Complex Genre-based Methodology for Teaching Academic Writing

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A B S T R A C T

Contemporary EAP research and teaching academics constantly elaborate new and better methods and re-evaluate those in use to facilitate students' academic growth. The article considers some options for teaching EAP to undergraduates highlighting the results of the experimental study conducted in the context of higher education in Russia and motivated by the researchers' perceptions about university level students' difficulties in acquiring proficiency in academic English. The data for this paper comes from 192 undergraduates' research project proposals. The approach offered is largely in line with traditions of the genre analysis and combines some novel features and conventional elements of the genre, product and process approaches. The innovations imply the use of recurring pattern phrases which are presented as sets of structural templates grouped in genre-based functional categories and organised around the framework of the project proposal. The article analyses applicability and functionality of this complex methodology developed by the authors relying on criterion-referenced measurement of students' writing performance by independent raters using analytic rating scales for assessment. The benefits of the methodology under discussion largely pertain to improvement in academic style and text organisation, and a learner-centred approach adopted helps students develop their own models for step-by-step writing project proposals. The findings of this study can have implications for EAP teaching practice in NNS educational settings.

Keywords: academic writing; project proposal; recurring pattern phrases; genre analysis

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Introduction

Academic writing, the primary form of communication within and across different research disciplines, is increasingly seen as one of the key issues to be addressed by both theorists and practitioners. Recent studies (e.g., Boulton, 2017; Flowerdew, 2015; Granger, Gilquin & Meunier, 2015; Hamp-Lyons, 2015; Oakey, 2020) reveal the divergence between research and practice and numerous attempts to decrease the discrepancy between theory and reality. Many scholars and teachers investigating the current and future role of EAP in the sphere of higher education point to the necessity to develop university students' writing skills and claim that maintaining standards of academic writing has significant implications for those involved in educational activities (Ganobscik-Williams, 2006). There is a continuous concern for elaborating effective frameworks to facilitate L2 students' academic development, to raise their awareness of the conventions of Western academia and ways of organising written texts and thus to broaden their linguistic and rhetorical repertoires (e.g., Atai, Babaii & Taherkhani, 2017) Carstens, 2009; Friginal, 2018; Hyland, 2004, 2015, 2016; Johns, 2002, 2008; Martinez, 2018; Tribble, 2000, 2015).

The search for a reliable methodology inevitably entails adjusting contemporary theoretical and practical approaches to teaching EAP to the needs of a particular audience. This article reports on the experimental EAP course designed for L1 Russian undergraduates working on their Russian-medium bachelor dissertational projects at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in Moscow and engaged in writing English-medium project proposals. Those proposals (up to 2500 words) were chosen by the university authorities to be an essential part of the students' final English language examination.

Our study has been motivated by external and internal factors comprising changes in Russian higher education, the quality of students' competence in English, new challenges resulting from growing academic mobility, our university requirements to teach undergraduates to write project proposals and get research papers ready for publication in international journals – to name just a few. The context in which the present study is embedded foregrounds its key research objective, namely to investigate the effectiveness of applying the complex methodology. The methodology combines innovative elements and conventional features, the core being the Swalesian 'Create a Research Space' (CARS) model (Swales, 1990, 2004; Swales & Feak, 2009, 2012) assisting students to identify rhetorical moves and their sequences in project proposals. The choice follows the lead of researchers who employ the two-layer analysis in terms of moves and steps which enables them to categorise text fragments related to their particular communicative intentions (e.g., Ebadi, Salman, Nguyen & Weisi, 2019; Soodmand Afshar & Ranjbar, 2017; Yang & Allison, 2003) and to examine move/step frameworks for each section of the proposal.

Here we do not set ourselves the aim to explore in depth numerous approaches advocated by contemporary theorists; neither is it any part of our purpose to provide a detailed survey of the state-of-the-art in teaching EAP in general; rather we will briefly outline trends in academic writing skills development relevant to the present study, introduce a new method involving the use of recurring pattern phrases within the frame of the proposal and some options for handling difficulties faced by NNSs while writing in English, describe the experimental study conducted with the methods offered and, finally, discuss the results obtained.

Review of Literature

Study Skills, Academic Socialisation and Academic Literacies

The literature on academic writing is among the richest in the domain offering coverage of its versatile aspects, the field of EAP being supported by an expanding range of publications and research journals. The ever-growing attempts at optimising methods of research and instruction so characteristic of contemporary science have brought about new trends. In recent years it has become more and more common to encounter the tendency to reconceptualise and unify existing approaches to enhance their efficacy.

