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## Teaching Argumentative Writing in English as a Foreign Language

### Insights into a Learning Unit Including Formative Feedback

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# Teaching Argumentative Writing in English as a Foreign Language

## Insights into a Learning Unit Including Formative Feedback

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### Abstract

This paper presents a learning unit for teaching argumentative writing in English as a foreign language in secondary school. The learning unit follows a process-genre approach based on draft-feedback-revision sequences and genre-specific instruction. For the learning unit, a comic story was created in order to mitigate the inherent difficulty of the genre and to promote motivation. The learning unit was implemented in two intervention studies within a project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) that investigated the effects of different kinds of formative feedback on adolescent students' argumentative writing competence. In the article, we present the learning unit's goals, design principles, and contents.

### Introduction

The German educational standards for English emphasize the importance of students being able to write coherent and well-supported texts on diverse topics. By Year 9, English as a foreign language (EFL) students should have mastered the writing process and be capable of producing structured essays, for example argumentative texts, with clear and coherent paragraphs supported by relevant details (Peltzer et al. 2022). However, argumentative writing is difficult, and EFL students often struggle with creating structure and coherence in argumentative texts (Siekmann/Parr/Busse 2022). Difficulties may be attributed to the inherent challenges of the genre. In addition to taking a clear position on a controversial issue, the student writer must (1) analyze the situational context, (2) anticipate readers' perspectives, (3) find arguments, supporting information, counterarguments, and rebuttals, (4) apply thematic and genre knowledge, and (5) create a stringent and convincing line of reasoning. Even adult writers often struggle to meet these complex requirements (Becker-Mrotzek/Schneider/Tetling 2010: 2). In a foreign language, these processes are even more demanding.

To support students' argumentative writing, we developed a learning unit based on a process-genre approach. A process-genre approach can be particularly helpful to support writing (Graham/Perin 2007; for the EFL context, see Berggren 2014). The approach includes direct instruction on genre elements and ample opportunities to write and revise

based on formative feedback (Graham/Alves 2021; Rahimi/Zhang 2017). The learning unit was designed for secondary school, especially for Year 9.

The learning unit was part of a research project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).<sup>1</sup> The project investigated the effects of different kinds of formative feedback on adolescent English learners' argumentative writing competence. We conducted two intervention studies with a pre-post-follow-up design. The first study investigated the effects of different forms of teacher feedback, while the second study focused on peer feedback and self-assessment (for a detailed description of the research design and results for Study 1, see Peltzer et al. 2024; data from Study 2 are currently being analyzed).

In this paper, we first describe the theoretical foundation and design principles underlying our learning unit. Then, in the second part, we describe the learning unit in more detail and demonstrate how it lays the groundwork for effectively implementing formative feedback.

## Part 1: Theoretical and empirical foundation of the instructional approach

Drawing on principles for effective teaching, this chapter outlines the rationale informing our instructional approach to teaching argumentative writing to Year 9 EFL students. We first describe the general instructional approach of the learning unit and then outline its main instructional principles.

### General instructional approach: A process-genre approach to writing

The learning unit is based on a process-genre approach, which aims to provide continuous scaffolding in the learning process. Argumentative writing is inherently complex and thus imposes a high intrinsic cognitive load (see Sweller/van Merriënboer/Paas 1998, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to systematically support students. In process-oriented and genre-oriented approaches to writing, scaffolding is provided during the learning process through draft-feedback-revision sequences and genre-specific instruction.

The process-oriented approach to writing is based on the writing model outlined by Hayes and Flower (1980), which involves several stages. These stages include planning, translating the plan into written language, and revising the written text. According to this writing model, the process begins with an idea evolving into a writing impulse (pre-writing), followed by crafting selective notes and sentence formation, leading to the creation of a draft during the composing phase. The draft then undergoes feedback and revision. These stages are recursive, with each iteration potentially prompting further revisions. Teaching according to the process-oriented writing approach has been found to be effective (e. g., Graham/Perin 2007) and involves guiding students through all the iterative stages of the writing

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1 Project number: 455690422

process. During the revising phase of the writing process, formative feedback is especially relevant (see section “providing formative feedback”).

