Implementing a Genre-based Writing Instruction in an EFL Classroom Setting: An experimental study

Michael Fiquemariam Woldemedhin
S2079879

MA in Applied Linguistics
Faculty of Liberal Arts
University of Groningen

Supervisor:
Dr. Steven L. Thorne
Second reader:
Dr. Hilde Hacquebord

July, 2011
Title: Implementing a Genre-based Writing Instruction in an EFL Classroom Setting: An experimental study

Candidate: Michael Fiquremariam Woldemedhin

Supervisor: Dr. Steven L. Thorne  Signature: ____________

Reader: Dr. Hilde Hacquebord  Signature: ____________

Date: 19 July 2011
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Steven L. Thorne, my supervisor, who supported and encouraged me generously throughout this study. Without his insightful comments and kind advice, this study would never be completed.

I am grateful to first year chemistry students at Bahir Dar University for taking part in the study. In addition, I am thankful to my colleagues in the department of English Language and Literature, Bahir Dar University for arranging the classes for my experiment and for assisting me in rating students’ texts. My special thanks go to my colleagues – Tesfa and Sinte, who tirelessly helped me with collecting data and rating students’ essays.

I am also indebted to all my teachers in the department of applied linguistics. Their assignments and wonderful lectures have broadened my knowledge and enormously improved my skills of doing research.

I would also like to thank my friends-Fitse, Tade and Wonde-whom I always cherished their company and friendship. Thank you for your support, care and love.

Lastly, I would like to extend my special thanks to my families whose love and help have always been the major sources of inspiration which keeps me going.
Abstract

Writing is among the most important skills that L2 learners need to develop. However, it remains one of the most difficult skills to master not only to second language learners but to learners who speak English as their first language. A number of theories and approaches that intend to develop learners writing skills have been suggested by various scholars. Among these, Genre-based approaches to teaching writing focus on teaching particular genres that students need to gain control of in order to succeed in particular setting. This research attempts to explore how much a genre based writing instruction is effective in helping EFLs become proficient writers by focusing on two genres-experimental lab reports and personal statements.

To this end, a genre-based writing instruction intervention which lasted for four weeks was applied to the class designated as the experimental group. For the other class (control group) the traditional-grammar based writing instruction was used for the same period. The t-test analysis which was conducted in the post-intervention measures of the collaborative lab reports produced by the two classes revealed that there were no significant differences between the two classes.

However, according the t-test results conducted on the post-intervention personal statements (in-classroom, individual writing tasks) of the two classes, significant differences were found in four measures: the number of present tense per clause, the number of first person pronouns, the number of chemistry vocabularies per clause and text structure. Besides, the post-test figures of the two classes suggested that the experimental class seemed to perform noticeably better than the controlled group in the other measures of the features of personal statements.
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ ii  
Abstract ........................................................................................................................ iii  

CHAPTER ONE .................................................................................................................. 1  
1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1  
   1.1. Background of the study ......................................................................................... 1  
   1.2. Aims of the Research ............................................................................................ 2  
   1.3. Significance of the study ....................................................................................... 3  
   1.4. Organization of the study ...................................................................................... 4  

CHAPTER TWO .................................................................................................................. 5  
2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ..................................................................................... 5  
   2.1. The role of input in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) ........................................ 5  
   2.2. Major approaches of teaching L2 writing .............................................................. 8  
      2.2.1. Product approach: Focus on language structure .............................................. 8  
      2.2.2. Current-traditional rhetoric (functional approach): Focus on text functions ...... 9  
      2.2.3. Expressionist approach: Focus on creative expression .................................. 10  
      2.2.4. Process approaches: Focus on the writing process ....................................... 11  
      2.2.5. Genre approaches: Focus on genre ............................................................... 13  
   2.3. Review of related studies ...................................................................................... 22  

CHAPTER THREE ............................................................................................................ 26  
3. Methodology ................................................................................................................ 26  
   3.1. Setting of the study .............................................................................................. 26  
   3.2. Subjects ................................................................................................................ 27  
   3.3. Sampling .............................................................................................................. 27  
      3.3.1. Sampling for the first experiment ................................................................. 27
List of Tables

Table 1: Pre-intervention and post-intervention lab report scores for class T and class G  37
Table 2: Between group t Test-lab reports ................................................................. 38
Table 3: Pre-intervention and post-intervention personal statement score for class T and class G .......................................................... 39
Table 4: Between group t Test-personal statement ................................................. 40

List of Figures

Fig.1. The teaching-learning cycle ................................................................. 21
CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

It is generally agreed that writing is the most difficult skill to master for foreign or second-language learners (Chaisiri, 2010). In addition, as Chaisiri noted providing writing instruction in L2 contexts particularly to those EFL learners who are rarely exposed to English or to the demands of writing English is considered difficult. A number of theories and approaches that intend to assist English language learners to develop their writing skills have been proposed, and implemented at different times. Among these approaches, product and process approaches have been widely used to teach L2 writing. As Badger and White (2000, p. 153) confirm the two approaches have dominated much of the teaching of writing that happens in the EFL classroom over the last 20 years. In the last ten years, however, a variety of genre-based methodologies, have been proposed as alternative approaches to teach writing in EFL context (Badger and White, 2000; Chaisiri, 2010).

In foreign or second-language writing, Hyland (2003a) has argued that genre-based approaches provide L2 learners explicit instructions on how they can make use of language patterns to write coherent and purposeful compositions. They especially focus on teaching particular genres that students need to gain control of in order to succeed in particular setting (Paltridge, 2004). A teacher who employs genre-based approaches is therefore required to get learners to produce texts (usually- academic essays) on the basis of purpose, organization and audience (Paltridge, 2001). Proponents of genre-based approaches claim that genre-based approaches provide an effective writing pedagogy because they make explicit what is to be learnt and also offer students a coherent framework for studying both language and context. In
addition, they argue that genre-based pedagogies help to insure that course objectives are derived from students’ needs and create the resources for students to understand and challenge valued discourses (Hyland, 2007).

Although there exist many studies in the area of EFL writing, only few deals with genre approaches to teaching L2 writing. This may be because genre approaches are relatively newcomers to ELT (Badger and White, 2000). The majority of these studies are qualitative studies concerned with the implementation of genre based pedagogies in EFL classroom settings. Based on the positive results found in these qualitative studies (e.g. Chaisiri, 2010; Walker, 1999; Gebhard, et al., 2007), it could be said that genre-based approaches have been demonstrated to be good instructional instruments to teach L2 students the skills necessary to write in ways that reflect particular genres within particular contexts.

However, empirical research on the potential of genre-based approaches as effective pedagogies for teaching L2 writing has not been adequately carried out so far. Moreover, the idea of using genre-based writing instruction in the second language classroom in a non-native speaking country is yet to be explored in any satisfactory way. Hence, this empirical study attempts to explore the effectiveness of a genre-based approach to improving EFL learners’ writing skills in two genres, 1) lab reports and 2) personal statements.

1.2. Aims of the Research

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate whether genre-based writing instruction is better than the traditional writing instruction in helping learners produce competent lab reports and personal statements. To this end, two experiments have been conducted. The first experiment aims to investigate whether the genre-based writing instruction, compared to the traditional writing instruction, helps ELLs produce competent lab reports in the collaborative lab report
writing tasks. The second experiment attempts to explore whether there are significant
differences between EFL students who are taught using genre-based writing instruction and those
EFL learners taught by traditional, grammar-based writing instruction in the quality of ‘personal
statements’ they write in the individual writing tasks. More precisely, this research tries to give
critical responses to the following research questions:

- Compared to traditional writing instruction, does genre based writing instruction help
  ELLs produce effective and competent ‘lab reports’ in the collaborative writing task?
- Compared to traditional writing instruction, does genre based writing instruction help
  ELLs produce effective and competent ‘personal statements’ in the individual writing
  task?

Hence, the class designated as experimental was taught using genre-based writing instruction
for a period of four weeks. The writing instruction had focused on the two genres (lab reports
and personal statements). For its part, the control class was taught using traditional-grammar
focused writing instruction for the same period of time. Pre-intervention and post-intervention
writing samples were taken from the two classes. Textual features, registers, and structural
features that indicated the development of the two genres under investigations were coded and
the sample texts were analyzed quantitatively.

1.3. Significance of the study

This research contributes to an understanding of the growing importance of genre-based
approaches in teaching L2 writing. The study is hoped to benefit L2 writing curriculum planners
and L2 teachers by shedding some light on what genre-based pedagogy means and how it can be
incorporated or implemented in the curriculum or actual classroom situations. Moreover and
most importantly, this work will serve as a valuable reference material for those researchers who
plan to conduct empirical studies in areas of genre-based writing pedagogy and L2 academic literacy.

1.4. Organization of the study

This thesis consists of six chapters. Following this introduction, the second chapter provides a theoretical overview of the different approaches to teaching L2 writing with special emphasis to genre-based approaches. It also reviews important studies that are related to genre and genre-based writing instruction. Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach adopted in the research. It explains the setting, subjects, procedures, coding and analysis of the two experiments conducted. Key findings from an analysis of the empirical data are presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5 gives a detailed account and interpretation of the findings of the two experiments. Chapter 6 concludes the study by summarizing its main findings. It also indicates the pedagogical implications and limitations of the study.
CHAPTER TWO

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. The role of input in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

The role of input has always been one of the major issues in second language research. According to Alcon (1998) the term input is taken from information processing and refers to oral/written data which learners are exposed to. Similarly, Gass and Mackey (2006) define input as the language which is available to learners in the form of listening, reading or body language. They further state that input is the raw data which learners use as linguistic evidence in order to detect patterns about the second language system. Ellis (1986) for his part has also defined input as spoken or written data that learners use to determine the rules of the second language.

