

Applying the VOICES Framework in the EFL Content-Based Classroom:

Perspectives from University Students

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1. Introduction

Teaching and learning content and language in an integrated manner has become increasingly significant across all educational levels in today's globalized and multicultural society. Moreover, given the growing emphasis on content-based approaches in second language (L2) writing instruction (e.g., de Oliveira & Lan, 2014) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (e.g., Ball, Kelly, & Clegg, 2016; Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010; Llinares, Morton, & Whittaker, 2012), examining the linguistic challenges encountered by L2 writers within target disciplines is beneficial. Nonetheless, significant challenges remain in integrating content and language, particularly in terms of identifying the linguistic features to prioritize and examining how language learning unfolds within CLIL contexts (Llinares, Morton, & Whittaker, 2012).

In higher education, students are frequently required to complete assignments that demonstrate content knowledge and genre-specific writing skills. Among the wide variety of academic genres, essays are particularly common, and tertiary education often emphasizes their importance by providing guidance on genre-specific features, such as structure, vocabulary, citation practices, and the responsible use of generative artificial intelligence in the digital age. Such instruction and practice play a critical role in developing students' academic literacy and genre awareness (Tardy, 2009) while enhancing rhetorical consciousness (Swales & Feak, 2012).

Within written discourse, evaluative language has received growing attention in L2 academic writing research (e.g., Lee, 2010, 2015; Liu, 2013; Lv, 2015; McCabe & Whittaker, 2017; Miller, Mitchell, & Pessoa, 2014, 2016; Ngo & Unsworth, 2015). Many studies have employed Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework developed

within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyze how writers use evaluative language. The framework categorizes evaluation into three semantic domains—Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation—with Attitude encompassing judgments of people, expressions of emotion, and appreciation of things. Applications of SFL in first language (L1) secondary school contexts have provided valuable insights into genre-specific language use. For instance, Coffin (2006) classified school history genres into three families: (a) Recording Genres (e.g., Autobiographical Report, Biographical Report, Recount, and Account), (b) Explaining Genres (e.g., Factorial and Consequential Explanation), and (c) Arguing Genres (e.g., Exposition, Challenge, and Discussion). Among these, this study primarily focuses on Arguing Genres. In inductively structured Discussions, authorial judgment is withheld until differing perspectives have been introduced and reconciled, whereas in deductively structured genres, such as Exposition and Challenge, the writer's stance is foregrounded early in the text, typically through thesis statements and topic sentences.

Compared to L1 writers' use of evaluative language in school history genres, research on L2 writers remains limited (see Miller, Mitchell, & Pessoa, 2014, 2016; Morton & Llinares, 2016). As part of a larger L2 project, Myskow and Ono (2018a) examined evaluative language in high- and low-graded historical biography essays from a CLIL-based history course at a Japanese university. The biography genre typically follows an inductive pattern, whereby evaluations emerge subsequent to the presentation of evidence. The results indicated minimal differences between high- and low-graded essays in evaluative subtypes or polarity, whereas the integration of evidence with evaluation through specific grammatical patterns was a crucial factor. This finding suggests that pedagogical guidance can assist students in linking evidence with evaluative language in order to construct effective historical essays.

Similarly, Myskow and Ono (2018b) analyzed L2 writers' use of emotional language (Affect) in the Factorial Explanation genre using the Appraisal framework. Their findings revealed the frequent use of Positive Inclination and Negative Satisfaction, primarily realized through adjectives and verbs, whereas nominal constructions for textual cohesion were less common. L2 writers also tended to construe emotions as stable attributes rather than dynamic catalysts for change, thereby highlighting the importance of teaching genre-specific linguistic resources to support the effective expression of Affect in historical

writing.

Building on these studies, Ono and Myskow (2020) examined the key discourse features in historical discussion essays—including evaluative language, sourcing techniques, cohesive links, and organizational patterning—and developed the analytic framework VOICES, comprising:

- (1) **Viewpoint of the Author:** the perspective or argument of the author;
- (2) **Other Voices:** supporting or opposing perspective/argument;
- (3) **Interpretation:** endorsing or countering views and evidence;
- (4) **Compression:** compacting information using nouns or pronouns;
- (5) **Elaboration of Evidence:** explaining or contrasting views; and
- (6) **Scale:** emphasis in terms of high/low force or focus.

VOICES is designed for both textual analysis and analytical classroom activities to support essay writing (see Appendix A). The analyses demonstrated that lower-graded essays exhibited diminished authorial voices and logical fallacies such as false equivalency, indicating the challenges of producing inductively organized academic discourse. Consistent with L1 research, the Historical Discussion genre is recognized as highly demanding and is typically encountered in upper-level schooling (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). Effective pedagogy includes modeling source integration techniques and raising awareness of logical fallacies, as well as distinguishing between interpretations and summaries and between value-based and scale-based evaluations.

Despite these insights, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' perceptions of Discussion essay and the VOICES framework remain underexplored. Additionally, the framework is applicable to Exposition and Challenge essays (Myskow, 2023), making it relevant for examining L2 learners' perceptions across these genres. Therefore, this study focuses on how Japanese EFL university students perceive analytic group activities using the VOICES framework for Discussion, Exposition, and Challenge essays as part of a larger research project investigating the challenges of producing historical genres and pedagogical practices that facilitate learning.

The following research questions (RQs) were formulated with this aim.

RQ1: How do university students perceive the usefulness of the VOICES framework when preparing to write their term papers?

RQ2: How do university students perceive their level of interest in the VOICES framework

when preparing to write their term papers?

RQ3: To what extent do university students perceive the VOICES framework as difficult, and in what ways do they experience such difficulties, if any?

