Matsuda (2003) argued, understanding the historical context of the field is important both for researchers and teachers to enhance their theoretical and pedagogical practices. Equally important, of course, is for the front-line L2 writing teachers to implement their own personal pedagogy thoughtfully and responsibly.

2.3.1.1 Basic skills approach

The most prominent approach in the early establishment of L2 writing instruction is the basic skills approach, which demonstrated a view of writing as something merely technical to be acquired, as a body of universally applicable writing skills compartmented into lock-step components, from letter formation, to letter-sound relationships, to vocabulary, to sentence grammar, to paragraph organisation.

The earliest practices that undergirded the skills-based approach to L2 writing instruction were the use of controlled/guided composition. Informed by behavioural, habit-formation theory of learning, controlled composition consisted of combining and substituting exercises (identifiable with what were traditionally known as "pattern drills") that were designed to facilitate the learning of sentence patterns by providing students with "no freedom to make mistakes" (Pincas, 1982, p. 91). Guided composition, on the other hand, provided less rigid structural guidance. Students were given assistance such as "a model to follow, a plan or outline to expand from, partly-written version with indications of how to complete it, or pictures that show a new subject to write about in the same way as something that has been read" (Pincas, 1982, p. 102). The limitations of controlled or guided composition soon became clear, since both focused almost exclusively on sentence-level grammar exercises that did not provide adequate preparation for the students to produce original free composition.

Robert B. Kaplan, a pioneering figure in rhetoric and L2 writing studies, argued that the problem stemmed from the transfer of L1 structures beyond the sentence level. Consequently, concern with L2 writing issues began to shift gradually from producing grammatically correct sentences to achieving "logical organisation" at the level of paragraph as judged by native English-speaking readers. Drawing on the principles of contrastive analysis and Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Kaplan suggested that paragraph structures, like sentence structures, were language- and culture- specific, a founding principle of contrastive rhetoric that later evolved into a field of research of its own (Kaplan, 1966). The blooming of interest in "rhetoric", narrowly conceived as the organizational structure, prompted researchers working in discourse analysis and text linguistics to examine structures of written discourse in various languages and their

possible influences on L2 texts. Yet the implications of contrastive rhetoric research in the context of L2 writing instruction remained a point of contention for many years (Leki, 1991; Matsuda, 1997; Kubota, 1998). In fairly recent years, contrastive rhetoric has come under even greater attack that has greatly shaken its very foundation, most notably from proponents of what has been flagged as the *intercultural rhetoric framework* (Canagarajah, 2006a; Connor, 2008, 2011; Kubota, 2010; Belcher & Nelson, 2013). In this framework, English is viewed not as not a static, monolithic entity, but an evolving, living language with many *varieties* (Canagarajah, 2006b; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010; You, 2008, 2010, 2011). Thus, the predominance of and conformity to the *native-speaker norms* was essentially called into question, and there emerged a serious concern to appreciate the unique rhetoric adroitness of multilingual writers.

The traditionalist basic skills approach to teaching L2 writing focused mostly on analysis of linguistic structures from the level of orthography and sentence, to the level of paragraph, and the students were facilitated basically by performing decontextualised writing exercises. One obvious problem with this approach was that words, sentences, and even paragraphs, are practiced in such a way that the social context as well as the assumptions inherent in the meanings of the texts can be considered immaterial to the learning of L2 writing. For example, students might parse a sentence into its grammatical components and create a new sentence following the same pattern, but the content or meaning of the sentence, which contains implicit or explicit personal, social, and cultural values, is only secondary to its formal correctness, or left largely arbitrary to the instructional purpose (Luke & Freebody, 1997). A further criticism against this approach was concerned with to what extent the students could apply these basic skills and grammatical rules in their real- world writing practices, and

there was empirical evidence suggesting that some knowledge, once mechanically taught and exercised, remained inert and never used (Mills, 2005).

2.3.1.2 Process/Expressive approach

Well into the 1970s and 1980s, the interest in composition studies began to shift from the properties of texts themselves to the process of writing, with researchers from various philosophical and methodological orientations paying closer attention to the *production*, than to the *products*, of written discourse (e.g., Flower & Hayes, 1981). During 1970s and 1980s in Australia, for instance, the popularisation of this process-oriented approach in primary and secondary schools had occurred through the writings of Walshe (1982, 1983), Graves (1983), Turbill (1982, 1983) and Butler & Turbill (1984). Teachers of literacy education were encouraged to give primacy to the *expressive* as the matrix for the development of writing, which was "seized upon in Australia as a blueprint" (*Thou shalt teach "expressive" writing*) (Davis, 1986, p. 235). (For overviews of literacy pedagogy in Australia and critique of process writing, see Richardson, 1991.)

One of earliest advocates to have introduced the notion of process into L2 writing studies was Vivian Zamel, who contended that it is important to investigate to what extent the findings from process studies in L1 composition apply to L2 writers (Zamel, 1976, 1982, 1983). Analysing "think-aloud" protocol data collected from six "advanced" L2 (learning English in an English-speaking environment) students while completing "a course-related writing task", she argued that L2 writers are similar to L1 writers, and can benefit from instructions emphasising the process of composing (for more detailed review of L2 writing process research, see Sivia, 1993; Sasaki, 2000).

Rather than the traditionalist view of writing as a reproduction of previously learnt syntactical or paragraph structures, the process-based approach views writing as a process of developing organisation as well as meaning. Planning strategies, multiple drafts, conferencing and formal feedback - both by the teachers and by peers - became important parts of instructions in many L2 writing classroom (Matsuda, 2003).

Atkinson (2018) summarised the most influential core values of process approach as: (1) Writing is the discovery of meaning; (2) Writing is a systematic process which can be divided into steps or stages-for example, prewriting, drafting, feedback, revising, and editing, making it highly teachable; and (3) The development of ideas/content precedes the achievement of correct form (p.2). Although some L2 writing teachers enthusiastically welcomed the process/expressive approach, characterising its arrival as a paradigm shift (e.g., Raimes, 1985, 1987; Cumming, 1989), criticisms against its uncritical acceptance were also forthright and unbending. Martin (1985), in particular, had often described this pedagogy as being based on nothing more than "folk-psychology". With its preoccupation with students' expressiveness on topics selected on their own, reluctance to intervene explicitly and constructively during instruction, and its almost absolute disregard of what was reckoned as effective "end products", as Martin (1985) succinctly remarked, this pedagogy was dangerously promoting a situation in which only the brightest students could possible learn what was needed while the less articulate or less intellectual ones were doomed to fail.

Taking up Martin's point in a challenging paper, Gilbert (1990) has also raised some significant issues with regard to the possible powerlessness inflicted on students and teachers from process-oriented classrooms. She was concerned that in emphasising the personal expressiveness of student writers (just like real freelance

writers), teachers and students were being misled into seeing writing as something that fell into full ownership of the student and could not be tampered with by the teacher. In the end, the teacher was left with very little to say about the child's written products, and precious less she/he could do to improve the poor ones. Arguing for a socially critical understanding of language, particularly written language, Gilbert (1990) suggested that teachers and students should be made aware that learning to write involves recognising how writing has "traditionally, generically, conventionally, and playfully functioned" (p. 67) (for more critical responses towards process pedagogy to L2 writing, see Horowitz, 1986; Susser, 1994).

Indeed, providing students with the "freedom" to write may encourage fluency, but for inexperienced student writers, especially those in ESL/EFL contexts who have only limited access or exposure to the written discourse, it would be less beneficial and less prudent to throw them abruptly into the "production process" without offering explicit guidance on what the "end products" should look like. Just as a mirror had been held up to the 'traditionalist' basic skills approach in order to focus more sharply on the "process/expressive" pedagogy; so in turn, had the critiques the concerned scholars offered of process writing severely wounded the credibility of this pedagogy, and in some way, hastened the advent and development of "genre-based approach" to L2 writing instruction.

2.3.1.3 Genre-based approach

It must be said at the outset, as already mentioned more than once in previous sections, that the use of the term "genre" itself has aroused a diversity of conceptualisations that evolved into three contending schools, each of which has productively motivated research and practice in second language writing studies as well

as in writing studies more broadly, with their distinctive - yet often overlapping - pedagogical imperatives and theoretical orientations. A shared concern within all the three genre schools is an understanding of the various contexts of language use and instructions of writing in correspondence to such specific contexts.

In SFL, genre-based pedagogy involves a typology of broad rhetorical patterns such as ***narratives***, ***explanations***, ***recounts***, and ***expositions***, etc., which are referred to as elemental genres that can be combined to form more complex macrogenres in academic and professional settings (for more elaborate review of SFL-based genre theories, see *Section 2.1*, this chapter). Students are required to be able to understand and write the key genres valued in various subject areas or disciplines – specifically, their primary social purposes, the ways they are staged, and their significant language features. By making explicit the typical stages and features of these valued genres, teachers can provide students with extensive options for writing so that they can produce, ideally, well-formed texts appropriate to intended modes and readers. It also helps teachers to identify the poorly written ones, which are judged as incoherent or less than effective, and to suggest straightforward remedies (Hyland, 2007).

In addition to providing students and teachers with delicate descriptions of key valued genres, SFL genre-based writing pedagogy employs the ideas of Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978) and the American educational psychologist Bruner (1990) in attaching considerable importance to *scaffolding*, or teacher-supported learning. In SFL, scaffolding has been elaborated into a genre-based teaching/learning cycle, one representation of which is shown in *Figure 2.10*, that originally comes from Rothery and Stenlin (1994) and later gets reinforced in works such as Martin & Rose (2005, 2007).
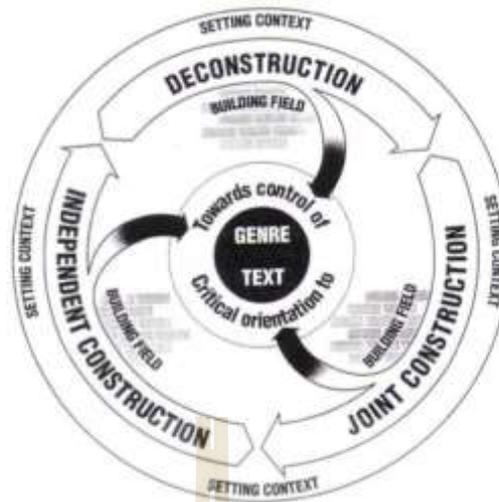
Figure 2.10 SFL genre-based pedagogy cycle (Martin & Rose, 2005, 2007)

This cycle features three main stages (Martin & Rose, 2005, p. 251):

• Deconstruction – the modelling of the genre, including as far as possible discussion of its context, schematic structure and linguistic features, establishing the genre as the goal of the cycle as a whole;

• Joint Construction – scribing another example of the genre based with suggestions from the students;

• Independent Construction – handing over the responsibility to students for writing a further text in the genre on their own.

As the model in *Figure 2.10* indicates, building field and setting context are crucial to all three stages of the pedagogy throughout. By building the field, students get familiar with the "aboutness" the text, and by setting the context, students understand the social purpose of the genre; and the ultimate goal of the cycle is, in general, for students to take control of the genre, both in terms of being able to write it and also reflect critically on its role (Macken-Horarik, 1998; Martin & Rose, 2007).

The introduction of SFL-oriented genre pedagogy is also paralleled

by developments in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (see Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (see Jordan, 1997), a major emphasis impelled by a growing number of international ESL graduate students in English-dominant countries. ESP differs significantly from SFL in the way that it conceptualises genres and draws from more eclectic theoretical foundations (e.g. Swales, 1990, 2004). ESP teachers are concerned with the communicative needs of particular academic and professional groups and so genres are seen as the purposive actions routinely used by community members to achieve a particular purpose. This pedagogy involves analysing a representative sample of texts to identify the series of move and steps, which make up the genre, thus helping students manipulate the organizational and stylistic features of these texts so that they can communicate and participate effectively in their disciplines and professions.

Genre-based approach promises real benefits for learners as they offer explicit and systematic explanations of how target texts are structured and why they are written in the ways they are. This explicitness grants all students an equal access to linguistic resources of meaning and learning. With that being said, it does not mean that genre-based pedagogy has been accepted without any criticism or concern in respect of its application in L2 writing classrooms. For example, some L2 writing researchers are concerned that the terminology of SFL-based work may daunt L2 writing teachers unfamiliar with the Hallidayan grammar (e.g., Tardy, 2011); process adherents may attack genre instruction as inhibiting writers' *self expression* and straightjackets creativity through conformity and *prescriptivism* (e.g., Dixon, 1987). Genre proponents, however, have defended themselves against the latter charge by contending that there is nothing inherently prescriptive in a genre approach. The dangers of a static,

decontextualised pedagogy are real only if teachers fail to acknowledge variation and apply what Freedman (1994) calls "a recipe theory of genre". The fact is, to be sure, that writing is constrained within generic conventions, but these constraints do not dictate. To the contrary, the more students are aware of the generic conventions, the less likely they are to be confused by notions of creativity, imagination and the mystique of idiosyncrasy, and the more possibilities there are for play and creation by conscious manipulation of language choices (e.g., Richardson, 1991; Hyland, 2007). In other words, an important part of an individual's genre knowledge is thus knowing when and how to follow the conventions, on the one hand, and when and how to be creative, on the other.

2.3.2 Previous studies on instruction-based genres by Chinese undergraduate English majors

With a pedagogical focus continued from the last section, the present section sets out to review major works on the instruction-based writing of Chinese undergraduate English Majors. How this group of learners develop their fluency in the written discourse through intense classroom-medium instructions has been a focal point of inquiry for a number of researchers in the field of L2 writing. Both the related pedagogical intervention as well as the students' written products have been examined from a kaleidoscope of research dimensions, most notably so in Mainland China, from the past two decades.

The most fruitful strand of research, amongst the others, looks at the textual properties of student writing within instructional settings. Drawing on Halliday's theme-rheme theory, for instance, Wang (2010) analysed three argumentative essays, representing lower-, intermediate-, and higher-level of grading, respectively, taken from

Test for English Majors – Band 4 (TEM-4) in the year of 2006 (an important proficiency examination that all English majors in China are obliged to take in the second year of their study), in terms of the types of themes being employed and patterns of thematic progression, and how these two aspects were correlated with coherence and overall quality of the students' writing. However, this study falls short in its data size - only three examination-driven essays, which was apparently too small; thus, the generalisability of the conclusions was not unquestionable. Ma (2009) analysed the characteristics of lexical bundles in Chinese English majors' timed writing. The researcher first extracted a list of 191 high-frequency three-word lexical bundles from a "native-speaker" (NS) corpus which consisted of 354 articles published in the United States amounting to more than 750,000 words, and then with references to the NS corpus, she investigated the presence of the lexical bundles in the target list in a learner corpus of 280,000 words, composed of 801 timed essays written in examination situations throughout five semesters by 163 English majors in a Chinese university. On the basis of student writers' think-aloud protocols and stimulated recalls, Xu (2010) analysed the retrieving patterns of lexical bundles in the timed writing processes of six English majors. Results showed that when students retrieved fixed expressions and those with substitute components, three major patterns emerged: *automatic retrieval*, *"tip-of-the-tongue" phenomenon* and *piecemeal construction*. A fairly recent project was reported by Liardét (2018) that investigated Chinese EFL learners' deployment of interpersonal grammatical metaphors, a construct mapped within SFL(Halliday, 1985; e.g., I BELIEVE, IT IS EVIDENT, etc.), in academic texts written in instructional settings. The data analysed in this study were drawn from the Chinese Longitudinal Learner Corpus, a specialised corpus of 130 students' argumentative essays collected

across two years of university study in an English language degree, totalling up to 520 essays (see also Liardét, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). In short, three key findings emerged from the data: first, the Chinese EFL learners' showed a noticeable preference (78%) for subjective interpersonal metaphors; second, the students often tended to hedge their evaluations with multiple co-occurring subjective metaphors; and third, the Chinese EFL learners' deployment of interpersonal grammatical metaphors decreased across the four semesters.

It must be noted, however, that the text samples explored in this strand of research have been almost exclusively collected from those written in examination situations, in particular the TEM-4 or stimulated situations designed to closely replicate the task prompt required on this national test (a critical test for English majors in the second year of their study), while the writing practices based on real-world classroom instructions tend to be largely neglected. This is, quite understandably, a confinement partially caused by the exam-driven nature of English education in China.

Not only have the students' textual products been explored with varying degrees of delicacy, research attention has also been paid to the composing processes by this group of students in the instructional settings. Qi (2004) focused on the impact of teacher feedback and peer feedback on the students' revision process in writing argumentative genres, based data collected from 33 fourth-year students in a Chinese university in Jiangsu Province. Three findings were drawn from the data analysis: teacher feedback was more useful than peer feedback in helping the students revise their texts; students valued and paid much more attention to teacher feedback; and the lower-, intermediate-, and higher-level students adopted different approaches and displayed unique characteristics in the process of revision. More recently, Liu (2015)

conducted an experimental study in a university in Beijing, with 52 English majors being tracked diachronically through two semesters' writing instructions. The results from pre-test and post-test writing tasks indicated, almost opposite to Qi's (2004) earlier conclusions, that the combination of peer feedback and teacher feedback was more effective than the sole teacher feedback in improving the students' writing proficiency, while data from follow-up questionnaires and interviews further suggested probable reasons to account for the improvement - that is, peer feedback enabled the students to play multiple roles in writing, strengthened their motivation, and enhanced their writing autonomy and sense of class identity. That the two studies differed from one another in respect of the aspects of writing process they focused on, the level of students participating in the experiments, as well as genres intended in the task prompts, could be held partially accountable for the disparate findings generated; there is, nevertheless, less than a consensus as regards to the question of which is, or should be, more privileged, teacher or peer feedback, in L2 writing instructions.

As evidenced from the works reviewed in this section, varieties of relevant issues concerning instruction-based writing of Chinese tertiary English majors have been explored through a kaleidoscope of lenses drawing on rhetoric, linguistic frameworks, or diverse genre analysis traditions. Despite that, still needed is a more systematic, intact description of the instruction-based genres experienced by this group of students - the trajectory of genres that marks their real-world journey in acquiring L2 English literacy. In addition, although for most of the time the principal object of academic writing research has been, and continues to be, the written texts, there has also been an increasingly recognised need to understand the context of the "small culture" in which the writing (or the teaching/learning of it) is situated, by looking into

the complexities and subtleties that characterise the writers' lived experiences and native point of views. This dual goal can be pursued by integrating the strengths of such a powerful theoretical lens as genre analysis in SFL with more delicate text-external (contextual) explorations into the "small culture" under question.

2.4 Research on transfer in genre learning and L2 writing

One issue that underlies, though often just implicitly or contentiously, many of the discussions relative to L2 writing instruction, compositional studies, EAP instruction, or teaching and learning of genre, is that of transfer (e.g., Leki, 2003; Wardle, 2007, 2009; Fishman & Reiff, 2008, 2011; Brent, 2012; James, 2014). There is a flurry of theoretical conversations and empirical studies among writing researchers that inquire into the ways that "learning in one context or with one set of materials impacts on performance in another context or with another set of materials" (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p.6452). Not surprisingly, teaching for transfer has thus become one of the fundamental goals of writing instructions in a variety of forms and contexts (Smit, 2004).

In this section, an effort will first be made to define transfer, reviewing some established conceptualisations on this construct. Then, the theory of adaptive transfer proposed by DePalma & Ringer (2011, 2014) will be explicated, to further illuminate how it can be usefully applied in the present investigation when examining the way that Chinese English majors traverse the two wring contexts. Finally, several key studies will be reviewed to demonstrate how the long-lasting concern with transfer has been approached empirically in the fields of genre teaching/learning and L2/EAP writing instructions.

2.5.1 Defining transfer

The concept of transfer has a long and deep history in psychology - educational psychology in particular. As Beach (1999, p.101) expounds, "transfer involves the movement of a person, a transaction, or an object from one place and time to another in our daily lives. As a construct in educational psychology, it refers to the appearance of a person carrying the product of learning from one task, problem, situation, or institution to another.

Perkins & Salomon (1992) distinguished two types of transfer: *near transfer* that occurs between very similar contexts, and *far transfer* that occurs between contexts that, on appearance, seem remote and alien to one another; and empirical findings indicated that *near transfer* seemed to have much better prospects than *far transfer* (e.g., Brooks & Dansereau, 1987; Clark & Voogel, 1985; Detterman, 1993; McKeachie, 1987).

In accordance with the two types of transfer mentioned above, Perkins & Salomon (1988, 1992) synthesised findings concerned with transfer by recognising two distinct but related mechanisms to explain how transfer occurs - *low-road transfer* versus *high-road transfer* (see also Fishman & Reiff, 2008, 2011; James, 2009). Transfer occurring on the *low road* involves "the automatic triggering of well-practiced routines" (Perkins & Salomon, 1988, p. 25) when stimulus conditions in the transfer context are sufficiently similar to those in a prior context of learning, a relatively *reflexive* process that figures most often in *near transfer*, while transfer on the *high road*, in contrast, depends on "mindful abstraction from the context of learning or application and a deliberate search for connections" (Perkins & Salomon, 1992, p. 6459), a relatively *reflective* act that can more easily accomplish *far transfer*.

In quite a different vein, Wardle (2007) reviewed three conceptions of transfer that focus on *tasks*, *individuals*, and *contexts*, respectively, basically drawing on the insights produced by Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström (2003). *Task-oriented* conceptions emphasise the transition of some basic mental functions or general principles previously learned in one task to solve problems in a new task. In general terms, the focus is on the tasks being performed. *Individual-oriented* conceptions focus on the learner's disposition to "seek out and create situations similar to those initially experienced", and the goal of schooling, according to this view, is to teach students "learned intelligent behaviour" (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003). Both *task-* and *individual-focused* views, however, are criticised by many researchers for being cognitively oriented and divorced from the social world. As a corrective, Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström (2003) further described three *context-oriented* conceptions of transfer - *situated*, *sociocultural*, and *activity-based*. In the situated view, the basis of transfer is understood as the "patterns of participatory processes across situations" (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003), which are then supported by affordances directly perceivable by the individuals. In the sociocultural view, on the other hand, transfer (or glossed as *generalisation* by theorists taking this view) is located within the interactions between people involved in the construction of tasks and always in relationship to various forms of social organisations (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003). Similar to *sociocultural* perspectives, *activity-based* view of transfer focuses explicitly on interactions between individuals and contexts, but expands the basis of transfer from the actions of individuals to the systematic activity of collective organizations (activity systems). Here, transfer is understood as "expansive learning", in which questioning existing practices plays a key role (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003).

These various conceptions of transfer, however, entail that prior to the outset of any study researchers must delimit what lens they choose to examine the issue through. However, in the field of L2 writing or compositional studies, less attention has been paid to define the term specifically. Given the fact that writing in nature is varied and context-sensitive, coupled with the blooming interest among writing researchers in the impact of context, community, and sociocultural forces, it would be remiss to focus solely on task or individual aspects of transfer without regard to situation or sociocultural context.

2.5.2 Theory of Adaptive Transfer

Based on a review of the existing scholarship on the notion of transfer in L2 writing and composition studies (e.g., McCarthy, 1987; Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990; Russel, 1995; Carroll, 2002; Kang, 2005; Bergmann & Zepernick, 2007; Nelms & Dively, 2007; Leki, 2007; James, 2009), DePalma & Ringer (2011) contended that these discussions of transfer constrained the concept itself to the *reuse* of a writing skill learned in one setting in a separate context, *intact* and *in its original form* - that is to say, viewing it in terms of *the consistent application* or *replication* of prior knowledge and experience. Transfer in this view, DePalma & Ringer (2011) further argued, was conceptualised too narrowly to account for the ways that writing skills and knowledge learned in one context are adapted and reshaped in unfamiliar situations. It is particularly so when it is acknowledged that there are hardly any two writing situations in this world that are exactly the same/consistent. As such, as DePalma & Ringer (2011) pointed out, viewing transfer as *use* or *reuse* seems to reflect what Matsuda (1997) calls a "static theory of L2 writing" where the writer is viewed as a kind of "writing machine" who has been programmed by pre-set writing skills or knowledge to produce certain

kinds of texts, ignoring his/her agency as writers to respond elastically to the dynamics of writing context. This narrowness in conceptulisation, the present writer conceives, seems to be associated with the *task-* and *individual-oriented* view of transfer as outlined earlier, as well as the *near transfer* in Perkins & Salomon (1992)'s distinctions.

In response to such a perceived inadequacy, DePalma & Ringer (2011) contended that research on transfer in L2 writing and composition would benefit from an expanded reconceptualisation of transfer -"a broader and more flexible framework for understanding how students both *carry forward* and *reshape* writing knowledge and experience learned in prior contexts to fit new ones" (p. 140). Towards this end, assimilating the significant theoretical and methodological advancements made by transfer researchers in the fields of education and educational psychology into their own, they proposed a new framework termed as *adaptive transfer.*

Specifically, *adaptive transfer* in this framework is defined as "the conscious or intuitive process of applying or reshaping learned writing knowledge in order to help students negotiate new and potentially unfamiliar writing situations" (p. 135). Drawing on the shared insights in the fields of L2 writing and compositional studies, DePalma & Ringer (2011) expounded six characteristics of adaptive transfer, which can be synoptically presented as follows:

1) **Dynamic**, as it allows spaces for change and fluidity of writing skills as responding to different contexts (Matsuda, 1997; Parks, 2001; Lobato, 2003);

2) **Idiosyncratic**, unique to individuals and inflected by a range of factors, including language repertoire, race, class, gender, educational history, social setting, genre knowledge, and so forth (Lobato, 2003);

3) ***Cross-contextual***, as it depends on students perceiving resemblances between the familiar writing context and the unfamiliar context where the prior writing knowledge is required (Pierce, Duncan, Gholson, Ray, & Kamhi, 1993, p. 67; Lobato, 2003);

4) ***Rhetorical***, as it occurs when students understand the confluence of context, audience, and purpose in an appropriate text, making room for the possibility of a "strategic and creative choice by the author to attain his or her rhetorical objectives" (Canagarajah, 2006b, p. 591);

5) ***Multilingual***, as it acknowledges languages and language varieties as fluid and in process, and recognising the agency of writers to draw from among a variety of discourses and languages in order to influence contexts of writing (Matsuda, 2002; Canagarajah, 2006a; Lu, 2006; Horner & Lu, 2007);

6) ***Transformative***, as it recognises that writers both shape and are shaped by rhetorical practices, and as such, newcomers working with a genre may act as "brokers" to introduce new ways of seeing, doing, or knowing (Wenger, 1998; Beech, 1999).

Given these characteristics, DePalma & Ringer (2011) perceive that adaptive transfer presupposes what Matsuda's (1997) proposed as a dynamic model of writing in which (student) writers are conceived of as "actors" (Lobato, 2003) - that is, as potential contributors possessive of unique language resources and abilities to an ever-changing rhetorical context rather than as passive recipients of the knowledge and conventions of a discourse of power (DePalma & Ringer, 2011).

As such, *reshaping* is crucial to an understanding of this adaptive

conceptualisation of transfer. Several empirical studies have provided useful examples of the kinds of *reshaping* that the framework of adaptive transfer allows writing specialists to identify (e.g., Parks, 2001; Brend, 2012). Based on what these empirical examples were able to illustrate, DePalma & Ringer (2011) further argued that designing multi-layered methodologies that embody textual analysis, rhetorical analysis, or genre analysis with interviews and observations, is important for researchers to account for the ways that learners adaptively transfer prior learning to new contexts (DePalma & Ringer, 2011). In this sense, the present study seems to fit in, epistemologically and methodologically, the same line of inquiry.

In the next section, an attempt will be made to discuss some of these key empirical studies that examined the issue of transfer that relates to L2 writing and genre learning, either from the vantage point of adaptive transfer, or less strictly, from a more narrowly conceived sense of the word.

2.5.3 Previous studies on transfer in genre learning and L2 writing

The goals of many writing instructions should be "transcendent" (Leki & Carson, 1997). That is, the usual purpose is to enable students to write better not just for writing classes but also later for more advanced, academic or professional purposes. However, the highly situated nature of academic writing, revealed particularly well through the social-constructivist views of writing, acts in some ways as a barrier to the transfer of knowledge, strategies, and resources from one task to the next, one context to the other. Importantly, many empirical studies have portrayed, oftentimes with vivid descriptions, how such a transfer occurred (or not).

One site that is of particular interest in writing-related transfer is the First-Year-Composition (also referred to as FYC), the ubiquitous general writing skills

instruction course in the USA, although its targets are almost exclusively L1 writers. The aim of this required writing course in the first year of university study is largely assumed to be to "carry out the task of teaching students to write for what comes next" (Wardle, 2009, p. 267); however, a number of compositional researchers and theorists have roundly questioned whether or not FYC has met its objective.

Wardle's (2007) study, described as a qualitative, longitudinal pilot study, followed seven students from her Fall 2004 FYC course, aimed to identify the students' perceptions of writing and transfer from what they learnt and did in FYC to later writing assignments across the university. The researcher collected multiple types of data to address her research questions: copies of all participants' written assignments, a survey, a focus group, and an individual interview with each of the students. The findings from the first two years of the pilot study suggested that the students did not often generalise from FYC, not because they were unable to or did not learn anything in FYC, but rather, they did not *perceive a need* to do so. Thus, she concluded that neither the writing tasks in other courses nor the structures of the larger activity system of the university routinely encouraged or provided the necessary affordances for students to transfer FYC writing skills and knowledge. On the more optimistic side, Wardle (2007) also found that the only ability that students seemed to consistently transfer within the various activities of schooling was *meta-awareness about writing* (e.g., the ability to analyse assignments, identify similarities and differences between assignments, discern what was being required of them in order to earn the grade they wanted). This was not surprising, as Wardle (2007) reasoned, because meta-awareness was conceived of as one of the most transfer-encouraging behaviours (see also Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Based on these findings, Wardle (2007, p. 82) suggested using rhetorical analyses and

auto-ethnographies as two appropriate means for cultivating such a meta-awareness, and hence to facilitate transfer in FYC settings. One limitation of this pilot study, as Wardle (2007) acknowledged herself, was that she did not observe students in their other classrooms or interview their other teachers, two additional methods of data-collection invaluable for future studies. In a further study, Wardle (2009) incorporated the theoretical lens of genre to understand learning transfer in the second course of a two-year FYC programme. The data for this study were collected from 23 teachers and 462 students from all 25 sections of the course, including teacher and student interviews, focus groups, surveys, as well as student papers, assignment sheets, and students' brief rhetorical analyses of their own writing. Assisted by two doctorate students, she analysed the topic, purpose, audience, and genre for the assigned writing tasks. Most of the assignments, in their analysis, were glossed as "mutt genres" (Wardle, 2009), genres that students wrote simply for the sake of practicing writing rather than to accomplish any meaningful purposes in a given rhetorical situation. The predominance of such "mutt genres" in FYC, as revealed by the students' perceptions, was deeply problematic, because they did not appear to see any connection between the discrete skills they were learning through writing those mutt genres and any specific academic genres required in other courses, much less transfer those skills from FYC to very different contexts. Wardle's (2009) research provided an important depiction of the unique challenges that students faced as they traversed through the undergraduate curriculum. In the end, Wardle advocated better serving the first-year students' future writing needs by reframing the goal of FYC, such that the course does not promise only to teach students to write but rather to teach them *about* writing in the university.

With a shared concern on learning transfer, Fishman & Reiff (2008, 2011)

offered a detailed account of their collaborative, three-year revision process in two courses in an FYC programme, making transfer their main focus. The new course designs, which involved genuine inquiry and research, supported by substantial rhetorical instruction, aimed to teach students transferable rhetorical concepts and principles that they could use for communicating in different kinds of contexts. They wanted to see their students, after leaving the classrooms, better able to "take the high road" to transfer, and better able to continue developing their transfer abilities as they travel into new academic, professional, and personal rhetorical situations.

Theoretical arguments for raising meta-awareness in L2 writing instruction has also found support in classroom-based research at the postgraduate level, especially within an ESP/EAP perspective. Cheng (2007, 2008) reported a series of case studies that addressed student learning in an English academic writing course he taught in a large American university in the ESP genre-based literacy framework. Following a "discovery-based approach to genre teaching and learning" (Cheng, 2007), each of the students in this course was instructed to collect at least five reputable published RAs in their fields. Using them as teaching materials, the course instructor led class discussions and genre analysis tasks in order to heighten the learners' awareness of the generic features and the rhetorical situations of various sections of an RA. Subsequently, as both the researcher as well as the course instructor, Cheng (2007) was able to draw on multifarious types of data; namely, rich participant observation accounts of the classroom, students' literacy narratives, students' writing assignments (i.e., three versions of RA sections based on the same material but tailored for different audiences and different rhetorical contexts), transcripts of student-teacher conferences (which he regarded as resembling the text-based interviews), as well as the students' reflective

analysis on their own writing. Tracing a focal student named Fengchen (a pseudonym) in one case study, for instance, Cheng (2007) found out that the student demonstrated an awareness of particular generic features and an ability to *transfer* those features into his own writing. Beyond the simple transferring of generic features, Fengchen also showed a growing awareness of the intricate interaction of various rhetorical parameters (e.g., perceived audience differences) and an ability to *recontextualise* such a generic awareness in his writing. Consequently, Cheng (2007) suggested viewing the goal of genre-based teaching and learning as that of fostering students' development of an increasingly sophisticated awareness of the rhetorical considerations motivating generic features and ultimately, helping them recontextualise genre awareness; that is, moving beyond *knowing genres* towards *knowing about genre*. It is noteworthy that, similar to Wardle (2007, 2009), Cheng (2007, 2008) also placed meta-awareness as a crucial element of genre learning, and his concept of *recontextualisation*, defined as "learners' abilities not only to use a certain generic feature in a new writing task, but to use it with a keen awareness of the rhetorical context that facilitates its appropriate use" (Cheng, 2007, p. 303), seemed to resonate strongly with what DePalma & Ringer (2011) later proposed as *adaptive transfer* (as seen in *Section 2.5.2*).

James' (2009, 2010) works on classroom transfer are particularly noteworthy in EAP scholarship for his detailed examination of learning transfer. In the first study, James (2009) examined learning transfer from a university ESL writing course to a writing task with characteristics very different from the kind of writing done in this ESL writing course but typical of the kind of writing required in other academic courses (i.e., a text-responsible writing task). Thirty students participated in this task. To try to stimulate transfer of learning outcomes from the course to the task, half of the students

were asked prior to the writing task to identify similarities between the task and work in the writing course. All students were invited for a 10-15 min semi-structured oral interview, which involved a series of questions about whether they had tried to use any learning outcomes from the course to do the writing task. Each student completed a one-page background questionnaire at the end of the interview. The students' writing from the task and from one graded assignment from the course was assessed for the use of 15 learning outcomes targeted in the course textbook; also, students' reports of intentional learning transfer were identified in the interview transcripts. The results indicated that learning outcomes did transfer from the course to the task, but in a constrained way; specifically, learning outcomes related to language use seemed to transfer more readily than those related to content and organisation; also, asking students to identify similarities between the task and the course did not promote learning transfer. In the subsequent study, James (2010) continued to investigate learning transfer from an English-for-general-academic-purposes (EGAP) writing course to tasks that involved writing in other academic courses. Eleven international students who enrolled in this course from diverse non-English-speaking backgrounds participated in this study and the data were gathered from three sources: multiple semi-structured interviews with each of the participants; a total of 54 writing samples that they did for graded tasks in this writing course and in their other courses; and a one-page questionnaire asking for their demographic data. The interview transcripts were examined for participants' explicit mention of transfer of learning outcomes, and the writing samples for observable application of 10 learning outcomes targeted in the writing course. Findings indicated that a wide variety of learning outcomes did transfer from the EGAP writing course; however, the frequency of transferring different

learning outcomes varied across task types and disciplines. It is obvious that James' (2009, 2010) studies approached the notion of transfer from a *task-oriented* perspective, as depicted in *Section 2.5.1* above. As such, although both of them provided very close and detailed analysis of learning transfer focusing on concrete outcomes, the learning context behind the scene of writing was mostly backgrounded.

While the literacy trajectory throughout undergraduate or postgraduate programmes may have posed obvious challenges to learning transfer, it is generally assumed that such a transfer can be even more difficult to achieve when students transition from university-based academic context to later professional/workplace contexts.

These transitions were mostly thoroughly taken up in Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré's (1999) book *Worlds Apart,* which consisted of several studies that collectively explored the extent to which writing at university prepared students for writing in the workplace. First, based on genre analysis of writing tasks, observations, and participant interviews but with limited lengths of engagement, the authors offered elaborate accounts of writing in university settings, including undergraduate courses in law, finance, and architecture, and two postgraduate courses in management, revealing, to a great extent, the highly situated, discipline-specific nature of such writing. After presenting these studies of university-based writing, the authors then turned to describe writing in three workplaces related to the above disciplines, i.e., a hospital's social service department, the Bank of Canada (a government financial agency), and an architectural office. Through observations, interviews, and text analysis, the authors were able to draw a full picture of these spaces as complex, messy, and highly social. Like the university-based writing, the workplace writing also reflected the values and

ideologies of each scenario operating as a *community of practice* on their own terms. In the end, as some of the key differences between the classroom and workplace settings were identified, the authors concluded that the worlds of school and work had surprisingly little to do with each other, where each is a valid activity system in its own right, but without much transfer between them. Thus, the authors inferred that when people moved from classroom in the university to workplaces, the challenge was not necessarily that of needing to learn new genres but rather needing "to learn new ways to learn such genres" (Dias et al., 1999, p.197).

