



**The Effect of Teaching Informational Registers on Iranian EFL  
Learners' Academic Writing Achievement**

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**The Effect of Teaching Informational Registers on Iranian EFL Learners'  
Academic Writing Achievement**

**Zahra Babaluie<sup>1</sup>, Mohadeseh Amini Harsini<sup>1\*</sup>**

**1. Department of English Teaching, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University,  
Karaj, Iran, \*Corresponding Author: mohadeseharsini@gmail.com**

**ABSTRACT**

This study was about the effectiveness of explicit register-based instruction on the academic writing achievement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners by improving their knowledge of the concept of register, in general and informational register, in particular. 30 postgraduate Iranian intermediate TEFL students of Islamic Azad University, Karaj Branch, participated in this study. Participants were divided into two groups: the experimental group who received the treatment through the model text with highlighted informational registers' features and register-based instruction, and the control group who received no treatment. A placement test was administered to ensure that all of the students were in the intermediate level of language proficiency. A research article was given to both groups and they were asked to write an article review, as a pretest. After receiving treatment, again another research article was given to both groups and they were invited to write an article review. Having collected enough and essential data, the quantitative and qualitative analyses of data were carried out. As the study was based on small scale register analysis, only the most significant linguistic features of academic register were selected. The data analysis indicated that the participants of none of the groups improved their academic writing scores significantly; however, a relatively small level of significance observed in the experimental group members' performance. Due to a multiplicity of possible reasons such as the relatively short period of treatment and small sample size, the improvement was observed in the experimental group did not reach the statistically meaningful level.

**Keywords:** Academic Writing, Informational Register, Multidimensional Analysis, Register, Register analysis, writing



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## 1-INTRODUCTION

One of the major challenges of EFL learners is to produce and comprehend academic texts. EFL learners do not feel comfortable with academic texts because they view it as an unfamiliar text or a goal rather than a tool to achieve their real goal. Hence, teaching how to write research articles, essays and personal opinions is the concern of most university teachers. Academic writing is a particular writing situation with its own register and conventions.

Producing academic texts entails the ability beyond constructing sentences with grammar and accuracy or writing organized paragraphs with topic sentences. It requires the demonstration of knowledge and proficiency through proper lexical and grammatical choices based on the particular register of a given text (Oshima & Hogue, 2007).

EFL learners are exposed to text varieties and they should write different types of writing paragraphs during class sessions, written assignments, term papers, etc. These variations are due to the different linguistic structures and systematic patterns related to particular situations of use called register (Gee & Handford, 2012). The systematicity of patterns facilitates learning and applying them in constructing a text. Therefore, improving learners' register knowledge assists them to recognize and interpret these patterns and their differences as well as produce them. Accordingly, proficiency with these varieties influences learner success in a way that "receptive mastery of different written text varieties increases access to information, while productive mastery increases the ability to write for varying purposes" (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 4). Increasing register sensitivity of EFL learners in order to achieve writing skill has remained somehow untouched in language studies and this study tries to accomplish it. Therefore, it is essential to make EFL learners familiar with the linguistic features of academic texts and their registers. To accomplish this complex task, proficiency in the linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural competencies is essential as well (Barkaoui, 2007).

EFL learners should identify the procedures and necessities of academic writing register. Learning register differences is more complicated for foreign language learners. EFL learners have been taught general vocabulary and grammatical rules of English in preparation for advanced study. In the general field of English for Academic Purposes



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(EAP), and the subfield of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) the significance of this knowledge is obvious as well. Both EAP and ESP aim to develop instructional materials that will assist students to learn the particular language patterns for the different situations and different kinds of texts in special fields. Hence, the necessity of knowledge on specific registers is outstanding. Thus, it is teachers' task to teach students how to use the words and structures that are appropriate for different registers. Proficiency on these varieties influences not only success as a student, but also as a teacher. As a teacher, we must be able to analyze an unfamiliar variety of registers in order to help ourselves and our students to master it. This study provides a primary knowledge which is essential to analyze academic register effectively and apply the extracted typical patterns of it and in academic writing. Thus, the research question in this study was as follows: does teaching informational-register affect Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing achievement? Teaching informational-register does not affect the Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing achievement was the hypothesis of this paper.

