

**Perceptions of Writing: Writing in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Programs
and Writing in Disciplines**

By

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Abstract

In this qualitative case study, I investigated academic writing in two contexts. The first was writing task designers at an EAP program, the second was the academics in the discipline of Accounting and Corporate Governance. Two participant task designers from each context volunteered their perspectives on the role and function of academic writing in their respective settings. The research questions were:

- 1) How is academic writing conceptualised in a university direct entry preparation program for business, accounting and economics at Macquarie University's ELC?
- 2) How is academic writing conceptualised in the discipline of Accounting and Corporate Governance at Macquarie University?
- 3) How are participants' views about academic writing compared in the two contexts?

To answer the research questions, I collected task descriptions, evaluation criteria, task descriptions and follow-up interviews with task designers and unit convenors from the participants. To facilitate data storage and analysis, I used Nvivo 11 for Windows.

Drawing on Roz Ivanič's (2004) theoretical framework, I coded and categorised data into discrete concepts. Analysis of participants' perspectives reflected core concepts encountered in Ivanič's framework, although some responses combined discourses separately proposed by Ivanič. Although dominant perceptions on the features of academic writing reflected skills discourse and genre discourse, findings showed that the approaches to writing task design in both contexts are more compatible with social practice, genre and process discourse. There were no signs of skills approaches to teaching writing in the design of writing tasks. I discussed the findings to illuminate potential implications for different stakeholders.

Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “Perceptions of Writing: Writing in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Programs and Writing in disciplines” has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee, reference number: 5201600334 on 1 June 2016

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Scope of the Study

I have been learning the English language for over fifteen years and have been teaching it for about eight years. Throughout these years, I found writing, especially academic writing the most challenging skill both for me and my students. There could be a multitude of factors accounting for non-native English language learners' difficulty in writing and producing appropriate texts in academia. It was my perception for many years that advanced knowledge of grammar and vocabulary will contribute to higher proficiency in English academic writing. It turned out, however, that all my attempts to improve my students' writing through expanding their grammar and vocabulary were unsuccessful.

This motivated me to focus my MRes research on academic writing in order to learn about the ways that could help me and my students to achieve higher levels of proficiency in academic writing.

However, I was unsure where to start and what to focus on because I found "academic writing" a vast area with many potential aspects for investigation. I reviewed past and current literature which helped me in two ways. First, I found interesting conceptions of the nature of academic writing and approaches to teaching writing such as Ivanič's (2004) theoretical/analytical framework and Lea and Street's (1998, 2006) new literacy studies. These frameworks are rooted in sociocultural approaches (Vygotsky, 1986) to language and learning. Second, I realised a gap in current empirical studies on writing task designers' perspectives pertaining to the nature of academic writing in the context of EAP programs and in academic disciplines, two contexts where academic writing is mostly in focus.

My search in the empirical literature revealed that most of the scholarship has been devoted to academic writing with a focus on teachers' perspectives, students' perspectives,

writing skills transferability and effectiveness of genre-based pedagogy. However, a niche existed in the literature of academic writing from the perspective of writing task designers. This gap motivated me to conduct this study to investigate writing task designers' perspectives on the nature of academic writing in two contexts. The first is English Language Centre (ELC) at Macquarie University where direct entry preparation programs for business, accounting and economics (BAE) are delivered among other language programs. The second context is the Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance (ACG) which is the largest in the Faculty of Business and Economics at Macquarie University. I conducted the research through collecting and analysing writing tasks, evaluation criteria, and task designers' perceptions in both contexts.

In this chapter, first, I will present a brief explanation of the two academic contexts wherein I conducted the study, followed by a discussion of the theoretical and analytical framework of the study. Then, I present definition of the key terms, the aims and research questions, and finally, provide an overview of the organisation of the thesis.

Context of the Study

Academic writing as a new genre turns out to be demanding for all students (both L1 and L2) in tertiary education. However, L2 students find it even more difficult given English is not their first language. For them, the problem is two-fold: mastering the appropriate language and learning suitable disciplinary conventions. Writing in disciplines demands not only strong general English language proficiency but sufficient knowledge of writing conventions and discipline expectations (Douglas, 2015). To prepare L2 writers for their first year of tertiary studies, specific courses such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are usually designed and run by English language centres.

Macquarie University English Language Centre (ELC) offers a wide range of English language programs, including general English programs and EAP courses such as academic English programs, Introductory Academic Program (IAP), and direct pathway language programs to Macquarie University. The aim of the EAP courses is mainly to prepare students for their disciplinary studies, of which writing is of special focus. Academic writing is one main tool for the assessment of students' content knowledge, therefore, EAP programs provide students with an opportunity to learn disciplinary expectations and conventions of writing.

In ELC, the targeted program was a 10-week course presented as a university entry preparation program for business, accounting and economics (BAE) for students with an IELTS score of 6 or equivalent. The program aims at improving students' language proficiency for entry into the Faculty of Business and Economics. Writing skills covered during the program were related to writing short and long answers in examinations, business reports, and essays. In such programs general skills such as vocabulary or structure are integrated into the discipline-specific content and task models.

In ACG, the focus was graduate programs which had writing as a requirement of the program units. The writing activities were short and long answers in examinations, business reports, and essays. The main scope of the writing tasks in this context was to assess students' understanding of disciplinary knowledge through final exams or writing tasks.

Exploring and comparing the conceptualisation of writing in both contexts will help designers in EAP programs to design tasks which help students develop the required skills in fulfilling disciplinary academics' expectations in their tertiary studies. It also helps designers in disciplinary contexts to gain a better understanding of the skills that students have developed in EAP programs.

Theoretical and Analytical Framework

Ivanič (2004) is among those who introduced a multi-layered framework of writing which can also be used as an analytical tool to discover the underlying perceptions about writing. Her framework has its roots in sociocultural theories of Vygotsky (1986). According to Vygotsky (1986), literacy development happens when people are involved in the literacy activities for appropriate communication with members of that community.

Ivanič's framework encompasses not only the sociocultural aspects of writing but its linguistic and textual aspects. She proposes that writing comprises four layers:

- 1- The written text.
- 2- The mental processes of writing.
- 3- The writing event, and
- 4- The sociocultural and political context of writing.

Ivanič presented six discourses of writing ranging from the individualistic to the constructivist views of writing. However, she proposes that a comprehensive view of writing encompasses all six discourses of writing considering the multi-layered nature of writing. Given the comprehensiveness of Ivanič's framework, it will be used as both the theoretical and analytical frameworks in this study. Since I only used Ivanič's publication in 2004 in current thesis, I will not repeat the date (2004) in subsequent citations in favour of simplicity and word count.

Aim of the Research

The aim of the present study is to investigate writing task designers' perceptions about the nature of academic writing. I recruited task designers from two different cultural contexts: the EAP context of English Language Centre (ELC) and disciplinary context of the

Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance (ACG), at Macquarie University. To achieve the aim of the study, I formulated the following research questions:

- 1) How is academic writing conceptualised in a university direct entry preparation program for business, accounting and economics at Macquarie University's ELC?
- 2) How is academic writing conceptualised in the discipline of Accounting and Corporate Governance at Macquarie University?
- 3) How are participants' views about academic writing compared in the two contexts?

I employed case study design for this small-scale qualitative research to explore the writing task designers' perceptions as the phenomenon of interest in these two specific contexts. I deemed case study to be an appropriate research design to investigate how academic writing was constructed by individuals in each context.

Definition of Key Terms

Perception: the term *perception* is considered as a synonym of *belief* and defined as “a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem” in the online Cambridge Dictionary¹. In the present study, the term perception refers to the way participant task designers define and perceive a quality piece of academic writing. I searched previous literature in order to find the relationship between writing task designers' perceptions and writing instructions in disciplines but I could not find any study devoted to this topic. Since the focus of this study is to compare the perceptions of two groups of participants from two different contexts it would be relevant and useful if there were any previous literature on the relationship of task designers' perceptions and the writing instructions. The current study, therefore, highly encourages future studies to discern the roots of task designers' perceptions and their impacts on the practice and instruction of the academic writing.

¹ <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/perception>

Writing Task: Ken Hyland (2003) defines the term language tasks as “any activity with meaning as its main focus and which is accomplished using language” (p.112). He then explains that the importance of tasks “results from the fact that learning to write involves engaging in activities rather than learning discrete items”. Writing tasks are therefore meaningful activities which utilise the medium of writing to accomplish a purpose.

In this study, the writing task types were utilised for the purpose of assessment and evaluation in the examined contexts. Therefore, writing task refers to a set of activities which are designed to evaluate students’ ability to write in academic contexts.

Task design: According to Hyland (2003), each writing task is designed to accomplish a purpose. For example, “deletion tasks are often designed to encourage succinctness and good style, while reordering tasks required students to (re)construct a cut-up text...” (p.127). Therefore, task design should correspond to the purpose of the task. Task design in this study refers to the controlled and guided creation of such tasks.

However, the purpose of writing test tasks is not completely compatible in the present study. While in EAP context of ELC the purpose of writing test tasks is mostly to evaluate students’ academic English language proficiency, in the disciplinary context of the Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance the purpose of writing test tasks is mainly to evaluate the level of students’ content knowledge.

It should be noted that this study is exclusively limited to the comparison of the task designers’ perception in both contexts regarding the features of a quality piece of academic writing and will not explore different task types, their components, their purposes and their design. In fact, although I recurrently used the concepts of writing task and task design and that I analysed writing tasks in this thesis, the focus is on exploring the features of a quality piece of academic writing in the view of task designers and not on quality-designed writing tasks.

Discipline: Discipline is generally defined by Cambridge online dictionary² as “a particular area of study, especially a subject study at a college or university”. It is also defined as a synonym to the field of study in some other dictionaries such as Merriam-Webster³. Therefore, there seems to be no clear-cut definition for these two terms as, for instance, Grabe (2012) used both discipline and field to refer to applied linguistics. Hence, it can be argued that discipline is a broader term compared to the field of study, which is more specific. For example, the discipline of applied linguistics may include such fields as language teaching and learning, language assessment, discourse analysis and so on. However, their use is likely relative. As an illustration, where Human or social science is considered a discipline, applied linguistics is a field of study and where applied linguistics is considered a discipline, then, academic writing is considered as a field of study in that discipline. In this research Accounting and Corporate governance is referred to as a discipline in the faculty of Business and Economics. The discipline of Accounting and Corporate Governance includes various fields of studies such as financial and management accounting, risk management and taxation and business law.

Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters. Following this introductory chapter, in Chapter 2, I will review the relevant literature which motivated and generated the research questions. I will discuss sociocultural theories in brief as well as new literacy studies, genre theories and Ivanič's framework in more details in the first section of the chapter. Then, in the second section of Chapter 2, I will review recent empirical studies on academic writing in the context

² <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/discipline>

³ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discipline>

of EAP and in disciplines. The chapter concludes with a brief justification and significance of this study in the light of the previous literature.

Chapter 3 discusses the design of the study. First, I will present the philosophical assumptions including the epistemological stance of the study. Second, I will review the methodological orientation of the study. Third, I will justify my choice of the case study as the design of the research. Then, I will present a discussion of participants, and data collection and analysis procedures.

In chapter 4 which is devoted to the finding of the study, I will present and discuss findings from the context of BAE program at ELC and the discipline under separate headings. The presentation of findings will be followed by a discussion of the findings from both contexts to compare how academic writing is viewed by EAP and discipline-specific writing task designers.

The last chapter of the thesis will present a summary of the study along with the implications and the conclusions. In the summary section, I will briefly review the motivation behind the study and the formation of the research questions followed by a brief review of data analysis procedure and the findings. Then, I will propose the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the study from sociocultural perspectives. This will be followed by the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter comprises two parts: a review of the theoretical frameworks related to sociocultural notions as they pertain to the nature of academic writing and a review of empirical studies on the nature of academic writing. There is a variety of theoretical frameworks researchers have used to inform their investigation of the nature of academic writing. Vygotsky (1986)'s sociocultural theory is one main grand theory which influenced academic writing scholars, whose own theories and conceptual frameworks tremendously contributed to the field of academic and disciplinary writing. The sociocultural construct of academic writing is seen to be the dominant approach of the contemporary academic writing studies (Dryer, 2015). Thus, I will first present a brief description of the Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as the predominant approach to literacy. Then, I discuss New Literacy Studies and genre theory, the two other main theoretical frameworks informing the research into the nature of academic writing. To conclude part one, I will present and discuss Ivanič's theoretical framework with its roots in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as a valuable tool in analysing the underlying constructs of academic writing.

In the second part, I will review recent empirical studies on the nature of academic writing and their relevance to the theoretical frameworks discussed in part one.

Review of the Theoretical Frameworks

Sociocultural theory.

According to Warschauer (1997), a sociocultural approach to literacy has originated from the sociocultural theories of the Soviet psychologist L.S. Vygotsky (1962, 1978). One major aspect of sociocultural theory relates to the social nature of learning which means that every mental function is organised through social interactions. Literacy in the main is a

social practice rather than an individual and autonomous skill. Warschauer argued that Vygotsky's sociocultural theory promoted a very different conception of literacy: Those who were enculturated into specific social practices of a community were considered to be able to achieve the literacy practices of the community and to use language for the appropriate communication with other community members.

New Literacy Studies and genre theory are two informing theories of the academic writing based on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. In the following sections, I will discuss academic literacies as part of New Literacy Studies and systemic functional linguistics (SFL), English for specific purposes (ESP), and English for academic purposes (EAP) in genre theory at greater length.

New Literacy Studies.

Street (2005) defined New Literacy Studies (NLS) as a new perspective to the study and acquisition of literacy. Based on study skills model by Lea and Street (1998, 2006) and Street (1997), literacy was considered as an autonomous and technical skill. A broader view of literacy practices is nested in cultural and social contexts. In NLS, literacy is embedded in social contexts and is ruled by "socially constructed epistemological principles" (Street, 2005, p. 418).

From the NLS perspective, literacy is also considered as part of power relations. It means that members of a community or social context control the new communicative practices with which they are encountered. Critical thinking is valued in NLS since participants need to question the dominant conceptions of literacy and attempt to identify the power relations regulated through literacy practices of the community members (Street, 2005). NLS encourages teachers to consider 'literacy' as a more complex skill than "a few

simple and mechanistic skills” because these skills “fail to do justice to the richness and complexity of actual literacy practices in people’s lives” (Street, 1997, p.53).

Building on NLS, Lea and Street (1998, 2006) presented three main perspectives or models on developing student writing, including study skills, academic socialisation, and academic literacies.

The study skills model emphasises the surface features of the text such as grammar, vocabulary and spelling. These (sub) skills are usually taught in a decontextualized way and are assumed to be transferable to other contexts after students have learned them (Lea & Street, 1998, 2006).

Based on academic socialisation model, the main task of writing teachers is to socialise students into the new academic culture. Academic writing is viewed from a broader perspective of the social context, therefore, students are taught how to write discipline-specific genres and how to adopt the conventions and norms of their discourse community. One criticism of this approach is that it recognises disciplinary discourses and genres in a discourse community as stable, so once students have mastered the rules and conventions of the current discourses and genres, they can reproduce them with no problem in other communicative events. In fact, deeper layers of cultural, social and political structures and motivators of language and literacy are neglected in this model (Lea & Street, 2006).

In the academic literacies model, deeper layers of the structures and processes, and the surface structure of the writing artefact are considered as important. Writing is viewed in its social, cultural and political context “at the level of epistemology and identities rather than skills or socialisation” (Lea & Street, 1998, p.3). The assumption is that an appropriate piece of writing is to a great extent related to the issues of epistemology and underlying disciplinary and institutional notions about knowledge rather than “the surface features of

form to which staff often have recourse when describing their students' writing" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 5).

Genre theory.

