

NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SYDNEY GENRE-  
BASED SYLLABUS DESIGN FOR IMPROVING THAI PRE-CADETS'  
CRITICAL WRITING ON EXPOSITION TEXTS\*

การวิเคราะห์ความต้องการสำหรับการพัฒนารูปแบบหลักสูตรตามแนววรรณฐานแบบ  
แนวคิดขิดนีย์เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนเรียงความแบบโต้แย้งทางเดียว  
เชิงวิพากษ์ของนักเรียนเตรียมทหาร

Parinyaporn Preecha, Udomkrit Srinon, Saneh Thongrin  
ปริญญาพร ปรีชา, อุดมกฤษฎ์ ศรีนนท์, เสน่ห์ ทองรินทร์  
Thammasat University  
มหาวิทยาลัยธรรมศาสตร์

Corresponding Author E-mail: prinyaporn.preecha@gmail.com

## Abstract

This research article aimed to study Thai pre-cadets' general context, to study Thai pre-cadets' opinions on English writing skills and to analyse the needs for development of a Sydney-genre-based syllabus design for improving Thai pre-cadets' critical writing on exposition texts. The study was conducted by quantitative research collecting data from 30 samples who were the second-year pre-cadets students who were enrolled in an extra English course in the academic year 2020. The data were collected through a Five-point rating scales questionnaire validated by 5 experts for its accuracy. The obtained data were analysed by descriptive statistics: frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation and content analysis for problems, obstacles and suggestions in open ended questionnaire.

The results showed that the majority of students lacked knowledge of expository writing and needed to learn English writing in everyday life at the highest level ( $\bar{X}$  =4.07). Some of them needed to learn expository writing with both teacher and peer support. Vocabulary and language pattern necessary for expository writing were also needed. Some students preferred to translate a draft from Thai to English when they were writing at a high level ( $\bar{X}$  = 3.83). The study also found that after their engagement in writing activities, they were yet unable

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to apply critical expository writing strategies. Therefore, it was suggested that there should be some guidelines for English teachers at the Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School to develop an SFL-based curriculum in order for students to develop writing skills to be able to write criticism effectively.

**Keyword:** Needs Analysis; Development; Improving; Critical Writing

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาข้อมูลพื้นฐานของนักเรียนเตรียมทหาร เพื่อศึกษาความเห็นของนักเรียนเตรียมทหารเกี่ยวกับทักษะการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษ และเพื่อวิเคราะห์ความต้องการสำหรับการพัฒนารูปแบบหลักสูตรตามแนววรรณฐานแบบแนวคิดชนิดนี้ เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนเรียงความแบบโต้แย้งทางเดียวเชิงวิพากษ์ของนักเรียนเตรียมทหาร เป็นการวิจัยเชิงแบบผสมวิธี โดยศึกษาจากกลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวน 30 คน ซึ่งเป็นนักเรียนชั้นปีที่ 2 ที่ลงทะเบียนเรียนภาษาอังกฤษเพิ่มเติม ในปีการศึกษา 2563 เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลด้วยแบบสอบถาม ที่ได้ผ่านการตรวจสอบความเที่ยงตรงเชิงเนื้อหาจากผู้เชี่ยวชาญ 5 ท่าน วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้สถิติพรรณนาเพื่อหาค่าความถี่ ค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย และส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และวิเคราะห์เชิงเนื้อหาสำหรับคำถามปลายเปิด จากนั้นในขั้นตอนที่ 2 ได้ทำการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกนักเรียนกลุ่มดังกล่าวอีกครั้งหนึ่ง

