Chapter 1
Design of the study

1.0 Introduction

Academic writing is now a major focus of second language writing research and teaching. The last 60 years of second language writing have witnessed remarkable shifts in ideology and in practice as well. These shifts in focus have been documented critically and historically by many researchers. Many papers aimed at defining the features of good writing and the scope of academic writing as well. In this chapter I discuss the nature of academic writing to set the objectives for the design and execution of academic writing courses for specific groups.

1.1 Academic Writing

Writing plays a major role in all academic contexts as it is one of the main mediums of assessing learners at various stages. Academic writing is also the most difficult and challenging task faced by every student at the higher levels because academics, as a rule, value precision, accuracy, appropriacy, among others features in language. Academic writing, as it is discussed in detail in chapter two, is a context dependent practice of producing good pieces of writing following a set of general principles of writing. While for some all forms of writing related to academics is academic writing, for some others academic writing follows a set of formal conventions and adheres to a set of rules. Chapter 2 elaborates on the limitations of approaches that of late governed the field of SL writing.

Academic writing is often equated with any writing produced by learners who are at the university level. At this level students need to write genres such as essays, summaries, expositions and book reviews. Also in certain universities students are asked to write dissertations in English which are typically structured as a
traditional thesis with clear introduction, review of literature, methodology, data analysis and discussion.

When students are unaware of the conventions of writing these longer pieces of texts such as dissertations, they need to be trained to write them. In fact at this level these students have to be taught not only a set of general conventions of academic writing but also discipline specific conventions including the purpose of writing, audience type, cultural appropriacy of content and writing styles. In such situations as Casanave puts it the writers

→ do not write in isolation but within networks of more and less powerfully situated colleagues and community members. They learn to forge alliances with those community members with whom they share values or whom they perceive will benefit them in some way and to resist when accommodating does not suit them.” (Casanave, 2002)

Hence the genres we produce consider not only writer’s purpose but also the requirements of genre. Miller (1984) thus describes genres — responses to social situations” and are socially constructed and embedded. Swales (1990: 58) defines genre as comprising — a class of communicative events, the members of which share same set of communicative purposes.” These purposes are recognized by expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre’. When we talk about genre analysis, we mean by analyzing any genre text to understand the structures, language used, vocabulary and grammar patterns and the moves and generic features which are particular to that genre. Analysis and understanding of these features help teachers and learners in producing appropriate texts. Freadman (2012: 547) argues that — any genre… alludes to, or carries, the history of its own practice …. The pedagogical question … is how to bring a student to take her or his place in this history — to discover how something has been done before, and how it can be adapted to particular needs as occasions arise”. Hence, genres should be taught, and taught explicitly because conscious knowledge of language, social context, and purpose of writing
something and application of this knowledge enables learners to make choices and control their writing.

While constructing social reality SL writers require the knowledge of both micro and macro level aspects of writing. While genre based instruction provides the learners with clear moves as to how to produce contextually appropriate genres, corpus induction help learners to use appropriate vocabulary and grammar. In the next section, an argument for a corpus based genre approach is presented to formulate the hypothesis for the study.

1.2 Corpus Data

Corpus based language teaching has been a dominant approach primarily in countries where technology is extensively used in language instruction. According to Sinclair (1990) corpus is a principled collection of naturally occurring texts. Texts can be both spoken and written. However, a corpus at the moment depends on texts that are stored in the written form and are analyzed for words, patterns and other textual aspects that represent a specific variety or type of language use. For instance in the following set of concordances generated from COCA we can see how the word ‘analyse’ has been used.

COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) is an integrated suite of corpus tools which enable us to examine language as used in real American English contexts. It provides us the instances of word use, for example analyse, in multiple contexts. By observing the ways it is used we can understand the contextual and co-textual preferences of the word.
Language used in real world contexts is used to compile corpora. It is compiled in different sizes, and the size of a corpus depends on the purpose of building it. In other words, regarding the size of the corpus one believes that the bigger the database the better it is to form valid generalizations about its features. The size of a corpus can be anything between a few hundred words to millions of words, as in the case of Oxford corpus and COCA. For a detailed discussion on some notable corpora please see chapter 2.