Even though there are still much debate concerning the methods and extent of providing language inputs to learners, currently many SLA researchers acknowledge that input is one of the key determinants of language acquisition. As Alcon (1998, p. 1) stresses, it is impossible to think of second language acquisition in the absence of input in some form or other. Various models of second language acquisition have different opinions in the type of input which is most facilitative to second language development. For instance, first induction models (Krashen, 1985) regard acquisition as a result of informal, message-focused input. On the contrary, instructional models (Ellis, 1990) consider formal instruction as an important part in second language acquisition (Alcon, 1998). Neither models have, however, yet provided strong empirical evidence to support their claim. As Verspoor, et al. (2009, p.72) noted, only few detailed studies that focus on the relationship between L2 acquisition and the frequency and type of input have been conducted so far.
Ellis (1986), who associates input as a means which helps learners drive the correct rules of their L2, has made two important distinctions with regard to second language development: incidental and intentional acquisition, frequently referred to as acquisition versus learning (Krashen, 1981) or implicit versus explicit learning (Ellis, 1990). According to him, incidental or implicit learning occurs when the learner unconsciously and naturally arrives at the appropriate rules and structures of the language from ‘experiences of instance’ whereas intentional or explicit acquisition takes place when s/he consciously learns the rules of the language (de Bot, et al., 2005). Krashen argues that in order for second language learners to acquire a language they need a great deal of meaningful input. He also argues that explicit input (rules) of the language does not lead to ‘acquisition’. He underscores that a language is best acquired without any formal study of structure and form (de Bot, et al., 2005, p.77). However, Vygotsky argues that offering meaningful input to learners (particularly at early stages of development) will not guarantee that acquisition will take place. He emphasizes the need to place learners in a context where they engage in socially meaningful interaction. Summarizing Vygotsky’s argument, de Bot et al. (2005: 80) write “children grow intellectually only when they are in the action of interacting with people in their environment, and this interaction depends for a great deal on language.”

Many studies have suggested that explicit instruction (input) indeed has a positive effect on SLA. For example, Norris and Ortega (2000) as cited in de Bot et al. (2005) have conducted a meta-analysis of studies that investigated the effects of grammar instruction. According to their analysis, instruction that includes focus on form does make a positive difference for classroom SLA. Similarly, Doughty (1991), White (1991), White, Spada, Lightbown and Ranta (1991) as cited in Alcon (1998, p. 4) suggested that explicit instruction which focus on specific structures has a global benefit over purely naturalistic acquisition. Hinkel (2006) has also argued in favor of
the importance of explicit pedagogy in helping learners become proficient writers. Quoting Christie (1998) and Martin (1992) he has pointed out that “a lack of instruction in L2 grammar and lexis disadvantages L2 learners in their vocational, academic and professional careers.” Hence, it can be said that even though comprehensible input is important for language acquisition, it may not be sufficient. In order to enable L2 writers to communicate meaningfully and appropriately, therefore, curriculum design in L2 writing instruction has to incorporate explicit instruction in grammar and vocabulary (Hinkel, 2006, p. 124).

Frequency of input is the other significant issue in second language acquisition. Along with other factors, input frequency is believed to have a significant role in many aspects of second language acquisition (Ellis, 2002; Gass and Mackey, 2002). Ellis (2002) contends that language processing can be hugely affected by input frequency. He argues that frequency can affect almost all aspects of language, including the processing of phonology, reading, spelling, lexis, formulaic language, comprehension, grammaticality, sentence production, and syntax.

In second language writing learning, reading texts are important sources of meaningful input. In fact, Krashen (1993) as cited in Hyland (2003a) states that L2 writing skills cannot be acquired successfully by practice in writing alone. He stresses that they have to be supported with extensive reading. Consolidating Krashen’s idea, Hyland (2003a) maintains that reading, whether it is assigned or voluntary, has a positive influence on composing skills at various levels of proficiency (p. 17). He further contends that “extensive reading can furnish a great deal of tacit knowledge of conventional features of written texts, including, grammar, vocabulary, organizational patterns, interactional devices and so on.” This implies that students benefit a lot if they read texts that are related to the genres which they need to acquire.
2.2. Major approaches of teaching L2 writing

Writing is among the most important skills that L2 learners need to develop (Hyland, 2003a). However, it remains one of the most difficult skills to master not only to second language learners but for learners who speak English as their first language (Chaisri, 2010). A number of theories and approaches that intend to develop learners’ writing skills have been suggested by various scholars. Underlying these approaches, a variety of classroom teaching practices have been applied to teach writing. This section provides an overview of how L2 writing and the teaching of writing have been conceptualized by these approaches.

2.2.1. Product approach: Focus on language structure

The product approach was the predominant approach in the mid 1940’s to mid 1960’s (Paltridge, 2004, p. 1). According to this method writing is viewed as “a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences structured according to a system of rules” (Hyland, 2003a, p. 3). In other words, learning to write is considered as analogous with having good linguistic knowledge, knowing appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices (Pincas, 1982). In this approach it is assumed that a writer who has good command of grammar and lexical knowledge can construct good composition. Besides, writing development in this approach is the result of imitating and manipulating models provided by the teacher (Hyland, 2003a).

In a product approach which uses language structure as a basis for writing, learning to write has four stages: familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing and free writing (Badger and white, 2000; Hyland, 2003a). As Hyland writes in the familiarization stage learners are taught certain grammar and vocabulary through a text. In the controlled and guided writing stages the learners apply the skills with increasing freedom until they are ready for the free writing stage where they are engaged in genuine writing activities. Looking at the four stage process, it can be
said that the product approach regards writing as combinations of lexical and syntactic forms. The criteria for good writing according to this approach are thus accuracy and clear composition (Hyland, 2003a, p. 4). The actual composition content (meaning), however, is given lesser emphasis and is left to be dealt with later.

Classroom teaching practices designed according to product approach are still widely used to teaching writing at lower levels. In fact, many L2 learners learn to write in this approach. However, product approach of teaching writing has serious weaknesses (Hyland, 2003a). According to him, the major weakness of this approach is that since the patterns presented to learners are based on the feelings of materials writers rather than the analysis of real texts, learners find it difficult to develop their writing beyond few sentences. In addition, learners may get confused when they find themselves in a situation where they are expected to write longer composition for a specific setting.

2.2.2. Current-traditional rhetoric (functional approach): Focus on text functions

There is no doubt that L2 learners need an understanding of appropriate grammar and vocabulary when learning to write. However, this cannot ensure that the students will write good compositions because writing is more than understanding of grammar and lexis. Some EFL scholars started to question the earlier approach’s effectiveness in developing students’ writing skills. Hence, in the mid 1960’s a new approach which tried to relate structure to meaning “making language use a criteria for teaching materials” (Hyland, 2003a), was introduced. This approach is referred to as current-traditional rhetoric or functional approach. Unlike the product approach, this approach takes textual manipulation beyond the sentence level to the discourse level (Paltridge, 2004; Silva, 1990).
As its major aim this approach tries to help L2 learners develop effective paragraphs through the creation of topic sentence, supporting details and transitions. In addition, it aims to help them construct different kinds of paragraphs: illustration, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and so on (Hyland, 2003a). Furthermore, the approach focuses on teaching L2 learners about essay development which contains larger structural entities such as introduction-body-and conclusion as well as modes of writing essays that include narration, description, argumentation and exposition (Silva, 1990).

It can generally be said that a functional approach to teaching writing is highly influenced by the structural model of the product approach. As in the product approach, with functional approaches writing is basically a matter of fitting into prescribed patterns. Some of the writing tasks in this approach, as Hyland (2003a, p. 6) has described them “reordering sentences in scrambled paragraphs, selecting appropriate sentences to complete gapped paragraphs and writing from provided information.”

Even though writing tasks designed on the basis of this approach involve some meanings, they mainly focus on detached, prescribed patterns that give little attention to what students need and want to write about. Most of the writing activities focus on form and function, neglecting the practical purpose and personal experience of the writers (Hyland, 2003a). Underscoring the major weaknesses of this approach, he states “writing is more than a matter of arranging elements in the best order, and writing instruction is more than assisting learners to remember and execute these patterns” (P. 7).

2.2.3. Expressionist approach: Focus on creative expression

Contrary to the previous two approaches discussed, the expressionist approach “takes the writer rather than form as the point of departure” (Hyland, 2003a, p. 8). Proponents of this
approach regard writing as an individual activity and as an opportunity to explore one’s feelings (Silva, 1990; Conner, 1996). Therefore, they argue that L2 writing classes should aim towards fostering L2 students’ expressive abilities by encouraging learners to produce fresh and spontaneous writing (Hyland, 2003a). Classrooms organized in accordance to this orientation centers around the personal experience of learners and takes writing as a creative act of self discovery.

Writing from expressionist perspective is learned, not taught. As a result, as Hyland (2003a) notes writing instruction is non-directive. In other words writing courses should aim to develop students’ ability of expressing their ideas on a topic. Teachers in this approach are thus only expected to provide learners with a favorable environment so that they can express their views freely. Teachers are also urged to respond to ideas produced by learners rather than to focus on learners errors (Murry, 1985, as cited in Hyland, 2003a).

Although the expressionist approach has offered important contributions to the teaching of L2 writing (e.g. it introduces the importance of encouraging learners to express their beliefs), it has several drawbacks. Firstly, since it assumes that all writers have similar potential to write if they are allowed to write freely, it fails to provide clear standard that can serve as guide lines to teach and evaluate “good writing”. In addition, L2 learners may face difficulties as the approach tends to neglect “the cultural background of learners, the social consequence of writing, and the purpose of communication” (Hyland, 2003a).

