Genre Awareness in Teaching Writing: A Case Study of Public High School Teachers in Nepal

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Abstract: This research examines how English language teachers in Nepal strengthen their understanding of genre awareness by integrating genre-based writing instructional activities, namely story writing, job application, journal, email, and essay writing within a high school teaching context. This qualitative case study gathered data using semi-structured pre- and post-instructional interviews with four teacher participants and students’ written artifacts. The findings indicate that teachers' awareness of genre significantly contributes to the improvement of their self-reflection and academic writing abilities, which, in turn, has a positive influence on their understanding of pedagogical content knowledge and genre-specific writing conventions. However, the findings also reveal that L2 writing teachers possess unconscious familiarity with the genre, especially in terms of teaching genre-based writing and analyzing genre-specific content. Consequently, this unconscious awareness appeared to be a complex phenomenon in terms of connecting their pedagogical perspectives, actual genre-specific pedagogical practices, and current educational and sociocultural requirements. The study suggests teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge of genres, reflective practices based on the learning achievements of learners, and ongoing genre-based teacher training, including workshops and seminars, should be organized to enhance their conscious awareness and understanding of the intricate nature of genre-based writing instruction.

Keywords: Academic writing, ESL/EFL writing, Genre awareness, Genre-based writing instruction, Pedagogical content knowledge, Self-reflection.

1. Introduction

Recent research trends on Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL/ESL) have shown that conscious knowledge of the genre-based approach significantly enhances genre awareness in teaching writing in EFL/ESL contexts. This case study explores how EFL teachers teaching in public high schools in Nepal are consciously aware of genre-based approaches in teaching writing that incorporate job application, story, journal, email, and essay writing. The study delves into the awareness of L2 writing instructors in the notion of growing interest in genre-based writing pedagogies that have been raised by various scholars (Byrnes, 2009; Byrnes et al., 2006; Cheng, 2006, 2007; Matsuda et al., 2003; Dovey, 2010 & Martin & Rose, 2008). Although this approach has gained significant attention from researchers in the L2 teaching composition context over the past two decades (Zhai & Razali, 2023), the current dominant practices of Genre Based Approach (GBA) in the Nepalese EFL writing context appear to be naïve. While there seems to be an apparent consensus among genre experts about the critical role of teachers' content knowledge in implementing genre-based teaching in L2 settings, the studies of teachers' experiences with genre-based pedagogies remain notably limited in scholarly works (Tardy, 2016). Hence, to concretize the effectiveness of GBA, this study aims to

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explore teachers’ conscious understanding of the effective implementation and integration of genre-based teaching approaches in L2 writing classrooms.

The genre-based pedagogy offers significant advantages in the classroom since this approach helps teachers and students work with the whole text and understand how language is used for a real purpose. More specifically, the genre-based approach to writing highlights the interconnectedness of language and its contextual application, where language is effectively used to achieve specific objectives within a given context (Pham & Bui, 2021). From our experiences of instructing in EFL contexts, we also believe that genre-based instructional approaches comprise a valuable resource for both novice and expert writing educators to skillfully guide their students in producing genre-specific texts that foster creativity and introspective competence across various genres. In addition, this framework facilitates L2 writing learners to improve their understanding of textual structures, familiarize them with various genres, and enhance their awareness of the different genre conventions (Lu et al., 2021; Nagao, 2018). Caplan (2019), Negretti and McGrath (2018), and Yang (2016) further claim that genre awareness is valuable for developing L2 writers’ thinking processes and creativity in writing. Consequently, it empowers writing instructors to navigate their courses adeptly and create specific contextual writing scenarios, moving away from focused predefined writing processes, textual content, and prescribed grammatical rules.

