



Research Article

Examining the effectiveness of the process-genre writing instructional framework in EAP writing course

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This study reports on an intervention designed to explore the applicability of the process-genre instructional framework to teach students expository academic essay writing in an EAP writing course. The main aim of the study is to assess the effectiveness of the process-genre writing instructional framework to improve students' academic essay writing skills to write coherent and well-structured expository essays. Two research instruments for data collection were employed: focus group interviews and the samples of students' expository essays. Data were analysed thematically in order to generate new insights from the data. The results show that the process-genre instructional framework i) had a significant impact in improving students' expository academic essay writing skills ii) facilitated development of students social/affective strategies thus encouraging an appreciation of cooperating with peers in constructing, giving, and receiving feedback and students perceived the process genre framework as useful in developing expository academic essay writing skills. The findings of this study have implications for teaching practice in L2 EAP courses and enrich its instructional practices.

Keywords: Process-genre instructional framework, process-genre approach, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), expository essay, academic writing, writing process strategies

1. Introduction

The ability to write is a skill to generate and present ideas fluently and coherently in a language that is effective for a given audience and purpose. At university level, students' success largely depends on their academic writing proficiency. However, most learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) find academic writing a complex and a challenging skill. Several researchers globally show that the transition to university for first year students, especially for those who learn English as a Second Language, poses serious challenges for many in terms of academic writing (Bacha, 2002; Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017; Chokwe, 2013; Giridharan, & Robson 2011; Leki & Carson, 1997).

There could be many reasons for students to find academic writing difficult and challenging at university level particularly in the first year. For instance, some researchers (e.g. Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017; Chokwe, 2013; Giridharan, & Robson, 2011; Leki & Carson, 1997; Tickle, 2011; Krause, 2001) have attributed these student difficulties and challenges to under preparedness and the wide gap between writing expectations and demands between high school and university. The scholars note that the university academic writing process have new demands and challenges that require the students to learn new conventions and literacy skills. These scholars further state that some of the areas in which students are underprepared are; not knowing academic language, not being sure whether the student writer is permitted to have his/her own opinion, a lack of understanding of the research process as recursive rather than sequential and poor critical reading and thinking skills. The findings suggest that students were not equipped with the needed academic writing skills at high school to enable them to succeed at university. Given our own experience as instructors of academic writing to university students, we concur that students struggle with features of academic writing such as language use, style, tone, mechanics, the

structuring of the essay, coherence and cohesion, referencing as well as arguing a point convincingly.

Other L2 writing scholars have attributed this under preparedness in academic writing to the approaches used to teach academic writing at both high school and university levels (Lillis & Scott 2007; Ivanic & Lea 2006; Babalola, 2012; Akinwamide, 2012). They argue that inappropriate writing instruction and strategies, used in writing classes do not help students develop and improve their writing skills. They further argue that L2 writing studies have several different effective instructional approaches and strategies that may significantly develop students' writing skills. They suggest that with suitable teaching/learning methods these students may overcome their difficulties in writing. Consequently, several L2 writing researchers have concluded that the academic writing approaches used to offer instruction to ESL undergraduate students are not adequate and have thus, appealed to writing instructors to reform the teaching of academic writing by using more effective writing instructional approaches and strategies of teaching this complex and challenging skill (Babalola, 2012; Bangert-Drowns, 1993; Chokwe, 2013; Graham & Perin, 2007).

Several L2 writing researchers have suggested various perspectives regarding how to teach writing for example, the product approach (e.g., Tribble, 1996; Myles, 2002) genre approach, (e.g., Halliday, 1978; Hyland, 2002) process approach, (e.g. Murray, 1972; Flower & Hayes, 1981) and the latest being the process- genre approach (Badger & White, 2000). The focus of the product approach is the written product more than the development of learners' writing skills. Proponents of this approach suggest that through models the product approach teaches the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices (Tribble, 1996), allows students to explore and analyze texts thereby gaining linguistic knowledge, and helping them become aware of their writing errors (Arndt, 1987; Myles, 2002). However, its critics argue that the product approach is teacher-centered and only teaches students to copy and practice the sentence patterns and form of model essays instead of discovering meanings for themselves (e.g., Anastasiadou, 2014; Brown, 2001; Prodromou, 1995; Applebee & Langer, 2013).

As an alternative to the product approach, Murray (1972) proposed the process approach which focuses on the entire process of writing and fluency of text instead of just the product. Most second language learners' educators view this approach as an effective way to develop students' writing and metacognitive skills (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Raimes, 1998; Reid, 2001).

Although the process approach has been widely used in ESL writing contexts because of its advantages of making students aware of the recursive nature of writing and motivating students' collaboration, it is still viewed as lacking in some respects. For example, some scholars (e.g., Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2002; Novia & Saptarina, 2021) have argued that learners spend a long time just to complete one piece of writing in the classroom. They further point out that the process approach does not provide students with sufficient linguistic content to write effectively because it does not provide systematic understanding of how language is used in specific contexts. As a response to these weaknesses, genre-based approach emerged.

The genre approach (Halliday, 1978; Hyland, 2002, 2007; Flowerdew, 1993; Swales, 1990) is seen as an extension of the product approach due to the similarities between the two approaches (Badger & White, 2005). The genre approach places more emphasis on the social context in which writing is produced but, like the product approach, it emphasizes organization of ideas and grammatical correctness. Hyland (2003, 2007) is of the view that writing instruction should teach students language functions in social contexts for them to appreciate the various conventions and generic types. However, the genre approach has been criticized for not helping learners express their own ideas without relying on models provided by the teacher (Caudery, 1998; Hyland, 2002) and that it disregards the cognitive processes and mental strategies (e.g., Hyland, 2004). Despite this criticism, several scholars have concurred that the process and genre approaches were not mutually exclusive since each compensated for the weakness of the other and proposed for their integration (Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2003, 2006; Tribble, 1996, Kay & Dudley Evans, 1998, Nunan, 1991), hence the introduction of the process-genre approach.

