

## **Institutional internationalisation through academic literacies in English: teaching and learning written genres in the Brazilian higher education context**

*A internacionalização institucional via letramentos acadêmicos em língua inglesa: o ensino/aprendizagem de gêneros escritos no âmbito da educação superior brasileira*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This contribution delves into the process of internationalisation of Brazilian higher education institutions by focusing on academic literacies in English. We highlight initiatives carried out at the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Brazil as to the teaching and learning of an array of written genres. We also assess its impact on graduate and undergraduate students' insertion in the various international academic/scientific communities. Drawing on references within the realm of English for Academic Purposes and Academic Literacies, this work also addresses course design and application of activities concerning academic writing. Students' personal accounts regarding their own experiences in producing written material have also been presented and discussed against the backdrop of an institutional internationalisation scenario. We concluded that the teaching and learning of written academic genres across various domains of knowledge does enhance the university's internationalisation process both at its "at home" and "abroad" strands.

**Keywords:** Internationalisation, Brazilian higher education context, Academic literacies, Written genres.

### **RESUMO**

*Este trabalho investiga o corrente processo de internacionalização de instituições brasileiras de ensino superior enfocando os letramentos acadêmicos em língua inglesa. Com destaque para ações realizadas na Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, avaliamos o impacto do ensino de uma variedade de gêneros escritos cujo objetivo é inserir estudantes de graduação e pós-graduação nas diversas comunidades*

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*acadêmicas/científicas internacionais. Tendo como referencial teórico produções nos âmbitos do inglês para fins acadêmicos e dos letramentos acadêmicos, perfazemos o desenho e a aplicação de atividades de escrita acadêmica em disciplinas de língua na referida universidade. Também apresentamos relatos pessoais de estudantes no que concerne suas próprias experiências de produção escrita tendo como pano de fundo um cenário de internacionalização institucional. Concluímos que o ensino/aprendizagem de gêneros acadêmicos escritos perpassando vários domínios do conhecimento contribui para intensificar o processo de internacionalização da universidade nas vertentes “em casa” e “para fins de mobilidade”.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Internacionalização, Contexto brasileiro de ensino superior, Letramentos acadêmicos, Gêneros escritos.*

## 1. Introduction

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) emerged as an area within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the late 1970s, and has been since then an important sphere for research and language teaching in the tertiary level worldwide (HYLAND, 2006, p. 1). Evolving as one branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), it can be defined (however, non-exhaustively) as the teaching of English aimed at assisting learners to conduct their studies and carry out research at the academic level (FLOWERDEW; PEACOCK, 2001, p. 8). According to Chazal (2014), EAP entails the acquisition of English so that students can effectively operate in their subjects and disciplines within an academic institution.

Central to the discussions surrounding EAP is the level of specificity of the language taught: the distinction between English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) or English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) plays a role when it comes to deciding which course design will meet the students' needs (HYLAND, 2006, p.9). Whereas the former addresses specific and specialised competencies of a certain discipline, the latter approaches a common core of linguistic skills present across various academic domains (HYLAND, 2006, p. 11). In general academic purposes, this common ground includes a wider variety of activities which involve integrated abilities, such as listening to lectures, participating orally in seminars, reading textbooks and writing essays (DUDLEY-EVANS; ST. JOHN, 1998, p. 41).

Writing is crucial in scholarly settings: English in the academia is an ever-growing demand, and it has become the predominant language in science and research (cf. BENESCH, 2001; HYLAND, 2006). This has led not only to a high influx of international students and scholars into universities in English-speaking countries (e.g. United States, Australia), but also to the use of English as a medium of instruction in institutions from former British colonies (e.g. Nigeria and India) and from up-and-coming research nations in Asia and Latin America (cf. JENKINS et al., 1993; FLOWERDEW; PEACOCK, 2001; WARD, 2004; HYLAND, 2006). This scene is clearly noticeable in the vast majority of the scientific literature worldwide being produced in English, and it is the main reason why academic writing in such language has become of paramount importance, including in Brazil, our research and teaching context.

