

# **The Effect of Genre-based Instruction on the Teaching of Business Report Writing**

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## **Abstract**

The present study investigates the application of Genre Theory to the teaching of business report writing to university students. Five instructors, three raters and five groups of learners attending the fourth semester of a six-stage Business English course participated in this study. Three intact classes were randomly selected for the experimental group (EG) and two for the control group (CG).

Each group was administered a pre-test requesting learners to write a business assessment report. The EG then received a four-week instruction period following the principles of a genre-based approach. The CG underwent no treatment. After the period of instruction, a post-test requesting the same task as the pre-test was administered to both groups.

Three independent raters scored the reports using a five-band scale adapted for this study. The quantitative data collected from the tests were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Rank Sums and the Cohen's Simple Unweighted Coefficient statistical tests. Scripts were also analyzed for code associations using the AQUAD.5 (Analysis of Qualitative Data) software. The information gathered was triangulated with the data provided by questionnaires administered to students and interviews held with instructors.

Results support the hypothesis that genre-based instruction enhances the written production of Business English learners with an intermediate English proficiency.

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

BE	Business English
CARS	Create a Research Space
CG	Control Group
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EECTR	Effective English Communication for Teaching and Research
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EG	Experimental Group
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
GBPE	General Purposes Business English
L1	Native Language
NRS	New Rhetoric Studies
RA	Research Article
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SPBE	Specific Purposes Business English
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UE S21	Universidad Empresarial Siglo 21
USA	United States of America

**To the memory of my mother**

## Introduction

Globalization has opened up endless possibilities for companies and firms to develop international links, do business and have partners abroad. Coupled with this, the latest advances in technology have brought about an increase in the amount of written correspondence, especially fostered by the use of the PC. These two facts, together with the status of English as the international language of business communication, account for one of the great challenges university students face at present: the need to develop writing skills in English.

In Argentina, the nineties were characterized by a strong privatization process by which formerly state-owned companies became the property of foreign corporations that began to use English as the *lingua franca* between their headquarters and their branches throughout the world. As a result, and parallel to a boom in in-company English training, academic institutions have started to incorporate Business English (BE) into the syllabuses of their degree programs in an attempt to empower their students to interact efficiently in their future professional activities. This fact is attested to by the large number of textbooks for teaching English in business contexts major editorials have launched in the last decade (Cambridge University Press, LTP Business, Nelson English Language Teaching, Express Publishing, Longman, Heinemann, Phoenix ELT).

Simultaneously, we are witnessing a technological revolution which has dramatically affected communications, changing not only the ways of conducting business but also the ways of communicating for that purpose (Louhiala-Salminen 1999:101). As Brieger (1997:73) points out, the significant increase in the use of personal computers and e-mail has almost replaced secretarial support and, consequently, more and more business people have to write their own texts. Louhiala-Salminen (1996:43) states this point forcefully,

The importance of writing has increased along with the introduction of the new electronic media: what was earlier communicated over the telephone is in many cases more efficiently (saving time, producing a document) done by writing and sending a fax message.

Louhiala-Salminen's (1996) study shows that 62% of Finnish business-people write their own correspondence. What is more, an analysis of job offers for the business sector reveals that 80% of the offers require candidates to manage both spoken and written English. Additionally, a meaningful fact reported by Business English Certificate Examination (BEC) instructors is that intermediate students get lower scores in the area of writing, where they are required to produce business letters, memoranda, and reports, than in the other skills assessed. This condition may have resulted from the fact that the traditional process approaches to writing, with their focus on the writer's cognitive process, have failed to provide a schematic structure that controls and constrains students' written production at this intermediate stage of their written English proficiency. This situation may have been reinforced by the emphasis on oral production brought about by the communicative approach.

For all these reasons, there is a pressing exigency for students who are preparing to work in the business field to develop not only speaking but also writing skills in English. As Louhiala Salminen (1999) explains, being able to write effectively in English has become an essential part of the professional competence required by the business community. Ellis and Johnson (1994) point out that there is no 'best' methodology to teach BE because instructors work in a wide range of learning environments, in different countries and varied cultural backgrounds. This may be one of the reasons why there is no unified theoretical framework that guides BE instructors, who seem to rely more on their own intuitions rather than on research-led methods to carry out instruction, especially in the area of BE writing. Consequently, many BE researchers have called for further research in this field (St. John 1996; Dudley-Evans 1986; Ellis and Johnson 1994).

The development of writing abilities in non-native speakers of English has been the concern of applied linguistics for the past forty years (Grabe and Kaplan 1996). Researchers in this area have developed a number of theories of writing, and their corresponding writing practices, which have been subsequently superseded by more comprehensive views of the writing activity. The 'writing-as-a-product' approach (Britton and Black 1985b, van Dijk and Kintsch 1983), with its focus on the cognitive aspects of writing, gave way to 'writing-as-a-process' approaches (Flower and Hayes

1977; de Beaugrande 1982, 1984; Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987), which provided important insights into what writers actually do as they compose texts and into the development of writing abilities. However, these models of writing have failed to consider the influence of the social context on shaping meaning, have not offered thorough descriptions of the nature of specific recurrent genres used in particular contexts nor have they provided an explanation of why the members of specialist communities write the way they do (Hyland 2003).

These issues seem particularly important in EFL contexts because, as contrastive rhetoric studies have demonstrated, speakers of different disciplinary communities are likely to organize reality in different ways (Kaplan 1988). Therefore, it seems essential for students who are planning to work in the field of business to increase their awareness of

- a) how the business community uses language to achieve specific goals,
- b) the structural, linguistic and rhetorical conventions that govern business written communication in English, and,
- c) the specific contexts in which particular business genres are used.

The emergence of genre studies has fostered the linguistic analysis of written texts from a socio-cultural institutional framework that aims to explain how language works to build the written genres associated with particular disciplinary communities (Christie 1999), thus starting a tradition of research-oriented work in business writing. In this vein, Hyland (2003: 18) points out that genre-based pedagogy offers students “explicit and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in social contexts” in an attempt to answer the question: why do members of specific discourse communities use the language the way they do?. By explaining the relationship between the rhetorical and linguistic choices made by expert genre users and the purposes their texts serve in particular socio-cultural contexts, this type of instruction increases students’ awareness of how genres are shaped to achieve particular goals. For this reason, genre analysis has become a major influence on language teaching in general and on the teaching of BE in particular.

## **Context and rationale of the present study**

This research study was carried out at a privately-run University in Córdoba, Argentina. All programs of study offered by the institution require students to complete a six-level course in BE. Students of different degree programs participated in this research because, for the BE courses, students are grouped according to their English proficiency rather than to their study programs. The reports used for this study belong to the fourth stage of the six-level BE course, which means that the students who participated in this study were at an intermediate level of English proficiency. The students had no English writing experience in their work environment.

From my own experience teaching BE in companies, I have always felt that no pedagogy has been able to equip working adult students with the appropriate skills and strategies to function in the workplace. At the same time, many teachers working in the field have been trained to teach General English and have no relevant training or experience in BE (Donna 2000). They are forced to develop instruction without the support of a sound theory. In short, both the BE students' necessity to develop effective language knowledge and skills in work-related contexts and the lack of a unified approach to the teaching of BE served as the basis for the present study in which I investigated the efficacy of genre-based instruction to the teaching of business report writing. I have presented this study through the following chapters:

Chapter 1 defines the concept of genre in Applied Linguistics, highlighting the major features of genre that make genre analysis appropriate for applications to language teaching in general. The chapter also introduces the reader to Genre Theory, the theoretical background for the present study. It further provides an overview of Business English (BE), the area of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) on which the present study is centered, and discusses the application of genre-based instruction to business writing in particular. Finally, the chapter focuses on *business reports*, the selected genre on which the application of Genre Theory will be investigated. Chapter 2, Methods, introduces the reader to the specific context of the study by describing the participants, materials, procedures and methods of research. It also offers the rationale for the decisions made at each step of the process. Chapter 3 presents and discusses the

results obtained from the analysis of the data. Chapter 4 focuses on the implications derived from the results, the limitations of this research study, and the directions for future research. Lastly, a conclusion reviews the research questions and hypotheses of this research study.

# CHAPTER 1

## Literature Review

### Genre Theory and its Application to the Teaching of Business Report Writing

#### 1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the main issues which will be discussed throughout this research study. It starts by exploring the term ‘genre’ and explaining the scope of the term in Applied Linguistics. This is done through a description of genres’ main properties and a justification of why genre analysis is useful for pedagogical purposes. Section 3 highlights the main concerns of Genre Theory as conceived by the three main traditions that have concentrated on genre studies in the last three decades (New Rhetoric Studies, Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics, and English for Specific Purposes) and discusses the pedagogical applications each school has yielded. Due to the fact that genre-based instruction is still a subject of controversy, section 4 of this chapter discusses some concerns about Genre Theory application and reflects upon teachers’ role within this approach. Section 5 presents a genre view of writing by focusing on key areas of competence: acquisition of genre knowledge, sensitivity to cognitive structures, learner’s knowledge of the code, and exploitation of genre knowledge. Keeping in mind that Genre theory provides an understanding not only of the forms and contents but also of the contexts that shape genres across different cultures, section 6 gives an overview of the business environment in which our university students are likely to interact professionally. Because this type of students needs to learn about the users and uses of common text-types within the context of the target community, section 7 describes the main features that characterize written communication in business contexts. Finally, section 8 brings the reader to *the business report*, the sample genre chosen to carry out this investigation.

## **1.2. The Scope of the Notion of Genre**

The concept of “genre” has been traditionally associated to particular types of discourse – mainly within literary studies. However, during the last three decades, there has been a growing interest in genre as a socio-linguistic activity which is carried out by the members of a community to achieve specific communicative goals (Henry and Roseberry 2001). In this recent conceptualization, every genre is a communicative act and genre analysis is the study of such situated linguistic behavior. This rethinking of genre, from a textual to a socio-cultural institution, has already led to a large body of studies of non-literary written texts such as the writing of professional biologists (Myers 1990), the research article (Swales 1990), the scientific report (Marshall 1991), the journalistic reported version of research articles in science magazines and newspapers (Nwogu 1991), legislative writing (Bhatia 1993), and academic and professional writing (Dudley-Evans 1986), to name but a few. In all cases, genre analysis has been primarily motivated by applied linguistics concerns, exhibiting a genuine interest on the part of researchers in describing how particular communities use language to achieve specific communicative goals. In this research study, I will use the term ‘discourse community’ after Swales’ (1990)<sup>1</sup> to mean the group of people who share common goals within a discipline and communicate with each other through the ‘genres’ they possess; and the term ‘text’ to refer to “any meaningful passage of language that serves some social purpose” (Christie 1999: 760). In order to expand on the notion of genre, I will highlight the major properties of genre under the four headings below and I will point out the reasons that make genre analysis an attractive tool for language teaching.

- Social nature
- Conventionality
- Intentionality
- Schematic structure

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<sup>1</sup> Swales (1990: 24-27) proposes six defining characteristics to identify a group of individuals as a discourse community: 1) A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals; 2) A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members; 3) A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback; 4) A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims; 5) In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis; 6) A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursal expertise.

### 1.2.1. Social nature

From the perspective of applied linguistics, the nature of genre is essentially social and the use of a genre is seen as actual behavior. In fact, in her seminal work, Miller (1994: 153) defined genre as “social action” precisely because community members achieve their communicative goals through the enactment of genres. Such genres are shaped and evolve as participants use them purposefully again and again, thus making the use of a genre a socio-linguistic phenomenon. For instance, in the recurrent situation of a business-person aiming to present a product, he/she will typically use the genre *oral presentation* because this is the type of ‘social action’ prospective customers expect. Similarly, if the communicative goal is to report information to senior management, employees will undoubtedly use the genre *business written report*, as it constitutes the conventional way of such a communicative goal within the business community. Hopefully, these examples will demonstrate that there is a complex interplay between texts and the context or situation in which they are produced. The latter refers not only to a physical place (e.g. a classroom or a company) but also to elements such as role relations, conventions and shared goals that re-occur in specific rhetorical situations (Johns 1997: 27). Genre-based instruction, then, seems to be an attractive approach to language teaching because it combines the advantages of a socio-linguistic perspective, relying on ethnographic information, with those of a cognitive perspective, regarding the use of tactical language, which is the next topic.

### 1.2.2. Conventionality

Genre analysis has demonstrated that, in general, texts belonging to a genre share characteristic linguistic and rhetorical features. But there is no authority or set of rules that prescribes which genres are used to serve the communicative aims of specific groups. Instead, within every discourse community, participants act according to a number of “unwritten rules” or conventions that regulate communication within the group. In other words, genres are shaped by community members as they make use of conventional linguistic strategies (Bhatia 1993: 19-21).<sup>2</sup> To illustrate this, Bhatia calls

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<sup>2</sup> Bhatia (1993) further develops the concept to include the cognitive aspect of genres.

attention to the consistent ways tabloids manipulate the conventions of the genre *news report* in order to attract the readers' attention (p.20). Over time, this practice has shaped a new genre: *tabloids*, and readers of this genre would be surprised if a tabloid reported news in a neutral, objective way, using the rhetorical features that characterize broad-sheets. This example shows that the use of certain genres by specific discourse communities constrains the textual choices participants can make if they are to achieve their communicative goals. For example, at a business meeting, participants would not achieve their communicative goals using the particular discourse of, say, the scientific community. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that those constraints do not constitute a rigid pattern in which minor alterations would render a text inappropriate. In fact, although the *written report* is the main genre used between company managers and employees to transmit requested information, individual reports are likely to exhibit slight variation from company to company reflecting each company's culture and conventions. From the pedagogical point of view, an approach to language teaching based on genre analysis may prove useful as the latter does not aim to provide a static description of language use but a dynamic explanation of how expert members of discourse communities use language to achieve a variety of goals. Therefore, if students become aware of the conventions that define particular genres, they are likely to produce them more accurately and, at higher levels of proficiency, manipulate them to achieve more complex goals. This purposeful nature of genre is the topic of the next subsection.

### **1.2.3. Intentionality**

Genres are associated with shared communicative purposes. Most genre researchers (Swales 1990; Miller 1994; Bhatia 1993; Brieger 1997; Johns 1997; Halliday 1985; Dudley Evans and St Johns 1998; Paltridge 1996) have demonstrated that individuals shape their texts purposefully to communicate with others. Therefore, in order to classify a text as belonging to a particular genre, it is necessary to focus on the goal it aims to achieve. Louhiala-Salminen (2000: 106) clearly states, "The main criterion for a genre is the shared and acknowledged communicative purpose of the text", pointing out that genres are the recognized means through which particular communities achieve their communicative goals. As an example of this, Bhatia's (1993)

analysis of academic and professional genres demonstrates that the abstract and introduction sections of *the research article* (RA) belong to different genres because they serve different communicative goals: the former aims to provide an overview of the RA whereas the latter introduces the RA without giving out everything reported in the RA (p. 82).<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the sales promotion letter and the job application letter, which might be thought to belong to different genres, share a common promotional purpose and are, therefore, considered sub-genres of the same genre.<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, a genre-based approach may increase learners' awareness of the relation between the communicative goals community members want to achieve and the use of particular linguistic or textual features; more importantly, it may help students realize that the purpose of a text defines the genre it belongs to. Now that intentionality has been considered, one significant question should be considered: How are genres structured?

#### **1.2.4. Generic structure**

Every genre exhibits an internal structure made up of self-contained units or 'moves' (Swales 1990) that accomplish partial goals within the text. Motta-Roth (1998: 33) defines a move as "a stretch of discourse (extending for one or more sentences) that realizes a specific communicative function and that represents a stage in the development of an overall structure of information that is commonly associated with the genre". For example, in a seminal study, Swales (1990) found that experienced academic writers introduce the topic of their research articles (RA) by structuring the *Introduction* section around three main moves:

1. Placing the reader in the context.
2. Establishing the problem.
3. Offering a solution.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Bhatia (1993:76-100) for the complete genre analysis of the RA abstract and introduction.

<sup>4</sup> See Bhatia (1993: 45-74) for the complete genre analysis of sales promotion letters and job applications.

<sup>5</sup> In his *Create a Research Space (CARS)* model for article introductions, Swales labels the moves (a) Establishing a territory; (b) Establishing a niche; and (c) Occupying the niche(1990:140).

Similarly, Evans (1998) identifies the four moves that make up the generic structure of an *assessment report*:

1. Stating the purpose and content of the report.
2. Presenting each aspect of the subject.
3. Assessing or summarizing the points mentioned before.
4. Concluding and/or recommending a course of action.

Nevertheless, as I have already mentioned, genres are not static models to be followed; there may be some degree of variation in the number of moves that make up each generic structure as well as in the linguistic resources that realize each move. In fact, from my own experience in teaching BE in companies, I have noticed that in corporations with a pyramidal corporate culture, where there is a clear, rigid definition of functions, assessment reports do not include the move ‘recommendation about the course of action’ whereas in flat structures employees are welcomed to express their suggestions to their senior staff.

In short, like the other properties mentioned, the exploration of generic structure contributes to building up knowledge of particular texts as belonging to particular genres. For this reason, from a pedagogical point of view, learners should be encouraged to carry out genre analysis to increase their awareness of the rhetorical devices expert genre users exploit in producing their texts. It is to be expected, that the less-expert individuals become aware of genre conventions, the sooner they will be able to produce appropriate texts and eventually manipulate language conventions to achieve a variety of goals.

Finally, although I have explained the properties of genre separately for the sake of clarity, I want to point out that they are not independent of each other or mutually exclusive. In fact, all of them are the qualities that belong naturally to any genre. The different schools that have concentrated on genre studies seem, however, to have emphasized one property over the others. In the following section, I will expand on this topic.

### **1.3. Genre Theory**

In the last three decades, there has been a growing interest in genre as a theoretical framework to analyze the form and function of the written discourse of particular disciplinary communities (Bhatia 1993; Swales 1990). Despite what looks like a return to a ‘focus-on-product’ approach, Genre Theory is concerned with the purposes texts serve in particular social contexts and the structural and linguistic choices that realize those purposes. From a pedagogical perspective, being able to describe *why* expert members of particular communities write the way they do is important as it facilitates instructional materials development that will ultimately help students become effective writers in the specific disciplinary community in which they act. Hyon (1996) distinguishes three main traditions that have concentrated on Genre theory in the last decades: North American New Rhetoric Studies (NRS), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), in particular the Sydney School of genre studies, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), the movement on which the present research study is centered. Because researchers in these traditions share their object of study, there is naturally some degree of overlapping regarding their conceptualization of certain properties of genre, as well as mutual influence. However, since NRS, SFL, and ESP have focused on genre with dissimilar objectives and in diverse contexts, they have defined genre somewhat differently and, therefore, have yielded divergent pedagogical implications. What follows is an overview of these traditions, their views of genre analysis, and the pedagogical applications each has yielded.

#### **1.3.1. North American New Rhetoric Studies (NRS)**

North American New Rhetoric Studies was developed in the USA among experts on rhetorics, composition and professional writing. New Rhetoricians have centered their genre studies on native contexts, defining genre as a ‘social act’ (Miller 1994: 153) individuals perform by participating in the activities of a community. Because scholars in this tradition (e.g. Miller 1994, 1994; Bazerman 1988; Myers 1990; Freedman 1999) are concerned with the social purposes that specific types of texts fulfill in social situations, they focus on the functional and contextual aspects of genres rather than on their form. Although textual regularities of form and content are not ignored, NRS holds

that “a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish” (Miller 1994: 152). In fact, Miller argues that the recurrent linguistic features that are used to realize a purpose within a social context “should not be considered material but socially constructed” (ibid). In other words, conventionalized textual regularities are communally constructed out of the shared experience of community participants. In an article on the social construction of popular science, Myers (1990) points out that the systematic changes in organization, syntax and vocabulary that article editors make to the articles they revise may not be just minor changes to improve those articles but may alter the articles’ social constructions or genres, turning, for example, a narrative of science into a narrative of nature. In this line of thought, researchers in this tradition reveal a strong ethnographic orientation to analyze the relationship between text and context. Freedman and Medway (1994) report on Yates’ (1989) work, which used ethnographic rather than linguistic methods to analyze the historical evolution of the memo in response to changes in the social and organizational business situation. Similarly, Bazerman (1988, cited in Hyonn 1996) traced the evolution of the genre features of the research article as it has adapted itself to changes in the area of scientific knowledge, thus highlighting the relationship between text and social context. This active nature of genre is similarly highlighted by Miller when she holds that genres ‘evolve, develop and decay’ according to changes in the social contexts in which they are used (Miller 1994:164). In short, for NRS, knowledge of the context in which genres are used is more important than knowledge of the linguistic forms that realize it.