2.2.4. Process approaches: Focus on the writing process

As many scholars pointed out, process approaches to teaching writing arose as a reaction against product oriented teaching models (Coe, 1987; Miller, 1991 as quoted in Susser, 1994; Hyland, 2002). Since their appearance in the ESL/EFL literature in late 1970’s, process
approaches have increasingly become the dominant approaches in L2 writing (Susser, 1994). Even though there are a number of different process approaches to writing, they all share some central features. Commenting on the common features of process approaches, Tribble (1996) as cited in Badger and White (2000) writes that process approaches stress on writing activities which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data through the publication of a finished text.

Process approaches recognize the importance of the cognitive process of writing to teach L2 writing, and “stress on developing students’ ability to plan, define a rhetorical problem and purpose and evaluate solutions” (Hyland, 2003a, p. 10). Accordingly, in producing a piece of composition, learners are expected to pass through four stages: pre-writing, composing/drafting, revising and editing. The approaches assume that by going through these stages, learners will discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning (Zomel, 1983). Hyland (2003a) also maintains that the four stages of the writing process are non-linear, recursive, interactive and simultaneous. This means, a writer may for instance, return to pre-writing activities after doing some editing or revising.

Unlike the product approaches, in process approaches providing input (stimulus) is considered to be less important. The primary role of the writing teacher is therefore to facilitate learners writing (Badger and White, 2000). Consolidating Badger and White’s comment Hyland (2003a) writes that the teacher’s role in process approaches is to “guide students through the writing process, avoiding an emphasis on form to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting and refining ideas”. By doing so, teachers make students aware that writing is a process of discovering in which ideas are generated and not just transcribed (Susser, 1994, p. 35).
Pedagogical practices designed in accordance with the process paradigm have been widely accepted by L2 writing teachers. However, some EFL researchers have criticized the process approaches saying that they have monolithic view of writing. According to these scholars, the process of writing in process approaches is regarded the same irrespective of what is being written and who is writing. Similarly, Horowitz (1986) posed a question concerning whether process approaches can realistically prepare students for the demands of writing in particular settings (Paltridge, 2004). Horowitz contends that process approaches overemphasize the significance of individuals’ psychological function, but neglects the reality of academia. In a similar fashion, Hyland (2003a) expresses his concern on the capability of process approaches in meeting students need to write academic texts. He states:

Encouraging learners to make their own meanings and find their own text forms does not provide them with clear guidelines on how to construct the different kinds of texts they have to write (p. 13).

He goes on arguing that equipping learners with strategies that good writers use does not necessarily improve the learners’ writing skills. Hence, he suggests that students need help in learning how to write as well as in understanding how texts are shaped by topic, audience purposes and cultural norms.

2.2.5. Genre approaches: Focus on genre

In recent years, the notion of genre and its application in language teaching and learning has received increasing attention (Hyland, 2007). Genre theories and genre based pedagogies were developed in response to process approaches which give little attention on how meanings are socially positioned and constructed. As Hyland (2003b, p. 18) pointed out, process approaches fail to “consider the forces outside the individual which help guide purposes, establish
relationships and ultimately shape writing”. Addressing this deficit, he adds, genre-based pedagogies offer students explicit and systematic explanation of the ways language functions in social contexts. In contrast to process approaches that regard writing as monolithic activity regardless of whatever is written and whoever writes it, they view ways of writing as purposeful, socially situated responses to particular contexts and communities (Hyland, 2003a, p.17). In this sub section I will try to give brief overview on the concepts of genre, the justification behind the use of genre approaches in L2 writing classrooms, and the two influential models of genre-based pedagogies: Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

2.2.5.1. The concept of genre

Genre refers to abstract, socially recognized ways of using language for specific purposes (Hyland, 2003a; 2003b; 2007). In conceptualizing genre in such a way, it is assumed that “members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on the repeated experience with such texts to read, understand and perhaps write them relatively easy” (Hyland, 2007). Strengthening Hyland’s view, Kamberelis (1999) maintains that any field of practice contains genres and in order to engage in communicative acts, members within that field of practice draw on the formal and thematic conventions of the genres. This implies that it is the genres that inform the ongoing communication between members of specific discourse communities.

As has been indicated in the above discussion, genre is central in the communicative activities of the members of a discipline. As a result, members need to acquire good knowledge of the genres of their discipline so that they can engage in the knowledge producing activities of their field or profession. For example, a writer who seeks to pass his/her message across to members of the discourse communities in which s/he belongs has to “anticipate what the readers might be
expecting based on the previous texts that they have read of the same kind” (Hyland, 2007, p.149). As Grape and Kaplan (1986) in Paltridge (2000, p.400) stressed linguistic knowledge alone may not be enough for writers to effectively communicate with their readers. Apart from that, they need to acquire genre knowledge as well. This may include using specialized vocabulary specific to their discipline, making use of grammar that the specific text type requires and presenting their ideas in a structure that their readers are familiar with. For instance, a writer who writes about science needs to know that s/he has to present his/her ideas in “a more personal, detached and authoritative manner that differs from the presentation of self in other contexts” (Gebhard, et al., 2007, p.422).

Recent trends in L2 teaching have indicated that EFL scholars have started to realize the importance of developing L2 learners’ genre knowledge. Johns (2002:3) underscores the significance of genre approach in language teaching saying “genre is one of the most important and influential concepts in language education.” Explaining the importance of helping learners to acquire genre knowledge specific to their need, Paltridge (2000: 400) contends that the notion of genre can provide students with the tools for both recognizing and adapting to “the changing genre landscape their professional lives will travel across.” He further argues that even if it is difficult to identify all the genres that students need to acquire in their future life, it is possible to help them “ask questions of texts, of contexts, and of themselves” so that they can produce and understand the kinds of texts they need to control in their professional lives.

2.2.5.2. Genre-based pedagogy: Brief justification

Genre-based approaches to teaching writing, according to Paltridge (2004, p. 1) focus on “teaching particular genres that students need control of in order to succeed in particular setting.” He further states that these pedagogies stress on helping learners understand the language and
discourse features of particular texts as well as the contexts in which these texts are produced. Hyland (2003a) who also tried to explain genre-based approach in terms of foreign or second language learning writes that “a genre-based approach refers to teaching learners how to make use of language patterns to achieve a coherent purposeful composition” (p. 18).

In contrast to the psycholinguistic and behavioral orientation, as Gebhard and Harman (2011) pointed out genre-based pedagogies are based on the sociocultural conception language and language learning. Accordingly, proponents of these pedagogies argue that language is both purposeful and inseparable from the social and cultural contexts in which it occurs (Paltridge, 2004, p. 2). They underline that language is a means through which one uses to ‘get things done’ and achieve certain goals (Hyland, 2003a, p.18). This implies that speakers and writers have to use “particular genres in order to fulfill certain social functions and to achieve certain goals within particular social and cultural contexts” (Paltridge, 2004, p. 2). In teaching learners to write, therefore, genre-based pedagogies offer learners explicit instruction on how target texts are structured and how they are structured in the way they are (Hyland, 2003a); they assume that writing instruction will become more successful when students are “aware of what target discourses look like” (Hyland, 2003b, p. 25). Therefore, they encourage teachers to provide students with opportunities to develop their writing through analyzing ‘expert’ texts (Hyland, 2003b, p. 22).

Many scholars contend that genre approaches to teaching writing provide an effective writing pedagogy (Hassan, 1996; Hyland, 2007; 2003a; 2003b). Hyland (2003a) for instance explains the advantage of genre based pedagogy. He says “genre based pedagogy incorporates discourse and contextual aspects of language use that may be neglected when attending to structure, functions or processes alone” (p. 18). In a similar way, Christie and Martin (1987) in Hyland (2007)
emphasize that genre-based pedagogies are important because they offer real benefits to both learners and teachers. They write:

Genre pedagogies promise very real benefits for learners as they pull together language content, and context while offering teachers a means of presenting students with explicit and systematic explanations of the ways writing works to communication (p. 150).

Hyland (2003a; 2003b) has further showed his strong support for genre-based pedagogy by advocating the importance of providing learners explicit instruction which, according to him, is the most important feature of genre-based writing instruction. He argues that rather than relying on “hit or miss inductive methods where learners are expected to acquire the genre they need from repeated writing experience”, providing learners explicit instruction gives learners and teachers clear understanding on the outcome of writing tasks. Hyland (2004) in Hyland (2007: 150) summarizes the main benefits of genre pedagogy. According to him, genre pedagogy is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicit</th>
<th>Makes clear what is to be learnt to facilitate the acquisition of writing skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systematic</td>
<td>Provides a coherent framework for focusing on both language and contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs-based</td>
<td>Ensures that course objectives and content are derived from students’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Gives teachers a central role in scaffolding students’ learning and creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>Provides access to the patterns and possibilities of variation in valued texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Provides the resources for students to understand and challenge valued discourses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness-raising</td>
<td>Increases teachers’ awareness of texts to advise students on their writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the several benefits they offer to both learners and teachers, genre approaches have not been uncritically adopted in L2 writing classrooms (Hyland, 2007, p.151). Proponents of process approaches, for example, have strongly attacked genre pedagogies arguing that the explicit teaching of genres proposed by genre-based pedagogies “inhibit writers’ self-expression and straightjackets creativity through conformity and prescription” (Hyland, 2007, quoting
Dixon, 1987); process approaches adherents claim that “genres might be taught as moulds into which content is poured rather than as ways of making meaning” (Hyland, 2003b, p. 26). Advocates of genre-based approaches have, however, defended themselves by contending that “genres do not have a constraining power which limits the originality of individual writers” (Hyland, 2007, p.152). They further claim that teaching learners about a particular genre does not necessarily dictate the way they write. It rather provides learners with certain patterns, help them make choices and facilitate their expression.