1.1. Genre-based Pedagogy

Genre-based pedagogy in language teaching has gotten prominent attention since John Swales first introduced this concept (Swales, 1990). Genre here refers to the abstract, socially recognized way of using language (Hyland, 2007, p.149), and genre-based pedagogy refers to how to teach a language; therefore, the students can use the language patterns to produce purposeful pieces of writing (Hyland, 2003). The main purpose of this approach is to develop the student’s skills in writing different types of text, including essays, emails, job applications, and literacy narratives, through a dialogic process (Rana, 2021). Because of the multiple benefits, this method appeared pertinent and applicable globally in teaching language instruction and subject-specific content across various disciplines (Martin, 2012). This pedagogy covers various language skills necessary for instructing students in their second language (L2) writing. Furthermore, researchers have employed the principle of genre-based pedagogy in various ways, including investigating writing instruction in diverse contexts and improving students' understanding of different writing styles. Multiple studies show that this approach has challenged the conventional educational practice that prioritizes solely the bottom-up approach of teaching writing as a process of "laying bricks" (Yang, 2016, p.40). Thus, the focus of this approach on a top-down method instigates a text’s social function and genres, such as stories, letters, paragraphs, and essays, along with linguistic features (Yang, 2016). As a result, this pedagogical concept draws on principles of different genre-based pedagogies and provides valuable guidelines for L2 writing instructors.

The study employs a genre-based approach to explore how L2 instructors are familiar with different writing strategies in teaching L2 writing (Carstens, 2009; Giraldo, 2019; & Dong & Lu, 2020). Based on this purpose, we assume that the L2 instructors should possess a deep understanding of the practical use of genres, which can effectively heighten students’ writing skills by cultivating their awareness of various genres (Yasuda, 2011). We also engage in discourse with scholars such as (Martin, 1999; Rose, 2007, & Rothery & Stenglin, 1994), who are the prominent figures advocating for the genre-based approach. They emphasize that teachers’ and students’ collaborative roles are crucial in shaping the success of genre-oriented writing across different contexts. As the use of GBA extends its’ applicability across various settings, including native-like and second or foreign-language scenarios, the benefits encompass improvements in students’ writing abilities and the enrichment of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and metacognitive skills (Suharyadi, Widiati, & Basthomi, 2021). Thus, for the past few years, the GBA has been widely used in teaching academic writing courses in ESL/EFL settings (Zhai, & Razali, 2023).
1.2. Genre Awareness and Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Apart from the significance of genre-based writing pedagogies to L2 learners, researchers contend that these pedagogies can also empower teacher educators by elevating the importance of their genre expertise and pedagogical content knowledge in classroom teaching. As a result, English language teachers provide clear instructions in L2 writing class explaining linguistic characteristics and rhetorical patterns specific to the discourse in which students are expected to engage (Hyland, 2007). Furthermore, GBA provides apparent benefits for writing instructors, enabling them to gain a deeper understanding of the communicative norms within their students’ current and future academic writing contexts, along with the introduction of diverse innovative and creative teaching techniques. Employing this method imposes substantial demands on educators in terms of their mastery of the subject matter. For instance, Tardy (2009) focuses on the expertise of L2 instructors in four domains of genre knowledge: formal knowledge, process knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and subject-matter knowledge.

Drawing on discussions by different scholars about genre-based approaches and their significance in teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, Hyland (2007) asserts that these approaches seem to empower them by acknowledging their expertise in understanding genres and equipping them to guide their learners in crafting meaningful texts. However, it's worth noting that genre-based methods also present distinct challenges to teachers, requiring a solid grasp of content knowledge and genre comprehension in their subject matter, which have been highlighted by researchers like (Chen, Graham, & Gunawan, 2013). However, L2 teachers rarely pursue training and engage in reflective exercises to gain proficiency in unfamiliar content areas, including different writing genres, throughout their teaching careers in the Nepalese EFL contexts. Consequently, they provided a limited opportunity for learners to grow as an L2 writer and also neglect their honest effort and confidence of them to enhance their writing skills (Rana, 2021). Despite this fact, genre-based expertise and the ability to explore new genres is crucial for L2 teachers (Cheng, 2018). Therefore, they can modify their genre knowledge and pedagogical content expertise to create approaches that are applicable to their teaching, thereby ensuring that students become acquainted with various writing genres (Shulman, 1987).

