



**'They cannot Write as Well as We Expect', Why?
A Multi-Case Study of Stakeholders' Perceptions of Factors that Hinder
Graduates of Colleges of Technology Mastering Technical Writing Skills
Requested in the Omani Market**

Submitted by

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to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

May 2018

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Signature:

Dedication

O' ALLAh,
Praise and Gratitude be to You,
Show us the straight way

Amen!

Abstract

This project addresses a continuing problem in technical education: the perceived mismatch between the report writing skills of technical college graduates and the demands of report writing in the workplace. This problem is commonly identified in surveys of employers, who express dissatisfaction with the writing skills of their new hires, and has most often been examined with surveys of alumni from these colleges, who express dissatisfaction with the writing preparation they received (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016). The study is specifically designed to find out why graduates of Colleges of Technology (CoT) have difficulty in performing technical report writing tasks as well as expected by workplace managers and how academic text features are different from or similar to professional text features. This project took a new approach to investigating the problem. This multi-case study employed the combined use of semi-structured interviews and document analysis methods. This involved a total of 19 interviews with (1) report writing tutors and courses designers and students in three (COT) and (2) employees and their employers in local telecommunication and banking firms. The project then focused on the empirical analysis of structural and linguistic features in a corpus of 168 reports written by numerous students of CoT and by practitioners from the firms. This combination brought multiple perspectives to the interpretation of the issue being investigated in relation to the different participants, but also contextualised the analysis of the texts within the social and cultural situations from which the participants came.

Findings suggested that CoT graduates' experience with writing for workplace purposes in the contexts of the study is influenced by both institutional and contextual factors. These factors interact to hinder the graduates' mastery of context-appropriate writing. The key institutional factors are a) task requirements, and b) awareness of texts' audience. The key contextual factor is the absence of coordination between the two investigated contexts, namely CoT and corporates. Within each of these broad categories, there are also subcategories that further demonstrate the complexity of graduates' writing and the multitude of elements that shape graduates' writing in both university and future workplace.

The thesis concludes by presenting practical and theoretical implications for corporate officials, teachers, and course designers. The study recommends that internal and external communication is needed between CoT and corporates as through the establishment of such effective channels of communication between these camps we will be able to bridge the current perceived gap and better equip graduates for the challenges of workplace writing. It is hoped that in addressing the research aims these findings may be beneficial to understanding the contextual factors that assist or hamper the progress of the undergraduates' technical writing. It is also anticipated that such a comprehension may guide course designers, writing tutors, and discipline lecturers to detect the preparations required to best sustain students' negotiation of technical writing to better prepare students to adapt to the demands of academic and work contexts.

Acknowledgements

First and above all, I thank Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful for giving me the strength and ability to see this research process through from the beginning to the end.

I owe a deep and special debt of gratitude to my supervisors Dr. Philip Durrant and Dr. Susan Jones who were my mentors, teachers, and friends. I am truly privileged to be supervised by them. A big THANK YOU Phil and Sue for your guidance, insightful feedback, devotion and patience. Words will not be enough to express my humble gratitude to the time you have given me along this journey. I am forever appreciative for what you have done along this long and wonderful endeavour, for the knowledge I gained from every time we spoke, and for your understanding and support during times of apprehension and hardship.

My sincere gratitude goes to the staff and my colleagues at the University of Exeter. I cherish and value the immense support they have given me whenever I needed it. I will always remember the insightful conversations we had and how they would go through all lengths to make my journey easier. I am especially grateful for the cooperation, enthusiasm and time of all of the participants who agreed to take part in this research, and without whom this work would not have come to life.

I would also love to express my indebtedness to my dear family in Oman, my brothers and my sister and especially my parents, for their continuous support, encouragement and prayers. My sincere thanks go to my little three nieces, my mother-in-law and sisters-in-law and all dear family members and friends in Oman for their continuous encouragement and emotional support.

Finally, and most importantly, my sweet and loving thanks to my wife, my better half, for sacrificing everything to be here with me. Without her by my side none of this would have happened. She has been my inspiration throughout this journey and has made everything easier to ensure I progress well. I also thank Ankli, the second mother of Mohammed, for her support and help. A special thanks is due to my beautiful son, Mohammed. He was the shining light of this endeavour; he also had to go through a lot with us, his mom and I, while we are away and busy with our study. I owe him all immensely for surrounding me with his love. Wishing to compensate him in the years to come, and looking forward for the next chapter in our life.

Thank you all for believing in me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction, statement of issue and rationale

English has become a necessary lingua franca for the Gulf countries as these countries' economies require both a skilled and unskilled multi-national labour force. Oman, where English is considered a necessity in the job market, is no exception (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016). As Al-Issa (2007) states, "Oman needs English as a fundamental tool for 'modernization', 'nationalization' and the acquisition of science and technology" (pp. 199-200). Hence, the Sultanate has adopted teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in its schools and as a Second Language (ESL) in its educational institutions because, in time, Omani graduates should start taking over the positions and roles of the foreigners and expatriates in different work fields and sites (Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015). To do so, graduate students will require various employability practical skills. A good command of written and spoken English is one of these skills, as students with English are highly valued and accepted in various job sectors where English is the only means of communication (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015; Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al-Issa, 2007 & 2006).

Thus, mastering English language skills has become an essential requisite not only for tertiary and higher education but also for recruitment purposes. Companies in Oman regard mastery of English language with inadequate experience and high salary demand as barriers to the recruitment of Omanis, especially specialists, managers or skilled technical labour (Al-Lamki, 1998). In addition, the inability of some graduates to communicate properly in English through either writing or speaking has been one of the reasons for the rise of unemployment among these graduates (Al-Azri, 2016, Al-Harhi, 2011; Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al-Issa, 2006; Al-Busaidi, 1995; Al-Lamki, 1998). Al-Busaidi (1995) argues that the success of replacing the expatriate community (Omanization) depends, among other factors, on the Omani graduates' competence in English. This demonstrates a strong correlation between mastery of English and the 'Omanisation' strategy, that is, "the government

scheme for gradually replacing the expatriate skilled labour force with Omani citizens" (Al-Jadidi, 2009, p.5).

