Chapter III

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed the theoretical background to the study. The main goal of the current chapter is to present the design of this study. According to Creswell (2009), research design is the process in which the researcher includes the overall assumptions of the study, the method of data collection and analysis.

This chapter begins with the aims of the study, followed by the research questions and the context of the study. Later, it presents detailed information regarding subjects, design of the study, and the procedure used in the study. This includes a brief account of research tools, process-genre writing methodology and other procedural details.

3.1 Aim of the study

The primary purpose of the study was to improve the learners’ academic writing skills through process-genre approach. First of all, the study tried to understand the types of writing learners were required to practice as part of their undergraduate course. Next, it studied the problems learners faced while writing. Finally, it explored the possibility of using process-genre approach in improving their academic writing skills. Furthermore, the study tried to find out the impact of process-genre on the teaching of writing in the academic contexts.

3.2 Research questions

The present research is concerned with the problems faced by the learners in academic writing. The research questions were meant to help the researcher to find
out the existing problems of the learners and to examine the feasibility of process-genre approach in the teaching of academic writing. The research questions were:

- What types of writing do the first-year undergraduate learners require to write?
- What problems do these learners experience while writing at the undergraduate level?
- How effective is the process-genre approach in helping these learners develop their academic writing skills?

3.3 Context of the study

Rajendra College in Chapra, Bihar was chosen for the study which was affiliated to Jai Prakash University. The reason for selecting the college was that the researcher was a student of this college and later worked there for a year and he was aware of the problems learners faced there.

The subjects were from regional medium background with very limited knowledge of English language and its conventions. They hardly used English language for communication. But they were required to learn English writing skills so that they could communicate effectively in writing. Of all the four skills, writing was the most difficult. And, they were required to write different types of writing as part of their undergraduate course.

3.4 Subjects

Thirty undergraduate learners, who were doing first year English honours course in Rajendra College, Chapra, Bihar were chosen as the sample of this study. The total number of learners enrolled on this course was fifty-five but thirty learners were
regular to their class and they were considered part of this study. It was a mixed group with eleven boys and nineteen girls. Their medium of instruction was Hindi.

3.5 Design of the study

This study was exploratory in nature. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in order to collect and analyze data for this research. In other words, the mixed method procedure was applied for this research. The rationale for choosing the mixed method design was the freedom it gave to use the tools and the techniques as per the need. Data for this study was collected using questionnaires, interviews, and think aloud protocols as well as teacher diary. Qualitative approach is primarily based on constructivist perspectives (e.g. the multiple meaning of individual experiences, meaning socially and historically constructed, with intent of developing a theory or pattern) or participatory perspectives (i.e. political, issue oriented, collaborative and change oriented) or both. Most of the tools used in this research were qualitative in nature. The researcher collected open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data (Creswell 2003 p.19-20). It meant that the nature of the study was completed in natural settings and it could be analyzed and interpreted in a descriptive manner. At the same time quantitative information was also collected as and when required.

3.5.1 Qualitative research

The qualitative approach attempts to describe, interpret, and clarify the naturalistic research setting in social contexts. This type of research method tries to draw data which make sense of human behaviour within research context. The main methodological tools of qualitative research are observation and description. However, it also takes a range of various resources for collecting data. Qualitative
research is also known by names such as ‘naturalistic inquiry’, ‘interpretative research’ and ‘ethnography. This research method contained a variety of research approaches in it. This approach may incorporate action research, case studies, ethnography, and participant observation.

3.5.1.2 Main features of qualitative research

Many researchers have tried to define the features of Qualitative research (Barbour, (2008); Denzin and Lincoln (2011); Flick, (2009), Holloway and Wheeler, (2010); Silverman, (2011). Some of the essential features of qualitative research are:

- It is naturalistic in setting: For this study, the naturalistic setting was used. The classroom context was not disturbed at any point of the research. The researcher wanted to investigate the process-genre approach to writing in naturalistic setting. The artificial context was not created for this study. The main objective of using this setting was to know whether the practice of process-genre approaches to writing was feasible in the context of ESL learners.

- It uses interpretative approach for the study: This study followed an interpretative approach. It was experience based approach which helped the researcher to record the information and analytically disclose the meaning making practice.

- It is also participatory in nature: This research was participatory in nature. The researcher and the learners were involved in classroom teaching and learning.