Another example of empirical research that explored transfer from academic to professional context was Parks' (2001) study of 11 francophone nurses transitioning from their respective French-speaking universities in Quebec (Canada) to an English speaking hospital in Montreal (Canada), which focuses on the evolution of a written genre known as *nursing care plans*. This study took place over approximately 22 months, during which the newly recruited nurses were required to go through a special orientation programme, headed by an experienced nurse referred to as a Clinical Educator. The programme consisted of a three-week intensive English course, a two-week Clinical Orientation, and a three-week Preceptorship working with a reduced patient loads, until they gradually assumed their duties as full-time staff. The data collected included tape recordings of feedback sessions during the Clinical Orientation, copies of work-related and school documents produced by the nurses in French and English, interviews with the new nurses and the Clinical Educator, and observation of the nurses at work. In addition to these qualitative data aimed at exploring the site, participants were also asked to write a care plan at three points in time: 1) upon the arrival at the hospital; 2) towards or at the end of the Preceptorship; 3) after having

worked at the hospital for approximately 9 months. Parks (2001) found that in their academic contexts, the nurses perceived care plans as merely a "school-based genre", but as they began working in actual hospital settings, they began to perceive differences between the care plans they had done while at university and those that they had begun to do in the hospital. Recognising these differences, as Parks (2001) noted, led the nurses to adapt the writing knowledge they had gained while in school to respond to the new rhetorical situation at the hospital. Parks' (2001) study offered at least two particularly significant insights related to the notion of transfer in the teaching and learning of genre: first, it employed a multi-layered methodological approach, pulling together multifarious sources of data, which enabled the researcher to present a rich portrait to account for the complex process of transfer; second, although Parks did not explicitly draw on a theory of *adaptive transfer*, her thoughtful discussion of how francophone nurses adapted prior learning experiences to fit a new context, according to DePalma & Ringer (2011), pointed to the possibility and potential value of such a frame.

In a more recent study, Brent (2012) followed 6 students in a Canadian research university through their first four-month in a co-operative education programme (a period during which they were still technically students but were also expected to perform as novice professionals) to learn about what aspects of rhetorical knowledge were *transformed*, if not simply *transferred*, as they were crossing the boundaries from the instruction-based academic worlds to the practices in the workplaces. Drawing on multiple in-depth interviews, coupled with analysis of their writing samples, Brent (2012) offered a narrative account of the 6 students' experiences of transferring the rhetorical knowledge. The findings from the study seemed to suggest

that some students (though not all) were able to make explicit connections between school and workplace writing. Specifically, the students demonstrated a high awareness of the different nature of research involved in the two contexts, adaptation for different audiences, a general ability to use models flexibly to fit new circumstances. In general, this study confirmed that students who had a good sense of rhetorical knowledge were well positioned to *adapt* well to new rhetorical environments and offered a clearer picture of how this rhetorical knowledge helped students *transform*, rather than simply *transfer*, their academic skills into practices to meet the demands of the workplace.

From the above review, it can be seen that many studies of transfer revealed a disturbingly uneven pattern of results, pointing to the complex, and sometimes even intriguing nature of this matter. It is for this reason that the present study hopes to dig in for more new insights on this buckle by exploring it in an unexplored situation, i.e., Chinese English majors transitioning from writing in the instruction-based settings to bachelor's theses, from the vantage point of the theory of *adaptive transfer*.

2.5 Implications for the present study: Niches to be occupied

The wealthy stock of literature reviewed in the preceding sections, reaching out into a myriad of research issues/areas, such as SFL-based genre analysis, thesis writing at the undergraduate level, L2 writing pedagogy, as well as transfer in genre learning, has not only substantially laid the groundwork for the current endeavour, but shed a revealing insight into the niches that can be potentially occupied.

As a point of departure, the SFL tradition of genre research revisited in *Section 2.1*, with its basic tenets and elaborately-developed classifying frameworks, warrants that genre analysis undertaken in the present study and all the further discussions it may

invoke be powerfully informed by theory. SFL notion of *macrogenre* has provided a sound weapon to crack the rhetorical structures of bachelor's theses written by Chinese undergraduate English majors - a practice-oriented, high-stake genre that has not attracted sufficient attention in the existing literature. The main target, and what has been basically overlooked in the past, is to unveil what elemental genres are playing a more or less indispensable role in developing this macrogenre.

Research on the instruction-based genres written by Chinese undergraduate English majors, on the other hand, takes either a test-driven orientation, or a monotonous focus on a single genre - *arguments*. One of the consequences of this monotony is that it is very likely to lose sight of the larger picture of such writing practices in the real classrooms, which, as can be expected, may embrace more brilliant and unpredicted highlights outside the exam venues, and invite, in the meantime, different voices other than the arguing ones from the apprenticed writers - ushering in, consequently, greater varieties of genres. The present study therefore wants to step in at this point and gaze truthfully at one of such instructional settings - one that is situated in SICAU, in an attempt to compensate for this "loss of sight" by tracing the hybridity of elemental genres performed in the authentic classroom contexts of relevant writing courses. Besides identifying the elemental genres "activated*"* in the two major rhetorical situations for SICAU English majors, the present work will try to enrich these textual evidences with contextual analysis. Influenced by Prior's (1998) *sociohistorical* approach to academic writing, the present study sets out to gather a miscellaneous assortment of data, i.e., documents, teaching materials, transcripts of semi-structured and talk-around-text interviews, in order to offer a situated account of how writing and its teaching and learning are urged, organised, and performed within the present

research site.

With such "thick descriptions" of the two rhetorical worlds, the present study thus hopes to address the question of whether and how the compositional preparations experienced by these students in the instructional settings help (or not) with their transitioning into the practice of bachelor's thesis writing. Apparently, to repeat, the bridge between the two rhetorical stages remains hitherto a critical and yet less attended one in the storehouse of research literature.

Finally, concerning the transfer of rhetorical/genre knowledge between the two stages, the present study will further bring this issue into a more dynamic and context-sensitive light as is informed by the theory of *adaptive transfer* (DePalma & Ringer, 2011, 2014). Pertinent to this theoretical concern is the question of how certain elemental genres as afforded in the instructional settings are readily *reshaped*, *adapted*, and *appropriated* by student writers to meet the rhetorical demands in writing a bachelor's thesis. With insights borrowed from previous studies on transfer in genre learning (Cheng, 2007, 2008; Wardle, 2007, 2009; and Brent, 2012; in particular), the present research will reopen this issue through focus group interviews with bachelor's thesis writers, which are suggested by the pioneering theorists as the most effective method to explore *adaptive transfer*. Given the fact that studies on the notion of transfer, especially in the domain of genre learning, have yielded diverging, and sometimes even perplexing results, as seen clearly in *Section 2.5.3*, it is anticipated that tackling this chronic problem at a brand-new knot - transfer from instruction to practice, in this case, will promise a deeper understanding of the true nature of this matter.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has surveyed the related territory thoroughly to provide background for the present inquiry. Such a review of literature, though seemingly lengthy and tedious at times, does help to locate the present work into the found research niche, speaking for the potential values that the on-going efforts can possibly be of to the knowledge of the field. The next chapter will then focus on how research methodology for the present study is designed, and more importantly, how it has been, and will continue to be, executed.
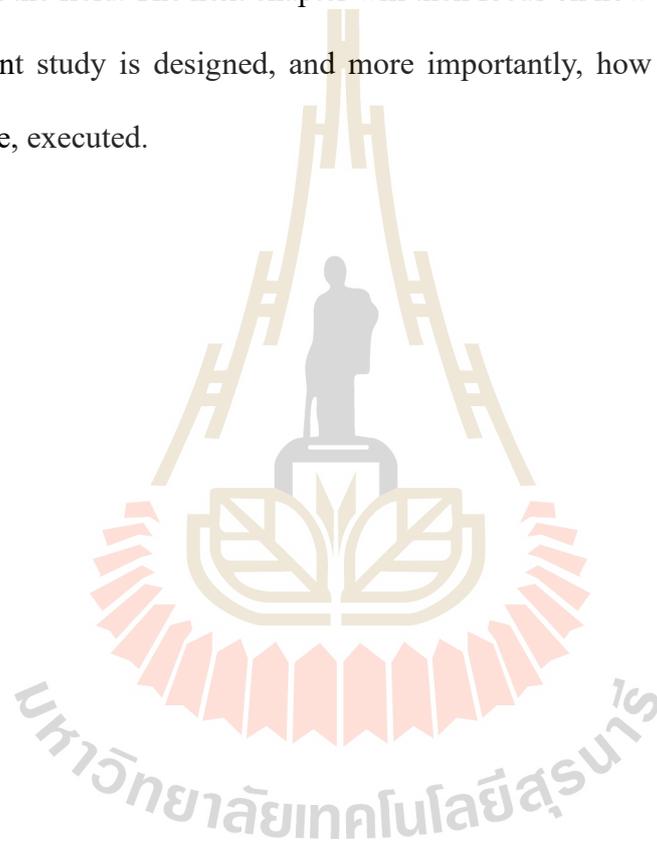
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter gives a detailed account of methodological issues relating to conducting the present study. In general, this case study is qualitative in nature, incorporating discourse analysis of two corpora and thematic analysis of a hybridity of qualitative data, including documents, teaching materials and a number of interviews. Besides that, however, for the purpose of addressing the Research Question 4 which involves the comparison of results generated from the two corpora, a quantitative method using log-likelihood tests - a statistical tool regarded as suitable for the present case, will be usefully applied. Briefly, the first section of this chapter will give a detailed introduction to the multiple types of data required for the present study. The second section discusses how these "messy worlds" of data will be analysed to address the research questions, together with measures taken to guarantee the validity and reliability of the analytical processes. Finally, a pilot study on 30% of the bachelor's thesis corpus with its preliminary findings will be reported.

3.1 Data sources

"The richest histories will emerge from multiple methods, with intertextual analysis, participant accounts, and observation of activity working together to produce a fuller portrait of the process."

(Prior, 2004, p. 197)

The data for the present study were collected from the two rhetorical settings that

represent the two marked phases of writing development for SICAU English majors throughout the curriculum. On the one end were those writing related courses, which took place in the second and the third year of their study and were largely based on classroom instructions. On the other end was the more practice-oriented task of bachelor's thesis writing. To tease out a fuller picture of what happens or not in each setting and how they were linked with each other, a multi-method approach pulling together a myriad of data sources was adopted. In the broadest outline, the types of data being examined fell into two broad categories. On the one hand were written artefacts of varying sorts, including not only the written products in both rhetorical phases but also some of the official, well-established documents and teaching materials, which, as believed, both shape and are shaped by the rhetorical values circulating in the relevant rhetorical contexts. These written artefacts, on the other hand, were triangulated with in-depth interviews with core participants in the respective rhetorical activities.

The overall architecture for data collection is diagrammatically presented in *Figure 3.1*, in which an inverted stairway is built indicating how students in SICAU are apprenticed into English writing across the two broad contexts. More details of each dimension will be illustrated in the subsequent sections.

3.2 Data collection

3.2.1 Data of bachelor's thesis writing

3.2.1.1 Corpus building of bachelor's theses
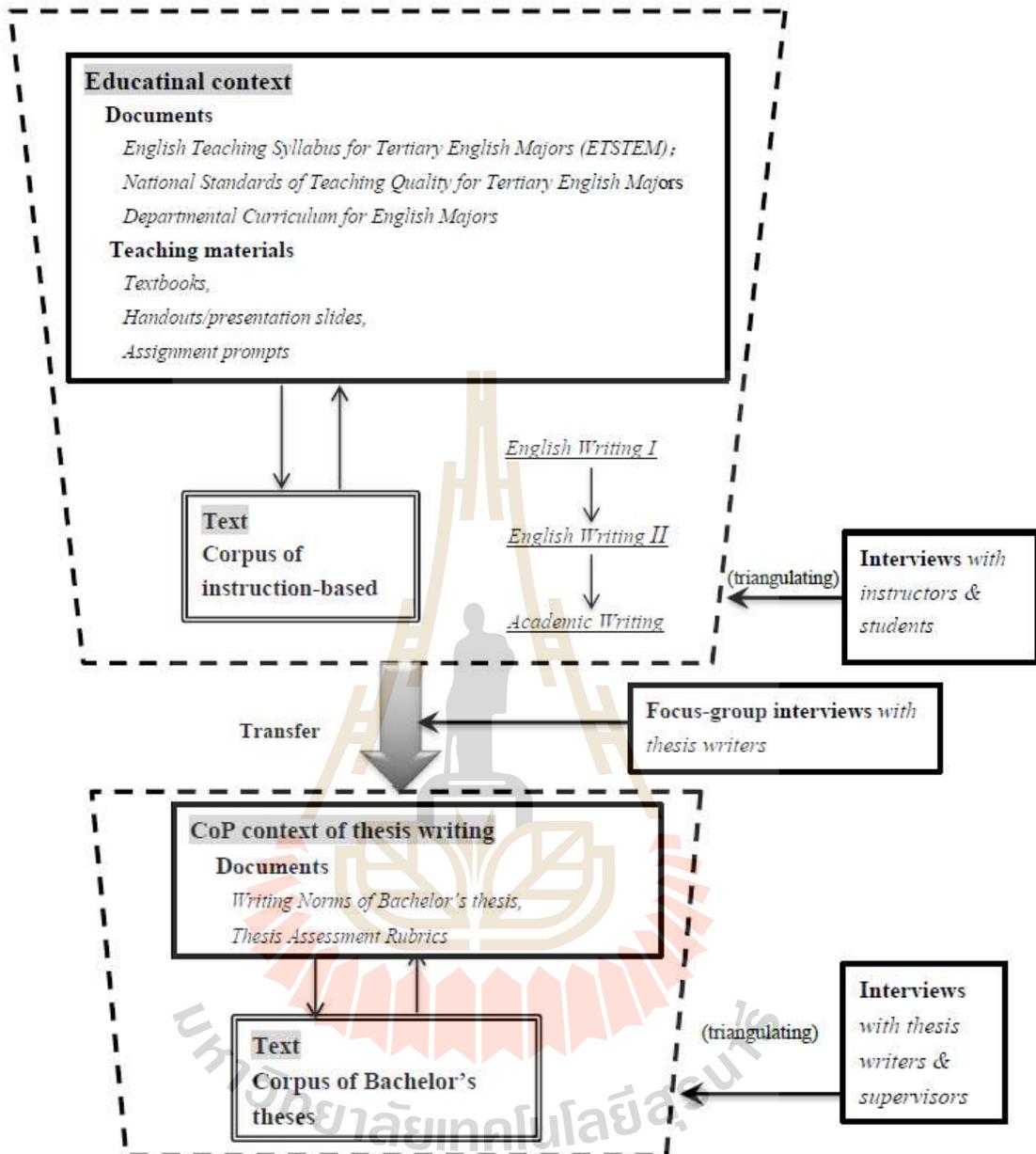
Figure 3.1 Overall architecture for data collection

The corpus of bachelor's theses was built from those produced by SICAU English major graduates during the last five years. A careful examination of related documents reassured the researcher that the writing norms and assessment

criteria for bachelor's thesis in this English department were maintained relatively stable and went through no critical and drastic changes in the last five years (only some minor modification on the editing format, with no obvious signs of radical changes in a foreseeable future). Therefore, it might be safely claimed that those quality texts selected from the past five-year span were representative of the most recent established practice in this small local community, measuring up to an expected, if not perfect, standard imposed on the prospective thesis writers.

Resorting to the internal database run by the Department with an informed consent granted, theses that achieved 85 points and above via both advisor's evaluation and oral defense were purposively selected. 85 points was set as the cut-off point on the grounds that, from informal interviews with the department directors and faculty, theses achieving this grade and above were generally regarded by the advisors and defense examiners as written up to an acceptable-to-favourable standard, thus collectively representing the valued rhetorical patterning of bachelor's theses in the recent years. Out of the total 336 theses produced by English majors between 2014 and 2018, 63 (18.8%) met the criterion, among which 24 were devoted to the field of translation/interpreting studies, 17 to linguistics/applied linguistics, 16 to cultural studies, and 6 to literary studies. From this sample set, 40 theses were then handpicked through quota sampling: a nearly equal number of theses were picked to represent each year; meanwhile, the breakdown of theses into the four research areas was 16, 13, 9 and 2, respectively, approximately proportionate to that in the original pool. Finally, the selected 40 theses were referred back to the thesis advisors to confirm them as legitimate exemplars without using any illegal tactics.

At this juncture, two issues concerning the sampling process need

further justification. First, the researcher decided on 40 as the corpus size for dual reasons. Seen from the review in *Section 2.2, Chapter 2*, the corpus size of previous research into thesis writing at the undergraduate level ranges from 25 to 80 (some of them included only certain part-genres, such as Introduction or Results and Discussion sections, rather than the full texts), and practically, given the time-consuming nature of manual analysis required in SFL-based genre research, 40 theses amounting to 226,769 words in total was reckoned as a manageable choice. Meanwhile, both purposive and quota sampling techniques were employed to supplement each other in the present study. Their combined strengths thus rendered the final corpus certainly a representative one, addressing a specialised domain, written and used by the same type of persons, and corresponding to the same social, educational, and communicative purposes (McEnery & Wilson, 1996; López Sanjuán, 2006).

Second, a quota sampling technique was employed to include theses from all the four sub-fields. The rationale behind was purely pragmatic: most students decide on their thesis topics only when they have started conferencing with their thesis advisors, some even fairly close to the last minute; so for prospective writers, it is often hard to tell in advance exactly what subject matters their "theses-to-be" will be about. Therefore, the sampled corpus was considered as representative of the overall possibilities that students may have in thesis writing, accommodating varied research interests that they are encouraged to entertain within the larger domain of English language studies.

It is worth noting that bachelor's theses in English language studies are multimodal in most of the cases; that is, besides the verbal texts, they are likely to contain a set of visual texts such as images, diagrams, figures, table and the alike, that

"support the reader to interpret the verbal text" and "rarely stand alone without verbal text to explain them" (Martin & Rose, 2008, p. 178). However, the multimodal composition of this macrogenre goes beyond the primary focus in this study, so a prudent decision was made to discard these visual supports, together with the auxiliary texts that nearly every single thesis needs to include, such as the cover page, abstract, acknowledgement, bibliography, or any other appendix (if any), from the bachelor's thesis corpus. That is, only the essential verbal texts were included. The texts were then numbered as "Year_No." for subsequent analysis and references, e.g., 2018_1, 2017_5, 2015_7, and so on.

3.2.1.2 Contextual data of bachelor's thesis writing

To complement the textual data, the researcher's gaze then moved away from the end written texts to the context where the writing generally took place. The purpose of so doing is to glean, beyond the generic composition of bachelor's theses, a richer understanding of the rhetorical values circulating in the thesis writing community.

3.2.1.2.1 Documents

Two types of documents related to bachelor's thesis writing for SICAU English majors were first examined; namely, *Writing Norms of Bachelor's Thesis for English Majors* and the *Assessment Rubrics* for thesis advisors and defense examiners. Both of them are formulated in the Chinese language within the English Department and then approved and officially released by the College of Humanities. Official documents of these two types, as seen in the previous section, have been in operation in this Department for more than 5 years without radical changes and thus become quite established norms on their own terms. Not surprisingly, they thereby play

a central role in informing the way that things should proceed in the written texts, which, in turn, are realistic instantiations of what is imposed or implied in the piloting documents. This dialogical relationship between text and context, i.e., instantiating and informing, is indicated in *Figure 3.1* by a pair of parallel arrows pointing to reverse directions. Given these considerations, it is the researcher's perception that these documents constitute a spotless window from which to peer into the small world of bachelor's thesis writing as a local *community of practice* (Wenger, 2015).

3.2.1.2.2 Semi-structured and text-based interviews

At the same time, interviews were conducted with selected thesis advisors and thesis writers to triangulate the researcher's interpretation of the written artefacts. Four thesis advisors, who have multiple years of experience in supervising thesis writing in SICAU and have a considerable number of students' theses selected into the present corpus, were invited for such interviews. At the same time, mainly based on availability of access, seven student writers whose theses constituted part of the present corpus and who just defended their theses in 2018 were invited for a face-to-face interview. All selected interviewees were approached on the basis of informed consensus, with additional permission granted for the interviews to be audio-recorded.

The interview questions fell into two categories. The format for the first part of the interviews was best described as "semi-structured" (Drever, 2003) with open-ended questions, over which the interviewers were encouraged to speak freely their experiences in supervising/writing the bachelor's thesis, their perceptions over the texture of bachelor's theses, the values they place on varying genres employed, and their interpretations of and (sub)conscious conformity with the rhetorical principles imposed by the relevant documents.

The second part were text-based interviews, the questions for which were developed on the basis of major findings from genre analysis on the bachelor's thesis corpus, in order to better understand the thesis writers' and advisors' opinions on the generic patterning of this academic genre. Some thesis writers, in cases where it was necessary, were asked one additional text-based question, the main purpose of which was to warrant the validity of genre identification by seeking the writers' confirmation and personal opinion, when "coders' dilemma" arose. Appendix B includes the planned interview protocols with the actual questions being asked. Three experts specialising in English language education, all from Sichuan Agricultural University, were invited to evaluate the content validity of the interview questions using Item-objective congruence (IOC) measure (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977). All experts rated independently individual items in the interview protocols, regarding the degree to which they measure what they are supposed to measure (1, if the item is congruent with the objective; -1, if the item is not congruent with the objective; or 0, if the congruence of the item is unclear). Results of IOC reached 85% for the interview questions with thesis advisors and 89% for those with thesis writers, indicating a high content validity with reference to the minimum acceptable validity index (50%) established by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977). Revisions and modifications were made accordingly based on the feedback from the experts.

Because both the researcher and the thesis advisors/writers interviewed are Chinese, the interviews were all conducted in the Chinese language, which, then, were transcribed and translated into English by the researcher herself before being referred back to the interviewees to check if there should be any misinterpretation.

3.2.2 Data of writing in the instruction-based settings

To look in a flashback at how students have been prepared for writing in the instruction-based settings before they embark on the task of bachelor's thesis, the researcher has decided to collect data cross-sectionally from three writing related courses in the first three years of university as currently practiced in the research site. Although in cases of a similar nature, a longitudinal approach is a more ideal choice, the reasons for this comprise are pragmatic - it is simply not possible to turn the clock back and trace diachronically the lived experiences of the 40 writers of those selected theses, nor, given the limited time span allowed for the current study, is it thinkable to follow the currently starting students for another three or four years until they take up their theses. However, given the comparability of student population in this university and the relative stability maintained in the present English curriculum (for more detailed information on the Department's curriculum evolution, please see *Section 1.7*, Chapter 1), it is presupposed that cross-sectional data drawn from the three courses, when integrated into a collective whole, will not, hopefully, lead to too distorted a picture.

3.2.2.1 Corpus of instruction-based genres

To compile a comparable corpus for instruction-based genres, equal numbers of students (i.e., 40) were selected as potential text contributors from each of the three writing-related courses in the current research site - *English Writing I* for the 3rd semester, *English Writing II* for the 4th semester, and *Academic Writing* for the 6th semester (The sequence of the three courses as they occur in the whole curriculum is indicated by the single arrows pointing downward leading one to another in *Figure 3.1*). Given the time span that frames the research and also in keeping with the university's academic calendar, the two subcorpora for *Academic Writing* and *English Writing II*

were compiled concurrently in Spring 2018 from students enrolled into the university in the academic years 2015 and 2016, while the other sub-corpus for *English Writing I* was compiled in Autumn 2018 from students enrolled in the academic year 2017. On balance, the students involved in the three writing-related courses were enrolled into the university in three consecutive academic years and thus were at different levels of their study (see *Table 3.1* for a general profile). Given the fact that these students, though at different levels of their studies, invariably come from a similar background and have demonstrated nearly equivalent initial English language proficiency by going through *gaokao* (the longstanding national entrance examination to tertiary education in China), they were assumed as comparable participants, not only within themselves but also with the foregoing 40 thesis writers, in the present research context.

Table 3.1 General profile of the three sub-corpora of instruction-based genres

Course	Time of collection	Year of students' enrolment
Academic Writing	Spring 2018	2015
English Writing II	Spring 2018	2016
English Writing I	Autumn 2018	2017

The selected contributors were those acknowledged by course instructors as active and responsible participants in the respective course. The target texts were those written by them in response to instructor-set assignments in and/or after each lesson/module, and were assessed by the same instructors.

An important issue to be addressed here is the *quality* of the target texts. Out of the totality of texts written by students selected from each course, only those positively assessed by the course instructors were considered as qualified, i.e., reaching a minimum grading of 60%, so as to ensure that they were written up to the

courses' requirements and expectations. The rationale for setting up this criterion is to ensure that the final corpus was a truthful representation of the compositional preparations offered in the instructional settings. In other words, if the students failed to produce the required texts at the course level (for whatever reasons they might have), they were considered even "not prepared for the preparations", definitely less so for what these preparations ultimately targeted.

Therefore, aware of this potential mortality threat, among many others, to the interior validity of the research, the present researcher precautiously decided on the initial sampling of participants for each of the three courses to be larger than 40.

In the case of *English Writing II*, the 2016 cohort was divided into 6 groups, and the researcher initially recruited 48 students from group 1 to group 5. The breakdown of students across the 5 groups was 10, 9, 11, 8, and 10, respectively. The reason for excluding group 6 was that the students in this group were only transferred into English programme from other disciplines/departments at the beginning of the fourth semester, i.e., rightly when the researcher was commencing the data collection process, so they had not taken any English-major courses, including *English Writing I*, as the students from the other five groups did, during the first three semesters.

In the Spring 2018, the 14-week course of *English Writing II* was divided into two sections. The first section, from week 1 to week 9, was charged by Chinese-L1 instructors, and the second section, from week 10 to week 14, by native-speaking instructors from the United States, with 2 class hours each week. Specifically, during the first section, group 1 to group 3 were taught by a Chinese-speaking male associate professor with a bachelor's diploma in English language studies, while group

4 and group 5 were taught by a Chinese-speaking female lecturer with an Master's degree in linguistics and applied linguistics, both of whom had been teaching writing to English majors at SICAU for more than five years. As for the second section, group 1 and group 2 were taught by a female American teacher, while group 3 to group 5 by a male American teacher, both of whom obtained their MA degrees in Education from American universities and were Peace-Corps volunteers teaching in this university for a two-year service. Because these 4 instructors did not collaborate in planning or teaching the course, there were naturally some differences between the modules they conducted; however, fundamental aspects of the course were similar in terms of the basic goals and objectives of the course and the same course textbook used by all four instructors.

An orientation meeting was arranged with each of the five groups of participants on the first week, during which requests were made to all students to bring every single writing assignment from this course, produced both in and after each class, either in hand-written or electronic formats, for the researcher to scan, copy and/or save. When the course ended, five students who failed to submit the whole set of assignments intact due to various reasons or had one or more assignments judged by the instructors as unsatisfactory, were automatically excluded, and another student dropped out due to irresistible factors in the middle of the course. In the end, 43 participants successfully submitted the full package of their assignments; However, despite an effort to maintain an equal number of participants in each group, only 7 participants remained in group 4. As a result, 9 participants were maintained in group 5 and 8 in the other 3 groups. Altogether, 231 assignments were collected from the 40 students to form the sub-corpus of *English Writing II.*

In the case of *Academic Writing*, the 2015 cohort was divided into two groups, both of which were taught by a tenor-track full professor who obtained an MA diploma in linguistics & applied linguistics from a Chinese university and has been responsible for this course since the first year it was introduced into the curriculum. Initially, 26 students from group 1 and 17 students from group 2 consented formally to assignments being collected and analysed. Generally, the lessons in this course were delivered mainly in the form of lectures or in-class reading/discussion sessions, with only 2 pieces of written assignments throughout the 10-week course. Given such a small number, the written assignments of the 43 participating students were directly forwarded to the researcher from the course instructor after he carefully examined them. In the end, 3 students were randomly deleted from group 1, and hardcopies of the remaining 40 students' assignments, totalling up to 80, were used to create the corresponding sub-corpus.

As for *English Writing I*, the 2017 cohort was divided into 4 groups, and 12 students were initially recruited from each. A similar orientation meeting, as with *English Writing II,* was held with the 48 participants in this course, during which the same guidelines were given for them to contribute their written assignments. In the Autumn 2018, the 12-week course of *English Writing I* was arranged in a way slightly different from *English Writing II*. The same two Chinese-speaking teachers started teaching *English Writing I* from week 1 to week 5 and resumed later from week 9 to week 12, meeting the class for 2 hours each week. To be more specific, group 1 and 2 were taught by the male associate professor while group 3 and 4 by the female lecturer. At the same time, the female American Peace-Corp volunteer met the 4 groups of students for 2 hours each week from week 6 until week 12, to deliver lessons in her

own session. At the end of this course, only 1 participant from group 3 did not submit the full package of written assignments, so a decision was made to retain 10 participants randomly within each group. In total, 280 assignments were collected from the 40 students to form the sub-corpus of *English Writing I.*

3.2.2.2 Contextual data of instruction-based writing

The corpus for instruction-based genres was also complemented by data gleaned from different layers of the overall educational context, which, to varying degrees, conditioned how the students performed in the relevant writing courses. Influenced by the sociohistorical approach by Prior (1998), multiple types of qualitative data were collected in order to build thicker, finer-tuned descriptions of the rhetorical and pedagogical contexts.

The contextual data come from two major sources: a multi-layered system of written artefacts that are believed to mirror the different levels of educational contexts, and semi-structured interviews with the core participants for the insider's point of views.

3.2.2.2.1 Documents and teaching materials

At the national and institutional levels, the written artefacts being examined include several official documents issued from the higher-level administrative or decision-making agents. They were, namely, the national *English Teaching Syllabus for Tertiary English Majors* (Teaching Advisory Committee for Tertiary English Majors, 2000), *National Standards of Teaching Quality for Tertiary English Maj*ors (MOE, on-going), the departmental *Programme (Curriculum) for English Majors,* and *course descriptions*, if available, for the 3 writing-related courses.

In the real classrooms, a range of teaching materials used by

course instructors were collected for meticulous analysis, including textbooks, classroom presentation slides, handouts, or any supplementary materials that come in handy. These provided valuable sources of information about how the course instructors organise their lessons, choose the appropriate classroom activities, select, design, and sequence the writing tasks, and impart the composition knowledge and skills to the students according to the institutional expectations.

Unsurprisingly, the written artefacts examined at each of these three levels of contexts are intrinsically correlated. To be more specific, the theoretical or pedagogical orientations, rhetorical values, generic expectations embedded in the upper level are supposedly realised by what lies below; and in the other way around, the documents and/or materials that can be found at the lower level are influenced, to varying degrees, by what is provided above. The complex, dialogical interactions between the three layers of the overall surrounding for instruction-based writing are similarly indicated by the reversely-pointed parallel arrows in *Figure 3.1*. A synthesis of those textual data from diverse sources enables the researcher to partly explain how the students are supposed to be prepared in the instructional settings.

3.2.2.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with core participants, i.e., the accessible course instructors and the key text contributors at the three writing courses, respectively, in order to explore the way teachers and students conceptualise the writing courses, the aspects of writing they emphasise in teaching and learning, and the types of assessments teachers use to evaluate the students' works. To address these issues, a list of open-ended questions was prepared, either text-based or classroom-based (see Appendix C). The intended questions with both groups of

participants were then sent to the same 3 experts from SICAU for IOC evaluation, and reached 86% and 87% respectively, thereby indicating a high content validity. The interview questions were refined where necessary.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher negotiated access with each of the course instructors. The female Chinese-speaking teacher in both *English Writing I* and *English Writing II,* and the male English-speaking teacher in *English Writing II*, did not respond to the researcher's request for recorded interviews. As a consequence, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the male Chinese-speaking teacher and the female American teacher for both *English Writing I* and *English Writing II*, and the tenor-track full professor for *Academic Writing*, respectively. Besides that, five student informants were selected from each of the three courses to participate in semi-structured interviews. For the student interviewees, a purposive sampling technique was thereby adopted and the sampling was based on the following criteria: 1) the selected informants were active learners in the writing course, showing a keenness on written discourse; 2) they were articulate and expressive enough to talk about their perceptions on how they have learnt to write based on classroom instruction; 3) they were reflective on writing-related teaching/learning activities. Nevertheless, it is admittedly true that the students could hardly be assessed objectively on these criteria, so the sampling was mainly based on the researcher's own perception drawn from informal talks with the course instructors, observation of the students' participation in the classroom interaction, and personal communication outside the classroom.

Similarly, the interviews were conducted in Chinese with Chinese-L1 participants and in English with the English-speaking teacher. During the interviews with the students, if any technical terms used in the interview questions

appeared to have hindered their understanding, the questions were then rephrased into simpler and more congruent words until getting across to the interviewees. In the next step, all the transcriptions, including the translated ones, were referred back to the interviewees to check if there was any misinterpretation.

3.2.3 Data of transfer from instruction-based genres to bachelor's thesis

In the architecture outlined in *Figure 3.1*, adaptive transfer occurs between the intersections between the two rhetorical situations, as marked out by the shaded, enlarged arrow in the middle.

Given its interactional nature, focus group interview as a research method is recommended as particularly useful to help researchers identify instances of transfer (DePalma & Ringer, 2014). Specifically, they should be able to provide insights into how students reshape their prior writing/genre knowledge when they transition from instructor-set instruction-based writing to later more academically demanding task to write a bachelor's thesis. To this end, focus-group informants need to be selected carefully. Out of the 40 thesis writers whose works were selected into the bachelor's thesis corpus, only 8 who submitted and defended their theses in the year of 2018 were available for such focus groups, since it was almost impossible to trace back the thesis writers who graduated in the previous years. A purposive sampling technique was thereby adopted and the sampling was based on the following two criteria: 1) they were articulate and expressive enough to talk about their level of preparedness when undertaking the thesis writing task; 2) they had both an awareness of and language for sharing retrospective perceptions about how they negotiate the rhetorical demands from the instruction-based genres to the thesis writing. Similar to the case of selecting ideal interviewees from the writing courses, the best way for the researcher to glean

information about these two criteria was either by consulting thesis advisors or through personal communication with the potential informants. As a result, five of 2018 thesis writers were approached and invited for a focus group interview; however, one of them was not available since she was taking an internship in another city at the time of the scheduled date. As an expedient, this thesis writer was requested for a follow-up individual interview later via online communication, while the other 4 participated in the focus group.

From the vantage of adaptive transfer, three open-ended questions were asked and discussed in the focus group and the follow-up. These questions, as presented below, were adapted from DePalma & Ringer (2014), with the generic terms used in the original questions being replaced with specific ones that point directly to the two rhetorical contexts involved in the present research:

a) Think back on the different classes you took that included writing for significant genres. Describe your process of working through later more academically demanding task of thesis writing.

b) Think about the genres you learned to write in the earlier courses. In what ways have you had to reshape what you learnt about the genres to fit what you need to write in the thesis?

c) Think of moments when you were told (maybe by your thesis advisor or examiners) that you had made an error and done something wrong. In any of these moments, did you feel like what you had done was really a different way of writing that you felt was nonetheless valuable, effective, and/or original?

Similarly, the focus group interview, as well as the follow-up, was conducted

in Chinese, which is the first language of both the researcher and the interviewees, and then transcribed and translated into English by the researcher herself before being referred back to the interviewees to check if the translated transcriptions were faithful and accurate.

3.3 Data analysis procedures

The overall data analysis process is diagrammatically outlined in *Figure 3.2* below, fuller details of which are in turn offered in subsequent sections. As the multiple arrows in it can possibly show, this conceptual framework not only points to the ways how the assortments of data collected (or to be collected) will be interpreted in seeking answers to the proposed research questions, but also serves as a flow chart for the verbal development of the remainder of this thesis.
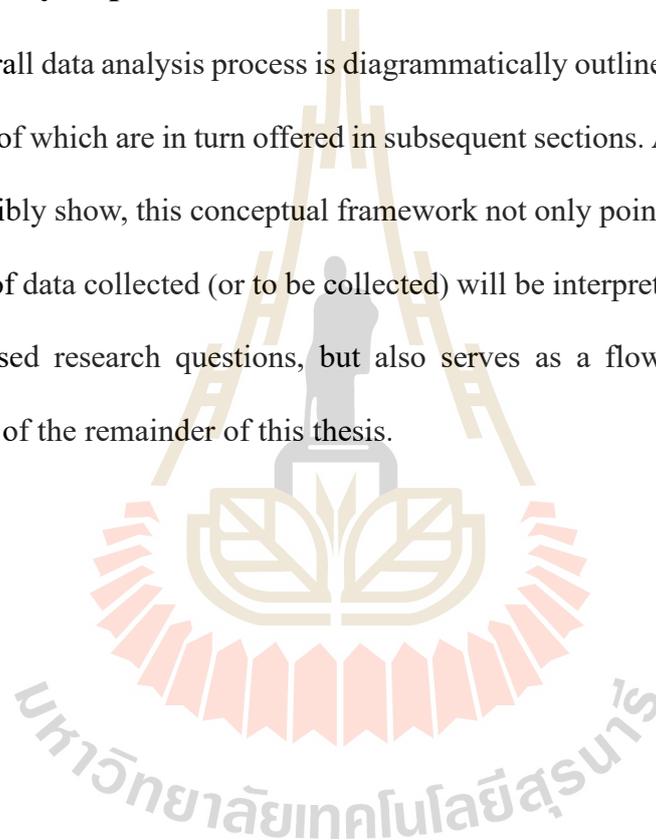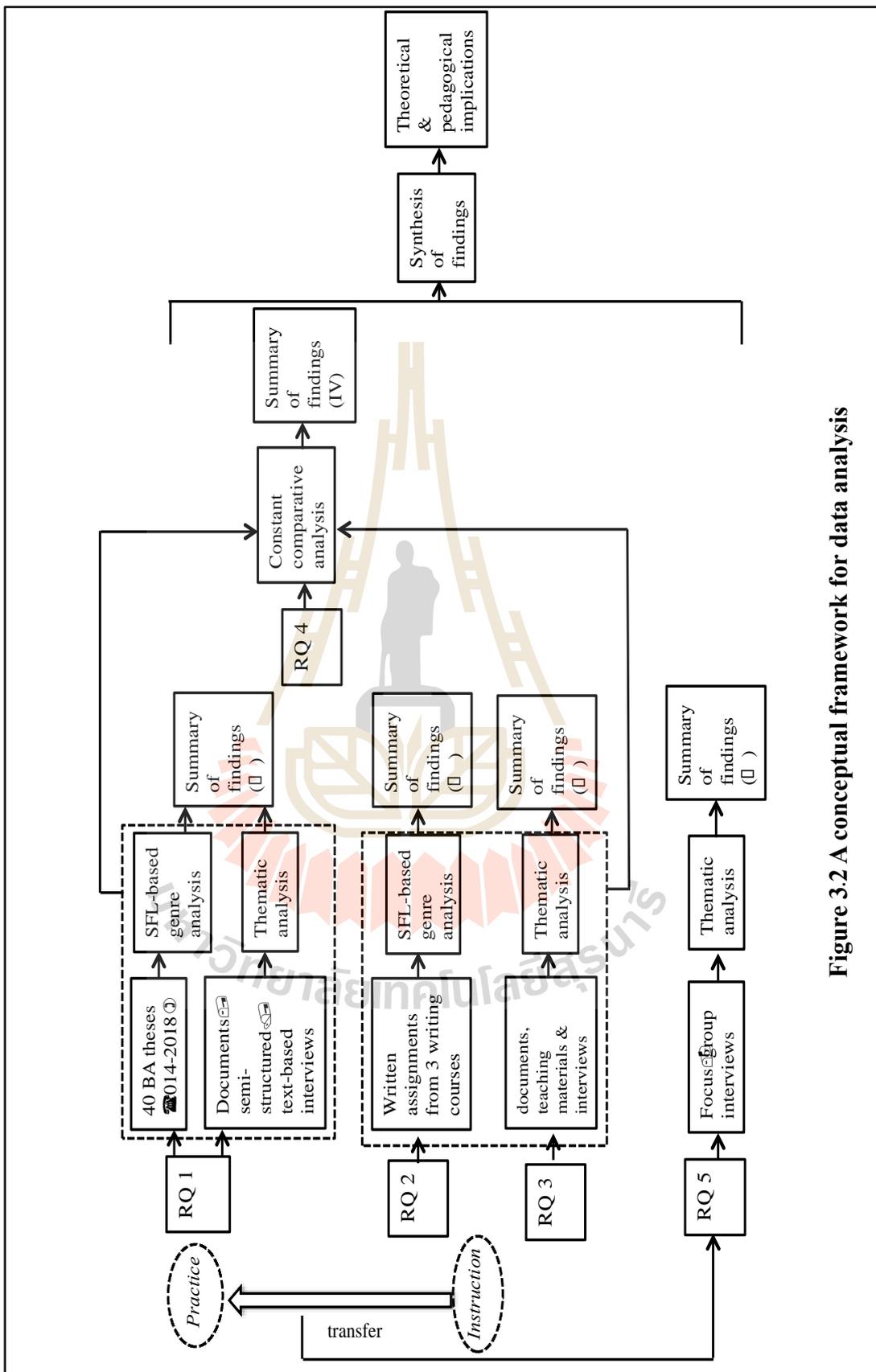
Figure 3.2 A conceptual framework for data analysis

3.3.1 SFL-based genre analysis of the two corpora

To identify the elemental genres at work in the bachelor's thesis corpus as well as in the instruction-based writing corpus, the textual analysis in the present study was based on the works grounded in *Systemic Functional Linguistics*, particularly the genre/genre family characterisation systems developed within this school over the years.