This paper is organized as follows: section two is review of literature. Section three presents methodology of the research. Section four discusses about the findings and finally, section five is conclusion.

## **2-REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Recognition of the term 'register' relates to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Early studies on register belong to Malinowski (1923, as cited in Christi, 2004) who initially proposed the concept of "context of situation". In Malinowski's view, the meaning of utterances is dependent on the situational context in which it happens. Later Firth developed Malinowski's idea frequently in his papers (1953, 1950, 1951, 1957, as cited in Christi, 2004), and focused the significance of register as "context of situation" in linguistics. He was pioneer of drawing other linguists' attention to this subject. Firth (1950, as cited in Christi, 2004) categorized the context of situation to three related elements: 1) participants, 2) Objects which are relevant to a particular text and event, 3) The result of the verbal action. He interpreted the context of situation as an abstract concept which stands for the environment in relation to the specific general categories related to the text. Vandamme in several publications (1977, 1981, and 1982, as cited in Vandamme &



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Lowenthal, 1986) expanded the notion of register beyond the boundary of linguistic sense or verbal signs. He added some nonverbal signs, actions, feelings, and perceptions represented in a particular type of action. His definition of the term “register” was considered as a “network of possibilities” involving a number of possible actions, perceptions and utterances relevant to it and vice versa. The network is dependent on register (1977). Vandamme model of register description was mostly action-type. Therefore, it was criticized because the linguistic differences which are the main category for the distinguishing register type cannot be illustrated through this model.

Couture (1986, p.86) regards register and genre “as concepts operating at the same level.” According to Couture (1986, p.86) “registers impose constraints at the linguistic levels of vocabulary and syntax, whereas genre constraints operate at the level of discourse structure.”. Couture (1986, p.86) regards register and genre “as concepts operating at the same level.”

Martin (2001) as a functional linguist focuses on the relationship between language and context as well. In his view, understanding meaning without knowing context is impossible and vice versa. He considered register and genre as semiotic systems which are different from other semiotic systems such as, language, music, pictures. Both of them use the words and structures of other semiotic system and language, to express meaning. He relates register to the context of situation and genre to the context of culture (Martin, 2001). The culture is constructed by system of linguistic choice, while the situation is constructed by patterns of language use (Halliday, 1978).

Significant development in register variation studies from late 1980s up to present times have made some advantageous and innovations in applied linguistics domain: the first is to design a corpus which represents the set of written and spoken registers of the target language. The second advantage of register analysis is more progresses and practical use of register variation studies in applied linguistic domain especially in academic language teaching. Designing and applying corpora in register studies also have provided helpful information for developing instructional materials in ELT classroom. In this way, “Representing Language Use in the University: Analysis of the TOEFL 2000 Spoken and Written Academic Language Corpus” by Biber et al. (2004) investigates whether the texts



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used on listening and reading TOEFL exams exactly represent the linguistic characteristics of spoken and written academic registers. For this purpose, they have chosen “The TOEFL 2000 Spoken and Written Academic Language Corpus” to analyze it. The T2K-SWAL Corpus consists of about 2.7 million words and represents the university registers that students encounter with. They considered ninety linguistic features in his study.

Biber et al. (1999) also developed “Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English” (LGSWE), as a corpus-based reference grammar which is applied to decide which grammatical features in a particular register analysis should be considered. With a comprehensive report on grammatical categories and structures in English based on empirical analysis, the LGSWE informs of the application of grammatical features in four registers (conversation, fiction, newspaper writing, and academic texts).

MDA also has been used as a tool for analyzing advanced learners' academic writings and the native speaker learners' academic writing in order to compare their text. For example, Gilquin & Paquot (2008) have applied corpus data to investigate how upper-intermediate to advanced EFL learners from different mother tongue backgrounds perform a number of rhetorical functions in academic text compare to native academic writing. In particular, the research indicated that the EFL learners are likely to use typical features of speech in their academic prose. Concluding that, most of them are unaware of register differences.