### **Pedagogical applications**

With regards to pedagogical applications, New Rhetoricians seem to doubt the efficacy of teaching students the linguistic and structural conventions that characterize particular genres for a number of reasons. Freedman (1999), for example, reports that this tradition has not provided genre-based instructional frameworks on the belief that individuals acquire and improve the specific linguistic conventions of the genres they need only as they participate in particular social situations. It is important to note though, that this approach to genre focuses only on native speakers, and therefore, this may be the reason why they hold a perspective that views knowledge as socially

developed, that is, as an inevitable response to the needs and goals of a particular community. In agreement with Freedman, Mulholland (1999) carried out a study of the genre features of e-mails to conclude that e-mail writers have not derived their modes of use, style and language from any systematic instruction but from their previous knowledge of related genres such as letters and memoranda. Coming back to Freedman and her socio-constructionist perspective, she doubts that genres elicited in one context can be successfully taught in a different context because she claims that genres are “dynamic, fluid and blurred” (p.766). In other words, the regularities from one context or situation become less clear when extended to another context because the rhetorical conventions that characterize particular genres are communally adapted to suit the emerging communicative needs of the community participants. Nevertheless, she acknowledges the potential of a genre-based approach to pedagogy as it raises native students’ awareness of the specific social demands they are likely to meet in particular settings. The following quotation from Miller (1994) summarizes the socio-constructionist view held by New Rhetoricians,

What we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have: we learn that we may eulogize, apologize, recommend one person to another, instruct customers on behalf of a manufacturer, take an official role, account for progress in achieving goals. We learn to understand better the situations in which we find ourselves and the potential for failure or success in acting together. (p. 166,167)

Consequently, this tradition recommends teachers to raise native students’ awareness of the extent to which model texts respond to the “complex, discursive, ideological, social, cultural, institutional context within which they are set” (Freedman 1999: 767). In other words, genres are considered a key to understanding how to participate successfully in the activities of the community (Miller 1994).

On account of the NRS’s view of genre, one may reasonably think that this tradition sees a limited potential to genre-based instruction because, as has been mentioned, their experts work in native contexts, where learners have plenty of opportunities to be exposed to the genres they need to learn. However, in the case of second and foreign language contexts, a genre-based pedagogy may be used to introduce learners to the model texts they are expected to produce in the community they strive to belong to, in order to raise their awareness of the conventional forms and structures used by expert genre users in recurrent social situations, and to offer them the possibility to practice them under the supervision of an instructor.

### 1.3.2. Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

A second tradition that has concentrated on genre studies is Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics. This school was born as an educational application of Halliday's systemic functional grammar; accordingly, like New Rhetoricians, researchers in this tradition have developed a social approach to genre but have stressed the functional use of language (Grabe and Kaplan 1996). As Eggins (1994) points out,

Studying how people use language forces us to recognize, first, that linguistic behavior is goal oriented (we can only make sense of talk if we assume it to be purposeful); and second, that linguistic behavior takes place both within a situation and a culture, in relation to which it can be evaluated as appropriate or inappropriate. (p. 29)

Unlike New Rhetoricians, this tradition is strongly concerned with the formal properties of language. Martin and his colleagues have analyzed how people use the language to achieve communicative goals by focusing on the relationship between language forms and their functions in social settings (Louhiala-Salminen 2000; Hyon 1996). SFL distinguishes three levels of meaning or "metafunctions" of language that are consciously or unconsciously realized through lexico-grammatical choices made at each level by language producers: the ideational level, by which reality is represented; the interpersonal level, which includes role relations and attitudes between participants in a language event; and the textual level, which is to do with the organization of texts as effective messages (Martin, Matthiessen and Painter 1997). Like NRS, this perspective tradition is socially-oriented because, as Eggins (1994) points out, it includes two contextual dimensions which influence the lexico-grammatical choices made in a text: the context of culture and the context of situation<sup>6</sup>. At the level of the context of culture, choices made with respect to the different stages in which a text is divided constitute the schematic structure that defines the genre of a text; simultaneously, choices at the level of the context of situation (register) realize each stage of the schematic structure (Eggins 1994). Therefore, researchers in this tradition have fostered the analysis of these two contextual dimensions in authentic model texts as they consider it a useful strategy for non-native students, who are encouraged to

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<sup>6</sup> The terms "context of culture" and "context of situation" were first used by Malinowsky (1923, cited in Christie 1999)

analyze, imitate and eventually- at higher L2 proficiency levels- deviate from the genre features of authentic texts in order to serve more sophisticated purposes.

### **Pedagogical applications**

This tradition's main concern has been to help primary and secondary students as well as adult immigrants develop the ability to make meaningful lexico-grammatical choices in their texts and to interpret such choices in the discourse of others. Work along these lines has provided important contributions to language education because it has helped students realize:

- (a) that every text has a communicative purpose which is step by step fulfilled in separate stages;
- (b) that there is an array of meaningful linguistic choices available to realize each stage of the generic structure of a text.
- (c) that the lexico-grammatical choices students make should be governed by the communicative goals they aim to achieve; for example, the decision to use passive constructions in a particular text may serve the purpose of foregrounding the actions rather than the agents.

These concepts were first applied in the field of L1 learning in the late 1980s, when a group of Australian researchers founded the Literacy and Education Research Network (LERN) in order to develop literacy in L1 school children. Based on the conviction that minorities fail to succeed in their communities because they do not experience enough exposure to key genres, this program designed a genre-based instructional approach to help students master a variety of school genres such as *explanation*, *description* and *argumentation* genres that constitute products of their own within the school context (Kay and Dudley-Evans 1998; Hyon 1996). The program seems to have helped learners realize that the configuration of meanings into functional stages, as well as the lexico-grammatical choices that realize them, are governed by the purposes particular genres serve in society. More recent research has also focused on written genres in the workplace and in academic settings. In fact, Martínez (2002)

designed a course for Spanish-speaking researchers in order to increase their awareness of the rhetorical and linguistic features that characterize the experimental research article keeping in mind the social situation that constrains their use. Additionally, Eleanor Er (1993) suggests that genre-based analysis of learners' text can be used for diagnosis assessment and to inform further teaching directions.

Christie (1999: 762) summarizes the pedagogical potential of genre studies within the view of the SFL tradition:

- They offer a principled way to identify and focus upon different types of English texts, providing a framework in which to learn features of grammar and discourse.
- They offer students a sense of the generic models that are regularly revisited in an English-speaking culture, illuminating ways in which they are adapted or accommodated in long bodies of text in which several distinct genres may be found.
- They offer the capacity for initiating students into ways of making meaning that are valued in English-speaking communities.
- Because they permit all these things, they also form a potential basis for reflecting on and critiquing the ways in which knowledge and information are organized and constructed in the English language.

Christie's list reveals that, in contrast with NRS, researchers in the SFL tradition consider the role of the instructor to be highly active and participatory in guiding learners through the rhetorical steps they have to analyze and follow to conform to the expectations of the participants of the discourse community they aim to belong to (Hyland, 2003).

In conclusion, these approaches to genre have assigned prominence to some genre properties over the others. While NRS is mainly concerned with the social nature of genres, SFL focuses on intentionality, the genre property that governs the language choices genre users make to achieve their communicative goals. I have already explained that both traditions have yielded significant contributions to specific areas of language teaching (New Rhetoric Studies in native contexts and Systemic Functional Linguistics to empower minorities). However, for the present work, I have chosen to follow a third tradition in genre studies, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), because I think it is the most suitable approach to teaching English writing to students who are preparing to work in the field of business.

### 1.3.3. English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

English for Specific Purposes is a movement within the fields of the Teaching of English as a Foreign (TEFL) or Second Language (TESL) that evolved during the 1960s out of the need to tailor instruction to specific rather than general purposes. ESP constitutes an eclectic approach to genre studies as it draws on a number of disciplines such as text analysis, linguistics, sociology and psychology (Bhatia 1993) and its main goal is to devise educational practices to help adult learners become effective language users in particular discourse communities. Swales (1990), a major proponent of Genre theory in ESP, defines genre as “a communicative event” that has “a communicative purpose” and exhibits “patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content, and intended audience” (p. 58). In this view, every written text belonging to a genre is considered representative of the linguistic resources particular communities exploit to accomplish their communicative goals. Swales’ ideas were first used in the field of academic discourse where his *CARS* (Create a Research Space) model of genre analysis was applied to the Introduction section of research articles. After Swales, other researchers in this tradition have investigated the application of genre analysis to written language not only in academic (Dudley-Evans 1986; Marshall, 1991; Swales 1990, 1996; Bhatia 1993; Brett 1994; Johns 1995; Connor and Mauranen 1999,) but also in professional settings (Marshall 1991; Bhatia 1993; Johns 1995; Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 1999; van Nus 1999; Henry and Roseberry 2001). All these studies have focused on the rhetorical structure and linguistic features through which expert users of particular genres realize their communicative goals, on the belief that “genre differentiation provides the opening strategy in elucidating the characteristics of recurring and regularized communicative events” (Swales, 1990:130). At this point, it is necessary to return to Swales’ definition of genre in which he highlights not only the communicative and purposeful function of genres, but also the fact that genres have recurrent patterns of organization and language. These textual similarities are only one of the reasons why ESP experts see genre analysis as a useful tool in helping non-native speakers cope with the writing tasks required of them in academic and professional contexts (Bhatia 1993; Paltridge 1996). However, it would be a mistake to think that genres are formulas, or in Swales’ (1990: 58) words, *prototypes*, that learners can imitate step by step because although moves analysis allows experts to make detailed

descriptions of specific genres, some genres have a less predictable structure (Dudley-Evans and St Johns 1998:10). In short, within the ESP tradition, variation is just as important as similarity. As Hyland (2003:23) states, “texts spread along a continuum of approximation to core genre examples” and there are naturally varying options and restrictions that operate in particular situations. For this reason, ESP analysts are also concerned with exploring the contextual constraints that account for the existing variation within genres. In this vein, Eustace (1996), who describes conventional aspects of current practice in letter, report, and proposal-writing in the business field, suggests that these texts should never go beyond one page because clarity, brevity, and effectiveness are more highly appreciated in that particular community than in, say, the scientific community. In short, as Bhatia (1993:11) indicates, the ESP approach offers a ‘thick’ description of language in use, that is, specific features of lexico-grammar or discourse organization of texts or genres, combined with the socio-cultural aspects of text construction.

Returning to the pedagogical goal of the ESP tradition, and keeping in mind both similarities and variation within genres, Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998) support the application of genre analysis as it allows students

“... to make sense of the world around them and participate in it, and be more aware of writing as a tool that can be used and manipulated. It enables students to enter a particular discourse community, and discover how writers organize texts; it promotes flexible thinking and, in the long run, informed creativity, since students ‘need to learn the rules before they can transcend them’ (p. 310).

These are some of the reasons why ESP researchers and practitioners consider genre analysis the main tool in language teaching to non-native learners who need to develop the specific language skills expert genre users already possess. But, how are genres shaped?

In agreement with New Rhetoric studies, ESP views each genre as a ‘typified social action’ (Miller 1994), and writing as a social activity that shapes organizational and social structures. By reproducing the particular rhetorical and linguistic conventions that characterize the genres through which they communicate, participants reinforce their role as members of a professional community. In Bargiela-Chappini & Nickerson’s (1999: 3) words, genres are “the ‘relatively stable’

forms of communication which develop in the course of production and reproduction of communicative practices within a community, and which are recognized by the members of that community”. In this view, each genre is a form of communication that serves an overall communicative goal and consists of a series of rhetorical ‘moves’ (Swales 1990) which accomplish partial intentions within a text. For example, the move *credentials* in a sales letter describes in an appealing way the company’s strengths and achievements. This move aims to attract the reader’s attention and at the same time, contributes to the overall communicative purpose of the genre: to persuade the prospective customer to do business with the company<sup>7</sup>. ESP researchers claim that a close observation of the stylistic features in each move reveals the conventionalized linguistic choices used by the sales community to realize step-by-step intentions, and the detailed analysis of the underlying structure in which each move is inter-related to the others serves to describe the generic structure that characterizes the genre *sales letters*. Following this line of thought, Dudley-Evans (1986) carried out an investigation of the Introduction and Discussion sections of MSc dissertations, coming to the conclusion that the MSc dissertations examined showed “a pattern of organization similar to that suggested for article introductions by Swales (1981)” (p. 144). In the field of Business English, Miriam van Nus (1999) describes the structural units of business letters. She concludes that “most of these elements”, i.e., letterhead, inside address, reference, date, salutation, subjection line, pre-close, close, signature, and postscript, “are standard elements of the format of a business letter” (p. 188)<sup>8</sup>.

To sum up, within the ESP tradition, every genre is considered the instantiation of specific purposes in particular situations through the use of conventionalized rhetorical and linguistic resources, and genre analysis is seen as a useful tool to teach non-native speakers the genre conventions that characterize the discourse communities in which they need to participate.

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<sup>7</sup> For a complete genre-based analysis of job applications and sales promotions, see Bhatia (1993:45-75).

<sup>8</sup> Van Nus (1999)’s empirical study is enriched by the corresponding functional analysis of each of the units or moves thus highlighting the correlation between forms and functions within the genre (188-191).

## **Pedagogical applications**

Since the early nineties, ESP has produced a wide range of teaching materials for academic and professional purposes. In the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP)<sup>9</sup>, most of the pedagogical materials produced have followed Swales' (1990) *Genre Analysis* and Bhatia's (1993) *Analyzing Genre*, which point out the writing conventions that constrain academic genres. For example, the San Diego State University has been successfully running a genre-based course to teach freshman students of diverse cultures the *classroom* genres they need to manage (Johns 1995). Similarly, the ESL Service Courses at UCLA designed a specialized "English for Science and Technology" course to teach academic writing to second language undergraduates of the natural, physical, and social sciences (Jacoby, Leech & Holten 1995). Connor and Mauranen (1999) carried out Swalesian genre analysis of *Grant Proposals* to help academicians succeed in their written presentations and Marshal (1991) followed suit with scientific and technical report writing to guide L2 students. In the field of English for business purposes, Pinto dos Santos (2002) adopted Swales'(1990) definition of genre as a rhetorical-functional framework to carry out genre analysis of 117 commercial letters in English exchanged by fax between a Brazilian company and two European companies. She points out the suitability of the approach for beginner students as well as for slow learners because it helps them become aware of text characteristics of particular communities. In fact, she concludes that "although one cannot ensure success in foreign language communication simply by teaching contextualized linguistic, and cultural and social, differences, yet by making students aware of the implications and the purpose of such differences one can, at least, contribute to a student's pragmatic progress in his/her professional activity"(p.187). In short, the contributions of the ESP school point to the potential of the genre-based approach as it fosters students' awareness of

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<sup>9</sup> EAP, a sub-discipline of ESP, is concerned with teaching the communication skills required for study purposes in formal education systems and aims to provide syllabus and course designs for both native and non-native English speakers (Jordan 1997).

- (a) the purposes texts serve in society
- (b) the distinctive schematic structure that characterizes each genre
- (c) the linguistic and rhetorical resources that realize the purpose of each genre, highlighting variation rather than uniformity in the functional use of language.

In conclusion, the three genre schools surveyed above show considerable overlap regarding the conception of genre from a socio-linguistic point of view, the identification of each genre according to the purpose it serves, and the relevance of the writer's linguistic and rhetorical choices in the construction of meaning. The main differences seem to lie in the way these schools have analyzed discourse and the specific institutionalized contexts where such analysis has been applied. As I hope to have made clear, NR is concerned with situational appropriateness and distrusts the pedagogical potential of genre analysis, SFL points out the crucial role of language in the construction of social life and is mainly concerned with classroom genres and literacy, and ESP prioritizes the moves structure in genre analysis and aims to devise pedagogical materials to be used in academic and professional contexts. As a result, there is yet to be a unified theoretical approach (Dudley-Evans and Johns 1998) and genre-based instruction is still a subject of controversy.

#### **1.4. Concerns about genre-based pedagogy**

Although during the last three decades genre theories have been applied to the study of many types of writing (e.g. Bhatia 1993; Swales 1990; Johns 1990, 1997; Dudley Evans 1994; Marshall 1991; Henry and Roseberry 2001; Myers 1990; Nwogu 1991; Orlikowski and Yates 1994), there are still some concerns to be addressed regarding the application of genre-based approaches in L2 writing situations. In 1998, Kay and Dudley-Evans ran a workshop in Singapore in which teachers who had put genre-based approaches in practice shared their views and experiences with them. Some of the teachers contended that the approach is more suitable for learners at beginner or intermediate levels of proficiency because "it gives them confidence, and enables them to produce a text that serves its intended

purpose” (Kay and Dudley-Evans 1998: 308). On the other hand, some teachers expressed concern “about the danger of the approach being prescriptive rather than descriptive, and the possibility of leading students to expect to be told how to write certain types of texts” (ibid: 311). In the same vein, Freedman and Medway (1994) have expressed that genre-based pedagogy may become a “show and tell” approach that may lead to a highly formulaic, prescriptive pedagogy thus limiting rather than facilitating learning. Admitting this limitation of the genre-based approach, Bhatia (1993: 40) claims that only as long as the writer is well aware of the rules and conventions that govern a genre can more creative communication be achieved.

In contrast with the views addressed in 2.3, and consistent with Bhatia’s (1993) opinion, Sengupta, Forey, and Hamp Lyons (1999) developed a genre model for adult learners’ consciousness raising entitled *Effective English Communication for Teaching and Research* (EECTR) on the belief that “academic language users will be more able to express their voices within their texts if they have a greater explicit understanding of the general conventions governing academic discourse” (p.15). In fact, Trebucq (2001) designed a genre-based set of activities which required students from the banking sector to analyze model texts belonging to different but related genres and to point out similarities and differences across the texts. After the activities, students were more capable of identifying each genre’s conventional constraints<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, by having students define the purpose of a number of texts belonging to various genres, they were able to focus on the textual elements that realize the purpose of each genre<sup>11</sup>. In fact, it became evident that genre-based instruction developed learners’ awareness of the linguistic features expert writers make use of to achieve their communicative goals; in other words, they were empowered to write the type of texts that the members of the banking community they belonged to were expected to produce. Therefore, I adhere to EECTR authors who consider genre analysis "a pedagogy of possibilities, not prescription" (p. 15).

Interestingly, Wesolowski (2000) applied genre analysis to the teaching of business letters to French-speaking students. Her assumption was that “each genre of business communication relies on ponderous sentence structure and unoriginal phrases or even clichés” (p. 93); consequently, she proposed the use of model texts

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix B for a sample activity.

for analysis, description and imitation, and stressed the importance of memorization from the outset. What is more, she concluded that teachers should tell students that there is absolutely no room for innovation in business correspondence and that most of the recurrent linguistic features that realize business texts are simply formulaic (ibid).

To sum up, although genre analysis has been successfully applied to identify the communicative goals of particular communities and the particular strategies employed to achieve those goals, its main weakness seems to be the alleged danger of limiting the fluent writer's creativity and freedom to express his/her communicative goals. As previously explained, ESP experts have tried to overcome this hazard by:

- (a) acknowledging that participants in a genre have varying degrees of linguistic and communicative competence (Marshall 1991),
- (b) highlighting variation rather than uniformity in the functional use of language (Hyland 2003:25), and
- (c) pointing out that as learners develop expertise at different stages, they can confidently interpret, use or even manipulate genre conventions to suit their communicative goals (Bhatia 1993).

### **1.5. A genre view of writing**

Much work in applied genre analysis (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993; Dudley-Evans 1986) highlights the relevance of linguistic analysis in developing writing skills. As mentioned before, genre analysis has not only become a tool to explain why members of specific communities write their texts the way they do, but also has helped learners become aware of the close relation between language use and social purposes (Hyland 2003). But apart from that, Bhatia (1993) points out that the analysis of language use has steadily progressed from linguistic description at a surface level (register analysis) to what he calls a "thicker description or explanation

of language use”<sup>12</sup>. As mentioned in section 2.3.3, this type of description includes ethnographic information as an essential component to understand the tactical aspects of text construction because, as Orlikowsky and Yates (1996: 546, 547) claim, knowing the repertoire of genres of a community reveals a great deal about the community’s identity and its organizing processes. Additionally, genre studies have drawn on ethno-methodology, sociology, psychology, and cognitive and communication studies because, as Bhatia (1993) suggests, the knowledge writers gain through experience in discourse communities is not simply about text similarities, but also about the contextual constraints that underlie their verbal responses. Hyland (2003) makes this point forcefully when he refers to non-native students in specialist communities:

Genre knowledge is important to students’ understanding of their L2 environment, and crucial to their life chances in those environments. The teaching of key genres is, therefore, a means of helping learners gain access to ways of communicating that have accrued cultural capital in particular professional, academic, and occupational communities. (p. 24)

In other words, the more students learn about genres, the more they conform to the conventional practices of particular communities. Bhatia (1993) states four main areas of competence that learners need to develop in order to interact successfully in any professional community: (a) knowledge of the code, (b) acquisition of genre-knowledge, (c) sensitivity to cognitive structures, and (d) exploitation of genre knowledge. There follows an explanation of each competence.

