

The Effect of Genre-based Scaffolding on Research Paper Writing of MA Candidates in an EFL Context

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on genre-based approaches to writing instruction. However, scant attention has been paid to the use of genre-based scaffolding in the realm of academic writing. Hence, in an attempt to tackle the problems prevalent in academic writing, this study set out to investigate the effect of genre-based scaffolding through sentence starters and writing frames on MA candidates' research paper writing. To this end, twenty MA candidates majoring in ELT were randomly assigned to two homogenous groups, one control and one experimental group, each including 10 participants. Both groups were exposed to a five-session genre-based instruction while the experimental group benefitted from the additional provision of sentence starters and writing frames relevant to different sections of a research paper. The analysis of the results, using independent sample of t-test, reveals that genre-based instruction can be a useful tool in improving academic writing. Moreover, the outperformance of the participants of the experimental group is indicative of the beneficial effect of scaffolding through starters and frames.

Keywords: Genre, Genre-based Instruction, Scaffolding, Sentence Starters, Writing Frames

Introduction

Early efforts at teaching writing date back to the late 1960s, most of which revolved around techniques for teaching writing (Kim, 2005). The focal point of concern for early writing teachers was primarily the final product of writing. Later, trends in the teaching of writing underwent tangible changes in the mid-1970s, switching the shift of focus away from product approach, later supplanted by what was termed the process approach to writing instruction (Brown, 2000). However, the last decade or so, according to Hyland (2007), has witnessed considerable attention to and a growing body of research on the application of genre-based instruction in language teaching and learning. The inclination towards genre-based writing instruction, as reported by Sabouri, Zohrabi and Vafa (2014), stems from the need for the explicit teaching of genres so as to assist students identify textual and linguistic features required to the construction of different texts. In other words, genres are taken as the departure point for “modeling, deconstructing and understanding language” (Sabouri, et al. 2014, p.1).

What writers actually put down in black and white is fashioned by their readers’ expectations. The better the writers anticipate what their readers might be expecting from them, the more the readers’ chances of interpreting the intended message. This, undoubtedly, calls for a genre-based approach which underscores the important role writer-reader interaction plays on a piece of writing (Reid, 1995). In other words, writers are supposed to identify potential readers in advance so that they can “select appropriate content, language and levels of formality” (Tuan, 2011, p.1472). However, the extent to which writers can foresee what they are expected to produce and how to do so is heavily dependent on their awareness of the genre they are supposed to write in. The more familiar the writers are with a particular genre they are engaged in, the more the likelihood of living up to the readers’ expectations (Hyland, 2007).

Writing in a foreign or second language has proved an insurmountable barrier to most EFL and ESL learners (Harmer, 2007; Nunan, 1989; Tribble, 1997, Richards & Renandya, 2003, etc.). Numerous reasons have been introduced as the impediments to writing progress, ranging from the scarcity of instructional methods and materials to learning strategies and activities. One situation which remains particularly tricky for learners is the kind of

awareness learners should develop about various genres to be able to produce texts that correspond to the requirements such genres make of them. Sometimes, inattentiveness on the part of the learner to the format, structures, content and levels of formality of a particular genre or unfamiliarity with such features may result in texts that fail to meet the acceptable standards of quality writing.

Previous research (e.g. Alvarez, 2007) highlights the need for explicit instruction in how to write in particular genres and how to conform to the demands each genre makes of writers. However, evidence bears out the fact that scant attention has been paid to how to provide such instruction so as to improve academic writing performance.

