

# A Genre Analysis of Reading Passages in the Vietnamese Upper Secondary School English Textbook Series Global Success

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## Research Article

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# Abstract

Vietnam's ongoing competency-based curriculum reform has placed great emphasis on Communicative Language Teaching and student-centered approaches. However, while genre plays a crucial role in language development and is explicitly represented in many educational curricula worldwide, the Vietnamese English curriculum organizes content primarily around themes and topics rather than genres. This study investigates the text genres represented in the reading passages of the Global Success English textbook series for Grades 10–12. Drawing on the Sydney School genre framework, the study employs a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative genre analysis and quantitative frequency analysis. The findings reveal that a wide range of genres appeared across the textbook series, with reports and arguments emerging as the most dominant genres. In addition, the frequency of macro genres increases progressively from grade 10 to grade 12, indicating a growing expectation for students to engage with more complex texts that integrate multiple genres and linguistic features. While the prominence of reports and arguments supports important informational and argumentative literacies, the uneven distribution of genres suggests the need for a more balanced representation. Greater exposure to a wider range of genres and subgenres may better support students' development of genre awareness and their ability to communicate effectively across different academic and real-world contexts.

## 1. Introduction

Genres play a crucial role in language acquisition. Each genre serves a specific communicative purpose with distinctive structural and linguistic features. The generic system within a curriculum typically evolves alongside learners' cognitive and linguistic development. As students progress to higher educational levels, they encounter more complex texts, demanding advanced information processing and critical thinking [15, 17]. Therefore, genre knowledge is considered a vital element in curriculum design and coursebook compilation [15, 27] as this knowledge helps learners improve reading comprehension, identify communicative purposes, and understand typical text organisation, vocabulary, and grammar [8, 48, 7]. Simultaneously, it enables teachers to plan instruction effectively. In the curricula of countries and territories such as Australia, the United States, New Zealand, England, Singapore, and Hong Kong, genres are explicitly represented, proving their significance in supporting academic reading and writing [6, 13, 38, 18, 39, 19].

In Vietnam, the educational system has significantly shifted toward improving learners' competence over the past few years. The 2018 General English Education Curriculum (2018 GEEC) [37] aims to develop students' communicative abilities through the student-centered Communicative Language Teaching approach. Following this orientation, the project "Making English the second language at school" was approved in 2025, marking a major milestone [44]. As English transitions from a subject to a tool for acquiring cross-disciplinary knowledge, it is important for students to get exposure to diverse genres to improve their language proficiency and autonomy in learning.

However, the 2018 GEEC and current English textbooks in Vietnam primarily organise content by topics, leaving generic features implicitly addressed. This lack of explicit focus can make it challenging for teachers to select appropriate teaching methods and limits students' exposure to different text structures and communicative purposes, stifling their language competence.

## 1.1. Genre definition

The term 'genre' has been used as a literary construct, referring to categories such as poetry, dramas, or novels. In the view of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), 'genre' is a "*recurrent configuration of meanings*" which "*enacts social practices of a given culture*" [21, p. 6].

## 1.2. Genre theories

Most genre theories are grounded in sociocultural theories of language and learning, where grasping knowledge and acquisition of language are anchored in everyday social and cultural activities shaped by beliefs, contexts, and relations [28]. There are three major genre theories that have been applied extensively in education and language development, namely, New Rhetoric (NR), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Systemic Functional Linguistics.

The New Rhetoric is a genre school that emanates from Activity theory, whose focus is on the inseparable pair of context and cognition [14]. In other words, the composition of texts is influenced by the genre schema of a writer and also the audience, the setting, the discourse communities, as well as the beliefs and cultural factors [3, 46, 10]. This thorough consideration results in the term "genre awareness", which promotes not only the acquisition of textual regularities of genres and their social situations, but also the ability to produce text genres as demanded in actuality in the future [3]. While this tradition is highly relevant and beneficial for education, it is challenging to apply for a variety of non-native EFL/ESL learners [3, 2].

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a movement that caters to the needs of diverse adult learners by researching and developing materials that enhance their familiarity with the textual patterns of the discourse communities they belong to [46]. Its focus is teaching English to non-native speakers in academic and professional contexts [24]. Due to this characterisation, ESP employs many instructional methods deriving from ESL/EFL teaching and has a major focus on language and text organisation [23].

Among the three genre theories, Systemic Functional Linguistics is a more popular approach to curriculum development for non-dominant, immigrant, primary and secondary students [3]. In SFL, a key concept is "register", which dictates linguistic choices in a situation through three variables: field (the social activity taking place), tenor (the relationship between participants), and mode (the role and channel of language in the situation) [21, 7]. Because genres are structured to achieve specific social goals, SFL forms a strong basis for genre-based pedagogies [30, 26]. This pedagogical approach explicitly teaches these textual configurations, enabling learners to grasp discourse structures and make meaning effectively in real-life English-speaking communities [42].

