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Blending process and genre approaches in teaching academic writing to first-year English as a second language students

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The article aims to provide a comparative analysis of the approaches employed by lecturers e to teach academic writing to first-year English as a second language (ESL) students at the university level. Lecturers are typically expected to adopt either the genre-based or process-oriented approach when instructing students from diverse multilingual and multicultural backgrounds, who possess varying levels of English proficiency. The process-genre approach is recommended by the researcher as it effectively enhances students' academic writing abilities. The study utilized pre-and post-tests to evaluate the academic writing skills of first-year students. The pre-test served as an initial evaluation of the participants' writing proficiency, providing a baseline for improvement, while the post-test measured progress after several weeks of instruction. Additionally, a questionnaire was administered to gather students' perspectives on academic writing. The findings indicate that many ESL students face challenges of managing course content while simultaneously grappling with the grammatical, lexical, and syntactic complexities of the target language. Consequently, lecturers are encouraged to apply the process-genre approach to support students in improving their academic writing skills and bridging the gap between secondary and tertiary education.

Keywords: English grammar; language proficiency; translanguaging; process-genre approach; academic writing

INTRODUCTION

Research on teaching academic writing to undergraduate multilingual and multicultural university students is gaining significant traction globally (Carstens, 2016; Mhlongo, du Plessis & Weidemann, 2021). The importance of teaching academic writing is understood by the fact that English is frequently employed as the academic lingua franca in many institutions (Baker, 2016). Nevertheless, numerous researchers express concern regarding the low levels of academic writing proficiency demonstrated by students across various texts (Fouche, van Dyke & Butler, 2017; Pfeiffer and van der Walt, 2019), prompting the development of models and theories aimed at addressing this issue (Pfeiffer and van der Walt, 2016). In South African higher education, several studies have focused on teaching writing to multilingual and multicultural students (Dalvit & De Klerk, 2005; Webb, 2007), highlighting the challenges of effectively implementing the Language Policy for Higher Education (2002). For instance, the University of KwaZulu-Natal has introduced vocation-specific isiZulu instruction to first-year health science undergraduate to facilitate knowledge conceptualization and improve patient communication in their mother tongue (Matthew & Gakool, 2018). This initiative is yielding positive outcomes, as both students and lecturers

recognize the beneficial role African languages can play in an academic context. Despite these advancements, English remains the primary academic lingua franca in nearly all South African universities. Consequently, this article advocates for the adoptions of the process-genre approach, which integrates both process and genre-based methodologies, as a strategy to enhance students' English writing proficiency (Huang & Zhang, 2020; Recelis and Matsuda, 2013), while fostering a deeper understanding of writing across various genres.

The globalization of education has prompted a paradigm shift, transforming many universities worldwide from being monolingual to multilingual institutions (Smith, 2018). This shift has also diversified the student body, moving from traditionally monoculture to increasingly multicultural demographics. However, the situation in South Africa remains contentious despite having one of the most liberal language policies, which allows the use of African languages in higher education institutions (Madadzhe, 2019). Heugh (1999) defines multilingualism as the ability to utilize two or three languages as mediums of instruction to enhance both students' academic and linguistic performance. Alternatively, multilingualism can be understood as "a phenomenon that denotes the use of more than one language or a multitude of languages by an individual or community or country" (Mutasa, 2014). Despite this inclusive language policy, the hegemonic dominance of English has made it difficult for the nine indigenous African languages to achieve equal status with English as languages of instruction. As an alternative, translanguaging - using two or more languages simultaneously - has been implemented in classrooms to help students broaden their linguistic repertoires and improve comprehension of the content (Adamson, 2020, Heugh, 2015, Makalela, 2015). Probyn (2015) support this approach, emphasizing that translanguaging is effective in helping students utilize two languages when sharing and processing information.

Another significant factor is the changes in admission policies and the merger of universities in South Africa, which have transformed many institutions into multilingual and multicultural centers (Webb, 2012). Antia (2014) commends the University of the Western Cape as the first to implement an open admission policy, allowing students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to gain admission provided they meet the academic requirements. Consequently, universities must be adequately prepared to accommodate students from various cultural backgrounds. Lestinen, Petrucijová, and Spinthourakis (2004) point out that "multiculturalism allows individuals to belong to several cultures and still retain authentic membership of their own culture" (p.1). Students who maintain their cultural identity often experience greater pride and motivation to learn within a multicultural environment.