- It is concerned with exploring phenomena ‘from the interior’ (Flick, 2009). This research was also concerned with the phenomena of exploring the
study from within. This phenomenon tried to explore each and every aspect of
data collection and analysis.

### 3.5.2 Action research

An action research has been defined by many distinguished scholars. Some of the
definitions are presented here.

Hodgkinson (1957) defines action research as

> a direct and logical outcome of the progressive position. After showing
children how to work together to solve their problems, the next step was for
teachers to adopt the methods they have been teaching their children, and learn
to solve their own problems co-operatively”. (Cited in Cohen and Manion
(1994, p.190)

Wallace (1998, p.4) puts forward his argument by stating that

> Action research is done by systematically collecting data on your everyday
practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decisions about what your
future practice should be. This process is essentially what I mean by the term
action research.

Nunan (1992) claims ‘action research executes the basic research demands, in which
it encompasses a researchable question or issue, data and interpretive analysis’ (p.18).

Action research has the following characteristics:

- It primarily focuses on concrete and practical issues of immediate concern to
  particular social groups or communities;
- It is carried out in natural setting;
- It requires systematic data collection and analysis;
• Qualitative methods such as observation and recording events and behaviours are used;
• It is participatory in nature;

3.5.2.1 Steps in action research

The steps followed while conducting action research are as follows:

• Collection of data/ data collection;
• Interpretation of data;
• Action based on findings and a plan for implementation;
• Evaluation of results;

(Ferrance, 2000, p.10)

Nunan (1992, p.19) presents the steps involved in action research cycle for the teacher and the researcher. The steps in the action research cycle are divided into seven stages. The stages are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step one: Identifying the problem</th>
<th>A researcher/teacher identifies a pedagogic problem in his/her own setting and decides to find a solution to the problem.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step two: Preliminary investigation</td>
<td>The preliminary investigation tries to identify/establish the problem through the classroom observation, interaction with the learners so on and so forth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step three: Hypothesis</td>
<td>The researcher/ teacher forms the hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step four: Plan for intervention</td>
<td>Intervention strategies are designed by the researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table seven: Steps involved in action research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step Five: Initiate action</th>
<th>Teaching instruction is provided in order to solve the pedagogic problems.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step Six : Evaluation</td>
<td>The outcome of teaching and learning is evaluated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step Seven: Follow up</td>
<td>The teacher/researcher investigates alternative method.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Action research requires data collection and analysis. It focuses more on self-reflection on the teaching and learning aspects. Teachers and researchers reflect on their own practices in order to improve the quality of teaching pedagogy which aims to bring about change and improvement in practice. It is evaluative and reflective in nature. It also identifies and investigates the problem within a specific situation. Kemmis and McTaggart (1998) addresses action research as ‘action research cycle’ as it is characterized by spiraling cycles of problem identification, systematic data collection, reflection, analysis, and data-driven action taken and, finally redefining the problem.

3.5.3 The present study

As stated above, action research method was employed for this study. With the help of action research, an attempt was made to find out the answers to the research questions. The problems in learning writing were identified by the researcher during the preliminary study. It was found that the learners at the undergraduate level were unable to write and therefore, the researcher decided to take up the study. The factors studied during the research period were related to methods and materials, techniques of teaching writing, approaches being used while teaching writing, syllabus (to find
out the types of writing genre it covered) etc. Thus, the data for this study were gathered from the real classroom teaching context. All the learners and teachers were from the same context.

3.5.4 **Research procedure**

The present study was an attempt to study the needs of the learners in terms of their ability to write in English so that they can perform well in academic writing. The study also analyzed the syllabus and teaching methodology practiced in the class. This research was also concerned about the factors which influenced the learners’ writing. The researcher interacted with the learners closely in their natural setting. By keeping the aims of this study in view, the study attempted to use certain tools for collecting data. The following tools were used during the study. The study had followed certain procedure:

(a) Information was collected from the students and their problems related to writing in English.

(b) Students’ and teachers’ opinion were also taken with regard to the present syllabus, teaching methods being used for teaching writing, and materials used for teaching writing etc.

(c) The collected information helped by the researcher to identify the problems which in turn helped the researcher to plan and implement the intervention using the process-genre approach.

3.5.4.1 **Pre-intervention stage**

In the pre-intervention stage, questionnaires, interviews and a test on writing were conducted. The purpose of this stage was to know the opinion of the learners about the current writing practices, syllabus, and the teaching methods and materials. In
addition to this, the purpose of the pre-intervention was to find out the problems faced by the learners in writing and their needs of writing in the academic context.