Although various genre classifications exist within Systemic Functional Linguistics, they are typically categorised based on specific institutional contexts. For instance, Brisk [31] identifies seven primary genres for K-5 classrooms, whereas Nesi and Gardner [21] outline 13 genres specific to higher education. Derewianka and Jones [7] offer a broader system with six main categories for educational settings. However, most genre classifications can be traced back to the work of Martin and Rose [21]. Their framework identifies six major genre families (stories, histories, explanations, reports, procedures, and procedural recounts) and a number of subgenres that serve different social purposes in educational, everyday, and professional settings. Due to its comprehensiveness, the framework of Martin and Rose [21] is used as the main foundation for this study. At the same time, later studies have expanded and refined their classification for educational purposes. To better capture the genres commonly found in the *Global Success* English textbook series, this study draws on and combines the frameworks proposed in [15, 21, 16], as summarised in Table 1.

Table 1  
The analytical framework of genres, subgenres and their social functions

| Genre          | Subgenre                              | Social function                                                                            |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| stories        | narrative                             | to tell a story with a complication and a resolution                                       |
|                | personal recount                      | to share a story without much disruption                                                   |
|                | anecdote                              | to share a story with disruption and reaction                                              |
|                | exemplum                              | to share a story with disruption and interpretation of behavior or character               |
|                | generalized recount                   | to recount events that recurred habitually                                                 |
|                | news stories                          | to report a story with different events unfolded through time through different viewpoints |
| histories      | biographical recount                  | to tell a lifetime of experience                                                           |
|                | autobiographical recount              | to tell the story of life from the writer                                                  |
|                | historical recount                    | to record past events                                                                      |
|                | historical accounts                   | to explain how one past event led to another or vice versa                                 |
| explanations   | sequential explanation                | to explain how things happen and imply a causal relationship                               |
|                | factorial explanation                 | to explain factors that contribute to something                                            |
|                | consequential explanation             | to explain the consequences or outcomes of something                                       |
|                | conditional explanation               | to explain the occurrence of something with different conditions or variables              |
| procedures     | everyday procedures                   | how to do experiments and observations                                                     |
|                | procedural recounts                   | recounting experiments and observations                                                    |
|                | protocols                             | to tell what to do and not to do                                                           |
| reports        | descriptive report                    | to describe or classify a phenomenon                                                       |
|                | classifying report                    | to classify something based on some criteria                                               |
|                | compositional report                  | to describe parts as a whole                                                               |
| arguments      | exposition (hortatory and analytical) | to argue for a point of view                                                               |
|                | discussion                            | to discuss two or more points of view                                                      |
| text responses | personal response                     | to share one's feeling about something                                                     |

| Genre | Subgenre       | Social function                                        |
|-------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
|       | review         | to evaluate a literary, visual or musical text         |
|       | interpretation | to identify the underlying message and cultural values |

However, some reading passages in the *Global Success* series do not strictly follow the criteria outlined in the analytical framework. This is when the term “macrogenre”, which means “a complex of elemental genres” [15], is adopted to deal with texts’ hybridity.

## 1.3. The role of genre in developing reading skills

Genre instruction has been shown to be beneficial for enhancing reading comprehension [47, 41, 4, 1, 9, 32]. These positive gains in reading comprehension were attributed to the activation of schema, recollection of background knowledge and increased concentration to organise their mind as learners managed to deconstruct the organisation and linguistic features [58, 33]. Nevertheless, it was suggested that simply explaining distinctive features in different genres or using merely one set of strategies for all genres may not confer positive effects on reading comprehension; rather, different strategies for approaching different genres may be more relevant for students [40, 11].

## 1.4. The role of textbooks in genre instruction

English textbooks are crucial in equitably exposing English language learners to various genres through reading texts, as they are the major and primary source where the teaching and learning take place in relation to the objectives and curriculum [20, 34]. They also play a pivotal role in impacting teaching methodology and learning styles and creating long-lasting effects [50]. Through these texts, the structures and linguistic resources are modeled for learners who may not have contact with these conventions before, enabling them to recognise social purposes, structures and features of important genres [13]. Such knowledge allows students, regardless of their background, to develop their genre awareness in order to understand texts and use language in social contexts appropriately. Given this pivotal role, there are a number of studies exploring the genre representation in English textbooks in ESL/EFL contexts globally [20, 5, 49, 22].

## 1.5. Research gap

However, in the context of Vietnam, the literature remains limited. To date, only a few studies have investigated genres and text types in Vietnamese English textbooks, with two representative studies, namely *Textbook evaluation: The case of English textbooks currently in use at Vietnam’s upper-secondary schools* and *Genre analysis of the reading passages in two high school English textbook series in Vietnam* [43].