### **1.5.1. Knowledge of the specialists’ code**

In the previous discussion of genre properties (see 2.2.), it was pointed out that participants of specialist communities use recurrent genres to achieve their communicative goals. Knowledge of the code is a pre-requisite for developing communicative competence in specific contexts because it presupposes not only the need for a range of specific vocabulary dealing with shared professional issues but also familiarity with the grammatical, syntactic and rhetorical resources expert

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed description of the evolution of discourse analysis, see Bhatia, 1993: 4-12)

writers recurrently use (Bhatia 1993). With regards to this, many authors (Bhatia 1993; Brieger 1997; Hyland 2003) point out that although learners may enjoy a high level of proficiency in every-day written communication, they still need to acquire knowledge of the specialist code because there are lexico-grammatical, semantic-pragmatic and discourse resources which carry genre-specific values in specialized contexts. My own experience teaching Business English (BE) confirms that understanding and internalizing the code helps learners overcome their lack of confidence in writing BE texts. However, as Bhatia (1993) points out, perfect knowledge of the code is not enough to be a successful writer because writing is a communicative event that takes place in particular social situations. The next area of competence learners need to develop in order to acquire writing expertise is genre-knowledge.

### **1.5.2. Acquisition of genre knowledge**

As previously explained, genres are both goal-oriented (see 1.2.3.) and socially shaped (see 1.2.1.). Therefore, learners also need to acquire knowledge about the users and uses of common text types within the context of the target culture. Orlikowsky and Yates (1996) explain that the set of genres routinely enacted by a particular community reveals important aspects of that community's identity and its organizing processes. For example, Nickerson (1998) carried out an investigation on the type of written communication used by non-English speakers working in a Dutch subsidiary of a multinational company with its head office in Britain. She found that employees communicate with their managers through business reports written in English. Interestingly, English is the native language of Directors and Managers; therefore, the genres used within the company reflect the British authority within the company. Additionally, Nickerson points out that there is a general pattern of communication within multinational companies where "language is not considered as separate from the company environment within which it is used, but rather as an intrinsic part of that environment" (p.282). In other words, being aware of users and uses of target genres seems to be crucial for English learners' future professional development in the international business environment.

### **1.5.3. Sensitivity to schematic structures**

Having developed expertise in the use of the code and awareness of the social contexts in which specific genres are recurrently used, learners still need to become familiar with the conventional cognitive structures around which specialists shape their written genres. As explained in 2.2.4., every genre exhibits a ‘recognizable structural identity’ (Hyland 2003:22) built around stages or rhetorical moves that accomplish partial goals within the text. In the same vein, Swales (1990), Evans (1998) and Hyland (2003) were cited to support the view that learners’ observation and instructors’ explanations of the strategies used in each move allow learners to gain an explicit understanding of how specialist written texts are structured and why they are written in the ways they are. As apprentices develop sensitivity to the schematic structure of genre-specific texts, they are likely to increase the pragmatic success of their written production in specialist contexts. But what else are learners empowered to do after having developed expertise at the levels discussed above?

### **1.5.4. Exploitation of genre knowledge**

According to Bhatia (1990), once learners have developed genre knowledge, knowledge of the code, and understanding of generic structures, they can confidently interpret and use target genres. In addition, they are already empowered to engage in criticism of not only textual but also cultural practices. What is more, at an advanced stage, they may be able to manipulate genre conventions to suit different communicative goals. This does not mean that constraints imposed on writers by institutions and communities can be disregarded; however, it reinforces that genre-based pedagogy focuses not only on similarities but also on purposeful variation (Hyland 2003).

In previous sections, I have surveyed the work of language teaching researchers and practitioners who have been concerned with Genre Theory and pedagogy over the last three decades. I have explored the social nature of genre, its conventionality,

intentionality and generic structure, and the main properties that characterize genre conceptions in applied linguistics. Since there is yet to be a unified theoretical approach, I have outlined in section 2.3., the main schools that are concerned with Genre Theory at present, pointing out overlaps and differences in their conceptions of genre and in the pedagogical applications they have yielded. Keeping in mind that there are still some concerns regarding the application of genre-based approaches, I have summarized current criticism on the value of genre pedagogy. Finally, I have focused on genre views of writing, hopefully demonstrating that genre pedagogy rests upon observation and explanation of the ways in which expert writers construe their texts and of the discourse strategies they make use of to achieve their intentions.

At this point, I would like to restate that this research study investigates the efficacy of genre-based instruction in the teaching of business report writing (see 1.2.). To carry out this study, I chose to work with the *business report* because it is one of the genres that Business English learners will surely have to use in their professional life. But before turning to the application of genre pedagogy to the teaching of report writing, the following subsection will define the context of this study, English for Business Purposes, commonly referred to as Business English.

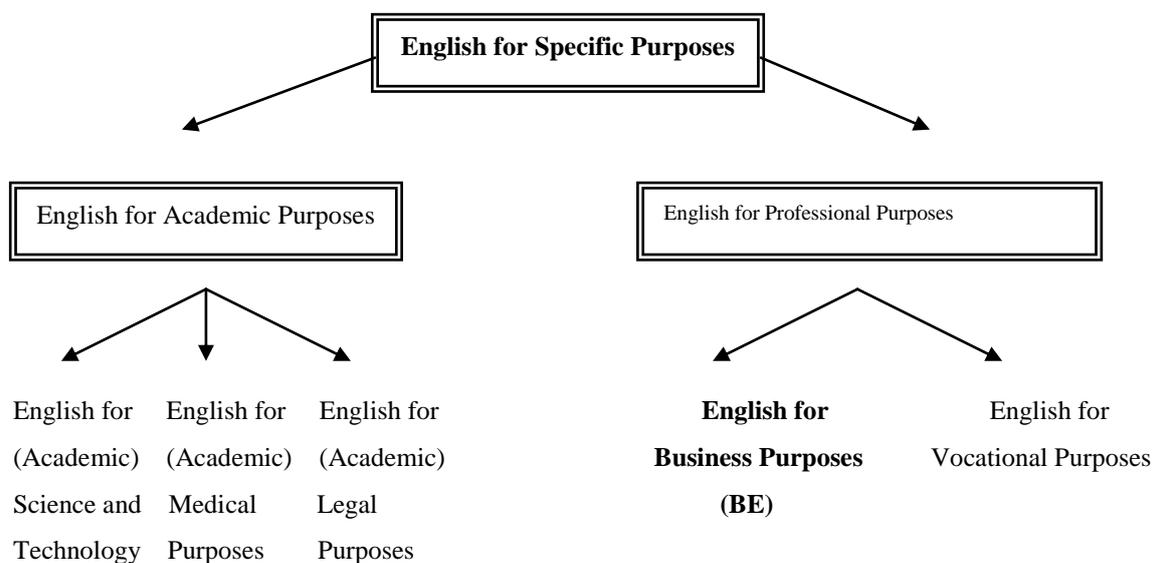
### **1.6. Business English (BE)**

Business English is a sub-division of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) that started to evolve during the late 1970s as a result of the close connection between ESP and the professional community. At its onset, BE was just a course program and learning objective (Brieger, 1997); nowadays, it has become the area of greatest activity and growth in ESP (Dudley-Evans and St Johns 1998: 53; Hewings and Nickerson, 1999)<sup>13</sup>. BE is a materials-oriented, goal-driven movement aiming to teach English to adults working in business or preparing to work in the field of business (Dudley-Evans and St Johns 1998; Donna, 2000). The lack of an established theory is a distinguishing mark of BE teaching, which has been

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<sup>13</sup> The growth of BE is reflected in the number of books and materials for BE that has been published since the 1990s and the increasing number of exams for BE (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate).

influenced by both the ELT and the non-ELT world in its attempt to teach knowledge of specialist language and, more recently, an understanding of the role of communication in professional situations (Brieger, 1997). Over the last three decades, there have been an increasing number of research studies on English teaching in the business world, a tendency that has led to the study of different professional genres and to interdisciplinary studies, making BE less intuition-led and more research-driven. The position of BE within ESP is shown in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1 Position of BE within the English for Specific Purposes field.**  
(Adapted from Dudley-Evans and St Johns 1998: 6)

Additionally, Dudley-Evans and St Johns (1998) distinguish between general (GPBE) and specific purpose business (SPBE) courses. The former are usually designed for learners without work experience and are similar to EFL courses, as the traditional four skills are taught, with materials set in the context of business; the latter are for job-experienced learners, focus on one or two particular skills in specific business situations and are usually run as one-to-one in-company courses. However, whether broad or narrow, the aims of a BE course will always relate to students' work-related language needs. Keeping in mind that the present study was

carried out with university students who did not yet have a clear idea of what specific professional settings they would work in, the type of course I will be referring to as BE corresponds to English for general business purposes (GPBE).

### **1.6.1. Business English (BE) teaching**

Naturally, there is a high degree of overlap between teaching General English and teaching Business English as both course types share a common core of language teaching units (Bhatia 1993). However, while students' language expectations are rarely immediate in General English classes, BE students have an urgent need to develop work-related language skills in a usually limited time. Consequently, a distinguishing mark of BE courses is their specificity in relation to students' needs and objectives. Such specificity is discussed below in three key areas of language teaching: needs analysis, syllabus and course design, and materials selection and development. The discussion aims to build up the readers' knowledge of BE teaching in order for them to better understand the decision made in this study.

#### **1.6.1.a Needs analysis**

As mentioned above, a hallmark of ESP courses, and therefore, of BE courses is their specificity in relation to students' needs (Brieger 1998; Donna 2000). ESP experts have proposed several procedures to identify students' needs. Pilbeam (1979), for example, establishes a two-fold procedure<sup>14</sup>, usually carried out in an oral interview, which seems to be suitable for individual training where syllabuses

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<sup>14</sup> Pilbeam's procedure includes (1) a target profile of language skills, which defines the actual tasks students have to carry out (*Target Situation Analysis*) and (2) a profile of personal ability, which assesses the students' proficiency in such tasks (*Present Situation Analysis*)

are customized in terms of content and pace. Holden's procedure<sup>15</sup> involves a three-stage analysis and seems to be adequate for small groups of learners, as it provides information about learning styles and strategies that can help the design of more effective business courses (Holden 1993, cited in Dudley-Evans and St Johns 1998). Brieger's (1997) approach includes the identification of the range of general and specialist language knowledge required by students, together with general and professional communication skills. As a point of departure, he suggests addressing the following questions:

- What types of information do we need to get?
- How can we get this information?
- How can we translate the information collected into objectives? (p.88)

In fact, Brieger's procedure was followed to identify the needs of the university students who participated in this research study on accounts of the large number of students and the impossibility to take into account individual learning styles. In short, it is part of the teacher's task to design and deliver courses that satisfy work needs. On the basis of the information gathered through needs analysis, course programmers can proceed to syllabus and course design.

### **1.6.1.b Syllabus and course design**

The syllabus and design of a BE course is directly related to the learners' work needs. Therefore, there is often a mix of specific content related to a particular job area and general content related to the general ability to communicate effectively (Brieger 1997; Dudley-Evans and St Johns 1998; Donna 2000; Ellis and Johnson 1994). I will highlight here some significant differences that may influence syllabus and course design.

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<sup>15</sup> Holden's procedure includes (1) identification of target language needs, (2) an interview to evaluate the learners' perceptions of communication within their own corporate culture, and (3) a questionnaire to establish preferred learning styles.

### *Individual vs. group courses*

Whereas individual courses offer the instructor the possibility to tailor content to the learner's goals, group courses, like the ones involved in this research work, need to satisfy the needs of learners who may not share the same background knowledge and objectives. Within group courses, Brieger (1997) distinguishes between "Closed" and "Open" groups.

### *Closed vs Open courses*

In closed groups, students share a rather homogeneous background because they belong to the same company, the same department, or perform similar functions. In this type of courses, there is usually great overlap in learners' objectives and, as a result, content and class activities are easily selected. For example, the students of Universidad Siglo 21 (UE S21), where this study was carried out, belong to different study programs but share the business orientation common to all degree programs offered by the institution. In contrast, in open groups the learners typically come from different geographical and professional areas and therefore, syllabus designers must carefully elaborate a common core of contents in order to satisfy the current or future occupational language needs of the participants. Within open groups, Ellis and Johnson (1996) distinguish between pre-experienced learners and job-experienced learners.

### *Pre-experienced vs experienced Learners*

Pre-experienced learners are students who have no work experience and, as a result, are not aware of their language needs in real-life business situations. Like students at the UE S21, these students usually acquire knowledge of business as they acquire knowledge of the specialist language of the business community. For this reason pre-experienced learners cannot participate in syllabus design but usually appreciate hearing why certain classroom techniques or activities are used for specific language areas. As Donna (2000) points out, "if they [students] understand why things are happening as they are, they will usually cooperate with greater enthusiasm" (p. 5). In contrast, students who have job experience are frequently welcomed to cooperate in the selection of content and skills to be taught because

they tend to focus their attention on what they perceive as their own shortcomings. In fact, Donna adds that “decision making and objectives setting can be passed on to students who are often used to making decisions, setting objectives and respecting deadlines in their day-to-day work” (p. 5).

Concerning the range of language to be included in a BE syllabus, it is important to keep in mind that most of the international communication in English is carried out by non-native speakers. Consequently, a BE syllabus does not need to include the richness of vocabulary and expression of a general English course (Ellis and Johnson 1994); instead, it is likely to be based on a core of the most useful and basic structures and vocabulary.

Regarding structures, the fine distinctions in meaning conveyed by compound tenses may not be so relevant in a business context whereas some structural areas such as conditionals or modality may be of utmost importance in developing negotiating skills (Ellis and Johnson 1994). In summary, the structure and language selection should be made keeping in mind the specificity that characterizes any BE course, and the fact that “the most successful BE courses are the ones which identify appropriate content and which fulfill students’ needs most completely in the shortest possible time” (Donna 2000: 4).

### **1.6.1.c Materials selection**

A central concern of BE teaching is the selection of appropriate materials. Business English teaching makes use of both authentic and published materials. The former is useful for experienced students to carry out genre analysis because they provide information about conventional corporate forms and contents and trigger learners’ awareness of variation within each genre; the latter gives structure and direction to the course and are used mainly by pre-experienced learners to practice specific language areas and skills (Donna 2000). Accordingly, the materials chosen to develop genre-based instruction at UE S21 were mainly taken from BE textbooks. Regarding the use of textbooks, BE teachers seldom use one particular textbook without any supplementary materials since published materials hardly ever meet the specific needs of BE learners (Dudley-Evans and St Johns 1998; Ellis and Johnson

1994; Brieger 1997; Donna 2000). As Brieger (1997) points out, bank staff do not need to be informed about how to make foreign payments, nor do export managers need to be taught the details of completing export documentation. In these situations, experienced learners are usually invited to bring to class original texts from their own company to be used as business input, while textbooks are used to provide language input (Ellis and Johnson 1994). The latter aim, then, governs the materials selection for work-experienced learners.

Materials for pre-experienced learners meet different requirements. Since this group of students learn business theory and practice as they learn the language and develop the skills appropriate to the business situation, the materials used provide both business input and language input (Ellis and Johnson 1994). A review of BE published textbooks reveals that content revolves around situations that reproduce the kind of standard business practices most students of BE are likely to encounter in their working environments (meeting visitors, developing contacts, giving presentations, interacting by telephone, participating in meetings). Nevertheless, Brieger (1997) holds that neither published nor authentic materials are ever ideally suited to the needs of the learners and consequently, the trainer will usually need to spend some time modifying or customizing either of the two types of materials. An example of this is the Class materials pack compiled for this study (Appendix F). In agreement with Brieger (1997), Dudley-Evans and St Johns (1998:15) summarize the role of BE course designers as 'providers of material', which implies *choosing* suitable material, *adapting* published material to the specific objectives of the course or even *writing* material where nothing suitable exists. Concerning the variety of English of the materials selected, it is important to keep in mind that although English has become the international language of communication, there is no international standard form of English yet. For this reason, BE courses tend to incorporate a diversity of native accents (mainly British and American) and, to a lesser extent videos and recordings of a wide variety of non-native speakers (Donna 2000, Brieger 1997). In conclusion, there is a wide variety of published and authentic materials available for BE courses; however, it is the course designer's task to select and develop materials on the basis of their suitability for the particular learning goals of this specific type of courses.

In this section I have defined BE as a language teaching movement concerned with the linguistic skills L2 individuals need to develop to interact successfully in work-related contexts. I have pointed out that there is not yet an established theory that supports BE teaching in particular and I have commented on the key issues that instructors need to deal with in order to comply with the specificity required of any ESP course. In the next section, I will focus on the features that characterize written communication in the business community.

### **1.7. Written communication in business contexts**

As already mentioned, participants in any specialist community rely on a number of genres to communicate among them. Just as medical doctors routinely enact genres such as medical prescriptions or patients' medical records, the members of the business community rely mainly on faxes, memoranda, e-mails and reports to achieve their work-related communicative goals. What follows is a description of the users and typicality of written business texts.

Eustace (1996) refers to three characterizing features of written business communication which distinguish it from other texts.

- 1) the preference for short over long texts,
- 2) succinct, straight-to the point contents, and
- 3) clear, effective organization.

With regard to the length expected of business texts, Eustace (1996: 53) reports on his consultation with American senior managers, who recommended “never going beyond one page in a letter destined for the USA”. In the same line, Louhiala-Salminen (1996) says that formal business letters have, to a large extent, given way to brief faxes and e-mails which do not contain superfluous set phrases. For instance, Eustace (1996: 54) suggests that closing the text with the set phrase ‘Do not hesitate to contact me’ should be avoided in business writing because it is assumed that the reader “would not hesitate to write back if it is important enough”. This reluctance to spend time reading or, better yet, this urgency to find out the goal of written documents seems to be a distinguishing mark of business written

communication. It accounts for the fact that business people build up their texts stating the aim of their writing in the first lines and then follow a particular order in the organization of information. When describing the way in which business writers organize the information, Eustace (1996: 54) states that business writing is never a continuous piece of prose, but rather “a set of functional boxes”. In genre meta-language, these ‘boxes’ are the rhetorical moves that help readers recognize the communicative goal of a genre (Swales 1990).

Business writers shape their texts in the conviction that the genres they use are “typified responses to social exigence” (Eubanks 1998, cited in Smith 2002: 60). Since writers are aware of the fact that skilled readers use their knowledge of the world and of previously encountered similar texts (Marshall 1991), they shape their written texts in accordance with the readers’ expectations; simply put, the business audience expects and demands this.

The goal-driven nature of business written communication is also reflected in titles and headings which are widely used to anticipate content and get texts moving quickly and when additional information is necessary, it is included in an appendix.

In conclusion, just as any other specialist group has a unique style and means of communication, so does the business community, who achieve their communicative goals by enacting a limited number of genres. By reproducing the conventions mentioned above, writers fulfill the expectation of their readers and at the same time, reinforce the values of the business community. As a thorough description of each of the written genres used by the business community would extend beyond the scope of this research work, the next section focuses on *the business report*, the genre chosen to investigate the application of genre pedagogy.

### **1.8. The business report genre**

The business report is “an informative formal piece of writing written on request, presenting and evaluating the positive and/or negative features of a person, place, product, etc, and may include suggestions as well as a general assessment, opinion and/or recommendation” (Evans 1998: 22). Senior staff request employees to write reports evaluating a wide variety of situations. Since reports are used in

every area of administration, they are likely to vary in content and may serve quite specific purposes such as to assess the convenience of buying a new product or the suitability of a candidate for a position in the company. In fact, many authors describe three main types of business reports: the persuasive report, the assessment report, and the informational report. However, it can be argued that in every case, the main purpose is to present facts objectively so that decisions can be made.