Aguado-Jimenez et al. (2012) attempted to raise learners' register awareness by using MDA methodology of their own spoken language and native speakers' language in university context. This study indicates a practical way of teaching notion of register and language variation which leads students to recognize the connection between individual linguistic features and registers. Register analysis even developed its realm in analyzing academic texts of other disciplines to distinguish their related patterns and linguistic features for facilitating writing research papers by students of those disciplines (e.g., Borza, 2015). In another study of corpus-based register analysis by Biber, Gray & Poonpon (2011); having conducted a corpus-based analysis of structures with syntactic complexity in conversation and academic texts, they reached to conclusion that complex



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noun phrases are more frequent in academic texts, while finite subordinate clauses are more frequent in conversation.

Register analysis studies also have led to development of instructional materials which are more authentic and representation of real life situations. In another study carried out by DeMarco (1986) titled “The Role of Register Analysis in English for Special Purposes (ESP) Curriculum”, Register analysis is considered as a basis in the analysis of the linguistic needs of ESP’s students. As register analysis is a tool to ensure appropriateness of content, it can be applied as a tool of material development to choose and prepare materials which encourage students to learn. Today, it is attempted to choose the content of ESP syllabus based on appliance of merging register analysis with discourse analysis. Because register analysis can be applied in order to distinguish authenticity of language in terms of lexical and grammatical features, while discourse analysis can be applied to determine the authenticity of the text message in terms of situational context, participants and so on.

Multi-dimensional analysis has been used to assess the authenticity of instructional materials. Alsurmi (2012) in his study, investigated whether TV shows including soap operas and sitcoms, as a source of authentic conversational materials, represent the linguistic characteristics of natural conversation or not. This study indicated that sitcoms reflect linguistic features of natural conversation more than soap operas. Register analysis also has been applied in learner’s language to improve learners’ awareness or sensitivity of concept of register and variation (Aguado et al., 2012). Through this study it is attempted to raise learners’ register awareness based on doing register analysis on their own spoken language and language of native speakers. Having completed this task, participants stated better understanding of the concept of register and association of particular linguistic features and registers. By considering all of the studies that mentioned above, it can be concluded that the some dimensions occur across languages and across general or limited area of discourse. Therefore these repeated results enhance the probability of universal dimensions of register variation (Biber, 2004).

### **3-METHODOLOGY**

30 TEFL students of Islamic Azad University at the MA level from Karaj Branch



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participated in this study to observe whether teaching informational registers affects their academic writing achievement or not. For this purpose, they were randomly divided into the two groups. The experimental group received some treatments and the control group received no treatment. After collecting the required data for this research, they were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. A detailed explanation is provided in each following section about the research methodology.

In order to assure the homogeneity of the sample, it was essential to take a placement test. Before the participants were randomly divided into the two groups, an IELTS reading section of Official IELTS Practice Materials (2009) was held to confirm all the participants were of the same level. The exam contained four reading passages in 27 items. The test was administered in 40 minutes.

The pre-test was used as a baseline to assess whether the students' level of writing skill was same or not. To achieve this, an academic article "Second Language Motivation; The Role of Teachers in Learners' Motivation" by Al Kaboody (2013) from Journal of Academic and Applied Studies was selected which related to students' own discipline. Then the article was handed to each group of participants to study and write an article review as a pre-test.

The researcher introduced the concept of register and taught register analysis in small scale to the students. The linguistic features based on Biber (1999) "Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English" and situational characteristics of informational dimension were presented to the students with its functional interpretation (See appendix D). In order to practice well, students applied features of informational and academic writing register in their first article review to modify it, and received some feedbacks from researcher. Finally, the sample research article with highlighted linguistic features was given to the students, and they were asked to write another article review as the post-test.

The post-test was administrated to recognize whether the register instruction approach of writing affected students' writing ability or not. For this purpose, an academic article "Individual differences and development of speech act production" by Taguchi (2013) from Journal of Applied Research on English Language was selected (See appendix C).



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Then after treatment, the article was submitted to the two groups. The groups were asked to study the article and write an article review.

