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Author(s)	Fujioka, Mayumi
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Second Language (L2) Writing Assessment in a Graduate-level English Academic Writing Course

Mayumi Fujioka

Introduction

Teaching a second language (L2) English writing course can be a daunting job. Teachers must set a goal for the course and implement writing tasks that meet the goal and the proficiency level of the students. Another important task for teachers is to assess students' writing. If teachers have a large number of students in the class, reading each student's writing is time consuming and labor-intensive. However, the difficulty of assessing students' writing is not simply a matter of time. Crusan (2010) comments that "[w]riting assessment is fundamental to the work of writing teachers" but it is "incredibly complex" (p. 10). The complexity includes determining criteria for grading or scoring writing, which must be effective and convincing. Such complexity of writing assessment leads to teachers' shrinking from or having an aversion to writing assessment. As a result, "they may not be systematic in their approach to assessment and quite possibly avoid assessment activities or carry out assessment without reflection" (Crusan, 2010, pp. 10-11).

Crusan's (2010) observation above concerning writing assessment coincides with the problem I experienced when I first taught a graduate-level English academic writing course. In my first teaching of the course in the academic year 2016, I developed the course activities based on an instructional framework called *genre-based instruction* (Hyland, 2004b), a summary of which is provided in the next section. However, the devotion of time to understand the theoretical framework and development of the course activities made little room for constructing a systematic approach to writing assessment. Based on this experience, in the 2017 academic year, I incorporated *genre-based assessment,* reflected on that approach and built understanding for an additional assessment approach called *dynamic assessment* for future implementation.

The purpose of this paper is to present genre-based assessment and introduce dynamic assessment in order to promote understanding of appropriate assessment

frameworks for graduate-level writing. First, I present the theoretical basis of genre-based assessment and its implementation in the graduate academic writing course, along with the reflection on its implementation. Second, I introduce the theoretical underpinnings of dynamic assessment and examples of its implementation in previous studies. Finally, I discuss how the two assessment approaches can be combined based on their strengths and limitations, taking various issues arising from the realities of instructional contexts into consideration.

Genre-based Assessment

The concept of genre and genre-based instruction

Genre-based assessment is based on genre approach to the teaching of writing. Although there are different views of genre, the concept of genre in relation to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is as follows: "Genres are the purposive social actions routinely used and recognized by community members to achieve a particular purpose, written for a particular audience and employed in a particular context" (Hyland, 2004b, p. 45). Scientific research papers are one type of genre, because they are written by scientists for the specific purpose of presenting their research findings to the audience of their communities in their disciplines and subdisciplines. The genre of scientific research papers consists of sets of structural and linguistic features shared by the scientific community members in order to achieve specific communicative goals. In ESP, since the seminal work on the analysis of research article introductions conducted by Swales (1999), a substantial body of work has followed in the analysis of generic features of different sections of research articles, namely, the method, result, and discussion, in diverse disciplines (see Lin & Evans, 2012).

Genre approach or genre-based instruction is an application of the results of genre analysis to the teaching of target genres. In the 2016 academic year, I adopted the genre-based instruction to teach a group of science graduate students how to write a scientific research paper (see Fujioka, 2017, for the details of the content of the course and instructional strategies). In the 2017 academic year, I taught the same course, using the same approach as the one from the previous year.[1]

Nine graduate students enrolled in the 2017 class. Over the course of the semester, students learned structural and linguistic features of different sections of scientific research papers, starting from the introduction, moving on to the result, discussion, conclusion, ending with the abstract. As was the case with the 2016 class, more emphasis was placed on the introduction and abstract, because students

chose to write either of these two sections as their final writing assignment for the course.[2] As course activities, students were first introduced to the published literature on the genre analysis of research article introductions presented by Swales (1999, 2004) combined with the concept and examples of *lexical bundles,* or formulaic phrases presented by Cortes (2013) and Hyland (2008).