When teaching academic writing, lecturers must be highly attuned to the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of their students (Zhang, 2018). It is essential for lecturers to demonstrate respect for these diverse languages and cultures, as universities play a critical role in fostering human values and promoting tolerance. Canagarajah (2002) conducted an in-depth study of various writing instruction models and emphasized that multilingual writers should incorporate elements of their vernacular to enhance their writing. Multiculturalism provides students with the opportunity to transfer knowledge between their first and second languages. Gao, Jia, and Zhou (2014) further argue that identity plays a significant role in helping English as a Second/Foreign Language students develop proficiency in English. In this context, students' native languages are regarded as valuable resources that can support the improvement of their academic writing skills.

The Medium of Instruction in a South African University
Although South African universities are permitted to select their medium of instruction from the country's eleven official languages, most institutions prefer to use English (Madiba, 2012). This preference is often attributed to the status of English as a global language, with little consideration given to students' perspectives in the development of language policies (Mayaba, 2018). Lekgotla and Ramoupi (2014) argue that language is a powerful determinant of societal power relations, and the role of African languages has not been adequately addressed even after 20 years of post-apartheid freedom. A significant number of black students continue to learn through English as a second language, which negatively affects student completion rates. In contrast, the inclusion of African languages alongside English could serve as a catalyst for meaningful change (Mthombeni & Ogunnubi, 2020).

The South African government has taken a significant step by recognizing eleven languages as official, yet English remains the dominant language of instruction in most tertiary education institutions. This presents a challenge, as the majority of students admitted to South African universities have limited proficiency in English, making it difficult for them to comprehend and process information from academic texts. Many of these students are underprepared for the demands of higher education (Tewari & Ilesanmi, 2020). Consequently, some researchers argue that indigenous South African languages should be further developed to play a more effective role in teaching and learning, rather than being restricted to conversational use (Mthombeni & Ogunnubi, 2020; Hlatshwayo & Siziba, 2013). The integration of indigenous languages alongside English is critical for supporting students with low English proficiency and improving their academic performance.

For the Department of Higher Education to successfully achieve its goal of fostering multilingual in universities, there must be a concerted effort to promote the use of African languages alongside English (Pillay and Yu 2015). Although current policy ensures parity of esteem for all official languages, English and Afrikaans continue to be the primary languages of instruction. Notably, English has y gained significant prominence at the expense of Afrikaans, as many speakers of African language perceive English as a more neutral and acceptable, particularly in contrast to Afrikaans, which is historically associated with the apartheid

regime's e oppressive education policies (Desai, 2016). Mzangwa (2019) suggests that to improve access and create equal opportunities for all students, South African universities should maintain English as a medium of instruction. Given, the country's eleven official languages, English is often regarded as a neutral language within most institutions, as it bridges the linguistic diversity of students.

The adoption of English as a medium of instruction in most universities has a detrimental effect on the promotion of multilingualism, necessitating urgent measures to support African languages (Mkhize & Balfour, 2017). This promotion of African languages is further undermined by students' attitudes, as many perceive English to be a unifying lingua franca that accommodates individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Banda and Peck (2016) lament the prevalent misconception that 'English plays the powerful role of being a prestigious language' (p. 286) when used as the medium of instruction. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that students attribute symbolic and cultural value to languages beyond English. Furthermore, the preference for English in higher education is reinforced by the tendency of black politicians and affluent business leaders to undermine indigenous languages, viewing them as underdeveloped and inadequate for addressing contemporary political and economic challenges.

Makalela and McCabe (2013) eloquently outline the underlying reasons that led the University of Limpopo to adopt English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) despite the availability of multiple languages. The authors conclude by urging language policy planners to conduct comprehensive research on the role of African languages in higher education. The implementation of a monolingual policy without thorough investigation possesses significant challenges for students with only basic proficiency in English. At the University of Western Cape, where Afrikaans served as the medium of instruction during the apartheid era, the introduction of an identity-building initiative has elevated the status of English above that of Afrikaans and isiXhosa (Antia, 2015). Banda and Peck (2016) approach the language policy issue at UWC from a different perspective, suggesting that the contestation and contradictions within the policy create fertile ground for diverse discourses among students from varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Huang and Zhang (2020) conducted a quasi-experimental study involving two groups of university students tasked with writing an argumentative essay. The intervention group received instruction on the process-genre approach, while the comparison group used the commonly practiced conventional approach. The results indicated that the intervention group significantly outperformed the control group, thereby supporting the assertion that the hybrid process-genre approach is crucial for enhancing student performance. Moreover, writing instructors should strive to maintain a balance when implementing the process-genre approach by providing implicit instructions on genre knowledge while adhering to the recursive nature of the writing process (Haung & Zhang, 2020). Students tend to improve their performance when they possess a balanced understanding of both the process and genre approaches.