Considering the importance of teachers' genre knowledge and familiarity in genre-based activities, recent studies have explored the knowledge and resources necessary for effective implementation (Tardy, 2016). In addition, contemporary studies have begun illuminating how L2 writing instructors comprehend genre theory and apply genre-informed teaching approaches in their educational practices (De Oliveira & Lan, 2014; Gebhard et al., 2013, & Hedgcock & Lee, 2017). We strongly agree with Tardy’s (2016) work, which focuses on the impact of such activities on the content knowledge and practices of high school teachers functioning as genre-informed writing instructors. For instance, the analysis of previous studies by various writers revealed that there is a dearth of additional research, particularly in the area of examining teachers’ awareness and pedagogical content knowledge concerning genre-based writing instruction. Thus, this study aims to address this gap by investigating how four English teachers in public high schools in Nepal cultivate their understanding of genre and their pedagogical content knowledge through a systematically designed genre-based integrated course. Also, the study delves into the challenges they encounter when applying genre-informed methods in L2 writing instruction.

2. Genre as a Theoretical Framework

We employed genre as our theoretical framework because of its appropriateness for meaningful interpretation of language and context. Moreover, it provides practical benefits when analyzing pedagogical knowledge and genre awareness, eventually aiding L2 writing instructors in improving their awareness of different writing styles and effective writing strategies. For instance, each genre in writing class presents a different set of rhetorical choices, such as content, grammatical features, and organizational structures, helping [teachers] students become aware of their L2 writing practices (Wennerstrom, 2003). Consequently, multilingual students become aware of the different genres they can use depending on their communicative purpose, their audience, and the level of formality in various
types of writing. Similarly, the theory enabled us to gain insights into the applicability of genre-based approaches in teaching L2 writing in the EFL context. The teacher participants were required to assess various texts to aid students in enhancing their writing abilities and optimizing their efficiency. This practice holds substantial importance in diverse Nepalese social contexts (Hua, Seedhouse, & Cook, 2007).

Moreover, the genre approach is intricate, and encompasses various facets. It includes a deep grasp of genre conventions, a practical understanding of the processes, an awareness of its communicative goals within its social and rhetorical contexts, and specialized knowledge of the subject matter covered by the genre theory (Tardy, 2009). This theoretical framework also delves into deepening L2 teachers’ understanding of multimodal writing and how to incorporate it into their teaching practices, specifically considering how genres can be adapted within their unique educational contexts. Drawing our earlier discussion of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge and their acquaintance with various writing genres highlights the importance of a comprehensive awareness of genre-related concepts. This practice encompasses a general understanding of genres and a specific familiarity with the genres they are asked to facilitate writing courses within their L2 contexts. This practice comprises a range of formal and informal writing activities addressing students’ understanding of different writing-based activities.

Likewise, genres are a great resource for knowledge development rather than a prescribed system of rules (Swales, 2002). It leads teachers to continually reshape and reconstruct subjects within the framework of teaching L2 writing in distinct sociocultural contexts (Ellis, 2007; Park & Oliver, 2008; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). Further, this theory enhances teachers' pedagogical perceptions of various genres and helps them understand potential areas of confusion or misconceptions associated with the genres they teach. However, although it plays a significant role in teaching, subject knowledge, and genre awareness are pertinent issues in EFL/ESL settings. Thus, this study seeks to answer how the exploration into teachers' understanding of different genres and pedagogical knowledge aligns with Ellis's (2007) perspective, which views subject knowledge as emerging within intricate and dynamic social systems. This connection calls for more research exploration, building a more comprehensive notion of teacher learning and development within their communities (Shulman & Shulman, 2004).

Furthermore, this theory serves as a conceptual framework for genre-based approaches in teaching L2 writing by helping teachers understand and identify the structure and style of texts, specifically writing tasks, and how these elements interact to achieve effectiveness within a specific context and fulfill their intended course objectives. In line with this framework, we aimed to explore how teachers delimit various genres, provide guidance on students’ written artifacts, and develop an understanding of how information is organized within distinct written genres. Thus, this theory engages actual language examples and assignments derived from genuine linguistic information to cultivate teachers' consciousness of the established norms and methods of the specific genres based on their pedagogical content knowledge.