In the case of the bachelor's thesis corpus, the essential step in analysing the corpus was to identify the kind(s) of elemental genres that constitute bachelor's theses as macro-genres. The 40 bachelor's theses in the corpus were then be *deconstructed* into short, smaller elemental genres, which were in turn *labelled* on the basis of a set of differentiating criteria, including the primary purpose, schematic structure, and critical linguistic features, together with some typological parameters that have been set in previous works by Martin and his colleagues to explore the boundaries of genres (e.g., Martin, 1997; Rothery, & Stenglin, 1997; Veel, 1998; Rothery & Stenglin, 2000; Coffin, 2006; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose, 2015a, 2015b, 2017b).

This deconstruction and labelling work was done manually by the researcher (for a more detailed illustration, see pilot analysis in *Section 3.4.2.2*, this chapter), drawing on the classification taxonomy of the seven genre families as presented in great detail in *Section 2.1, Chapter 2*. However, the taxonomy may probably not canvass a full range of genres, as Martin (2008) acknowledged, while perhaps there is an on-going list of genres well beyond what functional linguists have already studied or could recognise from their folk rhetoric (Martin & Rose, 2008). The key point here for presenting this classification is that it provides a systematic description of genres inside the academia in choice networks, that enables us to identify critical features that differentiate one genre from another and suggests how, from a topological viewpoint,

genres are related to each other along various dimensions/parameters. Meanwhile, the present researcher also kept an open eye to the theoretical possibility that new stages or even unexplored genres might emerge through the lenses of new types of discourse data, and then was to take a bold move to label them by herself according to their purposes and generic features.

As for the three sub-corpora of instructor-set assignments collected from the instruction-based settings throughout the curriculum, genre analysis (labelling and staging) was undertaken in a similar manner by drawing on the same system networks.

To guarantee the credibility of the corpus analysis and labelling work, techniques to check both *intra-coding reliability* and *inter-coding reliability* were pursued in the present study. A guest researcher who has some shared knowledge and expertise in the field of genre analysis, particularly of the SFL approach, was invited to analyse 30% of the corpus data, as a common practice in the literature of genre research. Both researchers analysed the data two times, with an interval in between to ensure that the first analysis had no impact on the second one, and this made sure that the researchers who were involved in the deconstruction and analysis of the texts were doing their job mostly on the basis of consistent labelling criteria and coding schemes, not on any momentary misled intuitions. The coding results from both researchers were then compared in order to seek mutual agreement, and when unresolvable disagreement arises between the two researchers, either the original thesis writer or a third researcher with professional experience in the field was consulted for a final decision (for more details of the intra- and inter-coding procedures, see also the report of pilot study in *Section 3.4*, this chapter).

3.3.2 Comparison of genre distribution between the two corpora

For the purpose of examining the connects and disconnects between what was offered in the writing instruction and what was utilised in the practice of bachelor's thesis writing, the analysis findings from the corpus of instruction-based genres and those from the corpus of bachelor's theses were compared in terms of their respective genre distribution. Given that the two corpora differed in size, statistical analysis was conducted by means of log-likelihood tests, using Paul Rayson's log-likelihood calculator (http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html). This method was chosen because it has been usefully applied and proved effective in many previous studies setting out to compare the frequencies of linguistic items in corpora of different sizes. For example, Lee et al. (2019) compared the use of 10 most common informal language features in L1 and L2 undergraduate student argumentative essays. Because the two corpora used in their study differed in size, one consisting of 101 high-rated essays written by L1-English students and the other of 254 high-rated essays written by ESL students, log-likelihood tests were employed by the researchers to conduct the comparative analysis. Similarly, in log-likelihood tests for the present study, the frequencies for each elemental genre in the two corpora were submitted to the calculator in order to determine whether the differences in occurrences were statistically significant. The greater the log-likelihood (LL) value, the more significant is the difference between the two frequency scores. Effect Size for Log Likelihood (ELL) measure (Johnston et al., 2006) was also implemented, included within Rayson's calculator.

3.3.3 Analysis of contextual data

For the other types of qualitative data; namely, documents at the national, departmental, and course level, transcripts of interviews, a constant-comparative

method (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was used to develop categories and thematic patterns. The analysis procedures are as follows:

1) Compile the documents (here the word "*document*" is used in its broad sense to include not only the national and departmental syllabi, but also such teaching materials as textbooks, slides, and/or handouts), field notes, and interview transcripts into pages, either in print or digital forms.

2) Read and reread each item in its entirety to reflect on the overall meaning of the information given.

3) Put marks (in forms of key words/phrases/notes) in the margin or other places appropriate on any "unit or chunks of data with heuristic significance", as concerns in particular the variety and variability of genres.

4) Compare the coded units of data *within* the single source, e.g. the national syllabus, to identify recurring regularity.

5) Compare back-and-forth units of data *across* different sources and then further referring them to the textual analysis previously generated from the corpora. Specifically, how the national syllabus informs/is instantiated in the departmental one, which, in turn, informs and/or is instantiated in the teaching practice; and more importantly, how the compositional preparations (mis)match, contextually and textually, with the texture of the culminating genre of bachelor's theses. *(3-5: open coding)*

6) *Axial coding* applied until categories and themes are correlated to form more precise and complete explanation about the issue being concerned.

7) *Iterative, spiral analysis* until no further detail could be identified (*selective coding* until *saturation* point is reached) and an overall understanding/interpretation of the data could be achieved.

8) *Peer-debriefing* with an invited researcher

9) *Cross-checked* by the same peer researcher

3.3.4 Analysis of focus-group interviews on adaptive transfer

To analyse the transcripts of focus group interviews, similar procedures involving *open coding*, *axial coding* and *selective coding*, as outlined above, were repeated, except step 6. When discussing issue of transfer in the WAC project in the North America, DePalma and Ringer (2014) have recommended several questions that WAC researchers might ask in analysing focus group transcripts. In the present research context, it is found that these questions lost none of their insight as we tried to get at adaptations students recollect as they transfer (or not) prior genre knowledge learnt in instruction-based settings to meet the rhetorical demands of the thesis writing. These questions were adapted as follows to suit the present research purposes, with which the researcher was able to identify those "unit or chunks of data with heuristic significance":

a) In describing their processes of writing the theses, what kinds of linguistic resources, rhetorical/genre knowledge, and writing experience do focus group participants discuss?

b) In what way do the focus group participants discuss how the earlier compositional courses were able or unable to facilitate them with the thesis-writing task?

c) How did the focus group participants reuse or reshape prior writing/genre knowledge to suit the more challenging writing contexts?

3.4 Pilot study

3.4.1 Rationale of the pilot study

It is commonly acknowledged, according to Leon, Davis, and Kraemer (2011), that a pilot study, normally small in scale, is a fundamental phase in the overall research process, the primary purpose of which is to examine the feasibility of an approach intended ultimately to be used in a lengthier, or large-scale study. Given the fact that the required data for one dimension of the present research, i.e., the one that focuses on the instruction-based writing courses, were and could only be collected from naturalistic settings in real time, it is almost impossible to conduct a pilot testing within the time frame. Despite this forced limitation, a pilot study was conducted on the bachelor's thesis corpus, the main purpose being to examine the feasibility of the genre analysis approach, and to check whether the SFL-based taxonomies of elemental genres as presented in *Section 2.1, Chapter 2* are applicable, exhaustive and representative in analysing the macrostructures of bachelor's theses.

3.4.2 Materials and methods

3.4.2.1 Pilot corpus

30% of the overall bachelor's thesis corpus (as in *Section 3.2.1.1, Chapter 3*), amounting to 12 bachelor's theses (i.e., the complete verbal texts) written by undergraduate English majors from Sichuan Agricultural University, were analysed in the pilot study. Practically, all the 8 bachelor's theses accomplished in the year 2018 were subjected to the piloting analysis, coupled with one from each year of 2017, 2016, 2015, and 2014, respectively, producing a sample size of 73,353 words. The reason to include the whole sub-set of 2018 cohort was rather pragmatic than theoretical: within the scheduled time frame, the 2018 thesis writers were the most, or probably even the

only accessible group whose insider perspectives could still be readily consulted. In this way, that the validity of the SFL-based genre analysis could seek the utmost verification from the writers themselves was given a due consideration. Following what has been stated in *Section 3.2.1.1, Chapter 3*, the full texts in the pilot corpus were then marked as 2018_1-8, 2017_1, 2016_1, 2015_1 and 2014_1, respectively.

3.4.2.2 Pilot corpus analysis

The 12 bachelor's theses were analysed in terms of the elemental genres that have been involved in construing the macrogenres. The taxonomies of those elemental genres were essentially developed within the Systemic Functional Linguistics as presented in such a delicacy in *Section 2.1, Chapter 2.*

Essentially, the identification of elemental genres depended on both boundary and function identification. First, the "bigger" texts of bachelor's theses must be deconstructed into smaller meaningful units basically from an ideational perspective - explicit shift in themes (*field*, in Hallidayan terms), while drawing additional clues from obvious boundary indicators, such as section/chapter headings, and discourse markers (connectors and other meta-textual signals). Second, it was important to look closely at the primary social purpose of each of the smaller texts, and relate their schematic structure and any explicit linguistic clues to a specific elemental genre. Meanwhile, to deconstruct the macrostructures of bachelor's theses, considerations of their particulate realisations, i.e., the logic-semantic relationships through which the elemental genres are combined, as seen in *Figure 2.8* earlier, were also playing an essentially pivotal role. In practice, it has to be noted, decisions on these three aspects of identification were not made by treating them as distinctly divided, sequential stages but rather as interlocked, which therefore could be, or had to be, undertaken

simultaneously.

The deconstruction and analysis work herein needs a few more words of explanation. As revisited in *Section 2.1.3.1, Chapter 2*, macrogenres develop either through complexing, i.e., combining elemental genres into a univariate structure by elaboration [=], extension [+], or enhancement [×], or through embedding, where an elemental genre is down-ranked to function as a stage of a higher-level genre, resulting in a multivariate structure.

A typical example of genre complexing was found and hereby illustrated by the *Introduction* chapter of Thesis 2017_1, which conveys markedly four separate but yet interrelated messages, as an inviting gesture to open the whole thesis. Recognising these four themes helps to demarcate this chapter into four shorter texts instantiating four elemental genres accordingly - a review, an exposition, a procedure and a compositional report - unfolding in a univariate serial structure via extension   [=] and enhancement   [×]. A synoptic snapshot of the univariate structure in this chapter is provided in *Figure 3*.3 below, the elemental genres in complex being signalled by single square brackets.

	Introduction
[review]	to comment on the novel *Moment in Peking*
	Context ^ Description ^ Judgement
+	
[exposition]	to assert the necessity of the study
	Background ^ Thesis ^ Argument ^ Reiteration
×	
[procedure]	to sketch out the process how the study will be done
	Purpose ^ Materials ^ Methods
×	
[compositional report]	to describe the main components of the thesis
	Classification ^ Component 1 ^ Component 2 ^ Component 3 ^ Component 4

Figure 3.3 Synoptic overview of the generic structure of

"Introduction" in Thesis 2017_1

To reproduce an authentic picture of how this genre complex was deconstructed into its constituting elemental genres, a photocopy of this excerpt, with the present researcher's manual analysis on it, is subsequently presented in *Figure 3.4,* where handwritten single square brackets were used to indicate the boundaries between elemental genres and double slashes (//) between genre stages, with key information underlined.

Introduction

review

Context

With the development of languages and communications among countries, literary creations of non-native language and back-translation become increasingly common. *Moment in Peking* is a typical example. Since *Moment in Peking* published in America, it has caused nationwide repercussions. As an encyclopedia reflecting Chinese contemporary society, it panoramically exhibits a picture of modern China through a description of three families' rise and decline from the Boxers Movement to the beginning of Anti-Japanese War. As an introduction of Chinese culture towards western countries, it shows traditional Chinese culture in various aspects and is full of culture-loaded words. Because it's written in English by the bilingual Chinese writer Lin Yutang in 1938, the process of translating it back into Chinese is called back-translation. This book has three unabridged translations, of which Zhang Zhenyu's version and Yu Fei's version are the most accepted ones.

Translation activity is a cultural activity in the final analysis, so is back-translation, a new branch of translation. More studies on the back-translating techniques are in need. Back-translation can better give expression to cultural transmission because the back-translator has to analyze both the original text and the translated text, which is a good way to judge the effect of the cultural transmission and improve the methods to transmit culture through translating. So it is of great necessity to study on the back-translation and give translators some suggestions.

To specifically study on the back-translation, this study refines research scope to the back-translation of culture-loaded words and choose the two Chinese versions of *Moment in Peking* as analysis materials. Through an illustrative research on these words, the cultural significance of *Moment in Peking* can be sensed concretely, and more importantly the techniques of back-translation of culture-loaded words can be well summarized. Furthermore, this study also simply analyzes the elements causing the two translators' different back-translation techniques, from the perspectives of translators' different translation backgrounds, linguistic foundations and views of translation.

This study is divided into three chapters.

The first chapter is a general review, including brief introductions to *Moment in Peking*, back-translation and culture-loaded words.

The second chapter is a comparative illustrative research of back-translation techniques in two Chinese versions of *Moment in Peking*, based on the classification of culture-loaded words.

The third chapter simply analyzes the elements causing the differences of back-translation of the two translators, from the perspectives of the translators' different translation backgrounds, linguistic foundations and views of translation.

The last part is the conclusion, summarizing the main findings and limitations of this study.

1

Figure 3.4 Original photocopy of manual analysis on

"*Instruction*" in Thesis 2017_1

The deconstruction of embedded genres, on the other hand, can be demonstrated by taking *Chapter 3* in Thesis 2018_4 as an illustrative example. This chapter, at the highest level, instantiates a discussion, which analyses the aesthetic translation of Chinese reduplicated words (Issue) from three perspectives (Sides), arriving at a Resolution in a *Conclusion* section. Under this superstructure, each Side stage is realised by an embedded classifying report, for the purposes of describing the classifications (Types) of translation methods from each perspectives. Some of the Type stages unfolding these first-order embedded genres, in turn, embed a second-order descriptive reports for finer descriptions of how the types of translation methods can be employed in translation practices; and the other Type stages embed second-order classifying reports listing sub-types of concrete translation techniques, all of which are then further elaborated in a series of descriptive reports embedded at the third layer, with abundant exemplification of how they are effectively used in translation works. Space excludes anything more than a synoptic overview of the multiple layers of embedding in the superstructure of this chapter, which grows even bigger than 14 pages in a 1.5-spaced Word file. *Figure 3.5* below models how the multiple-layer embedding in this chapter was deconstructed, the boundaries between different layers of elemental genres being marked by adopting the extended bracketing convention proposed by Szenes (2017): [[…]] for first-order embedded genres, double bracketing [[[[…]]]] for second-order embedded genres, triple bracketing [[[[[[...]]]]]] for third-order embedded genres. That is, the more brackets, the lower the order of the elemental genre in the overall multivariate superstructure.

Chapter 3 Aesthetic Translation of Chinese Reduplicated Words
[discussion]
  Issue
   ^
  Side 1   *3.1 From the Phonetic Perspective*
          [[classifying report]]
             Type 1   *3.1.1 Using Consonantal Alliteration*
           ^   **[[[[descriptive report]]]]**
  ^   **Type 2**   *3.1.2 Using Para Rhyme*
         ^   **[[[[descriptive report]]]]**
             Type 3   *3.1.3 Using Assonance*
                  [[[[descriptive report]]]]
  Side 2   *3.2 From the Semantic Perspective*
          [[classifying report]]
             Type 1   *3.2.1 Widening of Semantic Meaning*
                  [[[[classifying report]]]]
                    Type 1   *(1) Using repetition*
                  ^   **[[[[[[descriptive report]]]]]]**
             ^   **Type 2**   *(2) Using prural form*
               ^   **[[[[[[descriptive report]]]]]]**
                    Type 3   *(3) Using '-ing' structure*
                      [[[[[[descriptive report]]]]]]
  ^   **Type 2**   *3.2.2 Enhancing of Semantic Meaning*
                  [[[[classifying report]]]]
                    Type 1   *(1) Changing of Part of Speech*
                  ^   **[[[[[[descriptive report]]]]]]**
            ^   **Type 2**   *(2) Using of Onomatopoetic Words*
               ^   **[[[[[[descriptive report]]]]]]**
                    Type 3 *(3) Using of 'very/quite/so+adjective or adverb'*
                        Structure
                      [[[[[[descriptive report]]]]]]
             Type 3   *3.2.3 Narrowing of Semantic Meaning*
                [[[[descriptive report]]]]
  Side 3   *3.3 From the Perspective of Forms*
          [[classifying report]]
             Type 1   *3.3.1 Translation of ABAB*
            ^   **[[[[descriptive report]]]]**
             Type 2   *3.3.2 Translation of AA*
                  [[[[classifying report]]]]
                    Type 1   *(1) Using the every/each/all+' Structure*
                 ^   **[[[[[[descriptive report]]]]]]**
            ^   **Type 2**   *(2) Using Pronouns*
               ^   **[[[[[[descriptive report]]]]]]**
                    Type 3   *(3) Abandoning Form for Preserving Meaning*
                      [[[[[[descriptive report]]]]]]
             Type 3   *3.3.3 Translation of AABB*
                [[[[descriptive report]]]]
  Resolution   *Conclusion*

Figure 3.5 Synoptic overview of the multivariate structure of *Chapter 3*

in Thesis 2018_4

To guarantee the intra-coder reliability of this SFL-based genre analysis (as stated in *Section 3.1.1,* this chapter), the manual work involving both the deconstruction and labelling was taken up by the researcher for two times with an interval of three weeks. Altogether, the 12 bachelor's theses were deconstructed into 235 shorter texts based on their ideational meanings, each of which was assigned to a specific elemental genre, out of which 18 were tagged differently in the second coding from they were in the first. As such, the two codings reached a 92.3% intra-coder agreement, and then the researcher re-examined the 18 "problematic" texts more closely before a final resolution was made.

To warrant inter-coder reliability, a peer researcher was invited to help manually analyse the 12 theses in the pilot corpus. This peer researcher is a PhD candidate, who is now conducting his PhD research project, also adopting the analytic tools offered in the SFL genre theories, on analysing and comparing the generic complexities involved in tertiary textbooks, within and between the disciplines of economics and law. Having worked with SFL-based theories of language for more than 10 years and had two major research findings presented and well-received in two international conferences - one in Japan and the other in Australia, this peer researcher is undoubtedly an experienced hand in this field and has been deeply familiar with the genre taxonomies and coding procedures within this theoretical camp. Prior to launching into the inter-coding process, an orientation meeting was arranged between the two researchers, in which the principal researcher briefed the peer researcher on the general background of the present research and the immediate objectives of the pilot study. Both researchers subsequently went through the operating taxonomies of elemental genres together, until a mutual agreement was reached on the major aspects

of the inter-coding procedure. The peer researcher coded the 235 smaller texts in the pilot corpus for two times, as the principal researcher did, but with a shorter interval of four days, and reached an intra-coder reliability up to 94.5%. Upon closer re-examination, his assignment of each text to a particular genre was finalised, upon which, the two researchers agreed on 217 texts out of the 235 in total, thus reaching an inter-coder agreement rate up to 92.3%. To arrive at a proper solution to the 18 texts where there was residual disagreement, either the original thesis writers, if available, or a third researcher, who is an Associate Professor in English Language Studies in SICAU and have had many years of experiences of working with SFL theories and supervising bachelor's thesis writing for English majors in this university, was consulted for their emic, for one, or etic, for the other, accounts.

3.4.3 Preliminary findings from the pilot study

3.4.3.1 Deconstruction of bachelor's theses into elemental genres: overall distribution

On the whole, the macrogenres of 12 bachelor's theses under the pilot were deconstructed into 235 shorter texts, each realising a particular elemental genre, averaging 19.58 cases per thesis, with a coverage of up to 19 elemental genres in all the 7 genre families. *Table 3.3* provides a more elaborate description of the varieties of elemental genres and their general distribution across the pilot corpus. Note that given the relatively large scale of the corpus and the fact that the primary interest of the present study lies in the varieties of elemental genres at work and the general frequency of each, the particulate realisations of the macrogenres, i.e., the logic-semantic relationships between the elemental genres either through complexing or embedding, was not, and will not be, further discussed.

As shown in *Table 3.3*, the two most common elemental genres in the pilot corpus are descriptive reports (33.19%) and classifying reports (19.15%), both of which belong to the genre family of reports sharing the description of an entity as their primary social purpose. Specifically, descriptive reports are most frequently employed, for instance, when these English-major thesis writers set out to describe the charactersitics of a cultural phenomenon in English-speaking countries or a thesis writers present or review the existing literature that has been devoted to particular linguitic phenomenon in translation studies or linguistics. It is classifying reports, on the other hand, that play a pivotal role when they intend to classify the topic/phenomenon central to their own discussion.
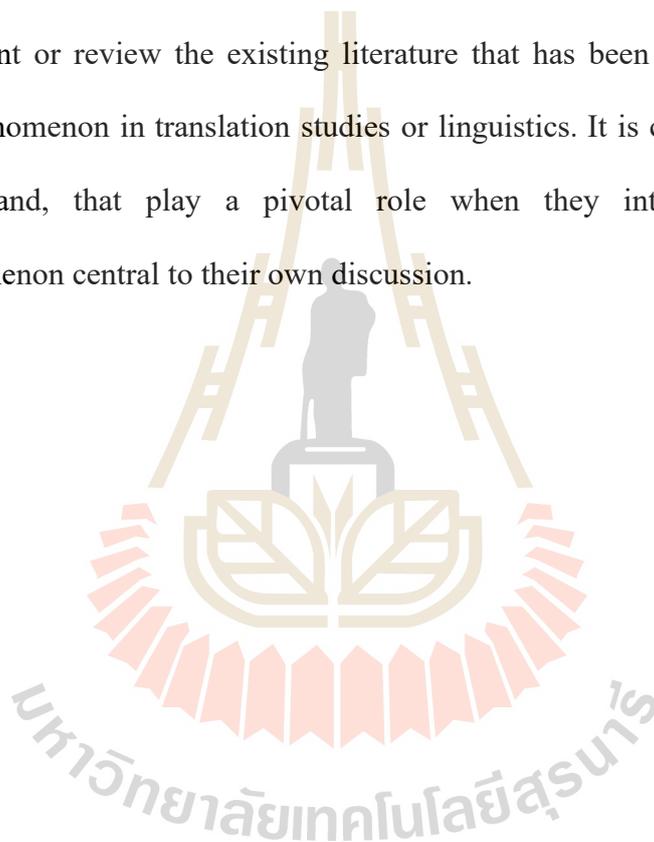
Table 3.3 Overall distribution of elemental genres across the pilot corpus

Genre		2018-1	2018-2	2018-3	2018-4	2018-5	2018-6	2018-7	2018-8	2017-1	2016-1	2015-1	2014-1	Total	Genre(s) per thesis	Percentage
Stories	exemplum		1											1	0.08	0.43%
Chronicles	biographical recount									1		1		2	0.17	0.85%
	historical account			1										1	0.08	0.43%
	historical recount		2	1		1			1					5	0.42	2.13%
	factorial explanation	2	2	2					1	1		1	1	10	0.83	4.26%
	consequential explanation		2					3						5	0.42	2.13%
	conditional explanation			2										2	0.17	3.40%
	analytcial explanation					1								1	0.08	0.43%
Reports	descriptive reports	9	1	3	17	15	10	3	12	5		1	2	78	6.50	33.19%
	classifying reports	7		3	12	5	4	8	1	5				45	3.75	19.15%
	compositional reports			3	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	14	1.17	5.96%
Procedural Genres	procedures	1	1							1				3	0.25	1.28%
	protocols							1						1	0.08	0.43%
	procedural recounts		2			4				1				7	0.58	2.98%
Arguments	exposition	4	1	3		1	2	1		3	12			30	2.50	12.77%
	challenge		2											2	0.17	0.85%
	discussion					1		1	1	1	1			5	0.42	2.13%
Text Responses	review									2			1	3	0.25	1.28%
	interpretation											10	10	20	1.67	8.51%
Total		23	11	21	30	29	20	18	18	21	14	15	15	235	19.58	100.00%

(*No instances were found in the pilot corpus of observations, narratives, anecdotes, and news stories; autobiographical recount; sequential explanation; personal responses and critical reviews. Therefore, they were automatically excluded from *Table 3.3*.)

In Thesis 2018_8 which explores the translation of city guidebooks from the perspective of Skopos Theory, a section entitled "*Features of City Guidebook*" instantiates a descrptive report that unfolds through two obligatory stages typical of this

genre: a Classification stage characterising the target, i.e., city guidebooks, as a formal and comprehensive tourism text, followed by a Description stage describing the text in terms of two sets of characteristics - its contents and stylistic features. Each characteristic constitutes a phase of the Description stage, and this phasal structure is signalled with paragraphing and cohesive markers (*First of all..; As for...;* underlined). *Table 3.4* below illustrates the generic structure of this short text, with stages and phases labelled, and key elements in bold. Note that errors or grammatical mistakes, if any, are not to be discussed, so the excerpts demonstrated in the remainder of this thesis are all presented intact as in the original copies.

Table 3.4 Descriptive report in "*2.1.2 Features of City Guidebooks*" of Thesis 2018_8

descriptive report	Text
	2.1.2 Features of City Guidebooks
Classification	The content of city guidebook, distinctive from many other common tour guide commentaries, is more formal and comprehensive and its features can be generally summarized as two types: the scope of tourism text and the stylistic features of tourism text.
Description contents	First of all, city guidebook has a quite wide range of contents. In terms of tourism information, it includes tourism resources, tourism products, tourism entertainment, tourism research and tourism transportation, tourism education and so on.
stylistic features	As for its stylistic features, city guidebook unlike impromptu tour guide speech, is much more formal and belongs to descriptive writing because its duty is to report all useful tourism information as they really are. Therefore, those words used in city guidebooks are special vocabulary and terms; they contain detailed information about Chinese culture; the sentence is refined, the paragraph is simple and the language style is easy to understand. All these text features are also expected to be realized in translated text, so that it is possible for foreign tourists to a city to understand. All in all, tourism English, just like Chinese, is a kind of applied language with diverse forms and stylistic categories.

Another section entitled *"Classification of Euphemism"* in Thesis 2018_7 which is concerned with the application of English euphemism in cross-cultural commnication represents a canonical classfication report, which is self evidenced from its section headline. This report opens with a Classification stage that characterises euphemism as a crucial expression with rich varities in daily communication. Just as Martin & Rose (2008) have noted that "crucial to this genre are criteria for classification, and the same phenomena may be classified differently according to various criteria" (p. 144), the writer of Thesis 2018_7 also acknowledges that euphemism *"can be divided differently according to different standards"*. In spite of the uncertainty in classifying criteria, the writer marshalls 5 Type stages extracted from one *"influential classfication which has already been widely accpeted by researchers",* which is explicity previewed in the opening Classification stage. The generic structure of this classifying report is provided in *Table 3.5* below.

Although the examples in *Table 3.4* and *Table 3.5* are unquestionably representative of the canonical reports, there has emerged from the pilot corpus a new optional stage, labelled as "Exemplification" by the researcher, which occurs rather frequently in some reporting genres - most notably in those theses devoted to translation or linguitisc studies. The primary social function of this stage, as the researcher perceives, is to give typical exemplars of the entity(ies) being described, which, oftentimes elucidated with pointed comments, set out to reinfornce the descriptions offered in the preceding obligatory stages.

Table 3.5 Classifying report in "*1.2 Classification of Euphemism*" of Thesis 2018_7

classifying report	Text
	1.2 Classification of Euphemism
Classification	Euphemism, as a crucial expression, exists in every aspect of every society and changes with the time and with the culture, the situation, the theme and individual development. With the development of society, euphemisms have become richer and richer, and more and more kinds of them are coined, including euphemisms about occupation, about old age, about sex, etc. It is not surprising that there are various euphemisms in the daily communication. With regard to the classification, they can be divided differently according to different standards. The following one is the influential classification which has already been widely accepted by researchers.
Type 1 description explanation examples	About Parts of the Body. In the advancing century, the sensitive parts of the body are unceasingly transferred, for directly presenting a word such as 'nude' will give people an impression of impoliteness and even vulgarity. (He Bin, 2003: 65) However, the effect will be totally different if euphemisms are used, such as 'in one's birthday suit', 'in Adam's and Eve's togs', 'in the buff', or 'showing one's form'. Moreover, 'breasts' can be called 'big brown eyes'; 'buns' can be substituted for 'the posterior'.
Type 2 explanation examples	About Diseases and Disabilities. It is not pleasant to talk about diseases and disabilities, and the use of euphemisms can avoid adding the psychological pressure of patients and their families, thus easing their psychological burdens. For example, people often substitute 'under the weather' for 'be ill', 'mentally handicapped' for 'psychosis' and 'the runs' for 'diarrhea', while 'social disease' is used to indicate 'venerable disease'.
Type 3 description explanation examples	About Death. Death is considered as the final destination of living beings and it is inevitable. However, no one wants to die. Hence, in communication, people tend to choose a euphemistic way to avoid the direct mention of death. That's why the euphemisms related to death can be found everywhere in almost every language, especially in English. For example, people never say 'a dying man' directly; instead, they use euphemistic expressions like 'to have one foot in the grave', 'to go for your tea', 'R.I.P. (rest in peace)', 'answer the final call', 'be asleep in the Arms of God', 'be at rest', 'be called to the beyond', 'yield up the ghost', 'pay one's debt to nature', 'cease to live' and so on.
Type 4 description examples	About Sex and Reproduction. In language, sex is often disguised by euphemism, whether it is lawful or unlawful, normal or abnormal. For instance, people often replace 'after one's greens' with 'lust'; 'petting' is called 'canoeing' or 'amorous'; 'tumescence' is changed into 'distension of the phallus', 'sexual intercourse' into 'act of love', and 'pregnancy' into 'to wear the apron high'.
Type 5 description examples	About Crime and Punishment. In English, there are abundant euphemisms concerning crimes and punishments. Here are some examples: 'thieves' have been described as 'five-fingers', 'bumper', 'shoplifter' or 'light-fingered'; 'crush out' is the substitute for 'murder', 'a sensitive gift' for 'bribery', 'fruit salad party' for 'drug-taking' and 'chum' for 'inmate'.

Table 3.6 below illustrates this Exemplification stage as it appears in a descrptive report instantiated in a section entitled *Pun* (in Thesis 2018_6) which introduces the use of this rhetorcial device in English advertising. Seen from *Table 3.6*, this report embodies two obligatory stages, i.e., Classification ^ Description, that classify pun as a form of word play drawing on words with same/similar sounds but different meanings and then describe it in terms of its features and functions. This obligatory stage is, in turn, followed by an optional Exemplification stage, incorporating two exemplars of pun used in two pieces of English advertisement.

The theorisation of Exemplification as a stand-alone stage through which reporting genres are realised is based on the following two considerations. First, across the 12 bachelor's theses under pilot, it occurs rather regularly, though not compulsorily, in quite a number of deconstructed elemental genres, most noticeably so in reporting genres - specifically, altogether, 44 instances of Exemplification stage are found across 35 descriptive reports, 6 classifying reports, 2 expositions and 1 factorial explanation. Second, rather than as an exemplifying phase loosely embeded in a larger descrptive stage, the Exemplification stage identified here demonstrates a recognisable clear-cut phasal structure on its own right (in most cases one or more examples followed by an elucidation), which is often signalled by the thesis writers with paragraphing, numbering, and/or cohesive expressions such as *Here are some(two) examples…, For example…, More examples are…*, and so on, as underlined in *Table 3.6*.

Table 3.6 Descriptive report in "*2.1 Pun*" of Thesis 2018_6

descriptive report	Text *2.1 Pun*
Classification	As a typical form of word play that deliberately explores the ambiguity of the linguistic units, pun is an amusing use of words on the basis of the identity or close similarity between words with the same or similar sounds but different meanings.
Description features functions	By using homophone and homograph, one sentence is skillfully given two meanings. Homophone means words are of the similar or even the same sound while homograph means words are of the same form orthographically. Specifically, homophonic pun uses two homophonic words in one linguistic construction or sequence, which is frequently seen in advertising. The main function of puns is to make the advertising more attractive for realizing the expected humorous effect, meanwhile some puns have a more serious and subtle intent, aiming at leaving an indelible impression on the recipients. Moreover, pun in advertising fortunately can save money by expressing more than one meaning with just one word or one phrase. Thus, when reading the advertising with a pun, consumers usually realize the other implicit and obscure meaning of the pun through the established association in mind and then probably find that how interesting the advertising is, consequently they are impressed deeply with it.
Exemplification example elucidation example elucidation	Here are some examples: (1) Forget hot taste. Only Kool, with pure menthol has the taste of extra coolness. Come up to Kool. (Kool) This is the advertising for Kool cigarette which employs a homophonic word of 'cool' to refer to both the brand of the Kool cigarette and the cool feeling of tasting the cigarette. The artful use of Kool as the brand of the cigarette makes the products distinctive from the normal ones and easily establishes the association of cool feeling of products and the Kool cigarette. (2) Start ahead. (Rejoice) This is the shampoo advertising of Rejoice. 'Ahead' can be dissected into two morphemes 'a' and 'head'. It is obvious that there are two meaning of the word 'head'. One meaning is that if you want to do something well, you should start from the point of beginning. Another meaning is that firstly you should make your hair on your head clean, indicating that this shampoo will help you obtain success. The advertising is concise and memorable so that few people can resist the temptation of the magical shampoo.

Turning back to *Table 3.3*, it can be seen that following on from the two reporting genres explicated above is an arguing genre - exposition (12.77%) - on top of the pile, although the most common site for this genre is either the traditional *Introduction* section or *Conclusions*, where the thesis writers tend to make use of this evaluating genre to argue for the necessity, significance or potential value to conduct the study. An instance of exposition is demonstrated in *Table 3.7* below, which is deconstructed from the *Introduction* section of Thesis 2017_1, the primary purpose of which is for the thesis writer to argue for the need or necessity to study back-*translation* - an undertaking (s)he actually embarks on in this thesis by comparing two Chinese translated versions of *Moment in Peking*. In this short text, the writer proceeds through the canonical schematic structure of an exposition, i.e., Background ^ Thesis ^ Argument ^ Reinforcement.

Table 3.7 Exposition in "*Introduction*" of Thesis 2017_1

exposition	Text
	An excerpt from Introduction
Background	Translation activity is a cultural activity in the final analysis, so is back-translation, a new branch of translation.
Thesis	More studies on the back-translating techniques are **in need**.
Argument	Back-translation can **better give expression to cultural transmission** because the back-translator has to analyze both the original text and the translated text, which is **a good way to** judge the effect of the cultural transmission and **improve the methods** to transmit culture through translating.
Reinforcement	So it is **of great necessity** to study on the back-translation and give translators some suggestions.

