



Developing a Metacognitive Genre Awareness Intervention Program for English as a Foreign Language Postgraduate Academic Research Writing

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Abstract: This review paper explores the significance of metacognitive genre awareness (MGA) in enhancing the academic writing skills of English as a foreign language (EFL) postgraduate students. EFL writers often face challenges in writing academic papers due to unfamiliarity with genre structures, rhetorical functions, and lexico-grammatical features. The paper examines related literature, with a focus on metacognitive knowledge, genre theory, EFL writing research, and EFL postgraduate academic research. The study delves into the theoretical framework of metacognitive knowledge, emphasizing the crucial role it plays in empowering the genre-based approach. The importance of understanding metacognitive processes, such as planning, monitoring, evaluating, and revising, is highlighted in relation to the application of genre knowledge in academic writing. Genre theory is explored as an essential tool in academic writing, as it facilitates text grouping and helps students respond effectively to different writing prompts. Genre-based approaches are found to contribute significantly to students' language development and writing proficiency across various disciplines. The review also addresses the challenges faced by EFL postgraduate students in academic research writing, emphasizing the need for tailored writing support and instruction. While previous studies have identified these challenges, there remains a lack of comprehensive frameworks to address them effectively. Through an examination of MGA interventions, the paper seeks to shed light on how metacognitive genre awareness can positively impact EFL postgraduate students' academic writing skills. The study proposes an academic writing course that focuses on identifying students' writing weaknesses and formulating targeted strategies for improvement. This review emphasizes the importance of metacognitive genre awareness in academic research writing and highlights the need for practical and effective writing instruction tailored to the specific needs of EFL postgraduate students. By incorporating MGA interventions into academic writing courses,

educators can foster a more conducive learning environment and enhance students' writing abilities across various genres and contexts.

Keywords: Metacognitive Genre, English as a Foreign Language, Postgraduate Research Writing.

Article History

Received: 18/06/2024; Accepted: 30/09/2024

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1. Introduction

Scholars have contended that linking the instruction of writing skills with cognitive development offers the most effective route to enhancing students' academic writing abilities ([Toba and Noor 2019](#)). This implies that operational thinking should consistently underpin the stages of writing instruction, facilitating cognitive processes that address writing challenges. This approach enables students to consciously engage with aspects like imagination, exploration, and ingenuity. As previously mentioned, research into the research writing skills of EFL learners reveals their limited grasp of the fundamental traits of research genres in academia. Therefore, a potential solution rooted in a genre-based approach is one that accentuates the influence of social context on rhetorical structures and requisite language use ([Lee 2023](#)). This approach takes into account reader expectations and the strategies necessary for effectively conveying social intentions. Thus, it can be contended that texts within a given genre should be made comprehensible to foreign language students, and writing should be framed within the context of social intentions and target audience considerations.

To explore EFL learners' writing processes at various levels of proficiency, conducted a research study among a number of three groups of Japanese EFL students namely: a less skilled group, a more-skilled group and a professional group. The findings showed that novice writers carried out a less detailed plan before processes of writing, however, they tended to plan every time they completed one semantically comprehensible chunk. In contrast, expert writers consumed more time making detailed plans of the organization and on pre-task planning. Another difference was in the writing strategies used by novice writers and proficient ones. Novice writers were found to be more concerned about translating their formulated ideas into English, whereas skilled and professional writers concentrated more on refining expressions of their English to make

meaningful text. More recently, the genre-based approach was anticipated by researchers to assist the needs of students in different educational contexts. Additionally, it was commended for overt instruction in terms of the conventions required to meet the potential readers' requirements and the most probable expectations.

Investigating the writing processes of EFL learners across varying levels of proficiency with involvement three groups of Japanese EFL students: those with lower proficiency, higher proficiency, and professional proficiency ([Sasaki 2000](#)). The results revealed that less experienced writers engaged in relatively less detailed pre-writing planning; however, they tended to plan more frequently after completing a semantically coherent section. In contrast, expert writers dedicated more time to thorough planning for both organizational and pre-task aspects.

Another distinction arose in the writing strategies employed by novice and skilled writers. Novice writers displayed a greater focus on translating their conceptualized ideas into English, whereas proficient and professional writers directed their efforts towards refining the expression of their English to craft meaningful text.

Recent attention has been directed towards the potential of the genre-based approach to cater to the diverse educational needs of students. This approach has been lauded for its explicit instruction in terms of conforming to conventions necessary to meet the expectations and requirements of potential readers ([Johnstone, Thurlow et al. 2008](#)).