## 1.6. Research objectives

To address this gap, the study conducts a genre analysis of reading passages across three high school grades (10, 11, and 12) in the *Global Success* textbooks. The findings are expected to provide empirical

evidence for curriculum developers and book designers, assist teachers in lesson planning, and offer students deeper insights into the communicative purposes, organisation, and linguistic features of various texts by answering the two following questions:

1. What is the overall distribution of genres and their subcategories across the *Global Success* textbook series from grade 10 to grade 12?
2. How are the frequencies of genres and their subcategories distributed across each individual grade level?

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, using qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the reading texts. The qualitative phase focused on identifying the genre of a text based on its communicative purpose. The quantitative phase measured the frequency and distribution of these identified genres across the three grade levels using Microsoft Excel. This combined design allows for a deep understanding of the patterns of genre distribution in the *Global Success* high school textbook series.

### 2.2. Data collection

The dataset for this study comprises reading passages extracted from the *Global Success* English textbook series for upper secondary schools (Grades 10, 11, and 12) [52–54], which is published by Vietnam Education Publishing House in collaboration with reputable publishers worldwide, Pearson and Macmillan.

Compared to previous textbooks of Vietnam, the *Global Success* textbooks are known for some transformative characteristics [56]. The first one is the active and equal collaboration between Vietnam Education Publishing House and foreign publishers, where the foreign partners work alongside authors in Vietnam to construct a textbook series adhering to the 2018 GEEC. The second outstanding feature is the appointment of a chief series author, Prof. Dr. Hoang Van Van, to oversee the development of the whole series to ensure the continuity and consistency in language knowledge and language skills. The third notable feature is the introduction to both important values in Vietnamese culture and those of the Western world thanks to the partnership. For these aforementioned features, *Global Success* was agreed to be used uniformly nationwide from the 2026–2027 school year [36].

The corpus consists of exactly 30 reading texts, corresponding to the 10 thematic units in each of the three textbooks. To ensure data consistency, strict exclusion criteria were applied: only the texts located within the dedicated Reading sections of each unit were collected. Other textual inputs, such as listening

scripts or writing samples, were entirely excluded from the analysis. All 30 selected texts were then obtained in Microsoft Word format (.docx) from hoclieu.vn, the official digital repository of the publisher, to facilitate the subsequent coding and analysis process.

## 2.3. Data analysis

The analysis comprised two distinct phases.

Phase 1: In the first phase, the collected texts were analyzed qualitatively using the classification framework of the Sydney School [15, 21, 16]. The coding process followed a systematic, step-by-step procedure. First, each text was read multiple times to grasp its general context. Second, the core communicative purpose of the text was identified. Third, the text was mapped against the specific categories outlined in the analytical framework (see Table 1).

A notable challenge during the analysing process is the presence of “macrogenres”, complex texts that embed multiple subgenres within a single passage. When encountering such hybrid texts, the analysis labelled them “macrogenres” instead of trying to attribute a specific genre to them.

To ensure analytical reliability and minimise subjectivity, any ambiguous texts were re-checked several times. These specific cases were carefully cross-checked and discussed in detail among raters until a clear consensus on the appropriate genre label was reached.

Phase 2: The second phase involved a quantitative analysis using Microsoft Excel to generate descriptive statistics. The frequency of each genre was recorded overall and for Grade 10, Grade 11, and Grade 12 separately. To facilitate comparison across the different educational levels, these raw frequencies were converted into percentages using (1):

$$P = (f / N) \times 100 (\%) \quad (1)$$

where  $P$  is the percentage of a genre,  $f$  is the number of texts identified in a specific genre, and  $N$  is the total number of reading texts. By quantifying the data, the study could objectively evaluate whether the textbooks provide a balanced generic input and whether the complexity of the texts adequately evolves alongside the students’ cognitive and linguistic development.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Research question 1: What is the overall distribution of genres and their subcategories in the grade 10–12 textbooks?

The first research question investigated the overall distribution of genres and their subcategories in the grade 10–12 textbooks. Table 2 presents the frequencies ( $f$ ) and percentages (%) of genres and their subcategories identified across the 30 reading passages, and Fig. 1 visualises the overall proportions.

Overall, the analysis reveals that the English textbooks for grades 10–12 encompass a wide range of genres, covering five major genre families alongside a substantial proportion of macro genres.