Hyland (2007) proposes genre-based writing instruction as a solution to the challenges in academic writing instruction. First and foremost, being needs-based, genre pedagogy enables teachers to steer their courses in line with their students' needs. In other words, through genre pedagogy the courses are grounded "in texts that students will need to write in occupational, academic, or social contexts" (p. 149). More importantly, genre-based framework facilitates and supports clear links to the students' purposes for writing beyond the writing classroom (Osman, 2004). This can, in turn, contribute to learners' effective participation in contexts beyond ESL classroom. What is more, explicitness has been highlighted as the prime feature of genre-based instruction, given the fact that it explicitly enlightens students as to how target texts are grammatically patterned, structured and organized and why they are framed as they are (Park, 2006). The kind of awareness of regularity and structure provided is "not only facilitating, but also reassuring" for many L2 learners (Hyland, 2003a, cited in Hyland, 2007, p.152). Through categorizing and analyzing various texts students become more sensitive and attuned to the ways messages are conveyed in particular contexts, heightening their awareness of the readers' expectations of a text (Swami, 2008). Such exposure and systemic analysis, however, can have an important consciousness-raising potential for them (Hyland, 2007).

Another virtue to be extolled, as Hyland (2007) puts it, is the supportive nature of such instruction giving teachers a central role in scaffolding

students' learning and creativity. Teachers deploying a genre-based approach in their classrooms often implement a three-phase teaching-learning cycle consisting of the modeling of a sample expert text, joint-negotiation of text with teacher, and independent construction of text by individual students (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993; as cited in Tuan, 2011).

Tuan (2011) adds that genre-based approaches "contribute to help students realize and master such features as purposes, audiences, context and linguistic conventions of text which are the important features of any text-types" (p. 1471). Alvarez (2007) maintains that writers need support from instructors in performing a wide range of tasks associated with writing research essays. In the same line, Kikula and Qorro (2005) report that owing to the inadequate provision of clear instructions, most graduates end up ill-equipped and this, in turn, leads to the stagnation of their academic writing.

Reppen (2002) proposes that a genre-based approach enhances exposure to the required text type and in turn familiarizes students with specific features, structures and organization of information, providing them with ample opportunities to become aware of the kind of written communicative purposes. Additionally, Tuan (2011) concludes that the successful implementation of genre-based program into actual classroom settings requires the provision of many well-written sample reading texts containing the features of the specific genres students need to produce language in.

Genre-based approaches are, more importantly, underpinned by the ideas of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1990), both capitalizing on the role of interaction with peers and more knowledgeable others (MKO). Hence, the degree of teacher intervention and the decisions made by them in terms of task selection can play a prominent role in scaffolding writing (Donato, 2000; Ohta, 2000). Scaffolding provides the teacher with the opportunity to facilitate students' transition from assisted tasks to independent performances (Bodrova & Leong, 1998; Palincsar, 1998). Mulatsih (2011, as cited in Rezvani, Saeidi & Behnam, 2015) refers to scaffolding as "a process by which a teacher provides students with a temporary framework for learning; done correctly, such structures encourage students to develop their own initiatives and motivations; once the students could develop knowledge on their own, the framework would be dismantled". (p. 5)

McKenzie (1999; as cited in Rezvani, 2014) identifies efficiency and momentum as the main characteristics of scaffolding instruction in the context of classroom learning. The preliminary elimination of flaws and defects as well as the structured and focused nature of the work provides the ground for more time available to be spent on learning and discovering than on searching, which altogether lie in the interests of learning efficiency. Through providing clear directions and clarifying the purpose of the work, scaffolded instruction also precludes learners from straying from the right path or into uncertainty and confusion.

Scaffolded support for teaching writing can be in the form of sentence starters and writing frames, which according to Wray and Lewis (1997), consist of a skeleton outline given to students to scaffold and prompt their writing. Scaffolded instruction in the form of sentence starters and writing frames, as Hyland (2007) points out, provides “something of the prompting missing between a writer and blank sheet of paper, assisting writers to envisage what is needed to express their purposes effectively and to anticipate the possible reactions of an intended readership” (p. 159).