According to Bawarshi and Reiff (2010), a great deal of debate and misunderstanding surrounds the definition, implications and effectiveness of genre and genre-based pedagogy. They believe that part of this confusion is attributed to the fact that it is uncertain whether genres are merely labels for the purpose of categorisation of text types, events, actions, and experiences or genres are means to "reflect, help shape, and even generate what they represent in culturally defined ways" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 3).

Genres simply as a way of categorising text types has been challenged across a range of disciplines and contexts over the past thirty years (Devitt, 2004, 2015; Nesi & Gardner, 2012). Instead, genres are more viewed as "powerful, ideologically active and historically changing shaper of texts, meanings, and social actions" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 4). This shift in viewing genre occurred due to challenges to the idea that texts are merely consisting of linguistic features which could be used to categorise different text types. It calls for recognising how formal features of texts are connected to social purposes and how they are known in relationship to these purposes. It indeed necessitates "understanding how and why a genre's formal features come to exist the way they do". (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 4) This new perspective of genre demands studying and teaching genres beyond the formal features of language towards recognition of how and why these formal features are related to the shaping of purposeful social relations.

Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) mention that current approaches to the genre in studying and teaching of writing are more derived from linguists and rhetorical and sociological studies. Genre studies in linguistics tradition have three representations: Corpus linguistics,

systemic functional linguistics (SFL), and English for specific purposes (ESP) including English for academic purposes (EAP) which is the focus of this study. According to Bawarshi and Reiff, corpus linguistics approach towards genre definition and study is more concerned with textual and surface features of the writing and neglects the sociocultural dimension of the texts. In contrast, SFL and ESP approaches are more concerned with the social contexts in which texts are produced. Each of these two approaches is therefore in need of further elaboration and discussion.

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL).

Linguistic genre studies are best described by systemic functional linguistics or “SFL”, also known as Sydney school of genre analysis, developed by Michael Halliday (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1989) at the University of Sydney. Halliday (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1989) introduced three elements of field (the activity going on), tenor (the relationships between participants) and mode (the channel of communication) which together determine the register of the language (Hyon, 1996).

J. R. Martin (1985) developed theories of the genre rather than the register within a systemic functional framework. The genre was differentiated from the register since the register was the functional variation of the language and was a contextual category which correlated groupings of linguistic features. Thus, registers were presented through surface linguistic features of a text. Genres, on the other hand, were how and why things were done and presented through the register. Genres were used to embrace the linguistically realised activity types which were also intrinsic parts of our culture. Hence, poems, narratives, expositions, recipes, manuals, appointment making, service encounters and so on were all counted as genres (Martin, 1985).

Influenced by Halliday’s emphasis on linking form, function and social context, Martin (1985) and his colleagues defined genres as staged, goal-orientated social processes.

Genres were goal-oriented and staged since they were realised in activities through which participants need to take several steps to achieve their goals. Language structure was viewed as integrated with social and cultural functions and contexts, working or ‘functioning’ in a particular way to serve purposes of particular social and cultural communication events. The term ‘Systemic’ referred to the system of available choices language users were confronted with during the process of meaning-making (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Hyon, 1996). Also, genres functioned as social processes because the members of communities interact with each other to develop their knowledge of particular genres in that context.

English for specific purposes (ESP).

English for specific purposes is concerned with studying and teaching English most often to non-native English speakers to prepare them to use English for academic or professional purposes. English for academic purposes (EAP) which is a more specialised area of study in ESP aims at preparing tertiary students for their academic studies.

John Swales, a fundamental figure in ESP genre theory, wrote from an ESP school of genre perspective, however, he considered Sydney school when defining the genre in Linguistics. According to Swales (1990), the concept of the genre was not always coincident with the speech events but it might occur independently of them. There existed deeper layers of meaning in genres rather than merely surface features of speech events which were utilised to follow the nomenclatures of groups. In Swales’ view, genre analysis was valuable due to its being clarificatory rather than classificatory.

Swales (1990) summarised his discussion of genre in different disciplines stating “distrust of classification and of facile or premature prescriptivism” and “a recognition that genres are situated within discourse communities” (p.44). He also highlighted genres’ communicative purpose and social action. Swales believed that genre was a class of

communicative events with shared communicative purposes in a special discourse community.

Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) believe that ESP and SFL are similar in several ways. They both take a broader sociocultural position and assume that linguistic features are connected to social contexts and language functions. In addition, their pedagogical assumptions are that writing teachers can help disadvantaged students by making visible and explicit the relationships between language and social functions embedded in genres.

Drawing upon the similarities between SFL and ESP studies, Ken Hyland advocated “genre-based pedagogy” with valuable implications for teaching and studying writing in academic contexts of EAP courses and in disciplines.

Genre-based pedagogy.

Hyland’s (2000, 2002) assumptions regarding the nature of academic writing reflected Halliday’s (1994) notion of the interpersonal function of language and Swales’ (1990) emphasis on socially embedded nature of language. Therefore, texts are seen as socially and culturally situated and “only in relation to these communities are meanings validated” (Hyland, 2000, p.xi). Texts are mirrors for “the institutional patterns which naturally and ideologically reflect and maintain such patterns” (ibid, p. xi). Readers are the members of the discourse community to whom the writer writes and writers should write in a way that influences the readers by using accepted resources to share meaning in specific contexts. (Halliday, 1994; Hyland, 2000, 2002).

Hyland (2000) took a comparative perspective across different academic disciplines to investigate how the social interactions in the process of creating texts were realised in discipline-specific writing. He explored several main academic genres to present how writers from different disciplinary cultures negotiated their ideas with other members of their

discipline through common and shared conventions. Instead of “regarding linguistic features as regularities of academic style, or the result of some mental processes of representing meaning” (p.1), Hyland considered them to be part of and used to investigate social interactions in an academic context. Apart from the emphasis on the social interactions between the writer and the readers of the text, Hyland went deeper in the construct of the text to assert that different genres in different disciplines resulted from institutional and interactional forces. Therefore, genres were not merely text types but were representatives of particular institutional practices.

Hyland (2002, 2007) in his later articles discussed the importance of genre approaches to teaching second language writing. Drawing on SP and SFL approaches to teaching writing, Hyland (2007) briefly introduced the principles of genre-based pedagogy. He stated that “changing views of discourse and of learning to write” towards an understanding of social and contextual aspects of texts can be attributed to “the notion of genre and its application in language and teaching” (Hyland, 2007, p.148).

By the same token, Bruce (2013) discussed the use of genre as a theoretical construct in academic writing instruction in the context of English for academic purposes. He began with introducing the notion of ‘discourse competence’ which in his view meant the knowledge elements, skills and strategies that an expert academic writer used. Then, Bruce proposed genres as a means of operationalising different elements of discourse competence knowledge for academic writing instruction.

After a brief review of various approaches to theorising genre knowledge, Bruce (2008) presented the dual social genre/ cognitive genre approach as a basis for research and course design in an EAP context to operationalise genre knowledge in a comprehensive way that considered both text and discourse. According to Bruce, both text and discourse are

important in genre-based pedagogy because a genre category aims to describe and classify a unit of language that is an operational whole so it is crucial to consider the nature of the underlying constructs of the text and discourse.

Bruce's (2008) social genre referred to "socially recognized constructs according to which whole texts are classified in terms of their overall social purpose ... Purpose here is taken to mean the intention to communicate consciously a body of knowledge related to a certain context to a certain target audience" (p.39). On the other hand, cognitive genre referred to the parts of writing that entail cognitive skills and internal organisations. These segments of writing realised a single, more general rhetorical purpose such as a recount, explanation, argument or exposition.

Ivanič's (2004) theoretical framework.

Ivanič in her article "Discourses of writing and learning to write" introduced a valuable analytical framework to investigate underlying theoretical constructs and perceptions in a range of educational data about writing pedagogy. This framework can be used for "identifying discourses of writing in data sources such as policy documents, teaching and learning materials, recordings of pedagogic practices, interviews and focus groups with teachers and learners, and media coverage of literacy education" (Ivanič, 2004, p. 220).

Ivanič's framework comprises a multi-layered view of language and six underlying discourses of writing, each of which corresponds to one or more of the proposed layers. Perceptions pertaining to each layer of language affect perceptions about writing and learning to write, approaches to the teaching of writing, and assessment criteria. These perceptions are referred to as "discourses" which are categorised into six groups: Skills discourse, creativity discourse, process discourse, genre discourse, social practices discourse,

and sociopolitical discourse. The four layers of language consist of the written text, the mental processes of writing, the writing event, and the sociocultural and political context of writing.

“Text” is the innermost layer and consists only of the linguistic features of the language and can be viewed as multimodal, comprising visual, material and linguistic attributes of written text. The skills discourse is considered in relation to this layer of language. In skills discourse, similar to Lea and Street’s (1998) study skills model, writing is viewed as an autonomous “unitary, context-free activity, in which the same patterns and rules apply to all writing, independent of text type” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 227). Also, the focus is on the “correct usage and adherence to conventions for the formal features of academic writing” such as grammar, punctuation, spelling and so on (ibid, p. 228).

The next layer is “cognitive process” which are mental processes in producing and comprehending text. This layer is linked to creativity discourse which focuses on the content and style of the written text rather than its linguistic features and form. It is concerned with the mental process of meaning-making and values writing as an activity with no social function other than the creative language activity of an author. This layer is also connected to the process discourse which focuses on the composing processes of planning, translating and reviewing.

The third layer is ‘event’ and refers to the “observable characteristics of the immediate social context in which language is being used, including the purposes for language use, the social interaction, the particulars of time and place” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 223). Ivanič asserts that this layer is what Halliday (1994) and Halliday and Hasan (1989) called

“the context of situation”. According to this theoretical tradition, “texts vary linguistically according to their purposes and context” (Ivanič, 2004, p.232). Ivanič relates this layer to two of her proposed discourses of writing: the genre discourse and the social practices discourse.

Genre discourse focuses on writing as a product- rather than process- which is shaped by the “event of which it is a part” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 232). In genre discourse, the socially and culturally situated nature of writing is important forasmuch as it determines the linguistic features and patterns of the text. In fact, although writing is not viewed as context-free and autonomous as it is in skills discourse, the emphasis is not on how and why genres are shaped in relation to the context but the emphasis is on what the linguistic features and conventions of genres are in a specific social and cultural context. Therefore, genre discourse shares the ground with skills discourse in terms of their focus on linguistic features of the text but diverges from skills discourse in viewing linguistic features as determined by social contexts.

However, the ‘event’ layer is of more significance in the perceptions underlying social practices discourse. In genre discourse, ‘event’ is merely significant in shaping linguistic features. According to social practice discourse, both content and the process of meaning-making are not separable from “the whole complex social interaction which makes up the communicative event in which they are situated and meaning is bound up with social purposes for writing” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 234). The embedded nature of writing event means that writing is perceived from a “broader sociocultural context of writing: the social meanings and values of writing, and issues of power” (Ibid, p. 234).

According to Ivanič, the sociocultural approach to writing has its origins in New Literacy Studies; as a result, text types do not necessarily encompass fixed and stable features as taught in an educational/pedagogic context. Conversely, writing is viewed in a

broader social and cultural context wherein the design is affected by “whom, how, when, at what speed, where, in what conditions, with what media and for what purposes text are ‘written’” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 235).

Contrary to the previous discourses, social practices discourse includes implicit ways of learning to write. Learners learn how to write by participating in writing practices and taking on the identity of the community members in a specific context to learn how to write in a specific way (Ivanič, 2004).

The exterior layer of the language is named ‘sociocultural and political context’ which entails “socioculturally available resources for communication: the multimodal practices, discourses and genres which are supported by the cultural context within which language use is taking place, and the patterns of privileging and relations of power among them” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 224). It is what Halliday referred to as ‘the context of culture’ which exceeded the text and material aspects of the language and the use of language to explore why text, cognitive processes and the events were the way they were. The discourse associated with this layer is the sociopolitical discourse which concerns not only the context of writing but the broad, more political and institutional aspects of the context.

Critical literacy approaches to writing which encourage the explicit teaching of ‘critical language awareness’ are pedagogical implications of this underlying discourse of writing. As discussed earlier, one feature of Hyland’s genre-based pedagogy was its promotion of students’ critical thinking by questioning the underlying values which shaped the genres and generic conventions. Similarly, in critical literacy approach to teaching, students are encouraged to explicitly identify how and why particular linguistic and semiotic choices have shaped the writer’s worldviews and how social, political and cultural roles have influenced the choices.

Based on Ivanič, to attain a comprehensive view of writing and writing pedagogy, one might integrate features from all the six discourse levels. Ivanič's framework is a valuable analytical tool in investigating various aspects of academic writing and its underlying construct with valuable pedagogical implications.

Review of Current Empirical Studies on the Nature of Academic Writing

The search for the most recent empirical articles in distinguished journals resulted in some studies comparing the cultures of writing in EAP courses and in disciplines. Except for few studies with a focus on the comparison between writing in EAP contexts and in academic disciplinary contexts (Ramoroka , 2012; Zarei & Rahimi, 2014) other studies—as far as I could detect—had a focus on some aspects of writing in disciplines such as disciplinary academics' view of writing (Goldsmith & Willy, 2016), the necessity of embedding writing in academic programs (Hunter & Tse, 2013), genre-based writing pedagogy (Bruce, 2013; Dryer, 2013; Gardiner, 2010; Johns, 2009; Wolfe, Olson, & Wilder, 2014) and transferability of writing skills (Baker, 2013; Counsell, 2011; Gardiner, 2010; Ong, 2014; Zarei & Rahimi, 2014). That is to say, many studies related to writing in EAP and in disciplines have so far focused on transferring of writing skills and strategies, and the importance of genre-based pedagogy.

Also, while the effectiveness of EAP writing instructions from students' perspectives has attracted much researchers' interest, other perspectives such as writing task designers' perceptions have not been subject to the same levels of attention.

Since comparing academic writing in both contexts in one study was scant, I deemed that articles on cultures of writing in each individual context would be revelatory. Hence, the following literature includes three categories:

- 1- those which compared writing in specific EAP courses with writing in the corresponding disciplines;
- 2- those with an EAP orientation; and
- 3- those with a discipline-specific orientation.

The word “orientation” is used because there appeared to be no clear boundary between the two contexts, however, some studies focused more on the nature of academic writing in disciplines while others were more concerned with EAP programs.

Academic writing in EAP context and in disciplines.

Ramoroka (2012) conducted research that examined the types and the nature of writing tasks and tutors’ perceptions on the characteristics of good writing in EAP preparatory courses and media studies. The context of the study was the University of Botswana where semi-structured interviews with tutors and students were conducted, using purposive sampling procedure. Also, the researcher collected students’ assignment samples from both EAP and discipline contexts. Findings of the study showed that essay writing was valued in both EAP courses and media studies department and the tasks given to students in both contexts ranged from descriptive, narrative, argumentative and expository writing. Also, tutors in both contexts shared the view of what was expected in typical essay writing and its length.

Despite the above-mentioned commonalities, there were differences in EAP tutors’ and content tutors’ perceptions on students’ writing needs. While EAP tutors believed that language, structure and genre knowledge were the main sources of students’ problems, tutors in disciplinary courses showed that discourse community knowledge and expectations were the main issues in students’ essay writing.

Overall, Romoroka based the study on the importance of sociocultural context in which the writing is situated. The researcher subscribed to Hyland (2000) and Braine's (1989) emphasis on "specificity" to acknowledge that successful academic writing teachers "must be aware of what is happening in the content departments" (p. 34). Romoroka rejected study skills approach to teaching writing and believed that an academic discourse was bound up with particular perceptions, values, and identities, which is one major aspect of a sociocultural approach to literacy.

