PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A GENRE-BASED APPROACH IN A NON-ACADEMIC EFL CLASSROOM

by

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A dissertation submitted to the

School of Humanities

of the University of Birmingham

2012

ABSTRACT

This research paper reports the implementation of a short ESP genre-based writing course in a non-academic EFL classroom in which adult students learn English for non-specific purposes (*e.g.* personal pleasure or career development). To overcome some of the limitations in the conventional ESP genre-based approach (which in previous research is typically applied in academic / specialised classrooms) and to adapt the instruction to meet the needs and abilities of the students as well as the institutional teaching goals, a process genre approach was incorporated throughout the genre-based writing course. The steps involved in the preparation and conduction of the course were outlined in detail together with the theoretical considerations taken into account for each pedagogical process.

Fourteen novice Japanese students engaged in sequenced phases in the carefully designed process genre model. The implemented writing instructions were empirically evaluated based on descriptive analysis of macro data obtained from the participating students' letters and the qualitative analysis of the students' opinions about their own writing and the overall course. The findings showed the practical effectiveness of the genre-based pedagogy for developing the students' genre awareness and improving their writing skills pertinent to the target genre. It was found that contextualisation of the genre through a preparatory role-play, facilitated discussions and the students' examination of the various rhetorical features within genre exemplars were particularly helpful in raising the students' genre awareness and emphasising the key factors affecting the given genre (*i.e.* purposes, audience and textual choices). The participants' positive remarks on the course and the observed progress in their writing skills also signalled the efficacy of the implemented instructions. Although this research should be treated as a preliminary study of the potential implementation of a genre-based approach for a non-academic EFL teaching environment, there was corroborating evidence to support the stance that the genre-based approach (with careful planning) could be effectively applied in similar teaching contexts which are non-conventional to the general ESP genre-based approach.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last three decades, the notion of providing explicit and systematic instruction to raise students' awareness of specific genre ('genre-based approach') has become the main pedagogical paradigm in the English writing classroom (Chandler, 1997; Henry, 2007). This approach seeks 'to explore ways of scaffolding students' learning and using knowledge of language to guide them towards a conscious understanding of target genres and the ways language creates meanings in context' (Hyland, 2003: 21). It was suggested that by being able to analyse the pattern of the conventional structural organisation and the rationale behind the textual characteristics of the chosen genre, the students could gain 'access to ways of communicating that have accrued cultural capital in particular professional, academic, and occupational communities' (Saracino, 2004: 59).

The conceptual framework underlying the genre-based approach is believed to coincide with the goal of communicative pedagogy in TESOL classrooms (McKinley, 2012). Unlike the more traditional form-oriented approach in which linguistic accuracy is at the forefront of instruction, the critical focus in the genre-based approach is in developing students' *functional* writing skills for achieving social purposes in particular situations (Kim and Kim, 2005; Lin, 2006; Cheng, 2011; Yayli, 2011).

Much genre-based pedagogical research is available within academic / specialised teaching environments (*e.g.* universities, special training schools) and the benefits of the approach for academic learners seem evident (*e*.g. Johns, 1995; Cheng, 2006; Lin, 2006; Bhatia, 2008; Ting and Tee, 2008; Ho, 2009; Chaisiri, 2010; Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Andrew & Romova, 2012; Babalola, 2012). At a public university in Japan where I work part-time, the genre-based approach has also been employed to familiarise university students with both academic genre (*e.g.* newspaper article summaries and survey reports) and non-academic genre (*e.g*. letters and blog posts). As such, the investigation into the pedagogical value of genre-based writing instruction has been an on-going research project for some of the professors at this university.

My current project was motivated by observing the positive outcome of the genre-based academic writing course at the university. Apart from my university work, I run my own private language school and have been teaching English to adult students with various occupational backgrounds. Although my school is an *Eikaiwa* school (translated as an English conversation school) and the acquisition of writing competence is not a main focus in the syllabus, as the students progress in their L2 learning they have shown an interest in learning English writing communication. This interest stems from either wanting to expand their personal L2 experiences (*e.g.* letters to friends, diaries) or to accomplish occupation-related tasks (*e.g.* work e-mails, technical reports). On a number of occasions, students have voluntarily produced a written discourse and have brought it to their class to seek my feedback on their writing. As I searched for relevant literature to aid my students' writing progress, I came to the realisation that, while some composition scholars (*e.g.* Lin, 2006; Johns, 2008; Hasan & Akhand, 2010; Andrew & Romova, 2012) have claimed the wide applicability of genre-based approaches in various educational settings, there are still significantly limited studies (if any) conducted to empirically investigate the application of the genre-based approach in non-academic EFL classrooms in which novice adult learners study English for the purpose of pleasure and/or career development.

The objective of the current study was to propose and then implement a genre-based approach at my private language school with novice Japanese adult students who learn English for non-academic or non-specific purposes, and to examine the applicability and effectiveness of the implemented approach in improving these students' English writing skills. In this paper, I first explain each of the preparatory steps undertaken to develop the present genre-based instruction (*i.e.* examination of the students' characteristics and teaching context, text selection and genre analysis). A series of learner-specific genre-based lessons implemented in my classroom are described in depth. Here, I report the practical and theoretical considerations involved in the planning of the lessons. In particular, issues concerning the conventional genre-based approach are acknowledged and the measures to overcome such limitations are outlined. Based on the analysis of students'

actual writing samples, the results of the implemented lessons are empirically evaluated. I also comment on the students' post-instructional opinions on the implemented genre-based approach and their attitudes towards their own progress in different linguistic skills.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Genre-based pedagogy

The concept of genre in applied linguistics was first developed in the early 1920s. Since then, the term *genre* has been defined by many different linguists. This has resulted in numerous descriptions and proposals for analytical methods for working with genre as well as various genre-based pedagogical approaches (Chandler, 1997). Currently, there are three main research areas of genre pedagogy, namely: (1) the North American New Rhetoricians, (2) the Australian Sydney school (or Systematic Functional Linguistics), and (3) English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (see Hyon (1996) for a detailed comparison of the three schools). These three approaches were developed based on distinct definitions of genre (Flowerdew, 2005) and there has been a considerable amount of discussion which debated and compared the effectiveness of these different approaches for writing instruction (*e.g*. Johns, 2008; Carstens, 2009; Russell *et al*, 2009)

Several recent studies (*e.g.* Upton and Connor, 2001; Kim and Kim, 2005; Matsuo and Greg, 2006; Ting and Tee, 2008; Cheng, 2011), however, have highlighted the interrelation and/or complementary nature of the three approaches and have integrated different aspects of the concepts into their unique pedagogical practices. While the present project also adopts this view, and thus the genre-based pedagogy implemented in the study does not conform to any of the three established approaches, the process followed in analysing the genre text is primarily adapted from the ESP methodology.

2.2. ESP genre analysis

The most recognised method of genre analysis applied in the ESP classroom was propounded by Swales (1990). Swales defined the term ‘genre’ as follows;

> A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the

> rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style (Swales, 1990: 58).

This definition suggested that written texts belonging to a particular type of genre generally conform to certain organisational conventions, which are presumably 'expected' by the reader (or 'expert members') within a specific social context (or 'the parent discourse community') (Winter, 1994; Hyon, 1996; Chandler, 1997; Lin: 2006). In Swales' genre analysis, the structural organisation of a text is examined by identifying information units called *moves*, each of which is designed to achieve one main communicative purpose, and assessing how these moves are organised within the text to achieve the overall communicative purposes of a given genre (Swales and Feak 2000: 35). Here, understanding of the communicative purpose of the target genre and its social context (including the writer-reader relations, history of their interaction, and the cultural background) thus becomes essential for a comprehensive genre analysis (Bhatia, 1993; Dudley-Evens, 1994; Yasuda, 2011).

The original framework of Swales' genre analysis has been further refined over the last several years. Some of the more recent ESP practitioners have conducted micro-level genre analysis which focuses on sentence and word-level grammar to identify prevalent and/or recurring linguistic features within a specific genre (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006; Henry, 2007). These researchers believe that such lexico-grammatical features are consciously or subconsciously 'chosen' by the writer, and play an important role in the overall patterning of a whole text (*e.g.* what kind of sentence patterns tend to predominate in a particular genre) and in turn, in achieving the social function of the genre (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006; Henry, 2007). The examples of such studies can be seen in a number of corpus-based genre analyses such as Upton and Connor (2001), Flowerdew (2005) and Upton and Cohen (2009). Through these micro-level approaches to ESP genre analysis, it has become more apparent that there is a substantial degree of conceptual overlap among the three main genre-based pedagogical approaches mentioned in the preceding section (Henry, 2007).

2.3. Issues in the pedagogical application of ESP genre analysis

While the ESP genre approach has been claimed to be most influential in L2 writing instruction among the various genre approaches, 'grounding teaching in a solid research base and drawing strength from an eclectic set of pedagogies and linguistic theories' (Hyland, 2003: 22), there are some frequently discussed issues associated with its applications (Cheng, 2006). For instance, Lin (2006: 228) warns that the genre approach can 'pose the inherent risk of becoming (and has indeed sometimes become) overly product-focused in a prescriptive way, since the curriculum is usually defined in terms of products – text in various genres'. Badger and White (2000: 157) stated that ESP genre-based teaching may 'undervalue skills needed to produce a text, and see the learners as largely passive'. The nature of ESP pedagogy in which 'textual hegemony' is promoted does not generally allow students to directly critique established genres. This, especially in EFL contexts, can lead to the students prioritising memorisation and imitation of a set of acceptable / prototypical linguistic features in a model text provided by the instructor (Hasan and Akhand, 2010; Johns, 2011: 63; Yasuda, 2011).

Johns (2008) further critiqued that although the writer's *purpose* was said to be at the centre of the genre theory, 'purposeful' text which was responsive to the students' needs and interests was in reality seldom found in the ESP genre-based L2 classroom. She suspected that in many cases, the learners were producing their text merely 'to please their instructors and/or pass the examinations' (Johns, 2008: 239). In fact, Flowerdew (2005) observed that the Japanese EFL learners in his ESP course were producing very similar discourses with little originality and were focusing too much on the correctness of language rather than on generating ideas. Johns (2008) argued that such pedagogy could have limitations in promoting rhetorical flexibility in a given genre and may not be able to prepare students 'for unpredictability of situation that require a reformation of genre schemas' (Johns, 2008: 246). Over time the realisation of the limitations and possible negative ramifications in the ESP genre-based approach have led to the attitude that application of this approach alone may not be sufficient in developing students writing 'skills' as

competent writers (Litinin, 2012).

2.4. Genre-based ESP writing instruction for novice EFL students

The aforementioned issues seemed to become more serious in classrooms with novice foreign language students. Commonly, the results from genre analysis in ESP have been applied in writing instruction for academic / professional L2 learners (*e.g.* university school students, students in business classes) (Johns 2011: 64). These 'academic / professional' learners were, in the majority of ESP research, assumed to have an intermediate to advanced level of linguistic knowledge (*e.g.* Johns, 1995, Bhatia, 2008; Cheng, 2008; Ting and Tee, 2008). Under this assumption, such students, based on their L2 knowledge and previous experiences, were capable of identifying the relationship between the social purpose of a text and a writer's linguistic choices (Johns, 2011; Yasuda, 2011). Yet, most EFL novice language students whose L2 writing experience is often limited to within the classroom may find it challenging to grasp the fact that there are definable pragmatic purposes and social functions of a text (Johns, 2011). They are more inclined to view writing as purely a means for improving their grammar / vocabulary knowledge and/or translation skills rather than as a 'communicative social act' (Yasuda, 2011: 112). Consequently, in writing exercises, these students tend to consider that the composer (as well as the reader) of the text is generally anonymous and his/her identity (or 'individualistic position') is non-existent (McKinley, 2012: 18). Johns (2008: 244) also mentioned that novice students were not included in much of ESP pedagogy because it is often difficult to ascertain their authentic needs and the possible situations in which they can apply knowledge of a target genre in a meaningful way.

Nonetheless, most genre practitioners who empirically probed the application of ESP genre-based pedagogy for EFL novice learners (*e.g.* Litinin, 2012; McKinley, 2012; Yasuda, 2011; Johns, 2008) found that ESP genre-based instruction, especially through the students' analysis of move structure, significantly increased the students' awareness of genre concepts and in turn effectively improved the quality of their writing. Yasuda (2011: 114) stated that the ESP

genre-focused approach can offer novice students 'a major resource for shaping their understanding of a new genre and offers an important learning foundation'. Moreover, Hyland (2008) suggested that by utilising the genre concept for establishing the expected patterns rather than enforcing rules, genre pedagogy can provide a wide range of choices for novice writers to make meaning. Many researchers (*e.g.* Andrew and Romova, 2012; Litinin, 2012; Yasuda, 2011; Cheng, 2006; Kim and Kim, 2005) who successfully adapted genre-based teaching in EFL classrooms argued that the fundamental issues underlying the ESP genre-based approach can be improved by incorporating process-focused instruction. In such instruction, development of the thinking process required to compose text was a main focus and a writer (learner) was viewed as an independent producer of text. Here, the communicative processes for reaching the final text *viz.* brainstorming, contextualisation, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing are regarded as an essential part of the writing pedagogy (McKinley, 2012; Yasuda, 2011). The writer's identity, creativity and fluency are also stressed in each process (McKinley, 2012: 19). Such an approach was termed as the *process genre approach* by Badger and White (2000) and reviewed briefly in the following section.

2.5. Process genre approach

The process genre approach to teaching writing was proposed to overcome the pedagogical shortcomings of both the genre and the process approaches in developing L2 students' writing skills (Frith, 2006) (refer to Badger and White (2000) and Hasan and Akhand (2010) for a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach and the rational for synthesising the two different approaches). Litinin (2012) explained process genre approach as:

> a hybrid, the combination of the process models and the genre theories which takes into consideration the development of the writing skills as well as the conventions, concept of which not only draws from the genre approaches such as knowledge of context, the purpose of writing and certain text features but also retains the process philosophy such as writing skills development and learners' response.