Genre-based approaches do not represent a single set of techniques. As Hyland (2007) pointed out, there are two major genre approaches that have been widely implemented in L2 classrooms worldwide. These are Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Even though these two perspectives of genre and genre-based pedagogies share a number of commonalities, “they differ in the emphasis they give to text or context, the research methodology they employ and the type of pedagogy they encourage” (Hyland, 2002). As Hyland (2007) observes while the theoretical foundation of SFL is drawn from the works of Vygotsky (1978) and Halliday (1994), ESP’s principles are drawn from the more eclectic theories of Swales (1990, 2004). However, both models stress the importance of scaffolding which is understood as “providing learners with relevant and increasingly more precise information in the environment at the right time to help solve a particular problem” (de Bot, et al., 2005, p. 81). It is assumed that by offering learners some assistance, it is possible to move them from their existing level of performance, what they can do now to a level of potential performance. In addition, even if the two approaches differ in the way they conceptualize genre, they both seek to disclose the rhetorical patterning of a genre with its key features. This involves, as Hyland (2007: 154) states “studying a representative sample texts to identify the series of moves or communication stages
which make up the genre.” In the following few paragraphs I will briefly discuss the two approaches.

2.2.5.3. Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

SFL, known in the United States as ‘the Sydney school’ has at its base the Hallidayan conception of the dynamics between text and context and Vygotsky’s sociocultural theories of learning (Gebhard and Harman, 2011, p.47). As Hyland (2007) writes both Halliday and Vygotsky have complementary opinion regarding language; they both consider that language and language learning are “social phenomena embedded in specific cultural, historical and institutional contexts” (p. 153).

From an SFL perspective, Gebhard and Harman (2011: 49) state, teaching academic literacy involves apprenticing ELLs (English language learners) to using school based genres and registers. In other words, SFL teachers who employ SFL model explicitly inform their students about the range of linguistic choices available for them when they attempt to write genres they likely encounter at school. Illustrating the roles of teachers applying SFL’s principles in their L2 classes, Gebhard, et al. (2007: 421) write:

For instance, teachers can help students make more expert linguistic choices that are sensitive to their immediate context by exploring the way language functions to enact relationships among participants, convey meaning or ideas, and reflect the medium or mode of communication. These three functions, which Halliday calls interpersonal, ideational, and textual, operate simultaneously and offer a basis for analyzing how texts vary in relation to who is communicating with whom, what they are communicating about, and the modes through which they are interacting.
According to Hyland (2007; 2003a) SFL is conceivably the most clearly articulated approach to genre both theoretically and pedagogically. He claims that buttressed by a highly involved and insightful theory of language and motivated by a commitment to language and literacy education, SFL offers the most theoretically sophisticated and pedagogically developed approach (Hyland, 2003b, p.22). Typically SFL pedagogies are characterized by their belief that in order for students to learn a language, they must get some assistance from their teacher or from their peers. This support is referred to as scaffolding. Even though scaffolding in genre-based pedagogy basically includes modelling and discussing of texts, explicit instruction and teacher’s input (Hyland, 2007: 158), in SFL it has been elaborated in an explicit methodological model represented by the teaching learning cycle (see figure 1). This model represents, according to Hyland (2003a), a ‘visible pedagogy’ in which what is to be learned and assessed is made clear to the students. The goal of this cycle, as Gehard and Harman (2011: 49) state is “to expand students’ meaning-making repertoires by providing them with the models, explicit instruction and critical analysis of authors’ and their own semiotic choices as they learn to interpret and produce academic texts in school.” According to Hyland (2007: 159), the key stages of the cycle are:

• setting the context—revealing genre purposes and the settings in which it is commonly used;

• modelling—analysing representative samples of the genre to identify its stages and key features and the variations which are possible;

• joint construction—guided, teacher-supported practice in the genre through tasks which focus on particular stages or functions of the text;
• independent construction—-independent writing by students monitored by the teacher; and
• Comparing—relating what has been learnt to other genres and contexts to understand how genres are designed to achieve particular social purposes.

Fig.1. The teaching-learning cycle (Feez, 1998, as cited in Hyland, 2007, p. 159)

2.2.5.4. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

The theoretical foundation of ESP is fundamentally inspired by Swales’ concepts of text and context dynamics (Gebhard and Harman, 2011, p. 47). Quoting Swales (1990), Hyland (2003b, p. 21) maintains that “the ESP approach is more linguistic in orientation and sees genre as a class of structured communicative events employed by discourse communities whose members share broad social purposes.” Accordingly, it tries to conduct thorough linguistic analysis of the type of texts students and professionals need to be able read and produce to do their work. This strengthens the argument that ESP pedagogy tends to give considerable attention to the context in which genres are employed for users in particular areas. The primary concern of ESP teachers is therefore identifying the communicative needs of particular academic or professional groups and helping them become better communicators in their respective groups.
As in SFL, the concept of scaffolding is at the centre of ESP genre teaching. However, ESP differs from SFL in the way it provides assistance to learners. Widdowson (1998)-cited in Hyland,-(2007: 160) states that ESP pedagogy seeks to provide learners with the means to understand and then help them create new texts through a process referred to as ‘gradual approximation’. Explaining this process further, Hyland (2007) writes:

A common approach in ESP classroom is to ask students, often in small groups to analyse, compare and manipulate representative samples of the target discourse in a process known as rhetoric conscious rising. Conscious rising is a ‘top-down’ approach to understanding language and encourages learners to see grammar features as “on line processing components of discourse and not the set of syntactic building blocks which discourse is constructed.

The logic behind such conception is that it is possible to develop students writing skills by guiding them to explore key lexical, grammatical and rhetorical features and by helping them to use this knowledge to construct their own example of the genre that they want to write (Hyland, 2003, p.160).

2.3. Review of related studies

Although a lot of works in the area of EFL writing have been carried out, only few studies deal with genre approaches to teaching L2 writing. Probably this is because genre approaches are relatively newcomers to ELT (Badger and White, 2000). The majority of these studies are qualitative studies concerned with the implementation of genre based pedagogies in EFL classroom setting. In the following paragraphs, I will try to review some of these studies and few other quantitative studies conducted so far.
Chaisiri (2010) has attempted to investigate how writing teachers perceive their current approach and the consequences of implementing genre-based pedagogy in one writing classroom. After analyzing sample texts produced by 40 Thai students participated in the study, he concluded that the genre-based writing instruction employed lead to clear improvement in students’ writing. He further stated that both the teachers and students have positive attitudes towards the implemented writing pedagogy. Walker (1999) has also designed a lesson that makes use of genre theory to teach engineering students about the genre of engineering lab report writing. At the end of his paper, he has pointed out that by integrating genre theory in one of the lab courses that the students took, it was possible to alleviate problems that students previously encounter in learning and writing the genre of engineering lab reports. Another qualitative research article that is relevant to this research is the study conducted by Gebhard, et al. (2007). In their research entitled “Reclaiming Recess: Learning the language of persuasion”, they tried to show how a teacher uses the tools of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to teach her fifth grade English Language Learners how to use academic language to challenge school policies regarding recess. In the study, the teacher who is as well one of the researchers, designed a unit of study to teach her students how to analyze and use academic language to get their recess back through a letter-writing campaign to the principal. In order to reflect on the effectiveness of the approach, she focused on the progress of one student. The analysis of the written texts produced by this student has indicated that the student stated her points very clearly through the use of carefully developed arguments and counterarguments. The teacher has also observed similar progress in the other students as well.

Among the empirical works conducted thus far, it is worth reviewing Kamberelis’s (1999) piece of research entitled “Genre development and learning: Children writing stories, science
reports and poems”. In his study he investigated the working knowledge of fifty-four children in three genres: narrative, scientific and poetic. He coded the children’s text for “the presence or absence of a variety of textual and structural features which are typically distributed across the three genres” (Kamberelis’s, 1999 p.1). Results of the empirical analysis revealed that the children had significantly more experience with narrative genres than the other two genres. In other words, this implies that the participants had more working knowledge of narrative genres than poetic and scientific genres.

In another longitudinal empirical study, Beer and Nagy (2010) tried to examine the difference among the four genres of text: narrative, descriptive, compare/contrast, and persuasive using two measures of syntactic complexity, clauses per T-unit and words per clause. They analyzed the data (written artifacts) which they had collected from the same two groups (83 students in grades three and five and 96 students in grades five and seven) on two occasions 2 years apart. Accordingly, for clauses per T-unit, they found differences between persuasive essays, and the other three genres. They also observed significant differences between descriptive texts for words per clause. Over the grade levels studied, however, the results indicated that, the measures of syntactic complexity did not increase in their differentiation among the four genres (Beer and Nagy, 2010, p. 183).

The last quantitative study which I would like to review in this paper is the work of Ho (2009) entitled “Systemic Text Analysis in the ESL Writing Classroom: Does It Work?” In her research she posed the question- “how can helping students analyze the macro and micro elements of a text help them improve the overall structure and texture of their own writing?”-In dealing with this question she designed a lesson by combining the genre-based theory and Systematic Functional Linguistics and implemented it. Having compared the pre- and post-instruction pieces
of review writing produced by an ESL undergraduate in the English class, she found out that the
genre-based instruction that she applied “appears to have resulted in the student’s improvement
in her written texts, particularly with regards to the overall schematic structure and the patterns
of clause construction” (Ho, 2009, p. 351).