As mentioned before, an IELTS reading practice test (2009) was administrated in 40 minutes to check if all the participants were in the same level of proficiency or not. In the second phase of study, an academic article was selected and handed to the students to study. Participants were asked to write an article review of the sample research paper as a pre-test to check their level of writing skill before the treatment. The third phase of study involved treatment. The treatment followed three steps:

Step one	introducing the concept of register, register analysis process, MD analysis, informational registers
Step two	highlighting academic registers' linguistic features in the sample academic text
Step three	asking the students to recognize linguistic features' of an academic text through the register analysis and modify their first article review and receive

In the first step in order to raise students' knowledge of register, the researcher introduced the concept of register to the students. Then register analysis process which involved three parts (description of situational characteristics, description of linguistic features and finding the relationship between the two parts) was taught to the students. Besides, MD analysis methodology was introduced to them. Through learning MD analysis, students became familiar with informational dimension of register. In the next step, some significant linguistic features' of informational and academic register introduced to the students and highlighted in the text one. The linguistic features included: 1- Nominal features (nouns, nominalizations, prepositional phrases after nouns, attributive adjectives and adverbs), 2- verb characteristics (use of present tense, present perfect, past tense, passive and reporting verbs) 3- connectors (coordinating conjunctions, subordinate conjunctions, correlative coordinators and adverbial conjunctions), 4- high type/token ratios, 5- types of sentences (simple, compound, complex and compound-complex).

After the treatment the last phase of study was to ask students to write another article review as a post-test to see whether raising students' informational register had led to





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the improvement of their academic writing or not.

The present study was a quasi-experimental study with one experimental group, pretest, treatment and post-test design. The researcher applied this pattern to discover the effectiveness of informational register knowledge on EFL learners' academic writing achievements from Karaj Islamic Azad University, TEFL department. Since the aim of researcher was to investigate the effect of informational register knowledge on EFL learner's academic writing achievement, the independent variable was informational register and the dependent variable was academic writing achievement. The scores of the placement test indicated that all the participants were at the same level of language proficiency. The written assignments were rated 3 times, two times by the same rater and one time by the other rater. In order to rate accurately, the written assignments were rated based on a scale which was available in "CUNY Assessment Test in Writing (CATW), 2012"). For more accurate rating, the texts' originality, grammar, spelling was checked through apply of online paper rater (<https://www.paperrater.com>). Then, the inter rater reliability, intra rater reliability of texts and the mean scores of the post tests and pre-tests were compared to find any statistically significant difference.

### 4-RESULTS

Except for the IELTS reading score of the control group, the other five sets of scores are not normal since the level of significance of the Kolmogorov- Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests ( $p = .091$  and  $p = .052$  respectively) are larger than the standard level of significance ( $p > \alpha$ ) only in case of the IELTS reading score of the control group. Consequently, the analyses involving these sets of scores are done with nonparametric techniques.

the first rater scored the writing pretest and posttest papers twice and the second rater once. This has left the researcher with three sets of scores. In order to estimate intra-rater reliability of the ratings, correlation between the two ratings of the first rater in the pretest of academic writing is calculated (Table 1). On the other hand, the degree of interrelationship between the average of the first rater's ratings and the second rater's rating of the pretest of academic writing is exploited as the measure of inter-rater reliability.

It is evident in Table 1 that the coefficient of correlation between the two ratings done by



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the first rater in the pretest of academic writing of the experimental group ( $p = .996$ ) points at an almost perfect correlation between the two sets of scores. Likewise, there is a relatively high correlation ( $p = .927$ ) between the two sets of scores representing the control group members' performance in the pretest of academic writing. This is reconfirmed by the fact that the respective level of significance of both of these coefficients, which is .00, is smaller than the .05 standard. Thus, it is concluded that the two ratings done by the first rater in the pretest of academic writing of the two groups enjoy a statistically meaningful degree of intra-rater reliability.