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า นักเรียนส่วนใหญ่ขาดความรู้เกี่ยวกับการเขียนอธิบายความเชิงวิจารณ์ และมีความต้องการเรียนรู้ทักษะการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในชีวิตประจำวันในระดับมากที่สุด ( $\bar{X} = 4.07$ ) และมีนักเรียนส่วนหนึ่งที่ต้องการเรียนรู้ทักษะการเขียนอธิบายความ โดยมีความต้องการเรียนหลักสูตรการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษทั้งกับครูผู้สอนโดยตรงและเรียนรู้ผ่านกิจกรรมกับเพื่อนร่วมชั้นเรียน นอกจากนี้ยังมีความต้องการเรียนรู้คำศัพท์และรูปแบบของภาษาเพื่อการเขียนอธิบายความภาษาอังกฤษอีกด้วย นักเรียนอีกส่วนหนึ่งเมื่อเขียนภาษาอังกฤษมักจะแปลจากไทยเป็นอังกฤษก่อน โดยมีค่าเฉลี่ยอยู่ในระดับมาก ( $\bar{X} = 3.83$ ) จากการศึกษาจึงพบว่าหลังจากกิจกรรมการเรียนการสอนนักเรียนยังไม่สามารถใช้กลวิธีการเขียนอธิบายเชิงวิจารณ์ได้ จึงมีข้อเสนอแนะว่าควรหาแนวทางให้ครูสอนภาษาอังกฤษในโรงเรียนเตรียมทหารได้พัฒนาหลักสูตรเพิ่มเติมในเชิงระบบและหน้าที่ (SFL-based curriculum) เพื่อให้นักเรียนพัฒนาทักษะการเขียนจนสามารถเขียนอธิบายความเชิงวิจารณ์ได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ

**คำสำคัญ:** การวิเคราะห์ความต้องการ; การพัฒนา; การปรับปรุง; การเขียนเชิงวิจารณ์

## Introduction

Needs analysis is an important process for the development of curricula or course materials. Teachers are considering the wishes of students and other circumstances such as what the learners need to do or the course objectives. Therefore, the stakeholders will have a chance to engage in course preparation. The ‘needs’ were designed by many scholars for instance Savage & Storer (1992) conducted a course that provided a chance for participants to design the course they would like to learn from, whereas Benesh (1999) fulfilled the demand of students and the course using students’ feedback so that students achieved the skills for their future careers. Needs analysis is undertaken at the beginning of a course. It enables students to express their personal language learning goals and the teacher can then diagnose their language needs to prepare the course for them. Teachers need to collect learners’ background information, solve their learning problems and provide learners with appropriate strategies to suit their needs and their content (Feez, 1998). Linguistic perspective nowadays focuses on learners who need to master genre and their needs have to be scaffolded by the teachers. Although students’ needs analysis is necessary for designing a SFL genre-based syllabus, many scholars (Srinon, 2011) did not include needs analysis in their studies.

Writing is important to further the studies of students in the future academy and gain scholarships overseas. However, no specific writing course is available to military students. They usually write in fragments, they cannot write in an academic genre due to the fact that they have never known such a writing structure in class. Writing skill is often put as the last in the sequence among the four skills in the school according to it being time consuming and most of the teachers are not trained in teaching writing. The English Division staffs are now working very hard to develop students’ writing. They are able to think and write critically in their native language, but they cannot express very well in English. The military boarding school is the only high school in Thailand that prepares students for military colleges. All students are able to serve as future officers (army, navy and air force) and police. The school aims to promote students’ academic achievement and prepare future leaders. The school provides a two years programme of study at high school level. Students must finish Mattayom 4 (grade

10) if they want to apply for the school entrance examination (Armed Forces Academies Preparatory School, 2020).

In this school, English is a compulsory subject. First year and second year class pre-cadets have to study two English subjects, namely English plus and fundamental English in each semester. One of the main objectives for all academic courses is to develop writing skills. However, many pre-cadets have difficulty in writing skills. For example, they could not write a long essay and their writing contains mistakes resulting from the influence of their mother tongue. Their writing contains a lot of fragments and is incomprehensible. To develop students' skill in writing is one of the important goals of learning. The English Division of the school is responsible for developing the curriculum and classroom teaching materials to suit students' needs. However, not all the teachers possess the skilled required for teaching writing and the teaching materials are out of date. Critical writing and critical thinking are unfavourable in class although critical thinking is considered crucial for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and higher education levels. Therefore, this study was initiated to examine students' needs in learning to write English. Pre-cadets are required to learn both academic subjects and military subjects including physical training.