In this approach, students' writing development occurs on the basis of knowledge about language and context (which is usually provided by the instructor as language input) and linguistic skills

(which can be acquired through writing skill exercises) (Badger and White, 2000).

According to the process genre model established by Cope and Kalantzis (1993), there are four essential phases in genre-based teaching / learning, namely, 1) context exploration, 2) text exploration based on model texts, 3) joint construction of a text, and 4) individual application. Classroom activities in the process genre-based classroom should be derived from the specific purpose of each different phrase. The goal of each phase is summarised below:

1) Context Exploration: To help students be aware of and comprehend the social purpose and other contextual factors (*e.g*. cultural background) of the chosen genre.
2) Text exploration based on model texts: To familiarise the learners with the target genre and to draw attention to organisational and linguistic features found in that genre.
3) Joint construction of a text: To construct a text (draft) with peers and/or teachers, using the knowledge and awareness gained from the preceding steps.
4) Individual application: To work individually and independently to produce original writing (practical application of what has been learnt).

Hyland (2008) has added a fifth phase to this model, *i.e.* 'linking related text' (language recycling). The purpose of this phase is to relate what has been learnt to other genres and/or contexts. Production of a job application letter, for example, may be followed by practicing a job interview (speech genre in a related context) or writing an acceptance letter from the employer (written genre in the same context).

Furthermore, Yasuda (2011) attempted to link genre to *task* and proposed a task-based syllabus for her novice EFL writing students. Yasuda (2011) commented that 'through a range of pedagogic tasks, learners can gradually link the target forms to the context in which they are used and perform a target tasks in the end' (Yasuda, 2011: 113). Since the theoretical rational for her approach was very similar to that of the process genre model (although she did not use the same term), some of the practical tasks she applied in her research were also adapted in designing the genre-based instruction in the current study.

2.6. Rationale for the present research

Despite the fact that process genre models appear to have gained much popularity in the English L2 writing classroom in recent years (Chaisiri, 2010; Yasuda, 2011; Litinin, 2012), as mentioned in Chapter 1, there are still very few empirical studies which sufficiently explore the processes of ESP genre-based teaching / learning through which L2 students (especially in EFL contexts) develop genre awareness and improve their writing (Cheng, 2008). Yasuda (2011: 115) pointed out the issues exist in the recent research as:

> studies on genre-based approaches tend to overlook questions about what learners learn, how they learn it, and whether the necessary learning takes place in genre-based framework of teaching and learning. … if research aims to offer instructional recommendations, it is necessary to clarify… how the instruction is implemented, what kind of tasks are designed and given to the students in each unit, and how these tasks are related to the goals of the genre-based instruction.

In particular, there seems to be little or no evidence of research on the application of the genre-based approach for novice EFL students in non-academic contexts. Although a number of cases of genre-based pedagogy in academic classrooms have been documented, as Yasuda (2011) and (Ortega, 2004) criticised, 'Obtaining data primarily from advanced learners may cause researchers and teachers to miss the opportunity to explore the nature of learner dynamics in L2 writing classrooms' (Yasuda, 2011: 115) and may 'diminish the capacity of L2 writing as a field to produce theoretically robust knowledge that can be useful in improving L2 writing across different settings'(Ortega, 2004: 8). Similarly, Andrew and Romova (2012) and Cheng (2006) advocated that more learner- or learning-focused, context-sensitive genre research which provided 'authentic, reflective, evaluative insights of real learner experience' (Andrew and Romova, 2012: 81) was needed to proclaim the effectiveness of the genre-based approach (or process genre approach) and to suggest its potential application in various pedagogical practices. With this end in mind, the proposal for the current research was formulated.

CHAPTER 3.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON MY TEACHING CONTEXT

Following the suggestion of a learner oriented research approach discussed above, it was important to first examine my teaching context and the characteristics of my students before conducting genre analysis and designing the genre-based writing lessons.

3.1. Pedagogical context

The students who participated in the current study learn English as a foreign language at my private English school in Japan. It is vital to note that the classes in which my students regularly studied were part of a general English course which was not specifically designed for 'academic' or 'specialised' training. The following desired outcomes of study were described in the syllabus of the general English course in my school:

1. Students will be able to conduct effective social interactions in various contexts (*e.g*. when meeting people for the first time, expressing opinions, giving advice, requesting). In particular, they should be able to make a favourable impression during a conversation in English.
2. Students will have cultural sensitivity and awareness of appropriate behaviour in targeted socio-cultural groups or contexts.
3. Students will feel confident to use English independently both inside and outside the classroom even with limited linguistic knowledge (*e.g*. by applying communication strategies).

The typical teaching / learning activities in this course thus focused mainly on acquiring effective conversational communication skills. Furthermore, it was evident from the analysis of the enrolment survey (see Figure 3.1), which was filled in by each student during his/her enrolment in my school, that improving speaking and listening skills were my students' highest priority in L2 learning. Nevertheless, I frequently conduct various writing and reading tasks with the students since such tasks can enhance their sociolinguistic and/or pragmatic competence in conversational situations (Nunan, 1999). Although most of the written texts produced by the students had been reviewed and edited in terms of lexical and grammatical mistakes, no formal writing instruction, especially to raise students' genre awareness, had ever been implemented in my school prior to this

particular study.

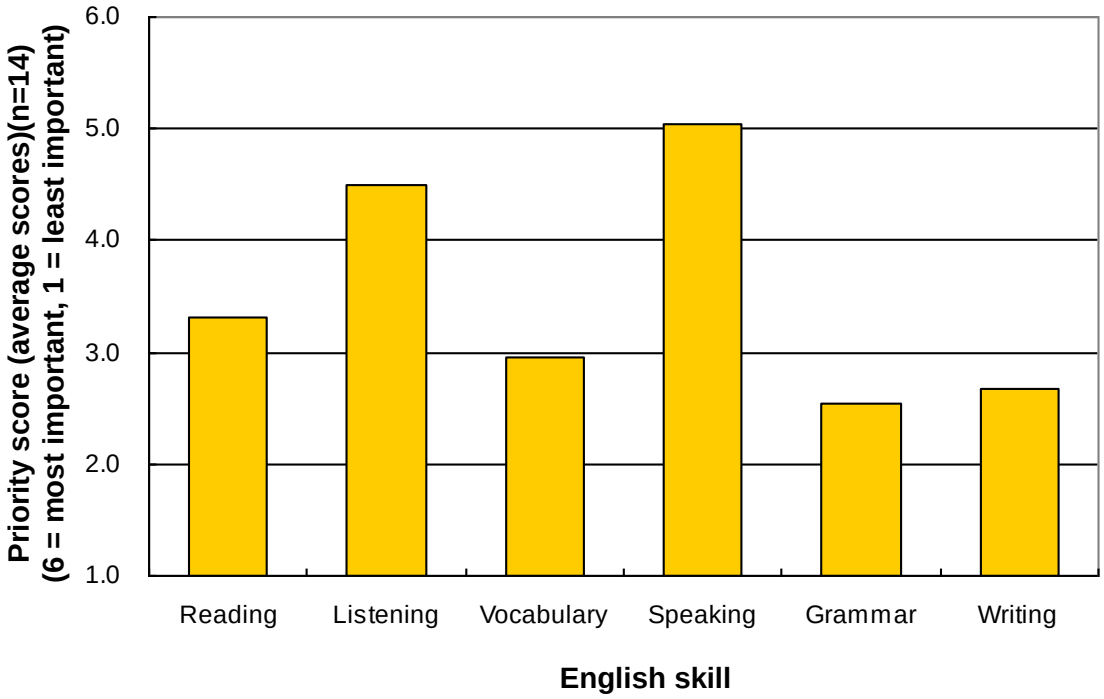

Figure 3.1. The English skill priority of the 14 students who participated in the genre-based writing lessons

Note: The data was obtained from the enrolment survey which was filled in by each student during his/her enrolment in my school

3.2. Characteristics of the participating students

For the purpose of conducting a series of genre-based writing lessons, three classes comprising 4-5 students per class were selected. In these classes, a total of 14 adult students (11 females and 3 males, ages from 27-55) studied English on a weekly basis. Based on the teaching materials (*e.g.* textbook, audio CDs) that they were comfortable using and the level of writing proficiency in their homework, the writing level of nine of the students was regarded as false beginner and five as pre-intermediate.

While the participating students had various occupational and social backgrounds, they had several other characteristics in common (revealed from a preliminary study of each student's background). Such characteristics were the main criteria for selecting these students (classes) in the

present study: These students;

- had learnt general English for the purposes of pleasure and other personal benefits (*e.g.* career development).
- had relatively high motivation levels to complete homework or conduct self-oriented study outside the classroom.
- had never studied any type of academic or professional English writing.
- had no prior knowledge about the concept of genre.

CHAPTER 4.
PREPARATION OF GENRE BASED INSTRUCTION

4.1. Chosen genre

As findings of the genre analysis were to be applied for pedagogical purposes in my school, it was necessary to select a genre that was congruent with the school's curriculum (Osman, 2004). As such, a genre of refund request letters was chosen because at the commencement of this research, 'shopping' had recently been a theme in all three studied classes. During the lessons, the students had discussed their positive and negative experiences pertaining to 'shopping'. These discussions had revealed the possibility of a genuine situation in the future in which students would need to write a refund request letter (in English) for unsatisfactory products / services.

4.2. Move identification and text selection

Selection of a particular refund request letter that was most representative in the business discourse community was the next salient process in the preparation of genre-based writing instruction (Yayli, 2011; Ting and Tee, 2008). In attempting to find a typical text, I retrieved ten refund request letters from the World Wide Web (see Appendix 1 for detailed information on the ten letters), and examined them in terms of their structural arrangement (see Appendix 2 for the result of the examination of the 10 letters). Each of the letters had been published by advisers (official or unofficial) of writing refund request letters and each contained some form of writing guideline. These guidelines offered relatively clear information on the functional purpose of the different components in the text. Based on this information, key structural units (*i.e.* moves) were identified in each letter. The identified moves were then collated, and the terms and definitions were standardised (Appendix 2). The moves were further adjusted by comparing them with a list of standard structural units (*stable elements*) of business letters proposed by Van Nus (1999) (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Standard structural units of business letters (proposed by Van Nus, 1999)

Note: This information was used to standardise the terms and definitions of the moves identified in the ten letters.

Structural Unit	Function
Letter head*	Carries company information such as name, address
Inside Address*	Gives name and address of receiver
Reference*	Encodes the letter for filing purposes
Date*	Includes date and town from which the letter was sent
Salutation*	Signals the beginning of the letter
Subject Line	Prepares the body of the letter
Preclose	Prepares for the close
Close*	Close the letter
Signature*	Includes information about sender such as name, position
Postscript*	Gives additional information after the close of the letter

'*' = stable unit (standard element) of a business letter

Here, it should be noted that the categorisation of text components into a specific move could vary considerably among researchers (McCarthy, 1991: 161; Fairclough, 1992: 238; Jaworski & Coupland, 1999: 11). In general, this potentially subjective process may involve consulting multiple specialist informants (in my case, experienced business letter writers) to validate the reliability of the move analysis (Dudley-Evens, 1994: 227; Hoey, 1994: 33; Flowerdew, 2005; Henry, 2007). Although this verification was practically unattainable in the current project, it can be assumed that each letter's accompanying instructional guidelines reflected the extensive knowledge and experience of its author, and/or had undergone relevant standardisation procedures before publication. These guidelines should thus be regarded as sufficient basic overviews or summaries of different moves. In addition, a number of lexico-grammatical patterns and formulaic expressions contained in each letter were in fact relatively comparable across the ten letters (see Appendix 2). This similarity in linguistic features was also used as a secondary determining factor for categorising the texts into different moves, further minimising the subjectivity in the move interpretation process (Dudley-Evens, 1994: 227; Henry and Roseberry, 2001).

As a result of the examination of the ten letters, a total of 16 moves were proposed (Table 4.2). It also became apparent that there was a great flexibility in the sequencing of the moves within the main body of the letters (see Appendix 2). While the number of the examined letters may have been limited, multiple examples provided a range of 'acceptable' linguistic options used to realise different functions in a specific move (as summarised in Appendix 2).

Of the 16 identified moves, five were considered obligatory (included in all ten letters) and the remaining eleven were considered optional (Table 4.2) (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006). The 'Inside address', 'Date' and 'Signature' were categorised as optional moves because they were absent in some letters. However, as can be deduced from the expressions within these letters (*e.g.* 'Please contact me at the above address or call the above number'), these moves were most likely to be intentionally deducted for website publication. According to Van Nus (1999), these moves ought to appear in standard business letters (see Table 4.1), and it may therefore be more realistic to regard them as obligatory elements in the genre of refund request letters.

Moreover, two of the moves, 'Proposed solution' and 'Polite closing' appeared to be realised through several different communicative approaches (which were described as *strategies* in Bhatia, 1993). Based on the 'strategy' analysis in Henry and Roseberry (2001), possible strategies used in each of these two moves can be suggested as below:

***Strategies used in 'proposed solution'*:**

1) Requesting the company (the reader) to send a full refund (amount stated)
2) Requesting the company to contact / reply to the customer (the writer) to arrange the date to return the product and to collect the refund (timeframe stated)
3) Requesting the company to contact the customer to confirm completion of the refund payment transaction
4) Stating the customer's preferred solution or expectation from the company (refund amount and/or timeframe stated)
5) Stating the customer's intention in the case of the company denying or not implementing the customer's proposed solution

***Strategies used in 'polite closing'*:**

1) Stating a positive fact
2) Stating availability
3) Welcoming a response from the company
4) Confirming that the company is expected to reply to the customer
5) Offering to provide further information

Table 4.2. The moves identified in the ten refund request letters

Note 1: The moves marked with '*' appeared in all ten letters and were considered as obligatory moves.