As has been indicated, genre approach to teaching writing is a new approach and most of the
studies that have been conducted concerning this approach are qualitative. From the few
empirical studies conducted, the majority of them deal with the development of children’s genre
knowledge (e.g. Kamberelis’s, 1999; Beer and Nagy, 2010). As far as the knowledge of the
writer of this paper, no one has tried to conduct an experimental study (using adult EFLs as
subjects) which compares genre based writing pedagogy with other approaches of teaching L2
writing. This research attempts to explore how much genre based writing instruction is effective
in helping EFLs become proficient writers by focusing on two genres-experimental lab reports
and personal statements.
CHAPTER THREE

3. Methodology

3.1. Setting of the study

In this study two experiments were conducted in order to see whether a genre-based writing instruction is effective, compared to traditional writing instruction, in helping second language learners produce effective ‘lab reports’ and ‘personal statements’. The first experiment investigated whether the genre-based writing instruction helped ELLs produce effective and competent ‘lab reports’ in the collaborative lab report writing task after comparing lab reports written by ELLs who were taught by the genre-based writing instruction with that of those ELLs taught by the traditional writing instruction. The second experiment explored whether there were significant differences between EFL students who were taught by the genre-based writing instruction and those learners taught by the traditional, grammar-based writing instruction in the quality of ‘personal statements’ they wrote in the individual writing task. Hence, the class designated as experimental—hereafter referred to as class G (for genre-based writing instruction), was taught using genre-based writing instruction for a period of four weeks. The writing instruction focused on the two genres (lab reports and personal statements). On the other hand, the control class—hereafter called class T (for the traditional writing instruction) was taught using the traditional-grammar focused writing instruction for the same period of time. After textual features, registers, and structural features that indicated the development of the two genres under investigations were coded from the pre-intervention and post-intervention writing samples, the sample texts were analysed quantitatively.
3.2. Subjects

The subjects of the study were two groups of freshman ELLs who were studying Chemistry in the undergraduate programme at Bahir Dar University. While the G class consisted of 47 students, the T class was consisted of 50 students. The ages of the students in both class ranged from 18-25 years. Even though they had been studying English as a Foreign Language since junior school, the subjects had low proficiency in all the four macro skills of the English language. They had little opportunity to use English outside the classroom and they had little exposure to the natural, authentic use of the English language. By the time this study was conducted, the students were taking a compulsory English writing course (University writing skills) which aimed to improve their skills of writing effective paragraphs and essays in academic register. In addition, both classes were taking an organic chemistry laboratory course where they were expected to write a lab report for every lab experiment they conducted every week.

3.3. Sampling

3.3.1. Sampling for the first experiment

The subjects in both classes (class G and class T) were organized in groups of 6 or 7 for the lab reports they had to write every week. Hence, there were 8 groups in each class. From these groups, four groups from each class were randomly selected for the experiment. The lab reports that were written by these groups before and after the writing instructions were analysed for their textual, register, and structural features of a lab report selected by the researcher.

3.3.2. Sampling for the second experiment

15 ELLs from each class had participated in the second experiment. From the total of 47 students found in the G class, 2 students that missed two discussion sessions were taken out from
the study. Another two students from the same class were rejected from the study because it was very difficult to code their composition due to their bad handwriting. Hence, from the remaining 41 students 15 students were randomly selected. Regarding the T class, from the class of 50 students, 3 students were rejected from the study because of their bad handwriting. From the remaining 47 students, 15 students who were randomly selected participated in the study.

3.4. Materials and procedures

3.4.1. Writing tasks

The subjects composed texts in the two genres (lab reports and personal statement). The laboratory reports that were analyzed in this study were written collaboratively (in groups of 6 or 7) outside the classroom. The experimental lab reports were not particularly written for the purpose of this study. Rather, they were actual assignments that students were required to write for the laboratory course that they were taking. On the other hand, the other writing task (writing personal statement) was an in-classroom writing task. In this writing task, the participants were prompted to write a personal statement. The prompt provided to the students was:

- Imagine that you would like to pursue your Bachelor or Masters study in one of the fields related to chemistry (e.g. organic chemistry, inorganic chemistry, chemical engineering etc.) at a certain University abroad and you are required to write a personal statement. Write a personal statement to the Institution that offers the programme that you want to study.

3.4.2. Procedure

The writing instructions lasted for four consecutive weeks, for both classes. The instruction consisted of a class meeting thrice a week, with one hour period for each session. During the four weeks instruction period, genre-based pedagogical approach to teaching writing was applied to
the G class. This group was explicitly taught about the different features of ‘lab reports’ and ‘personal statements’. For this purpose, twelve model writings (six for the lab report and six for personal statements) which represented the two genres were given to the students as reading assignments. Then, in the classroom the teacher discussed the basic features of each genre by using three of the six models for each genre as examples. Afterwards, the students, with the help of the teacher, tried to analyze the remaining three models that were not discussed by the teacher. After that, participants wrote their first draft which was followed by classroom discussion where students got feedback from their peers and the teacher. Finally, they wrote their final draft. The T class was given explicit instruction on the textual and structural features of the two genres. However, they were given the model texts. After they wrote their first draft, the teacher gave them feedback focusing primarily on the errors that were observed in their texts. Finally, they wrote their final drafts. The analyses of the texts were based on the final drafts (hand written) of the genres that both groups wrote.

Since the research seeks to see the difference between the writing developments between the two groups taught with different instructional methods, the last lab reports written by the G class and the T class before the beginning of the writing instruction were compared to see whether there were any differences between the two classes before the experiment. And in order to find out whether there were any differences between the two classes after the experiment, the lab reports written on the last week of the instruction by the two classes were compared and examined.

For the other writing task (writing personal statement) students wrote two essays with similar prompts in the classroom before the start of the instruction (pre-instruction writing task) and at
the end of the instruction (post-instruction writing task). The subjects were given 40 minutes to complete the writing task.

**Selection of textual features for analysis**

Various relevant published studies that deal with analysis of genre knowledge and writing development of ELLs were consulted to select the features that were analysed in this study. Accordingly, the following linguistic and structural features were selected for analysis:

**Measures of genre knowledge**

As Paltridge (2000: 398) writes “genre knowledge includes both content and form.” Therefore, the features selected in this study indicate the student writers’ knowledge of the content as well as form of the genres under scrutiny. Measurements of genre knowledge used by Kamberelis (1999) were slightly modified and used in this study. These features include textual features, register features and structural features. While textual features operate at sentence or inter-sentential level, register features operate at word or phrase level (Kamberelis, 1999). The last feature (structural features) operates at the level of the whole text. Following Kamberelis (1999) organization, the features selected for analysis were clustered in three categories:

**Text texture (Textual features)**

**Words per clause:** words per clause can be used as rough measurement of syntactic density and text complexity (Huot, 1990). According to Halliday and Martin (1993) in scientific discourses much information is compressed in short spaces. In addition, as Biber (1988) and Haliday have noted complex texts tend to be dense both lexically and syntactically (see Kamberelis, 1999, for a discussion).

**Verb tense:** past tenses tend to predominate in experimental reports since lab reports are accounts of certain experiments and what was discovered in the experiment. On the other hand,
personal statements are predominantly written using present and future tenses because a personal statement is a narrative about an individual experience, interests, qualifications and/or expectations for the future (http://uwp.duke.edu/writing-studio)

**Temporal connectives:** Temporal connectives are expressions that relate an event to a point or an interval in time. Some of these connectives include first, second, third, etc., when, now, meanwhile, finally, next, after, lastly, after, then, here, previously, whenever, till, while, so on (Knapp and Watkins, 2005, p.49). They are predominantly found in lab reports and personal statements.

**Conjuncts (logical connectives):** Conjuncts are adverbials that connect clauses or sentences logically. They are mainly adverbs such as therefore, perhaps, however, consequently, or prepositional phrases such as: as a result of, on the other hand, as consequence of, so on (Knapp and Watkins, 2005, p.48). They are found in large numbers in informational texts (Kamberelis, 1999).

**Passives:** Scientific texts particularly experimental reports make frequent use of the passives (Halliday and Martin, 1993). On the contrary, personal statements make use of active voices.

**Point of view:** Knapp and Watkins (2005) note that third person point of view gives a text more formal style and objective tone by removing the personal and by putting distance between the writer and the text. Hence, formal texts such as lab reports are written in third person point of view. It is not common to see personal pronouns like “I” and “we”. However, personal pronouns are common in narrative texts and personal writings. Kamberelis (1999) writes that a piece of writing which is written in the first person has the effect of engaging the reader closely in a personal event.
 Registers

Scientific terminologies-chemistry vocabularies: What makes scientific texts including experimental reports different from other kinds of genres of writings is they use much technical language. As Halliday and Martin (1993: 172) pointed out “Science could not be science without deploying technical discourse as a fundamental tool.” Accordingly, in the chemistry laboratory reports that students wrote, it was expected that there would be a considerable number of scientific terminologies related to chemistry. Scientific terminologies were also expected to appear in personal statements, but with small numbers compared to the frequency in laboratory reports.

Mental verbs: Mental verbs are verbs that tell what happens or is done by humans within themselves—things like thinking and feelings (Knapp and Watkins, 2005, p.72). They are common in genres such as arguing and narrating and are also features of personal descriptions, but are not a feature of technical descriptions (Knapp and Watkins, 2005, p.72). Since personal statements contain elements of persuasion and narration, they are expected to contain a considerable number of mental verbs.

Text structure

Contrary to many genres of writings which do not adhere to fixed and standardized structure, experimental reports have a very clear staging structure (Halliday and Martin, 1993, p.192). The following lists reveal the elements of an experimental report with its typical structure:

- **Title of the experiment**: Brief, informative and interesting phrase which provides brief information about the report
Introduction: It must contain clear objectives of the experiment. It should show the relation of the experiment to the scientific knowledge being constructed. In addition, it should tell the reader what to expect in the report (Halliday and Martin, 1993, p. 192).