Accordingly, the Omani government, represented by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), has established various higher education institutions that use English as a medium of instruction. The Omani Ministry of Higher Education's expectations of the institutions, which they govern, require an extensive effort to guarantee the quality of the students enrolled in their programmes. Technical education in Oman, which has seven Colleges of Technology (henceforth CoT) located in different regions of the Sultanate functioning under the jurisdiction and the supervision of the Directorate General of Technological Education (DGTE) in the Ministry of Manpower (MoMP), is one element of this higher education system. These colleges' central aim is to provide the market with technical graduates who are equipped with skills and experience that match and meet the requirements of the labour market (Ministry of ManPower, 2018). These graduates work as assistant engineers, technicians, accountants, Information Technology (IT) operators, and other technical occupations. Thus, considerable changes have taken place in HE in specific over the past two decades, one of which has been the gradual increase in students' numbers, thereby raising the national labour percentage in the private sector. Technological Education was no exception. This expansion has led to the enhancement of the policy makers' interest in providing students with an education-to-work transition, thereby making them readily employable (Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Azri, 2016; Al-Harhi, 2011; Mason, Williams & Cranmer, 2009; Linderberg, 2007; Teichler, 2000).

To achieve this transition, an obvious effort has been made in the CoT as educators and academics work constantly to equip technical students with the necessary skills to join the contemporary work force. More than ten thousand students are enrolled annually in the CoT for courses lasting from three to five years. In these colleges, students start their academic studies after spending 9 - 12 years at school using Arabic as the medium of instruction with only about 45 minutes a day of formal English language instruction. Students are

admitted into the CoT based on their overall grades in the General Education Certificate Examination (GECE, currently called General Diploma), of which English is only one subject. As the nominal linguistic prerequisite for admission in these programmes is very low, learners with weak linguistic abilities can be enrolled, assuming that they have done well in the other courses. Because of this weakness, students must be enrolled in a Foundation Year Programme (FYP), which is an intensive English language instruction course, before proceeding to their academic degree study. Regardless of the 10 years of formal English language exposure that students have had, and of the extensive FYP in English, and the ESP course programme, they still face difficulties in their writing once they start their specialization (post-foundation) studies. They are faced with challenging demands as English is the language of instruction and the new educational situation requires them to perform complex literacy tasks and technical writing either in the English department or in the different disciplines/departments they are enrolled in. Their difficulties with written tasks are attributed to different reasons, one of them is "the conflict between the demands of their English language teachers and of their disciplines teachers" (Al-Badwawi, 2011, p.17).

However, the huge investment has nowhere yielded the expected gains (Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016). The current educational system and practices in Oman are unable to deliver graduates who are fully equipped with the employability or generic skills required by employers nowadays or in the near future (Al-Balushi, 2008). Al-Issa (2006) believes that the graduates are not work-ready for their future employers, in that they are fully equipped with theoretical knowledge but may lack practical exposure which could help prepare them for the reality of the working environment. Most employers look for candidates who not only have excellent academic performance but also possess good communication skills, especially in English language (Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Azri, 2016; Al-Bakri, 2013; Al-Balushi, 2009). In Oman, as a result of their poor performance in English, many graduates are rejected when applying to work in private companies (Al-Azri, 2016; Al-Jadidi, 2009; Al-Balushi, 2008). As a result, the graduates are urged to improve their

English skills in order to secure jobs, especially with private companies (Al-Azri, 2016). The complaints about the low level of English in the school and HE systems, previously voiced privately, have increased. The local press has reported that the government's labour education and training programmes are not responsive to the market's needs as the graduates are mostly poor in English language usage, which has enabled the expatriates to dominate the private sector. The Oman Observer (January, 2017) for instance indicated that more than 300,000 are unemployed, only 12% of graduates have been recruited in the private sector, and some sectors (Health, IT and Engineering) are unable to take recent graduates because of their low level of English language competency. Although this problem was mentioned by Al-Busaidi twenty years ago (see Al-Busaidi, 1995), the problem continues. The graduates of the Colleges of Technology are no exception as they emerge weak in English and thus with communication skills, especially writing skills, inadequate for the job market. Their low English proficiency manifests itself in all language skills and the skill of report writing is no exception. Technical writing (TW), especially technical report writing, is considered a significant linguistic skill that tertiary students are required to become proficient at to succeed in their university studies and in their future workplace (Al-Khatib, 2005). This indicates that there exists a mismatch between the graduates' level of literacy in English and the linguistic demands at the workplace. At the same time, the government authorities insist on a call to replace expatriates with Omani labour.

It is a fact that the increasing number of graduates from Colleges of Technology and other HE institutions constitutes a first step towards the replacement of the foreign labour force in Oman. A further crucial step, however, is ensuring quality replacement, and in this, language of communication, especially report writing, is an important variable. Indeed, report writing is important as assessment in academia and the workplace is based, to a large extent, on students producing good written reports. The significance of technical writing in both the academic and workplace contexts has been thoroughly discussed from different theoretical perspectives that have brought out new insights and approaches. Lea and Street (1998), for

instance, have stated that "academic literacy practices - reading and writing within disciplines - constitute central processes through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge about new areas of study" (p.158). Other researchers, such as Thesen (2001) and Hyland (2006), have discussed the dominance of writing skills in higher education contexts, for example, the technical and vocational. This indicates the importance of technical writing to undergraduates' survival at the tertiary level of technical education. Yet, it remains "the most difficult skill to master" (Al-Badwawi, 2011, p.5), as it requires the acquisition of "various disciplinary and linguistic knowledge" (ibid). Leki and Carson (1994) referred to this difficulty arguing that even native or native-like English speakers, who are supposed to have excellent linguistic skills, face many challenges when they write for their degree courses. Based on this, I argue that technical writing is a demanding skill for the non-native speaking students like Omanis as they do not have the necessary linguistic abilities to cope with such demands. This means that "students are not only expected to learn the content of the subjects they are majoring in, but also the special ways of constructing an academic text according to the conventions of the individual disciplines" (Al-Badwawi, 2011, p.11).