The genre approach to writing instruction focuses on explicitly teaching the linguistic features of various text types for specific social purposes (Ivanič 2004). While the process method has received significant attention, research on genre pedagogy in EFL contexts has been limited (Lee 2016: 127). Existing studies suggest that the genre-approach is effective, especially for low-proficiency EFL students (Firkins/Forey/Sengupta 2007). Following the genre approach, Hyland (1990: 66 ff.) proposes familiarizing students with the rhetorical structures of argumentative essays by making the text structure explicit. Explicit information on text structure allows students to understand how to organize their arguments coherently and communicate their points of view effectively. Hyland (1990: 75 ff.) also suggests using good examples of the genre as models which can be discussed and analyzed stage by stage to demonstrate how an essay is developed and convincingly communicated. Ultimately, multiple iterations are often required before finalizing the text through feedback and revision (Gehring 2021: 278). Lee (2017: 33 ff.) argues that especially during the pre-writing stage, students benefit from instructional scaffolding, e. g., through a genre-typical model text. Providing direct instruction through worked-out examples might reduce cognitive load and increase performance (Atkinson et al. 2000). Meta-analytical findings corroborate that providing exemplars of the target genre benefits students’ writing (Graham/Perin 2007).

Recent studies highlight the potential of combining both paradigms in a process-genre approach. For instance, Kitajroonchai and colleagues (2022) find benefits for writing quality among pre-university EFL students taught using this approach compared to the process method alone. Similarly, Shareef and Sadiq (2023) confirm the benefits of the process-genre method for fostering higher-order thinking in higher education. Combining explicit instruction on characteristics of the genre (e. g., specific text structures, genre-specific language) and instruction on writing strategies has also shown promise in enhancing argumentative writing performance (Landrieu et al. 2023).

In our learning unit, we implemented the process-genre approach with draft-feedback-revision sequences and genre-specific direct instruction. We introduced core argumentation elements through a comic story and utilized model texts throughout the writing process. A *toolbox*<sup>2</sup>, containing genre-related scaffolds, supported students in writing and revising, with translations available as needed.

### Main instructional principles: Clarifying goals, enhancing motivation, and providing formative feedback

In the context of teaching writing, Graham and Alves (2021) specify some effective instructional procedures. Among those procedures, they mention setting clear goals, teaching both

<sup>2</sup> Students were provided with an exercise book and a booklet with different scaffolds, which was referred to as the *toolbox* during the learning unit. The *toolbox* contained: (1) topic-specific vocabulary clusters, (2) an overview of essential elements of argumentative essays with examples, (3) a graphical representation of all essay elements (“train of thought”), and (4) a list of linking words and phrases for argumentative essays with examples.

general and genre-specific writing techniques, engaging students in pre-writing activities, providing feedback, encouraging increased writing practice, analyzing model texts, teaching vocabulary, fostering peer collaboration, and enhancing motivation. In the following, we will draw on these procedures to establish our instructional design.

### Clarifying goals

To facilitate students' focus on essential concepts and enhance their ability to structure their thoughts effectively, the use of advance organizers (Ausubel 1960) is recommended to introduce students to upcoming learning content and goals prior to the commencement of instruction (Brophy 2000). Meta-analyses have consistently demonstrated the benefits of explicit goal setting (Graham et al. 2023: 44; Graham/Perin 2007: 464).

In our learning unit, we established goal transparency by commencing each lesson with the presentation and clarification of specific learning objectives for the lesson. In this way, we also aimed to reinforce the overall goal of the learning unit, which was to enable students to write well-structured, coherent argumentative essays. When introducing a writing task, we provided clear specifications of the task's objectives. Furthermore, we made the learning goals transparent in the feedback process (see section "providing formative feedback").

### Enhancing motivation

Adolescents sometimes display low writing self-efficacy, negative attitudes toward writing, and writing anxiety, which can negatively impact their willingness to engage with writing tasks, especially in foreign language learning (de Bernardi/Antolini 2006). Attitudes and beliefs toward writing and self-efficacy have been shown to significantly predict middle school students' writing performance (Busse et al. 2023; Graham et al. 2018). Students can face even greater motivational challenges when engaging with particularly demanding genres such as argumentative writing. Therefore, supporting motivation, for example by designing motivating learning material, is crucial.