A synthesis of the strengths of the three approaches, discussed above, resulted in an eclectic process-genre approach (Badger & White, 2000). The foregoing authors suggest that this approach allows learners to engage in language awareness activities to make them aware that writing is social and situated in a context. Further, they propose that learners should go through the recursive process of pre-writing, drafting, revision and editing. They posit that this would allow learners to engage in composing and thinking instead of imitating sample texts. Badger & White suggest that integrating the three approaches in the writing class could lead to learners' cognitive and metacognitive change.

While several writing scholars concur with the process-genre writing approach, as suggested by Badger and White (2000), there has been little research concerning how this approach can be applied in L2 English for General Academic Purposes writing contexts. A limited number of empirical studies (Deng, Chen, & Zhang, 2016; Huang & Zhang, 2019) have begun to examine how the process-genre writing approach can be implemented in the EAP classroom. Deng, Chen & Zhang (2016) carried a research project in a Chinese English as a foreign language context and concluded that the process-genre approach was successful in raising students' English and writing proficiency. Further, Huang & Zhang (2019) examined the impact of the process-genre writing approach on improving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' argumentative writing. They concluded that the approach significantly improved the EFL learners' writing in content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics. Huang & Zhang then proposed an instructional framework that was thought to be feasible and effective in enhancing L2 students writing performance. However, important to note in their proposed instructional framework is that it was used to teach argumentative writing in 26 ninety-minute sessions for 17 weeks. Therefore, the effects of the instructional framework they propose might be different in contexts where the total number of contact hours is much less. Further, they based their conclusions on statistical analysis of students writing scores and did not get views of students who participated in the intervention. The voices of the students are essential in determining the appropriateness of an instructional decision and are critical for improvement of the instruction and student academic growth. Thus, more studies are required to gain more in-depth understanding of how this approach can be applied in different L2 English for General Academic Purposes writing contexts and genres.

Following Huang & Zhang (2019) design of the process-genre instructional framework to L2 writing, an intervention study was designed to examine its effectiveness in an EAP preparatory academic writing course in the context of Botswana. The researchers aimed to develop a better understanding of the impact of the process-genre instructional framework on COM 112 students in terms of developing a well-structured expository academic essay. In addition the researchers hoped to better understand the perceptions of the students on the aspects of the writing process activities that were helpful as well as those that were not well received by the students as a means to tailor the approach to the Botswana context.

Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

RQ 1) To what extent does the process-genre writing instructional approach raise students' awareness of the components of a well-developed expository essay?

RQ 2) What perceptions do first-year Humanities students' hold of the process-genre instructional approach to writing?

2. Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the theoretical underpinnings of social constructivism. The constructivist theory, as Vygostky (1978) notes, provides a theoretical foundation of teaching and learning based on the premise that knowledge is not imparted by the instructor, but it is constructed by learners through an active engagement with their environment and experiences to create their own meaning. This suggests that learning and creation of meaning happen when students are actively engaged in learning instead of passively absorbing and reproducing information from the teacher (Anderson, 2016; Cirik, Colak & Kaya, 2015). Thus, the theory promotes instructional pedagogies

that are student centered and learning activities that are highly engaging to help facilitate student's creation of their own meaning (Keengwe., Onchwari, & Agamba 2014; Vygotsky, 1978).

The constructivist theory also sees knowledge construction as a collaborative process and knowing as a process (Flowerdew & Miller, 2008; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). The instructor's role is to scaffold (Vygotsky, 1978) learning especially in the early stages of instruction and then allow students to actively participate making them more independent, critical and autonomous. According to Vygotsky, scaffolding supports student growth, creates autonomous learners who are responsible for their own learning, and gives learners more confidence in acquiring new skills. Thus, the learners participate in the development of their own skills to reach higher proficiency and their peers play a major role in the development.

The principles underlying the process-genre writing approach are like those of constructivism. Central to the process-genre approach is the promotion of a student-centered classroom, where students are free to choose their own topics, and consider other students' opinions and feedback (Applebee, 1986; Brown, 2001). It allows students to take a more active role through building on students' knowledge while introducing challenging new material. Further, it encourages student-student collaboration and taking increased responsibility for their own learning. In line with Vygotsky's (1978) notion of scaffolding, instructors in the process-genre writing approach encourage students to "develop their own ideas and offer their own critical analysis and find their own voice" (Brown, 2001: 340). Thus, the role of the instructor is not of an evaluator of the final product but of a facilitator who guides and help students throughout the writing process to create their own meaning through a sequence of scaffolded developmental steps (Benko, 2012; Hyland, 2007).

3. Method

3.1. The Context

At the University of Botswana (UB), all first-year students are taught academic literacy (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in the Communication and Study Skills Unit (CSSU) in compulsory two 100 level courses known as COM offered in semester 1 and 2. This study was conducted in COM 112, a semester two compulsory three credit course for students enrolled for a variety of humanities courses at the University of Botswana (UB), an English-medium institution. Although academic literacy research (e.g. Lea & Street, 2006) advocates for embedding academic literacies development in the disciplines, at the UB they are still offered in a stand-alone Communication and Study skills Unit situated in a Centre for Academic Development and is staffed with academics with expertise in teaching English for academic and professional purposes. The COM courses however are discipline specific, meaning that there are different COM courses for faculties of social science, science, health sciences, engineering, business, education and humanities. These courses are aimed at equipping year one students with generic academic literacy skills that will help them adapt to the new ways of learning that are required in their specific disciplines (CSSU Student handbook 2006-2007). UB admits predominantly ESL students whose level of proficiency in English is a minimum grade of C or better in the General Education Secondary Certificate which is equivalent to the Cambridge O levels.

