

DEVELOPING ACADEMIC WRITING AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
OF RWANDA: A CASE STUDY OF FIRST YEAR ECONOMICS AND  
MANAGEMENT

By  
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## **Declaration**

I declare that this mini-thesis is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Ildephonse KERENI

December, 2004



Signed: .....

## **Dedication**

To

my late parents and sister

my sisters and brothers

my beloved wife and children

I dedicate this mini-thesis

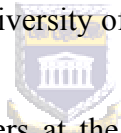


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Many people contributed to the accomplishment of this work. Only some are mentioned but the support of all is acknowledged.

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## **Abstract**

The present study investigates the extent to which English writing skills offered to francophone students at the National University of Rwanda through a one year intensive English course and in a 75 hour course of Speaking and Writing Skills during the first year of formal study in the Faculty of Economics and Management equip students to cope with academic writing tasks in subjects studied through the medium of English.

Research techniques used in this study include questionnaires distributed to students, interviews with language teachers and subject lecturers, and an analysis of the textbook as well as a sample of student exit examination scripts.

The findings reveal that writing skills offered to francophone students are product-focused and limited to formal correctness in English language. The majority of tasks required at most the composition of short paragraphs with no extended writing. Writing tasks are therefore not adequate for cognitively demanding academic writing in mainstream subjects. The teaching of writing failed to draw on process and genre approaches to English for Academic Purposes which, together with subject content considerations, could better develop students' academic writing. In addition, the findings indicated that extensive reading in students' fields of study, which could support the development of academic writing and of relevant technical and academic vocabulary in this context, is not required. Finally, it was revealed that students were unaware of the need to write for an audience and, moreover, were not equipped with the necessary linguistic tools to express rhetorical stance which is a crucial feature of academic writing.

The study concludes that appropriate academic writing skills for students studying Economics and Management subjects through the medium of English are generally not developed. In order to develop such skills, language teachers should engage students in

more cognitive writing processes using challenging topics from subject content complemented by an awareness of specific genres and related discourses for meaningfully communicative purposes. In addition, the study recommends extensive reading to enhance, among other things, an understanding of the requirements of academic discourse and the acquisition of relevant vocabulary.



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## ACRONYMS

TEOE: Techniques d'Expressions Orales et Ecrites

EPLM : Ecole Pratique des Langues Modernes

NCEC : New Cambridge English Course



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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Language background in Rwanda

Before the colonial period, Kinyarwanda was the only language used countrywide. It was used among Rwandans and served mainly as a means of communication and the vehicle of culture and history in the oral tradition. It was also the language of social, political, and economic interaction among Rwandans. It was only under the Belgium colonial regime in the 1920s and especially with the introduction of formal schools that French was introduced as a new language.



French, the language of the colonisers, was therefore used to fulfil administrative purposes and introduced into the schools as all local administrative personnel were chosen according to their level of competence in French. From the 1920s until the early 1960s French was used as the medium of instruction from grade four in primary school to the end of the secondary level of education and Kinyarwanda was taught as a subject. French started to serve as the language of instruction in higher education in 1963 when the National University of Rwanda was founded. It was in the early 1960s that the teaching of English as a foreign language was introduced in secondary schools.

French was used to accomplish both internal administrative tasks and to communicate with the outside world, so the English language remained without much importance for Rwandans until the 1970s. In the 1970s people began to realise the importance of English in various domains for different purposes. In commercial and cultural domains, for instance, English was important to facilitate exchanges with other Great Lakes African

countries. It became also important in political domains especially for foreign policy, and in educational and scientific domains. As a result, an English section was created in the National Office for Secondary School curriculum development in 1976 with the main task of standardising English programmes in all secondary schools. This interest in English became more important after 1994 as will be explained in the following section.

## 1.2 The importance of English in Rwanda after 1994

After the 1994 genocide, many Rwandans who had been in exile returned to their country. The majority of the returnees came from Anglophone countries, mainly Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. Others came from Francophone countries such as Burundi and The Democratic Republic of Congo. Yet others came from other continents such as Europe and America. The main point, as far as language use was concerned, was the problem of communication among Rwandans especially in administration and educational domains since Rwanda was suddenly changed into a multilingual country. To solve this problem of language use, the then Government of National Unity declared Kinyarwanda, French and English official languages. Apart from Kinyarwanda which was at the same time a national language, both French and English had equal status especially in administration and in education.

Apart from being officially important in administration and in education, the English language also became important in workplaces after 1994, even before it was declared an official language. Just after the 1994 war and genocide, many international Non Government Organisations and United Nations Organisations came to carry out their various actions in Rwanda, especially operations related to emergency aid. To carry out their duties, these organisations needed local labour, and knowledge of English was a requirement for all people who applied for jobs. This situation has prevailed up to today. Rwandans who were proficient in both French and English could get well paid jobs. This requirement had never applied before. In this context, there has been a growing interest in learning English through evening classes not only to get well paid jobs but also for

business purposes. The new status of the English language has had significant implications for language in education.



### 1.3 English Language in Rwandan education system

It has been earlier explained that the teaching of English as a subject was introduced in Rwandan secondary schools in the early 1960s but gained more importance in the 1970s when the National Office for Secondary School Curriculum Development standardised English in all secondary schools. English continued to be taught as a subject in secondary schools but gained much more importance in Rwandan education systems after 1994 as a result of the socio-linguistic situation mentioned earlier and also because of the need by the Government of National Unity to promote bilingualism (French and English).

#### *1.3.1 The importance of English in the primary education system after 1994*

After 1994, English enjoyed a new status in the primary education contexts. In primary schools with a French background, English was introduced and taught as a subject from fourth year. In schools with an English background, on the other hand, Kinyarwanda was used as the language of instruction up to second year. English became the medium of instruction from the third year, with Kinyarwanda and French taught as subjects. In private primary schools, which are essentially located in the capital and in a few provinces, English is used either as a medium of instruction or taught as a subject in all the six years of primary education. At the end of primary school, national examinations giving access to secondary school were set in the three languages and children had to choose any of the three they felt comfortable to write in. Since 2001, French and English have been the only languages in which examinations may be written.

In short, the importance of English in primary schools is justified by the fact that, before 1994, it had never been taught as a subject, nor had it been used as the medium of instruction, and it was impossible to find an exam set in English.

### ***1.3.2 The importance of English in Rwandan secondary schools after 1994***

This increasing importance of English at primary school level was also apparent in secondary schools. After 1994, both public and private secondary schools using exclusively English as the medium of instruction were created. In these schools, in order to promote bilingualism, French was taught as a subject. In schools where French was the language of instruction, English continued to be taught as a subject but the number of hours was increased for the same purpose of promoting bilingualism through the formal education system. The exam was set either in English or French according to whether students followed the Anglophone or the Francophone option. The number of hours for both French and English as subjects has been increased in secondary schools since 1996 in order not only to promote bilingualism but also to prepare students for university subjects taught either in French or in English. This meant that from 2002 any student leaving secondary school would possibly not encounter any problems of language hindering him or her from following university courses in either language.



The increasing importance of English was manifested in that not only the number of hours was increased as a subject but it was also used as the medium of instruction in some schools and exams were set in English in these schools, which was not the case before 1994.

Concerning the increasing importance of English at tertiary study after 1994, Francophone students had to follow an intensive English course to enable them cope with faculty subjects taught in English. As it appears, the English language, especially at the National University of Rwanda, became an important linguistic tool for academic learning. The following section discusses the background and the rationale of the study within the framework of the teaching and learning of English at the National University of Rwanda after 1994.



## 1.4 Background and rationale of the study

It was noted earlier that the socio-linguistic situation after the 1994 war and genocide in Rwanda resulted in the increasing importance of English observed in various domains although many Rwandans did not speak it till now. Consequently, there has been an increasing interest among Rwandans in learning English for various purposes. One of these purposes is academic study for reasons explained below.

From April 1994 to February 1995 the National University of Rwanda was closed due to the 1994 war and genocide. It reopened in March 1995 receiving for the first time Anglophone students who could not follow their mainstream studies in French. As a result, two parallel systems were put in place. Francophone students were supposed to study through French and Anglophones through English. Yet there were no bilingual lecturers who could teach in both languages. This presented crucial educational and financial constraints since the government had to hire two different lecturers to give the same course in two different languages.



In 1996, a policy was therefore introduced to offer intensive language courses to all students entering the National University of Rwanda. Francophone students had to follow an intensive general English course while Anglophones had to follow an intensive general French course, after which they would be required to study through the medium of either language according to the availability of the lecturer. It is in this context that the School of Modern Languages (EPLM) was created to offer one year intensive English and French courses to students from secondary schools admitted to the National University of Rwanda, in order to enable them cope with their mainstream studies. In addition to the EPLM intensive language course, students are offered a 75 hour course of Speaking and Writing Skills (TEOE) in their first year of formal academic study to reinforce the speaking and writing skills learnt in EPLM (these two acronyms, EPLM and TEOE, will be used through this work to refer to the two courses mentioned above).

In this context, the research problem is described in the following section.

## 1.5 Research Problem

Francophone students admitted to the National University of Rwanda from secondary schools are offered an intensive EPLM English course to enable them to follow some of the Faculty subjects in English. This intensive course is complemented with a 75 hours TEOE in first years of different Faculties. The main research problem is the extent to which the two courses prepare students for academic writing in Economics and Management Faculty subjects studied in English. This main problem drives my investigation with the aim to develop academic writing at the National University of Rwanda, particularly in first year Economics and Management Programmes. The purpose of the present study is discussed in the following section.

## 1.6 The purpose of the study

This study is concerned with writing in English for Academic Purposes. The aim of the study is to investigate the extent to which writing skills offered in the one-year intensive EPLM English course and in the 75 hour TEOE course prepare students for academic writing in the subjects which are offered through the medium of English. The study focuses on first year Economics and Management. In this regard, the study analyses students' and teachers' perceptions of the usefulness and the helpfulness of the writing skills offered to these students in terms of the requirements of academic writing in content subjects. In addition, it analyses writing skills developed in the one-year EPLM course book. Furthermore, it investigates, through scripts of the exit exam, the extent to which students control academic discourse while composing. Finally, the main concern of the study is to evaluate the nature of the academic writing skills developed at the National University of Rwanda, including the writing processes, purposes and contexts, in order to formulate recommendations towards the more effective development of academic writing in this context.

## 1.7 Research techniques

In order to achieve my research aims, I used three main research techniques, namely, questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. Questionnaires were distributed to first year Economics and Management students. Interviews were conducted with the Head of the English Department in the School of Modern Languages, TEOE teachers in first year Economics and Management, as well as with lecturers who teach Economics and Management subjects through the medium of English. The documents analysed include the textbook used in the EPLM intensive English course and students' exit exam scripts.

## 1.8 The scope of the study

This study will deal with academic writing skills in English as an additional language within the framework of English for Academic Purposes in the context of the National University of Rwanda where Francophone students have been exposed to English as the medium of instruction for some courses since 1997. In this regard, the writing skills offered to students before they start to study faculty subjects in English will be critically analysed in order to determine the extent to which these skills prepare students for academic writing in subject content. The study will be limited to first year students in the Faculty of Economics and Management (where the majority of first year Francophone students are enrolled) who have completed both the EPLM and TEOE courses.

The literature review will draw on theories of second language teaching and learning, with an emphasis on writing as a difficult skill in English as a second or foreign language and specifically on approaches to EAP writing. Two aspects of academic writing will also be explored, namely, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing In the Disciplines (WID). In addition, the reading-writing relationship and academic and technical vocabulary which are important aspects of academic writing will be dealt with. Finally, modality will also be discussed as a crucial aspect of academic discourse. The

discussion of these theories will form the background to an analysis of the writing skills offered in both the EPLM and TEOE courses in order to investigate the extent to which these writing skills develop appropriate academic writing skills for students in their first year of Economics and Management studies.

Drawing on the literature review discussed above, the study will include therefore a critical analysis of students' and teachers' views as well as the analysis of the text book in order to determine the extent to which both students and teachers understand processes of writing, purposes of writing and the contexts in which writing occurs for the development of academic writing at the National University of Rwanda in general and in first year Economics and Management in particular. As far as academic writing is concerned in this context, the study will also include a focused analysis of exit examination scripts after the completion of the EPLM course to find out to what extent students control modality. Finally, the study will include conclusions and recommendations for more effective academic writing at the National University of Rwanda and in first year Economics and Management in particular.



## 1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the background to language use in Rwanda with emphasis on the increasing importance of English in various domains especially after 1994. In education domain at the National University of Rwanda, the chapter has highlighted how English has been used as the medium of instruction and how this policy entailed the implementation of the intensive English course and the 75 hour course in the first year to equip students with linguistic tools to cope with subjects taught in English. The chapter has also shown the purpose of the study, that is, to investigate the extent to which writing skills offered in these two courses prepare students for academic writing in the Economic and Management subjects they study through English. Finally, the chapter has presented the main research techniques used in this study and the scope of the study.

The remainder of the thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter Two will deal with the literature review which will mainly consist of issues related to the main approaches to EAP writing and aspects of academic writing such as Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing In the Disciplines, the reading-writing relationship, academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary, as well as modality which is an important feature of academic writing. Chapter Three will describe the research design and techniques used to collect the data. Chapter Four will be concerned with the findings from questionnaires and interviews and the analysis of the textbook and of the scripts of EPLM exit examination. Chapter Five will draw conclusions from the study and formulate a set of recommendations towards the development of academic writing. The following chapter deals with the literature review.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores and discusses a range of issues pertaining to writing skills. It is made up of two parts. The first part deals with writing skill as ‘a difficult skill’. The second part discusses writing in academic contexts. It presents and discusses changing views on English for academic purposes and in particular on the development of writing skills. Various approaches to teaching academic writing are explored to determine the extent to which they can contribute to the development of academic writing in English (as an additional language) at the National University of Rwanda where francophone students leaving secondary school are first offered the intensive EPLM English course and TEOE course to enable them to cope with the subjects they have to study in English. Ideally, the development of academic writing skills in this context should take into account students’ ‘adequate understanding of the processes of text creation, the purposes of writing and how to express these in effective ways through formal and rhetorical text choices, and the contexts within which texts are composed and read and which give them meaning’ (Hyland, 2003: 24).

#### 2.1 Writing as a difficult skill

Writing is thought to be the most difficult skill in language learning. Richards (1990:100) argues that learning to write in either a first or second language is one of the most difficult tasks a learner encounters and one that few people can be said to master fully.

One may think that learning writing in a second or additional language may be easier than learning it in a first language as skills learnt in one language should be transferable to another language. To some extent, this may be true but the complexity of writing skills makes them difficult to acquire in both first and second or additional languages.

Consequently, both learners and teachers encounter difficulties with extended writing activities, that is, writing above the sentence level. These problems can be exacerbated by some language teaching methods, which consider the writing skill as the most difficult and therefore the one to be developed last with the result that it is often left out altogether. Examples of these are the direct method which concentrated on the speaking skill almost to the exclusion of writing and the audiolingual method which regards writing as the skill to be taught last, after pronunciation and reading.

One of the difficulties of writing in a second or additional language is that it is generally believed to require some mastery of writing in the first language. There seems to be a perception that once learners can write sentences and paragraphs in their first language, they will automatically transfer such skills to other languages. However, it has to be noted that this may be possible only if a certain degree of proficiency in the first language is attained.

The above view may have complex implications for the teaching and the learning of the English language in general and writing skills in particular at the National University of Rwanda. If it is assumed that the level of proficiency in the second language will to some extent depend on the degree of development in the first language, this means that learners' proficiency in English in Rwanda will depend on the sequence of languages used in Rwandan formal education and how they are taught.

Given the past and present language policies in Rwanda, Kinyarwanda which is the first language (home language) should ideally serve as grounding for skills to be transferred into French, and French in turn should serve the same purpose for English.

The latter, which is an additional language, was introduced as a medium of instruction for Francophone students at the National University of Rwanda in 1997. These students had been accustomed to the use of French as the language of instruction from the fourth year of primary school. In this new context of sudden transition to writing, English becomes very important since students need to become part of an academic discourse community and write according to the conventions and the norms of this new academic community. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) define a discourse community as a group of speakers or writers who share a set of communicative purposes and use commonly agreed conventions to achieve these purposes. In the context of EAP, 'a discourse community is constituted in and by its discursive practices and it is through discourse that new members are initiated into the group or are excluded from the group' (Starfield, 2001: 133-134) and, moreover, as Orr (1991:189) points out:

*The argument throughout current literature on student writing is that admission into the academic discourse community is a prerequisite for successful study. Mastering a discipline at tertiary level is as much a matter of acquiring the language of the academic community as it is of learning the content.*



At the National University of Rwanda, Francophone students admitted to this higher institution of learning have to follow some of their subjects in English which is the language learnt the last in their schooling. Yet, they have not only to learn it as an additional language but also as a medium of instruction in an academic context. In this extremely challenging situation students need to learn English for academic purposes to enable them to cope with those subjects learnt in English. In addition, students need to gain control over a range of genres and related discourses since they are required to write assignments and examinations in the subject areas.