Table 2  
Frequencies and percentages of genres and subcategories in the grade 10–12 textbooks

| Genre         | Subcategories        | f         | %          |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Macro-genre   |                      | 8         | 26.7       |
| Argumentation | Exposition           | 4         | 13.3       |
|               | Discussion           | 4         | 13.3       |
| Histories     | Biographical recount | 1         | 3.3        |
| Stories       | Personal recount     | 1         | 3.3        |
|               | News story           | 2         | 6.7        |
| Reports       | Descriptive report   | 6         | 20.0       |
|               | Classifying report   | 3         | 10.0       |
| Procedural    | Protocol             | 1         | 3.3        |
| <b>Total</b>  |                      | <b>30</b> | <b>100</b> |

Figure 1. Percentages of genres across the grade 10–12 textbooks

Among them, reports constitute the highest number of texts, at 30%, comprising 6 descriptive reports (20%) and 3 classifying reports (10%). This is followed by the argumentation genre, at approximately 27%, with its two major subcategories, exposition and discussion, represented in equal proportions (4 texts each). Macro genres are encountered at the same frequency as argumentation, identified in 8 texts across the three grades' textbooks. The third most frequent genre is stories, making up 10% of the corpus with one personal recount and two news stories. Histories and procedural genres appear much less frequently, only once each, in the form of a biographical recount and a protocol respectively. Nevertheless, the protocol subgenre is identified four more times in passages that combine multiple genres (macro genres). Similarly, the explanation genre, while never realised as a complete stand-alone text, is found within macro genre texts four times, with consequential explanation prevailing. The only genre family absent from the corpus is text response, which is not found in any of the three textbooks. Taken together, this distribution suggests that the series concentrates its reading input on informational and argumentative texts, while narrative, historical and evaluative genres occupy a peripheral position.

The classification process can be illustrated with two cases. A prototypical example is the reading passage in Grade 10, Unit 1, which opens with a Thesis stage stating the writer's position ("*However, studies show doing chores is good for children*"), develops four Argument stages each elaborated with supporting evidence, and closes with a Reiteration of the position ("*All in all, doing housework can bring a*

*lot of benefits to children*”). Its communicative purpose of arguing for a point of view, together with this staging (Thesis ^ Arguments ^ Reiteration), identified the text as an exposition.

Not all texts were as prototypical. The reading passage in Grade 11, Unit 9 is, in essence, an exposition on peer pressure; however, its two central Argument stages are realised as anecdotes recounting Thanh’s and Van’s experiences and the feelings these events provoked. The text thus displays genre hybridity in the service of an overarching hortatory purpose. Following the categorisation rule adopted in this study, which is that any passage realising more than one elemental genre was coded as a macro genre, the text was classified as a macro genre (exposition & anecdote). Borderline cases such as this were resolved through repeated re-reading of the staging and discussion among the raters until consensus was reached.

### **3.2. Research question 2: How are the frequencies of genres and subcategories distributed among each grade level?**

The second research question investigated how the frequencies of genres and their subcategories are distributed among each grade level. Table 3 demonstrates the results as frequencies and percentages, and Fig. 2, Fig. 3, and Fig. 4 illustrate the distribution within each grade. The total number of reading passages chosen for analysis in each grade is 10.

In grade 10, students are exposed to 4 genres in total, namely argumentation, reports, stories and macrogenre (Fig. 2). Argumentation and reports are the two dominant genres, at 40% each. Within argumentation, 3 texts are identified as expositions while only one is categorised as a discussion. Similarly, within reports, the descriptive report is the more common subgenre compared to the classifying report, with 3 and 1 texts respectively. One text is identified as a macrogenre. Grade 10 thus concentrates 80% of its reading input in just two genres, suggesting that the series front-loads informational and one-sided argumentative texts before diversifying the generic repertoire in later grades.

The grade 11 textbook affords students an opportunity to revisit the same genres introduced in grade 10 (Fig. 3). While reports and argumentation are still commonly represented in the reading sections, macro genre emerges as the dominant category, at 40%. Following macro genres are reports, found in 3 texts (2 descriptive and 1 classifying). In third place is argumentation, though only the discussion subgenre is found, in 2 texts. The story genre is represented only once, as in the previous grade, albeit through the news story subcategory. Exposition subgenres in this grade actually do not disappear; rather, they continue to appear as constituents of macro genre texts, indicating that the argumentative strand is sustained within increasingly complex textual environments rather than abandoned.

The grade 12 textbook covers the most diverse range of genres, with five major genres identified along with macro genres, which maintain their position as the top category, at 30% (Fig. 4). Argumentation and reports follow closely, at 20% each. As regards the former, discussion and exposition are distributed equally, while the latter is also divided in equal measure, with 1 classifying and 1 descriptive report. The

histories genre emerges for the first time with a biographical recount, at 10%. At a similar frequency of distribution are the stories genre, with 1 news story, and the procedural genre, with 1 protocol. The widening generic repertoire in the final grade may indicate a deliberate broadening of exposure once the core informational and argumentative genres have been consolidated.