3.5.4.2 Intervention stage

In the next stage, the tasks were designed for the purpose of intervention and four weeks of teaching writing was undertaken using the process-genre approach.

3.5.4.3 Post-Intervention stage

In the final stage, the post-teaching test was conducted to assess the improvement in writing skills of the ESL learners. In order to seek the views of the learners regarding the usefulness of the intervention, informal written feedback was collected.

3.6 Tools of the study

The tools used for the data collection were questionnaires, interviews, and informal discussions with the learners and teachers. The informal discussions were conducted twice with the learners; it was done in the beginning of the main study and later at the end to get the information about how the learners felt about the writing activities. The following tools were used: questionnaires for learners, pre-test and post-test, interviews, classroom observation, tasks and activities during intervention, teacher’s diary, questionnaire for teachers, think aloud protocol and the informal written feedback for the students. The qualitative and quantitative methods were used to analyze the data.

3.6.1 The questionnaire

Wallace (1998, p.124) claims that a questionnaire is an important tool to gather information about students. It supports the research study based on the information provided by the students. As stated earlier, a questionnaire was administered to get
information from a group of students. The main aim of providing a questionnaire was to retrieve information from the students about themselves, their perceptions about the use of English, their perceptions about their writing skills, the way they learned writing and other factors which may affect their learning of writing skills.

3.6.1.1 Piloting and finalizing of the questionnaire

A pilot study was conducted to find out whether the questionnaire was reader friendly or not. This study was administered to a similar sample. The questionnaires were modified based on the responses received from the sample. It was found that learners were not able to answer most of the open-ended questions. Therefore, such questions were rephrased and made reader-friendly. The sequence of questions was also changed as it became obvious that the interpretation of such responses would be extremely difficult. Further, the number of questions was decreased from 42 to 32, and more options were provided in case of questions which were previously open-ended.

Similarly, the teachers’ questionnaire was mailed to two teachers for their response. The mailed questionnaire was answered after ten days. Based on the feedback given by the teachers, the questionnaire was modified. Yes-no questions were replaced with open-ended questions to get in-depth information about factors related to teaching of writing.

The modified questionnaires were used for the main study. The finalized students’ and teachers’ questionnaires were administered to the sample.

3.6.1.2 Format of questions in the questionnaire

The open-ended, multiple choice questions and the Yes/No questions were incorporated in the learners’ and teacher’s questionnaires.
3.6.1.3 Open-ended questions

The open-ended questions were framed to enable the students to articulate their opinion and views freely. This helped the researcher to personalize the data to acknowledge and assess the diverse responses accurately.

For every question, there was an ‘any other’ option and the learners were asked to provide details there if their answer did not match with any of the options listed over there.

3.6.1.4 Multiple choice questions

The multiple-choice questions helped thoughtful selection of choices by providing clues for each question. While they had to select the most appropriate answer for the multiple-choice questions, there were some questions where they could select as many options as applicable to them. This promoted a thoughtful selection of choices by providing contextual clues for each question.

3.6.1.5 Yes/No questions

The yes/no questions were designed to get their views on different aspects and later they were asked to elaborate on them.

3.6.1.6 A brief description of students’ questionnaire

Students’ questionnaire was designed to obtain information about the students’ background, their practice of English in general, practices of academic writing in academic context, views regarding using the process-genre approach to writing, use of methods and material. Further, the questionnaire also dealt with academic and non-academic writing and its importance in their learning aspiration for higher studies.

Students’ questionnaire was divided into six sections and the details are as follows:
3.6.1.6.1 Learners’ profile

Section A of the students’ questionnaire aimed to obtain information related to the students’ educational and family background, age, the languages they knew, and their medium of instruction and the name of the institution in which they studied.

3.6.1.6.2 Use of English in non-academic context

This section dealt with questions such as the exposure of English in academic and non-academic contexts. The objective of this section was to find out the type of reading material and writing exposure the learners got in non-academic contexts. This section contained five questions. Question one focused on understanding their reading habits. It tried to find out if the learners had opportunities to read English newspapers. The second question was related to watching English programmes on TV. They were also asked to name the programmes they watched. The third question was related to the kind of reading they do outside of the classroom. Learners were given a list of the types of reading material. Question number four dealt with the types of writing learners usually practiced at home. A number of options were provided to the learners such as letter writing (formal/informal), paragraph writing, report writing, notice writing, note making and note taking etc.