To fulfil the above task, the kind of language used for academic instruction should be different from the language used for every day social communication. In this regard, Cummins (1980) distinguishes between two levels of language learning. The first he calls it 'Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills' (BICS) and the second 'Cognitive /



Academic Language Proficiency' (CALP). In the first model, language is made easily accessible by the familiar context in which the communication occurs. In CALP, that is to use a language in a decontextualised and cognitively-demanding situation as in higher education, the context for communication is dictated by the norms and conventions of the institution. Baker (1996: 154) argues that BICS are not sufficient to cope with the cognitively demanding situation of learning as in higher education. Carson (1995) highlighted the enormous lexical differences between typical conversational interactions in English as compared to academic or literacy-related uses of English. The basic distinction between BICS and CALP still holds in Cummins' recent work (2001) although he also makes use of the terms 'conversational' and 'academic proficiency' in order to avoid misunderstandings.

In the context of the National University of Rwanda, students leave secondary school without having attained a sufficient level of CALP and they are therefore offered an intensive English course (EPLM) using a series called the New Cambridge English Course (1993). Part of my aim in carrying out this research is to determine the extent to which the writing skills offered in the textbook prepare the students at CALP level which could enable them to operate in an environment that is cognitively and academically demanding.

The above paragraphs discussed some difficulties related to the learning of writing in a second or additional language, particularly for students starting at the National University of Rwanda who need to study faculty subjects in English. The following section deals with the role that the first language can play in teaching writing.

### ***2.1.1 The role of the first language***

This section deals with debates around whether the first language helps or hinders writing in a second or additional language. It is generally accepted that learners should be discouraged from translating from their first languages when they write and that they should develop the ability to think in English. However, studies of competent writers

indicate that they use translation from their first language when writing in a second or foreign language. Cumming (1989:114) describes an experiment in which he asked first language speakers of French to think aloud when they write in English. The expert writers talked to themselves in both French and English. Cumming (1989:128) concludes that students' first languages proved to be an important resource in their continual process of decision-making while writing.

In addition note-taking while listening to a lecture in a language that is not one's first language appears to be another writing skill that can benefit from the use of the first language. Adamson (1980:85) maintains that students should be taught how to use their first language when taking notes (on a lecture or a written text) and afterwards to reconstruct a coherent account in the language they will be expected to use in texts and examinations.

Although the role of the first language when writing in English therefore seems potentially significant, in order to enhance this role, a number of issues should be addressed to the language teachers at the National University of Rwanda while teaching extended writing. First, teachers should not criticize learners who use their first language to compose and write in English. Second, a distinction between students who use their first language to plan and organize their writing and those who translate literally from one sentence to the next should be made. For the second group, it may be useful to provide them with grammatical input on the differences between the two languages as far as syntax is concerned. Third researchers have found that the topic of a piece of writing might elicit translation from the first language.

Having dealt with the role that the first language can play in writing in a second or additional language, the following section discusses the difference between speaking and writing.

### ***2.1.2 Differences between speaking and writing***

Before I elaborate on these differences, I define and explain discourse and text which are often used in this chapter on literature review. In the context of the research, coherence and context also need to be defined and explained.

Schiffrin (1994) identifies two definitions of discourse. The first definition characterizes discourse as a unit of coherent language consisting of more than one sentence. The second definition characterizes discourse as language in use. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) argue that these definitions, taken alone, are deficient. They therefore provide a definition of discourse which combines both the notion of ‘sentence’ and the notion of ‘language in use’:

*A piece of discourse is an instance of spoken or written language that has describable internal relationships of form and meaning that relate coherently to an external communicative function or purpose and a given audience /interlocutor. Furthermore, the external function or purpose can only be properly determined if one takes into account the context and participants (i.e all the relevant situational, social and cultural factors) in which the piece of discourse occurs (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000: 4).*

In academic contexts, producing coherent and meaningful written discourse which is purposive and takes into account the context and participants is central for the development of academic writing. In this regard, coherence and context need to be defined.

Cook (1989: 4) defines coherence as ‘the quality of being meaningful and unified.’ According to Halliday and Hasan (1989) this quality of a text to be meaningful and unified ‘sets up internal expectations; and these are matched up with the expectations that

the listener or reader brings from the external sources, from the context of situation and of culture' (p.48). The context of situation is also emphasized by Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 235) who define coherence as 'the unity of a piece of discourse such that the individual sentences or utterances are connected to each other and form a meaningful whole with respect to the context of a situation, even when the connections are not explicitly made.'

The same authors define context as 'all the factors and elements that are nonlinguistic and nontextual but which affect spoken or written communicative interaction' (p. 13) and Halliday (1991: 5) describes context as 'the events that are going on around when people speak (and write).'

All the above defined and explained terms occur in what is called text. A text can therefore be defined as any passage, spoken or written, that forms a unified whole and having that property of hanging together through coherence and cohesion.

One of the ways to classify discourse is the written/spoken distinction resulting in written or spoken texts. It is from this perspective that some differences and similarities between speaking and writing are discussed in this subsection.

Speaking which in the first language is naturally developed earlier than writing has an influence on the production of writing. Learners who have not been made aware of the difference between writing and speaking tend to write the way they speak. There are various views about the differentiation between spoken language and written language.

One difference offered by Chafe (1982:36-7) lies in the speed observed in the production of speech. The work, which was part of a project to investigate differences between written and spoken language revealed the following:

*The average speed of spoken English, including pauses is in the neighborhood of 180 words a minute. The speed of writing depends on whether it is handwriting or typewriting as well as on individual differences ... presumably, most of the differences between written and spoken language have resulted from the nature of handwriting, rather than typing, but even typing takes place at, say about one-third the speed of speaking, and that rate is for copying, not creation of new language. Writing, then, of whatever kind, is slower than speaking and handwriting is much slower.*

Aitchison (1995: 105-7) states a number of characteristics that differentiate spoken and written languages. Each characteristic for spoken language is opposed to another one for written language, for example, talk is shared between two people (more than one participant) whereas written language lacks face – to – face interaction). A further point is that in a conversation the interlocutors need not say where they are or who they are because they share mutual knowledge while written language has to make all relevant information explicit. Further, spoken language makes use of repetitions and incomplete sentences or fragments while written language tends to avoid both repetitions and fragments, using full sentences. Lastly, in a spoken language sentence structures are fairly straightforward and simple and the vocabulary consists mostly of common words, with some colloquial phrases. On the other hand, written language uses abstract and less familiar terms. These typical characteristics are summarized in a table as follows:

SPOKEN	WRITTEN
More than one participant	Single writer
Inexplicit	Explicit
Repetitive	Non-repetitive
Fragments	Full sentences
Simple structure	Elaborate structure
Concrete, common vocabulary	Abstract, less common vocabulary

***Table 1 Typical characteristics that differentiate spoken and written languages Aitchison (1995).***

Richards (1990: 100-1) attributes part of the difficulty of learning to write well to these differences between written and spoken discourse. He emphasizes that rules of spoken discourse are acquired through conversation and do not require instruction. On the other hand, the rules of written discourse are largely learned. According to Richards (1990:107), ‘the difficulties learners have in mastering the ability to write well may depend on the fact that written discourse reflects very different rules from spoken language’.

Since written discourse is generally characterized by the absence of the listener, written language needs to be explicit because the audience for a written text may be unknown to the writer. In this regard, the goal of written language is to convey information accurately, effectively, and appropriately. According to Richards (ibid:101) who shares the view of Aitchison (1995), writing must provide a context to express meaning explicitly:

*The amount of shared knowledge between writer and reader is much less than that usually found between speaker and listener. In conversation, the participants often share background knowledge about a topic, and so a great deal can be left unsaid or merely implied. In writing, however, no such assumptions can usually be made. Writing is decontextualised and must provide its own context, expressing meanings explicitly.*

To make the meaning of a written text explicit, written language employs a different syntax and vocabulary from spoken discourse. To this Richards (ibid: 101) adds:

*It also has a more elaborated linguistic system characterized by the use of complex rather than simple clauses, a greater variety of clause types, more specific vocabulary, and a higher frequency and variety of devices for expressing such syntactic processes as relativization, nominalization, and complementization.*

It may seem from the above that linguistic organization is enough to achieve a well written academic text. However, once the writer has decided on the meaning to be expressed, he or she also has to consider the genre of text best suited to carry the meaning as well as the audience and the purpose to be achieved.

While the distinction between spoken and written discourses discussed above seems to indicate neatly distinguishable features of each type, these apparently fixed and typical features of speech and writing do not fully represent the complexity and overlapping that exists in the differentiation between written and spoken discourse. For example, modern emails, although written texts have many of the features of spoken texts.

In academic contexts, both spoken and written discourses may be highly complex. For instance, as McCarthy and Carter point out, ‘... a university lecture is usually transmitted to its audience using the medium of speech, but may well have many of the features associated with the mode of a written academic article (carefully planned and structured language, impersonal grammatical forms, etc.)’ (1994: 4-5).

Students at the National University of Rwanda who have to be prepared for writing in academic contexts therefore have to be made aware of the differences between written discourse and speech but they should also be informed about the overlapping features of the two discourses. In addition language teachers at the National University of Rwanda should know that in order for learners to achieve a well written text, elements such as form, content, context, audience and specific discourses and genres in the field of study that is, Economics and Management, should be taken into account.

The above section discussed writing as a difficult skill, particularly in a second or an additional language, and the implications this may have for students learning their subjects in English as an additional language at the National University of Rwanda. The following part of the literature review explores and discusses the main approaches to English for academic purposes writing to determine the extent to which they may be relevant for this context.

## 2.2 Academic writing

This section reviews and discusses the main approaches to teaching writing skills with an emphasis on English for academic purposes (EAP). Each of the approaches will be considered to determine the implications it has for the research carried out and the extent to which it may match with the context of the study that is, developing academic writing at the National University of Rwanda in general and particularly in first years of Economics and Management.

Before turning to various approaches to EAP writing, it is important to define EAP and to indicate its objectives. According to Flowerdew and Peacock (2001: 11), EAP is normally considered to be one of two branches of English for specific purposes (ESP), the other being EOP (English for occupational purposes). Harmer (1991:5) indicates that EAP has increasingly grown because students had to attend English speaking higher institutions but their low proficiency in English could not enable them to follow their courses efficiently. They had therefore to be offered an English course to prepare them for the English medium. Accordingly, the objective of EAP is in general to help students develop the academic skills which they need at tertiary level to follow mainstream subjects or to master content knowledge in English. To demonstrate their mastery of subject content at the National University of Rwanda, students have to communicate or express their academic knowledge mainly through writing. It is therefore important to develop EAP writing for students moving from secondary school to university.

### ***2.2.1 Approaches to EAP writing***

Quoted by Paltridge (2001: 55), Johns (2000) noted that many EAP courses draw on each of the approaches discussed below without necessarily focusing on one single perspective. It is through what is known about writing that practice in classroom writing is possible, but practice and experience are not sufficient without being informed by theories. Hyland (2003: 1) puts it as follows:



*Everything we do in the classrooms, the methods and materials we adopt, the teaching styles we assume, the tasks we assign, are guided by both practical and theoretical knowledge, and our decision can be more effective if that knowledge is explicit. Familiarity with what is known about writing, and about teaching writing, can therefore help us to reflect on our assumptions and enable us to approach ancient teaching methods, with an informed and critical eye.*

From this perspective, it is necessary to consider each approach to EAP writing to see the extent to which it may inform the language teacher to develop academic writing skills at the National University of Rwanda.

### **Controlled Composition**

Controlled composition in EAP teaching is based on the view that writing should focus on accuracy and correctness. According to Silva (1990), this orientation was born from the marriage of structural linguistics and the behaviorist learning theories of second language teaching that were dominant in the 1960s. Hyland (2003: 3) describes this view in the following terms:

*Essentially, writing is seen as a product constructed from the writer's command of grammatical and lexical knowledge, and writing development is considered to be the result of imitating and manipulating models provided by the teacher. For many who adopt this view, writing is regarded as an extension of grammar, a means of reinforcing language patterns through habit formation and testing learner's ability to produce well-formed sentences. For others, writing is an intricate structure that can only be learned by developing the ability to manipulate lexis and grammar.*

Paltridge (2001:55) shares the same view regarding classroom writing activities informed by this approach:

*Classroom tasks employed in this perspective included substitution tables, written expansions, transformation and completion-type tasks which learners used in the manipulation and imitations of model texts. The texts students wrote became a collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items with little concern for audience or purpose.*

In the context of this research, it appears that this model of requiring students to write only grammatically correct sentences may unfortunately be in use. Most compositions taught to students being prepared for writing essays in various sub-disciplines within Economics and Management programmes follow this model of a product which focuses on accuracy and correctness of sentences.

Although accuracy and correctness are required for a well-written text in academic context, it is logical to agree with Macaro (2003:249) that ‘writers should not allow the content of their writing to be dictated by the potential inaccuracy (or accuracy) of their written product’.



The pure ‘writing as product’ began to be abandoned in the mid-1960s when teachers began to feel that writing was more than just grammatically correct sentences. This led to an emphasis on more extended writing activities which considered writing to be the connection of sentences to produce paragraphs. This trend, known as rhetorical functions, will be discussed in the following subsection.

### **Rhetorical functions**

This new movement was referred to as ‘eminent-traditional rhetoric’ (Paltridge, 2001:56). It considers the text beyond the sentence level to the discourse level. However, this conception of discourse was still fairly narrow because it ignored other textual, social and cultural factors in writing. According to Hyland (2003:6), the focus on text functions is to help students develop effective paragraphs through the creation of topic sentences, supporting sentences and transitions and to develop different types of paragraphs.

Students are guided to produce connected sentences according to prescribed formulas and tasks which tend to focus on form to reinforce model writing patterns. From the same perspective, Paltridge (2001:56) indicates that:

*The teaching of rhetorical functions focused mainly on descriptions, narratives, definitions, exemplification, classification, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and generalizations. Classroom tasks concentrated upon arranging sentences and paragraphs into particular rhetorical patterns.*

Hyland (2003: 6) adds that this orientation is still influential where L2 students are being prepared for academic writing at college or university. Although the ‘rhetorical functions’ approach pretended to teach EAP writing at discourse level, students’ attention remained focused largely on form.

Once again, the above orientation which focuses on form may typically depict the kind of writing activity given to students who are preparing to study first year subjects in English at the National University of Rwanda. From my experience, the little time allotted to writing tends to involve these students in writing activities where they follow merely certain fixed conventions to structure syntactic patterns into a few paragraphs around a given topic.

Although tasks developed within a functional approach enable L2 students to develop essay writing focusing on form and function, they fail to take into account either the writers’ personal experiences or their practical purposes. In addition, many books informed by the rhetorical approach to teaching academic writing remain mostly concerned with the finished product without considering the process students go through in order to produce their texts. It is the focus on the writing process which is to be dealt with in the following subsection.

## **The process approach to writing**

It has been argued in the two previous subsections that controlled composition and rhetorical functions approaches to writing are both concerned with the mastery of grammatical and syntactic forms as well as the ability to structure and organize different kinds of paragraphs and text at a more advanced level. This approach to teaching writing has been referred to as the product approach. In the 1970's the reaction to the product approach to teaching writing made teachers feel that students were not set free to think and express what they have in their mind. As Jordan (1997:164) puts it students 'were restricted in what they could write and how they could write about it.' It is in this context that the process approach to teaching writing emerged.

The process approach to writing is characterized by three important elements. The role of the student becomes central, the teacher guides the students rather than control them and writing activities go through several stages.



### **The role of the students**

Richards (1990: 110) explains the key principles underpinning the process approach to writing as that students assume greater control over what they write, how they write it and also take part in the evaluation of their own writing. In this regard, learners are seemingly engaged in a meaningful writing; they also become less dependent on the teacher and work collaboratively with other students. This central role of the student in writing activities informed by the process approach is also acknowledged by Hyland. At the same time he stresses the role of the teachers in this writing process:

*The process approach to writing teaching emphasizes the writer as an independent producer of texts, but it goes further to address the issue of what teachers should do to help learners perform a writing task (2003: 10).*

## **The role of the teacher and stages**

Although the role of the teacher is 'reduced' compared to the role she/he plays in a product focused approach, it is also redefined. The redefined role of the teacher is described by Richards (1990:111) as follows:

*Rather than attempting to constrain learners to ensure that they produce correct writing, teachers act as facilitators, organizing writing experiences that enable the learner to develop effective composing strategies. The teacher is also an investigator of the writing process employed by the students, using observation and discussion to identify successful approaches to different aspects of the writing process.*

During this interaction the writing process undergoes various stages. These stages have no fixed model but they do have common elements; the only difference is how they are adapted or adjusted to the contexts of teaching writing. For instance, in the context of EAP writing, Paltridge (2001) shows how the approach starts with the writer and the writing process itself, rather than linguistic and rhetorical form as described in the previous subsection. In its stages, the approach also shows how a focus on form is delayed until the writer has come to terms with the content and organization of the text. He describes the stages in the following words:

*Classroom activities in this approach focus on the stages writers typically go through in producing texts, such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading their texts. Typically activities might be titled 'getting started', 'generating ideas', 'adding', 'deleting and managing ideas', and 'focusing on grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary' (in the editing phase) (p.57).*

It seems clear that through focusing on these stages the process approach to writing makes this skill more meaningful to students at tertiary level and can be beneficial for

students learning English as an additional language to prepare them for writing in subjects where composition or essay writing is the predominant mode for exams or assignments. The following three elements would seem to be central: First, the process approach shapes the student's critical thinking without being much constrained by grammatical mistakes. Second, it offers possibilities of helpful teacher feedback and, third, it also offers possibilities of peer feedback.