The demands for learning English are not new in Brazil and the Brazilian National ESP Project started in the 1970's (RAMOS, 2009; CELANI, 2005). Based on the necessities of the academic

community, the project was developed and has influenced teaching and learning in several universities and federal technical institutes as well as other contexts throughout the years. Some of the legacies of this project are a) the change in the teachers' and students' roles as they were both seen as responsible for their constant growth; b) the acceptance that the native language, Portuguese, could be used in the classroom; c) the development of a locally based methodology for reading in Brazil, based on the use of authentic texts, the teaching of reading strategies and the raising of awareness of the reading processes (RAMOS, 2009). This project had the premises of a general ESP program and it later had an impact on the production of genre-based materials for specific groups (RAMOS, 2004, 2017), which is still scarce in the country. Such approach emphasizes the use of language as a social practice, without a sole focus on reading strategies, but on genre awareness. This view has led to the teaching of reading in the Brazilian higher education context and also of other skills, such as academic writing (cf. MOTTA-ROTH, 1999) in an interdisciplinary academic literacy genre approach (cf. MOTTA-ROTH; HENDGES, 2010).

In order to understand how ESP perspectives have changed over the years, the next sections explore how the teaching of academic written genres in English has been dealt with from an academic literacies perspective in the modern university. We have, more specifically, concentrated on the internationalisation<sup>5</sup> initiatives held in a Brazilian higher education Institution, namely the Federal University of Minas Gerais - UFMG, which has implemented a locally situated set of university-wide subjects based on the community academic literacy necessities.

## 2. Academic literacies approach to the writing of genres: the university context

Academic literacy can be understood as an extension of the "New Literacy Studies" framework (c.f STREET, 1984, 1993, 1995) to the academic environment, in which institutional influences on students and participants' identities attain a central position. Within this model, language is deemed a discourse practice deployed to make meaning in a particular context (i.e the academic), which is socially and historically situated. This approach involves framing academic language as 'literacy practices', i.e. an institutionally patterned set of activities which will ultimately shape individuals' identities so they may successfully attain membership in various academic communities (cf. LEA; STREET, 1998; STREET, 2009). One instance of such activities is the writing of academic genres as a demanded communicative practice within the university realm. Rather than mechanically mastering a homogeneous, fixed and conventionalised set of technical writing skills, students in higher education are expected to adopt and/or switch discursive attitudes according to the academic context they belong to (STREET, 2009; STREET,

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<sup>5</sup> Knight (2004, p.11) broad-based definition for internationalisation is: "The process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" Hudzik (2011, p. 6) extends this definition, and uses the term comprehensive internationalization (CI), which in his words is "a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education."

2010). This leads to their identities being shaped as a consequence of their command of using written language to negotiate meaning in their respective academic/research communities as literacies as a social practice involves discourse and power (STREET, 2010).

Actions drawn from the academic literacies prism have been carried out in some higher education institutions so as to assist students in writing. In some British and North-American universities, educational development departments along with student learning centers have created programmes and promoted events in which students from various fields of knowledge have been made aware of a different notion of genre, i.e. a text type (both spoken and written) in which specific semiotic practices take place (STREET, 2010). Activities involving genre switching can illustrate how writing varies across fields and subjects. For instance, Street's study (2010, p. 354) showed that whereas hard science students showed more familiarity with structured text organisations, social science students were rather inclined to prose format. This means that different meanings and representations are created by different genres across distinct disciplines.

The next section addresses how these academic literacies have been taken as a point of departure to aid a heterogeneous tertiary student population within the context of internationalisation of a Brazilian higher education institution.

## **2.1 EAP and academic writing initiatives in internationalisation settings: the UFMG experience**

Over the past recent years, internationalisation has been a much in-vogue topic being addressed by major higher education institutions around the globe. Although the term has proven difficult to define, the rationale behind it points to an ongoing effort to insert postsecondary education into an "international, intercultural and global dimension" (KNIGHT, 2003b, p.2).

Knight (2006, 2008) explores the international dimension of internationalisation and goes on to distinguish two of its manifestations: "abroad" and "at home". While the first stream mainly focuses on student/researcher mobility through study abroad programmes, the second emphasizes various international/intercultural activities to be integrated into the university curriculum, courses and events held in foreign languages as well as foreign language studies. In this ever growing globalized world people from different countries interact, exchange and create knowledge. There is no doubt that globalization has a significant impact on education. Knight, (2008, p.xi) states that "the international dimension of higher education includes both campus-based activities and cross-border initiatives. "

Throughout this decade, the Brazilian higher education scenario has been reshaped in order to accommodate internationalisation both in its "abroad" and "at home" manifestations. An evidence of this was the Science Without Borders (Ciência sem Fronteiras)<sup>6</sup> and Language Without Borders (Idiomas sem

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<sup>6</sup> Programme's webpage: <http://www.cienciasemfronteiras.gov.br/web/csf>

Fronteiras)<sup>7</sup> programmes launched by the federal government Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Education, respectively. Whereas the former mainly aimed at sending abroad home university students from the hard science disciplines, the latter has promoted language learning as a means to make home institutions reach international levels.