Note 2: The sequence of the moves varied significantly among the 10 letters (see Appendix 2) and thus, the move number (in column 1) does not reflect on the sequence of the moves.

Move number	Move	Typical information included in the move	Presence of move in 10 letters
1	Date	Address of sender and date	7
2	Inside address	Name and address of recipient	7
3	Opening salutation *	Mode of address	10
4	Reference	Subject of letter, name of product, customer account number, and/or order number	4
5	Polite opening		1
6	Explanation of purchase *	Name of product and store, price of product, purchase date, payment method *etc.*	10
7	Proof of purchase	Name of enclosed document	7
8	Description of product / service fault *	Name of product, Details of fault	10
9	Outline of previous attempt to rectify problem	Name of store, department and/or representative of company	6
10	Legal evaluation of situation	Name of regulation or legislation	5
11	Proposed solution *	Name of product, expected refund amount, timeframe, and/or name of third party	10
12	Clarification of contact details	Phone number	7
13	Polite closing		5
14	Closing salutation *		10
15	Signature	Name of sender and signature	8
16	Enclosure	Name of enclosed document	2

Based on the result of the move identification process, a refund request letter published by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008) (see Appendix 3) was chosen for the subsequent more detailed genre analysis. Since this letter comprised the highest number of moves among the ten letters, it was assumed to be the epitome of a comprehensive refund request letter.

4.3. Genre analysis of the ACCC refund request letter

The method of the genre analysis of the ACCC refund request letter was adapted from the analytical approaches employed by, Van Nus (1999), Dudley-Evans (1994), Chandler (1997), and Henry 2007. First of all, the ACCC refund request letter was analysed in terms of key generic features and its specific social context. The result of the analysis was summarised and shown below.

Genre analysis of the ACCC refund request letter

1. Style convention: Block style business letter
2. Generically related texts: Business letter, complaint letter
3. Formality: Formal
4. Publisher's profile: The ACCC is an independent statutory authority in Australia. The main organisational objective of the ACCC is to administer and regulate the Commonwealth fair trading and consumer protection laws (*e.g.* Trade Practices Act. 1974) within the Australian market place (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008).
5. Main purpose of the publication: The letter was published to assist individual consumers write a rational and practical refund request letter to businesses (*i.e.* service providers or retailers).
6. Main communicative purpose of the letter: To obtain, without major arbitration, a full refund for the service or products that the consumer (writer of the letter) purchased.
7. Expected writer of the letter: Consumers (general population).

8. Expected recipient of the letter:

   The person(s) in position(s) of authority (*e.g*. managers, administrators, owners) within the business(es) which provided, supplied or manufactured the service or product for the customer (writer of the letter).

9. Contextual assumptions (indicated in the ACCC website):

   Prior to writing the letter, the writer has read the relevant warranties, guarantees and refunds policy documents provided by the retailer/ manufacturer. The writer also understands the basic statutory rights of consumers, which are applied to all purchases (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008).

10. Specific context and subject matter (inferred from the letter):

    A customer (Bill Citizen) purchased a faulty product (drink fountain) from a retail store (Big Fizz Appliance Company, Market City store). The first request for obtaining a refund was refused by the sales assistant (Robert Rogers) in face to face negotiation. However, the customer believed that he was entitled to a full refund for the product and wrote a refund request letter to the manager of the store (Jill Smith).

11. Specific addressee of the letter:

    Ms. Jill Smith (manager of Big Fizz Appliance Company, Market City store)

12. Length of the letter: 295 words, 1 page

13. Enclosure: A copy of the receipt for the purchased product

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4.4. The communicative purpose of the moves and the function of specific expressions in each move within the ACCC refund request letter

Based on the above analysis of generic features of the ACCC letter, micro-linguistic features in the letter were then examined to infer the communicative purpose(es) of individual moves, and the modal meanings of certain sentences and clauses in each move (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006). The result of the examination is outlined in the flowing subsections. It should be noted that the information provided below reflects my interpretation of the moves based on this letter's attached writing guidelines and the previous studies of various business letter writing conventions.

4.4.1. Date

In this move, the writer states the date and address from where the letter was sent.

4.4.2. Inside address:

This move gives the name and address of the recipient. The structure of the letter (block style) may indicate that this letter is a formal business letter (Van Nus, 1999).

4.4.3. Opening salutation

In this move, the writer establishes the nature of the relationship (formal). In the case of the ACCC letter, the formal address 'Dear Ms. Jill Smith' may reflect the formal relationship (social distance) between the writer and reader (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Also, by directly referring to the addressee, the writer may be trying to establish an individual-to-individual relationship with the reader, rather than an individual-to-company relationship (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006).

4.4.4. Reference

This move encodes the letter and states the key words/subject matter. The bold and capitalised letters can signal that this is the reference/subject move (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006). In the letter the clause 'Leaking Storage Tank' may suggest that this letter may contain issues concerning the company's products and it may be inferable that this is a complaint letter.

4.4.5. Explanation of purchase

In this move, the writer explains the first action taken in the sequence of events (purchase of the product) and provides the purchase details. In the clause 'I purchased… from your Market City store', the use of first person singular pronominal reference (*e.g.* 'I', 'your') may be used to establish the specific social relationship between the participants (*i.e.* the writer is a customer of the reader) (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Furthermore, including only the relevant factual information related to the purchase can increase the credibility of the writer (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006).

4.4.6. Proof of purchase

This move is included to indicate enclosure of the receipt and authenticates the purchase. This statement in addition to the explanation of the purchase can further increase the creditability of the writer (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008).

4.4.7. Description of product/service fault

This move defines the product's defect/s that the writer had discovered. In the ACCC letter, the second action taken in the sequence of events (the attempt to use the product) is explained in this move. The claim 'When I returned home and unpacked the Big Fizz Drink Fountain I found….' details how and when the defect was discovered. This may be stated to avoid a possible accusation that the customer damaged the product, hence not being allegeable for a refund (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999).

4.4.8. Outline of previous attempt to rectify problem

This move articulates the main issues of the situation (the reason of the letter). In the ACCC letter, this move explains the third action taken in the sequence of events (tried to return the product) and describes attempts made to rectify the problem and the result of each attempt. Here, only factual information is provided and a neutral voice is used when explaining the main issue. For instance, the action taken by the sales assistant is described using one verb 'told', rather than more emotional expressions such as 'claimed', 'refused' or 'insisted'. This may prevent the reader from questioning the writer's subjectivity in their evaluation of the situation (Caldas-Coulthard, 1994).

In the statement 'I explained to the sales assistant that I didn't want …', the writer indicates that he has no desire to upgrade the product with an additional expense. While the message is clear, the writer expresses it in an indirect way by reporting himself. This may have an effect of lowering the tone of his confrontational claim (Caldas-Coulthard, 1994; Jaworski and Coupland, 1999).

4.4.9. Legal evaluation of situation

This move may be included to motivate the company to grant the refund request by referring to the writer's statutory rights as a consumer. The declarative sentence 'I believe that it is within my rights to request a refund for a faulty product' can prompt the reader to cogitate the writer's request, as he has adopted a legal stance to the resolution of the complaint. Here, the writer alludes to further legal action if the company's response is unsatisfactory. This imposition of the writer's (customer's) statutory rights may be the first strategy employed in the process of soliciting the reader's action (*i.e.* granting a refund) (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006).

4.4.10. Proposed solution

In this move, the writer states he/her preferred solution (*i.e*. receive the full purchase price of the product) and also indicates how the writer intends to return the product and collect a refund (offer to deliver the product directly to the company). In this move, the writer also suggests the next step in the negotiation process (*i.e*. the company contacts the customer). The writer firmly requests a response within a specific timeframe and directly solicits action from the reader. The clause 'a full refund of the purchase price' may be stated to affirm to the reader that any deduction to the refund money is not acceptable for the writer.

In the imperative sentence 'Please contact me within the next two weeks…', the writer states a specific deadline for which the reader needs to respond. Here, the writer may be restricting the reader's freedom of action, maximising the imposition and its urgency (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006). This direct command implies that if the customer is not contacted within this timeframe, further action against the addressee or the company (*e.g*. contacting someone in higher management, contacting a consumer affairs organisation) would be justified. This statement can have the effect of elevating the customer's status in the power relationship with the reader (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006). Furthermore, the consequences for not replying to the customer within the deadline are not explicitly indicated in the letter. Withholding the details of the potential negative consequence can

also be perceived as asserting the writer's control of the proceedings (Winter, 1994). Similarly, the clause '…arrange a convenient time for me…' may reinforce the writer's position as a respectable individual customer (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006).

When discussing the process of collecting a refund, the writer says 'my refund' rather than 'a' or 'the' refund. Adding a possessive 'my' to the word 'refund' can imply that the writer is claiming that the company is withholding money they do not have ownership of (Caldas-Coulthard, 1994). In this move and the previous 'Legal evaluation of situation' move, the writer frequently uses singular possessive and objective pronouns (*i.e.* 'my', 'me', 'your'). By doing so, the writer may have again tried to clarify the relationship between the writer and reader within this particular situation (*i.e.* the writer is a customer with statutory rights ('my right') and the reader is a representative of the product supplier ('your Market City store') with imposed obligations) (Bakhtin, 1999).

4.4.11. Clarification of contact details

This move is used to provide the reader with various means of contacting the writer. In the refund request letter, the writer provides the reader with an alternative contact number (*e.g.* a during-business-hours phone number) possibly to eliminate a claim by the company that attempts were made to contact the customer but that the customer could not be reached (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008). 'I can be contacted at home on…' can reinforce that the writer expects to hear from the company (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008). Contrarily, the sentence forms here can also be considered as formulaic expressions used for providing a writer's contact details in business letters (Henry, 2007).

4.4.12. Polite closing

In this move, the writer welcomes a discussion to clarify details if required. The statement 'I look forward to hearing from you if you wish to discuss this further.' could be regarded as a

business formality in this circumstance (Henry, 2007). Although it is unlikely that the customer actually looks forward to discussing details of the refund request further, this polite positive statement may be used to strengthen the perception of the writer as an experienced business person (Coulthard, 1994; Flowerdew and Wan, 2006). This may also soften the writer's tone of voice before closing the letter (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999).

4.4.13. Closing salutation

This move closes the letter. In this move and the following 'Signature' move, standard protocol of business letter writing is employed, maintaining the formality of this letter.

4.4.14. Signature

The function of this move is to state the sender's name and authenticates the letter.

4.4.15. Enclosure

This move shows that the purchase can be validated. In this move, the writer restates that a copy of the receipt is enclosed.

The use of a colon in this move may allow the verb 'enclosed' to appear at the beginning of this clause. This may emphasise the word 'enclosed' making it very clear that there is important additional information contained in the envelope (Caldas-Coulthard, 1994).

4.5. Further comments on the strategies used the ACCC refund request letter

The micro level analysis above identified how the writer employed positive and negative *politeness strategies* within the letter (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Positive politeness strategies are generally used to establish and maintain closeness, solidarity and intimacy between participants, while negative politeness strategies are adopted to minimise imposition or intrusion (or to 'save face' for the writer) by keeping social distance with the addressee (Brown and Levinson, 1987;

Coulthard, 1994; Flowerdew and Wan, 2006). The writer of the ACCC refund request letter appeared to employ predominantly negative politeness strategies in the letter (*e.g.* being indirect, using passive forms). The use of politeness strategy (both negative and positive) was minimal in move 10 ('Proposed solution') where the author solicited an action from the reader.

Moreover, while the pronoun 'I' appeared 13 times throughout the letter, the word 'you' was used only twice within a single move (*i.e.* move 12 - 'Polite closing'). This highly disproportional use of personal references may have resulted in restricting interaction between the two parties, reinforcing the social distance between them, and establishing a certain level of power asymmetry between the participants (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Overall, the elements of social distance and writer's credibility seemed to be valued more highly in this letter than closeness and courtesy.

Although the examination above had drawn upon other similar examinations of business letters in previous research (*e.g.* Brown and Levinson, 1987; Jaworski and Coupland, 1999; Flowerdew, 2005; Flowerdew and Wan, 2006; Henry, 2007), the actual communicative efficacy of specific language features in the ACCC letter was not extensively investigated in this particular study. Thus, when conducting the genre-based writing instruction, careful consideration was required to avoid dogmatic statements about the effectiveness or attitudinal effects of such features.

CHAPTER 5.

IMPLEMENTED GENRE-BASED WRITING INSTRUCTION (INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH AND LESSON PLAN)

The writing process model established by Cope and Kalantzis (1993) and Hyland (2008) (five phases of process genre approach as described in section 2.5) was used as the framework for developing the present refund request letter writing module. The entire module was completed over the course of five to six one-hour lessons, the pace depending on the students' level and progress. Details of the lesson plans implemented are shown in Appendices 4a, 4b, 4c and 4d. In the module, the students submitted two refund request letters, one after phase 1 (*i.e.* after 'Context exploration' but without any knowledge of the concept of genre) and the other during phase 4 (*i.e.* during 'Individual application' after the genre awareness lesson).

In order to effectively accommodate both the students' learning priorities (speaking and listening) and the syllabus goals of the general English course at my school, the derived lesson plans aimed to attain an optimal balance between genre-based text production (theoretical explanation and writing tasks) and interactive conversational activities (role-play and discussion) (Kim and Kim, 2005). Throughout the module, the concept of genre was illustrated intermittently but was not made the focal point of instruction.