Although most authors (Evans 1998; Cotton and Robins 1993; Cotton et al. 2001) agree that there is no set layout for business reports because every company is likely to follow its own conventional styles, they do point out that all reports are presented schematically, that is, divided into sections and subsections that make them more readable and with headings and subheadings that indicate concisely the subject of a report. In BE, there is always a tension between institutional constraints and writer's creativity; for this reason, genre knowledge becomes valuable in illuminating formal aspects of text construction (Section 1.5). Cotton and Robins (1993: 154) state that "using sections and a numbering system in a report enables people to refer quickly and easily to specific parts in it". The following sections make up the generic structure of a business report:

*1. Introduction*

This section is sometimes called 'terms of reference'. It states the purpose of the report and, usually, who commissioned it.

*2. Body*

This presents the main content of the report, i.e., the facts.

*3. Conclusion*

This is what the writer thinks about the facts and how he/she interprets them.

*4. Recommendations*

These are practical suggestions about the course of action to be taken.

It is worth pointing out here that the Introduction and Conclusion sections are common to most text types, whereas the Body and Recommendation sections, which have a business-specific rhetorical function, are distinctive of business reports.

Finally, the business report is usually signed with the writer's name and position in the company and is always dated, either at the beginning or at the end of the text, under the writer's signature and position.

## **1.9. Conclusion**

The literature indicates that every genre is a socio-linguistic activity carried out by the members of a community and that genres evolve as participants recurrently use them to achieve particular communicative goals. Three main schools (NR, SFL, and ESP) have concentrated on genre studies analyzing the form and function of the discourse of particular communities and the social contexts in which genres are used. However, the fact that different genre schools have different pedagogical goals and teaching contexts accounts for the lack of a unified theoretical approach to genre studies. Bhatia (1993) makes this point forcefully when he calls for

... a model which is rich in socio-cultural, institutional and organizational explanation, relevant and useful to language teachers and applied linguists rather than to grammatical theorists, and discriminating enough to highlight variation rather than uniformity in functional language use; a model which is not seen as an extension of grammatical formalism but is truly applied in nature, in the sense that it requires minimum support and interference from grammatical theory, and exploits maximally the conventional aspects of language use (p. 11).

Another issue addressed was the pedagogical value of genre-based instruction. Research seems to indicate that knowledge of target genres provides individuals with the means to interact effectively with other community members. As shown in 2.5, "genre knowledge" implies being aware of the social contexts in which texts are produced and the purposes they serve in society. In fact, in the specific context of Business English writing, researchers point out that to understand the writing conventions of the business community and, later on, to become effective participants of such community, learners need to know the repertoire of genres

business people recurrently use and the particular social contexts in which those genres are used (Orlikowski and Yates 1994; Wesolowski 2000; Donna 2000; Hyland 2003). More specifically, the references in this study point out the relevance of genre analysis in developing effective writing skills. On the one hand, research demonstrates that by carrying out genre analysis of target texts, learners can become aware of the moves around which business writers structure their texts, as the analysis “offers writers an explicit understanding of how texts in target genres are structured and why they are written the way they are”(Hyland 2003:26). On the other hand, since genre analysis provides information about the vocabulary and grammar typically used by the business community, it provides learners with the appropriate linguistic resources to become successful genre users. As Hyland notes, “to create a well-formed and effective text, students need to know the lexico-grammatical patterns which typically occur in different stages” (2003:26). Finally, the description of business writing features in general and the business report in particular reveals the values and beliefs that underlie business communication. In fact, as Louhiala-Salminen (1996:50) points out, “business communication should not be treated as something separate from the real business but rather as a thread which is interwoven in everything that happens in business”. For this reason, the more learners become aware of the contextual framework in which business writing takes place, the more they will understand the rhetorical and linguistic features that constrain business written communication.

#### **1.10. Aim of the present study**

In the light of the methodological framework provided by Genre Theory and on the assumption that genre-based instruction facilitates the task of Business English learners without job experience, the aim of this study is to investigate the efficacy of genre-based instruction in the teaching of business report writing to Spanish speaking students with an intermediate level of proficiency in English in order to provide new empirical evidence of the effects of genre pedagogy in written communication in BE contexts.

For the purpose of this study, I have chosen *the business report* as the written text to be taught from a genre-based perspective. A secondary objective of this work

is to assess the effectiveness of the material and class activities that were specially designed for this study.

### **1.10.1. Research questions**

In accordance with the aim stated above, this work is intended to answer the following questions:

1. Does genre-based pedagogy facilitate the development of specialist-writing skills for learners with an intermediate English proficiency?
2. Is genre-based instruction an effective tool to teach business written texts to students without work experience?

### **1.10.2. Hypotheses**

It was assumed that the mean of scores obtained by the experimental group in the post-test would be higher than that obtained by the control group as the former would have improved their writing skills from being instructed following a genre-based approach; therefore,

Ho: Genre-based instruction does not enhance the written production of BE learners with an intermediate English proficiency.

H<sub>1</sub>: Genre-based instruction enhances the written production of BE learners with an intermediate English proficiency.

These hypotheses will be investigated in Chapter 4, which presents the data analysis.

## CHAPTER 2

### Methods

The previous chapter provided the theoretical background of the issues which are the main concern of this study. This chapter describes the context, participants, materials, procedures and methods of research of the study. It also states the reasons which led to the choices made in it.

#### **2.1. Context of the study**

This study was conducted at Universidad Empresarial Siglo 21 (UE S21) in the city of Córdoba, Argentina, during the second semester of 2002. This university offers BA programs of study in a number of business-related fields (Business Administration, Marketing Management, Administration Management, Human Resources Management, Public Relations Management, and International Commerce, among others). Every degree program includes a six-level Business English (BE) course (*Inglés I, II, III, IV, V, and VI*) which all students are required to complete independently of the degree program in which they enroll. The six-level course resembles general English courses in that the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) are practiced; however, uniquely, the topics and context chosen to carry out instruction all relate to the business field. Throughout the program of study, students are expected to make progress from a false-beginner level in the first semester to an advanced level in the sixth semester. The subjects in this study were all students attending *Inglés IV*, the stage at which *the business report* is taught (see Appendix A).

The study is a quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest, control group design. The subjects were not taken at random but belonged to intact classes and were tested before and after treatment.

## **2.2. Participants**

Sixty-nine subjects, 5 instructors and 3 raters took part in the experiment. Every participant volunteered their time for this study.

### **2.2.1. Subjects**

All subjects were learners of English as a foreign language, the typical context of educational institutions in Argentina. They were at an intermediate level of instruction, which means that they had successfully passed three semesters of the BE program mentioned in 2.1.

The first testing instrument (pre-test) was administered to 94 subjects in five classes at UE S21. Thirty-eight of these subjects (three intact classes) served as the experimental group (EG) and 31 (the other two classes) as the control group (CG). The remaining subjects' were not able to complete all the stages that the study required.

The pre-study questionnaire designed to collect demographic information (see Appendix D1) revealed that the composition of each of the groups was homogeneous with regards to native language, socio-economic background (UE S21 is a private university), areas of interest (all programs of study are business-related), and lack of experience in English report writing at work. In addition, the groups were comparable with respect to the number of years they had studied English before the research study. Table 2.1 below serves as an outline of the profile of the subjects as derived from the questionnaire. English Studies refers to the number of years in English programs before the study. While 15 subjects reported to have work-experience before the experiment, this experience was disregarded because 1) it was not professional business-related experience, and 2) because they did not use English in their work environment.

Table 2.1. EG and CG composition

Group	Sex	Age	English Studies	Work- experience
EG	F: 13	19-23 : 36	1-3 yrs: 15	Yes: 3
	M: 25	24 + : 2	4 + yrs: 23	No: 35
CG	F: 18	19-22 : 20	1-3 yrs: 14	Yes: 12
	M: 13	24+ : 11	4 + yrs: 17	No: 19

### 2.2.2. Instructors

Five Spanish-speaking teachers of English as a foreign language were chosen out of eight teachers who were teaching the BE course mentioned in 2.1. They were not chosen by the researcher but appointed by the academic board of UE S21 on the basis of their professionalism. In other words, they were considered the most suitable to participate in this research study because they were responsible people. All of them had received their BAs in TEFL from the School of Languages of the National University of Córdoba.

### 2.2.3. Raters

Three Spanish speaking TEFL teachers scored the participants' scripts. None of these raters belonged to the staff of the UE S21. This was meant to ensure objectivity and to prevent them from being influenced by their work contexts. These raters had been teaching students at an intermediate level of instruction for more than five years and had varying degrees of experience in Business English. They reported to have taught Business English in one-to-one classes but not systematically in any institutional Business English Program. Their little experience in BE teaching was controlled for by a short training session in how to score the reports. Two of them were colleagues of the researcher in the Master's Program at the National University of Córdoba and the third one was a professional contact. All of them were selected for their professionalism and appreciation of the research process.

## **2.3. Materials**

The materials used in this research study were: an instructors' pack, a raters' pack, two questionnaires, a pre- and a post-test, a class-materials pack for the EG, and a final guide to interview EG instructors.

### **2.3.1. Instructors' guide**

A guide (Appendix B) was utilized to provide step-by-step support to the EG teachers, who had never taught following a genre-based approach. The activities and tasks designed were detailed according to goals and purposes to provide consistent implementation.

### **2.3.2. Raters' pack**

A protocol was designed to guide the task of the raters as they did not have previous experience in rating business reports. It provided instructions on how students' performance should be rated and on how to use the scoring scale (Appendix C.1). The objective of this protocol was to minimize variation across raters.

The General Mark Scheme scale, applied by the raters of the internationally recognized Business English Certificate (BEC), intermediate level in 2001, was used to score the sample reports. This scoring scale was chosen because it has been validated by the University of Cambridge Syndicate. This scale includes 6 bands of assessment (0-5), which correlate with marks that represent how strong or weak students' performance is within each band. Since participants in this study have an intermediate level of English and band 0 corresponds to null achievement, this band was eliminated and the final scoring scale included bands 1-5 (See Appendix C.2).

### **2.3.3. Questionnaires**

Two questionnaires gathered qualitative data from the students: one was administered prior to the study and the second one after the study. Both instruments were written in Spanish to diminish the burden and tension of the participants.

The pre-study questionnaire (Appendix D.1) was designed to collect demographic information about the participants. It gathered information about age and sex of the participants, previous English studies, work experience, ability in writing business texts, prior instruction in report writing, and participants' perception of the report-writing task. It consisted of 11 multiple choice questions.

The post-study questionnaire (Appendix D.2) aimed to elicit the students' perceptions of the genre-based instruction as an approach to facilitate report-writing. It collected information about their opinions as regards the materials used, the requested tasks, and their experience. It consisted of 9 questions, out of which 8 were multiple choice. The final question was a prompt that encouraged students to openly comment on their experience in order to gather further information that might prove relevant for the study.

#### **2.3.4. Testing instruments**

A pre-test (Appendix E.1) and a post-test (Appendix E.2) were designed to evaluate the participants' competence in writing *business reports*. In order to minimize the learning effect, two similar but not identical prompts were utilized to elicit the reports. The pre-test prompt was an advertisement for a telephone answering machine whereas the post-test prompt was a candidate's curriculum vitae. Students were requested to perform the same communicative task in both testing instances: to produce a written business report of around 120 words evaluating the information provided by the prompt and making recommendations as to the course of action to be taken. In order to reduce the effect of uncontrolled variables such as participants' previous knowledge of the topic, the prompt stated all the information to be incorporated into the report.

#### **2.3.5. Class material**

A student's pack of genre-based activities was compiled to be the only material used when teaching report writing to the EG (Appendix F). There were four types of activities:

- a) Activities that aimed to raise participants' awareness of generic conventions regarding layout and style of a business report.
- b) Activities that aimed to increase awareness of generic structure.
- c) Activities that aimed to raise awareness of textual cohesion.
- d) Integrative activities.

The majority of the activities had successfully been piloted with BE students who sat for the *Business English Certificate* (BEC) examination in 2002 (See Trebucq 2001).

### **2.3.6. Interview with EG teachers**

A guided interview with each of the EG teachers was held at the end of the experiment (Appendix G). The interview aimed at collecting information about the instructors' appreciation of the genre-based approach as a theoretical framework to teach BE writing. It also enquired into their perception of the materials and tasks used to teach report writing in order to help the researcher evaluate the suitability of the materials.

## **2.4. Procedures**

The study was carried out with official permission from the academic board of the UE S21. It lasted five months. The first twelve weeks (August to October 2002) were devoted to the implementation of the study at the UE S21, and the remaining eight weeks, i.e., after the end of the academic year, were assigned for scripts' selection, scripts' scoring and data analysis. Table 2.2 shows the stages followed on site during the academic year.

*Table 2.2 Study implementation at the UE S21.*

<b>Week</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Instructors and raters' Training</b>												
<b>Pre-study questionnaire administration</b>												
<b>Pre-test administration</b>												
<b>Treatment</b>												
<b>Post-test administration</b>												
<b>Post-study questionnaire administration</b>												
<b>Final interview with EG teachers</b>												

### **2.4.1. Instructors and raters' training**

Before the experiment, three of the five instructors were randomly selected to lead the EG; they received individual training sessions in teaching report writing following a genre-based approach (weeks 1 and 2). Due to time constraints, it was impossible for EG instructors to be trained in a group; however all of them were trained by the same researcher and with the same materials. Instructors were not able to read further bibliography on genre-based pedagogy and were thus briefed on its central issues. They expressed that although they were not acquainted with genre theory, the way they had been teaching report writing up to that moment resembled the approach being proposed. Therefore, instructors felt comfortable with the class activities pack and used it as the sole material to teach report writing. The other two instructors received no training and led the CG following a communicative approach.

The three raters attended an individual training session with the researcher who informed them about their role in the study and described the evaluating

criteria. Five tests, one belonging to each band (1-5) were selected from the pre-test samples to practice test-scoring. Each rater received a folder containing:

- a) a Protocol (Appendix C.1) about how learners' scripts in the pre- and post-tests should be rated and how to use the scoring scale,
- b) the scoring scale (Appendix C.2),
- c) a copy of the pre- and post-test rubrics
- d) five sample tests, one from each band, to discuss and agree on evaluation criteria.
- e) a scoring sheet to document the scores assigned to each sample (Appendix C.3)

At the training session, raters were instructed not to make corrections on the samples but to assign them holistic marks that reflected the achievement of the intended purpose of the task. Next, the scoring scale was read aloud and criteria of evaluation unified. On the basis of Brieger's (1997: 42) definition of 'effective communicators', the completion of the business task was prioritized over accuracy of expression to simulate real business situations.

#### **2.4.2. Administration of pre-study questionnaire**

During weeks 3 and 4 participants of the EG and CG groups filled out the pre-study questionnaire. All students attending *Inglés IV* were asked to volunteer their participation in the experiment. They were not asked to sign a written consent; however, every instructor explained to their students that

- the aim of the study was to check the efficacy of a new "way" of teaching business written communication.
- the texts they would produce were not going to be graded or used in any way to evaluate performance.
- those who did not want to participate were free to leave.
- they should use pseudonyms rather than their own names (to prevent discomfort and encourage honest answers).

### **2.4.3. Pre-test**

Instructors administered the pre-test (Appendix E.1) to all subjects in groups EG and CG during the sixth week of class, that is, prior to the teaching of report writing. They did not impose a time limit for subjects to complete the task but administered it 30 minutes before the end of the class. The objective was to allow subjects sufficient time to fulfill the task but not enough time to revise their texts. During the test, instructors did not answer students' questions about the generic structure of the business report; they only answered questions on vocabulary.

### **2.4.4. Treatment**

Participants of the experimental (EG) and control (CG) groups underwent a 4-week (weeks 6-9) period of instruction in their own classrooms and according to their class schedule. During eight ninety-minute classes, approximately 30 minutes of every class were devoted to report writing. The CG received no instruction following the genre-based approach. Although CG instructors drew students' attention to the macro-structure of a report (introduction/body/conclusion), they did not engage into deeper text analysis such as highlighting the connection between the purpose of a text and the structural and linguistic choices that realize it.

The EG group received systematic genre-based instruction on business report writing. The entire instruction aimed to develop subjects' understanding and application of the typical features that characterize the genre *business reports*. It was carried out through the set of activities prepared for this study (See Appendix F). The presentation of the topic varied between inductive and deductive approaches and the practice was carried out with whole texts rather than discrete sentences. Following is a description of the tasks performed during treatment. Each task is explained under a heading that reflects the generic feature it aimed to highlight.

**(a) Activities that aimed to raise subjects' awareness of the conventional layout and purpose of written business reports.**

**Intentionality**

Subjects were asked to read three model reports (See Appendix F, texts 1, 2, and 3) and to focus on the following questions:

*Why did Yvonne Elliot, Finance Director write report 1? Why did D. Logan, Sales Director, write report 2? Why did Jim Bowen write report 3?*

*Why do business people write reports?*

From this inductive exercise students concluded that the purpose of a business report is to pass on requested information thus pointing out a central issue in Genre Theory: the purpose of a text defines the genre it belongs to.

**Variation**

After the identification of the purpose of business reports, subjects were led to focus on similarities and differences in layout and style between the three reports. Through this task, students realized that genre conventions are likely to vary slightly from company to company.

**Conventions**

The next step was the presentation of report 4 (See Appendix F, text 4), which exhibits an untidy layout and careless style, for participants to comment on the receiver's likely reactions. The goal of this task was to make participants aware of the readers' expectations and to realize that failure to adhere to the writing conventions of the business community may render their texts liable to be misunderstood and therefore disregarded. Finally, participants were asked to rewrite report 4 following the layout conventions they had observed in the model reports 1, 2, and 3.

## **(b) Activities that aimed to increase participants' awareness of generic structure**

### **Text types**

Instructors presented excerpts from different text types (a letter, a narrative and a report) for subjects to identify text types (Appendix F, texts 5, 6, and 7). Although the task presented no challenge to participants, it revealed that each text type has its own characteristic structure and that both the purpose of a text and the context in which it is written constrain text production.

### **Moves**

After the identification of different genres, students were asked to match headings to each of the sections of a report (See Appendix F, text 8). This task drew students' attention to the different "moves" that make up the generic structure of a business report.

### **Generic structure**

The following activity elicited students' prior knowledge of report writing in their own language. They were asked to comment on the "necessary" parts (*generic structure*) that a Spanish business report should contain in order to be successful. At this point, the instructors avoided making prescriptive contributions because the aim of the task was to make students realize that generic types, both in English and in Spanish have their own internal structure. Practice of generic structure was again provided by presenting scrambled strips of paper containing the moves that build up a business report for students to re-assemble them (See Appendix F, text 9).

### **Moves and purposes**

Reports 1, 2, and 3 (Appendix F) were used again for students to draw boundaries between moves and to state the partial goals each move accomplished

within the text. Through this task students confirmed that business reports have distinctive rhetorical sections and that each one serves a different purpose.

### **Rhetorical devices**

Reports 1 and 3 (Appendix F) were distributed again for participants to identify the type of linguistic resources that realized the different purposes of each stage (active / passive voice, declarative / interrogative / imperative sentences). In this way, participants were able to notice that each part of the generic structure of a business report is realized by recurrent rhetorical and linguistic features that “shape” the goal of each move.

### **(c) Activities that aimed to raise participants’ awareness of textual cohesion**

#### **Textual coherence and cohesion**

The following set of clauses was presented to participants:

*As requested, I am sending the information. It’s very rarely found  
in Texas. They think so. When does the championship start?  
No, I don’t know how to operate it.*

Instructors exploited this material by asking participants the following questions:

“What is the purpose of this ‘text’?”

“What information is being sent?”

“What is rarely found in Texas?”

“Who are ‘they’?”

The fact that students were unable to answer the questions led them to realize the need for specific ‘elements’ beyond the level of the clause to connect clauses together and organize them as coherent messages. Report 3 (Appendix F) was given to subjects for them to identify the elements that create cohesion. The aim of this exercise was to draw participants’ attention to the ways in which reference, ellipsis, junction, and lexical choice affect the development of ideas. Additional practice was given by asking students to extract the content words from a business report and to group them into lexical strings assigning headings to each group. Through this exercise, students became aware of the ways in which field-specific vocabulary contributes to textual cohesion.

#### **(d) Integrative activities**

I will describe here only one of the tasks to integrate the knowledge gained through the previous discrete activities. The rest of the activities can be found in Appendix F. Participants were asked to write a 100-word report evaluating two possible locations for a restaurant. The allotted time was 25 minutes. The aim of setting a time limit was to allow participants enough time for production but not for revision. The instructor refrained from making comments while participants produced their first drafts. The second step of the exercise requested students to analyze the format of their own texts: if they were satisfied with their work, they proceeded to analyze the generic structure; however, if they considered that rearrangements were necessary, they were asked to rewrite their texts. In the same way, they proceeded with the analysis of text cohesion. Only after they had finished their own step-by-step revision were they asked to hand in their final drafts. In this way, participants integrated the knowledge they had acquired through previous exercises and, at the same time, worked independently pondering their own production.