To take the first element, as far as critical thinking is concerned, the process approach enables the learner to write freely and helps to shape the student's thinking and rethinking. She/he is not constrained by a focus on linguistic mistakes or errors (grammar) but is encouraged instead to concentrate on content and organization through review and evaluation. Gabrielatos (2002:7) makes an important distinction between language accuracy and writing skills in terms of developing writing as follows:

*A learner may be able to write sentences which are satisfactory for his / her level in terms of grammar, syntax and vocabulary and still be unable to produce an effective text... we need to remember that language input / practice alone cannot result to the development of writing skills.*

Chimbganda (2001), having been aware of the many problems ESL learners in higher institutions encounter, especially when it comes to academic writing, discusses how a process approach can be used to enhance the academic writing skills of the students. He views the process approach to teaching writing as an approach which takes into account the many diverse factors which bring about successful writing. Basing his view on respected theorists such as Pica (1986), Dixon (1986) Ghani (1986) and Chenoweth (1987), among others who advocate a process approach to ESL writing, he stresses that the editing stage is very important because, as a form of revision, it sharpens the students' cognitive awareness and develops their critical thinking, supported by the teacher who makes useful comments. This interactive classroom work is potentially beneficial for improving students' academic writing. He concludes that it is quite clear that the process

approach offers many possibilities in fostering the academic writing skills of second language learners.

The second element, teacher feedback, would seem to be an important tool for the development of writing skills at the National University of Rwanda where a product approach to writing may still be a prevailing practice. Teacher feedback refers to comments or evaluation offered by the teacher on students' written work and is viewed as the most common form of feedback that students are exposed to.

Those who advocate a process approach to writing instruction have shown that teacher feedback which enables the students to revise their written works is essential to the development of students' writing. For instance, Patthey-Chavez et al. (2004: 3) who cite Patthey-Chavez and Feris (1997) and Sternglass (1998) claim that teacher feedback provides students with the opportunity to expand and shape their ideas over subsequent drafts of their work while Zellermyer (1989) adds that with teacher assistance and feedback, students gradually develop the skills necessary to view their own work critically, revise it, and become better writers. Orellana (1995) and Wollman-Bonilla (2000) stress that during process writing teacher feedback brings into focus the language choices writers need to make to convey their ideas and reinforce instructional points discussed in whole-class settings.

Although teacher feedback develops students' writing in various ways, as mentioned above, and it has been noted that students value it, some studies have been critical of the way teachers offer feedback. Zamel (1985) and Cohen (1987) consider teacher feedback as often inadequate in the sense that it deals only with surface level issues. Zamel goes on to indicate that teachers tend to concentrate their feedback on micro-level features and ignore macro-level issues and that when teachers attempted to deal with macro-level matters, comments on such areas were often unclear and not explicit. According to Zamel, micro-level or surface level features refers to issues such as punctuation, grammar, spelling whereas macro-level features focus on higher level issues like organization of the writing, audience awareness, content and meaning.

This criticism is very significant in a context such as at the National University of Rwanda where language teachers in the first year may focus on micro-level features at the expense of macro-level matters when giving feedback. In this context, students' writing cannot develop unless teacher feedback takes into account important features of academic writing such as topic, coherence, content, context and audience.

The third element of process writing is peer feedback which should complement teacher feedback. Peer feedback refers to that type of feedback that comes from another student of equal status. Students of equal status and who have different levels of knowledge in writing because of different backgrounds can help each other effectively. Since 'the growth of student participation in higher education signals a shift away from a small, highly elitist provision of higher education towards policies and practices aimed at widening access to more of a population' (Coffin et al., 2003:3), classes are getting larger and larger which makes language teaching, and especially writing skills development, a difficult task to accomplish. At the National University of Rwanda where the average number of students in English language classes is forty, the use of peer feedback may be one of the solutions to the problem of dealing with large classes. In addition 'peer feedback will give the teacher time to focus on higher level concerns in students' writing' (Mooko, 2001: 168).

This subsection on writing process has discussed how the approach evolved in EAP writing and how recent research advocates the process approach to writing rather than product approach. Through the writing process teacher feedback and peer feedback occupy an important place in the development of academic writing skills especially when teacher feedback focuses on more macro-level features of English language. However, although process approaches and the theories that underpin them represent a dominant approach in L2 or additional language writing teaching today, the process approach alone is not currently believed to be sufficient to help students achieve significantly better writing in academic contexts. Hyland (2003:14) explains this insufficiency arguing that equipping novice writers with the strategies of good writers does not necessarily lead to



improvement. She adds that students not only need help in learning how to write, but also in understanding how texts are shaped by topic, audience, purpose, and cultural norms. In academic context some writers argue that the process approach does not address the demands of writing in university settings. Among those writers Paltridge (2001) cites Reid (1984a, 1984b) who argues that the process approach does not address issues such as the requirements of particular writing tasks or the development of schemata for academic discourse and Horowitz (1986a) who adds that the process approach gave students a false impression of what is required of them in university settings and particularly its very particular socio-cultural context and expectations.

As researchers and teachers became aware of the limitations expressed above, they began to think about approaches to writing which could relate language more strongly to the achievement of purpose, coherence and communication with the reader. It is in this context that discourse-based and genre-based approaches to writing emerged.

### **Discourse-based and genre-based approaches to writing**

Genre approaches in EAP have manifested themselves in different parts of the world. They have also had different underlying goals focused on different teaching situations. Paltridge (2001:58) compares the situation for the case of Britain and the United States where the applications have not been the same as in Australia. In Britain and the United States, EAP applications have been mostly concerned with teaching international students in English-medium universities with an emphasis on providing students with the English language resources and skills to help them gain access to English-medium academic discourse communities. In Australia, on the other hand, the concern was to provide underprivileged members of the community with the necessary resources for academic success.

The case of EAP applications for the situation of Britain and the United States would be more appropriate for the context of this research. EAP applications would be concerned with providing first year students at the National University of Rwanda, particularly first

year students in Economics and Management, with English language resources in terms of academic writing to help them cope with specific genres and related discourse of the subjects they study in English, since they have to become members of this specific academic discourse community.

The genre approach in EAP settings includes among other things ‘a focus on language and discourse features of the texts, as well as the context in which the text is produced’ (Paltridge, 2001: 58). In Hyland’s (2003: 18) terms, the importance of genre orientations is that it incorporates discourse and contextual aspects of language use. In other words, a genre orientation cannot only address the needs of ESL writers to compose texts for particular readers, but it can also draw the teacher into considering how texts actually work as communication.

The above context leads us to define first ‘discourse’ and ‘genre’ before proceeding. Traditionally, two types of definitions were given to the term discourse. The formal linguistic definition characterises discourse as a unit of coherent language consisting of more than one sentence. The functional linguistic definition characterizes discourse as language in use. An early attempt to broaden the formal understanding of discourse led to the following definition by Cook (1989: 60):

*We have, then, two different kinds of language as potential objects for study: One abstracted in order to teach a language or literacy, or to study how the rules of language work, and another which has been used to communicate something and is felt to be coherent (and may or may not happen to correspond to a correct sentence or a series of correct sentences). This latter kind of language language in use, for communication is called discourse.*

The functional perspective does not specify what ‘language in use’ is. It presupposes that discourse consists of putting elements of language to use. It does not take into account the perspective of language in use for communication. Language in use for communication, however, considers important elements such as meaning, purpose, participants, audience

and context. It is from this perspective that Celce–Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 4) have found the most satisfying definition to be one that combines the three perspectives (formal, functional and language use for communication) with other elements such as audience and context.

It is important to note that, in the context of academic writing, discourse informs language teaching so that a written text is seen as a whole or a unit instead of being viewed only as grammatically correct sequence of sentences. In addition, the produced text should be communicative, that is, a text from which a known or unknown reader will extract the ideas and their meanings. Furthermore, since writing is viewed as a communicative act, it entails ability for the writer to consider the ways discourse must achieve a purpose. From this perspective, written discourse is manifested through genre and coherence. The two terms are defined and discussed in the following paragraphs.

The assumption behind the notion of ‘genre’ is that there ‘may be underlying recurrent features which are prototypically present in particular groups of texts’ (McCarthy and Carter, 1994: 24). The term genre is imprecise and can be confusing since its definition may depend on the intention and the function of the one who uses it. With regard to this issue, Richardson (1991: 177) writes:

*It would seem that a perfectly useful word had now been so expanded in meaning as to render it imprecise. However, ‘genre’ must now mean what it is said to mean by those using it.*

According to Richardson (1991), Martin (1985) who has defined genre as a staged, goal oriented social process is used as a reference point when defining the term and he also refers to the works of Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Hasan, 1978; and Kress, 1982. According to Hyland’s recent work (2003: 19),

*Genres are referred to as social processes because members of a culture interact with each other to achieve them, as goal oriented because they have evolved to*

*get things done; and as staged because it usually takes more than one step for participants to achieve their goal.*

As part of the production of meaningful texts, register is also emphasized:

*Meaning in language comes into being in the cost of using language and that linguistic choices are socially determined by the interaction of the context of culture and the context of situation. (Richardson, 1991: 177).*

The theory of genre begins earlier than 1991. In early 1976 genre theory focused on the role of language in education with the arrival of Michael Halliday to take up the chair of Linguistics at the University of Sydney. Not long after Halliday's arrival, Martin and Rothery (1980, 1981) began enquiring into the texts produced by children in schools in the late 1970s and a series of reports were issued by the Department of Linguistics beginning in 1980. Thus began the development of the genre-based writing approach founded upon Halliday's functional approach to language.

From a data base of research studies in the 1980's, a typology of genres was identified by Christie (1989, p. 5) as 'generic structures which appear to be involved in order to learn various school subjects'. So far more work was undertaken in identifying and describing the factual genres and the narrative genres. These two main groups were described by Richardson (1991:177-8) as follows:

*Factual genres included Procedures (how something is done), Description (what some particular thing is like), Report (what an entire class of things is like), Explanation (a reason why a judgment is made), Argument (arguments why a thesis has been produced). Narrative genres included Recounts, Narrative based on personal experience, Narrative based on fantasy, The moral tale, Myths, Spoofs, Serials, Thematic narratives.*

Among the genres he enumerates, there is one which is of interest in the context of education namely educational genres. In educational genre there are according to the author, lectures, tutorials, report / essay writing, learning seminars, examinations, textbook writing.

In higher education, university students are required to write within specific genres and discourses depending on the requirements of each subject. It is therefore important that language teachers and lecturers guide students and make them aware of the existence of specific genres in academic context. Although this orientation seems to adopt a genre-based approach to teaching academic writing, it would be beneficial for students to acquire academic writing through a procedure, as Flowerdew (1993) argues, which focuses on the process of learning about, and acquiring genres, rather than one which concentrates solely on the end product, or specific variety of genre. As Hyland (2003) emphasizes, writing is a sociocognitive activity which involves skills in planning and drafting as well as knowledge of language, contexts and audiences. In short, each of the two orientations should complement the other. The final aspect of writing that I wish to consider in the context of my research is the need for students to acquire discipline specific academic literacies. This issue is discussed in the following subsection.

### ***2.2.2 Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing In the Disciplines (WID)***

According to Coffin et al. (2003:7), with the increasing recognition of the centrality of writing for learning and assessment in higher education, the movement to include Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing In the Disciplines (WID) has grown. Kasper et al. (2000:16) suggests that it is important to note the differences between the focus of WAC and WID programs.

Programmes in WAC usually focus on teaching rhetorical skills that are necessary in all sorts of courses and so tend to emphasize the rhetorical modes, such as definition, comparison-contrast, and cause-effect (Arani et al., 1998). In addition, WAC programmes target the development of students' ability to define and solve problems, their ability to

examine ideas carefully and support them with evidence, and their ability to incorporate and synthesize information. In this context, the types of writing taught in WAC programmes would be similar to those taught in many EAP programs.

In contrast, WID programs tend to focus on rhetorical conventions as they are specific to given disciplines; thus, the types of writing taught in WID programs would be similar to those taught in many ESP programs. With WID programs, it is clear that the writing process takes into account the content. Themes and topics related to the disciplines frequently form the basis of writing process in classroom writing activities. According to Hyland (2003:15) these integrated writing activities may be useful for students in academic preparation programs and can be important in encouraging learners to think about issues in new ways. In fact, first year students at the National University of Rwanda enter a new community in which ways of thinking are different from secondary school. One of the ways to express their critical thinking in this new community is writing. The kind of writing required has its conventions and that is why it is called academic writing. In addition this writing occurs in particular disciplines with their own ways of organizing and presenting knowledge.



According to Coffin et al. (2003:7), one benefit of incorporating writing in the disciplines is that students can see how different forms of writing occur in different contexts. She adds that WAC / WID pedagogy emphasizes the sequencing of writing tasks throughout a course so that students gradually build competence in particular forms of writing. Apart from encouraging ESL students to learn better through active engagement with subject matter, Cooke (1991:6) underlines that WAC / WID helps students to see patterns, connect ideas, and make meanings.

In the context of first year students at the National University Rwanda who spend a whole year learning general English, WAC / WID programme could be beneficial if some realities are considered.

Another aspect which would be developed through WAD/WID programme for efficient academic writing is academic and technical vocabulary.

### ***2.2.3 Academic and technical vocabulary***

Coffin et al. (2003: 14) refer to academic vocabulary as register, that is, the vocabulary which students are expected to use in written texts. The importance of learning academic vocabulary is stressed by Coxhead and Nation (2001: 259) and, according to the two authors, learners need the opportunity to use academic vocabulary in ‘meaning focused output activities’, that is, in speaking and writing in academic contexts. They argue that using academic vocabulary makes learners show that they can operate within the meaning systems associated with the university or institution’s culture of literacy. They go on to emphasise that productive use of academic vocabulary is an important component of academic success.

In the context of the first year of Economics and Management at the National University of Rwanda, both academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary may be obstacles for students in communicating their meanings efficiently in written academic discourse. It is therefore important that language teachers and subject lecturers collaborate to help students learn academic and technical vocabulary through contextualized reading and writing practices. It is to the reading-writing relationship I turn.

### ***2.2.4 The reading-writing relationship***

According to Krashen (1993), second language writing skills cannot be acquired successfully by practice in writing alone but also need to be supported with extensive reading. Hirvela (2001: 330) stresses the importance of incorporating reading into EAP writing courses by citing especially Carson and Leki (1993b:1), Spack (1988: 42), and Grabe (1991: 395). Carson and Leki emphasize that reading can be, and in academic settings nearly always is, the basis for writing. Spack adds that perhaps the most important skill English teachers can engage students in is the complex ability to write

from other texts, a major part of their academic writing. Grabe (1991: 395) underlines that there is a need for reading and writing to be taught together in advanced academic preparation.

Having discussed the relationship between reading and writing as an important aspect of the development of academic writing, the following paragraphs deal with modality. Modality is one of the features of academic writing which enables the writer, through its expression, to control academic discourse especially in terms of writer's stance. The focus on modality in this research is to investigate the extent to which first year students at the National University of Rwanda, ready to write their essays in the subjects learnt in English, control their discourse through expressions of modality.

### ***2.2.5 Modality***

Lock (1996: 8-10) identifies three types of meaning within grammatical structures: experiential meaning, textual meaning, and interpersonal meaning. For the scope of this research, only one aspect of interpersonal meaning called modality will be explored.

One area of interpersonal meaning called modality is important for the creation and interpretation of meaning in academic discourse. Before tackling modality, it is important to explain what is meant by 'interpersonal meaning'. According to Martin and Rothery (1993: 144), 'interpersonal meaning is concerned with enabling interaction, with constructing social reality as exchanges of goods and services or information and the ways people evaluate these negotiations'. Interpersonal meaning, according to Lock (1996: 9), has to do with 'the ways in which we act upon one another through language-giving and requesting information, getting and offering things to ourselves, and the ways in which we express our judgements and attitudes – about such things as likelihood, necessity, and desirability'.

Lock (ibid: 193) provides both a broad and a narrow definition of modality. A broad definition would encompass all expressions of interpersonal meanings that lie between 'it



is so' and 'it is not so' or between 'do it' and 'don't do it'. A narrow definition of modality encompasses only the modal auxiliaries and their uses, and sometimes also adverbs functioning as modal adjuncts such as possibly, probably and certainly. In the context of this research, to analyse students' scripts, the narrow definition will be taken into account and verbs such as claim, appear, assume, doubt, guess, look, suggest, and think. This aspect of interpersonal meaning is critical in academic writing because it carries important information about the stance and attitude of the writer towards the message she or he conveys. Hyland has expressed the issue as follows:

*In presenting informational content, writers also adopt interactional and evaluative positions. They intervene to convey judgments, opinions and degrees of commitment to what they say, boosting or toning down claims and criticisms, expressing surprise or importance, and addressing readers directly' (1999: 99).*

It is important to find out how students who complete EPLM English course and ready to write in the subjects control their discourse through modality. Expressions of modality are central in academic writing since they enable writers to determine their commitment to the information through their relationship to the subject matter and their readers. In this way, expressions of modality can help first year students at the National University of Rwanda control their written discourse by maintaining interaction with their readers – who are especially their subject lecturers – and building a convincing argument when they write their assignments or exams.