The potential problems in the ESP genre-based pedagogy (discussed in section 2.3) were also acknowledged in planning the lessons. It was considered that the foremost measure implemented to compensate for the limitations of traditional ESP genre-based instruction was to incorporate a process-focused approach throughout which students were encouraged to study both the writer's and reader's mind in a meaningful context (Badger and White, 2000; Kim and Kim, 2005). As Badger and White (2000: 158) suggested, 'in the writing classroom, teachers need to replicate the situation as closely as possible and then provide sufficient support for learners to identify the purpose and other aspects of the social context'. At the start of the first lesson, for

instance, a real faulty coffee maker was brought into the classroom to immerse students in the hypothetical situation in the module activity. A student in the class was then asked to unpack the appliance and discover for themselves the problem with it (*i.e*. the wire sticking out underneath).

Several other communicative tasks with real-life simulations were included throughout the module to increase students' interest in the lesson and intrinsic motivation to write an effective refund request letter (Yasuda, 2011; McDonough, 2004; Cope and Kalantzis, 1993; Nunan, 1999). During a telephone role-play in the first lesson (Lesson 1 in Appendix 4a), the customer service operator (another student) was instructed to persist in not giving an exchange or a refund no matter what the customer said. This exercise was conducted so students who played the role of the customer could experience the genuine emotional frustration of not being able to negotiate their desired solution with the operator (or the company) (Nunan, 1999; McDonough, 2004) and to prompt student's desire to write a refund request letter. To understand the social position of both parties, the students switched the roles and repeated the telephone call. At the end of the role-play, a group discussion was facilitated to explore the students' emotional experiences of playing each role. This phone call role-play also served as the initial check to see if the students correctly comprehended the situation with minimum teacher-fronted instructions. This type of contextualisation process was considered particularly beneficial for novice EFL students, such as those in this research, who may not have been capable of grasping the social context of the target genre through verbal or written explanations alone (Kim and Kim, 2005). The section below briefly describes other specific strategies applied in the lessons.

5.1. Overcoming the problem of overemphasising the final product

Since the students' performances or final production were not intended to be graded as would be the case in most academic / professional teaching environments, the issue of overemphasising the final outcome may not have been a major concern in my teaching practice. However, since this type of writing module had never been undertaken in my school, precautions

were taken to avoid outcome-oriented instruction. In the first lessons, for example, the primary goal of the lessons was articulated as being the enhancement of the students' social pragmatic skills and socio-cultural knowledge in English-speaking countries, rather than composing grammatically or linguistically 'correct' text (see student handout in Appendix 5). Furthermore, when examining the ACCC letter (Lesson 3 in Appendix 4c), the grammatical features of the genre (*e.g.* the tense typically employed in each move) were explained in relation to their communicative functions rather than the accurate application of grammatical rules within discrete sentences (Lin, 2006; Cheng, 2011).

Also, the last lesson (Lesson 4 in Appendix 4d) was designed to highlight how the module had helped the students to increase their knowledge of pragmatic business conventions and a polite / formal approach to letter writing in English culture. In this lesson, the students repeated the initial telephone role-play between a customer and customer service operator so that they could notice how their speaking skills (not just writing skills) had improved through having written the refund request letters (Nunan, 1999).

5.2. Overcoming the problem of teacher-centred prescriptive teaching (passive learning)

The approach adopted to address this issue was similar to 'scaffolding language and learning strategies' illustrated in Kim and Kim (2005). The strategies employed in the module promoted active interactions between the teacher and students as well as between students themselves (Kim and Kim, 2005; Andrew and Romova, 2012). For instance, when the genre concept was introduced, instead of a teacher-fronted prescriptive presentation, the students were directed to conduct cue card matching and jigsaw activities with their peers, to raise awareness of the moves and their communicative purposes within the target genre (see Lesson 2 in Appendix 4b). A group discussion was then facilitated to further examine the purpose of the different parts (moves) and the psychological effects of the rhetorical phrases in the letter (*e.g.* 'What key

information was included to explain the purchase details?', 'Why did the writer mention his legal right in the letter?'). During this discussion, it was also explained that we were only inferring the writer's intention and choices that he had made to achieve his communicative purposes, and such choices may have changed depending on the context (the writer's business experiences, cultural background *etc.*) (Lin 2006).

Concluding the above lesson, the students were given homework in which they compared the example refund request letter and their first letter (written before being introduced to the concept of genre) in terms of the information contained and the organisational features of the text, and listed possible modifications that they could make to their own letters. This task was designed to encourage students to learn to independently observe and explore texts as a vital part of the writing process (Kim and Kim; 2005; Yasuda, 2011).

Furthermore, a peer feedback exercise in the last lesson provided meaningful responses for the students (Lesson 4 in Appendix 4d) (Lin, 2006; Yasuda, 2011; Yayli; 2011). Here, the final refund request letters that the students produced were 'recycled' in a subsequent activity in which the students exchanged their refund request letters anonymously and then each student acting as the manager of the company wrote a reply letter to the anonymous student. In this step, by reading another student's writing, the students could not only learn how their peers used key vocabulary and organised their text, but also realise the significance of considering the reader's perception when composing a letter (Coulthard, 1994; Kim and Kim, 2005; Lin, 2006).

5.3. Overcoming the problem of lack of originality / creativity

The issue of lack of originality and creativity in the students' writing was attended to by concentrating on fostering the students' ownership of their written work (Kim and Kim, 2005; Matsuo and Greg, 2006; Cheng, 2011; Yasuda, 2011). From the first draft of the letter, the students were encouraged to develop the context of the genre by creating an imaginary history of their

relationship with the company (*e.g.* previous purchase history) and their own reasons for purchasing the coffee maker (see Lesson 1 in Appendix 4a).

Similarly, during the text composition process (Lesson 3 in Appendix 4c), the efficacy of the optional move 'Polite opening' (positive polite strategy) was first examined with the students. In this exercise, the students were asked to draw upon their own business experiences and knowledge of social protocol (in both L1 and L2), and to make their own pragmatic decision whether or not to include the 'Polite opening' move in their letter.

The timing and way of presenting to the students the model (example) letter (ACCC letter – Appendix 3a) may also be salient factors affecting the originality and creativity in the students' letters (Macbeth, 2009; Yasuda, 2011). In the current program, the students were instructed to read individually the ACCC refund request letter imagining that they were the actual recipient (*i.e.* the manager of the company who had received this letter from a customer) (Lesson 2 in Appendix 4b). Subsequently, a group discussion was facilitated to explore the students' impression of the example letter having read it from the position of the recipient. These processes helped the students to reflect what it would be like to receive a refund request letter. By offering the model letter to the students in this manner (before explicit explanations of the moves and their communicative purposes), the students could have an opportunity to critically examine for themselves the convention of the target genre (Yasuda, 2011). Prior to comparing the example letter with a student's own letter (their first draft), they were told that the model letter was to be used as guidance to revise their own letter, not as a 'perfect' model to be rigidly copied for their final letter.

Furthermore, when a summary of typical expressions found in the initial corpus-based genre analysis was presented to the students (see Appendix 11 for the handout), they were told that this information was presented to illustrate that there were a number of ways to realise the communicative purposes of a move or letter as a whole (Henry, 2007). For example, three different

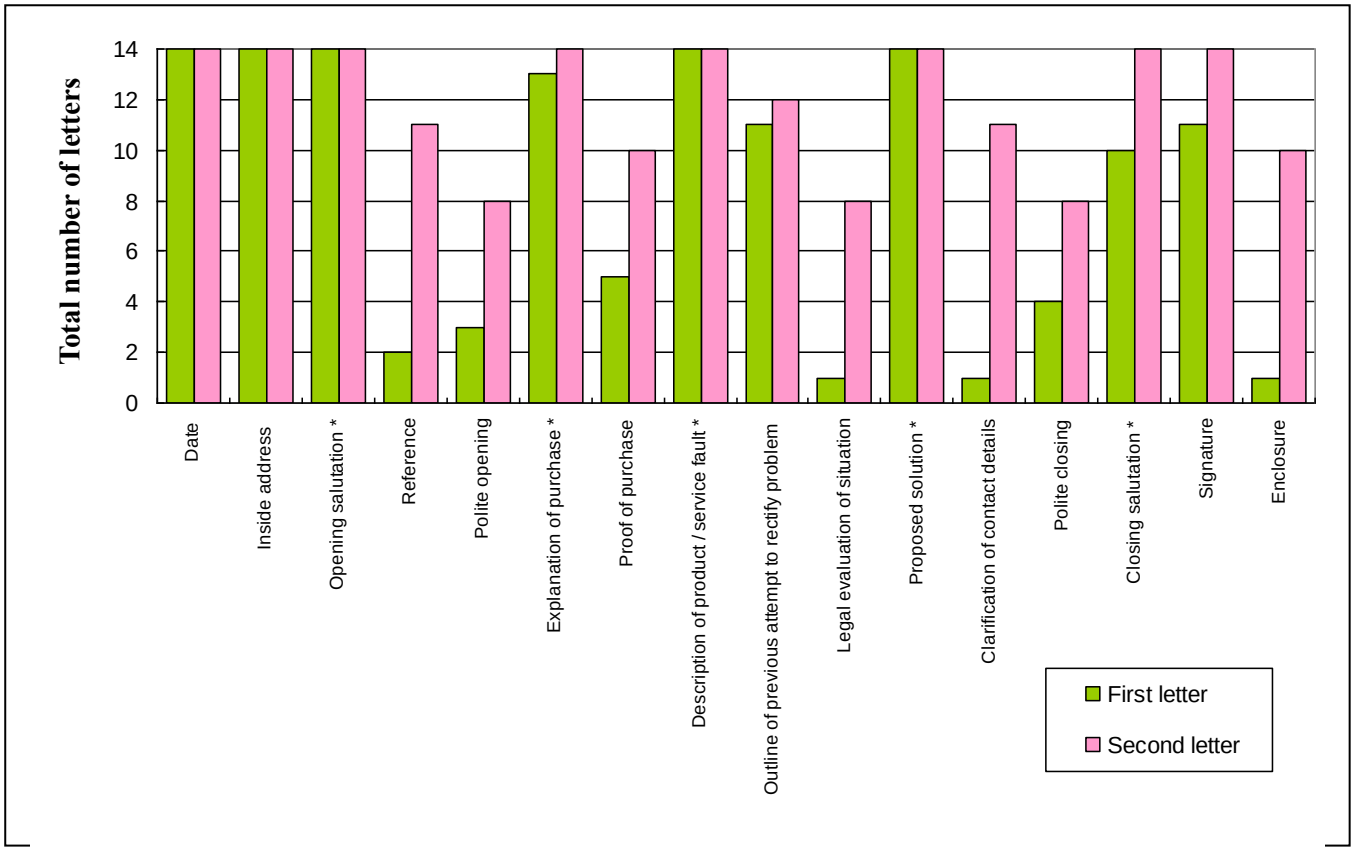
verbs (*i.e.* returned contacted, explained) were used in the move outlining the previous attempt to rectify the problem. In the processes described above, it was considered crucial to clarify for the students that, while they needed to follow certain conventions in business letter writing, they also had production choices to make as the producer of a letter when constructing their own letter (Osman; 2004; Lin, 2006; Matsuo and Greg, 2006; Johns, 2011).

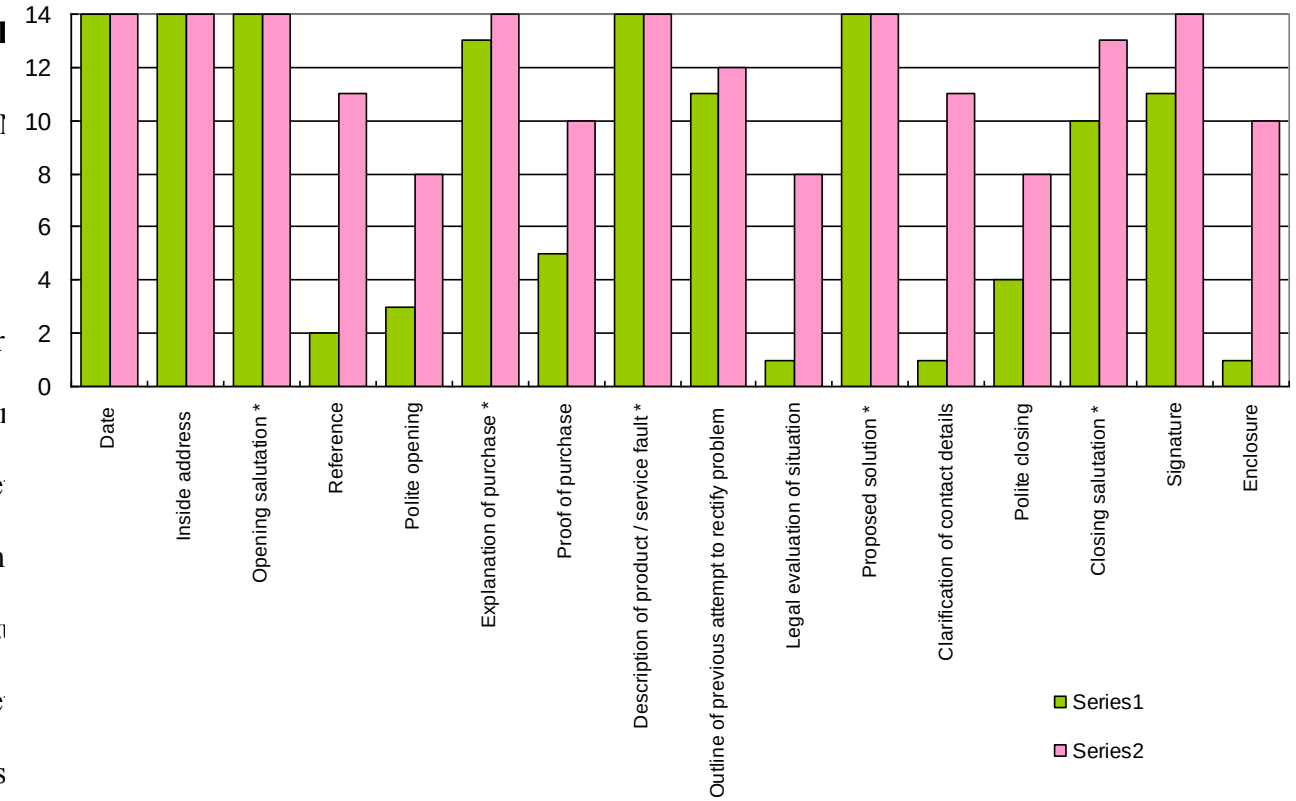
CHAPTER 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Students' refund request letters

The two refund request letters that the students produced (before and after the genre awareness lesson) were contrasted to assess the effects of the present genre-based writing course on the students' writing. It was apparent that in the first draft, many students had randomly copied some of the descriptive sentences from their context summary handout (distributed in Lesson 1 - see Appendix 5). In the second letter, on the other hand, the students seemed to manipulate a number of the lexical phrases from the example letter and made their letter more cohesive. Moreover, most students produced friendly, less formal letters for their first draft, using a number of conversational expressions (*e.g.* 'Nice to meet you', 'Thank you for listening to me'), and the degree of formality increased in their second letter with applications of various formulaic phrases (*e.g.* 'I look forward to hearing from you') (see Appendix 13 for the students' example letters). Some students also made the second letter more formal by omitting the contraction of words from their letters (*e.g.* changing 'I don't' to 'I do not') (Henry, 2007).