Reviewing practical approaches to EAP teaching in the British and American Higher Education systems, Street (2009) distinguishes three main perspectives, namely, Study Skills; Academic Socialisation; and Academic Literacies (previously pointed to in Lea & Street, 1998) whose amalgamating might enable teachers to better assist students. The skills model with its focus on individual projects involves generic based support outside of the subject discipline (commonly rendered by nonacademic staff). The socialisation model presupposes students' skills acquisition through immersion in the culture of higher education. Advocates of the academic literacies model challenge current practices and promote a holistic subject based approach treating writing as a social and disciplinary practice (Lillis, 2000); it is intended to examine the institutional culture and the ways to adapt and merge the above models to encourage writing development.

This unification manifests itself in various initiatives which might range (e.g., in the UK) from compulsory writing courses for first year students to institutional writing centres, and numerous practical methods integrating generic writing assistance into student support programmes have been established. However, those useful initiatives tend to lose much of their efficiency outside English speaking countries with their communicative traditions and institutional culture.

Text Approach, Process Approach and Writing as Social Practice

Clearly, ways to support students' writing vary across countries and within institutions. To have a broader view on how writing is currently being taught, it is expedient to consider here another group of approaches, namely the text approach, the process approach and writing as social practice (Coffin et al., 2003). The former largely relies on imitation and foregrounds the final product (and its specific features, e.g., spelling, text structure, vocabulary, style); more recent textual approaches shifted the focus to genres, or text types, and project reports. Process approaches (currently retaining some of their practical grounds) are largely concerned with steps and stages of writing. Writing as a social practice emphasises the necessity of teaching forms and conventions of academic writing within a social context as it might facilitate bridging the gap between the two approaches. Another evidence of regrouping (Baynham, 2000) is the triad combining skills-based, text-based and practice-based approaches with the emphasis on the two former. The choice is accounted for by the 'weight' of most essential elements considered: the text-based approach draws on linguistic analysis, especially register and genre analyses, and the practice-based approach involves social and discursive practices pertaining to a particular discipline.

Product, Process and Genre Approaches

Genre-based approaches to academic writing are characterised by the same tendency of blending different perspectives (e.g., text- and practice-based). Badger and White (2000) in their comparative study of product, process, and genre approaches hold that they are complementary and argue for a synthesis which draws on all three. Their reasoning goes along the following lines.

Product approaches treat writing as being primarily concerned with linguistic knowledge, the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices. Stages of learning commonly include familiarization (with certain features of a particular text)**,** controlled and guided writing (skill practice) and free writing. Process approaches tend to emphasise linguistic skills (e.g., planning and drafting) rather than knowledge (e.g., about grammar and text structure). A typical model presupposes four stages: prewriting, composing/drafting, revising and editing. Genre approaches reveal strong similarities with product approaches (e.g., considering writing as predominantly linguistic), yet they emphasise the impact of the social context and the importance of communicative purpose. Common stages closely parallel product approaches and involve introducing and analysing a model of a particular genre, manipulating relevant language forms and, finally, producing a text (Dudley-Evans, 1997). Thus, Badger and White offer the *process genre approach* designed to incorporate the insights of the above approaches and adapt them for the needs of the writing classroom.

Hyland (2003, 2004) who investigated how genre approaches to teaching L2 writing could complement process views emphasised the role of language in written communication and repeatedly foregrounded purpose and function as constituents of the genre analysis; he maintained that genre-based pedagogies aid students to write effectively and produce relevant texts, and further pointed to the necessity of integrating genre, product and process approaches focusing on their content or the process of composition (Hyland, 2007). This approach comprising major constituents of successful teaching is intended for university students not necessarily living in an English-speaking country.

Corpus-driven Approaches

Corpus based studies of phraseology-regularities or patterns in academic discourse generated numerous wordlists (e.g., Biber, 2006; Hyland, 2008; Liu, 2012; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010) and phrase banks like *REF-N-WRITE*, a Microsoft word plug-in for scientific writing where the retrieved recurrent sequences are fixed multi-word units that have customary pragmatic and/or discourse functions used and recognised by the speakers of a language (Chen & Baker, 2010). Commonly the choice of lexical items in those resources is based on an automated frequency-driven approach to identify highly frequent word combinations (otherwise known as *lexical bundles, chunks*, *clusters, n-grams, multi-word expressions, multi-word constructions, academic formula*s, *recurrent word combinations* etc.) characteristic of academic writing; at present there seems to be no consensus among scholars with respect to terminology, *phraseology* and *formulaic sequences* being two umbrella terms often used to denote various types of multi-word units. Further we will use the term *recurring pattern phrases* to define highly frequent word combinations characteristic of academic discourse.

