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A Systematic Literature Review of Process Genre Approach in EFL Writing Teaching in China: From Theory to Practice

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Abstract

Process genre approach (PGA), which integrates the strengths and drawbacks of product approach, process approach and genre approach, has long been proved effective in scaffolding EFL writing teaching in culturally divergent contexts. China with the largest EFL learner population worldwide likewise places rising attention to PGA, yielding a body of research findings. However, constrained by language barriers and data permission, the implementation of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China remains an incomplete picture, especially for foreign researchers and practitioners. As such, to fill the research gap, this study conducts a systematic literature review of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China by virtue of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) framework. Based on three most influential databases in China, namely China National Knowledge Infrastructure, Wanfang Data and CQVIP, 25 articles are identified from core periodicals and then systematically examined in a bid to address the research questions pertaining to research status, research achievements and developmental implications of PGA. In so doing, this study is hoped to provide more valuable references and kindle more insightful ideas for moving this line of research forward.

Keywords: *Process Genre Approach, Systematic Literature Review, Research Achievements, Developmental Implications, Research Status*

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Introduction

Writing, coupled with listening, speaking and reading, is acknowledged as an essential component in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning (Fenuku, 2024). It embodies not only one's competence in conveying meaning through written works but also one's English application ability on culturally divergent occasions (Wong & Singh,

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2024). As was once contended by Hyland (2022, pxi), “writing continues to be a key metric in the life chances of millions of people around the world: a measure of educational success, academic competence, professional advancement and institutional recognition”. Concurrently, given that written documentations function as the necessary means of communication in nowadays text-oriented world, writing plays an indispensable part in both academic and professional contexts, garnering escalating attention from all concerned (Bigger, 2022).

With the advent of economic globalization, Chinese EFL learners are prompted to be more aware of the effectiveness of English writing and spare no efforts to cultivate their writing ability as EFL writing is deemed an effective medium of international communication (Zhang, 2024). However, EFL writing teaching in China is generally considered a challenge for instructors and learners due to its time-consuming and laborious nature (Shuai et al., 2025). Perennial problems like insufficient attention, traditional teaching approach, expanding class size and lack of technological support render EFL writing a comparatively weaker link in teaching (Zhang et al., 2023). Past decades have witnessed a series of documents and policies released in succession to facilitate EFL writing teaching in various educational stages. For example, *College English Curriculum Requirements* and *Guidelines on College English Teaching* both highlighted that new approaches should be introduced into EFL writing classroom for purpose of achieving better instructional effects.

Pedagogical approach is key to EFL writing teaching and learning as it fashions how people understand writing and how they learn to write (Hyland, 2022). Driven by the compelling needs of cultivating EFL learners’ writing ability and the official requirements highlighted in above mentioned policies, EFL writing teaching in China, like in many other countries, has experienced the transition from product approach, process approach to genre approach (Gu et al., 2025; Jiang et al., 2023)

Product approach once occupied a dominated position and is still largely implemented in EFL writing teaching in China, subjecting to considerable criticism (Liu & Kim, 2021); process approach was embraced for realizing a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered teaching mode (Yan, 2005); genre approach underpinned by social constructivism echoed the classification of English for special purpose (ESP), English for academic purpose (EAP), English for occupational purpose (EOP), etc., provoking a new surge of interest in academia (Huang, 2020). Under meticulous exploration and scholarly scrutiny, three approaches were found with respective strengths and weaknesses and complementary to each other (Gu et al., 2025). Consequently, PGA which integrated the advantages of three approaches were proposed and soon enjoyed popularity in EFL writing teaching of various countries (Wong & Singh, 2024).

Rationale and Research Questions for the Study

Indeed, studies could be searched that have revolved around the elaboration and verification of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China. Limited amount of extant literature written in English or published on overseas periodicals leaves PGA in EFL writing teaching in China an incomplete picture, let alone advancing this strand of research. Likewise, constrained by database permission, studies included in Chinese databases are

inaccessible to foreign researchers and academicians, hindering the collision of ideas and the generation of original thoughts. On top of that, due to language barrier, foreign researchers and academicians may have major difficulties in understanding the research results interpreted in Chinese. As a result, the research status, research achievements and developmental implications of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China remain an underrepresented area. To the best of our knowledge, no study has been conducted on basis of Chinese literature to specifically display the research on PGA in EFL writing teaching in China, which could be safely concluded as a research gap to be filled.

In view of the above, following PICO principle (Population, Intervention, Comparison intervention, and Outcome measures) (MacMillan et al., 2019), this study strives to conduct a systematic literature review on PGA in EFL writing teaching in China with an aim to address the following questions:

RQ1: What is the research status of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China?

RQ2: What are the research achievements of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China?

RQ3: What are the developmental implications of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China?

PGA

To approach PGA, the attention should be firstly traced back to product approach which is best known as the traditional approach within Chinese educational settings. Product approach gives prominence to linguistic knowledge, grammatical usage and mechanical consideration, viewing writing nothing but a finished product (Trang & Barrot, 2024). In this way, students are bound to acquire writing by rote and memorization so as to accomplish vocabulary-rich, error-free and well-organized texts. It is evidenced that sample text imitation is contributory for students to learn from scratch and avoid making mistakes. Nevertheless, neglecting writing processes greatly jeopardizes learners' motivation and turns classroom into largely teacher-centered, incurring overwhelmed criticism in academia (Badger & White, 2000).

In response to the criticism of product approach, process approach was developed in the mid-1970s, suggesting that writing was not a linear but a recursive and creative process (Badger & White, 2000). Under instruction of process approach, students are encouraged to develop their writing skills and achieve certain goals at each stage from planning, translating to reviewing (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Masowa & Thetso, 2025). Interaction between teachers and students is highlighted since students act as the dominator in classroom but teachers narrowly play the role of facilitator (Wong & Singh, 2024). However, process approach was also criticized for not taking the contexts, genres, targeted audiences and communicative purposes into consideration (Badger & White, 2000).