2. Methods

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study were 52 second-year university students in Japan majoring in law or political science. They were enrolled in *Social and Political Change in CLIL-based Modern World History* courses in the Intensive English Program. The students were assigned to three classes that followed the same curriculum but met at different times throughout the week. At the time of the study, their English language proficiency was considered to be at the upper-intermediate level or Level B2 as per the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Students in the Intensive Program often demonstrate a strong motivation toward English learning because they voluntarily enroll in double the number of English courses compared to their classmates. However, they typically have limited exposure to studying abroad or living in English-speaking countries.

2.2 Materials

The study comprised three types of instructional materials. First, sample essays for the Discussion, Exposition, and Challenge genres were developed, and the VOICES framework, which explains the definition of each aspect along with illustrative examples, was prepared (Myskow, 2018a; see Appendix A). Each sample essay was approximately 700-800 words long, matching the requisite word count for a midterm paper.

The organizational structure varied across the three genres. For example, the sample Discussion essay on the *Positive/Negative Effects of the Russian Revolution* (Myskow, 2018b, see Appendix B), followed an inductive pattern consisting of an introduction, three perspectives, and a conclusion. In contrast, the Exposition essay, *Positive Effects of the Russian Revolution* (Myskow, 2018c), adopted a deductive structure comprising an introduction, three arguments in favor, and a conclusion. Similarly, the Challenge essay, also titled *Positive Effects of the Russian Revolution* (Myskow, 2018d), was deductively structured, beginning with an introduction, followed by three positions to be challenged,

and concluding with a final summary.

Thus, while all three essays addressed the same theme, the Russian Revolution, they demonstrated organizational and rhetorical variations appropriate to their respective genres. The same VOICES framework and examples were applied across all three argument-based genres to guide students in learning and analyzing genre-specific structures and linguistic features.

A questionnaire survey was also developed to investigate students' perceptions of the VOICES framework and the analytic group activity conducted in class (see Appendix C). The questionnaire comprised three items:

- Q1. Was the VOICES pattern you learned today useful for preparing to write your term paper?
- Q2. Was the VOICES pattern you learned today interesting to you?
- Q3. Were the activities you participated in during today's class difficult?

The first two questions were rated on a four-point Likert scale (i.e., *very useful*, *somewhat useful*, *not very useful*, and *not at all useful*), whereas the third question used a five-point Likert scale (i.e., *very difficult*, *somewhat difficult*, *about right*, *not very difficult*, and *not at all difficult*). Following each question, the participants were asked to explain their opinions or provide reasons for their evaluations, either in English or Japanese.

2.3 Procedures

The participants were divided into Groups A ($n = 15$), B ($n = 19$), and C ($n = 18$) prior to the study. Each group received instructions on writing a specific argumentative essay genre—Discussion (Group A), Exposition (Group B), or Challenge (Group C)—in separate writing workshop sessions within the course. Before the workshops commenced, the instructor explained the content, and written consent was obtained from all students.

The students first read a sample historical essay on the Russian Revolution in one of the three assigned genres: Discussion, Exposition, or Challenge. Subsequently, they were introduced to the rhetorical stages of the genre and the VOICES analytic framework, through which they learned the structural, linguistic, and rhetorical features of their allocated essay types in preparation for writing their own term paper on a revolution of their choice. Next, the students engaged in a series of genre analysis activities using the framework. They identified and examined how each aspect of the VOICES framework was

realized in the sample essay and discussed their observations with their peers. Specifically, they were encouraged to categorize sections or rhetorical expressions in the sample according to the six elements of VOICES (Ono & Myskow, 2020, see Appendices A & B): (1) Viewpoint of the Author, (2) Other Voices, (3) Interpretation, (4) Compression, (5) Elaboration of Evidence, and (6) Scale.

For the analytical activity, the students worked in groups of three or four. After completing an initial individual analysis, they engaged in group discussions that were audio-recorded and videotaped. Depending on the group, the recordings ranged from six to nine minutes in length. Following the activity, the instructor reviewed the key points of the VOICES framework to ensure students' understanding, concluded the session, and distributed a questionnaire on the analytic activity. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire in English or Japanese and submit it before leaving the classroom.

2.4 Data analysis

Questions with Likert points were analyzed quantitatively, while written comments were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Among the 135 comments obtained, 129 were written in English, whereas six (three participants) were written in Japanese and translated into English by the researcher for consistency and analysis, which led to 2,245 words of comments in total. In particular, these written comments were analyzed using the KH coder, which is a software tool designed for quantitative content analysis and text mining that is employed in the field of computational linguistics (Higuchi, 2001). It allows users to conduct objective analyses of textual data by quantifying word frequencies and identifying and visualizing relationships among words. First, the most frequently occurring words in the participants' comments were quantified and listed to identify their perceptions of usefulness, interest, and difficulty. Second, a co-occurrence network analysis was employed to illustrate the relationships among the words highlighted by the participants within each genre. Third, a correspondence analysis was conducted to examine the association between participants' evaluations of interest and difficulty, and the keywords and concepts that appeared in their comments. Finally, the comments were subjected to thematic analysis to shed light on the successes and areas for improvement in the analytic group activity conducted in class. The audio-recorded data were transcribed by external experts and qualitatively analyzed with a focus on students' perceptions of ease and

Table 1. *Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness on the VOICES Pattern across Genres*

Genre	Discussion (Group A)		Exposition (Group B)		Challenge (Group C)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Very useful	12	80.00	13	68.42	14	77.78
Somewhat useful	3	20.00	6	31.58	4	22.22
Not very useful	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not at all useful	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	15	100	19	100	18	100

difficulty of the analytic activity.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of the VOICES Framework

A total of 52 university students' perceptions of the VOICES pattern they had learned were examined quantitatively across genres in terms of perceived usefulness (Table 1). Most students regarded the VOICES pattern as either very useful ($n = 39$, 75.00%) or somewhat useful ($n = 13$, 25.00%), and none evaluated it negatively in this regard, irrespective of the assigned genre. More specifically, students in the Discussion essay group reported the highest proportion of positive evaluations (very useful: $n = 12$, 80.00%), followed by those in the Challenge essay group (very useful: $n = 14$, 77.78%). Students in the Exposition essay group reported the lowest proportion (very useful: $n = 13$, 68.42%).

