Genres in an Academic Writing Class

Graham Lock and Charles Lockhart
City University of Hong Kong

Abstract

In this paper, we identify and describe the genres that a group of tertiary level ESL students produced during a process writing class in which they were free to decide their own topics, purposes, and audiences. We identify six expository genres: description, advice, analysis, report, discussion, and argument. Characteristics of these genres, the relationships among them, and their schematic structures are described. We conclude that students in this study simply reproduced the genres of secondary school. We argue that students need to extend their repertoire of genres beyond those of their previous educational experience by writing on more specialized topics for more specific audiences and purposes, and by producing longer, more complex texts.

The teaching and learning of English as a second language (ESL) writing has been strongly influenced by the process writing movement (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996), which has focused primarily on cognitive aspects of the composing process. Writing is seen as a set of recursive processes which are interrelated in complex ways (Flower, 1979; Flower & Hayes, 1981), with the writer establishing goals and working out strategies and procedures to achieve those goals. It is through this decision-making process that the writer discovers meaning and determines how to communicate that meaning to the reader. Typical classroom techniques in a process approach focus on composing strategies, including techniques for invention and discovery, production of multiple drafts, procedures for revising, and techniques for editing (e.g. White & Arndt, 1991).

Although process approaches can lead to improved teaching and learning of writing (Johns, 1995), researchers and teachers of writing have begun to question whether “the process” should be the central concern in writing instruction. One issue that has been raised is that process approaches tend to ignore the social nature of writing. Linguists such as Martin (1984, 1997) and Swales (1990) have pointed out that we write to achieve social purposes and that we draw on shared linguistic resources in order to achieve these purposes. Learning to write is not so much a matter of discovering meanings within
ourselves as developing control over a repertoire of socially available meaning-making resources.

Process-oriented classroom practices have been criticised for being insufficiently directive in intervening in the writing process and for implementing a hidden curriculum, in which the prestigious forms of writing necessary for academic success are not explicitly taught. Research by Martin & Rothery (1980, 1981) in Australia has been particularly influential in this regard. They looked at a large corpus of writing by children from forms 1 - 6 of a Sydney primary school, in which process approaches to the teaching of writing were dominant. They discovered that most of the writing being done was of the narrative /expressive kind, and that some children wrote almost nothing but observation texts and observation-comment texts, which are genres typical of beginning writers in kindergarten. Of 1500 texts, only 228 (15%) were factual writing and most of the factual writing was done by children classified as good writers by their teachers. They conclude that the children were not being adequately prepared for the kinds of writing that would be valued as they entered secondary education. The better students were moving into the more prestigious genres without help, while the children who needed help were not getting it.

At the other extreme, the study of academic and professional genres by scholars such as Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) has been influential in the provision of ESP courses, mostly for science and engineering students, or for graduate students. Thus, genre-based pedagogies have been developed for the teaching of writing in primary and secondary schools in Australia (e.g. Rothery, 1995) and for ESP courses, particularly at graduate level (e.g. Weissberg & Bker, 1980; Swales & Feak, 1994). However, the process approach remains very influential in first year university writing courses, and is probably still the dominant paradigm in North America. Little research into the genres that students produce in such writing courses has been done.

---

1 An Observation consists simply of observations about an activity. An Observation-comment text consists of observations followed by comments. Examples given in Martin & Rothery (1986) p.10 are:

Observation text: I went to the Easter show.
Observation-Comment text: On the weekend I went to my nan's place and nan took me to see the Gremlins. It was great fun. I like the part when Gismo drove bushes.

2 For example, Leki (1995) and Frank (1990) are two widely used coursebooks for ESL undergraduate students in the U.S., both taking a process approach. Reid (1993), a textbook to prepare ESL writing teachers, also focuses primarily on writing processes.
In this paper, we identify and describe the genres that students in a tertiary process-oriented writing class produce. By doing so, we hope to shed some light on the issue of how well such courses help to prepare students for the writing demands of tertiary education.