Content conveyed through stories is not only motivating but also easier to grasp for learners and may improve learning retention (Thorndyke 1977). Meta-analytic findings (e. g., Mar et al. 2021) confirm that narrative texts are easier to comprehend and are better recalled than expository texts.

Due to their narrative structure and visual appeal, comics have emerged as a promising tool in language learning. Educational researchers and educators have long advocated for their integration into teaching curricula, calling for more empirical research on their effective usage (e. g., Farinella 2018; Hennig et al. 2020; Kateregga 2022). While research is still limited, emerging evidence suggests a positive motivational impact of comics (Dallacqua/Sheahan/Davis 2022). Comics can captivate students' attention through illustrations and dynamic layouts, thereby enhancing the learning experience. Featuring diverse and relatable characters further boosts engagement, as adolescents may see themselves reflected in the content (Farinella 2018: 1 ff.). In EFL teaching, comics offer visual context to aid language comprehension. Dual Coding Theory suggests that combining verbal and visual information

can lead to more sustainable learning and better understanding compared to using either mode alone (McClanahan/Nottingham 2019: 39 ff.). Integrated designs like a continuous comic story that coherently presents information can facilitate schema construction (Sweller/van Merriënboer/Paas 2019: 268) as the synergy of images and texts can help learners understand the meaning of words and phrases within a visual context. Comics, therefore, can aid contextualized and effective vocabulary acquisition (Graham 2011).

Considering the benefits of teaching through a coherent visual narrative, we created a comic story as a framework for the learning unit. We integrated both genre-related as well as process-related aspects of writing into the storyline and incorporated the main characters of our comic story, Lana and Nadim, in all our learning material.

Following a global English language teaching (GELT) approach (Chau et al. 2022; Rose/Galloway 2019), we intentionally left out references to any specific national or regional contexts in the comic story.

### Providing formative written feedback

Feedback stands out as one of the most influential factors impacting learning and achievement, with the potential to yield either positive or negative effects for learning in general (Hattie/Timperley 2007) and writing in particular (Scherer/Graham/Busse 2024). Formative feedback, which is provided during the learning process, plays an important role in our instructional design. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007: 86), effective formative feedback addresses three key inquiries: “Where am I going?” (*feed up*), “How am I going?” (*feed back*), and “Where to next?” (*feed forward*). Feedback should thus provide information on the learning goals, on students’ performance, and on means of moving closer toward the learning goals. Feedback based on these quality criteria outlined by Hattie and Timperley has also been shown to lead to significant improvement in writing (e. g., Brooks et al. 2021; Parr/Timperley 2010) and may foster students’ self-efficacy for writing (Siekman et al. 2023).

In our research project, written formative feedback played a central role and was provided after each composition phase, i. e. after each first draft and after each revision phase. All feedback methods incorporated *feed back*, *feed up* and *feed forward*. To ensure transparency of the learning goals and assessment criteria, we developed a standardized feedback sheet (a teacher and a student feedback version) containing criteria of argumentative essays (rubric) and a model text (exemplar). Feedback was either given by teachers (in Study 1) or by students (peer feedback or self-assessment in Study 2).