### 2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed some issues pertaining to writing as a difficult skill particularly in a second or an additional language. The role that the first language can play in second or additional language writing and differences and similarities between speech and writing have also been dealt with. The aim was to highlight some of the implications these may have in relation to the development of academic writing for students learning their subjects in English at the National University of Rwanda.

In addition, the chapter reviewed and discussed the main approaches to EAP writing and writing across the curriculum. Approaches to EAP writing were dealt with in order to determine the extent to which each may match the development of academic writing at the National University of Rwanda in general and particularly in first years of Economics and Management. Writing across the curriculum was discussed to show its importance for first year students in Economics and Management to cope more effectively with writing in the subjects they learn in English. It is in this context that academic vocabulary and the reading-writing relationship were also dealt with to show how they are important to support academic writing in the context of this research.

Furthermore, modality has been the concern of this chapter. In the context of academic writing, students at the National University of Rwanda need to be aware of expressions of modality in order for them to control their discourse by interacting convincingly and meaningfully with their reader especially when they write their assignments and exams in English.

The above aspects of writing skills and academic writing in particular will be dealt with in analyzing the current teaching of writing skills in the EPLM English course and in the TEOE course at the National University of Rwanda in Chapter Four. Before doing so, Chapter Three will be concerned with the research methodology used to collect the data.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Chapter Two dealt with the theoretical framework used to analyse the writing skills offered to students both in the intensive EPLM English course and in the TEOE course during first year of Economics and Management studies at the National University of Rwanda. This chapter is concerned with the research methodologies and techniques that I used to collect the data.

#### **3.1 Research method**

The aim of this research was to find out the extent to which writing skills offered in the intensive EPLM English course and in TEOE course help first year students to cope with the academic literacy requirements of the subjects they study through the English medium. This type of research is predominantly qualitative as it is mainly concerned with ‘achieving a deeper understanding of the respondents’ world’ (Sarantakos, 1998: 53). The researcher in this study is concerned with an in-depth understanding of the teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the helpfulness of the courses in terms of academic writing. A quantitative approach was also used as part of the document analysis to determine the number of writing tasks developed in the textbook and occurrences of expressions of modality in students’ scripts.

Three research techniques were used to collect the data, namely, questionnaires, interviews and document analysis. Questionnaires were distributed to first year students in Economics and Management, interviews included language teachers as well as subject lecturers in first year Economics and Management, and document analysis was concerned with the analysis of the textbook used for the EPLM English course as well as the exit

English examination. This use of multiple methods of data collection can be referred to as *triangulation* ‘with a view to increasing the reliability of the results’ (Mouton and Marais, 1990: 72). By this method of triangulation, Erlandson et al. (1993: 115) write that the researcher seeks out several different types of sources that can provide insights about the same events or relationships. Neuman (2000: 124-125) clarifies the concept through the instance of surveyors and sailors as follows:

*‘Surveyors and sailors measure distances between objects by making observations from multiple positions. By observing something from different angles or viewpoints, they get a fix on its true location.’*

De Vos (2002: 341) argues that this process, called triangulation, is used by qualitative researchers. He goes on to say that there are several types of triangulation and the most common is triangulation of measures where researchers take multiple measures of the same phenomena and by measuring something in more than one way, they are more likely to see all aspects of it.



The various types of sources of data in this research serve to get more accurate and reliable information about the extent to which writing skills offered to first year students in Economics and Management at the National University of Rwanda help them cope with academic writing in the subjects they study through English medium.

### 3.2 Research site and sampling

The research was carried out at the National University of Rwanda in the School of Modern Languages (EPLM) and in the Faculty of Economics, Social Science and Management. The sample population included eighteen students from first year Economics and Management who provided information by answering to the questions of a questionnaire. Two English teachers, the Head of the English Department in the School of Modern Languages and two lecturers from Economics and Management participated in the interviews.

Concerning the criteria for choosing my sample, I used purposive sampling. According to Strydom and Delpont (2002: 334), in purposive sampling a particular case is chosen because it illustrates some feature or process that is of interest for a particular study. Hence, the students selected to answer the questionnaire should be francophones from first year Economics and Management who had completed the intensive EPLM English course and the TEOE course during their first year. They were selected from the four groups of students formed in order to study Speaking and Writing Skills Course in Economics and Management. Each group had thirty students and the first three groups were represented by five students each and the fourth by three. The selected eighteen students came therefore from the total number of a hundred and twenty students. In addition, each student was from each one of the groups in the School of Modern Languages (EPLM) since there were eighteen groups during 2001-2002 academic year. The selection followed alphabetic order on the list from first year Economics and Management.



Likewise, Singleton et al., (1988: 153) state that purposive sampling is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher, in that a sample is composed of elements that contain the most characteristic or typical attributes of the population. Cohen and Manion (1994: 77) argue that the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in his sample on the basis of his judgement of their typicality. However, according to Strydom and Venter (2002: 207), the judgement of the individual researcher can be too prominent a factor in purposive samples. I therefore chose to interview the Head of English Department in the School of Modern Languages because he coordinates pedagogic activities of intensive EPLM English course and teaches English at the same time and could offer reliable information on the intensive English course. Two other English teachers were also chosen to be included in the sample population because they teach TEOE in first year Economics and Management. I also decided to interview two lecturers in Economics and Management because they taught the same students through the medium of English. In short, I chose my informants on my own judgement because I thought they would be in a position to

provide information relevant to my study and they were all involved in the implementation of the new policy of bilingualism at the National University of Rwanda. In order to make my informants feel at ease in providing the information, I explained to them that their names would be kept anonymous. Students are therefore referred to either as A, B, C, ... or S1, S2, ... language teachers referred to as T1 and T2 and lecturers in Economics and Management referred to as L1 and L2.

### 3.3 Data collection

As previously stated, the source of data collected in the School of Modern Languages and in first year Economics and Management consists of questionnaires, interviews and documents. The procedure followed to collect each of these is described below.

#### *3.3.1 Questionnaire*

Before distributing the questionnaire to the selected students, I invited them for a meeting. Fortunately, all of them turned up and I made it clear that their views were needed only for research purposes. I requested them to provide their information the same day while we were together in one of the classes of Economics and Management. They agreed since they had enough time because it was on Friday afternoon. I did this because I wanted to be able to explain to them what they had to do so that I could get relevant information. I also wanted to get all the copies back. To make them provide detailed information without any obstacle, I told them to use any language they feel comfortable in, either, Kinyarwanda, French or English. They took their time and whoever needed any explanation consulted me. In short it is important to make it clear that I used group-administered questionnaires. According to Delpont (2002: 174), in this type of questionnaire respondents are present in a group and complete a questionnaire on their own without discussing it with the other members of the group, but sometimes the fieldworker conducts a discussion with the whole group before completing the questionnaire. It is in this context I made my informants complete the questionnaire as described earlier.

Almost all the questions were open-ended. Although open-ended questions are not easy to analyse, ‘one often obtains more useful information from them and it is also likely that responses to open questions will more accurately reflect what the respondent wants to say’ (Nunan, 1992: 143). Sarantakos (1998: 230) expresses the same view that with open-ended questions the respondents are free to formulate their answers in the way they consider to be the most appropriate and in their own words. It was with this point in mind that informants were given open-ended questions to allow them freedom to express their feelings and thoughts.

The main questions that the students had to answer were related to both the intensive EPLM English course offered to students before entering the University faculties and the TEOE course taught in first year Economics and Management. These questions sought mainly to determine the extent to which the writing skills developed in these two courses contribute to the development of academic writing that students need for academic writing in Economics and Management subjects taught through the English medium.

The questionnaire in which all the questions are developed can be found in appendix A. In addition, findings from the questionnaire are presented in chapter four. Since some students answered in Kinyarwanda and some others in French, these findings were translated into English. I had no difficulty concerning these two languages since Kinyarwanda is my mother tongue and French my second language and medium of instruction during my primary and secondary education before I was enrolled in English Department at tertiary level. In general, the process was normal without any concerns since all the students knew me because we shared teaching and learning experiences in the School of Modern Languages during 2001-2002 academic year. They therefore felt free to ask me any question about the questionnaire. Although the questionnaire was meant to provide a variety of information related to the topic of the study, it did not cover all the aspects of the issue, especially concerning pedagogical aspects of the courses since students were not as familiar with this aspect as the teachers. For this reason, I decided to

conduct interviews with language teachers and subject lecturers. The process for collecting data from interviews is described below.





### **3.3.2 Interviews**

Interviews were also conducted at the National University of Rwanda and concerned three categories of my sample population, namely, the Head of English Department at The School of Modern Languages (EPLM), two TEOE language teachers in first year Economics and Management and two lecturers who teach these subjects in English. Before interviewing them, I explained that I needed their views and opinions only for research purposes and they agreed without any problem. While interviewing each of the three categories, I used semi-structured interviews. I chose this type of interview because it ‘gives the researcher and participant much more flexibility’ (Greeff, 2002: 302) and open-ended questions are asked to allow the participants to express themselves freely. This was important to me because these questions would allow freedom to the informants to express feelings and thoughts about issues pertaining to the study in more details. As Smith et al. (1995: 14) advise that the researcher should think of appropriate questions in order to address the issue he or she is interested in, I prepared open-ended questions related to the research question for each of the three categories of informants.



For the Head of English Department in the School of Modern Languages (EPLM), the questions of interview focused mainly on writing skills offered to students through intensive EPLM English course with an emphasis on their appropriateness for preparing these students to adequate academic writing in faculty subjects at the National University of Rwanda in general. The interview with the Head of the Department was conducted in his office at the School of Modern Languages and he kindly lent me the New Cambridge English Course textbook as well as some students’ scripts of 2001-2002 exit exam.

Concerning the two language teachers of the TEOE course in first year Economics and Management, the questions of interview sought to gain a detailed picture of their perceptions of the appropriateness of the course to enable first year students to write academically according to the requirements of Economics and Management subjects taught in English. The interview followed a semi-structured format; each of them was interviewed alone.

Likewise for the two lecturers in first year Economics and Management, the interview was conducted on a semi-structured one-to-one interview basis and open-ended questions were asked 'in order to obtain relevant and detailed responses' (Neuman, 2000: 277). Since I got appointment on Saturday, the interview process was not interrupted by people coming in. The main purpose of the interview questions for these lecturers was to find out if first year students in Economics and Management were able to write academic English according to the demands of faculty subjects they study in English especially when they wrote assignments and exams. It is important to note that interviews for subject lecturers differed from those for the first two categories in that the latter were mainly concerned with objectives of the two courses in terms of writing skills, the process of the teaching and the learning of these skills and the content; while the former sought to find out if the objectives had been practically attained.

In general, interviews were conducted in a friendly atmosphere since informants, who were teachers in an academic environment, were interested in the kind of research carried out. However, I had sometimes to explain some questions so that the informants could understand the focus as far as the topic was concerned. In addition, especially concerning language teachers, interviews could not cover all the information since they could not remember many of the things they taught in writing or writing skills developed in the documents or exactly how students wrote. Furthermore, the understanding of *academic writing* was confusing for some informants and the reliability of information would not be fully obtained. It is therefore from this perspective that I also decided to use document analysis as another source of data in order to overcome some weaknesses of questionnaires and interviews so as to get more reliable information.

### ***3.3.3 Document analysis***

Two documents were used as research tools to gather the data for this study, namely, the textbook used for teaching material in the intensive EPLM English course and students' scripts of 2002 exit exam after this course. I could not find the kind of guideline used in the TEOE course which would have shed more light on the research question.

Surprisingly, the academic secretary of the faculty told me that he did not know about this document. Language teachers informed me that they remembered to have seen a 'simple sheet of paper' but that they did not have it and they did not follow it as a syllabus and that each teacher designed his or her own materials. In addition, it would have been better if I had got students' copies in TEOE and in some of the subjects taught in English. The new academic secretary did not know where students' copies were kept since the former was abroad for postgraduate studies. This limits the findings of the research in a sense that the analysis of the TEOE course relied only on teachers' interviews.

Although document analysis has disadvantages such as not being necessarily representative, not being easily accessible, and the fact that documents are biased since they represent the view of their authors, it also demonstrates advantages. Among the advantages of documentary research, the main ones provided by Sarantakos (1998: 277) are *spontaneity* since in most cases documents are produced by the writers without being requested to do so by researchers and this, according to the author, reduces researcher bias significantly, *low cost*, and *high quality* of information.

For the case of this research, documents which are the source of data demonstrate one major advantage. Information that might be difficult or even impossible to obtain through questionnaires and interviews can be obtained through analysis of the textbook which is the only syllabus followed in the intensive EPLM English course for preparing students to cope with faculty subjects learnt in English, and through analysis of students' exit exam scripts. The two kinds of document are dealt with in the following two subsections.

### **Analysis of the textbook**

Any type of written document can be analysed in various ways and the researcher must select the content that is available for analysis. I selected the New Cambridge English Course level four to be analysed for this research because it is the last book in the series and therefore can be assumed to cover almost all the writing skills that students need to

cope effectively with academic writing in first year content subjects. My analysis aimed to, among other things, to determine exactly how much time was devoted to writing skills development. In addition, the textbook was analysed to establish the nature and relevance of writing tasks and processes present.

### **Students' scripts**

These are students' copies of 2002 exit exam after the students completed the intensive EPLM English course. The sample consisted of twelve copies of students among the eighteen who received the questionnaires. As far as the analysis of students' writing skills was concerned, six copies were selected because their writing section was considered 'good' and other six 'weak' according to the teacher who attributed marks to them. Responses to the writing section of the exam paper were analysed to determine the extent to which these students use modality which is important for the control of academic discourse. Modality was chosen because this feature of academic writing seems not to be the concern for language teachers whereas it is important in text creation especially in the creation of writer's stance, that is, the decision and position the writer takes towards the topic and the reader. It was therefore important to find out how new students in an academic community created relationship to the topic and to their readers who were also members of this academic discourse community using expressions of modality.

On the whole, apart from some problems stated earlier related to getting some documents in Economics and Management, no special problems were encountered in getting these two documents and they provided useful information to complement questionnaires and interviews.

All sources of data collection were not exhausted in this study. For instance the views of all students and teachers on the courses, all the students' exam scripts were not considered. This therefore makes it difficult to generalize on the basis of the sample. Nevertheless, the multiple sources of data provided enough information for an in-depth understanding of the study.

This chapter has provided an overview of the predominantly qualitative research methodology used to carry out this study. It has, among other things, outlined and discussed research methods used in this study, the sampling and the procedures. The next chapter deals with the presentation and the analysis of the collected data.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

This chapter will present findings from four sets of data. The first set consists of questionnaires distributed in February 2004 to Economics and Management students who had followed an intensive EPLM English course for six hundred hours (one year) in the, before they started their studies in Economics and Management. The second set of data to be considered includes the interview with the Head of English Department who is also a teacher of the intensive EPLM English course, interviews with teachers of the TEOE course run concurrently with first year studies, as well as interviews with lecturers who teach Faculty subjects through the medium of English. The third set consists of the writing skills developed in the textbook used for the intensive EPLM English course. Finally, the last set of data to be analysed is samples of students' writing in the exit exam written after the completion of the intensive EPLM English course. All these sets of data will be analysed to investigate and then determine the extent to which writing skills offered to these students prepare them efficiently for academic writing in the subjects they study in first year Economics and Management through the English medium. I will now turn to the findings from the questionnaires.

#### **4.1 Students' views about writing skills**

Questionnaires were distributed to eighteen students from the first year of the Faculty of Economics, Social Sciences and Management. The first year is the same for all students but they are divided into two groups. Group A and Group B. Group A is made up of students who will study, from second year, Social Work, Social Sciences, Public Administration and Political Science. Group B consists of those who will study Economics, Management, Business of Accounting Science and Business of Information

Technology applied to Management. The eighteen students who received the questionnaire belong to group B. The questionnaire consists of thirteen questions (see Appendix A). These questions seek mainly to find out student's views about writing skills in the intensive EPLM English course. Another set of questions is concerned with students' experiences of writing skills taught in the TEOE course. Both sets of questions seek to know if writing skills taught in the two courses help them to cope with academic writing requirements. In other words, it is to determine the extent to which the kind of writing skills taught to these students develops academic writing skills.

Questions concerning writing skills in the EPLM course aimed to find out the types of writing taught to students, how often the students learnt writing skills compared to other skills, how those skills were taught by their different teachers and if the writing skills developed in the New Cambridge English Course helped the students to write academic English.

#### ***4.1.1 General views of the EPLM course***



These findings include comments on the writing tasks given by the teacher to complement the textbook (The New Cambridge English Course) and comments on the textbook as well as on how well these skills equip them for academic writing.

#### **General views of the course**

The findings include the content, frequency and processes of writing skills offered to students in the EPLM English course to complement the textbook.