3.6.1.6.3 Questions related to academic context

This section carried eight questions related to learning English, and writing in academic contexts. The first question of this section was asked about the importance of English for the learners. The second question was linked to the reason for learning English. The third question was a follow up question of the previous question and this question was related to the importance of English in higher studies. The fourth question focussed on the English language classroom. The next question was linked to
the previous question. This question tried to find from the learners the most difficult part in learning English. The sixth question was related to language skills and the problems they faced while learning these skills. The next question was focussed on the importance of writing and the last question of this section related to the importance of writing in an academic context.

3.6.1.6.4 Writing in academic context

There were twelve questions in this section. All the questions were related to writing in the academic context. The first question of this section was about the types of writing usually learners had to do in the English classroom. This question was an open-ended question. The second question sought to get the views of the learners about what they thought should be the inputs for the writing class. The third question dealt with the strategies used by the learners while doing their writing tasks. The following question talked about whether the learners applied any strategies while writing in their mother tongue. Questions four, five and six dealt with various aspects and strategies of writing. The next question dealt with the pre-writing activities and the eighth question focussed on the problems learners faced while writing. The ninth and tenth questions were on the homework given to the learners and the type of homework given to them. And then the next question was related to how often teacher gave them writing tasks. The last question of this section provided the information related to the strategies used by the teacher while teaching writing.

3.6.1.6.5 The process-genre approach to writing

This section focused on the process-genre approach to writing. This section explored whether the learners were able to use the process-genre approach while writing in the academic context. There were three questions related to writing activities learners
used to perform while writing. The first question probed to know whether the learners carried out certain activities before they wrote the final draft. The next question was linked to drafts of writing they went through before writing the final draft. The third and final question focused on the extent to which the use of various writing strategies would help them to develop their academic writing skills.

3.6.1.6.6 Feedback

This section administered questions related to feedback provided by the teacher as well as the peer feedback. The questions in this section tried to find out the feedback they received from their teachers, peer group and the usefulness of the feedback.

3.6.1.7 A brief description of teacher’s questionnaire

The researcher administered a questionnaire to the teachers to get the teachers’ opinions on teaching writing, their teaching practices for teaching writing skills and the nature of help required by the learners. The teacher’s questionnaire was also piloted on a similar group of English teachers and suitable changes were made based on the feedback.

The teacher’s questionnaire was divided into five parts. The parts of teacher’s questionnaire covered the educational as well as professional background of the teacher, teaching and learning of writing in general and teaching of academic writing in particular, the present syllabus and the feedback the teachers provide in the writing class. The details are as follows:

3.6.1.7 Background/personal information

The section collected information about the teachers regarding their personal and professional information. The detailed information included the name of the teacher, age, gender, name of the institution, designation, educational qualifications, and
teaching experience. The researcher also collected their phone numbers and email ids for any further communication if required for this research.

3.6.1.7.2 Pre-service/In-service training

The set of questions in this section were related to the professional information of the teacher. The first question dealt with whether the teacher had received any pre-service/in-service training. The question requested the teacher to fill the professional details such as name of the institute, name of the course, duration of the course, nature of the course. The second question tried to find out to what extent such courses helped the teacher in teaching English. The next question was regarding the teacher’s information regarding English language teaching journals. This information helped the researcher to get an idea about the teacher’s knowledge updates. The next question tried to find out whether the English teacher had the exposure of reading any journals related to English language teaching.

3.6.1.7.3 Teaching and learning academic writing

This section included a set of questions which dealt with the teaching and learning of academic writing. The first question was related to teaching writing in the class and types of writing the teacher usually taught in the writing classroom. The second question sought their opinion on the importance of teaching academic writing and its usefulness for the learners. The next question was to know whether the teachers were aware of the differences between informal everyday English and English in an academic context. The next questions focussed on the importance given by the teachers to the language aspects, the current practices of teaching writing in the English classroom, importance of teaching academic writing, genre of writing such as formal letter, paragraph, and essay writing in the classroom, difficulties faced by
learners while writing in the classroom, difficulties faced by the teacher while teaching writing. In addition, some questions also dealt with aspects of academic writing and their importance for the students, strategies applied while teaching paragraph and essay writing. Finally, an attempt was also made to find out if the teachers were aware of process-genre approach to teaching writing.