The form and structure of the sentence starters and frames, however, is, to a large extent, determined by “the type of the genre, the purpose of the writing, and the proficiency of the students”. Moreover, the provision of sentence starters and frames is preceded by “teacher modeling and explicit discussion of the forms required for a particular kind of text and can be used to scaffold planning or drafting”. The ultimate purpose of such scaffolded instruction is to facilitate students’ transition from assisted to unassisted tasks, in other words, gaining them confidence in writing so that they no longer have to rely on the frames (Hyland, 2007, p.159).

More importantly, scaffolding in the form of writing frames and sentence starters provide a genre template which enables students to initiate, maintain and develop their texts appropriately while concentrating on the message they tend to convey, simultaneously conforming to the demands the genre makes of them as they provide a structure for writing.

The past decade or so has witnessed a large and growing body of experimental investigations on writing instruction. Genre-based approaches to teaching writing have drawn considerable attention since the mid-1980s

and numerous studies have attempted to investigate the impact of genre-based writing instruction since then.

Henry and Reseberry's study (1998), which was an attempt to teach students how to write tourist brochures through a genre-based approach, was indicative of the improvement in the writing of students with various language abilities and also of the positive attitudes towards the method.

The findings of the study conducted by Saowadee (2006) showed that Thai university students reaped the benefits of genre-based approach to writing. In a similar study, Piyatida (2009), who investigated the use of the genre-based approach and its effects on the writing achievement and attitudes of three groups of Thai engineering students (high, medium, low), concluded that taking a genre-based approach to teaching writing content concerning engineering, embracing request e-mails, enquiry e-mails, and reports amplified the writing potentials of the participants in all three groups.

Swami (2008) performed experimental investigations on the effectiveness of the explicit use of genre-based instruction in teaching writing. The goal of the study was to develop a rigorous understanding of the possible advantages of sensitizing EFL learners to the rhetorical move structures of a genre, the communicative purposes they serve, and the linguistic features which realize those moves. The findings revealed improvement in learners' writing ability in academic essays, job application and sales promotion letters.

The findings of the study by Tuan (2011) highlighted the importance of using a genre-based approach in gaining students control over the key features of the recount genre in terms of social purposes, language features and schematic structure.

In the study carried out by Babalola (2012), genre-based instruction also proved to have a significant effect on English writing performance of computer science students. Moreover, the findings of the study by Elashri (2013), which aimed at developing some writing skills for second year secondary stage students and their attitudes towards writing through using the genre based approach, underscored the benefits of taking a genre-based approach to writing instruction as it improved writing skills and attitudes

towards writing. In another study Sabouri et al. (2014) highlighted the effectiveness of using a genre-based approach to EFL writing.

Putting under investigation the reading comprehension of Iranian ESP learners (male and female B.S. biology students), Sadeghi, Hassani and Hemmati's (2013) study also highlighted the efficacy of deploying genre-based instruction in improving the reading comprehension of the genre group in comparison with non-genre group who received traditional methods of teaching ESP.

To investigate the effect of a genre-based approach on teaching academic writing, Alidoost, Toulabi, Shahivand and Qalavand (2104) concluded that this approach not only can promote a positive attitude towards writing, but also can familiarize students with the ways different texts provided for different communicative purposes are organized, thereby improving their writing performance.

In an attempt to identify the most common problems in writing research proposals, Kikula and Qorro (2007) discovered that the most outstandingly weak aspects in proposal writing included unsatisfactory sampling procedure (58%), stating of hypotheses that could not be tested (53%), using inappropriate methodology (51%) and inadequate literature review (50%).

Addressing this problem, Derntl (2014) presented a synthesis of guidelines found in literature about structuring and writing scientific papers, outlining the process of publishing research papers in journals and conference proceedings, aiming to provide early stage researchers with a handy introduction to essential issues.

The findings of the study conducted by Alvarez (2007), which was an attempt to help college-level ESL students learn to write research papers, indicated that ESL writers need support from instructors in performing a wide range of tasks associated with writing research essays. The results also revealed that ESL students appreciate explicit instruction in performing these tasks.