3. Research Methods

The study adopted a six-month-long case study methodology (Duff, 2008). Because of its exploratory nature, we examined the writing practices, pedagogical knowledge, and awareness of public-school teachers across different genres. A public school was selected as a case, and four L2 writing teachers were purposively chosen as participants based on their teaching experiences and classroom practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Pseudonyms such as David, Karina, John, and Kajal were used to maintain the anonymity of participants’ identities. We gathered various types of data from interviews, documents, observations, and surveys and also facilitated an investigation into our research participants, the institution, and the broader dynamics between teachers and students (Schoch, 2020). We followed the data analysis procedures outlined by Corbin & Strauss’s (2012) grounded content analysis approach. The data analysis procedure entailed revisiting data multiple times and making
descriptive notes to establish a deep understanding of each teacher participant’s experiences and real classroom practices.

The interview data were the primary sources for exploring teachers’ beliefs, experiences, and classroom practices and were verified by cross-referencing with students’ written work and document analysis. Moreover, we used the native language, Nepali, during the interview to avoid misunderstanding of various genres and their pedagogical content knowledge. The audio-recorded interviews were conducted via Zoom, convenient to the participants, and transcribed and translated repeatedly with careful analysis to the prior consent of the participants. In addition to the two 45-minute-long interviews with each participant, several additional short interviews were conducted through instant messaging and phone calls to obtain more information about the teachers’ real classroom practices and belief systems. Then, we categorized the entire dataset using analytical frameworks supported by existing literature, theories on genre knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and teachers’ awareness of different writing genres.

The entire data was analyzed based on the teacher’s beliefs and practices of instructional approaches in teaching L2 writing, and the transcripts were read and re-read multiple times to authenticate the overall data. After analyzing the process, relevant codes emerged, including participants’ educational background, past learning experience, work context, real classroom practices, and students’ written artifacts. These codes were refined and revised during the coding process. Based on the generated codes, themes were developed, such as recontextualization of genre-based approach, understanding L2 teachers’ beliefs and practices on genre awareness, strategies of facilitating collaboration and scaffolding, and challenges encountered for implementing genre-based writing instruction.

4. Results and Discussions

The study’s findings have been divided into four sections, aligning with the research question on how teachers improve their awareness of different writing styles and their pedagogical content knowledge through a systematically designed, genre-based integrated course and how they perceive genre-based pedagogy's effectiveness. The results have been derived from their interviews and students’ written artifacts and presented in different thematic subsections. The thematic subsections are generated based on the translated interview excerpts, different phases of the coding process, analysis of written artifacts, and relevant literature on genre-based pedagogy.

4.1. The Recontextualization of Genre-based Pedagogy

When it comes to teaching writing in the L2 context, the contextualization of genre-based pedagogy has proven to support students in composing various types of written work. Many previous studies reported that this pedagogy has successfully supported L2 teachers in guiding their students to write effectively in diverse contexts (Hyland, 2007). Specifically, it proved beneficial in students’ different contexts of learning L2 writing, such as ESL/EFL contexts, multicultural contexts, and the teaching of non-English subjects (Jeong, 2018; & De Oliveira & Lan, 2014). Recontextualizing students’ needs and context-based approaches in teaching writing allow them to learn how language functions in texts and how texts are developed through their purpose and targeted audiences (Tardy, 2005). The process of recontextualization is defined here as learners’ ability to use a certain generic feature in a new writing task and to use it with a keen awareness of the rhetorical context that enables them to use it appropriately (Cheng, 2007). After analyzing teachers’ interview data about their real-classroom practices, they seemed to recontextualize writing activities incorporating genre awareness in students ‘writing process.

Karina contended as:

“I empower my students…. to realize that… every writing task represents a new rhetorical context. I encourage them… umm…yes... a new set of rhetorical purposes, and like a new configuration of writer/reader relationships, among other elements. So, that may differ from the one in which a generic feature is previously noticed. So, so... they started to realize that... previously
noticed generic features often used in their writing activities, like essay and story writing... oh yes, they kept contextualizing in different a new or a recreated context to achieve the rhetorical purpose and convince their audience in the new rhetorical contexts”.