Some federal universities have also endeavoured locally in an attempt to foster internationalisation through the teaching of academic English and courses on academic French, German, Italian and Spanish<sup>8</sup>. Such is the case of UFMG, which has offered the EAP courses *Inglês para Fins Acadêmicos* with the thorough support from the university's Language Proficiency Department within its Office of International Affairs.

The *Inglês para Fins Acadêmicos* (IFA) subjects have been designed in order to meet the university students' demands regarding English language proficiency for the academic environment. Ranging within the intermediate-to-advanced spectrum (from B1 to C1 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), the IFA subjects have provided linguistic support for students who either wish to participate in international mobility programmes or need to improve their abilities to engage in academic activities in which English is crucial<sup>9</sup>. Although the set of subjects involves integrated skills for general academic purposes, writing has a fundamental status and is taught by taking both the students' aimed degree (graduate and undergraduate) and their different backgrounds (subjects and disciplines) into consideration.

### 3. Written Genre in Academic Discourse: the IFA experience

Taking the premise outlined by Bakhtin (2003) that human activity is intertwined with language, and that its manifestation can be observed in a variety of contexts, this section aims at addressing the theme of genre, bearing in mind its complexity and, thus, its importance to the teaching and learning of English in the context of English for Academic Purposes.

Defining genre is far from being an easy task. The discussion surrounding the issue is vast and researchers tend to rely on different theoretical backgrounds. We acknowledge that language is a social practice and for that reason our definition of genre is in consonance with this premise. Swales' (1990, p. 24) genre definition suits well an array of ESP/EAP studies, including ours as he affirms that genre refers to "a class of communicative events with some shared set of communicative purposes". Thus, texts can be understood as having a communicative purpose that leads users to make language choices that characterize specific genres (SWALES, 1990).

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<sup>7</sup> Programme's webpage: <http://isf.mec.gov.br/>

<sup>8</sup> Due to space restrictions, this article focuses on discussing the English for Academic Purposes subjects.

<sup>9</sup> Apart from the usual demand for writing for journal publications and for other academic submissions, graduate and undergraduate students have also been offered courses in English within their respective fields and disciplines as part of the internationalisation of the curricula from various academic units.

Genre can, therefore, be determined by various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience that are tied with its communicative purpose. Other researchers along the same line emphasized even more the social role of genres (e.g. RAMOS, 2004). Meurer (2004), for instance, defines genres as semiotic actions characterized by their social role outwardly in language in contexts with a recurrent social practice. In addition, genres can be identified by participants who belong to the same pool of shared knowledge. In other words, members of the same discourse community, in our case the general academic community. This is in accordance with Bakhtin (2003), who states that the addressee plays a significant role in the interpretation of text genres that are ideologically elaborated resulting from pre-established social conventions.

Genre is one of the most important and influential concepts in literacy education nowadays. In the context of teaching academic writing, Hyland (2007) emphasizes the importance of situating writing tasks in meaningful contexts with authentic purposes. Focusing on this authenticity of text, task, context, and purpose enables students to address their challenges to engage in academic practices.

One of the main aims of the five IFA subjects offered by Faculdade de Letras (UFMG)<sup>10</sup> is to help students understand and produce academic texts in English to fully participate in a more global scientific community. In order to achieve this purpose, the subjects are grounded in texts that students will have to read and write in their target contexts, thereby aiming to support them to participate effectively in the academic world, according to their specific needs.