Findings of this study are important in two ways. First, Romoroka explored academic writing through a sociocultural lens which is a theoretical framework used in the current study. Secondly, academic writing is examined in both EAP and disciplinary contexts. As far as I could detect, there were scarce studies with a focus on both contexts so, although the participants and the focus groups were not task designers but students and tutors, I found students' and tutors' perspective on academic writing valuable in providing insight into the underlying discourses in both contexts from other perspectives.

Zarei and Rahimi's (2014) study was on the transferability of writing skills across tasks, disciplines, and the first and the second language. Although not directly relevant to the present study, the findings of Zarei and Rahimi's study provided clues to the nature of writing both in disciplines and in EAP contexts. The researchers examined transferability of learning from writing classes in English for general academic purposes (EGAP) to writings in disciplines to understand the effectiveness of writing classes in EAP. To achieve their aim, the researchers analysed participants' writings both in an EGAP course conducted during the years 2009 to 2010 at Jihad Education Centre affiliated to Isfahan University of Technology in Iran, and in the fields of chemical engineering, electrical engineering, and disciplines of psychology, and English language in Isfahan University of Technology with a follow-up

interview with participants. According to the researchers, “the interview-based, participant-reported learning elements and targeted outcomes as distinct categories of descriptions” were adopted from a study by James (2010) as the model of analysis in their study with a qualitative design.

The results showed that transfer happened in various degrees in all disciplines but targeted outcomes did not transfer in the discipline of chemistry and field of electrical engineering in the discipline of engineering. The researchers believed that this might be the result of different disciplinary expectations or of the specific stylistic and rhetorical nature of disciplines of engineering. The findings- that academic writing is viewed differently in different contexts and in different disciplines- enrich the importance of sociocultural views on the academic writing. In present study, I will compare the perceptions of task designers from two different contexts in line with the sociocultural views that emphasises the contextual nature of academic writing.

Academic writing in EAP context.

Other studies such as Counsell (2011), Gardiner (2010), and Ong (2014) approached academic writing in EAP contexts from the students’ perspectives. To investigate the degree of EAP writing courses’ effectiveness in students’ tertiary studies, the researchers conducted interviews and used questionnaire survey to elicit EAP alumni’s perceptions on the effectiveness of the taught strategies in EAP programs.

Counsell (2011) in her study replicated Mu’s (2007) research in which writing strategies of three Chinese post-graduate students were investigated while they were writing academic papers in English. Counsell investigated discourse communities in which writings were generated. The context of the study was ELC’s generic direct entry academic program (DEAP) in University of Tasmania with a focus on postgraduate students of faculty of

business. Findings of the study revealed that the DEAP had not a significant influence on students' ability to identify effective writing strategies or to fully transfer the strategies into their disciplines. For example, while some students recognised "revision" as a useful strategy, they did not attempt regularly to revise their disciplinary writings. Counsell concluded her study by challenging the transferability of generic skills to specific disciplines. The findings of this study can indicate the importance of paying more attention to the features of the language in relation to its social and cultural contexts rather than generic context-free linguistic features.

Similarly, Ong (2014) investigated into the effectiveness of generic EAP courses from students' perspective, albeit the focus was on factors such as students' investment in learning English in their home countries and in the EAP courses, their work background, and their agency. The study adopted "an academic literacies lens to investigate learning transfer in the University Entrance English Course (UEEC) at the University of New South Wales (UNSW)" (p. 734). UEEC is a general English for academic purposes course to teach students' academic literacies applicable across a wide range of disciplines.

In this longitudinal multiple case study, Ong collected data by questionnaires, semi-structured and text-based interviews. The results of the study, contrary to Counsell's (2011) results, showed a satisfactory transfer of writing knowledge and skills such as paragraph development, using cohesive devices and Harvard Referencing Style from EAP taught courses to postgraduate writing tasks. However, Ong believed that successful transfer of writing strategies was not merely attributed to EAP programs' teaching. The researcher assumed a role for learners' past writing knowledge and challenged the view of students as "blank sheets and passive learners to be acculturated into written discursive practices of their target [academic discourse community] ADCs" (Ong, 2014, p. 747). The sociocultural

framework of this study was reflected in the way it considered the writer's sociocultural background as an effective factor in the process and the production of the written text.

Gardiner (2010) also emphasised the importance of being familiar with genres of writing in disciplines and in EAP courses and investigated the effectiveness of EAP courses in the view of ex-EAP students. Gardiner's goal was to perceive whether genres taught in EAP courses were useful for being assimilated into genres of university assignments.

He conducted his study at the University of Sydney's Centre for English Teaching (CET) which followed a genre-based direct entry program. He gathered data over two weeks through a comprehensive interactive on-line PeoplePulse questionnaire which was sent to the students via email. The findings showed that more than half of the students affirmed that they used various genres such as "critical reviews" and "descriptive reports" along with writing skills like "paraphrasing and referencing ideas from sources", "developing logical ideas and arguments", "using academic language style", and "combining (synthesising) evidence from sources" in their university assignments. Yet, they reported that some genres such as "reflection journal" and "research/project/thesis literature review" and several writing skills such as "clarity of ideas/ expression" and "grammar" were not adequately covered in the centre's courses.

Finally, Gardiner held that EAP writing courses needed to be reviewed constantly to be up to date with recent changes in the genres and rhetoric of writing in university disciplines so that they could assist students with a better view of the faculty members' expectations. According to Gardiner, writing in EAP was viewed from a sociocultural viewpoint emphasising its communicative aspect rather than being a tool to express individuals' opinion. Gardiner also discussed that a broad writing curriculum was not

practical since academic writing was not merely concerned with general writing strategies but was more to do with discipline-specific genre needs and expectations.

Although Gardiner took a sociocultural position towards teaching writing, his definition of genre seems to be limited to various text types. This view of the genre is mostly linked to what Lea and Street (1998) termed as ‘academic socialisation’ and to what is called ‘genre discourse’ in Ivanič’s framework, both of which are limited to linguistic features of different text types rather than broader communicative aspects of writing.

Another line of inquiry in EAP context was the importance of genre-based pedagogy in writing instruction. Based on these studies (e.g., Bruce, 2013; Wolfe et al., 2014), writing instructors must be aware of the existence of various genres, tasks and discourses in different disciplines to promote students’ flexibility in dealing with different writing assignments in their majors. Genre in Hyland’s (2002, 2007) genre pedagogy had a broader meaning, covering not only different text types but the underlying values, identities and perceptions that constituted those genres and their use in particular contexts.

Wolfe et al. (2014) examined First Year Composition programs (FYC) in six diverse disciplines: business, psychology, nursing, biology, engineering, and history in the U.S. universities. The researchers performed a critical genre analysis (CGA) to promote understanding of the core intellectual values that motivated writing in different disciplinary contexts. The researchers mentioned that they based their theory on Ken Hyland’s (2000) and David Russell’s (1995) theories that disapproved general “academic literacy”.

Based on the premise that FYC instructors were mostly from English departments, the researchers compared and contrasted conventions of literary analysis with conventions of common genres in six other disciplines hoping, by a CGA, to increase FYC instructors’ awareness of the existing genres and conventions outside of English studies. Wolf et.al,

concluded that one responsibility of FYC instructors was to familiarise students both with similarities and with differences in genres and rhetoric in their subject courses so that students were socialised into their disciplinary community more successfully. It seems that the researchers adhered to the notion of genre, based on Hyland's (2002,2007) definition of the genre by considering the effects of institutional and departmental powers and policies in shaping genres in each discipline and field of studies.

In a similar vein, Dryer (2013) examined FYC courses at the U.S. public research universities to investigate the underlying theoretical construct of academic writing in those university programs. Dryer's emphasis on the sociocultural aspect of writing illuminated that academic writing was viewed as situated in the context of disciplinary expectations resulting in different genres.

To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher used corpus analysis to define and measure specific writing traits in a large collection of texts produced in specific genres. After analysing, defining and measuring eight most frequent traits including grammar and conventions, audience and rhetorical awareness, assignment and engagement, critical thinking and analysis, support and evidence and development, thesis and focus and purpose, organization and structure, style and voice and tone, Dryer concluded that theoretical construct underlying academic writing in U.S. public research programs suggested that there were no clear-cut conventions in academic writing instruction and that the conventions were defined based on the context in which the writing was situated.

Academic writing in the context of discipline.

Goldsmith and Willy's (2016) article on discipline-specific writing perceptions in engineering was the most recent literature detected in relation to the discipline contexts. In this article, the researchers investigated perceptions of engineering subject writers on

discipline-specific writing's importance and practice in a wide range of engineering fields in a number of Australian universities. Drawing on a sociocultural view of academic writing, the researchers used Activity Theory which valued learning as historically, culturally and socially situated.

The researchers questioned the fact that engineering subject teachers view teaching writing skills as marginal and as the responsibility of student support services rather than the responsibility of disciplinary academics. This study was a good example of how writing was conceptualised and practised in most of the engineering disciplines in Australian universities.

Based on the findings, "writing practices are neither seen as developmental nor as intrinsic to the engineering curriculum" (Goldsmith & Willy, 2016, p. A118).

Baker (2013) is another researcher who studied the conceptualization of writing in disciplines within the Ivanič's framework. She used Ivanič's framework to explore underlying perceptions and conceptualizations about writing which existed in the policy and practice of literacy education. Baker's attempt was to investigate how writing was conceptualised and practised by students when in school and when in university. She sought to see how and to what extent the transition happened in the discourses of writing.

Baker traced perceptions of a group of British students from A levels (HSC equivalent) to their second year of university study. The results of this ethnographic-style project revealed the contextual nature of writing activity. Writings were influenced by various discourses such as "creativity" and "genre", using Ivanič's framework, as students moved between school and university. In addition, understandings of writing were individual, situated and context-dependent.

Considering the above-mentioned literature, it appears that in recent years support for developing writing within a disciplinary context has been on the increase. Embedded Writing

Programs, Writing Across Curriculum (WAC) and Writing In Curriculum (WIC) are all set up to scaffold writing in disciplines by the embedding of academic literacy in the university curriculum.

By the same token, Hunter and Tse (2013) assumed teaching academic writing as the responsibility of academic faculties and subject coordinators as the specialist in the content subject and then presented challenges to this thought. The first challenge was that writing knowledge and instructions could not be transmitted to students in the same way as content knowledge was transmitted. On the contrary, guides to writing instruction should be constructed through researching, synthesising ideas, analysing and formulating those ideas. The second challenge was regarding the limited knowledge of disciplinary academics in how to articulate writing instructions. The last challenge considered the issue of viewing writing as peripheral to content knowledge in British and Australian universities.

Then, the researchers presented the results of a case study of embedded writing programs applied in economics for business at the University of Sydney. Interviews with students revealed students' perceptions towards the embedded writing programs' usefulness. Also, based on the results, it was preferable for disciplinary academics to teach writing skills to students because of their awareness of the suitable genre and expectations of the specific discipline.

Conclusion

Search for relevant literature revealed that academic writing seems to be used as an umbrella term approached from various perspectives: analysing academic writing teachers' and discipline-specific academics' perceptions (Goldsmith & Willy, 2016; Ramoroka, 2012), students' perceptions (Baker, 2013; Counsell, 2011; Gardiner, 2010; Hunter & Tse, 2013; Ong, 2014; Ramoroka, 2012;), or analysing task types and rubrics in EAP contexts or in

disciplines (Dryer, 2013), to name a few. However, the debate on the nature of academic writing in EAP contexts and in disciplines and its features and norms has so far yielded inconclusive findings. While some researchers believe that academic writing involves transferring of general writing skills (Ong, 2014), some other researchers assume that academic writing involves a communication process in which students should assimilate discipline- specific writing expectations (Bruce, 2013; Counsell, 2011; Gardiner, 2010; Hyland, 2000, 2002, 2007; Wolfe et al., 2014;). What lies at the heart of the inconclusive and dynamic debates is the multi-layered nature of language which results in a wide range of approaches to research on academic writing (as discussed above). In this study, my approach to academic writing encompasses linguistic and non-linguistic features in line with the multi-layered nature of language proposed by Ivanič.

Also, my survey of academic literature revealed a gap in earlier empirical studies regarding the nature of academic writing from writing task designers' perspectives. My personal experience both as an EAP teacher and L2 learner along with the review of past and current literature convinced me that the importance of writing task designers' perspectives has been neglected by academic writing scholars.

By conducting this study with a focus on task descriptions and assessment rubrics along with writing task designers' perceptions in the context of ELC's university direct entry programs for business, accounting and economics students and in the discipline of accounting and corporate governance at Macquarie University, I hope to contribute to a better understanding of how academic writing is conceptualised in the context of EAP and in discipline. The theoretical framework underlying this study will be a sociocultural approach using Ivanič's framework since it provides an appropriate analytical framework for investigating academic writing from a broader perspective.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

In this chapter, first I discuss the philosophical assumptions of the study. Then, I review case study, as the design of the study, from the perspective of three major scholars of this field. This will be followed by a justification for my choice of case study to investigate and report the research problem. Next, I present participants, data collection, and analysis procedures.

Research Paradigm

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.3) define qualitative research as studying issues or people in their natural context through “an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world”. This philosophical stance was originated from the philosophy, theory, and methods of anthropology and “later on has been adopted by educators [and linguists] to explore the learning issues” (Davis, 1995, p. 432). Unlike, psychological approaches with a positivist paradigm, in semiotic approaches or interpretive approaches, the researcher follows an emic perspective as opposed to an etic perspective. An emic perspective necessitates an understanding of the meanings gained by the participants, while in an etic perspective, the focus is mostly on an outsider such as researchers’ interpretations of the meanings (Davis, 1995). Taking a holistic perspective in conducting research, ethnographers, socioculturally oriented and other qualitative researchers attempt to arrive at an understanding of the immediate and local meanings of actions from the participants’ perspective (Davis, 1995).

In this study, the views of the participants (emic perspective), as well as the researcher’s interpretations (etic perspective), are incorporated in the process of constructing meaning (Creswell, 2007). It means that although the focus is on the participants’ perspectives, I, as the researcher, am aware of my personal perspectives and biases originated

both from my cultural and personal experiences as an English language learner and teacher and task designer while following a sociocultural approach in this research. This reflexivity and positioning of the researcher in the study are in line with the axiological assumptions⁴ of qualitative research.

The philosophical assumptions underlying this thesis are thus rooted in interpretive tradition with a subjective epistemology and an ontology that considers reality as situated and socially and culturally constructed. Accordingly, the rhetoric and methodology of the current study reflect a philosophical stance that represents a constructivist paradigm⁵.

Case Study

Qualitative research as a paradigm encompasses different research designs. One design is case study. Case study has been viewed differently by different scholars. Pondering upon three seminal methodologists' (Merriam, 1998, Stake, 1995, and Yin, 2003) views on case study, it can be assumed that case study is a complicated approach which needs to be adopted carefully. Accordingly, it is important to identify and elaborate on the epistemological stances of the above mentioned three scholars on the nature and implications of the case study in qualitative studies. It seems that Stake and Merriam are closer in their constructivist views towards case study (Yazan, 2015). Stake (1995) and Merriam's (1998) interpretive, constructivist perspective allows for viewing reality as multi-layered constructed by individuals in their social or cultural contexts, rather than as objective entities to be discovered by the researcher. Also, the researcher as a "value-laden", biased individual in the

⁴ According to Creswell (2005) there are five philosophical assumptions in choosing qualitative research: 1- ontology, 2- epistemology, 3- axiology, 4- rhetorical, and 5- methodological. Choosing a stance on each of these assumptions has implications for qualitative research design.

⁵ These perceptions have been called differently by different scholars, for example, Lincoln and Guba (2000) call these perceptions as paradigms, and Creswell (2005) calls them philosophical assumptions.

process of interpretation is positioned in the research process. Based on this perspective, reality is interpreted at three distinct levels: from the participants' perspective, from the researcher's perspective, and from the reader's perspective (Stake, 1995).