The teaching of academic writing to ESL students is a challenging endeavor that cannot be effectively achieved through a singular approach (Badger & White, 2000; Deng, Chen, & Zhang, 2015). As a lecturer responsible for teaching English communication skills, I have observed that first-year students face numerous challenges in their academic writing. This realization underscores the necessity of conducting a study focused on enhancing students' academic writing proficiency by evaluating various methods employed in institutions both locally and globally. In this study, I examined three approaches: the product, process, and genre approaches, to determine which method could be most effective in helping students at a South African university improve their academic writing skills. The product approach is not included in this study, as it primarily emphasizes the imitation of model texts, with grading based on the final product. Therefore, this study focuses on the integration of the process and genre approaches in writing instruction. The genre approach is rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics, as proposed by Halliday (1978), and emphasizes the relationship between linguistic systems and social structures. This approach is vital in writing education, as it provides students with explicit and systematic explanations of how language functions within social and cultural contexts (Hyland, 2003). More importantly, the genre approach empowers ESL instructors to assist their students in producing well-structured texts (Hyland, 2007). It elucidates the relationship between text genres and their contexts, thereby aiding students in enhancing their writing proficiency.

The study aims to evaluate the writing abilities of students prior to their instruction in the process and genre approaches and to assess the impact of these two approaches in their writing performance. Furthermore, the study could determine whether the integration of the process and genre approaches leads to greater improvements in students' writing abilities compared to the use of either approach in isolation. The results of the study are anticipated to provide insights into the challenges faced by ESL students when writing essays.

METHODS

The study adopted a mixed method design, employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data. Quantitative data collected via a questionnaire were interpreted using basic numerical calculations, while qualitative data derived from written texts were analyzed through textual analysis. The focus of the study was on students enrolled in an English Communication Skills (ECS) course at a South African university, specifically designed for first-year students who are adapting to university life. The study aimed to explore the performance and perceptions of first-year students as they learn to write essays that meet

university-level standards. To achieve this objective, the researcher evaluated various techniques and models suitable for teaching academic writing skills to multilingual and multicultural students at the university level. This evaluation sought to assess the effectiveness of each technique or model and determine their applicability in supporting students at a South African university.

Participants

A sample of 48 participants was selected from a total population of 483 students enrolled in the English Communication Skills (ECS) course for natural and agricultural sciences. An ethical clearance certificate was obtained from the university's ethical clearance committee, and all selected participants signed an informed consent form prior to commencement of data collection. To ensure anonymity, each participant was assigned a code that replaced their real name. Simple random sampling was employed to obtain a manageable sample, in accordance with Creswell's (2012) guidance that researchers must determine the appropriate number of participants for their studies (p. 609). The demographic distribution of the participants' native languages was as follows: Tshivenda (17), Xitsonga (11), Sepedi (8), isiNdebele (5), isiZulu (4), and Shona (3). All participants completed both the pre-test and post-test and engaged in all activities associated with the study. The selection of a manageable sample facilitated a thorough analysis of the collected data, enabling the researcher to draw sound conclusion.

Writing tasks

Participants were evaluated through the composition of two short essays (pre-test and post-test), which allowed the raters to assess their performance effectively. Four raters, all lecturers in the Department of English with experience ranging from 11 to 23 years, were responsible for marking and rating the essays. To ensure consistency in marking, all raters attended a four-hours training session on establishing interrater reliability and fairness. During this session, they were trained to use a five-point rubric that encompassed the following criteria: planning and organization, relevance, coherence and cohesion, lexical resources, and linguistic accuracy.