A final observation worth mentioning is the relatively high frequency of Text Responses in the overall pilot corpus, although they are almost exclusively found in the two theses devoted to literary studies. Within the genre family of Text Responses, only reviews and interpretations are found across the macrogenres of 12 bachelor's theses, with interpretations (8.51%) far exceeding reviews (1.28%) in numbers. This seems to indicate that when the English-major students take up literary studies in their bachelor's theses, they are more interested in exploring the dominant messages (themes) or cultural values delivered in the literary works than simply expressing personal comments or judgements. An instance of interpretation is shown in *Table 3.8* below, taken from a section entitled *Loss of Self* in Thesis 2014_1, which explores this theme in *Lord of Flies*, a remarkable novel in Dystopian Literature. This interpretation unfolds through a 3-stage generic structure, i.e., Evaluation ^ Synopsis ^ Reaffirmation, in compliance with what Rothery & Stenglin (2000) have before proposed. Specifically, in the opening Evaluation stage, the dominant message *"loss of self"* is articulated which gives the literary work a particular sociocultural value. In the Synopsis stage, the thesis writer shows, by way of a selective retelling, how the characters and events in the novel are constructed so as to convey this theme; thus, character recontextualisation and event recontextualisation are two particularly important phases involved in this stage. The final stage, Reaffirmation, restates more forcefully the significance of this theme and elaborates on it in terms of the more far-reaching impact that it endorses on ethical tradition and human nature (see Rothery & Stenglin, 2000, p. 226).

Table 3.8 Interpretation in "*3.3 Loss of Self*" of Thesis 2014_1

interpretation	Text
	3.3 Loss of Self
Evaluation	We know that if one is isolated and settles in new surroundings, he will usually do something abnormal. In this novel, almost all kids felt the loss of themselves.
Synopsis character recontextualisation event recontextualisation	The obvious example was Jack who used to be the chief of the choir. Since he was not chosen as chief, he and his fellows had to receive a new mission. In the beginning, Jack agreed with Piggy that they should behave as civilized people and everybody should obey the rules. When Jack went into the forest to find food, he even didn't dare to kill pigs. However, after he overcame his fear, he became addicted in hunting and forgot his responsibility to keep the burning. The only thoughts in his mind were hunt and meat. By killing pigs he could get back to his own values. Though Jack never hunted pigs before, he succeeded in killing one after another to prove his ability. While hunting, he also felt that he was being hunted, too. So he had to be courageous enough and wore war paint to cover his original appearance. Jack had lost himself and turned into a totally different person. He hid his cowardliness and consciousness. He became indifferent to the bloody scenes. Only by this means could he be courageous enough to do the brutal things. From then on, the virtuous boy from the civilized world had disappeared; a cruel savage took his place. Jack demonstrated that he could hunt and defeat the beast. The rules which Ralph had set were powerless to Jack and he shared the meat with other boys, so he establishes his own tribe. Even worse, he used these boys' fears of the beast to control their actions. The tribe killed Simon and Piggy under the leadership of Jack. Jack's loss of himself finally turned him into an actual beast.
Reaffirmation of Evaluation	These kids in *Lord of the Flies* underwent the loss of themselves in a new society. They had to put themselves into this new world to get approval. Little by little they lost their own characteristics and did as the others do. The constraint of ethical tradition gradually weakened and the human nature finally was destroyed.

A great deal of effort has been made so far to elaborate on the four elemental genres which loom large in the pilot corpus. In contrast, the others, especially those of stories, chronicles and procedural genres, have occurred less significantly in the entire data set. In sum, the overall frequency of the 7 genre families is presented in *Table 3.9* below.

Table 3.9 Overall distribution of genre families across the pilot corpus

Genre family	Total cases	Percentage
Stories	1	0.43%
Chronicles	8	3.40%
Explanations	18	7.66%
Reports	137	58.30%
Procedural genres	11	4.68%
Arguments	37	15.74%
Text responses	23	9.79%
Total	235	100%

A straigtforward observation from *Table 3.9* above is the overwhelming dominance of reports *(*58.30*%) -* factual genres assuming primarily a social function placed on the more informative end on the continuum, over those of arguments *(*15.74*%)* or text responses *(*9.79*%)* on the more evaluative end which tax a more critical and reasoning mind *(*for the continuum of social functions that different genres perform, see *Figure 2.2* in *Section 2.1.2*, *Chapter 2)*. Unveiling the 12 thesis writers*'* general disposition to inform rather than to critique, the genre analysis so far seems to provide textual evidences, not incidentally, for the accusation levelled against undergraduate theses that they are not actively involved in the development of new knowledge in the relevant fields, but instead, merely committed to transmitting the received wisdom (Grobman & Kinkead, 2010; Xu et al., 2016). To quote Tardy (2005), in other words, they are wrestling with the task of "knowledge telling" rather than the more complex task of "knowledge transformation" (p. 325).

3.4.3.2 Analytical explanation: A newly identified elemental genre

From the piloting genre analysis, a new elemental genre has emerged that falls into the genre family of explanations which are concerned with explaining how a phenomenon happens (as seen included in *Table 3.3*), but it is mutually identified by the two principal coders as not fitting appropriately into either sequential, factorial, or consequential explanations in the existing taxonomy. As it will be demonstrated, this new genre, termed as "analytical explanations" for the moment by the two coders, shares with the other members of explanations an overall social purpose to explain an event or a phenomenon "through the examination of causes and consequences" (Coffin, 2006, p. 67). However, unlike the sequential, factorial and/or consequential explanations outlined in *Section 2.1.2.3, Chapter 2,* the analytical explanation fulfils

this overarching purpose mainly through analysing the overall event/phenomenon into its constituting elements and accounting for each element from different aspects in order to seek an all-around explanation. Thus, not surprisingly, the genre displays a distinct generic structure and some linguistic features as it unfolds in texts.

In the pilot corpus, the only instance that instantiates this genre is a traditional *Conclusions* section in Thesis 2018_5, which reports on a corpus-based study on Biophysics English. The general purpose of this section is to summarise the main findings from the thesis writer's analysis on a Biophysics Corpus, in terms of its STTR (standard type-token ratio), POS (Part of Speech), frequency of functional words, and usage and semantic categories of connectors, respectively; and for each of theses findings (s)he has attempted to offer some speculative explanations. *Table 3.10* below illustrates the schematic structure of this newly identified genre.

The opening Orientation stage pinpoints the gist of the thesis by locating the study in a corpus-driven context that uses both qualitative and quantitative methods. This is then followed by four Explanation: Aspects stages, in which the major results from the corpus analysis are presented from the aforementioned four strands, each of which is further expounded with possible explanations of their causes.

As seen from *Table 3.10*, the results and explanations of their causes provide the two phases, i.e., outcome ^ reason, that comprise the Explanation stages. The writer signals the boundaries between the two phases by expressions such as *which is partly because…, This is because…, A proper explanation of the high frequency of functional words is that…, and This indicates that…* (underlined in *Table 3.10*)*,* which collectively contribute, as they were, to an all-sided understanding of the overall results of the corpus-based study on Biophysics English.

Table 3.10 Analytical explanation in "*Conclusion*" of Thesis 2018_5

analytical explanation	Text *Conclusions*
Orientation the gist/context of study	In this study, a biophysics corpus is compiled and the basic data statistics and the usage of connector in comparison with that in academic writing are analyzed with both qualitative and quantitative methods.
Explanation: Aspect 1 outcome reason	On the whole, biophysics corpus has a STTR of 37.91, which is slightly lower than 41.20 in BNC. That's to say, vocabularies in biophysics corpus is not as rich as that in BNC, which is partly because more registers are included in BNC.
Explanation: Aspect 2 outcome reason	As for POS, the top 10 POS in biophysics corpus are NN, IN, JJ, NNS, DT, MP, CD, CC, VVN and RB. Other than NN and NNS, NP accounts for a large part of the corpus, which is a unique feature of specialized corpus. Besides, CC (coordinating conjunction) and passive voice are frequently used to increase the objectivity and reliability of the texts. This is because conjunction always represents strong logical connection and passive voice usually takes the object as the subject and put the process of action in the noticeable place, which emphases the the truth itself
Explanation: Aspect 3 outcome reason	Though NN ranks in the top of the POS frequency list, only two nouns appear in the 20 mostly used words. With 'the' ranking in the first, most frequently used words belong to functional words, such as preposition, determination and conjunction. Large number of content words begin to emerge after the top 20 used words. And this is the same case with the Reuters corpus, which is in accordance with the words of Liang Maocheng that in Chinese, the most frequently used word is always '的', while in English, that is always 'the'. A proper explanation of the high frequency of functional words is that their types are very limited, while they have great power to constitute numerous expressions and phrases.
Explanation: Aspect 4 outcome reason	In terms of the usage of connectors in biophysics corpus, academic writing part of ICE-GB is introduced as a reference corpus, which also can be seen as a common corpus. Overall biophysics corpus uses more connectors than academic writing, and the top ten overused connectors in biophysics corpus account for as high as 81% of the total D-value of connectors between two corpora. In the aspect of semantic category, both corpora have similar tendency in the usage of connectors with contrast/concession ranking the first, enumeration/addition and result/inference second or third, followed by summation and transition. This indicates that in comparison with general corpus, biophysics corpus shows the same preference for the category of connectors, while the total usage of connectors in biophysics corpus is far more than that in general corpus.

Similar to factorial explanations, the analytical explanation is concerned with explaining a particular phenomenon in terms of its *causes* or *reasons*, rather than *consequences* or *effects* as in consequential explanations. However, from the present analysis, the researcher proposes analytical explanations as a new genre - differentiated from factorial explanations from a typological perspective, on the grounds that while the latter focus on multiple factors leading to a particular

phenomenon in its entirety, the phenomenon being explained in the former is *de-composed*. This distinction is explicated diagrammatically in *Figure 3.6* below, in which the relations between the phenomenon and its causes are indicated with arrows.
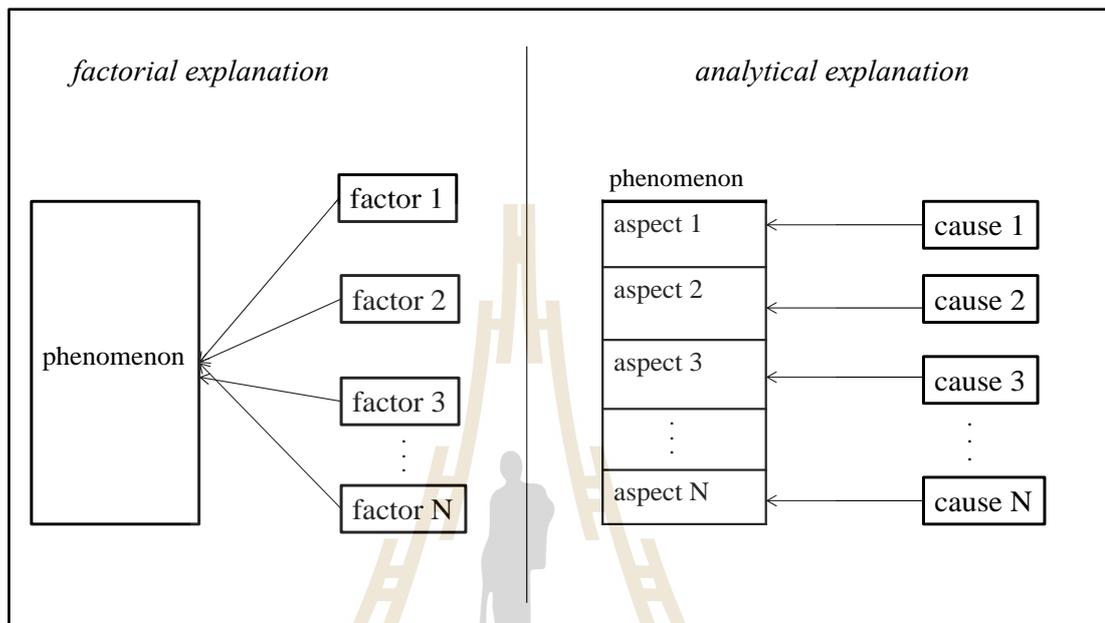
Figure 3.6 Distinction between the two causal explanations

However, it must be acknowledged that the theorisation of this new explanation genre represents only a tentative move on the basis of only one sample text; thus, its rigor needs yet further verification from a larger corpus in the main study and closer examination of more instantiating texts.

3.4.4 Conclusions of the pilot study

Thus far, it has been partially demonstrated that SFL-based genre analysis on the 12 bachelor's theses has uncovered the hidden rhetorical values in this tertiary macrogenre, particularly in terms of what elemental genres are bulking up and how they are unfolding in constructing the macrostructures, all of which attests to the applicability of genre theories in the SFL tradition to meet the objectives of the current

research. Additionally, from this pilot analysis, a new explaining genre, i.e., analytical explanation, with its distinct social purpose and schematic structure, has been put forth, and a new generic stage, i.e., Exemplification, has emerged in a noticeable number of reporting genres. These two small additions, as humbly wished, may not only help to enrich and modify the analytical frameworks employed to inform the remaining part of the main study, but also contribute its due share, minute as it is, to the existing storehouse of SFL genre theories. However, it must be admitted that the conclusions drawn out at this juncture are by no means assertive, especially considering the small scale and unrandomised sampling of the corpus under pilot. Strong corroboration from bigger data in the main study is still wanted.
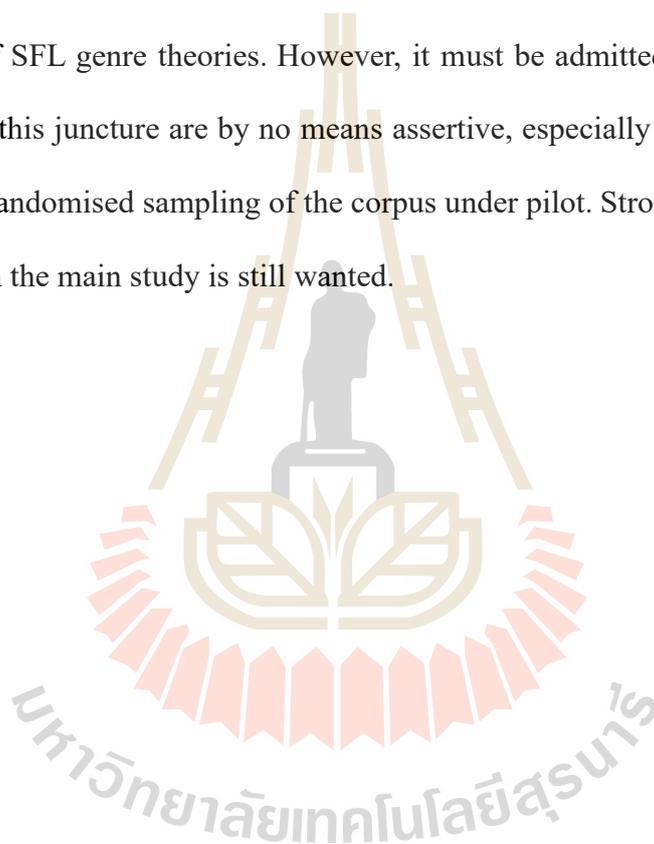
CHAPTER 4

GENRE CONFIGURATION OF BACHELOR'S THESES

This chapter sets out to present the major findings from the SFL-based genre analysis on the current corpus of bachelor's theses, relative to Research Question 1, "what elemental genres do SICAU English majors use to construct the macrogenres of bachelor's theses and what are their schematic structures?". Coupled with other types of qualitative data, such as institutional documents, and in-depth or talk-around-text interviews with thesis writers/advisor, discussion are then extended into the rhetorical values underneath the genre deployment that circulate in this thesis writing community.

4.1 Deployment of elemental genres in bachelor's theses

> *"Textual qualities? I think, first of all, a good bachelor's thesis must have a complete structure, and second, a flawless logic."*
>
> *(Grace, a thesis advisor interviewed)*

4.1.1 Overall results

Analysis of the deployment of elemental genres helps to reveal the construction of bachelor's theses as complex social processes. It also provides a discursive means to capture the meaning implicated in "*a complete structure*", as emphasised by one of the thesis advisors in the interview and likewise subscribed to by the other three, as a so highly-valued element in this academic macrogenre.

The 40 bachelor's theses written by SICAU English majors in the past five

years contained 776 instances of elemental genres, averaging 19.4 cases per thesis. The generic complexity of this macrogenre did not only manifest itself quantitatively in terms of number, but also qualitatively in terms of the variety of recognisable elemental genres used to complete it. Specifically, twenty-two types of elemental genres (a broader coverage than the number of 19 in the pilot) were ultimately identified across the full corpus, with no instances being found for observation, recount, news story, personal response, and critical review.

Table 4.1 presents the frequency counts and proportions of these elemental genres and genre families. In order to illustrate the generic outlook, canonical examples from the data will be used, highlighting the manner in which individual elemental genre is staged and contributes its rhetorical share to achieving the ultimate goal of bachelor's theses. It needs to be reiterated that genre analysis is an interpretative method, and the present analysis was not without "coding dilemmas" (Pessoa, Mitchell & Miller, 2017). At times, tricky cases appeared with a "surplus" of stages or linguistic features atypical of a particular genre, and/or a "loss" of the proverbial valued ones, or in rarer cases, they were found to "straddle the borders" between genres (Martin, 2002b, p.109), reflecting the subtleties of student writing in an EFL context. For instance, one small section in Thesis_2016_2 was entitled "*Influence of Translators' Cultural Identities on C-E Literature Translation*". Misled by its heading, the guest inter-coder first misinterpreted this short text as a discussion of the impact of translator's cultural identities that resulted in their choice of translation strategies, thus labelling it as a consequential explanation. However, upon careful inspection and second-round of negotiation between the present researcher and the guest inter-coder, it was found that, despite the misleading heading and an ambiguous Orientation stage at the beginning of

the text, the body part of the text was devoted to 5 factors within the translator's cultural identities that would be held accountable for the translators' translation behaviours. Therefore, both coders finally agreed on a decision to label this text as a factorial explanation. In similar cases like these, one basic principle was pay particular attention to the most prominent overarching social purpose assignable to individual texts, to facilitate the differentiation of genres.

Table 4.1 Frequency of elemental genres in the corpus of bachelor's theses

genre family	elemental genre	count of instances		percentage	
reports	descriptive report	254		32.73%	
	classifying report	86	**386**	11.08%	**49.74%**
	compositional report	46		5.93%	
arguments	exposition	190		24.48%	
	challenge	3	**204**	0.39%	**26.29%**
	discussion	11		1.42%	
text responses	review	22		2.84%	
	interpretation	40	**62**	5.15%	**7.99%**
explanations	sequential explanation	1		0.13%	
	factorial explanation	31		3.99%	
	consequential explanation	12	**50**	1.55%	**6.44%**
	conditional explanation	2		0.26%	
	analytical explanation	4		0.52%	
chronicles	biographical recount	6		0.77%	
	historical account	5	**36**	0.64%	**4.64%**
	historical recount	25		3.22%	
procedural genres	procedure	6		0.77%	
	protocol	2	**29**	0.26%	**3.87%**
	procedural recount	22		2.84%	
stories	anecdote	1		0.13%	
	exemplum	5	**8**	0.64%	**1.03%**
	narrative	2		0.26%	
total		776		100.00%	

It is fairly noticeable that reports carried the greatest amount of rhetorical weight in the construction of bachelor's theses, comprising nearly half (49.74%) of all occurrences in the data set, with descriptive reports (32.73%) atop the list followed by

classifying reports (11.08%) and compositional reports (5.93%). That reports contained the highest frequency is probably due to that fact that bachelor's thesis writers invested considerable rhetorical efforts to characterise the linguistic or cultural phenomena being studied, to inform the readers of the essentials of theories, to describe the attributes of research instruments, or to introduce the classifications or constituents of certain abstract or complicated conceptes. On the whole, as Lai & Wang (2018) have it, describing the quality, status and formation of entities is the cornerstone of all forms of academic or scientific activities.

Examples of descriptive report and classifying report have been seen in *Table 3.4* and *Table 3.5* in the preceding chapter, so no efforts shall be made to repeat. *Table 4.2* below is a typical example of compositional report. Given the limited space, the text presented is a highly abridged version (the deleted wording is indicated by '…'), but the content remains in the sequence it appears in the original. The same format will be followed hereinafter when illustrating the schematic structure of other genres.

Table 4.2 Compositional report in "*1.2.2 Components of CL*" of Thesis 2016_4

compositional report]	Text
	1.2.2 Components of CL
Classification	CL share the following five elements proposed by Johnson: "goal interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, group skills and group processing."[12]
Component 1	The first and most prominent, goal interdependence refers to the sense that every student is vital for the group and they have to work together to fulfill a common goal…
Component 2	The second element in CL is face-to-face interaction…
Component 3	The third necessary element of CL is individual accountability…
Component 4	Group skills are a series of group cooperative skills and interaction strategies which can help the students conduct cooperative learning more smoothly…
Component 5	The final component is the group processing…

Unsurprisingly, bachelor's thesis writers also made particularly heavy use of arguments, making up 26.29% of all cases. Among the three sub-categories, expositions were used most frequently, amounting to 24.48%, second only to descriptive report on the overall ranking, whereas the other two members, i.e., discussions (1.42%) and challenges (0.39%), were of minimal use in the corpus. The most common sites for expositions were the two obligatory parts of a bachelor's thesis, *Introduction* and *Conclusions*. In the *Introduction* part, thesis writers employed expositions to establish background importance and/or present the necessity of or a valued purpose for the research (for which, *Table 3.7* is a typical example), while in the *Conclusions* part, expositions were utilised mainly to comment on the implications or real-world values of the research or to pinpoint its limitations or weaknesses. By contrast, there were far fewer cases in which the thesis writer sought to inspect an issue from opposing perspectives, as in a discussion (*Table 4.3*), or to refute an existing claim, as in a challenge (*Table 4.4*), in order to establish his/her own contentions.

Table 4.3 Discussion in "*3.2 Xu Yuanchong's 'Rivalry Theory'*" of Thesis 2015_2

discussion	Text
	3.2 Xu Yuanchong's "Rivalry Theory"
Issue	Speaking of the "Rivalry Theory", some people in translation circle are for it while some are against it.
Side 1	The objectors think this theory goes against translation theories' main principle-faithfulness, thus is contradictory to translation's essence.
Side 2	However, the supporters praised the theory as a breakthrough of traditional translation theories. They believe it is actually a kind of high-level faithfulness…
Resolution	From the perspective of ideology, it can be perceived from Xu Yuanchong's theory that the western ideology of confidence has exerted an impact on the traditional Chinese Confucian ideology of modesty, making the people of China become more and more confident and self-centered. As a result, Chinese translation circle has affirmed its advantages and merits, thus dialoguing and competing with the former on the basis of equality.

Table 4.4 Challenge in "*3.1 Possible Solutions to Chinese Americans' Self-Identity*"
of Thesis 2014_8

challenge	Text
	3.1 Possible Solutions to Chinese Americans' Self-Identity
Position Challenged	Many people suggest people in a foreign land should acculturate into its mainstream society if they want to be accepted by the community.
Anti-thesis	But if people do as these people suggest, American multicultural society will **never** exist.
Rebuttal 1	In my opinion, the first possible better way I suppose is to adapt to a new society is to maintain its original culture and add something new in mind. Take American Chinese cuisine as an example…
Rebuttal 2	…The step to assimilate in multicultural America Chinese Americans has experienced this painful and difficult process. In this process, they have a strong feeling for both the cultural conflicts and coexistence. So the second solution is to have a better understanding about each other …
Reiteration	In summary, as for Chinese Americans, maintaining an original identity is difficult… For those who have desire for keeping their culture, they can promote proud culture as well as entering the mainstream of American society without anxiety of marginalization. More importantly, Chinese Americans should have a clear self-identity about themselves…

Despite the possible variability in terms of academic level, "the development of an argument is regarded as a key feature of successful writing by academics across disciplines" (Wingate, 2012, p. 145). By developing arguments -expositions in particular, the bachelor's thesis writers were expected to demonstrate their powers of independent thinking and to persuade readers to align with their claims. Looking into the institutional context, it is found that the importance of sound argument was explicitly stated in two criteria in the Department's assessment rubrics, which accounted for 30% of the total credits: *(1) The thesis has an unambiguous main argument, supported by rigorous reasoning and solid evidences; (2) The thesis conveys original and creative ideas.* The first statement, not incidentally, echoed the "*flawless logic*" mentioned by the thesis advisor in the framing quote.

Arguments were immediately followed by text responses which likewise

perform evaluative roles in the discourse. However, the proportion of text responses displayed interesting variations across the 4 subfields. The total occurrences of these genres that made up 8% of the overall corpus were almost exclusively confined to the 2 literature theses but only piecemeal in theses of cultural studies and translation, and were completely absent from those of applied linguistics (variations of genre deployment across the 4 subfields will be further discussed in *Section 4.2*). Consistent with the prior pilot analysis, the use of interpretations (5.15%) remarkably exceeded that of reviews (2.84%), which was unsurprising, however, given that studies in and of literature were naturally engaged in evaluative and interpretative work to unravel issues such as themes, characters, symbolic meanings, to name but a few, of a selected literary work, rhetorically constructing why the selected text is of social, historical, and aesthetic significance. An example of interpretation has been given in *Table 3.8* in the previous chapter. Here, the excerpt in *Table 4.5* is a typical review.

Table 4.5 Review in "*1.1.1 An Introduction of Lin Yutang and Moment in Peking*" of Thesis 2017_1

review	Text
	1.1.1 An Introduction of Lin Yutang and *Moment in Peking*
Context	*Moment in Peking,* an encyclopedia reflecting Chinese contemporary society, panoramically exhibits a picture of modern China through a description of three families' rise and decline from the Boxers Movement to the beginning of Anti-Japanese War.
Description	It depicts constant changes of events in modern history, such as Manchu Restoration, Clash of the Warlords, the May 4th Movement, and so on. Meanwhile, as an introduction of Chinese culture towards western countries, it shows traditional Chinese culture in various aspects, including ecological culture, material culture, social culture, religious culture and linguistic culture.
Judgement	Since its first publishing in America in 1939, it has immediately made a huge influence and brought his writer Lin Yutang Nobel nomination in 1975.

As demonstrated so far, reports, which are factual and informative in nature, and arguments and text responses, playing out on the more evaluative end, made up 84.02% of the sum of elemental genres in the corpus, composing the large bulk of this academic macrogenre. In sharp contrast, the other four genre families, explanations, chronicles, procedural genres and stories, in rank order, played a rather auxiliary role, filling up the remaining 15. 98% of the corpus.

Explanations were used only occasionally, with 6.44% of the total, to establish causal links between phenomena or events. Factorial explanations and consequential explanations were relatively more frequent, accounting for 3.99% and 1.55%, respectively. Thesis writers in these cases, as shown in the corpus, were driven by a need to unearth the causes leading to or observed impact from a particular cultural or historical event. In empirical studies, factorial explanations were used when the writer attempted to explain the acquired data from surveys or experiments through an effort to find out possible reasons or contributing factors behind. *Table 4.6* and *Table 4.7* are exemplars of the two explanation genres.

Table 4.6 Factorial explanation in "*2.1.1 Introduction and the Correlated Data of Teacher's Influence*" of Thesis 2016_2

factorial explanation	Text 15
Phenomenon (Outcome)/ Abstract	By investigating the reason through the simple questionnaire, text-based interviews and connecting some correlated theories and with the known fact, three factors are summarized to account for teachers' impact.
Factor 1	To start with the social factor, living in remote rural places which are far from the most developed eastern coastal cities,… Most of them have no other people to consult the problems in living or study. The only one they can obtain some scientific advice from is the teacher.
Factor 2	The next is teachers' individual characters. From question 5, table 2, it can be inferred that the most influential element is their positive personality, such as being friendly to students, rich life experience, care for students, etc.
Factor 3	The proficient major knowledge and education skills are less important. They have to master some certain knowledge and intelligence level, but once the competence has reached a critical level, it will not have conspicuous effect on their students.[6]

Table 4.7 Consequential explanation in "*2.1 Literary Translation*" of Thesis 2015_2

consequential explanation	Text **2.1 Literary Translation**
Phenomenon (Input)	Under the great upsurge of the policy of reform and opening up, 1990s saw the prosperity of literary translation in Chinese translation history, and unprecedented achievements have been made during that time**…**
Consequence 1	In the initial stage of reform and opening up, China's material civilization was unprecedentedly developed while the spiritual civilization was still stagnant**. …**, at that time, as every single person was expected to participate in the construction of modern socialism with Chinese characteristics**.…** There was a strong sense of participation and practice among people**.** As a result, many literary works about the influence that the policy of reform and opening up had on Chinese people were translated, **…**
Consequence 2	With the end of the Culture Revolution, the restraint put on culture and literature for as long as ten years was remove**.** People were longing for the translation versions of good foreign literary works**.** With the declining interference of politics on literary translation, and with the further liberation of people's minds, the selected topics have been more and more free**…**

Yet, sequential explanations, conditional expiations, as well as analytical explanations were, on the flip side, less than sporadic. It is worth mentioning that analytical explanations, as a new code generated from pilot, occurred 4 times throughout the corpus, which, though not in the least frequent, firmed up the prior generic description in *Section 3.4.3.2*. As an emergent genre, the analytical explanation entails closer examination with particular attention to its rhetorical functions, especially in light of the local context which shapes the construction of bachelor's theses. This will be the focus of *Section 4.1.2* below.

Likewise, chronicles were sparsely employed, accounting for only 4.64% of the overall corpus, but, undeniably, they played a distinct role in the macrogenre by colouring the discourse with shades of 'historical meanings'. Historical recounts were the most common sub-category (3.22%), used either to trace how an event of cultural or historical significance happened in the past, or how a specialised area where the object of study was located had evolved. The excerpt in *Table 4.8* below is a clear example.

By contrast, historical accounts were used only minimally (0.64%), indicating that thesis writers were not so much concerned with the causal links between historical events as the sequencing of such events. Meanwhile, biographical recounts, with a relatively low frequency of 0.77%, were naturally seen in the life stories of prominent authors, translators or historical figures, as *Table 4.9* illustrates.

Table 4.8 Historical recount in "*1.1 Uncle Sam and Its Cultural Implication*" of Thesis 2018_2

historical recount	Text
	1.1 Uncle Sam and Its Cultural Implication
Background	Uncle Sam is a common national personification of the American government or the United States of America in general…Uncle Sam has been a popular symbol of the American government in its culture and a manifestation of patriotic emotion since the beginning of the 19th century. The first reference of Uncle Sam in formal literature was in 1816 allegorical book *The Adventures of Uncle Sam in Search after His Lost Honor* written by Fidfaddy, Esq.
Record of Events	During the Revolutionary War came Brother Jonathan, a male personification, Uncle Sam appeared after the War of 1812…It comes from a legend during 1812-1814 war. According to a legend, there was an old meat processing man named Samuel Wilson. The local people affectionately called him Uncle Sam, and he was a patriot and took part in the American War of Independence. In the war between America and England, he signed a contract with the government for the production of bottled beef for the troops. Whenever the United States government received the beef which he had inspected by himself, the meat would be made into the barrel with the cover of the US mark on the bucket. Because the Uncle Sam's first two letters are U and S, and the abbreviation of the United States of America is U.S. too, so people put these two names into one, which meant that the cattle meat made by Uncle Sam became the American property…
	In 1830s, American cartoonists gave Uncle Sam an image according to the legend, so there appeared a bearded man with high thin figure…, which are the pattern of the American stars and stripes... Since then, Uncle Sam has become a symbol of the United States, and his hardworking and cheerful character and patriotism embodies the nature and spirit of the American people. Therefore, the US Congress officially recognized Uncle Sam as America's national symbol in1989, and designated September 13, 1989 as Uncle Sam Day, the birthday of Samuel Wilson.

Table 4.9 Biographical recount in "*1.1 Jane Austen and Her Writing Style*" of Thesis
         2017_7

biographical recount	Text
	1.1 Jane Austen and Her Writing Style
Orientation	Jane Austen (1775-1817) is a famous English female novelist. She was born in a literate clerical family with good upbringings in the southern part of the United Kingdom, and spent almost her whole life, more than 40 years in the countryside of England.
Life Stages	Her father was a learned clergyman, and her mother was born in a relatively wealthy family and also had a certain degree of culture…She began to write in 13 or 14 years old, which manifested her talent in the respect of language expression. After her father retired in 1800, the family moved to Bath,... Austen refused the marriage proposal of a young man who would inherit a great fortune for she didn't love him. She was unmarried for her whole life and died of serious diseases, and at last she was buried in Winchester Cathedral.[1]
	Her six major works-*Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Mansfield Park*, *Emma*, *Persuasion*-are mostly related to those so-called decent people's life, marriages and intercourses which were familiar to her and seemed ordinary and trivial.
Evaluation of Person	As for the comment on Austen, Edmund Wilson, …, once said: "In around one century and a quarter of the history of English literature, several interesting revolutions occurred to Britain. The renovation of literary taste affected almost all the popularity of writers. But only Shakespeare and Jane Austen are enduring."[2]
	Adeline Virginia Woolf, …, said: "Among all the great writers, Jane Austen is the most difficult to be caught in the moment of greatness."[3;1]

Coming next on the ranking, procedural genres accounted for 3.87% of the total occurrences of elemental genres, with procedural recounts predominating (2.84%), most notably in theses carrying out empirical studies. The reason for this is that these empirical studies were already accomplished activities when they were represented onto the pages in the written mode, so the thesis writers were obliged to give, *retrospectively*, a detailed account of how the research had been done. At the same time, a small number of procedures were also found, most of them appearing at the end of

the *Introduction* part, as some thesis writers routinely laid down at this juncture, *prospectively*, a step-by-step process of how to get the thesis done. Put in another way, the use of procedural recounts denoted the *completed* research activities whereas that of procedures encoded a planned *forthcoming* event in the unfolding discourse, as exemplified in *Table 4.10* and *Table 4.11*, respectively. Only two instances were found for protocols, in both of which the thesis writers summarised the implications of their research for future translation activities in the form of "*strategies*" or "*rules*", regulating for translators what to do or not to do. One example is represented in *Table 4.12* below.

Table 4.10 Procedural recount in "*3.1 Different Anxiety Levels of All the Subjects*" of Thesis 2016_4

procedural recount	Text **3.1 Different Anxiety Levels of All the Subjects**
Purpose	For each student, his/her FL anxiety score is calculated by summing the rating of the FLCAS questionnaire.
Materials& Method	There are 33 questions in the FLCAS questionnaire; the subject get the score from 1 to 5 according to his/her response. The average score of the questionnaire is 99, as a result, the students can be divided into 3 different anxiety levels: high anxiety level, average anxiety level and low anxiety level…
Results & Discussion	Table 3.1 English Language Anxiety Levels of All the Subjects … Table 3.1 illustrated the different language anxiety levels of all the students at the beginning of the experiment. It can be indicated… that three fifths of the subjects are in average anxiety level, and the group of high anxiety level took up nearly one fourth…, and only a small number of students are seldom anxious…. There is no doubt that a considerable number of students are suffering from the high anxiety in English class.

Table 4.11 Procedure in "*Introduction*" of Thesis 2018_1

procedure	Text
	Introduction
Purpose	From the perspective of linguistic differences between English and Chinese, this study will explore different strategies to translate English prepositions better by analyzing some typical example sentences.
Method	To achieve the goal of this study, this paper will at first give a brief introduction of English preposition mainly from its types and features.
	Secondly, three differences between Chinese and English are demonstrated so as to reveal their influences on the translation of English prepositions.
	At last, based on the discussion above, this thesis provides six ways to help translate English prepositions.

Table 4.12 Protocol in "*3.4 Strategies to Correct the Pronunciation*" of Thesis 2015_5

protocol	Text 10
	3.4 Strategies to Correct the Pronunciation
Classification	The pronunciation is the foundation to learn English well. So the students must be sure to pronounce the words correctly. To correct the false pronunciation caused by Cangxi dialect, these rules can be observed.
Rule 1	The college should think highly of the phonology teaching…
Rule 2	Pronunciation errors' analysis is very important…
Rule 3	The teachers can set up teaching plans according to the individuals…
Rule 4	The students should do more pronunciation exercises,..
Rule 5	The students can not correct their pronunciation because they have formed a habit…

Finally, stories turned out to be the least used genres, occupying a restricted proportion of 1.03% in the overall corpus. Stories were found completely exclusive to theses of cultural studies, most probably because only writers in this field of study opted for interesting tales from legend, mythology, or noteworthy incidents from other sources, to exemplify their propositional content. Another observation worth mentioning was the number of exempla (0.64%) slightly higher than the other story genres, which reflected the thesis writers' inclination to project or trigger moral

judgements related to their topical issues in retelling the tales. In general, stories, as a genre family with primarily entertaining social functions, helped to increase the readability of bachelor' theses, and thus created an amusing platform in this stereotypically stodgy site of academic writing. The example of an exemplum in *Table 4.13* illustrates some sense of this rhetorical effect:

Table 4.13 Exemplum in "*1.2 Source and Image of Western Dragon*" of Thesis 2014_6

exemplum	Text
	1.2 Source and Image of Western Dragon
Orientation	It is not unique but has its similar cases. About in the Mid-5th century of Anglo-Saxons, the Britain had a masterpiece which was honored as the national epic of the Anglo-Saxons nation. It was called Beowulf.
Incident	It's centered on a story in which the hero, Beowulf, struggled to slaughter a fierce monster. Like the creature of Greek tales above, this sort of monster was none other than a dragon that guarded the treasure.
Interpretation	Although Beowulf was badly injured by the dragon's fire, he finally put an end to monster's life through courage and determination.

In sum, the analysis presented above was an attempt to unveil the rhetorical patterning of bachelor's theses, by specifying what elemental genres were used to what extent for what purposes in order to achieve the ultimate goal of the macrogenre. With the co-construction of these genres, the textual space in bachelor's theses was furnished by means of generic complexity, which could be measured in terms of number and in terms of variety. Considering that genres, by definition, are *staged goal-oriented social processes*, a nuanced understanding of this complexity brought to light the types of social interactions created through the written discourse.

4.1.2 "What has happened, in this aspect, is due to this reason": Analytical explanations as an emergent case of genre innovation

To recall, earlier in the pilot, a special case emerged that did not fit any of the initial coding categories. Upon close examination, especially by recognising its primary social function as to explain a phenomenon in terms of *cause* and its similarities to and major differences from factorial explanations, a new code was proposed for this instance: analytical explanation (For details of the initial generic description, see *Section 3.4.3.2*).

As stated in the preceding section, the entire corpus yielded 4 instances of this new genre. Though not large in number, these texts were extracted and analysed more carefully, and were deemed as examples based on which to build a refined description of this genre and its schematic structure.

