Chapter 5

Findings and Implication

5.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the findings and implications of the results discussed in previous chapter. The major findings are presented in relation to the research questions asked; and their implications are given for undergraduate students who wish to pursue higher studies and for the teachers and material producers. The main aim of the study is to evaluate effectiveness of corpus based genre approach to academic writing. Evaluation was carried out through a careful examination of learner drafts over a period of three months. During the research observations of learners with regard to using genre and corpus as rich sources of language were made. It can be inferred from the discussion in the previous chapter that these sources need to be used in classroom with caution because overgeneralizations about language use can lead to misconceptions. If used carefully, these tools can provide solution to the problems of learners, teachers and material producers. A detailed analysis of the multiple drafts, written by learners, pertaining to the selected genres, result in some valuable findings regarding genre and corpus use.

5.1 Findings with reference to genre use

- It was found that the participants were not familiar with the moves in producing academic texts. An understanding of genre conventions resulted in learners writing genres appropriately. Such texts also helped learners to achieve desired results in academics.

- Description texts (COP group) in spite of being simple in terms of content complexity seemed to have posed challenges for learners as they lacked the knowledge of ‘what and how’ to describe people and events.
• Awareness of genres and genre analysis processes enabled learners become independent and helped them to improvise their writing considerably.

• Training in sample genre texts facilitated critical reading of texts and understanding the purpose and motive behind each piece of text which further enhanced their chances of becoming better writers.

• Analysis of sample texts did not lead the learners to reproducing the sample texts; rather it assisted learners in understanding the content and language pattern required of that genre.

• A significant finding was that learner background knowledge to able to produce a text as expected by teachers varied from each other. It was evident when they responded to the description item.

• Genre inputs have had an effect on the citation of examples and references by both the groups of learners.

• Relatively late introduction of research based writing seems to have influenced learner’s background knowledge too of the genres selected. In such situations, expecting learners to master the skill of research based writing by their own hampers learners chances to succeed in desired discourse community.

• Each kind of writing has specific language patterns and preferences. Awareness of these patterns through genre aided learners’ use of language in effective ways.

• An uncritical reading skill of learners in analyzing the texts was evident during the intervention. This did seem to have an effect on the quality of content in their writing.

• Contributing to changes in the holistic restructuring of genres was found to be a challenging task. No learner showed a shift in modifying genre conventions to accommodate their meaning. Going by what critical pedagogues argue these learners were not ready to experiment with genres yet.
- Most of the changes observed changes were related to the moves incorporated.
- Language related changes confined their scope to the use of verbs, prepositions, adjectives, phrases and referencing skills.
- Learners did not pay extensive attention to collocational patterns in the sample texts.
- There has been an improvement in terms of the objectives of writing a text and its organization.
- Learners have shown maturity in their showing differences between different kinds of genre.

5.2 Findings with reference to Corpus use

- Most of the searches are made using basic search paths such as key word search for concordances
- Advanced search options such as POS (Parts of Speech), collocational patterns, and frequent count of a word were rarely used.
- Most of the search results are for concordances. Charts and tables were not searched for to get an overview of the searched item.
- Majority of the concordances were generated without controlling specific genre and usage time period factors.
- The key word in almost every search was a basic head word. Most of the search words belonged to high frequency category and used in spoken English such as *tell, discuss, speak, describe, present* and so on.
- A large number of words selected after they analyzed the concordances.
- Synonyms of words (both nouns and verbs) were searched extensively.
- Subject verb agreements were observed from concordances quite often.
- A limited number of phraseological patterns were searched and noticed.
- A very few instances of use of inappropriate synonyms were observed.
• Although learners were advised to use dictionaries to clarify meaning related confusions, a large number of students tried to infer various meanings of words through concordances.

• Most of the search words are the ones either used by learners in their first drafts or the ones they wanted to use from the sample text.

• A small number of instances of use of phrases from concordance lines have also come to limelight.

• Often the desire to use words in multiple ways became the basis for the search. No specific focus was decided before beginning the search.

• Genre or register specific searches are very limited. Therefore, no explicit example of use of target genre pattern is exhibited.

• The modifications done by learners exhibited their reading of concordances horizontally.

• There is little evidence to suppose that they have applied any possible ways or strategies to fine-tune their generalizations and analysis.

• In concordances, mostly the immediate words to the right of the target words were observed.

5.3 Overall Major finding

• 90 % of students’ second and third drafts exhibited an improvement in terms of both content and language.

• An improvement in the confidence of learners to take an initiative to write a text was observed.

• Most of the learners opined (in the checklists) that a beneficial aspect of the genre and corpus tools was the substantial input they provided.

• Learners felt more comfortable identifying and modifying their mistakes by themselves without relying on a teacher or any other outside source.
• Genre analysis contributed to the critical reading skills of the learners enabling them to analyze a text to improve their writing besides just getting content information.

• Corpus data opened a vast arena of vocabulary in front of the learners to choose from instead of making use of a repeatedly using same words.

• A large percentage of informants of the study recognized the role of genre and corpus intervention to improve academic writing.