In the pre-test, participants were required to write essays using the five-paragraph structure, written in clear and unambiguous language. At this stage, all participants were familiar with the five-paragraph style and were expected to produce well-developed essay. This approach enabled the researcher to assess the students' strengths and weaknesses, thereby facilitating the recommendation of an appropriate model for teaching academic writing. The first essay (pre-test) was administered during the second week of the first semester, wherein students were expected to use their prior knowledge to write an argumentative essay. The second essay (post-test) was administered in the tenth week of the same semester to evaluate any improvements in the students' writing abilities. A rubric served to evaluate any improvements in the students' writing abilities. A rubric

served as the marking guide for both the pre- and post-test. During the eight-week interval between the pre- and post-test, students received instruction on blending the process and genre approaches in their writing. The intervention strategies employed were designed to help students comprehend the relationship between the communicative functions and language forms inherent in the genre approach. Additionally, these strategies aimed to enhance their texts by applying the necessary steps outlined in the process approach.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to the sampled participants in the middle of the semester, with the aim of gathering data regarding their language and cultural backgrounds. This timing was chosen to allow participants to acclimate to the academic writing style. The questionnaire comprised twenty open-ended questions designed to elicit their experiences with academic writing. Dörnyei (2003) notes that questionnaires are valuable instruments, as they can yield "factual, behavioral, and attitudinal information" (p. 8) about respondents. A secondary objective was to evaluate the participants' responses, which would inform the researchers about effective strategies for teaching academic writing. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire, focusing on students' writing abilities, their awareness of writing theories, and their commitment to adhering to the necessary writing processes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-test and post-test

The results obtained from the pre-test essays revealed that students experience numerous challenges in writing coherent, logical, and grammatically correct essays. The analysis indicated that participants were capable of composing well-structured paragraphs; however, they often failed to fully develop the ideas presented within each paragraph. In certain instances, the essays exhibited a low level of academic writing proficiency. The evaluation was conducted using a five-point rubric assessing planning and organization, relevance, coherence and cohesion, lexical resources, and linguistic accuracy.

A comprehensive analysis of the pre-test essays revealed that approximately 80% of the participants lacked grammatical complexity and demonstrated instances of circumlocution. An example illustrating this issue is presented below, taken from a student essay:

> Covid-19 was a very dangerous disease that people in my community have never seen for so many years. We still feel the impact of Covid-19 as it has killed many people in our village and those who live in other villages. In my family alone, Covid-19 kill my mother and my father, and also kill my only brother and one of my three sisters which is very bad. To stop the death of many people, the government started this lockdown to stop people from moving from place to place.

The paragraph above exemplifies a common issue faced by students who translate sentences from their first language into English, as they often do not adhere to the grammatical structure of the English language. Indigenous languages such as Xitsonga and Tshivenda possess different syntactical frameworks compared to English, resulting in grammatically incorrect sentences. The following example further illustrates how some students struggle to compose texts that contain well-developed ideas.

Covid-19 is a very strange disease and dangerous disease. Covid-19 came to South Africa because of people who visited Europe and come back. Covid-19 was discovered in March 2020 and it started affecting many people all over the country. The government implemented this lockdown to stop the disease to kill people.

The two examples indicate that students expressed their ideas primarily through short, simple sentences that lacked the appropriate syntax and register expected at the academic level. Only 20% of the participants show the ability to utilize formal discourse and effectively combine of simple, complex and compound sentences.

Results from the post-test essay indicated a modest improvement in the areas of relevance, coherence, cohesion, and lexical resources.

Notably, participants exhibited significant advancement in linguistic accuracy, particularly regarding grammatical errors.

This improvement can be attributed to the lecturer's integration of the genre approach model alongside the process approach utilized in composing the pre-test essays. Furthermore, participants demonstrated enhanced vocabulary usage, which is critical for effective academic writing.