#### **Types of writing**

With regard to types of writing mentioned by students, although they provided various terms such as narrative, dissertation, argumentation, topic, they all mentioned essay writing based on argumentation and story telling. Another type of writing which is

predominantly given by almost all the students is letter writing. To essay writing and letter writing, one student (K) added note taking (abbreviations) and two others (L) and (P) added summarizing. One student (F) does not remember what he studied in writing. According to him it was a mixture.

### **Frequency of writing skills taught**

Concerning how often writing skills were taught compared to other skills namely listening, speaking, reading and grammar, nine informants mentioned that writing was sometimes learnt. Four marked 'often' and the same number of students marked 'always'. Only one student mentioned that writing was rarely taught. All the students declared that grammar was always taught.

### **Method of teaching writing skills**

Before showing according to the informants views how these writing skills were taught, it is important to mention that the intensive EPLM English course is taught in classes commonly called groups. Each class is called a group with an assigned number. The number of groups depends on the number of teachers who are available. The fewer the teachers, the larger the classes. For the academic year 2001-2002, the department of English had 18 groups, the average number of students for each group was 45 and each group had its own teacher during the whole time allotted to the teaching and learning of the EPLM intensive English course. Therefore, how writing was taught may differ from one group to another.

According to the informants, the main approach was to give topics outside the textbook to students who then wrote about these topics. This view is expressed by twelve students (66%). Although three other students (B, D and H) did not say anything about how writing was taught by their teachers, it seems that their experiences are similar to those above since their response to question 2, concerning the types of writing learnt in the EPLM English course, all of the three students mentioned writing about any topic chosen



by the teacher and composition. The three remaining students (F, I, and J) do not state clearly how writing was taught in their groups. Student F does not remember as he mentions for question 2 (types of writing). However, although students I and J do not describe clearly how writing skills were taught by their respective teachers, they mention composition in question 2.

Among the students who said that the stress was on 'composition' by being given topics to write about, two students said that they were first given notes about how a composition is done and then a model of composition and finally they were given topics to write about as practice. Two other students mentioned a structured process from sentence to paragraph and from a whole essay ('composition according to students') having an introduction, a body and a conclusion. In addition, two students (N and P) mentioned coherence, structured sequence and logical connections were taught while they were learning how to write a good composition. Student (I) remarked that their teacher emphasized on grammar, writing being a sub-title of grammar. Student (E) mentioned that their teacher did not allot much time to writing. Writing was taught when a test was about to be done; exercises on writing were not corrected.

From information provided by the students, it is clear that apart from letter writing and short essays, students are not exposed to the more complex factual genres such as recount, procedure, description, report and explanation which would make students aware of the purposes these genres serve and how linguistic elements are organised to achieve meanings in the context of their study. In addition, teaching writing through sentence, paragraph and then whole composition via a model seems to indicate that the emphasis is on language form and on language use. Concerning language form, it appears that students are required to produce a coherent arrangement of words, clauses and sentences, structured according to a system of rules. For language use, it seems that students develop effective paragraphs through the creation of topic sentences, supporting sentences and transitions according to prescribed formulas. These two approaches make writing activity product rather than process. In this context, according to the students' information, there is no evidence of process approach to writing which puts emphasis on the writer (student)

and makes writing a thinking process which undergoes stages. Furthermore, it remains unclear if 'any topic' includes topics related to subject matter, that is, teaching writing through relevant content and reading.

Having interpreted students' views about writing skills taught in the intensive EPLM English course to complement the textbook, I turn now to the discussion of students' views about writing more specifically in the New Cambridge English Course (NCEC).

### **Students' views about writing skills in the New Cambridge English Course (NCEC)**

The New Cambridge English Course (NCEC) (1993) by Michael Swan and Catherine Walter was adopted by the Academic Senate in 1997 to be taught to students in the intensive EPLM English course before they start first year studies in different faculties of the National University of Rwanda. It has four levels (Book 1, Book 2, Book 3, and Book 4) and each level consists of a student book, a teacher's guide and a practice book. All the four levels are also accompanied by a set of student and class cassettes. This section deals with students' views on the extent to which the course helped them to write academic English.

Thirteen students (72.2%) stated that the New Cambridge English Course (NCEC) helped them to write good, academically acceptable English. They provided various reasons. These students can be grouped into three categories. The first category consists of students who feel their writing is good thanks to the grammar learnt from the New Cambridge English course. The second category of students attribute good writing to both grammar and new words found in the course book. The third category is made up of students who mentioned only that new words from readings in the course book helped them to write correct English. The fourth category of students felt they write good English thanks to many exercises found in the course book without specifying the kind(s) of exercises in the book.

Four students (22.2%) declare that the New Cambridge English Course did not help them to write good English. The reasons varied. For instance, student D mentioned that writing was not given enough time. He shares the same view of student F who felt that, although the book was used every time the students were in class, it did not help them to write. According to students P and R, the New Cambridge English Course was not used for writing but almost all the time for grammar. One student, F, admits that he did not take the course seriously.

Although many students (72.2%) agree that the textbook helped them to write good English, they seem to understand writing as grammar and vocabulary. Once again, as it has been noted earlier, students' understanding of academic writing seems to be viewed as 'a product constructed from the writer's command of grammatical and lexical knowledge' (Hyland, 2003: 3). It remains unclear as to whether the informants are aware of academic writing. In other words, it is not clear how students understand the demands of academic writing tasks in relation to the kinds of writing skills in the coursebook. They may simply compare their writing after the intensive English course to their writing in secondary school. Students' understanding of academic writing seems to indicate that they are unaware that a good written text is a response to a particular communicative setting. In this instance, students do not seem to understand that good writing has a communicative purpose, and that a particular context and expectations of the reader make the writer to decide on linguistic forms in order to achieve the purpose and coherent meaning.

Students (22.2%) who felt that writing skills developed in the textbook did not help them to write academic English seem to be aware of that grammar alone does not help to achieve good writing. However, their responses do not make it clear as to whether they understand what is meant by academic writing.

The above subsection has discussed and interpreted students' views about how well writing skills developed in the textbook help these students to write academic English. The following subsection therefore discusses students' views about how well writing

skills developed in the intensive English course help them to write in the academic subjects they study through the medium of English.

**Students' views about how well writing skills in the School of Modern Languages equip them for academic writing.**

This section presents findings in response to the following questions:

- Do you think the writing skills learnt in your EPLM group help you cope with the subjects you study in English when you answer in writing?
- Did the New Cambridge English Course help you cope with writing in the subjects you study in English?
- Do you have the same difficulties in writing in all subjects you study in English?
- What makes it difficult for you to write good academically acceptable English depending on the subject studied in English?



Almost all the students (69%) agreed that writing skills learnt in the EPLM course helped them cope with the subjects they learn in English. Among these students, there are some who explain they do not have problems when they answer in writing and others who, although they agree that writing learnt in the EPLM course helps them cope with writing in their subjects, specify the problems they still face. They mention the problem of vocabulary but especially the use of specific technical terms. Another one mentioned the problem of lecturers who have different accents.

Among informants who agree that writing in the EPLM course helps them cope with writing tasks in their subjects, there are those who compare the writing skills they had before following the EPLM course and the writing skills they achieved at the end of the intensive EPLM English course. They said that they started the intensive EPLM English course without knowing how to write English but at the end of the course they were able to express themselves in writing. For others, their ability to write in the subjects is due to

their experience in the course where they were accustomed to answer in writing in tests organized by the school.

Another category of informants attributes their ability to answer in writing to the fact that the teacher can decipher what they want to express.

A few students (31%) who feel that the writing skills learnt in the EPLM course do not help them cope with writing in the subjects say that they have to make much effort since writing skills learnt in the School were not sufficient. Student F puts it as follows:

*'some time yes but not usually. We have to make effort since writing learnt in EPLM is not enough.'*

While the majority of students feel that the course equipped them to write academic English, it is clear that there are significant gaps. For example, the kind of writing skills offered in intensive English course do not seem to equip students for academic writing in the subjects. This is evidenced by two main factors. The first factor is related to the fact that, as noted earlier, the control of the students' writing seems to be limited only to language form and to the organization of sentences to form short paragraphs and short essays. In this way, process and genre approaches which could develop academic writing and enable students to control academic written discourse seem to be unknown to these students. The second factor, as it is mentioned by students, is a lack of academic and technical vocabulary. This may imply in turn that intensive reading and extensive reading are not encouraged. These two kinds of reading can develop academic and technical vocabulary as well as academic writing in the subjects students learn in English. In other words, in the context of this research, reading and vocabulary related to the content of the subjects learnt in English can develop academic writing for Economics and Management first year students.

Turning more specifically to the textbook used and the connection between writing skills in the textbook and writing in the subjects learnt in English, many of them (70%) once again underline the fact that whatever they write is achieved thanks to what was learnt in

the New Cambridge English Course. They mention among other things new words and expressions, grammar and note taking which is sometimes confused with dictation for some students. For example student C puts it as follows:

*The New Cambridge English Course has tried to help me write well in the subjects because it gave me some grammatical rules and vocabularies and many exercises which I right now in the works.*

One of these students acknowledges that the New Cambridge English Course, although it helps them cope with the subjects in writing, does not take into account the faculty in which they are supposed to be studying:

*Yes, because it helps me taking notes, answering an exam,.. but I'm still having some difficult in writing because we do not use what we learned in Cambridge.*

A few students (30%) declared that writing skills learnt in the textbook do not help them to cope with writing in the subjects they learn in English. The main reason is that writing skills developed in the textbook do not have anything to do with writing in the subjects and the emphasis was on grammar. Student A expresses the issue as follows:

*It is rare that writing learnt in the New Cambridge helps me write in the subjects, except grammar, it is especially conceived for general English and writing is insufficient.*

Although the majority of students mention that writing skills developed in the textbook help them to cope with writing in the subjects, it is clear that students' understanding of academic writing is grammar and vocabulary which are not even contextualized in disciplines of their study. It seems therefore that the textbook does not address the needs for academic writing in the subjects that first year students in Economics and

Management learn through English medium. The textbook will be analysed in detail in section 4.3.1.

The previous subsection presents students' views on how writing skills developed through the New Cambridge English Course match writing requirements in the faculty subjects studied in English. The following paragraph summarizes informants' views on whether they have the same difficulties in writing in all the subjects they study in English.

Although some students mention that difficulties differ from subject to subject, they do have almost all the same difficulties. These difficulties are related to academic writing skills in general such as writing a coherent academic essay in which ideas are well linked and the lack of appropriate terms related to the subjects studied in English and of vocabulary in general. All these problems, according to many of the students (72%), are due to the fact that writing skills learnt in the EPLM course were neither sufficient nor well taught. In this context, some students mention that they did not practice much writing and even the few assignments or homework they did have were sometimes returned without correction or feedback to enable the students to be aware of the mistakes made in order to improve their writing. Concerning the issue, for instance student L provides the following information:

*Writing in EPLM was not much considered and it was not well taught. We did not have corrections of our composition and they was not enough.*

Through the whole section on writing in the EPLM course, an analysis of informants' views reveals that the New Cambridge English Course (NCEC) does not offer sufficient or appropriate writing skills to prepare students for writing in the subjects nor is there evidence of academic writing skills taught in the course more generally. The few writing tasks that are given do not take into account the various genres and practices needed for understanding and the control of discourse at tertiary level. Key Features of academic writing (Gocsik, 1997) such as relevant topic, coherence, content, context and audience do not seem to be part of the curriculum in the course. This would imply that students

generally leave the School with basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) rather than more cognitively oriented academic language skills (CALP). In addition, the methodology used by the teachers seems to focus on a product approach to writing instead of more process- and genre-oriented writing in order to make students aware of writing techniques such as brain-storming, planning, multiple drafting, peer collaboration, teacher feedback, delayed editing and the control of rhetorical structure of specific text-types. Finally, writing skills developed in the intensive EPLM English course seem not to be supported by academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary as well as intensive reading and extensive reading.

Having summarized the key emerging issues for the section on writing in the EPLM course, I now turn to present the views of the students about writing skills developed in a 75-hour course (TEOE) offered during their first year of study at the National University of Rwanda.

#### ***4.1.2 Students' views of the TEOE course***



The course is entitled 'Techniques d'Expressions Orale et Ecrite' in French which means Speaking and Writing Skills in English. The course is offered to both francophone and Anglophone first year students. Francophones learn it in English and Anglophones in French. The aim of the course is to reinforce speaking and writing skills learnt in the EPLM course in order for the students to cope efficiently with the subjects offered either in English or in French.

This section presents francophone students' opinions about writing skills offered to them in English. The questions given to the selected students regarding the above issue were designed to seek the following information:

- Whether writing skills learnt in the TEOE course helps them cope with writing in the subjects they learnt in English.

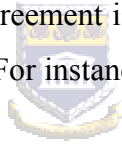


- Whether there is any difference between the kind of writing skills learnt in the TEOE course and those learnt in the EPLM course, and
- What they suggest so that writing learnt in the two courses could better prepare students for writing skills for academic requirements in the Faculty.

**How well writing learnt in TEOE helps students cope with writing in the subjects learnt in English.**

Views of students can be grouped according to the information they provide. The first group concerns students who feel that writing learnt in the TEOE course helps them cope with writing in the subjects they learnt in English. The second group consists of those who disagree. Both groups have reasons for their opinions.

The first group which constitutes the majority of informants (66.6%) have different reasons although they all agree that the course helped them. The first sub-group within this group consists of students whose agreement is due to the writing and the vocabulary related to the subjects learnt in English. For instance student A declares:



*Yes it helps me, because our teacher choose subjects to teach us, and very usually he was teaching us the English used in outside life specially in what is in relation with my faculty. For example to fill inventories how to work when you arrive in banks etc.*

The second sub-group concerns students who admit that writing skills learnt in TEOE help them write in the subjects due to the fact that writing skills in ‘TEOE’ complements the basic writing skills learnt in EPLM. For example student C puts it as follows:

*The writing I have learnt in TEOE help me a bite to cope with writing in the subjects I learn in English because it came to complete what I have learnt in EPLM.*

The third sub-group consists of students who say that much more time was spent on writing than on speaking. They specify that the emphasis was on how to order paragraphs, how to summarise a text and how to write a composition. This is for instance the view of student J:

*I can say yes, because much time we learn much writing than speaking and we were shown how to order paragraphs and how to write a composition.*

One student, F, who also felt that writing learnt in TEOE helps him to cope with writing in the subjects, declares that there is no syllabus or books used as curriculum. According to the student, teachers teach what they want and this differs from teacher to teacher although students are in the same year (first year Economics and Management).

*Yes, but not as well as is EPLM. Because there is not notes or syllabus or books concerning the TEOE course, so the teachers teach what they want which are different from the teacher to another even if there are in the same domain.*

It is good that each teacher designs her/his own syllabus according to the students' needs, jointly negotiated by the teacher and the students. In the context of this research, however, all the teachers of TEOE in first year Economics and Management, jointly with students and subject lecturers should collaborate to design the content of TEOE.

The second group comprises students (33.4%) who feel that writing skills learnt in TEOE do not help them to cope with writing in the subjects. These students have different arguments to support their opinions. The first argument is that writing learnt in TEOE does not relate to the subjects learnt in English. This is for instance expressed by student D:

*Writing I learnt in TEOE does not help me because what we learnt in TEOE was not related to the subjects we learn in English.*

The second reason put forward is that most of the things learnt in TEOE had been seen in EPLM where the stress was only on two types of writing, namely, composition and letter writing. This is for instance the view of student M:

*I do not see any difference between TEOE and EPLM, every thing I learnt in TEOE I had learnt it in EPLM. The stress was on two types of writing, composition in which I learnt to connect sentences, and letter writing.*

The last reason concerns teachers who were not committed. According to this category of students, the teachers in question were either insisting on definitions and grammar without giving exercises on writing, or were not correcting exercises they did give students, nor giving feedback. For instance student P expresses it in the following terms:

*No, because in TEOE the emphasis is on definitions, grammar without many exercises on composition and even the few we did were not corrected so that we could know the mistakes we made.*

While the majority of students (66.6%) admit that TEOE helped them to cope with academic writing in the subjects they study in English, their understanding of academic writing remains unclear as it has been revealed in previous sections. Although the course focuses only on Writing and Speaking Skills, there is no evidence of any difference in approach to writing skills development, that is, there does not seem to be any greater awareness of the demands of academic writing and writing in the disciplines. Similarly, product rather than process approaches to writing seem to be the norm. The model of writing development which moves from sentence to paragraphs and how they are ordered tends to focus predominantly on forms of language and writing is taken as a product. In addition, without teacher feedback writing skills cannot be developed. Furthermore, there is no attention to specific genres and related discourse features which may enable

students to deal with various subjects taught in English. In short, writing skills taught in TEOE do not relate directly to the subject content taught in English which could make academic writing more meaningful and enable students to cope efficiently with the subjects in extended arguments (for instance history of economic thought, principles of economics and principles of management), case studies ( for example the use of Consumer Price Index CPI, Growth Domestic Price GDP, money supply, unemployment, etc), interpreting data (interpreting for example GDP using Rwandan data from 1970 to 2003), comparing and contrasting (comparing and contrasting for example the price indexes of two countries, supply and demand of two different goods and services), cause and effect relationship ( for example causes and effects of inflation in given countries and in a given period) and so on.