Yin (2003), on the other hand, is viewed as “relatively conservative positivist and post positivist...seeking to find external truths and ultimately be able to make predictions” (Duff, 2008, p. 33). Yin's (2009) discussion on generalisation from data to the theory takes a positivist stance even though he tries to evade this by proposing “analytical generalisation” instead of the widely used “statistical generalisation” in quantitative approaches. However, in his model of analytical generalisation, multiple cases are viewed as multiple experiments in a laboratory to examine their level of correspondence to a previously developed theory. Therefore, if several cases display correspondence with the theory, generalisation can be approved. Although Yin's (2009) attempt is to differentiate between statistical generalisations in a quantitative approach to analytical generalisations in a qualitative approach, the result is not very distinguishable. In this thesis, therefore, the approach to case study is closer to the philosophical orientation of Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998).

Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) are different in defining the case and the case study. Stake (1995, 2005) considers case study not primarily defined as an approach or a methodology of research but as the study of individual cases when the researcher has identified specific cases within a time and space frame with clear boundaries. He also defines three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, multiple or collective. In intrinsic case study, the focus is on an individual case with unusual or interesting characteristics. In instrumental case study, the cases are studied as representatives of the complexity of an issue under study and an individual or individuals with unique characteristics are not the focus of

the research. Finally, collective or multiple case study is an extension of instrumental case study involving more than one case.

On the other hand, Merriam (1998) views case study as a distinguished methodological approach which can be taken by researchers to explore a variety of cases. A case in Merriam's view is more inclusive than the case in Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) and is defined as "a thing, a single entity, and a unit around which there are boundaries" (p. 27). Therefore, as long as the researchers can identify a phenomenon and are able to draw boundaries around it, they can name it a case ready for an in-depth investigation.

Drawing on the literature on the qualitative and case study research from the fields of psychology, education and sociology (for example, Denszin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; and Yin, 2003), Duff (2008) expands the overviews by other methodologists and presents the implications of qualitative case study in applied linguistics. After reviewing the definition of case study in various fields and disciplines, she concludes that in most definitions of the case study several features recur: "boundedness or singularity, in-depth study, multiple perspectives or triangulation, particularity, contextualization, and interpretation" (p.22).

Design of the Study

This study is framed within a qualitative paradigm with a case study design because it involves an "inductive, as opposed to deductive, approach to research, looking for, describing, and accounting for observed patterns, as opposed to testing explicitly stated hypotheses and making strong causal claims" (Duff, 2008, p. 30-31).

Also, among the five notable qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2007), I deemed a case study as more suitable due to the following reasons:

- 1- I considered writing task designers' perceptions the phenomenon of interest in specific contexts with clear boundaries in order to mirror the multi-layered nature of academic writing as constructed by individuals.
- 2- Although task designers could represent a culture-sharing group as in ethnography, the purpose of the study was not to determine how task designers' culture works, but I considered task designers as specific representatives of the complexity of the issue of the nature of academic writing in the context of EAP and in academic disciplines as viewed by writing task designers. Therefore;
- 3- The intention was to explore the nature of academic writing (the issue) from the perspectives of writing task designers (units of analysis) in the academic context of accounting and corporate governance at Macquarie University, and in the English for academic purposes (EAP) context. The EAP context encompassed the BAE direct entry courses in the English Language Centre (ELC) (bounded-systems).

In this study, I adopted Stake (1995), Merriam (1998), and Duff's (2008) models of case study at different stages of the research design. Stake and Merriam are similar in their epistemic stance, therefore, they both adhere to exclusive qualitative techniques and methods of data collection and analysis. However, I followed Duff given her more appropriate approach to case study in applied linguistics and Merriam for her more systemic approach in designing my research. According to Merriam, the first step in conducting a case study is to review the literature to shape a theoretical framework which in turn lead to the emerging research problem. Then, the research problem can be refined into several research questions to address the research problem. The next step is a purposive sampling and data collection. Both Stake and Merriam agree on the three sources of data collection: observation, interviews, and documents. I considered an observation an impractical method of data

collection since task designers' job did not entail any direct observable practice. As the best method to directly elicit the participants' perspectives, I selected semi-structured interviews along with the analysis of the unit guides and assessment rubrics/criteria as the main sources of data collection.

For case selection and sampling, first, I designed the study based on Duff's (2008) intensive sampling to recruit information-rich participants. However, since only 2 potential participants responded from the academic discipline, it ended with "convenience sampling" as proposed by Duff (2008). In convenience sampling, available cases are recruited. In the context of ELC, participants were recommended by the academic head of the centre based on their experience. This method of sampling is called "reputational case selection" (Duff, 2008; Miles. et al., 2014). Also, drawing on Duff (2008, p. 124), I recruited two participants from each context (four in total) as "the approach taken by many researchers in applied linguistics case study research" for in-depth analysis.

Regarding data analysis, the objectives of this thesis echoed Merriam's method. According to Merriam (1998), data analysis is "the process of making sense out of the data ...[which] involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read— it is the process of making meaning" (p.178). Therefore, both the researcher and the participants are involved in the process of meaning making.

Triangulation for increasing the internal validity of the study involved three levels in line with Duff's (2008) recommendation:

- 1- Triangulation of perspectives by incorporating both the participants (emic) and the researcher (etic) perspectives as well as multiple participants' perspectives in two contexts.
- 2- Triangulation of data collection techniques (interviews, and document analysis).

- 3- Triangulation of results by comparing the findings of the study with the findings of recent empirical studies.

Participants

I conducted this study at Macquarie University with participants from Macquarie University English Language Centre (ELC) and Faculty of Business, and Economics. To respect the ethical issues regarding the participants, I used several methods:

- 1- I de-identified the participants and referred to the participants from ELC as E1 and E2, and the participants from discipline as D1 and D2.
- 2- Since gender was not an important factor in data analysis, I used male pronouns to refer to all the participants in reporting the findings.
- 3- I did not publish ELC documents to respect the confidentiality of the documents as noted by the academic head of the centre.
- 4- I did not publish discipline documents to respect the anonymity of the unit convenors.

After I obtained ethics approval from Ethics Committee (see Appendix A), I sent emails along with ethics approval to the head of departments of the Faculty of Business and Economics and the academic head of English Language Centre. I asked the department heads to forward the recruitment emails to the experienced unit convenors and task designers. The contact information of the researcher was included in the emails in order for the potential participants to make direct contact. From the emails sent to the four departments in the Faculty of Business and Economics, I only received two positive emails from the Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance.

In ELC, the academic head of the centre asked for a meeting for more clarification on the purpose of the study and ethical issues. In the meeting, it was mentioned that ELC documents were confidential so I could access the documents without publishing them in my

thesis. Also, two experienced task designers were recommended by the academic head. After the meeting, I sent the emails with information and consent forms to the recommended participants to explain the aim of the study and to invite them to participate in the research.

The four participants (two from the Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance and two from ELC) had similarities and differences as presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Similarities and Differences among the Four Participants of the Study					
Participant	Site	Educational background	Experience	First language	Job position
E1	BAE program at ELC	6 years	Bachelor's degree in English language teaching, Master's degree in applied linguistics	Non-native English speaker	Task designer, Senior teacher
E2	BAE program at ELC	At least 6 years	Bachelor's degree in history and political science, Certificate in TESOL, Master's degree in applied linguistics	Non-native English speaker	Task designer, Senior teacher
D1	Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance	About 8 years	PhD (Economics), EMBA AGSM, MA (Bus. Research) MGSM, GC (Higher Ed.), CPA	Native English speaker	Task designer, unit convenor, Associate Professor
D2	Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance	About 10 years	Ph.D., Postgraduate Certificate in Environmental Studies, Bachelor of Economics (Hons): Accounting, Australian Chartered Accountant	Native English speaker	Task designer, unit convenor, Senior lecturer

All the four participants had a minimum experience of 5 years as writing task designers. However, their job did not entail merely designing writing tasks. In the Faculty of Business and Economics, the participants were both lecturers and unit convenors, but in the ELC task designers were not necessarily engaged with the teaching of the designed writing tasks.

Having multiple cases from multiple sites (faculty of BAE and ELC), this study can be described as a collective case study (Stake, 1995). In a collective case study, several individuals from more than one site will be analysed to explore their different perspectives on the issue.

Data Collection Procedures

I collected qualitative data from multiple sources including EAP and disciplinary task descriptions, assessment rubrics and criteria, and semi-structured interviews with unit convenors and task designers in both contexts. In fact, I used multiple methods of collecting data to increase the validity of the findings. Interviews were the main sources of data sets since they provided excellent opportunity to explore participants' perspectives in depth. The semi-structured procedure also allowed for further clarifications and modifications during the interviews and using probes. I chose semi-structured interviews as the best method of data collection because of three reasons. First, I could prepare core questions based on the research questions, therefore, I could assure that the research questions are addressed during the interviews. Secondly, semi-structured interviews provided me with opportunities to elicit further clarifications using probing questions. Third, I could go back and forth between the questions to link the topics as well as creating flexibility in following the participants' speech (Galletta & Cross, 2013; Riazi, 2016). Moreover, the questions were designed in a way that

provided participants with the opportunity to generate as much narrative as they wanted (Galletta & Cross, 2013; Riazi, 2016)

I designed the interview protocol in light of Ivanič's framework and intended to discover participants' perceptions about writing, perceptions about learning to write, approaches to designing writing tasks, and the assessment criteria they use. I then modified interview questions for each interview based on the documents collected a priori from the participants. I deemed that task description, and assessment rubrics/criteria were significant in providing the designers' expectations and perceptions about the nature of academic writing. Observation, another potential method suggested by Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) was considered impractical since designing of the writing tasks and assessment rubrics/criteria did not involve any observable practice by designers.

To be more specific on data collection procedures, I asked each participant to email the required documents to the researcher before the interviews. I collected course outlines for university entry preparation program for BAE students along with task instructions, task evaluation criteria and final writing exam question papers. The documents in ELC were used by different teachers; therefore, there was no specific document assigned to each participant. In other words, tasks were generally designed by a committee of task designers and then modified when needed. In contrast, unit guides and assessment rubrics from the faculty members were sent separately by each of the participants in the department of ACG for the specific units they were convening.

After careful analysis of the collected documents, an interview protocol (see Appendix B) was designed to address both the content of the documents and Ivanič's theoretical framework.

I designed interview questions to meet the philosophical and theoretical stance of the study. Following an interpretive qualitative case study, I designed core questions and probing questions to allow participants to express their perspectives fully without being directed towards specific worldviews (see Appendix B). I conducted semi-structured interviews of about one hour. During the interviews, I used a mobile recorder and interview protocol to record data. Also, I informed the participants that I would pause or stop participants the recorder whenever they wanted. The venue of the interviews was the participants' office on Macquarie University campus upon their suggestion. I conducted smooth verbatim transcription of the overall 3 hours and 39 minutes of the interviews with occasional editing for the removal of uhs and ums in Nvivo 11 for windows.

Data Analysis Procedures

According to Miles et al. (2014), it is necessary for the researchers to use software in data analysis to reduce the risk of being overwhelmed with the large amount of data. Therefore, I uploaded interview transcripts and all the collected documents into Nvivo 11 for analysis. I used Nvivo 11 for coding, analytic memoing, storing and maintaining data, and data linking (Miles. et al., 2014).

As mentioned before, the analysis of documents commenced during the process of data collection, which reflects Stake's (1995) and Merriam's (1998) emphasise that data collection and data analysis be conducted concurrently since in qualitative research there is no specific and predetermined time for data collection and data analysis (Yazan, 2015).

Unlike Stake (1995) who proposed an analysis based on the researcher's impression and intuition, I followed Merriam (1998) who considers both the participants' interpretation of the phenomenon and the researcher's interpretive perspectives in a more systemic way.

According to Merriam (1998), the goal of data analysis is to find *answers* to the research questions, and these answers could be called *categories*, *themes*, or *findings*. The first step was thus to identify segments in the database that provide answers to the research questions. As it is mentioned by Duff (2008) and Miles. et al. (2014), most qualitative data analysis is inductive and data driven, however, the researcher may anticipate the codes before analyzing the data. Similarly, before starting the process of analysing, I identified 12 categories- called a provisional “start list” of codes by Miles et al. (2014)- based on the interview questions. These categories were general terms reflecting underlying concepts in interview questions, for example, *general academic writing features*, *features in different tasks*, *features in different disciplines* and so forth (See Figure 1).

Then, I started *Deductive* coding of each transcript and each document based on their relevance to the categories (Miles. et al., 2014). For example, the codes such as *vocabulary*, *grammar*, *context-based structure* emerged in relation to the category labelled as *general academic writing features* (See Figure 1). As the coding progressed more codes emerged- that is called *Inductive* coding by Miles. et.al (2014). I labelled the emerging codes from data according to the underlying concepts. After recurrent merging, deleting and adding, 24 concept codes emerged at this stage.

Then, I created six categories based on Ivanič’s six discourses of writing and categorised the emerged codes based on their relevance to each discourse (See Figure 2). This process of coding that is called *pattern coding* by Miles. et al. (2014, p. 86) “is a way of grouping those summaries into smaller number of categories, themes, or constructs”. In the last stage, I analysed the codes in each discourse category. I then analysed the sources of each code to explore the underlying perceptions related to the sources. The sources were interview transcripts, EAP documents, and academic discipline documents (See Figure 3).

Mires Thesis.nvp - NVivo Pro

Look for: context-free1 Find Now Clear Advanced Find

context-free

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
proper utilisation of introduction,		4	5 9/08/2016 08:12 AM	ELLA	27/08/2016 8:13 PM	ELLA
using appropriate linking devices		4	5 8/08/2016 10:12 AM	ELLA	25/08/2016 9:15 AM	ELLA
clear and relevant thesis sentences		4	5 7/08/2016 9:11 AM	ELLA	22/08/2016 6:15 PM	ELLA

ELLA 3 items

Figure 1: 12 categories for codes based on data

Mires Thesis.nvp - NVivo Pro

Look for: Skills discourse Find Now Clear Advanced Find

Skills discourse

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Grammar		3	7 13/09/2016 9:06 A	ELLA	27/09/2016 8:36 P	ELLA
synonyms		4	7 13/08/2016 8:13 A	ELLA	20/09/2016 6:22 P	ELLA
word formation		4	7 12/08/2016 9:37 A	ELLA	19/09/2016 9:02 P	ELLA
collocation		5	8 12/08/2016 8:33 A	ELLA	19/09/2016 7:16 P	ELLA
spelling		4	7 11/08/2016 9:53 A	ELLA	18/09/2016 4:41 P	ELLA
word choice		5	8 11/08/2016 7:32 A	ELLA	18/09/2016 2:27 P	ELLA
using appropriate linking devices		4	5 10/08/2016 9:35 A	ELLA	18/09/2016 8:15 A	ELLA
proper utilisation of introduction, body, and conclusion paragraph		4	5 10/08/2016 9:15 A	ELLA	17/09/2016 3:20 P	ELLA
clear and relevant thesis sentences		4	5 10/08/2016 8:11 A	ELLA	17/09/2016 8:39 A	ELLA

ELLA 9 items

Figure 2: Six categories for codes based on theory

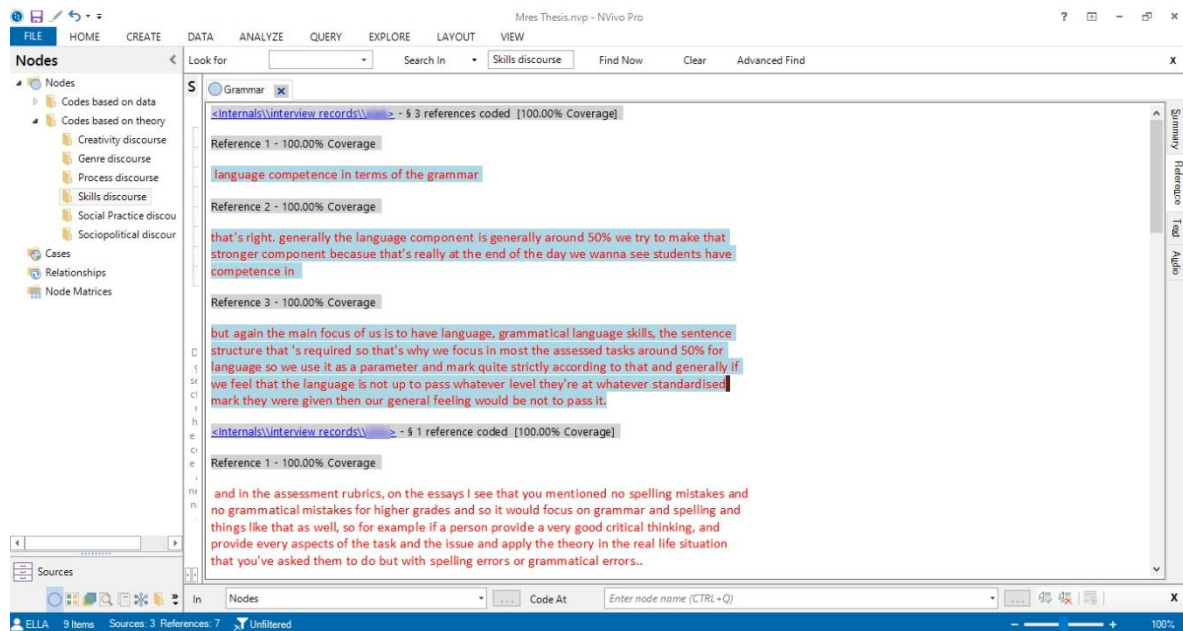


Figure 3: Analysis of the source of each code

The process of data analysis was iteratively inductive and deductive. It is believed that during the process of data analysis, the researcher experiences constant shifts between inductive and deductive analysis to finally depict the big picture out of data (Merriam, 1998; Miles. et al., 2014).