As shown in Table 1, the students generally found the VOICES framework helpful and practical for writing their term papers, reflecting their overall positive evaluation of this analytic tool. For example, Student D3 reported, "*It was really useful and meaningful to learn the VOICES patterns and how the essay is organized using them. I will make the most of what I learned today in writing my own term paper.*" Similarly, Student C16 noted, "[The] Important factors I should include in my essay became clear, so the VOICES pattern was very useful."

Despite these positive evaluations, some students expressed concerns and a lack of

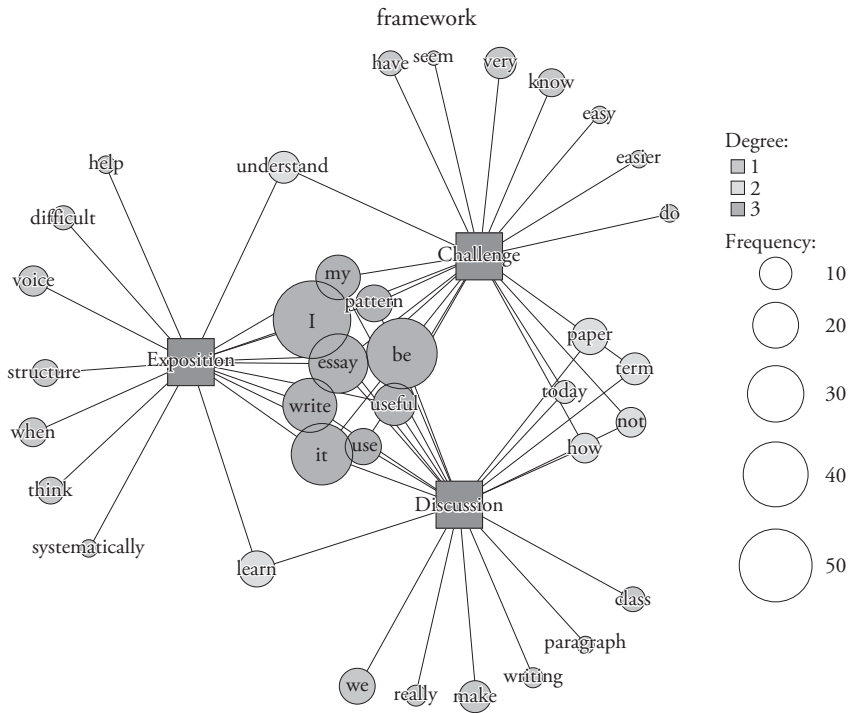
confidence. For instance, Student D5 commented, *"It's easy to understand and good information to write essays. However, I'm not sure if I use it completely and correctly. I need practice."* As this remark suggests, while the students recognized the usefulness of the VOICES framework, they were uncertain about their ability to apply it fully to actual term paper writing. Likewise, Student E9 reported insufficient understanding and limited confidence within the given timeframe, stating, *"I couldn't understand perfectly, and I'm concerned that I can't use it properly."*

Figure 1 presents the results of the co-occurrence network analysis of student comments on the usefulness of the VOICES framework. Student comments can be categorized into three. Degree 1 refers to the perceptions unique to each essay genre, Degree 2 reflects the commonly shared perceptions between the Discussion and Exposition genres, and Degree 3 encompasses the perceptions shared across all three genres. With regard to Degree 3, the students noted that the framework helped them understand the expected patterns in each genre and confirmed its overall usefulness.

In terms of Degree 1, the students in the Discussion genre highlighted the usefulness of the framework for paragraph-level writing. In the Exposition genre, the students reported that the VOICES framework helped them identify the systematic structure of the genre. In the Challenge genre, the students indicated that learning the VOICES pattern facilitated their understanding of its rhetorical features.

The students' written comments provided further evidence of the benefits of using the VOICES pattern. For instance, one student reported that *"VOICES makes it easier to decide the structure of the essay"* (E13). Another student remarked, *"Academic writing is very difficult for me to complete. There are a lot of rules, so I don't feel 'free' (my impressions). I know I have to learn its rules"* (C17). Given the specific structure of each essay genre and the elements expected to be presented in a particular sequence, rhetorical structures appear to be perceived as rules by students. More specifically, one student, focusing on the Compression aspect of the VOICES pattern, stated, *"If I can use 'Compression' well in my essay, my writing will be improved!"* (D15). Among the six aspects of the VOICES pattern, this student clearly regarded Compression as the key to successful writing.

Another student commented, *"These systematic patterns must be helpful when I write an essay or thesis not only in English but also in Japanese"* (C4). This suggests that the student considered knowledge of the VOICES pattern to be transferable across genres as well as

Figure 1. Co-occurrence network of students' comments on the usefulness of the VOICES

languages. Strictly speaking, although these differ in rhetorical structure and conventions across disciplines (e.g., Bunton, 2002; Paltridge, 2002; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007), and essays can be further classified into multiple genres (Coffin, 2006), the student's awareness of genre features and the appropriate use of language appear to have been enhanced through analytic activities using the VOICES framework. Moreover, such awareness may have been fostered not only by learning the VOICES pattern itself but also through the analytic and interactive group discussions, in which differing perspectives and reasons could be shared, exchanged, and negotiated. A more detailed analysis of these group activities is presented in subsequent sections.