Regarding the significance of technical writing in a workplace context, effective written communication skills also help a person function productively in education, in employment, and in everyday social interaction. "Communication education suggests that universities that fail to provide adequate (writing) communication training may be putting their students at a personal, academic and professional disadvantage" (Gray, Emerson, & MacKay, 2008, p. 223). In 2004, the United States College Board's National Commission on Writing issued a widely-publicized report indicating both how highly employers prize writing skills and how much the lack of those skills may cost both companies and workers themselves. Intensified employer demand, in combination with the speed of technological development and the increasing commercialization of the field of science, has meant that science students at college level must acquire stronger written communication skills than ever before, to be competitive in a global job market. It has also been

concluded that technical writing cannot be isolated from the chains of communication and interaction between writers or readers and clients (Al-Khatib, 2005). On this issue, Pogner stated that:

"Text production is not only cognitive problem-solving and communication processes [...] but also means of negotiating professional standards and roles; defining strategic functions of texts and genres; establishing, maintaining or changing the text's and interaction's context by helping the readers/users of the text carry out their own complex technological and business tasks"

(Pogner, 2003, p.865)

The conclusion that can be drawn from this quotation, I believe, is that there is a desperate need for practicing technical writing for workplace purposes as it plays several effective roles in such contexts.

Given the significance of report writing in students' attainment in higher education contexts and in the workplace environment, it is not surprising that graduates confront considerable difficulties with regard to mastering various report writing skills in their various professions, and the Omani technical context is no exception. Colleges of Technology obligate their students to study Technical Writing (TW) courses to help them overcome such challenges and thus succeed academically and professionally. Yet, they still experience the difficulties that employers claim. Employers' associations have issued reports indicating that the new technical graduates' lack of the writing skills needed for employment limits their capabilities to contribute productively to achieving the work organization's objectives soon after assuming a post (Ministry of Manpower, 2013). Corporate managers and group leaders in Oman tend to believe CoT graduates are incapable of presenting the results of their work in the form of reports written in English (Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016). Because they thought the reports were ineffective, they then questioned the quality of the graduates work itself. Despite the fact that companies trained students to practise writing internal report templates in the hope that they would follow them to produce reports of the desired quality, the approach did not work. As a result, it is more advantageous for employers to recruit experienced workers rather than train new ones as it takes much time,

effort and cost to train and prepare these graduates to cope with the linguistic demands of the workplace.

Preliminary research findings also suggest that writing in general received insufficient focus in either school and higher education English programmes or workplace contexts (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015), and report writing is no exception. In Oman until now there has been very little research that has focused specifically on the needs of employers of science graduates (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015 & 2016). It is possible that these employers have needs which are specific to their industry and do not match the profile of the “generic” employer. Furthermore, little research in Oman, to the best of my knowledge, has investigated what is meant by the “written communication skills” Omani employers state they desire, (for instance Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015 & 2016), and what stakeholders’ assumptions about the communication skills required of technical graduates in the workforce are (Al-Maskari, Al Shuaily, & Rajesh, 2014; Al-Azri, 2016). These studies accurately informed that CoTs which teach communication skills to their students are not meeting the requirements and concerns of employers. It is also agreed upon in the local literature that what is required is specific English for Specific Purposes (ESP) training (see Al-Busaidi, 1995; Al-Harhi, 2016; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Azri, 2016). Institutions under the governance of Higher Education are urged to equip their graduates with more than just the academic skills traditionally represented by a subject discipline and a class of degree. In a symposium organized by Al-Musanna College of Technology in June 2013, representatives of both the technical education institutions and the workplaces agreed that the graduates are well equipped with technical skills such as IT, management, engineering and marketing but they lack in certain aspects such as ability to communicate, skills to solve problems and interpersonal skills (Ministry of ManPower, 2013). The symposium also revealed that the graduates who applied for jobs in an organization are found to be inadequate and ineffective in terms of ideas, accuracy and presentation as illustrated in their writing samples. If these graduates are accepted for a job, then they will encounter difficulties in fulfilling workplace-writing demands. There exists a mismatch between the graduates’ level of written literacy in

English and the writing demands at the workplace, which may indicate that there is a mismatch between what writing courses offer at institutions and the real needs of writing in market and industries. In addition to having the proper skills, graduates need to learn how to apply writing skills in the business environment, which can be quite different from the social and scholastic environments they are accustomed to. Yet, it is not yet known what factors contribute to stakeholders' opinions that CoT graduates, especially the employed ones, have difficulties in meeting those requirements and the concerns of employers.

Since competent use of English, especially report writing skills, in education, training, profession and in the workplace is central to the progress and success of the omanisation policy, an examination of the practice of report writing by the country's native technocrats and their perceptions of the causes of mismatch between academic and professional report writing should be an issue of immense importance to policy makers. Thus, this study employs semi-structured interviews with different stakeholders (students, teachers, course designers, employers and employees) and document analysis of various reports written by students and employees to investigate why graduates have difficulty in producing technical reports in line with their future employers' expectations despite the fact that they have studied Technical Writing courses to equip and prepare them to face the challenges of report writing in the workplaces they will enter upon graduation. As an introductory chapter, this section establishes the background of the study. It introduces the reader to the learning environment at CoTs and their role in preparing students for an effective transition into the workplace, one in which they are enabled to fulfil the demands and challenges of the competitive world of business. The significance of technical writing with a specific emphasis on its essential role in tertiary education and future workplace contexts is also highlighted. This will be followed by the rationale for the study's aims and objectives.

This project addresses a continuing problem in technical education: factors contributing to the perceived mismatch between the TW skills of CoT

graduates and the TW skills required in the workplace. The mismatch problem itself was commonly identified in surveys of employers, who expressed dissatisfaction with the writing skills of their new hires, and in surveys of alumni from these colleges, who expressed dissatisfaction with the writing preparation they received. The problem has also most often been examined with surveys of the types of communication students undertake. This project adopted a new approach to investigating the problem: it included firstly interviews with students and report writing course tutors and designers from three colleges of technology as well as employees and their employers in local telecommunication and banking firms. The aim at this stage was to understand those stakeholders' perceptions of the textual and contextual factors that hinder the graduates' ability to write technical reports in line with the Omani employers' requirements. The study focused then on the empirical analysis of language features in a large collection of reports written by numerous students and practitioners; this was to find out the features in which these reports match and mismatch. The combination of these two methods would bring multiple perspectives to the interpretation of the language analyses. While the project focuses on report writing, the general approach can be applied to other fields of writing that are practised in the Omani context, such as memoranda and emails. The belief behind the project is that teaching innovations are likely to be most effective when they are based on sound empirical evidence about the problem (Conrad, Pfeiffer & Szymoniak, 2011).