The above approach is common for data-driven learning which draws on different strands of research including learner corpora, frequency lists, error correction and contrastive analysis – to name just a few (cf. Boulton, 2017). However, if this option is ruled out (as is often the case for many Russian universities) students turn to wordlists and encounter a great variety of differently formed sequences at times too difficult to choose from, or (if necessary) to memorise and reuse in certain contexts. Indeed, *REF-N-WRITE* has an academic phrase bank containing 20,000 frequently used academic/scientific phrases and thematically organised templates; *The New Academic Word List* (Coxhead, 2000) contains 570 headwords and about 3000 words altogether. Moreover, decontextualised phrases presented in a list are unlikely to be appealing to teachers (Flowerdew, 2015), and researchers seldom give more than a general indication of how their results can be applied (Oakey, 2020). Online resources, helpful though they are, could better meet demands of competent and confident language users who can make their choice conscious. As for novices in the field of academic writing who are more likely to randomly choose from those

phrase banks the expressions which appeal to them and seem appropriate for the tasks set, the efficacy of the procedure could be challenged in terms of teachability.

Along with those mentioned above, various word lists appear in contemporary course books and websites created by practising EAP teachers (cf. Oakey, 2020 for details) who treat phraseology-regularities differently and prefer phrases that contain more clausal features (rather than fragmentary strings of words or partially-filled constructions) and whose discourse functions could clearly be identified from the context. Teaching materials can present incomplete / complete sentences or full clauses with an incomplete adverbial phrase, e.g., *The contribution of this study has been to confirm …* or *Before this study, evidence of X was purely anecdotal* (Morley, 2015); ____ *has led to a renewed interest in* ____ or *Numerous studies have investigated* ____ (Barros, 2016). As Oakey (2020) promptly notes, EAP researchers and classroom-based practitioners do not group frequently occurring phrases in the same functional categories and tend to choose sets of purpose-led functions like *Classifying and Listing* or *Comparing and Contrasting* or genre-based text-specific functions like *General literature review*. His comparative analysis of sets of phrases proposed for teaching academic writing (two produced by researchers and specifically intended for pedagogy and four from other resources for teaching purposes) reveals different understanding of the notion of *function* in academic discourse research and EAP pedagogy. The latter often emphasises functions that realise particular stages of a genre and focus on more pragmatic, text-focused phrases while the excessively intricate interpretation by the former (though a necessary part of a comprehensive theoretical framework) proves to be conceptually too challenging for teachers and learners and thus unsuitable for incorporation into teaching materials. The widely cited conclusion that "functional linguistic classification and the organisation of constructions according to academic needs and purposes is essential in turning a list into something that might usefully inform curriculum or language testing materials" (Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010, p. 510) is somewhat of a challenge inviting further investigations and indicating a relevance gap between research and practice which teachers relying on their own experience fill with materials based on pedagogical corpora they have collected themselves (Oakey, 2020).

Current Tendencies: Eclecticism or Synthesis?

So far, the brief outline of contemporary trends in academic writing demonstrated the current practice of combining complementary approaches. The ongoing tendency to their merging typical of quite a number of writing paradigms since the mid-1990s (Weideman, 2007) at times borders with eclecticism and brings about the so called hybrid approaches which could be unhelpful if used indiscriminately. Alternatively, merging can be rather fruitful if teachers do it creatively and purposively target particular audiences. Our experimental course for HSE undergraduates might seem somewhat eclectic in that it draws from research and pedagogical sources and comprises various teaching strategies. However, the underlying principle is that of synthesis implying systemic integrating into the teaching practice some essential elements of genre-based, product, process and corpus-driven approaches and sociocultural components necessary for L2 students' instruction.

In short, our complex methodology incorporates most of the lines of inquiry discussed, introduces some novel constituents involving the use of recurrent pattern phrases and is still another attempt to bridge the gap between research and teaching. To attain the goal, the study is intended to furnish answers to the following questions:

1. What present day approaches and trends are most relevant to teaching writing to students in L1 Russian setting?

2. What constituent elements should be incorporated in the academic writing course?

3. What particular benefits could be gained from purposively drawing together different complementary procedures?

Methods

Teaching Context

The standard HSE course in academic writing for undergraduates of non-language departments is organised by discipline (e.g., sociology, management, history, psychology etc.)**,** runs for 56 hours during 6 months and largely consists of practical components. Those workshop activities are intended to form students' competence in EAP and awareness of the conventions within which they are to write. Instruction relies on online resources, articles from major English-language research journals compiled in 'readers', and project proposals submitted by former students. Subject specialist lecturers deliver courses in Russian and participate in assessing students' exam performances thus rendering their assistance to language teachers (cf. Taherkhani, 2019). Most students have little (if any) experience in academic writing, and scarce knowledge of academic register and format, and the key objective is to provide them the essentials of EAP sufficient for writing a project proposal.

Participants

The experimental study was conducted in 2017 – 2018 at the HSE management department where the main medium of instruction is Russian. 192 participants (male and female) were fourth-year students aged 20 – 21. The students' level of L2 proficiency ranged between B2 and B2+ on the CERF scale according to their results on IELTS taken at the end of the previous academic year (a uniform university requirement).