Furthermore, it falls upon the language instructor to ascertain whether students possess the capacity to navigate the multifaceted stages of writing. Subsequently, students can receive tailored feedback that reflects their advancements in writing skills, fostering their motivation to tackle writing assignments. Within an academic research framework, the proficiency anticipated of postgraduate learners involves their ability to conduct autonomous research. This entails novice postgraduate scholars being competent in sourcing information from diverse outlets such as reviews or literature, extracting pertinent details, summarizing, synthesizing, and analytically evaluating specific information before crafting intricate written compositions. Obviously, this involves the use of metacognitive skills ([Raković and Winne 2022](#)) with knowledge about the features of the target research genres like. In the context of EFL learners, language could also be a problem as they need to be proficient in the target research discourse, and not general language, and communicate in the rhetorical structure that is expected like thesis. Such significant

improvement is due to the fact that FL writers are required to master grammar rules, know more vocabulary, know more information so that it becomes faster for them to improve their language compared to learning every language skill independently ([Türkben 2019](#)).

2. Method

2.1. Criteria Studies

They were considered eligible if they tackled the creation of an intervention program targeting MGA in the context of postgraduate academic research writing for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners.

2.2. Information Sources

A systematic search was conducted in key academic databases: Scopus and Google Scholar. The following keywords were employed: “Metacognitive genre”, “English as a foreign language”, and “Postgraduate research writing”.

2.3. Search Strategy

The search strategy combined the identified keywords using Boolean operators (AND, OR). It was structured as follows:

(Topic: “Metacognitive genre” OR “Metacognitive genre awareness”) AND (Context: “English as a foreign language”) AND (Academic Writing: “Postgraduate research writing” OR “Postgraduate academic writing”)

2.4. Study Selection

Initial screening involved assessing titles and abstracts against the intervention program’s objectives. Full-text assessment was conducted on articles meeting the criteria.

2.5. Data Collection Process

A standardized data extraction form was employed to systematically gather relevant information from the selected studies. Data points included study characteristics, participant demographics, intervention details, measured outcomes, and findings.

2.6. Data Synthesis

A narrative synthesis approach was adopted, summarizing key elements of each study. Findings were synthesized to provide insights into the MGA intervention's efficacy in the context of EFL postgraduate research writing.

2.7. Results

2.7.1. Related to Individual Studies

Brief summaries of each study's primary findings were presented, emphasizing the impact of the MGA intervention on EFL postgraduate research writing.

2.7.2. Related to the Review

The review paper synthesized findings from the chosen studies, offering a comprehensive overview of the process and outcomes of the MGA intervention program within the realm of EFL postgraduate academic research writing.

This method and search strategy align with the review paper's title and highlight the keywords "Metacognitive genre", "English as a foreign language", and "Postgraduate research writing".

3. Literature review

3.1. Literature on Metacognitive Knowledge and EFL Writing

Several research on metacognitive knowledge have been conducted in the subject of EFL writing. These studies are mostly derived from the body of research on writing strategies and writing processes, with a focus on the idea of critical analysis in relation to composition methods. It has been stated that the term strategy is ineffective due to its broad scope ([Manchón 2012](#)). Rather, the term has been dealt with as a concept that refers to a diversity of means used to approach and complete writing tasks via a group of processes, methods and actions. This indicates that any behavior type that might be noticed during writing is known as a writing strategy. ([Manchón 2012](#)) has proposed that the conceptualization of writing strategies mainly deals with control mechanisms and problem solving, revealing that such notions come in line with cognitive psychologies that denote or indicate metacognitive knowledge.

Within the domain of literature, metacognitive knowledge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing is approached from diverse angles. The assorted classifications of metacognitive

knowledge within EFL writing are approached as a subject open to exploration. Furthermore, a significant pedagogical emphasis is placed on metacognitive knowledge in EFL writing, prompting an inquiry into methods for enriching students' metacognitive awareness in this area. This investigation encompasses both classroom teaching methodologies and the structuring of the curriculum. Moreover, the students' metacognitive knowledge of specific genres of writing needs to be scrutinized including their knowledge of argumentative or expository writing. What is needed in the EFL context is that metacognitive knowledge can be examined as one of several factors within an EFL cognitive model of EFL writing.