Viewed across the three grades, three trajectories stand out. First, macro genres rise steeply from 10% in grade 10 to 40% in grade 11 and remain high at 30% in grade 12, indicating a growing expectation for students to engage with texts that integrate multiple genres and their linguistic features. Second, within argumentation, stand-alone exposition texts decline (3–0 – 1) while discussion ones stay relatively steady (1–2 – 1), so that more multi-perspective texts and fewer one-sided ones appear toward grade 12. Third, the stories genre remains flat at exactly one text per grade, while histories and procedures surface only in grade 12, suggesting that narrative and specialised genres remain peripheral throughout the series.

It is also notable that throughout the analysis there are texts in the grade 10–12 textbooks in which tenor, mode and field do not necessarily align, making up atypical texts. For instance, in the Grade 12, Unit 10 reading text, the exposition subgenre is realised through a heartfelt letter from a head teacher to convince her students to pursue lifelong learning. In these cases, it was through the analysis of staging and the context of the situation that the social functions of the text could be determined. This allows teachers and students to perceive genres critically and flexibly as they appear in multiple social contexts. Moreover, this clearly distinguishes between genres and text types, with only the latter mentioned in the 2018 GEEC [37].

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that reports and argumentation are the most common genres in the corpus, that macrogenres increase markedly after grade 10, and that stories, histories, explanations, procedures and, above all, text responses are minimally represented or absent. The findings point to a series that prioritises informational and argumentative literacy while offering an increasingly complex, hybrid textual environment as students progress.

Table 3  
Frequencies and percentages of genres and subcategories by grade level

| Genre         | Subcategories             | Grade 10 |           | Grade 11 |           | Grade 12 |           |
|---------------|---------------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
|               |                           | f        | %         | f        | %         | f        | %         |
| Macro-genre   |                           | 1        | 10        | 4        | 40        | 3        | 30        |
| Argumentation | Exposition                | 3        | 30        | -        | -         | 1        | 10        |
|               | Discussion                | 1        | 10        | 2        | 20        | 1        | 10        |
|               | <b>Total</b>              | <b>4</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>20</b> |
| Histories     | Biographical recount      | -        | -         | -        | -         | 1        | 10        |
|               | Historical recount        | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | Autobiographical recount  | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | Historical accounts       | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | <b>Total</b>              | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>1</b> | <b>10</b> |
| Stories       | Personal recount          | 1        | 10        | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | News story                | -        | -         | 1        | 10        | 1        | 10        |
|               | Narrative                 | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | Anecdote                  | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | Exemplum                  | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | Generalised recount       | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | <b>Total</b>              | <b>1</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>10</b> |
| Reports       | Descriptive report        | 3        | 30        | 2        | 20        | 1        | 10        |
|               | Classifying report        | 1        | 10        | 1        | 10        | 1        | 10        |
|               | Compositional report      | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | <b>Total</b>              | <b>4</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>20</b> |
| Explanation   | Consequential explanation | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | Sequential explanation    | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | Factorial explanation     | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | Conditional explanation   | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |
|               | <b>Total</b>              | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b>  |
| Procedural    | Everyday procedure        | -        | -         | -        | -         | -        | -         |

| Genre          | Subcategories      | Grade 10  |            | Grade 11  |            | Grade 12  |            |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                |                    | f         | %          | f         | %          | f         | %          |
|                | Protocol           | -         | -          | -         | -          | 1         | 10         |
|                | Procedural recount | -         | -          | -         | -          | -         | -          |
|                | <b>Total</b>       | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>   | <b>1</b>  | <b>10</b>  |
|                |                    |           |            |           |            |           |            |
| Text responses | Personal response  | -         | -          | -         | -          | -         | -          |
|                | Review             | -         | -          | -         | -          | -         | -          |
|                | Interpretation     | -         | -          | -         | -          | -         | -          |
|                | <b>Total</b>       | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>   | <b>0</b>  | <b>0</b>   |
| <b>Total</b>   |                    | <b>10</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>100</b> |

## 4. Discussion

This study examined the representation and distribution of genres in the reading passages of the *Global Success* English textbook series for grades 10–12. Overall, the findings reveal several notable patterns: the dominance of reports and argumentation, an equal balance between the exposition and discussion subgenres, a marked increase in macro genres across the grades, and the underrepresentation of stories, histories and the absence of text responses. Each of these patterns is discussed in turn.