Data Collection and Instruments

The experiment implied collecting quantitative data from the participants' performance on the final exam held under standard university conditions to draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the methodology in question. To analyse the results, the authors were granted access to PDF versions of participants' written works stored in LMS. A standard university policy ensuring reliability of examination results presupposes criterion-referenced measurement of students' writing performance via blind assessment and triple marking of all proposals by a team of independent raters (working at other departments) each including two language teachers and one content lecturer. Results are scored on the ten-point scale, with 10 being the highest possible score:

Excellent	Very good	Good	Average	Below average
10	8-9	7-6	5-4	3-1

The assessment instrument is a scoring rubric based on internationally accepted analytic rating scales and adapted for the needs of the university. It comprises criteria clustered into 3 dimensions: 1) *communicative task realisation,* 2) *organisation and format,* 3) *language range and control* each contributing weight of 35%, 30%, and 35%, respectively in accordance with HSE regulations. The overall score is calculated by adding the scaled scores from each of the three rubrics.

Instructional Materials

The aim of this experimental study was to compare the results of learners' development achieved in the above classroom context with those achieved with the help of the complex genre-based methodology under discussion. The methodology developed involves the genre analysis projected onto the sentential level and focuses on grouping pattern phrases frequently used for different rhetorical purposes. The functional categories for the sets of phrases are based on the CARS model and organised around the structure of the project proposal i.e. introduction, literature review, methodology, and expected research outcomes. The classification of genre-based categories correlates with a particular move (e.g., methodology, literature review) and corresponding steps but the underlying organising principles differ from those offered by Morley (2015) or Barros (2016) whose functional categories do not necessarily correspond to a sequence of steps within a particular move. In our model full clauses are split and organised in templates (largely tripartite) where lexical items are grouped according to structural elements that could be used interchangeably (cf. below).

The project / article / book   *concerns / addresses / highlights*   *the issue / problem / theory*

Those templates constitute compact blocks related to a relevant step within the IMRD framework; presented in a convenient tabular form (see Table 1 below) they prove to be easier to work with as learners can focus on the structure of sentences which could further be used for other rhetorical purposes rather than choose and memorise certain phrases. Besides, the search could be reduced considerably and instead of scanning long lists (at times approaching 100 phrases as in a corresponding section of Morley's (2015) *Academic Phrase bank*) students need to 'process' about 10 times less amount of information; four or five blocks per step appear sufficient to cope with the task such as writing a conclusion. Moreover, the procedure helps students to grasp the inner logic of a particular move, compare different sentence structures and synonymous expressions used to perform similar functions. A fragment from the *Academic phrase bank* rearranged below can serve to illustrate the difference between the models offered and phrase bank versions.

Table 1
Summarising the Content

The Academic phrase bank version	The rearranged version	
This paper has given an account of and the reasons for the widespread use of X....	*This paper / essay / assignment/ dissertation has given*	*an account of / the reasons for…/*
This essay has argued that X is the best instrument to…		*argued that …/*
This assignment has explained the central importance of…		*explained…/*
This dissertation has investigated....		*investigated*

Baseline data for the templates were extracted from authentic articles (published in highly ranked journals recommended by subject lecturers), dictionaries and online resources, and processed with the help of the frequency-based approach for determining phraseology and formulaic sequences. Pattern phrases thus obtained were grouped thematically into 48 blocks and 'cover' about 24 steps, approximately 50% of those presented in rather comprehensive move/step frameworks for IMRD research articles (Cotos, Huffman, & Link, 2015). Their distribution was to a certain extent arbitrary: the templates largely (70%) pertain to the introduction and literature review sections, with the remaining 30% equally divided between methods, and expected research outcomes. The disproportion rooted in our university requirements because previously undergraduates' written works were confined to abstracts and literature reviews; however, at present the 'bank' is constantly expanded and updated by both teachers and students justifying its convenience and practicality.

Procedures

Sixteen groups of undergraduates were randomly divided into two flows and taught academic writing (by different instructors) by two methods to be compared. 104 students (flow 1) studied EAP in the standard way which presupposed extensive reading and analysing authentic research articles from related fields, finding language items characteristics of the academic register and imitating authors' style while writing proposals. In the treatment groups 88 students (flow 2) were introduced to the move and step analysis, the specific rhetorical structure of each section of a project proposal and templates of pattern phrases.