3.2 Students' Perceptions of Interest in the VOICES Framework

Students' interest in the VOICES pattern varied; however, similar perceptions were

Table 2. *Students' Perceptions of Interest in the VOICES Pattern across Genres*

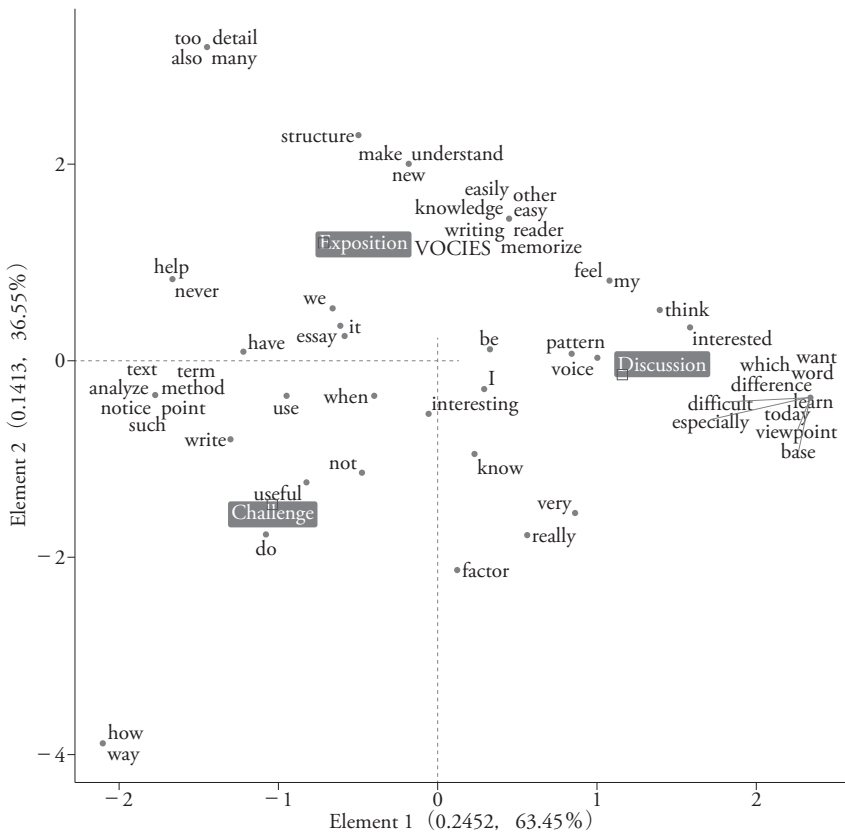
Genre	Discussion (Group A)		Exposition (Group B)		Challenge (Group C)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Very interesting	9	60.00	9	47.37	10	55.56
Somewhat interesting	5	33.33	9	47.37	7	38.89
Not very interesting	1	6.67	1	5.26	1	5.56
Not at all interesting	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	15	100	19	100	18	100

observed across genre groups (see Table 2). In each group, most students reported high ($n = 28$, 53.85%) or relatively high ($n = 21$, 40.38%) levels of interest in the framework. Specifically, the number of students who expressed high interest in the VOICES pattern was nine (60.00%) in the Discussion genre, nine (47.37%) in the Exposition genre, and ten (55.56%) in the Challenge genre.

Some students associated their interest in the VOICES pattern with the reader's perspective, as illustrated in the following comments: *"I felt [it was] interesting, because [a] sample essay is elaborated based on this rule. I think this type of essay is easy to understand for readers"* (D7) and *"Similarly, readers also understand the contents of essays by using the knowledge of VOICES"* (E13). Moreover, as Student E18 noted, *"It will also help me to read other essays,"* suggesting that the genre-based rhetorical knowledge students acquired through the VOICES framework may be applicable not only in writing, but also reading academic essays (Tardy, 2009).

Figure 2 presents the results of the correspondence analysis of student interest in the VOICES framework across genres. As demonstrated in the figure, certain keywords are linked to specific genre groups. For instance, students in the Discussion group tend to associate their interest with recognizing the "differences" in the "viewpoints" presented in essays, while those in the Exposition group focused on "knowledge" and "understanding" of the "new" "structures" they had learned in greater detail. In contrast, students in the Challenge group emphasized that they had "noticed" "how" to "analyze" a "text" through a particular "method."

Figure 2. Correspondence analysis of students' interest in VOICES across genres.



However, one student from each genre group reported that the framework was not particularly interesting, although for different reasons. A student in the Discussion group stated, “*I’m not very interest[ed] in writing. I know it was very useful, but I prefer to learn history*” (D13). This comment suggests that, regardless of the genre, this student is generally not inclined toward writing and instead prefers other forms of learning. Another student in the Exposition group commented, “*It’s useful but not interesting because it’s too systematic*” (E8). Indeed, as the VOICES framework focuses on the rhetorical functions of essays, its analysis tends to be systematic and grounded in rhetorical properties as evidence. While some students regarded such systematic patterns as helpful and interesting, others

Table 3. *Students' Perceptions of Difficulty in Using the VOICES Pattern across Genres*

