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TEACHING ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY WRITING TO B2 LEARNERS BY TASK-BASED APPROACH

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Abstract: Argumentative essay writing is a challenging skill for upper-intermediate (B2) learners of English, particularly in academic contexts, where they are required to present clear positions, support claims with relevant evidence. This article aims to describe and critically evaluate a task-based approach to teaching argumentative essay writing through the methodological framework of what to teach, who to teach, and how to teach. It focuses on developing learners' understanding of argumentative essay structure, alongside the use of appropriate formal language and cohesive devices. The proposed methodology follows a three-stage instructional cycle: pre-communicative preparation, communicative tasks, and post-communicative noticing-based reformulation. Through these stages, learners generate and evaluate ideas collaboratively before producing individual essays, comparing their work with model texts, and revising their writing. The approach promotes critical thinking, learner autonomy, and respect for differing opinions. The article highlights the pedagogical value of combining meaningful communication with explicit attention to linguistic accuracy and argumentative organization in B2-level writing instruction.

Keywords: task-based language teaching (TBLT), argumentative essay writing, B2 learners, second language writing, critical thinking, communicative tasks, noticing hypothesis

Introduction

Writing is an essential life skill that supports learners in achieving their academic and career goals. In an increasingly text- and data-driven world, strong writing skills are crucial for success. However, L2 writing is considered to be particularly complex and challenging, while such competencies are highly variable, multifaceted, and challenging to master (Cumming, 2016). Therefore, writing has become a central component of second-language teaching and learning. Particularly, argumentative writing is one of the most demanding productive skills for learners of English, and it becomes more important as they move into academic and examination contexts. At the B2 level, learners are expected to "write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects" and to evaluate "advantages and disadvantages of various options" (Council of Europe, 2001, 2020). In practice, many B2 learners cannot yet do this reliably. The problem is especially visible in test settings such as IELTS Writing Task 2, where candidates must present and defend a position within a limited time. It is therefore a methodological problem as much as a linguistic one, because learners need to be taught how to build an argument, not only how to write correct sentences.

Traditional instruction in this area is mostly product-oriented. Learners study a model essay, analyze its structure, and then imitate it. This approach gives them a clear form, but it has well-known limitations. Learners may reproduce the organization of a text without understanding why its argument works, and they seldom use language for a real communicative purpose before they write. The task-based approach (Willis, 1996; Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2003) offers an alternative.

TBL improves language and writing abilities by concentrating on real-life communication activities. They may include essays on social issues, persuasive letters, and debates. Such activities encourage students to explore a topic, think critically, assess evidence, and develop well-supported arguments. It can also enhance students' language proficiency and critical-thinking abilities, especially in argumentative writing. Structured tasks give students opportunities to apply these skills and create persuasive arguments supported by clear claims, evidence, and logical reasoning.

The aim of this article is to describe and critically evaluate a task-based methodology for teaching argumentative essay writing to B2 learners. To achieve this, the article is organized around three basic methodological questions: **what** to teach, **who** to teach and **how** to teach. Together these elements are intended to serve four aims: *practical, educational, developmental, upbringing.*

What to teach

The content of teaching argumentative essay writing at B2 level includes the aims of teaching, the structure of the text, the structure of the argument, and the language needed to express it. By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to write a clear argumentative essay of about 250 words in 40 minutes. They know how an essay is organized and what parts an argument consists of. The developmental aim is to develop critical thinking, the ability to find reasons and examples, and independence in planning and checking their own writing. The upbringing aim is to teach learners to respect other opinions, to support ideas with facts, and to be honest in academic work. These aims show that the learners' main task is not only to write correct sentences but to build a logical argument. Another step learners find out is the typical organization of an argumentative essay:

Part	**What it contains**
Introduction	General statement about the topic and a thesis statement (the writer's position)
Body paragraph 1	Main idea, reason, example
Body paragraph 2	Second main idea, reason, example
Counterargument paragraph	Opposing view and the writer's answer to it
Conclusion	Restating the position in different words

Meanwhile, students will be able to identify and distinguish "building blocks" of the essay:

1. **Claim:** the point the writer wants the reader to accept
2. **Reason:** why the claim is true
3. **Example:** specific evidence, such as a fact, an experience, or a situation
4. **Counterargument:** what the opposite side may say
5. **Rebuttal:** why the counterargument is weaker

In this process, teaching an appropriate use of language for the essay is crucial too. Learners need to know how to use linkers and in what position properly, being showed essential exclamations, linkers and conjuctions

The language

Function	**Examples**
Stating opinion	In my view…, I strongly believe that…

Function	Examples
Adding ideas	Moreover, In addition, Furthermore
Giving reasons and examples	This is because…, For instance, such as
Contrasting	However, On the other hand, Although
Conceding	It is true that…, Admittedly…
Concluding	To sum up, In conclusion

By implementing all the things they are taught, learners achieve to write good, coherent and strong essay in a particular sequence: thesis → reasons → examples → counterargument → conclusion, expressed in suitable formal language.