Swales (1999, 2004) explained the typical flow in introductions by using analytical units called rhetorical moves and steps. For example, according to Swales, the rhetorical moves in the introduction typically start with the author's establishing a territory for the research (Move 1), moving on to establishing a niche (indicating a gap in the previous research) (Move 2) and ending with presenting the present work (Move 3). In addition, each move consists of multiple steps. For example, the first move of establishing a research territory is comprised of claiming the importance of the topic (Step 1), making topic generalizations (Step 2) and reviewing previous research (Step 3). According to Cortes (2013), under each rhetorical move and steps within the move, specific lexical bundles are frequently used. For example, in Move 1 step 3, reviewing items of previous research, such lexical bundles as *studies have shown that* or *it has been suggested that* are frequently used. Similarly, in Move 3 step 1, announcing the present study, *the purpose of the present study was to* is a typical lexical bundle (see Fujioka, 2017, for more details on the moves and steps of research article introductions and lexical bundles).

In the course, students were first introduced to the explicit rhetorical structures and examples of lexical bundles for research article introductions, and they analyzed the structural and linguistic features of journal article introductions they chose in their own disciplines. Similarly, students were introduced to the genre analysis of journal article abstracts presented by Hyland (2004a). The move structure of abstracts consists of Introduction, Purpose, Method, Product (main findings or results), and Conclusion. Among them, the Product move is almost obligatory but the other moves are not always required (Hyland, 2004a, see Fujioka, 2017, fore more details). Based on these moves, students conducted their own genre analysis of the abstracts of journal articles they selected.

The last few weeks of the semester were devoted to the final writing assignment. Students wrote drafts of the introductions or abstracts of their research papers outside of the class. When students brought their first drafts to class, they received individual oral feedback from the instructor mostly on the structure and organization. For their revised drafts, they worked in pairs and exchanged peer feedback, through which they commented on structure, organization, clarity, and

grammar and vocabulary issues. On their subsequent revised drafts based on peer feedback, they received written feedback from the instructor that focused on clarity, grammar and vocabulary. Based on the instructor's feedback, they made further revisions and submitted the final drafts.

Implementation of genre-based assessment: The use of a scoring rubric

As mentioned earlier, effective assessment of students' writing was a major problem to be overcome in the 2017 class. Among different genre-based assessments discussed by Hyland (2004b), I chose a scoring rubric. Rubrics explicitly show the objectives of writing assignments, clarify expectations, and help students understand how their work will be evaluated (Crusan, 2010). However, creating a rubric is an overwhelming task, so Crusan (2010) advises teachers to adopt the examples of rubrics that were already developed and adapt them to the specific situations of each classroom.

For the graduate-level academic writing course, I adapted the scoring rubric for an argumentative essay provided by Hyland (2004b). It consists of the total score of 100 points, which are divided into three components: format and content (40 points), organization and coherence (20 points), and sentence construction and vocabulary (40 points). Each component is further divided into four ranges of scores, with explicit description of criteria. For example, the highest score range in each component is as follows (Hyland, 2004b, p. 176):

Format and content 40 points

31-40 *excellent to very good*

Fulfills task fully; correct convention for the assignment task; features of target genre mostly adhered to; good ideas/good use of relevant information; substantial concept use; properly developed ideas; good sense of audience

Organization and coherence 20 points

16-20 *excellent to very good*

Message followed with ease; well-organized and thorough development through introduction, body, and conclusion; relevant and convincing supporting details; logical progression of content contributes to fluency; unified paragraphs; effective use of transitions and references

Sentence construction and vocabulary 40 points

31 to 40 *excellent to very good*

Effective use of a wide variety of correct sentences; variety of sentence length; effective use of transitions; no significant errors in agreement, tense, number, person, articles, pronouns, and prepositions; effective use of a wide variety of lexical items; word from mastery; effective choice of idiom; correct register

In each component, the three other score ranges include *good to average, fair to poor,* and *inadequate,* with explicit criteria provided as is the case with the highest score range shown above.