The experimental course in general was organised in compliance with the following procedures. First students were initiated to norms and conventions of English academic discourse and differences between those and Russian communicative traditions (see below), ways of organising written texts and their stylistic peculiarities and further instructed to treat sections of project proposals in terms of move/step structures. Then templates of pattern phrases related to different genre-based functions were gradually introduced to facilitate meticulous work on framing each section. The work involved formulating the rhetorical purpose, naming the steps pertaining to a particular move, specifying their language realisation (both in Russian and in English) and finally arranging them in a logical sequence. The tasks of naming steps and specifying their linguistic expression deserved special attention because not all conventional names of steps could be easily deciphered by inexperienced L2 writers: while *presenting background information* seems to be similarly interpreted across cultures, some other steps like *claiming centrality* at times appeared cognitively challenging. Hence students needed to determine what exactly their message was intended to be about, find appropriate wording to formulate this intention in L1, scan the templates to compare different ways of expressing similar intentions in L2 and choose the variant most relevant for their purposes. The following authors' templates (Kuzmenkova, 2014) in Table 2 below where students are to supply Russian variants correlating with particular steps can serve as an illustration.

Table 2
Templates of Pattern Phrases

1. _____

| The major/ main/ new/ key/ recent/ most promising/ fundamental / significant | problems/ questions/ trends/developments/ issues/ changes/ blank spots in / points of reference for | the analysis of [x] / (studying) the theory/ field of [x] / a wide range of contemporary studies | concern [z] / are to be found in [z] / point to / reveal/ signify… |

2. _____

| There is / are | a great variety / an indefinite multiplicity of means at our disposal / ways for… different / various approaches to / methods for /of… | | treating / interpreting / investigating / analysing [x] |

3. _____

| To summarise / conclude/ recapitulate | it is possible to state / it can be assumed / argued that | the research is an attempt to present some evidence/ confirm the theory of…/ further / advance our understanding of… |

Formulating intentions in L1 (apart from naming steps in English) appeared rather helpful for L2 writers as it provided focusing on the broader content, grasping the essence of the message to be conveyed (instead of translating each pattern phrase in a block). The task also helped find

appropriate English patterns preforming similar functions and corresponding to rhetorical purposes of L1 phrases without turning to word for word translation.

Thus, students picked out and formed sequences they thought appropriate, added necessary terms to complete the phrases, organised them logically and made the final 'product' coherent. That largely sufficed for inexperienced L2 academic writers whose primary goal was to abandon the habit of seeking out English equivalents to common Russian expressions. As a rule, students gradually come to realise that the very choice of rhetorical formulae is determined by a certain logical organisation relying on culture specific ways of reasoning and structuring. Of course, more competent and creative students were invited to introduce greater variety and detail within the frames set.

The sentence-level analysis proved useful for steps represented by multiple sentential units. Since a move can often be realised by a combination of steps, students discussed a move structure, analysed its constituent steps in terms of corresponding pattern phrases, and – if necessary – assigned additional patterns to the step in question. The adopted strategy appeared flexible and teachable and allowed students to form their own templates.

Having thus analysed a certain section of a project proposal, students were encouraged to read authentic research articles relevant for their studies, spot recurrent patterns in a corresponding section and study the language in context. They were also encouraged to offer more patterns to complete the overall model of a project proposal and use them in writing their own sections. Finally, to consolidate the work on their drafts students were to mark steps in their fellow students' project proposals and analyse those submitted by former students, indicate appropriate variants (as there is no ideal model to be imitated) and practise editing poor examples. Further activities were largely based on guided or independent writing, redrafting and editing.

Thus, the procedures described above correlate with potential constituents of an academic writing course referred to in the research question. The complex genre-based methodology applied to teaching undergraduates in the treatment groups combined several complementary practices: mastering pattern phrases typical of academic discourse; planning and drafting, revising and editing; controlled, guided and free writing.

Data Analysis

The key research question whether synthesising complementary procedures can yield particular positive outcomes involved the comparative analysis of scores obtained by students in control and treatment groups. To serve the purpose, the scores elicited from students' works were categorised and thoroughly examined in terms of the three dimensions (see *Instruments*). The overall scores of the items for each group were calculated separately, average scores from each dimension for the two groups were compared and percentages were presented. The data collected were afterwards subjected to statistical analysis, namely to an independent sample t-test, to check whether there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups of students, who were taught with standard and innovative methods. The students' t-distribution under the null hypothesis, implying no differences between control and treatment groups, was calculated for both groups. The effects of the new methodology on student instruction were examined. The results of the experimental study are presented in the section to follow.

Results

The final stage of the experiment involved the analysis and criterion-referenced measurement of undergraduates' project proposals. The assessment instruments and distribution of scores are presented in Tables 3 – 12 below.