The findings by Wardani, et. al., (2021) also claim that the recontextualizing genre-based pedagogy in teaching writing has an important role in increasing students’ motivation to construct a text in a particular genre. In the meantime, the participants found that initiating the recontextualization process involved encouraging learners to cultivate genre awareness and inspiring them to employ generic features. This, in turn, enabled their ability to apply genre awareness in their writing instruction effectively. However, the participants also noticed instances of being unconsciously acquainted with genres, which has impacted a substantial consciousness-raising potential for teachers, with significant implications for their understanding of writing various genres and their professional development. In this regard, David claimed that,

“I definitely categorize and analyze the different writing activities such as email writing, job-application letter, and paragraph writing. and then, I ask my students to write, umm, yeah... reflect, and brainstorm their... their... ideas on how to write those activities. This... their initialization found umm... contextualizing some generic features in some way to create meaning uh... and specific scaffolding to students’ written artifacts”.

In the Nepalese context, teachers are the changing agents, and the overall course is designed based on the contexts and students’ needs. Therefore, they need to reflect on their own teaching writing practices, allowing students to understand, deconstruct, and challenge the writing activities that seemed to re-contextualize traditional writing practices in their L2 contexts. However, the main goal of genre pedagogy, which aims to uphold social justice through equal distribution of knowledge, will not prevail if the principles of the pedagogy itself are not recontextualized properly (Kartika-Ningsih & Gunawan, 2019). For this claim, another teacher participant, John depicted:

“I’d rather be a reflective teacher because....it would help me understand the con-conventional structures, interpretations, and ... applications of written texts in the textbook. I could help my students improve their writing skills...because...umm...I could offer them guidance and feedback in when they work with me. And...this allows me to choose a more student-centered methods and materials. Finally, I think, I can also be more critical to current instructional paradigms”.

Based on this narrative, it’s clear that the teacher participants were knowledgeable about the concept of reflective practices in the context of L2 teaching. Moreover, the study by Kartika-Ningsih and Gunawan, (2019) on the recontextualization of genre-based pedagogy in Indonesian EFL classrooms indicates that the recontextualization process of genre-based pedagogy does attempt to address important issues such as classroom needs and curriculum demands. They leaned adopting a recontextualized approach to genre-based pedagogy, effectively moving away from traditional one-sided instructional techniques. The primary focus of this adopted approach was to cater to the unique needs and objectives of the students while recognizing a diverse range of genres in L2 writing instruction.

4.2. Pedagogical Practices and Genre Awareness

Throughout the six-month collaboration, we observed that nearly all the teacher participants expressed a generally positive attitude towards genre awareness within the context of multiliteracy educational trends. This perspective stems from the belief that teachers should possess an awareness of how to instruct learners in adapting and generating text in accordance with the specific requirements of the social context. However, although they argued that in non-native language contexts where writing is considered an integrated skill, they might not be familiar with the precise terminology or concept of “genre,” they did recognize the existence of various forms of writing, and they actively involved students in working with different types of texts (Rana, 2021).

For instance, Kajal stated,

“Well, as I have said, I have never taught and learned writing as a separate skill, and none of the training and umm... workshops are provided regarding genre-specific teaching. So, the word
"genre" is new for me, but now: yes. I have realized that... I, umm am already familiar with genre-based teaching activities.”

In addition, the further discussion with teacher participants stated that their experiences of teaching writing, specifically argumentative essays, email, job applications, and formal and informal letters, developed their practical awareness of teaching writing of different genres and made their own writing improve (Nazari & Alizadeh, 2023). However, though the teachers somehow seemed aware of writing conventions, the data exhibits that they had limited knowledge of analyzing genre-specific texts. They believed presenting the sample texts to L2 writing students was enough to model them. To illustrate, John further argued that:

“When students are provided various writing conventions as examples, they... can definitely use them as models to create similar types of writing. For example, in my class, before I engage them in composing emails, I for sure show them a sample email. And umm...make them aware of the main elements used in the email... such as the subject, greetings, body paragraph, closing, and umm... yeah...signature. Also, uh... I sometimes present different types of text, like um... formal and informal writing letters, and ask them to identify the d-difference between them so they become aware of different writing c-conventions...style.”