3.2. Research Design

The study was qualitative, exploratory and descriptive in its methods of data collection and analysis to enable the researchers to study students' experiences from their perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Qualitative inquiry has been used widely in L2 writing research because it allows for holistic descriptions and narratives of data that can be described such as, interviews and text analysis. Thus, this approach is appropriate to use in this study as it seeks to understand students' perceptions and experiences of the process-genre instructional framework and analyse their texts.

3.3. Participants

The intervention was offered to all 176 students enrolled in the COM 112 course in their second semester of 2020/21 academic year. They were divided into 4 classes and each researcher taught two. However, a convenient sample of 24 students were drawn from the 176 students as the key participants who contributed in the focus group interviews.

3.4. Research Instruments

To increase the validity of the findings, two data instruments were used to obtain comprehensive and useful data. The two instruments used were focus group interviews and students' pre-intervention and final essays which are discussed below.

3.4.1. Students' pre-intervention and post-intervention academic essays

Students' were given a pre-intervention writing task in the 1st week of the semester before they were introduced to the academic writing course. They were assigned expository academic essay topics which cover a wide range of disciplines in the Humanities and students working in pairs conferred and selected one topic. This pre-intervention task was administered for the purpose of diagnosing students' weaknesses and writing difficulties. The students were assigned to work in pairs in line with constructivist theory and the process writing which sees knowledge construction as a collaborative process and encourages student to student collaboration. The pre-intervention required the students to do the following: choose one of the topics below and write an expository essay of not more than 750 words in which you cite and quote from articles from published sources:

- a) Compare and contrast online and face-to-face teaching and learning at the University of Botswana.
- b) Your cousin has completed his 2021 Botswana General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) with a very good overall mark. Explain to him the importance of reading for Humanities in one of Botswana's universities.
- c) Discuss how the printing press helps in the dissemination of ideas.
- d) Discuss how social media is associated with modern human interactions.
- e) Explain why it is important to know other languages and cultures besides one's first language.
- f) Discuss the impact of gender-based violence on the girl-child in Botswana.
- g) There are a number of negative factors that affect teenagers in the 21 century. Identify one of these factors that you feel is the most common, explain it and propose some possible solutions.
- h) Explain how visual and performing arts play an important role in student development
- i) Explain how Electronic records are under constant threat from technology.

They were asked to write an essay outside class on the selected topic before they were taken through the writing process instruction. Students were provided with an assessment rubric to give them a clear idea of components that will be assessed and to motivate them to target for high marks. A marking rubric commonly used for non-native speakers was adopted from Jacobs et al. (1981). This rating scale was found suitable because it provides a holistic overall assessment score. The highest possible mark was 30 points. The assessment rubric contains five components measuring an essay : (1) content (development of ideas), (2) text organization (introduction, development paragraphs and conclusion) (3) vocabulary (accurate word choice and appropriate use of transition markers between sentences) (4) language use (precise use of language at sentence level; sentence variety and word choice conciseness, variety of sentence structure, consistent verb tense and logical flow of ideas) (5) mechanics (complete sentences, correct punctuation and spelling). Each component had four ranges: excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor, and very poor.

The second task which served as the post intervention test was delayed until the 4th week after students were introduced to academic writing and its features and were being introduced to

writing as a process. Students were told to use the same topic they selected for the pre intervention task at the beginning of the semester to write the essay again as they were being guided through the writing process stages. The students were made aware that the same assessment rubric provided for the pre intervention task was going to be used to assess the post intervention task.

3.4.2. Focus group interviews

The second instrument were 40-45 minutes focus group semi-structured interviews carried at the end of the semester to examine the student's response at the end of the intervention. Since semi-structured interviews are flexible and spontaneous pilot interviews were conducted with two focus groups of six students by both the interviewers to ensure problems with wording of questions, interview techniques, coding and data analysis were sorted out before launching data collection. Focus groups were used as a data collection tool based on the principle of "maximum variation" in sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). Since the participants were from different programs within the Faculty of Humanities at the UB, (e.g. Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Information Management, Archives and Records, Bachelor of Media Studies and Bachelor of Fine Arts: Theatre) and of mixed ability in terms of English language proficiency, twenty four (24) students were selected to participate in the focus groups to assess how the intervention affected this range of students. Four (4) focus groups comprised of six students each was purposively selected from the four classes. Purposive sampling was employed to select focus group participants because it allows one to select the sample from which the most understanding or insights can be gained (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Patton, 2002). The students were selected deliberately for being assertive and their confidence in airing their views as had been observed by the researchers in class interactions throughout the semester. Students selected had been observed to usually be comfortable to engage fully in class discussions and state their opinion in front of other students and the lecturer throughout the semester. This was done to minimize biasness usually associated with purposive sampling whereby the participants may offer responses they think are favourable to the researchers (Kothari & Garg, 2019).

Further, before the interviews, the participants were informed that there were no right or wrong answers and encouraged to use first-hand experience narratives as evidence to support their views. Also, since the researchers teach COM 112 course, they decided not to interview students they taught and the interviews were conducted in a seminar room instead of the classroom which created a more relaxed environment. The participants were assured that they would not be individually identified in the report and thus were not required to introduce themselves stating their names. Participants were informed that participation in this study was entirely voluntary and that they would not be disadvantaged in any way should they decide not to participate. These strategies combined provided confidence that power relationship bias could be minimized. Lillis (2001) stress the importance of a dialogue between students and their lecturers since it can offer valuable insights. The views from students would allow the researchers to obtain a broad picture of their perceptions of the writing process.

Students were asked to state their thoughts and feelings towards the teaching of writing as a process, whether they thought it had improved their writing skills, what they found helpful and unhelpful about the process-genre writing approach, and how the approach could be improved. The focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed, and excerpts from these are provided in the findings to illustrate students' reactions to the approach. The results of the focus group interviews were triangulated with the results of the analysis of students written texts.