The post-test essays demonstrated a marked improvement in academic style compared to the pre-test, as students actively engaged in peer discussions regarding the feedback provided by their lecturer and assisted each other during joint construction of their essays. Approximately 60% of the participants effectively employed discourse markers and sentence connectors, such as 'therefore,' 'moreover,' and 'consequently,' which were notably absent in their pre-test essays. This engagement fostered critical thinking as students questioned their word choices and contemplated the ideas they presented while preparing their final drafts. Furthermore, incorporating social, cultural, and linguistic aspects into the feedback and editing sessions enabled participants to better recognize genre conventions and produce relevant texts. Figure 1 illustrates a comparison of students' performance between the pre-and post-tests.
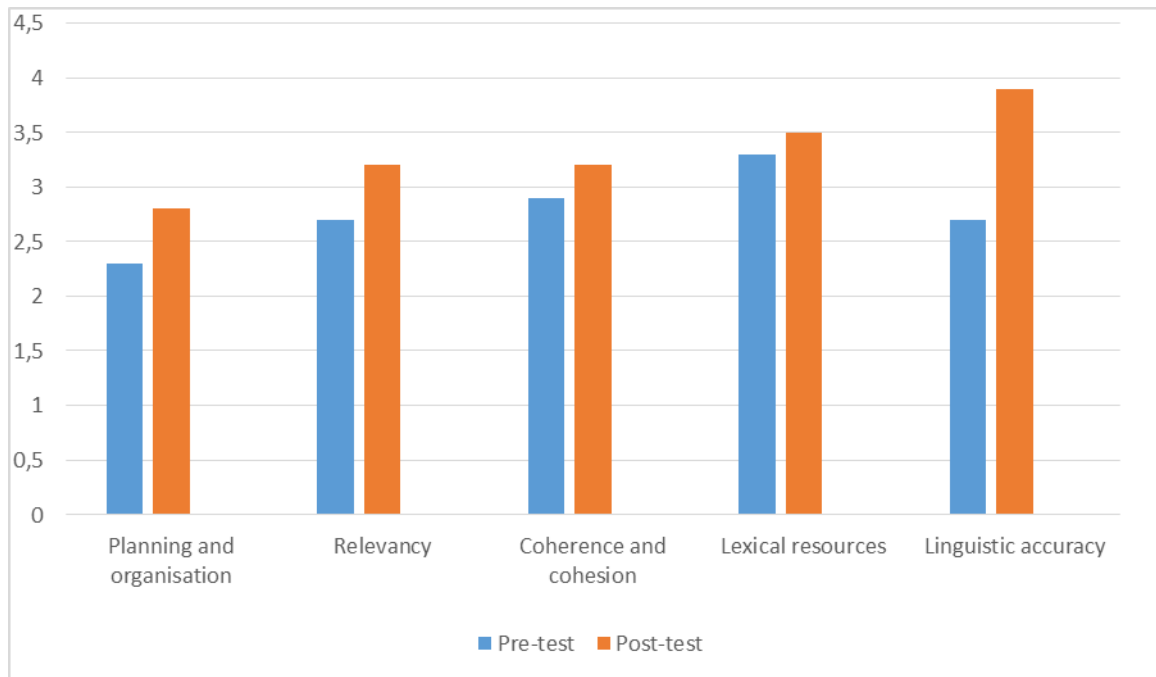

FIGURE 1 | Comparison of Students' Performance in Pre-and Post-tests Using a Five-Point Rubric

Figure 1 illustrates that students demonstrated improvement across all five evaluated areas in their post-test essays. Notably, linguistic accuracy—which is often overlooked in the process approach but emphasized in the genre approach—exhibited the most significant enhancement. Genre-based instruction is crucial for enabling students to gain mastery over text creation, select appropriate vocabulary, and develop a better understanding of grammatical usage, all of which are essential for achieving linguistic accuracy. The post-test essays clearly reflect that participant acquired a certain level of content knowledge, which they effectively demonstrated in their writing. Despite the overall improvement in writing performance among most students, it is essential to assess

their language proficiency from multiple perspectives (Hulstijn, 2011). The language proficiency levels of students significantly influence their performance enhancement (Desai, 2016).

Questionnaire

All participants returned the completed questionnaires to the researcher, along with four lecturers from the Department of English, to ensure the trustworthiness of the collected data. The results from the questionnaire indicated that students experience numerous challenges in writing texts, highlighting the need for intervention to enhance their performance. The question aimed to ascertain whether students had received any training in academic writing, their familiarity with various writing models, their understanding of genre, and the significance of the different stages in the writing process. The results were meticulously analyzed under the following five themes: (1) background knowledge of students regarding the process approach; (2) the necessity of grammar instruction; (3) the effectiveness of editing essays prior to submitting the final draft; (4) the influence of social and cultural factors on students' written texts; and (5) evaluating whether there was any improvement in the post-test compared to the pre-test.