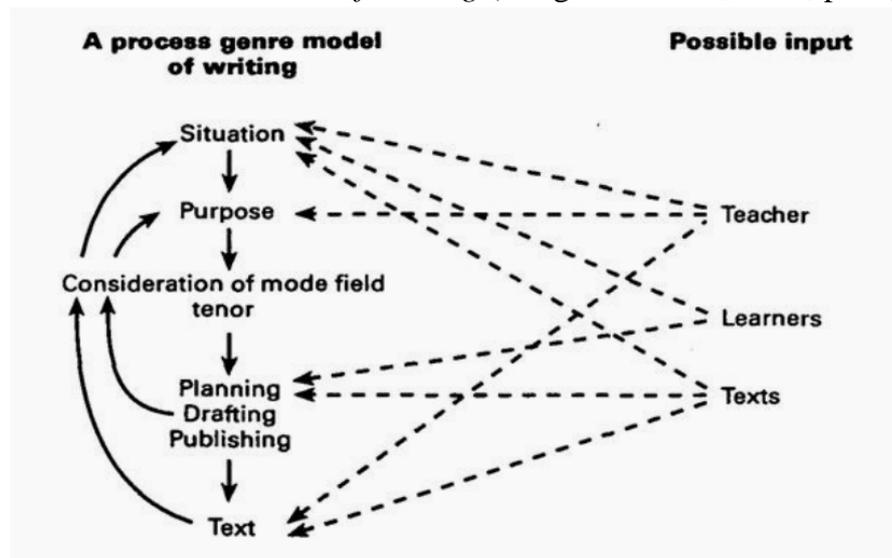
Consequently, genre approach was proposed which took writing as an effective way of conveying intended meaning to targeted audiences to achieve certain goals (Hyland, 2022). In this vein, writing is a situated social practice. It is on the premise that people from the same community share mutual communicative objectives and have no difficulty in understanding each other (Hyland, 2022). Each genre is featured with conventionalized structures and linguistic knowledge, containing specified communicative intention in a set social context (Zhou, 2023). Students firstly learn how texts are structured with

generic expressions, then internalize the schematic knowledge, and finally write independently by extracting what they have stored in mind. Despite the acknowledged advantages, genre approach was also subjected to various disadvantages like downplaying writing skills and impairing writing creativity (Hitimala et al., 2024).

With this, Badger and White (2000) put forward PGA which synthesized the strengths and shortcomings of three approaches. The idea central to PGA is that writing pertains to language knowledge as in product approach and genre approach, social contexts as in genre approach, and writing skills as in process approach. As is depicted in the Figure 1, PGA values input from teachers, learners and texts, which aims to draw out learners' potential and cultivate their writing skills. To elaborate, instructors in writing classroom commence with contextualizing and deconstructing the sample texts, during which students are enabled to figure out the communicative purposes of a given genre. Upon acknowledging the situation, learners switch their attention to field (what to convey), tenor (to whom) and mode (how to express) to build schemata knowledge throughout the recursive process from planning, drafting to publishing. Instruction culminates in the written texts independently accomplished by students.

Figure 1

A Process Genre Model of Writing (Badger & White, 2000, p159)



It was Han Jinlong (2001) who firstly introduced PGA into Chinese EFL education. Following Badger and White (2000), he elucidated the principles as well as the feasibility of implementing PGA within Chinese educational landscape. He clearly reckoned that although PGA was still at an exploratory stage, its remarkable features as time-saving and high-efficiency tailored to the EFL writing instruction in China. He initiatively put forward a practical four-step mode for PGA, namely modeling, imitating, independent writing and revising. At *modeling stage*, sample texts of certain genre are provided and explicitly analyzed for students to comprehend why, to whom and how these texts are constructed. It is a stage for students to get familiar with the macroscopical conventionalized frames and microscopic language features so that they will not struggle

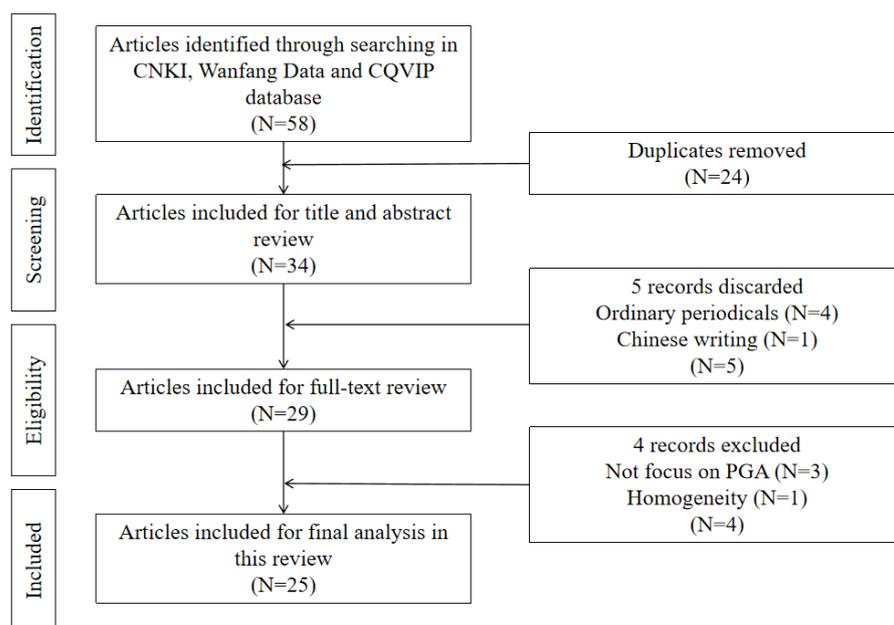
to start writing; at *imitating stage*, different from mechanized model imitation, students consciously internalize and apply the generic knowledge and structures they have accumulated at former stage; at *independent writing stage*, students are encouraged to accomplish texts of a certain genre independently to deliver purposeful information in a given situation. This stage is inclusive of outlining, drafting and finalizing the written works; at *revising stage*, students will experience independent revision, peer review and teacher feedback.

Henceforth, more and more theoretical and empirical studies have been conducted on PGA in China, arousing significant interest and attention in writing instruction (Fu & Ibrahim, 2023; Gu et al., 2025).