The scoring rubric for an argumentative essay was modified for the final writing assignment of the graduate academic writing course. Two components were developed: (1) Structure/organization (40 points) and (2) Sentence construction, vocabulary, and transition (40 points). These two components reflected the emphasis of the course. Since students in the graduate writing course wrote the introduction section or the abstract based on their own research, the content was removed from the rubric, as they were experts in reviewing relevant previous studies and conducting their own research in their chosen fields of studies. As mentioned above, during the course, emphasis was placed on the structural features of research article introductions and abstracts, and thus the first component of the rubric was devoted to structure and organization. In addition, students learned the use of various lexical bundles and transitional phrases, rules for academic written English, and received guidance on grammar errors they tended to make. Therefore, the second scoring component concerned sentence construction, vocabulary, and transition (40 points).

The scoring rubric developed for the final writing assignment was as follows:

| 1 Structure/Organization 40 points |

31-40 *excellent to very good*

The introduction or abstract:

Fully demonstrates the expected structure, following the rhetorical moves and steps

21-30 *good to average*

Demonstrates the expected structure quite well

11-20 *fair to poor*
Adequately demonstrates the expected structure

1-10 *inadequate*
Inadequately demonstrates the expected structure

2 Sentence construction, vocabulary, and transition 40 points

31-40 *excellent to very good*
Effective use of a wide variety of correct sentences; variety of sentence length; effective use of transitions; no significant errors in agreement, tense, number, person, articles, pronouns, and prepositions; effective use of lexical bundles; use of correct register (avoidance of colloquial phrases and contractions)

21-30 *good to average*
Fairly good use of a wide variety of correct sentences of various length; fairly good use of transitions; no repeated errors of major grammar points

11-20 *fair to poor*
Use of correct sentences with a lack of variation in construction and length; adequate use of transitions; repeated grammar errors; incorrect use of lexical bundles; use of incorrect register (use of colloquial phrases and contractions)

1-10 *inadequate*
Incorrect sentences that impede understanding; lack of variation in sentence construction and length; inadequate use of transitions; repeated major grammar errors; no use of lexical bundles; repeated use of incorrect register (use of colloquial phrases and contractions)

The scoring rubric above[3] was presented to the students before they started writing their first drafts so they could understand what was expected of them in their final assignment and how their work would be evaluated. After submitting the final drafts, students received their scoring rubric sheets, as well as their drafts with the instructor's comments written on them. In the rubric sheet, their scores in the two components were provided, along with brief comments indicating in what items of the criteria they did not do well, which could be checked with specific written

comments provided in their submitted drafts.

Reflections on genre-based assessment

The rubric adapted for the graduate-level academic writing course falls into an *analytic* rubric, which usually includes a scale of distinctive features or characteristics of specific writing assignments (Crusan, 2010). As noted by Hyland (2004b) for the scoring rubric for an argumentative essay, the detailed analytic criteria can "encourage teachers to reflect on specific features of writing quality and to grade papers more delicately" (p. 175). I concurred with this observation in my development of the scoring rubric for the graduate students' writing. In order to construct detailed statements of criteria for the different ranges of scores in each of the two components, I had to carefully reflect on the content of the course and clarify what I expected students to demonstrate through their writing. In addition, grading students' writing was significantly easier by staying with the rubric. Furthermore, the biggest advantage of using the scoring rubric was that I was able to communicate my grading procedures to my students before they submitted their work. This was important in that in many cases students receive their grades or scores on their writing assignments after the semester is over and they are left with a question as to why they receive those grades.

While I benefited from developing and using a scoring rubric, I could have used the rubric not only for the grading purpose but also for instruction. Hyland (2004b) notes that a detailed analytic rubric, such as the one for an argumentative essay, "provides criteria that may be more useful as diagnostic and teaching tools as the explicit descriptors provide a clear framework for feedback and revision" (p. 175). I presented the scoring rubric to my students before they started working on their drafts, hoping they would utilize it as a guideline for improving their drafts toward the final submission. However, in the future, I need to present a scoring rubric early on in the semester and incorporate that into students' outlining and drafting their papers as well as using it as a guideline for peer feedback activities and teacher feedback before they submit their final work.