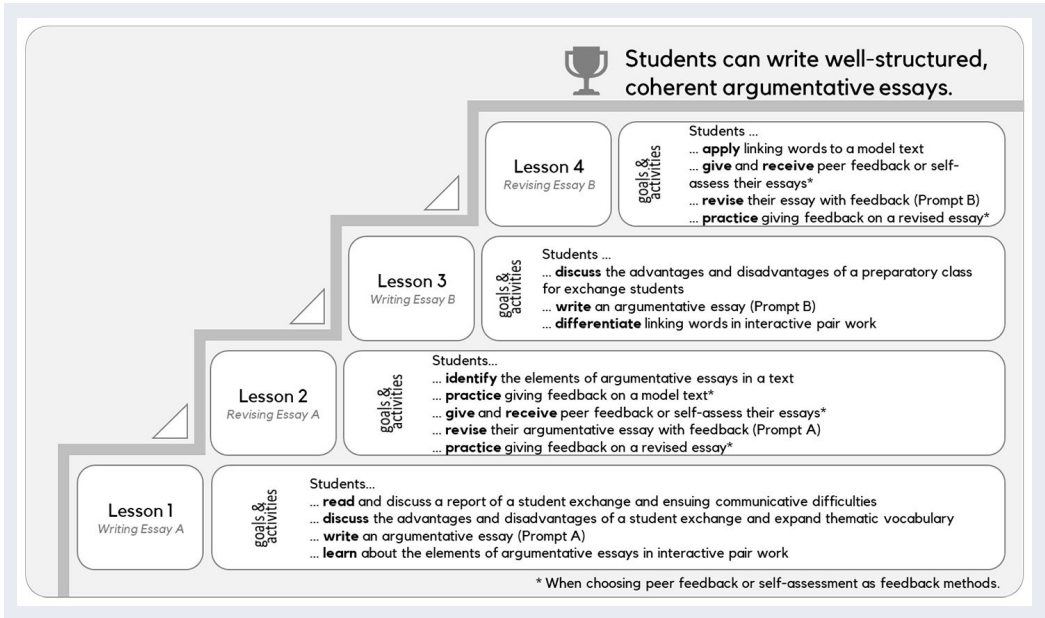
While the focus of feedback was primarily on deep-level features of argumentative writing such as structure and coherence, and these criteria were most prominent on the feedback sheets, error feedback on recurring mistakes was provided when using the rubric and exemplar feedback sheet for teacher feedback. In terms of feedback on linguistic features, a targeted approach to written corrective feedback is crucial for EFL learners, as it has been shown to significantly enhance accuracy in specific linguistic features (Bitchener 2008; Bitchener/Knoch 2009; Scherer/Busse in press). Therefore, we implemented targeted error

correction when using the feedback sheet, singling out recurring errors. For in-text teacher feedback, we inserted an error marker in the essay margin for each error of selected categories (spelling, grammar, tense, word choice). When students acted as feedback agents (peer feedback and self-assessment), they were not instructed to give linguistic feedback but to concentrate on the deep-level text features outlined by the feedback sheet.

Part 2: Learning goals, structure, contents, and procedure of the learning unit

In the following, we provide detailed insights into our learning unit targeting secondary students’ argumentative writing in EFL (see Figure 1).

Figure 1  
Goals and activities of the learning unit



The learning unit consisted of four lessons (90 minutes each). During the unit, students wrote two argumentative essays, which they revised based on formative feedback. The unit was bound together by a continuous storyline told through a series of consecutive comics that dealt with the topic of student exchanges (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Selected comic panels from different sequences of the comic story (created with pixton.com)

The figure displays four comic panels with educational annotations:

- Top Left Panel:** Excerpt from the comic sequence on the first writing prompt. It shows two characters, Lana and Nadim, in a conversation. Lana says, "I don't think student exchanges are worth the trouble." Nadim responds, "I disagree. I think student exchanges are great! I can't wait to finally go abroad next month." A vocabulary corner box provides the German equivalents: (to) not be worth the trouble = nicht die Mühe wert sein and (to) disagree = widersprechen, nicht einverstanden sein.
- Top Right Panel:** Excerpt from the comic sequence on the essay element 'pro-argument'. It shows Nadim saying, "I think exchanges should be compulsory because you learn a lot of new things." A box labeled 'argument' lists its characteristics: answers the question 'why?', points out reasons, and uses the simple present.
- Bottom Left Panel:** Excerpt from the comic sequence on the essay element 'thesis statement'. It shows Lana on a video call with Nadim. Lana says, "Oh, that seems like a nice idea! See, the student council even recommends it for every exchange student. I agree that all students who want to go abroad should attend a preparatory class." A box labeled 'thesis statement' is shown next to her.
- Bottom Right Panel:** Excerpt from the comic sequence on linking words and phrases. It shows a text message conversation. Lana asks, "What do you mean? You love talking to me online BECAUSE hanging out in person is better? I don't get it." Nadim replies, "Oops, sorry! Autocorrect :D I meant I love talking to you online ... hanging out in person is better :)"

## Lesson 1: Introducing the genre of argumentative essays

In lesson 1, students were introduced to the overall goal of the learning unit: “You can write well-structured, coherent argumentative essays.” Moreover, they learned about the lesson goals, which were:

- “You can **discuss** the advantages and disadvantages of a student exchange.
- You can **state** your own opinion.
- You can **describe** the elements of argumentative essays.”