Research literature regarding scaffolding also points towards its helpfulness. Bodrova (1998) who investigated the effect of scaffolding on writing by making a comparison between the samples of unassisted and scaffolded writing concluded that scaffolded writing instruction results in

more advanced levels of writing compared to the level of writing children produced when they are unassisted. In another study, Adderly (2000) deployed scaffolding through writing frames in an attempt to resolve the question of whether or not it can improve students' standard of writing. The main finding to emerge from the study was the effectiveness of deploying writing frames, improving sentence construction, organization and layout of the students' writing.

In attempt to evaluate the efficacy of the genre-based writing using scaffolding techniques, Mulatsih (2011), who deployed the three-phase cycle of modeling, joint construction and independent construction of the texts among fourth semester English students in Nuswantroro university, strongly recommended scaffolding concluding that genre-based instruction accompanied by scaffolding techniques can yield far better results. The results revealed that the participants of the experimental group who received scaffolding techniques outperformed their counterparts in control group.

Another study carried out by Ahn (2012) aimed at teaching two genres of Report and Essay writing by implementing the three-staged teaching and learning cycle of Vygotskian notion of scaffolding to develop writing competency of primary school students. Scaffolding in the course of the early stages of the cycle proved helpful given the fact that such scaffolding by the teacher enhanced students' awareness of the ways texts are organized to serve different communicative purposes.

Furthermore, the study carried out by Rezvani et al. (2015) investigated the effect of scaffolding genre-based instruction of narrative texts on Iranian EFL learners' writing performance and pointed towards the efficacy of such approach to teaching writing in that setting.

Adding to a growing body of literature on scaffolding, the findings of the study by Panahzadeh and Gholami (2014), who provided upper-intermediate female learners with planned preemptive focus on form through linguistic scaffolding, proved to be advantageous to and beneficial in enriching learners' lexical repertoire which in turn led to improvements in their oral production. The positive influence of scaffolding has also been highlighted by the findings of the study by Amirhassemi, Azabdaftari and Saeidi (2013) who investigated the effect of scaffolded versus non-scaffolded written corrective feedback on EFL learners' written accuracy on

English articles and past tense. Although the results revealed no significant differences among the four groups in the study in terms of their accuracy in the use of articles in their compositions, the group who benefitted from scaffolded corrective feedback outperformed the other groups in the correct production of past tense.

As far as difficulties in EFL and ESL writing are concerned, research paper writing in Iran is by no means an exception. The challenge attributed to research paper writing is not a new phenomenon, but a persistent problem lingering on thus far, despite numerous attempts made to alleviate the situation. Prevalent as this problem may seem in the realm of academic writing, appropriate measures are to be taken so as to pinpoint the root of all impediments to the progress in this field and aid writers in avoiding those pitfalls.

Hence in an attempt to enhance students' exposure to academic genre, thereby familiarizing them with specific features, structures and the routine organization of information of that genre, this study is underpinned by genre-based approaches to writing instruction, central to which is Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding which, in the case of this study is provided in the form of sentence starters and writing frames.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, genre-based approach to research paper writing through scaffolding using sentence starters and writing frames has not been given great attention by the researchers in the past and this motivated the present study. Hence, this study was an attempt to investigate the effect of genre-based scaffolding on Iranian MA candidates' research paper writing. The following research question was formulated to serve the purpose of this study:

1. Does genre-based scaffolded instruction affect MA candidates' research paper writing?

Method

Participants

The participants in the present study included 20 male and female advanced English learners, comprising two intact classes, which were randomly assigned as experimental and control groups. Their homogeneity was checked by PBT TOEFL and their age range was 27-32. The participants were M.A. candidates of ELT, studying at Islamic Azad University, Tabriz Branch.