The predominance of reports and argumentation aligns with previous studies exploring the representation of genre in English textbooks for K-12 education across countries [20, 43]. The results are also in line with the investigations of Dost [20] and Ørevik [49], in which the descriptive report subcategory accounts for the majority. The prominence of descriptive reports is justifiable, as it aligns with Level 3 of the Vietnamese language competence framework [35], which requires the comprehension of reading texts related to everyday-life topics, including many factual and informational texts. The distribution thus privileges the provision of information to help develop students' factual knowledge; such informational input may support comprehension by activating schemata and background knowledge [58], while the repeated modelling of report conventions gives learners contact with structures and linguistic resources they may not otherwise encounter [13]. However, the steady decline in the report genre from grade 10 to grade 12 suggests that less importance is progressively attached to this informative genre as attention is distributed more equally among other varieties of genre, which could be compatible with students' better cognitive ability in the last year of upper secondary education (Keating, as cited in [29]). At the same time, the concentration on descriptive reports echoes the concern raised in [40] that over-reliance on a single informational subgenre may come at the expense of generic diversity.

Contrary to previous studies [20], which found that the exposition subgenre dominates the discussion one, throughout the three textbooks discussion and exposition are distributed equally, which shows a relatively great focus on argumentative literacy – both the ability to defend one’s standpoint and to consider multiple viewpoints on a matter. This balance well reflects the emphasis on students’ ability to analyse different viewpoints and develop independent thinking skills outlined in the 2018 GEEC [37], as such texts can encourage learners to reject biased views and develop sound reasoning and critical thinking. It is also noticeable that the genre analysis of Nguyen [43] found no presence of the discussion subgenre in the English textbook series, which might be attributed to either an update in reading content or the different categorisation system that her study employed. In addition, several explanations for this finding are plausible. First, the 2018 GEEC explicitly targets the evaluation of multiple perspectives as a learning outcome [37]. Second, the series was developed under the editorship of a chief author with a background in Systemic Functional Linguistics [55], which may have resulted in a more genre-conscious selection of reading input. Third, washback from writing tasks requiring opinion paragraphs and essays may favour balanced argumentative input [52–54]. Given the small number of argument texts ( $n = 8$ ), however, this balance should be interpreted with caution. Furthermore, the trend observed across grades, with more discussion texts and fewer stand-alone expositions toward grade 12, may indicate a transition in students’ learning pathways from processing one-sided texts to multi-perspective texts. Such argumentative texts can also help students scaffold essential skills in the process of transitioning to ESL, which is gaining traction in the Vietnamese educational system [44].

Macro genres are identified 8 times in the grade 10–12 textbooks, with a gradually increasing number from grade 10 to 12, suggesting the books’ greater attention to students’ exposure to texts that combine different purposes to create a whole cohesive text. Notably, this trajectory is the reverse of that reported in [20], where macro genre exposure declined across grades and was entirely absent in grade 10. Exposure to such texts can help students improve literacy levels and think more critically about how genres are interwoven and combined to convey meaning effectively. It is notable that the explanation genre is often combined with exposition texts, allowing students to comprehend more complex reasoning and transfer such skills to writing; furthermore, the descriptive report subgenre is also fused with argumentation genres, which can be useful in instructing learners how to merge different genres in a text to serve an overarching purpose. Because different genres reward different reading strategies [40, 11], such hybrid texts raise the instructional demand that learners recognise and coordinate several sets of generic conventions within a single passage, which argues for explicit instruction rather than incidental exposure [51, 57]. As illustrated by the peer-pressure text in grade 11 (see Section 3.2), the constituent genres of a macro genre may be subordinated to a single overarching purpose, and identifying this hierarchy is itself an analytical skill that teachers can model.

In terms of the stories genre, the shift from the personal recount subgenre to the news story presents a logical transition based on the learners’ pathways [13]. Nevertheless, unlike previous studies [20, 5, 49], the stories genre and its subcategories remain underrepresented, which might be attributed to their possibly wider coverage in lower secondary school textbooks, as stories are one of the starting points for students’ exposure to genre, which is a conjecture that requires verification against the lower

secondary series. This, coupled with the absence of the text response genre, signifies a diminished focus on the evaluative and interpretive literacy that response genres develop such as reviewing, interpreting and responding critically to texts and, more broadly, on the creative competencies specified in the 2018 GEEC [37]. An alternative explanation is that the theme-based organisation of the units leaves little room for literary texts. Whichever explanation holds, the gap is consequential, as Level 3 of the Vietnamese language competence framework requires creative writing, personal response, review and story writing [35], and response genres become more prevalent during university and college study in the form of critique, empathy writing and narrative recounts [21]. Greater representation of these genres would therefore serve both curricular targets and students' post-secondary needs.

Overall, the genre distribution in the *Global Success* series from grade 10 to 12 partially follows the spiral curriculum suggested by the Sydney School [21, p. 138], which moves learners from genres 'closest to spoken language' toward the more technically demanding and socially powerful genres of academic and professional life. It must be stressed, however, that the spiral operates selectively with reports and argumentation being revisited with increasing complexity across the three grades, whereas stories remain flat at one text per grade, and histories appear only once, and text responses never appear. The series thus prioritises informational and argumentative literacy over literary, personal narrative and evaluative literacies, and thus, the spiral principle is recognised for some genre families but not for others.