In plenary, students read a comic story<sup>3</sup> featuring the two main characters Lana and Nadim. After reading a social media post by a friend who is currently on a student exchange and experiencing difficulties, Lana claims: “I don’t think student exchanges are worth the trouble.” Nadim disagrees and mentions that he is looking forward to his own student exchange. Lana decides to write an essay for an exchange blog and Nadim turns to the class, asking them: “What do YOU think?” Students were then instructed to discuss the advantages and

<sup>3</sup> The unit’s comic story was created with the educational software Pixton (pixton.com). In class, the comic was displayed panel by panel through PowerPoint. A vocabulary corner on each slide provided students with potentially unknown words.

disadvantages of student exchanges, using a T-chart<sup>4</sup> to collect their arguments and highlight the strongest argument for each side. In plenary, the teacher recorded pro- and counterarguments in writing. Students were then presented with the first writing task of the learning unit, featuring the statement by Lana that student exchanges are not worth the trouble. Students were asked: “*What do you think? **Write** an argumentative essay in English, in which you **discuss** the statement. Note: ‘to discuss’ means that you consider pro- (+) and counterarguments (–) in your essay.*”<sup>5</sup>

Students were encouraged to use the designated area in the exercise book to plan their essay before writing. During the writing task, students had continuous access to the results of the pre-writing task, namely the pro- and counterarguments the teacher recorded, and were invited to use these in their essays. Students could turn to the *toolbox* for additional support and ask the teacher for vocabulary.

In the second half of the lesson, students were presented with the next comic sequence on the challenges of writing. The teacher asked the students in the class to share their ideas and experiences with writing. Consequently, a visual containing the three parts of the writing process (planning, writing, revising) was displayed, and the teacher explained the necessity of considering all phases of the writing process.

In the comic story, Nadim, who is now abroad on his student exchange, states that he enjoys staying with his host sister’s family and asserts: “I think student exchanges should be compulsory.” Here, the teacher introduced the term “thesis statement,” explaining its function as a claim stating an opinion. The class observed how Nadim convinces his host sister by presenting a strong pro-argument supported by a credible example, introducing students to the discourse moves “pro-argument” and “support.”

Next in the story, Nadim, while waiting for his train to school, falls asleep and starts dreaming of the *train of thought*. This metaphor was used to illustrate the three parts of an essay (introduction, main body, conclusion) to the class. Students, in pairs, were provided with snippets and instructed to match each snippet containing the definition of an essay element with an example. On the backside of each snippet, students could find a German translation. After the task, students were asked to return to the comic story.

In his dream, Nadim is then introduced to each element of argumentative essays through a worked example, providing students with the solution to the matching task (see Figure 3).