The EG classes were periodically observed by the researcher. The minor deviations from the plan were discussed after class with the instructors.

#### **2.4.5. Post-test**

On week 11, a post-test, with the same structure and purpose as the pre-test, was administered to both groups (Appendix E.2). This test was given under the same environmental conditions as the pre-test. As in the pre-test, instructors neither answered questions about generic structure nor imposed a time limit for participants to complete the task. They administered it 30 minutes before the end of the class and only answered questions on vocabulary.

The only difference between the pre-test and the post-test was the written prompt used to elicit the task. The replacement of the written prompt was necessary to remove any risk of participants' remembering what they had written on the pretest. The scripts were codified as indicated in 2.4.8.

#### **2.4.6. Administration of post-study questionnaire**

On week 12 instructors administered the post-study questionnaire (Appendix D.2) to students of the EG. Only 22 subjects handed in their questionnaires because: (a) as week 12 marked the end of the academic year, many students did not attend classes to study for final exams, and (b) one of the instructors forgot to administer the instrument to her class. These drawbacks reflect the complexity of researching in institutions which do not have a long-standing tradition of research and publication.

#### **2.4.7. Interview with EG teachers**

After treatment, every EG teacher attended an individual interview with the researcher. A set of questions was designed to structure the interview (Appendix G). The teachers were asked to comment on their experience teaching report writing from the genre-based approach and to give their opinion about the class activities used. The interviews were carried out in Spanish to diminish the instructors' tension, as they were being recorded, and to create a relaxed atmosphere that would foster spontaneous wide-ranging answers. Every interview was transcribed and the qualitative data collected complemented the quantitative results of this study.

#### **2.4.8. Scripts selection and codification**

Although 94 reports were gathered at the first data collection session (pre-test), 25 samples had to be discarded for the following reasons: (a) Five scripts had been used as examples at the raters' training session and (b) Twenty students did not hand in the corresponding post-test. The codification system below was used to identify the samples and was not revealed to any participant in the study (For example, **G1P2PPS34**).

**G1 / G2** for control and experimental group respectively,

**P1 / P2** for pre- and post- test respectively,

**PC / PP / PI / PRI / PV** to identify the classes participants belong to, and

**S 1 / 2 / 3 / 4**, to enumerate participants.

#### **2.4.9. Scripts scoring**

Each rater was first given a pack of 69 photocopied pre-tests. The samples had been previously shuffled to avoid the raters' identification of the samples as belonging to either EG or CG. Then, they scored the pre-tests. Despite the recommendation to return their scoring sheets in fifteen days, all raters took a longer period to complete their task. However, since serious scoring is time-consuming and raters were also fulfilling their teaching tasks at the time this study was carried out, it was unadvisable to exert further demands. Fifteen days after each evaluator handed in their pre-test scoring sheet, they received the corresponding post-test samples to carry out the same task. An interval of 15 days was considered necessary to avoid instructors' identification of students' writing style.

### **2.5. Method of Analysis**

Cohen's Simple Unweighted Coefficient and Wilcoxon Rank Sums statistical tests were used to analyze the quantitative data from the pre- and post-tests. The

former was used to measure the inter-rater reliability of the three raters who took part in this study. The latter was applied to the scores given to the scripts.

The dependent variables were the three raters' sets of scores obtained from the pre- and post-tests. The independent variable of interest here was the genre-based instruction implemented in this study.

Students' scripts were qualitatively analyzed for code associations using AQUAD.5 (Analysis of Qualitative Data). The data collected from students' questionnaires and instructors' interviews were used for triangulation.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Results and discussion**

Chapter 2 described the design and methodology of this research study and analyzed the choices made for its implementation. The chapter included the necessary information for the replication of the study in terms of materials and instruments used and the statistical procedures carried out with the data collected.

This chapter will present the results derived from the quantitative and qualitative data collected. The implications, limitations and directions for further research will be presented in chapter 4.

#### **3.1. Quantitative analysis of the data**

The present study used two statistical tests to analyze the results obtained from the data collected. The first was Cohen's simple unweighted coefficient, a kappa test type which was used to measure the inter-rater reliability of the three raters who took part in this study. The raters marked the scripts independently and their scores were corrected for chance agreement using the first test. The second test, Wilcoxon Rank Sums, was then applied to the marks given to the scripts in order to compare the performance of the experimental and the control groups.

### **3.1.1 Interrater reliability**

Interrater reliability was analyzed to investigate to what extent the three raters involved agreed on the value of each script and reached the same conclusion. Kolbe and Burnett (1991) state that studies which do not produce a high level of reliability “suggest weaknesses in research methods, including the possibility of poor operational definitions, categories, and judge training” (p. 248). The authors focus on three important issues regarding interrater reliability. The first of these issues refers to what is normally accepted as strong levels of reliability. One of the most common statistical tests used to calculate interrater reliability is Cohen's kappa ( $k$ ), also referred to as kappa. However, when the categories are nominal, as in this case, Cohen's simple unweighted coefficient is the form of kappa that can meaningfully be used. Kappa values of .70 and above are considered to be good agreement; values from .50 to .69 reflect fair agreement and values below .50 indicate poor agreement between raters. The second issue addressed by Kolbe and Burnett's suggestion refers to rater's training. It is generally accepted that well-trained raters, especially in cases where they train and work in the same place, are likely to achieve higher agreement coefficients. However, there have been studies in marking written scripts in which raters have achieved good agreement even without training (Asis 1998; Bombelli 2005). Finally, Kolbe and Burnett also suggest the importance of strong research methods and instruments to achieve high interrater reliability. This last issue points to the need for validating the scoring scale used for rating the scripts. The most common validation procedures for data collection instruments are the use of statistical tests (tests of internal consistency) or the use of internationally validated scales (such as the ones used to mark reports in international exams).

The present study observed the three issues addressed by Kolbe and Burnett. First, the study followed the second procedure for the validation of its measuring instrument. The scale used to rate the scripts in this study is the same scoring scale used by the raters of the internationally known test Business English Certificate (BEC) designed and administered by the University of Cambridge Syndicate. This scoring scale is internationally recognized and has already been validated by the University of Cambridge Syndicate. Secondly, the three raters who took part in the rating of the scripts were trained following the same standardization procedures as

those used for BEC markers. Finally, although the three raters do not work together, they have similar years of experience in teaching and evaluating students' written production. These factors may have contributed to the level of reliability achieved by the raters in this study. Table 3.1 below shows the coefficient of interrater reliability ( $k = .83$ ) obtained from the rating of the scripts, indicating a good level of agreement among the raters.

*Table 3.1 Reliability Coefficients, Cohen's simple unweighted coefficient*

Unweighted Coefficient:	<b>.83</b>
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### **3.1.2 Performance of the groups**

As explained above, the present study used Wilcoxon Rank Sums to analyze the data resulting from the performance of the two groups when writing business reports. The Wilcoxon test is a non-parametric test used to compare the performance of two groups. Although this test does not allow ample generalizations of the results to other contexts as parametric tests do, it is a well-known, standard and reliable test for comparing nominal data like the ones obtained in this study. It is important to notice here that, although the raters assigned marks to the reports, these marks are still nominal data as they represent discrete marks or bands on a scale: 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. These marks, which are used for practical reasons, represent categorical rather than numerical data.

Before running Wilcoxon Rank Sums on the data, the normal distribution of the scores obtained from both the control and the experimental groups was verified. Although non-parametric tests do not require normally distributed data, a set of data showing a high degree of skewedness would indicate that extreme values have pulled the point of central tendency either positively or negatively. Highly skewed data may thus cause results to be less accurate. To verify the normal distribution of the data, the mean, the median and the mode were calculated to ensure that they were approximate values. Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 show these values for the pre- and

post-test scores from the Control Group (CG) and Experimental Group (EG), respectively.

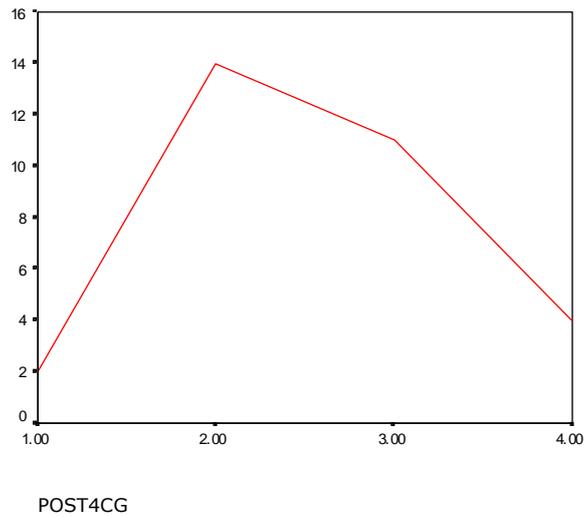
*Table 3.2 Mean, median and mode for CG*

	<b>PRE-TEST</b>	<b>POST-TEST</b>
<b>MEAN</b>	1.95	2.20
<b>MEDIAN</b>	2.00	2.00
<b>MODE</b>	2.00	2.00

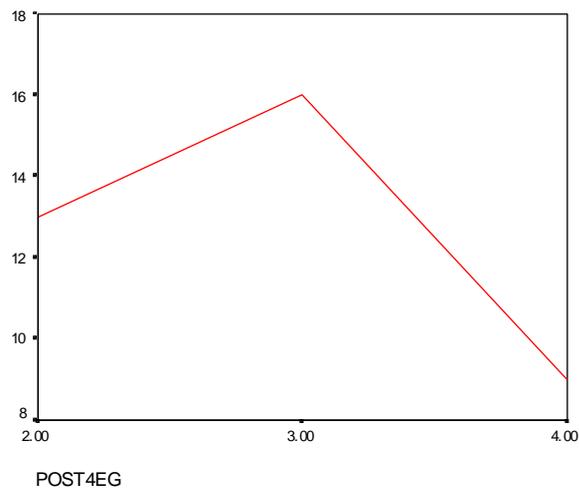
*Table 3.3 Mean, median and mode for EG*

	<b>PRE-TEST</b>	<b>POST-TEST</b>
<b>MEAN</b>	2.10	2.89
<b>MEDIAN</b>	2.00	3.00
<b>MODE</b>	2.00	3.00

As can be seen from Table 3.2, the scores from the pre- and post-test for the CG show a tendency toward a normal distribution and only a small degree of skewedness. The difference in mean between the pre-test and the post-test scores is not big enough to be significant and may have been produced by the learning effect and the normal maturation of the students in this group. Table 3.3 also shows that the scores obtained from the EG are relatively normally distributed but the difference in mean is big enough to be significant and cannot be said to have been produced by either of the effects mentioned above. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 below graphically represent the distribution of the post-test scores for both groups. The horizontal axis represents the bands of the scoring scale and the vertical axis represents the number of times each band was registered. It is worth noticing here that the line charts indicate not only the higher mean in the EG but also a lower level of skewedness.



**Figure 3.1 Distribution of Post-Test Scores for Control Group**



**Figure 3.2 Distribution of Post-Test Scores for Experimental Group**

Once the normal distribution of the scores was verified, the probability level for the study was set at .01. In other words, the probability for the results obtained after running the statistical test to have happened by chance is 1 in 100. This high level of probability was meant to be another step to improve the validity of the results. The  $z$  value of 6.23 ( $z = 6.23$ ) was obtained from comparing the marks assigned to the reports in the post-test of both the EG and the CG. The critical value

for an alpha (probability) level of .01 is 2.57 (See Table 3.4 below). As the z value obtained (6.23) is higher than the critical value (2.57), the null hypothesis can be rejected with a high degree of confidence as the students in the experimental group who used the genre-based approach to writing reports outperformed those in the control group.

*Table 3.4 Wilcoxon Rank Sums for EG and CG*

EG	CG	z
815.5	910.5	<b>6.23*</b>
* p< .01, n= 69		

Although the non-parametric test used in this study does not allow us to claim that the same results will be obtained by other groups of similar students, the analysis of the quantitative data collected seems to indicate that the experimental group outperformed the control group due to the treatment received.

### **3.2. Qualitative analysis of the data**

As has been stated in Chapter 2, this study intends to triangulate results obtained from the quantitative and the qualitative data collected. Triangulation has been identified as a key element in quantitative and qualitative research (Miles & Huberman 1994; Silverman 1993, 1997). Miles and Huberman (1994) identify five types of triangulation: triangulation by data, by method, by researcher, by theory and by type of data. In the context of this study, the type of triangulation used is the first one. The purpose of applying triangulation by data is to enhance internal validity by a more detailed, multi-layered interpretation of the phenomenon under study (Paulien, Verloop & Beijaard 2002).

The qualitative data analyzed in this study come from three different sources. The first source is the reports written by the CG and the EG in two different

instances: the pre-test and the post-test. The second set of qualitative data was provided by the interviews with the teachers who administered treatment to the experimental group. The last source is the post-study questionnaire administered to subjects at the end of the study.

### **3.2.1. Reports analysis**

The reports written by both CG and EG groups were analysed to measure the strength of code associations in them. By code association is meant the systematic relationship between lexical items and the rhetorical functions they serve (Huber 2001). Thus, the code associations in the post-test reports of the EG should be stronger than those of the CG. Code association was investigated by using AQUAD.5, the software for analysing qualitative data. This software allows computer-assisted codification of qualitative data and, among other functions, assessment of the systematic relationship between codes.

#### **3.2.1.a. Identifying macro and micro codes**

Before exploring the strength of the systematic relationships between codes, it was necessary to identify the codes expected to be found in each section of the reports. It is worth remembering at this point the rubrics given to the students in both groups participating in this study. The rubrics read:

*The Personnel Manager has asked you to evaluate hiring a public affairs associate in order to make the Public Relations Department more efficient. Read the job ad and then Fiona Scott's CV. Finally, write a report evaluating the candidates' qualifications together with your recommendation.*

Texts were codified for two types of codes: macro codes and micro codes. By macro codes, I mean structural codes, or set phrases, that bear a connection with the

structural sections of the report the students in both groups were asked to write. Thus, different codes were expected to emerge for the introduction, the body, the conclusion and the recommendation sections of the reports. These codes have a high frequency of occurrence in authentic business reports, in texts from business books (*New International Business English, Insights into Business, Market Leader*) and in samples of test materials (*BEC examinations*). To avoid extraneous variables, care was also taken to include for this analysis only those codes students at this level of proficiency were supposed to know. Table 3.5 lists the macro codes expected to be found in the post-test reports of the two groups.

Micro codes, on the other hand, refer to the lexical items which are used to support the rhetorical functions of the reports, in other words, lexical density. For the purpose of the present study, the micro codes in the descriptive and evaluative moves of the two main sections of a report, the body and the recommendation, were analysed. These two main sections were selected as the focus of analysis because their rhetorical functions distinguish this genre from others commonly used in business writing. Table 3.6 illustrates the micro codes expected to be found in the reports of the two groups.

Table 3.5 Macro codes expected to be found in post-tests

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>CODES</b>
Introduction	<i>The purpose of, the intention of, the aim of, this is a report concerning, this report outlines/presents/ assesses/evaluates, the report contains the assessment of... As requested, this reports...</i>
Body	<i>This candidate is, The experience of the candidate indicates that, with regard to our requirements, The candidate has...</i>
Conclusion	<i>To conclude, to sum up, on the basis of, the only possible conclusion</i>
Recommendation	<i>I believe/feel /think, would be ideal for, it would not be advisable/ advantageous/ practical, my recommendation is, I recommend that... should be...</i>

Table 3.6 Micro codes expected to be found in post-tests

<b>SECTION</b>	<b>CODES</b>
Body	<i>Candidate, details, experience, qualifications, agency, assistant, improve, graduate, efficiency, on the one hand, additionally, in addition, besides, moreover, for instance</i>
Recommendation	<i>Professional, strong, ample, efficient, fluent, best, public affairs</i>

Results indicate that, in the post-test, the EG outperformed the CG by making use of a higher number of macro codes to realize the rhetorical function of each of

the four sections, i.e., introduction, body, conclusion, and recommendation. These findings seem to suggest that systematic training with focus on the relationship between rhetorical function and genre-specific macro codes enhances students' performance. Table 3.7 below shows that the strongest difference between the two groups was in the body section -10% in favour of the EG group. Interestingly, in the introduction and recommendation sections, there was a similar gain (6%) although it was expected that the latter section would show higher gains than the former because of its business-specific rhetorical function. The lowest gains (3%) were observed in the conclusion section probably because the macro codes that realize this section are common to most business genres and are consequently less likely to be affected by genre-specific training.

*Table 3.7 Macro codes found in CG and EG post-test reports*

<b>Codes</b>	<b>CG Post-test reports</b>	<b>EG Post-test reports</b>
<b>Macro</b> (Rhetorical function)		
Introduction (to introduce the purpose of the report)	19%	25%
<b>Body</b> (to describe the main features/characteristics of the candidates)	<b>21%</b>	<b>31%</b>
Conclusion (to round off the description)	20%	23%
<b>Recommendation</b> (to make a recommendation based on the previous considerations)	<b>24%</b>	<b>30%</b>

% over 100 words

The relationship between the section Introduction and the macro codes used by students needs to be explored in more detail as it shows gains for the EG. Whereas most reports in the CG use the rather simplistic formula 'I am writing this report to', most reports in the EG show more elaborate forms of indicating purpose, as shown by the following examples:

I'm writing this report to give you information about to the Best candidates to the new position in Public Affairs Associate. (C2-Cyro 4)

I am writing to inform about the candidate's qualification that are necessary for the Post of Public Affairs Associate of Patagonia, which designs and distributes functional outdoor Clothing. (C2-Estrelly)

I am writing this report to inform you about the main characteristics of candidates. (C2-Eugenia)

I writing this report to inform about the result of my evaluate the Fiona Scott qualifications. (C2-EVA)

I'm writing this report to inform about the last selection of the candidates, which are going to be associate in order to make the Public Relations Department more efficient. (C2-Evange)

I am writing this report to provide my opinion about the qualification of Fiona Scott to get the job in the Public Relations Department. (C2 Jacinto)

This report is to inform you about the advantage and disadvantage of the candidate to our company. (E2-David F)

In the present report I am going to evaluate the most suitable candidate. (E2-David G)

The purpose of this report is to inform about the evaluation of Fiona Scott, who is the new possible candidate for the Public Relations department. (E2-Carolina)

The purpose of this report is to evaluate hiring a public affairs associate in order to make the public relations department more efficient. (E2-Cocorda)

The purpose of this report is to inform you about the conditions of the candidate, Fiona Scott. (E2-Natalie)

The purpose of this report is to compare what person we need in the area of RRPP of our company and what are the characteristics of Fiona Scott to occupy the post of Public Relations in our organization. (E2-Pirata)

This aim of this report is to inform you and evaluate the candidate to include in the Public Relation Department. (E2-Natty B)

This seems to indicate that the linkage between this part of the reports and the ways students linguistically realize it is stronger for the EG not only in terms of percentages (19%-25%) but also in terms of the degree of structural complexity.

The results obtained from the analysis of the micro codes used by both groups at the post-test indicate that the EG also outperformed the CG in the number of lexical items used to reinforce the descriptive and evaluative functions of the reports. Table 3.8 below shows a 6% gain in the body section and an 8% gain in the recommendation section in favor of the experimental group.

*Table 3.8 Micro codes found in CG and EG post-test reports*

<b>Codes</b>	<b>CG Post-test reports</b>	<b>EG Post-test reports</b>
<b>Micro</b> (Lexical items)		
<b>Body</b> (lexical items connected with description of features/characteristics)	<b>16%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Recommendation</b> (lexical items connected with making recommendations)	<b>19%</b>	<b>27%</b>

% over a 100 words

These results seem to correlate with the ones obtained at the level of macro codes and to lend further support to the positive effects of the treatment.

### **3.2.1.b Exploring systematic relationships: Using linkages**

The analysis of the qualitative data collected for the purpose of this study also included examining the relationship between the macro and micro codes identified and the body and the recommendation parts of the reports produced in post-test conditions by both groups. To explore this relationship, I used the notion of ‘linkages’ (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Linkages are associations which are created between the macro and micro codes of a text. These associations are analysed by

using AQUAD 5 and indicate the strength of the textual relationship between the two types of codes in a given text. This examination was carried out in the hope that it would lend further support to the aims of the study.