This study aims at determining the pre-cadets' needs for an English writing course in a military school. The first section shows participants' age, hometown, former school, and length of learning English, educational background and parents' occupation. The next section describes their opinion toward learning to write English, topics of interest and additional suggestions. Five-point Likert scales were used to investigate participants' needs and the problems of learning to write. This study investigated both quantitative and qualitative results. The result will be useful for designing a genre-based writing course to enhance pre-cadets' critical writing skills. It is necessary to design the writing materials to match students' needs concerning the components, topics and their interests. Students will be motivated to learn well by identifying their needs.

## Research Objectives

The objective of this research was to analysis the needs of students for designing a genre-based syllabus to improve Thai pre-cadets' critical writing skills on exposition texts at a Thai military school.

## Methodology

The instrument incorporated in this study was a questionnaire which could be applied to the writing course for pre-cadets in the military school. It was comprised of four parts: general information, opinions about English writing skills, topics of interest, and recommendations. The reliability coefficient checking was performed by the Cronbach alpha function in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences statistical program and the reliability coefficient values were 0.896 which was an acceptable level for high reliability. The descriptive statistics applied in this study were, namely, percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation.

### 1. Population and sample

The population of students covered 580, second year class, pre-cadets in academic year 2020 at AFAPS, Nakhon Nayok. Students are divided in to eighteen sections. Each section consists of approximately thirty pre-cadets. Participants in this study were thirty, second year class, pre-cadets in a military high school. They were students who were enrolled on English Plus in the academic year 2020.

### 2. Research instruments

A needs analysis questionnaire on examining the students' needs for the English writing course was developed by the main researcher. The aim of this phase was to obtain information concerning student needs to develop critical writing skills. The literature reviews and theories related to genre-based instruction and related studies were studied. They were analyzed and synthesized for designing a set of needs analysis questionnaires. They were designed in the form of a matrix and rating type questions with a 5-point rating scale and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was divided into 4 parts: namely, general information about the respondents, students' opinions toward writing skills development, students' topics of interest and suggestions for the development of critical writing instructions.

The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.896 which is acceptable for social research.

Analyzing the questionnaire on investigating pre-cadets' needs for critical writing instruction: the needs analysis questionnaire for developing critical writing was analyzed by quantitative (the data from the rating scale items) and qualitative methods using a content analysis (open-ended items).

## Results

This study aims to find out the needs of pre-cadets in term of their English writing to have a general understanding of the academic needs of pre-cadets or the development of their writing skills. The data were analyzed using SPSS, a statistical program for social sciences. The questionnaire items were about the teaching and learning process for the writing course. A five-point Likert scale was used: 5- extremely agree, 4- mostly agree, 3- moderately agree, 2- slightly agree, and 1- least agree. The findings were received from a total number of thirty completed questionnaires. The results of the needs analysis are presented as follows.

### General Background information

All of the participants in this group were the thirty, second year class, pre-cadets at this military school. General information about the respondents are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Background information

Code	Percentage	Frequency (Number)
Bangkok and near by	43.3	13
Other province	17	17
1-10 years	26.7	8
More than 10 years	73.3	22
Age 17	10	3
18	43.3	13
19	30	9
20	16.7	5
Special programme	53.3	16
No special programme	46.7	14

Code	Percentage	Frequency (Number)
Go abroad	-	-
Never go abroad	100	30
Farmers	10	3
Labourers	10	3
Government / state	73.3	22
Business	6.7	2
Very good (English)	3.3	1
Good	20	6
Medium	63.3	19
Need to improve	13.3	4

Table 1 shows the background information of the participants. For participants' age, most of them were aged between seventeen and eighteen (twenty-eight of them were aged between seventeen and eighteen years old). With regard to schools, most of them (56.7 %) come from other provinces, far away from Bangkok. With regard to the special English programme, most of them (sixteen out of thirty) used to participate in the English special programme. However, none of the participants have gone abroad. Nineteen out of thirty pre-cadets reported that their English was at the 'medium level' which tended to bring certain kinds of difficulties when they wrote in English. With regard to their parents' occupations, most of their parents (73.3%) work in government sectors or state enterprises. From the survey result, most of them have been studying English for more than ten years.