**Theoretical Background**

*Genre and text structure*

The notion of genre refers to classes of texts which are structured in certain ways in order to achieve certain socio-cultural purposes. Hence, Martin and Rothery’s (1986, p. 243) definition of genre as “the staged purposeful social processes through which a culture is realized in language” and Swales’ (1990) characterization of genre as a class of communicative events with a shared set of communicative purposes (see Bhatia, 1993, for an extensive discussion of the various definitions of genre). In achieving their purposes, texts typically move through a sequence of stages, which constitute their schematic structure (Martin, 1984, 1985). In a particular genre, some stages may be obligatory and some optional.

Each stage in the schematic structure of a text makes a particular contribution to achieving the communicative purpose(s) of the text. For example, Rothery (1989) represents the schematic structure of an exposition as:

\[
\text{Thesis} \; \Rightarrow \; \text{Argument} \; ^n \; \Rightarrow \; \text{Conclusion}
\]

The carat signifies that one stage precedes the other. The superscript \(^n\) indicates that the stage may be recursive.

Rothery (1989, p. 71) glosses the thesis stage as “the part of the text which presents the proposition to be argued” and the argument stage as “the writer’s defense of or objections to the Thesis”. This is essentially the same genre that Hyland (1990) calls the argumentative essay and that we will be calling ARGUMENT.

*Genre agnation and prototypes*

Genres can be grouped according to how they are related or agnate to one another. Martin (1997) discusses modelling genre agnation according to topology. In a topology of genres, agnate genres are arranged in space according to a set of parameters which define similarities and differences
among them. From a topological perspective, differences among genres are on a cline rather than according to +/- oppositions, as in a typology. Martin (1997) points out that the topological perspective both “helps facilitate the development of learner pathways” and “helps students and teachers make sense of the real-life instantiations of genres they come across in their reading and marking, which are not always prototypical examples of the canonical genres” (p.16).

The notion of prototypicality is also central to Swales’ (1990) approach to genre identification. According to Swales, prototype theory makes it possible to avoid having a set of definitional criteria that would apply to a genre in all instances. Rather, texts can be characterised in terms of similarities to and differences from a prototypical instance of a particular genre. The further a text may be from the prototype of one genre, the more it may resemble a text of an agnate genre.

Methodology

In this study, we are interested in identifying and describing generically the texts that a group of tertiary level ESL students produced in a writing class in which they were free to decide their own topics, purposes for writing, and audiences.

Participants and setting

The subjects of this study are 27 students randomly selected from 54 Cantonese-speaking students taking a first-year academic writing course at an English medium university.

The university writing class taken by the subjects of this study involved what might be described as a modified process approach. The students were required to produce two written assignments during the course with a minimum of three drafts for each assignment (most students produced four drafts). The students made their own decisions about topics, purposes and audiences. There was no explicit instruction on the text types or linguistic features that the students should use in their writing, nor were they provided with any text samples of specific genres. However, the students were given instruction in the importance of considering purpose and audience, and for each of their assignments they were required to produce a written statement of purpose and audience to be cleared by the instructors. Between each draft, the students participated in peer feedback sessions and received some non-
directive comments from the instructors. (The analysis of these peer response sessions are reported in Lockhart & Ng, 1995, 1996).

**Data collection and data analysis**

All drafts of the first of two assignments were collected from the students. For the investigation reported in this paper, the initial and final drafts of the first assignment were analysed, a total of 54 texts.

The analyses aim at identifying and describing the genres of the texts. We took the notion of purpose as our starting point for generic groupings of the texts. The three researchers separately provided a description of what they saw as the communicative purpose(s) of each text. These descriptions were then compared, discussed and refined. We started with quite specific descriptions of purpose (e.g. “The text is trying to persuade the reader that hospice care is a very good thing and that more such facilities should be available in Hong Kong”). Such characterisations were then grouped together and generalised (e.g. “These texts all argue that something should be done”). These generalisations were the basis for our classification of the texts into a number of genres.