Methodology

Systematic review is developed to identify, select, appraise and interpret a particular research topic with predefined, structured and explicit methods, providing reasonable description of certain issues and evidence-based references for further study (MacMillan et al., 2019). Compared with traditional literature review, it offers more in-depth insights and thus has been largely perceived as a more trustworthy method (Pati & Lorusso, 2018). Wright et al. (2007) even claimed that systematic reviews joint with meta-analyses were the best form of evidence. As such, this study implements Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA), an internationally recognized framework for systematic literature review (Moher et al., 2010), to investigate the research status, research achievements and developmental implications of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China. Specifically, a four-step flow diagram inclusive of identification, screening, eligibility and included as suggested by Moher et al.(2010) is followed (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Flow of Systematic Literature Review



Articles Search Strategy

Identification stage is designed for identifying relevant articles from databases on basis of pre-set search terms. MacMillan et al. (2019) once suggested that while executing literature review, at least 2 to 3 databases were deemed sufficient to ensure the comprehensiveness of research results. Therefore, this study adopts three most authoritative and convincing Chinese databases as data resources, namely China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Wanfang Data and CQVIP. Search terms are set as “过程体裁 AND 教学” (process genre AND teaching) OR “过程-体裁 AND 教学” (process-genre AND teaching) OR “过程体裁教学法” (process genre approach). Given the quality and reliability of search results, papers collected in core periodicals labelled with Science Citation Index (SCI), Engineering Index (EI), Peking University Core Journals, Chinese Social Sciences Citation Index (CSSCI), Chinese Science Citation Database (CSCD) and Association for Machine Intelligence (AMI) are exclusively extracted. With this, 19, 23 and 16 articles are respectively selected from CNKI, Wanfang and CQVIP, amounting to 58 articles with 24 duplicates to be removed. In light of the limited number of extracted articles, no time box is further fixed and all articles are downloaded from the databases to be examined by virtue of Mendeley, a computer-assisted reference management system.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Thirty-four selected articles at *Identification stage* are further scrutinized in accordance with inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1) at *screening and eligibility stage*.

Table 1*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
It is written in Chinese.	It is written in English or other non-Chinese languages.
It is published on core periodicals.	It is published on ordinary periodicals or other forms of publications.
PGA is the research focus.	Other writing approaches or elements other than PGA are the research focus.
EFL is taught.	Non-English languages are taught.
Writing skill is targeted.	Listening, speaking, reading or other skills except writing are targeted.
It is within Chinese educational settings.	It is within the educational setting of foreign countries.

Through title and abstract review, 2 articles published on *Journal of Hebei North University (Social Science Edition)* and 2 articles published on *Journal of Jiangxi Electric Vocational & Technical College* are discarded for not belonging to core periodicals. Beyond this, another article conducted by Zhang Jing in 2009 is also removed due to the research focus on Chinese writing not EFL writing. It is worth noting that an article written by Cao Xiuping (2017) is found published on *Chongqing Medicine* which was once included in core periodicals but has been excluded since 2024. However, this article is kept for further analysis in view of the influence of *Chongqing Medicine* in field of science education.

After screening procedure, the researchers execute full-text review of 29 journal papers to examine if any article goes against eligibility criteria. It turns out that 3 articles respectively focus on integrated output-oriented teaching mode, IELTS writing reform and self-learning strategies rather than PGA, violating the inclusion and exclusion criteria. In addition, Zhao Jianqun published 2 papers respectively on *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University (Educational Science)* and *English Teaching AND Research Notes* in 2005, subjecting to the homogeneity and needing to be pooled. As a result, only the one on *Journal of Inner Mongolia Normal University (Educational Science)* is remained for following investigation. Finally, 25 articles are included for final analysis as shown in Figure 2.

Coding Scheme

Considering the research questions, a comprehensive coding framework with 5 key categories is developed on basis of the design by Huawei and Aryadoust (2023). These coded categories cover general information of publication, research paradigms, research contexts, research genres, research results and implications. General information of publication could be further subdivided into publication title, publication author, publication year and publication source. Specific explanation of each coded feature is presented in Table 2 and the coding results are shown in Appendix A.

Table 2

Definition of Coded Features

Coded Features	Definition of Coded Features
Publication title	The title of the article in formal publication.
Publication author	The name of the author and coauthors who conduct the research.
Publication year	The year when the article is published.
Publication source	The name of the publication.
Research paradigms	The types of the article, like theoretical research or empirical research.
Research contexts	The situation where the article is located.
Research genres	The category of English writing the article focuses on.
Research results and implications	The research findings and suggestions for future study in the article.

Validity

First and foremost, systematic literature review rather than unsystematic narrative review is undertaken with rigorous methods in this study to guarantee the validity.

In addition, to minimize bias as much as possible, this study attempts to be exhaustive enough to develop a list of potentially relevant studies on PGA in EFL writing teaching of China from three high-quality databases, which cross-checks the comprehensiveness and validity of studies appraised. Restricting to core journals also ensures, to some extent, the high-level evidence of literature.

Finally, two independent reviewers also limit the introduction of bias in literature screening procedures. Each reviewer operates the same procedure of searching articles from databases and all extracted articles are included for further appraisal. As for abstract and title review and full-text review, any differences between two reviewers are reconciled through mutual agreement to reduce the risk of subjective interpretation. In

coding process, Pearson correlation coefficient has been measured to be 0.89, indicating a high-level of inter-coder reliability.