Although a scoring rubric can be an effective grading and instructional tool, it has a limitation. It is not designed in such a way as to address individual differences in students' writing proficiency and mastery of genre knowledge. Based on my two years of experiences teaching the graduate-level academic writing course, I found that there was diversity among students in their written English proficiency and demonstration of the knowledge of genre they had learned in the course. Some students had a good command of English and experienced little difficulty writing

introductions or abstracts based on the generic conventions we had covered in the course. On the other hand, other students struggled presenting their ideas according to the expected rhetorical moves and steps for the introduction or the abstract, and some of them demonstrated problems with sentence construction and needed extensive assistance with grammar. The problem with scoring rubrics is that, even though they can be used as a guideline for feedback and instruction, they cannot fully address individual differences and how much progress students have made in the specific areas they need to improve.

These reflections on using a scoring rubric as part of genre-based assessment led me to explore other types of assessment that take individual differences into account as well as combine assessment and instruction. *Dynamic assessment* is the one that meets these goals. In the next section, details of dynamic assessment are provided, including its theoretical underpinnings and its application to language teaching and learning both in and outside the classroom context described in previous studies.

Dynamic Assessment

Theoretical underpinnings

Dynamic assessment (DA) is deeply rooted in an educational theory called Sociocultural Theory, usually associated with the work of a Russian psychologist, L. S. Vygotsky. According to Wertsch (1985), one of the central tenets of Sociocultural Theory includes the social origin and social nature of higher mental processes (e.g., voluntary attention, logical memory, the formation of concepts). Another important claim made by Vygotsky is that human mental processes are mediated by physical and psychological tools produced in sociocultural contexts. Psychological tools include language, numbers, work of art, drawings, diagrams, and maps, through which meaning is invoked (Wertsch,1985).

Vygotsky mainly studied how human mental processes develop in children and constructed an important concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky's definition of the ZPD is "the distance between a child's *'actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving'* and the higher level of *'potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers'*" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86 as cited in Wertsch, 1985, pp. 67-68, italics and bold in the citation). Though originally referring to children's cognitive development, the concept of the ZPD has been applied to adults' second language acquisition and learning (see Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, pp. 272-287). In L2 learning, the ZPD is understood as

the distance between what L2 learners can perform on their own and a potential level of performance they can achieve with a help offered by the teacher or more advanced peers.

The concept of the ZPD is essential to the principles of DA, which views "assessment as a process rather than a product" (Shrestha & Coffin, 2012, p. 57). DA integrates assessment and instruction into a unified activity, the goal of which is to promote learner development through appropriate forms of mediation by taking accounts of individual learners' ZPD (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004). Appropriate forms of mediation refer to assistance "that is not aimed at helping the individual solve a problem … but to move the individual toward independent, agentive performance and to be able to transfer what is appropriated in a given circumstance to future situations" (Poehner & Lantolf, 2010, p. 316). In essence, in a DA procedure, teachers (mediators) simultaneously make assessment and provide instruction; they assess individual learners' current level of independent performance and detect areas of assistance they need, and by offering appropriate assistance, they help learners understand the principles of the task they are doing and enable them to transfer what they learn to future situations where they can perform the task without teachers' help. In other words, DA "is a development-oriented process which reveals a learner's current abilities in order to help them overcome any performance problems and realize their potential" (Shrestha & Coffin, 2012, p. 57).

Examples of DA implementation

Previous studies on DA in language classrooms shared common characteristics of extensive interaction between the teacher (mediator) and students through which the teacher provided individual assistance (mediation) based on students' ZPD. Poehner (as cited in Poehner & Lantolf, 2005, 2010) conducted a series of DA case studies that concerned spoken language ability among advanced undergraduate learners of the French language at a US university. They performed the task of orally constructing a past-tense narrative in French after watching a short video clip. In the DA sessions, the teacher (mediator) offered various kinds of mediation, including offering suggestions, posing questions, making corrections, and helping them make decisions about selection of vocabulary or verb tense and deal with other language difficulties. The various forms of mediation were not predetermined, but they emerged from the interaction between the student and the teacher. In Poehner & Lantolf (2010), Poehner, by presenting the examples of two students taken from his case studies on the narrative task in French, presented how

these students had demonstrated different levels of L2 language development and consequently needed different types of mediation.