The previous sub-section presented informants' views on the extent to which writing learnt in TEOE helps them cope with the subjects learnt in English. The following sub section describes the students' views on whether there is any difference between writing skills learnt in EPLM and those learnt in TEOE.



#### ***4.1.3 Comparison between writing learnt in EPLM and in TEOE***

The general view of the students is that there is not much difference except that writing in EPLM was integrated with other skills and writing whereas TEOE was a separate skill. For this reason according to some students, many more exercises on composition were done in TEOE. Nevertheless, according to two students, only a few writing skills related to the faculty subjects were learnt, with some attention to technical words. Only two students (11.1%) declared that TEOE develops writing skills much further than EPLM.

On the other hand, four students (22.2%) claim that it is only thanks to writing learnt in EPLM that they are able to manage with writing in their academic subjects studied in English. For them, writing in TEOE did not develop anything new for them. Two reasons were given. First, nothing related to the subjects to be learnt in English was given through writing in TEOE. Second, according to one student, no value was given to writing in

TEOE either by the teacher or by the students. He added that at least in EPLM exercises on composition, letter writing and dictation were sometimes done. He also regrets that instead of doing exercises in TEOE, they learnt theories on writing such as notes on simple, compound, complex sentences; independent and main clauses; paragraph; topic sentence; summary; wordiness; etc. and sometimes grammar.

Although writing is taught as a separate skill in the TEOE course, the same understanding of writing and teaching writing as EPLM seems to underlie the teaching approach. Students still mention exercises on composition and theories on writing. This seems to indicate that there is no evidence of academic writing skills development or of consideration of either the content or the various genres related to the demands of Economics and Management. In addition, teachers still focus on language form, dealing with grammar in isolation from its use in context. The implication is that teachers may spend much more time on micro-level features of the language, that is, issues such as punctuation, grammar and spelling, and ignore higher level issues like organization of the writing, purpose of the writing, audience awareness, content and meaning. In this context, writing is approached as a product and students do not have opportunities to experience the advantages of process writing.

The following subsection considers students' suggestions for improving academic writing skills development so that it can help them meet academic standards.

#### ***4.1.4 Students' recommendations***

The main recommendation emerging from questionnaires is that since writing is important in the academic context, much more time should be spent on teaching it by giving many exercises and homework tasks on writing. The topics in these tasks should be varied and must be corrected so that students can improve their writing through constructive feedback.

In both the EPLM and the first year TEOE courses, both teachers and students need to realise that English language skills in general and writing skills in particular are very important to prepare them for academic demands in the faculties.

For the EPLM, students suggest the following:

- Increasing attention to note taking and dictation exercises
- Grouping students according to the faculties they are going to follow
- Teaching some faculty subjects in EPLM
- Relating writing skills to the faculty subjects taught through the English medium
- Spending less time on grammar
- Expanding types of writing skills
- Increasing attention to vocabulary and grammar in context, so that there can help students to write correct and academically acceptable English.

For the TEOE, students suggest:



- Designing a syllabus so that the teachers teach the same content
- Designing writing skills in TEOE so that they build on writing skills learnt in EPLM
- Designing writing skills in TEOE which can prepare students for being able to do their own research and write their ‘memoires’ (thesis in English.)
- Designing writing skills in TEOE which can prepare students for academic writing related to the faculty subjects
- Teaching specialized terms and expressions of the faculty subjects
- Expanding academic writing skills to the following years
- Allotting more hours to TEOE
- Paying much attention to practice and avoiding to rush in order to ‘finish hours’
- Minimizing questions of memorization because they do not help students to improve their writing skills

The above students' recommendations emerge from their views and reflect their needs. Their suggestions implicitly sum up emerging issues from their overall views. They reveal that neither course pays attention to the various types (genres) and related discourse features which could help them cope with academic writing tasks. In addition to this, writing skills taught do not take into account the content of the subjects taught in English. This point also reveals that there is no collaboration between TEOE teachers and subject lecturers in Economics and Management. TEOE teachers themselves do not collaborate with each other to determine the content and the methodology appropriate in this academic context in general and in Economics and Management in particular. No academic or technical vocabulary related to Economics and Management is taken into account in writing skills tasks developed for these students. Furthermore, intensive reading in the context of the students' study which could develop academic and technical vocabulary as well as academic writing seems not to be encouraged.

As noted in this previous paragraph, students' recommendations emerge from their views and their needs. The following section synthesizes the emerging issues from students' perceptions of writing skills before analyzing teachers' views.



#### ***4.1.5 Synthesis of students' views***

Findings from questionnaire will be considered in the perspective that writing skills are developed in classrooms where both teachers and learners have an understanding of the process of text creation, the purposes of writing and the context in which texts are composed.

Concerning the process of text creation and the purpose of producing it in academic context especially in EAP writing, many EAP courses for second or additional language learners draw on approaches to EAP writing rather than focus, necessarily, on the one single perspective (Johns, 2000).

In the context of first year students in Economics and Management at the National University of Rwanda, according to students' views, writing skills learnt in both the EPLM and TEOE courses, seem to focus on *controlled composition* and *rhetorical functions*. Through controlled composition, it appears that students are taught to produce grammatically correct sentences. In this context, the main focus is on language form. Through rhetorical functions, the analysis of students' views seems to indicate that students are taught to combine correct sentences in paragraphs but the focus remains on form. The implication is that the two approaches make writing activity a product rather than a process. There is no evidence of process approach to writing which puts emphasis on the student writer and makes writing a thinking process which undergoes stages such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading rather than focusing on language form. Grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary is focused on in the editing phase. In addition, through students' information, there seems to be no evidence of genre approach to writing which could realistically prepare students for the demands of academic contexts. In other words, writing skills learnt in EPLM and in TEOE do not concentrate on teaching academic genres in the context of the students' study such as essays, research report, case studies, data interpretation, theses, etc. and the purpose of producing particular texts. In the context of this research, there seems to be no evidence of the purpose of producing written text. The focus remains on grammatical and lexical correctness. From this perspective, texts produced by students are not contextualized, that is, students do not seem to understand that 'texts exist for communities of readers and writers' (Johns, 2000).

In the context of the research, with no evidence of genre approach to writing, students seem to be unaware of that there are reasons beyond the text for the linguistic choices that writers make not only for particular expectations and requirements of a particular field of study but also for a particular audience. The context within which texts are composed is related to the field of Economics and Management and the reader is first of all the subject lecturer and then maybe the peers.



According to Dudley-Evans (1995), developing particular expectations and requirements of a particular field of study forms part of teaching academic writing. Unfortunately, according to students' views, writing skills taught to them seem not to take into account topics related to Economics and Management. In addition, there is no evidence of the implementation of a WAC/WID programme which could support academic writing.

Furthermore, academic and technical vocabulary as well as intensive reading and extensive reading which could also support academic writing seem not to be of writing skills practice.

Having synthesized findings from students' views, I turn now to teachers' views, which is the concern of the following section.

## 4.2 Teachers' perceptions of writing skills

This section describes three different sets of teachers' views about writing skills at the National University of Rwanda: First, the views of the head of the English Department and the English teacher in the intensive EPLM English course; second, the views of two teachers of the TEOE course in the first years of the Economics and Management programmes; third and last, the views of two subject lecturers in the same programme. The first set of interviews seeks mainly to find out if writing skills taught to students in the EPLM course prepare them for academic writing in the faculty subjects learnt in English. The second aims to find out if writing skills taught in the TEOE prepare students for academic writing in Economics and Management subjects learnt through the English medium. The main purpose of the last set of interviews was to find out if students write academically acceptable English in the subjects they learn in English.

### *4.2.1 Views from senior programme staff in EPLM*

These views were provided by the Head of the English Department in the School of Modern Languages (EPLM) through interview concluded in English. The Head of the

department coordinates the pedagogic activities of the EPLM intensive English course offered to students in the department and teaches English like other teaching staff. The questions addressed to him seek mainly to know if English writing skills developed in EPLM prepare francophone students for academic writing in the faculty subjects they have to study in English. The findings include the objectives of teaching and learning writing skills in EPLM, the content of these skills and the processes to teaching them as well as the assessment of writing. Each point is dealt with in the following paragraphs.

### **Objectives of teaching and learning writing skills**

The Head of the Department stated that the objectives of teaching and learning writing skills in the EPLM course are: to provide students with sustainable writing expression, to help them write their essays and exams correctly, and to help them behave accurately in their daily life correspondences.

### **Types of writing skills and how they are taught**

The types of writing skills mentioned by the Head of English Department are: in class dissertations, take home dissertations, notes dictation, and grammatical exercises (in class and take home).

According to the Head of the Department, these skills are always taught. He specifies that in class short compositions on a given topic or letter writing exercises are given. After students have done their compositions, a selection of those embodying almost all common mistakes is made and the selected ones are written on the board for mistake correction. Another strategy is to collect all compositions to be corrected and marked and returned so that students can be aware of their own weaknesses. However, he admits that teachers encounter a problem with large classes and that the allotted time to the session is insufficient to make each student write a series of compositions. Another issue is that teachers have too much work and this constitutes an obstacle since writing requires regular and concentrated follow-up. He notes that if this regular and concentrated follow-

up was done, it would require teachers to go beyond the prescribed syllabus that teachers follow in a bid to achieve standardized teaching. So, the scope and time allocated to the syllabus completion does not allow teachers to give enough exercises on writing. In this respect, the head of English Department explains that the predetermined syllabus (the New Cambridge English Course) helps students more in communicative purposes than in other skills such as academic writing skills. Likewise, he feels that writing skills learnt in the EPLM English course are insufficient to help students develop academic writing skills that would enable them to cope efficiently with their subjects, especially to write well assignments, exams and other academic tasks. The main difficulties the students encounter, according to this informant, stemmed from their background: they tend to write words exactly as in their previous languages, they also write the way they speak, and they lack technical terms.

### **Assessment of writing**

For the Head of the Department, writing is assessed according to how well both the form and the content are viewed by the marker. It is assessed especially through continuous tests which are given throughout the duration of teaching and learning of the intensive EPLM English course. It is also assessed in a final exam (exit exam). Both continuous tests and the final exam are considered when deciding whether to promote a student or not.

The Head of the Department seems to support the findings from student questionnaires that writing skills development in EPLM is insufficient and not always appropriate for preparing students to do EAP writing in their first year in general and in first year Economics and Management in particular. Students are not exposed to genres related to the academic context and they thus have difficulty understanding and controlling academic discourse in Economics and Management. Short compositions on a 'given' topic and exercises on letter writing are not necessarily appropriate for students who are required to write extended essays in various subjects, who have to synthesize and summarise extensive readings and lectures, who have to write research reports and who

may ultimately write their thesis in English. Moreover, large classes, confinement to the New Cambridge English textbooks and the little time allotted to the few and inappropriate writing skills make it impossible to adopt a process approach to developing writing skills while teaching. The few writing skills that are taught are product-focused and both teachers' and peers' feedback, if any, seem to be of little attention.

In addition, as the informant points out, the textbook which deals mainly with English for everyday communicative purposes does not equip students with cognitive academic language proficiency which would seem to be necessary for studying through the English medium at the tertiary level of education. In other words, students finish the intensive English course with only basic interpersonal communicative skills and an ability to read short texts on everyday topics. This would also help to explain why students are not aware of differences and similarities between spoken and written discourse at academic level. That is why 'they tend to write the way they speak.' More importantly, students in first year Economics and Management are not prepared to do writing in the subjects they study in English and they accordingly lack academic and technical vocabulary related to those subjects. In short, there is no evidence of academic writing skills in EPLM and teachers are not trained to teach this.

Having summarized the significance of the views from the Head of the English Department in the School of Modern Languages (EPLM), the following section presents views from the TEOE teachers, the other course offered concurrently with their first year of formal study.

#### ***4.2.2 Views of teachers of Speaking and Writing Skills (TEOE)***

The main purpose of these interviews was to know the objectives of the course, the types of writing skills taught and how they are taught, how writing skills are assessed and the suggestions to develop students' academic writing.

The main views to be described are from two informants who teach this module in the first year of the Economics and Management programmes. According to both informants, the objective of the TEOE course is to enable students to speak and write using both French and English and therefore be able to attend lectures in either language. Concerning the types of writing skills they taught, they both mention letter writing, CV's, report, summaries, note taking, and essay writing through the process of sentence construction to paragraphs.

These varieties of writing skills are taught without the aid of any predetermined syllabus or any other syllabus designed by either teacher through common agreement or negotiation between teachers and students. Both teachers mention a kind of guideline consisting of some points which can be considered as a rough content outline.

The implication of the above is that, confirmed by one of the two teachers, they may teach differently especially in terms of content, although they are given this kind of guideline. The other teacher, who declared that he had never had any common agreement with the other teachers of what he could teach, adds that he has the impression teachers have been doing what would suit them. The lack of collaboration among the TEOE teachers in the first year is also apparent between subject lecturers and these TEOE teachers. Both TEOE teachers admit that they have never collaborated with subject teachers. Consequently, one of the TEOE teachers states that she has no idea about what modules students learn in English. In response to the question about whether writing skills taught in TEOE relates to the subjects taught in English, the informant simply says 'to some extent ... as a teacher you try your best to initiate discussions on one or two topics in relation to some subjects of the students' concern.'

Apart from the implications mentioned above, both teachers have realized that the time allotted to the module is not enough to teach academic writing skills efficiently as they require much practice and follow up. Teacher 1 expresses the idea as follows:

*I don't think so. The number of hours allotted to the module does not suffice at all to teach students efficiently.*

Teacher 2 specifies that 'the time allotted to this course is not sufficient to equip students with the skills they require for academic purposes'. He adds that 'the course itself is divided into two main parts: the first deals with the development of the speaking skills and the second with the writing skills. Each part provides for both theoretical and practical divisions'. Furthermore, they have noticed that the students do not have a good background in writing skills although they have been offered a one year intensive English course in the School of Modern Languages (EPLM). Both teachers have also remarked that only a few students can manage to write well while the majority hardly ever write 'correct sentences'. For instance teacher 1 reacts that 'they seem not to have a good background in English at all (no prerequisite)' and teacher 2 is more specific that 'most of the students haven't been trained to write academically especially during their one year intensive English course prior to their academic studies'.

Attempts to improve the basics of writing skills are limited by the size of classes. It becomes difficult for teachers to give as many exercises as possible since it is quite impossible to correct each of the students and give back feedback. According to one of the informants, they try to provide general remarks. He points out as follows:


*It's quasi impracticable to give students individually as many exercises as possible in writing unless you want to keep copies uncorrected. The only alternative that is so far feasible is to divide the class into manageable groups. Under these working conditions you can provide students in their respective groups with some general remarks.*

Another constraint mentioned by one of the informants is that materials from the main library of National University of Rwanda are drawn from old books. In addition, according to my experience at the National University of Rwanda as an English language teacher, language teachers are not trained to teach academic writing according to new and

various approaches to language teaching in general and academic writing skills in particular.

Concerning assessment, both teachers reported that they give students course work assignments done in class and a final exam. They say that they look at both form and content. One of the two indicates that he insists on formal correctness, and so emphasises grammatical mistakes, spelling, etc. According to him, formal language constitutes the basics of correct writing. He expressed this as follows: ‘My main concern is formal language; grammatical correctness constitutes the basis of correct writing. I do not care much about the general organization of ideas in the text’.

Before discussing the suggestions provided by both teachers, it is important to note that both TEOE teachers realized that students only take this module seriously if the teacher himself or herself is serious. Otherwise, many students miss classes. The following suggestions have been provided by teachers:

- 
- To give much more practice on themes related to faculty subjects
  - Students should be exposed to different types of writing
  - To encourage extensive reading
  - To acquaint students with knowledge in ESP
  - To train language teachers not only at university but also at secondary level

From teachers’ interviews, it seems clear that there are certain gaps in their understanding of the purposes of writing, the processes of text creation, and the contexts in which texts are composed.

Although the course seems to offer various genres of writing skills, there are certain key genres absent, for example extended essays, research report, case studies, interpreting data, and so on. Consequently, it appears that there is lack of related discourse, that is formal and rhetorical text choices to express the purposes of writing meaningfully. The

choice of genre in the language courses does not take into account the context of the studies in Economics and Management.

Writing skills in TEOE appear to be product-focused. Teachers seem to be more concerned with language form since they tend to focus their teaching of writing only on language correctness and putting paragraphs together. This implies that the teaching of writing skills in TEOE seems not to be informed by other main approaches to teaching academic writing such as process and genre approaches to writing. These approaches could enable students to develop academic writing skills such as viewing academic writing as a thinking process which undergoes various stages. During these stages engagement of the student writer, teacher feedback, and peer feedback concern with the needs of a particular audience and how to link ideas are very important for the production of coherent academic texts.

According to the informants' views, the teaching of writing skills in TEOE seems to ignore that texts are composed within a particular context for particular readers. In the context of this research, students are members of an academic community, in this case of the Economics and Management community. Accordingly, different types of texts they produce are related to this field of study and the production of these various texts should take into account the reader's expectations and related linguistic choices.