Results

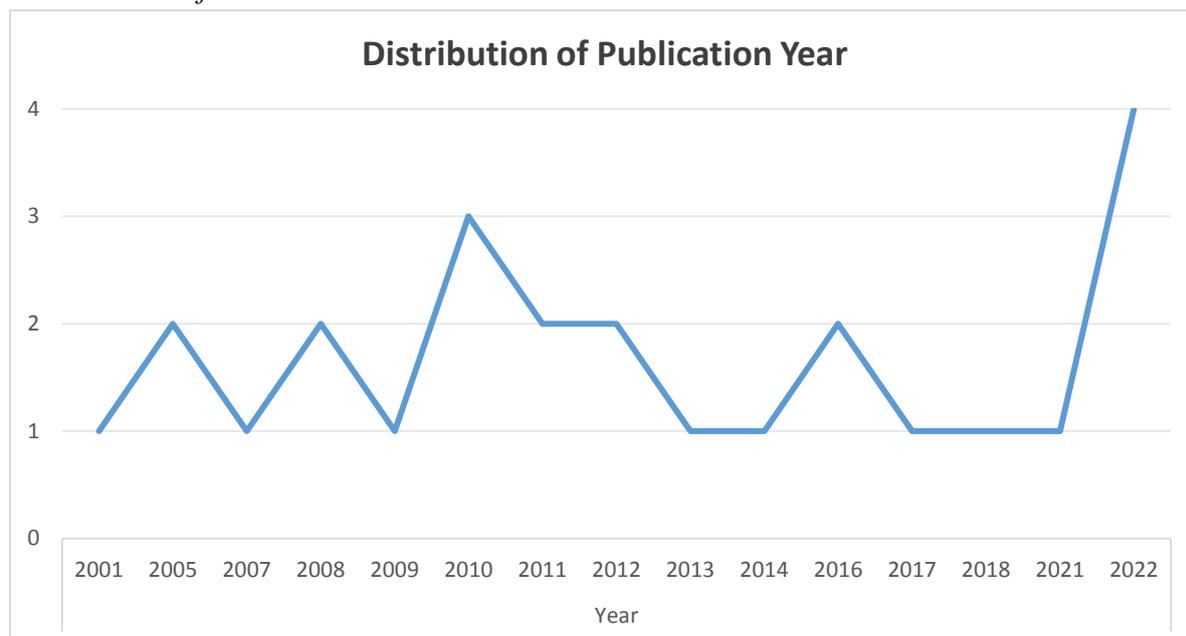
RQ1: Research Status of PGA in EFL Writing Teaching in China

A descriptive analysis of literature review is delineated in accordance with the coding results to display the research status of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China from perspective of publication year, research paradigms, research contexts and research genres.

As for the publication year, it spans from 2001 to 2022 with the detailed distribution shown in Figure 3. It was in 2001 when PGA was firstly introduced to Chinese educational settings. Since then, the interest in PGA has never ceased, discretely stimulating new studies in the following two decades. Through comparison of the publication quantity, the year of 2022 witnesses the highest record as 4 articles, which is followed by the year of 2010 with 3 articles. In general, only 1 or 2 articles could be retrieved in each publication year, without significant fluctuation.

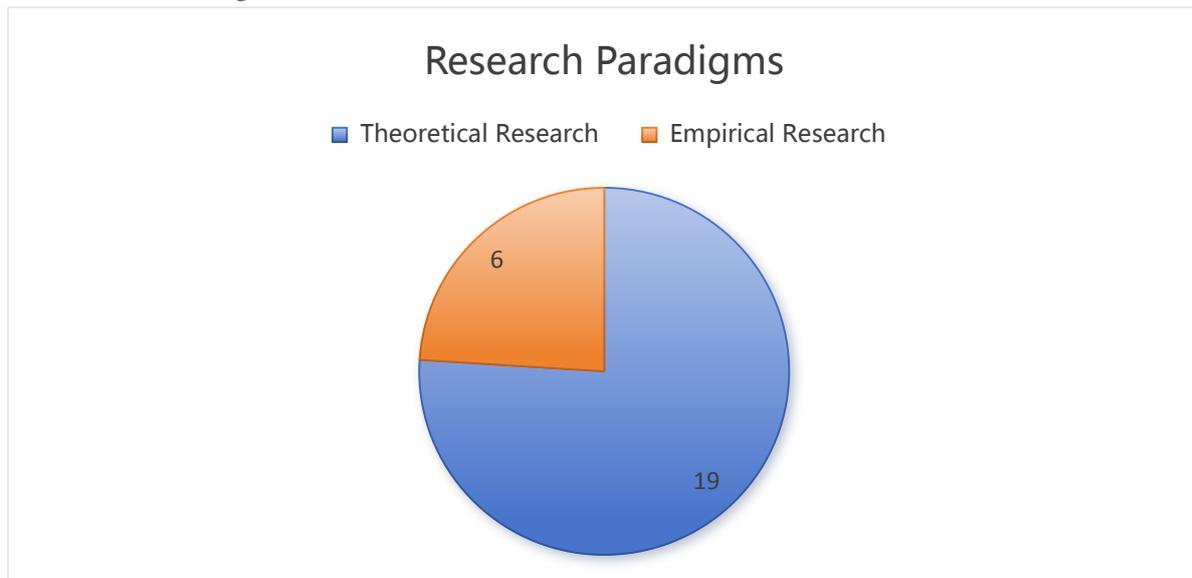
Figure 3

Distribution of Publication Year



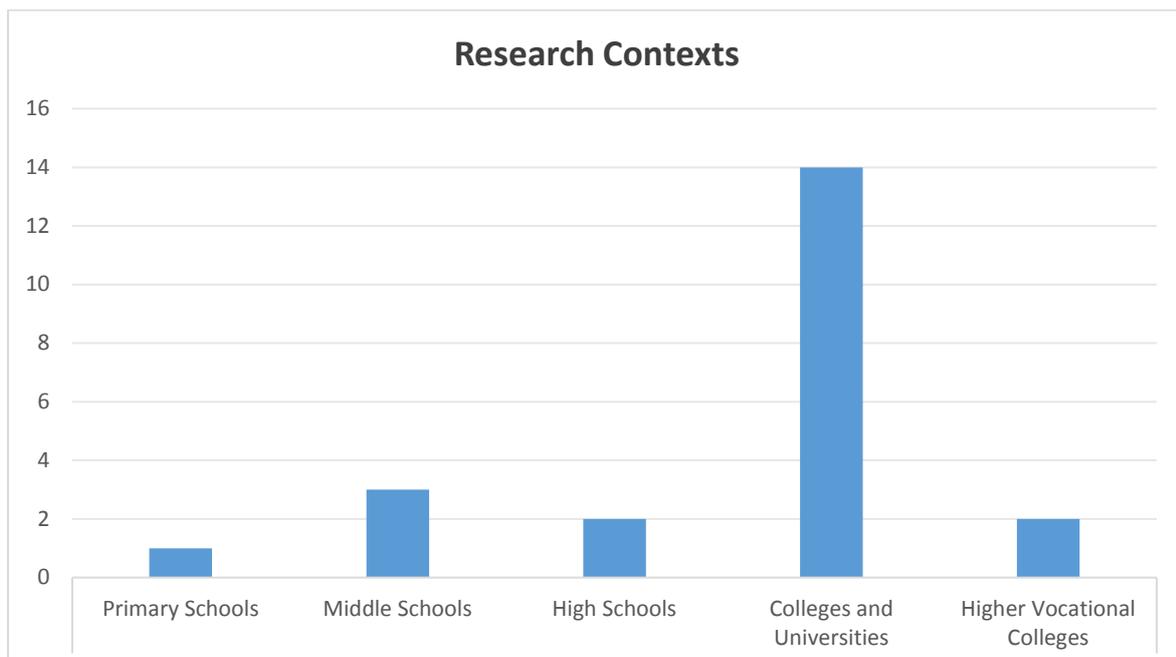
When it comes to the research paradigms as depicted in Figure 4, 25 retrieved articles are inclusive of 19 theoretical research and 6 empirical research. A significant part (accounting for 76%) of studies explored PGA from a theoretical basis; only 24% of studies conducted experimental research on PGA with quantitative method or mixed methods. It is notable that only article [17] explicitly stated to implement quasi-experimental research method (Yao, 2010), which is proved to show better strength in educational research (Cohen et al., 2000).