1.3 Data-driven Learning

Data-driven Learning was introduced by Tim Jones in 1990 and the bottom line of this approach is: ‘students act as researchers’. Students are provided with language data and they work as researchers to understand the nature of language. The main advantage of this approach is student motivation. Students feel highly motivated to learn. This approach can be applied to corpus data in two ways: Data-driven Learning (henceforth DDL) with raw data and, DDL with designed material. DDL with raw data means students can be introduced directly to corpus through concordances. They can be provided with paper based concordances and allowed to work to draw generalizations about language. As this kind of process requires highly critical thinking, it can be best done with advanced level learners.
Another way of using corpus data with DDL is designing materials supporting concordance line. Teacher can design activities to be solved by referring to concordance lines. In this process, the work load on students is reduced, but they still feel as researchers because they are exploring language themselves.

1.4 Defining Terms

In the present study corpus and genre are used together to improve learner writing. A few terms related to these two areas are discussed below.

Concordances

Concordances are instances of word use organized both syntagmatically and paradigmatically for purposes of analysis. Primarily sources of language use are extensively studied for changes in word use across texts and time by lexicographers. A set of concordances for the word ' are given below for references.

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<td>1</td>
<td>, and other visions after death when undergoing anoxia, or oxygen deprivation. In <strong>concordance</strong> with this understanding, virtually every one of the phenomena I experienced after my own</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>* Ensure easy access to the lavatory # * Small rewards may be negotiated for <strong>concordance</strong> with management e.g. drinking recommended levels of fluid during the day or using the lavatory</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>nurse involvement potentially spans a whole range of interventions from promoting healthy lifestyle, through <strong>concordance</strong> with medication and for nurse prescribers, prescribing and monitoring treatment for management of hypertension</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>to manage and so need to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that <strong>concordance</strong> is maximised and side effects minimised. It is also worth checking that patients are</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>a biomarker of the hydrogen cyanide found in cigarette smoke. 12 13 There</td>
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was high **concordance** between self-reported and biochemically validated smoking measures; smoking measures were therefore not biochemically validated greater pressure to be abstinent. Furthermore, data from earlier surveys showed high **concordance** between self-reported and biochemically validated smoking measures, suggesting that our use of self-reported smoking in community settings and has excellent interrater reliability, good test-retest reliability, and sufficient **concordance** with clinical judgments and structured clinical interviews.

# TABLE: TABLE 1 -- Demographic

| # | 39. Swahn MH, Whitaker DJ, Pippen CB, et al. **Concordance** between self-reported maltreatment and court records of abuse or neglect among high-risk youths. Am |

likely than controls to report travel to areas with endemic malaria, and there was **concordance** between the parasite species and the region of travel. The association between parasite species

94% of patients with suspected catscratch disease. Despite the lack of **concordance** between serologic results and BAPGM enrichment PCR results, most (185 62.5%) patients

For realized services, this fraction rises to 50%, reflecting the spatial **concordance** of key intact habitats and human communities. # Figure 3. Global distribution of

Putting benefits in context: Comparisons with costs and income Our findings of strong spatial **concordance** among biodiversity conservation priorities, ecosystem service provision, and human need would be less

top-quarter areas for biodiversity from 326% to 264% of opportunity costs, while increasing the **concordance** between biodiversity and ecosystem services by 1.19%-1.60% for each of the four valuation alternatives (potential financial compensation schemes -- are particularly strong. In previous research, a spatial **concordance** of biodiversity and poverty has been reported
(Fisher and Christopher 2007), and

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<td>1</td>
<td>behavioural change and motivational interviewing techniques to empower patients, aid their understanding and improve concordance with advice and therapy should be utilised. Above all, care should be collaborative.</td>
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Table 1.1 concordances of ‘concordance’

*Source: Corpus of Contemporary American English*

**Genre Moves**

Genre as discussed is a purposeful creation of text. Each text such as comparison and contrast or a description follows a specific move order in presenting reality. In case of an abstract for instance the move structure typically follows the sequence of introduction to topic followed by a review followed by research problem followed by methodology and results. These moves in certain genres and disciplines are frozen. Every user is required to follow this procedure and moves.