In the context of this research, to address issues of the purposes of writing and the contexts in which texts are composed, collaboration between TEOE teachers and subjects' lecturers in Economics and Management is necessary. This collaboration would especially serve to determine the content of the course. Content related to the field of Economics and Management would also enable students to develop academic and technical vocabulary through intensive reading in the context of their study in order to develop academic writing in the subjects learnt in English. Unfortunately, according to the informants, this collaboration does not exist.



This section has presented the views of two teachers of the module intended to teach speaking and writing skills to the students of the first year of Management and Economics programmes. In addition the section has summarised key issues reflected in teachers' views and recommendations. The following section will present Economics and Management subject lecturers' views about students' writing skills.

#### ***4.2.3 Views of subjects lecturers***

The views presented are from two lecturers. The first one, who is Indian, teaches Principles of Management. The second, who is Rwandan and bilingual (French and English), teaches Principles of Economics. The main purpose of the questions was to find out if francophone students have any language problems when they write their assignments or exams in the subject, what makes it difficult for them to write good English which meets academic standards, how assessment is done, and lecturers' suggestions to develop academic writing in relation to the faculty subjects.

Both lecturers admit that, thanks to EPLM experience, students manage to express themselves with the little knowledge of English they have. However, considering academic writing, both lecturers indicate that their writing is below acceptable academic standards. Among the difficulties encountered by the students, as far as writing skills are concerned, one of the two informants mentions a lack of follow up from EPLM. The second informant is more precise in defining the problems students face in writing their assignments or exams. Among other things, he mentions that 'some of the students cut the sentences, that is, they write incomplete sentences and they lack vocabulary in general and technical terms in particular. In addition the majority of them are neither analytical nor expressive in their writing'.

According to the same informant, the above difficulties are due to a number of reasons. First, students are exposed to English language at a late stage. Second, 'the constraint of big classes (more than 100) is an obstacle to give enough assignments which require critical thinking since correcting them and giving feedback would be quasi impossible'.

Third and very important, ‘the institutional policy of giving them detailed notes limits the development of academic writing skills’. He adds that ‘the implication is that students tend to memorise their notes and then when it comes to answering questions which require critical thinking, their writing skills are inadequate’. Likewise, the informant points out that ‘this policy also limits the use of library by students which in turn breaks the process of self development’.

Although these students in first year Economics and Management have language problems in written expression which is below acceptable academic writing standards, both lecturers realize that they do not all have the same problems and their levels of written expression are different. One informant remarked that the students who are bright in the subjects are the ones who write good English. In addition, as a bilingual lecturer, she remarked that those who write well in French also write well in English. However, many of francophone students do not even write well in French. The same informant echoed the Head of the English Department (EPLM) view that these students write as they speak.



Concerning assessment, both lecturers focus on the ideas, that is, the subject content in relation to the questions. ‘I do not penalize them for their mistakes but what matters for me is the idea put forward’, the bilingual lecturer declared. The Indian lecturer states clearly that his class ‘is not a language class’.

Regarding all the above issues, the lecturers made the following suggestions in relation to the development of academic writing skills at National University of Rwanda:

- A follow up from EPLM to the Faculty in terms of academic writing skills should be made.
- Both lecturers and students should be aware of the importance of academic writing skills.

- Lecturers should encourage students to use the library and write assignments which require critical thinking and feedbacks should be given to students to improve their academic writing skills.
- Appropriate topics containing technical terms should be dealt with in the first year module ‘Speaking and Writing Skills’ (TEOE).
- Academic writing skills should be introduced in all levels of education at the National University of Rwanda.

Through their views and recommendations, both subjects’ lecturers acknowledge that students’ writing is below academic standards. This confirms that academic writing is neither taught in the EPLM course nor in the TEOE offered in first year Economics and Management. The implication is that these students are not analytical and are limited in their expression. Consequently, in this context, they are unable to control academic written discourse since they are not exposed to various genres related to the subjects they study in English. This is mainly due to the fact that the two courses do not effectively prepare students for writing in academic context in general and writing in the subjects in particular. In this regard, students are not prepared for the extended writing required to write assignments and exams in faculties. The absence of extended writing implies that students are not aware of characteristics of academic writing such as coherence and audience. In the context of first year Economics and Management the audience is the subject lecturer and peers. It is therefore important to note that students should write about topics related to the subjects but unfortunately writing taught to these students does not take into account these subjects. In addition, process writing would improve academic writing through the advantages of process approach to writing such as critical thinking, teacher feedback and peer feedback. Academic writing is also hindered by the absence of extensive reading which would also develop academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary related to the subjects learnt in English if relevant topics were given to the students and if subject lecturers were giving to students more topics which require critical thinking and extensive reading rather than those requiring memorisation.

This section has summarized and analysed the views of two subject lecturers in first year of Economics and Management at the National University of Rwanda. The following section deals with the analysis of the textbook.



### 4.3 Analysis of the textbook

The aim of the analysis is to uncover the number and nature of the writing tasks offered to students in level four of the New Cambridge English Course (NCEC) in order to determine their appropriateness for developing academic writing skills in the context of first year Economics and Management students studying some courses in English.

Level four of the New Cambridge English Course has been chosen for analysis because it is the last level of the course and is supposed to bring students to an upper-intermediate level before they start to learn faculty subjects in English. It is therefore assumed by the National University of Rwanda that at the end of this level students are well prepared for the demands of academic writing in English.

Level four consists of five blocks. Each block has eight lessons followed by a consolidation section and a test which focuses on listening, speaking, language in use, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading and writing as these skills are developed in the lessons. These skills are not integrated in a way that they are developed around a common theme in a lesson or in the block. Each lesson deals with a number of tasks. The number of tasks varies from lesson to lesson. The analysis that follows, deals with the discussion of writing skills in each block.

#### ***4.3.1 Writing activities in Level Four of the New Cambridge English Course (NCEC)***

BLOCKS	NO. OF TASKS	NO. OF WRITING TASKS
Block A	58	4
Block B	53	3
Block C	47	2
Block D	55	2
Block E	48	3
Total	261	14 = 5.3%

***Table 2: number of writing tasks developed in Level Four of the New Cambridge English Course.***

The table clearly shows that the number of writing tasks offered to students in Level Four of the New Cambridge English course is extremely low (5%). This seems to indicate that writing is not given much importance in this textbook and that the writing skills that are taught to students are insufficient to prepare them for the demands of academic writing at tertiary level in Rwanda where they need to write effectively in the disciplines taught through the medium of English.

I now turn to the nature of the few writing tasks that are present in the book.

### **Writing activities in block A**

The whole block deals with only three tasks for writing skills. The first writing activity called 'note-taking' in lesson A requires students to write only the names of the people being interviewed and what they are interested in. This exercise seems to be intended to make students aware of the structure *be interested in + noun or verb-ing* since students are given a list of nouns and activities related to leisure. Thus this activity bears little relation to the kind of note-taking activity needed at tertiary level where students are required to take notes from a complex and lengthy lecture or in a seminar which require special writing skills such as summarising and synthesising.

The second exercise in the same lesson is more related to extended writing but it offers a choice between speaking and writing, and there is therefore no obligation on students to write. Students are asked either to give a short talk to the class or write about one of their interests. For the writing task 150-200 words are required. The topic itself is an account of students' everyday interests. This topic is therefore likely to be in the form of a description or narrative and may also exhibit features more associated with spoken language such as spontaneous rather than planned language, non-standard forms, inexplicit information and repetitive, everyday vocabulary, fragmented sentences, simple structure, register, and simple clauses.

Consequently, it seems unlikely that the exercise will assist students to write a more extended essay in which aspects of academic writing such as context, logical organisation, coherence and audience are taken into account and where control of lexically dense, complex clauses, and more abstract, and often discipline specific vocabulary is required.

The third type of writing activity in block A is writing a letter to a close friend in which students are required to give an account of their personal experiences. At this stage where students are about to finish a 600-hour-intensive English course to start studying Faculty subjects through English, this kind of task can be judged inappropriate as an indicator of academic literacy from the point of view of purpose, topic and genre. At the very least, letters in which technical words and more complex themes or topics are required should be used as it is possible that students in Economics and Management may have to deal with business letters related to these disciplines.

The last writing activity in block A is to construct a short text. Students are given twelve questions which help them to write a story about a lady who wanted to set fire to her car when she was on a journey and then was arrested by the police. Once again, as it has been argued earlier, this kind of writing activity demands a simple narrative structure using everyday vocabulary and is inappropriate for students being prepared for the complex demands of writing in English at tertiary level in general and writing in Economics and Management in particular.

### **Writing activities in block B**

Block B has three writing tasks. Although the three tasks are different from the writing tasks in block A, they are equally inappropriate for students learning English for academic purposes.

The first writing activity requires learners to write a short report on one event but using different sources. At first glance, this might seem to be a useful task for students as

report-writing as a genre is often required at tertiary level. However, to make it effective and meaningful, this kind of task requires an academic context and topics or themes related to the field of study: writing a report on an event from newspapers or from radio/TV cannot help students in Economics and Management to report, for example, on a seminar or on a conference about topics related to Economics and Management. Such students therefore need more complex report-writing tasks in registers related to the discipline.

In the second writing activity, each student chooses one of the passages offered in the task and reads it. Then each student tells the partner what she or he has understood and write it down in turn. This could be considered preparation for note-taking in lectures as students will have to note down what they understand from lectures but lectures will not be simple stories and there is no further development of note-taking skills. Lectures will also make use of discipline specific discourse features into which students need to be inducted. Therefore, this kind of writing activity does not go nearly far enough to help.

The last writing exercise deals with summarising, which is called ‘economic writing’ in the book. Students are asked to summarise the meaning of a long sentence in a few words. The task consists of nine exercises and none of them requires a summary of more than ten words, neither do any of them have any relationship amongst each other. The extent to which this writing exercise can help students summarise books or other long academic readings, particularly those related to Economics and Management is thus questionable.

### **Writing activities in Block C**

The block has only two tasks through which students interact with writing. The first writing task deals with formal letter writing and the focus is on job applications. Students are shown what an interviewer’s notes on a job applicant and letters addressed to successful or unsuccessful applicants look like. It was mentioned earlier that business letters as a specific genre are necessary for students in Economics and Management.



However, a simple exercise in which students are merely made aware of few formal expressions and words (such as we have considered, we regret, we are unable, post, qualification) in formal letters of job application and which are practised through group work speaking activities cannot help them deal with more complex business letters of various kinds in Management and Economics disciplines.

In the second and last writing exercise, students write down the names of the rooms of a house described on a tape-recording. Although the task is called a note-taking writing skill, it deals with vocabulary related to the names of different rooms of a house. As it has been argued earlier for note-taking in block A, this kind of exercise cannot help students in Economics and Management take notes from lectures and other forms of academic discourse delivered in English.

### **Writing activities in Block D**

Here too only two tasks involve students in writing activities. Although the first task has been called a writing exercise, it is more related to vocabulary since students are asked to write down words related to position and shape. These words are taken from a written description. At this level, instead of identifying words from a simple description, students need to be engaged in extended writing on description as a genre. According to their field of study, that is, Economics and Management, They can for instance describe how a Customer Information and Communication System in a given company operates, how the production system in a company is made, how the supply chain management of a company is done, etc. They can also for example describe the economic fluctuations of the Rwandan economy using the financial indicators, the macroeconomic performance of the Rwandan economy, the causes of the Rwandan Net export downturns, etc. The aim for a language teacher would not be to assess how much students knows about the subject, but how they control related academic discourse, how ideas are organised to convey a coherent meaning, and how they position themselves towards the topic and the reader. In addition, this kind of writing makes use of academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary related to the field of Economics and Management.

In the second writing exercise, students have to make a 50 to 100 word summary of a conversation on a tape-recording between a shy boy and a girl who meet for the first time. Students are then asked to summarise their conversation. Although the exercise is about summarising as a writing skill, it is intended to make students aware of some expressions and words (such as friendship, shyness, marriage, scared, had better..., why not...?, why don't you...?, What/how about...ing?, if I were you, I would..., etc.) used for personal relationships. It is obvious that, as mentioned earlier, this kind of exercise cannot prepare students for complex summarising tasks in the various genres of Economics and Management.

### **Writing activities in Block E**

Block E has three writing tasks. All these tasks focus on narrative (past events). Although the three exercises seem to involve students in more extended writing (100 to 150 words), they appear to be designed to reinforce students' ability to use past tenses such as past progressive, simple past and past perfect as well as direct and indirect speeches in a meaningful context. The focus is therefore predominantly on form which seems to indicate an approach to writing as a product rather than a process. These past tenses would be more meaningfully used in extended essays in which students for example write about historical thoughts of Economics and of Management.

#### ***4.3.2 Summary of the analysis of the textbook***

The analysis of Level Four of the New Cambridge English Course reveals that the number of tasks devoted to writing skills in the textbook is very low compared to other skills (5%). Furthermore, none of these tasks is suitable for developing academic writing skills other than at a very basic introductory level. This seems to indicate that students are not being sufficiently prepared for writing at tertiary level.

All the writing tasks developed in the textbook seem to be designed for developing everyday language use for communication in contexts other than academic. Writing skills emphasised on such as note-taking, reports, letters, summaries and narratives appear to be very important for developing academic writing aim at reinforcing some language forms in a given situation for basic interpersonal communicative skills.

However, in an EAP context such as Economics and Management at the National University of Rwanda where students are required to write extended essays in various subjects, such writing tasks cannot meet the needs of the students. The textbook therefore fails to engage students in more extended essay writing on topics or themes reflecting the content of the subjects they learn in English. In addition, students are not exposed to the stages of process writing through which teacher feedback and peer feedback can help students to make progress in their writing and progressively overcome difficulties encountered.

In addition, students are not taught how to create coherence and cohesion which are one of the features of a well written text (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000: 125). In written academic discourse, these two features are especially related to 'textual meaning' which 'has to do with the ways in which a stretch of language is organised in relation to its content' (Lock, 1996: 10). To make sense of a text, as far as textual meaning is concerned, the reader needs to understand the connections between its parts. To achieve this, writers use conjunctions and lexical ties such as word repetition, synonyms and antonyms, and superordinates (Basturkmen, 2002: 51). In academic context, where extended writing is required, it is therefore important to make students aware of that linguistic expressions are used to achieve coherent textual meaning.

In the same way, writing skills developed in the textbook do not address issues such as audience and the writer's position towards the topic and the reader which are related to interpersonal meaning. To achieve this interpersonal meaning of written texts, writers adopt interactional and evaluative positions in presenting informational content (Hyland, 1999: 99). The same author refers to these ways that writers adopt to create a relationship

to their subject matter and their readers as writer's 'stance'. Such expressions are generally carried through the system of modality and are important features of academic writing. (ibid: 106). It is unfortunate that the writing skills in the textbook do not develop this aspect of academic writing at all nor does any informant raise any concerns that relate to teach students to express interpersonal meaning. The absence of this facet of writing seems to indicate that teachers are unaware of this aspect of academic writing and are accordingly unable to teach it.

It is from this perspective that students' scripts are analysed to find out the extent to which expressions of modality as grammatical resources are used.

#### 4.4 Analysis of students' scripts

This section analyzes students' scripts from the 2002 exit examination called *first sitting* in the intensive EPLM English course preparing students to enter tertiary level study.

Samples of writing in the exit examination were chosen for analysis because it is at this final stage that students are assumed to demonstrate their abilities to deal efficiently with written discourse in order to meet academic requirements. In other words, after a 600-hour course, students are supposed to write academically acceptable English by being able to control academic discourse.

It has been noted earlier that modality as an aspect of interpersonal meaning is central to academic discourse. Students' writing is therefore analysed to find out how they use expressions of modality to show their stance and attitude towards the messages they convey. Three key aspects of modality will be considered. As described in the literature review, the first of the three aspects of modality consists of the closed class of modals such as *must, can, might, may, will, etc.* (called Aspect 1 for the purposes of this analysis). The second includes verbs such as *claim, seem, appear, assume, doubt, suggest, and think.* (Aspect 2). The third aspect is concerned with adverbs such as *actually, certainly, obviously, and definitely.* (Aspect 3)

The aim of this analysis was to find out whether any of these aspects of modality occurred in students' writing and if so, whether they were correctly used. Cases where modality could have been used but was not were also analysed. Twelve scripts were analysed: six of them were considered 'good' and the other six 'weak' according to the teacher who attributed marks to them. The topic was to assess the work done at the School during the 2001-2002 academic year as far as English language was concerned (see Appendix D).

The following table shows occurrences of these aspects of modality in students' writing.

'Good' texts							'Weak' texts					
Students	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12
Marks												
\20	12	12	12	13	14.5	15	04	06	07	08	08	08
Aspect1	3	1	2	1	1				1		1	1
Aspect2			2	4								
Aspect3												

**Table 3: Occurrences of expressions of modality in a sample of student exit examinations (EPLM)**

The table indicates that most of the 'good' writers use some words from Aspect 1, that is, the traditional category of modals. However, all of them used one modal 'will-future' to show what they 'will' be able to do in the faculties or in other places thanks to the intensive English course offered to them in EPLM. Only two 'good' students (S1 and S5) used *can* to express ability, S1 also used *could* to express possibility, and one student (S3) used *might* to express probability or likelihood if we use Lock's (1996) framework. In this category (Aspect 1), there are therefore only two uses of modality in the sense of expressing a stance towards the information given.