Figure 4
Research Paradigms



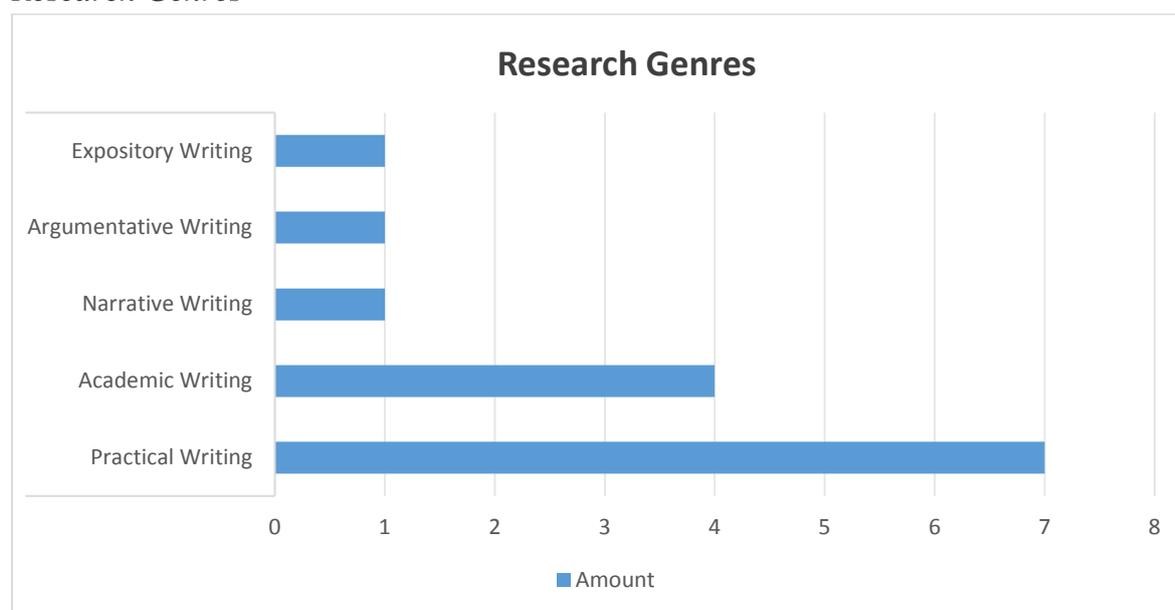
In terms of research contexts specified in Figure 5, extracted articles cover all educational levels in China, including primary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities as well as higher vocational colleges. Compared with other 4 levels, colleges and universities account for the overwhelming majority, reaching as high as 56%. Middle schools come second, while high schools and higher vocational schools both occupy the third position. Primary schools rank the lowest with merely 1 article. It is worth noting that 3 articles inexplicitly clarify the research context.

Figure 5
Research Contexts



About research genres in Figure 6, practical writing, academic writing, narrative writing, argumentative writing and expository writing are basically involved with practical writing taking the largest proportion as 28%. It is followed by academic writing which accounts for 16%. There is only 1 article for each of narrative writing, argumentative writing and expository writing. It deserves serious attention that 11 articles investigated PGA in a general manner, not specifying the targeted genre.

Figure 6
Research Genres



RQ2: Research Achievements of PGA in EFL Writing Teaching in China

Given that retrieved articles are basically grouped into theoretical research and empirical research, research achievements of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China are expounded correspondingly to provide a closer look.

Theoretical research achievements

Inspired by Han (2001) who systematically introduced PGA and initiatively proposed a four-stage teaching model, theoretical research on PGA in EFL writing teaching in China experienced substantial growth.

The most salient theoretical achievements are embodied in the teaching models of PGA. As is shown in Table 3, 11 articles plowed their way to develop teaching models of PGA, which were mainly based on the research achievements of Han (2001). Despite that, several articles also tailored to specific educational contexts and provided a stepwise understanding of PGA. For example, in article [4], a dedicated stage was incorporated into the instructional design to foster writing creativity. The study underscored the critical importance, for middle school students, of drawing on personal experiences to generate writing ideas and expand cognitive pathways (Wu, 2022); article [10][15][24] innovatively structured the instructional phases into pre-writing information input, while-writing information output and post-writing reflection stages, highlighting writing as a

complex cognitive and psychological development process (Li, 2011; Ren & Zhang, 2014; Zhao, 2005); article [20] specifically emphasized the differences between writing instruction in vocational colleges and in general universities, proposing a creative writing stage. At this stage, students were categorized into three levels based on their writing proficiency and then grouped into learning support teams. This approach aimed to create a positive learning atmosphere, encouraging interaction among heterogeneous group members to promote knowledge internalization (Li, 2008).