Table 3
Analytic Scoring Rubric 1 for the Assessment of Communicative Task Realisation

10	Task successfully accomplished. Target reader fully informed about purpose of the research proposed, procedures planned, and expected outcomes. Relevant sources carefully reviewed.
9-8	Good realisation of the task. Target reader reasonably informed about purpose of the research proposed, procedures planned, and expected outcomes. Sources mostly relevant and carefully reviewed.
7-6	An attempt to accomplish the task. Target reader partially informed about purpose of the research proposed, procedures planned, and expected outcomes. Review of sources mostly descriptive.
5-4	Poor attempt at the task set. Target reader unclear about purpose of the research proposed, procedures planned, and expected outcomes. Review of sources inconsistent and descriptive.
3-1	Complete failure to accomplish the task set. Target reader completely uninformed about purpose of the research proposed, procedures planned, and expected outcomes. Sources irrelevant and poorly reviewed.

The first criterion focuses on the content and serves to evaluate informativeness of the proposal in general and all its constituent elements and indicates their appropriateness to the task set.

Table 4
Distribution of Scores for the Assessment of Communicative Task Realisation

Group	Number of participants	Scores									
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Control	104	0	2	12	72	12	3	2	3	0	0
Treatment	88	2	9	21	42	12	2	0	0	0	0

Table 4 shows that, on the whole, students of both treatment and control groups complied with the requirements – with few exceptions. However in the treatment groups overall performance was slightly better (about 6 % growth) with the average scores 7,3 vs 6,9 in the control groups where the results were mostly (about 80%) within the *good* scale whereas about 30% of their peers in the treatment groups scored *very good*. Participants in the treatment groups could adequately discuss the expected research outcomes of their projects and present the analysis of sources whereas in the control groups the discussion was somewhat muddled (e.g., the outcomes were seldom specified and at times merely substituted by hypotheses copy pasted) and the review mostly descriptive and often irrelevant to the research proposed.

Table 5
Analytic Scoring Rubric 2 for the Assessment of Organisation and Format

10	Completely logical organisation structure, effective arguments and supporting material. All content points required in the task included and appropriately expanded. Ideas effectively organised with good internal cohesion. Academic format of the proposal fully appropriate to the purpose set. All requirements met.
9-8	Good organisation structure; well-presented and relevant arguments and supporting material. Some content points required in the task inappropriately expanded or omitted. Ideas clearly organised with mostly appropriate paragraphing and linking. Academic format of the proposal largely appropriate to the purpose set. Nearly all requirements met.
7-6	Clear (but limited) organisation; structure mostly coherent but some elements missing / some arguments unsupported /material irrelevant / expected outcomes unspecified. On the whole, academic format of the proposal appropriate to the purpose set. Basic requirements met.
5-4	Only an attempt at proposal structure; logical breakdown apparent, ideas inadequate and/or poorly organised. Few content points required in the task included or expanded appropriately. Cohesive devices incorrectly used. Paragraphing irrelevant or illogical. Inconsistent attempt at format. Only some requirements met.
3-1	No attempt at proposal format. Logical organisation absent, embryonic sense of argument, poorly expressed lines of thought, paragraphing lacking, no suitable material. Ideas reproduced incoherently without understanding. Inappropriate to the purpose set.

These criteria referred to overall information structuring, linking ideas through logical sequencing and proper formatting of proposals.

Table 6
Distribution of Scores for the Assessment of Organisation and Format

Group	Number of participants	Scores									
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Control	104	0	3	2	8	38	30	20	3	0	0
Treatment	88	6	16	22	35	6	3	0	0	0	0

Table 6 indicates that over 90% of students in the treatment groups were aware of the conventional features of the genre under study as their works demonstrated clarity of the message, appropriate organisation structure and inner logic within and across constituent parts of the project proposal. In contrast, participants in the control groups displayed markedly poorer performance than their peers in treatment groups whose results showed about 28 % growth, the average scores being 5,5 vs 7,6. They showed lack of awareness about conventions of organising written texts in English and basic rhetorical techniques used to realise communicative purposes corresponding to different moves and steps within the sections of proposals. Neglect of those essential aspects of academic writing and interference of (e.g., differences in treating logical organisation) brought about substantial differences in performance and lower scores in coherence and cohesion.   Besides, about 50% of the students failed to meet essential formatting requirements, most frequent drawback being the way of presenting references which did not correspond to the standards accepted.

Table 7
Analytic Scoring Rubric 3 for the Assessment of Language Range and Control

10	Wide range and fluent control of appropriate structures and professional vocabulary. Grammar and spelling conventions observed. Few non-impeding / non-distractive errors. Academic register fully appropriate to the purpose set.
9-8	Good range and effective use of appropriate structures and professional vocabulary. Grammar and spelling conventions generally observed. Some non-impeding / non-distractive errors. Academic register largely appropriate to the purpose set.
7-6	Adequate range of appropriate structures and professional vocabulary. Generally adequate language control. Some impeding errors. On the whole academic register appropriate to the purpose set.
5-4	Restricted range and uncertain control of grammar structures but some attempts at a range of professional vocabulary. Many impeding errors. Unsuccessful or inconsistent attempts at register. Only to some extent appropriate to the purpose set.
3-1	Narrow range of appropriate structures and professional vocabulary. Little evidence of language control with basic errors. No evidence of academic register.