### Topics of interest

This part of the questionnaire showed students' topics of interest. This section from the study included twelve categories of topics. Participants rated each of the topics ranging from 1 through to 5, 1 'being not at all interesting' and 5 being 'very interesting'. The data obtained from this section are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Topics of interest

Topic of interest	Mean	S.D.
Military custom	3.7	0.95
Military warfare	4.1	0.99
Leadership	3.96	0.88
Peace keeping operations	3.9	0.88
Sociology	3.56	1.0
Agriculture	3.13	1.04
Environment	3.76	0.89
Science and technology	4.13	0.93
Culture	3.53	1.04
Foreign affairs	4.13	0.93
Communications	4.13	0.81
Social media	4.10	0.95

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of each topic of interest for writing essays by thirty pre-cadets in this military school. The questionnaires with the highest mean were sciences and technology (4.13), foreign affairs (4.13), communications (4.13), military warfare (4.10) and social media (4.10) respectively. The topics about leadership and peace keeping operations revealed the medium scores with means of 3.96 (SD, 0.88) and 3.90 (SD, 0.88). The topic about agriculture had the lowest mean, (3.13). Most of the topics get a high average score, above 3.0, which shows that any of the mentioned topics are fairly interesting for pre-cadets. These topics would be interesting enough to use as the topics for writing. In regard to the IOC calculation, the experts accepted all the topics with the content validity of 0.90.

### **Opinions about the writing course**

This part of the questionnaire consisted of twenty-three questions concerning students' opinions toward writing skills. The results of this part are presented in Table 3. The mean score for each action in this part ranges from 1 through to 5: 1 being 'disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'. The data obtained from this section are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Opinions about the writing course

Statement	Mean	S.D.
1. You are interested in writing in relation to your daily life.	4.07	0.82
2. You are interested in writing about military technology.	3.63	0.89
3. You are interested in writing about military leaders.	3.67	0.92
4. You do not always participate in language preparation before writing in English very often.	3.26	1.04
5. You are anxious when you participate in critical English writing.	3.30	1.02
6. You would like to have English critical writing syllabus based on exposition.	3.07	0.98
7. You are used to practice writing exposition.	2.73	1.23
8. You would like to practice writing exposition.	2.87	1.07
9. You are not able to link the knowledge of grammar points to writing.	2.90	1.06
10. You know the meaning of words, but you are not able to construct correct sentences.	3	1.2
11. You are not able to critique.	3.30	0.98
12. You do not understand the structures or patterns for writing English.	2.93	0.94
13. You do not understand the process of critical writing.	3.26	1.04
14. You cannot combine the sentences.	2.73	1.04
15. You do not have any chance to practice writing in English very often.	3.13	1.16
16. You think English writing is difficult.	3.10	1.15
17. You rarely join writing activities in groups.	3.23	1.07
18. You rarely do post-writing activities such as self-evaluating, or giving feedback.	3.5	0.77
19. You never learned the subject 'critical English writing' from the former school.	2.67	1.12
20. You are not able to think critically based on what you write.	2.80	1.03
21. You translate Thai to English when you write.	3.83	0.79
22. You do not know critical English writing strategies or techniques.	3.33	0.84
23. You are not able to write in respond to what you read.	3.20	1.06

Table 3 shows the means for which the participants rated their opinion toward the English writing skill. With regard to the need for writing skill, the questionnaire with the highest mean was the writing topic of 'daily life' with a

mean of 4.07 (SD,0.82) and the second highest mean was translation from Thai to English with a mean of 3.8 (SD,0.79). 'Never learning critical writing' had the lowest mean score. The mean of learning critical writing is 2.67 (SD, 1.12). The result from this part of the questionnaire reflects that most of the students had studied critical writing skills from their former schools, but the statement 'you used to practice writing exposition (one side argument)' received the second lowest mean score of 2.73 (SD, 1.23). It can be assumed that students can write with critique and they try to translate their ideas from Thai to English, but they did not know how to write in the exposition genre. If they know the strategies for writing exposition, this will help to familiarize them with the critical thinking and writing technique based on the genre-based approach.

For learning and teaching activities, pre-cadets rarely have chance to join writing activities in a group ( $\mu=3.23$ ) and they do not always participate in pre-writing activities ( $\mu=3.26$ ). The questionnaire data indicated that they do not understand the process of critical writing ( $\mu=3.26$ ) and they are anxious during English writing activities ( $\mu=3.30$ ). Moreover, students reported that they need individual writing feedback and sometimes want to work with peers. However, all the other sources received quite a lower average ranging from 2.67 to 2.93.