I also conducted an inter-rater reliability based on the percent agreement method, the coders being me and a postgraduate student who worked in the same field of research. To calculate the inter-rater reliability, I first provided the other coder with explanations on Ivanič's framework and the aim and objectives of the study. Then, I selected 10% (5 pages out of 52) of the whole transcripts randomly and printed three copies of them to be coded by me and the other coder. After 10 days, I coded the third copy of the transcripts again. Inter-rater reliability (agreed codes/total codes) between my first and second coding, and the other coder' coding reached 88.8%.

Utilising the system of inductive-deductive coding, creating categories and finally synthesising the analysed data helped me to discover how academic writing in the context of

accounting and corporate governance and in BAE university direct entry preparation program at Macquarie University was conceptualised by writing task designers.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter is organised into four sections. In the first section, I will present the findings from the analysis of data from the context of ELC to answer the first research question regarding writing task designers' perspectives on the nature of academic writing. The second section will be a report on the findings from the analysis of data from the context of the discipline of accounting and corporate governance to answer the second research question concerning the perceptions of disciplinary task designers on the nature of academic writing. In the third section, I will compare and discuss the findings from both contexts in the light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 to answer the third research question on how academic writing is viewed in the two contexts. As indicated in Chapter 3, I have used Ivanič's theoretical/analytical framework to discover the underlying perceptions of writing task designers about the nature of academic writing. The last section will be a summary of the findings.

Views on the Nature of Academic Writing in the Context of University Entry Preparation Program for Business, Accounting and Economics (BAE)

Writing features and assessment criteria.

In this study "linguistic features" are defined based on Ivanič's framework. In Ivanič's multi-layered view of language, the *text* consists of the linguistic substance of language. According to Ivanič, text can also include visual and material substance along linguistic substance. Based on the analysis of the documents and the interviews from both contexts, I have categorised the linguistic features under three headings of *vocabulary*,

grammar, and structure for the purpose of consistency throughout the report of the findings.

However, in real documents, features might be categorised under different names.

Linguistic features in BAE documents.

Table 4.1 Academic Writing Features Based on BAE Documents			
Feature	Includes	Task evaluation criteria	Weight (%)
Context-free Vocabulary	The accurate use of a variety of vocabularies, synonyms, rephrasing, word formation, word choice, collocation, and spelling	Business report	20
		Short answer	25
		Argument essay	20
Context-bound vocabulary	Academic expressions and avoiding colloquialisms, and abbreviations	Business report,	2.5
		Short answer	2.5
		Argument essay	2.5
Context-free grammar	The accurate use of a variety of complex structures to produce meaning: sentence structure and word order, missing words, verb tense, formation, voice, noun-verb agreement, prepositions, punctuation, singular/plural, and articles	Business report	20
		Short answer	30
		Argument essay	25
Context-bound grammar	Using passive voice and nominalisation, and avoiding contractions	Business report	2.5
		Short answer	2.5
		Argument essay	2.5
Context-free Structure	The logical organisation of ideas within and between paragraphs, including using appropriate linking devices, clear and relevant thesis sentences, accurate introduction, body, and the conclusion paragraph	Business report,	5
		Short answer	10
		Argument essay	15
Context-bound structure	Specific components of a piece of writing which had specific purposes in specific contexts.	Business report	5
		Short answer	-
		Argument essay	10
Content		Business report	35
		Short answer	30
		Argument essay	25

According to BAE course outline, students were required to submit three types of writing tasks: short answers to the tests, a business report, and an argument essay. Based on the task evaluation criteria, students were assessed in terms of language, content, and structure.

Analysis of the evaluation criteria of the three writing tasks revealed that content was mainly assessed in terms of fulfilling the requirements of the task type, that is, what to include in each paragraph of different task types and how to arrange them based on the task type conventions. For example, in an argument essay, content was evaluated based on including “main ideas relevant to the question in support of the thesis/position, developing the main ideas with relevant and adequate support and including a relevant concession/counterargument paragraph”. (Argument Essay Task Evaluation Criteria).

The language was assessed based on three features: vocabulary, grammar, and academic style. I merged academic style features into the vocabulary and grammar since academic style in evaluation criteria included specific grammar and vocabulary conventions such as avoiding colloquial words, or abbreviations to fulfil the academic formal structure.

Therefore, I have categorised them as context-bound vocabulary and grammar. Structure in the evaluation criteria was assessed based on two features (see table 4.1). First, the structure is considered as part of a common discussion of writing which not only focuses on “words and sentences but can refer to longer stretches of text too, with prescriptions for cohesive links and structures within and between paragraphs which are independent of text types” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 227). Second, the structure is viewed as dependent on the text’s specific conventions and contextually defined rules. For example, a business report was required to be based on the report format with “clear, accurate and relevant headings for each section” (Business Report Task Evaluation Criteria). I should again note that the text types’

conventions and rules on what to include in each paragraph and how to arrange them were clearly prescribed for the students in the evaluation criteria under the heading of “content”.

Linguistic features as perceived by the participant E1 and E2.

Vocabulary and grammar.

Both participants emphasised the importance of having a wide range of vocabulary. E1 stated that “we always look at the range and accuracy of vocabulary”. Likewise, E2 expressed that students got feedback on their accurate vocabulary use such as accurate word choice. In addition, E1 considered grammatical errors along with inaccurate vocabulary usage as one main cause of the failure of the students. He believed that many students had a good command of the content knowledge but they could not pass the writing component of the exams because of having “too many grammar mistakes and vocabulary mistakes”. He mentioned that ELC’s task designers would research about the task types and the content type in the targeted disciplines before designing the tasks and evaluation criteria. According to their recent research, they found common problems of the university students in the faculty of the business and economics. Many subject teachers were not satisfied with the students’ level of language competencies in terms of grammar along with other issues such as lack of critical thinking and communication skills.

The importance of syntactic patterns and rules was considered higher than other linguistic features by E2. The analysis of the transcripts revealed that E2 recognised “language, content, and structure” as three features of a quality piece of academic writing. However, he stated that language components and more specifically grammar were considered as the most important part of evaluation criteria and in designing the writing tasks.

Interestingly, the participants' perspectives on the importance of grammar and vocabulary were mirrored in the weighting allocated to the language component in BAE evaluation criteria in different tasks (see table 4.1).

Based on E2's perceptions, students needed to acquire native-like language competency in terms of grammatical points such as sentence structure and spelling. To demonstrate the significance of language and syntactic rules he said:

We use it [grammatical language skills] as a parameter and mark quite strictly according to that and generally, if we feel that the language is not up to pass whatever level they're at, whatever standardised mark they were given, then our general feeling would be not to pass it.

Also, both E1 and E2 emphasised on the academic style and formal structure such as hedging, nominalisation, passive voice, avoiding to use contractions, colloquialisms, abbreviations, and first or second person pronouns. However, when I asked E1 why students should write in that way, he seemed to be reluctant to explain to students the differences that might result from choosing to write from a personal or impersonal point of view. He believed that students should first learn the basic rules of academic writing which required them to write formally by avoiding active voice and so forth:

The students would probably score very poorly [if they write in active voice or use personal pronouns] for an academic style. We will provide feedback to the students and ask them to rewrite their writings. We would help students identify all those issues and try to say it may be okay to use the first personal pronoun in certain circumstances in academic writing but at this stage we want you to know that it's better not to! (E1)

Context-free structure.

Clarity of the ideas appeared to be valued as one main feature in a quality piece of writing by both E1 and E2. E1 defined clarity of ideas as:

when you read a piece of academic writing, you generally have the first sentence [that] gives you an understanding of what [the] paragraph is going to be about and then that paragraph is developed and it's cohesive by using the cohesive devices.

He also stated that a good piece of academic writing required the good organisation of ideas by proving good introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs as parts of a good structure. However, the structure as defined above was allocated the score value of 5-25 percent of the overall grade in various task evaluation criteria (see table 4.1). This means that based on BAE documents, the text structure or the rhetorical organisation of the text was considered as less important compared to the writer's vocabulary and grammar competencies.

Context-bound structure.

The structure was defined more as a context-bound feature by E2. According to him, a good piece of academic writing had to fulfil the requirements of the task and the structural requirements of the genre of the task. Although he used "style" and "structure" interchangeably, he clarified his perception by stating that "if students are writing a report they should write a report style, if writing an essay to write an essay style, so the genre fits whatever the requirements of the task is and in BAE we look at different genres." Also, E2 mentioned that students were supposed to "learn the linguistic characteristics of different text types in order to be able to reproduce them appropriately to serve specific purposes in specific contexts". Hence, "students' writing [was] analysed for their fulfilling *the purpose of*

the writing, their structure, and organisation of the ideas based on the requirements of the task”, as stated by E2.

Furthermore, E2 believed that students’ cultural and educational background affected their view of components of a text type or the organisation of the ideas within and between paragraphs:

Some issue that we encounter are to do with structure which could come from cultural perspective.... sometimes in terms of the approach to the task where something is organised inductively or deductively or how an argument is developed how much support is given for an argument may differ depending on the cultural context. (See Appendix C)

E1 also believed that structure was important as dependant of the text types. While paying more attention to the independent features of logical paragraphs, as discussed in the previous section, E1 mentioned that:

In BAE we look at business reports mainly but we also do essays and we show students that for an essay there won’t be any titles, headings, or subheadings, whereas in business report it’s very common to have an abstract or the summary at the beginning, executive summary ...so you look at the actual genre.

Therefore, findings from interview transcripts of E1 and E2 showed that both participants believed in both definitions of the structure but they put different levels of emphasis on each definition, with more focus on context-bound features by E2 and more focus on context-free features of the structure by E1.

In addition, when talking about features of academic writing in different disciplines or in different writing tasks, participants frequently used different names such as argumentative essay, business reports, or research papers for different text types. Both E1

and E2 had the perception that a quality piece of writing had to be written according to the requirements of the text types since each text type had specific components (For example, see Appendix C).

Despite the participants' emphasis on the requirements of the academic style, formality in academic writing, and the significance of context-free and context-bound text structure, the score value allocated to these features in evaluation criteria was not very high. (See table 4.1)

Perceptions about learning to write and approaches to the designing of writing tasks.

Using models.

Both E1 and E2 suggested designing tasks in a way that provided students with models of different genres as an effective approach to teaching academic writing. In this approach, each genre model would be deconstructed so that students could distinguish between different components and could learn how each component worked to fulfil the purpose of the text in specific context. Both participants mentioned that students would learn better when they were exposed to quality models of writings in each genre. According to E2, “students would write with teachers to analyse models [and] write something in pair, individually, [or in] groups”. Also, E1 believed this approach helped students learn similarities and differences among text types so they were able to reproduce the same structure in their own writings.

Brainstorming, planning, drafting, writing.

Another approach suggested by E1 was to assist students to “go through the process of writing a text” (E1). Brainstorming, planning, drafting and writing were mentioned by E1 as the processes that students were required to go through when preparing to write their

assignments. After brainstorming and planning, students prepared drafts of writing to receive feedback before the final submission of their writings. This was also reflected in business report instruction in which students were required to submit the plan, the draft, and the final report in different stages in order to receive feedback.

BAE course outline showed that students were required to prepare a written portfolio which included both teachers' feedbacks on the students' drafts and students' self-reflection on their strengths and weakness and their learning process:

Every student must submit a Writing Portfolio. This is a folder which contains feedback from teachers about the written and oral tasks you do in BAE, your own thoughts about your strengths and weaknesses for each task, as well as self-corrections of your own writing. It is a way to reflect on your learning, to improve your writing and speaking, and to show evidence of your learning to your teachers.

(BAE course outline)

Simulating the real world contexts.

In addition, analysing the business report task instruction revealed that task designers attempted to situate writing tasks in real-life contexts by simulating a situation where students needed to write a business report for clients by referring to a company in the real world. For example, the business report task started with an instruction as such: "Your client is interested in ethical investing and has asked you to critically evaluate a company in terms of ethical and financial performance. The purpose of your report is to evaluate a company for this client..." This background of the task situated the students in a simulated real context. Furthermore, students were provided with a list of companies in the real world such as ANZ bank, Google, and H & M in the business report task instruction. Therefore, students were required to reference from the real companies in the real world.

This approach was not mentioned by any of the participants in the interviews. However, since the documents in ELC were designed by a group of task designers including E1 and E2 over the years, I assume that it was considered an approach by the ELC task designers and not specifically by E1 and E2.

Practising and receiving feedback.

Another important finding in analysing the interview transcripts was that both E1 and E2 emphasised on the role of “practice” in improving writing skills. They both believed practice made perfect and students needed to be given more chances of writing and receiving feedback to master the required knowledge and skills in academic writing. The importance of practice and feedback was presented by both E1 and E2:

E1: going through the experience of writing a number of times helps them... The idea of writing, rewriting and rewriting.... different opportunities for students to practice....so yes, practice makes perfect.

E2: there are a lot of practice required on those skills ... Of course, the more they write, the better.... they have task feedbacks they write in class and teachers endeavour to mark them.... students generally rewrite that task so in terms of improving their writing.

In brief, academic writing in the context of BAE program in ELC was presented as comprising two sets of features: context-free features and context-bound features. In task instructions, task evaluation criteria and course outline, the emphasis was on the accurate use of the context-free grammar and vocabulary. Also, the structure was assessed both as a set of context-free rules to organise the ideas logically within and between paragraphs and as a set of context-bound conventions to fulfil the requirements of the text type.