Having identified the genres in our data set, we then analysed the schematic structure of the texts. Again, the three researchers independently identified stages in the schematic structure of the students’ texts and provided brief characterisations of each stage in terms of its contribution to the communicative purpose of the whole text. We then met to compare our analyses. Characterisations of the stages were at first very specific (e.g. “This stage explains another advantage of hospice care”) and were later generalised (e.g. “supporting argument”). We generalised schematic structures for each genre by examining similarities and differences among texts having the same communicative purposes, and derived descriptions of prototypical schematic structures. The extent to which a certain structure is prototypical, of course, cannot be established solely by counting the number of times it occurs within a corpus, particularly with a relatively small corpus of learners’ texts such as ours. Rather, the perceptions members of a relevant discourse community have about which are the most typical instances of a genre and the least typical need to be considered. Thus, final decisions about the prototypical schematic structure were arrived at based on our analyses of the texts and our judgements

---

3The authors of this paper, together with our research assistant William Mak Wai-Leung.
as writers and teachers of writing. For example, where a certain stage appeared in only some of the texts within a genre, we decided through discussion among the three investigators whether it ought to be part of the prototypical schematic structure, and if so whether it should be regarded as obligatory or optional.

Final labels for the various types of stages that we use in this paper were arrived at by consulting the relevant literature and using existing terms where applicable. Other labels were arrived at through discussion among the three researchers.

Findings

The topics and audiences of the texts

The majority of the texts written by the students are on some kind of general social or cultural phenomenon or issue, usually relevant to Hong Kong (e.g. Chinese religion; environmental protection; euthanasia; student suicides; and crime in Hong Kong). A minority of the texts (all of them narratives) deal with vicarious or personal experience, although, interestingly many of these also draw a socially relevant moral. Similarly, the overwhelming majority of the texts assume a generalized educated public audience. Few of the texts show any sign of being intended for any kind of specialized professional or academic community.

The communicative purposes and genres of the texts

The texts in our data fall into two main groups – those with a purpose to inform or entertain by telling a story, and those with a purpose to inform or persuade by generalising about the world. The former texts we call narrative and the latter we call expository. (We use the term expository genres to mean roughly what Martin (1989) refers to as factual genres.) The majority of the texts fall into the expository category. Of the 54 texts, 43 (79.6%) are expository texts, while only 11 (20.4%) are narrative. This paper focuses on the expository texts.

The expository texts can be further classified into six agnate genres based on a more delicate consideration of their communicative purposes. Five of the 43 expository texts identify a social or cultural phenomenon (e.g. Chinese religion) and describe its characteristic attributes. They can be thought of as answering questions such as What is phenomenon X and what is it like? We
call these DESCRIPTION texts. Four of the expository texts similarly identify a phenomenon (e.g. beauty) but then give advice on how to achieve it. These texts can be thought of as answering questions such as What is phenomenon X and how can it be achieved? We call these ADVICE texts.

Three texts construe a state of affairs as a problem (e.g. emigration from Hong Kong) and analyse the reasons for or consequences of the problem. They can be thought of as answering questions such as How did problem X come about? or What are the consequences of problem X? We call these ANALYSIS texts. Seven texts similarly problematise a state of affairs (e.g. crime in Hong Kong) and consider the reasons for or consequences of the problem. They then proceed to recommend a course of action that should be taken. They can be thought of as answering questions such as What are the reasons for problem X and what should be done about it? We call these REPORT texts.

Three texts present arguments for and against a particular issue (e.g. euthanasia) without explicitly attempting to persuade the reader that one interpretation is to be preferred or that something should be done. These texts can be thought of as answering questions such as What are the arguments for and against issue X? or What are the advantages and disadvantages of X? We call these DISCUSSION texts. Ten texts similarly identify an issue (e.g. capital punishment) but attempt to persuade the reader that a certain viewpoint on the issue is correct or to be preferred, or that a certain course of action should be adopted. We call these ARGUMENT texts. ARGUMENT texts are very similar to the genre Rothery (1989) calls exposition and Hyland (1990) calls the argumentative essay.