Like other explaining genres, analytical explanations may begin with an optional Orientation stage that "locates" or contextualises the phenomenon to be explained. They may also conclude with an optional Extension stage that functions to draw concluding implications or reflection on the issue. Most importantly, it is the middle obligatory stages that distinguish analytical explanations from the other explanation genres. The Phenomenon stage summarises the outcome to be accounted, although in some cases its role can be performed synoptically by way of section headings or visual auxiliaries (such as tables, figures, or diagrammes). In the Explanation stage, one aspect of the outcome is announced and then its cause(s) explained, and this stage is potentially, and necessarily, recursive, construing what Martin & Rose (2008) refer to as an *implication sequence*. Using the conventional notations of SFL, the schematic structure of analytical explanations is illustrated as

below:

(Orientation) ^ Phenomenon ^ Explanation: Aspect/Cause ^ (Extension)

From a typological perspective, the Phenomenon being *de-composed* **(**a term used in *Section 3.4.3.2*) into its constituting elements in the Explanation stage is the most crucial criterion for differentiating analytical explanations from factorial explanations, in the latter of which the Explanation stage encompasses factors contributing to the holistic Phenomenon (see also *Figure 3.6*). The rhetorical function of analytical explanations can be depicted more finely as follows:

> The analytical explanation seeks an all-sided account for a complex problem, phenomenon, or outcome, by breaking it into its constituting elements or different aspects and then trying to explore the possible reasons behind each of the elements or aspects. It is analytical in the sense that it relies on the writer's abilities to see the multi-faceted nature of an issue and thus helps bring people to a horizontally rather than vertically accumulated understanding.

As such, a useful gloss of the **analytical explanation** is "What has happened, in this aspect, is due to this reason." Here, one example is used to illustrate this genre (also see *Table 3.10* earlier for another example), drawing attention to how particular wordings in the example realised the recursive semantic meanings that characterise the genre and define its stages.

Table 4.14 Analytical explanation in "3.2 Discussions on the Uses of Lexical Memory Strategies" of Thesis 2017_6

analytical explanation	Text 15
	3.2 Discussions on the Uses of Lexical Memory Strategies
Phenomenon	'the Uses of Lexical Memory Strategies' as indicated in the section heading

Explanation: Aspect 1
    outcome
    indication
    reason
	As for the sums of Fg (Table 1), freshmen show their biggest preference for 'Image, Sound and Context', which indicate that most freshmen have tried to… Since 'Repetition' had been the most preferred …, the data indicate a leap on lexical memory strategy.

Explanation: Aspect 2
    outcome
    cause
    indication
    reason
	What follows 'Image, Sound and Context' is 'Etymology'. It shows that English-major freshmen have already known …. However, in Table 4 …, which indicates a big disparity of uses of 'Etymology' among the students. In other words, some students may have been proficient in 'Etymology' ….

Explanation: Aspect 3
    outcome
    indication
    reason
    reason
 	
indication
	What's more, 'Conscious Practice' seems to be not helpful … as its sum is even less than 'Repetition'… That indicates that lacking language output is a common phenomenon... That is partly because of shyness of Chinese students... Another important reason is that, in most Chinese regions, English teaching is limited …
	The working mechanism for 'Conscious Practice'…Unfortunately, these strategies have not been fully applied by English major, which makes us realize English majors' lack in language output…

Explanation: Aspect 4
    outcome
 	
    indication
	As for the sums of JG (Table 2), 'Etymology' shares almost the same popularity…as 'Image, Sound and Context' which is the most preferred. From the data we can know that 'Etymology' has become and 'Image, Sound and Context' continues to be the principal lexical memory strategies for juniors.

Explanation: Aspect 5
    outcome
    indication
    cause
	In contrast, 'Repetition' still stays at a low level and so does 'Conscious Practice'. It reveals that 'Repetition' serves as an auxiliary strategy... It tells us that juniors also lack adequate language output..

Deduction	From Table 3 it is seen that the students' change of their preferences. Based on that, it can be concluded that students make a big advance in 'Etymology'. We can make a further conclusion that English majors in Sichuan Agricultural University obtain …

It is noticeable that analytical explanations and factorial explanations, despite

the distinctions drawn between them, manifested a few core resemblances - a shared causal orientation in particular, that seemed perplexing in the early stage of coding and classification. Considering their observed "family resemblances", and the comparatively higher rhetorical weight laid on factorial explanations in the construction of bachelor's theses, a set of questions have arisen that call for further conceptualisation: Is what is now termed as the analytical explanation a new addition to the genre family, or just a parody or a premature version of the factorial explanation? Are the students innovating with genre, or emulating the more privileged one by meeting some but not all of the generic conventions? To address these questions, the present discussion will draw on Tardy's (2015, 2016) theoretical concept of *genre innovation*, and then, going beyond the texts, look at the actual context in the thesis writing community, attempting to argue for the inventiveness and legitimacy of analytical explanations in their own right.

Tardy (2015) used the term *genre innovation* to refer to "departures from genre convention that are perceived as effective and successful by the text's intended audience or community of practice" (p.305). In the case of analytical explanations, it is the de-composed Phenomenon that makes the genre depart from the other canonical explanation genres, but it simultaneously opens up discursive spaces in the Explanation stage for writers to insert, perhaps in a tentative tone, their personal interpretations. Although academic writing, especially at the more advanced level, stereotypically lays stress on setting up systematic, objective, and scientific explanations about the world, bachelor's thesis writers, on the contrary, viewed the projection of personal stance, reflected in the use of analytical explanations, as part of the undergraduate-level *research* and also a proper means to meet the linguistic and generic expectations of this

demanding writing task. The writer of Thesis 2018_5 (a corpus-based study on Biophysics English), who developed her *Conclusions* section as an analytical explanation (as shown in *Table 3.10*) commented on her use of this genre in the talk-around-texts interview:

> "Just to summarise the major findings of my research, and perhaps, offer some of my *personal reflections*. *It works,* in my case. In fact, each *aspect* echoes the sections in my Chapter Three. I try to give account of their possible *causes*. Given my current abilities, I don't think I am capable of producing anything original. The best I can do now is summarise, and then offer some *tentative* explanations. Details of my research findings have already been presented in Chapter Three, mostly in forms of tables and statistics, so in the Conclusions, I think I need to link them to linguistic theories behind, although my explanations are *fairly plain and simple. (*Writer of Thesis 2018_5, interview, author's emphasis by *italics,* hereinafter*)*

It was clear from this interview excerpt that this innovative genre played a dual function. On the one hand, the thesis writer experimented with this creative textual form to express her *individuality* (Tardy, 2016) through injecting '*personal reflections*'. On the other hand, she also bent genre at the level of *epistemology*, seeing the use of this genre as a means of maximising her participation in knowledge construction, against the ceiling on her current ability.

The effectiveness of her using this genre in this situation was later reaffirmed by a thesis advisor in the interview (all names used in this chapter are pseudonyms), who also served as her thesis examiner in the oral defense:

> "She is not well-acquainted with the discipline (Biophysics), so she cannot explain her research findings systematically from a transdisciplinary perspective. It is simply impossible, or *unrealistic*, to expect that much from an undergraduate English major. She has made *nice attempts* to offer explanations from her *personal perspectives*. Although the explanations might sound *superficial*, and somewhat *lacking in theoretical grounding*, we *appreciate* her *efforts* in having her own *viewpoints* uttered. And the passage looks *neat in structure* and *makes sense* to me." *(Sophie, a thesis advisor interviewed)*

A related concept here is that of *reception.* As Tardy (2016) noted, it is through

the reception by readers that a norm-breaking text is deemed as a successful innovation rather than an unwelcome deviation. In the present case, the thesis was lauded as innovative and successful, as it was later awarded that year's Thesis of Distinction at the university level.

At this juncture, a conclusion can be drawn with confidence that analytical explanations have emerged as the writers' successful *improvisation* or *play* with genre (Devitt, 2011; Schryer, 2011) - responding nimbly to what Tardy (2016) called the "ecosocial" conditions of the local writing context, and simultaneously performing humbly with their limited linguistic, rhetorical and epistemological *capital* (in relation to Bourdieu's 'metaphor of the linguistic market'). In other words, the genesis of analytical explanations was recognised as successful as they allowed writers to do things that might not be possible through the recognised genres in the existing scholarship. As such, the emergence of analytical explanations in bachelor's thesis writing underscores the need to view genres as generative, dynamic, and fluctuating (Schryer, 2011). As Tardy (2016) argued, "innovation is ultimately the source of diversity and change in an otherwise relatively stable system." (p.18)

4.2 Variations of genre deployment across the sub-fields

In the preceding section, the focus was to answer the question of what kinds of elemental genres, and to what extent, are employed for writing bachelor's theses. However, on a closer examination, the results displayed nuanced variations across the 4 broad sub-fields, namely, *translation*, *culture*, *literature*, and *applied linguistics*, as previously introduced. *Table 4.15* summarises the proportions of genres in each sub-field (in cases where no instance was found, the cell is shaded). This is in spite of the

uneven number of theses catalogued in each branch, due to the quota sampling technique used in building the corpus. Thus, the variations are demonstrated in terms of percentage rather than frequency counts, allowing for standardisation for the comparisons to be made. Obviously, relevant topics in different sub-fields tend to invoke different sets of outstanding problems and then different procedures for pursuing them, and that significantly influenced the writers' choice of genres.

Table 4.15 Deployment of elemental genres across the 4 sub-fields

	Trans. (16)	Cult. (9)	AL. (13)	Lit. (2)
stories		**4.97%**		
anecdote		0.62%		
exemplum		3.11%		
narrative		1.24%		
chronicles	**4.26%**	**11.18%**	**1.17%**	**3.33%**
biographical recount	1.52%			3.33%
historical account	0.30%	1.86%	0.39%	
historical recount	2.43%	9.32%	0.78%	
explanations	**3.65%**	**8.07%**	**8.98%**	**6.67%**
sequential explanation			0.39%	
factorial explanation	2.43%	4.97%	5.08%	6.67%
consequential explanation	1.22%	3.11%	1.17%	
conditional explanation			0.78%	
analytical explanation			1.56%	
reports	**55.02%**	**31.68%**	**58.20%**	**16.67%**
descriptive reports	37.08%	24.22%	35.16%	10.00%
classifying reports	13.68%	4.97%	12.89%	
compositional reports	4.26%	2.48%	10.16%	6.67%
procedural genres	**1.52%**	**0.62%**	**9.38%**	
procedures	0.91%	0.62%	0.78%	
protocols			0.78%	
procedural recounts	0.61%		7.81%	
arguments	**28.88%**	**31.68%**	**22.27%**	**3.33%**
exposition	26.75%	29.19%	21.48%	
challenge		1.86%		
discussion	2.13%	0.62%	0.78%	3.33%
text responses	**6.69%**	**11.80%**		**70.00%**
review	6.08%	0.62%		3.33%
interpretation	0.61%	11.18%		66.67%
total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

While theses in the other three sub-fields accorded pivotal roles to genres of reports and arguments, literature theses did not make much use of these two dominating genre families, but instead placed an overriding stock on text responses, amounting to 70% of the sub-branch, with interpretations predominating with 66.67%. The emphasis laid on interpretations could be explained by the fact that literary studies always have as their primary goal the search of an in-depth understanding of literary proses, relying almost exclusively on *library*-based research. For this reason, it came as no surprise that literature theses were void of any procedural genres which were found pervasive in those engaged in *empirical* research. For more than two decades, scholars have depicted the study of literature as one that involves abstract conceptual activities and requires highly interpretative skills (Currie, 1993; Ivanič, 1998). Echoing these earlier arguments, the findings here reconfirmed the relevance of interpretations as the appropriate choice of genre to materialise the conceptually-driven nature of literary studies. However, to paraphrase what Altınmakas & Bayyurt (2019) recently argued, expecting undergraduate EFL students to accumulate sufficient reading into literary works and then develop appropriate conceptual-level skills to respond to them is not a fair ambition that can be achieved within a short period of time. This possibly explains why only a very small number of literature theses entered the present corpus at the initial stage of sampling.

Theses in applied linguistics contrasted most with those in literary studies in that the former made no use of text responses but instead contained the highest proportion of procedural genres among the four sub-fields. This could be driven by a strong empirical orientation commonly associated with research in applied linguistics, as the name "applied" literally denoted. Another field-specific peculiarity found in the corpus

was the wide and variant use of explanations by these potential "applied linguists". As both *Table 4.15* and *Figure 4.3* show, whilst thesis writers in the other three sub-fields tended to explain significant issues in their research focusing solely on the *factors* and/or *consequences*, those undertaking research in applied linguistics so did by taking diverse routes, giving a fuller rhetorical play to all the five sub-categories of explanations. One thing that could be inferred here was that the field of applied linguistics, at least at a less advanced level as the undergraduate, called for a display of the students' abilities to offer explanations for observed phenomena in different ways, not only in terms of attributable *factors* or *consequences*, but also in light of *sequence*, under different *conditions* or from highly *analytical* perspectives.

As mentioned passingly in the prior section, theses of cultural studies were the only rhetorical site for story genres, and at the same time, contained a significantly higher proportion of chronicles than those in the other three sub-fields. Therefore, by the side of rhetorical efforts invested in reporting and arguing, the two genre families, i.e., stories and chronicles, both placed on the entertaining end along the continuum of social functions, reinvested in the theses of cultural inquiries an exceptional note of amusement.

Theses in these three sub-fields, as discussed above, showed some marked differences from their counterparts in terms of genre configuration. On the contrary, those of translation studies were found otherwise to have developed, metaphorically, "*inside the box*", with a configuration of genres that appeared very similar to the general tendency found in the entire corpus. This was perhaps due to the higher quota assigned to this group of theses in the sampling process, but further showed translation studies to be the "*orthodox*" area in the community of practice engaged in bachelor's thesis

writing, in terms of both quantity as well as quality.

4.3 Behind the choice of genre: Rhetorical values in bachelor's thesis writing community

This chapter so far has presented findings from genre analysis on 40 bachelor's theses written by SICAU English majors. Metaphorically, the theses analysed here, as a "*main course*", were found to expand through a winning combination of reporting genres as the "*staples*", evaluating genres (arguments and text responses) as the "*meat*", and entertaining (stories and chronicles), explaining as well as procedural genres playing an ancillary role as the "*dressings*". This on-going section then attempts to discuss some of the main implications, and by looking further into the context, to tease out behind the choice of genre the values circulating in this thesis writing community.

4.3.1 Reports as the transmission of existing knowledge

In the academic ranks of education, Tardy (2005) pointed out, students progress gradually from tasks of "knowledge-telling", in which they write to prove their understanding of existing knowledge, to more complex tasks of "knowledge-transforming", in which they actively create new knowledge, as advanced academic writers are normally expected to do (p. 325). At the undergraduate level, however, thesis writers are most likely wrestling with issues at the less advanced level, acting as "knowledge-tellers", rather than "transformers", having as one of their imperatives the transmission of subject-matter knowledge in appropriate generic forms.

The emphasis laid on transmitting existing knowledge is evident in the Department's *Writing Norms of Bachelor's Thesis*, which specifies that *"The Introduction should give a comprehensive review of the related studies by previous*

scholars, presenting the background knowledge of the selected topic." Likewise, the *Assessment Rubrics* also addresses this issue by integrating the abilities to "*consult existing literature*", "*provide sufficient references*", and "*analyse all sorts of material*" into one domain in the assessment criteria under the label of "*material collection and utilisation*", making up 10% of the total credits.

As shown in the prior analysis, the genres of **reports** were found pervasively at work in bachelor's theses, mainly to present descriptions of the objects being studied, in terms of their defining characteristics, classifications or component parts, most of which were richly documented in the existing literature. Thus, the genres of **reports** which set out to inform rather than to entertain or to evaluate stood as the most appropriate rhetorical vehicle to transmit such received knowledge. They were in effect a means of "writing to learn in content areas" (Hirvela, 2011). In this way, English-major students' academic literacy as well as their repertoire of disciplinary knowledge were expected to grow with experiences of gathering, selecting, and reflecting on the relevant literature, and especially through rhetorical recontextualisation of it in their final theses.

A thesis writer informant in the interviews, though in less technical terms as used in SFL linguistics, confirmed the role played by reporting genres in transporting the existing knowledge:

> Q: Then, in your thesis, what genres do you think may have played a more significant role?
> A: Probably *descriptive* ones, I think. Because my project involved a corpus, I devoted considerable space in my thesis to *introducing the background knowledge*, for example, *definitions* of various *items* or linguistic *concepts*. (Writer of Thesis 2018_5, interview)

Another writer informant, whose thesis was on translation of rhetoric in

English advertising, expounded on a similar view:

> "There are numerous types of rhetorical devices and translation methods, so I *classified* them and then *described* one by one in detail. This was how I organised my thoughts in thesis; otherwise I might go astray.
>
> …the first two chapters, which mainly included *widely-accepted and well-established ideas*, such as *definitions*, *linguistic features* and *rhetorical devices* in advertising.
>
> …I don't think I was able to propose a new translation method by myself, so I just relied on some *existing knowledge* and focused on *describing* the *known* ones." (Writer of Thesis 2018_6, interview)

Embracing the existing knowledge is also a top concern in the mind of thesis advisors, as it surfaced as a recurring theme in the interview sessions. Two of the thesis advisors interviewed commented as below, stressing the exigence of bachelor's thesis writers to receive knowledge rather than to create:

> "We were much more concerned with the students' ability to s*earch for the relevant literature*, to analyse and understand, and then in the theses, to articulate their understanding with a certain degree of clarity. What we would love to see is their *understanding of the literature*, complemented by *careful observation and analysis*, which converge ultimately on a reasonable conclusion. After all, bachelor's theses differ a lot from Mater's or doctoral these. It is the *intake* rather than the *output* of knowledge that we expect from undergraduates." (Wendy, a thesis advisor, interview)
>
> "When we supervise the students, one of our chief concerns is to help them *select and sort out reference materials* related to their selected topics, and ideally, express in their own words how they *understand* the materials… It is *not practical*, if not entirely impossible, to require undergraduate students to blaze new trails." (*Sophie*, a thesis advisor, interview)

Another advisor informant, perhaps due to her growing familiarity with the notion of genre, stated in more explicit terms the close relationship between the genres of **reports** and the transmission of existing knowledge:

> "For bachelor's theses, I think, *reports* and arguments are perhaps more important, relatively, than the other genres.
>
> Because the primary goal of bachelor's theses is for students to transfer *what they have learnt from a wide-range of reference materials*, reading, analysing and integrating them into a research product. Based on that, students also have to try to draw their own conclusions. For the dual purposes, *reports* and *arguments*, I reckon,

may have more weight to carry in their writing." (Grace, a thesis advisor, interview)

Note that, besides reports, this interview excerpt also pinpointed the importance of arguments. This is an issue that will be taken up in the next sub-section.

4.3.2 Arguments/Text responses as the projection of authorial self

Authorial self is an important concept in the theoretical discussions of academic writer identity (Clark and Ivanič,1997; Ivanič, 1998). According to Clark and Ivanič (1997, p.152), the authorial self involves "the textual evidence of writers' feeling of authoritativeness and sense of themselves as authors". Integrating this concept of *self* with SFL - the appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2015) in particular, McKinley (2018) described the authorial self as an indication of the writer's sense of an exigency to write, recognised at any point when writers put forward opinion or stance in establishing their own argument.

In the present case, the frequent use of arguments and text responses can be understood as a means by which the writers of bachelor's theses project such an authorial self. Both performing a social function on the evaluative end - to evaluate either an *idea* or a *text* (Rose, 2012), arguments and text responses thus accumulate meaning potential that individual writers can avail of for personal interpretation, analysis, and evaluations, as well as for endorsement or critiques of others' opinions or works.

This ability to argue critically, or at least the attempt to do so, is highly valued in the thesis writing community, which can find a direct evidence from the statements made on *argumentation*, *reasoning*, as well as *originality* in the Department's assessment rubrics, as previously presented in *Section 4.1.1*. One of the thesis advisors

interviewed stressed the ability to evaluate opinions, which he generally referred to as "critical thinking", as the primary function of bachelor's theses:

> "The writing of bachelor's theses at least can help them *develop a critical thinking ability*, which enables them to look at problems from different angle. This ability also *keeps them from accepting others' opinions without questioning*; instead, they will think over the issue, *judging* in which way the *opinions make sense* and in which way they do not. To enhance the ability *to think critically*, I must say, is the primary function of bachelor's theses." (Brown, thesis advisor, interview)

The same thesis advisor informant in the later talk-around-text session made an even stronger claim, depicting the rhetorical structure of a bachelor's thesis as an argument at the most macro level - a *macro-argument* in SFL terms.

> "At the most macro level, a bachelor's thesis is in essence an *argument*, but it comprises various parts. You see, in a bachelor's thesis, only two parts, Introduction and Conclusion, are necessarily *arguments*. The rest can vary. This is the way in which a thesis of applied linguistics is supposed to be constructed. Theses in literature, for another example, may include a number of recounts, those in translation, mostly reports, I guess. *Probably, they only land on arguments in the concluding part*. Seen from a global perspective, it is definitely an *argument*, but if you look closely into different sections, you will find numbers of varieties of genres. (Brown, thesis advisor, interview)

This is what this thesis advisor thought of as an apt description of the macrogenre of bachelor's thesis. It captured, for one thing, the nature of a bachelor's thesis as a persuasive endeavour, and well explained, for the other, why genres of arguments were ranked secondary to reports in terms of quantity, in spite of its privilege in terms of quality - the *meat* in the main course, to reiterate the metaphor in the opening.

The exigence to argue critically, i.e., to project a position or stance towards their own or others' opinions, was in some situations perceived by thesis writers themselves, as two of the thesis writer informants commented:

> "…but more important is *to form our own ideas and perspectives* from the vast sea of existing literature." (Writer of Thesis 2018_2, interview)
> "Actually, I think, *to argue and then to explain* are the key themes in a thesis…

They (arguments and explanations) are two genres most used in writing the thesis, *arguments to propose your opinions and positions, and explanation to further illustrate."* (Writer of Thesis 2018_7, interview)

(Note that the term "explanation" is used by the informant in its common sense denoting "to further elaborate", rather than in the SFL taxonomy of the genre family.)

It is important to note that for building arguments in bachelor's theses, it is the quality rather than the quantity that matters. As one of the thesis advisors specifically emphasised, arguments in bachelor's theses had to be well grounded in theories in the disciplinary literature, or based on careful implementation of research procedures and solid empirical evidences, in order to be favourably received. In other words, thesis writers were expected to build an argument using evidences from discipline-appropriate sources. In the interview, she even recollected an anecdote about one student who, driven by a blind, personal interest, proposed a research topic brimming over with highly subjective points of views, and then was rejected in the proposal defense. She thus cautioned:

"This is not a common case somehow. For the majority of students, *to play safe*, it was admittedly more sensible to opt for topics that are *achievable with description-type reports and fewer arguments*." (Wendy, a thesis advisor, interview)

In addition, the actual practice in the community was also characterised by many "unsuccessful attempts to argue", as one of the thesis writers related in the interview:

"I should have included arguments of my own in Chapter 3, but I hardly did. I don't think I was really able to…" (Writer of Thesis 2018_6, interview)

Similar to what Stapleton (2002) and McKinley (2013) have found out about L2 student writers, the bachelor's thesis writers in the present case might inevitably "borrow" their arguments from relevant sources, and then use the borrowed arguments or mimic the features as their own. According to Stapleton (2002) and McKinley (2013),

this approach to forming an argument is common for EFL writers and may lead to a loss of the writer's voice and authorial self.

Admittedly, the construct of academic writer's voice or authorial self is an elusive issue and is obviously well beyond the scope of a single section or an entire chapter in the current thesis. Behind the choices that the writers were actually making, a conclusion can be drawn that arguments (and text responses likewise, especially in theses of literary studies) appeared to be an appropriate choice of genres where a display of the authorial self is called for. This is the second rhetorical value deep-rooted in the community of practice engaged in bachelor's thesis writing.

4.3.3 Ancillary genres as the positioning of a constellation of social roles

As analysed in the foregoing Section 4.1.1, varieties of genres other than the reporting as well as the evaluating ones, were found to be at work, to lesser but varying degrees, in the construction of bachelor's theses. They functioned to constitute the complexity of bachelor's theses, giving rise to the multiple social roles that were performed by the "versatile" writers, irrespective of their quantity.

The hybridisation of these ancillary genres opened up an ample discursive space in between those informative and evaluative meanings (as instantiated in the use of reports and arguments/text responses), so that the thesis writers could be positioned often simultaneously as storytellers (by means of stories) or historians (by chronicles), or positioned to seek resolutions or explanations (by explanations), or positioned to get things done by observing step-by-step procedures or strict rules (by procedural genres). As such, the community of practice is moulded by the way in which the writers adopt these stances, and how they accept, decline or tailor these positionings, to eventually become a rhetorically flexible member in the community.

4.4 Summary

The main findings from genre analysis on the 40 bachelor's theses can be summarised as a general profile of the elemental genres jointly constructed, the variations in the way how these genres were harnessed across the four relevant sub-fields, and then the emergence of an analytical explanation genre which drew particular attention. This new elemental genre, standing somewhere between explanation genres, to the best knowledge of the present researcher, has remained unaccounted for in the existing scholarship. This new finding not only enriches the theoretical taxonomy of key written genres in the SFL tradition, but also testifies to the dynamics, fluidity and vitality of the "ecosocial" conditions of the thesis writing community which breed new cases of genres in its discourses. Discussions made in these lines, in short, offered a useful account of the generic complexity involved in the construction of this academic macrogenre. Looking beyond these textual evidences further unveiled the local writing community's rhetorical values: namely, its emphasis on disciplinary knowledge transmission, the exigence for writers to establish their voice and authorial self, and rhetorical possibilities of performing multiple social roles. Then, if the writing of bachelor's theses were to be characterised as a value-laden social practice, the configuration of genres provided a means of materialising these values.

CHAPTER 5

COMPOSITIONAL PREPARATIONS IN THE INSTRUCTION-BASED SETTINGS: CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN TEXT AND CONTEXT

This chapter focuses on the teaching and learning of genre(s), in the instructional settings, responsive to Research Questions 2 and 3, "what elemental genres do the students write in the instruction-based writing courses and what are their schematic structures?" and "to what extent and in what manner are instruction-based genres addressed in the current educational context?" Pulling together major findings from the SFL-based genre analysis on the corpus of instruction-based writing complied from the 3 writing courses in focus, and a multitude of qualitative data, such as the national document, teaching materials, and in-depth interviews with both students and course instructors, this chapter attempts to offer a situated account, both textual and contextual, of the writing instructions playing out in the current research site.

5.1 Hybridity of elemental genres in the instruction-based settings

"Learning to write, however, calls for a more self-conscious perspective of language, as learners navigate the orthographic, lexico-grammatical, and organizational challenges of presenting meaning as written text. ...A writing curriculum should provide students with access to and effective participation in a range of genres."

(Bazerman et al., 2017, pp.356-357)

5.1.1 Overall results

Before taking up the question of what elemental genres were performed by the students in the instruction-based writing, there are several issues that called particular attention during the corpus analysis.

Out of the 231 assignments collected from *English Writing II*, 253 instances of elemental genres were identified. The discrepancy in number was caused by a few cases in which the students fulfilled the writing assignment by utilising 2 or 3 elemental genres, either combining them into a macrogenre or simply in discrete texts. Three additional genres, i.e., email, résumé, and resignation letter, were found across the corpus. Although they were not included in SFL's frameworks of common educational genres, they were specifically addressed by some individual instructors in English Writing I & II as serving certain important personal and practical purposes in real-life situations. Therefore, they were grouped together under a genre family which was labelled as "practical genres". In addition, there were a few assignments in *English Writing II* and *Academic Writing* that contained *decontextualised* drills to reinforce taught vocabulary or sentential patterns, with neither a controlling theme in the content nor a recognisable structure at the organisational level. Assignments, or "texts", like these, instantiating no particular genres in the current definitional sense of the word, were glossed as exercises - a term borrowed from Nesi & Gardner (2012) as a sweeping categorisation. For the purpose of this study and given their apparent "lack of interest" in genre, these exercises will not be emphasised any more than necessary in the succeeding analysis and discussions.

Altogether, the 591 writing assignments collected from the 40 students in the 3 writing-related courses realised 613 instances of elemental genres in total, averaging

15.33 cases per student as (s)he strode through the writing part of curriculum. Eighteen types of elemental genres (including the extra practical genres and exercises) were found across the full corpus. The whole genre family of text responses was absent, for which a possible explanation could be that they might be more appropriately addressed in the reading- or literature-oriented courses in the curriculum. Apart from text responses, no instances were found for news story, autobiographical/biographical recount, sequential/conditional/analytical explanation, classifying/compositional report, protocol and procedural recount.

The overall frequency counts and proportions of the elemental genres and their genre families, employed by students in the instructional settings as responsive to instructor-assigned tasks, were presented in *Table 5.1*.

Table 5.1 Frequency of elemental genres in the corpus of instruction-based writing

genre family	elemental genre	count of instances		percentage	
arguments	exposition	177		28.87%	
	challenge	8	**188**	1.31%	**30.67%**
	discussion	3		0.49%	
practical genres	email	40		6.53%	
	résumé	40	**104**	6.53%	**16.97%**
	resignation letter	24		3.92%	
stories	anecdote	18		2.94 %	
	observation	30		4.89%	
	exemplum	5	**98**	0.82%	**15.99%**
	recount	15		2.45%	
	narrative	30		4.89%	
exercises	exercises	79	**79**	12.89%	**12.89%**
reports	descriptive report	73	**73**	11.91%	**11.91%**
explanations	factorial explanation	50	**52**	8.16 %	**8.48%**
	consequential explanation	2		0.33 %	
procedural genres	procedure	16	**16**	2.61%	**2.61%**
chronicles	historical account	1	**3**	0.16%	**0.49%**
	historical recount	2		0.33%	
total		**613**		**100.00%**	

On the whole, arguments were performed most frequently during the 3 phases of writing instructions, comprising 30.67% of the overall corpus. Expositions, in particular, occupied a predominant position in this genre family, amounting to as much as 28.87%, while in sharp contrast, challenges (1.31%) and discussions (0.49%) were only occasionally practised.

The second highest number of occurrences was found, quite unexpectedly, among the family of practical genres (16.97%). In reality, however, the 3 practical genres were only taken up by certain individual instructors for one or two weeks, usually at the end of the related courses, and only one assignment was given accordingly. The relatively large proportion of these practical genres in the corpus could then be best explained by the fact that the assignments that prompted each of the 3 practical genres were highly circumscribed; in other words, it was not realistically possible for any of the students to respond to the teacher's request for an email, a résumé or a resignation letter with anything otherwise composed. Relatedly, in many of the other assignments, the students might be allowed more liberty or a wider range of genres to choose from, to address the teachers' writing prompts.

Stories were also amply employed, reaching up to 15.99% of the whole corpus, the five members of which, roughly speaking, were more evenly distributed, as shown in *Figure 5.1*. Following stories, reports comprised 11.89% of the total, but solely exclusive to descriptive reports. As for the other 3 genre families - explanations (8.48%), procedural genres (2.61%) and chronicles (0.49%), they were found to be relatively infrequent and their use rather restricted.

By far, the overall distribution of instruction-based genres has been reported in a broad stroke. It serves as a suitable point of reference to be compared with the

generic configuration of bachelor's theses as reported in the preceding chapter, with a view to throwing light on the question of "how much instructional provisions are offered for students to meet the later rhetorical challenge of writing a bachelor's thesis" (a central issue for next chapter). Such a rough portrait, however, tells us less about by which way, via which route, or in what sequence English-major students were shepherded into these elemental genres in the instruction-based stage of learning to write. In what follows, the elemental genres elicited and then performed by 40 selected students in each of the three writing-related courses, in respect of their variety and frequency, will be presented and discussed.

5.1.2 English Writing I in the Autumn of 2018

In the autumn term of 2018, the 40 students selected from 4 groups undertaking *English Writing I* in their second year of study composed 280 short texts both in and out of class. Throughout this course, these second-year students wrote on a range of either instructor-prescribed or, in rarer cases, self-selected topics; for example, "*My Idea of Good English Writing*", "*Escape the Modern Stress*", "*Description of a Person*", "*SICAU is a Great University*", "*A Personal Experience*", "*My Last Day in Nanjing*", "*Volunteer! Make a Difference*", as well as an email and a résumé in the last two weeks.

The students wrote their essays in response to the topics listed above, adopting appropriate genres, each of which was assessed, accepted and on some occasions, provided written feedback, by the course instructors. *Table 5.2* presents the distribution of elemental genres and genre families within this sub-corpus, which is then represented in *Figure 5.3* and *Figure 5.4* that follow.

Table 5.2 Frequency of elemental genres in the sub-corpus of English Writing I

genre family	elemental genre	count of instances		percentage	
practical genres	email	40	**80**	14.29%	**28.57%**
	résumé	40		14.29%	
stories	anecdote	9		3.21 %	
	observation	24		8.57 %	
	exemplum	5	**75**	1.79 %	**26.79%**
	recount	11		3.93 %	
	narrative	26		9.29 %	
arguments	exposition	71		25.36%	
	challenge	3	**75**	1.07%	**26.79%**
	discussion	1		0.36%	
reports	descriptive report	48	**48**	17.14%	**17.14%**
chronicles	historical recount	1	**1**	0.36%	**0.36%**
explanations	consequential explanation	1	**1**	0.36 %	**0.36%**
total		**280**		**100.00%**	

It can be observed that the compositional efforts during this stage were more or less evenly distributed among 4 major genre families, namely, practical genres, stories, arguments, and reports, whereas by stark contrast, chronicles and explanations only occurred incidentally, with only one single case for historical recount and consequential explanation, respectively, which appeared to be more like individual students' idiosyncratic choices of genre when fulfilling the writing tasks.

For reasons previously explained, practical genres occupied, quite surprisingly, the highest proportion (28.57%) in the whole sub-corpus. In the actual classroom practice, the teaching of how to write an email and a personal résumé was taken up by the American instructor at the end of this course, and every student was then assigned to produce one sample for both genres.

Interestingly, stories and arguments shared exactly the same proportion in the sub-corpus (26.79%); however, their employment varied. As regards stories, the five sub-types were almost evenly split, with narratives (9.29%) and observations (8.57%)

slightly higher than the other three. This seems to reflect that at this stage the students were often encouraged, and guided as well, to represent their personal experiences into the written mode, and in so doing, they attended more to highlighting the complication and resolution of happenings, in case of narratives, or injecting their personal response or comment to the event being related, in case of observations.

An example of narrative is given in *Figure 5.5*, in which the student writer recounted an unexpected incident during her "Last Day in Nanjing", demonstrating a canonical schematic structure of narratives, i.e., Orientation ^ Complication ^ Evaluation ^ Resolution ^ Coda.

Figure 5.1 A narrative written by EW1G4S4 and its schematic structure

Figure *5.6* below exemplifies a typical observation, staged as Orientation ^ Event Description ^ Comment, which was a response to a writing task that had the students to expand from a single sentence "an old woman was walking in the woods."
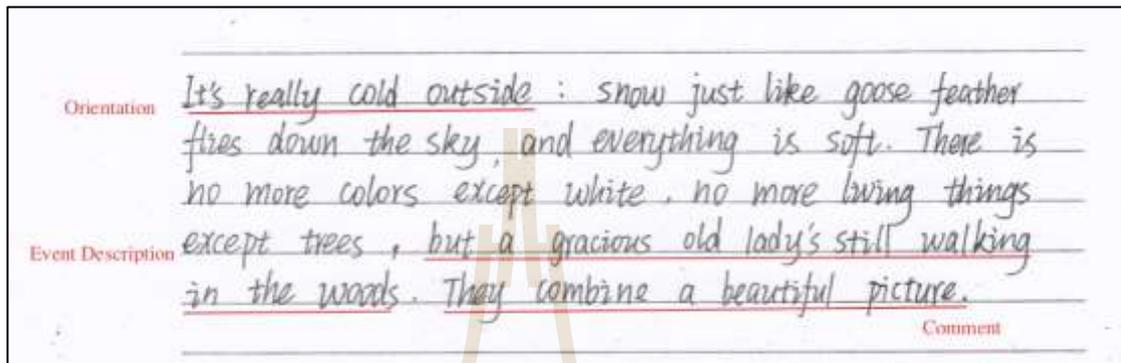
Figure 5.2 An observation written by EW1G3S3 and its schematic structure

Among arguments, on the other hand, the writing practice was overwhelmingly concentrated on expositions, comprising 25.36% of the sub-corpus, which was also the highest in the overall ranking. Yet, the occurrences of challenges and discussions were rather infrequent, accounting for only 1.07% and 0.36%, respectively. One factor leading to this dissonance within arguments was perhaps the writing prompts, in which certain propositions were provided for the students to argue for or against. As shown in the data set, instead of challenging or approaching from different angles what was already alluded to in the original prompt, students were more tempted to support or adopt the same position in developing their own claims. *Figure 5.7* is an illustrative example of exposition entitled "*My Idea of Reducing Stress*", which unfolds through Orientation ^ Thesis ^ Arguments ^ Reiteration.

My ideas of reducing stress

It is true that people in morden times experience great stress in their lives. However, as to the ways to cope with the stress, different people have different opinions. Some insist on traveling, while others argue for listening to the music or even playing computer games. *Orientation*

In my opinion, an effective solution to reduce stress is to do physical exercise. My reasons are as follows. *Thesis*

Argument 1 First and foremost, exercise not only helps to release our emouti emotional breakdowns but also improves our mental state. Live in a morden society, we concentrate on our body movement all day along, thus we become tired and begin to escape from the reality. When we feel tired, take a break or go for a walk with friends will ease our stress greatly. Kant, a German philosopher who researched, lectured, wrote on philosophy and authropology during the el Enlightenment at the end of the 18th Century. He was an awsome man in peoples eyes. He worked very hard, at the same time he also took exercise punctually. He got up in 5 o'clock every morning, after two hours' work, he would go for a walk on time. Exercise played as a positive role in his life and helped him a lot.