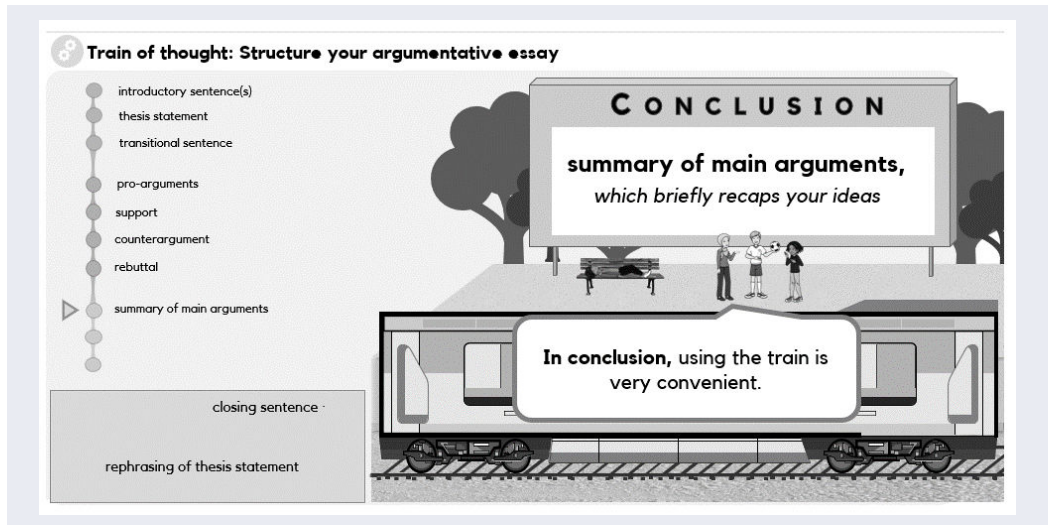
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4 A T-chart is a two-column table used to organize information, especially when comparing or contrasting two different sides of an argument. It consists of a table with one vertical and one horizontal line in the middle that form two different columns, each with a heading describing the information displayed.

5 All writing tasks were consistently accompanied by a German translation for enhanced comprehension. For brevity, this translation is excluded in the remainder of this paper.

Figure 3

The *train of thought* as a metaphor for argumentative essays



Students were informed that their *toolbox* illustrates the *train of thought*, which might help during the writing process.

## Lesson 2 – Part 1: Formative feedback

The learning goals of lesson 2 were<sup>6</sup>:

- “You can **identify** the elements of argumentative essays in a text.
- You can **give** feedback on your own/your peer’s essay.
- You can **revise** your essay.
- You can **give** feedback on a revised essay.”

During our research project, for formative feedback sequences, students were divided into subgroups based on the following randomly assigned feedback conditions: Study 1: (1) rubric and exemplar teacher feedback, (2) in-text comment teacher feedback, (3) combination of rubric, exemplar, and in-text comment teacher feedback; Study 2: (1) rubric and exemplar peer feedback, (2) rubric and exemplar self-assessment.

For the rubric and exemplar feedback conditions, we designed two versions of a feedback sheet: one version for teacher feedback and one version for student feedback (peer feedback and self-assessment). Both versions of the feedback sheet contained an analytic rubric based on the criteria of argumentative essays<sup>7</sup> where each essay criterion could be

6 The second and fourth goals only applied to peer feedback and self-assessment (Study 2). When we implemented teacher feedback (Study 1), we did not train students to give feedback themselves on an essay.

7 We defined the criteria of argumentative essays as (1) introductory sentence, (2) thesis statement, (3) transitional sentence, (4) counterargument, (5) rebuttal, (6) pro-argument, (7) support, (8) summary sentence, (9) rephrasing of the thesis statement, (10) closing sentence, paragraph breaks (11), and (12) linking words.

rated as fulfilled (*yes*), partly fulfilled (*partly*), or not yet fulfilled (*not yet*), and an exemplar in form of a model text for the writing prompt being assessed. In Study 1, examining teacher feedback methods, the feedback sheet additionally included a section for targeted error feedback on surface level features (such as spelling), and a section at the bottom that directed students to the *toolbox* scaffolds deemed most beneficial for revision (for an illustration of the rubric and exemplar teacher feedback sheet, see Peltzer et al. 2024). In Study 2, comparing peer feedback and self-assessment, the feedback sheet’s rubric encompassed two columns for rating each essay criterion: (1) for the draft version of the essay, and (2) for the revised version of the essay (see Figure 4). Moreover, the student feedback sheet contained a general reminder of the *toolbox* (*feed forward*).