Method: It provides explicit instructions so that the experiment can be replicated (Halliday and Martin, 1993, p. 192)

Results and Discussions: Provides information on what happened and reports the outcome of the experiment. It is the most important section of the laboratory report because it is the section which reports the data up on which the conclusions are based. The result stage provides for comparability across replications (Halliday and Martin, 1993, p.192).

Conclusion: This section relates the results to the purpose of doing the experiment (Halliday and Martin, 1983, p.192).

Reference: Complete bibliographic information must be provided for all references in the report

Text structure of personal statements

Because personal statements are personal, it is hard to find a single type of structure that can be taken as a standard. Having reviewed different ways of organizing a personal statement, I selected the structure suggested by UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service). According to UCAS a good personal statement should contain the following sections (http://dollaracademy.org/assets/pdf/Information%20booklets/ucas_personalstatement2.pdf):

A. The first third (The course and the writer): This section focuses on the course of study for which the writer is applying. It tries to explain what the course means to the writer. It is a part which explains why the writer is motivated to pursue his/her studies in that specific course. The
writer can describe any practical work or other experiences that are related. In this section the writer should use key words associated with the course she/he is applying for.

**B. The second third (writer’s academic studies):** This section explains how what the writer studied before supports and prepares him/her for the course that he/she wants to study. The writer should give real examples of what she/he particularly enjoys at the moment [or last year] in his/her studies (e.g. actual texts, experiments, visits, experiences, topics etc.) The writer should also mention any related prizes or awards that she/he received.

**C. The third third (writer’s wider self):** This part explains the writer’s wider interests / experiences. The writer should show to his/her readers that she/he is committed, skilled and focused

**D. A brief conclusion:** concludes the personal statement. In this section, the writer should summarize the key points mentioned in the other sections of the personal statement and say something about what he/she can offer to the University if she/he is admitted to the University.

**3.5. Coding and analysis**

Various objective measures of writing development have been suggested by many L2 researchers (Freeman and Storm, 1977; Wolfe-Quintero, et al., 1998). However, the researchers have not come into consensus on one global index that can reliably and objectively measure L2 development. T-units related measures have frequently been used to gauge L2 development (Wang, 2009). Nevertheless, some researchers argue that T-units analyses are not suitable for low proficiency data (Gaies, 1980; Humburg, 1984 cited in Ishikawa, 1995; Ishikawa, 1995). They argue that low proficiency writings are full of grammatical and lexical errors that it is difficult for a researcher both to understand and tabulate the T-units. Instead, they suggest the next smaller unit (clause) as a suitable unit for analysis (Wang, 2009). Therefore, in this study,
following Kamberelis (1999) and Ishikawa (1995), students written texts were segmented into clauses. In defining what a clause is, I used Quirk, et al.’s (1985) definition which states that a clause is a group of words with “a visible subject and finite verb” (Ishikawa, 1995, p.57).

Once the texts were segmented into clauses, they were coded for the textual features registers and structural features. In coding the features selected, it was initially tried to count only those clauses and words that were error free in all respects. However, it was impossible to do that because the subjects’ texts were full of errors. Therefore, some errors were tolerated. For example, punctuation errors were disregarded. Besides, spelling errors were tolerated unless they seriously affect the meaning or message which the learner writers intended to express. Like Ishikawa’s (1995) study all the cases of ambiguity were given the most favorable interpretation. Furthermore, contractions (e.g. doesn’t, can’t, won’t etc.) were counted as two words. Words which were incorrectly separated (e.g. high school) were also counted as one. In counting the number of chemistry vocabularies found in the subjects’ texts, Mr. Guch’s chemistry vocabulary list (http://misterguch.brinkster.net/vocabulary.html) was used to decide which vocabularies were specific to different fields of chemistry.

For textual features and registers, tokens of feature types were coded and ratios of tokens per clause were computed. However, this procedure did not work for the structural features since they were not continuous variables. Hence, a four points Likert scale- 4 (excellent), 3 (good), 2 (satisfactory) and 1 (poor) was used to score the structure of the written texts. My colleague and I scored the texts according to the features that the two text types (genres) must contain (as discussed previously). The inter-coder reliability was found to be statistically significant (r=.83). The significance of differences observed between the experimental and control group in the measures of the futures of each genre were tested by using t-Test. The significance of the
statistics was set at $p < .05$. The independent variables were the two classes (the experimental and the control) and the dependent variables were the set of linguistic and textual features that were coded and scored.
CHAPTER FOUR

4. Results

In this section, quantitative analyses of the textual features, register features and structural features of the two genres under investigation are presented. Table 1 reports the means, as well as standard deviations of the measures of the features of the laboratory report produced by the two classes (class T and class G) before and after the intervention. Table 2 presents the results of between-group t-Test (genre of lab report) for each measure of the three features. Table 3 reports the means and standard deviations of the pre and post-intervention measures of the other genre-personal statement, for both classes and the last table reports the t-Test values for each measure of the features of the personal statement written by the two classes.

Table 1

Pre-intervention and post-intervention lab report scores for class T and class G

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Class T</th>
<th></th>
<th>Class G</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words per clause</td>
<td>12.23</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>11.79</td>
<td>2.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjuncts</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal connectives</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passives</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person point of view</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry vocabularies</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text structure</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen from table 1, there are hardly any noticeable differences between the two classes in most of the pre-intervention and post-intervention measures of the lab reports they wrote. The T class pre-intervention measure of lab reports which showed an average of 12.23 words per clause was reduced to 11.79 words in the lab reports written after the intervention. Similarly, the average words per clause of the lab reports written by the G class were reduced to
11.74 from the pre-intervention measure of 12.09. The number of temporal connectives per clause was just under .1 on the pre-intervention and just over .1 on the post-intervention lab reports, for both classes. The number of passive verbs per clause had only increased from .45 to .47 for the T class and from .44 to .48 for the G class. In a similar fashion, the use of third person point of view increased in the post-intervention lab reports than the pre-intervention lab reports, for both classes.

However, there seems to be slight differences between the two classes in some of the measures. For instance, the tables reveals that while the number of past tense verbs per clause was reduced from .36 (pre-intervention) to .34 (post-intervention) for the T class, it rose from .41 to .44 for the G class. The tables also show that while the number of conjuncts per clause for the T class remained the same (.09) in the post-intervention lab reports, it increased from .08 to 0.12 for the G class.

The only variable which measures register features of lab reports-the number of chemistry vocabularies per clause-remained the same with average measure of 2.65 in the post-intervention lab reports for the G class, while it reduced from 2.73 to 2.49 for the T class.

As has been indicated in the table, little improvement was observed in the textual features on the post-intervention lab reports for both classes.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Pre-intervention</th>
<th>Post-intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words per clause</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjuncts</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal connectives</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passives</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third person point of view</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry vocabularies</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text structure</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 reveals the results of between-group t-test for each measure of the features of lab report. Accordingly, there were no significant differences between the two classes on either the pre-intervention or post-intervention lab reports. However, the values of t were smaller on the post-intervention lab reports than pre-intervention lab reports in all measures.

Table 3

Pre-intervention and post-intervention personal statement score for class T and class G

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Class T</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Class G</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words per clause</td>
<td>11.36</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present tense</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjuncts</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal connectives</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actives</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First person point of view</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry vocabularies</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental verbs</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text structure</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be observed from table 3 there seem to be very subtle differences between the two classes in almost all measures on the pre-intervention personal statements. The only noticeable difference reported was the number of chemistry vocabularies found in each clause. On average, the G class appear to use more chemistry vocabularies (M= .63) per clause than the T class who only used .44 chemistry words per each clause.

However, clear differences between the two classes were observed in several measures on the post-intervention personal statements. While the number of present tense verbs per clause reduced from .80 to .78 for the T class, it rose from .71 to .92 for the G class. Similarly, while the number of first person pronouns only increased by .06 to reach .57 in the post-intervention personal statements for the T class, it increased by .16 to reach .69 for the G class. Besides, the number of chemistry vocabularies per clause was almost doubled (M= 1.17) on the post-
intervention personal statements for the G class while it just increased to .66 for the T class. A very clear difference between the two classes was also shown in the mean score of the textual features on the post-intervention personal statements. The structure of the personal statements produced by the G class after the intervention (M=2.73) seems better than those produced by the T class (M=1.95).

Table 4
*Between group t Test-personal statement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Pre-intervention</th>
<th>Post-intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Words per clause</td>
<td>.790</td>
<td>.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present tense</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>.003**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjuncts</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal connectives</td>
<td>.846</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>.738</td>
<td>.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First person point of view</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.017*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry vocabularies</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td>.005**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental verbs</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text structure</td>
<td>.709</td>
<td>.000**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01

Table 6 reports the results of between-group t-test for each measure of the features of personal statement. As it is seen from the table, even though there were no significant differences on the pre-intervention personal statements in all measures, significant differences were found in four measures (Present tense, First person point of view, Chemistry vocabularies, and Text structure) on the post-intervention personal statements, \( p < .05 \).
CHAPTER FIVE

5. Discussion

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of key research findings presented in the previous chapter, with reference to each of the two research questions. The first section (5.1) discusses whether there is a difference between the two classes (class T and class G) in the quality of the lab report (operationalized by the quantitative measures of the textual, register and structural features of a lab report) written in groups by the two classes. The second section discusses the difference between the two classes in the quality of the personal statements they wrote individually.

5.1. Research Question 1

The first research question examined the post-intervention lab reports of the two classes and evaluated the effectiveness of the genre-based writing instruction in helping ELLs write competent lab reports in the group assignments. No statistically significant differences were found in the mean scores of all the measures of the textual, register and structural features of the lab reports written by the two classes.