Argument 2 Second, physical exercise mould people's character

and promotes a more optimistic attitude towards life. It is reported that men who used to take exercise are happier than people who regard work as the only thing in the world. Last but not least, *Argument 3* physical exercise is benefit to our health, with which people can face up to the stress and diffculties they meet more readily and easily. proper compti amount of exercise can help us build a strong body, which is regarded as the foundation of solving all problems.

In a word, physical exercise plays an important role in killing stress. Live in such a busy world *Reiteration* we do need to work hard to improve our life standard. meanwhile, we should remember to take exercise regularly. Just as the saying goes: All work and no play makes jack a dull boy. We are supposed to learn balance work and life wisely.

Figure 5.3 An exposition written by EW1G1S3 and its schematic structure

Reports were also taught and practiced in this course, amounting to 17.14% of all cases in the sub-corpus. It is worth noting that within this genre family, descriptive reports were given a full sole attention, thus appearing with the second highest frequency (17.14%) in the overall ranking, immediately following expositions. One who was responsible for the high frequency of descriptive reports could be the Chinese female instructor, who invested a lot of efforts in teaching how to write a description of a person or place in her session and assigned writing tasks accordingly, as in *Figure 5.8*, for example.
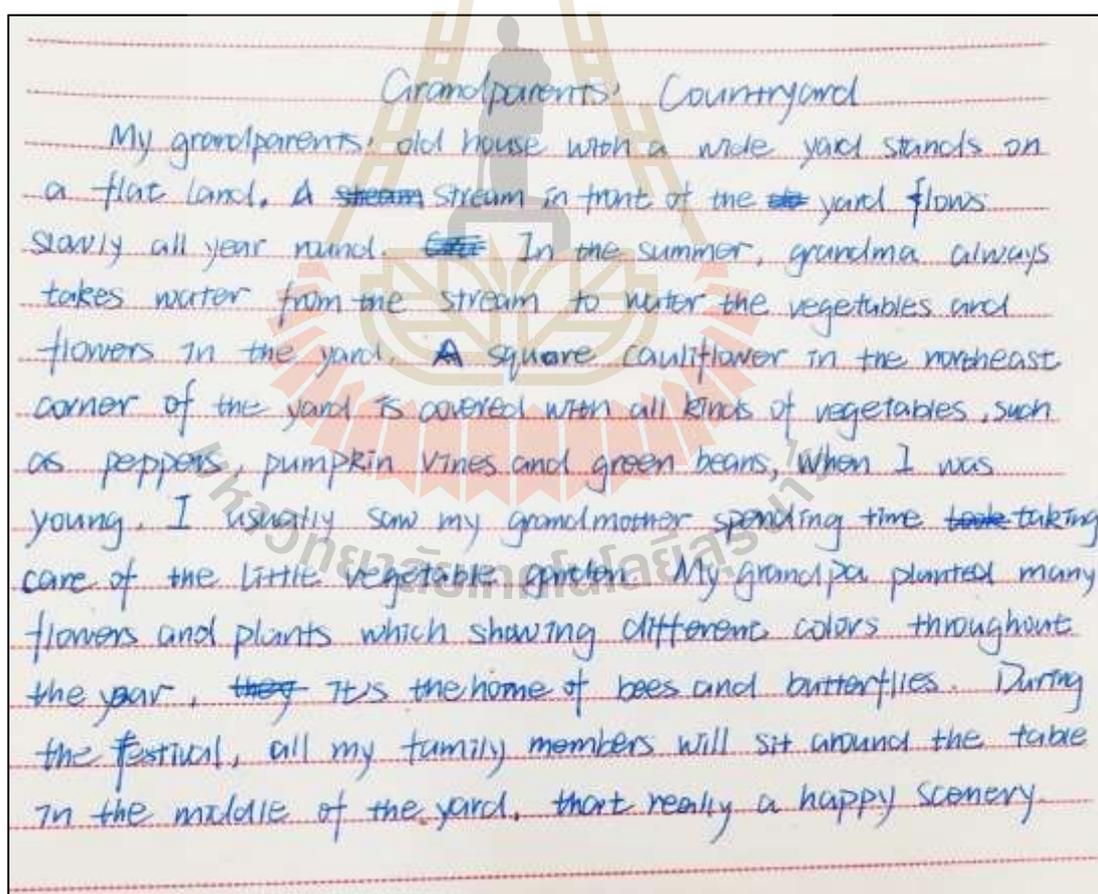
Figure 5.4 A descriptive report written by EW1G4S5

5.1.3 English Writing II in the Spring of 2018

In the spring term of 2018, the 40 students engaged in *English Writing II* accomplished 231 assignments both in and out of class, instantiating 253 elemental genres altogether. Similar to those in English Writing I, students in *English Writing II* wrote on a wide range of either instructor-prescribed or self-selected topics; such as, "*Students Should Not Rely on the Internet to Do Their Homework*", "*With the Intelligent Machines to Do the Thinking, Will Our Brain Gets Lazy?*", "*Today is a Happy Day*", "*The Benefits of Volunteering*", "*The Trade War between America and China*", "*American Gun Culture*", to list but a few, as well as some exercises and a resignation letter. *Table 5.3* shows the distribution of elemental genres and genre families within this sub-corpus, followed by visual representation in *Figure 5.9* and *Figure 5.10* below.

Table 5.3 Frequency of elemental genres in the sub-corpus of English Writing II

genre family	elemental genre	count of instances		percentage	
arguments	exposition	106		41.90%	
	challenge	5	**113**	1.98%	**44.66%**
	discussion	2		0.79%	
exercises	exercises	39	**39**	15.42%	**15.42%**
reports	descriptive report	25	**25**	9.88%	**9.88%**
practical genres	resignation letter	24	**24**	9.49%	**9.49%**
stories	anecdote	9		3.56%	
	observation	6	**23**	2.37%	**9.09%**
	recount	4		1.58%	
	narrative	4		1.58%	
procedural genres	procedure	16	**16**	6.32%	**6.32%**
explanations	factorial explanation	10	**11**	3.95%	**4.35%**
	consequential explanation	1		0.40 %	
chronicles	historical account	1	**1**	0.40%	**0.79%**
	historical recount	1		0.40%	
total		**253**		**100.00%**	

Compared with that in *English Writing I*, the proportion of arguments increased significantly in *English Writing II*, taking up as much as 44.66% (nearly half) of the whole sub-corpus. Expositions remained the predominating genre in this family, accounting for 41.90%, with challenges and discussions still low in frequency, comprising 1.98% and 0.79%, respectively. *Figure 5.11* and *Figure 5.12* below represent two examples of exposition and challenge, both of which were responses to the writing prompt "*With the Intelligent Machines to Do the Thinking, Will Our Brain Gets Lazy?*".
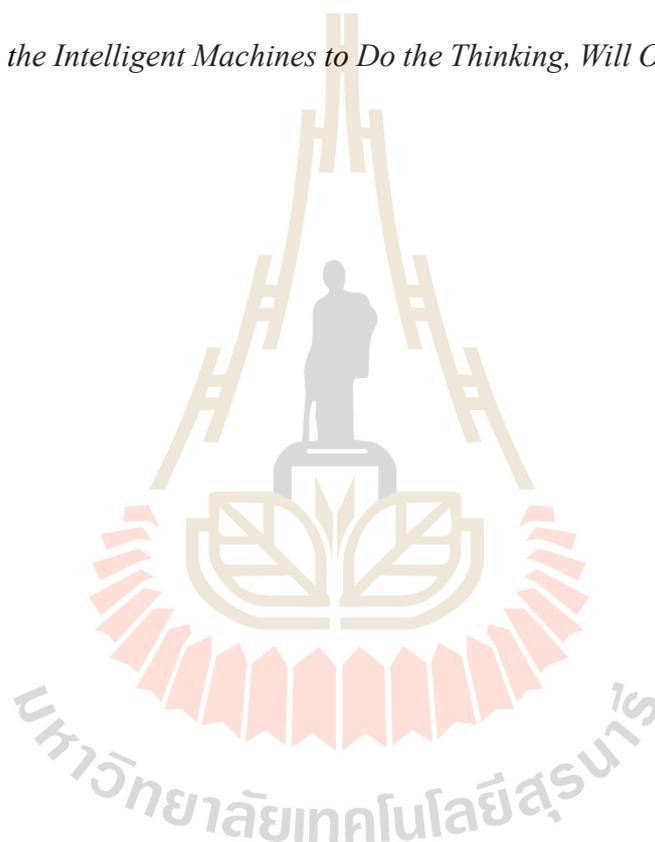
With intelligent machines to do the thinking, will our brains get lazy?

Orientation Nowadays, intelligent machines seem to have had great influence on our daily life. Not only do they take over human jobs but also they can already outperform humans. As machines get smarter, people come to realize that these challenging technologies will do more of our thinking, thus they may give rise to the fact that our brains will regress. So will our brains get lazy in a world run by intelligent machines? From my perspective, I think the answer should be 'Yes'. **Thesis**

Argument 1 Firstly, we are likely to lose our ability of independent thinking and problem-solving. Since we know intelligent machines make fewer mistakes than us, we may always turn to them for help to solve problems instead of finding solutions by ourselves. For example, many students now like to search the answers on the Internet for their school assignments without spending time thinking by themselves.

Argument 2 Secondly, Some brain functions, such as positioning function and memory function, may be affected. According to research, as we use GPS more frequenly, the positioning function can be damaged or even be lost. Also, our memory decline. We are more dependent on mobile phone contacts so we can hardly remember people's phone number.

Reiteration In conclusion, I think with the intelligent machines to do the thinking, our brains will get lazy.

Figure 5.5 An exposition written by EW2G5S3 and its schematic structure

Aritifical Intelligence Won't Make Our Brains Lazy

Orientation
With the rapid development of artifical intelligence, there are many fields that have been took over by artifical machines in our modern life. Some people hold a view that we humans **Position Challenged** will be less intelligent as a result of less uses of brains, in the world run by aritifical intelligence. However, in my opinion, human brains will not be inferior to intelligent machines **Anti-thesis** forever, even though it is truth that aritifical intelligence makes great achievement.

Rebuttal 1 First of all, intelligent machines won't have emotions like humans. There is no possibility to program all humans' emotions accurately into intelligent machines. For instance, machines can learn similing, but they can't understand the difference between jeer and laugh. In fact, expressing our emotions infers to complex social abilites, because we are humans who live in the society. What's more difficult is controlling our emotions. There is no denying that no aritifical intelligence can do these. **Rebuttal 2** Furthermore, it is no doubt that all intelligent machines need to be repaired by humans if there are some faults. After all, all kinds of aritifical intelligence is researched by humans. So our brains will

keep pace with the aritifical intelligence all the time.
Reiteration All in all, the view that aritifical intelligence will make our brains lazy is an expression of lacking vision on human brains. After all, machines are always machines, they can't replace humans totally. Also, we humans also make progress at the same time.

Figure 5.6 A challenge written by EW2G4S3 and its schematic structure

In contrast to arguments, stories shrank remarkably from 26.76% in *English Writing I* to only 9.09% in the current course; yet, the 4 types of story genres were more evenly employed (exemplums were absent from this course), with anecdotes (3.56%) slightly more frequent than the others, which gives the impression that in the teaching and learning of writing stories in this course, the students' attention was directed in some way to the human emotions aroused by the incidents being recounted. To illustrate, *Figure 5.13* below presents a typical example of anecdote, staged as Orientation ^ Remarkable Event ^ Reaction.
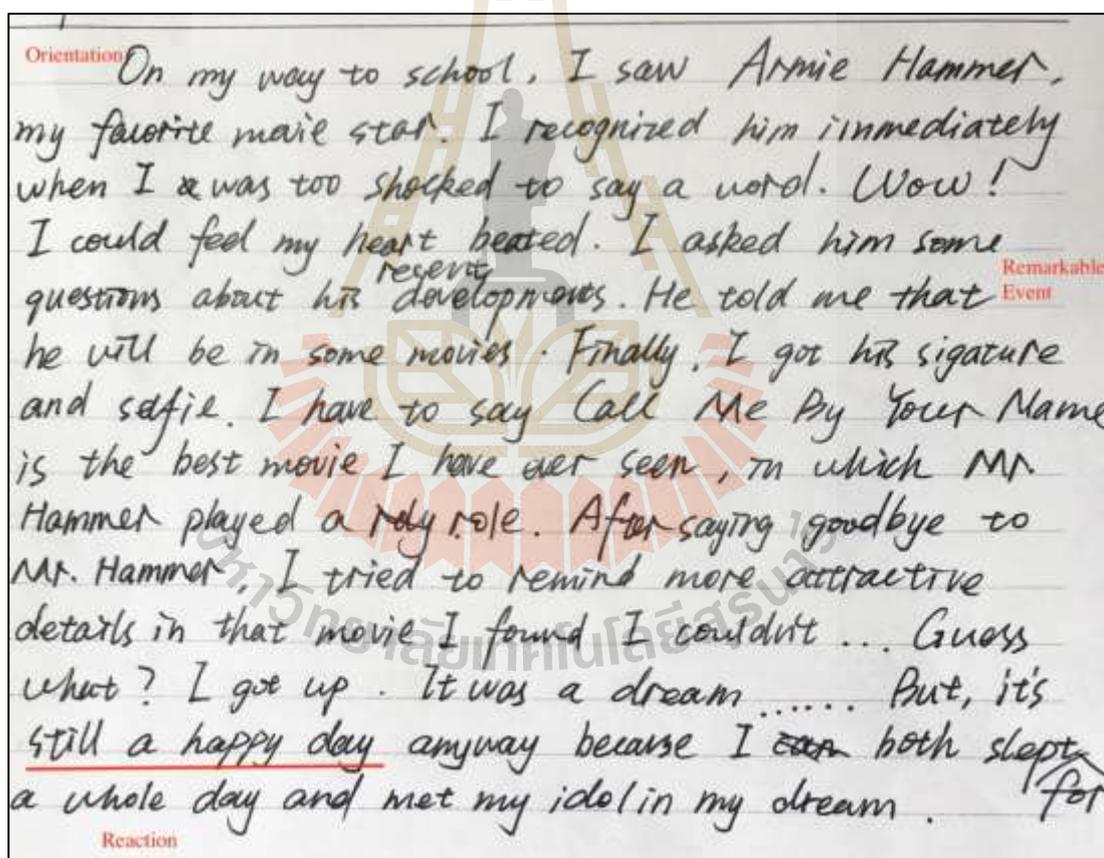
Figure 5.7 An anecdote written by EW2G5S8 and its schematic structure

Procedural genres, while absent in *English Writing I*, were addressed in this course by the American female instructor, who taught two groups of *English Writing II* students the writing of what she called **"how-to essays".** As an after-class assignment,

the students composed an essay explicating the steps and processes of how to get something done, in this case instantiating the elemental genre of procedures that constituted 6.32% of the sub-corpus.

Explanations, as shown in *Table 5.3*, were employed slightly more frequently (4.35%) in this course, especially factorial explanations (3.95%) which were not used at all in *English Writing I*. *Table 5.4* below is an abridged exemplar of factorial explanations. At the same time, chronicles remained as inactive, but an interesting case of historical account (See *Table 5.5*), absent from *English Writing I*, was found in this sub-corpus. It is worth pointing out that neither explanations nor chronicles received proper treatment throughout the teaching agenda, so they were largely employed in essays on self-selected topics in which the students had more freedom to decide what to write and how to write it than when they were writing for instructor-set assignments with specified topics or central propositions that tended to invite one genre more than another.

Table 5.4 Factorial explanation written by EW2G3S4 and its schematic structure

factorial explanation	Text **An Invisible Killer to College Students**
Phenomenon	Currently, the proportion of college students having psychological problems experienced dramatic increase…Besides, one of the most dangerous aspects of depression and other mental health concerns is suicide. That is to say, a mental health problem is like an invisible killer, which can end someone's life anytime… There are numerous causes accounting for the phenomenon.
Factor 1	The first is that students in the modern world are being confronted with great pressure from study. The burden of the curriculums and exams is too heavy. Being depressed for a long time, people will face some problems in mental health, ...
Factor 2	Secondly, growing students are addicted to the Internet. Many college students desire to find psychological satisfaction in the virtual world for lack of communications in reality. ... Thus some college students indulge in the virtual world, close the doors of their hearts and become isolated in the real world.
Resolution	Besides, due to the intensification of social competition and the depression of the job market, it is more and more difficult for college students to find desirable jobs. This has put great mental pressure on many students, which triggers them to lose the sense of security and to be of anxiety and inferiority.

Table 5.5 Historical account written by EW2G4S4 and its schematic structure

historical account	Text **American gun culture**
Orientation	American gun culture do have a long history.
Account Sequence	As early as the 1600s, when the first Europeans came to the continent of the North America, what they had to face were the cruel battles, the frequent conflicts with the local Indians. At that time, the government did not have the power to provide necessary defense, the people could only rely on themselves. Thus, gun played a significant rule in self-defense. In many states, the local governments encouraged people to own and carry guns to protect themselves as well as the public. So no wonder, when it came to the Independent War, the armed people enhanced the importance of owning guns privately. Because it was the people with private guns who first opened fire to the Lexington, which led to the beginning of the war, and the independence of America. In the views of many Americans, the victory of the Independent War was largely determined by the fact that most Americans own and carry guns with them.
Deduction	Therefore, during the long process of history, the gun culture has been fully formed and developed in the US. As a result, the right of owning guns has been considered as a right that cannot be derived. They share a belief that guns provide some level of protection against crime and tyranny, and guns were a powerful symbol of their identity and freedom.

5.1.4 Academic Writing in the Spring of 2018

It is noticeable that in the course of *Academic Writing*, the generic profile was much simpler. As previously mentioned in *Section 3.2.2.1*, the lessons in *Academic Writing* were delivered mainly in the form of lectures or in-class reading/discussion, and only 2 written assignments were given out throughout the course. One of the assignments contained 5 sentences or paragraphs, which were highly decontextualised and so disparate with each other, thus was categorised as exercises, and the other contained a short passage that instantiated the elemental genre of factorial explanation. However, that the writing prompt for the latter assignment was a semi-completed text which was highly structured and readily scaffolded, leaving only a few blanks for the students to fill in based on the clues given in Chinese; by doing this, the instructor's emphasis was more on the taught vocabulary, syntactic forms and the appropriate use of voices, rather than on the genre itself. In general, the two writing assignments, as

informed by the instructor later in the interviews, were laid down with a view to raising the students' awareness about how to write with objectivity and clarity - two important criteria regarded as characterising academic discourses.

5.2 Context of the instruction-based writing: A situated account

The preceding section offered a package of generic profiles that could be used to answer the question of *what elemental genres were at play in the writing-related curriculum?* However, to understand what was actually going on in these instructional settings and how these written genres were taught, learnt and called into being entails further exploration far beyond the student writers' textual or transcriptual performances. Adopting an emic approach, this section now turns to the context of the writing instruction in this university, attempting to give a situated account based on multiple sources of information such as the national syllabus, teaching materials, as well as in-depth interviews with core participants.

5.2.1 Generic aspirations in the national syllabus

As stated in Chapter 1, the English Teaching Syllable for English Majors (ETSEM) in China, issued by ELT Advisory Board under the Ministry of Education (usually referred to as "the national syllabus" for short) in 2001, orchestrates the undergraduate English education nationwide. Examining this important document, attention was focused on the provisions related to writing - mentions of *genre* in particular. By doing so, the purpose was to reach an understanding of the broad discoursal, or generic, aspirations at the national level, which were translated, often adaptively, into the actual practice of the massive institutions and English departments.

It is stated in the national syllabus that English writing courses aim at

"training students' fundamental English writing abilities, including writing outlines, summaries, *short essays* as well as simple *practical writing"*. It is suggested that English writing courses be offered in the second and third year, for 3 or 4 terms, which is, as has been shown above, closely accorded with by SICAU English Department.

In respects of the teaching contents, the national syllabus specifies an accumulation of knowledge from *words and sentence structures* to *paragraph writing strategies* to *textual structure and organisation* to *writing short essays*. When it comes to *genre*, the national syllabus further stresses:

"*If conditions permit*, students should be further trained to master all kinds of *genres* and their *textual structures*, such as the *descriptive*, *narrative*, *expository* and *argumentative*."

Embedded in this statement are two recognisable aspects pertaining to the status of genre. First, although the ability to write different genres seems to be placed at a more advanced stage, its importance is obscured by being made contingent, or in some sense optional, as implied in the phrase "*if conditions permit*". Second, the concept of genre is somewhat loosely or crudely categorised, more directly associated with the common *types of writing* or *rhetorical modes* (i.e., *descriptive*, *narrative*, *expository* and *argumentative*, terms often used in traditional L1 or L2 composition pedagogy), drawing no distinction between sub-types of genres based on their specific social functions or linguistic features as theorised in SFL.

Additionally, the national syllabus also sets forth, in a broad outline, the expected learning outcomes in all aspects of language learning (specifically, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, use of reference books, and cultural attainment) in this four-year undergraduate

programme. These learning outcomes are specified on a yearly basis in the original syllabus. For a quick review, the part concerning writing is reproduced in *Figure 5.14* below, with highlights(italics) placed on the types of genres being mentioned.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
• Be able to write a *short essay* of 120-150 words within 30 min • Be able to write *practical genres*, e.g., *notes* and *notices*	• Be able to write a *short essay* of about 150-200 words within 30 min, according to a given topic, outline, diagramme, or data • Be able to write a *practical genre* of about 60 words within 10 min	• Be able to write *story synopses*, *book reports*, *course papers*, and *formal correspondences* • Be able to write 250-300 words in 30 min	• Be able to write *all kinds of genres* • Be able to write 300-400 words in 30 min • Be able to write a *bachelor's thesis* of 3000-5000 words

Figure 5. 8 Expected learning outcomes in writing in the national syllabus

Apart from genres emphasised at each stage (before the culminating bachelor's thesis), the national syllabus stresses an accumulated writing speed and other qualities of good writing that students are expected to acquire; for example, grammatic accuracy, appropriate choice of words and expressions, substantial and relevant contents, coherent organisation, and clear structure. It is hard to envision, however, beyond the few genres specifically named, e.g., *story synopses* and *book reports* (similar to *text responses* in SFL tradition), as well as some *practical genres*, how students are supposed to gain a holistic grasp over "*all kinds of genres*" via writing what are referred to as "*short essays*". This uncertainty is perhaps due to a fuzzy understanding of what the genre "*essay*" entails. As Johns (2008) pointed out, essay is difficult to define as a genre, because it is often used as an umbrella term for various types of writing, and the characteristics of structure, register and argumentation vary greatly. It is therefore rather

ambiguous what the specific requirements of an "*essay*" should be like and what particular elemental genre it is to realise. Therefore, to know how the fuzziness and ambiguity that infuses the national context has been translated into more concretes terms in the current institution, it is necessary to give a more realistic account of what the writing teachers think and do in the local classrooms - their theoretical orientations and practical support lent to the students.

5.2.2 Approaches to teaching writing: a pedagogic "mosaic"

Informed, but by no means slaved, by the national syllabus, individual teachers had relative freedom to design the day-to-day lessons in their courses. In view of the non-interventionalist nature of the present study, not a single element in the pedagogical environment was manipulated. It seems unlikely, therefore, that there was a one-size-fits-all model for writing instruction, given the elasticity of faculty allocation for the three writing courses in the institution; it is equally unlikely that the approach to teaching writing was framed under one single theoretical umbrella that the writing teachers unanimously agreed upon. On the contrary, as individual writing teachers came to this work with diverse backgrounds of education, disciplinary expertise, and experiences in L2 writing instruction, the writing pedagogy in reality consisted of a package of various approaches and strategies that individual teachers chose, consciously or unconsciously, as the most suitable to his/her own classroom context. Metaphorically, the actual pedagogic site did resemble a "mosaic", a clearer view of which could be gained by looking more closely at the individual teachers (under pseudonyms), drawing in particular on teaching materials they developed and used for the courses and emic points of view revealed in the in-depth interviews. (in reality, for practical reasons, the textbooks designated by the Department for the 3 writing courses

were not used at all either by the instructors or students, so they were excluded from the current examination).

Professor Lee: a traditionalist

Professor Lee is a senior faculty member in the Department of English, who has been teaching both *English Writing I & II* for many years. He appeared to be an enthusiastic proponent of the traditionalist basic-skills approach throughout all his sessions in the two writing courses (for a more detailed review of the theoretical origin, dominant pedagogic practices and major critiques of this approach, see *Section 2.3.1.1, Chapter 2*). The 298 presentation slides that he designed and used in the two courses were characterised by a consistent focus on and passion for rigid, decontextualised exercises at the word-, sentence- and paragraph- levels. To provide a more quantifiable picture of such a deep entrenchment in the basic skills, *Table 5.6* presented below summarises the major contents of his presentation slides with the themes and subthemes that emerged.

Table 5.6 Overview of Professor Lee's teaching contents

Theme/subtheme		Level
I. Useful sentence patterns	sentence patterns used in *introductions*	sentence
	sentence patterns used in *conclusions*	sentence
	sentence patterns used to explain *causes & effects*	sentence
	sentence patterns used for *comparison & contrast*, *pros & cons*	sentence
	substituting with richer *choices of words*	word/sentence
II. Language revision of problematic uses	insufficient *supporting details*	paragraph
	repletion & redundancy	paragraph
	unparalleled sentence structure	sentence
	improper use of *transitional words* and *cohesive devises*	sentence/paragraph
	erroneous *logic* in sentences	sentence
	ambiguous *S + V structure*	sentence
	punctuation	orthography/sentence
III. Nominalisation		word

To illustrate each subtheme listed in *Table 5.6*, Professor Lee provided a great deal of exemplars both in Chinese and English, although most of them were disconnected and decontextualised. His preoccupation with "sentence structures" was equally evident in the two interviews carried out with him, during which the term "sentence structure" or "sentence pattern" emerged as a dominating theme that constantly resounded. In the end-of-English-Writing-I interview, for example, he described the primary objective of English Writing courses as "*how to think in English*", and in his conception, the *logic* of English, the highest goal of not only the learning of writing but English language learning in general, lied entirely in the basic *subject + verb + object* construction within the sentence. Yet, this conception of *logic* and its relationship with *sentence structures*, as shown from the following interview extracts, was deemed as too partial, or too narrow, if not utterly inappropriate or misleading:

> "I raised this question to students in the first class: what is the logic of English? …just attempting to show them that the *logic* of English is embodied in the very *basic structure of a sentence*, that is, *subject + verb + object*."
> "The students have already accumulated some vocabulary. Building on that, they should learn how to make *neat sentences* - be able *to create basic sentence structures,* and simultaneously*, to develop an awareness of the logic*."
> "If we just asked the question what is *the basic sentence structure* in English, students would simply answer SVO, but if we emphasised *the connection between SVO and the logic*, they might pay more attention to this."

In the interview at the end of *English Writing II*, Professor Lee went on to stress his expectations for students to write "*clearly, idiomatically and logically*", which, in his idea of "*good writing*", was narrowly related to "*appropriate choice of words, sentences, and contents*".

Interestingly, however, Professor Lee himself seemed somewhat mindful of the possible risks in detaching sentence patterns from their context and openly objected

rigid "*parroting*", consistent with the criticisms raised against the basic skills approach for creating "*inert*" writing knowledge (e.g., Miller, 2005).

> "I told students that they could imitate the sentence patterns I presented in the class, but I also cautioned them *not to be slaved by them*. I definitely would not suggest *rigid parroting. That*'*s* why I always told my students that the patterns, or templates, I provided for them were just *choices*. My intension was that they could choose the one *most suitable for their writing purposes* and make *flexible* use of the words and expressions."

The fact that Professor Lee attended more to such local issues as grammar and vocabulary rather than the global aspects of writing well explained the number of assignments that were categorised as exercises in the corpus. In spite of that, he provided a number of model texts in his supplementary materials, all of which were intended for the writing part in CET-4 or CET-6. These model texts contained 14 instances of expositions, 5 of discussions, 2 of challenges, and 1 of factorial explanation. However, in using such model texts, he showed little, if any, regard for the genres per se, and when asked for his view on the importance of genre knowledge in writing, he remarked, "*it is definitely important, but different genres, despite their different styles or characteristics, all depend on the same mode of thinking and the awareness of logic*", a belief (or misbelief, rather) that helped explain why the concept of genre was almost completely overlooked in his teaching agenda.

Unfortunately, focusing solely on the sentence-level exercises seemed to have greatly demotivated the students in the class and caused unnecessary misunderstandings or confusions. One student informant, for example, from an *English Writing I* group which Professor Lee taught, showed a lower awareness of genre in the interview, admitting that he "*never had any experience with formal, standard genres*" in the classroom; and when asked whether or not he thought the concept of genre was

important to learning writing, he mumbled "*I don't know*" with a disconcerting look in his eyes. Another student informant, reflecting on her experiences in Professor Lee's classes, launched a more direct complaint in the interview:

> "To be honest, I don't know actually what it is that he was teaching. It was too *messy*. He assigned some exercises, but *I had no clue what they were for*."
>
> "I did *not see much relevance*. Sometimes I just did *not get his point*. For example, he presented us very long examples at the beginning of the class, which *did not actually make much sense* to me, and then asked us to create sentences with noun phrases or something. And we did, but that's all about it?!" (EWIG1S6, interview)

Ms Rita*:* deep involvement with genre-based pedagogy

Ms Rita is a young Chinese-L1 lecturer in the Department, who, like Professor Lee, has been teaching both *English Writing I & II* in recent years. Her approach to teaching writing was more recognisably influenced, as it were, by the genre-based pedagogy (as reviewed in more detailed in *Section 2.3.1.3, Chapter 2*). Specifically, her teaching was systematically organised around the four broad types of "*genres*", or *rhetorical modes* in her own terms, moving gradually from *narration* and *description* in *English Writing I* to *exposition* and *argumentation* in *English Writing II*.

Although she did not strictly follow the SFL terminology, she brought to the class a keen interest in the students' active participation in a variety of key written genres. Essentials of her instructional contents in the two courses were summarised in *Table 5.7* and *Table 5.8* below, with details that could be directly or indirectly associated with the theoretical ideas and pedagogic practices in the SFL genre-based approach.

Table 5.7 Overview of Ms Rita's teaching contents in English Writing I

Unit	Details	Elemental genres involved
Introduction	orientation & course requirements; four common rhetorical modes (narration, description, exposition, argumentation)	
punctuation		
proper words	words & style: informal v.s. formal, practical v.s. eloquent, general v.s. specific	
narration	t*o entertain*	
personal narratives objective reports	chronological order, insights into *human behaviour or motivation* *attitude & feelings*	*recount* (1), *exemplum* *anecdote* (1)
unpleasant experiences	showing or telling, chronological order, action verbs	*narrative* (2), *observation* (1)
historical narratives	brief accounts of *a person's life*, *the history of a family*, the establishment and *development of an organization*, etc. [introduction ^ account ^ remark] (similar to *Orientation ^ Life Stages /Sequence of Recount ^ Deduction*)	*biographical recount,* *historical recount* (1)
description		
description of a place	senses, spatial order, *features*, a dominant expression	*descriptive report* (1)
description of an object	senses, spatial order, *features* or *functions* a dominant expression	*descriptive report* (1)
description of a person	*personality*, *behaviour*, *qualities*, concrete, vivid details, person in action, using *anecdotes*	*descriptive report,* *anecdote*

Table 5.8 Overview of Ms Rita's teaching contents in English Writing II

Unit	Details	Elemental genres involved
topic sentence	characteristics: focused, manageable, discussable, interesting; placing	*exposition* (1), *descriptive report* (2)
paragraph development	unity, coherence, ordering of information	*observation* (1), *recount* (1), *descriptive report* (2), *sequential explanation* (1), *factorial explanation* (1),
exposition	*To convey information or explain*	
exemplification	choose appropriate examples	*exposition* (2),
process analysis	*step-by-step* process of *how to do things, how something is done/made, how something happened*	*procedure* (1), *procedural recount* *{*autobiographical recount (1)}*
cause-effect analysis	[background/phenomenon ^ cause 1, 2, 3…/effects 1, 2, 3… ^ restatement] (similar to *Phenomenon ^ Factor 1, 2, 3…/Consequence 1, 2, 3… ^ Deduction*)	*factorial explanation*, *consequential explanation*
argumentation	*to persuade;* four core elements: issue, claim, support, *refutation;* from more than one *side*	*exposition* (1), *discussion* (1) *challenge*

Ms Rita's commitment to genre infused her teaching in myriad way. First and foremost, she was apt to present to the students the sub-categories of each rhetorical mode in terms of their *social purposes* and *generic structures*. For example, she depicted the purpose of *narration* (which, as seen from *Table 5.7*, incorporated most story genres and certain chronicles in SFL terms) as "*to entertain*", that of *exposition* (which involved procedural genres and explanations, as in *Table 5.8*) as "*to convey information and to explain something difficult to understand*", and that of

argumentation (including all sub-types of arguments) as "*to persuade*". In some cases, she also demonstrated the expected rhetorical structures (or "*suggested writing patterns*" in her own words) for certain sub-types of writing. For instance, she depicted "*historical narrative*" as unfolding through an [*introduction ^ account ^ remark*] pattern, which was observably akin to the [Orientation ^ Life Stages/Record of Events ^ Deduction] schematic structure for biographical or historical recounts. Another example was what she addressed as "*cause-effect analysis*", for which she suggested a [*background/phenomenon ^ cause 1, 2, 3.../effects 1, 2, 3... ^ restatement*] structure, almost equivalent to the [Phenomenon ^ Factors/Consequences ^ Deduction] schematic structure for factorial or consequential explanations in the SFL genre tradition.

Additionally, Ms Rita attached great importance to *scaffolding* in her classroom practices. The teaching methods she adopted, which she termed as "*concept explanation*" and "*sample analysis*" (note that in *Table 5.7* and *Table 5.8* the number in brackets following each elemental genre is the number of sample texts used to model that genre), as a means of making explicit the social purposes, core features, and rhetorical structures of particular genres, were equivalent to the Deconstruction stage in the teaching/learning circle proposed by SFL genre theorists and practitioners (see *Section 2.3.1.3*, *Chapter 2* for a detailed review). In doing this, Ms Rita directed the students' attention to *textual regularities* that enabled genres to function as *rhetorical shortcuts* to student writer (Worden, 2018). Another method that she used under the label "*writing practice*" included Joint Construction of target genres in class and Independent Construction by the students themselves after class -a fact learnt through unrecorded personal communications with students from her classes and by examining

the texts produced by this group of students in the present corpus. A snapshot of one slide Ms Rita presented in *Introduction* at the beginning of *English Writing I* (*Figure 5. 15*) provides a quick, yet only partial, window to her fundamental concern for genre and adherence to genre-based pedagogy.
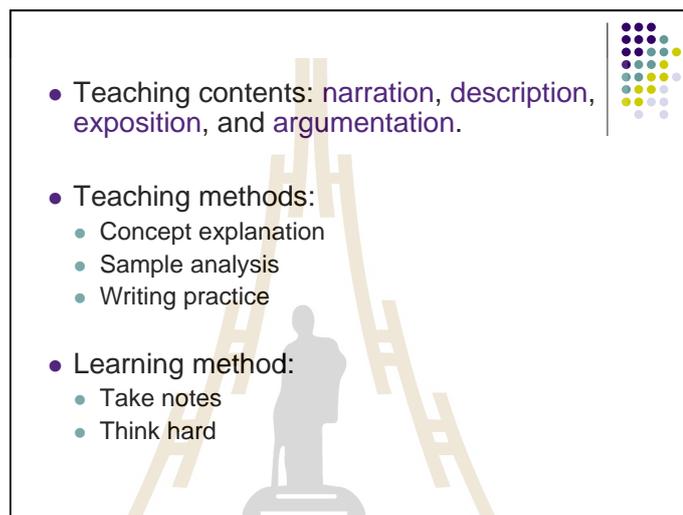
Figure 5.9 Snapshot of one slide from Ms Rita's *Introduction* in English Writing I

From the perspective of SFL, Ms Rita's approach to dealing with genre showed certain limitations - most notably in the blurred bordering between genres and an incomplete coverage. For example, the genre exposition in the SFL sense of the word, was first taken up in the unit "*exemplification*" as a sub-category of *expository* writing, and again, in quite an undistinguishable fashion, it was demonstrated as a key genre for *argumentation*. A second example could be found in the unit "*process analysis*". Although Ms Rita described this type of *expository* writing in such a way that could be easily linked to procedural genres in the SFL tradition (see *Table 5.8* for details), she illustrated this genre with a sample text materialising, quite surprisingly, a typical autobiographical recount, in which George Bernard Shaw, the Nobel-laureate

playwright, narrated his life stories of how he successfully learnt public speaking. Moreover, for *descriptive* writing, Ms Rita organised the sessions according to the matters being described, i.e., a *place*, an *object*, or a *person*, which resulted in a sole focus on descriptive reports, with no mentions of the other two genres in the same clan, compositional reports and classifying reports.

Despite the above aspects in which Ms Rita's instructional approach was found lacking, they were stemmed probably not so much from the instructor's own shortcomings as from the present researcher's chosen theoretical footing in SFL. Just as advocates of explicit teaching of genre forms argued, teaching genre conventions empowered students by giving them access to powerful ways of using language (e.g., Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Martin, 2009). Similarly, the students who received writing instruction from Ms Rita did exhibit a heightened awareness and a keener perception towards genre (or particular genres) in the interview data, evidentially consistent with many of the previous studies which argued for the effectiveness of genre-based pedagogy in either improving EFL tertiary students' writing performances or raising their genre awareness (e.g., Emilia, 2005; Chen & Su, 2011; Yasuda, 2011; Ramos, 2019).

> "It (the knowledge of genre) is very important. We just learnt two types, narrative and descriptive this term. In general, when we write, we have to know what our *purpose* is. For different purposes, we use different genres, different language, and different *structures*." (EW1G3S6, interview)
>
> "To learn genres, we need to know their *basic structures and elements*. Only when we have acquired this kind of knowledge can we write our essays in a standard format conventional to a particular genre." (EM1G4S6, interview)
>
> "I think whatever we write, we have a *potential audience*. We should be clear who they are. In order *to attract the attention of our audience*, we then need to find out *the most effective means to express ourselves*. The concept of genre provides us with such a weapon, or in other words, *writing model*s, to attract the audience." (EM1G4S2, interview)
>
> "I think now *I understand better some key genres* and *what they should look*

like." (EW2G4S3, interview)

Ms Michelle*:* set her foot in both genre and process

Ms Michelle, a Peace Corps volunteer from America, came to teach in this university on a 2-year term. A suitable description of her instructional approach in the two fundamental writing courses was that she had, conceivably, adopted an eclectic approach, setting her feet in two of the pedagogical camps: one in *genre* and the other in *process*.