Eight texts have unclear purposes. In other words, the investigators reacted to them along the lines of “I can’t understand what this text is about.” We call these indeterminate texts. Three texts have two or more distinct, but related, purposes. We call these composite texts. They differ from indeterminate texts in that they successfully combine the different purposes into a single coherent text.

---

4 This genre is close to what Martin & Rothery call a REPORT genre, differing mainly in terms of the topics whereas in our data, the “thing” described is usually a cultural or social phenomenon. The REPORTS from Australian school children analysed by Martin & Rothery are typically about classes of more concrete things such as “birds” or “Australians” (see, for example, Martin, 1989: 6-11).
The number of student texts for each generic area according to first and final drafts is given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of genres in the students’ texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Draft</th>
<th>Final Draft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeterminate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expository</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Narrative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 1 shows, ARGUMENT is the expository genre most favoured by the students. However, there is a clear difference between first and final drafts. In the first drafts, the distribution of texts among the various genres is fairly even, with ARGUMENT, DESCRIPTION and REPORT being equally slightly favoured (3 texts each). In the final drafts, ARGUMENT is strongly favoured (7 texts), followed by REPORT (4 texts). In other words, shifts in genre that take place between first and final drafts are generally in the direction of genres that have a persuasive purpose. It is also worth noting that the number of generically indeterminate texts falls from 6 of the first drafts to only 2 of the final drafts.

The schematic structures of the genres

As mentioned in the methodology section, a prototypical schematic structure for each genre was derived from our analyses of the texts. These are described below. Note that stages within brackets are optional, superscript * indicates a recursive stage, and ^ indicates sequence.

The DESCRIPTION texts begin by identifying a phenomenon by defining it, classifying it or making a generalisation about it (see Appendix for an example of an identification stage from a text describing euphemisms in Chinese and
Genres in an academic writing class

English). The texts then describe the attributes of each category or aspect of the phenomenon. The schematic structure of a prototypical DESCRIPTION is as follows:

Identification ^ Aspect^n ^ (Conclusion)

Like the DESCRIPTION texts, the ADVICE texts first identify a phenomenon by defining, classifying and/or generalising about it. However, the phenomenon then becomes the target towards which advice is directed (see Appendix for an example of a target stage from a text giving advice on how to achieve “true” beauty). The schematic structure of a prototypical ADVICE text is as follows:

Target ^ Advice^n ^ (Conclusion)

In the ANALYSIS texts, a problem is first identified (see Appendix for example of a problem stage from a text analysing emigration) and then possible reasons for or consequences of the problem are explored. The schematic structure of a prototypical ANALYSIS is as follows:

Problem ^ Reason^n / Consequence^n ^ (Conclusion)

The REPORT texts begin like the ANALYSIS texts, but whereas the ANALYSIS texts may briefly mention some suggestions for solving the problem in the conclusion, recommendations are an essential part of the REPORT texts and are expanded to a full stage (see Appendix for an example of a recommendations stage from a REPORT on children left alone at home). The schematic structure of a prototypical REPORT is as follows:

Problem ^ Reason^n / Consequence^n ^ (Conclusion) ^ Recommendations

The DISCUSSION texts begin by identifying an issue (see Appendix for an example of an issue stage from text discussing euthanasia) and then present arguments both for and against it. The texts end with a conclusion which summarises the points of view, restates the issue, or evaluates its importance. The schematic structure of a prototypical DISCUSSION is as follows:

Issue ^ Point of view^n ^ Conclusion

The ARGUMENT texts begin with a thesis which identifies an issue and presents a proposition to be argued for (see Appendix for an example of a thesis stage from a text arguing for the restoration of capital punishment). This is followed by arguments to support the proposition. The texts end with a conclusion which consolidates the arguments and relates them to the proposition, or in
some cases simply restates the proposition. A prototypical argument has the following schematic structure:

\[
\text{Thesis} \land \text{Argument} \land \text{Conclusion}
\]

**Genre agnation**

The agnation of these genres is represented according to a topographical perspective in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Agnate Expository Genres in the Students’ Texts

The figure indicates that there are no discrete boundaries between the genres, and that individual texts may be more or less close to a prototypical instance of a genre, symbolised by the centre of a generic area.