**Table 1. Correlation between the first rater's ratings of the pretest of academic writing**

Correlations

		The first			
		The first	rater's	The first	
		rater's first	second	The first	rater's
		rating of the	rating of the	rater's first	second
		pretest of	pretest of	rating of the	rating of the
		writing of	writing of	pretest of	pretest of
		the	the	writing of	writing of
		experimental	experimental	the control	the control
		group	group	group	group
The first rater's first rating of the pretest of writing of the experimental group	Correlation	1.000	.996	**	-.058
	Coefficient				.024
	Sig. (2tailed)			.000	.838
	N	15	15	15	15
The first rater's second rating of	Correlation	**	1.000	-.068	.023
	Coefficient	.996			



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the pretest of writing of the experimental group	Sig. (2tailed)	.000		.809	.936
	N	15	15	15	15
The first rater's first rating of the pretest of writing of the control group	Correlation Coefficient	-.058	-.068	1.000	**
	Sig. (2tailed)	.838	.809		.927
	N	15	15	15	15
The first rater's second rating of the pretest of writing of the control group	Correlation Coefficient	.024	.023	**	1.000
	Sig. (2tailed)	.933	.936	.000	
	N	15	15	15	15

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2. Correlation between the average of the first rater's ratings and the second rater's rating of the posttest of academic writing**

Correlations

		The first rater's rating of the pretest of writing of the experimental group	The second rater's rating of the pretest of writing of the experimental group	The first rater's rating of the pretest of writing of the control group	The second rater's rating of the pretest of writing of the control group
The first rater's rating of the pretest of writing of the experimental group	Correlation Coefficient	1.000		**	-.074
	Sig. (2tailed)			.955	.451
	N	15	15	.000	.091
				.792	
	N	15	15	15	15



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The second rater's rating of the pretest of writing of the experimental group	Correlation	**			
	Coefficient	.955	1.000	-.083	.464
	Sig. (2tailed)	.000		.768	.081
The first rater's rating of the pretest of writing of the control group	N	15	15	15	15
	Correlation	-.074	-.083	1.000	.422
	Coefficient				
The second rater's rating of the pretest of writing of the control group	Sig. (2tailed)	.792	.768		.117
	N	15	15	15	15
	Correlation	.451	.464	.422	1.000
The second rater's rating of the pretest of writing of the control group	Coefficient				
	Sig. (2tailed)	.091	.081	.117	
	N	15	15	15	15

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 3. Independent samples Mann-Whitney hypothesis test of IELTS reading scores of the two groups**

Hypothesis Test Summary

Null hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of IELTS reading 1 comprehension is the same across categories of group membership	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	.4861	Retain the null hypothesis.
Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is			

## 5-DISCUSSION

Although the result of the present study did not indicate a meaningful improvement in students' academic writing after receiving informational-based registers instruction due



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to some potential factors (e.g. small sample size, short treatment duration, etc.); yet, there are numerous studies which have proven the significance of teaching academic register's feature to assist students in their writing achievements. Rezvani et al. (2015) investigated the effectiveness of genre-based instruction on writing achievement in a semi-experimental research and a pre-test/post-test assessment. Fifty four EFL university students in Iran, Islamic Azad University, were tested before and after the instruction. The teaching materials, developed for teaching writing English Description and Narration in a genre-based method in this study, were prepared in a way to conform to the procedures carried out during class instruction. After five-week treatment, post-test was administered. After collecting the data and by analyzing the post-tests of control and experimental groups, it was recognized that the genre-based methodology had a great effect on task-based writing achievement in that setting. The findings of this research were suggested to be very helpful for researchers, language teachers and syllabus designers. Comparing the procedures of Rezvani et al.'s (2009) study with the present research, there are some similarities in terms of the design of the study, post-test/ pre-test assessment and level of participants. But in terms of number of participants, which involves 54 students there is a large difference compare to 30 participants of the present study. Moreover, the treatment of Rezvani et al.'s (2009) study was held in 5 weeks (two hours a day, three times a week). While, the treatment of the present study was held in 6 weeks (20 minutes a day, one time a week). 180 minutes of treatment duration in the present study is too short to teach register-based instruction compared to 10 hours of Rezvani et al.'s (2009) study to teach genre-based instruction. Since Rezvani et al. (2009) explained in their study, through treatment duration the instructor had enough time to inject the awareness of genre moves, organizational possibilities and lexico-grammatical resources. Therefore, the students were prepared enough to carry out joint construction of their own compositions in pairs or small groups, using their findings from the small survey in the context exploration stage. The enough treatment duration provided the participants a chance to write their first draft independently, and then work with a partner to improve their draft. Besides, providing scaffolding, the students were encouraged to continuously refer to the model text, and