Figure 6.1 illustrates the total numbers of specific moves included in the first and second letters (written by the 14 students). The total number of each move was either consistent or had increased in the second letter. All of the five obligatory moves were present in the 14 second letters. It was therefore clearly demonstrated that the implemented lessons increased the quantity of the moves included in the students' letters. Yet, the current study did not extensively examine the 'quality' of these moves. In order to provide a more definite conclusion on the effect of the present genre-based instruction on the students' writing, the extent to which the discourse produced is considered 'acceptable' in the professional / business community will need to be determined.





Nevertheless, it was observed that my effort to improve the issues in the ESP genre-based approach (discussed above) produced a positive outcome in some aspects of the students writing.

The students seemed to have taken ownership in their writing and to have engaged in the thinking process (for both contextual and psychological elements of the genre) during the composition of their letters, as evidenced by the fact that most of the students' final letters contained a great deal of their original ideas (see Appendix 13). Indeed, no students, even if they had relatively low English proficiency level, produced a letter almost identical (direct copy) to the example letter provided.

Interestingly, many students employed various types of rhetoric based on positive politeness strategies, even in their first letters, to motivate the reader to grant a refund (*e.g.* 'If you were a customer in the same case, you also would be disappointed like me', 'I believe it isn't your intention to sell the inferior product'). Perhaps, such a polite attitude towards the reader was influenced by the protocol in Japanese culture, especially in a business environment, in which people usually try to avoid direct confrontation with strangers (McCarthy, 1991: 152). It is beyond the scope of this particular study to examine the effectiveness and/or appropriateness of the positive polite strategy found in the students' letters. It can nonetheless be implied that some of the students considered, as early as during the context exploration phase of the module, the value of interpersonal communication skills in business letter writing.

6.2. Students' evaluation of the lessons

At the end of the genre-based writing course, the participating students filled out a feedback survey (see Appendix 12 for the actual survey questions). In this survey, the students' view of how they improved different L2 skills (*i.e.* writing, reading, listening, speaking, and cultural knowledge) was evaluated. Each student also self-assessed their letter and their peer's letter. The survey was written in English but most students completed the survey in Japanese.

The summary of the survey result is shown in Table 6.1. Although the current approach was implemented in an unconventional teaching environment for ESP genre-based instruction, *i.e.* a conversation-oriented general English classroom, the majority of students enjoyed the writing

lessons (86% of the students) and reported an improvement in their attitude towards writing in English (71% of the students). They also stated their enthusiasm to study other types of texts in future lessons (79% of the students). Some students had realised the necessity of further writing practice to aid their L2 learning process, while others simply enjoyed expressing their creativity in English writing (see Table 6.1 and students' comments p.34).

Table 6.1. The students' evaluation of their own letters and their peers' letters (second letter) (n=14, number in bracket is the actual number of students)

Questions		Yes	No	I don't know
Regarding the letter you wrote to Ms. Rebecca Crab (second letter):				
1	Was your final letter an effective refund request letter?	71% (10)	14% (2)	14% (2)
2	Did you consider Ms. Rebecca Crab's perception of you when you wrote your letter?	86% (12)	7% (1)	7% (1)
3	Did your letter have enough key information that is commonly included in a refund request letter?	79% (11)	14% (2)	7% (1)
Regarding the letter you received from the other student:				
1	Did you decide to give a refund to the writer?	86% (12)	14% (2)	0% (0)
2	Did you feel positive towards the writer after reading his/her letter?	64% (9)	21% (3)	14% (2)
3	Did the writer have enough key information that is commonly included in a refund request letter?	93% (13)	7% (1)	0% (0)
Overall:				
1	Do you think that you will need the skill to read or write a refund request letter in English in the future (excluding an examination situation)?	64% (9)	21% (3)	14% (2)
2	If you wrote a letter in Japan to request a refund from the director of a company, do you think the information and the format would be similar to the letter you wrote for the class?	71% (10)	0% (0)	29% (4)
3	Do you feel more confident to write letters in English after the lessons?	71% (10)	14% (2)	14% (2)
4	Would you like to learn more about how to write other texts by doing similar classroom activities?	79% (11)	14% (2)	7% (1)
5	Did you enjoy writing the refund request letter and reply letter?	86% (12)	0% (0)	14% (2)

The students' comments obtained from the survey are listed below. Some comments were directly copied from the students' survey and others were either edited grammatically or translated

from Japanese. The students generally appreciated the lessons as they had had the opportunity to use English in a realistic writing situation and in their comments confirmed the benefits of participating in a genre-related class for improving their L2 skills and knowledge. As depicted from the students' comments like 'I felt it was important to include positive reasons for the manager to refund my money' and 'It was very refreshing to learn about cultural and attitudinal differences through writing a letter', the students seemed to be positively motivated to produce an effective letter based on their rhetorical consideration of the function of writing and the target reader's psychology. At the same time, the students may have been able to integrate critical thinking into the process of composing their final letter. The point raised here highlights that even in a non-academic EFL teaching / learning environment, it is possible to increase learners' awareness of 'the specific audience for and purpose of a particular text, and how best to communicate rhetorically in that instance' (Beaufort, 2004: 140). It is also deducible that the present instructional approach increased the level of students' confidence to handle unfamiliar discourse through analysing the specialist culture and organisational / linguistic features that exist within the genre exemplar.

Comments regarding the letter writing lessons:

- It was very easy to understand what information to include in each part of the letter.
- I think that I was able to write a precise letter in the end based on the example letter.
- I don't often write long sentences, so it was very educational.
- I feel that I can now write a refund request letter in English if I have a shopping problem overseas.
- I learnt a lot about English writing culture.
- It was very refreshing to learn about cultural and attitudinal differences through writing a letter.
- 'I enjoyed the telephone role-play very much. It was very useful too' (student's own words).

Comments regarding the letter you wrote:

- I felt it was important to include positive reasons for the manager to refund my money.
- I did not know what to write in the first letter, but I learnt what to write and could include important information in the second letter.

Comments regarding the letter you received from the other student:

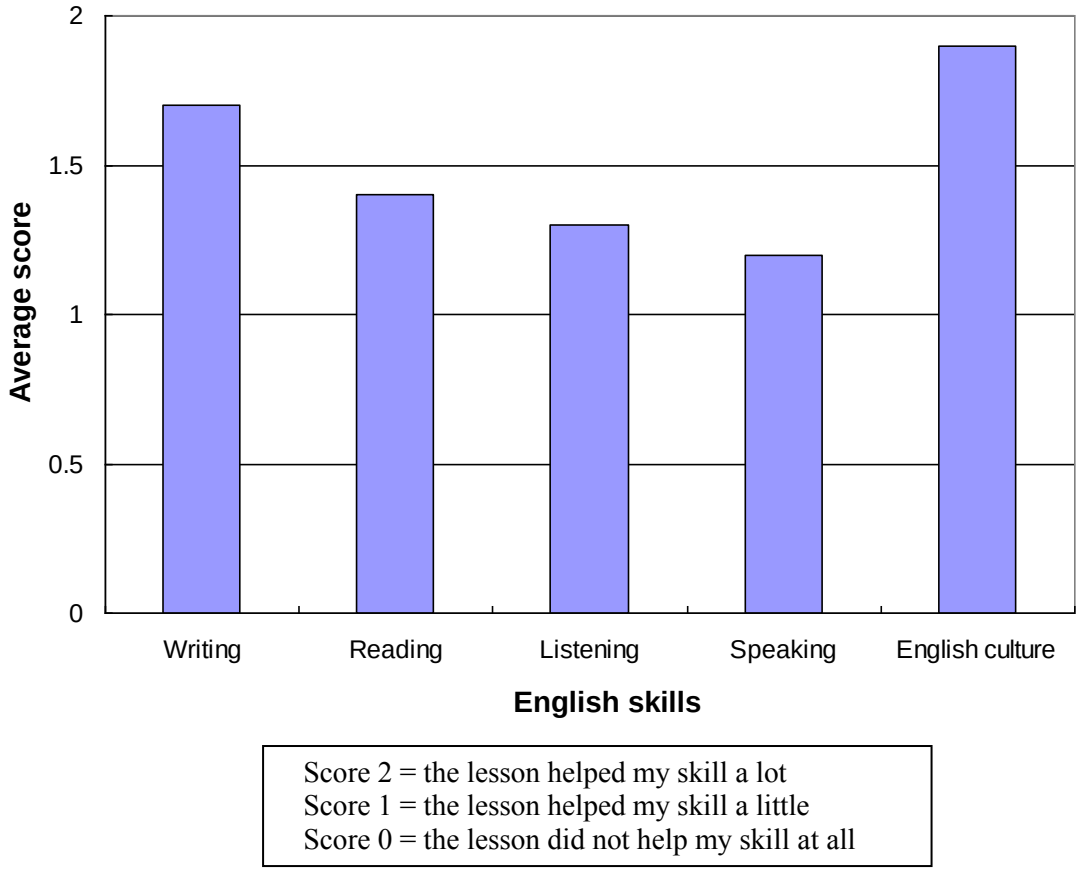
- 'I understood the content of the other person's letter' (student's own words).
- (as the manager of the company, I felt I should give a refund because) the customer bought many products from the store in the past.

- (as the manager of the company, I felt I should give a refund because) the customer bought the coffee maker as a gift for her mother.
- I thought the customer's (another student's) letter was a little too casual.

The effect of the instructions on individual student's five language skills (*i.e.* writing, reading, speaking, listening, and cultural knowledge) was perceived differently among participants (see Figure 6.2). Some students thought the program helped them improve all five skills but others thought it helped mostly with their writing skills. It is worth noticing that a number of students indicated that the present writing course had the most impact on their socio-cultural skills / knowledge. This result seemed to have reflected the general goals of a genre-based approach which focuses on the L2 writer's understanding of the particular social context within which the reader's expectations and the textual conventions of a given genre have been developed (Winter, 1994; Hyon, 1996; Chandler, 1997).

In general, most students reported that the present genre-related teaching / learning assisted them to improve multiple skills in English communication and realised that such language skills were interconnected, hence affecting their overall English proficiency level. This realisation was crucial in my teaching context since the course syllabus focuses on various English communication skills (rather than only writing skills) (Yasuda, 2011).

Figure 6.2. The result of the student survey on the genre-based writing lessons: The effect of genre-based writing lessons on different skills (students' evaluation) (see Appendix 12 for the actual survey questions)



6.3. Limitations of the study and future direction

The current empirical research outlined sequenced instructional steps in which the process genre approach was adapted within a conversation-oriented classroom attempting to cater for the varying needs of non-academic adult language learners. However, the present study should be regarded as a pilot investigation on the potential implementation of a genre-based approach for the following reasons. Firstly, the small sample size may have been one of the main limitations inherent in the current research. Only 14 students participated in the study. In the examination of the participants' actual genre-specific writing samples, quantitative analyses of the students' language use at a more micro-level (*e.g.* lexical diversity and sophistication) were unfeasible with such limited data. Here, the descriptive analysis of the macro-level textual features (*e.g.* moves included in the students' letters) was only practical for quantitatively demonstrating improvements in the

students' writing. Besides, there were no control / comparison groups to examine the effectiveness of the present instructional approach. Therefore, although the students' writing showed noticeable improvements between the first draft and the final letter, neither can we confidently conclude that the improvement was due to the implemented program nor make any valid inference about the general applicability of the methodology in similar EFL situations. An increase in the sample size and a comparison of achievement between two different treatment groups may broaden the scope of the study and in such a study we may be able to obtain more generalizable evidence of the pedagogical effects.

Another point to question was that, in this project, the students were exposed to only one type of genre (refund request letter). Even though the study provided evidence on how raising the students' rhetorical awareness of this specific genre assisted them to deal with an unfamiliar genre and increased the quality of their written discourse within a relatively short course, it is still uncertain how effectively these students can adapt their socio-cognitive genre knowledge gained in this project to newly encountered genres. The past studies (*e.g.* Yasuda, 2011; Byrnes, 2009; Johns, 2008; Hyon, 2001) indicated that exposing students to a variety of genres can further 'sensitise students to the linguistic signals that shape each genre' (Yasuda, 2011: 114) and 'has the potential to strengthen learners' awareness of the discourse-level features that relate to the communicative purpose of each genre; this increased awareness assists students in writing competently in various situations beyond the classroom' (Yasuda, 2011: 114). A long-term study in which the students longitudinally experience analysis and production of multiple genres may be necessary to examine how genre awareness becomes embedded in the students' L2 writing practice and contributes to long-term progress in their L2 development. Here, it may also be intriguing to explore how the participants' attitudes and perceptions towards genre-based teaching / learning evolve over time.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

In the present study, the genre-based approach was effectively applied and integrated into the course syllabus of my non-academic EFL classrooms with false beginner to pre-intermediate learners. However, much consideration was required in the construction of the lesson plans to satisfy these learners' unique needs, match their abilities and overcome the potential drawbacks associated with traditional genre-based pedagogy. Here, the process-focused approach (process genre approach) was incorporated into ESP genre-based writing instruction and the students experienced a step-by-step writing process in which they developed their writing skills by gaining awareness of the social and cultural functions of their writing (Kim and Kim, 2005; Litinin, 2012).