In the same line of argument, Ableeva (2008) revealed that L2 learners, though enrolled in the same level of course, were not in the same level of ability. Ableeva applied DA to listening comprehension among university learners of L2 French in the US. In the DA sessions, six students listened to the same audio text multiple times and individually interacted with the researcher (mediator), who offered different types of mediation ranging from hints to suggestions and explanations. Ableeva concluded that applying DA to L2 listening comprehension enables teachers to evaluate learners' L2 listening abilities more accurately and create opportunities for intervention to support learners' L2 abilities that are emerging.

Providing mediation ranging from implicit to explicit ways was also presented in Poehner (2009), who reported group dynamic assessment procedures in a class of fourth grade students learning L2 Spanish in the US. Before the lessons, the teacher prepared mediating prompts, which were organized from most implicit to most explicit. The implicit end of the scale concerned providing hints, alerting students that there was a problem, while the explicit end provided guidance with students in solving the problem, with the most explicit prompt of the teacher providing the solution and explaining it. Furthermore, the teacher assigned a numerical value to each mediating prompt, and recorded the level of mediation individual learners needed.

Shrestha and Coffin (2012) is the only study to date that investigated extensive interaction in the teaching and learning of academic writing from a DA perspective. They investigated the use of tutor mediation in academic writing development by two university student writers in the context of distance education in the UK. Their study did not address L2 writing; their participants, both of whom were writing papers in business studies, were a first language (L1) English writer and a writer with multilingual backgrounds in English, German, and Hungarian. DA procedures involved the tutor's provision of mediation over the period of time in which students engaged in writing their first drafts to the completion of their final drafts. These processes lasted from four weeks to two months, due to the fact that this was a distance learning context, not constrained by a semester in typical classroom learning, and also that students voluntarily participated in the study. Instead of face-to-face interaction, the tutor provided mediation to the two students individually via written comments on the computer.

For data analysis, tutor's annotations on students' drafts were categorized as tutor mediation moves. Those mediation moves included both implicit and explicit

ones (e.g., asking learner to identify problems, providing a choice of possible solutions, and providing the correct solution). In addition, learner reciprocal moves (writers' responses to tutor mediation) were also categorized, which included imitating the mediator, using the mediator as a resource, incorporating feedback, and overcoming problems. Both tutor mediation moves and learner reciprocal moves were quantified to see change in the written interaction between tutor and student over time, as well as to compare the use of learner mediations between the two students. Findings revealed that tutor mediation moves did not necessarily lead to the writers' linear development in academic writing over time, in line with Vygotsky's theory of development that learning involves progression and regression. However, the participants' comments through interviews indicated that they enjoyed DA procedures and felt that DA helped promote their academic writing development. Another important finding was that echoing the findings in the previous studies on DA mentioned above, the two participants required different levels of assistance due to their varying academic writing abilities (ZPDs).

Future L2 academic writing assessment

Discussion in this section aims for effective assessment in a graduate-level academic writing course in general, not limited to the specific academic writing course I taught, although many insights I gained from teaching that course are integrated into the discussion. A future academic writing course may benefit from a combination of both genre-based assessment and dynamic assessment (DA), with more emphasis on DA supplemented with genre-based assessment.

The most salient features of DA revealed from previous studies include sensitivity to different abilities among different learners, that is, learners' varying ZPDs, and provision of appropriate mediation tailored to individual learners through the interaction between the teacher and each student. This one-on-one interaction is feasible if the class size is not large. Thus, in an academic writing course with a small number of students, the teacher can detect differing writing abilities demonstrated in students' drafts of their assignments and provide mediation, in the form of written feedback, according to individual writers' needed areas of assistance.