These criteria were applied to evaluate appropriacy of language used in the academic register and adequacy of grammar structures and vocabulary.

Table 8
Distribution of Scores for the Assessment of Language Range and Control

Group	Number of participants	Scores									
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Control	104	0	2	1	17	60	14	7	3	0	0
Treatment	88	6	15	24	31	8	4	0	0	0	0

Table 8 shows that participants in treatment groups performed better than their peers in control groups, the average scores being 7,5 vs 5,9. They demonstrated the ability to use stylistically appropriate words and formulaic expressions adequately and in good proportion, vary their vocabulary, generally avoid repetition and handle both simple and complex grammar structures largely avoiding distractive errors. The language in the majority (about 90 %) of works was consistently formal or neutral as dictated by the task. The analysis of the control groups' results revealed confusion between formal and informal style and problems in constructing well-formed and stylistically appropriate sentences (e.g., the overuse of personal pronouns, simple grammar structures, colloquial expressions and contractions). Further analysis revealed serious L1 interference problems resulting in grammatically inappropriate word for word translation of typically Russian phrases (e.g., *basing on 5 forces of Porter we can say that…).* This largely accounts for the difference between average marks: about 80% *very good* and *good* in the treatment groups vs 70% *good* in the control groups. The overall mean results of students' performance according to the three assessment criteria in control and treatment groups are shown in Table 9.

Table 9
Group Statistics

Assessment Criteria	Control /Treatment Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Communicative Task Realisation	Control	104	6,81	1,015	,100
	Treatment	88	7,33	,991	,106
Organisation and Format	Control	104	5,44	1,197	,117
	Treatment	88	7,68	1,160	,124
Language Range and Control	Control	104	5,88	1,017	,100

Table 10

Independent Samples T-test

Assessment Criteria	Levene`s Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference		Lower	Upper
Communicative Task Realisation	2,511	,115	-3,588	190	,000	-,522	,145		-,809	-,235
			-3,595	186,136	,000	-,522	,145		-,808	-,235
Organisation and Format	,001	,970	-13,099	190	,000	-2,240	,171		-2,577	-1,902
			-13,133	186,518	,000	-2,240	,171		-2,576	-1,903
Language Range and Control	9,468	,002	-10,922	190	,000	-1,752	,160		-2,068	-1,435
			-10,769	171,030	,000	-1,752	,163		-2,073	-1,431

Table 10 shows that students in the treatment group had significantly better scores than those in the control group according to all criteria: 1) communicative task realization: M=7,33, SD=,991 vs M=6,81, SD=1,015; t(190)= -3,59, p=,000; 2) organisation and format: M=7,68, SD=1,160 vs M=5,44, SD=1,197; t(190)= -13,1, p=,000; 3) language range and control: M=7,64, SD=1,205 vs M=5,88, SD=1,017; t(190)= -10,9, p=,000.

Table 11
Distribution of Overall Scores for the Project Proposals

Group	Number of Participants	Scores										Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
		10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1			
Control	104	0	2	2	28	60	4	5	3	0	0	6.1	,999	,098
Treatment	88	2	15	21	38	8	4	0	0	0	0	7.4	1,093	,116

Table 12
Independent Samples Test

		Levene`s Test for Equality of Variances	T-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Overall Scores	Equal Variance Assumed	6,094	,014	-8,748	190	,000	-1,322	,151	-1,620	-1,024
	Equal Variance not Assumed			-8,683	178,272	,000	-1,322	,152	-1,622	-1,021

Tables 11 and 12 show a significant difference in the overall scores of students in the control group (M = 6,1; SD = ,999) and treatment group (M = 7,4; SD = 1,093); t (190) = - 8,75, p=,000. The t-test analysis of the overall performance brings to the forefront the fact that the methodology under study assisted participants in the treatment groups to better cope with the task set – in terms of all scores attained. On the whole, the results indicate that their research proposals were well-paragraphed and logically organised with respect to moves and steps of the CARS model without any structural elements missing; included an adequate range of professional vocabulary and pattern phrases appropriately used; demonstrated students' reasonable control of grammar structures and relatively low proportion of L1 interference. Thus, the results demonstrated that the students in the treatment group did outperform those in the control group and consequently the null hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion and Conclusions

Seeking answers to the research questions posed in the Introduction, we have analysed contemporary approaches most relevant to teaching academic writing to students in a L1 Russian setting and offered the complex methodology which comprises the use of pattern phrases, sociocultural components pertaining to forms and conventions of academic writing in English and some essential elements of the genre, product and process approaches. The primary goal of the experimental study was adapting the constituents considered to meet the requirements of the target audience and investigating the effectiveness of applying the methodology in question.