Interviews with E1 and E2 revealed almost the same results. Both participants put emphasis on the importance of grammar, vocabulary, and structure both as context-free and context-bound features (For example, see Appendix C). However, E1 emphasised the importance of context-free structure and E2 emphasised the importance of context-free grammar. One detected discrepancy between the participants' views and what was presented in the documents was in relation to the importance of academic style. In documents, less score value was devoted to academic style, while according to the participants, the academic style was an important feature of a quality academic writing.

Also, E2's perception about the importance of students' educational and cultural background in their perspectives about and their performance in academic writing was not detected in the design of the tasks, course outline or in evaluation criteria.

Views on the Nature of Academic Writing in the Disciplinary Context of Accounting and Corporate Governance Department

An overview of the discipline documents analysis.

Documents from the discipline were two sets of unit guides sent by each participant and an assessment guide sent by D1. Participants were the unit convenors so the documents were designed by them.

Based on the unit guide by D1 (UGD1), students were required to present their knowledge through writing in three sets of assessment tasks:

- 1- In class case study tests weighting 14 %;
- 2- Research essay weighting 40%; and,
- 3- Final exam weighting 30%

In class case studies were designed as formative assessment tasks to help students improve their content knowledge and their reading and writing skills required in the research essay and in the final exam. The purpose of the research essay was stated as such:

The purpose of the individual essay is to allow you to put accounting and corporate governance concepts into practice in a real-life setting and allow you to demonstrate your research and writing skills on an individual basis. The assignment and the arguments you develop should help you reflect on your learning... (UGD1)

Therefore, not only the content knowledge but the writing skills of the students would be assessed. Also, it indicated that the writing tasks were designed to allow students to learn concepts in connection to the real-life setting. Also, students needed to write to demonstrate their research skills.

In the final exam, which was called a summative assessment in UGD1, students' acquired content knowledge and the writing skills would be assessed. Assessment criteria (in UGD1) as presented in all the three assessment tasks were quite similar in terms of the writing skills:

- 1- Clarity of expression (including grammar, spelling, referencing) in research essay
- 2- Presentation, communication & structure in research essay
- 3- Clarity of expression (including accuracy, spelling, grammar, punctuation) in final exam
- 4- Presentation, communication & style (written) in final exam and in case studies

Also, in the Assessment Guide D1 (AGD1), marking rubrics/criteria mentioned that to achieve High Distinction level, no spelling mistakes and/or poor grammar was expected along with the high performance in content knowledge. Also, the students had to demonstrate excellent evidence of the use of the IDEALS framework. IDEALS framework was developed

and modified by D1 to help students improve their critical thinking and problem solving. The framework was a model, prescribing what to include in each paragraph and how to approach each part of the task to fulfil the requirements of an argument essay. According to Unit Guide D2 (UGD2), there were two types of written tasks:

- 1- Assessed coursework, weighting 20%,
- 2- Final essay, weighting 50%

Four assignments of the assessment coursework would be marked at random. One assignment would be marked in the first weeks of the semester to provide students with early feedback on their performance. Assignments were mainly assessed in terms of the content knowledge and complete answers to the questions.

Final essays were supposed to be delivered in three stages: the first draft, the second draft with peer review comments, and the final essay. Based on the marking criteria, the writing skills of the students would be assessed in terms of writing style, weighting 5%, which was defined as: “The extent to which the essay is free from bibliographical, grammatical and typographical errors...” (UGD2). Also, students were expected to fulfil the convention requirements of the task type by including particular sections and approach each paragraph based on the rules and conventions of the task. For example: In the introduction paragraph students had to provide topic background and ethical issue, weighting 5 %, which was the extent to which students “have clearly explained the background to [the] topic and identified a clear and focused ethical issue” (UGD2).

Perceptions about writing and assessment criteria by participants.

Linguistic features to communicate clearly.

By the analysis of both interview transcripts and unit guides from the Department of Accounting and Corporate Governance, I found that communication skills were highly

important for both participants. According to the interviews, both D1 and D2 believed that business, economics and accounting students had to communicate effectively both in academic contexts and in their future career. According to D1, “if you don't have good business and communication skills, [and] good argumentative skills, you cannot function properly in business community”. He also believed that “the process of communication is what's required for higher degree [students]”. The unit guide and assessment rubrics prepared by D1 mirrored his perceptions on the importance of communication skills in achieving a high score: “to achieve high distinction, students have to be able to communicate their ideas clearly”. Also in the unit guide, he emphasised the importance of communication skills in students’ future career stating that “accountants need to report on results as part of the accounting cycle”. (UGD1)

Similarly, D2 believed that “communication was a key skill for employability”, both when preparing CV, cover letter, and emails to the potential employer, and when communicating with clients and colleagues. Moreover, he believed that since most communications were through the medium of writing in academic and vocational context, it was essential for students to learn how to write clearly to communicate effectively. Also, according to D2, the best way to assess students’ content knowledge was through written tasks which required students to develop necessary skills of communicating their knowledge clearly.

Both D1 and D2 clarified that there were several knowledge sources necessary to communicate clearly and to create texts which were understandable. The knowledge sources D1 and D2 identified were:

- 1- grammatical knowledge,
- 2- vocabulary knowledge, and

3- knowledge of text structure

Although both participants agreed on the importance of error-free sentences, appropriate vocabulary and well-structured arguments, there were commonalities and differences in their views on the definitions and the significance of the features.

Vocabulary and grammar.

For D1, grammar, vocabulary, cohesive devices, proper topic sentences, and generally linguistic features and patterns were as important as the content knowledge and the text type conventions. He believed that a quality piece of writing with the high level of content knowledge and poor level of grammar, spelling, and inappropriate vocabularies could not exist. He added that poor grasp of English language skills such as grammar and spelling or using out-of-context, superfluous vocabulary would result in an unclear writing. D1 stated that “you cannot get everything perfect and then have atrocious grammar... if an article is littered with spelling mistakes and grammatical errors, they actually cause you to lose the line of thought”.

Similarly, D2 stated that correct grammar would make a piece of writing understandable and “if your writing is full of grammatical errors, it can't be taken seriously”. In addition, D2 believed that appropriate word choice was necessary for creating a clear writing, as he stated that “there are some students who think that academic writing is about using long words and they don't know quite what they mean and so you get these weird sentences”. Therefore, D2 believed that good command of grammar and vocabulary was necessary to communicate clearly. However, he was aware that students made some minor grammatical errors within the properly structured text, but did not feel they were important.

Context-free structure.

Similar to the findings in the context of ELC regarding two aspects of the text structure, participants in the context of discipline defined structure both as context-free and context-bound. From a broad view, different texts have more or less the same structure: Introduction, body, and conclusion with logical development in each section. On the other hand, this generic structure needs to be adjusted to particular situations so that it accommodates the disciplinary requirements and conventions.

Both D1 and D2 referred to both aspects of text structure. However, D2 put more emphasis on context-free structure as a necessary feature of a clear writing. He believed that the number one feature in creating clear writing was a logical argument and logical organisation of ideas within and between paragraphs. From this perspective, D2 believed that many students, especially PhD students, had problem with organising their ideas clearly by using appropriate topic sentences: “I thought maybe I should do more in terms of structure and things like topic sentences and all that sort of things, something that my PhD students seem to really struggle with”.

Similarly, D1 emphasised the importance of the logical connection between ideas by using appropriate cohesive devices, topic sentences, and appropriate introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs. To clarify on this issue, he referred to an article which he believed was a poor piece of academic writing. One of the reasons he would have rejected that paper was its loose organisation of the ideas:

If you look at the topic sentence of that paragraph, and then you go to the conclusion of that paragraph, they are two completely different things. I could probably highlight two or maybe three places in that paragraph where it should be broken up into new

paragraphs...and once you get into these long convoluted paragraphs you actually lose what the argument is.

Therefore, writing properly to D1 means connected and organised ideas in separate paragraphs by using cohesive devices and appropriate topic sentences.

Context-bound structure.

Another important feature according to D1 is “writing style”, or what I called context-bound structure so far in this study. By different writing styles he meant that:

When I write a letter, it's different to writing an academic article, when I write a professional piece of correspondence, that's different to writing an accounting essay, when I write the result of an experiment in a scientific study, that's different to writing a normative argument or theoretical piece or philosophical piece or something like that so there are different styles of writing for different contexts.

He then mentioned that different text types constituted different parts and different approaches to address and discuss the topic of writing. D1 further elaborated that, for example, in the discipline of engineering, students were required to prepare project reports which were very structured but they did not require high levels of critical thinking. In contrast, he explained, in writing a problem-solution report or a case study in the discipline of business and accounting, high levels of critical thinking were required.

In a similar vein, D2 believed that in addition to the “baseline of good writing which is things like grammar and structure and so forth”, the conventions of the writing should be taken into consideration. By convention, he meant differences in different text types in terms of the required components. For instance, he believed there were different conventions defined for a science paper and a philosophy paper:

In a science paper, the structure is very specific and you have to have [components] like hypothesis and method [but] if you look at a philosophy paper, generally they still do that but they don't use such specific titles and so have more of a sort of background and more fluidity with their narrative... in philosophy, there is a lot of retelling of the story before you start your paper.

One main difference between D1 and D2 in terms of their views on the structure was that according to D1, different text types with different purposes and different audience required certain grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, based on my understanding of what he mentioned in the interview, he did not perceive grammar and vocabulary as context-free and independent of the purpose of the text. Rather, they were determined by the specific objectives of the specific context in which writing took place. As an example, D1 stated that "if I'm writing a descriptive piece, I use the words "is", "are" or "being" or whatever, a lot more... If I'm writing something about the future or the present or the past I have to use different tenses and different nouns and different ways of describing things". According to D1, one had to be vigilant of when and why to use passive voice or active voice, or to use personal pronouns such as "I" or "we". In writing a literature review, for instance, using past tense versus present tense or using passive voice versus active voice made great differences in meaning and positioning of the writer (D1 explained). D1 further explained that different text types were different not only in terms of specific components and conventions but in terms of grammar and vocabulary.

On the other hand, participant D2 described a written text as consisting of two separate layers. One layer, which was shared by all writing types, was grammar, vocabulary, and structure in terms of the logical connection within and between paragraphs. The other layer was discipline-specific conventions which encompassed the structure in terms of the

fulfilment of requirements of the specific text type by using the necessary components meaningfully and appropriately. In fact, the second layer was considered by D2 as the point of divergence in different text types in different contexts.

Another difference between the two participants' views was that D1 held a critical stance towards some writing conventions. For instance, he criticised why students had to be using the Harvard Referencing Style which was required as the accepted style of the Faculty of Business and Economics.

He also added that writers could write in a way which was distinguished from the others' style of writing so that their writing was representative of their personality. Therefore, in his view, not only was writing style determined by the conventions of the text types but could be challenged and resisted.

Perceptions about learning to write and approaches to the designing of writing tasks.

Practising and receiving feedback.

Having analysed the responses to the interview questions about ways to learn writing and the approaches in designing writing tasks, results indicated that both participants believed students learn how to write by being exposed to many writing opportunities. They accounted for the importance of practice and ample writing as an opportunity for the students to receive instructive feedback from the teachers and the peers. They also believed students need to provide feedback on the writings of their peers to find the chance "to read quality writings of the others" (D1) and/or reflect on their strengths and weaknesses.

D1 designed writing tasks in a way that required students to read case studies each week, then come to the class and discuss the ways they could prepare a critical report on them with their peers, then write it, present it and get feedback: "We did that eight times plus

we did two in-class tests...case studies solving the problems were similar to the structure of the essay so this is what we call a continuous form of assessment” (D1). By this approach, he attempted to use formative assessment which helped students to improve their writing skills, critical thinking skills, as well as their content knowledge so they could become prepared for their final essay which held a value of 40%.

Likewise, D2 required students to submit their final essay in several phases in the form of drafts to receive feedback on each section:

In this case, we provide them with enough time to rewriting, I mean that's the key thing. so that's why we have the draft which is in advance of the final essay so they are forced to deliver a draft and then go through at least one reiteration after that and to have peer review and to have some feedback so I guess these methods help them.

The need to teach writing.

D1 believed that most students were weak at writing skills so he attempted to teach them how to write. Therefore, he attempted to design unit guide and writing tasks in a way to teach students the required writing skills and knowledge:

I have done a research and found that none of my students knows how to reference, none of the students knows how to write an essay, none of them knows how to structure an argument, and they are this far in university, it is wrong! And so when you look at what I am teaching them, I have to teach them all those skills on top of the content.

On the other hand, although D2 stated that he attempted to help students with their writing skills by providing more opportunities to write and get feedback, he preferred explicit approaches to teaching writing as the best way to help students improve their writing skills. He was unsure whether students would learn how to write with his implicit approach based

on practice and feedback. In addition, according to him, the main focus of the unit was on the content knowledge and writing was only a means to assess students' content knowledge. To express his uncertainty, he stated that "I'm not sure how much they actually learn about writing. They learn in a sense through practising and through writing while getting some feedback, but we don't teach them grammar we do teach them referencing."

Using models.

Moreover, findings from interviews showed that both participants believed students would learn appropriate writing based on the conventions of their discipline if they were exposed to frameworks or models which outlined or prescribed the requirements of the tasks or the text types. D1 used a special framework which he had adopted and modified to describe different steps to write a critical argumentative essay (refer to section 4.2.1). Similarly, D2 echoed his perception in the value of being prescriptive as such:

I need to be more prescriptive about what the structure should be because if you give somebody especially students who have not done a lot of writing before 4000 words to write on a topic, they go like "how am I going to fill that?" But if you break it down and say this is how this section should work and this is what, this should be helpful.

In short, both participants believed in both context-free and context-bound features such as grammar, vocabulary and structure, however, they had different perspectives on the importance of each feature. Also, documents from both participants showed the importance of writing skills in assessment criteria although, again with different levels of significance.

Discussion of the Findings: Comparing Task Designers' Perceptions in Both Contexts in Light of the Literature Reviewed in Chapter 2

Discussion of the finding in the light of theoretical frameworks.

Perceptions on context-free features of academic writing.

Comparison of the findings from both contexts of ELC and the discipline revealed that writing task designers in both contexts shared the idea that a good piece of academic writing comprised accurate grammar, a range of appropriate vocabularies, correct spelling and punctuation, and logical connections within and between paragraphs using cohesive devices and topic sentences. The emphasis on these features echoes Ivanič's skills discourse of writing which is based on the perception that "writing consists of applying knowledge of a set of linguistic patterns and rules" ranging from "sound-symbol relationships and sentence construction" to "the prescriptions for cohesive links and structures within and between paragraphs" (p. 227). Also, Lea and Street's (1998, 2006) study skills model focuses on the surface linguistic features and patterns and is based on the perception that the knowledge of these features is independent of text type and transferable from one context to other contexts. Findings, therefore, reveal that these four participants' perceptions support transferrable context-free linguistic features as one layer of academic writing but not as the only layer.

Sharp differences, however, existed between the importance of the linguistic features in each context (refer to table 1, section 4.2.1, and 4.2.2.2). In ELC, features such as grammar and vocabulary were considered as highly important, while linguistic features of *the written text* were viewed and valued differently in the discipline. D1 believed that the implicit knowledge of linguistic features was inseparable from other writing skills. In contrast, D2 believed that the minor deficiencies in linguistic features might happen even

in a quality piece of writing so minor grammatical mistakes were negligible. Therefore, the level of significance put on the Linguistic features of the written text varied in both contexts and between the participants in the discipline.

Perceptions on the context-bound features of academic writing.

Findings also indicated that in both contexts, linguistic features were also viewed in relation to the contexts in which writing took place. These views are in line with Ivanič (2004, p. 232) who states that “texts vary linguistically according to their purposes and context”. In genre discourse of writing “good writing is not just correct writing, but writing which is linguistically appropriate to the purpose it is serving” (ibid. 233). Therefore, although linguistic features are considered as important, they are not considered as context-free but defined in relation to *the writing event* which is the second layer in Ivanič’s multi-layered view of language.