The vertical axis is ideationally related, concerning the extent to which texts construe a state of affairs as taken for granted, or as something to be
Genres in an academic writing class

explained, interpreted and argued about. At one end, a state of affairs is construed as a phenomenon or class of phenomena which can be categorised and described. At the other end, a state of affairs is construed as an issue, about which it is possible to take a position concerning its existence, its characteristics or its desirability. Between these is the construal of a state of affairs as a problem, the reasons for which need to be explained.

The horizontal axis is interpersonally related, concerning the extent to which the purpose of the text is primarily to inform or to persuade. Thus, a DESCRIPTION simply informs the reader of the nature of a phenomenon, while an ADVICE also seeks to persuade the reader to bring about the phenomenon by performing a set of behaviours. An ANALYSIS explains why a certain problem exists, while a REPORT seeks to persuade the reader that, based on such an analysis, certain measures should be taken to solve the problem. A DISCUSSION informs the reader of viewpoints for and against an issue, while an ARGUMENT seeks to persuade the reader that a certain position on the issue is to be preferred.

Indeterminate and composite texts

Indeterminate texts are texts that were identified as having no clear communicative purpose. For example, one text begins with a stage which could be interpreted as: (i) identifying a problem to be analysed (Hong Hong people’s obsession with money); (ii) putting forward one or more propositions that will be argued for (being too obsessed with money will bring you unhappiness or Hong Kong people have been corrupted by Western materialism); or (iii) identifying a phenomenon that will be described (Hong Kong people’s attitudes towards money). As the rest of the text unfolds, it tends to drift from informing the reader about the phenomenon in a relatively neutral way (e.g. how young people take rich businessmen as role models), to presenting consequences of the problem (e.g. it leads to students neglecting their studies), to persuading the reader to adopt a negative attitude towards “money-mindedness,” mainly through evaluative language, which is particularly frequent in the latter part of the text. Although there are at least two potential propositions in the first stage, neither is subsequently argued for. In other words, it is not clear whether the purpose of the text is to describe a phenomenon, analyse a problem or argue a thesis.

Composite texts are those which use elements from different genres to realise two or more distinct, but related, purposes. They differ from indeterminate texts in that they successfully combine the different purposes into a single coherent text. For example, one text on environmental protection
consists of an argument that environmental protection is being neglected (with a prototypical ARGUMENT schematic structure) followed by advice on what steps readers themselves can take to protect the environment (with a prototypical ADVICE schematic structure).

Generic variation

Texts in our data which were identified as clearly belonging to particular genres, nevertheless vary in the extent to which they are prototypical instances of their genres. In some cases, texts may be non-prototypical at the level of schematic structure. For example, one text that we identified as a REPORT begins by identifying the increasing crime rate in Hong Kong as a problem. Much of the rest of the text consists of stages which set out the dire consequences of the problem, followed by recommendations for solving it. However, the text also contains two stages which simply describe two kinds of crimes, armed robbery and smuggling -- stages that seem more like aspects stages of a DESCRIPTION than either consequences or reasons stages in a prototypical REPORT text.

In other cases, the non-prototypicality may lie in features other than the schematic structure. For example, one text begins by identifying and defining an issue (euthanasia) without signaling any stance towards it. It then presents views against and views for euthanasia, most of which the writer distances herself from by using projecting (reporting) clauses such as “they believe...” and “Doctors and nurses feared...”. The text ends with a short summary of the opposing views of doctors and nurses and of administrators. We therefore identified this text as a DISCUSSION with a prototypical Issue ^ Points of View ^ Conclusion structure. However, by the use of strongly evaluative and emotive language in presenting the pro-euthanasia arguments (e.g. “the indignity of the artificial prolongation of life”; “have to die lonely and frightened in cramped hospital wards”; “this enormous feeling of isolation”; “very devastating to the patients”), the writer indirectly signals a standpoint, thus “pushing” the text towards the persuasive end of the interpersonal axis.