**Figure 4**  
Excerpt of the student rubric and exemplar feedback sheet (upper section)

Criteria for argumentative essays		Draft			Revision			Model text: Preparatory classes for exchange students are a good idea
		yes	partly	not yet	yes	partly	not yet	During a student exchange, you encounter many new situations, which you might want to prepare for. This essay discusses the topic of preparatory classes for exchange students [INTRO]. Although there might be some disadvantages, in my opinion, all exchange students should attend such a class [TH]. There are many good reasons why, which I will consider in the following [TR].
Introduction	There is an <b>introductory sentence</b> (or several), [INTRO] which leads to the essay's topic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	There is a <b>thesis statement</b> , [TH] which expresses your opinion about the topic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	There is a <b>transitional sentence</b> , [TR] which says what will follow in the main body.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

During our research project, in this lesson, students were divided into subgroups based on the randomly assigned feedback conditions described in the following. In a regular classroom setting, for reasons of feasibility, we suggest teachers choose only one of the following feedback methods.

**Feedback method 1: Rubric and exemplar teacher feedback**

In this feedback approach, the teacher, before lesson 2, utilized the feedback sheet described above, to provide feedback on the initial draft. The teacher version of the feedback sheet included an additional column for linguistic feedback (e. g., feedback on spelling errors).

In lesson 2, students were presented with a model text for writing prompt A (“Student exchanges are not worth the trouble.”). Working in pairs, they identified the elements of an argumentative essay. Following completion, the findings were discussed collectively. The teacher then introduced the feedback sheet containing the same criteria and model texts previously reviewed. Students received their initial essay draft along with the feedback sheet completed by the teacher.

**Feedback method 2: In-text comments teacher feedback**

With this feedback method, before lesson 2, the teacher annotated comments in the margins of each student’s essay (based on the same criteria as the feedback sheet). Underneath

each essay, the teacher referenced components of the *toolbox* that had the potential to aid in revision (*feed forward*). In lesson 2, students then received their essays with in-text comments included.

### Feedback method 3: Combination of rubric, exemplar, and in-text teacher feedback

For this feedback method, prior to lesson 2, the teacher prepared the feedback sheet and in-text comments for each student. In lesson 2, students participated in the previously described task using a model text. Afterwards, they received their first essay draft with both in-text comments and the feedback sheet.

### Feedback method 4: Rubric and exemplar peer feedback

For peer feedback, students were introduced to the characteristics of helpful feedback through examples provided by Lana and Nadim. The teacher emphasized the importance of specificity and introduced the feedback sheet to students. In a whole-class setting, students were then further familiarized with the feedback sheet in a training phase. Based on the rubric, students evaluated the introduction of a flawed model text (exemplar), assessing key components for fulfillment (see Figure 4). Students then practiced using the feedback sheet by assessing the remaining parts of the exemplar. In pairs, they focused on specific parts of the main body or conclusion and presented their findings to the class, guided by the teacher, who offered corrections as needed. Suggestions for enhancement were discussed, and an improved version of the model text was revealed.

After the training session, students received an anonymized peer's first draft of writing prompt A ("Student exchanges are not worth the trouble."). After reading their peer's essay and completing the first column of the feedback sheet ("draft"), the teacher disclosed the randomly assigned feedback pairs, and students exchanged their feedback. They were encouraged to offer their peers additional oral explanations and support as required.

### Feedback method 5: Rubric and exemplar self-assessment

When opting for this approach, students engaged in the same training session as for feedback method 4 (peer feedback).

Following the training session, students received the feedback sheet along with their initial essay draft. They were then directed to carefully revise their own essay, revisit the provided instructions, and complete the first column of the feedback sheet ("draft").

## Lesson 2 – Part 2: Revision

Independent of the feedback method chosen, students were instructed to revise their essays based on the feedback they received:

Please **write** an improved version of your first draft. **Use** the feedback to do so. **Remember** the task was: What do you think about the following statement? “Student exchanges are not worth the trouble.”

After finishing their revision, students who received and provided peer feedback or self-assessed their essays were asked to fill out the second column of the feedback sheet (“revision”) on their peer feedback partner’s revised essay (peer feedback) or on their own essay (self-assessment). For reasons of feasibility, students who received teacher feedback were provided with a separate progress report that displayed the learning development from draft to revision.

### Lesson 3: Linking words and phrases

The learning goals of lesson 3 were:

- “You can **discuss** the advantages and disadvantages of a preparatory class for exchange students.
- You can **use** your knowledge about the elements of argumentative essays in your text.
- You can **differentiate** between important linking words and phrases.”