The writing event is defined as “observable characteristics of the immediate social contexts in which language is being used, including the purposes for language use, the social interaction, the particulars of time and place” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 223). Similarly, Halliday and Hasan (1989) referred to *the context of the situation* to refer to the immediate context in which writing takes place.

In both contexts, findings revealed that writing task designers were aware of the writing event layer of the language and that the writings vary in various contexts to fulfil different purposes. However, there were variations in the participants’ underlying perceptions.

In ELC, although E1 mentioned that BAE program was framed within a genre-based pedagogy and that appropriate use of linguistic features based on text types were important, much of the emphasis was put on the accuracy of the linguistic features such as

the range of vocabulary, the range of grammar, and logical structure of ideas within and between paragraphs.

Based on Hyland's (2000) genre-based pedagogy, genres are not merely labels for text types to distinguish linguistic features and writing patterns in different text types. Teachers need to go beyond such regularities as linguistic features and consider genres as representatives of the institutional underlying perceptions. Hyland's notion of the genre (see also Lea & Street, 1998, 2006; Nesi & Gardner, 2012) encompasses Ivanič's genre discourse, social practices discourse and sociopolitical discourses, simultaneously. In fact, not only are the linguistic features of each text type important in conforming to the conventions of a specific discourse community but they should be considered as mirrors of the broader institutional ethos.

However, findings from interviews and task evaluation criteria show that in the ELC context, the skills discourse is dominant by focusing on the accurate use of context-free grammar and vocabulary, and structure (see table1). Also, the genre discourses exist when focusing on the appropriate use of context-bound grammar, vocabulary and structure, although there is less significance on the context-free features (see table 1).

Genre discourse as defined by Ivanič is referred to as academic socialisation by Lea & Street (1998, 2006). In both genre discourse and academic socialisation, linguistic features are determined according to particularities of the text type in particular context. Therefore, the accuracy of the features is not enough in writing a quality piece of writing but linguistic features should be appropriate for the specific text type as well. In Ivanič's framework, *appropriacy* is assessed in line with genre discourses and *accuracy* is the focus in skills discourse assessment criteria. In ELC, although task designers were aware of the writing event and its effect on the linguistic features, their main focus was on

English language competencies in terms of accurate grammar, vocabulary and logical organisation of the ideas.

On the other hand, findings from the discipline indicated that D1 and D2 put more emphasis on the writing event rather than the written text, although for D1 both written text and the writing event were equally important. D2 had the perception that linguistic features of the text could be neglected if the content and other requirements of the tasks were fulfilled.

Both D1 and D2, however, emphasised that different text types had their own specific audience and so students had to learn how to write to effectively communicate with their readers. According to systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1994) perspective, writers should write to influence their readers by employing accepted resources in order to share meaning in specific contexts. According to Halliday (1994) and Hyland (2000), readers are the members of the discourse community to whom the writer writes. Therefore, texts are seen as socially and culturally situated and “only in relation to these communities are meanings validated” (Hyland, 2000, p. xi). This also reflects Ivanič’s social practices discourse which focuses on contextual factors of writing event including the readers.

Perceptions on the ways of learning to write.

Findings indicate that there is a considerable consistency pertaining to the perceptions about the ways of learning to write in both contexts. In both contexts, participants believed that practice made perfect and that the best approach to learning to write for students was to provide them with many opportunities to write. In creativity discourse, it is believed that “people learn to write by writing, hence learning to write involves writing as much as possible” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 229). However, findings of this

study are not completely concomitant with Ivanič's creativity discourse which values writing in its own right with no reference to any specific purpose or context. In contrast, in both contexts, writing was viewed as situated in social contexts with specific purposes.

The practice was considered an important way of learning to write since it provided students with opportunities to receive feedback from peers and their teachers. In creativity discourse of writing, students learn writing by "being given plenty of opportunities to write, and, by getting feedback on their own writing." (Ivanič, 2004, p.230). Although these were mentioned as effective ways of learning writing by all the participants, findings show that their underlying perceptions on the ways of learning to write are more compatible with the social discourse of writing and not with the creativity discourse. In other words, receiving feedback from teachers as experienced members of their disciplinary community members were deemed to help students to learn the writing conventions of their disciplinary context "by participating in socially situated literary events which fulfil social goals which are relevant and meaningful to them" (Ivanič, 2004, 235).

In social practices discourses of writing, not only does writing consist of "linguistic substance but also as a multimodal artefact, the product of the writer's design involving the interplay of more than one semiotic mode" (Ivanič, 2004, p.235). Both in the genre discourses of writing and the social practices discourses, writing is viewed as consisting of a set of linguistic features which are situated in a social context. However, in genre discourses, linguistic features and patterns of each text type are fixed and determined based on the text types' conventions and the role of the writer is to reproduce the conventions to fulfil the requirements of the text. On the other hand, in social discourses, this is not merely "the composition and construction of linguistic text, but also

by whom, how, when, at what speed, where, in what conditions, with what media and for what purposes texts are ‘written’” (Ivanič, 2004, p.235).

Analysis of the interview transcripts reveals that participants view academic writing as situated in specific contexts with two sets of features. First, a set of similar linguistic rules such as sentence structure and paragraph structure shared in all writings (Skills discourse of writing); second, a set of conventions and linguistic rules and patterns specific to each text types (Genre discourse of writing). However, E2 went beyond these two perspectives to consider the educational and cultural background of the students as an important factor in how to approach academic writing. He believed that task designers had to consider students’ background in their attempt to help students learn conventions of English language academic writing (For example, see Appendix C). This is in line with Street (1997) who believed in considering “the richness and complexity of learners’ prior knowledge” and the ways this knowledge affect “deep levels of identity and epistemology, and thereby the stance that learners take with respect to the ‘new’ literacy practices of the educational setting” (p.53). This perception of E2 can be indicative of the importance of sociocultural factors on the writing conventions. However, this perception was not dominant in any of the contexts.

Based on my analysis of the unit outlines in ELC, I believe that the design of the writing tasks in ELC reflects the “functional approaches” to teaching writing. In this approach, tasks are designed to simulate real-life contexts “where the emphasis is on the adequate fulfilment of a specific social goal” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 235). Also, teachers have a role in explicitly teaching students the conventions of fulfilling the task. (Refer to 4.1.2.3)

In the context of academic discipline, writing tasks were considered as tools to assess students’ understanding of the content knowledge. Therefore, students were

involved in “purposeful, situated activities which require writing in order to fulfil goals”. This is called “communicative approach” to language teaching by Ivanič. The design of the tasks in the context of the discipline provided the teachers with the opportunities to teach students how to write through purposeful activities which required writing for communication. However, in the context of academic discipline, writing task designers did not mention explicitly that they designed writing tasks for the purpose of teaching writing. D2 mentioned that he tried to help students improve their academic writing by providing them with more chances of writing but he was unsure whether that was helpful or not.

Another approach to designing writing tasks in both contexts was based on the perception that students would learn how to write when they were exposed to models of good writings. This approach is presented by Ivanič in the genre discourse in which “the ‘target’ text -types are modelled, linguistic terminology is taught in order to generalise about the nature of such texts, and learners are encouraged to use this information to construct (rather than ‘compose’) their own texts in the same genre” (p. 233). I found that in both contexts, text types were defined in two ways. Firstly, texts such as business reports and essays which were defined in relation to the broader socially defined conventions and constructs to fulfil the requirements of a specific text type in a specific disciplinary context (referred to as social genres by Bruce, 2013); Secondly, texts such as exposition, explanation, argument, and recount which were defined in relation to cognitive skills and internal organizations to fulfil the rhetorical purposes of the text (referred to as cognitive genres by Bruce, 2013).

An approach which was practised merely in the context of ELC was brainstorming, planning, drafting and writing. This approach to learning to write “encompasses both cognitive and practical processes” of writing since students are encouraged to pay

attention to both their mental process of writing when they brainstorm to generate ideas on the topic and the ways to write it and to the practical steps of planning, drafting, revising and editing (Ivanič, 2004, 231).

Criticisms of this approach are twofold regarding the assessment of the writing process. Firstly, it is doubted whether the writing process can be assessed and secondly, even if it is feasible to assess the process, whether there is any value in assessing the writing process. Ivanič believes that the focus of the assessment should be on the product of the writing since the reason for going through the details of the writing process is to create a better writing. Therefore, there is no point in assessing the process in her opinion. However, she mentions some approaches to both assess the written composition and the writing process by preparing “a written reflection on the processes involved in producing it.” (p. 232)

Preparing portfolios to reflect on the learning process was practised in both contexts. Portfolio-writing is indicative of two sets of perceptions regarding learning to write: the process discourse, and the social practices discourse. In the process discourse, portfolios are used as a means of students’ self-reflection on the processes involved in producing the written text and to assess the quality of the processes rather than the product. On the contrary, in social practices discourse, students are encouraged to produce “portfolios of evidence and ‘progress files’ [to] comment on how successfully their writing achieved their socially defined goals” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 237). Thus, not only is the focus on the quality of the end product but in this approach, the views of the students have a significant role in “summative statement of the achievement” (ibid., p. 237).

I also found that portfolios are used both as a means to assess the process and as a means to assess the product of the written assignment in the context of ELC. However, in

my opinion, portfolio writing in BAE program is not used to support the importance of considering “the whole complex social interactions” in creating a text. My understanding is based on the premise that in ELC context, evaluation criteria were defined based on fixed rules and patterns required in specific text types in specific contexts (genre discourse of writing) and that the uniqueness of each writing event in relation to various contextual factors (social practices discourse of writing) was not considered as effective on the quality of the written text.

From another aspect, portfolios can reflect the social practices discourse because they were intended to help students with learning to write by creating a means of communication through the medium of writing. From this perspective, this approach can indicate the “communicative approach” in social practices discourse with the underlying perception that learning should happen in the real contexts and students learn how to write by writing for real purposes in real contexts which require the act of writing for communication.

Another discourse of writing in conjunction with social practices discourse is a sociopolitical discourse of writing which is based on the premise that “writing, like all language, is shaped by social forces and relations of power” (Ivanič, 2004, p.237). In this discourse, writers need to be aware of their choices and the way their choices determine their position in relation to the world. By the same token, Lea and Street’s (2006) academic literacies model focuses on the “meaning making, identity, power, and authority” (p.369) in a way that invites the writers to be aware of their linguistic choices which determine their position in relation to the others. Therefore, writers are free to challenge the institutional conventions and rules to contribute to discoursal and generic changes (Ivanič, 2004; Lea & Street, 2006).

According to the findings, only D1 demonstrated views that reflected his awareness of “the interests of more powerful social groups” in the disciplinary context of the Faculty of Business and Economics and the influences on the “discoursal and generic resources that a writer can draw on and make use of” (Ivanič, 2004, p.238). He was critical of the faculty conventions regarding referencing styles and emphasised on the personalised styles of writing, and he making students’ free in choosing to write in passive or active voice. According to him, writers needed to know why different types of texts were the way they were. In the sociopolitical discourse of writing, the writer should develop “a critical awareness of why particular discourses and genres are the way they are...and the writers [should] understand the consequences of writing in one way rather than another” (ibid., p. 238).

Discussion of the findings in light of recent empirical studies.

Findings of this study can be compared to the findings of the previous empirical studies reviewed in Chapter 2 in many ways. In the following paragraphs, I will present only a few of them.

In recent empirical studies, researchers such as Romoroka (2012) and Counsell (2011) emphasised the importance of the sociocultural features of the text rather than generic context-free linguistic features. Romoroka rejected the study skills approach to teaching writing and Counsell challenged the transferability of generic skills to specific disciplines. Oppositely, Ong’s (2014) findings showed high levels of generic skills transferability, which approved the importance of considering context-free linguistic features.

However, my study is in line with Ivanič’ perceptions in viewing study skills approach as a complementary to other approaches such as process approach, genre

approach, and sociocultural approaches to teaching writing. Drawing on Ivanič, I believe that task designers should consider multi-layered nature of language and design tasks which provide teachers with a holistic approach to teaching writing that not only take into consideration both context-free and context-bound features, but go beyond the linguistic substance of the text to consider the impact of the broader sociocultural contexts of the text and the ways they shape text types.

Also, Gardiner (2010), and Baker's (2013) findings emphasised on the sociocultural aspect of writing. Their studies illuminated that academic writing was viewed as situated and that the conventions of each text type were determined by its contextual conventions. Gardiner's view of the text types was mostly linked to what Lea and Street (1998, 2006) termed as 'academic socialisation' and to what is called 'genre discourse' in Ivanič's framework which is limited to linguistic features of different text types rather than broader communicative aspects of writing. Similarly, the findings of my study revealed that in both contexts, situated nature of academic writing was mostly limited to the linguistic conventions and rules in different text types.

Also, Baker's analysis of students' conceptualisation of academic writing based on Ivanič's framework showed that writing was influenced by various discourses such as "creativity" and "genre". The findings of the present study on the writing task designers' perspective revealed the dominance of "skill discourse" in the context of EAP and "genre discourse" in the context of the academic discipline. Coupled with the findings of

Baker's study, my research can indicate the variety of underlying discourses from different perspectives. Also, it supports the interpretivist stance of the present study, which is also stated by Duff (2008) in this way: "it is this recognition of diverging observations and multiple realities that underlies interpretivism , which is arguably the

most common approach to qualitative case studies in the social sciences (including applied linguistics) at present” (p. 29)

Conclusion

To conclude, participants in both contexts believed in two sets of features: Context-free and context-bound features. Also, the analysis of the interviews and the documents in both contexts reveal that the above-mentioned features are related to three major groups of features: 1- grammar, 2- vocabulary, and 3- structure.

Interestingly, although dominant perceptions on the features of academic writing reflect skills discourse and genre discourse of writing, findings demonstrate that in practice, the approaches to writing task design in both contexts are more compatible with social practice discourses (functional approaches and communication approaches), genre discourses (modelling) and process discourse (planning, drafting, writing). There were no signs of skills approaches to teaching writing in the design of writing tasks.

Chapter 5: Summary, Implications and Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter, first, I will present a summary of the motivation behind the study, the formation of the research questions, the design of the study and key findings. Then, I will provide the theoretical and pedagogical implications of the study. Subsequently, I will assess the limitations of the study and present suggestions for future research. I will conclude the chapter with a synopsis of the previous sections.

Summary of the Study

My search of the relevant literature resulted in the main research question of “how academic writing is conceptualised by writing task designers in the context of EAP and in academic disciplines?” I focused on both contexts because I assumed there should be a connection between the perceptions on the nature of academic writing in the two context. To help answer this question, I developed some other questions:

- 1) How is academic writing conceptualised in a university direct entry preparation program for business, accounting and economics at Macquarie University’s ELC?
- 2) How is academic writing conceptualised in the discipline of Accounting and Corporate Governance at Macquarie University?
- 3) How are participants’ views about academic writing compared in the two contexts?

I chose the Faculty of Business and Economics at Macquarie University as one of the leading business and economics schools worldwide and ELC’s BAE program as one program with the highest number of enrolments.

Since I wanted to discover writing task designers’ underlying perceptions, I interviewed experienced writing task designers and unit convenors in both contexts. Open-ended semi-structured interviews appeared to be the most appropriate method of data

collection in my research because interviews could provide better opportunities for the participants to elaborate on and clarify their perceptions about academic writing. Also, I analysed task descriptions, unit outlines, and assessment rubrics/evaluation criteria to increase the validity of my findings. I assumed that the collected documents designed by the participants could mirror task designers' underlying perceptions about the nature of academic writing.