Taking the example of the graduate academic writing course I taught, DA procedures can be applied in the future as follows. In students' first drafts, presenting ideas according to the expected genre structures takes precedence over detailed editing. The expected genre structures here include rhetorical moves and steps in introductions or abstracts of students' research papers. Appropriate

forms of teacher mediation can be provided according to students' differing levels of understanding and demonstration of genre knowledge. If students show their struggles with presenting ideas in the expected genre structures, the teacher may want to suggest students refer back to the expected rhetorical moves and steps in introductions covered in course handouts or check their own understanding of the topic they are writing about. On the other hand, some students may successfully display the expected rhetorical moves and steps in their first drafts. If the problems in their first drafts include only minor language errors, such as saying *few researches have been done in the field of* … instead of *little research has been done* …, the teacher may want to alert them to the use of countable and uncountable nouns and proper adjectives to accompany those nouns.

In essence, the teacher needs to detect individual students' needed areas of assistance in their first drafts, and provide appropriate forms of assistance tailored to individual writers so they can understand specific areas of writing they should improve for their revised and final drafts. Some students may require more revisions and more teacher mediation on their drafts to be able to demonstrate the expected genre structures than other students. However, that is the point of DA in that instruction should be provided that is sensitive to individual students' differing abilities.

In students' revised drafts, when they get to the stage where they mainly work on grammar and vocabulary, once again appropriate mediation can be provided according to students' differing levels of writing abilities. For those writers who demonstrate a good command of written English with minor errors, the teacher can provide only hints or implicit feedback, telling them there is something wrong in their sentences. For example, writers with a solid knowledge base of grammar understand their errors if they have a missing plural *s* for countable nouns (e.g., plant cell vs plant cells) and a missing definite article in reference to something which is already introduced in the context. Through the teacher's hint, they can correct those errors by themselves. In contrast, other students demonstrate more serious writing problems, including multiple occasions of wrong sentence construction that severely impedes understanding of the meaning or repeated uses of incorrect relative clauses due to their insufficient knowledge of grammar. Those students need more explicit forms of mediation including the teacher's explanation of grammar rules and provision of correct sentence construction. In summary, the teacher needs to provide appropriate forms of mediation through varying degrees of explicitness, from giving hints to suggesting a possible solution and providing the solution, depending on students' current levels of abilities to deal with the

problems in the task they are facing.

Though DA helps the teacher provide individualized assistance to different learners, the biggest problem in its implementation is intensity of work. DA is labor-intensive for the teacher due to the large amount of interaction, either oral or written, it requires for each student. Therefore, it may not be realistic that the teacher points out all the problems in students' writing, especially when the class size is large. Thus, the teacher may want to be selective in what problems they should focus on with each student, by limiting their attention to the most salient problems students demonstrate, and guide them to solve those problems during DA sessions so they will be able to overcome those problems on their own in the next step.

Another possible solution for conducting DA in a large class is to adopt group dynamic assessment (G-DA). According to Poehner (2009), G-DA and one-to-one DA procedures follow the same principle but differ from each other in that G-DA involves the group's ZPD. In G-DA procedure, the teacher needs to actively engage the entire group in interactions and all the mediating moves should be directed to the group. This can be realized through the teacher's posing a leading question or presenting a prompt to the entire group and individual learners' responding to the question or the prompt. The teacher's mediation may be limited to only some learners, but since the mediation in the form of oral exchange occurs in front of the entire class, it can benefit the rest of the learners as well and consequently promote the entire group's ZPD. However, the extent to which G-DA is effective in the teaching and learning of academic writing has not been investigated. In a future academic writing course with a large class, the teacher will need to decide whether G-DA can be implemented in oral interaction for the entire class, and if so, in what areas of assistance G-DA can be effective.