A number of reasons could be attributed for these findings. The first and major reason could be the lack of commitment on the part of the subjects for the tasks that they had to carry out which is crucial for the effective implementation of the genre-based writing instruction designed. Since the grade assigned for the lab assignments they wrote is very little, the subjects did not want to invest much energy into writing good lab reports. Therefore, even though they seemed interested in the approach, they were not fully committed to the activities (e.g. reading the model reports critically before coming to class, writing the first drafts in time so that they could get
feedback, willingness to give/receive feedback from their peers and their teacher, etc.) that are central to the success of the genre-based writing instruction implemented.

The other main reason could be the subjects’ low-level knowledge in writing the genre of a ‘lab report’ coupled with the short intervention period. The figures reported in the pre-intervention measures of the lab reports suggested that the subjects had hardly understood the linguistic and structural features of a lab report. For example, the average number of words per clause on the pre-intervention lab reports for both classes was approximately 12. This is way higher than the average words per clause reported in Ishikawa’s (1995) study. In her experimental study which focused on “low-proficiency English as foreign language students”, she found out that the average number of words that her subjects wrote on one clause was 5. Besides, as Halliday and Martin (1993) state in scientific discourses such as laboratory reports much information is compressed in short spaces. This implies that students with low L2 writing proficiency use more words per clause than those students who are proficient. Hence, it is possible to say that the subjects in this study have very low L2 writing proficiency-especially in writing a lab report. The other evidence which indicate the subjects’ low level knowledge in the genre of a lab report is the existence of only few numbers of conjuncts and temporal connectives in their lab reports. Even though it is expected that a lab report would contain a considerable number of conjuncts and temporal connectives, the subjects in this study almost never used them in their pre-intervention lab reports (just below .1 per clause). Probably the subjects had very little experience of writing lab reports because they were in their first year and hence did not take many lab courses.
Due to these reasons, I presume, the genre-based writing instruction which was implemented only for four weeks could not bring about significant changes on the experimental groups’ lab writing skills.

It is important, however, to note that the genre-based writing instruction that was implemented had brought about encouraging results on some of the features of a lab report. For instance, the use of third person narrative had increased noticeably on the post-intervention lab reports of the G class than the figure reported for the T class. The structure of the post-intervention lab reports produced by the G class also appears to be better than the ones produced by the T class.

5.2. Research Question 2

The second research question investigated the post-intervention personal statements of the two classes and evaluated whether the genre-based writing instruction was effective in helping ELLs write competent personal statements. Even though no significant differences were found between the two classes in all measures on the pre-test, significant differences were found in four measures (the number of present tense per clause, the number of first person pronouns, the number of chemistry vocabularies per clause and text structure) on the post-test.

From these four measures (variables), the first two were among the variables which measure the textual features of personal statements. After examining the relatively high mean scores of these measures on the pre-test (.71 and .53) for the G class and (.80 and .51) for the T class, one may presume that the subjects may have had some experience with the genre of narrative and descriptive writings which usually contain considerable number of personal pronouns and present tense verbs, respectively. As I confirmed later, in the English course that they took earlier, the subjects had a writing assignment in which they were expected to introduce themselves and write about their future dreams. Since the genre of personal statement contains
elements of description and narration, the experience that they got from that assignment combined with the genre-based writing instruction they received might have helped the G class perform significantly better in these two measures than the T class on the post-test.

From the two variables which measure register features of personal statements, significant difference was found between the two classes in the number of vocabulary items used per clause. The G class seemed to use more chemistry vocabularies once they understood—from the discussion of the models which was one of the key activities in the genre-based writing instruction—that personal statements (especially the ones written for admissions to universities) should contain a number of vocabularies specific to the course that one wants to study.

The two classes also seemed to differ significantly in the quality of the way they structure their personal statements on the post-test. The G class’ personal statements appear well-formed (M=2.73) than the structure of the personal statements produced by the T class (M=1.95). This finding supports Ho’s (2009) result which indicated the significant improvement that was shown on her subject’s composition after the implementation of the genre-based writing instruction. Ho (2009) reported that the genre-based instruction that she applied had resulted in “the students’ improvement in their written texts, particularly in the overall schematic structure.”

Despite the absence of statistically significant difference between the two classes in the other measures, the post-test figures of the two classes suggested that the two classes were noticeably different in almost all these measures. Generally, it can be said that the post-intervention personal statements produced by the G class were better than the ones written by the T class in all measures of the three features of personal statements-textual, register and structural features.
CHAPTER SIX

6. Conclusion

6.1. Key findings

In this study, two experiments were conducted to explore how much a genre-based writing instruction is effective, compared to the traditional writing instruction, in improving ELLs’ writing skills in two genres-lab reports and personal statements. In both experiments the subjects were first year undergraduate students that were studying chemistry at Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia. By the time these two experiments were conducted, the students were taking an EFL writing course (University writing skills) and a laboratory course in which they wrote a lab report for every laboratory experiment they conducted every week.

In the first experiment, a genre-based writing instruction intervention which lasted for four weeks (for a total of 6 hours), was applied to the class designated as the experimental group. For the other class (control group) the traditional, grammar based writing instruction (an approach which had already been used to teach L2 writing in the University) was used for the same period. The t-test analysis which was conducted in the post-intervention measures of the collaborative lab reports produced by the two classes revealed that there were no significant differences between the two classes.

The second experiment also compared the genre-based writing instruction and the traditional writing instruction in order to explore whether the former is more effective than the latter in improving ELLs writing skills. But the focus was on the genre of personal statements. As in the first experiment, while the experimental group was taught using the genre based writing instruction for four weeks (1.30 hours per each week), the controlled group was taught using the traditional writing instruction for similar period of time. According to the t-test results conducted
on the post-intervention personal statements (in-classroom, individual writing tasks) of the two classes, significant differences were found in four measures: the number of present tense per clause, the number of first person pronouns, the number of chemistry vocabularies per clause and text structure. Besides, the post-test figures of the two classes suggested that the experimental class seemed to perform noticeably better than the controlled group in the other measures of the features of personal statements.

6.2. Implications for pedagogy

This study has suggested several implications for L2 writing pedagogy. Among these, perhaps the major and the most important implication is that incorporating genre-based approach into L2 writing courses is important because it helps L2 writers to understand the language and discourse features of particular texts they need/want to produce and effectively communicate their message across to a particular group of readers. Besides, the study has suggested that the genre-based writing instruction also helps L2 teachers on how they should support their learners improve their writings by offering them a clear purpose for teaching students in terms of the particular genre or text type that the students need/want to learn. In addition the study has indicated that in order to get the best out of a genre-based approach, both the teachers and learners have to be motivated and committed to the procedures and activities incorporated in the approach.

6.3. Limitations and Implications for further study

As in all studies, this study suffers from several limitations. The first and the most obvious limitation of this study was the small sample size. The number of the participants was too small to generalize the research’s findings beyond the context of this study. This research was also limited by the duration of time used to carry out the experiments. Had the experiment period was longer, it would have been possible to clearly examine the effectiveness of the genre-based
instruction and to thoroughly understand the trend of development of the subjects’ knowledge of the genres investigated. Furthermore, the findings of this study were limited by inherent problems related to the coding, which was done manually, and the statistical tests used.

The results of this study seemed to indicate that compared to the traditional writing approach, the genre-based writing instruction, if implemented properly, can potentially be a good tool for teaching L2 writing. However, further research, probably with similar design and large sample size, must be conducted to confirm these findings and further explore the full potential of the approach. It will also be interesting to explore whether there are any relationships between impressionistic score of written texts of different genres produced by the students with corresponding quantitative measures of the textual, register and structural features of each genre.
References


Appendices

Appendix I: Lesson plan of the genre-based writing instruction used to teach lab report writing

Course: University Writing Skills

Target group: First year chemistry students section A-experimental group

Objective: At the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:

- Identify the textual and structural features of laboratory reports
- Write laboratory reports appropriately

Class duration: 6 hours

Topic: Writing lab reports

Procedure

I will first clearly inform students about the objectives of the lesson, and explicitly tell them the activities that they are going to carry out. Then I will give them three model laboratory reports. They will start reading the reports inside the classroom and continue reading them at their dorm. As an assignment I will ask the students to compare the reports and figure out the common features of the three reports. I will also ask them to analyse each report by trying to answer the following questions:

- What are the reports about?
- What is the purpose of the reports?
- Who could be the writer of the reports?
- Who are the readers?
- What is the purpose of the different sections of the reports?
- What tense is mostly used in the texts?
- What other language features can be found in the reports?
• What kind of structure do you see in all the three reports?

    After having brief discussion with students on their responses, I will explain the salient features (both linguistic and structural) of the reports. These include:

• The use of temporal connectives

• The use of appropriate logical conjunctions

• The use of past tense

• The use of passive voice and impersonal subjects

• The parts of the report and the function of each part -Title, Introduction, method, results and discussion, and reference.

    Afterwards, I will give them another model report and ask them to analyse it in small groups. Then, I will discuss the report with the students in detail.

    The students write the first lab report. Since the students have to submit one lab report every week, I will not have the time to have their drafts commented by their peer and myself. Instead, I will ask the students to bring the report that they already submitted to class so that we (the students and I) evaluate and comment on it. I hope the comments will help them write a better report in the second week. I will also give students another sample report and ask them to analyze it in small groups. The same strategy will be applied in the third and fourth week of the intervention period.
Appendix II: Lesson plan of the genre-based writing instruction used to teach personal statement writing

Course: University Writing Skills

Target group: First year chemistry students section A

Objective: At the end of the lesson, the students will be able to:

- Identify the textual and structural features of personal statements
- Write effective personal statements

Class duration: 6 hours

Topic: Writing personal statement

Content

Defining the genre: What is a personal statement?