Table 3*Teaching Models of PGA*

No.	Teaching Models	Educational Contexts
[3]	Context construction, Modeling, Independent writing, Self-assessment and peer assessment, Revision and presentation	EFL writing in primary schools
[4]	Identifying communicative purposes, Analyzing genre of model texts, Stimulating writing creativity, Co-drafting, Providing multi-layered feedback, Revising the final drafts independently	EFL writing in middle schools
[5]	Modeling stage, Independent writing stage, Revision stage	EFL writing in middle schools
[7]	Modeling and structured displaying, Mutual collaborating and imitating, Independent writing, Teacher-student co-assessment and revising	Medicine SCI academic writing in colleges and universities
[11]	Stylistic comprehensive analysis stage, Generic comprehensive analysis stage, Student-student interaction and teacher-student collaborative writing, Independent writing	Academic writing in military schools
[12]	Warming-up, Draft, Revision, Final draft	Practical writing in colleges and universities
[10] [15] [24]	Pre-writing information input stage, While-writing information output stage, Post-writing reflection stage	EFL writing in higher vocational colleges and high schools
[16]	Modeling and analysis, Imitating and skill training, Independent writing, Group evaluation, Teacher evaluation and feedback	EFL writing in colleges and universities
[20]	Modeling, Imitating, Creative writing, Revision, Second-round writing and evaluation	Practical writing in higher vocational colleges

Juxtaposed to teaching models, article [15] and [24] also delved into PGA by discussing its theoretical foundation, advancing the understanding of PGA. Li (2011) assumed that PGA was underpinned by Krashen's language acquisition theory, genre analysis theory and Gagné's information processing theory. According to Zhao (2005), except for language acquisition theory and genre analysis theory, constructivism and cognitive model of writing were also found to be contributory to the development of PGA.

Besides, several scholars focused on making a thorough comparison among four major English writing pedagogies-product approach, process approach, genre approach and PGA, justifying the necessity of PGA and further corroborating its effectiveness (Bu, 2010; Han, 2001; Li, 2007). As summarized by Han (2001), PGA drew out the insights and advantages of three approaches, meeting the practical needs of EFL writing teaching in China and deserving to be popularized through experiments. Bu (2010) also suggested

that each writing approach may exert varying influence on the teaching of different genres, among which PGA was proved to be suitable for narrative writing, expository writing and argumentative writing. Liang (2005) enriched the theoretical research results of PGA by expatiating the beneficial role of PGA in alleviating learners' writing anxiety in modeling, imitating, independent writing and revising stages.

Driven by information technology development, a new surge of interest in integrating PGA and technologies could be observed in article [1][6][21]. Shang (2008) firstly put forward that due adjustment should be initiated for the application of PGA in multi-media internet environment. She claimed that existing problems like limited classroom time, absence of feedback and lack of social contexts could all be well addressed by the assistance of multimedia and internet technologies. Another study focused on the necessity and feasibility of combining PGA and automated writing evaluation (AWE) systems like Bingo English, Juku Online Writing System, etc (Zeng, 2018). It argued that with help of AWE systems technically supported by artificial intelligence and big data, systematic, timely and effective feedback could be provided in recursive writing process so as to promote engagement, boost motivation and improve writing proficiency. A more recent study was executed by Liang (2022), reporting that the concept of digital humanities was featured with openness and interactivity, the core idea of current EFL writing teaching in China. To facilitate college English writing teaching, proper digital humanities tools could be utilized with consideration of the specific teaching characteristics at each stage of PGA. For example, at modeling stage, Vocabulary Cloud Generator, Voyant Tool, KH-Coder Text Mining Tool and Juxta Analyzer could be adopted for analyzing the generic features and contextual elements; at teacher-student evaluation stage, writing evaluation platforms and multi-user collaborative writing systems could all be helpful for learners to assess and revise their works (Liang, 2022).

Empirical research achievements

So far, 6 articles in total examine the effects of PGA by virtue of educational experiments with quantitative methods or mixed methods. For example, Wang and Gao (2022) conducted a mixed methods research with questionnaires, iWrite backend data and in-depth student interview records as data resources, showing that multiple evaluation-based intelligent instructional model which integrated iWrite and PGA was conducive to students' writing ability and critical thinking ability. In another quantitative research, PGA was proved to be feasible in EFL writing teaching in middle school as it empowered students with not only linguistic knowledge but also writing skills and writing awareness (Chang, 2012).

In the educational experiments, to clearly unravel the causal effects of PGA as independent variable, various dependent variables pertaining to writing ability, critical thinking ability, writing anxiety and genre awareness were under serious scrutiny. Except for the research results of Wang and Gao (2022) and Chang (2012) mentioned above, Song and Xiao (2016) also verified through a two-term experiment that the application of PGA in practical English writing teaching contributed to alleviating students' writing anxiety and facilitating their writing proficiency.

In addition, two studies delved into PGA by comparing the effects of product

approach and PGA. It is indicated that compared with product approach, PGA was more powerful in raising students' awareness of utilizing writing strategies and revision, enhancing their ability of flexibly applying generic knowledge, and increasing their engagement in collaborative ideation (Yao, 2010). According to He and Ji (2009), varying effects of product approach and PGA in college English writing teaching were also further investigated. They claimed that through statistical analysis of pre-tests and post-tests, students under instruction of PGA were found to achieve more noticeable progress in organization, wording and sense of audiences.

However, PGA was also found to have some deficits. For example, Wu and Cui (2016) focused on incorporating PGA in English literature review writing, affirming that PGA was helpful for most students to basically grasp how to write a literature review but obviously insufficient for holistic genre-based writing, especially in aspect of establishing a research position and occupying a research position. Besides, He and Ji (2009) suggested that the application of PGA contributed little improvement in grammatical accuracy.

RQ3: Developmental Implications of PGA in EFL Writing Teaching in China

Enlightened by the gleaned articles, several developmental implications of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China have emerged, yet deeper analysis reveals research gaps that warrant further scholarly investigation.

Firstly, due to limited empirical validation, there is an unremitting call for more studies on the application of PGA to verify its effectiveness and robustness in Chinese educational context (Han, 2001). So far, only 25 relative studies including 6 empirical ones could be extracted from core periodicals, suggesting a limited understanding and investigation of PGA. Seen from theoretical research achievements above, great efforts have been paid to develop the practical teaching procedures of PGA in various educational levels, which indeed facilitates the implementation of PGA but renders empirical research a must to corroborate the feasibility of teaching models and to embrace more proper adjustments (Jia & Jia, 2013; Wu, 2022; Zhang, 2010). Wu and Cui (2016) reckoned that it was the lack of teaching practice research that caused the latest teaching achievements in China rarely known in the academia. This signals the imbalance between theoretical and empirical research on PGA. To bridge this gap, more empirical studies are needed to test the adaptability and sustainability of theoretical research findings of PGA.