3.5. Data Analysis

A total of thirty (30) pre-test and post-test essays were selected from the four classes for analysis based on their performance. The sample size of the texts was determined using insights from Best and Kahn (2003) who believe a sample size of 30 would be manageable for analysis and adequate for analytical needs. Samples, which were marked by the researchers, were randomly selected from essays that had scored high, average, and low marks. This would allow for analysis of

multiple and varied texts which would allow for a broad understanding of students writing competencies. The purpose of analysing students' essays before and after the intervention is to assess the effects of the process-genre instructional framework on helping raise students' awareness of writing a well-structured coherent essay. The analysis will also help establish the students' weaknesses and writing difficulties before and after going through the intervention. Identifying information on the students' essays was removed to avoid bias against different students and each essay was numbered in a way known to the researchers.

The following measures were considered for assessing the essays. Scores for the first component, content, ranged from 1- 10. Score 9-10 was assigned if the text presented was logical, clear and focused, information was relevant and supported the main idea, provided relevant details to enrich the central ideas and communicated with a strong authorial voice. Score 8-7 was attributed if it presented writing which was mainly focused, most information is relevant and supports the main idea, provides main idea but details are general or brief and attempts to communicate with a strong authorial voice. Score 6-5 was assigned if it presented three of the four indicators; score 4-3 if two of the four indicators were present; score 2-1 if only one of the four indicators were present; and score 0 if no indicator was present.

The second component, text organization, ranged from 0 to 5. Score 5 was attributed if the text presented a clear academic essay structure; a clear distinction of paragraphs (introduction, development paragraphs and conclusion), a clear paragraph structure i.e. the logical organization of the information contained in the paragraphs; topic sentences, supporting details, integration of sources and a conclusion. Score 4 was attributed if it presented three of the four indicators; score 3 if two of the four indicators were present; score 2 if only one of the four indicators were present; and score 1 if there was no clear text structure. The third component, vocabulary, marks ranged from 0 to 5. Score 5-4 was assigned for accurate word choice, varied vocabulary, appropriate use of transition markers between sentences and varied appropriate use of reporting verbs. Score 3-2 was attributed if 2 of the indicators was presented. The fourth component, Language use, indicators were the precise use of language at sentence level; sentence variety, conciseness, variety of sentence structure, consistent verb tense, logical flow of ideas and formal tone and style. A score of 5 was attributed if the text had all the 5 indicators.

The fifth component, mechanics, indicators were complete sentences, correct punctuation and spelling. Full marks were attributed if all the indicators were present. Scores were attributed by the two researchers. To ensure interrater reliability and uniformity of marking criteria standardization of marking was carried out. Ten common sample essays were rated by each researcher independently and then compared to see whether they reach a consensus on the final score. If the score differed in range, they had to elaborate why they gave such a score and review the criteria until they reached an agreement. After assessing the ten sample essays and reaching a common understanding of the marking rubric, the researchers evaluated fifteen essays each independently and the interrater reliability indicated a satisfactory level for overall marks for the five components ranging from $r = 0.81$ to $r = 0.89$. Further, a histogram was used to test skewness and consistency of the distribution of the marks between the two assessors. No skewness was observed as the mean, median and mode values showed normal distribution.

For the focus group interviews, all the transcriptions were thematically analyzed by the researchers. The researchers read to search for recurrent themes, coded (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and created summaries of their data and searched for interrelationships between codes and then for themes and subthemes. The researchers made comparisons of the initial data analysis and discussed the descriptive data and came to a consensus on the major themes that specifically addressed the research question.

3.6. The Intervention

The intervention followed a pretest - posttest design. The intervention was conducted in the normal classroom setting during a 14-week semester, for a total of 36 fifty-minute sessions. It was conducted with both theoretical lectures and practical sessions. Theoretical lectures were

conducted in one session per week followed by a practical session. The last session of the week was allocated for out of class peer discussions and research allowing students time to work independently. In the lectures as well as the practical sessions, important concepts on expository academic essay writing, such as issues of academic writing being discipline specific; variety of academic genres, structure, and patterns of development were discussed. The students actively participated in the intervention by reflecting on their own experiences of academic writing and going through the different stages of the writing process.

The instruction for the intervention followed the steps of the process-genre writing instructional framework proposed by Huang and Zhang (2019). The intervention sessions may be summarized as follows: 1. Introduction to and discussion of academic writing; 2. Introduction to and discussion of types of genres in academic writing; Expository essay structure, giving a logical and coherent organization of contents; analysing examples excerpts of expository text in which each piece of information was clearly expressed and organized in a coherent structure. 3. Introduction to and discussion of reflective writing; distinguishing between reflective essay and academic expository essay in terms of purpose, structure and language use. 4. Introduction and discussion of the writing process stages. Analysing the pre-intervention topic using pre - writing strategies.; writing and submitting the pre-writing stage (topic analysis, activation of existing knowledge, preliminary outline, annotated bibliography, detailed outline) 5. Reflection on the prewriting stage 6. Introduction to examples of text structures, paragraphing, topic sentence use, and cohesion; 7. Writing an essay - rewriting the essay they wrote during the pre- intervention phase; 8. analysis and revision of the texts produced; 9. Peer editing and submission; 10. Reflection on peer editing.

After writing the pre-intervention essay, the course-built students' understanding of the difference between academic and non-academic texts. The instructor provided students with two texts on the same topic an academic and non-academic text for example, a text from a newsletter and another from an academic source on the same topic. Through guiding questions, the students were encouraged to initially discuss in their pairs to discover the difference between the two texts. This was followed by a class discussion where the instructor probes and provides guidance by asking questions on differences in terms of intended audience, purpose, language use, structure, organization, and style to help students identify the difference between the two texts. This task highlighted the difference between the two texts in terms of the language features, structure, and rhetorical conventions. This helped students realize the difference between different genres, in this case an academic and a non-academic expository text. After raising the students' awareness on the difference of genres, students are then introduced to expository academic essay writing and its features through different activities.