Discussion

In attempting to account for the genres that the students in this study produced we need to consider in more detail the context in which the texts were produced. The writers were all very recent graduates from local secondary schools and in their first year at university. Their previous experience of learning to write at secondary school would have been generally
Genres in an academic writing class

product-based and exam-oriented. Writing instruction in Hong Kong’s secondary school English language classes typically focuses on sentence level grammatical accuracy with some instruction in “organisation”. The topics teachers set generally mirror those found in the public examinations, in particular the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) normally taken at the end of five years of secondary education, or the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), normally taken at the end of seven years of secondary education (i.e., just before university entrance).

In taking their first writing course at tertiary level, the students were encouraged to choose their own topics, purposes and audiences and were provided with no exemplars of the kinds of writing expected of them. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that the students have, by and large, simply reproduced genres of secondary school, particularly those they are required to write for public examinations. The Hong Kong Examinations Authority writing syllabus for the HKALE states that:

This exam tests the ability of candidates to write extended English discourse. Topics will be selected to encourage expository writing, e.g. persuasion, argument, reporting, development of hypotheses, organising of information, etc. rather than narrative or purely descriptive writing.5

In order to prepare Form 6 and 7 students for this exam, there are many textbooks on the market. A typical example is a textbook by Chau & Chau (1993), which contains 12 thematically based units, all focusing on social or cultural issues (e.g. drug abuse, environmental protection, student suicide, abortion, child abuse). Many of these topics are identical to those of the students’ texts in this study. In addition, outlines of essays are provided which are meant to “help students build up the skill of organising the essay” (preface). In 3 out of the 12 units, the outlines follow the schematic structure of what we are calling ARGUMENT texts. In 5 units, the outlines follow the schematic structure of a prototypical REPORT, while 3 others are also clearly reports but have schematic structures which vary somewhat from those in our data. The outline in the one remaining unit suggests an ADVICE text.

Thus, the expository genres most strongly favoured by the students in this study are precisely those that they had been trained to write for the HKALE. Although the students may have learned how to produce better texts during the

---

5 By “purely descriptive writing” the syllabus is referring to description of specific people and things or of events, rather than the generalised descriptions of social and cultural phenomena (expository description) found in our data.
writing course through the processes of drafting, redrafting, editing, etc., they
do not seem to have extended their repertoire of genres beyond those of their
previous educational experience. As Grabe & Kaplan (1996: 362) point out,
however, it is important for students at an advanced level to “expand their
range of writing abilities into additional genres”.

Implications

Although we would certainly not want to deny the importance of
encouraging students to go through the processes of drafting and redrafting,
and of responding to both peer and instructor feedback, it seems clear that a
more interventionist pedagogy is necessary to extend students’ control over
academic and professional genres. This does not mean going back to the so-
called current-traditional rhetoric approach (Silva, 1990) where students are
given rigid rules for organising their texts. Instead, students need exposure to a
variety of texts within the relevant target genres and a method of
understanding how the contexts and purposes of texts are related to their
schematic structures and lexico-grammar. They need to learn how to write on
more specialized topics and for more specific audiences and purposes, and
how to combine what Martin (1994) calls “elemental” genres into “macro-
genres”, which are longer, more complex texts. For example, critical reviews,
case studies and research reports are among the genres that Grabe & Kaplan
(1996) suggest as suitable for advanced level students.

In order to effectively implement a pedagogy that would help students
make the transition from the kinds of writing that gain them acceptance into
the university to the kinds of writing that allow them to be successful while at
university, instructors themselves need to be well informed about the features
of the relevant target genres. However, although there is a considerable body
of research into the genres of primary and secondary education and, at the
other extreme, into the genres of graduate level and professional writing, much
less is known about the genres required at undergraduate level. Additional
research into writing at this level will help us to develop a more informed and
effective curriculum for first year tertiary level writing courses.

