Chapter V
Findings and conclusions

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter dealt with the analysis and findings of the data. The present chapter begins with the restatement of the aim and objectives of the study and research questions and the findings of the research questions for this research. It is followed by the main findings and discussion of the study. Finally, it ends with implications of the study followed by limitations and suggestions for further study.

5.1 Aim and objectives of the study

The purpose of the study was to find out the following aim and objectives:

- The aim of the study was to improve academic writing skills of UG learners in Bihar.

In order to accomplish the aim of the study, the four objectives were set to achieve the main purpose of the study.

- The first objective of this study was to help the learners to raise their awareness about the various genres of writing.
- The second objective of this study was to enable the learners to understand the context, purpose and audience of the text.
- The third objective of this study was to raise the rhetorical and linguistic consciousness of the learners.
- The fourth and final objective was to empower the learners to use the process-genre cycle to improve their academic writing skills.
The first objective was achieved by helping the learners to raise their awareness about the various genres of writing by providing the models of different generic texts. In this study learners were introduced to formal and informal letter, paragraph and essay writing as these were part of their syllabus. This objective was very significant for the ESL learners to know how the different generic texts should be produced depending on the context, purpose and audience. Such types of awareness allow the learners to activate their schemata before they start their writing tasks.

The second objective was achieved by asking the learners to read the model texts and answer the teacher-researcher’s questions regarding the context of the texts, purpose of the texts and the audience. During the intervention stage, the model texts helped the learners to identify the readers they were going to write for; the context and the purpose to convey their message in an appropriate manner and this helped them in planning and writing the tasks.

The third objective was attained by providing various rhetorical generic tasks such as narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative to help them find the differences between them. Further, the instruction was also provided by the researcher in order to raise the linguistic consciousness such as use of vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, mechanics of writing etc. of the learners.

The fourth and final objective was achieved by helping the learners to participate in the writing activities while using process-genre cycle adopted from Feez & Joyce and Badger & White model of teaching of writing. The type of writing activity may empower the learners to be self-dependent writers. In the beginning stages, the learners and the researcher took part in the activity following the process-genre cycle and later learners were able to produce an independent text by using the same cycle.
In order to achieve all the objectives, the intervention stage was conducted with the learners. At the end of the intervention period learners felt pretty confident about their ability to write and then a post-intervention test was conducted to find out the learning outcome. The analysis of the pre and post intervention test scores and the written scripts of the learners revealed that there was a significant improvement in the academic writing skills of the learners. In the next section, the answers to the research questions will be presented.

5.2 Research questions

The research made a sincere attempt to find the answers of the following research questions:

- 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?

The first question in this study sought to determine the types of writing learners were required to write at the undergraduate level. In order to find answer to the research question one, the prescribed syllabus and textbooks were analysed and information was also collected from the learners and the teachers with the help of questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. It was found that learners needed to write formal letters, paragraphs, and essay writing as part of their syllabus.

However, these genres were hardly taught in the classroom. Mostly the teachers were with literature background and they tried to ignore this part of the syllabus. Hence,
these three types of genres were chosen for this study for the pre-intervention phase, intervention phase and post-intervention phase. After, the findings of the first question led the researcher to find the answer to the second research question.

The answer to the second research question was retrieved through pre-intervention test as well as the semi-structured interviews. The results of the investigation showed that learners faced several challenges while writing. Several problems were identified and based on the problems learners were given instructions by using the process-genre approach to writing. With regard to formal letter writing, most of the learners were from regional medium background and were not aware of the format of the formal letter writing. Further, they were also not familiar with the use of formal language and the audience they needed to address. Problems related to conciseness of the letter were also identified.

Problems were also detected in the written scripts of paragraph writing. Most of the learners were unaware of writing a paragraph. They were unable to write the topic sentence and supporting sentences of paragraphs. The ideas were found incoherent and not well organized. Further, problems related to sentence structure, use of vocabulary, discourse markers, grammar and errors in spelling, and mechanics of writing were also found in their written scripts.

Similar problems were found in the learners’ essays. The learners’ essays did not have the thesis statement, and the paragraphs did not include the topic sentences and supporting sentences in the paragraphs of an essay. They had similar problems with grammar, vocabulary, spelling, coherence, cohesion, sentence structure, and organization of the paragraphs. Most of the learners were unable to divide their essays
into paragraphs. The findings of the second research question set the tone for the main study of this research.

The third question of the research was quite significant for this study. The intervention was conducted using the process-genre cycle adopted from Feez & Joyce (1998) and Badger & White (2000). The detailed analysis of the tasks and the procedure of the tasks were explained in chapter IV. Here, broad findings of the third research question would be presented. A comparative analysis of pre and post intervention tests revealed that the learners had made a significant improvement in their writing with regard to content, organization, use of vocabulary, use of language and mechanics. They had also been benefitted by using the transitional words and phrases which were supplied by the researcher. The post-intervention test findings, further confirmed that process-genre approach to writing was effective in helping learners improve their writing.