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their grammar work as they write, and the instructor actively guided the students in turn or when they are in need, reminded them continuously about the text organization, proper use of grammatical and discoursal structures within genre frames, how they can change the genre moves, following through coherence and cohesion among the written text, and so on. Each piece of writing went through more than one draft, before it was given to the instructor, who then provided further feedback for a final piece of paper to be submitted for grading. While, in the present study short treatment duration due to the some limitations prevented the researcher to give more tasks and enough feedbacks and provide the participants to work actively in separate or in a group. Therefore, the findings of the present study may change if the treatment holds in longer duration.

Russell (2014) examined the linguistic features in the academic writing of advanced English language learner and English first language university students. For this purpose, two corpora of 30 research essays were gathered, one corpora of L1 student writing done in different departments at Portland State University, and the other of ELL writing created in an advanced writing course in Portland State University's Intensive English Language Program. The frequencies of 13 linguistic features which had been found in considerably different frequencies in L1 and ELL essays (Hinkel, 2002, as cited in Russell, 2014) were compared through corpora. The tokens of each feature in each essay were computed, and the frequency rate was calculated in each case. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test found 6 features with notably different frequency rates between the two corpora. The following features were more frequent in L1 essays than in ELL essays: modal would, perfect aspect, passive voice, reduced adjective clause, it-cleft and the high type/token ratio, which are mostly the features of informational registers. An analysis of how each of the significant features was used in the context of ELL and L1 essays indicated that both student groups were still acquiring the proper use of modal would; the majority of students in both groups did not use it-clefts; the lower type/token ratio in ELL essays revealed that these students applied a more limited vocabulary than did L1 students; and ELL students were still acquiring the precise and proper uses of perfect aspect, passive voice, and reduced adjective clauses, while L1 students used these features grammatically and for the standard uses. Russell (2014) suggested instructors to apply his study's



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findings to ELL writing classroom and assist students raise their awareness of informational registers' features and apply them in their own academic writing by guiding students in recognizing these features and differentiate them from the features which are appropriate only in conversation. According to the findings of Russell's (2014) study, again the significance of the present study, which examines the efficiency of teaching informational registers on academic writing achievement, becomes obvious. Therefore, repeating the present study with more treatment duration and more participants' suggested seriously to other researchers.

Aguado et al. (2012) explored the use of multidimensional analysis of learner language to promote awareness of linguistic concepts such as register and variation. In this context, a group of learners involved 47 students completed an awareness-raising activity based on a multi-dimensional analysis of their own spoken language and the language of native speakers fulfilling the same tasks. This research focused on practical ways of using MDA of learners' language and native speakers' language in the university context.

The research indicated that it is possible to practice MDA of learner language and make students familiar with the notions of register and language variation in university EFL. The participants confirmed that after the activity they were better prepared to understand the role of register and the connections between individual linguistic features and registers.

The study aimed to analyze the oral production of first-year EFL Spanish university students, and use the findings of analysis to explore the potential applications of MDA of learner language in the context of higher education. For this purpose, the study followed 3 steps which involved: 1) collection of learner corpus, 2) the multi-dimensional analysis of this corpus and 3) the use of the MD analysis results to explore the practicality of using MDA to promote learner language awareness. A second corpus of British speakers was gathered, recorded, transcribed, marked up and analyzed in order to exploit the comparability of the initial learner data. The learner data (C1) was collected during 2005 from 59 students with an average age of 19.6. The corpus of English speaker language (C2) was collected at the Manchester Metropolitan University, UK in 2006. The number of informants in C2 was 28, all of them native speakers of English with an average age



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of 22.25. In the learner corpus, 59 learners were interviewed by native English speakers. The interview involved three parts: First, speakers were given three topics to choose from: an experience that taught them an important lesson, a country which impressed them or a film or play which the speaker particularly liked. This was the personal narrative component of the interview. A small part of the interview was then devoted to interpersonal communication. Finally, students were given four pictures and were asked to describe them. The total number of words of C1 was 45,558, and the mean word count was 772.16 per contributor. The total number of words of C2 was 21,509, and the mean word count was 796.62 per contributor. After transcription by experienced native speakers of English, the two corpora were tagged for part of speech (POS) at the University of Northern Arizona under the supervision of Prof. Douglas Biber.