The result of the current genre-based writing instruction affirmed many of the previous claims of the merits of genre-based approaches and the process genre approach (*e.g.* McCarthy, 1991; Dudley-Evans, 1994; Jaworski and Coupland, 1999; Flowerdew, 2005; Henry, 2007; Bhatia, 2008; Cheng; 2011; Johns, 2011; Yayli, 2011; Yoshida, 2011; Andrew and Romova, 2012; Litinin, 2012). While a legitimate concern remained in the accuracy of form in the students' final refund request letters, all of the students had produced more coherent and comprehensive letters through exploiting the genre knowledge they gained in the module. The improvement in understanding of business letter protocol and the ability to independently produce a similar type of business letter was clearly reflected in the reply letter that each student wrote to an anonymous student's refund request letter (see Appendix 14 for examples of students' reply letters). Without any further instructions, all students wrote reasonably formal letters using a block style business letter format with the key moves included (*i.e.* date, inside address, opening and closing salutation, and signature). Most of the students also adopted a range of formulaic expressions and positive politeness strategies in their letters.

Over the course of five to six genre-based lessons, the students understood that there was a

conventional system to be followed when writing business letters, and at the same time, there were also choices to be made at each stage of writing, in terms of language, organisational structure and rhetorical strategy, all of which were also affected by the social context. Most importantly, the current genre-based approach appeared to have provided the students with an optimum opportunity to see 'language as a meaning-making system' (Martin, 2009: 11) by emphasising the interactive relationship between purpose, audience and linguistic choices in performing specific social actions. The implemented lesson plans in this study therefore may offer some valuable suggestions for designing and sequencing in-class activities for non-academic EFL writing classrooms.

In an effective genre-based methodology, the role of the teacher can be one of the pivotal factors. As Yayli (2011: 128) remarked in his conclusion, 'If a teacher is aware of how a text is structured and organised in relation to its purpose and reader and could select and/or create appropriate contexts for learning, then s/he will be in a better position to intervene successfully in the writing of his or her students.' It is thus critical for teachers not only to acquire generic competence or at least some genre knowledge in the specialist culture, but also to be able to judge what the students can do independently and what they need assistance with, and ultimately, to direct the students towards individual autonomy (Cheng, 2006; Lin, 2006; Yayli, 2011).

For further enhancing my students' generic awareness, future genre-based literacy lessons exploring the textual and contextual differences of various genres may be necessary (Yayli, 2011). The findings from the current study will have profound implications for such lessons, and also the students should have acquired a sound foundation from which they can deepen their genre knowledge.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix 1. Information on the ten refund request letters retrieved from the World Wide Web

Letter no.	Date on the letter	Web site type	Country of origin	Length (word count)	Type of retailer*[1]	Letter type*[2]	Product/service (Unsatisfactory)	Web address (source of the letter)
1	no date	Governmental consumer advice	Australia	295	S	P / E	Appliance	http://www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/815997
2	Jan 2008	Personal advice	USA	261	S	P	Food	http://casualkitchen.blogspot.com/2008/01/how-to-write-effective-complaint-letter.html
3	Aug 2002	Professional writing directory	USA	201	S	E	Product (various)	http://www.lousywriter.com/how_to_write_better_complaint_letter.php
4	no date	Governmental consumer advice	UK	126	I	P / E	Product (various)	http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/ca20_tcm44-8192.pdf
5	no date	Personal advice	USA	178	S	P	Digital appliance	http://cameras.about.com/od/warrantyinformation/a/sample_warranty_complaint_letter.htm
6	1997	Complaint advice site	USA	440	I	E	Telecommunication service	http://www.savvy-discounts.com/complaint_resolution/complaint_resolution_6_0.htm
7	Nov 2007	Educational / business writing	USA	289	I	P	Appliance	http://grammar.about.com/od/yourwriting/a/letcomplaint.htm
8	no date	Educational / business writing	USA	82	S	E	Appliance	http://www.dumblittleman.com/2009/03/how-to-write-complaint-messages-that.html
9	Jul 2008	Educational / business writing	USA	166	I	P	Tuition	http://www.usingenglish.com/forum/letter-writing/73266-how-write-refund-letter.html
10	no date	Governmental consumer advice	Australia	214	S	P	Appliance	http://www.caba.nt.gov.au/documents/ca010201_refund_ltr.pdf

*[1] 'S' = Retail shop / 'I' = Internet (other)

*[2] 'P' = Post / 'E" = e-mail

Appendix 2. The result of the examination of the 10 letters (the common phrases/expressions used in each move and the sequence of moves)

Note: The moves marked with '*' appeared in all ten letters and were considered as obligatory moves.

Move #	Moves identified	Grammatical tense used	Phrases and expressions used in the move	Sequence of moves										Total Present
				Letter 1	Letter 2	Letter 3	Letter 4	Letter 5	Letter 6	Letter 7	Letter 8	Letter 9	Letter 10	
1	Date	-	-	1	1	n/a	1	2	n/a	1	n/a	1	1	7
2	Inside address	-	-	2	2	n/a	2	1	n/a	2	n/a	2	2	7
3	Opening salutation *	-	Dear (title) (name),	3	3	2	3	3	1	3	1	3	3	10
4	Reference	-	(customer / order / product number) (product - fault)	4	n/a	1	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	4
5	Polite opening	Present perfect	I have been a happy shopper at the (name of the store) for several years.	n/a	4	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1
6	Explanation of purchase *	Past	On (date), I (*purchased, bought*) a (product) at (name of the store). On (date), I ordered a (product) from your website. I paid by (method of payment). Recently, I purchased a (product) at / in your (name of the store). I wanted to let you know that I purchased a (product) on (date) that was (description of fault).	5	5	3	5	4	4	4	2	5	5	10
7	Proof of purchase	present / present perfect	Please see enclosed invoice. My receipt is enclosed. I have included copies of all pertinent documents regarding my purchase. I have included the purchase information. I have enclosed a copy of my (*receipt, guarantee, warranty*) for your information.	6	6	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	7	6	7	6	7
8	Description of product / service fault *	present / past / present perfect	The problems with the (product) include... The problem was with the… I cannot use the (product). It was missing (part) and could not be assembled. I was distressed to find that (fault). I am disappointed because... When I returned home and unpacked the (product), I found that the (fault) and the appliance did not work properly. Unfortunately, your (product) was inadequate because (fault).	7	7	4	6	5	6, 8	5	3	6, 8	7	10
9	Outline of previous attempt to rectify problem	Past	I returned the (product) to your (name of the store). I contacted your customer service department... Your customer service representative assured me that… I returned to the (name of the store) and the sales assistant (name) told me that... I explained to the sales assistant that...	8	n/a	5	n/a	6	7	n/a	4	n/a	8	6

Appendix 2 continued.

Move #	Moves identified	Grammatical tense used	Phrases and expressions used in the move	Sequence of moves										Total
				Letter 1	Letter 2	Letter 3	Letter 4	Letter 5	Letter 6	Letter 7	Letter 8	Letter 9	Letter 10	
10	Legal evaluation of situation	Present	The Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000 state that I am entitled to a cooling-off period of seven working days in which to return goods. I believe that it is within my rights to request a refund for a faulty product. I will wait until (date) before seeking assistance in resolving this dispute from a third party. If I do not hear from you in the next 10 days I will send (information) to (regulatory agency).	9	n/a	n/a	7	9	9, 12	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	5
11	Proposed solution *	present continuous / present /future	I would like a full refund of... I would like to return the appliance to (name of the store) for a full refund of the purchase price. I am writing to you to request that my money be refunded in full. I am returning the (product), and expect a full refund of (amount). Please send me a check for (amount). Please reply in the next (number) days. Please contact me within the next (number) weeks to arrange a convenient time for me to return the (product) and collect my refund. Please will you arrange to refund my money as soon as possible.	10	9	6	8	8	2, 5, 10	6, 8	5	4, 11	10	10
12	Clarification of contact details	Present	Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (phone number). Please contact me using the information above. I can be reached at (contact information). I can be contacted at home on the phone number above or at (phone number) during business hours.	11	n/a	7	n/a	10	11	n/a	7	9	11	7
13	Polite closing	present continuous / present	Again, I remain a happy customer of (name of the store) and of (name of products). I look forward to hearing from you if you wish to discuss this further. I am looking forward to your reply in this matter.	12	8	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	n/a	8	10	n/a	5
14	Closing salutation *	-	Sincerely, Yours truly, Yours,	13	11	8	9	11	13	9	9	12	12	10
15	Signature	-		14	12	9	n/a	12	14	10	n/a	13	13	8
16	Enclosure	-	Enclosed:	15	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2

Appendix 3a. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) refund request letter (Australian Commonwealth, 2008 - sourced in April 2012)

Note: This letter was provided to the students as an example letter.

Bill Citizen
1 My Street
My town State 0123
(Ph 01 2345 6789 and email myname@mailhome.com.au)

Today's date

Ms Jill Smith (Manager)
Big Fizz Appliance Company
Commerce Street
Market City 9876

Dear Ms Smith

BIG FIZZ SOFT DRINK FOUNTAIN—Leaking Storage Tank

On 16 December 2007 I purchased a Big Fizz Soft Drink Fountain for $79.95 from your Market City store. I have enclosed a copy of my receipt for your information.

When I returned home and unpacked the Big Fizz Soft Drink Fountain I found that the main storage tank leaked and the appliance did not work properly. I returned to the Market City store and the sales assistant (Robert Rogers) told me that you no longer stocked the Big Fizz Soft Drink Fountain, but for an additional $29.90 I could upgrade to the Mega Fizz Refreshment Dispenser.

I explained to the sales assistant that I didn't want the extra expense of upgrading to the Mega Fizz Refreshment Dispenser and would prefer to get a refund for the faulty unit I had purchased. He told me that it was not company policy to give refunds.

I believe that it is within my rights to request a refund for a faulty product and I would like to return the appliance to your Market City store for a full refund of the purchase price. Please contact me within the next two weeks to arrange a convenient time for me to return the appliance and collect my refund.

I can be contacted at home on the phone number above or at (01) 9876 5432 during business hours. I look forward to hearing from you if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

W. Citizen

Enclosed: Copy of the receipt for the Big Fizz Soft Drink Fountain

Appendix 3b. Letter writing guideline and template attached to the ACCC refund request letter (Australian Commonwealth, 2008 - sourced in April 2012)

Note: This document was not provided to the students. The information was used to identify the different moves and to conduct the detailed genre analysis of the letter.

Your name
Your street
Your suburb state postcode
(Phone number and email if required)

Today's date

Contact person (Manager)
Business concerned
Business address

Dear Mr/Ms Manager

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROBLEM—REASON FOR WRITING

First, write a detailed description of the problem, noting when and where you bought the product and how much it cost you. List all important information but try not to get bogged down in any irrelevant or trivial details. Then explain why you are unhappy with what you have bought—if it's broken or unfit for its purpose or some other reason.

Next, outline the steps you have taken to get the problem fixed, who you spoke to and the results, if any, of your efforts.

Then describe what you would like the business to do about the problem—a refund, a replacement or a similar product to the same value from a different manufacturer. Offer to deliver the item to the supplier's address and follow with something like 'I look forward to your prompt response' or similar request indicating that you expect to hear from them and by what date.

Be sure to enclose copies of any relevant documentation such as receipts or warranty certificates.

Finish your letter with a full list of possible contact addresses or phone numbers where you can be contacted, particularly during business hours, and reinforce that you expect to hear from the business.

Yours sincerely

Your name

Enclose

Appendix 4a. Refund request letter course module: Lesson 1 - Context exploration (1 hour)

Steps (approx. time)	Activity	Comments on activity	Teaching material prepared
1 (10 mins)	Brainstorming activity on internet shopping	To raise student's interest in the overall topic of online shopping, the students brainstormed the kinds of goods and services they had bought or could buy online (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993).	
2 (10 mins)	Explanation of the mock shopping scenario	A student was asked to unpack a real faulty coffee maker and discover for themselves the problem with it (*i.e.* the wire sticking out underneath).	Faulty coffee maker in a box
3 (30 mins)	Telephone call role-play between a customer and a customer service operator (to request for a refund for the faulty product) (pair work)	In this activity, one student became a customer service operator and another became the customer. For each role, a role description card (Appendix 6) was given. Since there were no model dialogues used in this role play, the students had to draw upon their knowledge of the pragmatics adhered to in such a situation. At the end of the role-play, a group discussion was facilitated to explore the students' emotional experiences of playing each role.	Role cards for the customer service operator and the customer (Appendix 6) Toy telephones
4 (10 mins)	Summary of the mock shopping scenario Explanation of the homework task (teacher fronted)	To enable students to review the mock shopping scenario at home, students were given written information which summarised the context and the result of their phone call (Appendix 5). All students received homework (Appendix 7) in which they were assigned to analyse the basic generic background by answering a set of questions, and to then write a refund request letter. A letter writing homework sheet was provided to each student. This contained a template of a block style business letter with the name and address of the director of the mock company included. To maximise originality and creativity, and in turn, to build ownership of the written work, the students were encouraged to construct their own context as a customer (*e.g.* the reason for the purchase, the history of their relationship with the company)	Handout explaining the context (Appendix 5) Letter writing homework sheet (Appendix 7)
Homework*	Writing a refund request letter (first letter) based on the mock shopping scenario	Students wrote down answers to a set of generic questions and produced their first refund letter at home without explicit awareness of the genre/move concept.	