An explicit instruction of the process-genre approach to the teaching of writing helps the learners to improve their awareness of content and format of a particular genre, organization, use of language, vocabulary and mechanics of writing. As per the findings of the study, it could be claimed that the regional medium learners benefit from the use of the process-genre approach. Explicit instruction on the process of writing and its textual features in relation to the social context could possibly help the learners of Rajendra College in Chapra Bihar to improve their academic writing skills.

Hence, the third and final research question has established the fact that the use of process-genre approach to the teaching of writing helps the ESL learners to improve their academic writing skills.
5.3 Major findings and Discussion

This study was undertaken to determine whether the process-genre approach to writing could be effective for the improvement of academic writing skills of the ESL learners. The study was initiated as the learners faced many problems in writing but very little attention was paid to the teaching of writing and specifically on the processes of writing. Earlier, it was a routine to ask the learners to write without any teaching and the learners were left without any clue regarding writing. They generally lacked the exposure to reading the texts, group discussions, prewriting stage, brainstorming for generating ideas, writing the first draft and editing or proof reading of the text before reaching the final draft.

Thus, the purpose of the study was to implement the process-genre approach to writing to improve the writing skills of the ESL learners in academic context. It was hoped that the exposure to the various stages of process-genre writing would eventually result in the improvement of writing skills as well as the confidence of the learners in academic context.

While using the process-genre approach to writing, it was found that the learners were motivated enough to participate during the activities as they showed a lot of interest in writing. Learners’ interest was visible when they were participating in groups at each and every stage of writing. While participating in the activities, they were able to overcome their barriers and participate in generating ideas, organizing these ideas, and in several other stages of the process-genre approaches to writing. The samples of the different generic texts were provided to the learners as supplementary materials which were found to be really important for the learners. The tasks which had been conducted during the intervention period show the growth was apparent from one task
to another. It was learnt that using the process-genre approach to writing helped the learners to reduce their errors in all the five aspects of writing. The use of peer feedback and teacher feedback also played an important role in the improvement of writing skills. Further, it was apparent that the application of the process-genre approach enabled the learners to have a sense of purpose and context in which they were going to write. This awareness was significant for the learners in case they had to write the type of genre required by them to write in a specific context. The improvement was shown by the learners in the steady implementation of process genre approach to writing.

Thus, one can maintain that the process-genre approach greatly motivated the learners to write and hone their writing skills and helped them to be aware about their own writing. The process-genre based approach to writing advocated learner-centred learning with the initial support from the teachers. Such approach helped the learners in writing coherent, cohesive texts along with use of appropriate vocabulary, grammar and mechanics of writing. The findings established that there has been a considerable improvement in learners’ written scripts of post-intervention letter writing (formal), paragraph, and essay writing.

It is the need of the hour to introduce the process-genre approach to the teaching of writing to the regional medium learners in ESL contexts in order to improve their academic writing skills. The explicit instruction followed by the processes could be an immense help for the learners to overcome their inability to write the various generic texts. In addition, the models of the texts enabled the learners to get first-hand experience of various genres of writing. The various models of the text provided enough exposure of reading to the learners which helped to improve their academic reading skills as well. Further, the processes used before writing the first draft such as
brainstorming, collecting the ideas and organizing the ideas enabled learners to
gather all the relevant information related to the topic they were going to write.
Furthermore, the revision of the first draft by getting peer feedback and the feedback
from the teachers would improve the errors occurred while writing. Therefore, an
early introduction of the process-genre approach to the teaching of writing at the
undergraduate level would raise their awareness regarding the various generic and
rhetorical texts, language use in the particular context, purpose of writing the text and
awareness of the readers during writing.

5.4 Implications and suggestions for the study

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher is able to present the implications
and suggestions for this study.

5.4.1 Need for teaching writing in the ESL context

Writing has been one of the significant components of English language teaching to
enable the learners to perform well in and outside of the class. Therefore, the learners
should be trained in generating ideas, organizing ideas and writing multiple drafts.

5.4.2 Need for teaching writing through the process-genre approach

It is also recommended that the process-genre teaching model adopted for this study
should be used for various classrooms in the ESL contexts at college and university
level. Since the model of teaching cycle was very flexible in nature, the teaching and
learning can be commenced at any point of teaching model depending on the ability
of the learners’ language learning and the progress of learning.

The findings of the study offer a number of implications to the teaching of writing in
the ESL classrooms.
• Teaching writing should not be limited to taking down notes and dictation. Moreover, it should provide various generic writing tasks such as letter writing, paragraph writing, essay writing and report writing. Learners should also be given an opportunity to practice various strategies in order to develop writing skills.

• An integrated approach to teaching and learning to write could be extremely useful; therefore, it should be incorporated into the teaching of writing.

• Learners need to be given explicit instruction regarding writing at various levels such as structures and forms of different genres, content and use of specific words of various other genres.

• Learners need to practice and revise their writing in and outside of the classroom.

• Feedback from the teachers and the learners could play an essential role for the improvement of academic writing skills.

• Teaching of genres can be significant in helping the learners for the world at large as it provides exposure to understand the different social discourses.