The analytical procedure included the recognition of the most outstanding co-occurring linguistic features to compare and contrast with Biber's work, as well as the comparison between learner language and native speaker language, as linguistic co-occurrence is considered the most significant part of the study of register variation. A questionnaire was completed after the experience where these learners gave the researchers feedback on the task. Before examining their own language, the students read a text related to the role of register. The study followed a 4-stage procedure. Learners were asked to read a text and think about the role of the frequency of linguistic features and the pattern of different registers. Learners then contrasted their own frequency mean for one single linguistic feature, adverbial hedges, against the mean for this linguistic feature of the British speakers. After that, the Dimension 1 (involved vs. information production) score of the learner interview was computed and was compared to the score for Dimension 1 on different registers in Biber (1988) and the dimension score of the British speakers' interviews. After the session, the learners completed a questionnaire which recorded their opinions. Aguado et al. (2012) decided to use Dimension 1 as it represents a basic measurement "of variation among spoken and written texts in English" (Biber, 1988, p.104). Given the pedagogical orientation of their experience, Aguado et al. (2012) believed that by focusing on this dimension, learners would develop a clearer understanding of the notion of register across written and spoken registers. The finding





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of the study indicated that after learning the notion of register and variation through multi-dimensional analysis of their own speech production and comparing it with native speakers' corpus, they showed the register appropriateness of their oral production. Moreover, by recognizing the features of dimension 1, interaction vs. informational dimension, they reported on better understanding of the difference between the academic written and spoken registers' feature and use them more appropriately. Again, through Aguado et al.'s (2012) study the importance of teaching the concept of registers and registers' dimensions become obvious in assisting second language learners to use each register appropriately. While, the present study's focus is only on informational and academic register to enhance the register awareness of EFL learners and help them to use the typical features of informational registers, particularly the academic register appropriately in their writing. The main difference of the present study with Aguado et al.'s (2012) study is that it raises students register awareness through introducing directly the main features of informational dimension and asked them to apply these features in their writing. But in Aguado et al.'s (2012) study students became aware of the features of spoken registers through analyzing their own speech production transcriptions using MDA methodology and comparing their own corpus with native speakers' corpus.

Gilquin & Paquot (2008) in another study attempted to investigate a written academic corpus data in order to examine how upper-intermediate to advanced EFL learners from a wide range of mother tongue backgrounds perform a number of rhetorical functions particularly prominent in academic discourse, and how this compares with native academic writing. The study indicated that EFL learners are likely to apply the typical features of the spoken language rather than written. The findings of this study suggested that the learners are unaware of register differences. Four possible factors were considered for register confusion: the influence of speech, L1 transfer, teaching-induced factors and developmental factors.

The analysis of the learner data and their comparison with the written and spoken native corpora indicated that the learners are likely to overuse words and phrases which are more likely to appear in speech, and underuse more formal expressions typical of academic writing. In addition, they sometimes use conjunctions in positions favored by spoken



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registers, rather than academic prose. While, Gilquin & Paquot (2008) tried to investigate the learners problem in academic writing and reached to conclusion that the learners use the features of spoken register in their academic writing, the present study aimed to teach the features of informational registers, particularly the academic register to solve this problem.