Instruments

The first instrument utilized in this study was a proficiency test, used to ensure the homogeneity of the participants for the study. Selected from Longman Preparation Tests for TOEFL, the test encompassed 4 sections of the PBT TOEFL test: Listening (50 items), Structure (15 multiple-choice and 25 error-recognition items), Reading (50 items). The scoring method for the test was dichotomous, that is, each correct answer was given 1, and each incorrect answer received 0. Thus, the maximum possible score for this test was 140 for 140 items on the test.

Having been chosen for the study, the participants in both experimental and control groups were assigned a writing task employed as the pre-test, namely, the second instrument of the study. The test was targeted at participants' research paper writing skill, including particular hypothetical information (e.g., findings of the study, similar and contradictory findings, suggestions for further research, etc. all provided as short phrases). By drawing upon the information given to them, the participants were required to complete the incomplete phrases given to them and write a full description of whatever section they were assigned.

The next instrument solely provided for the participants of the experimental group was a string of sentence starters and phrases commonly used in research paper writing, all selected from 'Academic Phrasebank' which is a general resource for academic writers, aiming to provide the phraseological 'nuts and bolts' of writing organized according to the main sections of a research paper or dissertation. Furthermore, what the participants of experimental group additionally benefitted from were a

number of writing frames constructed by putting together the phrases typically forming different sections of a research paper.

The final instrument was a writing post-test, that is, another writing task similar to the one employed as the pre-test of the study. This test, similarly, embraced different sections, each providing the kind of preliminary information the participants needed to expand upon and produce a coherent and cohesive account of what is thought of as acceptable academic style of writing, befitting the research-paper writing genre. Both pre-test and post-test embraced 5 sections chosen out of the gap of the study, purpose of the study, importance of the topic, participants, instruments, similar findings, contradictory findings, results, discussion and suggestions for further research. The maximum score for both tests was 36. The scores of both pre- and post-test were given using the rating scale based on Jacob et al. (1981).

Procedure

To begin with, 20 participants whose homogeneity had already been ensured using a PBT TOEFL test were randomly assigned in two control and experimental groups, each including 10 participants. The participants in both groups, prior to any treatment, were assigned a writing task, the results of which served as the data for the pre-test. Both groups were engaged in a 5-session practice on how to write different sections of a research paper, notwithstanding, undergoing different methods of instruction. The kind of work carried out in the control group included exposing the participants to sample research papers, familiarizing them with different sections and the commonalities and regularities of them.

Nevertheless, the participants of the experimental group were not only provided with the opportunity to be immersed in a detailed exploration of sample research papers but also a group of sentence starters that commonly appear in different sections of a research paper as well as a number of writing frames which provided a rough outline equipped with starters, connectives and sentence modifiers. Such frames, providing a structure for the participants to incorporate their ideas into, obviated the painful dilemma of teetering in indecision and wavering between this and that. Rather, the participants had at their disposal a skeleton overview of the task and all they

had to allocate their time and attention to was the insertion of the required information into those frames. Some samples of the sentence starters and frames have been provided in the Appendix A.

Finally, after the 5-session treatment, the participants in both groups, were assigned another writing task, similar to the one employed as the pre-test of the study. The results of this test served as the data for the post-test of the study.

Design

The present study had a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test design with a control group intended to estimate the effect of the independent variable(i.e., genre-based scaffolded instruction)on the dependent variable of the research which is research paper writing performance.

Results

The data obtained from the PBT TOEFL test, writing pre-test and post-test were analyzed by means of the statistical package for social sciences version 16 (SPSS, 16). Initially, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores of the experimental and control groups on the PBT TOEFL test which was taken to ensure the homogeneity of the participants in both groups. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics on the results of the PBT TOEFL test in the control and experimental groups.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for the results of the PBT TOEFL test

	groups of students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
students' scores	experimental	10	83.00	3.496	1.106
	Control	10	82.70	4.347	1.375

Table 2 displays the results of the independent samples t-test on the results of PBT TOEFL test in the control and experimental groups.