The findings indicated that EFL writers drew upon world knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and rhetorical knowledge while planning a writing task. However, during task monitoring and evaluation, personal knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and message knowledge were all employed. The researcher suggested that future studies approach language learning research differently and examine how language students adapt their task learning through continuous training to enhance their strategy-knowledge networks. This approach is anticipated to equip students with vital metacognitive knowledge and the necessary strategies for proficient task execution. While the descriptive profiles of learners and their think-aloud protocols by Wenden offer informative insights, a crucial question lingers: how could this potential benefit be harnessed in prospective research to ascertain whether EFL postgraduate writing proficiency exhibits similar or distinct patterns?

3.2. Theory of Genre

Due to the challenges it raises, the genre is essential to the teaching of current language. So that authors may easily react to many stimuli throughout academic writing, genre supports the classification of texts writing ([Yarrow and Topping 2001](#), [Hyland 2004](#)). Writing may also be used to demonstrate learning in genre-based methods ([Roe, Smith et al. 2018](#)). Essays and research papers are typical examples of writing genres that exhibit the learning abilities of students. ([Hyland 2004](#)) explains that a sense of genre is convenient for enhancing the students' abilities of learning. For instance, students' learning and self-evaluation can be produced by means of reflective journals.

It is stated that the genre approach is described as dependent on the different social contexts in which learning takes place ([Badger and White 2000](#)). Consequently, writing aims at specific situation, whereas textual development has a bearing on the writing syllabus advancement

([Hyland 2004](#)). The genre approach to the teaching of language emphasizes on the implementation of a given social purpose and the language-related knowledge dissemination. The text is always supposed to match the context for which it is devoted. Based on this concept, ([Badger and White 2000](#)) argued that controlled composition is on the contrary side where it focuses on developing the writing abilities of students through the use of the texts manipulation and imitation it takes under the teachers' rigid control.

The idea of genre is mostly limited to the "nature of the content," for which students must make an effort to write at a satisfying level so that thinking that addresses both the content and the genre becomes more accessible ([Kasper 2000](#)). It is mentioned that when teachers employ genre techniques, pupils should be able to analyze and assess how a language is used in a certain genre ([Swales and Swales 1990](#)). This is due to the fact that instructional methods only work when pupils have a solid grasp of language and genre. Therefore, it cannot be assured that the abilities that are improved through regulated or restricted composition would help students qualify to acquire genre and realize teaching the genre-based techniques ([Kasper 2000](#)).

Data derived from a genre-centered analysis need to be applied by the instructor of writing to develop the course content so that students become acquainted with the different forms by which genre constitutes in the coming courses ([Wingate 2012](#)). Closer to this point of view, ([Lazar and Ellis 2011](#)) conducted a study to anticipate the collaborative initiative effectiveness in writing based on the interaction between students and their instructors. The researchers reevaluated that a genre-based approach utilized for teaching writing was extremely instrumental and it was effective in enhancing the abilities of students to write across several disciplines, though an implicit focus was on genre-based teaching ([Lazar and Ellis 2011](#)). Additionally, the collaborative model applied by the researchers revealed that all students' responses indicated a considerable improvement based on the assessment criteria applied in the study. Besides, the researchers found that there was a significant growth in the writing performance of the students after applying the genre-based approach.

3.3. Postgraduate Academic Research in EFL

The performance of graduate students is determined by how well their academic writing is put together. As a result, the pursuit of academic writing quality has sparked scholarship, which has strengthened research writing ([Jeyaraj 2018](#)). Postgraduate students whose native language or first language is not English are becoming more prevalent in higher education institutions. This

has forced scholars to identify strategies that make it easier to write research papers and are suitable for the improvement of academic writing abilities and language competency.

The main challenges faced by students are related to the relationship with supervisors in addition to vocabulary, sentence structure, clarity in writing ([Ravichandran, Kretoivics et al. 2017](#)). Hence, the research focus is essentially on how supporting academic writing expands based on techniques and skills of writing, taking into account genres, context and social networks ([Paré 2019](#)).

When conducting research for writing assignments, students encounter several writing difficulties as identified by ([Jomaa and Bidin 2017](#)). However, there is a scarcity of studies that provide a framework that can deal with those identified challenges ([Joseph Jeyaraj, Too et al. 2022](#)). This study mainly aims at problematizing writing challenges and providing writing support through offering a framework to contribute in postgraduates' academic writing.