Also, in a future academic writing course, genre-based scoring rubrics can be incorporated into the implementation of a series of DA sessions. Earlier it was pointed out that scoring rubrics can be utilized as a teaching tool instead of an assessment tool for only the final product. Thus, in a future academic writing course, genre-based scoring rubrics can be introduced to students before they embark on their writing so both the teacher and students agree on what is expected in the assignment. When students complete their first drafts, the teacher can implement one-to-one DA sessions with them, as described above, and the revised drafts can be evaluated based on the scoring rubrics. Then, for their subsequent drafts, again DA sessions are implemented and their revised drafts are evaluated according to the scoring rubrics.

Since the criteria on the scoring rubrics remain the same, students can see improvements on their writing over multiple drafts. For example, they may get *inadequate* for the evaluation of the structure and organization in their first drafts. However, they can move from there to receive *good to average* and finally *excellent to very good* in their subsequent drafts. This applies to the evaluation of sentence construction and vocabulary as well (see the statements of criteria in the scoring rubric shown in the earlier section). In summary, a combination of genre-based scoring rubrics and DA procedures helps students understand areas of problems in their writing and learn to solve them on their own through individualized assistance from the teacher and make them see improvements through the changes of evaluation over multiple drafts.

Concluding remarks

L2 writing assessment can be a daunting task for teachers because of the time required to read students' writing and, above all, its complexity of determining effective and convincing criteria for grading or scoring. However, if teachers acquire sufficient knowledge of writing assessment which is well-grounded in theory, their feelings of aversion to assessing students' writing can be lessened, though may not be completely removed. Based on my experience of genre-based instruction in a graduate-level English academic writing course, genre-based assessment was discussed by presenting a scoring rubric specifically designed to assess students' final writing assignment. While using a rubric turned out to be an effective grading tool, it may not address differences in individual students' writing abilities and mastery of genre knowledge nor does it help students see improvements over multiple drafts. In order to overcome these problems, dynamic assessment (DA), a unified activity of assessment and instruction tailored to individual students, was suggested for future implementation of the course in combination of genre-based assessment.

However, future implementation of the course may still require additional assessment approaches, as no one approach or a combination of two can be a panacea for the difficulty and complexity of assessing graduate students' writing in English in their chosen areas of studies. No matter how difficult L2 writing assessment can be, teachers need to be well-informed of different assessment approaches and constantly scrutinize the approaches they adopt. By doing so, assessment can become part of individual teachers' rigorous instructional endeavors.

Notes

1. The implementation of the academic writing course in 2017 was part of a larger study supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant number 16K02849, as with the case of the same course offered in 2016 reported in Fujioka (2017). Since the purpose of this paper based on the 2017 course was to explore effective assessment for L2 English academic writing, I did not conduct an empirical study in which I would collect samples of students' writing for analysis.

2. The main reason why students chose to write either introductions or abstracts is that most students enrolled in the course, both 2016 and 2017 academic years, were first-year master's students. They had started their graduate research studies and had not obtained research findings, and thus to many of them, introductions were the section they were able to complete for this course. Other students wrote abstracts based on the predictions of their research findings.

3. The scoring rubric shown to the students was written both in English and Japanese. The statements written in Japanese were added to the statements of the criterion written in English.

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Abstract

L2 writing assessment is a daunting task for many teachers due to its complexity of determining effective and convincing grading or scoring criteria. However, a systematic approach to assessment originating in theory can help teachers alleviate their aversions to writing assessment. In a graduate academic writing course, genre-based assessment of students' writing was adopted in the form of a scoring rubric, in which explicit criteria of the genre features were provided. Those genre features included both structural or organizational components and linguistic components. The scoring rubric turned out to be an efficient grading tool and can be a useful teaching tool. However, it may not be effective in addressing individual differences in students' writing proficiency or helping them see improvements in their writing. In order to complement the limitations of genre-based assessment, dynamic assessment, a unified activity of assessment and instruction tailored to individual students, was presented. Moreover, suggestions are offered as to how a combination of dynamic assessment and genre-based assessment can be implemented in a future graduate writing course. Though these two assessment approaches may not solve all the problems with L2 writing assessment, continued

reflections on and exploration for effective assessment approaches will add rigor to teachers' instructional endeavors.