3.6.1.7.4 Syllabus, coursebook and teaching writing

In this section, the questions were related to syllabus, and the course book. The first and second question investigated the aptness of present textbook with regard to teaching learners writing skills. The fourth question was focussed on the importance of language skills. The fifth question was related to the time spent on writing skills by the teacher. The sixth and the seventh questions were regarding the textbook and the scope of teaching writing through the process-genre approach. The eighth question was related to the classroom strategies that the teacher applied to teach academic writing in the classroom. The next question was related to any supplementary material the teacher used in the classroom.

3.6.1.7.5 Feedback

This section included the questions related to feedback. There were four questions regarding evaluation of learner’s writing and feedback provided by the teacher. The questions focused on the feedback techniques used by the teacher, the criteria followed by the teacher while providing feedback.

3.6.1.8 Nature and administration of the questionnaire

The questionnaire for the students was administered during the compulsory class hours. Students were asked to give complete and correct information and they were assured that the information provided by them would be kept confidential. The
researcher translated some questions into Hindi to help the learners understand the questions. When some learners expressed their wish to answer the questions in Hindi, the researcher permitted them as getting authentic data was important. Later, during data analysis, the teacher-researcher translated them into English.

The teacher’s questionnaire was administered to them and they were asked to answer in English. The teacher-researcher was available when the teachers completed the questionnaires and helped them whenever they had any doubts or required clarification regarding the questions.

3.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for ten teachers and thirty learners. Both the teachers and learners were of the same college where this study was conducted.

3.6.2.1 Semi-structured interviews with the learners

In addition to the questionnaires, a semi-structured interview was also conducted with the sample. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher and the learners’ non-verbal responses were recorded in the research diary. Learners were also allowed to answer in their native language which was Hindi. The interviews questions were mostly related to writing practices, beliefs, and opinions. The interview was also used to gather information on the past and present behaviours or experiences. The main purpose of this tool was to find out the problems related to infrastructure, lack of resources, and lack of motivation towards teaching and learning related to writing faced by learners and teachers which would affect the teaching and learning process. In addition, the interviews were meant to supplement information collected though the questionnaires and get clarity regarding what they said in the questionnaires.
All the responses provided by the learners were taken down by the researcher. Most of questions were related to the methods of teaching English and teaching writing.

A semi-structured interview was used to know the opinion of learners regarding the problems of writing, practice of writing, about academic writing and the strategies they followed while writing. Such type of interviews are open in nature and make learners feel free while sharing the problems related to academic writing. Questions which were asked during the interview mainly focused on these.

a) The writing activities they were required to do
b) Their preferences with regard to writing
c) The writing strategies they used while writing
d) How they are taught writing
d) Role and importance of academic writing
e) Some questions related to genres, the process-genre approach
f) Role of feedback and explicit teaching of writing

3.6.2 Semi-structured interviews with the teachers

A semi-structured interview was conducted with teachers to know their opinion, point of view, and suggestions. The interview aimed to find out what the teachers thought about teaching writing skills, what they taught, how they taught writing skills and what problems they faced while teaching them. It also tried to find out the needs of learners with regard to writing skills. The questions for interviews were mostly related to teaching methodology, material and teacher’s belief. Some questions were as follows:
a) What are the aims and objectives of teaching writing?

b) What methodology do you follow while teaching writing skills?

c) What type of strategies/methods do you apply while teaching writing?

d) Do you think teaching writing skills are important for the ESL learners?

e) Do you teach academic writing in the classroom?

f) How often do you give homework or assignment to your learners?

g) What do you focus while providing feedback to the learners?

The answers to the above questions were recorded in the research diary. Next, the use of diary and its importance for this study will be discussed.

3.6.3 Diary

Diary was used as a tool to record the events which took place during the collection of data. It helped the researcher to record the events or incidents, field notes and daily records as they occurred which teaching and learning during this study. Next, these records included each and every event including the class timing, the duration of class, items to be taught in the class, activity performed by the researcher and learners etc. Further, the diary record added to the descriptive notes to a large extent and acted as a great source of written fields. The diary always kept the researcher on alert to record the incidents which took place during the field study.

Through the recording of diary, the researcher used to take down every minute detail of the classroom learning and the process of teaching. Further, it helped the researcher to keep an eye on the improvement of writing of the learners. It also helped the researcher to reflect on certain activities and through these reflections, the researcher used to provide feedback to learners. The diary was kept and maintained throughout
the study to introspect and maintain reflective cycles of research during the intervention.