It is widely recognized that thesis projects are required by the vast majority of academic degrees as a requirement for the entire learning process. Consequently, students are required to write their own research papers in order to graduate. In most universities, students work on their own thesis projects but this is not an easy task where they are expected to face a range of challenges, especially those students whose English is an FL. It could also be argued that thesis writing is considered as the most difficult stage in obtaining a high degree. Therefore, before writing a thesis, students should carry out different tasks and procedures during their involvement in different stages. Additionally, the difficulties that face students may either be motivated to complete their specific inquiries or, otherwise, hinder their progress in their academic endeavors ([Campillan 2019](#)).

4. Results

Highlighted are results mentioning the potential benefits and challenges associated with the development of a MGA intervention program for English as a Foreign Language postgraduate academic research writing. This section is divided into two sections highlighting a number of advantages and disadvantages retrieved from the literature review.

4.1. Advantages

Research indicates that metacognitive knowledge plays a pivotal role in EFL writing, enabling students to employ a diverse range of writing strategies and processes. This leads to improved planning, task management, and problem-solving during writing tasks.

Also, the exploration of metacognitive knowledge in EFL writing promotes heightened awareness among students regarding their cognitive processes. This heightened awareness contributes to improved self-regulation and reflective practices in writing.

Besides, there is a notable pedagogical focus on metacognitive knowledge in EFL writing. This focus facilitates the enhancement of students' metacognitive awareness through effective classroom instruction and curriculum design strategies.

Additionally, the literature on metacognitive knowledge in EFL writing encompasses various perspectives where that leads to a holistic understanding of its impact. Different categories of metacognitive knowledge are explored, addressing both planning and monitoring aspects.

Finally, the adoption of a genre-based approach in teaching writing has shown promise in promoting learning. This approach aligns writing with specific social purposes, enhances students' understanding of genre conventions, and supports skill development across disciplines.

4.2. Disadvantages

The term “strategy” is broad and can encompass a range of processes, methods, and actions in writing. This broadness makes it challenging to precisely define and measure writing strategies, potentially leading to ambiguity in research findings.

Also, despite the emphasis on MGA, there might be limitations in the depth of genre knowledge possessed by EFL postgraduates. This could potentially affect the quality and effectiveness of their academic research writing.

Third of them is that while a genre-based approach offers benefits, its successful implementation might be hindered by the complex nature of genre awareness and the need for targeted instructional techniques to develop this awareness among EFL postgraduates.

In addition to the previous issues, EFL postgraduate academic research writing faces challenges related to language proficiency, cultural nuances, and differences in writing conventions. These factors can affect the efficacy of interventions aimed at enhancing MGA.

Despite the recognition of writing challenges faced by postgraduate students, there appears to be a scarcity of comprehensive frameworks or interventions to address the identified issues. This

gap underscores the need for more targeted and supportive approaches to postgraduate academic research writing.

In Figure 1, a list of advantages, disadvantages, insights, and future works is provided.