In the opening class of *English Writing I,* Ms Michelle provided an overview of the course by introducing four *types of writin*g, i.e., *narrative*, *descriptive*, *expository*, and *persuasive/argumentative* (equivalent to what Ms Rita referred to as the four common *rhetorical modes*) and stressed that her focus in this course was on how to write different parts of an *essay*, plus professional emails and résumés for the last 2 weeks. *Table 5.9* summarises the focal points of Ms Michelle's teaching in this course.

Table 5.9 Overview of Ms Michelle's arrangement in English Writing I

Unit	Details
orientation	types of writing overview: narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive/argumentative; different parts of an essay; professional emails and résumés
introduction	hook; thesis statement
body	building on the claims stated in the thesis statement; can be used for any type of writing; using details instead of claims if doing more of a narrative style
conclusions	restate opinion; look into the future; ask questions
emails	purposes: to complain, inform, advertise, apologise, etc. tone: informal, neutral, formal
résumés	layout and key components

At this stage, the notion of genre was not placed saliently on Ms Michelle's teaching agenda , as she did not go further into any specific type of writing as mentioned

above, but instead developed her lessons around how to write an "*essay*", which was used as an umbrella term throughout the course, reminiscent of the word in the national syllabus. She, then, on occasion of the Peace Corps 25th Anniversary Writing Competition which invited an essay on the topic "*Volunteer! Make a Difference!*", guided the students to write this "genre" in the format of "five paragraphs", which consisted of an introductory paragraph of the topic and the statement of a claim, three supporting paragraphs for the claim and a concluding paragraph.

Ms Michelle's approach to essay writing resonates with previous writing scholars who, in a similar fashion, adopted the five-paragraph structure to teach academic argumentation in an EFL environment (e.g., Bacha, 2010). However, instead of confining essays of this kind to relatively simple argumentative structures (e.g., Andrews, 1995), Ms Michelle seemed to have perceived the five-paragraph structure as "universally" useful to any types of writing, and she repetitively emphasised, "*it is not necessarily persuasive/argumentative*" (interview data) and "*it can be a narrative, or anything that you choose*" (presentation slide). That said, she seemed somewhat inconsistent in her claim for the universal applicability of the five-paragraph structure, since she explicitly required a focused, debatable and positioned "*argumentative thesis statement*" to be included in the introduction paragraph and only until taking up persuasive/argumentative writing in the subsequent English Writing II did she remind students of using this previously learnt structure.

Moving into *English Writing II*, Ms Michelle's attention to the concept of genre was noticeably intensified. Having reviewed the four types of writing with a *jigsaw/expert group* activity (in which the students were divided into four groups and each group gathered together their ideas of one particular type of writing, so as to make

the group one of experts) in the first-week orientation class, she then devoted the

remaining weeks to each type of writing, elaborating on such global issues as

communicative functions, writing strategies as well as rhetorical structures. *Table 5.10*

summarises the key points addressed by Ms Michelle in *English Writing II*, and the

elemental genres that could be associated with from an SFL perspective.

Table 5.10 Overview of Ms Michelle's teaching contents in English Writing II

Unit	NO. of slides	Details	Elemental genres involved
orientation	10	review of four types of writing: narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive/argumentative;	
descriptive writing	11	five senses; picture in mind	*descriptive report*
expository writing	18	*to explain; does not give opinion;* daily-life writing; Focused only on *how-to* articles	*procedure*
narrative writing	14	*title ^ setting ^ characters ^ problem ^ complicate the problem ^ resolve the problem*	*narrative*
persuasive/ argumentative writing	19	*OREO: opinion ^ reason ^ evidence ^ opinion restated;* five-paragraph structure	*exposition*,

An observation from *Table 5.10* was that Ms Michelle's conceptualisation of

the four types of writing seemed rhetorically simple and quite narrow in scope, treating

each type of writing as almost identical to only one particular genre from the

perspective of SFL, with no distinctions drawn between possible sub-types as Ms Rita

did (as shown in *Table 5.7* and *Table 5.8*). For instance, by putting highlights on the

element "*problem*" and its "*complication*" and "*resolution*" in narrative writing, Ms

Michelle associated this type of writing with only one member of the story genres, i.e.,

"narrative", from an SFL perspective. Similarly, by introducing the interesting acronym

OREO, which stood for "opinion ^ reason ^ evidence ^ opinion restated", a rhetorical structure for argumentative writing, Mr. Michelle solely focused on exposition where students were supposed to argue for a proposition, neglecting alternative cases where students might argue from multiple perspectives via discussion or argue against a given stance via challenge.

Besides the narrow and somehow restricted conceptualisation of genre, Ms Michelle held an unbiased, neutral attitude towards the relative value of each type of writing (genre) in the students' overall development of writing capacity, seeing all of them as equally important. For instance, when commenting on the students' work on the "*Volunteer! Make a Difference!*" essay that they did during *English Writing I*, Ms Michelle declared herself as open and welcoming to any pieces of writing that fell out of the argumentative bound.

> "I mean, for students in university, I feel like they do write more *argumentative* essays, because a lot of people want to get their *opinions*, but I think it is still important to teach the different types. I had some students who were obviously *natural story-tellers*, because I read through their papers. And *I think it is important to learn all of the different types*, because I think the students really could find "*I might not be that good at argumentative paper, but I am really good at telling a story*", so that they could develop that through *what they like*. It is important to focus on *what they are interested in - anything*." (Ms Michelle, interview, *English Writing I*)

It was, in her perception, the students' purposes in writing that determined their choice of genres, as she remarked in the interview at the end of English Writing II:

> "I think it depends really on what the students want to write, because the students all have *different purposes in writing*. So, I think *it is important to teach, or to have, these different types of writing*, just because *there is always going to be a different reason that you are going to write*." (Ms Michelle, interview, *English Writing II*)

On the other hand, Ms Michelle's approach seemed to fit with what Tardy et

al. (2018) called a "genre-informed approach" in which genre was an important concept but was not uniquely, consistently, and thoroughly emphasised. She did not, for instance, spend much efforts in deconstructing sample texts in the class but instead incorporated many strategies from the *process approach* - the second pedagogical waters that she had set the other foot in. Her enthusiastic engagement in the students' writing processes could be epitomised into four main aspects: heavy reliance on peer-review or peer feedback, production of multiple drafts, less attention to grammar, and extra activities of creative writing, all of which, to a certain extent, reified the 3 influential ideas underlying *process approach* as iterated by Atkinson (2018) (see also *Section 2.3.1.2, Chapter 2*).

Throughout both *English Writing I* and *English Writing II*, Ms Michelle required students to trade their every single piece of writing with others for peer feedback and spent a large amount of class hours walking around the classroom, listening to their peer reviews, and contributing her own comments. Then, the students would revise and re-edit their paragraphs based on the feedback both from the peers and from the teacher. In this way, the students were actively involved in producing multiple drafts for every writing task, and Ms Michelle even requested the students to compile all of their drafts and peer reviews into a portfolio, which she called "*class journals*", submitted to her at the end of the courses. *Figure 5.16* below shows a snapshot of a slide that Ms Michelle presented every time after a writing assignment, before she moved on to a new teaching activity, to mobilise the students into giving and receiving peer feedback.
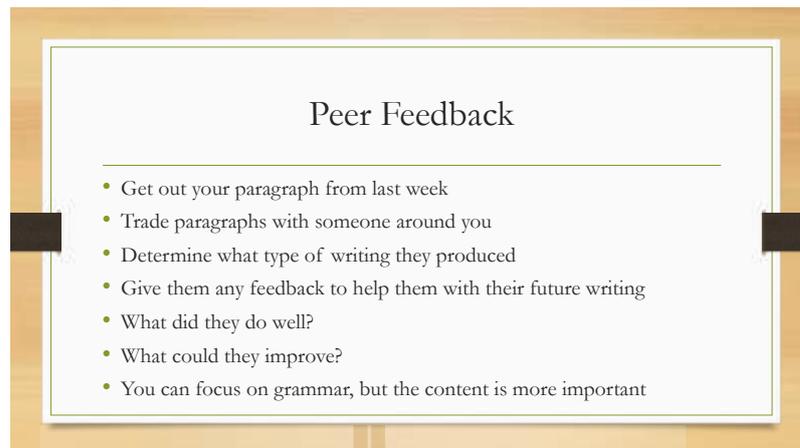
Figure 5.10 Snapshot of a slide used by Ms Michelle for peer feedback

Taking a closer look at *Figure 5.16*, it could be noticed that in doing their peer feedback, the students were encouraged to focus more on the content rather than on grammar, a principle that Ms Michelle herself clung to in doing her own evaluation and later confirmed in the interview data.

> "I don't think I should grade based on grammar or sentence structure. That's not what I teach. Since structure is what I focus on in class, that is what I really focus my comments on." (Ms Michelle, interview, *English Writing I*)
> "I focus more on the content of that essay, not as much on the grammar." (Ms Michelle, interview, *English Writing II*)

In addition, Ms Michelle inserted some activities of creative writing into different units on her teaching agenda. The purpose of these creative writing activities was obviously not as much to invite structurally and logically sound texts as to stimulate the flow of creative ideas and to facilitate students' expressiveness and fluency in writing by "*just keep writing*" (interview). Some details of these creative writing activities are presented in *Table 5.11*. Writing in this way, to quote Atkinson (2018), was more of "*the discovery of meaning*" rather than of "*the achievement of correct form*" (p.2).

Table 5.11 Creative writing activities carried out by Ms Michelle

Unit	Creative writing activity	Description
Orientation (EW I)	2 truths and 1 lie getting to know you	Everyone writes 2 things that are true and 1 thing that is a lie about him/herself; get into groups of 6 and share the three things; vote on which one is the lie
introduction (EW I)	brainstorming	Write for 10 min non-stop any ideas that come to mind when thinking about volunteering
conclusion (EW I)	pass the story (Halloween scary story)	Everyone gets out a piece of paper and writes, "It was a dark and stormy night" as the first line; write a scary story starting from that line; after a few minutes, fold down the paper and pass down to the next person so that (s)he can only see the last line; the next person starts from the last line; continue folding and passing until stop
descriptive writing (EW II)	write & draw	Each person gets one piece of paper; fold the paper into 8 sections; write one creative, descriptive sentence on the paper; pass the paper to the person on the right; (s)he draws a picture of what is written; fold the paper so that the next person sees only the picture; the next person writes a sentence about the picture; continue to fold and write or draw until filling up the paper.
narrative writing (EW II)	one-word story; group story	Each person in the whole class takes turns to say one word to create a story (one person writes down the story as the other people share their words); Each person in a group is given 5 min to write a certain part of the story; pass the paper to the next group member write the next part

Professor Brown: English for Academic Purposes approach

Different from the two fundamental courses of *English Writing I* and *English Writing II*, *Academic Writing*, the course that Professor Brown taught in the third year, was more research-orientated and targeted more directly at the writing of bachelor's thesis - an advanced academic genre that the students were to encounter in the final year of their study.

Professor Brown set up, correspondingly, 3 objectives for this course in his Orientation class: first, for the students to learn how to write bachelor's thesis (and the proposal); second, to be acquainted with fundamentals of academic writing; and third,

to develop the ability to think in English and overcome the habit of word-by-word translation from Chinese. The ultimate end was, for the students, "*to become a qualified graduate*".

For this reason, Professor Brown's instructional behaviour in this course could be more appropriately depicted as grounded in the *English for Academic Purposes* genre-based approach (Swales, 1990, 2004; Johns, 1994; Jordan, 1997; Bhatia, 2004; see also *Section 2.3.1.2, Chapter 2*), as he invested a lot of efforts to drawing the students' attention to the textual and stylistic features of academic texts, in order to help them develop competence as writers within the disciplinary domain of English. It was unsurprising, therefore, little, if any, significance was given to the notion of genre in the SFL sense of the word.

To understand Professor Brown's teaching foci and his underlying pedagogical values, Tribble's (2002) discussion of academic writer knowledge provided a suitable framework. Bringing together insights from both the process approach and genre-based approaches to writing instruction, Tribble (2002) identified four categories of knowledge that writers need in order to produce appropriate and effectives texts in specific academic domains. These can be summarised and represented as in *Table 5. 12*.

Table 5.12 What academic writers need to know (Tribble, 2002, p. 131)

content knowledge	knowledge of the concepts involved in the subject area
writing process knowledge	knowledge of the most appropriate way of carrying out a specific writing task
context knowledge	knowledge of the social context in which the text will be read, and co-texts related to the writing task in hand
language system knowledge	knowledge of those aspects of the language system necessary for the completion of the task

The analysis presented in *Table 5.13* below is, therefore, grounded in this categorisation, drawing on Professor Brown's presentation slides as the main source of information. A central question herein is how, or to what extent, these facets of knowledge intersected in this local classroom for academic writing.

Table 5.13 Overview of Professor Brown's teaching contents in Academic Writing

Unit	Details	Domain of knowledge
Part One **Introduction**	explanation of basic terms	content
	characteristics of academic writing: objectivity, clarity, coherence, accuracy, plainness and preciseness	language system
	linguistic features of academic writing: lexical and syntactic	language system
	language style of academic writing: tentative, formal, objective, concise, varied	language system
	procedures of academic writing	writing process
Part Two **Selecting a Topic &** **Developing** **Research Questions**	principles of topic selection	content
	title writing: purposes, format & standards	context
	procedures of developing research questions	writing process
Part Three **Writing a Research** **Proposal**	components of a research proposal	writing process
	MLA format of bibliography	writing process
	boiling down key words	writing process
Part Four **Writing an Outline**	functions of outline	context
	process of writing an outline	writing process
	four main components of an effective outline	language system
	types of outline	writing process
Part Five **Abstract Writing**	importance of abstract	context
	structure of an abstract	language system
	types of abstract	writing process
	qualities of a good abstract	language system
	steps of writing an effective abstract	writing process
Part Six **Article Reading &** **Discussion**	example questions to be discussed [*Abstract*] [*Introduction*] What are the functions of *introduction*? How is *introduction* organised? [*Methodology*] What aspects of the participants are discussed? [*Results*] How did the author make the results as objective as possible? [*Discussion*] What are the differences between Discussion and other parts?	all of the four domains

Although this course was not generically oriented, in the interview conducted at the end of the term, Professor Brown reasserted the importance of genre knowledge in developing academic writing competence. He particularly underlined the role played by **arguments** in academic writing, and regarded the presentation a central argument, which was the core of a research paper (or a bachelor's thesis), in rhetorically powerful and persuasive manners (which he glossed as "*language force*"), as a matter of top priority. The following extracts best illustrated his viewpoints in this respect:

> "They (students) had learnt these basic genres in the fundamental writing courses earlier, so I *did not spare much efforts* on this in this course."
> "Academic writing, or the bachelor's thesis, barely involve other genres than *arguments*. In most cases, it is *arguments* that do the job. The most important thing is *how to make the central argument more powerful and more persuasive*."
> "Everything should be centred around one main point. *Relevant* and *consistent*."
> (Professor Brown, interview, *Academic Writing*)

5.3 From text to context: A further discussion on the "mosaic" of writing instruction

Through the portraits of the four instructors, specifically what they think and actually do in the writing courses under focus, it becomes clear that the on-going writing instructions given to English majors incorporated a judicious combination of approaches, which were informed by and intended to meet the demands specified by a single national syllabus, yet with varied, and sometimes even perplexed, degrees of effectiveness.

Professor Lee's traditionalist approach, with his single-minded focus on some of the basic language knowledge, diverged tremendously from the other three instructors and seemed to be ill-received and deemed as the least effective by the student writers. His static perception over language and its use in written communication, exclusively

accounted for the small number of "**exercises**" that students (from the groups he taught) were assigned to write and that were included in the corpus. Though knowledge on *words and sentence structures* and *paragraph writing strategies* is called for in the national syllabus, the disconnected and decontextualised vocabulary/grammar activities, as oftentimes implemented by Professor Lee in his classes, seemed unlikely to promote the students' overall writing capacity, and as many studies have demonstrated, the grammar points, once covered and practiced, may not be successfully and accurately used by the students in their own writing *(*e.g., Frodesen & Holten, 2003*)*. That said, it does not mean that any in-class formal vocabulary/grammar instruction should be dispensed with, especially for L2 learners who are still facing a challenging, long-term process of L2 acquisition. To remedy the demonstrated futility of such endeavours, it is probably most optimal for the writing teachers to mindfully integrate the formal language instruction with analysis on other important dimensions of writing, such as communicative purposes, genres and their unfolding structures, or rhetorical situations. Also, Ferris *(*2017*)* has suggested that the writing teachers can use on-line Academic Word List Highlighter tool to choose the vocabulary that have direct relevance to the assigned writing tasks or, through analysing diagnostic writing samples or student self-evaluation questionnaires, identify the grammar points catering to the students' immediate learning needs. In short, the word- or sentence-level instruction in writing classrooms should be brief, narrowly-focused and authentically integrated with the rhetorical settings. By so doing, the students may be able to deploy the linguistic knowledge most appropriately, using the optimal lexical or syntactical structures in their own written-mode production in meaningful and purposeful ways.

Ms Rita and Ms Michelle, on the other hand, manifested some overlapping

characteristics as both of them showcased a heightened awareness towards *genre* in their approaches to teaching writing. Their choice and arrangement of *genres (*or *"*types of writing*"* or *"*rhetorical modes*"* in their own words*)* throughout the two courses *(English Writing I* & II) conformed to a large extent to the generic aspirations set up in the national syllabus, as already seen in Section 5.2.1, which helped them to narrow the vast universe of language *(*meanings*)* to a manageable and reasonable set of priorities *(*genres*)*. Although neither of the two female lecturers openly claimed to have deliberately followed the SFL-based genre pedagogy, they helped the students to get a firm grip on a variety of key elemental genres over which the students need control to complete in-class or even more challenging future writing tasks. Compared to Professor Lee, Ms Rita*'*s and Ms Michelle*'*s classes were deemed more effective and well-received by the students, resulting in the students*'* improved writing performances and their boosted interest and confidence in writing in another language not their mother tongue. In addition, Ms Michelle also integrated some process-focused activities, such as multiple drafting, peer feedback, as well as creative writing into her other class priorities. Such endeavours proved not only effective but also motivating and engaging for the students. One of the implications drawn from Ms Michelle*'*s case was that, rather than sticking rigidly, without questioning, to any single pedagogy, writing instructions that try to thoughtfully marry the strengths of more than one approach might be more beneficial to students. Such marriage and integration require some up-front thought and work by L2 writing teachers, but if done well, it would be a great gift to L2 students.

When it comes to the course of *Academic Writing*, at a relatively advanced level in the curriculum, the teaching and learning of elemental genres began to step down from the instructional platforms, and some other important issues related to academic writing

were taken up and marked with highlight. Probably due to the nature of this course and its immediate objective to prepare the students for the writing of bachelor's theses and thesis proposals, Professor Brown, the course instructor, took an English-for-Academic-Purposes approach that appeared less suitable to be examined through the lens of SFL genre theories. However, the value of this course, as it seems, lied not as much in its affordances for particular elemental genres as in its bridging role to support the students to successfully transition from the instruction-based elemental genres to the more challenging task of bachelor's thesis writing. In other words, if the students basically learnt *"how to argue"*, for one example, in *English I & II*, they were supposed to learn "how to argue academically and research-orientedly" in *Academic Writing* or their bachelor's theses. The question of how the students actually did so will be answered more systematically in the ensuing chapter.

5.4 Summary

Taking a closer look at how students were prepared and facilitated with instruction-based writing in the current Department, basically through the lens of SFL genre theories, this chapter reported and so represented an integrated endeavour to close the gap between text and context.

At the outermost level, the teaching and learning of English writing was informed and conditioned by the provisions in the national syllabus for English major undergraduates, whereas these provisions were then pursued and crystallised in varied manners by each instructor in the local classrooms. One thing inferable from the present findings is that the learner pathway in reality might be far more complex and dynamic than what the national syllabus, with its unitary list of expected outcomes regarding

genre learning, would demand. In other words, it is interesting to see how the national syllabus can be, and has been, translated into a multitude of 'legitimate' versions by individual instructors in their classrooms, which in turn affect the diversity in student performance in the writing assignments.

As depicted in the preceding section, the principles and practices of *basic skills*, *process*, *SFL*, and *EAP* were all more or less actively implemented and fruitfully combined, while, then, the extent to which each teacher incorporated a focus on genre in their instructional decisions varied. The dynamic integration of these multiple instructional approaches, with their strengths and weaknesses therein discussed, supported Wingate's (2012) argument that "it is necessary to draw on more than one theory for effective writing instruction" (p. 9). The teacher agency, as demonstrated here, in responding to the nation-wide expectations with idiosyncratic interpretations that feed into varied implementations in their local contexts must be valued and appreciated. It is such learner dynamics and teacher agency that future developments of L2 writing instruction may happily welcome.

Based on these findings, a conclusion could be safely drawn that it was the interplay of those contextual factors, at the national, institutional, as well as pedagogical levels, that shaped the student texts as seen in *Section 5.1*, this chapter. Put into another way, the contextual accounts given to the writing instructions in the current Department, which, as *a small culture* on its own right, was by nature dynamic and fluid, well explained why the students wrote and allocated their generic resources the way they did.

CHAPTER 6

TRANSFER FROM INSTRUCTION TO PRACTICE: IS THERE A SMOOTH LITERACY JOURNEY?

The purpose of this chapter is to tap on the students' transition and transfer from instruction-based genres to bachelor's theses. Comparing the genre distribution of the two corpora via Log-Likelihood tests, the first section presents the findings in respects of their matches and mismatches, responding to the forth research question, "to what extent does genre learning in the instruction-based settings connect or disconnect with the generic demands in writing a bachelor's thesis?" Based on thematic coding of the focus-group interview, the second section further uncovers the students' adaptive transfer of rhetorical knowledge, answering the last research question, "to what extent and how do the students transfer the rhetorical knowledge learnt from the instruction-based settings to suit the rhetorical demands in bachelor's theses?" Also, factors that impact upon the attempts to transfer are discussed.

6.1 Mapping instruction-based genres with bachelor's theses: continuity and discontinuity

> *"However, even if we all knew what students would be writing later, David Smit points out that 'the problem that will not go away' is 'determining what aspects of a particular genre ought to be made more explicit and when and how to make those aspects explicit'(155).We have much yet to learn about this problem."*
>
> *(Wardle, 2009, p. 769)*

To address the question of how effective the prior writing instructions were for English major students in preparation for the later practice-based writing of bachelor's theses, the writing experiences of those students in the two rhetorical episodes were to be compared in this section, to interrogate if there was a satisfactorily smooth transition from where they were (and what they were writing) to where they would be (and what they would write). The focus of such a comparison falls mainly on the students' actual written artefacts in the two corpora, representing their direct engagement with related elemental genres in the two writing situations, which have been previously reported in *Table 4.1* and *Table 5.1*, respectively.

As specified in *Section 3.3.2., Chapter 3*, statistical analysis was conducted by means of log-likelihood tests, using Paul Rayson's log-likelihood calculator (http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html). The frequencies for each elemental genre in the two corpora (IBG = instruction-based genres; BT = bachelor's thesis) were compared in order to determine whether the differences in occurrences were statistically significant. To reiterate, the greater the log-likelihood (LL) value, the more significant is the difference between the two frequency scores: $LL \geq 3.84$ is significant at $p < 0.05$; $LL \geq 6.63$ is significant at $p < 0.01$; $LL \geq 10.83$ is significant at $p < 0.001$; and $LL \geq 15.13$ is significant at $p < 0.0001$. Effect Size for Log Likelihood (ELL) measure (Johnston et al., 2006) was also implemented, included within Rayson's calculator.

Table 6.1 presents the relative distribution of each elemental genre in the two corpora. As the table shows, on average, significantly more instances of elemental genres were employed in bachelor's theses (19.4) per student than in the antecedent writing assignments (15.3), indicating that, as a whole, an individual student somehow was not given sufficient amount of labour in the writing classrooms in face of the

increased rhetorical load in writing a bachelor's thesis. Note that the possible reasons for **text responses**, used particularly extensively in theses of literary studies, to be absent from the instruction-based writing, have been discussed in the preceding chapter. Similarly, the reasons for the absence of **practical genres** and **exercises** in bachelor's theses are equally obvious. Therefore, the three genre families will be excluded from the present discussion. With the remaining 22 elemental genres, two patterns of *continuity*, or *match* (where no significant difference was found between the two corpora) and two patterns of *discontinuity*, or *mismatch* (where significant differences existed) surfaced in relating the two rhetorical phases of undergraduate writing. The four patterns of (dis)continuity are summarised in *Table 6.2* and will be discussed in turn.

Table 6.1 Comparison of the distribution of elemental genres in the two corpora

genre family	elemental genre	IBG corpus	BT corpus	LL	ELL
stories	anecdote	18	1	22.78 **** (+)	0.00771
	observation	30	0	49.08 **** (+)	0.01368
	exemplum	5	5	0.14 (+)	0.00007
	recount	15	0	24.54 **** (+)	0.00935
	narrative	30	2	36.44 **** (+)	0.00991
chronicles	biographical recount	0	6	6.99 ** (–)	-0.25
	historical account	1	5	2.05 (–)	0.00152
	historical recount	2	25	18.12 ****(–)	0.00527
explanations	sequential explanation	0	1	1.16 (–)	-6.07
	factorial explanation	50	31	10.10 ** (+)	0.00203
	consequential explanation	2	12	5.76 * (–)	0.00228
	conditional explanation	0	2	2.33 (–)	-4.91
	analytical explanation	0	4	4.66 * (–)	-2.58
reports	descriptive report	73	254	67.91 **** (–)	0.00983
	classifying report	0	86	100.14 **** (–)	92.90
	compositional report	0	46	53.56 **** (–)	46.32
procedural genres	procedure	16	6	7.38 ** (+)	0.00234
	protocol	0	2	2.33 (–)	-4.91
	procedural recount	0	22	25.62 **** (–)	18.38

Table 6.1 Comparison of the distribution of elemental genres in the two corpora (cont.)

genre family	elemental genre	IBG corpus	BT corpus	LL	ELL
arguments	exposition	177	190	2.48 (+)	0.00035
	challenge	8	2	5.41 * (+)	0.00262
	discussion	3	11	3.17 (–)	0.00125
text responses	review	0	22	-	-
	interpretation	0	40	-	-
practical genres	email	40	0	-	-
	résumé	40	0	-	-
	resignation letter	24	0	-	-
exercises	exercises	79	0	-	-
total		613 (ps: 15.3)	776 (ps: 19.4)	19.17 **** (–)	0.03663

Note: ps = per student-writer; LL = log-likelihood value; ELL = effect size for log likelihood; (+) = overuse in IBG corpus relative to BT corpus; (–) = underuse in IBG corpus relative to BT corpus; * = p < 0.05; ** = p < 0.01; *** = p < 0.001; **** = p < 0.0001.

Table 6.2 Four patterns of (dis)continuity in the transition from instruction to practice

	pattern		related elemental genres
continuity	underuse		exemplum, historical account, sequential explanation, conditional explanation, protocol, discussion (6)
	extensive use		exposition (1)
discontinuity	excessive preparation		anecdote, observation, recount, narrative, factorial explanation procedure, challenge (7)
	inadequate preparation		biographical recount, historical recount, consequential explanation, analytical explanation, descriptive report, classifying report, compositional report, procedural recount (8)
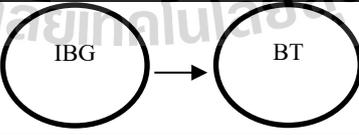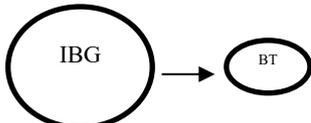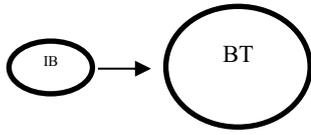
Quantitatively, the first group of elemental genres, i.e., exempla, historical accounts, sequential explanations, conditional explanations, protocols, and discussions, were found to be equally underused in both rhetorical contexts (indicated by the relatively smaller size of the ellipses in *Table 6.2*). That is, while the English major students invested only marginal, if not completely zero, efforts in learning and writing these six elemental genres in the earlier writing courses, their use, anyhow, was likewise scanty in the construction of bachelor's theses.

By contrast, expositions became the only elemental genre that was consistently in extensive use in both rhetorical episodes. For reasons already discussed in *Chapter 5*, e.g., the exam-driven nature of English education in China, and the writing instructors' expectation for students to form and voice their own opinions in essay writing, expositions received tremendous emphasis in the writing classrooms. Relatedly, as one of most valued genres in the thesis writing community (see *Section 4.3.2*, *Chapter 4*), expositions made comparably substantial contributions to the discourses of bachelor's theses, meaning that the prior efforts put in teaching and learning the genre were, in the quantity aspect at least, worthily repaid.

In brief, the writing instructions under observation seemed to be doing justice to these 7 elemental genres, giving them fair treatment, in greater or lesser doses, that catered well to the varied rhetorical demands in bachelor's theses. In other words, in linking the two rhetorical worlds, a seemingly unproblematic *continuity* was found within the 7 elemental genres that could possibly and partially foster an untroubled transition in between.

On the flip side, mismatches were observed where significant differences were found to draw the two corpora apart. Seven elemental genres, namely, anecdotes,

observations, recounts, narratives, factorial explanations, procedures, and challenges, which were more or less frequent in the instruction-based writing assignments, were much less employed in bachelor's theses. This discrepancy might suggest that these elemental genres were unduly emphasised in the classrooms or received excessive pedagogical intervention that hardly made its way into the bachelor's theses. It is not our intention, however, to devalue these instructional efforts, because we are aware that well beyond the bachelor's theses, there might be possibilities for these elemental genres to be more useful in the students' continued literacy development. That said, it is still advisable that pedagogical investment be more thoughtfully re-allocated, if the most immediate end of general writing courses is, and continues to be, to prepare students for the culminating task of thesis writing.

The same holds true with 8 elemental genres, namely, biographical recounts, historical recounts, consequential explanations, analytical explanations, descriptive reports, classifying reports, *compositional* reports, and p*rocedural* recounts, the pedagogical support for which was found insufficient. Most surprisingly, reports, which occupied the bulk of discursive spaces in bachelor's theses (see *Section 4.1.1, Chapter 4*), were largely overlooked in the instructional phases; two subtypes, i.e., classifying reports and compositional reports, were never present in the prior writing courses. It is also worth noting that analytical explanations, the new genre that emerged from bachelor's thesis corpus, was yet entirely invisible from the writing instructions. This observation, on the one hand, has reinforced the earlier argument to view analytical explanations as an innovative genre shaped by the unique rhetorical context of the local thesis writing community, and on the other hand, invoked an interest in the question of how this novel genre could be appropriately and fruitfully introduced into the existing

writing syllabus.

Altogether, in the writing instructions under observation, 7 elemental genres received seemingly fair treatment that catered well to the varied rhetorical demands in bachelor's theses, while another 15 elemental genres did not. To the question posed in the chapter heading, "*Is there a smooth literacy journey?*", the answer for the moment, regretfully, is a tentative *NO*. The chasm between the two rhetorical worlds, as discussed so far, has not only well explained the sense of difficulty that the final-year students have felt when approaching bachelor's theses, but also pointed to a viable route via which remedy work can be thoughtfully done to refine literacy journey charted for future students. Once done well, we believe, it may yield promising results to the advantage of both uninitiated learners and writing teachers.

A question that needs further probing is how much of the rhetorical knowledge learnt and developed within those elemental genres in writing classes, regardless of the variability in amount, was transferred, or transferable, to suit the rhetorical challenges that students later encountered as bachelor's thesis writers. Suppose that such knowledge was not transferable and only stayed where it was (in the writing classrooms), any appeal to more effective, fine-tuned compositional preparations would be groundless. The succeeding section will explicate, based on data drawn from the focus-group interview, the students' application, from the adaptive transfer vantage, of the prior knowledge of evoked genres when they transitioned into new writing situations in bachelor's theses.

6.2 Adaptive Transfer: Reusing and reshaping prior rhetorical knowledge

As DePalma & Ringer (2011) argued, adaptive transfer is theorised as a framework that "acknowledges both the reuse and the reshaping of prior writing knowledge to fit new contexts" (p.135). In what follows, findings from the focus-group interview data will be discussed, focusing on what happens to students' use of prior genre knowledge when they transitioned from the preliminary instruction-based writing tasks into "newer" and more complex writing situations in bachelor's theses: To what extent did they reuse and reshape approaches in transferring their prior rhetorical knowledge, and what reported behaviour seems to be predictive of why and how they transfer such knowledge into unfamiliar writing contexts?

6.2.1 Reusing of *whole genres*

Following Reiff & Bawarshi (2011), *reuse* of rhetorical knowledge was identified here as the writers' behaviours to draw on (or consciously dismiss) *whole genres* with certainty, maintaining known genres regardless of the varied writing tasks. In the focus-group, when asked what genres they were reminded of or drew on, the thesis writers would often name recognisable genres they had been exposed to in the prior writing courses, reflecting on their perceived relevance (or irrelevance) to the bachelor's thesis writing. However, influenced by their former writing instructors' idiosyncratic perceptions over the concept of genre and kaleidoscopic approaches to teaching, the informants referred back to the prior known genres not necessarily as those sophisticatedly developed in SFL genre tradition but as broader categories of *rhetorical modes* often drawn upon by writing instructors (see *Section 5.2.2, Chapter 5*). For example,

"Because all of us did translation studies, we seldom used the *narrative* or the *argumentative*." (Writer of Thesis_2018_6, focus group)

"I think we used more of the *expository*." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

"When writing the thesis, we relied mainly on the *expository* writing, supplemented by *arguments*. Bachelor's theses are not all about *arguments*." (Writer of Thesis_2018_7, focus group)

"The way I wrote this part was quite similar to what we did in *argumentative* writing, that is, introducing the topic and then going into the analysis." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

"I think my Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 are *descriptive*. They require no researching but integrating insights from previous scholars. Chapter 3 is relatively more important and involves more *arguments*." (Writer of Thesis_2018_8, focus group)

The students' reported behaviours of directly reusing these genres corresponded with the *cross-contextual* characteristic of adaptive transfer. Reiff & Bawarshi (2011) defined students exhibiting and reporting such a ready use of whole genres with a recognition of performing similar tasks in similar contexts as "boundary guarders". As the two authors identified, students exhibiting boundary guarding behaviours seemed to express more confidence in approaching the writing tasks and engage in low-road transfer (Perkins & Salomon, 1988) of their prior genre knowledge, even in the face of new and disparate tasks.

6.2.2 Reshaping of rhetorical knowledge

Beyond the low road, it is possible to trace in the interviewees' discourse a shift from replication and application of intact knowledge of whole genres to reliance on smaller constellations of strategies and rhetorical resources, which they consciously and intuitively reshaped, resituated, or reinvented to meet the demands of the target community of practice. Reiff & Bawarshi (2011) defined students observed to report these behaviours "boundary crossers", as those who engaged in high-road transfer (Perkins & Salomon, 1988) which required "mindfulness", reflection, and a related

ability to seek connections between contexts. Such boundary crossing, as perceived in the present research, is an important indication of adaptive transfer.

6.2.2.1 Breaking down genre knowledge into strategies

In the focus group interview, the four thesis writers reported drawing on 5 strategies from a range of prior experiences in learning the relevant genres in the writing courses - and then applying and repurposing them to the new and potentially more challenging writing task (the bachelor's thesis), thus engaging in boundary crossing indicative of adaptive transfer. This section will illustrate what happened, in the interviewees' retrospection, when they transported those genre strategies.

Strategy 1: Providing sufficient examples

The four interviewees all commented on the extensive use of this strategy in writing their bachelor's theses. For instance, Thesis_2018_4 writer explicitly pointed out the importance of providing examples to support her ideas and expressed the difficulties she encountered in finding suitable cases when analysing the translation methods of a particular type of reduplicated words in her thesis:

> "There was one type of replicated words, in the form of ABAB, which could be used as adjectives. I even consulted my friends in the Chinese Department, but still could not *find enough examples*. You have to *provide sufficient examples to support your ideas*. Actually, I spent *a lot of time searching for the suitable examples* in writing my Chapter 3." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

Furthermore, the writers of Thesis_2018_6 and Thesis_2018_8 acknowledged that they developed such an awareness of giving examples to argue for an opinion from their learning experiences in the preliminary argumentative writing and then transferred this strategy into theses, as they saw the two writing situations were "*similar in nature*" and "*in some way related*".

Strategy 2: Developing an outline before writing

When asked if they did refer back to what they had learnt in the earlier writing courses that facilitated their thesis writing, two of the informants named the use of outline and explained how it helped them remove the initial obstacles, as in the following two interview excerpts:

> "At the beginning, I had a lot of problems with my *outline*, and I revised it again and again, until eventually I was certain that *I packed every key point into the outline* and *knew exactly what I was going to write in each section*. That's why I could write fluently later." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

> "I think before writing, there must be *a clear outline*, *a clear framework* for each chapter. It makes writing easier." (Writer of Thesis_2018_6, focus group)

Strategy 3: Follow a chronological order

Reflecting on one of the sections in Chapter 2 which traced the development of Skopos Theory (a theory of translation that she adopted to inform the overall study in her thesis), the writer of Thesis_2018_8 immediately recognised her adherence to the chronological order in this text which she directly imported from what she had learnt about narrative writing in the writing courses. Although she did not respond with the technical term for this genre in SFL, namely, **historical recount**, she specified a clear purpose in using this genre and a clearer sense of how it could be appropriately repurposed and recontextualised in the specific task of thesis writing, which was evident in the following interview excerpt:

> Q: When you presented Skopos Theory in this section, what kind of genre do you think you were using?
>
> A: I reviewed *the four stages of its development*. It was first put forward by the mentor and then further developed by his apprentices.
>
> Q: So, you traced back its history? When you were writing this section, do you think you were referring back to what you had learnt in the writing courses?
>
> A: Yes. I followed *the chronological order*.