**1.5 Research Problem**

One of the major problems regarding academic writing is that learners, in most of the Indian institutions, are not explicitly taught academic writing but they are expected to produce academically acceptable texts. Learners unaware of the generic conventions produce texts that fail to achieve the target language use requirements. From my teaching experience and the interviews I conducted with teachers and students I aimed at understanding some of the problems of learners; and I recognized that most of the learners at higher levels face the following problems in writing:

1. **Grammar**: they are not aware of the use of various tenses according to the genre.

2. **Lexis**: firstly, they are not aware of the use and usage of words in different situations. Secondly, they are not aware of genre specific vocabulary; hence they tend to use general vocabulary for academic purposes.
3. Genre: they do not have enough exposure to genre specific academic texts. The only exposure they get is from their textbooks or help books which generally do not represent a single genre or its features.

4. Organization: they are not aware of the organization of the texts that is they organize ideas in random order as they are not aware of the genre features.

5. Format and language: even if learners are provided with formats of a genre, the language inputs provided are very limited and hence result in most of the learners writing exactly the same sentences and expressions.

6. Discourse Markers: most of the learners are not aware of genre specific discourse markers such as in, so far, therefore, hence etc. They are taught a few discourse markers as part of their grammar courses through discrete items hence they fail to use it in their writing.

7. Different types of writing based on their purpose: most of the learners are aware of only two types of writing that is formal and informal. Beyond these two categories they do not know how to modify a text according to the purpose and the audience.

8. No Personal excess to inputs: teachers provide learners with a few sample texts and instructions to produce a text, but they do not have personal access to sources of language to clarify their doubts while they produce texts outside the classroom.

9. Redundancy: most of the students' writing is redundant. They write words to fill in the gaps and repeat words almost 6-8 times in a small text.

10. Plagiarism: most of the learners tend to copy lines, sentences as well as paragraphs from the samples provided by the teachers rather than producing their own texts.
11. Inappropriate genre: most of the learners fail to recognize academic writing as a formal genre and they write in the way they speak.

Therefore, I aimed at examining these factors (texts, contexts of learning, for example) that affect the performance of students whose primary objectives are to fulfill the academic requirements such as writing articles, assignments, term papers, reviews, abstracts to mention some of the most important tasks. The focus of the study is thus on utilizing corpus data and genre analysis moves to develop academic writing. in other words,

- Often, in learning contexts, attention may get deflected to the processes one takes up in the production of texts. As a result some crucial aspects, such as, lexico-grammatical features, textual, contextual, generic features, that make up the texts are ignored, and the writing does not meet academic standards.
- Issues related to the exploration of why we write the way we write are hardly discussed.

1.6 Hypothesis

Synergy between corpus studies and genre approaches to writing is more holistic and varied in learning and teaching academic writing. This confluence of micro (words, phrase, and discourse markers) and macro (genre) aspects of language supported by the notions of language learning will facilitate the learning of knowledge of language, context and complex skill required for academic writing.

The present study, in other words regards and retains some of the remarkable features of the process approach such as the focus on the text producer, the role of the audience, the internal processes of learning, and aims to incorporate the textual, contextual and generic features which determine the quality of academic writing.
1.7 Research Questions

a) Will the combination of corpus and genre analysis be useful in developing learner’s EAP writing skills?

b) What aspects of learners’ writing can be improved by following the designed framework?

c) What do learners opine about the use of corpus data and genre analysis in developing their writing skills?

d) How has genre analysis helped learners improve their writing?

1.8 Tools of research,

1. Multiple drafts of various genres produced by students

Checklists and questionnaires

1. Corpus checklist to capture views of students regarding the use of corpus.

2. Genre Checklist to capture views of students regarding genre analysis.

Corpus Tools

1. Word and Phrase.info.

2. COCA

1.9 Sample

This study is conducted with two groups of students. One group is Course of Proficiency (henceforth COP) students and second one are learners of PGDTE (Post Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of English). Both the groups are from The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. The sample size for the study is 38. Out of 38, 21 students are of COP group and 17 are of PGDTE group. Course of Proficiency is a part time course offered to students whose minimum qualification is intermediate. It is a short term programme of 160 hours duration. Students from various educational (B.A. B.tech, MBA, MCA, PhD and
so on) and socio cultural background enroll in this course. The main aim of these students is to learn basic academic English to succeed in higher education as well to get a job in their desired institutions. The needs of these learners to a large extent are broad and general. To succeed in their desired fields they require basic knowledge of various types of writing - descriptions, opinions, arguments, classification, covering letter, and resumes. After a discussion with the students and their requirements three types of paragraph writing was taken up for this study. The three genres are:

1. Description paragraph
2. Classification paragraph
3. Opinion paragraph

Similarly, students of PGDTE group also hail from various language backgrounds and hence they face problems in meeting the requirements of academic standards of higher education. The main reason behind these problems is – they need to produce a variety of genres which they are not aware of. A Few Genres they need to produce are:

- Research reports or projects
- Articles
- Summary
- Abstract
- Research proposals
- Analysis of literary texts, situations
- Essays
- Book reviews
- Small notes on literary concepts

Besides, these students join PGDTE course with various career goals in mind, hence their requirements and needs differ from each other. Few of the future goals of these students include:
joining higher studies (for this they need to write tests and research proposals)

starting a lucrative career in teaching and professional fields (for this they need to succeed in state and national level tests)

becoming editors in newspapers and so on (this requires adequate knowledge of language and genres)

Considering their need to produce various texts while studying as well their future career and study goals, three genres were selected to develop materials for this study. The selected genres are:

1. Abstract Writing
2. Summary writing
3. Book reviews

1.10 Methodology

Stage 1: Needs analysis and genre selection

In this stage, researcher interviewed both COP and PGDTE students and teachers to identify the problems they face in writing. Then the researcher looked at the types of writings they need to deal with to become successful in their academic contexts, and finally identified three genres for each of the groups for intervention programme. Simultaneously, the researcher designed materials for all the selected genres to be used during the intervention programme.

Stage 2: Intervention programme

As mentioned earlier, three tested genres for each group are selected for this study; hence the whole teaching part is also divided into three small parts – one part for each genre. Further each part has certain steps. These steps are:
a. At the beginning, researcher gives an open-ended writing task related to a genre to the students and asks them to produce a text.

b. Researcher gives genre related input to the learners with the help of a sample text. After genre awareness, Learners modify their texts for appropriate generic moves and vocabulary use.

c. Learners with the help of researcher identify a few common language related problems and explore online corpus and modify their writings.

This process gets repeated for all the three genres selected for input and during all these stages, researcher conducts informal or semi-structured interviews and uses checklist to know the response of leaners to corpus data, and the activities used. Towards the end of the teaching sessions, researcher uses genre and corpus checklist to document learners’ responses regarding the usefulness, appropriacy and convenience of using genre analysis technique and corpus exploration.

Stage 3: Final outcome

The data collected from the writing scripts for all the genres are analyzed qualitatively and the data collected from the genre and corpus checklist are also analyzed quantitatively. Tasks and activities designed for teaching purpose are consolidated in the form of a writing course. LCD (Liquid Cristal Display) projector and Power Point Presentations are also part of the course. Hence all the material used during the intervention was not paper based.

1.11 Scope of the study

The study is an attempt to facilitate the process of writing academically relevant text genres. While genres generally provide clear guidance in analyzing the macro textual aspects of a written text, corpus data have been induced in facilitating the learning of the micro level aspects of writing. This study has also attempted at a few relevant genres that the learners need for their academic purposes. While the scope of genres is confined to written texts, spoken genres in academics has not
been considered as part of investigation. The study also explores learner preferences in using genre and corpus in their writing. Furthermore, it examines the genres and the changes learners made in their texts after consulting corpus data. The study is thus comprehensive in its scope where both intervention and exploration are given equal importance.

1.12 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to establish the need for a corpus-genre approach to teach writing. While highlight the problems faced by learners to cope up with the challenges of academic writing, this chapter provides a broad outline of the research design. In the next chapter a detailed review of genre based pedagogy along with corpus based pedagogy are discussed to develop a framework for the study. Also an examination of COCA is provided.