By using insight derived from the constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978), reflection and its purpose in writing was introduced to the students at this point because students are required to write reflective essays after completing each stage of the writing process. Reflective writing is incorporated into this course to teach students the importance of reflection in developing in-depth understanding of the writing process and show the difference between the two genres- academic expository essay and reflective essay. After pair and class discussions on what reflection is and its importance in social and educational environments and its structure, students were assigned to reflect about their first semester writing at university. Students were provided with guiding questions to help stimulate their reflection. The instructor assessed and provided feedback to the students followed by a class discussion on language features and the structure of reflective writing and the difference with the other two genres discussed earlier. Thereafter, students were required to reflect after completing and submitting the prewriting stage, peer-editing and at the end of the course. Making students to reflect after completing the prewriting stage and peer editing helped students to have an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the activities therein. It encouraged students to think of how and why they used the writing strategies.

At the beginning of the second phase of the course, students were required to use the same topic they selected at the start of the semester to write the essay again. The instructor then explicitly taught students the pre-writing process strategies such as; topic analysis, activating

existing knowledge using different strategies, organizing ideas in the form of outlines, reading matrix, and the annotated bibliography which was done to encourage students to generate ideas.

Students then worked on their prewriting stage and submitted their work to the instructor who provided feedback and encouraged the students to use feedback provided to review their work. Students are reminded of the notion of recursiveness of the writing process throughout and encouraged to continually revise their work. Once the students have completed and submitted the prewriting stage, they were required to write a reflective essay on the activities they embarked on at this stage. As stated earlier, this allowed for students in-depth understanding of strategies they used.

In the third phase which is the drafting stage, different expository academic essay sample texts are used to explain and discuss features of the expository academic essay genre and the different organizational structures. Hedge (1998) suggests that for learners to appreciate the skills needed for successful construction of a particular text, it is useful for them to examine samples of the writing to see how ideas are put together and developed. As the students collaboratively wrote their first draft, in class sessions were used to explicitly teach the structure of the introductory, developmental and concluding paragraphs. In class and out of class activities on integration of sources, paraphrasing, summarizing, in-text citation, coherence and cohesion are discussed and assigned to students. While drafting, students were also reminded to pay careful attention to purpose, audience and style/tone. Throughout the instruction the instructor emphasizes the recursive nature of writing and guided the learners through each step. As a facilitator, the instructor offered guidance in helping students to engage in the thinking process of composing and did not impose own thoughts on student writing (Brown, 2001).

After completing the first draft, the instructor encouraged students to revise their work before they exchange scripts with peers for peer editing. The instructor provides students with peer editing guides to help them provide useful comments and suggestions to their peers. This also makes it less threatening to students who might feel that they do not have the necessary skills to evaluate other students work. To encourage students to take the peer editing exercise seriously, it was assigned 10% of the total essay marks. Peer editing evaluation rubric which assesses the quality of evaluation is provided to the students so that they are aware of how the instructor will assess their peer evaluation. The instructor encouraged peer editors to provide verbal feedback to their peers through digital platforms such as WhatsApp or Teams meeting. Then, students used the feedback from peers to revise their writing before they edit and finally submit their final writing. The students were required to write a final summative reflection of the whole experience of going through the process-genre approach. The instructor provided feedback on the final draft after the students have incorporated feedback from their peers.

4. Findings

The Results are reported in two separate sections which illustrate first the effects of the intervention on developing students' knowledge of the components of a well-developed expository academic essay and then students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the process genre instructional framework on developing their writing skills.

4.1. Findings from Students' Academic Essays before and after the Intervention

Raw scores based on the pre- and post-intervention essays were used to address research question 1 which sought to find out to what extent the process-genre writing approach raise students' awareness of the components of a well-developed expository essay. Descriptive statistics of the average writing marks and standard deviations for each component; content, organisation, vocabulary, language and mechanics for the pre and post intervention essays are shown in Table 1 below and Table 2 shows the mean and Standard Deviation of the lowly scored and highly scored essays after the intervention. The statistics are useful to give a broad idea of students' performance for each of the components before and after the intervention.

Table 1

Mean and standard deviation of overall marks for pre and post intervention essay components

<i>Components</i>	<i>Pre-intervention (Overall scores)</i>		<i>Post intervention (Overall scores)</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Content	4.66	0.758	7.20	0.805
Organisation	2.66	0.606	3.90	0.607
Vocabulary	2.93	0.691	3.66	0.606
Language	2.86	0.681	3.77	0.568
Mechanics	3.03	0.668	3.77	0.626

Note. SD: Standard deviation

Table 2 Mean and standard deviation of lowly and highly scored essay components after the intervention.

4.1.1. Awareness of content

As indicated in Table 1, pre-intervention students' samples showed weaknesses in terms of content and a significant improvement post intervention. Generally, pre-intervention essays indicated flaws in terms of providing relevant details to enrich the central ideas and communicating with a strong authorial voice, fluency within the text and awareness of acknowledging sources of information. Though the highly scored texts were informative through the existence of main ideas and supporting details they did not acknowledge sources. In the post intervention essays the highly scored samples indicated that the students have, in their writing, examined their essay topic holistically as shown by the scores in Table 2. This is because their essays showed the interrelatedness of the discussed ideas from the introduction, through to the developmental paragraphs up to the conclusion. They also integrated sources in their essays. However, samples of the lowly scored essays did not adequately develop the ideas comprehensively and the ideas were not clearly related from introduction to conclusion. The development paragraph from a lowly scored essay shows awareness of a topic sentence and the need to provide supporting evidence (see excerpt 1 below) but fails to adequately develop the main idea. However, compared with the pre-intervention essay, the students showed awareness of their audience and the context through providing citations though limited.