The first theme focused on students' background knowledge of utilizing the process approach in writing. A significant majority of the students (83%) reported having some understanding of the various stages of the process approach, although they often encountered difficulties due to limited knowledge of the topic. One participant noted that their English teacher in secondary school mentioned, "The process approach has five stages, but he preferred the traditional way of assigning essays in a controlled environment." During the pre-test, students were not provided sufficient time to write multiple drafts, resulting in essays that fell short of academic standards. These findings align with Racelis and Matsuda (2013), who indicated that integrating the process approach into the genre framework significantly enhances students' writing standards. The second theme addressed the necessity of grammar instruction. All participants concurred that dedicated sessions on grammar should be included, as such instruction would help them better comprehend the language in which knowledge is communicated.

Furthermore, they recognized their low levels of academic writing proficiency, expressing that grammar teaching could facilitate improvements in their current abilities. Another participant pointed out that:

> As students, we expect lecturers to have several sessions on grammar teaching to help us cope with the expected standard at university. I come from a rural village where the school have few resources and under qualified teachers who failed to equip us to cope at university level.

During the intervention period, grammar lessons were integrated into almost all contact sessions in an interactive manner, encouraging full participation from the students.

This aligns with Hinkel (2013) recommendation that targeted grammar instruction can help struggling students enhance their writing performance. The third theme explored the effectiveness of editing essays before submitting the final draft. Participants expressed differing opinions on this issue. A slightly majority (54%) expressed concerns, noting that many of their peers lacked sufficient linguistic accuracy to provide helpful feedback. On the other hand, 46% of the participants found peer editing beneficial for improving the quality of their essays. One participant remarked, "During the peer editing stage, we are expected to read thoroughly and give comments but some of us were clueless on what to do and end up indicating spelling mistakes only". After engaging in a thorough discussion, participants reached a consensus, agreeing that peer feedback could be beneficial. They recognized that despite the challenges, peer editing provided an opportunity to learn from one another and acknowledged the value of having their essays reviewed by peers to enhance their editing process and receive constructive comments.

The fourth theme examined the influence of social and cultural factors on students' written texts. Approximately 90% of the participants agreed that incorporating familiar social and cultural aspects when teaching genre-based approaches significantly helped them understand what to include in their essays. They mentioned that comparing the symbolic and cultural values embedded in different languages enabled them to use that information effectively in their writing. Hyland (2003) supports this notion, emphasizing that students should be guided to consciously engage with target genres, which helps them comprehend how language creates meaning within specific contexts. After receiving instruction on blending the process and genre approaches, participants were able to make noticeable improvements in their post-test essays. One participant, reflecting on their experience after the post-test, shared their motivation:

> The information that we received from our lecturers on process and genre approaches helped us to understand the importance of different stages. This helped us to improve the quality of the essays we write for summative evaluation.

The above quotation confirms that students began to recognize the similarities between the process and genre approaches. This awareness allowed them to critically evaluate the stages involved in both approaches, helping them identify the steps that contributed to the improvement of their essays.

The final theme focused on whether students showed improvement in composing their essays after receiving instruction. All participants agreed that through a combination of lectures, student/lecturer engagement, and peer collaboration, they gained a better understanding of how to write essays. One participant highlighted that "teachers at secondary school promote memorization rather than encouraging critical thinking and peer collaboration," emphasizing the gap between secondary education and

university-level academic writing. Students also acknowledged the improvement in their writing skills, attributing it to the inclusion of cultural, social, and textual practices in the teaching process. These elements helped them connect academic writing to their everyday realities, making it more relatable and enhancing their engagement. Importantly, participants recognized that explicit instruction in language use and knowledge of genre conventions significantly improved the quality of their essays. Based on these findings, the researcher evaluated both the process and genre approaches, concluding that the blended process-genre approach holds promise for enhancing students' writing abilities by addressing both linguistic accuracy and genre awareness.