In addition to this, major new Asian players (e.g., countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) are replacing the United States and Europe, who are taking on lesser positions, as economic power. Furthermore, the Middle East, because of global dependence on it for oil, is a critical player in international business (Bertha & Bhatia, 2013). Yet, previous research and theory have been directed toward business communication in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in Europe. Some scholars claim that this emphasis has given the literature a Western bias (Bertha & Bhatia, 2013). This study attempts to contribute in correcting this imbalance in global and local business communication research through shedding light on business

communication in the Omani context. Such research is needed as Oman's location plays a major role in connecting Asian Nations and Western countries economically. It also moves toward establishing a framework to guide future research in Oman on technical communication in general and report writing in specific. The time has come to gain an up-to-date understanding and updated research on business written communication in the Omani context in order to form a comprehensive picture of the daily processing patterns of local workplace communication and how it could be related to the evolving international and intercultural business communication.

1.2. Research aims

This research study problematizes students' writing as a social practice by locating the technical learners' composition in the Omani socio-cultural context. This will be achieved through exploring the factors that hinder graduates' mastery of the requirements of technical writing and its demands and functions in the workplace. Such an understanding necessitates acknowledging that graduates' experience of writing is normally affected by numerous social activities both inside and outside the academic and professional contexts (Ivanic, 2004). To achieve that, this study aims to uncover the perceptions and the practices of the students, TW teachers, PF-Coordinators, employers and employees regarding TW practices to provide an understanding of this complex phenomenon and how it develops and to explore what these five groups think is the nature of writing and what constitutes a good technical essay. The study endeavours to unveil (1) the students' perceptions with regard to how their technical writing practices are affected by the demands of their various language and disciplinary teachers, (2) the teachers' expectations of their learners' compositions and by what means they may prepare their students for future workplace technical writing demands, (3) the employers' beliefs of the technical writing competencies that the graduates should possess in order to be employed in their organizations, and (4) the employees' perceptions of how their technical writing practices are affected by the demands of their employers. According to employers, the power to practise report writing for purposes that corporations require of us

in meeting professional expectations is a far cry from the skills pursued in educational institutions. The situation is even more serious when professional expectations are not paid enough attention in TW classes. In brief, the current study will provide an insight into the challenges that students face while practising technical writing in the university context and the contextual aspects that shape their experiences to deal with such challenges, and will compare it to the demands of the labour market. Through such an investigation, it may be possible to create a balance between the technical writing difficulties that students face academically and the requirements of the employers through a series of recommendations to bridge this gap.

1.3. Structure of the study: overview of the present work

This study consists of seven chapters. Chapter One serves as an introduction to the thesis, while Chapter Two (Background and Context of Study) provides background information about the Sultanate of Oman and its educational system. Chapter Three (Literature Review) considers the literature on theoretical approaches to writing in higher education. It then focuses on empirical studies by highlighting their views and implications in relation to English for Specific Purposes (ESP), with a particular focus on report writing. It discusses and emphasizes the need to distinguish between the characteristics and requirements of report writing as a university study subject and as a workplace genre. Chapter Three is thus partly intended to prepare the ground for comparing and contrasting report writing genre at university and in the workplace, and helps shed light on possible reasons for the dissatisfaction with university graduates' report writing competence when it comes to writing reports in the workplace. Chapter Four (Research Design and Methodology) is dedicated to presenting and discussing an account of the methodology and design of this research, addressing issues related to the reasons behind the choice of Case Study methodology. The chapter also addresses in detail the selected research instruments and the efforts to ensure their validity and reliability. A major part of Chapter Four is, therefore, devoted to explaining the choice of subjects and sampling for the study. A special focus is placed here on the interview as it provided most of the data

for the research. The document analysis method, another important source of data, is also presented and discussed in depth, helping to provide the reader with a rich picture of the report writing learning environment at CoT. Documents analysed included reports students wrote as assignments for the TW courses and reports from the telecommunication and banking sectors.

Chapter Five (Findings) begins to address the research questions, featuring findings relating to the subjects' perspectives about whether there are other factors of mismatch between academic and authentic reports. Brief discussions that focus on the results arising from the analysis are given. The findings chapter also incorporates analysis of academic reports and reports from the workplace in terms of purpose, structure and the means by which the relationship between author and writer is expressed. The comparison between the authentic workplace reports and the reports produced by students was carried out to investigate whether what is being taught reflects the workplace written genres. Summaries and conclusions drawn from the findings and based on the research questions are provided. This is followed by Chapter Six (Discussion), which discusses the results by concentrating on specific concepts and drawing empirical findings from the two contexts, academic and professional. Extensive reference to the literature, some of which is reported in sections of Chapter Three, is employed, highlighting some aspects of report writing domains and the factors that are associated with the graduates' inability to produce reports as well as expected by corporate managers. Finally, Chapter Seven (Conclusions, Implications and Limitations) connects findings from the data analysis with the research questions and the literature. Conclusions and recommendations are put forward regarding the perceived (in)effectiveness of TW course content, teaching methodology, rules and regulations shaping and governing the pedagogy at CoT and the practice of ESP in the area of Technical Report Writing in Oman and similar contexts. Mention is also made of the limitations that impacted on the conduct of this study.

Chapter 2: Background and Context of the Study

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present an insight into the Omani educational and business context with an overview of the historical development of English language dominance in the job market, the educational system and English language teaching (ELT) at tertiary level. It is necessary to introduce the historical development of English as a primary language in the Omani business sector, the educational development in Oman and then how English became the only medium of instruction at tertiary education institutions in order to understand the developments that occurred within English language teaching. Within these sections, this research will analyse how these developments were influenced by historical and political factors that shaped the current language practice in Oman.

2.2. Sultanate of Oman: Overview

Among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Oman is the third largest country. It has a valued and strategic location linking the Indian Ocean countries and Asian nations to European and American nations. Islam is the religion of the country and this greatly influences Omani national identity and life style. Arabic is the official language but several languages are spoken by Omani and foreign inhabitants, such as English, Hindi, Urdu, Baluchi and Swahili. English, however, is considered to be the "key element in the development of the country and its effective integration into the modern world" (Al-Mahrooqi, 2012, p. 263); thus its status is moving from a foreign language to that of a second language all over the country (Al Riyami, 2016).