Secondly, researches on PGA are subject to insufficient genre diversity. In line with the descriptive analysis of literature review, more attention has been paid to practical writing and academic writing, leaving other genres an under-researched field. As was advocated by Song and Xiao (2016), only with mastery of the diversity of discourse structures and flexibility of linguistic features could communication be achieved in a more convenient manner, which served as a comparatively new orientation for following research. Therefore, more genres need to be further discussed so as to generalize the research results.

In addition, driven by the coming of technological era, incorporating PGA and educational technologies like multi-media (Shang, 2008), AWE systems (Wang & Gao,

2022; Zeng, 2018) and digital humanities tools (Liang, 2022) appear both necessary and promising, suggesting a new orientation for advancement of PGA. Positive research results substantiated that using technologies to assist classroom teaching under PGA contributed more in-depth insights.

Another critical concern is about learners' English proficiency level as a moderator variable. He and Ji (2009) pointed out that PGA was unsuitable for students of low proficiency level as they were unable to fully comprehend the sample texts. In addition, Ren and Zhang (2014) also summarized that owing to the culturally divergent environment, PGA should never be mechanically applied but needed to abide by the principle of "teaching in accordance of students' aptitude". Therefore, this highlights that when implementing PGA, learners' English proficiency level should be carefully considered to ensure its effectiveness.

Finally, PGA featured with inherent defects cannot stand alone to be omnipotent. He and Ji (2009) stated that PGA was inapplicable to literature writing which required strong creativity. Concurrently, Bu (2010) held that for practical writing, product approach and genre approach were deemed appropriate, while PGA was considered suitable for narrative writing, expository writing and argumentative writing. As such, instead of viewing PGA as a one-size-fits-all approach, future studies should explore its combination with other instructional approaches to jointly cultivate learners' comprehensive writing ability.

In conclusion, while the application of PGA in China shows promising theoretical and empirical achievements, more critical attention needs to be paid to empirical validation, genre diversity, technological integration, learner proficiency and pedagogical combination so that researches on PGA in EFL writing contexts could be further enriched and advanced.

Research limitations of this study

Although conducted under meticulous examination, this study yet encounters certain limitations. Firstly, gray literature like non-core journals, dissertations, thesis, and conference proceeding are not included in this study, affecting the generalizability of research results. Beyond that, 3 databases are exclusively adopted for data sources, which may exclude valuable relevant studies published in other sources. Furthermore, high heterogeneity among included studies poses challenges for direct comparison and meta-analysis. Last but not the least, research results are confined to the domain of Chinese EFL writing teaching, which may be not so referential and instructive for the application of PGA in other countries. Following researchers can enrich and refine the achievements by expanding the scope of literature, adding authoritative databases as data sources, making comparison within homogeneous studies, etc.

Conclusion

This study strives to conduct a systematic literature review of PGA in EFL writing teaching in China on basis of 25 articles collected from Chinese core periodicals in CNKI, Wanfang and CQVIP databases. Three research questions are addressed to present a comprehensive picture of the research status, research achievements and developmental implications of PGA,

embodying the research novelty in this study. In terms of research status, from 2001 to 2022, theoretical and empirical studies on PGA had comprehensively explored a wide range of educational contexts and genres. It is further corroborated that PGA in EFL writing teaching in China has generated substantial achievements no matter from theoretical or practical perspective. However, seen from the developmental implications, it necessitates further scholarly attention, including additional empirical studies, exploration across a broader range of genres, integration with technology, consideration of proficiency levels, and collaboration with other instructional approaches. It is hoped that this study would arouse more attention and interest in investigating PGA so that more valuable references could be achieved for following research.

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Competing Interests

No, there are no conflicting interests.

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Appendix A
Coding Results

No	General Information of Publication			Research Paradigms	Research Contexts	Research Genres	Research Results and Implications	
	Title	Author	Year					Source
1	College English writing instruction from the perspective of digital humanities: Ideas and methods	Liang Haiying	2022	Waiyu Jie	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	×	Result: Incorporating various digital humanities tools in process genre approach instructional processes is beneficial to students' writing ability, collaboration ability, critical thinking and innovative ability. Implication: It is anticipated that more convenient digital humanities tools could be explored in combination with foreign language writing ideas and approaches to facilitate the foreign language writing teaching efficiency.
2	The establishment and practice of multiple evaluation-based intelligent instructional model—Take general academic English writing class as an example	Wang Xuesong Gao Yang	2022	Hebei Jingmao Daxue Xuebao (Zonghe Ban)	Empirical research	Colleges and universities	Academic writing	Result: Multiple evaluation-based intelligent instructional model improves students' writing ability and critical thinking ability. iWrite facilitates the teaching efficiency and ameliorates teaching effects. Implication: How to manipulate online activities to ensure the learning effects, and how to understand students' cognitive development in this teaching model remains to be examined.
3	The application of process genre approach in English reading and writing teaching in primary schools	Li Yang	2022	Zhongxiaoxue Waiyu Jiaoxue	Theoretical research	Primary schools	Narrative writing	Result: It expatiates the applicable procedures of process genre approach in English reading and writing teaching in primary schools to improve students' writing ability and self-confidence.
4	English writing teaching practice under instruction of process genre approach in middle schools	Wu Qihong	2022	Zhongxiaoxue Waiyu Jiaoxue	Theoretical research	Middle schools	Practical writing	Result: It summarizes the detailed procedures of process genre approach in English writing teaching practice in middle schools, hoping to promote English writing teaching proficiency.
5	Implementing process genre approach in English writing teaching of middle schools	Zhang Guanwen	2021	Zhongxiaoxue Waiyu Jiaoxue	Theoretical research	Middle schools	Practical writing	Result: It analyzes teaching procedures of process genre approach in English writing instruction of middle school, which effectively improve students' writing ability and comprehensive quality.
6	Application of automated writing evaluation system in college English teaching	Zeng Qinghua	2018	Zhongguo Baoye	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	×	Result: Applying automated writing evaluation system in college English writing is able to refine evaluation method of process genre approach, relieve teachers'