Genre	Discussion (Group A)		Exposition (Group B)		Challenge (Group C)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Very difficult		0	1	5.26	4	22.22
Somewhat difficult	5	33.33	10	52.63	4	22.22
About right	6	40.00	7	36.84	5	27.78
Not very difficult	4	26.67	1	5.26	5	27.78
Not at all difficult	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	15	100	19	100	18	100

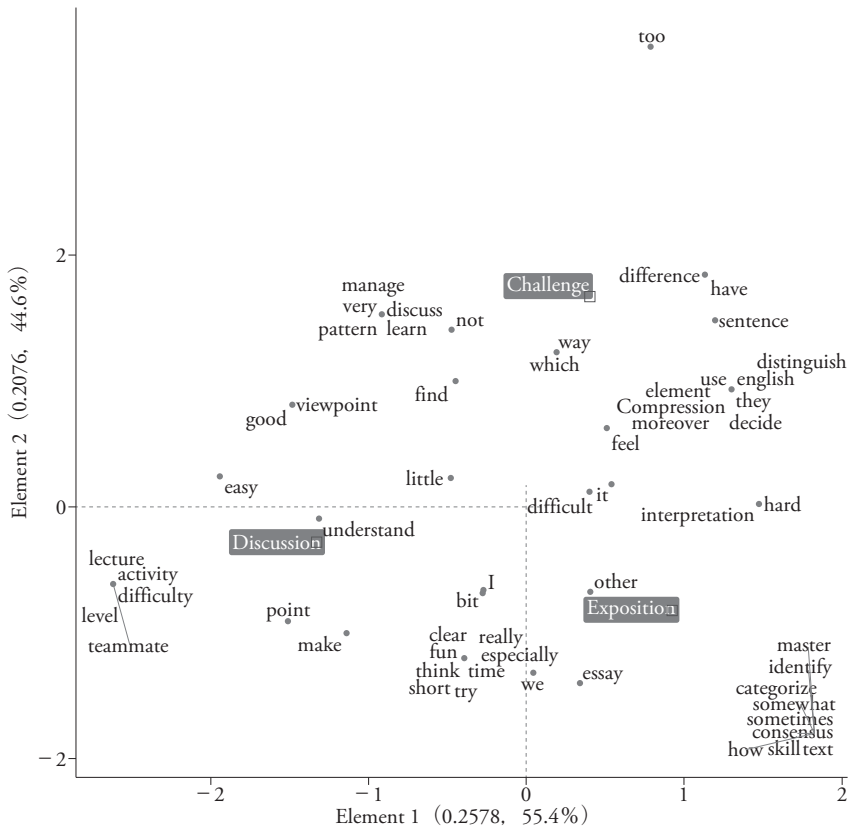
expressed more negative attitudes toward the framework. Furthermore, a student in the Challenge group raised interesting questions about the transferability, stating, “*I’m not sure how to use the VOICES without term paper[s]*” (C7). This reflects the students’ interests in the transferability of the VOICES framework from pedagogical tasks to argumentative discourse in other contexts.

3.3 Students’ Perceptions of Difficulties with the VOICES Framework

Students reported varying levels of difficulty in using the VOICES framework (Table 3), and these perceptions differed across genres. The framework was perceived as the most difficult in the Challenge genre (very difficult: *n* = 4, 22.22%; somewhat difficult: *n* = 4, 22.22%), although five students (27.78%) in this group found it not very difficult. In the Exposition genre, the framework was considered to be challenging (very difficult: *n* = 1, 5.26%; somewhat difficult: *n* = 10, 52.63%). By contrast, students in the Discussion genre regarded it as relatively less difficult, with only three (33.33%) reporting it as somewhat difficult.

The results of the correspondence analysis of the genres and students’ perceived difficulty using the VOICES framework are presented in Figure 3. While different genres were associated with varying keywords, certain aspects of the framework were consistently challenging for the students. Identifying the author’s *viewpoint* proved particularly difficult for the Discussions and Challenge genres. One student remarked, “*It’s difficult for me to*

Figure 3. Correspondence analysis of students' perceived difficulty with the VOICES framework across genres.



recognize [the] 'viewpoint' because I was concerned about the level of [the] 'viewpoint.' Viewpoints are divided into economic, social welfare, politics, long or short, education or healthcare, etc." (D1). Another noted, "It was a little bit difficult to find (or judge) the 'viewpoints' from the sequences. However, I was able to manage thanks to the cooperation of my teammates" (D3). These comments highlight the cognitive demands of evaluating multiple perspectives and arguments within an essay.

Similarly, Student C16 reported, "I felt the difference between [the] viewpoint of [the] author and [the] interpretation a little confusing, but managed to understand it." As

“Viewpoint of the Author” (the author’s perspective or argument) and “Interpretation” (endorsing or countering views and evidence) are closely related and often appear sequentially, distinguishing between them can be challenging. In addition, Student E10 noted, “*For me, it is difficult to distinguish other voices (opposing) between interpretation (countering), but it was interesting,*” suggesting that different students may encounter difficulties with different aspects of the framework.

The Compression aspect of the VOICES framework was reportedly difficult for students in the Exposition and Challenge genres. Student C7 stated, “*It is difficult to find and use Compression (nouns and pronouns),*” while Student E15 commented, “*Especialy, finding the compression was hard,*” and Student E11 noted, “*Compression is a little bit difficult for me. Moreover, it’s difficult to use.*” These observations indicate that the difficulty of this aspect extends beyond analytical identification to its practical application in writing in the target genre, which requires both content-based and linguistic knowledge.

Challenges also arose in distinguishing the closely related aspects of the framework. Student C18 observed, “*It was difficult to distinguish the VOICES. Some [aspects] of them have only subtle differences,*” and Student E2 noted, “*There were some points that we found which one is used in the sentence. The difference was still a bit [unclear].*” These comments suggest that students sometimes struggle to differentiate clearly between interrelated aspects.