Students re-entered the comic narrative as Nadim and Lana connect via video call. Nadim supports the idea that the student council published in the student newspaper, which suggests that all aspiring exchange students should enroll in a preparatory class prior to their exchange. However, Lana voices doubts and proposes that learning during the exchange itself might be more enjoyable. Nadim plans to write an essay for the student newspaper, and Lana again asks the class for their thoughts: “What do YOU think?”

In preparation for writing task 2, students were prompted to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a preparatory class. The teacher recorded the results in plenary, and students were presented with writing prompt B:

*“All students who want to go abroad should attend a preparatory class.” What do you think? **Write** an argumentative essay in English in which you **discuss** the statement. (15 minutes) Note: You can always review the revision and the feedback you received for your first essay.*

During writing, students could access the arguments collected from the pre-writing task and were reminded of the *toolbox* and the designated area for essay planning.

The narrative then returned to Nadim, who, still on his exchange, reaches out to Lana via text. During their text conversation, Lana uses an incorrect linking word, which confuses Nadim. Students were tasked with correcting Lana’s mistake and reminded of the significance of appropriate linking word usage for effective communication. In a subsequent exercise, students matched example phrases containing linking words with argumentative moves supplemented with German translations. The lesson concluded with a brief cloze text activity on linking words.

## Lesson 4 – Part 1: Formative feedback

The learning goals of lesson 4 were<sup>8</sup>:

- “You can **differentiate** between important linking words and phrases and use them in your revision.
- You can **give** feedback on your own/your peers’ essay.
- You can **revise** your essay.
- You can **give** feedback on a revised essay.”

Students received a cloze model text for writing task 2 and inserted missing linking words. The teacher then shared the correct solutions and clarified further as necessary. The feedback process mirrored that of lesson 2.

## Lesson 4 – Part 2: Revision

The revision process for writing task 2 followed the procedure outlined in lesson 2. Towards the end of lesson 4, students were reminded of the unit’s goal: “You can write well-structured, coherent argumentative essays.”, as they reflected verbally on their learning progress.

## Conclusion

This paper aimed to provide detailed insights into our learning unit on argumentative writing in EFL. The instructional approach was built on process-genre writing pedagogy, focusing on draft-feedback-revision sequences, and genre-specific instruction. Within this approach, we incorporated several evidence-based instructional principles. First, goal transparency was emphasized as a means to help students concentrate on key ideas and improve their thought organization skills. Additionally, we aimed to enhance motivation by teaching the complex genre of argumentative writing through a continuous comic story. Finally, we incorporated formative feedback to support students’ writing, delivered by varying feedback sources.

The learning unit has been implemented in Year 9 in comprehensive schools during two intervention studies within a research project funded by the DFG. Results of Study 1 indicate that all groups that participated in the learning unit made significant learning progress concerning argumentative writing and that the learning unit was positively evaluated by the participants. The process-genre approach, including formative feedback, has shown to be feasible, indicating its pedagogic relevance as a possible framework for writing instruction in secondary schools. Concerning formative feedback, findings show that students receiving rubric and exemplar teacher feedback made large progress in writing quality, highlighting the potential of this time-efficient feedback method (Peltzer et al. 2024). Data of

<sup>8</sup> The second and fourth goal only apply when using peer feedback or self-assessment.

Study 2 concerning the effects of peer feedback and self-assessment are currently being analyzed.

## Supplementary Material

For additional resources used in the learning unit (worksheets and the *toolbox*), please refer to the following links:

- Toolbox: [https://www.josch-journal.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/JoSch-27\\_Zusatzmaterial\\_LiraLorca\\_et al\\_LearningUnit\\_Toolbox.pdf](https://www.josch-journal.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/JoSch-27_Zusatzmaterial_LiraLorca_et al_LearningUnit_Toolbox.pdf)
- Worksheets: [https://www.josch-journal.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/JoSch-27\\_Zusatzmaterial\\_LiraLorca\\_et al\\_LearningUnit\\_Worksheets.pdf](https://www.josch-journal.de/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/JoSch-27_Zusatzmaterial_LiraLorca_et al_LearningUnit_Worksheets.pdf)

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