7	Application of process genre approach in medicine SCI academic writing teaching	Cao Xiuping Yue Xiaolong	2017	Chongqing Yixue	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	Academic writing	pressure, promote students' initiative and improve their writing ability. Implication: Process genre approach warrants the assistance of new media and big data. Result: It details the procedures of applying process genre approach in medicine SCI academic writing teaching to cultivate students' cooperative learning ability and autonomic learning ability as well as to improve students' discourse awareness and writing ability.
8	Application of process genre approach in practical English writing teaching in higher vocational colleges	Song Chunmei Xiao Xuenong	2016	Heilongjiang Xumu Shouyi	Empirical research	Higher vocational colleges	Practical writing	Result: Compared with product approach, process genre approach is effective for reducing students' writing anxiety and improving their writing ability. Implication: More genres need to be explored.
9	Practical research on integrating process genre approach in English literature review writing teaching	Wu Wei Cui Gang	2016	Jiefangjun Waiyu Xueyuan Xuebao	Empirical research	Colleges and universities	Academic writing	Result: Process genre approach is beneficial for students' literature review writing. Implication: Students' proficiency level should be taken into consideration.
10	Application of process genre approach in English writing teaching of high schools	Ren Yongdong Zhang Jian	2014	Zhongguo Jiaoyuxue Kan	Theoretical research	High schools	Expository writing	Result: It expounds the teaching procedures of process genre approach in high schools, which distinctly arouse students' writing passion and improve their writing quality. Implication: Specific application environment should be taken into serious consideration while applying process genre approach.
11	Academic writing on basis of process genre approach in military schools	Jia Xinyan Jia Yukai	2013	Xiaoshuo Pinglun	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	Academic writing	Result: It introduces the teaching procedures of process genre approach in military schools, finding that instructors should focus on students' academic genre awareness so as to improve their writing quality and empower them stepping into field of international academic exchange.
12	Application of the genre-process approach in practical English writing course	Huang Jian Li Mei	2012	Waiyu Jiaoxue Lilun yu Shijian	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	Practical writing	Result: A teaching model on basis of process genre approach is constructed from both macro and micro perspective to relieve anxiety in writing.

13	Action research on cultivating students' English writing awareness through training	Chang Wanli	2012	Zhongxiaoxue Waiyu Jiaoxue	Empirical research	Middle schools	Practical writing	Result: Process genre approach with writing training activities is feasible and beneficial for students' writing knowledge and awareness.
14	Study on experiential English writing evaluation mode on basis of process genre approach	Li Hongying Cai Huiping Luo Yi	2011	Jiaoyu Xueshu Yuekan	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	×	Result: Experiential English writing evaluation mode on basis of process genre approach is able to facilitate English writing teaching and optimize diversified evaluation mode that caters to Chinese contexts.
15	Application of process genre approach in English writing teaching	Li Wei	2011	Jiaoxue yu Guanli	Theoretical research	×	×	Result: It investigates the theoretical basis, application procedures, suggestion for process genre approach in English writing teaching. Result: It introduces the necessity of applying process genre approach in EFL writing courses and details the procedures of process genre approach which strengthen students' subjective initiative, raise their writing confidence and improve their writing ability.
16	Application of process genre approach in EFL writing course	Zhang Mang	2010	Qianyan	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	×	Implication: Process genre approach heeds the call of EFL writing teaching in China, deserving to be promoted. Result: Compared with product approach, process genre approach could better cultivate students' writing application strategy, improve their correction awareness, and promote their ability to use genre knowledge. Quantity and type of research objectives are limited, jeopardizing the generalization of results. Implication: Thinking-aloud method is suggested to know more about students' writing process.
17	Effects of process genre approach and product approach on students' writing application strategy and writing ability	Yao Xianghong	2010	Waiyu yu Waiyu Jiaoxue	Empirical research	Colleges and universities	Argumentative writing	Result: It compares the connotation, teaching procedures, advantages and disadvantages of four college English teaching approaches, suggesting that genre approach and product approach fit practical writing while process genre approach is suitable for narrative writing, expository writing and argumentative writing.
18	Comparative study on college English writing teaching approaches	Bu Nannan	2010	Shanxi Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Shehui Kexue Ban)	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	×	Result: Process genre approach can strengthen students' genre awareness, cultivate their critical thinking, and provide beneficial interactive activities. Process genre approach is more suitable for practical writing rather than
19	The application of the process genre approach to the teaching of English writing	He Xiaojia Ji Huinan	2009	Jiangxi Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Zhaxue)	Empirical Research	Colleges and universities	Practical writing	

				Shehui Kexue Ban)				literature writing like poetry and novel. It is unfit for low-starting-point students who are unable to fully understand the sample texts. Implication: Implementation of process genre approach merits further investigation and refinement.
20	Application of process genre approach in practical English writing in higher vocational colleges	Li Wei	2008	Sixiang Zhanxian	Theoretical research	Higher vocational college	Practical writing	Result: It investigates the introduction and application procedures of process genre approach in practical English writing in higher vocational colleges so as to improve students' writing ability.
21	Network teaching model of English writing-Application of process genre approach in multimedia and network environment	Shang Zhihui	2008	Yuancheng Jiaoyu Zazhi	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	×	Result: Based on analyzing the existing problems of English writing teaching in colleges and universities, it proposes a new teaching model which incorporates process genre approach in multimedia and network environment. Implication: Incorporating process genre approach in multimedia and network environment has become a trend.
22	A study on English major writing teaching in colleges and universities	Li Yanfei	2007	Zhongguo Chengren Jiaoyu	Theoretical research	Colleges and universities	×	Result: It introduces the development, procedures and issues to be noted for process genre approach.
23	Study on English writing anxiety and coping strategies	Liang Songhe	2005	Jiaoxue yu Guanli	Theoretical research	×	×	Result: Process genre approach is favorable to reducing writing anxiety.
24	Application of process genre approach in English writing teaching in high schools	Zhao Jianqun	2005	Neimenggu Shifan Daxue Xuebao (Jiaoyu Kexue Ban)	Theoretical research	High schools	×	Result: It introduces the necessity, theoretical basis and specific procedures of applying process genre approach in English writing in high schools.
25	English writing teaching: Process genre approach	Han Jinlong	2001	Waiyu Jie	Theoretical research	×	×	Result: It firstly introduces process genre approach into Chinese educational fields and elaborates the connotation of process genre approach. Implication: Process genre approach fulfills the current needs of EFL writing teaching in China, calling for promotion through experimental research.