With the assumption that writing is fundamental to EAP teaching and learning, which involves communication of researches, arguments, knowledge and ideas, we have focused on this specific skill in this article. The following written academic genres are taught at IFA: statement of purpose, summary, abstract, essay, literature review and research paper. By taking into consideration both their linguistic and rhetorical features, the referred genres have been selected by EAP teachers based on what students are often required to write in their academic contexts. For example, graduate students need to publish results of their investigations, and, consequently, have to learn the genre conventions of a research paper. This genre-based writing instruction aims to offer "students an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written in the ways they are" (HYLAND, 2007, p.151). For students' writing development, they have access to texts that are similar in terms of communicative purpose, organization, and audience. This allows them to analyse specific features of the target genres to see typical patterns of textual and linguistic organization.

The IFA subjects are divided following students' proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and for each level one specific written academic genre

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<sup>10</sup> The IFA subjects aim to develop the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking, particularly in an integrated way. Moreover, it involves more skills, such as critical thinking, study skills (which include conventional academic skills, such as citation and referencing), and the work towards academic practices in the various disciplines.



is addressed. This organisation takes learners' linguistic skills into account according to their proficiency level and it also allows teachers to focus on students' needs in relation to a specific genre.

Table 1 shows how genres are distributed in each IFA subject:

**Table 1** - Written academic genres taught in the IFA subjects

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Subject level<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>Academic Written Genre</b>	<b>Description</b>
IFA I	B1 intermediate	Statement of Purpose/ Summary	Letter of intention presenting reasons to study or conduct research in a university of their choice; Synthesis of an article
IFA II	B1+ intermediate	Abstract	Article abstracts and their rhetorical moves
IFA III	B2 upper intermediate	Essay	Argumentative essays and its structure ( introductory paragraphs, developing and supporting ideas and conclusion), including how to compare, contrast, and to establish agreement and disagreement about a specific topic
IFA IV	B2+ upper intermediate	Literature Review	Synthesis of recently published work on a specific topic, pointing out how their work can fill an existing gap in the literature
IFA V	C1 advanced	Research article	Research articles and their sections, acknowledging cross-discipline features

Source: designed by the authors

<sup>11</sup> Level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The subjects include the process approach and genre analysis which can be called a blended approach as advocated by Badger and White (2000), with the support of corpus linguistic tools. The authors recognize that writing involves knowledge about the language, the context in which writing happens, the purpose for writing and skills in using language. Considering these characteristics, they propose the term ‘process genre’ approach, in which writers decide how and what kind of information need to be presented, as well as the knowledge of the appropriate language concerning a specific genre (cf. BADGER; WHITE, 2000, p. 157-158). First, students are taught the communicative purpose of each genre as well as the role they play in academia. After understanding these two important points they engage in a process involving planning, drafting, peer reading and editing before submitting their texts. Throughout this process students have the opportunity to discuss with teachers and classmates important aspects related to their writing and, consequently, issues concerning their particular fields arise. Hyland (2004, p. 114) observes that there are significant variations on how members from disciplines like economics and physics, for example, interact in their fields. Thus, the author points out that when teaching English for Academic Purposes one should look beyond a rigid set of language features /conventions. He puts forward the idea that specific disciplines might have their particularities on the way they represent and disseminate their knowledge, and this specificity should also be considered when preparing students to interact in this context. In the IFA subjects, this specificity is taken into consideration when one assigns writing tasks valued by different disciplines as we are aware that even genres with common names, such as research abstracts, reports and essays are often structured in different ways across disciplines.

Practicing the writing of the most important academic written genres becomes an asset for the students as writing represents the main channel of communication in universities worldwide. Such practice considers the students’ disciplines, as mentioned, as well as the power relations involved in the production of each genre in specific social contexts. It is important to note that the type of genre included to be taught in each IFA subject was chosen taking into consideration the interrelationship between language proficiency and the overall characteristic of each academic genre.

The writing phases followed in the IFA subjects, as presented in Table 2, raise students’ awareness of genre characteristics and language features, providing opportunities for process writing.

**Table 2** - Writing phases in the IFA subjects

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Description</b>
1 - Introduction to the genre	Teachers elicit the main characteristics of each genre focusing on their context of use and communicative purpose



2 - Genre analysis and practice	Real samples of each genre are presented for students who engage in guided activities focusing on vocabulary meaning, structure and overall comprehension of the genre
3 - Writing outline	Students are asked to write an outline followed by a draft
4 - Teacher Feedback	Teacher gives individual feedback on the draft
5 - Peer Revision	Students write the first version of their text that is, then, reviewed by a classmate
6 - First version Submission	After reviewing the comments made by their colleagues, students submit the first version of their text to be given feedback by the teacher
7 - Teacher Feedback	Teacher gives individual written feedback, considering genre structure, content and language use (vocabulary and grammar). Common mistakes are identified and the teacher prepares activities targeting students' specific needs
8 - Second version submission	Students edit their texts if needed. They have a chance to use online corpus tools for editing them, submitting another draft of their texts to receive teacher feedback again.