Excerpt 1

Stress on students is usually caused by many factors such as academic requirement and demands of studies. Stress prevents students from reaching their academic goals that they have set. Students are not able to complete the work they have been given at a given time which gives them more stress and they can become overwhelmed in the process (Stupart, 2020). The effect of this stress is when that, students develop a loss of interest within their schoolwork and hence academic performance drops. In addition, when students are stressed, it becomes difficult for them to focus well during lectures or even when they are studying. This then just leads to decline grades and a low academic performance.

4.1.2. Awareness on organization

The analysis of the pre-intervention essays showed that almost all students showed a moderate awareness of the essay structure as scores ranged between 3 for the highly scored and 1 for the lowly scored. Generally, there was a low level of text structure regarding the structure of the introduction, paragraphing and the conclusion. The pre-intervention essays had arguments that are not logically presented and lack of flow of thought in a paragraph, choppy paragraphs or very long paragraphs which were not focused and did not have a clear structure of topic sentences, supporting details and concluding sentence. However, all the 30 post intervention essays analysed showed a high level of awareness of essay structure including an introduction, development paragraphs and a conclusion as shown by the mean scores in table 1. However, there were variations between the highly scored and lowly scored essays in terms of paragraph development and structure (see Table 2). All the highly scored sample essays showed students' awareness of the

structure of the introductory paragraph through providing a hook, context/background and a thesis statement while the lowly scored samples showed weakness on the structure of the paragraphs. The lowly scored paragraphs were not well structured and some lacked cohesion (see excerpt 2 below). When the lowly scored essays paragraph structure was compared with the pre-intervention essays, they showed only minimal improvement. Before the intervention, many students' introduction paragraphs had no clear structure of the hook, context/background and thesis statement. The findings suggest that the process-genre instructional framework seem to have enhanced students' writing development by making them aware of the essay structure and paragraph development.

Excerpt 2

University students often have stress while they are undertaking their academic journey. This stress would usually affect them in one way or the other. The many years we have spent being students has made us aware of the stress that comes about a student life. We have also learnt that stress is caused by many considerations and it also has man any effects on students' academics. Therefore, essay focuses on the cause of stress students' effects on students' academics. Therefore, this study focuses on the cause of stress students analyze the effects that are brought about this stress. We will go deep into research about the causes and effects of stress on students' academic performance, read other research to get more information about this topic and also from our own experiences as students. There are many causes and effects of stress and we selected a few which include lack of adequate resources, inadequate living allowance and poor time management by students, effects of this stress are loss of interest in schoolwork, mental health conditions and low academic performance.

4.1.3. Awareness of vocabulary

The students showed awareness of the need to use a variety of words, although the researchers observed that both highly and lowly scored essays did not effectively use transitional markers to show how the ideas relate to one another within and among paragraphs which we had also observed in the pre-intervention essays. The researchers also observed that generally, where the meaning was not clear it was due to weaknesses such as; sentence construction error, grammar, or the development of ideas (See excerpt 2 above) which can be regarded as a problem of linguistic ability rather than lack of awareness.

4.1.4. Awareness of language use

Analysis of language use in students' pre intervention essays showed that some students used conversational language, contractions, first person pronouns and informal tone. However, generally, post intervention students' essays analysed did not use slang, had very limited use of contracted forms especially in lowly scored essays and did not use conversational language. However, weaknesses in writing conciseness, using a variety of sentence structures, use of consistent verb tense and logical flow of ideas was observed mostly in lowly scored essays.

4.1.5. Awareness of mechanics

For both pre and post intervention essays the researchers observed that spelling errors were minimal in most scripts. However, the lowly scored essays had multiple mechanics errors like incomplete sentences and punctuation.

4.2. Findings from Focus Group Interviews

Three themes related to students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the process-genre writing instructional framework on developing their academic writing skills were identified, namely: writing process activities usefulness in developing academic writing skills; peer editing usefulness to develop academic writing skills; and instructional framework impact on students' confidence to write academic essays. The aim was to answer the second research question on "*What are the student's perceptions of the process-genre writing approach to writing on developing their writing skills?*".

4.2.1. *Writing process activities usefulness in developing students' academic writing skills*

Analysis of the focus group discussions revealed that most students positively received the process-genre writing approach, for there were more positive than negative comments.

In commenting on the writing process stages they found helpful, the participants consistently highlighted activities in the prewriting stage; topic analysis, activation of existing knowledge, producing an outline and writing the annotated bibliography. One participant said, "For me, I found prewriting useful. In the outline you write down your points when you are drafting your essay you would have done the thinking and the research". Another said, "I will go for topic analysis because it helped me better understand the topic and the annotated bibliography; it helped with research".

Further, the students unanimously agreed that the drafting stage was particularly important because it was where the writer synthesized all the ideas. Further, the participants recognized the recursive nature of writing and interestingly, that one draft was not enough in writing.

The following excerpts illustrate some of the responses on the prewriting activities and the recursive nature of writing:

Our lecturer taught us that writing was recursive. You find that we had to re-do our assignment over and over again because we were trying to refine the topic that we were writing about. The process challenges you as an individual/pair to actually read your own draft and see if you did not stray from the main point. We changed our essays so many times. If you would have seen the first essay, you would wonder what happened along the way because we had to go back and reform it.

Yet others indicated that:

When we work on the second draft, we keep going back to check the mistakes made; whether grammar or just making sure the draft is cohesive. It's like you are re-reading and then re-writing essay. It is making sure that everything is on track by re-checking the details that were earlier provided during the pre-writing stage.