The findings of the experiment revealed certain benefits of integrating different complementary procedures into the teaching practice to assist students in their work on project proposals. The introduction of the CARS model in the treatment groups drew students' attention to formal aspects of academic writing, helped them grasp certain NS/NNS's variations, forms and conventions and adequately structure project proposals. This was particularly useful for Russian learners as in the Russian communicative tradition formal aspects are commonly considered less important since the main emphasis is laid on the content, and thus inaccurate word count, disproportional sections, improper formatting or other seemingly inessential 'trifles' are not often treated by students as serious drawbacks. That partly explains the control groups' underperformance in the experiment.

The move/step framework also helped undergraduates in treatment groups more efficiently organise ideas and understand the inner structure of each section of their proposals. The focus on the rhetorical structure of project proposals and research articles (in contrast to a standard procedure of merely analyzing the language and imitating) aided students to realise how moves and steps actually 'work' and are expressed in English. This realisation is vital for L2 learners because linear logic so common for NSs of English is not universal and mastering its principles needs explanation, exemplification and training. The lack of attention to those aspects resulted in incoherent logical organisation and inability to fully realise communicative purposes by participants in the control groups.

The study was also intended to investigate whether the novel component of the complex methodology (namely the set of structural templates of pattern phrases grouped in genre-based functional categories and organised around the framework of the project proposal) integrated into traditional practices had a positive impact on teaching academic writing. The experiment proved that the templates were quite useful in structuring proposals, and the fact that the best results were registered on the scale *Organisation and format* was not a complete surprise. Besides, the work with the templates appeared to be time saving because learners were first provided with pattern phrases related to different genre-based functions realised by steps to be further analysed in authentic research articles. That allowed students to shift the emphasis to content aspects while reading; it also appeared to be efficient in helping them structure both simple and complex sentences with more accuracy, abandon the habit of word-for-word translation (cf. the practice of specifying intentions in L1) and start expressing their ideas in better English. In addition, controlled, guided and free writing as well as planning and drafting, revising and editing widely practiced in treatment groups contributed to positive impression of students' final products. On the whole, the participants in treatment groups outperformed the task over those who followed the standard course in every aspect considered and showed particular strengths in logical organisation and style of their proposals.

Thus, there are reasons to believe that the complex genre-based methodology combining several complementary procedures could render the teaching process more efficient. In a way, we attempted to meet the challenge mentioned in *Review of Literature* and offered "something that might usefully inform curriculum" (cf. above Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010, p. 510), namely the classification of functional categories corresponding to a sequence of steps within a particular move. The methodology is not confined to choosing from long lists of clauses and merely completing them (cf. Morley, 2015 or Barros, 2016); in contrast to those approaches incomplete clauses are split and lexical items are grouped according to structural elements that could be used interchangeably. The innovative practices motivated by teaching needs involve the two-level analysis intended to clarify communicative purposes and make the choice of rhetorical techniques used for their realisation flexible and conscious. Eventually students could develop their own models for the sequence of the steps to be employed; this important outcome contributes to developing learners' autonomy and raising motivation.

The findings indicate that the experimental procedures had a positive effect on students' academic writing skills development and a course comprising various teaching strategies can be extended to other university departments. However, the study results elucidated some problem areas to be taken into account with a view to the potential course design, namely structural and stylistic conventions of academic writing in English and L1 (not necessarily Russian) interference. Commonly, learners in an EFL situation tend to rely on L1 communicative traditions and the absence of professional teachers' guidance hinders their academic progress. The author's experience of delivering lectures on EAP at Xi'an University revealed similar problems faced by Chinese colleagues; they supported the idea of naming steps and specifying their linguistic expression in L1 and started introducing templates related to particular steps within a move in their course for postgraduates.

Overall, the methodology offered could walk learners step-by-step through all stages of the writing process and assist them to adhere more strictly to conventions of academic writing. Currently, the number of students who need competence in EAP to become fully-fledged members of the academic community is increasing dramatically. For them fluency in the norms of writing acceptable by English academic standards is a prerequisite. Helping these students not only to develop academic writing skills but also to adapt themselves to the above norms is a challenging task to be pondered by language teachers. The present study has taken a step in this direction. On general grounds the investigation does not face major limitations – apart from its focal point – an academic project proposal**.** The sentence-structure analysis of recurrent sequences within the proposal structure proves expedient for teaching purposes though the range of steps covered is somewhat limited (partly by the format of the proposal). Obviously, the classification of pattern phrases needs broadening and further elaboration – to be applied to writing research articles and other academic papers. Still, it can be assumed that implementing the methodology under consideration within the restricted framework can aid students to learn the essentials of the academic writing style and demonstrate the ability to organise their project proposals along the internationally accepted lines. Eventually, the findings of this study taken together can benefit teaching EAP in different educational settings outside Russia.

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