The process-genre approach offers significant benefits for ESL students by integrating both cognitive and cultural aspects, while guiding them through all the essential stages of essay writing. Ferris and Eckstein (2020) assert that "writing requires a great deal of explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge," which many first-year students often lack. During the interval between the pre-test and post-test, lecturers provided instruction on various writing approaches, enabling students to shape their essays with attention to both micro (e.g., grammar, vocabulary) and macro-level (e.g., organization, coherence) writing skills. Furthermore, interactive grammar teaching, which encouraged active student participation, was incorporated, resulting in improved linguistic accuracy. Post-test essays demonstrated enhanced language usage, including better vocabulary and more complex sentence structures, which had been problematic in the pre-test. The integration of the process-genre approach allowed students to understand the social purpose of language, equipping them to write essays that meet university-level standards. This aligns with the findings of Huang and Zhang (2020), who emphasized that the process-genre approach improves L2 students' performance in writing argumentative essays.

The pre-test results clearly show that students have varying levels of writing proficiency due to their diverse educational backgrounds, leading the researcher to recommend the process-genre approach. The isolated use of either the process or genre approach alone may not be sufficient to address all the writing challenges faced by ESL students. Despite slight differences between the two approaches, both are critical in helping students develop academic writing skills. Yan (2005) highlights that "this approach allows students to study the relationship between purpose and form for a particular genre as they use the recursive processes of prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing" (p. 20). The post-test results revealed significant improvements as students successfully integrated steps from the genre approach into the writing process. Hayes (2012) emphasizes that modeling writing is a crucial component for helping students improve their texts. The hybrid process-genre model, therefore, offers flexibility for writing teachers, allowing them to select the most effective elements from each approach to scaffold students' academic writing development more effectively.

The findings of the study indicate that students significantly improved their academic writing proficiency by following the six steps as suggested by Yan (2005), which include: preparation, modeling and reinforcing, planning, joint constructing, independent constructing, and revision. In the post-tests, students demonstrated notable progress on vocabulary use and sentence construction, showcasing their ability to provide clear examples based on discussion held during the joint construction phase – an ability that was lacking in the pre-test. Mauludin (2020) supports the notion that joint construction is particularly effective in refining students' written texts. Through this method, students are paired with a peer to collaboratively revise their work, focusing on improving both organizational structure and linguistic features.

The restructured process-genre approach, as expounded by Huang and Zhaug (2020), allowed students greater flexibility to integrate both models effectively. This approach not only facilitated the development of essential academic writing skills but also emphasized the transferability of genre knowledge from the students' native languages to English, the medium of instruction. This transfer plays a crucial role in enhancing students' ability to compose well-structured texts in English. Furthermore, the focus on revisiting and editing during the independent construction phase enabled students to recognize the importance of thorough self-evaluation. By revising their essays before submission, they gained a deeper understanding of how to refine their writing, improving both the content and linguistic accuracy. This iterative process empowers students to produce more polished and academically sound essays, which are key skills in higher education.

CONCLUSION

Drawing from the data sources, it becomes evident that lecturers must prioritize teaching the fundamental of academic writing, rather than assuming that all students entering university possess effective writing skills. As Green (2013) highlighted, academic writing is a complex process that requires consistent and extended practice to perfect. This is particularly important for students who come from diverse linguistic and educational backgrounds, as their writing proficiency varies significantly. The integration of both the process and genre approaches addresses this challenge by framing writing as a social practice embedded in the cultural contexts in which it is produced, as Hyland (2016) suggests. This approach allows students to engage meaningfully with the social and communicative functions of writing, rather than merely focusing on mechanics. Additionally, attaining a sufficient level of academic writing proficiency can only be achieved by applying teaching methods and theories tailored to the specific needs of each student group.

This article has effectively illustrated the academic writing challenges faced by many students at a South African university, where English is predominantly learned as a second language. These students often struggle with essay writing, compounded by their limited proficiency in the grammatical, lexical, and syntactic aspects of English. As a response, the process-genre approach emerges as a suitable solution to improve their writing skills. This approach actively engages students in the drafting and revision process, encouraging a thorough focus on both the development of ideas and the final product. The hybrid model, as recommended by Badger and White (2000), is particularly beneficial in addressing these issues. It combines the strengths of both the process and genre approaches, allowing students to develop a deeper understanding of the social and cultural contexts of writing while methodically following the stages of the writing process. By employing this approach, the university can enhance students' academic writing proficiency, which in turn can positively impact the degree completion rates. Students who have stronger writing skills are more likely to succeed in their academic endeavors, leading to higher retention and graduation rates.

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