5.4.3 Implication for teachers

While using an application of process-genre approach, the teachers could play their role as facilitators. They could also provide a number of classes for writing practices using process-genre based approach to the teaching of writing. Teachers should also be aware of using the process-genre approach to writing in the classroom. For this, they also need to improve their knowledge regarding teaching of writing using various approaches to writing. Moreover, the findings of this study have a number of practical implications:
• Teacher should focus on teaching writing and provide more practice to the learners using the process-genre cycle.

• They should also change their attitude towards English language teaching and about writing classes. They should not teach language as a content-based subject. Instead they should teach it as a skills-based subject.

• They should adopt different approaches to writing as per the needs and requirements of the learners and their usefulness in helping the learners learn.

• The teachers should also involve the learners in the various stages of a writing task and provide autonomy to the learners to express their ideas in the classroom.

• The teachers should also spread awareness about the importance of English language in their classroom with special reference to academic writing skills.

• The teachers should closely monitor each learner’s progress at each and every stage of writing and help them by providing positive and constructive feedback.

• The teachers may also conduct writing competitions of various genres of writing such as essay writing, formal letter writing, paragraph writing, business letters which would motivate the learners to learn about the genre and also practice writing.

5.4.4 Implication for learners

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for the learners:

• Learners should realize that writing is an important skill and learning to write would help the learners to perform well in their academics as well as in getting
good employment. Therefore, they should pay attention to improving their academic writing skills.

- They should also be aware of the types of genres they require to learn at the undergraduate level.
- They should practice various genres of writing with the help of teachers.
- They should also cultivate the habit of reading texts related to different genres. The exposure to these texts helps them in improving their writing skills.

5.4.5 Implication for course/textbook designer

The findings of the study have a number of implications for the course designers:

- The course designer should include various types of generic tasks with explicit instruction.
- The textbook designers should include many activities for the learners to get practice in doing the tasks.
- Models of generic tasks should also be available in the textbook in order to provide the learners with a clue regarding the types of genres they are learning and it would further help them to raise their awareness of generic texts.

5.4.6 Implication for administrators

The findings of the study have some implications for the administrators. These implications are as follows:

- The administrators should make sure that there is a prescribed text for the undergraduate learners. They should make sure that the textbooks which are in use include all the topics in the syllabus.
- They should arrange teacher education programmes to equip the teachers with the skills required for teaching skills to the learners. This is necessary as most
of the teachers do not have English language teaching background and may not be familiar with the current approaches to teaching writing.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The findings of the study are limited to a small group of learners studying through the regional medium.

5.6 Significance of the study

This study has a several practical applications. Firstly, it points to the introduction of the teaching of writing in the ESL context using process-genre approach to writing. Next, it also tries to raise the awareness of learners regarding different types of genres, context of writing and purpose of writing. In addition, the involvement of learners while doing the writing tasks using the process-genre cycle has also been quite significant. The findings of the study extend our knowledge regarding the use and implementation of process-genre approach to the teaching of writing in the ESL context. This could be the first study in an Indian context to investigate the effectiveness of process-genre approach to writing in the ESL context. The findings of the study also complement those earlier studies done in the context of native speakers of English. The present study confirms the previous findings and contributes additional evidence that suggests that the use of process-genre approach to the teaching of writing with the regional medium learners would be possible to a large extent.

5.7 Recommendations for the further study

The findings of the study are related to undergraduate learners studying in regional medium colleges. Research can also be carried out to investigate the application of a process-genre approach and its effectiveness to the teaching of writing in the ESL
contexts at various levels of study such as at the primary school, secondary school, higher secondary and post graduate level as well. It is recommended that further research could be undertaken in the following areas:

- There can be a study to examine the needs of the learners with regard to other academic genres such as report writing, writing an abstract, laboratory reports and thesis writing at the Post -Graduate level.

- Further investigation could also be made to find the efficacy of the process-genre approach to the teaching of writing at the Senior Secondary level.

- A study to assess the effects of integrating all the basic skills (L/S/R/W) could be investigated through process-genre approach.

- The study could also be carried out with different rhetorical genres such as expository essay, argumentative essay, persuasive essay, descriptive essay and narrative essay.

- A similar study should be undertaken to explore the teachers’ attitude towards the role and implementation of process-genre approach to the teaching of writing in the ESL context.

5.8 Conclusion

The present study made an attempt to study the problems of the ESL learners in academic writing skills and tried to examine the impact of the process-genre approach on the writing skills of the learners. The findings of the study suggest that using a process-genre approach helps the learners to improve their academic writing skills. It was evident that the explicit instruction of the context, textual features, and the processes of writing enables the learners to produce a better text in comparison to the pre-intervention test. The findings of the intervention showed that the learners
improved their awareness of genres of writing, context, textual features, purpose and audience over time. The use of explicit instruction and multiple drafts to produce the final draft has certainly made a positive impact and the errors in the written texts were found to decrease to a great extent.

Finally, it is assumed that the findings of the study would provide insights into the complexity of teaching and learning of writing in the ESL context. Moreover, it is further anticipated that this study would contribute to the conceptualization of the teaching practices of writing in the ESL context and more specifically with the regional medium learners.