Meanwhile, as the participants engaged in self-reflection regarding their strategies for teaching writing, they seemed to lack general pedagogical knowledge, particularly in the organization of writing instruction activities (Worden, 2019). For instance, the teachers overlooked learners' creativity, such as not engaging in brainstorming ideas, critically analyzing the language convention and content, and sufficient genre-specific resources, including content knowledge, supporting details, and genre-specific vocabulary. However, they emphasized linguistic elements such as sentence structure, spelling, and current grammatical rules. Regarding this, another teacher participant, David asserted:

“Well, since I am constrained by a specific timeframe for course completion, I incorporate writing with other language skills, so. I directly engage learners in textbook-based writing activities. Umm... like, although I present some examples before students start writing tasks, I can’t manage time for them to engage in analyzing and pointing out uh... the specific features or styles of each sample text and engage them in different products. Oh-no, I mean process-oriented and genre-specific activities.”

While teachers’ beliefs regarding genre awareness and their pedagogical approaches exhibit positive qualities, there is a significant limitation in their pedagogical content knowledge pertaining to L2 writing. This limitation is a result of the prescribed curriculum that imposes constraints, hindering them from implementing a genre-based approach in actual classroom practices.

### 4.2. Strategies to Facilitate Collaboration and Scaffolding

In the previous section, we highlighted teachers’ beliefs and practices of their instructional methods and comprehension of pedagogical content knowledge in relation to various genre-based teaching approaches for L2 writing. Considering these discussions, we further delve deeper into how teachers investigate various strategies informed by their genre awareness to promote collaboration and scaffolding techniques, aiming at improving their students' understanding of various genres in different writing tasks. There is a concern that a teacher’s intervention can prevent the students’ self-expression so that they can build the autonomy and creativity needed for writing beyond the classroom. In this regard, Tardy (2016) suggests L2 teachers can’t exclude genres and genre-based approaches as they are the primary modes and means through which students generate different generic features in writing. Similarly, genre-based techniques have proven to be an effective pedagogy to facilitate collaborative approaches with supportive guidance (Cheng, 2011; Hyland, 2007; & Swales, 1990).

As we observed teachers employing scaffolding techniques to nurture collaborative initiatives among their students, we noticed a variety of approaches, such as the integration of diverse learning resources and utilizing students' native language (L1) or translanguaging as a means to clarify complex concepts like grammatical components and difficult vocabularies. For this claim, Karina highlighted:
"I experience using translanguaging as beneficial in explaining difficult words, phrases, and concepts. So, I... I see my students understand clearly. And they also translate difficult words and uh... long sentences into Nepali and later write easily., but they sometimes write uncontextual words and grammatically wrong sentences."

In the same way, teachers appear to have embraced distinct components of scaffolding techniques at various stages of the writing process, tailored to specific objectives depending on the nature of the writing tasks. Additionally, they observed students’ initiatives of using mind maps as an effective means to brainstorming and note down ideas for genre-based writing. A mind map is a tool designed to support visual thinking both as a learning aid and a method (Buzan and Buzan, 2002, 2006). Specifically, it improves students’ brainstorming skills, enabling them to implement their creativity in flexible ways during writing process.

For this technique, Karina shared her observation as:

“You know... my students use mind maps for writing essays or paragraphs. I mean, they place the central topic in the center and brainstorm related ideas. I found this practice... technique helps them to generate new um... um...yeah... ideas with their past experiences. Yeah! it serving as a valuable tool for brainstorming and e-e-exploring various approaches to generate writing ideas in their writing process hmm, yes, that’s it”.

In this regard, the findings of Yan et al. (2022) illustrate that mind maps serve as an efficacious and enduring instructional intervention to enhance students’ higher-order abilities. This contributes valuable insights to the development of sustainable instructional approaches aimed at fostering students’ creativity in writing. Additionally, Wang et al. (2010) determined that the use of mind mapping as a strategy is beneficial for promoting creativity and problem-solving. The teacher participants also depicted that employing mind maps strategy stimulated students’ motivation to learn different writing strategies and engage their abstract thinking process. Furthermore, in teaching writing, translanguaging approaches also found to be incorporated to enhance students’ content and contextual knowledge. For instance, most of the teachers stated that though the students compose the final product in English, they read, brainstorm, discuss, draft the ideas in multiple languages, including mother tongue (Canagarajah, 2020). Furthermore, they claim that this approach helped them to implement students’ L1 as resources on story writing activities as they had already learned how to write and compose stories in their native language. Kajal shared her experience as:

“Well, since I say my students are familiar with telling or writing story in Nepali in their everyday lives, I...we introduced the idea of story... story writing in English and leverage them to discuss, and brainstorm the ideas in their first language. This technique I see enhance their creativity and ability to connect their background knowledge and understanding in writing in English.”