References

London and New York: Longman.
Genres in an academic writing class


Identification stage from a DESCRIPTION text

The Chinese and the English cultures are very distinctive since they are from different origins. The three major origins of the Chinese culture are Confucianism, Taoist tradition and Buddhism. In regard to the English culture, the three major shapers are Christianity, Greco-Roman tradition and evolutionary theory (So, 1986). In this writing, the powerful device, language, will exert its strength to tell you how the cultures in the East and the West are similar regarding the facets of euphemisms for sex and death taboos, words with similar pronunciation of vulgar words and words with negative connotations. This powerful device, language, then allows you to access to the cultural differences in the aspects of domains and connotations of colour, cognitive perception, the terms people use to address each other and the rhetorical device in writing.

In the Chinese and the English cultures, we have both taboos and euphemisms. In these two cultures, taboos are some words or expressions which are prohibited and cannot be imposed and accepted by social usage. Interestingly, in both the Chinese and the English-speaking worlds, the most severely taboos are associated with sex and death. So, euphemisms often arise to substitute for the offensive and unpleasant taboos.

Target stage from an ADVICE text

Everybody wants to be beautiful and to be given compliments by others. Surely, you are one of them. What do we mean by beauty? What should we have and what should we do to make ourselves beautiful? These are not simple questions.

Problem stage from an ANALYSIS text

Nowadays, emigration has become a common phenomenon and a serious problem in Hong Kong.

Recommendations stage from a REPORT text

In order to tackle the problem of children left unattended at home, five approaches are identified. They can reduce the problem and accidents caused by working parents.

Firstly, the provision of child care services so as to help parents particularly working parents, care for their children. Recently, many child care centres and nursery places are established which cater for families who need help to look after very young children.

For older children, who need care after school, the after-school care programme provides half-day care, lunch, homework tuition, guidance, general counselling and play activities to primary students. The programme generally have a long waiting-list, showing the demand for such service. Many working parents want to apply for the service but the requirements are a bit higher.
Some parents, however, may need temporary care for their children so that they may attend to other activities, including, seeing a doctor, visiting relatives, going to the market. Occasional child care service can provide half-day or full-day care for young children.

It is hoped that increased provision of child care services may help those with special needs, such as single parent families, not to leave their young children unattended. However, the demand for the child care services can be met in full in the near future, bearing in mind that resources are not unlimited and that the primary responsibility for ensuring safety of children should rest with their parents.

Secondly, mutual help by the neighbours, friends and relatives is essential to promote and encourage parents in the same neighbourhood to help each other to provide temporary care for children when the need arises. This form of mutual help provides ready and convenient help to parents in terms of need, and facilitates the care of children in a nearby, familiar and safe environment. However, it depends heavily on the willingness of the parents to contribute.

Thirdly, public education is needed in order to alert parents’ awareness of the danger of children being left alone. Many of the accidents occurred not because the parents had the intention to hurt their children but rather because they were not aware of the danger and serious consequences of leaving their children at home. This includes a press conference, exhibition, television and radio announcements, posters and leaflets to remind parents not to leave children unattended.

It is hoped that if parents can gain more knowledge of the importance of child care, there will be a tremendous drop in children accidents.

Fourthly, legislation is another way to prohibit parents from leaving children unattended. It provides greater protection for children who cannot take good care of themselves. Parents would be more alert in providing the care and supervision required for their children’s safety. The fatal accidents can then be reduced to a minimal.

Lastly, those families with sufficient financial resources, can employ a domestic helper to assist with child care responsibilities.

Generally speaking, parents are responsible to look after and care of their children. Leaving children at home unattended is very dangerous and I am sure nobody would like to expect fatal accidents to happen. Children are innocent and should be under intensive care. Parents should spend more time with their children as to reduce such tragedies.

**Issue stage from a DISCUSSION text**

Euthanasia, more commonly known as mercy killing, is the practice of killing someone painlessly in order to relieve their suffering when nothing can be done to help them. It has long been the subject of heated controversy.

People feel strongly about the subject of euthanasia.

**Thesis stage from an ARGUMENT text**

Capital punishment is the same as death penalty which means the infliction of punishment by death. It should be implemented to combat serious crimes. To my mind, I am strongly for its restoration in Hong Kong.