A personal statement is a narrative that an individual writes about his/her experience, interests, qualifications and/or expectations for the future. It needs to be built like an argument, the whole purpose of which is to persuade an admissions tutor/potential employer that the writer is the right person for the course/post. In doing so the writer will also give a sense of his/her personality, and what makes his/her particular combination of characters, skills, experiences and enthusiasms a winning one

Structure of a personal statement

A. THE FIRST THIRD: THE COURSE & YOU

- Focus on the course of study for which you are applying, explaining what it means to you.
- Explain what, in particular, got you interested, and how it all began. A specific event? An observation? A meeting with someone? What motivates you, make this a necessary choice for you?
• Describe any practical work or other experiences that are related

• Explain how you see the future, and any career or life choices that might result from your intended study

• Use key words associated with the course.

B. THE SECOND THIRD: YOUR ACADEMIC STUDIES

• Explain how what you are now studying supports and prepares you for the subject you were talking about in the First Third

• Give real examples of what you are particularly enjoying at the moment [or last year] in your studies—mention actual texts, experiments, visits, experiences, topics etc. Let the enthusiasm come through

• Mention any related prizes or awards in your secondary career

C. THE THIRD THIRD: THE WIDER YOU

• You explain here your wider interests / experiences that complete the picture

• Mention any prizes or awards, showing your ability to be committed, skilled and focused

• Look for opportunities to show initiative, leadership, useful skills

• Give facts about what you do that interest you

• The admissions tutor will want to feel that you are the sort of person who will survive the rigours of living away from home, perhaps, and make the most of the wider opportunities at University

• You will, in short, be worth the investment / gamble

D. A BRIEF CONCLUSION

• You may already have reached a natural finish point in the previous section, focusing on yourself and what you have to offer.
• If you haven’t found a natural end, you may wish to return to a key idea of the opening section, linking in some way with the ambition you expressed, or the initial experience that set you going.

Slightly adapted from UCAS: PERSONAL STATEMENT STRUCTURE: 2010 (www...)

Language features of personal statement

• First person (“I”)
• Present and future tenses
• Action verbs
• Passive voice
• Mental verbs

Activities

• The teacher will introduce the lesson.

• The teacher asks students some brainstorming questions- what’s a personal statement? Have you ever written a personal statement or read somebody’s personal statement? What do you think are the basic information that should be included in a personal statement?

• The teacher will then present two model texts to students and ask them to compare the texts and identify the generic structure and language feature of the texts in small groups. This is followed by whole classroom discussion. The teacher will also explicitly explain the linguistic features, the basic contents and organization which are commonly found in a personal statement.

• The teacher will then provide a few more model texts and encourage students to analyze them based on the following questions:

  What is the purpose of the reports?

  Who could be the writer of the reports?

  Who are the readers?
What is the purpose of the different sections of the reports?

What tense is mostly used in the texts?

What other language features can be found in the reports?

What kind of structure do you see in all the three reports?

**Joint construction**

- The teacher will jointly compose a piece of Personal statement together with the class. He will also elicit ideas from students about imaginary events and the purpose of the writing. Then the students and the teacher will start to write. The teacher will act as a scribe or facilitator. He asks students to contribute to the text.

- While constructing the text, the teacher gives advice about the generic structure and language features to which students should pay much attention. He explicitly raises grammar points and vocabulary during this class activity.

**Independent Construction**

- The teacher provides students a prompt (Imagine that you would like to pursue your MSc study in one of the fields related to chemistry and you are asked to write a personal statement), and asks them to start planning and write independently.

- Students should start with outlining what they are going to write about according to the generic structure of personal statement.

- The teacher reminds students to use various types of the language features of Personal statement. In the meantime, pay attention to students in case they have any difficulties or questions about their writing. Consult with students individually about their writing.

- Ask students to revise and edit their first drafts of writing.

- Let students share their writing with their peers and re-edit their writing.

- The teacher gives comment on the students draft.

- Students write their final draft.
Appendix III: Model lab report

Infrared Spectroscopy

Objective: To be able to use IR-spectroscopic technique and structural elucidation of compounds

1. Theory

IR-spectroscopic technique is one of spectroscopic techniques that deals with interaction of matter with electromagnetic radiation in infra-red region (14000-100 cm$^{-1}$). This region of EMR is divided into three regions called; near IR (14000-4000 cm$^{-1}$), mid IR (4000-400 cm$^{-1}$) and far IR (400-100 cm$^{-1}$). Mid IR region is the one that is most commonly used. And absorption of radiation in this region promotes molecules from one vibrational state to another. Hence IR-spectroscopy is called vibrational spectroscopy.

IR-spectrum is a plot of absorption intensity (or % transmittance) as a function of wave number of incident radiation. This spectrum consists of series of absorption bands. Each band is characterized by its position and intensity. The position of the band depends on the mass of the two atoms and on their bond strength. The stronger the bond and the smaller the mass of the constituting atoms of the chemical group the higher its vibrational frequency. And band intensity is usually expressed only qualitatively (strong, medium and weak). The band intensity depends on the magnitude of change in dipole moment. The greater the change in dipole moment the stronger the band.

Vibrational frequencies are characteristics of the type of compound and its functional group so that chemists can rapidly identify a number of structural features from IR-spectrum. The IR spectrum is divided into two regions; the functional group region (4000-1400 & 900-600 cm$^{-1}$) and finger print region (1400-900 cm$^{-1}$). Bands in the functional group region are characteristics of particular functional groups such as: O-H, N-H, C=C-H, C=O, etc. And bands in the finger print region are very complex which are not usually assignable. However, bands of finger print region of any compound are unique and thus are a “finger print” of the compound.
One of very interesting features of IR spectroscopy is that the absence of a characteristic absorption band may be more important than its presence. A functional group that gives rise to much characteristic absorption can usually be identified more definitely than the functional group that gives rise to only one characteristic absorption. The shape and position of the specific band is highly affected by H-bonding (both intermolecular and intramolecular). I.e. the stronger the H-bonding, the lower the vibrational frequency and the broader and the more intense the absorption band. This is because of the decrease in energy and force constant of the bond. Intramolecular hydrogen bond is unaffected by dilution and therefore the absorption are also unaffected by dilution process. While intermolecular hydrogen bonds are broken on dilution and leads to decrease in absorption frequencies.

2. Procedure

- The unknown solid sample was mixed with Nugol (milling agent) and KBr and milled by agate mortar.
- The milled sample was placed in die and plate was formed by pressing under pressure of 10 bars.
- The plate was placed on to solid sample window and then into the IR spectrometer.
- After running the FT-IR software the spectrum was obtained.

3. Results and Discussion

The given compound is;
A. Interpretation of the spectrum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peak wave number (Cm⁻¹)</th>
<th>Functional group vibration assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3424.95 (3500-3200)</td>
<td>N-H stretch (1̇ Amine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2921.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2851.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1721.64 (1727)</td>
<td>C=O stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1543.40</td>
<td>C=C stretch due to benzene ring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1536</td>
<td>C=N stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1337.10</td>
<td>C-N stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1180.59</td>
<td>C-N stretch (aliphatic 2̇ amine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1143.37</td>
<td>C=S stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1089.59</td>
<td>C-N stretch (aliphatic 2̇ amine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1114.76</td>
<td>C-N stretch (saturated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>758.31</td>
<td>C-H bending in benzene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>702.13</td>
<td>C-H bending in benzene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Conclusion

Even though it is difficult for one to elucidate structure of a given compound definitely solely from IR spectrum, one can interpret the spectrum of IR and propose the functional groups that the compound may contain. And if the empirical formula is given one can propose the structure. Other information such as NMR, UV-Vis and MS spectrum are needed to be more certain about the proposed structure.

4. References
Appendix IV: Model personal statement

What I love about chemistry is the constant sense of discovery: looking at the simplest reactions on a molecular level is like glimpsing a whole new world. I am keen to learn at the cutting edge of current knowledge and to contribute to new discoveries. During the course of my degree I hope to take part in some research; after leaving university I am looking to work in science, possibly in research, and some experience will almost certainly come in useful. I would also like to continue my study of French at university I think it is a beautiful language and one of my ambitions is to become fluent.

As part of my study, in addition to the A level course, I have taken part in the RSC Analytical Chemistry competition in a school team; I am a regular subscriber to the New Scientist magazine and have attended several courses, including an ISCO course on Forensic Science. I am also an affiliate of the RSC, and I’m currently looking for work experience possibilities in this field.

I joined Kimbolton School on a scholarship and during my time here I’ve won seven prizes in total, including two for French and Maths; I am now looking forward to the challenges presented by my appointment as one of fifteen Gown Prefects in the school. However, as well as taking my work and responsibilities seriously I have a lot of fun as well. I sing in the school choir and the chamber choir, and currently take singing lessons: I hope to continue with my singing at university, ideally in a university or college choir. I have represented both my House and School in General Knowledge teams and, although not exactly a gifted sportswoman, I’m happy to take part in some sport for my House. I enjoy taking part and trying new sports and although my talents aren’t likely to take me into the university teams, I look forward to continuing to ‘have a go’! I have also taken part in numerous musicals and plays in the school. In January I joined the Kimbolton Amnesty International Group and have been involved regularly since then. As a
member of the school’s Community Service Unit I spent a year working in a primary school, and another in a school for handicapped children, both on Thursday afternoons during term-time.

I believe that my academic ability and dedication to my subject make me an ideal candidate to study chemistry at university. I look forward to taking advantage of all the opportunities that will be open to me as a student, both in work and leisure time.