The finding shows that several approaches are available to help students address the linguistic features of a given text and gain a deeper understanding of the reasons behind their purpose and organization of writing and the audience (Chen & Su, 2012). For instance, teacher participants noticed that collaborative initiations between teachers and students and scaffolding strategies positively impacted their writing process. However, some difficulties have been reported in addressing grammatical features and properly selecting vocabularies in writing activities. While observing four teacher participants real classroom practices, they seemed emphasizing the importance of the writing process as “scaffolding techniques, as well as metacognitive and metadiscoursal awareness-building strategies to enhance students’ writing skills in various genres (Belcher, 2010). As writing processes are ever-evolving, both genre awareness and pedagogical content knowledge development require facilitating students with proper support to help them recognize different genres, adopt to them, and potentially to innovate generic features based on their needs and contexts (Tardy, 2016).

In the context of second language (L2) writing, successful genre-based instruction is greatly enhanced when there is active collaboration between teachers and students. This is because learners often require explicit guidance and support from their teachers. However, it is crucial for teachers to be highly skilled and refined in their involvement to ensure that the classroom remains student-centered. The teacher participants agreed that scaffolding strategies sounded crucial for offering well-timed and appropriate assistance in L2 writing instruction. Furthermore, fostering a cooperative classroom learning environment has proven to be a valuable addition to maintain student-centeredness
while still allowing the teacher to play a significant role. As a result, teachers can encourage students to become more self-reliant, offering essential support through scaffolding and promoting meaningful collaborative learning by engaging them in conversations and group discussions among their peers.

### 4.3. Challenges in Implementing Genre-based Writing Instruction

Although teachers responded positively to incorporating genre-based writing instruction into their L2 writing context along with their corresponding classroom practices, we noted some of the challenges they encountered when implementing this approach. Our observations align with existing research conducted by scholars, highlighting some significant challenges associated with genre-based writing instruction. These challenges can arise due to the simultaneous emphasis on genre-specific conventions and contextual understanding among teachers and students (Johns, 2011; Yayli, 2011). Likewise, the conflicting nature of L2 writing genres has also been acknowledged as a complicating factor (Kindenberg, 2021). Additionally, the role of language within genre instruction (Cheng, 2019 & Li et al., 2020) and the scaffolding of metalinguistic concepts and metacognition facilitate the actual use of genre (Negretti & Kuteeva, 2011).

John stated his lack of professional expertise to scaffold students based on their current expertise was identified as the major challenge:

“*I think, I face as a challenging part when I have to provide input to make my students understand what I am instructing. Before that, uh... unknowingly, I began teaching with rote memorization of model text where...where students had to recite and memorize assigned writing formats. Then finally, I felt I should use effective approaches to become them conscious with various genre-based writing practices*.”

The heavy workload in the absence of teacher collaboration intensified the practical challenge of scaffolding. Similarly, David expressed his struggles in genre analysis to elucidate linguistic concepts and conventional features of the texts, which can be partially ascribed to the time constraints for students to analyze thoroughly. He further specified:

“*Umm... I am quite unsure.... But I would spend almost one entire class session to genre analysis. For me, uh... the syllabus and prescribed unnecessary writing activities added a burden to practice genre-based writing instruction meaningfully within the tight teaching schedule*”

Another major obstacle perceived by the teachers was the high-stake testing culture in the Nepalese education system. Because of the summative examination systems, it seemed more in favor of the effective strategy of imitating, reciting, and reusing the prescribed model texts. Throughout the six-month collaboration with teachers, we also found that these challenges are further compounded by internal factors related to the teachers, including their dual responsibilities of preparing students for summative assessments while guiding their writing activities based on individual needs (Lee, 2012). Furthermore, the teachers’ limited expertise in adopting genre pedagogies in alignment with local requirements, syllabi, and school administration expectations (Tardy, 2017 & Li et al., 2020) adds another layer of complexity to the situation.