3.6.4 Classroom observation checklist

While observing the classes of the teachers, classroom observation checklist was used which included the following:

a) The aspects of language focused in the classroom
b) Genres of writing focused in the classroom (letter writing/paragraph writing/essay writing)
c) Strategies of teaching writing followed by the teacher
d) Approaches used by the teacher while writing
e) Types of material used by the teacher in the class
f) Feedback strategies used by the teacher

Overall, the classroom observation checklist supported the present research to a large extent.

3.7 The second phase: Intervention stage

The intervention period was started after the analysis of pre-teaching questionnaires, interviews, analysis of the syllabus, and interaction with the teachers which helped the researcher to analyze the problems learners faced related to writing and the methods being used to teach writing skill. Based on the data collected in the pre-intervention stage, it was realized that the process-genre approach to writing would be an appropriate methodology for teaching of academic writing.
3.7.1 Intervention and data collection procedure

The procedure of data collection was carried out throughout the teaching sessions. The teaching sessions lasted thirty days and every day the duration of the session was two hours. Writing skills were taught using the process-genre approach. The tasks were varied in nature. The learners were taught formal and informal letter writing, paragraph writing, and essay writing. Each piece of writing took minimum three to four days which involved a process of producing a rough draft to the final draft. First of all, learners were given the model text, the context of the text, the situation of the text and the linguistic nature of the text. The text was deconstructed and the nature and organisation of information in the text was discussed. The various generic texts were used to increase the familiarity with such texts. After that the researcher and learners participated in the brainstorming activity followed by planning to produce a rough draft of the text which was produced through joint construction by the learners and the researcher. After producing the text jointly, the learners were asked to produce the text independently. In the beginning of the study, learners were uncomfortable but as they moved further they felt at home. The words and phrases which learners came up with were listed on the board. Later, the ideas were arranged and then the students were instructed to write individually with the help of those ideas.

For every task, the feedback was provided by the researcher. On the following day, the learners’ scripts were returned with feedback provided by the researcher. Based on the feedback, the learners were instructed to produce the final draft. The final drafts were collected and recorded.
The teaching learning cycle which was followed is shown below and the details of each stage are given after the figure.

![Teaching-learning cycle diagram](image)

**Figure- five: The Teaching-learning cycle (Feez and Joyce, 1998, p.28)**

### 3.7.2 Stages of the process-genre model

The process-genre model of teaching is divided into six stages. These stages were as follows: i) Preparation stage ii) Modelling and reinforcing stage iii) Planning and joint construction iv) Independent construction v) Revising

#### Stage 1

### 3.7.3 Preparation stage

Stage one of the process genre model of teaching was the preparation stage. In this stage, the researcher prepared the learners by asking questions regarding various genres of writing in order to create a context and specifying it within the specific genre. The specified genres of writing were letter writing, paragraph writing and essay
writing. Further learners were asked to talk about the differences between formal and informal letter, the formats of letters etc. In the same manner, questions were asked regarding paragraph writing and essay writing.

Stage 2

3.7.4 Modelling and reinforcing stage

In the second stage, a model text was introduced to the students. The main purpose of introducing the model text was to help learners to be acquainted with the various generic texts. Such awareness would help learners to identify the context as well as the purpose of producing the text in academic or non-academic context. During this activity, learners were given handouts of samples of letters such as letters of complaint and letters of enquiry. Later, they were provided with samples of paragraphs such as the sample of descriptive paragraph, and expository paragraph. In the same way samples of essays were also given to them.

Stage 3

3.7.5 Planning and joint construction

In this stage, learners were asked to plan and construct their writing activity based on the model text. Further learners were given a writing topic for planning their writing activity. At this stage brainstorming, discussion took place. Furthermore, ideas were generated for the joint construction of the text. The researcher helped the learners in framing the sentence structure, in organizing ideas, providing transition words and phrases, connectives etc to complete the task.
Stage 4

3.7.6 Independent construction

In this stage learners were given the opportunity to construct the text independently. However, the researcher helped them out wherever they had doubts.

Stage 5

3.7.7 Revising and linking related ideas

This stage provided the opportunity to revise their written script. In the beginning, they were asked to share their written script with their peer group and get feedback. Later, the researcher also helped them out by providing feedback.

During the teaching sessions, efforts were also made to raise their consciousness regarding the various genres of writing. It was believed that consciousness raising would help the learners to improve their writing. Data was collected in all the sessions and at all these stages.