Table 2
Independent samples t-test for the PBT TOEFL test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
students' scores	Equal variances assumed	.333	.571	.170	18	.867	.300	1.764	-3.406 4.006
	Equal variances not assumed			.170	17.208	.867	.300	1.764	-3.419 4.019

As indicated in Tables 1 and 2, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group ($M = 83.00$, $SD = 3.50$) and control group ($M = 82.70$, $SD = 4.35$), which signifies the initial homogeneity of the participants in both groups, $t(18) = .170, p = .867 > .05$.

Another independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores of control and experimental groups on the pre-test. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics on the results of the pre-test in the control and experimental groups.

Table 3
Descriptive statistics for the results of the pre-test

		groups of students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
students' scores	experimental		10	13.20	1.751	.554
	Control		10	12.50	1.581	.500

Table 4 indicates the results of the independent samples t-test on the results of pre-test scores in the control and experimental groups.

Table 4

Independent samples t-test for the results of the pre-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
students' scores	Equal variances assumed	.066	.800	.938	18	.361	.700	.764	-.867 2.267
	Equal variances not assumed			.938	17.815	.361	.700	.764	-.867 2.269

As indicated in Tables3 and Table 4, there is no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group ($M = 13.2$, $SD= 1.75$) and control group ($M = 12.50$, $SD=1.58$), which indicates there is no significant difference in both groups, $t(18)=.93$, $p=.36>.05$.

Similarly, another independent samples t-test was run to compare the mean scores of the participants of both groups on the post-test. The results of the descriptive statistics are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive group statistics for the results of the post-test

		groups of students	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
students' scores	experimental		10	28.70	2.058	.651
	Control		10	22.90	5.587	1.767

Table 6 indicates the results of the independent samples t-test on the results of post-test scores in the control and experimental groups.

Table 6

Independent samples t-test for the results of the post-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
students' scores	Equal variances assumed	11.245	.004	3.081	18	.006	5.800	1.883	1.845 9.755
	Equal variances not assumed			3.081	11.397	.010	5.800	1.883	1.674 9.926

The results of the comparison of post-test scores in both groups, presented in Tables 3 and 4, reveal a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group ($M = 28.10$, $SD = 2.05$) and control group ($M = 22.90$, $SD = 5.58$, $t(18) = 3.08$, $p = .00 < .05$). Such significant difference is an indicator of the outperformance of the participants in experimental group, which confirms the effectiveness of genre-based scaffolded instruction through sentence starters and writing frames.

Discussion

The results of the independent samples *t*-test for the post-test showed a significant difference between the writing performance of participants in experimental and control groups, which confirms the findings of the study by Alvarez (2007) which pointed out the need for explicit instruction and support from instructors to improve research paper writing. The outperformance of the participants in experimental group was indicative of the effectiveness of the genre-based approach to writing instruction. This is consistent with the findings of the study by Henry and Roseberry (1998), Saowadee (2006), Swami (2008), Piyatida (2009), Tuan (2011), Elashri (2013), Alidoost et al. (2014) and Sabouri et al. (2014), all pointing towards the efficacy of taking a genre-based approach to teaching EFL writing.

The outperformance of the participants in experimental group was also indicative of the effectiveness of scaffolded instruction through sentence starters and writing frames. The helpfulness of scaffolded writing instruction is also corroborated by the findings of Bodrova (1998), who compared the samples of unassisted and scaffolded writing and found that scaffolded writing did produce more advanced writing compared to the level of writing children produced when unassisted. Backing up the effectiveness of scaffolding, the study by Amirghassemi et al. (2013) capitalized on the use of scaffolding to improve the production of past tense in writing.

The present study aimed at using a genre-based approach to research paper writing which was accompanied by scaffolded instruction through sentence starters and writing frames. The helpfulness of genre-based approach accompanied by scaffolding has already been corroborated by the findings of the study by Mulatsih (2011) and Ahn (2012), both attempting to reap the benefits of deploying the three-phase cycle of modeling, joint construction and independent construction of the texts, namely the three-staged teaching and learning cycle of Vygotsky's notion of scaffolding to improve writing performance.