Economically, like the other Gulf countries, Oman still depends substantially on oil and gas revenues, which total 80% of the overall country's budget, to build infrastructure and provide essential services for its citizens (Goodliffe, 2013). Compared to other Gulf countries, Oman has low per capita oil reserves and revenues. Oman has a heterogeneous and rapid growth population due to economic progress and structural developments. Its

population includes various ethnic groups such as Arab, Asian and African (e.g. Egyptian, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Philippino, Sri-Lankan and Swahili). Around 50.3% of Omanis are less than 24 years old (Indexmundi, 2015). Oman has been relying considerably on expatriates to gain a rapid construction of infrastructure and to work in different fields such as oil (Harry, 2007). As a result, the government has changed a number of policies to find better strategies to recruit Omanis into the private sector. To do so, and like the other Gulf countries, it has focused on reforming policies such as economic diversification, education, and training development, and directly intervenes in controlling the labour market (Al-Azri, 2016).

Politically, since 1970, Oman has been ruled by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Therefore, historically, 1970, is considered to be an important turning point in Oman's history (Al Riyami, 2016). Before 1970, Oman lacked basic services including health, education, transportation and housing. There were only three primary schools for boys, two small hospitals and few kilometres of surfaced roads. Currently, there are over 1,250 schools that provide free education up to the age of eighteen, over 80 hospitals, and 150 health centres which are free to all Omanis (MoE, 2010). Despite the development and modernization of all levels of Omani society, it is emphasized that people have avoided publically discussing policy matters with higher authorities as such issues are sensitive (Al Issa, 2002; Al Riyami, 2016). However, and as a result of the 'Arab Spring' which impacted on Oman, young Omanis went out on the streets and protested, calling for reform, fighting against corruption in the Government and requesting solutions for unemployment and the limited opportunities in HE institutions. The government response was quick as within less than a month fifty thousand people were employed, the requirements of HE were lowered and many key officials were fired. However, such procedures did not seem to "really reflect a long term vision to overcome the social, economic and political issues encountered in Oman" (Al Riyami, 2016, p. 42). Accordingly, the Sultanate started applying a long term vision, Oman 2040, to meet its goal of diversity in the national income sectors. Education is perceived to play a role in preparing Omanis to work in these various sectors, but Omanis are found to be

insufficiently competent in relevant skills, including English (Al Issa, 2015; Al-Mahrooqi and Denman; 2016, Al-Riyami, 2016), which is considered a prerequisite to obtain jobs, especially in private sector organisations, where English is dominant (Al-Bakri, 2013).

2.3. The Story of English in Oman's Labour Market

In this part, I will focus mainly on English for three main reasons: (1) it is the area of my speciality; (2) it is the most globally taught language; and finally (3) space and time do not allow for a broader consideration of other extensively used languages in Oman (Arabic, Baluchi, Indian and Farsi).

English as the main language of the labour market has not happened by accident in Oman. Al-Busaidi (1995, p. 14) states that its roots are traced to two main, among other subsidiary, aspects: (1) the Omani connection with the outside world, specifically Great Britain, the Indian Peninsula and Persia (Baluchis and Lawatiyas) and East Africa (Swahilis); and (2) the coast and interior political division of Oman (Sultanate of Muscat and Oman). Although these factors are independent of each other, they seemingly have given shape to the development of English in the Omani labour market.

Regarding the first aspect, the political and economic events of the British, Indian, Persian and African connection in Oman, British-Omani affairs can be traced back to the 15th century, although Oman had never been a British colony. The relationship is a representation of the trading and commercial friendship between Oman and Great Britain and it was later strengthened by granting only Britain, in 1965, the petroleum exploration concession in Oman (Al-Busaidi, 1995). Oil exploration activities, together with a war in Dhofar (the Southern part of Oman) in 1965, were responsible for importing a foreign labour force to work in the industry and fight the war. With regard to the Indian population, they have been residing in Oman since the 16th Century (Allen, 1987). Some of them are currently called Liwatiyas and Khojas. The Indians' knowledge and advances in new commercial technology made them useful as local agents between Europeans and the Arabs (Landen cited in Al-Busaidi, 1995, p.96), and it was in this way that modernization influences from India

spread into the Omani labour market in specific and the Gulf market in general. Accordingly, India, for generations, has supplied and still supplies Oman with low-paid labour, English speaking skilled labour, and cheap goods (Al-Busaidi, 1995, p.96). The Indians have therefore been participants and key players in introducing and maintaining English in Oman. The Swahili connection is attributed to Omani subjects emigrating to Zanzibar (Al-Busaidi, 1995). Settlement in and around the Omani Arab colonies there and in East Africa was developed and agriculture encouraged; thus “the Arabs made Zanzibar their home, intermarried with the Africans to the extent that they even lost their language” (Al-Maamiry, 1988, p. 64). During their residency in Africa, the children of Arabs alongside the children of their compatriots followed a British-inspired education with real incentives attached to mastering the English language, Mathematics and Science. 1964 saw the end of 132 years of Oman Arab influence in Zanzibar and Omanis started returning to Oman. This return of Omanis from Zanzibar and other parts of East Africa resulted in a major increase in the use of English in the labour market (Al-Busaidi, 1995). The connection with Persia (currently Iran) was similar to the Swahili connection: the relationship began through the Baluch’s (a great Persian tribe) connection with Oman, dating from as early as the 10th century (Al-Busaidi, 1995). Baluchis and Lawatiyas also travelled to East Africa and acquired English, becoming highly multilingual as they added this to their knowledge of languages like Persian and Urdu. On their return to Oman, they became key players in introducing and maintaining English in Oman as well.

As Oman’s connections with the outside world led to importing labour forces fluent and competent in English and strengthened the dominance of English in the Omani labour market, there was also another factor which played a major role in such dominance: the geographic division between the coast and interior of Oman due to chains of mountains, deserts and deep valleys that made the interior isolated (Al-Busaidi, 1995). While the coast, specifically the capital Muscat, had been a commercial maritime power with multilingual ethnicities, the picture was not the same in the interior of the country (ibid). Al-Busaidi (1995) believes that such a division made learning

Arabic not possible for foreigners as there was limited contact with the indigenous Omanis; thus, there was no alternative to learning and using English. With this essential dependency on non-Arabic-using expatriates, it does not need any imagination to conclude that all immediate and future development plans and market had to be run by expatriates, with English as the inevitable language of that body of expatriates.