To this end, the reports written under post-test conditions by both groups were digitalized and then codified for the purpose of analysis. All the reports produced by the EG were digitalized together under the file name ‘all\_e2reports.rtf’ which indicates all the second reports produced by the Experimental group. By the same token, all the reports produced by the CG were digitalized together under the file name ‘all\_c2reports.rtf’ which indicates all the second reports produced by the Control group. These file names appear in the analysis of linkages presented below. The codes used to codify both files were the same for standardization and comparative purposes. The macro codes used are specified in Table 3.9. The micro codes are illustrated in Table 3.10.

*Table 3.9 Macro codes used for coding texts*

<b>Macro codes</b>	<b>Represent</b>	<b>Move in report</b>
K/S/Q/E	Knowledge, Skills, Qualifications, Experience	Body (to describe the qualities of the candidate)
Recom.	Recommendation	Recommendation (to recommend the best or most suitable candidate for the job)

Table3.10 Micro codes used for coding texts

<b>Micro codes</b>	<b>Represent</b>	<b>Move in report</b>
Addition	In addition, additionally	Body
Agency	Agency/agencies	Body
Besides,	Besides,	Body
Cand.	Candidate	Body
Exp.	Experience	Body
Graduate	Graduate/graduated/graduation	Body
Instante	For instance,	Body
On hand	On the other hand,	Body
Qualificat.	Qualifications	Body
Best	Best, the best	Recommendation
Efficient	Efficient, efficiency	Recommendation
Fluent	Fluent, fluency	Recommendation
Prof.	Professional	Recommendation
Think/believe	I think, I believe, In my opinion, etc.	Recommendation

It was expected that linkages between these codes would be higher in the post-test reports of the EG than in those of the CG. AQUAD 5 calculates how these codes are related in the texts and shows

- a) the two codes for which the linkage is constructed (e.g. ‘recom’ for recommendation and ‘think/believe’ for ‘I think that...’),
- b) the number of instances in the text in which these two codes have been linked together, and
- c) the text example where these linkages have occurred.

For the purpose of this section, eight examples of linkages are presented for the CG and the EG. It is probably necessary to recall here that the macro codes structure the content of the report whereas the micro codes represent the lexical encoding of such functions. Thus, it was expected that the function ‘recommendation’ was going to be linguistically realized by words or phrases such as ‘think’, ‘believe’, ‘in my opinion’. Of the eight examples analyzed in this section, four refer to the relationship between the macro code ‘recommendation’ and two of its possible linguistic realizations (micro codes): ‘think/believe’ and ‘fluent’. It was hypothesized that recommendations would be signposted by phrases such as ‘I

believe’, ‘I think’ or ‘I suggest’, and that a reason for recommending a candidate would be their fluency in the German language, as suggested in the instructions for writing the report. The first linkage examined here is the relationship between ‘recommendation’ and ‘think/believe’. The linkage is presented by AQUAD as indicated in output 3.1 below.

**LINKAGE ANALYSIS:**

**Preconstructed linkage structure:**  
**recommendation                   AND think/believe**

```

=====
--> File: all_e2reports.rtf-----
61- 61: recommendation           AND   62- 62: think/believe
      candidates. Also I recommend advertising the message.
      on the internet. I think that this is the best way to
92- 92: recommendation           AND   92- 92: think/believe
      I suggest that Fiona Scott's is a good candidate to a
95- 95: recommendation           AND   95- 95: think/believe
      I think that the Department of Human Resources should
                                  AND   95- 95: think/believe
      I think that the Department of Human Resources should
171- 171: recommendation        AND   171- 171: think/believe
      In my opinion Fiona Scott's a very good candidate
250- 250: recommendation        AND   250- 250: think/believe
      In my opinion this person is the best to this
301- 301: recommendation        AND   302- 302: think/believe
      Recommendations
      I believe that Fiona Scott is the appropriate person for
419- 419: recommendation        AND   419- 419: think/believe
      Fhirstly I think that Fiona Scott is suitable but
721- 721: recommendation        AND   721- 721: think/believe
      I think that she is well trained to take
972- 972: recommendation        AND   972- 972: think/believe
      I think that you should recruit this candidate because
10 confirmation(s)

```

**Output 3.1 Linkage between ‘recommendation’ and ‘opinion’ for the EG**

There are 10 confirmations of linkages in the total number of post-test reports produced by the EG. The output for the same kind of linkage for the CG, on the other hand, shows that there are only 6 linkages, that is, 40% less linkages than in the reports written by the EG.



**LINKAGE ANALYSIS:**

**Preconstructed linkage structure:**

**K/S/Q/E AND cand**

=====  
--> File: all\_e2reports.rtf-----  
48- 48: K/S/Q/E AND 48- 48: cand  
The first candidate, Fiona Scott, is a excelente  
AND 55- 55: cand  
She has studied in a important University, he university of  
London. Also since 1992.  
She is a prestigous Public elation person, but she was  
born in GB. The Patagonia GMBH need that the mother  
tongue of candidates be  
81- 81: K/S/Q/E AND 92- 92: cand  
Fiona Scott has a good professional experience. In 1992  
she worked  
to Department of Public Relations in Scottish Wildlife  
trust. She was responsible for  
writing articles on all aspects of the Trust's  
activities.  
From 1990 to 1991 she was assistant to the sports editor  
She graduated in University of London. She talk fluent  
German  
  
Recommendations  
I suggest that Fiona Scott's is a good candidate to a  
87- 87: K/S/Q/E AND 92- 92: cand  
From 1990 to 1991 she was assistant to the sports editor  
She graduated in University of London. She talk fluent  
German  
  
Recommendations  
I suggest that Fiona Scott's is a good candidate to a  
88- 88: K/S/Q/E AND 92- 92: cand  
She graduated in University of London. She talk fluent  
German  
  
Recommendations  
I suggest that Fiona Scott's is a good candidate to a  
92- 92: K/S/Q/E AND 92- 92: cand  
I suggest that Fiona Scott's is a good candidate to a  
590- 590: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: cand  
(Public Affairs Associate). She has a diploma in Public  
Relations of London Camber of Commerce and Industry.  
Fiona worked in departments of Public Relations,  
writing  
articles on al aspect of the "Trust's" activities and  
ensuring their distribution to the press. She was editor  
of the trust's mounthly jourlan and made relations with  
European Enviromental agencies. I belive that she have  
a very good experience on Public Relations.  
She is British, but she has a fluent German, In adition  
Fiona is interest in diferents sports (swimming/ rock  
climbing)  
It's a detail very important.  
Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best  
candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. Shi is suitable  
592- 592: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: cand  
Fiona worked in departments of Public Relations,  
writing  
articles on al aspect of the "Trust's" activities and

ensuring their distribution to the press. She was editor of the trust's monthly journal and made relations with European Environmental agencies. I believe that she has a very good experience on Public Relations. She is British, but she has a fluent German, In addition Fiona is interested in different sports (swimming/ rock climbing)

It's a detail very important.

595- 595: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: candidate  
Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. She is suitable ensuring their distribution to the press. She was editor of the trust's monthly journal and made relations with European Environmental agencies. I believe that she has a very good experience on Public Relations. She is British, but she has a fluent German, In addition Fiona is interested in different sports (swimming/ rock climbing)

It's a detail very important.

598- 598: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: candidate  
Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. She is suitable a very good experience on Public Relations. She is British, but she has a fluent German, In addition Fiona is interested in different sports (swimming/ rock climbing)

It's a detail very important.

600- 600: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: candidate  
Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. She is suitable Fiona is interested in different sports (swimming/ rock climbing)

It's a detail very important.

Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. She is suitable

18 confirmation(s)  
recommendation

she speaks fluent German.

conclusions

Once finished the evaluation of this candidate,

I think that she is well trained to take

771- 771: fluent AND 772- 772: recommendation

she has a fluent German.

I think that you should recruit this candidate because  
15 confirmation(s)

### Output 3.3 Linkage between 'recommendation' and 'fluent' for the EG

## LINKAGE ANALYSIS:

### Preconstructed linkage structure:

fluent AND recom

```
=====  
--> File: all_c2reports.rtf-----  
40- 40: fluent AND 54- 54: recom  
and Industry. She is fluent German and English.  
I suggest this candidate for this job before you make  
364- 364: fluent AND 366- 366: recom  
she speak fluent German. In conclusion she is very  
qualified for this  
job. I suggest this candidate for this job before you  
425- 425: fluent AND 432- 432: recom  
3 ski instructor, IBM PC user and speak the fluent  
German.  
Finally, in my opinion Fiona Scott is the good candidate  
478- 478: fluent AND 493- 493: recom  
she speak fluent german, besides she working an  
To conclude, I recommend you looking for  
484- 484: fluent AND 493- 493: recom  
she can speak fluent german, besides she is working  
In conclusion, I recommend you see her as a very
```

5 confirmation(s)

### Output 3.4 Linkage between 'recommendation' and 'fluent' for the CG

Further evidence in support of the hypotheses investigated in the present study, and available for triangulation with the qualitative results, is provided by the linkages expected to be found in the body of the reports. The next four examples refer to the relationship between the macro function *description of the most suitable candidate*, represented here by the macro code 'K/S/Q/E' and two of its possible linguistic realizations: 'candidate' and 'graduate'. The first example is illustrated in the outputs below, where the linkages are formed between the macro code 'K/S/Q/E' and the word 'candidate' as a linguistic realization of such a function. The outputs that follow indicate the presence of eighteen linkages for the EG and eleven for the CG

**LINKAGE ANALYSIS:**

**Preconstructed linkage structure:**

**K/S/Q/E AND cand**

```
=====  
--> File: all_e2reports.rtf-----  
48- 48: K/S/Q/E AND 48- 48: cand  
The first candidete, Fiona Scott, is a excelente  
AND 55- 55: cand  
She has studied in a importent University, he university of  
London. Also since 1992.  
She is a prestigouses Public elation person, but she was  
born in GB. The Patagonia GMBH need that the mother  
tongue of candidates be  
81- 81: K/S/Q/E AND 92- 92: cand  
Fiona Scott has a good professional experience. In 1992  
she worked  
to Department of Public Relations in Scottish Wildlife  
trust. She was responsible for  
writing articles on all aspects of the Trust's  
activities.  
From 1990 to 1991 she was assistant to the sports editor  
She graduated in University of London. She talk fluent  
German  
  
Recommendations  
I suggest that Fiona Scott's is a good candidate to a  
87- 87: K/S/Q/E AND 92- 92: cand  
From 1990 to 1991 she was assistant to the sports editor  
She graduated in University of London. She talk fluent  
German  
  
Recommendations  
I suggest that Fiona Scott's is a good candidate to a  
88- 88: K/S/Q/E AND 92- 92: cand  
She graduated in University of London. She talk fluent  
German  
  
Recommendations  
I suggest that Fiona Scott's is a good candidate to a  
92- 92: K/S/Q/E AND 92- 92: cand  
I suggest that Fiona Scott's is a good candidate to a  
590- 590: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: cand  
(Public Affairs Associate). She has a diploma in Public  
Relations of London Camber of Commerce and Industry.  
Fiona worked in departments of Public Relations,  
writing  
articles on al aspect of the "Trust's" activities and  
ensuring their distribution to the press. She was editor  
of the trust's mounthly jourlan and made relations with  
European Enviromental agencies. I belive that she have  
a very good experience on Public Relations.  
She is British, but she has a fluent German, In adition  
Fiona is interest in diferents sports (swimming/ rock  
climbing)  
It's a detail very important.  
Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best  
candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. Shi is suitable  
592- 592: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: cand  
Fiona worked in departments of Public Relations,  
writing  
articles on al aspect of the "Trust's" activities and
```

ensuring their distribution to the press. She was editor of the trust's monthly journal and made relations with European Environmental agencies. I believe that she has a very good experience on Public Relations. She is British, but she has a fluent German, In addition Fiona is interested in different sports (swimming/ rock climbing)

It's a detail very important.

595- 595: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: cand  
Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. She is suitable ensuring their distribution to the press. She was editor of the trust's monthly journal and made relations with European Environmental agencies. I believe that she has a very good experience on Public Relations. She is British, but she has a fluent German, In addition Fiona is interested in different sports (swimming/ rock climbing)

It's a detail very important.

598- 598: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: cand  
Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. She is suitable a very good experience on Public Relations. She is British, but she has a fluent German, In addition Fiona is interested in different sports (swimming/ rock climbing)

It's a detail very important.

600- 600: K/S/Q/E AND 604- 604: cand  
Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. She is suitable Fiona is interested in different sports (swimming/ rock climbing)

It's a detail very important.

Concluding, I think that Fiona is the best candidate that the Patagonia GNBH has. She is suitable

**18 confirmation(s)**

### **Output 3.5 Linkage between 'K/S/Q/E' and 'candidate' for the EG**

**LINKAGE ANALYSIS:**

**Preconstructed linkage structure:**

**K/S/Q/E AND cand**

=====

16- 16: K/S/Q/E AND 34- 34: cand  
activities since 1992 and she has been an editor of the journal's trust.  
On the other hand she is a ski instructor, has a certificate of camp counseling. She likes rock climbing. Fiona Scott is the best candidate for this job- she is

25- 25: K/S/Q/E AND 34- 34: cand  
has a wide experience, she has worked for well known companies.  
In my opinion we should interview her the next week Fiona Scott is the best candidate for this job- she is

36- 36: K/S/Q/E AND 54- 54: cand  
With a Journalism and Media studies degree from the University of London in 1991. And in 1992 with a Public Relations degree from the London Camber of Commerce and Industry. She is fluent German and English. Her professional experience three-month training I suggest this candidate for this job before you make

44- 44: K/S/Q/E AND 54- 54: cand  
in 1992 she works in department of Public relations and responsible for writing articles on all aspects of the trust's activities and ensuring their distribution to the press. I suggest this candidate for this job before you make

52- 52: K/S/Q/E AND 54- 54: cand  
With a 3 ski instructor certificate from camp counseling. I suggest this candidate for this job before you make

121- 121: K/S/Q/E AND 140- 140: cand  
She joined in Scottish Wildlife Trust, in the Department of Public Relations, in 1992 to present. There she is responsible In my opinion, Fiona Scott is a candidate

132- 132: K/S/Q/E AND 140- 140: cand  
three-month training period with the Glasgow Herald. She was Assistant to the sports editor between 1990 to 1991. In my opinion, Fiona Scott is a candidate

134- 134: K/S/Q/E AND 140- 140: cand  
Assistant to the sports editor between 1990 to 1991. Concerning her additional skills, she is fluent in German, also IBM PC user, grade 3 ski instructor and In my opinion, Fiona Scott is a candidate

160- 160: K/S/Q/E AND 166- 166: cand  
degree from the London camber of Commerce and Industry (1992). Also, she studied in the University of London from 1988 to 1991, she graduated of BA in journalism.  
Thirdly, about the professional experience of the candidate, she has

165- 165: K/S/Q/E AND 166- 166: cand  
Thirdly, about the professional experience of the candidate, she has

**11 confirmation(s)**

**Output 3.6 Linkage between 'K/S/Q/E' and 'candidate' for the CG**

A final example will show the relationship between the macro code 'K/S/Q/E' and another of its potential linguistic realizations 'graduate'; which stands for 'graduated' and 'a graduate'. As in the previous examples, the EG outperformed the CG by producing nine more linkages between these codes in the texts of their reports, as illustrated in outputs 3.7 and 3.8 below.

**LINKAGE ANALYSIS:**

**Preconstructed linkage structure:**

**graduate AND K/S/Q/E**

=====

--> File: all\_e2reports.rtf-----

```

88- 88: graduate AND 88- 88: K/S/Q/E
      She graduated in University of London. She talk fluent
      AND 92- 92: K/S/Q/E
      She graduated in University of London. She talk fluent
      German
      she has a good qualifications. for work in this area.
194- 194: graduate AND 194- 194: K/S/Q/E
      she was gruadated in journalism and Media studies.
      AND 197- 197: K/S/Q/E
      she was gruadated in journalism and Media studies.
      She was worked in scottish Wildlife trust, besides she
      was
      worked in another areas for example, Deparment of Public
      AND 202- 202: K/S/Q/E
      she was gruadated in journalism and Media studies.
      She was worked in scottish Wildlife trust, besides she
      was
      worked in another areas for example, Deparment of Public
      Relations,
      Responsible for writing articles on all aspects of the
      trust's activities and
      ensuring their distribution to the press. Besides she
      was worked in
329- 329: graduate AND 329- 329: K/S/Q/E
      she graduated in London Cmaber of commerce and
      AND 334- 334: K/S/Q/E
      she graduated in London Cmaber of commerce and
      Industry. apart from that. she has experience to work
      but
      the Patagonia GMBH. becos she worked in other company.
      on the other hand Fiona Scott has camp. couseldon
      certificate
      AND 335- 335: K/S/Q/E
      she graduated in London Cmaber of commerce and
      Industry. apart from that. she has experience to work
      but
      the Patagonia GMBH. becos she worked in other company.
      on the other hand Fiona Scott has camp. couseldon
      certificate
      and speak fluent german. this is important to the
621- 621: graduate AND 621- 621: K/S/Q/E
      London when she graduating as BA in Journalism and Media

```

AND 625- 625: K/S/Q/E

London when she graduating as BA in Journalism and Media studies. Besides, in 1991 she got a Diploma in Public relations, in the London chamber of commerce and Industry.

Now Fiona Scott work for Scottish Wildlife Trust, in the

AND 629- 629: K/S/Q/E

London when she graduating as BA in Journalism and Media studies. Besides, in 1991 she got a Diploma in Public relations, in the London chamber of commerce and Industry.

Now Fiona Scott work for Scottish Wildlife Trust, in the Department of Public relations. Her work consist in writing articles on all aspects of the trust's activities and ensuring their distribution to the press.

In my opinion I think, what Fiona scott comply

648- 648: graduate AND 648- 648: K/S/Q/E

First of all Fiona Scott was graduated in the University

AND 648- 648: K/S/Q/E

First of all Fiona Scott was graduated in the University

AND 651- 651: K/S/Q/E

First of all Fiona Scott was graduated in the University of London

with honours in Journalism and Media studies also she obtained a diploma in Public Relations in the London

AND 655- 655: K/S/Q/E

First of all Fiona Scott was graduated in the University of London

with honours in Journalism and Media studies also she obtained a diploma in Public Relations in the London

Camber

of commerce and Industry in 1992. After that she has been

working for the scottish Wildlife trust as responsible

AND 658- 658: K/S/Q/E

First of all Fiona Scott was graduated in the University of London

with honours in Journalism and Media studies also she obtained a diploma in Public Relations in the London

Camber

of commerce and Industry in 1992. After that she has been

working for the scottish Wildlife trust as responsible for writing articles on all aspects of the trust's

activities,

this present job and the one that had in the summer of

**17 confirmation(s)**

### **Output 3.7 Linkage between 'K/S/Q/E' and 'graduate' for the EG**

LINKAGE ANALYSIS :  
Preconstructed linkage structure:  
**graduated** AND **K/S/Q/E**

=====  
--> File: all\_c2reports.rtf-----  
9- 9: graduated AND 11- 11: K/S/Q/E  
studies. Also in 1991 she graduated from London Camber  
of Commerce  
and Industry and she got the degree on Public Relations.  
AND 16- 16: K/S/Q/E  
studies. Also in 1991 she graduated from London Camber  
of Commerce  
and Industry and she got the degree on Public Relations.  
On the one hand she is good at writing because she  
has  
been responsible of writing articles of the Scottish  
Wildlife Trust's  
activities since 1992 and she has been an editor of the  
205- 205: graduated AND 207- 207: K/S/Q/E  
London. In 1992 she graduated in London  
of Public Relations.  
She worked for department of Public  
AND 214- 214: K/S/Q/E  
London. In 1992 she graduated in London  
of Public Relations.  
She worked for department of Public  
relations and she was responsible for writing  
articles.  
Besides she have good drive the  
computers.  
In my opinion this candidate is not  
apropiete for this post because she not have  
experience. Besides she works in London and  
419- 419: graduated AND 421- 421: K/S/Q/E  
Fiona Scott has 23 years old, she graduated from London  
Camber  
of Commerce and Industry in Public Relations in 1991/2.  
AND 423- 423: K/S/Q/E  
Fiona Scott has 23 years old, she graduated from London  
Camber  
of Commerce and Industry in Public Relations in 1991/2.  
Beside  
has additional skills as camp counseling certificate,  
650- 650: graduated AND 655- 655: K/S/Q/E  
Fiona Scott is graduated from University of  
London in Journalism and Media Studies. In 1992, Scott  
had a diploma in Public Relations.  
She has worked in Department of Public Relations  
AND 658- 658: K/S/Q/E  
Fiona Scott is graduated from University of  
London in Journalism and Media Studies. In 1992, Scott  
had a diploma in Public Relations.  
She has worked in Department of Public Relations  
of Scottish Wild-life Trust since 1992. In this post, she  
has written articles on all

**8 confirmation(s)**

### **Output 3.8 Linkage between 'K/S/Q/E' and 'graduate' for the CG**

The analysis of code associations indicates that the EG group outperformed the EC group by making use of a higher number of linkages in their post-test reports. It may be thought that the fact that the reports produced by the EG are longer than those of the CG may have favoured the stronger textual relationship between macro and micro codes exhibited in the EG group's reports. In any case, results seem to indicate that the gains in favour of the EG group are due to the treatment received and correlate with the quantitative results of this study. Finally, the coming sections present the results of the individual interviews with the EG instructors and of the post-study questionnaire EG students completed.