Variations in perceived difficulty may reflect students’ familiarity with the assigned genres. Previous research has identified the inductive informational structure of the Discussion genre as “the most demanding of the history genres” (Christie & Derewianka, 2008, p. 139). However, the EFL students in the present study demonstrated differing perceptions of difficulty across Arguing genres, which were likely influenced by individual writing expertise, topic knowledge, and prior instruction. Cross-cultural differences in L1 writing education may also have contributed to this phenomenon. According to Watanabe (2004, 2024), L1 writing instruction in U.S. elementary schools emphasizes a genre-based approach, teaching detailed genre features and providing students with extensive opportunities to write in multiple genres. In contrast, Japanese instruction typically focuses on a narrower range of writing genres, emphasizing narrative- and experience-based writing that foregrounds students’ personal feelings and reflections. These differences may underline the variations in students’ perceptions of Arguing genres and inductive versus

deductive informational structures, warranting further investigation.

3.4 Perceived Challenges in Using the VOICES Framework

The comments the students wrote in the questionnaire highlight the challenges encountered during the group discussion activities. While Student E16 noted, “*It was fun to hear other people’s interpretation,*” other students reported, “*Sharing ideas and trying to reach a consensus is somewhat difficult*” (E17) and “*The working time was a little bit short, so it’s difficult for us to make a consensus*” (E19). Although the instructor explained the aspects of the VOICES framework and illustrated them with examples, the students naturally varied in their level of understanding, necessitating different amounts of time to share and negotiate ideas. Moreover, the students exhibited differing degrees of engagement in group activities; some spoke frequently and dominated the discussion, whereas others struggled to keep pace with or follow the content.

The analysis of the recorded group discussion data corroborates these observations. The following excerpts from the Exposition group illustrate the interactions of three students attempting to reach an agreement on their analytical interpretations.

Example 1. An Analytic Group Activity of the Exposition Genre

Student 1: “However” at the next sentence which start, “However.” In this sentence is interpretation and counter argument in this case. This agrees with this statement showing the reference mention about, so this is interpretation, and also, it’s a part of other voices.

Student 2: In addition, we can find the words which shows scale in this sentence, the “greatly.”

Student 1: Yeah.

Student 2: “Greatly” is a word which shows scale.

Student 1: In the one, two, three, four, five, sixth sentence from the top, “greatly” is the word...

Student 3: I’m sorry. I’m sorry. You said that, “However” of the sixth sentence is interpretation of countering. You said. I thought that this “However” is other voices of opposing.

Student 1: Of course. Yeah, so other voices.

Student 3: Yeah.

Student 1: I'm not sure the difference between the interpretation and the opposing. I think it's ... same I thought.

Student 2: So the sentence including, "However" is the opinion of author. So this sentence different from other voice because other voice means other author or other person's opinion. So I agree with ... idea because interpretation means this author's own evidence or views. So I think also this, "However" means interpretation.

Student 1: Yeah, the author refute the point mentioned in the above, the author's other voices, so it's a little bit different.

As indicated by the students' interactions, they experienced difficulty distinguishing between "Other Voices: supporting or opposing perspective/argument" and "Interpretation: endorsing or countering views and evidence." Although students were initially confused or lacked a clear understanding of these aspects, they were ultimately able to identify the target sentences by referring to the definitions of these aspects and providing supporting evidence for their decisions and analyses.

Another excerpt illustrates the interactions among three students working in the Challenge genre. In this instance, they struggled to categorize the target sentence as one of the following: "Interpretation," "Viewpoint of the Author," "Elaboration of Evidence," or "Compression."

Example 2: An Analytic Group Activity of the Challenge Genre

Student 5: OK. And this next sentence, "However, such observations..." I think "However" is interpretation, and also elaboration? No.

Student 4: Elaboration?

Student 5: No. I think I'm not sure about... I think it is equal to show the contrast.

Student 4: So you mean...

Student 5: But I'm not sure.

Student 4: I thought "elaboration" means to go more in detail...

Student 6: So you mean...

Student 4: "In terms of education," blah, blah, blah, is elaboration. I don't know.

Student 6: Yeah. I thought “However, such observation tend to overshadow other aspects of social welfare.” is goes to interpretation. But after that, I think it was elaboration, because there are a lot of details.

Student 5: OK. I see.

Student 6: Yeah, and “such observation” means the compression, maybe.

Student 5: Compression. OK.

Student 4: There are a lot of elaborations.

Student 5: I think “such observations tend to overshadow other aspects of social welfare.” is viewpoint of author.

Student 6: Yeah.

Student 4: Yeah. Maybe.

Student 6: But I think it is the interpretation of other voices. So I think interpretation also includes the viewpoint. So it’s not just viewpoint. So I thought it’s interpretation.

As demonstrated above, individual group members sometimes held differing interpretations of the textual analysis, indicating that certain aspects of the VOICES framework are challenging to understand and identify. Such discrepancies are natural when novice EFL writers analyze unfamiliar genres and employ unfamiliar analytic frameworks. Nevertheless, group discussions appear to facilitate active learning and interaction as students negotiate their ideas and decisions to reach a consensus. Their understanding of both the target genre and the rhetorical functions of the VOICES framework s reinforced and enhanced through the exchange of ideas.

Overall, group discussions involving three or four members proved to be more effective than pair work for students with upper-intermediate language proficiency. This approach allowed each student to first analyze the sample text individually and then actively share their interpretations and decisions during the discussion, thereby supporting collaborative learning and deeper comprehension.