* The students had 1-2 weeks to complete their homework assignment.

Appendix 4b. Refund request letter course module: Lesson 2 - Text exploration based on model texts (1 hour)

Steps (approx. time)	Activity	Comments on activity	Teaching material Prepared
1 (15 mins)	Context exploration (review)	The students were directed to compare and discuss the answers to the questions on the homework sheet (from Lesson 1).	
2 (15 mins)	Introduction of the model letter (reading and group discussion)	The students were directed to read individually an example of a refund request letter (version of the ACCC letter – Appendix 3a). The students were told to imagine that they were the manager of the company and had received this letter from a customer. New vocabulary and the content of the letter were clarified. Before comparing the example letter with the students' letter (homework sheet), a group discussion was facilitated to explore the students' impression of the example letter having read it from the position of the recipient.	Model refund request letter (see ACCC letter in Appendix 3a)
3 (15 mins)	Text assembling exercise (group work)	After the discussion in step 2, the model letter was taken away from the students. To recall the macro structure of the example text (organisation of the different parts), the students as a group reassembled a 'jigsaw' text of the letter. This activity was designed to increase the students' awareness of the different parts (moves) and their sequencing in the example refund request letter (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993; Lin 2006).	Jigsaw puzzle of the model text
4 (15 mins)	Explicit explanation of the moves and their communicative purpose	The students were then given explicit verbal and written guidance to define each move in terms of its communicative purpose. Cue cards with possible communicative purposes were provided, so that the students could, working together, match them with each move. The students commented on the possible purpose of each move and took down notes on the example letter sheet. A student discussion (teacher facilitated) was conducted to further examine the purpose of the different parts (moves) in the letter (*e.g.* 'What key information was included in the purchase details?', 'Why did the writer mention about his legal right in the letter?'). To avoid prescriptive instructions, I explained that the interpretation of the letter was only an inference of the writer's intention or choices to achieve his communicative purposes in the letter. Also, it was explained that this example letter was to be used as guidance for the students to revise their own letters, not as a 'perfect' model letter to be rigidly copied (Lin, 2006). At the end of the activity, the students were given a handout that outlined the sequence of moves and the explanation of the meaning of each move (Appendix 8). When the example letters were studied in class, this handout was used as a reference to help clarify the moves contained in the letters.	Cue cards of communicative purposes of different moves Handout that outlined the sequence of moves and the explanation of each move (Appendix 8)
Homework*	Comparison of the two letters	As homework, the students were asked to compare the example letter and their own letters in terms of the information contained and the organisational features of the different parts (moves), and to think of possible modifications that they could make to their own letters (Appendix 9). This task was designed to encourage students to learn to observe texts on their own. Rewriting of their original letter was not required for this homework.	Letter comparison homework sheet (Appendix 9)

* The students had 1-2 weeks to complete their homework assignment.

Appendix 4c. Refund request letter course module: Lesson 3 – Joint construction of a text (1 hour)

Steps (approx. time)	Activity	Comments on activity	Teaching material Prepared
1 (15 mins)	Text exploration (review)	The answers to the questions on the homework sheet (from Lesson 2) were compared in class (teacher facilitated activity).	
2 (15 mins)	Introduction of a new move (*i.e.* Polite opening)	Based on the discussion above, a move which was not included in the example letter (Polite opening) was introduced using another example of a refund request letter (Appendix 10). To encourage students to reflect on their own business experiences and knowledge of social protocol, the student discussion was facilitated to examine the effectiveness of 'Polite opening'. Through this structured discussion, the students made their own decision whether or not to include the 'Polite opening' move.	Another example of a refund request letter with the 'Polite opening' move (Appendix 10)
3 (15 mins)	Introduction of key phrases used in refund request letters	A summary of typical expressions found in the initial corpus-based genre analysis was presented to the students (Appendix 11). The students highlighted the expressions found in the example letter. The students were not expected to understand the subtle meanings/differences of all of the expressions listed. Rather, this information was presented to illustrate that there were a number of ways to realise the communicative purposes of a move or letter as a whole (Henry, 2007). For example, three different verbs (*i.e.* returned contacted, explained) were used in the move outlining the previous attempt to rectify the problem. It was important to explain here that, although the students needed to follow certain conventions in business letter writing, they also had choices to make as the producer of a letter when constructing their own letter (Lin, 2006). A grammatical point highlighted in this step was the tense typically employed in each move. For example, in 'Explanation of purchase' and 'Outline of previous attempt to rectify problem', the past tense was commonly used whereas in 'Legal evaluation of situation', it was common to use present tense (Flowerdew, 2005).	Handout of key expressions used in refund request letters (Appendix 11)
4 (15 mins)	Improving the students' first refund request letter based on the information learnt in the previous lessons	Students were instructed to start writing an improved version of their refund request letter making use of the knowledge and awareness gained from the exploration of the example texts. They were told that they could either start the letter from scratch or edit their first letter. Until the class time was over, the students worked individually, being assisted by the teacher when required. To make the task more meaningful, the students were told to use a pseudonym as the letter was to be given anonymously to a student from another class who would then be acting as the manager of the company (e-appliance centre). The students were also told that the students who read their letter would write a reply pertaining to their refund request.	
Homework*	Writing a refund request letter (second letter).	Students produced their second refund request letter. For this task, the students received several handouts to aid their writing (*i.e.* two example letters, list of moves and the explanations of each move, examples of expressions). To minimise spelling and basic grammatical errors and to promote professional presentation, the students were encouraged to type their letters.	

* The students had 1-2 weeks to complete their homework assignment.

Appendix 4d. Refund request letter course module: Lesson 4 - Individual application and linking related text (30 minutes x 2)

Steps (approx. time)	Activity	Comments on activity	Teaching material Prepared
1 (15 mins)	Repeating the initial telephone call role-play	The students were instructed to redo the initial telephone call role-play between a customer and customer service operator (see Lesson 1). This was conducted to demonstrate for the students how their speaking skills had improved and their awareness of business pragmatics had increased through writing a refund request letter (Nunan, 1999). The activity was also used to remind the students of the mock scenario and the associated emotional experiences.	Toy telephones
2 (15 mins)	Read the anonymously written refund request letter Explanation of the homework task	Students were asked again to imagine that they were the managers of the e-Appliance Centre (Rebecca Crab) and that their online store had sold the faulty coffee maker. They were instructed to read an anonymously written refund request letter (*i.e.* unedited version of the second refund request letter from a student in another class). The new vocabulary and the content of the letter were clarified. For homework, all students were assigned to first count and highlight the number of moves included in their peers' second refund request letter and then to write a reply to the letter.	Unedited version of the students' second refund request letters (photocopied)
Homework*	Linking related text - writing a reply (peer feedback)	The students conducted genre analysis on their peers' second refund request letter. Then, they wrote their reply to the letter.	
1-2 week interval			
1 (15 mins)	Reading the reply	The students received and read their replies from the other students. The new vocabulary and the content of the letter were clarified as they read the text.	Unedited version of the students' reply letters (photocopied)
2 (15 mins)	Discussion of the effectiveness of the second refund request letter	A students' discussion was then facilitated to highlight the students' progress in the module and the importance of genre awareness in writing. Also discussed were business protocol, cultural differences/similarities, and the effects of a polite approach in letter writing.	Feedback survey sheet (English) (Appendix 12)
Homework*	Feedback survey (written)	The students filled out the feedback survey on the genre-based writing module (Appendix 12).	

* The students had 1-2 weeks to complete their homework assignment.

Appendix 5. Refund request letter handout (given to the students in Lesson 1 - Context exploration)

Refund Request Letter - situation

Task goals:

- Practice communication skills
- Practice people skills
- Practice negotiation skills
- Practice speaking and listening skills
- Develop writing and reading skills
- Learn more about English culture
- Learn more about official letter writing protocol

Situation:

On the 15th of April, 2012, you purchased a BARUN Coffee Maker from the online shop '*e-Appliance Centre'.* You paid $179.00 for the product. You paid by credit card. You have the receipt for the product.

You received the BARUN coffee maker this morning. You found that there was a wire sticking out underneath. When you plugged the coffee maker in, it did not work.

Condition (before calling e-Appliance Centre):

You want to get a new replacement BARUN coffee maker or get a refund. You do not want to spend any more money on a coffee maker. You felt that $179 was already too much to pay for a coffee maker.

Situation continued (after calling e-Appliance Centre:

Today, you called the *e-Appliance Centre* and spoke to Roger Ramjet in the customer service department. Based on the conversation with Mr. Ramjet, you have decided to write a letter to *e-Appliance Centre* and request a refund for the product.

You are going to attention your letter to the director of *e-Appliance Centre*. The director's name is Rebecca Crab.

GOOD LUCK!

Appendix 6. Role cards (used for the telephone role-play in Lesson 1 - Context exploration)

1) Role card for the customer

You are a *customer*.

You want to exchange your faulty product (BARUN coffee maker) with a new one. You want to get the same model (you don't want to get a different model). When you bought the product, you thought it was very expensive. You don't want to spend any more money on a coffee maker.

If the company cannot exchange it, you want to get a full refund. You really think this is what the company should do for you as one of their customers. You are already upset about the faulty product. You expect the company to be very apologetic.

2) Role card for the customer service operator

You are a *customer service operator*.

Your name is Roger Ramjet. You work for a company called e-Appliance centre.

Your company doesn't sell the BARUN Coffee Maker anymore. If a customer wants to exchange one, you cannot give him/her the same model. The only option for the customer is to upgrade their coffee maker to the Super BARUN Coffee Maker (a new model produced by the same manufacturer). But, the price of this coffee maker is $279. If the customer wants to upgrade to this model, he/she has to pay $100 more.

Your company's policy says that you do not give refunds for any products. You cannot change the company policy. If a customer requests a refund, you need to explain the company's policy to him/her.

You are determined not to give a refund no matter what the customer says. Also, your boss (Rebecca Crab) will get very angry with you if you cannot take care of your customer's requests / complaints by yourself.

Appendix 7. Letter writing homework sheet (given to students in Lesson 1 - Context exploration)

Refund Request Letter – writing preparation

Before you write any letter, it is important to think carefully about the situation. To help you understand your situation in this exercise, answer the following questions. You can make up the answers if needed.

1) What result (response form the company) do you want to achieve through writing this letter?

_____

2) Who are you writing this letter to?

_____

3) Is this a formal letter or a casual letter?

_____

4) What is the most important information to include?

_____

5) For what purpose did you buy the BARUN Coffee Maker?

_____

6) What is your relationship with e-Appliance Centre (*e.g.* How many times have you shopped on their online store?, What products have you bought before from them?)

_____

7) How do you feel about the customer service operator (Mr. Roger Ramjet)

_____

8) How do you feel about this company?

_____

Now, write a refund request letter to a company.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Write your name, address and phone number here (please make up your identity for this exercise).

26 April 2012

Ms. Rebecca Crab
e-Appliance Centre
123 River Street
Hamilton, ST 10270

Dear _____,

Appendix 8. List of moves contained in the example letter and an explanation of each move (given to students in Lesson 2 - Text exploration based on the model text)

Sequence	Different parts of the letter	Explanation
1	Date	Your name, address, phone number and e-mail address, and the date on which you wrote the letter are included.
2	Inside address	The name and address of the receiver of the letter are included.
3	Opening salutation	'Dear' is commonly used followed by the name of the receiver.
4	Reference	You can include the name of the product that you purchased.
5	Explanation of purchase	You should include the name of the product, the online store name, the price of the product, and the purchase date.
6	Proof of purchase	You can state that your receipt is enclosed in your letter.
7	Description of product/service fault	You need to give a concise, detailed description of the fault.
8	Outline of previous attempt to rectify problem	You need to clearly outline the steps you have taken to fix this situation. It may be useful to include the name of the company's representative that you spoke to. The findings/ results of your efforts are to be stated here.
9	Legal evaluation of situation	You can mention your legal rights in order to motivate the reader to grant your refund request.
10	Proposed solution	You should explicitly state an expected refund amount (*i.e.* a full refund) and a timeframe for the company to act on your refund request. Also, it may be important to state who will be responsible to arrange and pay for the courier for returning the product to the company.
11	Clarification of contact details	Contact details during business hours and after hours are usually included.
12	Polite closing	Here, you can reaffirm your expectation that the reader of the letter will respond to your letter.
13	Closing salutation	'Sincerely,' is commonly used to end a refund request letter.
14	Signature	You need to sign at the end of the letter to authenticate the letter. Your name is usually printed below your signature.
15	Enclosure	You can restate that you have enclosed a copy of your receipt.

Appendix 9. Letter comparison homework sheet (given to students in Lesson 2 - Text exploration based on model texts)

Note: Students were asked to compare the example letter and their first draft letters in terms of the information contained and the organisational features of the text parts (moves), and to think of possible modifications that they could make to their own letters.

Compare your refund request letter with the example letter.
Then, answer the following questions.

1) What information was included in the example letter that was not included in your letter?

_____

_____

2) What information was included in your letter that was not included in the example letter?

_____

_____

3) What was the first impression you got reading the example letter (remember that you were Rebecca Crab, the manager of the company)?

_____

_____

4) What was the major structural (layout) difference between your letter and the example letter?

_____

_____

5) After you read the example letter, what part of your letter would you change?

_____

_____

_____

6) After you read the example letter, what part of your letter would you keep (*i.e.* not change)?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 10. An example of a refund request letter containing the 'Polite opening' move (used in Lesson 3 - Joint construction of a text)

Sourced in April, 2012 from World Wide Web - http://casualkitchen.blogspot.com/2008/01/how-to-write-effective-complaint-letter.html

Daniel Koontz
79b Lake Crescent
Hamilton, ST 10270

6 May 2012

The Handy Supermarket
123 River Street
Hamilton, ST 10270

Dear Sir or Madam,

My wife and I have been happy shoppers at The Handy Supermarket for several years. However, I wanted to let you know that I purchased a one pound package of Happy Farm bacon on April 29th that was in unsatisfactory condition. I have included the purchase information below.