Source: designed by the authors

In order to contribute to learners' autonomy and awareness of linguistic features, considering the genre on focus, workshops on how to use online corpora<sup>12</sup> for editing are given. These workshops, organized between phases 6 and 8, are based on concepts, such as lexicogrammar and phraseology, which are of interest of Corpus Linguistics studies. By using a corpus, one can access users' choices in specific domains, and in our teaching context students are led to observe academic genre features. As learners identify linguistic features more accurately, they are more likely to produce them more effectively. During IFA class workshops, corpora is introduced to students as reference tools to be consulted for examples when problems or questions arise in the writing process<sup>13</sup>. The objective of such workshops is to show students that corpora can be used as research tools to be systematically investigated as a means of gaining greater awareness of language uses. Thereby, classes take place at labs and teachers guide student searches to features which are typical in the target genres.

<sup>12</sup> Some of the online corpora students learn to use are the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA - <https://corpus.byu.edu/COCA/>) and the British National Corpus (BYU-BNC - <https://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>).

<sup>13</sup> Due to space restrictions the use of online corpora for consultation cannot be fully discussed in this paper. Oliva (2018) can be accessed for details on how students can succeed in editing lexical and grammatical errors if they practice how to use corpus tools.

The online line corpus tools for editing are helpful to students and teachers to identify the most adequate uses in specific linguistic contexts. Teachers can create meaningful activities and students can better edit their texts. Besides the online corpus tools, both IFA teachers and students can have access to the Corpus do Inglês para Fins Acadêmicos, hereafter, CorIFA<sup>14</sup>, which comprises texts produced by students taking the subjects of English for Academic Purposes. This learner corpus that is being compiled by members of the Learner Corpus Research Group with the collaboration of IFA teachers. The advantages of building a learner corpus having teaching purposes in mind are vast, and we shall observe the ones important in developing academic literacy among the group of students portrayed in this paper. CorIFA mirrors the written production of our students in five different academic genres. Thus, by accessing the corpus teachers can have an in-depth account of learners' interlanguage and consequently take better pedagogical decisions. On a more practical level, teachers can create tailor made activities focusing on students' needs and raise linguistic awareness on specific language patterns that seems to be genre specific. Preliminary findings from CorIFA, such as about the use of linking adverbials (DUTRA et al., 2017), have already been used as data for workshops concerned on improving students' writing during lab classes, which according to students were beneficial for their learning, in particular, for improving the writing required in the university setting.

This section has brought an overview of the genres worked at IFA and of the tools used to improve writing. In the next section, we bring students' perspectives on how this genre based approach has helped them develop academic literacy.

#### **4. Students' accounts regarding experiences in producing academic genres for the IFA subjects**

In 2016<sup>15</sup>, two surveys were applied in order to obtain a broader view on the students' English-language learning experiences in the IFA subjects. There was a collection of 112 accounts in the first semester and 51 in the second semester of that year. Students' profiles, needs and expectations as well as their course (and professor) evaluation were points addressed in the first survey. The second survey dealt with their perceptions about their development in oral and written comprehension skills, and also about their perspectives on the opportunities they could have due to their participation in the subjects. The aim was to observe to what extent the IFA course was impacting students' academic / professional career both in Brazil and abroad. We had 163 responded surveys, out of which 74,85% pointed to a satisfactory perception specifically when it came to academic writing as a learning outcome. The next two excerpts are examples of students' perception of their progress:

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<sup>14</sup> For more information on CorIFA, check <https://sites.google.com/site/corpusifa/> and also Dutra *et. al* (2017) and Guedes (2017), who present the theoretical and methodological rationale behind CorIFA. The same research group has also compiled another learner corpus: CorIsF (Corpus do Inglês sem Fronteiras - <https://sites.google.com/site/corpusisf/home>)

<sup>15</sup> From class observations, it was clearly noticeable for IFA professors that most students were actively engaged and motivated in the tasks proposed during classes.