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study explored the genre awareness of teachers and its impact on pedagogical practices of genre-based teaching approaches in EFL/ESL writing classrooms. It examined how genre-based teaching methods enhance teachers’ knowledge of different writing styles by integrating a range of genre-based writing activities, including story writing, job application writing, journal keeping, email composition, and essay writing. The outcomes of a six-month collaboration, interviews with four teachers and writing practices shows that implementing genre-based pedagogy can enhance teachers’ pedagogical knowledge related to genre-specific language choices and increase their awareness of it. The study responded to Tardy’s (2016) call for scholarly attention of teachers who incorporate genre knowledge into their pedagogy and actual classroom practices when teaching writing in L2 contexts.
The findings indicate that implementing a genre-based approach positively impacted teachers, fostering their self-reflection, enhancing their academic writing skills, understanding generic writing structures, and increasing their knowledge of different genres. While it was challenging for teachers to align their belief systems and instructional practices with the current genre-based writing approaches, adopting genre-based pedagogy from traditional teaching methods and implementing collaborative procedures and scaffolding techniques proved highly effective and beneficial. These initiatives enhanced teachers’ pedagogical expertise and significantly heightened their understanding of genre-based writing approaches. Additionally, the results also underscored that the teacher participants unveiled a clearer understanding of genre-based approaches, particularly when it comes to teaching writing and analyzing genres within their classroom practices. However, when examining the real classroom practices of genre-based approaches in teaching writing, it becomes more evident that these methods can be both empowering and challenging for teachers (Liu & Chen, 2022). In addition, the teachers appeared to lack awareness of the complex nature of the interactions between their belief systems, real-world classroom practices, and current educational and sociocultural needs.

Undoubtedly, this study is not free from limitations due to its practical constraints of relying solely on data from a case study of public-school teachers gathered through semi-structured interviews and student-written artifacts. Notably, it lacks actual classroom observations and longitudinal studies, which could provide a deeper understanding of the local instructional approaches, learning contexts, and actual writing instruction practices employed by teacher participants. There remains, however, a need for further research into genre-based contextually relevant approaches to teaching writing instruction. Consequently, it seems essential for teacher participants to adopt a critical and reflective approach to their current beliefs and practices.

The findings from this study underscore the significance of teachers reflecting on their beliefs and real-classroom practices, including their understanding of genres and genre awareness in L2 writing. This reflection should extend to their actual instructional methods, discussions with more experienced L2 writing teachers, outcomes of their teaching or making some recording demo lessons, and conducting surveys among their students (Yu et al., 2020). Returning to their beliefs and instructional practices, teachers seem to lack awareness of the complexities of L2 writing structures and real-world classroom practices required to address their students’ educational and socio-cultural needs. In response to these circumstances, teacher professional development workshops and seminars could be organized to enhance their understanding of the significance of scrutinizing their personal beliefs and practices and adopting the intricate nature of genre-based instruction. In addition to teachers’ efforts to recontextualize genre-based pedagogy and address challenges related to their belief systems, collaborative initiatives, and scaffolding strategies, it is equally crucial to provide them with strategies for developing context-specific knowledge, skills, and approaches that are tailored for teaching L2 writing in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the study reveals that teacher participants lacked knowledge of systematic instruction and skills for guidance in teaching L2 writing because the university programs did not offer courses, creating contextual constraints on developing their belief and practice systems within genre-based pedagogy. It is applicable for school management to provide positive support and guidance. Along with external sources of support like university researchers and teacher educators need to offer scaffolding strategies to encourage L2 teachers to self-reflect on their beliefs and practices related to writing instruction. Finally, fostering regular exchanges of ideas and meaningful negotiations between teachers and external stakeholders can create more contextually relevant opportunities for productive instruction and enhance their belief and practice systems in genre awareness.
References