Mechitoua (2010) evaluated students' writings in terms of using features of academic language, appropriate linguistics register variables, and the structure of an essay. In contrast, the present study aimed to evaluate students' writing improvement after receiving instructions based on features of informational registers, especially academic register. Mechitoua's methodology involved collecting and analyzing the exam papers' of twenty students of the first semester in Applied Language Studies. The students were asked to write essays about the relationship between language change and language variation in about 90 minutes. After collecting the required data the papers were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively to investigate students' use of academic language features which are grammatical, lexical, and discourse ones, the appropriate linguistics register, and how their essays were structured. While, the present study's methodology included collecting and evaluating papers of 15 students in two control and experimental groups. The students were asked to write a review of two different articles about their discipline (TEFL) as a pre-test and post-test in about one week. Finally their performance on writing was compared to see the effect of teaching informational registers on their writing improvement. Mechitoua's (2010) data analysis were based on features of academic writing which are grammatical, lexical and discourse features. While the present study aimed to teach these features to evaluate students' writing improvement. Mechitoua's (2010) data analysis also indicated that the students did not employ the main features of academic language in their essays.

Moreover, they employed the features of spoken registers in their writing and did not follow the structure of an academic essay that requires an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

The findings of the present study suggested that the members of none of the groups improved their academic writing scores significantly; however, the relatively smaller



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level of significance observed in the experimental group (Tables 4.11 and 4.12) and the fact that the control group members mean and median scores decreased (Table 4.13) point at a slight difference between the patterns of change in the two groups. Due to a multiplicity of possible reasons (e.g. the relatively short duration of treatment, the small sample size, etc.), the improvement observed in the experimental group did not reach the statistically meaningful level. On the other hand, although homogeneity of the two groups was statistically proven with the independent samples Mann-Whitney test of their members' IELTS reading comprehension results (Tables 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9), subjects from the two samples performed differently in the pretest and posttest of academic writing. This made it statistically impossible to prove the difference between the patterns of change in the two groups.

Although, the improvement of the experimental group is not statistically significant may be due to some factors which mentioned above, the significance of teaching informational registers especially academic register's features has been proven by numerous studies and Mechtoua's (2010) research as well. According to Mechtoua's (2010) findings there should be explicit instructions and practices provided by teachers about the nature of academic writing and its main features. This may assist students to be aware of these features and to insert them meaningful and properly in their writings.

### **6-CONCLUSION**

The aim of present study was to investigate the effect of teaching informational registers on intermediate Iranian academic writing achievement. In this chapter the proposed hypothesis was verified by contribution of 30 participants of intermediate post graduate TEFL students of Karaj Islamic Azad University. The participants were divided into two control and experimental groups. The improvement of academic writing of the two groups was analyzed by pre-test and post-test scores on their academic writing. The results enabled the researcher to verify the accurate nature of improvement made by each group. Although it would be dangerous to make grand generalizations on the basis of a quasi-experimental research, the improvement observed in the experimental group did not reach the statistically meaningful level due to a multiplicity of possible reasons which was already



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discussed.

Present study provided participants with different opportunities. First, they learned the concept of register in general and informational registers in particular. The informational dimension involves registers such as academic prose, research articles, textbooks and etc. with high density of information. Consequently, raising knowledge of students of the features of informational registers (e.g. nominalization, prepositional phrases, high type/token ratios, etc.) register has facilitated writing academic text for participants. Third, using register analysis they became familiar with linguistic features and situational characteristic of the academic registers. Moreover, they recognized how to associate a linguistic feature's function with situational characteristic of it.

Further research needs to be carried out for a semester or even longer period of time to make sure that students have practiced adequately and received enough feedbacks. Some more suggestions could be generated from this study for future research. Since most teachers are unfamiliar with the concept of registers and registers dimensions, and they play vital role in academic writing area; thus more research should be undertaken to investigate teachers' perception of this novel approach. Since the fair but not significant improvement was obvious from comparing the results of pre and post-writing test of EFL learners with small samples and short period of treatment, maybe further research following remedial suggestions have clear indication that teaching informational registers do assist students academic writing achievement by mastering conceptual and linguistic features of informational registers and engaging in extended writing assignments from the beginning to the end of the treatment period. Finally, considering that removing the limitations of the present research might have resulted in more optimistic and desired results, the provided instructions of current research should be expanded and included into academic writing material development to facilitate students' academic writing achievement.



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