I have been attending classes for only 3 months, but they have already contributed to the writing skill, mainly. I was introduced to some tools that help to develop writing. Corpus, for example.

Activities such as email writing, argumentative essay writing and presentation of scholarly articles are excellent and completely applied to my goals. Before taking this subject, I felt insecure to write in English for academic purposes.

As most students point out in the two surveys, learning academic English subsidizes their insertion in academic events, as publications in journals of their respective areas of study, as seen in the previous excerpt.

In 2017, an IFA student sent a thank you email to her professor in which she reported that when taking the subject, she was able to improve her writing abilities and was one of the winners of an essay<sup>16</sup> contest: Many Languages, One World, sponsored by the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI)<sup>17</sup>. The contest participants were asked to write an original essay discussing global citizenship and cultural understanding, and the role that multilingual ability could play in fostering those.

The following excerpt is from an interview given to UFMG's media department, in which the student reveals that the IFA subjects made a significant difference in her academic life:

I have never taken a private course in English and have never had the opportunity to practice the language [in an academic context]. Without the subject English for Academic Purposes, (...) I would not have been able to be one of the contest winners.

The next excerpt is an example of a successful experience in terms of internationalisation "at home" (cf. KNIGHT, 2006, 2008). This student reports a desirable impact of taking English with academic focus, which is the purpose of the IFA subjects offered at UFMG:

The IFA course opens up great opportunities for me to attend lectures in English, to read books in English, which contributes to my academic advancement and helps me in the development of my master's research. In addition, the practice of English helps me to establish contacts with international researchers, broadening the horizons of my study and my professional career.

<sup>16</sup> The genre *essay* is explored in IFA III, as seen in Table 1.

<sup>17</sup> The 60 contest winners represented 27 different countries and 57 universities. 6,000 people from 170 countries took part in the initial phase of the contest. The event included an all-expense-paid trip to Boston and New York City and the opportunity to speak in the General Assembly Hall at the United Nations. For more information about the contest, please access: <https://www.manylanguagesoneworld.org/>

According to most students' accounts the IFA course offered by the Faculty of Letters at UFMG has mobilized successful language learning experiences with academic focus, mainly in terms of the writing of an array of genres. This certainly contributes not only to the manifestation of the internationalization process "abroad", but also "at home". This is because by developing linguistic and intercultural skills, students are able to participate, for instance, in mobility programs to have access to education across borders and also to engage in research collaboration or in scholarly activities with international universities from their home university.

## 5. Conclusions

As outlined in this article, the teaching of EAP has been a reality in higher education institutions which pursue to become part of the international academic and scientific community. We showed that one way to achieve this is through the writing of various academic genres in English, which has been encouraged and systematised in language courses and subjects pertaining to the university curricula. We made explicit how some Brazilian institutions have endeavoured to approach writing of academic genres in such a language, and we finally stressed the Federal University of Minas Gerais' *Inglês para Fins Acadêmicos* subjects as part of this national effort. As previously stated, this initiative purports to offer students the necessary apparatus to effectively write academic texts ranging from paraphrases within summaries to more sophisticated exploration of phenomena in research articles.

Not only have the students' different language proficiency levels been taken into account in those subjects, but also their various academic backgrounds. We have made explicit that this has led to the design of process writing activities that are not only based on general genre conventions, but also on specific discursive practices belonging to distinct academic communities. In other words, given the heterogeneous nature of academia itself, working with different written genres across a variety of disciplines seems to be a path to reach various academic literacies in English.

These literacies through academic genres have also been fostered through authentic language use in the classroom environment. Online corpus tools have aided teachers in that regard, raising students' awareness of language use according to genre conventions. Moreover, the compilation of a learner corpus has provided pedagogical subsidies to cater for their needs when it comes to specialised writing in their respective domains.

While analysing our students' accounts, collected in two surveys, we found out that most of the IFA students highlighted successful learning experiences related to the development of academic writing skills. Thus, we can conclude that students' positive feedback mainly on the writing tasks proposed in the IFA subjects is an indication as to how the approach proposed has helped them become part of

international academic spheres both by taking them overseas - in geographical terms - or by enabling them to negotiate their own research and ideas in English from their own homely environments.

On the whole, initiatives to academic literacies in English by means of developing writing skills have proven to be fruitful ways to contribute to raise Brazilian universities to world-class levels.

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