3.8 The tasks used for the study

Various tasks were used for this study during the pre-test, intervention period and the post-teaching stage. The two main objectives of the tasks were :(a) low linguistic output demand and (b) of cognitively medium challenge. The tasks moved from simple to complex which was based on principles of learning theories. Therefore, the post-test task was a little more complex than the pre-test. The types of model texts of genre writing were formal and informal writing, paragraph writing and essay writing.

3.9 Evaluation criteria

Analytic scoring criteria were used to evaluate the pre-and post-teaching writing test scripts as the analytic scoring criteria have a number of advantages over holistic
scoring as well. According to some distinguished researchers, first and foremost, even inexperienced raters can easily understand and apply the criteria than in holistic scales (Francis, 1997, and Adams, 1981, both cited in Weir, 1990). Secondly, the analytic scoring helps in understanding learners progress across the different aspects of writing. Finally, analytic scoring can be more reliable than holistic scoring. For this study, ESL composition profile (see appendix seven) was used in order to evaluate the written performance of the learners. In addition, holistic scoring criteria were used to show the overall progress of the learners.

3.10 Think aloud protocol

Think aloud protocol was used to record learners’ feeling, thinking while doing their writing tasks. According to Ericsson and Simon think aloud protocol is “verbalization of both orally encoded information and other kinds of thoughts” (1993, p. 228). Moreover, the objective of administering think aloud protocol was to establish the thinking and feeling of the learners while writing. Flower, Hayes, Carey, Shriver, and Stratman (1986), defined think aloud ‘as a sequential recording of a person’s attempt to complete the task’. In addition, it is a powerful tool in educational and social research. However, Faigley and Witte (1981) have observed that the collection of data using think-aloud protocol is “uncertain” (p.412) and the writing conditions are “artificial” since the writers are needed to write and verbalize at the same time what they are thinking. On the contrary, Flower and Hayes (1981) have emphasized that the think aloud protocol is an important data collection tool which provides a detail record of what is going on in the writer’s mind during the process of composing. Furthermore, many studies have demonstrated that the writing process whether in L1 (e.g. Emig, 1971; Flower and Hayes, 1981; Scardamalia&Bereiter, 1987), and L2 (e.g. Raimes, 1985, 1987; Uzawa, 1996; Wang & Wen, 2002), apply
the think aloud protocol as an instrument to gain insightful information on writer’s cognitive processes of composing. In the same way, the obtained information provides insightful details of students’ thinking process. However, further supporting their argument, Ericsson and Simon claimed that think aloud activity is not “entirely alien” (1993, p.78) to us. Although, the spontaneous think-aloud protocol is rare in normal life but many people may experience some forms of verbalizing their thoughts. Further, Flower et al., (1986) have advised the researchers that they should advise the subjects not to worry about speaking correctly, stopping in the middle of thoughts and sentences or the choice of language. Instead the learners should continue to verbalize while performing the task.

Moreover, it was a serious effort made by the researcher to measure the awareness level of the learners. The learners participated in this activity while writing. As they found it difficult to express in English, they were asked by the researcher to do the same in Hindi. In particular, the data gained was expected to provide some evidence of the learners’ incorporation of genre awareness in their second language writing process. The detailed analysis of think-aloud protocol will be discussed in the data analysis chapter.

3.9 Informal written feedback

Learners were asked to provide feedback on the intervention programme on a sheet of paper. They were asked to provide details of the components they found useful which helped them to improve their writing skills. They were also asked to provide suggestions to improve the intervention programme.
3.12 Procedure used for data analysis

Data analysis involves several stages such as identifying, categorizing and organizing information for the understanding of the needs and problems faced by the target group. The main purpose of analyzing the data was to find out the nature of the problems the learners faced. In the following chapter, the responses to the questionnaires, interviews, observation checklist, think-aloud protocol will be analyzed in detail. The responses to the questionnaires and the interviews will be analyzed by following qualitative as well as the quantitative methods. In the same manner, the pre-test and the post-test tasks would also be analyzed. The data analysis and interpretation will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research method and the data collection procedures for conducting this research at length. The first part of the present chapter examined the aim of the study, method applied for this research, context of the study, subjects of the study, tools used for this study and the procedure of data collection in detail. The second part of this chapter focused on the students’ and teachers’ questionnaire, tasks and the procedures used during the intervention of this study. Further, the study also dealt with the steps used for teaching academic writing through the process-genre approach. The next chapter would present a detailed analysis of the collected data.