However, it commonly emerged across all the focus groups that even though the participants recognized the usefulness of the process-genre writing approach, participants expressed that the process was intense and time consuming. They also thought that the content provided was too much for first year students. For instance, the participants said, "Generally all the activities were useful, but the only problem is maybe challenging. The stuff is too much and there is little time that's why maybe some of us did not really understand some steps". Another asserted that:

Ma'am, I feel like it's a lot because we started with the prewriting, the outline and the drafting but still on the back side I feel I would not know if it was not for the course. It helped us to know how to write an outline, how to write a draft but I think it's just a lot.

Yet others indicated that they had used the process-genre writing strategies learnt to do writing tasks in other writing assignments. "Drafting helped me in other courses such as, Indigenous Guidance and Counselling because I used the very same skills that I learnt in COM 112.". In showing students' understanding of the process-genre writing approach, several participants stated that what they learnt would have an impact on how they approach written assignments in the other writing assignments and in the future: "For me as a media student, we are required to write a lot so I think I have learnt a lot of strategies that I will use in the future".

4.2.2. *Peer editing usefulness in developing writing skills*

When asked about their perceptions on peer editing, almost all the participants viewed it as a very useful exercise that helped them improve their work and some stated that it boosted their confidence. They appreciated the feedback they received from their peers and regarded it as constructive criticism which helped them improve their essays. One of the examples of statements showing appreciation include;

The peer editing reveals more than what you could see yourself because it is more about an outside source looking at your work. There are some things that as an individual you won't see that others

can see. So, I feel the peer-editing helped us a lot because we realized so many corrections and there were a lot of suggestions that came up as well.

Another stated that: "It helped with boosting confidence because I felt like a lecturer when I pointed errors to my peers. I was helping my peers to improve their work".

However, there were a few who viewed it as a complicated activity because of the advantages and disadvantages involved. They accepted that peer-editing helped them to improve areas of weakness in their writing but raised fears of their peers judging them or being seen as judgmental. They also felt that their peers would not understand their line of thought. One participant commented that: "At some point I felt the peers' comments were not helpful because some of them were irrelevant but there were cases where our peers were able to find some of our mistakes, and this helped us correct our essay". Another participant asserted that, "For me, the feedback we received was helpful; also, not that helpful but reading their drafts and commenting was helpful because now I know what our lecturers want". Some expressed fear of giving feedback confidently "For me, I think I am too critical so, I kind like fear giving feedback to my peers because they will think I am attacking them".

4.2.3. *Instructional framework impact on students' confidence to write academic essays*

When asked on their overall opinion of the process-genre writing approach, the participants indicated that they had gained more confidence, motivation and awareness of their potential as writers. Responses suggested that the process-genre writing framework had an impact on the participants' awareness, their confidence and made them think differently about their writing.

One participant commented that: "When you go through the writing process genre instruction, you realize that there is a hidden potential in you which makes you to excel in your writing assignments". For instance, in reference to whether the process genre writing instructional framework had improved their knowledge on expository academic essay writing one participant said "I found the instruction useful because it really taught us a lot, we did not know much about academic writing". Another stated that "It helped us package writing in an organized fashion. I used to write in a haphazard manner and it showed us the prewriting and all that I think it will help us when writing".

When asked to make suggestions of how the approach could be improved the participants dwelt more on the content of the course than improvement on the approach. Some participants commented that they would have liked more time spent on the annotated bibliography, in-text citation and referencing. Others would have liked more time spent on reflective writing. Other requests were for more practice activities. One of the comments was as, "The annotated bibliography should be a stage on its own so that we are able to understand it more- more time should be given and practice activities before we can do it on our own". Another included:

Referencing should be taught on its own we do not know it for example, I do not know the APA style, we were just told the APA style and we do not know what it is. The library does not really show us or the difference between the different referencing styles. Give referencing and in text citation time because if we are not taught in COM there is no where we will learn it. It's given a casual approach across all courses, but we do not know it.

5. Discussion

Two main research questions guided this study. The first research question sought to determine whether the process-genre instructional approach could raise first year humanities students' awareness of the components of a well-developed expository essay. The second research question investigated the first-year humanities students' perceptions of the effectiveness of process-genre instructional approach to writing in improving their writing skills.

The findings for the first research question showed that implicit instruction of the writing process as provided for by the process-genre writing instructional framework seem to raise student's awareness of the components of a well-developed expository academic essay. Asking students to collaboratively write and go through the prewriting stage, drafting, revising, peer

editing, and revision seem to have significant impact on the quality of their essays. This confirms the findings by Ghobadi (2021) who found that process - genre approach motivates students because of collaboration. The students produced much improved essays after going through the process-genre instructional framework when compared to the essay students wrote before being introduced to the instructional framework. This finding is in line with constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978) that collaboration among learners results in successful learning. The essays showed increased students' awareness of essay structure and improvement in developing paragraphs. Results from the analysis of the focus group interviews, seem to corroborate with the text analysis results. The majority of students reported that the approach improved their knowledge on academic writing skills and had impacted on how they approach writing tasks. The analysis on the student essays showed that collectively students were aware of how an essay should be structured, and that ideas should be logically organized, the use of formal language, a variety of vocabulary and sentence structures which corroborates other research findings (Deng et al., 2016; Huang & Zhang, 2019; Palanisamy & Aziz, 2021).

Although all the essays assessed showed awareness of essay structure the lowly scored lacked clear paragraph organization, inadequate development of ideas, grammatical sentence construction errors, inconsistent verb tense use, limited and inappropriate use of transitional markers and lack of coherence and cohesion. This could be attributed to the students' lack of linguistic ability which is a core component of writing and provides how well students write (Ajmal & Irfan, 2020; Richards, 2002). However, the process-genre instructional framework does not adequately provide for explicit instruction on language development. This finding has implications for theory because it is relevant to suggestions made by researchers that L2 students need explicit instruction on language use to develop their linguistic ability (Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2003).