Who to teach

The target learners are upper-intermediate (B2) students of English, typically aged 16–25, who are preparing for the IELTS examination or university study. The CEFR describes learners at this level as able to understand the main points of complex texts and produce clear, detailed writing on a range of topics. However, their writing skills may be uneven. Although they generally have sufficient vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to express opinions, they may fail to support them with reasons or examples, rely repeatedly on the same linking expressions, overlook opposing viewpoints, or use language that is overly informal or formulaic. A number of learner-related factors may also affect instruction. Motivation is often primarily instrumental, as learners seek to achieve a required IELTS band score or gain admission to university. Many experience anxiety when writing under time constraints. Classes may include learners with differing levels of proficiency, while conventions for structuring arguments in learners' first languages may differ from those expected in English—for instance, some learners may place the main point later in the argument. Furthermore, learners accustomed to teacher-centered instruction may initially be unfamiliar with group discussions and debates. For this reason, before the course begins, the teacher should assess learners' needs and common difficulties, using tools such as a brief questionnaire and a diagnostic essay, and draw on the findings to select suitable topics and design learning tasks.

How to teach

The teaching follows the task-based cycle and is divided into three stages: pre-communicative, communicative, and post-communicative. The topic, for example "University education should be free for everyone", is used in all stages so that learners can reuse their ideas and language.
Pre-communicative stage. The aim of this stage is to prepare learners for the main task by raising their awareness of how an argument is built. Learners receive a set of jumbled cards with claims, reasons, and examples and work in pairs to identify the parts of an argument and to match each claim with a suitable reason and example. The pairs then check their answers with another pair and explain why their choices are logical. In this way they see the structure of an argument and meet useful language before they have to use it.
Communicative stage. The main task is a group discussion. The class is divided into two sides: one side strongly agrees with the statement and the other strongly disagrees. Each side prepares its claims, reasons, and examples and presents them, answers the opponents' counterarguments, and explains its position. The discussion ends with an outcome: the class votes on which side was more convincing and, individually, each learner writes an argumentative essay about the topic

using the ideas that were generated. Because learners already know their arguments, they can concentrate on organizing them in writing.

Post-communicative stage (noticing-based reformulation). After the discussion and the individual writing task, the post-communicative stage helps learners notice the gap between what they wanted to say and what they were able to write. This is based on the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990) and on research into writing tasks where learners compare their texts with a reformulated version (Qi & Lapkin, 2001; Hanaoka, 2007). The stage has three steps. First, in pairs, learners receive a model version of their own essay, in which the teacher has kept their ideas but improved the organization and language, or a strong sample essay on the same topic. Their task is to compare it with their own text and to find and list at least five differences in the argument (for example, a missing counterargument or an unsupported claim) and in the language (for example, linkers, formal expressions, and cautious language), and to explain why the model is more convincing. Second, learners rewrite their own essay using what they have noticed. Third, if time allows, a week later the learners write a new essay on a similar topic to see whether they use the new language independently, a form of task repetition (Bygate,2001).

Conclusion

This article described a task-based approach to teaching argumentative essay writing to B2 learners. It answered three questions. The content to teach (*what*) is the argument, built from a claim, a reason, an example, a counterargument, and a rebuttal, together with the essay structure and the formal language that expresses it. The learners (*who*) are upper-intermediate students preparing for IELTS or university study, who can express opinions but often fail to support them, ignore opposing views, and rely on memorized phrases. The teaching procedure (*how*) has three stages: a pre-communicative stage, in which learners identify the parts of an argument and match claims with reasons and examples; a communicative stage, in which two sides debate the topic and then write an essay; and a post-communicative stage, which corresponds to Willis's (1996) language focus and is realized through the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), where learners compare their essays with a model, rewrite them, and repeat the task.

The main advantage of this approach is that learners first generate and defend ideas for a real purpose and only then write, while attention to form is added after the task, when learners know what they want to say. In this way the practical, educational, developmental, and upbringing aims are achieved together.

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