4. Conclusion

This study investigated Japanese EFL university students’ perceptions of analytic

group activities using the VOICES framework by analyzing questionnaire responses and recordings of group discussions. The main findings are summarized as follows. First, regarding students' perceived usefulness of the VOICES framework, three-quarters of the participants rated it as very useful, whereas one-third rated it as somewhat useful across the three target genres. Their evaluations were primarily attributed to the systematic structure of the framework and specific rhetorical functions associated with each component. Second, concerning the students' level of interest in the framework, 53.85% reported a high level of interest and 40.38% reported a relatively high level. This positive orientation appears to reflect their learning attitudes and active engagement in group activities. In addition, students recognized that knowledge of the VOICES framework could support not only their writing, but also their reading of essay genres. Third, the students reported varying levels of difficulty in applying the framework across genres. The Challenge essay was perceived as the most difficult, followed by the Exposition essay, while the Discussion essay was considered the least difficult. Among the six components of the VOICES pattern, *Viewpoint of the Author*, *Interpretation*, *Elaboration of Evidence*, and *Compression* were most frequently identified as challenging, suggesting the need for additional instructional support. Students' perceived difficulties were sometimes linked to the dynamics of group discussions, in which members were expected to share, negotiate, and reach a consensus. Some students displayed limited confidence in their analyses and an insufficient understanding of the framework, which occasionally led to passive participation. Nevertheless, the exchange of ideas in group discussions appeared to foster collaborative learning and gradually deepened students' collective understanding.

One pedagogical implication of this study is that the VOICES framework has the potential to be of much use to teachers of Arguing genres (i.e., Discussion, Exposition, and Challenge). While this study employed groups of three to four members, different configurations such as pairs or larger groups may also be explored depending on students' L2 proficiency, writing expertise, and familiarity with the target genre. Another implication relates to genre-based writing pedagogy (e.g., Hyland, 2004; Tardy, 2009). As reflected in the positive responses to the framework, analyzing the VOICES pattern can help students (a) develop rhetorical awareness (Swales & Feak, 2012), (b) connect evidence with evaluation (Myskow & Ono, 2018a, 2018b), and (c) enhance genre-specific knowledge (e.g., Tardy, 2009). Although the difficulty level of tasks and the linguistic

features of sample essays should be adjusted to learners' proficiency, the VOICES framework holds considerable potential for fostering students' evidence-based reading, analytical, and writing skills in a balanced manner.

Finally, future research should integrate textual analyses of students' actual essays with questionnaire data to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of how genre knowledge is reflected in their writing and where difficulties arise. A mixed-methods approach in genre-based writing research may further illuminate the underexplored aspects of students' engagement with target genres from multiple perspectives.

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Appendix A. Characteristics of the Arguing Genres (adapted from Myskow, 2018a)

1. Viewpoint of the Author (perspective/argument)

What are the main **viewpoints** (perspectives/arguments) put forward by the author?

EXAMPLES

Perspectives:

- This event had **major** social effects.
- One **important perspective** is economic.

Arguments:

- This event had **negative** social effects.
- One area the event had a **harmful effect** on is the economy.

2. Other Voices (supporting/opposing)

How are **other voices** integrated into the essay in support or opposition to the authorial voice?

EXAMPLES

- **One argument** that is often made is...
- **Taguchi (2018) points out** that...
- Overall, the effects were "**extremely harmful**" (Yamamoto, 2014).

- **Of course**, the new technology created some problems. **However**, ...

3. Interpretation (endorsing/countering)

How does the author *interpret* views and evidence (i.e., are they endorsed or countered?)

EXAMPLES

Endorse:

- **As these points illustrate...**

- **Therefore...**

Counter:

- **However**, there are several problems with this view.

4. Compression (nouns and pronouns)

How are nouns used to compact or *compress information*?

EXAMPLES

Nouns:

- **Rising economic inequality** brought about...

- **A new hope for the future** caused people to...

Pronouns:

- His policies were very **unpopular**. **This** led to his electoral defeat.

- People distrusted the government. **This distrust** contributed to rising tensions.

5. Elaboration of Evidence (explain/contrast)

How does the author *elaborate* their views by providing more detail or contrasting them with other views?

EXAMPLES

Explain:

- **One reason is that...**

- **Moreover...**

- **For example...**

Contrast:

- **On the other hand**, there are several problems with this view.

- **In contrast...**

6. Scale (quantity/commitment)

How are things or events *scaled* in terms of *quantity/intensity or commitment*?

EXAMPLES

Quantity:

- **Many** people were shocked.

Intensity:

- The consequences were **very severe**.

Commitment:

- The event **seems to** have had some negative effects.

- It is **possible** that...

Appendix B. Sample Discussion Essay Coded with the VOICES Framework (adapted from Myskow, 2018b)