Q: When, or where, did you learn this kind of writing strategy?
A: In *the narrative writing.* (Writer of Thesis_2018_8, focus group)

Strategy 4: Classifying items based on similarities and differences

Similarly, the writer of Thesis_2018_6 also looked back upon her experiences in developing Chapter 2, in which she focused on the rhetorical devices used in English advertisements and specifically recalled her concerns in the beginning about the large number of rhetorical devices she needed to handle and the difficulty in how to "*give a detailed description of them all in a well-organised way*". Her final solution was to "*classify them first, based on their similarities and differences, and then introduce each type in turn in terms of its definition, rhetorical effect, typical examples, and analysis of how the rhetorical effect is achieved*". Apparently, she was touching upon an elemental genre known as classifying report in this particular case, yet implicitly, and without using the SFL term for this genre. The writer of Thesis_2018_8 joined her in the focus group in indicating that classifications were plenty in her thesis. Interestingly, however, both writers pointed out that they neither received much guidance of nor engaged in this type of writing in the prior writing courses and learnt how to write basically by "*reading a lot of scholarly works in the field*", "*seeing the strengths and weaknesses in their classifications*", and, based on that, "*creating and presenting a new framework*". It thus could be argued that the students' transferring this writing strategy into thesis was motivated by their reading experiences in the disciplinary field, based on which they made adaptions to suit their own rhetorical needs.

Strategy 5: Arguing from both sides

Alongside the strategy of "*providing sufficient examples*", the writer of Thesis_2018_8 recounted doing so by drawing evidences from both the affirmative

and the opposite side, to prove, in her case, that the translation methods under discussion were effective.

> "To prove that it (a translation method) works effectively, I have provided a lot of examples. This can be done *from both the positive and negative side*, so I think it is a similar process to *argumentation*." (Writer of Thesis_2018_8, focus group)

The interview excerpt, and in particular the mention of "a*rgumentation from both sides*", evoked a subtype of argument genre in SFL, namely, **discussion**. However, as reported previously in *Chapter 4* and *Chapter 5*, this elemental genre was neither much emphasised in the prior writing instructions, nor playing a conspicuous role in constructing the macrogenre of bachelor's theses. Therefore, the ease with which the thesis writer transferred this writing strategy between the two rhetorical contexts, as she so expressed in the interview, seems particularly inspiring, as it points to the possibility for transfer to happen, regardless of the slim input into instruction and the equally slim output from the practice of thesis writing.

In short, the flexible employment of these writing strategies also corroborated the core characteristics of adaptive transfer as *dynamic*, *rhetorical* and *cross-contextual* (DePalma & Ringer, 2011; see also *Section 2.5.2, Chapter 2*).

6.2.2.2 Resituating rhetorical resources

In addition to the writing strategies illustrated above, the boundary crossers also reported to have appropriated some rhetorical resources cumulated in the antecedent writing experiences, and with proper adjustments, resituated them in the bachelor's theses. From the focus group transcripts emerged 5 types of rhetorical resources, which cut across the word and sentence/clause level and well beyond into the discourse level. The application and adaptation made over these resources were

somehow indicative of the boundary-crossing students' awareness of how the two writing situations differed in their core values and rhetorical demands.

Points of view: from first-person to third person

"I used to write *in the first-person perspective* in those essays, as teachers always told us that the first-person perspective would make our essays sound more *authentic* and more *credible*. But the bachelor's thesis required *objectivity*, so the first person was not allowed. Every time I was typing on my computer, I would first cook the ideas in Chinese in *the first-person perspective*. As it went on, I realised that it was wrong, so I had to *change*. The *objectivity* emphasised in the bachelor's thesis makes it different from our earlier essay writing experiences." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

The thesis writer's change in *point of view* emerged as a result of her perceived association, and disassociations as well, between the two writing contexts. The way she made use of this rhetorical resource, which was adapted and transformed, nevertheless, was not entirely unproblematic. Arguably, as the interview excerpt showed, it denoted a narrowly conceptualised understanding of essay writing as genuine, subjective, and full of self-expression, and thesis writing, as traditionally conceived, as scientific, objective and void of human touch - and an even narrower identification of these characteristics as confined to the first- or third-person perspectives.

Basis of argumentation: from general knowledge to specialised knowledge

"In my Chapter 3, I analysed a series of translation methods, informed by a translation principle which I introduced in the preceding chapter. My analysis of these translation methods involved both expository and argumentative writing, but all of the analysis must be closely connected with the overarching principle. This is another aspect in which bachelor's thesis writing is differentiated from the earlier essay writing." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

In the instructional settings, there was a general tendency to encourage students to support their arguments in the short essays, which were usually set on topics concerning critical or controversial issues in real life (as reported in Chapter 5), based on evidences drawn from their general knowledge about the world or their personal experiences in the immediate environment. In contrast, as already discussed in *Chapter 4*, thesis writers were more or less engaged in the knowledge transmission or construction in a specialised field within the discipline, and were thus expected to build an argument using evidences from discipline-appropriate sources, either through the reading of disciplinary literature or concrete data from empirical research. The gap between the two writing situations in this respect seemed to be well recognised by the informant in the excerpt, which then prompted her to adapt, or reshape, her way of arguing, accordingly.

Focus of narration: from event to background setting/characters

"In the previous narrative writing, we focused on the *event*, like what did and what we learnt from doing it. The focus was on recording *personal experiences*. But in writing my bachelor's thesis, as when I was analysing the ancient poems, *the focus shifted to the portrayal of characters* in the poems. I found it quite *difficult*. I know what the characters were like, because I had written about it in Chinese before, but I had *a lack of English vocabulary* for depicting them. I had trouble in *seeking for the most appropriate words. The focus shifted from the event to the background settings and characters*." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

Reflecting on how she transferred what she had previously learnt about narrative writing into analysing poems in the thesis, the writer of Thesis_2018_4 specifically identified the transformation of focus of narration, i.e., from the event or experiences to the portrayal of characters and background setting. In addition, she also expressed difficulty encountered in fulfilling this transformation which was mainly caused by lexical shortage.

Lexical choice: from diversity to accuracy

In the above example, when asked how she resolved the problem concerning lexical shortage, the thesis writer explained that she "*looked up in an on-line dictionary which would offer several words simultaneously with close meanings*" (synonyms), and then checking up one by one their "*differences in shades of meaning*", she "*chose the one that most fit her expectations*". Incidentally, at this point, the informant explicated furthermore how she perceived the earlier essay writing and bachelor's thesis as differing in respect of choice of words, which is, as will be seen here, another important type of rhetorical resources that student writers were supposed to possess and might draw upon in each writing context.

> "In the previous essay writing, we did not pay much attention to *the delicate shades of meaning associated with varieties of words*. Instead, we were encouraged to use them interchangeably to show *diversity* in wording. However, in bachelor's theses, the choice of words must be *accurate*, so we could not use the words too casually. In general, we need to be *more mindful towards wording* in writing the bachelor's thesis." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

It can be seen that the student tended to view the essays written in the prior general writing courses as a rhetorical site to showcase lexical richness, while the bachelor's theses required a smaller range of lexical items but an advanced mastery of their exact meanings.

Syntactic/clausal structure: from complexity to simplicity

> "In the essay writing, we were encouraged to use relatively more complex clauses, but in the bachelor's thesis, we were told not to, if we could make ourselves understood using simpler sentences. The bachelor's thesis expects conciseness. If we use too many complex clauses, and to be worse, use them inappropriately, they may cause ambiguity, to the detriment of the preciseness of the thesis. In my earlier drafts, I used a lot of complex clauses, but my advisor commented and suggested that I should remove or at least simplify them." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

Just as third-person perspective was associated with *"objectivity"*, a simple sentence structure was, according to the interviewed writer, associated with *"conciseness"* of information and *"unambiguity"* of meaning which were valued in bachelor's theses. It is with this basic assumption that the thesis writer was found to have appropriated and resituated the prior rhetorical resources at the sentence/clause level, to meet the rhetorical expectations of the more challenging writing task.

Once again, the recontextualisation and appropriation of acquired rhetorical resources to navigate a new writing task as demanding as a bachelor's thesis manifested marked features of adaptive transfer as *dynamic*, *rhetorical*, and *cross-contextual.*

6.2.2.3 Reinventing rhetorical patterns: "Exemplification" stage revisited

Earlier from the pilot corpus (*Section 3.4.3*, *Chapter 3*), a new rhetorical stage was identified and termed as "Exemplification", which was found to function as an optional stage in a range of elemental genres embedded in bachelor's theses, such as descriptive reports, classifying reports, expositions and factorial explanations. This stage was consistently recurrent across the full corpus of bachelor's theses (but not in the instruction-based genres), and it emerged as a theme widely discussed in the focus group, pointing to another significant aspect of adaptive transfer.

First, Exemplification appeared in the bachelor's theses as a result of the students' extensive use of the writing strategy *"providing sufficient examples"*, which was, as demonstrated in the preceding section, consciously and intuitively transferred from their prior knowledge about writing.

As the discussions in the focus group went more in-depth, the students exhibited a critical generic awareness, regarding the formation of this stage as situated

at the interface of two types of genres (or genre families). As two of the interviewees recalled, the Exemplification stage was most frequently used in their theses in sections which were devoted to analysing the effectiveness of particular types of translation methods. Although taking a global perspective, the thesis writers considered their primary purpose in these sections as "*to show to the readers, to describe these translation methods to them*" (Writer of Thesis_2018_8), they also took this additional stage of Exemplification as playing a rather rhetorically persuasive role, helping them "*to link the analysis of these translation methods with some overarching theories"* and thus "*to be able to convince the readers that they were truly sound and effective methods"* - in a way that "*resembled the argumentative writing*" (Writer of Thesis_2018_4).

As such, it could be asserted that the Exemplification stage emerged as a rhetorically *persuasive* stage reinvented and remoulded in genres which were supposed to be *descriptive* and *informative*, conditioned by the theoretical and rhetorical exigencies of bachelor's theses. Its emergence manifests not only a critical generic awareness that the student writers developed and rematerialised in their writing, but also a *transformative, cross-contextual* application of their prior genre knowledge in rhetorically and academically more complex tasks - indicative of the successful occurrence of adaptive transfer. Simultaneously, it opens up a more sophisticated issue in the field of genre research - that of "genre mixing" or "genre blending" (e.g., Raynolds, 2000; Bhatia, 2004; Martin & Rose, 2008). However, theoretical discussions around this concept have been complicated, and sometimes even contradictory, thus well beyond the scope of the present study. At this point, to bring a tentative concluding remark into the case, the interviewee's own creative coinage of *"genre grafting"* (it was a figurative use the equivalent Chinese word "*jiajie*", meaning that one part of a plant

or tree is cut and added onto another, so that they are joined together to produce a new variety) might be usefully borrowed.

"Just like *grafting*, the exemplification functioned to draw the two types of writing together." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

This coinage insightfully captured the writer's *idiosyncratic* manipulation of generic resources in instantiating one genre with marked characteristics drawn from another. This boundary-crossing behaviour particularly highlighted the characteristics of adaptive transfer as *idiosyncratic* and *transformative (*DePalma & Ringer, 2011, see also *Section 2.5.2*, *Chapter 2).*

6.2.3 How adaptive transfer occurred?

The findings thus far suggest that adaptive transfer did occur. An ensuing question is: what, in fact, encouraged such a transfer? Three themes emerged from the focus group, i.e., *students' individual ability to recognise similarities and differences between the two rhetorical situations*, *affordances of teacher(thesis advisor) feedback*, and *engagement with reading in the disciplinary field*, which were important to the students' transfer of rhetorical knowledge when faced with new challenges.

Earlier theories claimed that transfer depends to a large extent on an individual's ability to recognise similarities between the two situations (Tuomi-Gröhn & Engeström, 2003) and appropriately transform and expand knowledge so it works in a new situation (Beach, 2003; Guile & Young, 2003). The focus group interview here produced data that supported these earlier theories by indicating that the students did transfer their prior genre knowledge because through the lens of genre, they could create connections between the instruction-based writing and bachelor's theses, but beyond that, as some of the excerpts presented in *Section 6.2.2.2* showed, they could

also discern at the same time the differences between the two writing contexts which prompted them to make adaptations accordingly rather than reuse the genres rigidly as "a blueprint for replication" (Bhatia, 2004, p. 208). The following excerpts further illustrate this point:

> "Yes, because they are *similar* in nature. I put forth a translation method in a similar way I put forth an opinion in argumentative essays." (Writer of Thesis_2018_8, focus group)
>
> "They were in some way *related*." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)
>
> "When I started to write my thesis, I felt that it was *quite different* from the essays I wrote before." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

In this respect, we joined Cheng (2007) in asserting that to facilitate a transferable genre-learning, it is important to help students develop an increasingly sophisticated awareness of the rhetorical considerations that motivate particular genres or generic features. In other words, apart from *knowing genres*, students need to simultaneously engage in *knowing about genre*.

Students also attributed their transferring prior rhetorical knowledge into bachelor's theses to the feedback they received from the thesis advisors. For example, the writer of Thesis_2018_8 recounted that her thesis advisor commented on her first draft that her analyses of the translation methods was not closely related to the theories adopted. She used these comments and "*elaborated on her analyses by linking them to the theories*", in a way that, as she felt, "*resembled argumentation*". Similarly, the writer of Thesis_2018_4 also reported having expanded her analyses with rich *exemplifications,* because this was what her thesis advisor suggested. By the end of the focus group, the writer of Thesis_2018_4 made a final statement, in a tone full of appreciation:

> "It was the first time for us to write an academic paper. We were lacking in experiences in many aspects. So, we had a strong reliance on our advisors'

suggestions, as they could help us avoid certain detours." (Writer of Thesis_2018_4, focus group)

Finally, *reading in the disciplinary field* was a related stimulus to transfer of rhetorical knowledge in the form of writing, even beyond the presence (or absence) of affordances in the earlier writing experiences. For example, two of the thesis writers credited their development of *classifications* in the theses to research articles they had read devoted to similar topics (see also in *Section 6.2.2.1*), despite the fact that earlier on they had received little, if any, instruction or training, on similar types of writing.

To sum up, the powers found here to have assisted students' transitioning from *instruction* to practice mirrored Wardle's (2007) findings in many ways. In Wardle's study (2007), which was situated in an FYC course, students indicated that teacher feedback, peer interaction, and previous experience reading and writing in the field were important to their writing successes when faced with new challenges outside FYC. While the thesis writers interviewed in the present study did not recognise any influence from peer talks (as far as we know from the focus group), they did find that the other two sources of support, i.e., *teacher (thesis advisor) feedback* and *engagement with disciplinary reading*, extremely useful. One possible reason for the influence of *peer talk* not to be felt by the thesis writers in the present case was that the writers were only engaged in individual consultations with thesis advisors during the whole processes of drafting and revising the theses (though one thesis advisor might have to supervise more than one student in an academic year) and it is less common, therefore, for them to share or exchange ideas with their peer students. Given its unknown effects in the present research context, it would be interesting to reveal, through further empirical exploration, how peer talk or even peer review, if encouraged by thesis

advisors and successfully implemented by thesis writers themselves, would practically impact on the students' adaptive transfer of prior rhetorical knowledge. If positive evidences are found, similar to what Wardle (2007) did in her study, it then may be suggested that peer talk/review be more widely and productively adopted in bachelor's thesis writing, to the benefits of both writers and supervisors.

6.3 Summary

This chapter has, in the first step, examined the extent to which the two rhetorical legs of the English-major students' literacy journey - glossed as *instruction* and *practice* respectively, were connected or disconnected, by comparing findings from two corpora which were compiled for both cross-sectionally and then analysed, as reported in the preceding two chapters, through the lens of SFL-based genre theories. Regrettably, however, it is found that the literacy journey charted for the current students was characterised by more pits of "discrepancy" than bits of "fluency", indicative of some remedies yet to be done to refine the existing writing curriculum, in order for it, as hoped, to provide more seamless preparation for students to navigate the transition from instruction to practice.

From the vantage point of adaptive transfer, this chapter has further presented findings from a focus group interview with students who successfully completed the transition, attempting to see how much of and in which way the rhetorical knowledge acquired in the instruction-based settings is transferred, or transferrable, to the writing task of bachelor's theses, and if so, what factors, specifically, have promoted the transfer. There is ample evidence from the present context to suggest that such a transfer did occur, despite the problematic "*genre itinerary*". Discussions made in this line

corroborate DePalma & Ringer (2011)'s belief that, rather than viewing students as passive recipients of mechanical writing skills, adaptive transfer allows for students to be perceived as agents who possess a variety of rhetorical resources and a range of knowledge bases that they may *reuse,* as "*boundary guarders*", or *reshape,* as "*boundary crossers*", in different writing contexts. This conclusion aligns with previous studies that produced concrete proofs for the occurrence of transfer (Cheng, 2007; Fishman & Reiff, 2008, 2011), but contradicts many other works in the literature which suggested that in L1 or L2 writing instruction the hoped-for transfer was absent or rare (e.g., Perkins & Salomon, 1994; Bergmann & Zepernick, 2007; Wardle, 2007, 2009).

That there are promising signs for transfer to happen in the course of learning to write reaffirms the earlier stance in calling for pedagogical affordances which are more effective, purposeful, and pertinent to the transition that students are meant to undergo. So long as what is invested in the writing instruction is transferrable (and in fact transferred) and can be applied by students in a useful and meaningful way in accessing and adapting to new writing contexts, as found in the present study, such an investment, or any effort to reallocate it, will not be wasteful.

The following chapter, which is also the last, will close the whole thesis by presenting a summary of the major findings of the present research, pointing out its pedagogical implications for L2 writing pedagogy in similar EFL contexts, coupled with its limitations and suggestions for future scholarly efforts in related areas.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

Coming to the end of this thesis, this chapter will first summarise the major findings of the present study, and then provide implications for writing and supervising bachelor's theses in EFL contexts, for teaching, learning and assessing writing in university classrooms, and more importantly, for facilitating a smooth transfer between these two rhetorical worlds that mark the literacy journey within the undergraduate spaces. Finally, limitations of the present study are clarified, which lead to a breadth of topics related to L2 writing that require additional investigation.

7.1 Summary of the findings

"The main purpose of a Conclusion is to summarize the research by highlighting the findings, evaluating and pointing out possible lines of future research as well as suggesting implications for teaching and learning."

(Yang & Allison, 2003, p. 380)

In an effort to chart out the overall literacy journey experienced by the Chinese English-major students, this whole thesis touches upon three lines of inquiry, i.e., bachelor's thesis writing, genres in the classroom instruction, and transfer of rhetorical knowledge from instruction to the culminating thesis. The main findings thus can be summarised in each of these three lines.

First and foremost, the SFL-based genre analysis of 40 bachelor's theses offered a rich account of the generic complexity involved in this academic macrogenre. It

revealed, specifically, how various elemental genres were jointly deployed and how their deployment varied across sub-fields, and then how a new genre, analytical explanation, emerged as a case of genre innovation triggered by the unique rhetorical and epistemological demands embedded in undergraduate research. Furthermore, through document examination and in-depth interviews with thesis writers/advisors, three rhetorical values were teased out, underneath the generic structuring, as circulating in and characterising the current thesis writing community. They were, namely, the transmission of received disciplinary knowledge, projection of thesis writer's authorial self, and simultaneously positioning of a constellation of social roles, all of which were in turn materialised via discursive means.

Moving, in flashback, to the earlier instructional settings, the SFL-based genre analysis of the complete sets of writing assignments collected from 40 students in the three courses in focus unveiled a generic diversity that manifested itself quantitatively via the number and qualitatively via the variety of genres that those students were actively engaged in inside (or outside) the actual writing classrooms. In view of their highest frequency in the corpus, arguments remained to be the most common genre that these undergraduate students had to write, consistent with the stance upheld by many previous researchers (Wu, 2006; Hewings, 2010; Lee & Deakin, 2016). However, it is also found that as the students were ushered into a broader range of genres, they were also made increasingly aware of the need for a holistic, balanced grasp over a more diverse set of genres in their writing.

Beyond the written texts, a multitude of qualitative data, such as the national document, teaching materials, and in-depth interviews with both students and course instructors, were also drawn upon to offer a situated account of the national,

institutional, as well as pedagogical contexts within which the writing instructions in the current Department resided. Specifically, it is observed that the real-world writing classrooms were imbued with a fruitful integration of the principles and practices of more than one instructional approach, and that it was the interplay of multiple contextual factors, at the national, institutional, as well as pedagogical levels, that shaped how student performed in the textual spaces.

Embraced in the third line of inquiry was the question of transition and transfer from the writing instructions to the task of writing a bachelor's thesis. This issue was first taken up by mapping the genre distribution in the two corpora compiled respectively from the two rhetorical contexts. Analysis through log-likelihood tests revealed two patterns of *continuity*, i.e., underuse and overuse, and two patterns of *discontinuity*, i.e., excessive preparation and inadequate preparation, that marked the students' transition, with the latter significantly exceeding the former. In addition, a focus group interview with thesis writers who successfully completed the transition indicated that those students did consciously and adaptively transfer a range of rhetorical knowledge acquired from the previous experiences in the writing courses, either by *reusing* the whole genres intact or by *reshaping* a pool of strategies and rhetorical resources, to navigate the complex task of thesis writing. Finally, three main factors, i.e., *student cognitive ability*, *teacher(thesis advisor) feedback*, and *reading in the disciplinary field*, were found to have influenced or promoted such a transfer.

7.2 Pedagogical implications

The main findings from the three lines of inquiry outlined in the preceding section carry implications for bachelor's thesis writing, for thesis supervision, for classroom

writing instruction, for writing assessment, and to top it all off, for more effective measures to facilitate the move from the diversity of instruction-based genres to the complexity, rhetorical and intellectual, of bachelor's theses as macrogenres.

For prospective final-year students, on the threshold of bachelor's thesis writing, a better understanding of the generic composition of this macrogenre will facilitate them to approach it with a sharpened "rhetorical vision". This rhetorical vision empowers students not only with an increased knowledge about how varieties of elemental genres can be navigated and flexibly appropriated to reach the diverse, complex goals in bachelor's theses, in compliance with the rhetorical values in the local writing community, but also a heightened meta-awareness of genre throughout the whole processes of writing. Essentially, the use and the location of different elemental genres in a bachelor's thesis are not always fixed and invariable. For instance, some genres, like reports, are ubiquitous in theses of all types, while some others, like expositions, though appearing in theses of all types, are more commonly found in 'Introduction' and 'Conclusion' chapters (the only two functional chapters that every thesis must include). Also, there are some genres whose use is rather content- or subject-specific, such as stories in cultural studies and text responses in literary studies, and some others are most narrowly confined to a particular place in a particular type of theses, like procedural recounts in 'Methodology' of empirical studies in applied linguistics. Facing such a variability, what thesis writers need to do is to choose consciously the most appropriate genre at different points in the overall writing processes. Crucially important in making the choice are careful considerations of the nature of their study, the subfield that their selected research topic falls into, and the specific function associated with a particular part or section of the thesis. Similarly, such a genre

knowledge and genre awareness can helpfully equip thesis advisors with a "pedagogical metalanguage" (Rose, 2017) which they can use when they sit down with their advisees and give guidance or feedback to their writing.

In the instructional settings - the second line of inquiry, the variability and diversity of genres observed in the students' written texts casting doubt on the common practice in many standardised tests to rely too heavily, if not exclusively, on argumentative writing to tell us how well students write academically. With the current findings, the implication is that that although the capacity to write effective argumentative essays is an important index of L2 writing ability (Hirvela, 2017), there is certainly more 'beyond the argument' that can be held accountable for the literacy success of EFL students.

Moving the gaze beyond the texts to the context of instruction-based writing, in an attempt to close the ontological gap between the two, the dynamic integration of a multitude of instructional approaches (the "*mosaic*") implemented by individual instructors, with their pros and cons therein discussed, calls for an elastic approach, marrying as many strengths as possible of these approaches, to teaching a more diverse set of genres to students in similar EFL environments. Although the present thesis, especially its dealing with the students' textual performances in the two rhetorical contexts, is grounded in the SFL genre theories, it should be noted that SFL presents only a conceptual tool to examine the choice of genres. The real purpose is not to call for teaching SFL as the major content of intervention, but to have the SFL metalanguage and understanding about language and discourse serve the larger pedagogical goals in various institutional contexts.

Having detected, from the perspective of genre, the continuity and discontinuity in the overall literacy journey that the students were put to traverse, the findings thereof

can also be useful for curriculum developers to redress the existing imbalance by reallocating the pedagogical investment. For instance, the pedagogical affordances for the 7 elemental genres which were found to be less used in the bachelor's theses might be duly reduced or transferred to the other 9 elemental genres which were insufficiently taught and practiced. Because curriculum can have an important impact on teachers' developing conception of genre (Tardy et al., 2018), a refined curriculum better accommodating the targeted genres in bachelor's theses will surely empower general writing instructors with a more active role in scaffolding the transition.

Partitioned not only by the number and variety of genres that the students are to perform, the two rhetorical worlds are also differentiated by the extent to which those genres performed involve the discipline-specific knowledge. To bridge this gap, it is advisable to introduce what Hyland (2018) recently proposed as "collaborative pedagogies" into the writing classrooms. One of the practices underpinning collaborative pedagogies is for writing teachers to collaborate with content teachers who can assist as informants or consultants (for examples, those who teach literature, culture, translation, or applied linguistics, to name a few), so that the teachers can assign writing tasks which are disciplinarily meaningful. Similar practices were advocated in what is called "content language integrated learning"(CLIL), which can also be fruitfully introduced into the writing classrooms. Because "*engagement with reading in the disciplinary fields*" was found to be an influential factor to facilitate students' adaptive transfer of learnt rhetorical knowledge, it becomes essential for those uninitiated writers to acquire competence in particular genres and specific writing skills along with the knowledge and tradecraft of their target areas. In so doing, the topics, contents, and practices of the discipline can thus act as vehicles for teaching particular

genres and discourses (Hyland, p. 387), making the learning of genre linked to and situated in richer content learning. In other words, students are not only "learning to write", but also "writing to learn" (Manchón, 2011).

Building a tightened genre awareness is also a significant aspect of any approach to L2 writing instruction - a viable means to warrant the transferability of the learnt rhetorical knowledge. Johns (2008) has similarly advocated for an approach that emphasizes meta-awareness, arguing that what might be most beneficial to L2 writers is "developing the rhetorical flexibility necessary for adapting their socio-cognitive genre knowledge to ever-evolving contexts" (p. 238). Aligning with such a genre awareness orientation and an integration with disciplinary contents as described earlier, a valuable goal for those undertaking L2 undergraduate writing might be, to parody Halliday's insightful threefold perspective "learning language, learning through language, learning about language" (Halliday, 1993, p. 113), learning genre(s), learning through genre(s), and, ultimately, learning about genre.

7.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study is not without its limitations, apart from the few already mentioned in Chapter 1 of which the researcher has been mindful from the onset. Nevertheless, it is for these unbridged gaps that future research is warranted, which can zero in on more critical issues concerning bachelor's thesis writing, L2 writing instructions, or transition and transfer of rhetorical knowledge between different writing situations.

With regard to bachelor's thesis writing, this study only examined theses which were highly assessed, leaving the generic composition in less-achieving theses entirely overlooked. Future studies can benefit by including and comparing theses across the

spectrum, in order to reveal the correlation between the deployment of genres and the judgement of the merits of theses, further unveiling the preferred generic patterning for the less-achieving writers to improve. Second, due to the quota sampling techniques used in compiling the bachelor's thesis corpus, the four sub-fields of study (i.e., literature, culture, translation or applied linguistics) that students normally undertake were not evenly represented in the current corpus. With a corpus more representative, for example, via stratified random sampling, future research can continue to investigate the nuanced variations across the sub-fields, which would provide crucial information about how the relevant research topics would exert influence on the disciplinary writers' choice of genres. Third, for the exigence of this study, the present investigation of thesis writing was confined only within the undergraduate spaces. As undergraduate education is a preparation for more advanced learning and research, comparing bachelor's theses with higher-level genres, such as master's or doctoral theses or published research articles written by expert writers in close disciplines would prove to be a valuable line of inquiry. Finally, this study only touched upon bachelor's thesis in one single discipline, i.e., English, comparisons can also be made to equivalent macrogenres in other disciplines. Such studies can enhance our knowledge about the varied rhetorical values in disciplinary communities and bring into light how the deployment of genres shapes and is shaped by the discipline-specific cultures.

Speaking of the instruction-based writing, due to the limited time span, the current data was collected cross-sectionally, instead of longitudinally, from the 3 writing-related courses offered in the curriculum. Future studies may take the longitudinal approach, if possible, to follow the same group of students throughout the curriculum and draw a more accurate sketch of their literacy journey. In addition, given the

diversity of genres identified in the current corpus, L2 writing and rhetoric scholars who have their research interests in Chinese undergraduate student writing — its macro or micro linguistic features in particular (for example, the use of lexical bundles, interpersonal grammatical metaphor, or theme-rheme structures, as reviewed in *Chapter 2*), may consider looking beyond the timed, test-oriented argumentative essays, into a broader range of generic options available and accessible to these students. With such an enhanced effort, writing teachers and researchers, as believed, may gain a deeper understanding of how Chinese undergraduate students (or students in analogous EFL contexts) perform rhetorically across the generic spaces in the classroom-based instructional settings.

The methods used in this study to deal with *transfer* also have limitations. First, the thesis writers who participated in the focus group interview were all "successful writers" whose theses scored 85 points or above. It is uncertain, therefore, if transfer would occur in similar ways with those thesis writers who are less successful and less achieving. On the other hand, the naturalistic approach and real-world settings meant that genre learning in the writing courses could have been influenced by reading and writing experiences in the other courses that students were taking, which, further, meant that the rhetorical knowledge which is actually transferred might have come from other sources beyond the writing courses under investigation or influenced by some other unpredicted variables.

Last, the overall research has been situated in one institution in China. As with any case study, the findings may not be generalisable to the diversity of settings in which English writing is taught, learned, and composed. For this reason, an attempt has been made to describe this example in great detail to provide on-going researchers with a

basis for making connections to other contexts. Therefore, future endeavours that expand the data sources to include larger groups of students from a multitude of national, educational, and sociocultural environments and compare their results to those generated here would be tremendously valuable.

7.4 Closing remarks

In this chapter, an effort has been made to consolidate the most significant findings of this study and its major implications for future practices in pedagogy and research.

This thesis has taken a step further towards understanding the generic structuring of bachelor's theses by Chinese English majors, their textual and contextual experiences in the prior classroom writing instructions, and moreover, the nature of transfer between the two rhetorical worlds. Together, the findings of this study are intended to inspire more scholarly interest in (1) SFL-based genre studies; (2) explorations in academic writing that bring together text and context, and (3) investigation of transfer, which is regarded as the ultimate goal of any form of education.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A STUDY SURANAREE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Working Title of Study:

Rhetorical Knowledge Transfer from Instruction-based genres to Writing a bachelor's thesis: An SFL-informed study on Chinese English Majors

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Yimin Zhang, who is currently PhD student in English language studies with Surananree University of Technology. The purpose of this research is to investigate the English-major students' transfer of genre knowledge from the writing related courses to bachelor's thesis, which is the culminating task in the overall undergraduate study.

As thesis writers/advisors, you will be requested to join in a semi-structured interview sharing your experiences in writing/supervising a bachelor's thesis. As students/teachers involved in the 3 writing-related courses, you will be requested to share your teaching materials and every single written assignment produced throughout this course (both in and after the class), and if possible, join in a follow-up interview and/or some informal talks.

Risks and discomforts

Be reassured that there will be no known risks associated with this study.

Potential benefits

There will be no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this study.

Protection of confidentiality

Your privacy will be maximally protected. Your identity and personal information will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study. More importantly, the purpose of this study is not to test your English writing ability as individuals, but to gain a deeper understanding of your genre development; therefore, your written texts will only be used for genre analysis, in no way subjected to any form of evaluation. Be reassured that any information generated from the interviews/talks will not be reported to the teachers of the related courses.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Yimin Zhang at Suranaree University of Technology via Email (cheriezhangyimin@163.com). If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the School of Foreign Languages, Institute of Social Technology, Suranaree University of Technology.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature_____ Date:_____

A copy of this consent form should be given to you.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ABOUT BACHELOR'S THESIS WRITING

Semi-structured interviews with thesis advisors

1. What do you think is the major function of bachelor's theses for English majors?

2. What textual qualities do you think a good bachelor's thesis should have?

3. Do you think the knowledge of different genres is important when students develop their bachelor's theses? If yes, what genres are the most important? If no, why not?

4. What should the students be able to do in the different genres in their theses?

5. When conferencing with students, what aspects in their theses do you pay the most attention to? What kind of feedback do you usually give?

6. What difficulties do you think the students normally have in developing the different genres (sections) in their theses? And how did you help the students resolve them?

7. To what extent do you think the writing norms and assessment rubrics are helpful with your supervision as well as the students' writing?

Text-based interviews with thesis advisors

1. Analysing a small corpus of bachelor's theses consisting of those written by SICAU English majors from the past five years, I've found a considerable number of reports (including descriptive reports, compositional reports and classifying reports), far exceeding the number of arguments that have been employed. How do you account for this preference?

Semi-structured interviews with thesis writers

1. What do you think is the major function of bachelor's thesis as an English major?

2. What textual qualities do you think a good bachelor's thesis should have?

3. Do you think the knowledge of different genres is important when you are developing your thesis? If yes, what genres are the most important/difficult? If no, why not?

4. Have you encountered any difficulties in developing the different genres (sections) in your thesis? If yes, what were they and how did you resolve them?

5. When drafting your thesis or conferencing with the advisor, what aspects in you theses do you pay the most attention to? What kind of feedback do you usually expect from the advisor?

6. To what extent do you think the writing norms and assessment rubrics are helpful with your thesis writing?

Text-based interviews with thesis writers

1. When developing this section of your thesis, what effects/purposes do you mostly want to achieve? I thought this was [the name of the genre/stage]. Does that seem a fair assessment to you?

2. In you thesis, I've found a considerable number of [the name of the genre], far exceeding the number of [the name of the genre] that you've employed. How do you account for this preference?

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS ABOUT THE INSTRUCTION-BASED WRITING

Interview questions for instructors of *English Writing I*, *English Writing II*, and *Academic Writing*:

1. What writing objectives do you have for students in this course?
2. Do you think the concept/knowledge of genre is important for the students' development of writing capacity?
3. What genre goes first, second…etc, and why? Do you think some genres are more important, more privileged than others in the general writing courses?
4. What do you like students to be able to do in a narrative/report/argument…etc (genres)?
5. What kinds of writing are your assignments? For where do you get them? The reasons for choosing such assignments?
6. What should students know or able to do when they write?
7. What do you look for when you evaluate their writing? What is a good narrative/report/argument…etc (genres) for your class? (Marking criteria)
8. What do you define as 'success in this course'? Do you expect the students to be able to apply the genre knowledge you teach them in this course when tackling future, new, unfamiliar writing situations?

Interview questions for participating students in *English Writing I*, *English Writing II*, and *Academic Writing*:

1. What writing objectives do you have for this course? What do you expect to learn from this course?
2. Do you think the concept/knowledge of genre is important for your development of writing capacity?

3. Do you think some genres are more important/privileged/useful than others in the general writing courses?

4. What is a good narrative/report/argument…etc (genres) in your opinion? How do you conceptualise their generic feature?

5. What do you do when you write for the course assignments?

6. What do you define as 'success in this course'? Do you expect to be able to apply the genre knowledge you learn from this course when tackling future, new, unfamiliar writing situations?
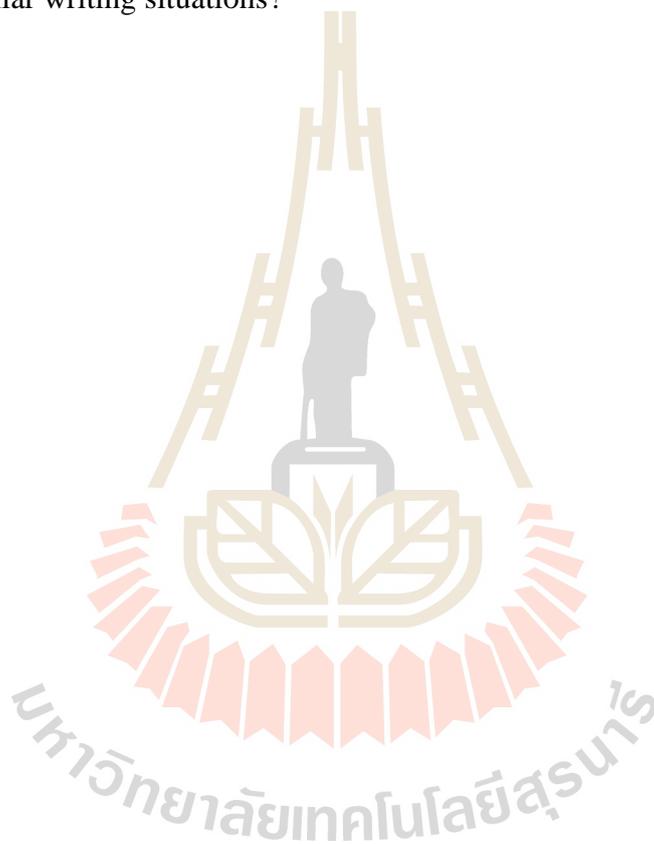
CURRICULUM VITAE

Yimin Zhang was born on March 27, 1987 in Yaan, Sichuan, China. She graduated from Sichuan International Studies University in 2009 with a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature. In 2012, she obtained her master's degree in English Language and Literature from the same university.

From 2012-2016, she worked as a lecturer at the Department of English in the College of Humanities of Sichuan Agricultural University, China. Since 2016, she has been pursuing her Ph.D. in English Language Studies at the School of Foreign Languages, Institute of Social Technology, Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. Her research interests include written discourse analysis, L2 writing pedagogy, genre research, and Systemic Functional Linguistics.