Since that time, the Sultanate has witnessed a rapidly developing economic renaissance. The development further accelerated by 1970, when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said was crowned ruler of Oman. In order to maintain such economic progress, Oman realized the need to build and strengthen powerful trade links with various English-speaking (such as the UK and the USA) and non-English speaking countries (such as Turkey, Japan, Germany, and France). It also recognized the importance of foreign/expatriate experts from all over the world to work and participate in building the country. According to Mashood *et al.* (2009), since 1970, there has been a need to have a foreign workforce especially in developing the country's infrastructure and construction, and for the professional and technical positions. In the view of Aycan *et al.* (2007), Oman has relied heavily on foreigners for advanced technical and occupational expertise and manual labour. English has been used as a medium of communication between Oman and these countries and between Omanis and these foreign/expatriate experts; therefore, Oman has required increasing numbers of English speakers (Al-Busaidi, 1995). Consequently, success in the workplace has meant labourers being competent in English. English became a key for people to professionally develop their career and to maintain and improve their economic standing (Al-Issa, 2006). Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2015) argue that Gulf citizens have to actively engage with English language as part of their professional career and to maintain and improve their economic standing (p. 390). English also became the only lingua-franca among the Omani multilingual labour market since learning Arabic was difficult due to the geographic separation between the interior and the coast (Al-Busaidi, 1995).

In time, Omani graduates should start taking over the positions and roles of foreigners and expatriates in different areas such as the telecommunication and banking fields, where English is the only means of communication. Accordingly, English language competence has become a requisite for tertiary and higher education and for recruitment purposes. It is recognized that to achieve the Omanisation policy, which is "the government scheme for gradually replacing the expatriate skilled labour force with Omani citizens" (Al-Jadidi, 2009, p. 5), the centrality of English in the training of Omanis needs to be seriously acknowledged since pre-HE in Oman has not been via the medium of English.

The Omani government has become aware of the importance of the English language for the country's global and international development. Thus, the Sultanate has adopted teaching English in its educational institutions (Al-Jadidi, 2009). In fact, the current unemployment of HE graduates because they cannot communicate properly in English, through either writing or speaking, demonstrates a "strong correlation between mastery of English language and the 'Omanization' strategy" (Al-Jadidi, 2009, p. 5). Accordingly, the Omani government, represented by the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), has established various higher education institutions that use English as a medium of instruction. The MoHE's expectations of the institutions, which they govern, require an extensive effort on the part of the teaching faculty to guarantee the quality of the students enrolled in their programmes. Technical education is no exception since it is one element of this higher education system.

2.4. System of Education and Training in Oman

Prior to starting studies in the technical colleges, Omani students need to complete a Basic Education programme, which is a unified system covering the first ten years of schooling. After that, they spend two years in the Post-Basic (secondary) programme (see Figure 1). During these twelve years, learners follow a process of learning, starting at the beginner level and moving towards the post-intermediate level to integrate instructional purposes. They study English as a foreign language (EFL) and are exposed to only about 45

minutes a day of formal English language instruction. On completion of their secondary education, they move to the Diploma Certificate of Secondary Education (DCSE) exams programme, by which it is decided who can apply to continue to tertiary education.