### **3.2.2. Interview with EG instructors**

As already stated, the main objective of the semi-directed interview (Appendix G) conducted at the end of this study was to find out the participating teachers' opinions about the application of genre-based instruction to the teaching of business report writing and about the materials used to carry it out. All the teachers agreed on the benefits of focusing attention on the structural and linguistic conventions of the genre. Two of them felt that genre-based instruction gives students the possibility to build their texts faster and more confidently on the basis of pre-established patterns, especially at an early stage of language acquisition. When requested to express their expectations about the results obtained from genre-based instruction, teachers gave optimistic answers. The teachers' comments, translated to English below, illustrate the considerations mentioned:

Students acquired the formal structures to present information efficiently in a business report. (PC)

I believe students are well-prepared to write business reports. At their level of proficiency in English (intermediate), I think they are able to communicate effectively with a native or non-native writer and produce an effective report. (PP)

Students learnt the formal structure of a business report. (PI)

Genre-based instruction gives them confidence as to how to approach the task, how to

organize it, and how to develop its outline. (PI)

Genre-based instruction improved students' performance in accuracy and speed, mainly because of the emphasis on structure and conventions. (PI)

Students learn how to organize their discourse in accordance with the specific goals requested at their work. You make choices regarding content in a logical way and fulfilling the readers' expectations. Perfect. (PC)

I do not think it (genre-based approach) limits students' creativity because once the task is assigned, they can continue working and developing the topic as far as they want and are able to. (PI)

This approach gave them (students) confidence. I emphasized the fact that not all reports were identical in their organization based on the sample reports we had. Some reports had sub-headings, others did not. Then, when students were asked to produce their reports, they made different choices as regards headings. I found this very important because I realized that they had grasped the genre and that they were not thinking "I have to do this" but "I do it as I think it appropriate". (PC)

As to the assessment of the genre-based material used with students, it can be said that all the teachers found it appropriate though all of them admitted they had been unable to use all the materials due to time constrains.

I found the material well-focused to the objective of teaching following Genre Theory. It was easy to develop. (PC)

I found it useful. There was a wide variety of activities, but I was not able to cover all the material due to the few (eight) classes we had. (PP)

I would use this material again because I had good results. I think all the material exceeded the time available. I had to assign some activities as homework due to lack of time. (PI)

Interestingly, one of the teachers spontaneously commented on how she had exploited the materials, thus demonstrating that she had followed the approach without deviations from instructions.

I worked building up genre awareness of what the purpose of a business report is, who requests it, where and when it is used; then, I focused on the linguistic aspect, type of language, vocabulary, textual organization. I worked a lot with 'moves' as the point of departure of understanding what a business report is. I think they (students) understood the organization a report has. From then on, they proceeded comfortably. (PC)

In summary, it can be said that teachers considered that the main advantage of this approach was that it provided useful guidelines for the step-by-step organization of the text. Genre-based instruction seems to have facilitated the tasks of both teachers and students. As regards the materials used, they seemed to have been adequate and effective for teaching business report writing to students of intermediate English proficiency without job experience. Although the number of activities seems to have exceeded the allotted time for report writing, the teachers' views reaffirm the gains in the post-test scores obtained by the EG.

### **3.2.3. Post-study questionnaire**

As explained in section 2.3.3, the main purpose of this questionnaire (Appendix D.2) was to gather students' opinions about the materials used in class, i.e., the requested tasks, and the teaching method as a whole.

In general, it can be said that the students' reaction to genre-based instruction was favourable. Fifteen out of 22 respondent students (68%) indicated that identifying and analyzing the typical features that characterize effective business reports facilitated the learning task. In keeping with the teachers' comments, 19 students (86%) reported that the type of instruction "gave them confidence in report writing".

Regarding the materials, 18 students (81%) rated the tasks carried out during the period of instruction as "appropriate" and 20 of them (90%), answered that the rubrics were clear. These findings are in keeping with the results obtained from the interviews to teachers and support the results obtained from the quantitative data.

In conclusion, the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data collected indicates higher gains for the EG than for the CG. As already explained, although the scores obtained from both groups are normally distributed, the statistical results indicate not only the higher mean in the EG but also a lower level of skewedness. What is more, the fact that the z value obtained (6.23) is higher than the critical

value (2.57) seems to indicate that the EG outperformed the CG due to the treatment received. The results of the qualitative data indicate that the students of the EG group outperformed those in the CG not only in the number of macro codes deployed to signal the rhetorical function of the four sections of the reports, but also in the linkages between micro and macro codes of the body and recommendation sections. Finally, the data collected from the interview with the EG teachers and the post-study questionnaire provide further evidence to support the results. In short, the triangulation of the results obtained in this study seems to indicate that the genre-based approach to writing business reports accounts for the gains obtained by the EG.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Implications, Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

As stated in the previous chapter, genre-based instruction, as conceived by English for Specific Purposes, (Bhatia 1993; Johns and Dudley-Evans 1991; Swales 1990, among others) enhances BE students' production of written business reports. This chapter presents the implications and limitations of the results discussed in the previous chapter. It also offers some directions for further research.

#### **4.1. Implications**

**A genre-based approach to BE facilitates the learning of the structures and lexico-grammatical features of target genres.**

One important implication of this study is that BE students with an intermediate level of L2 proficiency need explicit teaching in the structure and lexico-grammatical features of target genres. Due to their limited linguistic competence, intermediate students are not able to produce well-formed and effective texts. Delpit (1988) comments that "Students will be judged on their product [...] and that product, based as it is on the specific codes of a particular culture, is more readily produced when the directives of how to produce it are made explicit" (p.287 cited in Hyland 2003). Although both groups in this study had explicit teaching, only the EG achieved target-like reports. In other words, neither group was aware of the social

context in which business communication takes place or understood the conventional aspects of the business report construction before instruction. Indeed, although 50 out of 69 students reported to have had report-writing instruction in the previous course (*Inglés III*), the results obtained at the pre-test demonstrated low levels of performance for both groups. The presentation, deconstruction and discussion of model texts fostered by genre-based instruction seem to have contributed to the development of students' knowledge of the schematic structure and the linguistic features that are necessary to write business reports.

**Genre-based instruction raises students' awareness of the social nature of writing.**

It has already been stated in section 1.2.1 that the enactment of a genre is a response to the expectations of the other members of a specialist community. Therefore, students who are preparing to work in the business field need to understand the social context in which written business communication takes place in order to produce effective texts. This study suggests that students can acquire knowledge of the contextual constraints that govern business report production by undergoing genre-based instruction. In fact, having been taught that the business community values brief, straight-to-the-point writing, the EG students made more business-specific linguistic choices than the CG to build their reports (see Tables 3.7 and 3.8). Interestingly, this was an important achievement for the EG group because, being pre-experience learners, they did not have previous knowledge of the cultural conventions of the business environment. In summary, the genre-based approach seems to have provided students not only with the linguistic resources but also with business input, thus raising students' awareness of the social nature of genre.

**Genre-based instruction highlights variation rather than uniformity.**

As discussed in section 1.4, some researchers on Genre Theory application (Freedman & Medway, 1994; Kay and Dudley-Evans, 1998) have warned about the danger of the approach becoming prescriptive or formulaic and therefore, leading

students to only imitate target texts without realizing variations within genres. Although it might be thought that only advanced students can make varied linguistic choices within a particular genre, this study has shown that even at an intermediate proficiency level, BE students can realize specific goals using various linguistic resources. The analysis of the macro-codes used by the EG and the CG in the section *Introduction* showed that whereas most reports in the CG had little, if any, variation in the formulation of purpose, most reports in the EG showed a variety of forms; for instance, ‘The present report is to’; ‘In the present report I am going to’; ‘The purpose of this report is to’; ‘The aim of this report is to’. Thus, there is a clear implication that genre-based pedagogy for intermediate proficiency learners encourages the use of a wide range of alternative expressions to realize the same purpose.

### **The need for teachers’ training in Genre Theory application.**

As genre pedagogy aims to describe rather than prescribe generic features, teachers’ training is essential to the efficacy of the approach. As Hyland (2003) points out,

There is always some danger of reifying genres with a text-intensive focus, as inexperienced or unimaginative teachers may fail to acknowledge variation and choice, applying what Freedman and Medway (1994: 46) calls ‘a recipe theory of genre’ so that students see genres as ‘how-to-do’ lists (p.26).

It can be assumed that the CG students did not make varied linguistic choices to realize the purpose of the section *Introduction* because instructors failed to teach the array of linguistic choices conventionally used by business people to introduce the purpose of a report. In contrast, the EG teachers guided the students’ analysis of generic features in model texts and provided explicit teaching of the rhetorical and linguistic resources that realized them. As learners made progress, teachers diminished their support, fostered reflection on given reports, and finally encouraged students to work independently by producing multiple drafts until they, and not teachers, were satisfied with their final product (see, for example, Tasks 4.1

and 4.2, Appendix F). Thus, through training, uninformed teachers can avoid turning the genre based approach into the ‘recipe-based approach’ mentioned above.

### **Time-effectiveness**

Donna (2000: 4) holds that “The most successful BE courses are the ones which identify appropriate content and which fulfill students’ needs most completely in the shortest possible time”. As stated above, one of the needs of pre-experience learners is to acquire knowledge of the values of the business community. The students involved in this study became familiar with such values and learnt the linguistic and rhetorical resources that characterize business reports over eight thirty-minute modules of instruction. While it is not possible to specify how long it would take for students to be able to manipulate genre features like specialists, this study suggests that genre-based instruction is an efficient method to help students achieve an initial level of mastery of the business report genre over a short period of time.

## **4.2. Limitations of the study**

### **English proficiency**

As this research study was carried out with subjects with an intermediate level of L2 proficiency, the results obtained cannot be generalized to advanced students. As pointed out in section 1.4, a number of teachers who have put the genre-based approach into practice held that this type of instruction would be more suitable for students with a beginner or intermediate English proficiency than for advanced students.

### **Previous/background knowledge**

The subjects in this study were students of a business-oriented university where all programs of study belong to the business field. This means that all the students had some background knowledge of business, acquired along their study programs.

In other words, although the subjects did not have job experience, they did have a lot of business input in Spanish. This circumstance may have facilitated their understanding of contextual constraints. The improvement of both groups over such a short period of time might have been due to their previous business background knowledge. Therefore, it cannot be said how efficient this approach might be for students without any prior knowledge about business situations.

### **Task fulfillment**

In agreement with the discussion in section 1.6.1.c, many important considerations were taken into account when selecting the materials to develop instruction: target content, time availability, students' needs, and language and business input. However, the results of this study are limited by the fact that none of the three groups completed all the tasks of the students' pack in class. Therefore, even if the study results proved the efficacy of the materials used, it is impossible to tell how much students would have improved, had all materials been completed.

### **4.3. Directions for further research**

The implications and limitations discussed above provide directions for further research. The following are some suggestions:

#### **Language proficiency**

As the subjects in this study were at an intermediate level of L2 proficiency, a future study could assess the effectiveness of genre-based instruction in the teaching of business writing to advanced students. This study would throw light on the alleged limitation of the approach as a hindrance to students' creativity.

### **Job-experience**

The subjects in this study had no job experience. A follow-up study could be carried out including work-experienced subjects as well. This would give insight into the impact of students' background knowledge and competence on the learning of Business English writing from a genre-based approach.

### **Effectiveness of communication vs. linguistic accuracy**

A future study could include experienced BE teachers as raters in order to investigate whether they prioritize effectiveness of communication over linguistic accuracy when rating business texts.

### **Genre-based instruction in teaching oral skills**

This study focused on genre pedagogy applied to the development of written skills. A further study could investigate its application on teaching oral skills such as interacting by the telephone or participating in meetings, which are key language skills for students engaged in business-oriented programs of study.

### **Teachers' role**

This study suggests that the teachers who followed the genre-based approach empowered their students to become effective writers by highlighting, among other aspects, the varied linguistic choices writers can make to build business reports. Further research may investigate the correlation between teacher's training in Genre Theory and the amount of linguistic variation students' texts exhibit. Such study would contribute to the understanding of the teachers' influence on students' perception and understanding of variation within genres.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Conclusion**

The present study investigated the application of genre-based instruction to the teaching of Business English (BE) writing to students with an intermediate English proficiency. The study was meant to be a contribution to research in the ESP field in general and to the teaching of BE in academic contexts in particular.

On the basis of the results arrived at in this study, this chapter reviews the research questions and the alternative hypotheses stated in chapter 2 and provides the general conclusions for this study.

#### **Research Questions**

**1. Does genre-based pedagogy facilitate the development of specialist-writing skills for learners with an intermediate English proficiency?**

The results of this study showed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the ratings assigned to the reports by three independent evaluators (Wilcoxon Rank Sums) as well as in the code associations investigated by using AQUAD. The triangulation of the statistical results with the data collected from the interview with EG teachers and the students' final questionnaire further supported the results obtained and enhanced the internal validity of this study. Thus, the null hypothesis of this study can be rejected and the unidirectional hypothesis, i.e.:

H<sub>1</sub>: Genre-based instruction enhances the written production of learners with an intermediate English proficiency, can be accepted.

## **2. Is genre-based instruction an effective tool to teach business written texts to students without work experience?**

The answer to this question is that genre-based instruction seems to empower pre-experienced students to interact effectively in the business community as it raises students' awareness of their language needs in real-life situations. Additionally, this type of instruction makes students aware of the contextual constraints that will govern their written production in their professional life. By analyzing, describing and deconstructing model business reports, the pre-experienced learners who participated in this study not only learnt the rhetorical and linguistic features necessary to write business reports, but also became aware of the business audience's expectations, of the situations in which business reports are produced, and of the communicative purposes this genre serves. In other words, genre-based instruction provided students with an explicit understanding of how business reports are constructed and why they are written the way they are. This is very important because, as stated in Chapter 2, pre-experienced learners acquire knowledge of business as they acquire knowledge of the specialist language.

A secondary objective of this research study was to assess the effectiveness of the genre-based materials and class activities designed for this study. In agreement with Donna's (2000) statement about materials selection, the materials in this study seem to have given structure and direction to the instruction and to have provided students with the opportunity of practicing business-specific language areas and skills. Students reported that instructions were clear and that the requested tasks were easy to understand. This is extremely important in classroom contexts where there are large numbers of students and limited time to accomplish course objectives. In fact, some of the students spontaneously praised the organization of the materials as these allowed them to proceed into easily identifiable stages, and the three teachers who participated in the study valued the business input they provided. In short, the results of this study seem to confirm that the choice of materials was adequate and contributed effectively to achieving the specific goals of genre-based instruction.

In conclusion, teaching students from the genre-based approach as conceived by ESP, facilitated students' production of written business reports because it developed students' awareness that writing is a purposeful activity that takes place in specific social contexts. In addition, students were able to realize that the structural and linguistic choices that encode a particular genre are governed by conventions established within the specialist community as its members interact to achieve specific communicative goals.

The students in the EG developed three of the four competences that Bhatia (1993) considers essential for successful participation in a professional community: they learnt the business code, acquired genre knowledge, and developed sensitivity to schematic structures. In other words, students were empowered to participate in the business community. It is believed that they have become more aware of the demands and they have started acquiring the skills needed to effectively perform in their future business community.

Finally, because a distinguishing mark of Business English teaching is the lack of an established theory, it is hoped that this research study will give some insights into the possibilities that genre-based instruction offers to this area of language teaching.

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## **Appendices**

**Esta es la página 101 donde debería ir el  
Syllabus of the course. Es un pdf de tres hojas (101-103)**

**página 102**

**página 103**

## Appendix B – Instructors’ guide

Follow this guide to develop the tasks. Should you have any doubts, please contact the researcher. Thank you for your commitment to this research study.

### **1. Activities that aim to raise students’ awareness of the standard elements of the format of a business report**

**Task 1.1:** Have students read reports 1, 2, and 3. Have them find out the purpose of each one of the reports by asking them the following questions:

*Why did Yvonne Elliot, Finance Director write report 1?*

*Why did D. Logan, Sales Director, write report 2?*

*Why did Jim Bowen write report 3?*

*Why do business people write reports?*

(Expected answers: To inform about a task assigned, to report the results of some research, to report on the assessment of a project).

Make it clear that business people write reports to pass on requested information

**Task 1.2:** Encourage students to focus on similarities and differences in layout and style in reports 1, 2 and 3 so that they realize that genre conventions are likely to vary slightly from company to company.

**Task 1.3:** Have students read text 4, a report with an untidy layout, and ask them to comment on the receiver’s possible reactions. The goal of this task is to make students realize that failure to adhere to the writing conventions of the business community may render their texts liable to be misunderstood and therefore disregarded. Ask students to rewrite the untidy report in order to make it effective. Play the role of a novice writer by asking students to justify the changes made.

## **2. Activities that aimed to raise students' awareness of generic structure**

**Task 2.1:** Ask students to read the excerpts belonging to different genres (a letter, a narrative, and a report). Have them identify text types and fields (formal letter giving information, somebody's story about a frightening experience, etc.) Although this exercise presents no challenge to students, it is useful to show them that the purpose of a text and the context in which it is written determine the text type produced. Have them focus on the macro-structure each text exhibits.

**Task 2.2:** Ask students to match headings to the appropriate sections (moves) of the report (Text 8).

**Task 2.3:** Have students comment on the "necessary" parts (generic structure) a Spanish report should contain in order to serve its purpose. Do not make prescriptive contributions because the aim of this task is to have students profit from their own experience.

**Task 2.4:** Have students predict similarities between Spanish and English business reports regarding generic structure.

**Task 2.5:** Ask students to draw boundaries between sections identifying the purpose of each of the moves of reports 1, 2, and 3. The aim of this task is to have students realize that reports have distinctive rhetorical sections (moves) and that each one serves a different purpose.

**Task 2.6:** Have students organize the scrambled strips of paper containing the moves of a report (Text 9). Once students do this exercise, have them focus on to the kind of statements (active/passive voice, declarative/interrogative/imperative sentences) that realize each section. The aim of this activity is to help students recognize the connection between structural stages and linguistic features as the latter respond to a primary function (to remind of the request, to state what procedure has been carried out for the

task assigned, to report conclusions and recommendations) Additionally, lead students to focus on the connectors that introduce each move, so that they are introduced to textual cohesion.

**Task 2.7:** Have students focus on reports 1 and 3. Ask them to identify the structural and linguistic devices that encode the purpose of each move. Through this task, it is expected to make students aware of the ways in which rhetorical and linguistic features build up the reports.

**Task 2.8:** Provide additional practice by asking students to identify the moves of the report (Text 10) by assigning headings to each rhetorical section.

**Task 2.9:** Assign some time for students to read explicit information about the main sections of an assessment report (Texts 11 and 12). Conduct oral practice reinforcing the expressions conventionally used to realize the different moves of a business report.

**Task 2.10:** Ask students to replace specific stages of some of the reports provided in accordance with alternative purposes you provide. Demonstrate that the rhetorical and linguistic features employed to shape a report are determined by the purpose it aims to fulfill.

### **3. Activities that aim to raise Students' awareness of textual cohesion**

**Task 3.1:** Present the following set of clauses to students:

*As requested, I am sending the information. It's very rarely found in Texas. They think so. When does the championship start? No, I don't know how to operate it.*

Ask students the following questions:

What is the purpose of this text?

What information is being sent?

What is rarely found in Texas?

The fact that students are unable to answer them will hopefully make them aware of the need for specific elements beyond the level of the clause to connect clauses together and organize them as messages. Encourage practice by asking students to insert the given words and phrases in the appropriate space (Text 13).