According to the study results, the majority of students still lack the ability to write with critique in particular, and the exposition genre; also they are not familiar with the process of critical writing.

### **Suggestions about English course development**

This part of the questionnaire asked pre-cadets for their suggestions on the activities or skills that should be developed for future critical writing lesson. 46.7% percent of participants reported the need for a writing course. The same number referred to the need for practicing English writing. With regard to additional suggestions, most students (eighteen out of thirty) reported that their problems referred to vocabulary. They did not know enough words. Therefore, they cannot express themselves very well when they started writing English essays. They are able to think critically in Thai, but they cannot write in English because of their limited language ability and lack of practice. Moreover, they need to practice more to gain more confidence and most of all, they want to know the writing technique, so that they organize their ideas in English and arrange their sentences effectively.

They expected that they could apply their knowledge in class to write in English by themselves if the topics interested them. More than half of respondents stated that they could not write very well due to lack of technique, key vocabulary and the necessary language resources. A number of students complained that there are not enough writing lessons or materials that suited their needs. Pre-cadets commented that the learning environment in the school was not supportive because limitations of time. Students did not have sufficient time to practice writing before and after class due to busy schedules and time constraints (e.g. military training, school activities, etc.).

For example:

‘I cannot read and write in English. I want to learn writing technique and have more time to practice’.

‘My problem is lack of vocabulary, techniques or strategies and no understanding of English writing’.

‘I don’t have a chance to practice writing very often and my practice in the past is not effective, I need help from the teacher’.

‘I need to learn more unfamiliar words or sentence level pattern and I hope to learn interesting topics that relate to daily life’.

‘My problem is grammatical structure and I want to learn how to use vocabulary’.

‘I cannot understand English very well and I would like to learn what I can apply in my life’.

‘I want to write with peers and to do more group work tasks’.

‘I wish I had a lot of time practicing writing and the main problem is time limit’.

Based on the resulted of open-ended questions, most students lacked the skills required for basic writing skills such as linguistic patterns or vocabulary. Nevertheless, they were aware of the necessity of the writing skills. Therefore, the needs of students for designing genre-based instructions are: technique, time, vocabulary, teachers’ assistance, language pattern, the topic that can be applied in their lives and group work activities.

## Discussion

This study revealed the opinions and suggestions for the development of the English writing course which would be useful to fulfil learners' needs and maximize their proficiency in English. The topic that received the highest mean score is writing in relation to daily lives whereas the topic that received the lowest mean score (2.67) is 'never learned critical English writing in the former schools'. However, the topic 'you are not able to write with critique' received the significant score of 3.30. This showed that they still need to continue studying critical writing although they used to learn it in the past. These results related to the fact that they do not understand the process of critical writing (3.26) and they ever participated in pre-writing activities (3.30). That is to say, they seem to acquire some critical English writing skills in their former schools, but they need to learn more about critical writing with processes and strategies that contribute to better understanding. This aspect is consistent with the previous studies by Srinon (2011) on genre-based instruction, focusing on the development of linguistic choices used by students. Specific lexicogrammatical features are a pre-requisite for forming arguments (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2006). Developing students' argumentation is related to the application of genre-based pedagogy which acknowledges the explicit teaching of genre. Writing topics play a significant role in building students' motivation. The relationship between text and context in SFL accounts for the application in the daily life which interest students. Therefore, it was considered that the introduction of genre-based pedagogy will enhance students' writing ability due to the fact that many scholars argue that it brings out positive outcomes (Nagao, 2018). Students prefer topics about daily life (4.07). It matches with Halliday's language function which refers to the representation of reality (Brown, 1994).

The following mean scores related to critical writing are just about the same. Students are not familiar with critical writing strategies ( $\mu=3.33$ ) and they are unable to write with critique ( $\mu=3.30$ ). Moreover, they do not understand the process of critical writing and they are unable to write in response to what they read ( $\mu=3.26$ ;  $\mu=3.20$ ). However, they always translate Thai to English when they write. This means that they are able to think critically in Thai, but they may not

write with critique very well in English due to their linguistic competence and their problems rooted from knowledge of the English language.