The analysis of focus group interview responses showed that the process-genre writing instructional approach led to significantly increased confidence and motivation in writing, understanding of academic writing, knowledge on writing strategies, and appreciation of peer editing in writing and a realisation of inherent potential to write. These findings are consistent with Vygotsky (1978) constructivism idea of scaffolding that supports student growth, creates autonomous learners who are responsible for their own learning, and gives learners more confidence in acquiring new skills. The findings are also consistent with previous empirical research findings that showed the process genre approach helps students to have positive attitude towards their writing which results in reduction of writing anxiety (Deng et al., 2016; Ghobadi, 2021, Huang & Zhang, 2019; Wali & Mandani, 2020).

A close analysis of the students' comments suggests that the process-genre instructional framework developed students' metacognitive (appropriately responded to the task demands), cognitive (transferring knowledge and skills to other writing tasks) and social/affective strategies (cooperating with peers in constructing and peer editing). Firstly, it appears that explicit instruction of the process-genre writing strategies, scaffolding and facilitation developed students' metacognitive strategies. There was some evidence from students' responses that the process-genre instructional approach to academic writing may change students' views of themselves as academic writers and help to promote confidence (Ghobadi, 2021; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). The prewriting stage activities seem to have played a significant role in lessening the students' writing anxiety and unearthing an inherent writing potential in them which is consistent with other research findings. (e.g. Ajmal & Irfan, 2020, Ghobadi, 2021). The implicit instruction, activities done and the scaffolding from the instructor helped the students to be actively involved in the creation of knowledge (Brown, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, the students felt motivated and engaged so they were confident to write their ideas. The above results suggest that the process-genre instructional framework has a significant role in boosting student's self-confidence and ability to write making it an effective instructional approach in improving student's confidence and motivation for writing (Ghobadi, 2021). These results are also relevant to suggestions made by L2 writing researchers that implicit instruction of the writing process makes writing less

threatening for learners and it make them find writing interesting as well as give them a sense of accomplishment, so they get motivated (Arndt, 1987; Badger & White, 2000; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Hyland, 2002; Myles, 2002; Prodomou, 1995; Richards, 2002).

Secondly, students' responses showed that the process-genre instructional approach developed cognitive strategies that stimulated learning transfer. It can be concluded that explicit instruction of the process-genre approach to writing influenced the stimulation of students' transfer of the writing skills learnt in the EAP environment to other writing contexts. These findings are important because they suggest that students do transfer writing knowledge and skills learnt in EAP to assignments in their other courses. This suggests that the process-genre writing strategies are broadly transferable skills. These findings are consistent with what other researchers in writing instruction have observed (e.g., James, 2009; Leki & Carson, 1994; Minh, 2022; Perkins & Salomon, 1988) in suggesting that even though academic writing is situated and discipline specific, students can transfer some writing strategies across contexts.

Finally, an analysis of students' comments suggest that the process-genre instructional approach facilitated development of students social/affective strategies thus encouraging an appreciation of cooperating with peers in constructing, giving, and receiving feedback. It can be concluded that providing explicit instruction on the process of writing, revision and editing stage may have contributed to improvements in students' beliefs and attitude towards collaboration, the value of revision, and peer feedback. These findings are consistent with principles of constructivism which underlay the process-genre approach Vygotsky (1978).

Although interviews across the focus groups showed a positive perception of the process-genre writing approach, some participants complained that it was tiresome and took a very long time. This finding is consistent with other L2 writing researchers who argue that the writing process require learners to spend a long time just to complete one piece of writing (Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2003; Novia & Saptarina, 2021). This complaint could also be linked to the observations made by different scholars that academic writing is challenging and complex for English L2 learners (Hyland, 2003; Richards, 1990)

6. Conclusion

The study was intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the process genre framework in enhancing first year students' academic writing skills. From assessing the student's essays after the intervention and an analysis of focus group discussions, it can be concluded that the process genre framework significantly raises students' awareness of components of a coherent and cohesive academic expository essay. The results further suggest that the process-genre instructional framework developed students' metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies. The study identified the perceptions of L2 students towards the process-genre instructional approach and their attitude towards the activities involved in pre-writing, drafting, editing and reviewing stages. It also evaluated students' essays to determine whether the process-genre instructional approach could raise students' awareness of the components of a well-developed expository academic essay. An instructional focus on the process of writing and recursive nature of writing an academic essay suggests that students have constructed new understanding and knowledge from the multi drafting experience. Thus, the process-genre instructional framework seems to be an effective pedagogical tool to help students improve their academic writing skills.

The findings of this study have implications for teaching practice in L2 EAP courses. Firstly, L2 EAP practitioners maybe encouraged to see that the process-genre instruction improved students writing significantly on organization, paragraph structure and development, logical development of ideas and language use. Secondly, the instruction in the course facilitated transfer of writing strategies learnt to other writing tasks. However, caution should be applied because it is important to note that perspectives on transfer were self-reported by some participants and have not been verified by the researchers. It would be worth carrying out research to investigate which process-genre writing strategies students transfer to other writing contexts and genres.

This study has some limitations that can be addressed in the future on the process-genre instructional framework which concerns the research design. First, this study mainly used qualitative methods to examine the effectiveness of the process-genre writing instructional framework focusing on only four classes of students from the faculty of Humanities, it is therefore not clear if this approach could easily be adapted to EAP students in other disciplines. Future research could use both qualitative and quantitative methods with EAP students in other faculties using other genres to find out the effectiveness of the method.

Second, the instruction focused on expository academic essays only so effectiveness of the process-genre instruction to other genres may not be guaranteed. Further research could also examine differences between groups of students, for example, between those from different learning cultures, that is., compare home from international students, age, and gender difference or between disciplines. Such research would contribute to improvement of the process-genre writing instructional pedagogy and L2 writing practitioners understanding of the development of L2 student writer.

It is hoped that the findings from the study will further contribute to the development of instructional frameworks of second language writing.

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