To facilitate data storage and analysis, I used Nvivo 11 for Windows. I did coding in Nvivo through several steps:

- 1- Creating 12 preliminary categories based on the interviews. I formulated the interview questions based on Ivanič's framework and the collected documents prior to the interviews. I labelled the categories according to 12 preliminary concepts emerged from the interviews.
- 2- Conducting inductive analytical coding based on the relevance of data to the categories. 213 codes emerged at this stage. After merging, deleting and refining, 24 codes were obtained.
- 3- Creating six theory-based categories based on Ivanič's six discourses of writing and categorising the codes into each theory-based categories.

It should be mentioned that the process of coding was iteratively deductive and inductive and although overall categories were framed within Ivanič's framework, all codes were data-driven basically.

I then analysed the source texts related to the codes in each theory-based category to explore the underlying perceptions related to the sources. Based on the analysis of data, the following findings were achieved:

- 1- Participants in both contexts believed writing comprised two sets of features: context-free features and context-bound features.
- 2- Grammar and vocabulary were viewed both as context-free and context-bound:
 - a. Context-free features: features such as sentence structure, word order, verb tense, voice, noun-verb agreement, prepositions, punctuation, singular/plural, and articles.
 - b. Context-bound features: the academic style and formal structure such as hedging, nominalisation, passive voice, avoiding to use contractions, colloquialisms, abbreviations, and first or second pronoun.
- 3- The structure was viewed both as context-free and context-bound:
 - a. Context-free structure: the logical organisation of ideas within and between paragraphs using appropriate linking devices, clear and relevant thesis sentences, accurate introduction, body, and the conclusion paragraph.
 - b. Context-bound structure: various components of each text-type such as the differences in the components of a business report and an argument essay.
- 4- In ELC there was a much higher focus on context-bound and context-free grammar and vocabulary while in the academic discipline, the focus was more on the context-free and context-bound structure.
- 5- Although all participants were aware of the contextualised nature of academic writing, only participant E2 and participant D1 mentioned the broader sociocultural context of writing as an important issue in how academic writing was shaped.
- 6- In both contexts, practice and modelling were the two best methods of learning to write.

- 7- In ELC, task designs reflected Ivanič's functional approaches and process approaches to teaching and in the academic discipline, they were reflective of communicative approaches to teaching.
- 8- Participant D1's perceptions reflected Ivanič's sociopolitical discourse by being aware of the writers' linguistic choices which determine their position in relation to the others.

Theoretical Implications of the Study

To analyse the data of the study, I used Ivanič's framework as an analytical tool which offered a comprehensive view and perceptions about writing. Ivanič's framework covers a range of views from individualistic to constructivist views of writing and learning to write.

The analysis of the perceptions in both contexts resulted in findings which were compatible to an amalgam of various discourses in Ivanič's framework. For example, while participants indicated the importance of context-free linguistic features corresponding to

Ivanič's skills discourse, it was not indicative of a mere individualistic view. Although they valued grammar, vocabulary, and structure as basic skills necessary in any type of writing, they believed that an appropriate writing comprised other features as well which were determined by the context of the writing. These views reflected Ivanič's genre discourse and social practices discourse. Also, while skills discourse comprised parts of the participants' perceptions, none of them mentioned considering the explicit teaching of linguistic features and patterns as part of their writing tasks design practice. On the other hand, tasks were designed in a way that indicated functional approaches and communicative approaches as they pertain to the social practices discourse. Therefore, there are two theoretical implications for this study:

- 1- The findings of this case study contribute to Ivanič's framework by proposing more potential discourses of writing to exist when academic writing is viewed in the context of EAP and in academic disciplines. For example, a potential discourse can be perceptions which focus on the importance of the accurate linguistic features and patterns in texts (skills discourse) while incorporating functional approaches (social practices discourse) in designing writing tasks. In other words, the results of this study show that permutations of Ivanič's six discourses can be a potential tool for discovering the underlying perceptions on the nature of academic writing.
- 2- Discrepancies between the ideas, such as differences in the participants' perception in the importance of grammar in a quality piece of writing, and the impossibility to fitly frame participants' perceptions into Ivanič's six discourses can indicate a constructivist epistemology that reality is constructed by individuals.

Pedagogical Implications of the Study

The findings of the study explain that writing task designers' perspectives about the nature of academic writing need to be considered as an important factor in EAP and academic discipline contexts. An expanded knowledge of various discourses of writing with consideration of its effects on classroom practices, assessment rubrics and evaluation criteria and students' successful performance in academic writing, would benefit EAP and discipline writing task designers and policy makers significantly. Prior knowledge of various discourses of writing and corresponding teaching approaches will help designers create tasks which incorporate both linguistic and the sociocultural aspects.

What has been identified in this study is that there are commonalities and differences in task designers' perspectives towards the nature of academic writing. This study can be an incentive for more future research and practice in promoting meaningful dialogues between

task designers in the context of EAP and the discipline and to inform more research on the ways to improve this dialogue and understanding. One suggestion to promote constructive dialogue is to hold workshops where writing task designers from both contexts and academic writing researchers can meet and discuss perceptions on the nature of academic writing and the expectations regarding a quality piece of academic writing. Also, results of the study show that in both EAP context and in the academic discipline, there is less attention to the sociocultural and political context of writing.

Considering the sociocultural and political layer of language, writing is viewed as “a sociopolitically constructed practice” and it has “consequences for identity, and is open to contestation and change” (Ivanič, 2004, p.225). Therefore, writing task designers in both contexts should know that writing is more than just linguistic and rhetorical features or different text types with specific features. On the other hand, task designers need to design tasks and evaluation criteria in a way that help students improve their “critical language awareness” (Ivanič, 2004, p. 225). According to Ivanič, critical language awareness can be explicitly taught through critical literacy approaches. Thus, writing task designers should consider social responsibility in assessment criteria along with accuracy, appropriacy and effectiveness and design tasks to provide students with the opportunities to understand why different text types are the way they are, and to take a position among alternatives (Ivanič, 2004).

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was the limited time which prevented more clarification and investigation of the participants’ perceptions. In qualitative case studies, the researcher needs enough time to investigate all aspects of the case deeply through the application of various methods. Due to the limitations imposed by the time frame of MRes thesis, I used the

interviews and documents analysis as the preferred method. I believe that a questionnaire prepared based on the interviewees' responses to be administered to a larger sample to elicit their perceptions about academic writing could be valuable and could add to the validity of the findings. The validity of the study could also increase if I had enough time to inquire into participants' feedback on the results of data analysis and to allow for more discussions and clarifications on the results. Perhaps if the participants critiqued the findings and the conclusions of the study, more accurate description of their underlying perceptions could have resulted.

Another limitation of the study was the limited number of task designers in ELC and volunteers in the academic discipline. The research could be more meaningful if I recruited more participants based on various factors such as educational background, experience, cultural background, language and professional background. This could result in more accurate and viable results if more time could be devoted to the process of data collection.

Regarding the participants, another limitation occurred in the context of ELC since current writing task designers were not the sole designers of the writing tasks. The current documents were designed and modified during the course of time by various task designers and what I analysed as the complementary to the interviews could not truly and completely mirror participants' perceptions in the context of EAP in ELC.

Suggestions for Future Research

This research was a small-scale case study with a limited number of participants and time limitation. It is, therefore, impossible to generalise the findings to the population of EAP and discipline writing task designers. Therefore, further research with a larger sample size would add to the findings of this research and the current literature.

Another suggestion for future studies is conducting a case study to analyse underlying perceptions of BAE teachers and students in ELC and in the discipline of accounting and corporate governance about the nature of academic writing by using sociocultural analytical frameworks. Coupled with the findings of the present study, further research on the same issue from other participants can be valuable in presenting a comprehensive view of the nature of academic writing in BAE programs and its counterpart disciplines at Macquarie University. Similar comprehensive case studies on the nature of academic writing in other contexts can also add to the current literature in the field of academic writing.

Conclusion

This qualitative study with a case study design investigated the nature of academic writing in the context of EAP and in an academic discipline as conceived by writing task designers. I conducted this study at Macquarie University with a focus on BAE program in ELC and two postgraduate units in the Faculty of Business and Economics. I recruited two participants from each context to share their perspectives on the importance of academic writing, the features of a quality piece of writing, the ways students can learn how to write and the approaches in designing writing tasks. I also collected task descriptions, assessment rubrics/evaluation criteria, and unit outlines to investigate more into the participants' underlying perceptions. Drawing on Ivanič (2004), I analysed data through open coding into interview-based categories and categorising emerged codes into six theory-based categories related to Ivanič's six discourses of writing, using Nvivo 11 for windows.

Findings of the study explained the importance of a comprehensive view of writing which comprises all discourses presented by Ivanič. Writing task designers' perspectives in both contexts revealed that much focus was put on the written text, the written event, and the mental processes, three layers in the multilayered view of writing proposed by Ivanič.

However, less attention was put on the sociocultural and political context of writing, which is the outmost layer of writing based on Ivanič's model. Ivanič believed that a multi-layered view of writing could be the basis for a comprehensive and holistic wiring pedagogy which comprised all six discourses of wiring. Therefore, awareness of divergent discourses of writing based on the multi-layered nature of language will help writing task designers to create tasks which may take into account both linguistic and non-linguistic features of academic writing.

Considering the limitations of this study associated with sample size and duration of the study, further investigations on the nature of academic writing in the context of EAP and academic disciplines would add to the value of the findings of this study. Also, future research with a similar design but with a focus on other disciplines or other writing programs will contribute to a better understanding of the nature of academic writing in various contexts.

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Appendix A

08/10/2016

Macquarie University Student Email and Calendar Mail - RE: HS Ethics Application - Approved (5201600334)(Con/Met)



MACQUARIE
University

ELAHEH GHARESOUFLOO <elaheh.gharesoufloo@students.mq.edu.au>

RE: HS Ethics Application - Approved (5201600334)(Con/Met)

2 messages

Fhs Ethics <fhs.ethics@mq.edu.au>

Wed, Jun 1, 2016 at 2:16 PM

To: Associate Professor Mehdi Riazi <mehdi.riazi@mq.edu.au>

Cc: Ms Elaheh Gharesoufloo <elaheh.gharesoufloo@students.mq.edu.au>

Dear Associate Professor Riazi,

Re: "Cultures of Writing: Writing in English for Academic Purpose (EAP) courses and writing in disciplines" (5201600334)

Thank you very much for your response. Your response has addressed the issues raised by the Faculty of Human Sciences Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee and approval has been granted, effective 1st June 2016. This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Associate Professor Mehdi Riazi
Ms Elaheh Gharesoufloo

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 1st June 2017
Progress Report 2 Due: 1st June 2018
Progress Report 3 Due: 1st June 2019
Progress Report 4 Due: 1st June 2020
Final Report Due: 1st June 2021

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/application_resources

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Sub-Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).
4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Sub-Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request

08/10/2016 Macquarie University Student Email and Calendar Mail - RE: HS Ethics Application - Approved (5201600334)(Con/Met)

for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/current_research_staff/human_research_ethics/managing_approved_research_projects

5. Please notify the Sub-Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy>

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Secretariat at the address below.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Anthony Miller
Chair
Faculty of Human Sciences
Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee

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Appendix B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introductory Statement

Thank you for choosing to participate in this study. I am a postgraduate student of applied linguistics and I am now conducting research for my Masters' thesis. The research is a small scale case study to compare how academic writing is viewed in the context of English for academic purposes at Macquarie University's English Language Centre and in the context of faculty of business and economics. The focus of the study is graduate programs which have writing assignment as a requirement of the unit. BAE direct entry program at ELC is designed to prepare business, accounting and economics students for their future tertiary studies through introducing them to the basic language skills and disciplinary expectations. It is hoped that the findings of the study contribute to a better understanding of how academic writing is viewed and conceptualised in both contexts. This study is a pilot study and will hopefully be pursued more comprehensively in a PhD project to investigate other aspects of the research questions.

Background Information on Interviewee (writing task designers)

Date:

Name:

What is your job title?

What primary functions does your job involve?

How long have you been involved in this position?

What's your educational background?

Theory-based question (TBQ) 1: the importance of academic writing in this discipline, How important and why?

- 1- Could you please explain to me the importance of (academic) writing in this program?
 - Follow-up question: what role does assignment writing play in this unit?

- 2- How important, do you think, writing is in students' future career?
 - Follow-up question: How learning to write quality reports (assignments) in business and accounting, do you think, would affect students' future career?

- 3- Could you provide me with some examples of where and when BAE students need to write?

Theory-based question (TBQ) 2: Ivanic's beliefs about writing + assessment criteria

- 1- In your opinion what are the main features of a quality piece of written assignment?
 - Follow-up question: would you please tell me about features of a good writing (in business and accounting)?

- 2- How might these features be different in different writing tasks in this program?

- 3- How these features differ from writing in other disciplines/ programs?

- 4- In the position of written assessment task designer, what do you value most in students' written work?

- 5- How do you evaluate a writing assignment with good content and poor language?

Theory-based question (TBQ) 3: Ivanic's beliefs about learning to write

- 1- What specific skills and knowledge do you think students need to successfully complete writing tasks?

2- How, do you think, students can improve their writing skills?

- Follow-up question: how can students learn to write?

Theory-based question (TBQ) 4: Ivanic's beliefs about approaches to the teaching of writing

1- What are some of your main concerns for designing a writing task?

2- Would you please tell me what you do in the process of designing writing tasks to improve students' writing?

- Follow-up question: what do you as a task designer do to improve students' writing skills through designing effective and purposeful writing tasks?

Comments: Is there anything else that you would like to mention about your experience in designing writing tasks?

Concluding Statement: Again I want to thank you for your participation in this study. The information which you provided will be analysed to contribute to a better understanding of how academic writing is viewed from task designers' perspective in the faculty of Business and Economics and the context of EAP programs at ELC to reach more conclusive findings on the features and norms of academic writing in Business and Economics faculty and in ELC's BAE direct entry programs. In case there is a need for more clarification on the provided information, I would be grateful if I could have the chance to contact you in the future.

Appendix C

Sample of the transcripts

A: interviewer/ B: Participant

A: Thank you. Now let's go to the second set of questions which is about your perceptions about the features of academic writing. In your opinion, what are the features of a good piece of writing or written assignment I should say?

B: one of the features, I think, the first thing in an assignment is that they understand the question, understand the focus of the task and complete the task as required; that's what we tell the students, so always read and understand what the assessment is, what the task is, plan to complete the requirements of the task but obviously after that it is looked at obviously the structure, it is a relevant structure for that particular genre of writing, style of writing also that they use the correct academic style and enormously there is grammar and vocabulary required so I think that is the structure and also...

A: what do you mean by structure?

B: well, I mean if they are writing a report they write a report style if writing an essay to write in essay style so the genre fits whatever the requirements of the task is, yeah and in BAE we look at different genres with the students we do reports they do an essay they do a short answer so these are sorts of tasks possibly they would encounter in university.

A: Thank you. In the course outline, it was emphasised that students' writings need to be clear and organised and in some cases students need to support their opinion and in some other cases, they need to evaluate something critically. Would you please tell me more about these requirements?

B: well, some issues that we encounter are issues to do with structure but which that could come from cultural perspective and often most of our cohorts are from China and therefore sometimes in terms of the approach to the task where something is organised

inductively or deductively or how an argument is developed how much support is given for an argument may differ depending on the cultural context or can be an issue of cross-cultural or different cultural approaches to the organisation of a paragraph or an argument and that's something that we work on, which could come as an issue of the cultural environment and so yeah that's something we touch upon it and we come across it well.

A: yeah, thank you. When you say for example you need a piece of writing to be clear or organised they are big terms...

B: okay when we would approach Western English speaking context, what we would see as clear may be complete clarity, may be organised in a completely different way how clear ideas might be organised in another educational context so that's something that we need to encounter or deal with is how we would see something clear and it's not something only in terms of language sentence structure or vocabulary choice; it's also to do with organisation of an argument which could vary in different academic environments and cultural environments.