The problem was with the slicing and stacking of the bacon. First, the top two or three slices of bacon were mangled and twisted around the remaining stack of bacon slices. Second, the entire package of bacon looked like it had been accidentally cut almost totally in half, right through the middle. There appears to be some quality control problems with the slicing mechanism used by your bacon manufacturing contractor.

The bacon tasted fine and was otherwise satisfactory. However, it looked highly unappealing coming out of the packaging. Furthermore, because of the condition it was in, the bacon could not be cooked in slices. Each individual slice of bacon fell apart into multiple pieces when I attempted to peel it off the stack.

Again, we remain happy customers of The Handy Supermarket and of Happy Farm branded products. I wanted to notify you of this one quality failure and request a refund of my $2.99 purchase price. My receipt is enclosed.

Sincerely,

D. Koontz

Daniel Koontz

Purchase Information:
Store Location: 123 River Street
Purchase Receipt Information: 29/04/09 12:48PM 284 12 329 129
Sliced Bacon Lot #: EST 7202 N2
Sell-by date: 5 May 2012

Appendix 11. Key expressions used in refund request letters (given to students as guidance for writing a letter in Lesson 3 - Joint construction of a text)

Note: The expressions listed in the table were found in the 10 letters.

Different parts in the letter	Expressions which can be used
Opening salutation	Dear (title)(family name),
Polite opening	I have been a happy shopper at the (name of the store) for several years.
Explanation of purchase	On (date), I (purchased, bought) a (product) at (name of the store). On (date), I ordered a (product) from your website. I paid by (method of payment).
Proof of purchase	Please see enclosed invoice. My receipt is enclosed. I have included the purchase information. I have enclosed a copy of my receipt for your information.
Description of product/service fault	The problem was with the… It was missing (part) and could not be assembled. I was distressed to find that (fault). When I returned home and unpacked the (product), I found that the (fault) and the appliance did not work properly. Unfortunately, your (product) was inadequate because (fault).
Outline of previous attempt to rectify problem	I contacted your customer service department... Your customer service representative assured me that… I returned to the (name of the store) and the sales assistant (name) told me that... I explained to the sales assistant that...
Legal evaluation of situation	The Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000 state that I am entitled to a cooling-off period of seven working days in which to return goods. I believe that it is within my rights to request a refund for a faulty product.
Proposed solution	I would like a full refund of... I would like to return the appliance to (name of the store) for a full refund of the purchase price. I am writing to you to request that my money be refunded in full. I am returning the (product), and expect a full refund of (amount). Please send me a check for (amount). Please reply in the next (number) days. Please contact me within the next (number) weeks to arrange a convenient time for me to return the (product) and collect my refund.
Clarification of contact details	Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (phone number). I can be reached at (contact information). I can be contacted at home on the phone number above or at (phone number) during business hours.
Polite closing	Again, I remain a happy customer of (name of the store) and of (name of products). I look forward to hearing from you if you wish to discuss this further. I am looking forward to your reply in this matter.
Closing salutation	Sincerely,
Signature	
Enclosure	Enclosed:

Appendix 12. Feedback survey on the genre-based writing module (filled by students)

Page 1.

Letter Writing Lesson Feedback Sheet

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this feedback form.
For each statement, please circle your opinion. You can write your comments in Japanese.

a) Regarding the letter writing lessons:

1. Did the lessons help your letter writing skills?: not at all a little a lot
2. Did the lessons help your letter reading skills?: not at all a little a lot
3. Did the lessons help your listening skills: not at all a little a lot
4. Did the lessons help your speaking skills: not at all a little a lot
5. Did the lessons help your understanding of English culture: not at all a little a lot

Comments: _____

_____

b) Regarding the letter you wrote to Ms. Rebecca Crab (second letter):

1. Was your final letter an effective refund request letter?

   Yes, it was. No, it wasn't. I don't know.

   Why/why not?: _____

2. Did you consider Ms. Rebecca Crab's perception of you when you wrote your letter?

   Yes, I did. No, I didn't. I don't know.

   Why/why not?: _____

3. Did your letter have enough key information that is commonly included in a refund request letter?

   Yes, it did. No, it didn't. I don't know.

   Why/why not?: _____

c) Regarding the letter you received from the other student:

1. Did you decide to give a refund to the writer? Yes, I did. No, I didn't.

   Why/why not?: _____

2. Did you feel positive towards the writer after reading his/her letter?

   Yes, I did. No, I didn't. I don't know.

   Why/why not?: _____

3. Did the writer have enough key information that is commonly included in a refund request letter?

   Yes, he/she did No, he/she didn't I don't know

   Why/why not?: _____

d) Overall:

1. Do you think that you will need the skill to read or write a refund request letter in English in the future (excluding an examination situation)?

   Yes, I think so No, I don't think so I don't know

   Comment: _____

2. If you wrote a letter in Japan to request a refund from the director of a company, do you think the information and the format would be similar to the letter you wrote for the class?

   Yes, I think so No, I don't think so I don't know

   Comment: _____

3. Do you feel more confident to write letters in English after the lessons?

   Yes, I do. No, I don't I don't know

   Comment: _____

4. Would you like to learn more about how to write other texts by doing similar classroom activities?

   Yes, I would No, I wouldn't I don't know

   Comment: _____

5. Did you enjoy writing the refund request letter and reply letter?

   Yes, I did. No, I didn't I don't know

   Comment: _____

Overall comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 13. Examples of students' letters: first and second refund request letter

Note 1: The first refund request letter was written at home without explicit awareness of the genre / move concept.
Note 2: The second refund request letter was completed after the genre-based writing lessons.
Note 3: 'Date' and 'Inside address' were deleted from the students' original letters, as it was provided for the students in the block style template.

Student 1 - First letter

Dear Ms. Rebecca Crab,

How do you do? I'm Jill Jones.
I have a request to you.
I have purchased a BARAN Coffee maker from your shop.
I paid $179.00 for it on the 15th of April this year.
I paid by credit card. I have receipt on my computer.
I received the BARAN coffee maker this morning.
I found that there was a wire sticking out underneath.
It didn't work.
Today, I called your shop on the phone and spoke to Roger Ramjet in the customer service department.
I told Mr. Ramjet about my coffee maker that I got today from your shop. I told him of I wanted to get a new replacement BARAN coffee maker or get a refund. But he told me that he couldn't both them.
He said there is a model change over it on $279.00.
I don't pay anymore for a coffee maker.
Over the last three years, I have bought a TV, a fridge and a digital camera from your shop.
I would like to buy other things in the future from your shop. So I would like a refund this time.
I'll be waiting for your reply.
Thank you very mach for listening to me.

Sincerely, Jill Jones

Student 1 - Second letter

Dear Ms. Crab,

I'm pleased being well stocked of e-Appliance Centre. Over the last three years, I have bought a TV, a fridge and a digital camera from your shop.

I purchased a BARAN Coffee maker from your shop. I paid $179.00 for it by credit card on the 15th of April this year. I have the receipt.

I received the BARAN Coffee maker this morning. I found that there was a wire sticking out underneath. It didn't work. At once, I called your shop on the phone and spoke to Roger Ramjet in the customer service department. I explained Mr. Ramjet about my coffee maker that I got today from your shop. I told him of I wanted to get a new replacement BARAN coffee maker or get a refund. But he told me that he couldn't both them. He said only that there was a model change over it on $279.00.

I don't pay anymore for a coffee maker. I believe that it is my right to request a refund for a faulty product and $28.00 for the overseas call cost. Please contact me within the next two weeks to pay directly into my bank account. I'm returning the appliance by collect on delivery.

I can be contacted at home on the phone number below or at 011-81-854-88-1111 (overseas call number) during business hours. Alternatively, you can e-mail me on 321.Y.dog@city.com.jp. I'll be waiting for your reply. I would like to buy other things in the future from your shop. So I would like a full refund this time.

Yours sincerely,

Jill Jones

Home phone 011-81-854-88-9876
My bank account: Bank of Shimane, Oda branch office, No. 1010555

Attached: Copy of the receipt for the BARAN Coffee Maker

Student 2 - First letter

Dear Ms. Crab

Thank you very much for making the time to read this letter. Thanks to your online shop ‘e-Appliance Centre’, the customers, including me, can purchase the things, even if we don’t go out.

The BARAN Coffee maker what I ordered had arrived today. I’ve already paid by credit card on the 15th of April. Although, there was a wire sticking out underneath. In short, it didn’t work. So I’d like to request a refund. When I called the customer service centre, a staff named Mr. Ramjet explained that your shop don’t repair or refund the appliance what customers have bought, and he recommended another one ‘super BARAN coffee maker’. It has more function and is more expensive than I purchased. He continued to talk, there was not a coffee maker except it. I’m afraid it’s not what I’d like to purchase. If you were a customer in the same case, you also would be disappointed like me, wouldn’t you? If we can’t drink good coffee, we won’t be able to spend a good day.

Please reply to my request. I’m looking forward to your good answer.

Sincerely yours
Charlie Chaplin

Charlie Chaplin

Encl: a copy of the receipt.
a photo of the coffee maker had arrived.

Student 2 - Second letter

Dear Ms. Crab

Thank you very much for making the time to read this letter. Thanks to your online shop ‘e-Appliance Centre’, the customers, including me, can purchase the things, even if we do not go out. I have purchased the appliance from your shop twice before. They are working very good.

The BARAN Coffee maker what I ordered had arrived today. I have already paid by credit card on the 15th of April. However, there was a wire sticking out underneath. In short, it did not work. So I would like to request a refund.

When I contacted your customer service centre, a staff named Mr. Ramjet explained that your shop do not repair or refund the appliance what customers have bought, it is company policy. And he recommended another one ‘super BARAN Coffee Maker’. It is upgraded and more expensive than what I purchased. There was not a coffee maker except it in your shop. I am afraid it is not what I want.

I would like to return the BARAN Coffee Maker to your shop for a full refund of the purchase price. If you were a customer in the same case, you also would be disappointed like me. If we can not drink good coffee, we would not be able to have a good day.

Please reply to my request within the next two weeks. I usually stay at home, please contact me at a convenient time. Otherwise you can e-mail me on charlie@coolmail.com. I am looking forward to your reply in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Charlie Chaplin
Charlie Chaplin

Attached: Copy of the receipt for the BARAN Coffee Maker
Photo of the coffee maker had arrived

Student 3 - First letter

To (dear) Ms Rebecca Crab,

Nice to meet you. My name is Ayame Kakitsubata. I send e-mail to you because I have some claim.

Two weeks ago, I bought a BARAN coffee maker from the online shop e-Appliance Centre. But, regrettably, the new coffee maker had already broken. When I plugged the coffee maker in, it did not work. So I called your company. Because I wanted to request a refund. But your company refused.

I wanted to give the coffee maker to my mother for mother's day. My mother was waiting for it. But the dream fade away. In Japan. refunding is natural. Exchanging new goods in good condition is natural, too. Because Japanese treasure "Heartiness". I think that "Heartiness" is the most important thing in business. So please change your company's rule. You can change! You can do it! I trust you

Student 3 - Second letter

Dear Ms. Crab,

I bought a BARAN Coffee Maker from the online store e-Appliance Centre and paid $179.00 by credit card on the 15th of April, 2012. I received it this morning. But regrettably, the new coffee maker was already broken. When I plugged it in, it did not work. So I contacted your company customer service department. Because I wanted to request a refund. But your company refused.

I wanted to give my mother it for mother's day. My mother was waiting for it. But the dream fade away. I think that "trust" is the most important thing in business. If you are in my situation, you don't want to look mother's sad face, do you? So please change your company policy. You can change! You can do it! I trust you.

I can be contacted at home on the phone number below. I am usually at home. Alternatively, you can e-mail me on happy.go.go.@bigpond.com. I look forward to hearing from you. Please contact me within the next one week.

Yours sincerely,

Ayame Kakitsubata

Ayame Kakitsubata

Home phone: 08 5555 7890

Attached: Copy of the receipt for the BARAN Coffee Maker

Appendix 14. Examples of students' reply letters: first and second refund request letter

Note: As homework, the students conducted genre analysis on their peers' second refund request letter (counted and highlighted the number of moves). Then, they wrote their reply to the letter.

Student 1 - Reply letter

Rebecca Crab
e-appliance centre
123 River street
Hamilton, ST 10270

5 May 2012

Ms. Marie Takanobe
2743 Hanenishi
Kute Ohda, Shimane

Dear Ms. Marie Takanobe,

We are grateful to you for having been our customer for several years. We feel very sorry that the Buran coffee maker you had purchased did not work. It was not checked and it is our fault that we could not find it impaired. Hereafter we will try hard to supply best products and to meet your needs.

We have decided to refund you the full money you paid. Please let us know your bank account where the money will be transferred by 15th of this month. Also you are asked to send the coffee maker back to us by cash-on-delivery in a week, that is, by 12th May.

We are hoping you will enjoy purchasing as good products as you like from our company. We are enclosing a list of products we can supply to you.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Crab

Rebecca Crab
e-appliance centre

Student 2 - Reply letter

Rebecca Crab
123 River Street
Hamilton, ST 10270

7 May 2012

Ms. Kim Smith
102-1 Yoshinaga, Kawechyo
Ohda City, Shimane Pref
090-7799-4266

Dear Ms. Smith,

Thank you for your support as always. Thank you for your e-mail in your busy days.

I am so sorry the Buran coffee maker did not work. I did not forecast this unexpected trouble.

Could you send the coffee maker and the guarantee back by collect? We will repair it and send you it soon or refund to you.

I hope you will do business with us again. Thank you very much for your patience.

Best regards,

Rebecca Crab

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