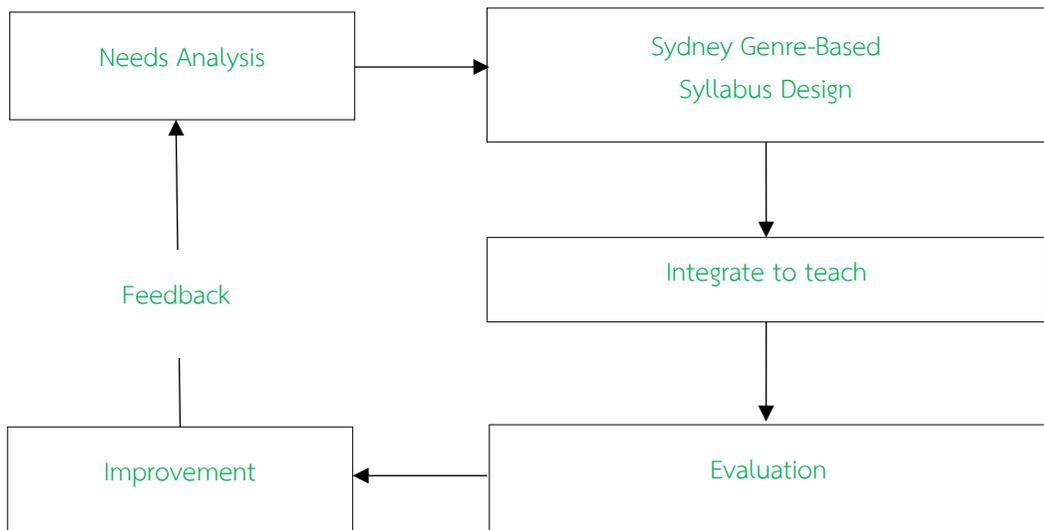
A needs analysis has been used to gather information about students and their writing problems and the curriculum developed to respond to students' greatest needs and interests. SFL material development is used to engage students actively in the writing process with particular emphasis on group work, feedback and writing strategies. The course will be very successful in helping students to acquire necessary structure, grammar, vocabulary and linguistic resources for writing exposition genre.

The pre-cadets' responses implied that the teacher needs to develop teaching methods, materials and an environment that facilitates their writing practice. The teacher should support them with vocabulary, language pattern which are important factors to enhance students' language ability.

In conclusion, the key findings revealed that the need for exposition genre existed. The participants want to take writing courses in terms of meeting their writing needs. By looking at the result of open-ended questions, we can easily see that they want to improve and practice writing. Writing practice leads to boredom if the topics or contents do not interest them.

## Body of knowledge

It can conclude the research result of needs analysis for the development of a Sydney Genre-Based syllabus design for Improving Thai Pre-Cadets' critical writing on exposition texts as follows:



**Figure 1:** Body of knowledge

In the figure 1 it can explain the step as follows; a Sydney Genre-Based syllabus design begin with a needs analysis and then apply to teaching and after that evaluate the process to improving and return to first step.

## Recommendations

The researcher has additional suggestions of this study as follows:

### Policy Suggestion

1. A genre-based approach using effective materials which can enhance students' writing ability
2. English teaching by using a Sydney Genre-Based approach able to develop students' English writing skills as well. It should be defined it as a normal form of language teaching in all educational institutions.
3. Teaching English by analyzing students' interest subjects can improve students' English writing.

### Implementation Suggestion

1. Integrating English into the military subject (writing about military lives) will benefit students for their future career and suit their needs.

2. Educational institutions should propose a teaching by using a Sydney Genre-Based approach to the Ministry of Education to designate it as a model of language teaching.

3. Educational institutions should be aware of the Sydney Genre-Based method and teaching English by focusing on the subjects that students are interesting

### Further Research Suggestion

1. During further research, it should incorporate the reflections of teachers and faculty staff in the needs of an English writing course.

2. There should be research on teaching English by using the activities outside the classroom

3. There should be research on the development of a Sydney Genre-Based English language teaching process.

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