• Students identified minute differences between genres for example variations in paragraph writing (COP group) helped learners see genres with different perspectives.

• PGDTE learners showed an understanding that research based writing does not merely mean empirical or methodological details.

• Overgeneralizations and uninformed searches lead to drastic language related misunderstandings.

5.4 Implication for learners

Although the number of participants who took part in this study is 38 but these implications are valid for all students who wish to pursue university level education.

• Genre based pedagogy is extremely beneficial but it can also be misleading if learners do not choose appropriate sample text of a genre. The sample text for a genre should be chosen carefully after authenticating its validity in its respective field.

• Genres are constructed both in rigid and flexible moves in their own unique way. On one side where an expert user can experiment with the genres, learners are advised to first master the target genre rather than experimenting with it at the learning stage. This does not mean that
learners reproduce a copy of the sample text. They should follow sample genre texts as guidelines and should present their original ideas.

- Learners are instructed not to make generalizations about a genre based on a very small number of sample texts.
- Genre analysis have much more to offer than mere moves of a text type. In this study learners mainly focused on the moves. They can also look deeper into the meaning making process of these genres and the purposes they achieve by using a particular kind of language.
- Genres are useful source of use of language in real life contexts. Instead of looking at genre as mere texts for academic purposes, learners need to perceive them more as social entities.
- Corpus based language learning can be very frustrating if the search is not focused and guided by a specific aim. So learners are advised to frame specific questions before approaching corpus (COCA).
- Learners tend to overgeneralize corpus findings. Native speaker corpus is a reliable source of language as far as usage norms are concerned; however, it could equally be unreliable in case of use as the non-native norms tend to exhibit cultural, spelling and meaning variations. Learners must cautiously make use of corpus findings in contexts where they are applicable.
- In this study, it was observed that most of the learners searched only single words and observed patterns only to the right of the node word. It would be exciting to know the other collocates of the words as well.
- Learners are advised to search all derivatives of a word separately for clarity of usage.
- Learners are advised to use various search option and various word combinations to get specific results.
• Corpus (COCA) is also divided into multiple genres and multiple short period timelines. To understand the use of a word or phrase in a specific discourse, learners should limit their search by selecting relevant options.
• Corpus exploration demands quite a lot of time and sometimes learners become lethargic to properly analyze the data and copy concordances without properly understanding the contextual meanings. This leads to wrong use of language. Learners, in case of confusion, should cross check meaning of words by looking up a dictionary.
• Learners should also understand the fact that corpus provides language as it is used in the world and does not give any information about whether something is right or wrong. It is up to learners to evaluate the data and decide whether something is appropriate for their local context.

5.5 Implications for Teachers

Although the aim of both genre and corpus studies is make learners become independent, teachers play a vital role in the process of achieving this aim. A few recommendations for teachers to make use of genre and corpus tools are as following.

• Learners, especially at university studies come from various educational and socio-cultural backgrounds. Hence, their perception of world as well as writing texts is different. In such situations, teachers should not assume that learners would learn various types of genre writing during their educational career rather by providing required genre input; teachers can increase the speed of learning by facilitating the process.
• Teachers should select genre samples carefully after researching carefully as the sample text would represent particular target genre. An inappropriate text may fail to exhibit all aspects of an appropriate text.
• In the initial stages of genre instruction, teacher should make move framework for learners to guide them through the process of analyzing a text. They should also aid learners in observing target genre distinctive language patterns.

• Corpus exploration requires basic knowledge of computers. There are always a few techno savvy learners but for others who are not familiar with the use of technology, teachers should conduct orientation sessions to familiarize them with computer use as well as the search paths of corpus (COCA).

• Teachers should allow learners explore corpus extensively in the initial stages without very specific questions in mind. This will allow learners to overcome their inhibitions about using corpus.

• Teachers should be conversant with the use of corpus tools such as search techniques, data display, controlling the search options, making specific searches before they use it in classroom.

• Teachers should guide learners to decide on the focus of their search before they access concordances.

• Teachers should guide learners read concordance lines and observe language patterns both horizontally and vertically.

• If possible, teachers should keep a tab on learner search records and question them why they searched a particular item and what did they observe. This will help teacher evaluate whether learners are making appropriate generalization or just referring to concordances at superficial level.

• Teachers can also use paper based concordance activities to develop analytical skills of learners.

• Teachers can also encourage learners to use corpus to modify their texts based on teacher feedback.
• Teachers can familiarize learners with the changing nature of the language across years by enabling them observe how some words become more frequent in very less time and how some others become defunct.

5.6 Implications for Material producers

In India, genre analysis and corpus data have not been used extensively by material producers. Instead of creating artificial examples of language use, material producers can make use of language instances from corpus, which can be further validated with their social and cultural contexts.

• In this study, it was found that most of the learners struggled to deal with academic writing demands made by universities and educational institutions. Genre based materials should be designed to enable learners critically examine multiple sample texts and understand the technicalities of a genre rather than providing one specifically written sample text to be followed.