The effectiveness of deploying writing frames has also been underscored by Adderly (2000) who found that writing frames can be advantageous, improving sentence construction, organization and layout of the students' writing. The provision of sentence starters and writing frames disentangled the learners from the predicament of how to commence, maintain and terminate, in other words, priming them with scaffolds adhering to the principles of research paper writing. The helpfulness of scaffolded support is also highlighted by the findings of the study by Panahzadeh and Gholami (2014) providing upper-intermediate female learners with planned preemptive focus on form through linguistic scaffolding, which proved to be beneficial in enhancing learners' lexical resource, thereby improving their oral production.

To conclude, this study set out to investigate the effect of genre-based scaffolded instruction on research paper writing of MA candidates of ELT. Taking a genre-based approach provided a fertile ground for enhancing MA candidates' awareness of research paper genre and its particular features and standards. Moreover, scaffolded support provided in the form of writing

frames and sentence starters proved advantageous to MA candidates, since such preliminary scaffolds allayed their concerns over not only how to convey their message but also how to conform to the standards of research paper writing by putting at their disposal the nub and crux of the genre.

The findings of this study have got implications for writing instructors. Firstly, they underline the benefits of enlightening learners to specific features of a particular genre. Once familiarized with the nuts and bolts of the genre, the learners are equipped with the knowledge of what to write and what not to write. More importantly, the explicit instruction of a particular genre provides more room for teachers to scaffold their students' learning, smoothing students' transition from assisted and dependent to unassisted independent performances. In other words, through frequent exposure to phrases, sentence starters and frames typical of a particular genre, the learners become more and more attuned to the commonalities of that genre and their dependence on them gradually fades away.

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Appendix

Sample frames for research paper writing

Frame for Empirical background to the study

The relationship between X and Y /The effect of X on Y has been widely investigated by several researchers to date. The past decade or so has witnessed a large and growing body of experimental investigations on.....
approaches to.....have drawn considerable attention since (date) and numerous studies have attempted to investigate the impact ofsince then, each delving into the issue from different perspectives.

The literature onabounds with ample support for The investigation intowas pioneered by Author (....) who demonstrated that (number) years later, in an attempt to explore Author(....) reported that Author (....) extended this work to and performed experimental investigations on The findings of his/her study revealed that..... In another study, Author (....) examinedand concluded that..... With the same objective, Author (....) conducted numerical experiments onand discovered that Moreover, the findings of the study by Author(....) who aimed at evaluating the..... lent support toindicating that Similarly, Author's (....) study which was an attempt to investigatepointed towards..... The findings of the study by Author (....) also provide confirmatory evidence that..... Adding to a growing body of literature on , the findings of the study by Author (....), who....., proved to be advantageous to and beneficial in

Gap and purpose

So far numerous studies have been carried out attempting to explore/investigate/establish
 Moreover, X has been previously investigated by some researchers, most of whom

have primarily concentrated on To the best of author's knowledge little attention, if any, has been paid to and literature reviews indicate that no research has been found to have focused on (specific part of the research). What is more, a careful study of the aforementioned investigations reveals that no previous research has simultaneously examined the Hence, as an attempt to fill this gap (and present a pretty novel approach to), the present study was undertaken so as to determine the extent to which can contribute to the improvement in

Frame for Suggestions for further research

Unveiling just the tip of iceberg of, this research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. Firstly, it is recommended that further research be undertaken to establish whether More broadly, further research is also needed to determine the extent to which /the degree to which/ the effectiveness of X in What is more, illuminating insights can be derived from a further study with a tighter focus on as more information on it would help us to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter. In other words, more research into is still necessary before obtaining a definitive answer to

Last but not least, further research in this field/regarding the role of X would be of great help in enhancing our understanding of the relationship between X and Y/ the effect of X on Y.

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Biodata

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