Two ‘good’ students (S3, S4) used words from the group of verbs that fall into Aspect 2. Student three (S3) used *I think* and an attributive clause *I am certain*. Student four (S4) used four verbs from Aspect 2: *consider, assume, find, think*. Surprisingly, none of the ‘good’ students used expressions of the type covered by Aspect 3. In addition, students five and six (S5 -who used only *can* for ability- and S6) who were awarded high scores surprisingly failed to use any expressions of modality. This may indicate that this aspect of academic writing is not taught in EPLM. It may also reveal that writing skills for short essays in EPLM are limited only to putting grammatically correct sentences together and then forming some paragraphs. Teachers themselves may be unaware of the role of these expressions in academic writing. Consequently, these students (both ‘good’ and ‘weak’) are unable to consider their relationship to the topic or the reader. In other words, they are unaware of what ‘rhetorical stance’ refers to in academic writing.

Coming back to ‘weak’ writers, as the table shows, only three of them used only *will future* without any expression of aspect from any of the categories in the table. This may stem partly from the fact that these students may have never understood the basic use of modals through their schooling.



Taking into account the topic given to all of the students, ‘*Assess (evaluate) the work done at EPLM and give suggestions for the future*’, students could be expected to make use of all the three kinds of modality. For instance in Aspect 1, since the information about the student’s assessment of the course had to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact, students could have used expressions such as *I may say that...*, *It might be true that...*, *I can argue that...*, *I would conclude that...*, etc. In addition, students could have made suggestions which can be expressed through a certain degree of obligation., for example, using expressions such as *teachers should...*, *students should/must* (or negative) *or have to...*, etc. Furthermore, they could also have used expressions such as *it would have been better if...*, *teachers could have...*, *writing skills might have been...if, we would have...if, etc.* to show some gaps in the course.

With regard to Aspect 2, students could have used phrases such as *it seems that...*, *it appears that...*, *I doubt that...*, *I think that...*, *etc.* to show the outcomes or the shortcomings of the course.

They could also have made use of expressions from Aspect 3 such as *certainly*, *obviously*, *definitely*, and *it is obvious*, to express certainty and to emphasise that the work had been successful.

In general, it is necessary that first year students at the National University of Rwanda learn modality as an aspect of interpersonal meaning to enable them to understand and use rhetorical stance in their academic writing.

### **Summary**

In general the analysis seems to indicate that students may have not incorporated modality into their written discourse. This is a significant omission as it affects their ability to express rhetorical stance which is an important feature of academic writing. Greater control of modality would enable them to exploit an awareness of their relationship to their readers and to the information presented and also to make choices about the strength of the claims they are making.

### **4.5 Conclusion**

The main purpose of Chapter Four has been to present and analyse data from questionnaires, interviews and documents. The analysis revealed that neither the EPLM nor the TEOE course prepares students for academic writing in general and for academic writing in the subjects they learn through English in particular.

Although the majority of students agree that both the EPLM and TEOE courses helped them to develop academic writing, findings from the questionnaires indicated that students are unaware of academic writing. The writing processes that students go through are limited to language form, that is, lexico-grammatical correctness. Approaches to

academic writing such as process and genre approaches to writing which could develop students' creativity and critical thinking through stages of process approach to writing as well as control of rhetorical structure of specific text-types which are important for developing academic writing are absent. In this regard, students are not exposed to various genres related to the disciplines of their study, especially Economics and Management, and are unable to write for specific readers who are in this case lecturers and peers. These findings from students' views are very similar to those from interviews. The interviews showed that the EPLM and TEOE courses do not equip students with academic writing skills required at tertiary level. This is especially due to the fact that students were not exposed to writing extended essays required in assignments and exams. Writing skills taught in EPLM, especially those developed in the textbook are concerned with every day basic interpersonal communicative skills which do not suffice for cognitively-demanding academic situations. Likewise, the TEOE course develops writing skills limited to the formation of some paragraphs with emphasis on language form. It is therefore clear that the absence of extended essay writing related to Economics and Management fields resulted in the absence of adequate processes of text creation, clear purposes of writing and unawareness of the contexts in which texts are composed and which give meaning. The interviews also revealed that intensive reading and extensive reading which could support extended essay writing and develop academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary is not encouraged.

The textbook analysis and students' scripts analysis also indicated that English academic writing is not developed to prepare students for academic writing in faculty subjects learnt in English. There are few exercises aimed at developing writing skills and are inappropriate for developing academic writing. They simply deal with basic interpersonal communicative skills. The analysis of students' scripts also showed that after the intensive EPLM English course, students are unable to use expressions of modality which are crucial to the control of academic discourse since they enable the writer to take decisions and positions towards the topic and the reader.



In short, English writing skills offered to students in both the EPLM and the TEOE courses at the National University of Rwanda do not prepare them for academic writing in first year Economics and Management subjects. The next and last chapter will deal with conclusions and recommendations.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusion

The study carried out has investigated the role played by writing skills offered through the intensive EPLM English course and through the 75 hour TEOE course in first year Economics and Management in preparing these students to cope with academic writing in Faculty subjects through English as the medium of instruction. The findings of the research indicate that writing skills offered in the intensive EPLM English course do not prepare students for academic writing in faculty subjects at the National University of Rwanda in general and in Economics and Management in particular. In addition, the 75 hour TEOE course in first year Economics and Management does not prepare students adequately for the demands of academic writing in their studies through the medium of English. In other words, academic writing skills are not developed adequately in either of the two courses. There are some reasons outlined below.

First, in both courses, a process approach to writing teaching is absent. Such an approach could engage students in more of the cognitive processes central to writing activity through stages such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading of their texts.

Second, writing skills in both courses do not deal with topics related to the subjects learnt in English and they do not engage students in relevant extensive reading either.

Third, writing skills offered in the two courses do not develop academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary in the field of the students' studies.

Fourth, the two courses do not prepare students for controlling academic discourse in order to express the purposes of writing in effective ways through formal and rhetorical text choices.

Fifth, there is no evidence of a genre approach to writing teaching which could complement a process approach and equip students to recognise the range of genres required by Economics and Management studies as well as specific discourses pertaining to these genres. Students are also not made aware of the fact that they should write for a clear purpose and audience.

In short, English writing skills offered at the National University of Rwanda are not adequately academically developed and do not consequently prepare students for challenging and cognitively demanding academic context where they are required to write extended essays in the subjects they study in English.

Having presented conclusions based on the findings of the study, the following section formulates recommendations which could contribute to the development of academic writing skills in order to assist francophone students at the National University of Rwanda in general and students in Economics and Management in particular.

## 5.2 Recommendations

This section deals with recommendations which could serve as guidelines to develop English academic writing skills for academic purposes in the context of National University of Rwanda.

To develop English academic writing skills in order to prepare students for academic writing in Economics and Management subjects, language teachers should reflect on the fact that they are dealing with students who learn English as an additional language and therefore be aware of the role that languages learnt earlier can play in students' writing skills. The development of writing skills in an EAP context like the National University

of Rwanda should also take into account differences and similarities between writing and speech. More importantly, language teachers should have an adequate understanding of the processes of text creation, the purposes of writing and the contexts in which texts are composed in order to ensure that texts communicate appropriate meanings. In addition, the issue of large classes and untrained language teachers as real obstacles should be taken into account in order to develop English academic writing. Each of these points is dealt with in the following paragraphs.

### ***5.2.1 The role of languages learnt earlier***

One of the difficulties encountered in the teaching and the learning of writing skills in a second or in an additional language may be a lack of awareness of the potential role of students' first language or other languages learnt before English. In the context of higher education in Rwanda, language teachers should be aware that both Kinyarwanda and French can be important resources in students' continual process of decision-making and in their planning and organization while dealing with extended writing in English. However, language teachers should not encourage students to translate literally from one sentence to the next while actually composing. Instead, in a situation where language teachers know both Kinyarwanda and French, it is important that these language teachers provide students with input on grammatical differences between Kinyarwanda or French and English as far as syntax is concerned but only during the editing phase. In addition, language teachers should not prevent students from using Kinyarwanda or/and French in a note-taking writing activity. Note-taking is one of the important writing skills needed by students especially when attending a lecture in English. Students should therefore be taught how to use these languages efficiently when taking notes so that they could reconstruct a coherent account in English which will be used in tests and examinations.

The awareness of the role that Kinyarwanda and French can play in the development of students' academic writing, as far as English for academic purposes is concerned, is not the only issue that language teachers and students at the National University of Rwanda should be aware of. Another issue which needs particular attention as far as academic

writing is concerned is the differences and similarities between writing and speaking. The issue is dealt with in the following subsection.

### ***5.2.2 Differences and similarities between speaking and writing***

In an academic context where extended writing is a requirement for students who write assignments and exams in English and who may tend to write the way they speak, language teachers should make these students aware of the differences and similarities between spoken and written discourse. Basically, language teachers at the National University of Rwanda need to know that students, in order to cope efficiently with academic writing in the subjects they learn in English, need a certain level of cognitive academic language proficiency because basic interpersonal communicative skills are not sufficient in a cognitively-demanding academic environment. It is in this context that teachers should make students aware that written discourse reflects very different rules from spoken discourse such as the absence of the listener, more elaborated linguistic system, specific vocabulary, etc. Since written discourse is characterised by the absence of the listener, language teachers should make students aware of the fact that they have to be explicit about their written text when they are composing by providing all relevant information that the reader needs to understand the communicated text, and that the written text utilises full and complex sentences with abstract and less common vocabulary.

However, teachers also need to be aware of the fact that in academic contexts both spoken and written discourses may be highly complex. Students should know that a spoken discourse may have some of the features of a written discourse as a written discourse may have many of the characteristics of spoken texts. For example a university lecture may be spoken but with a highly elaborated academic language, and students need to have practice in a variety of ‘different types of language use which are conventionally related to different contexts and different types of discourse’ (McCarthy and Carter, 1994: 8).

Although students need to know some of the differences and similarities between written and spoken discourses for developing academic writing skills, it is even more important that they develop an awareness of processes of text creation, purposes of writing, and the contexts in which texts are composed to achieve the purposes and communicate meaning. Recommendations are concerned with these points in the following subsections.

### ***5.2.3 Writing process***

In the context of the National University of Rwanda, English language teachers should know that a number of theories supporting teachers' efforts to understand L2 writing and learning and particularly EAP writing have developed since the 1980s. However these teachers need also to know that these theories are more accurately seen as complementary and overlapping perspectives instead of adopting and strictly following just one of these orientations (Hyland, 2003).

In this regard, process and genre approaches to writing focusing on students' subject content are strongly recommended for English language teachers in both the language teaching courses studied here.

These approaches are mainly recommended on the basis of the findings of this study in order to make language teachers aware of the fact that syntactic complexity and grammatical accuracy are not the only features of writing improvement and may not even be the best measures of good writing and that writing is more than a matter of arranging elements in the best order by developing paragraphs through the creation of topic sentences, supporting sentences, and transitions, and the development of different types of paragraphs. Language teachers should go beyond these orientations and need to know that basic cognitive processes are central to writing activity and students' abilities to plan, define a rhetorical problem, and propose and evaluate solutions are crucial to the development of academic writing. These two elements which emphasise the process of writing, and the student writer guided by the language teacher are some of the features of the process approaches to writing recommended in this research.

## **The process approach to writing**

Language teachers in the intensive EPLM English course and in the TEOE course need to be aware of three important elements which characterise the process approach to writing namely, the central role of the student, the role of the teacher and the stages students go through in producing texts.

In Rwandan context at the National University of Rwanda where language teachers tend to control students rather than guide them through writing, it is necessary that language teachers know that students can assume greater control over what they write, how they write it and can also take part in the evaluation of their own writing. In this regard, language teachers should be able to redefine their roles and become facilitators in the writing process to enable students develop through strategies such as ‘teacher-student conferences, problem-based assignments, journal writing, group discussions, or portfolio assessments in their classes’ (Hyland, 2003: 12).

Language teachers at the National University of Rwanda should also be aware of the fact that these composing strategies are utilised through important writing stages such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading produced texts. Recommended activities through this process are especially pre-writing activities or brainstorming to generate ideas which enable students to generate ideas about content and structure, writing multiple drafts and giving extensive feedback which enable students to add, delete and rearrange ideas, facilitating peer feedback, and focus on grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary in the editing phase (Raimes, 1992; Paltridge, 2001).

In the context of this research, two elements of the above activities, namely teacher feedback and peer feedback, need particular attention by language teachers in order to develop academic writing. Language teachers should give extensive feedback to their students bearing in their mind that it enables students to expand and shape their ideas over subsequent drafts, that it gradually develops students’ skills necessary to view their own work critically and revise it, and that it brings into focus the language choices

students need to convey their ideas. However, to make teacher feedback efficient for academic writing, language teachers should not spend much more time on punctuation, grammar, spelling, etc. but rather much on organisation of the writing, audience awareness, content and meaning. In addition, teacher feedback should be complemented with peer feedback. In the context of the National University of Rwanda where students have different levels in English proficiency, students can help each other through student-to-student conferencing which is verbal or can take the form of written comments.

In the context of first year students in Economics and Management, the writing process should engage students in a variety of cognitively challenging writing tasks to develop their skills in the process of transforming content. It is therefore important that language teachers adapt their teaching of writing in relation to the content of Faculty subjects studied in English. In other words, language teachers, subject lecturers and students should work collaboratively to determine the content of academic writing skills on the basis of the content of subjects studied in English.

In this context, a combination of WAD/WID programmes is relevant for students ready to follow Economics and Management programmes at the National University of Rwanda. These students are required to write their assignments and exams in English. The kind of writing needed requires subject-specific discourse and genres, as well as academic vocabulary and technical vocabulary. It is therefore suggested that a WAD/WID programme supported with extensive reading and sound collaboration between language teachers and lecturers of the subjects taught in English could significantly develop students' academic writing skills in the subjects.

Language teachers should be aware of the fact that focusing on form within a discourse-based approach does not exclude the process approaches to academic writing and that it should also involve students in extensive reading for the success of academic writing in this context. Language teachers should therefore encourage students to use the library in order to write meaningfully in extended essays required in the faculty subjects. In addition, language teachers should encourage students to read intensively and extensively



with the intention of increasing their command of academic and technical vocabulary needed for Economics and Management. To develop academic writing in this context, language teachers and students should understand that it is necessary not only to learn how to write and what to write about, but also to be aware of how texts are shaped by purpose and context (Hyland, 2003).

### **The genre approach to writing**

In order for students to be prepared effectively for academic writing as required in faculty subjects, specific genres such as extended essay, report writing, argumentation, description, formal letters of various kinds, memoranda, case studies, procedure, recount should be dealt with in writing activities. As stated earlier, challenging topics for writing activities should be related to the Economics and Management subjects that students study in English.

Language teachers should be aware of the fact that the aim is not to teach fixed or rule governed patterns of models of genres or of what a student should and should not write in a particular situation (Paltridge, 2001). In the context of the National University of Rwanda, language teachers should make students aware of the features of academic discourse related to each genre dealt with.

More importantly, language teachers should make it clear to their students that they have to write for the purpose of communicating meaning and that to communicate the purposes effectively and meaningfully, they have to know that the texts they produce are in and for academic community. Therefore, language teachers should equip students with skills enabling them to write for their potential reader(s). It is in this regard that students should be aware of the fact that they have to be able to make linguistic choices in order to address their reader and the topic successfully.

One important instance of linguistic choices in academic writing may be the use of modality in any genre for the purpose of expressing the writer's stance towards the topic

and the reader, for example, commitment, obligation, agreement, persuasion, etc. It is therefore suggested in this study that language teachers include expressions of modality in the writing programme since they add to students' ability to control academic discourse in a profound way.

#### ***5.2.4 Large classes and staff development***


Large classes constitute a real obstacle to the development of academic writing in English language classes at the National University of Rwanda. The present study recommends group work strategy to complement individual work during writing activities in order to increase the number of writing tasks. Likewise, language teachers should be regularly trained in the field of academic English in general and English academic writing in particular to enable them to apply approaches to EAP in the context of the National University of Rwanda.

The recommendations formulated in this study to develop English academic writing skills in Economics and Management studies suggest a combination of process and genre approaches to EAP writing with an emphasis on subject content. What is recommended for language teachers at the National University of Rwanda is the need to see how 'the strengths of one approach might complement the weaknesses of the other' (Hyland, 2003: 23) in this particular teaching and learning context. In addition, large classes should be divided into smaller groups and the skills of language teachers should be regularly upgraded.

Although this study was not exhaustive, I hope that both English language teachers and students at the National University of Rwanda in general and those of Economics and Management in particular will benefit from it. Throughout this study, it has emerged that more rigorous approaches to academic writing in the subjects need to be implemented at the National University of Rwanda, particularly in the Faculty of Economics and Management, in order to prepare students effectively for extended writing.

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## APPENDICES