• Sample genre texts should be taken from the authentic sources and not created for the purpose of teaching. Probably, materials designers can identify text genres based on their content and context complexity.

• Materials with a focus on genre conventions, features and the purpose and logic behind a particular type of text production should be designed. Merely informing learners about the processes one takes up to produce a text is not enough to make them better writers.

• Instruction materials should be designed which enable learners question the way target reading texts are written and the role they play in society instead of plain factual or inferential questions.

• In addition to genre analysis, corpus should be used to provide multiple examples of target word or phrase to familiarize learners with the use of language.
• Use of concordances, as they are shown in corpus, should be included in the materials.
• Material should be designed which shows how corpus can be used to modify a written text.
• Material producers should provide large language data base to learners for exploration and making generalization instead of providing tailor made answer to everything.
• In India, we do not have any corpus of our own. Although native corpora are useful source of information but at times, L2 learners fail to understand cultural connotations of native language use.
• Sample genre text analysis and the colour coding technique of corpus should be combined together in materials to enable learners observe patterns easily.

5.7 Pedagogical Implication

Language as it is used in the real world has implications for both teaching and learning. Initial arguments in using real data in instruction stemmed from Sinclair’s (1990) attempts to demonstrate how important it is to use ‘real’ flowers to investigate issues of botany. He exclaims that analyzing real language provides reliable results and also help us understand language as it is used. In continuation of the research work done by Sinclair several other researchers too have examined real language as used in real contexts. A close study of these research studies suggests that analyzing real data by learners will expose them to real combinations of words and word preferences made in different contexts. One of the findings of such a research was by Paul Nation and his students where they studied Academic Language as used in written texts to come up with wordlists for academics. Later, Mark Davies employed a similar strategy of studying a large database of English as used by Americans and produced wordlists for various academic fields of study. Hence a careful study of real language helps teachers to
identify the needs of learners and can also become useful sources to design materials. Learning why we write the way we write is yet another trend in SL writing instruction. SL writing for long depended on individual abilities and gave less importance to discourse communities and their conventions. Emergence of genre analysis and its approaches to language analysis have allowed us to examine language as it is created and used by communities to achieve their purposes. John Swales and Vijay K Bhatia’s work involved such a study of why professional writers write the way they write. Their ideas are that if the learners are exposed to the moves involved in creating a piece of written text, it would make the process of exploration easier for the novice learners to master the conventions. Learner autonomy has been discussed over the years as notion to be achieved after a period of instruction. DDL approach being learner centric aims of making learners independent of external agents who provide immediate solutions to their questions. It aims at providing more learning opportunities for learners to study language in real contexts and makes them become researchers in their process of learning a language. In this study such an attempt has been made to guide learners to observe and analyze language data. By analyzing it is shown learners learn various aspects of language use. This study is an attempt to show how learners can be helped to study and analyse language patterns both at text and context levels. By a careful and conscious examination of language in real contexts learners learn faster and better.

5.7 Scope and limitations of the study

The main focus of the study was to examine how genre knowledge and corpus facilitate and enable learners improve academic writing. Expert written genre texts were used for intervention programme. Although researcher devised moves framework of each genre after consulting multiple genre samples from various sources, learners were not exposed to multiple samples due to time constraints. If
multiple drafts are used to for similar kind of genre interventions for writing, it can lead to an enhanced learning experience.

This study considered dealing with only six genres for two groups – paragraph writing for COP students and research based writing for PDGTE group. Experiments could not be done with other kinds of writings such as term papers, essays and so on which are equally important in academic scenario.

Furthermore, this study relied on data collected from written scripts and a checklist; and based on the data arrived on a few findings about the usefulness of genre corpus collaboration. While the result of the analysis shows remarkable improvement in writing of learners across the drafts, the findings cannot be generalized to broader context firstly, because the context of the study is limited to one university and students are of specialized courses. However, as the focus of the research is on academic writing, undergrad and graduate students of any Indian university who struggle to cope with academic challenges, this course can be helpful. For more specialized results, this study can be replicated in other socio-cultural and educational contexts.

5.8 Suggestions for Further research

There is need for a study which focuses on variations of a genre according to the purposes it fulfills. For instance, all types of abstracts - for conference papers, articles, thesis, and dissertations can be taken up for research. There should be similar kind of study with the use of non-native corpus which probably may result in different findings.

A learner corpus to highlight major problems in writing at undergrad level would also be a wonderful basis for research. Non-native or native corpora can be used to provide language input to learners. In this study, the focus was limited to broad word and textual level features. There can be study with specific focus on a few discourse features.
5.9 Conclusion
Thus, this study was conducted with two groups of learners who needed English language for academic and professional purposes. The aim was to facilitate learning of academic writing. Writing does not exist in isolation, it is connected to the context in which it is produced hence genre analysis was used to enable learners understand importance of context and purpose of a genre. But mere genre sample may not be helpful to learners of L2 who grapple to overcome language problems even at undergraduate level. Corpus with genre can help learners achieve much desired success in meeting academic standards.