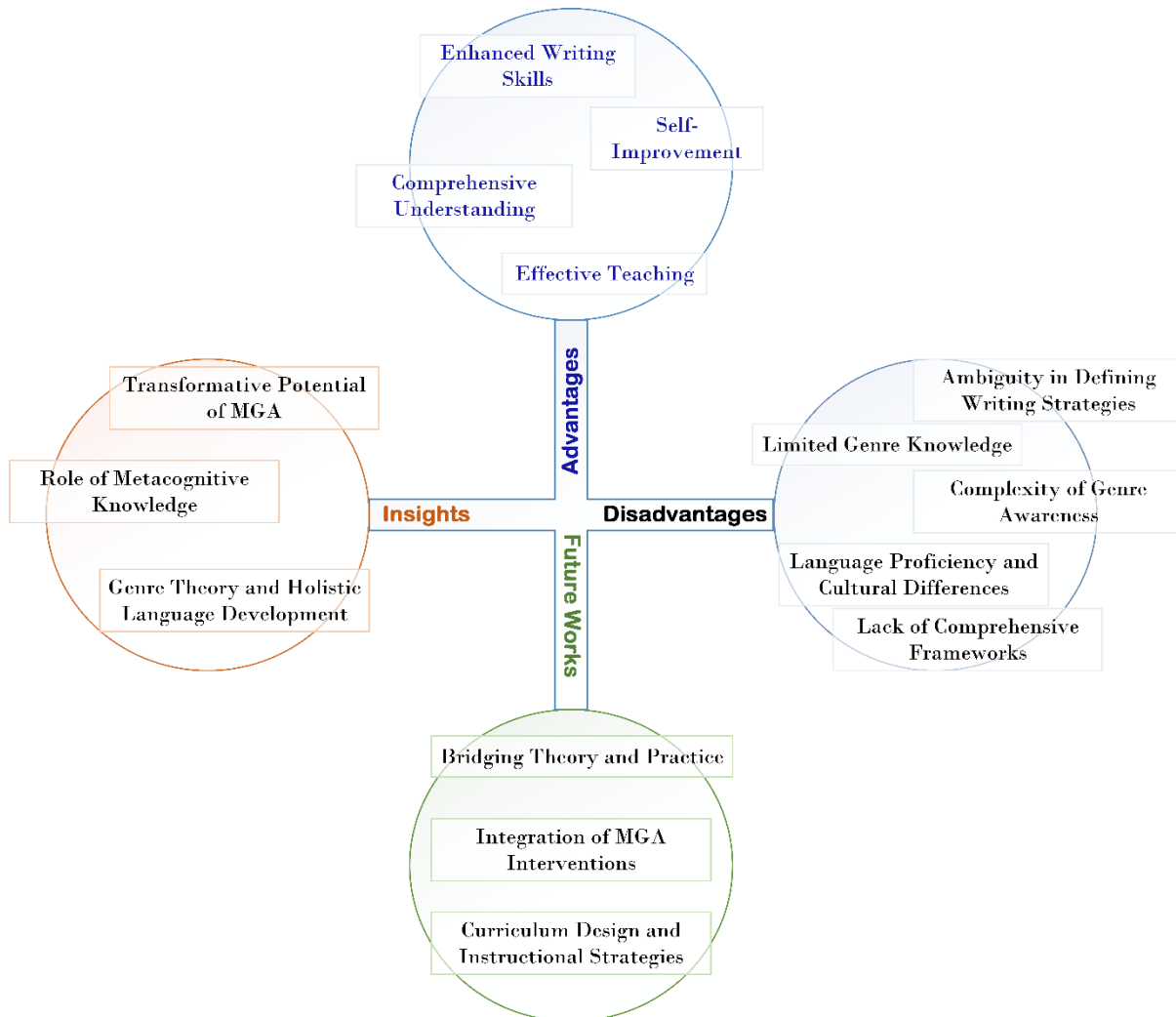


Figure 1: A list of advantages, disadvantages, insights, and future works

5. Conclusion and Future Directions

This review paper has illuminated the transformative potential of MGA in advancing the academic writing skills of English as a foreign language (EFL) postgraduate students. The intricate challenges faced by EFL writers, stemming from their unfamiliarity with genre structures, rhetorical intricacies, and lexico-grammatical nuances, are convincingly addressed through the lens of MGA. By delving into a rich tapestry of literature encompassing metacognitive knowledge, genre theory, EFL writing research, and EFL postgraduate academic

research, this review underscores the multi-faceted dimensions of influence of MGA on the enhancement of writing abilities.

The theoretical underpinning of metacognitive knowledge is adeptly highlighted, emphasizing its pivotal role in empowering a genre-based approach. This intersection between cognitive awareness and effective writing strategies propels EFL postgraduate students towards a more profound comprehension of metacognitive processes, planning, monitoring, evaluating, and revising, integral to the application of genre knowledge in academic writing.

Genre theory emerges as an indispensable tool, facilitating text organization and furnishing students with the aptitude to navigate diverse writing prompts effectively. The genre-based approaches unveiled in this review resonate as potent contributors to holistic language development and heightened writing proficiency, extending their benefits across a diverse spectrum of academic disciplines.

The challenges faced by EFL postgraduate students in academic research writing are acknowledged and accentuated, demanding tailored writing support and instruction. However, the absence of comprehensive frameworks to address these challenges in an efficacious manner necessitates dedicated efforts in curriculum design and instructional strategies.

This review has signified the dawning of promising future directions. The exploration of MGA's interventions serves as an invaluable foundation for cultivating an enriched learning environment. It is imperative that educators and institutions embrace these interventions and integrate them seamlessly into academic writing courses. By devising an academic writing course that pinpoints individual writing deficiencies and crafts targeted strategies for improvement, the pathway to enhancing EFL postgraduate students' academic writing skills is illuminated.

This review also has bridged theory and practice, expounding on the pivotal role of MGA in academic research writing. As the journey continues, future efforts must converge towards a comprehensive framework that marries theoretical insights with practical implementation. By fostering an environment where MGA's interventions are seamlessly woven into academic writing instruction, educators stand poised to empower EFL postgraduate students, equipping them with the tools necessary to navigate the intricate tapestry of academic writing genres and contexts.

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