## 5. Conclusion

Several recommendations follow from these findings. Textbook developers could diversify the generic repertoire, particularly by incorporating stories, histories and text responses, and by deliberately recycling genres across grades so that the spiral principle applies to the full range of genre families. Curriculum designers could make the intended genre progression explicit in the curriculum rather than leaving generic features implicitly addressed within topic-based units, thereby assisting both textbook writers and teachers in planning instruction. In terms of teaching practice, the findings suggest that teachers need to place greater emphasis on developing students' genre awareness. This is particularly important given the increasing presence of macro genres from Grade 11 onwards. A genre-based approach, such as the Teaching-Learning Cycle, can help students understand how these texts are organized and how their linguistic features work together, making it easier for them to comprehend and interpret what they read. Teachers should also go beyond the genres already represented in the curriculum by providing additional exposure to less frequently taught genres, such as stories, historical texts, and text responses. This can help create a more balanced range of reading experiences for students. By explicitly guiding students to identify the purpose, structure, and language features of different genres, teachers can help them become more confident and strategic readers. These skills can support not only their learning in school but also their ability to engage with academic texts in higher education and with a wider range of texts in real-life contexts.

Finally, some limitations should be acknowledged. The corpus comprises 30 reading passages, so each text represents 10% of a grade-level sample; the trends identified here, while consistent, rest on small absolute differences and should be read as indicative rather than conclusive. In addition, the analysis was confined to the dedicated Reading sections; listening scripts and writing model texts, which also model genres, were excluded and may present a different generic profile. Future research could extend the analysis to these text types and to the lower secondary *Global Success* series, which would also test the conjecture that stories are concentrated in earlier grades, as well as to classroom studies of how teachers exploit the genres represented. Studies examining the effects of the identified genre distribution on students' reading and writing outcomes would further substantiate the pedagogical implications proposed here.

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## Author Contribution

Nguyen, L.T.H came up with the idea of conducting this research, selected the theoretical framework and methodology, oversaw the whole research, cross-checked the data analysis and its interpretation and refined the manuscript. Ho, T.U.N wrote the literature review, analysed the data, created data visualisation and tables and wrote the findings and discussion section. Vu, V.C.H edited the literature review, wrote the rest of the manuscript, analysed the data, organised the reference list and reviewed the manuscript.

## Data Availability

All data supporting the findings of this study are available within the paper and its Supplementary Information. The qualitative data analysis (genre analysis) could be found in the Supplementary Information.