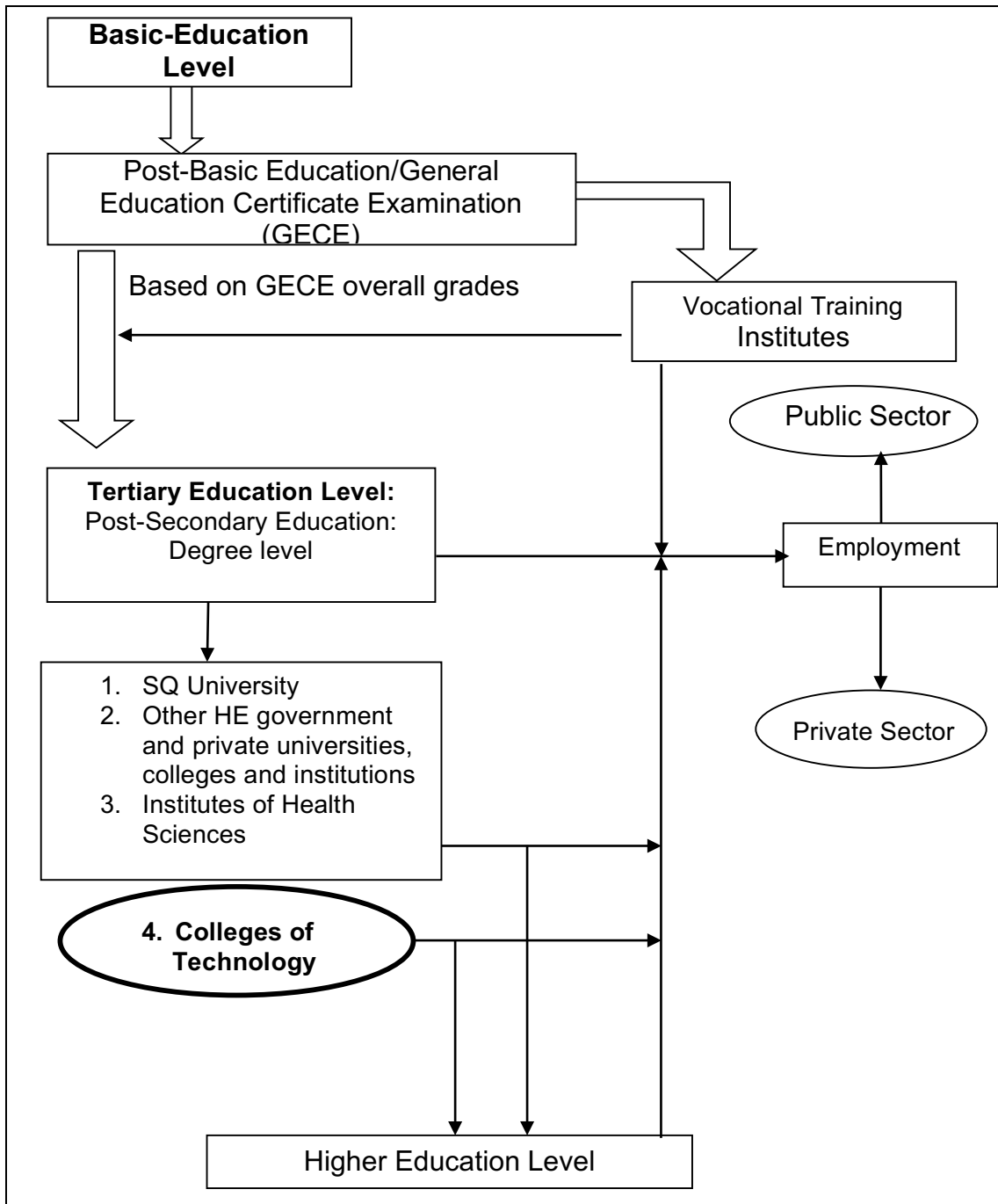


Figure 1: the position of Colleges of Technology in the education system in Oman

2.4.1. Technical Education in Oman

Technical education, which is represented by the Colleges of Technology (CoT), is one of the choices available for students who are accepted to apply for tertiary education in Oman. Students may also apply to other tertiary institutions, such as the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), and other HE public institutions like the Colleges of Applied Sciences, the Institutes of Health Sciences and other private universities and colleges. The Omani government funds these studies. For the last three decades, the CoT have been the major provider of technical education in the Sultanate of Oman. In addition to offering well-established academic college degree programmes, CoT support the government efforts to train the national workforce of the future and meet the demands of local and international industries and corporations for suitably qualified graduates. The Ministry of ManPower (MoMP) has introduced technical colleges across the Sultanate to deliver free and quality education to thousands of Omani youth. The vision of these colleges is to have a productive labor work force who, with their scientific, technical and vocational capabilities, are able to take over from foreign experts the important jobs and participate in various economic fields in the Sultanate (Ministry of ManPower, 2015). This vision has been repeatedly stressed and encouraged to ensure the welfare of Omani families. To realize this vision, continuous care and attention is accorded to propose and implement general policies in line with the state economic and social objectives. There are currently seven dynamic technical colleges, when introduced there were initially five colleges, operating in the country under the jurisdiction of MoMP.

Considerable changes have taken place in technical education over the past two decades, one of which has been the increase in student numbers, thereby raising the national labour percentage in both the public and private sectors. More than ten thousand students are enrolled annually in the CoT for courses lasting from three to five years. This expansion has led to an increase in the number of the CoT from five to seven colleges around the Sultanate. It also accelerated the technical education development through the enhancement of the policy makers' interest in providing students with an

education-to-work transition and the extent to which they are readily employable (Teichler, 2000 and Linderberg, 2007). To achieve this transition, an obvious effort has been made in the CoT as educators and academics work constantly to equip technical students with the necessary skills to join the contemporary work force.

2.4.2. Colleges of Technology

The colleges are divided into six regional Colleges of Technology, located in the cities of Al-Musanna, Nizwa, Ibra, Salalah, Shinas and Ibri, and one Higher College of Technology (HCT) in Muscat. The regional colleges were founded in 1993 except the ones in Shinas and Ibri, which were established in 2005 and 2008 respectively. These seven colleges are recognized as among the premier technological institutions committed to building a sustainable infrastructure, skilled human resource, and excellent student body to meet the changing demands of education and the job market. The central aim of these technical education institutions is to provide the market with the technical and vocational graduates who will work as technicians, accountants, Information Technology operators, and other technical occupations.

In these colleges, students start their academic studies after spending 9 - 12 years at school using Arabic as the medium of instruction. As illustrated in Figure 2.2., p. 23, students are admitted into the CoT based on their overall grades in the General Education Certificate Examination (GECE), of which English is only one subject. As the nominal linguistic prerequisite for admission into these programmes is very low, learners with weak linguistic abilities can be enrolled, assuming that they have done well in the other courses. Students need better language skills to do these other things, so they go to CoT because it is their only choice. As a result, CoT end up recruiting students who miss the opportunities to go to the other institutions and who cannot secure employment in the Government or the private sector (Al-Husseini, 2004).

Apart from the English Language Centers (ELCs), each CoT has three academic departments offering programmes in Engineering, Information

Technology (IT), and Business Studies specializations, except for HCT in Muscat, which, in addition to these three departments, has other academic departments offering Applied Sciences, Pharmacy, Photography and Fashion Design programmes. The language of instruction in all six programmes is English. The programmes are implemented to ensure their suitability in terms of Oman industry needs and global academic standards. They comprise, in addition to the Foundation Programme, two degree levels, namely Diploma and Higher Diploma, in each specialization. Students could spend up to five semesters in the Foundation Programme before going to the other levels and if they specialize in Engineering, Business Studies or IT, they may continue their studies in HCT to pursue a Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) once they achieve a 2.75 accumulative GPA or over out of 4.

2.4.3. ELT in CoT

English language education in the CoT starts when students first enter college with the Foundation Year Programme (FYP) and then continues in the Post Foundation-Year Programme (Post FYP) for two to four years. In the FYP and the Post FYP, English is taught as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which is “the teaching of English with the specific aim of helping learners to study, conduct research or teach in that language” (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p. 8). The focus in EAP is on teaching students the English language necessary to understand and succeed in the disciplinary subjects. Students in the CoT also need it as a means to learn their future professions. English is considered the “carrier” subject, while the academic disciplines that students will major in are the “content” subjects (Kennedy, 2001, p. 31).

2.4.3.1. Foundation Year Programme in CoT

Prior to enrolment in the technical education institutions, students have studied in a mostly Arabic medium of instruction context whereas all of the CoT teaching is conducted in English. Therefore, learners experience many difficulties with the situation in their higher education for the reason that their level of competency in English does not help them to start their academic study (Al-Husseini, 2005 and Al-Issa, 2006, Al Badwawi, 2011, Al-Riyami,

2016). Those students who join CoT for a four-year Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech.) degree are high-school graduates from a variety of backgrounds and of mixed ability both in terms of their English proficiency and their general academic performance. The students are both male and female, and aged between 18 and 23; they speak Arabic as their mother-tongue. They have usually had a minimum of nine years' academic exposure to the English language at their state school prior to enrolment in the university. Students take an English placement test, designed by the English Language Centers at CoT prior to joining the disciplinary study to determine their linguistic competence. Students who score above 80% are exempted from enrollment in a FYP, which is an orientation programme that aims to strengthen students' English language skills in general (Al-Husseini, 2005), and advance to the Post-Foundation year programme (Post-FYP) where they study TW courses beside the content courses of their disciplines. Students who score less than 80% are enrolled in the FYP and they are given another placement test by the end of the programme to assess their progress. Technical students have to complete the FYP before starting the Post Foundation-Year (Diploma, Higher Diploma, and Bachelor) streams of technological education. At the top of the list of difficulties students face in FYP are the writing skills (Al-Badwawi, 2011). One of the principal competencies that students are expected to acquire all the way through the FYP is writing different types of texts of varying lengths, using textual or graphical information as prompts. Students' promotion to the academic programme is determined by their passing a standardised final year examination. The acquisition of these general writing skills is an essential stage before starting to learn and practise technical writing skills in the Post-FYP. Thus, the Writing module is allotted more time (i.e. around 8 hours per week) than the other three skills, Reading, Listening and Speaking (6 hours per week).