Stages	<i>Positive/Negative Effects of the Russian Revolution</i>
Introduction	The Russian Revolution occurred in the midst of World War I (1914-18). In February 1917, Czar Nicholas II abdicated, ending 300 years of Romanov rule. In October of the same year, the communist Bolshevik Party rose to power, promising to end the war and improve conditions for workers. A bloody civil war ensued followed by the establishment in 1922 of the Soviet Union—the world’s first experiment with communism. After emerging victorious from the ashes of World War II, the Soviet Union soon became a global superpower and for nearly half a century, the world would be defined by a Cold War (1947-1991) between the communist East and the capitalist West. With the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution approaching, there has been much debate about whether it was a positive or negative event. <i>This essay examines both sides of this issue. It looks at both positive and negative effects of the revolution from the perspectives of economics, social welfare, and politics</i>VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR].
Perspective 1	The revolution completelySCALE transformedVIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR the Russian economy. <i>In the short-term,</i>ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE the Soviet Union experienced significantSCALE economic growthVIEWPOINT OF AUTHORCOMPRESSION. According to Acemoglu and Robinson (2013: 141) OTHER VOICES, its national income growth of 6% a yearSCALE from 1928-1960COMPRESSION was “the most rapidSCALE spurt of economic growth in history up to then.” <i>One reason for</i>ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE <i>this growth is industrialization</i>VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR. Frieden (2006: 219) observes that OTHER VOICES the Soviet Union’s industrial production was “a stunning success,”SCALE with steel output increasing from 3 to 13 million tonsSCALE and coal from 36 to 128 million tonsSCALE from 1928 to 1937. However, ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE <i>this rapid economic growth</i>COMPRESSION <i>did not last in the long-term</i>VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR. Because of a failure to initiate political reforms and create a more inclusive pluralistic democracy, COMPRESSION “Soviet growth ran out of steam, and the economy began to collapse in the 1980s and then totally fell apartSCALE in the 1990s” (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013: 93) OTHER VOICES. Thus, INTERPRETATION while the Soviet Union experienced rapid economic expansion in the short-term, <i>this growth was not sustained</i>VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR in the long-term.
Perspective 2	The social impact of the revolution wasVIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR immenseSCALE. <i>In terms of education,</i>ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE <i>the literacy rates increased</i>VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR dramaticallySCALE. Prior to the revolution, nearly two-thirdsSCALE of Russians could not read or write, but new

programs across the Soviet Union **greatly** [SCALE] improved the situation (*Behrent, 2012*) [OTHER VOICES]. According to *Clark (1995)*, [OTHER VOICES] one campaign for railroad workers led to **a 99% literacy rate** [SCALE] by 1924. Moreover, [ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE] the revolution brought **100%** [SCALE] government-subsidized healthcare for **all** [SCALE] citizens [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR]. The Soviet healthcare system, known as ‘the Semashko model,’ has been called a “coherent, cost-effective system to cope with the medical necessities of its own time” (*Mihaly, 2000: 11*) [OTHER VOICES]. On the other hand, [ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE] the revolution also brought **much** [SCALE] pain and suffering to its citizens [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR]. Stalin’s obsessive persecution of political opponents resulted in **2.5 million** [SCALE] people exiled to the labor camps, where **many** [SCALE] died of overwork or starvation (*Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013: 131*) [OTHER VOICES]. Ordinary citizens also [ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE] lived in constant fear [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR]. According to *Acemoglu and Robinson (2013: 131)*, [OTHER VOICES] from 1940 to 1955, **about one third** [SCALE] of the adult population was found guilty of not working hard enough, and of them, **15 million** [SCALE] were imprisoned and **250,000** [SCALE] were executed. As these points show, [INTERPRETATION] although the Soviet Union improved the education and healthcare [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR] of its citizens, it was also [ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE] a brutal and repressive regime [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR].

Perspective 3

The Russian Revolution ushered in **a whole** [SCALE] new form of government [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR] that was unique in human history. On the one hand, [ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE] the communist government was a **vast** [SCALE] improvement [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR] over the **highly** [SCALE] dysfunctional and corrupt Czarist regime. After losing not one but two consecutive wars under the “**inept** [SCALE] leadership” of Czar Nicholas II (*Tucker, 2017: 295*), [OTHER VOICES] Russian pride was restored following the victory of the Soviet Union in World War II. The Soviet Union’s ascendance under a communist government to a global superpower in the Cold War also [ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE] became a source of national pride [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR]. During this time, the Soviet Union made **major** [SCALE] advances in [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR] space exploration, arms development, and **numerous** [SCALE] other technologies (*Graham, 1993*) [OTHER VOICES]. On the other hand, [ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE] the Soviet government also [ELABORATION OF EVIDENCE] became an authoritarian and totalitarian dictatorship [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR]. Censorship laws were **very** [SCALE] strict and a personality cult was created [VIEWPOINT OF AUTHOR] around Joseph Stalin (*Gunther, 1936*) [OTHER VOICES].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Russian Revolution had both positive and negative effects

on the nation. It brought about rapid economic growth in the short-term that proved unsustainable in the long-run, eventually leading to the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. The social welfare of its people was greatly improved through education and healthcare, but this was overshadowed by the cruelty of the concentration camps where millions perished. In terms of politics, the Russian government helped to restore national pride by leading the nation to victory in World War II and global superpower status during the Cold War. However, in doing so, the government became an authoritarian dictatorship.

Note. VOICES (Viewpoint of the Author, Other Voices, Interpretation, Compression, Elaboration of Evidence, and Scale) are presented in all caps. Words and phrases signaling VOICES are italicized, those indicating Scale are in bold, and those representing Compression are underlined.

Appendix C. A Questionnaire Survey

Please answer the following questions about today's class.

1. Was the VOICES pattern you learned about today useful for preparing you to write your term paper?

☐ Very Useful ☐ Somewhat Useful ☐ Not very Useful ☐ Not at all Useful

Please use the space below to explain your opinion (*You may use English or Japanese*).

2. Was the VOICES pattern you learned about today interesting to you?

☐ Very Interesting ☐ Somewhat Interesting ☐ Not very Interesting ☐ Not at all Interesting

Please use the space below to explain your opinion. (*You may use English or Japanese*)

3. Were the activities you participated in today's class difficult?

☐ Very Difficult ☐ Somewhat Difficult ☐ About Right ☐ Not very Difficult ☐ Not at all Difficult

Please use the space below to explain your opinion. (*You may use English or Japanese*)