**Task 3.2:** Ask students to try to identify the expressions that create cohesion in the report (Text 7). The aim of this exercise is to draw students' attention to the ways in which reference, ellipsis, junction, and lexical organization join and develop ideas.

**Task 3.3:** Ask students to provide the missing words in the report (Text 14). In this exercise, students will feel compelled to include connectors, pronouns, and field-specific vocabulary. Point out their function as devices to link and develop ideas.

**Task 3.4:** Have students extract the content words from some of the reports provided (Texts 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 14) and ask them to group them into lexical strings (groups of words belonging to the same field) assigning headings to each group. The aim of this exercise is to raise awareness of the way in which lexical relations contribute to textual cohesion. In this case, attention should be paid to the use of terms which have specialized technical meanings within the business community

#### 4. Integrative activities

**Task 4.1:** Students complete activities **a** and **b** (Text 15). The aim of this task is to have students organize information and complete a report. Through this task,

students start their own production. Read some reports aloud pointing out their strong and weak points as regards generic conventions.

**Task 4.2:** Assign 20 minutes for students to write a short report on two possible locations for a restaurant (Text 16). The aim of setting a time limit is to allow students enough time for production but not for revision. Refrain from making comments while students produce their first drafts. The second step of the exercise is to have students analyze the format of their own texts: if they are satisfied with their work, encourage them to analyze the generic structure; however, if they consider that arrangements are necessary, ask them to rewrite their texts. In the same way, students should proceed with the analysis of text cohesion. Once they have finished their own step-by-step revision, ask them to hand in their final draft. In this way, students integrate the knowledge they have acquired through previous exercises and, at the same time, are encouraged to work independently. The aim of having them rewrite their texts is to reinforce the structural points they already manage through repetition, thus increasing their confidence as writers.

**Task 4.3:** Encourage students to use their acquired knowledge of the genre *business reports* to elaborate their own *Tips for writing effective reports*.

## Appendix C.1 – Raters' protocol

It is important that evaluators follow these instructions carefully so that results are not invalidated.

- 1) Get familiar with the **Scoring Scale** on p.1 of the folder you have been given.
- 2) Read the set of instructions that were given to participants, pp. 3, 4 and clarify any doubts you may have with the researcher.
- 3) Go through the sample reports on pp. 5-7 with the researcher in order to unify assessment criteria. Keep in mind that the guiding principle for evaluation is the fulfillment of the task required.
- 4) Score the reports. It is not necessary for you to correct mistakes of any kind. Just assign marks holistically.  
Should you have any doubts, do please ask the researcher before proceeding.
- 5) Record the scores given to the participants on the **Scoring sheet**.
- 6) Hand in all the material, i.e. scoring scale, instructions given to participants, sample reports, scoring sheet, and the photocopied reports.

Thank you very much for contributing so generously to this research project. It is hoped that the findings of this study may throw some light on the teaching and learning of Business English writing.

## Appendix C.2 – Scoring Scale

Evaluators are expected to assess students' reports by awarding a mark (5-1) to each piece of writing on the basis of the following marking scheme:

<b>Mark: 5 = Full realization of the task set.</b>	
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both content points (evaluation and recommendation) achieved.</li> </ul>
<b>Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good range of grammatical structures.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confident use of specific vocabulary.</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective structural organization (introduction, body, conclusion/recommendation).</li> </ul>
<b>Links</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good use of linking devices.</li> </ul>
<b>Register &amp; Format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register and format consistently appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very positive effect on the reader.</li> </ul>
<b>Mark: 4 = Good realization of the task set.</b>	
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both content points (evaluation and recommendation) achieved.</li> </ul>
<b>Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good range of grammatical structures with some non-impending errors.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good use of vocabulary though not specific.</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good structural organization.</li> </ul>
<b>Links</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good use of linking devices with some non-impending errors.</li> </ul>
<b>Register &amp; Format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register and format on the whole appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive effect on the reader.</li> </ul>
<b>Mark: 3 = Satisfactory realization of the task set.</b>	
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both content points (evaluation or recommendation) achieved or one fully achieved and another poorly achieved.</li> </ul>
<b>Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of non-impending errors in grammatical structures.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adequate use of vocabulary though with some non-impending errors.</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor structural organization.</li> </ul>
<b>Links</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfactory use of linking devices</li> </ul>
<b>Register &amp; Format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Register and format reasonable, although not entirely successful.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Satisfactory effect on the reader.</li> </ul>

<b>Mark 2 = <i>Inadequate realization of the task set.</i></b>	
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only one point achieved.</li> </ul>
<b>Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numerous errors in grammatical structures which sometimes hinder communication.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited use of vocabulary.</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak structural organization, causing confusion.</li> </ul>
<b>Links</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content not clearly linked, causing some confusion.</li> </ul>
<b>Register &amp; Format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate register and format.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative effect on the reader.</li> </ul>
<b>Mark: 1 = <i>Very poor realization of the task set.</i></b>	
<b>Content</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One content point poorly achieved.</li> </ul>
<b>Structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little evidence of grammatical structures required by the task.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent basic vocabulary errors.</li> </ul>
<b>Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of structural organization, causing a breakdown in communication.</li> </ul>
<b>Links</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate or no use of linking devices.</li> </ul>
<b>Register &amp; Format</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little attempt at appropriate register and format.</li> </ul>
<b>Effect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very negative effect on the reader.</li> </ul>



## Appendix D.1 - Pre-study questionnaire

### CUESTIONARIO

El presente cuestionario corresponde a la etapa inicial de un trabajo de investigación sobre la escritura en inglés. Rogamos tenga a bien responder las siguientes preguntas marcando con una cruz lo que corresponda. Elija un seudónimo para el cuestionario y anótelo para que lo use en tareas posteriores. El seudónimo se usará sólo para la recolección de datos. MUCHAS GRACIAS.

Seudónimo: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Edad  
soña 32 ed sám  soña 32 y 91 ertne  soña 81 ed soneM
2. Sexo  
oninemeF  onilucsaM
3. ¿Cuántos años hace que usted estudia inglés?  
ic ed sám  onic  ortauc  sert  sod  lnco
4. Usted ha estudiado inglés en  
ralucitrap amrof  dadisrevinu  seügnilib soigeloc  sodavirp sotutitsni
5. ¿Tiene experiencia laboral?  
ís  (siga con el punto 6) on  (siga con la pregunta 7)
6. Si en su trabajo usa o ha usado el idioma inglés, especifique su propósito:  
etnemlaro emracinumoc arap olós   
atirse amrof ne emracinumoc arap olós   
senoicnuf sabma arap
7. ¿Qué tipo de textos escribe correctamente en inglés?  
e  semrofni  sexaf  somem  l-mails  sotsé ed onugnini  satrac
8. ¿Ha recibido instrucción en redacción de informes en castellano?  
on  is
9. ¿Ha recibido instrucción en redacción de informes en inglés?  
on  is
10. Usted considera que escribir informes en inglés es una tarea  
elpmis  adacilpmoc etnemanaidem  complicada .adacilpmoc yum
11. ¿Cuán importante considera usted la capacidad de redactar informes en inglés en el futuro ámbito laboral?  
 etnatropmi yum  importante asacse ed  etnatropmi etnemanaidem  importancia

## Appendix D.2 – Post-study questionnaire

### CUESTIONARIO

El presente cuestionario corresponde a la etapa final de un trabajo de investigación sobre la escritura en inglés. Rogamos tenga a bien responder las siguientes preguntas marcando con una cruz lo que corresponda. Recuerde que al llenar el cuestionario inicial usted usó un seudónimo. Repítalo, por favor. Los datos solicitados se restringen a su experiencia en el aprendizaje de “report writing” durante el segundo cuatrimestre de 2002. Sus respuestas sólo serán usadas a los fines de la investigación. Muchas gracias por su colaboración.

Seudónimo: \_\_\_\_\_

Para la enseñanza de “report-writing” usted usó fotocopias con diversas actividades.

- 1) La cantidad de actividades realizadas en clase y asignadas como tarea fue:  
adaisameD       adaiporpA       etneicifusnI
- 2) Las consignas o instrucciones en dichas actividades fueron:  
saralC       sasufnoC
- 3) ¿Realizó usted todas las actividades?  
íS  (siga con el punto E)      (D otnup le noc agis) oN
- 4) Indique los motivos por los que no realizó todas las actividades  
odireuqer euf oN       oirasecen euf oN       sartO
- 5) ¿Cómo evaluaría usted las actividades y ejercicios realizados en relación al objetivo de las mismas (aprender a escribir *business reports*)?  
Muy bueno       oneuB       olaM
- 6) Considera usted que la forma en que aprendió (destacando las características particulares que hacen que un informe sea efectivo y analizando cada una de las partes que componen un informe) facilita el aprendizaje de *report-writing*?  
íS       etnemlaicrap olos       oN   
¿Por qué? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 7) La forma estructurada en que aprendió a escribir informes  
ribirse la dadiruges ad el       lanosrep dadivitaerc us atimil
- 8) En qué porcentaje mejoró su producción escrita de *business reports*? (Considere la mejoría entre el primer y último informe que escribió)  
%001 a %08       %06 a %97       %03 ed sonem       %03 a %95

Comentarios: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E.1 – Pre-test

### Report writing

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

You work for a small advertising company. Your manager has asked you to evaluate the purchase of a telephone answering machine that would increase efficiency in the company. Read the following extracts from a sales brochure and write a report evaluating the possible purchase of the *Response 400* model together with your recommendation (100-120 words).

### **Response 400**

#### **Complete sophistication made simple**

Good impressions are vital in business. So when we created the **Response 400**, that combines telephone and answering machine for you, we've given you the possibility to **record your welcome message digitally** so it maintains consistent quality no matter how many times it's played. **Easy to use** yet with many facilities, the Response 400 is **hands-free**, meaning you can hold a conversation and work without having to keep the handset in your hand. On the other hand, if you want to keep things **totally** confidential, you can listen to the messages left for you using the handset. The useful LCD panel **records the duration of calls** in case you need to charge their cost to your customers, **shows you the number as you dial it**, and **identifies incoming calls**.

#### **Other features include:**

- \* 20-number memory
- \* Last number redial
- \* Clock
- \* Programmable security code
- \* Message counter
- \* Smart Colors

**Buy U\$S 202.09 excl. VAT**

ORDER DIRECT 0800 700 999

Delivery time: 20-24 days from purchase

## Appendix E.2 – Post-test

### Report Writing

Pseudonym \_\_\_\_\_

You work for Patagonia GMBH, a company which designs and distributes functional outdoor clothing. The Personnel Manager has asked you to evaluate hiring a public affairs associate in order to make the Public Relations Department more efficient. Read the job ad and then Fiona Scott's CV and write a report evaluating the candidates' qualifications together with your recommendation (100-120 words).

**PATAGONIA has a new position open:  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS ASSOCIATE**

Job is based in Munich. Candidates must have substantial PR/Press experience and strong writing skills. They must have serious proficiency in technical sports (Skiing, Kayaking, climbing ...) and outdoor experience. German mother tongue. Environmental background a plus. Send CV with picture to:

Nathalie Baudoin  
**PATAGONIA GMBH**  
Reitmorstrasse 50  
8000 Munich - Germany

### CURRICULUM VITAE

#### PERSONAL DETAILS

Name: Fiona Scott  
Date of birth: 7 August 1979  
Nationality: British  
Address: 52 Hanover Street  
Edinburgh EH 2 5 LM, Scotland  
Telephone: 031 449 0237

#### EDUCATION

1991-1992: London Camber of Commerce and Industry  
Diploma in Public Relations  
1988-1991: University of London  
BA (honours) in Journalism and Media Studies

#### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1992 to present: Scottish Wildlife Trust. Department of Public Relations  
Responsible for writing articles on all aspects of the Trust's activities and ensuring their distribution to the press. Editor of the Trust's monthly journal. In charge of relations with European environmental agencies.

Summers of

1990 and 1991: Three-month training period with the Glasgow Herald. Assistant to the sports editor.

#### INTERESTS

Sports: Cross-country skiing, rock-climbing and swimming.

#### ADDITIONAL SKILLS

Camp counseling certificate  
Grade 3 ski instructor  
IBM PC user  
Fluent German

## **Appendix F – Class materials**

**Text 1 –Report 1**

**Tasks 1.1, 1.2, 2.5 and 2.7**

**Acá va el cuadro escaneado: Report on the proposed merger of Unibank**

## **Text 2 – Report 2**

### **Tasks 1.2, 1.2 and 2.5**

- **What is the purpose of the report below?**
- **Read model reports 1 and 3 and focus on similarities and differences in layout and style.**
- **Is the language used in the reports formal or informal?**

### **Text 3 – Report 3**

**Tasks: 1.1, 1.2, 2.5 and 2.7**

To: The Chairperson, Dersley Swimming Club  
From: Jim Bowen, Assistant Coach  
Subject: Rotheroe Sports Centre  
Date: 10<sup>th</sup> May 2001

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to assess the suitability of Rotheroe Sports Centre as a possible future training base for the Dersley Swimming Club.

#### **Location and access**

Rotheroe Sports Centre is conveniently located just off the Ring Road to the south of Dersley, next to the Marston Industrial Estate. It is therefore easily accessible by private transport from most parts of the city and has ample free parking. Buses run between the sports center every 15 minutes from 6 am to 11 pm. On the other hand, direct services from other areas may be limited, particularly early in the morning or late at night.

#### **Facilities**

The Rotheroe Centre offers an excellent range of facilities. The swimming pool is of Olympic size and is fully heated. It has a large spectator area and changing rooms with ample locker space and showers. In addition, the center has a large, well-equipped gym.

However, there is no cafeteria; furthermore, there are no restaurants within walking distance of the center, which means the team members would have to bring packed lunches.

#### **Availability and cost**

The pool could be available for sole use by the club on weekday mornings from 7 to 8 am or on Monday and Wednesday nights after 9 pm. There is also the possibility of booking the pool for galas on occasional Saturday evenings. The gym is available from 8 am to 10 pm every day. The cost of hiring the pool at special club rates would be £ 40 per hour, compared to the £ 30 currently paid by the club for the City Baths.

#### **Recommendation**

To sum up, Rotheroe Sports Centre would be able to provide the facilities necessary for the Dersley Swimming Club to train. Most importantly, it has an excellent 50-metre pool of the type used in top-level competitions. The slight increase in the cost of hiring the pool is acceptable, especially in view of the fact that charges at the City Baths are due for revision in a month's time.

#### Text 4

#### Task: 1.3

The Chairman and Managing Director of a bank have asked Yvonne Elliot, their Finance Director, to write a report evaluating the possible merger with Unibank.

Read the report she sent them:

*Mr. Stephen Wade, Chairman, and Mr. Peter Evans, M.D.: you asked me to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of a possible merger with Unibank and to present my report by March 15. I collected information from many sources including Unibank's publicity material, annual reports, financial publications and material on the Internet. I also obtain a confidential study of Unibank carried out by City consultants. Unibank is a well-established and highly respected bank, with over forty branches, it has a number of important corporate clients, a profitable investment department, a skilled workforce and modern communication systems. Although at one time it was in financial difficulties, it now seems to have fully recovered. Unibank is an obvious target for us for a merger. It covers the city of London, an area where we are not well represented, and the merger would allow us to cut costs. Unprofitable branches could be closed down and staffing costs reduced. The unions would strongly oppose staff cuts. The prospects of growth are not good because of the possibility of a recession. The management styles of the two banks are very different. Our bank is prepared to take risks to make profits. Unibank, however, is cautious and conservative. The chairman of Unibank is a strong, charismatic person. He might not be willing to play a secondary role if the merger took place. An in-depth study should be made of Unibank's financial situation, and a meeting should be set up between the chairmen of both banks to discuss the advantages of the merger. I don't agree with mergers with other banks in the city. It would be good if we could contact a top public relations consultant to advise us if the merger goes ahead.*  
*Yvonne Elliot.*

*Adapted from American Business English Program*

- \* How effective do you think the report is?
- \* Rewrite the report using format conventions.
- \* Do you agree with the statement that "failure to adhere to the writing conventions of the business community may render a text liable to be misunderstood and therefore disregarded"?

**Text 5**  
**Task 2.1**

**Identify the text-type below. Do you think this ... follows the conventions of the genre?**

**Do you agree that the layout, language style and structure of the text are conventionally established in accordance with its purpose?**

**Text taken from *New International Business English***

## **Text 6**

### **Task 2.1**

- **Identify the type of text below. Do you think that this ... follows the typical conventions of this type of text?**
- **Why do you think there are no sub-headings in the following text?**
- **Draw lines dividing the structural parts, that make up this text (Setting, development, end)**

## **Text 7**

### **Tasks 2.1**

- **Identify the type of text below. Do you think that this ... follows the typical conventions of this type of text?**
- **Draw lines dividing the structural parts that make up this text (Introduction, body, conclusion)**

**Text taken from *New International Business English***

**Text 8**

**Task 2.2**

**Match the following headings to the correct sections.**

*Conclusion Findings Procedure Recommendations Terms of Reference*

**Text 9**

**Task 2.6**

**The different sections of the report below have been scrambled. Number them in the correct order.**

**Text 10**

**Task 2.8**

**As supervisor of a children's camp, you have been asked by the MD to write an assessment of one of the group leaders who is being considered for promotion to group coordinator. Read the model below and fill in the appropriate sub-headings (Purpose, Recommendation, Leadership, Qualities, Personal Qualities, Achievements). Then, underline the most suitable word or phrase in bold.**

**Text 11**

**Task 2.9**

**Taken from *Successful Writing***

**Text 12**

**Task 2.9**

## Text 13

### Task 3.1

**A local sports team in your town needs new facilities where they will train for national competitions. As assistant coach of the team, you have been asked to visit a new sports center and to write a report assessing the suitability of the center. Read the report below and insert the following words and phrases in the appropriate spaces.**

*Also, especially, furthermore, However, In addition, On the other hand, particularly, To sum up, therefore*

**Text 14**

**Task 3.3, 3.4**

**Provide the missing expressions in the following report:**

**Text 15**

**Task 4.1**

**Taken from *New International Business English***

**Text 16**

**Task 4.2**

**Write a report for the following situation.**

**You are Site Manager of *Texan Chicken*, a fast-food business. Your General Manager, Edward Thomas, has asked you to write a report on two possible locations in your area for a new restaurant. He telephoned you with instructions on 10 April, saying ‘Let me know the advantages and disadvantages of each site, and give me a firm recommendation, please, with your reasons. Can you let me have the report by April 30 as I have a board meeting the following day?’**

## Appendix G – Guide to interview EG instructors

1. Su percepción del material usado y de las actividades llevadas a cabo (tratando de determinar si se trabajó en análisis y descripción de textos, si se enfatizó el objetivo del texto, si se identificaron “moves”.)
2. Si consideran que se facilitó la tarea para ellos y para los alumnos y cómo creen ellos que van a ser los resultados (para ver si lo que ellos piensan es lo que realmente pasa)
3. Si creen que este tipo de enseñanza mejoró la producción de informes. ¿Por qué? ¿En qué aspectos?
4. Si consideran que manejar análisis del género es importante para un profesor de BE y por lo tanto sería conveniente que nuevos docentes se capaciten para la aplicación de la Teoría del Género como una alternativa para que los alumnos adquieran competencia lingüística y comunicativa.
5. Si los alumnos compartieron la idea de que hay convenciones lingüísticas y estructurales típicas de BE. y si vieron la importancia de manejarlas.
6. Si ellos consideran que la aplicación de esta teoría les da mayor seguridad a los alumnos de nivel intermedio al escribir. Si por el contrario, ésta limita la creatividad de los alumnos. Si les parece muy mecánico. Si ven algún tipo de peligro en la aplicación de esta teoría. Si tienen algún caso en especial para comentar, por ejemplo si algún alumno con experiencia laboral hizo algún aporte.
7. Consideran que los alumnos adquirieron las estructuras formales para expresar y presentar información eficientemente dentro del área de *Business English*?
8. Creen que este trabajo de investigación aporte material pedagógico a los instructores de *Business English*.
9. Creen que basados en este estudio, se puedan organizar cursos extra-curriculares de inglés escrito dirigidos a instituciones o empresas tales como Colegios Profesionales, Cámaras de Comercio, etcétera, lo que desde un punto de vista social, permitiría que profesionales argentinos interactúen activa y eficientemente en la comunidad discursiva empresarial a través del inglés escrito como lingua franca.
- 10.** Creen que este tipo de enseñanza puede sustituir otros métodos de aprendizaje tales como cursos en el exterior o viajes de negocios que se encuentran restringidos en este momento por la crisis económica que atraviesa nuestro país.