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## Figures

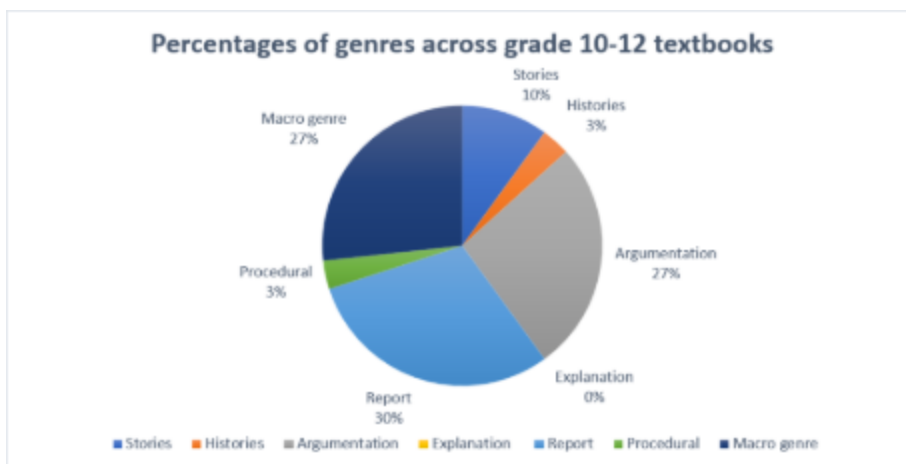


Figure 1

***Percentages of genres across the grade 10-12 textbooks***

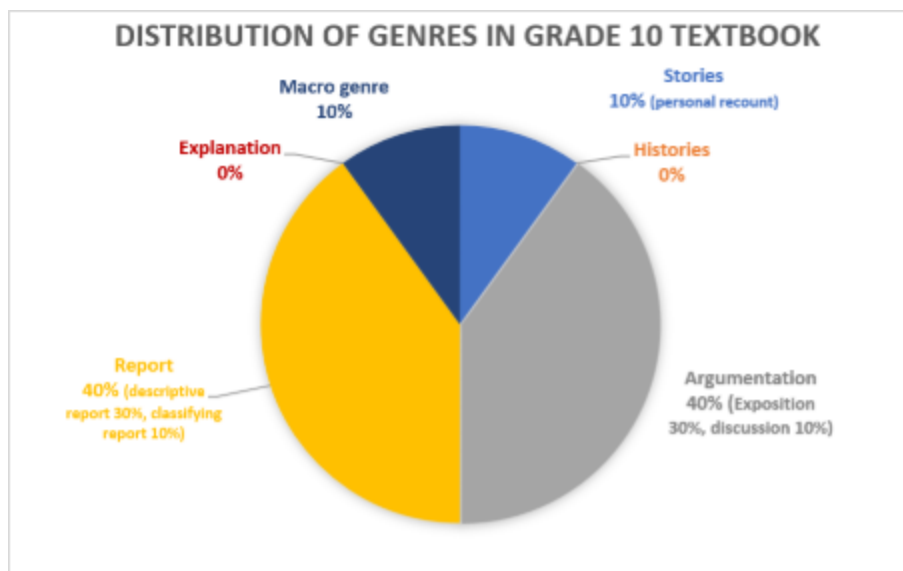


Figure 2

*Distribution of genres in the grade 10 textbook*

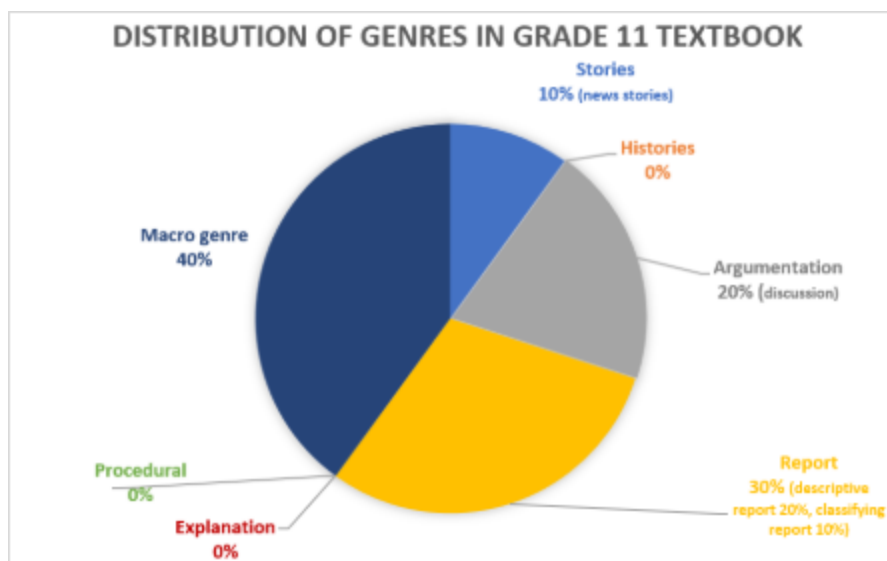


Figure 3

*Distribution of genres in the grade 11 textbook*

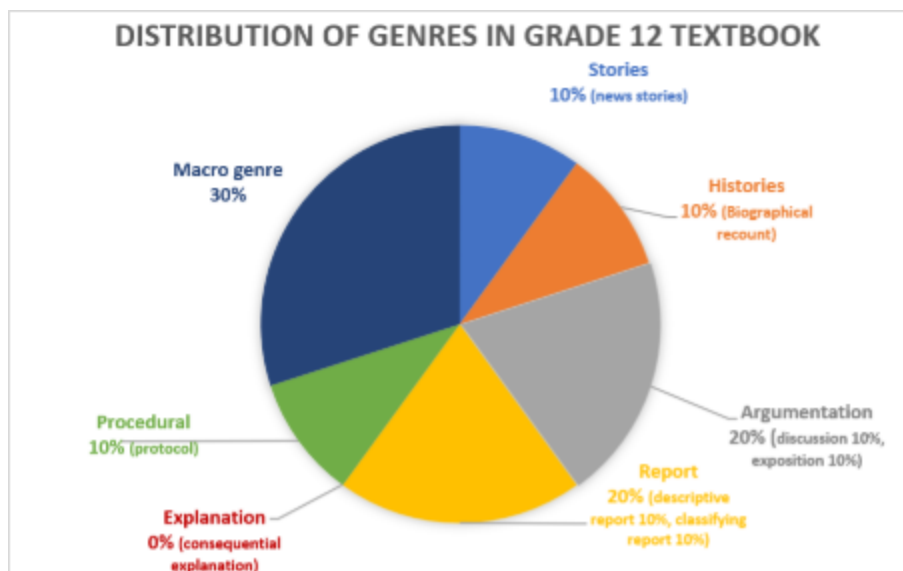


Figure 4

*Distribution of genres in the grade 12 textbook*