The FYP is considered "year 0" in the academic degree plan, which is not uncommon among higher education institutions, because the foundation year usually refers to a non-credited course of study that equips students with the necessary skills and knowledge needed for their higher degree studies (Al-Hussaini, 2006). The Foundation Year Programme (FYP) in the CoT is

comprised of intensive English language study skills courses in addition to introductory IT and Mathematic modules. As these programmes are provided to serve students' needs and due to the differences in students' levels of comprehension, the programmes are at various levels. The overarching aims of the FYP are (1) raising the students' language proficiency to a level where they can commence professional studies in Post FYP/degree programmes that use English as the medium of instruction, and (2) preparing students for higher education by equipping them with other necessary non-linguistic skills, such as computer literacy, numeracy, and study skills (Al-Jamoussi & Al-Badwawi, 2005). By achieving such aims, we may "*sustain the students' eagerness to start studying English for specific purposes according to each specialisation*" they enrolled in (Ministry of ManPower, 2015).

Similar to other HE institutions in Oman, colleges of technology mainly utilize Anglo-Western materials. They come in full packages including the class book, workbook, CDs and teacher's guide; the latter tells the teacher how to start and end the lesson, and what to include or exclude. These materials are used to achieve a pre-designed syllabus that is prepared by elites at the ministry level "who do the thinking while teachers are reduced to doing the implementing" (Giroux, 1988, 124). The FYP's principal and teachers are a mixture of Omani citizens and native and non-native speakers of other nationalities. They are professionally skilled and adequately experienced to fulfil the requirements of lecturing in such contexts. A student could spend up to five semesters in the FYP before starting to study the post-FYP (*i.e.* the specialisations level), and after passing the FYP, students move to the post-FYP/degree programmes.

I may claim here that, since the objectives of the FYP are to prepare students to perform better and succeed in their future academic disciplines, the FYP could be merely seen as a springboard for the degree studies or a bridging course before students can start their 'real' studies (Al-Badwawi, 2011). This view of English language seems to be in line with perceiving academic courses as "content" and the English language as the "carrier" needed to transfer this content to the students.

2.4.3.2. Post Foundation-Year Programme (Post-FYP) Study in CoT

Writing continues to be a major component of the English language module during the Post-FYP. As is the case in many higher education institutions around the world, it plays an important role in the students' learning process and assessment for both the academic disciplines and the English Language modules. In the Post-FYP studies at the seven CoT, students take similar ESP modules (i.e. Technical Writing 1 & 2, Technical Communication 1 & 2, and Public Speaking) in addition to modules with the Engineering Studies, International Business Studies, Design, Pharmacy, Applied Sciences, Photography, and Information Technology departments. With the exception of Design and Photography, where the focus of assessment is on students producing artefacts, students' assessment in the above-mentioned modules is based on their technical writing skills in the form of reports, assignments and exam papers. Opting for these courses in addition to going through an eight-week 'On the Job Training' (OJT) period in one of the market organizations according to their specialization may equip the technical students with the requisite skills needed to commence their careers in the labour market. Learners spend around five academic years in the Post-FYP before they graduate with a Bachelor of Technology (B. Tech.); nevertheless, they could be entitled to an optional mid-way withdrawal. After two academic years of disciplinary learning, students who are not able to continue with the post foundation/degree programme can graduate with a diploma or advanced diploma if they have completed three academic years, based on their academic attainment as assessed by their Grade Point Average (GPA) and their International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score (see Figure 2, p.30).

Writing is considered a prime measure of the students' success in each module and of their ability to move from one academic level to another, as the assessment methods include students writing various types of assignment. Accordingly, students study two TW modules (i.e. TW 1&2) to help them keep their level of competency up to the level required to carry out these assignments. There are no set curricula for the lecturers to teach in the Post-FYP. Therefore, students are usually taught using handouts copied from

various English language-teaching books. The selections are focused on aspects that are important for students and may satisfy their interests and needs. Written assignments are used as a tool for assessment in the disciplinary departments. For most of the academic discipline modules, students have to write two term papers with a total of 25% of the semester mark being allocated to these assignments. This is of course in addition to the writing that they have to do in the mid and final semester exams, which constitute 20% and 50% of the semester's result, respectively. The remaining 5% of the marks is allocated to attendance and class participation. The course outlines mention that the assignments should be well presented, address the questions directly, and be free from spelling mistakes and grammatical errors. In addition to the above, the mid-term and the final exams of these subjects also have a variety of questions that require students to write answers ranging from short answers to short essays. For the academic disciplines, students are expected to master the skill of academic writing in English to the degree of being able to write term papers and assignments showing competence in both their linguistic abilities and subject area content.

To cope with the above requirements, students, during the course of Post-FYP, have to acquire various writing skills such as using resources, summarising, paraphrasing and quoting. In addition, as English is the dominant business language in Oman, they also need to acquire skills that prepare them to execute the tasks they will be required to perform in their future workplace environment. Unfortunately, there is no definite module in the academic disciplines that might be taught to students to equip them with such skills. Thus, the English Language Centres (ELCs) in the CoT offer English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programmes in the form of three Technical Writing courses, namely Technical Writing 1, Technical Writing 2 and Technical Communication, to fulfil the students' needs for writing skills in the various academic and future business-related disciplines. These three modules are in addition to subject-specific content courses taught to students on the three to five year degree programmes, for example, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Oil and Gas Engineering, Information Technology, Finance, Management, Accounting and Applied Sciences, which

are also taught to each new cohort. This study focuses mainly on the writing practices, specifically the report-writing practices, of these courses rather than on other content courses. The focus is on the obligatory TW core courses that all technical students have to take, rather than other courses which are aimed at students taking various degree programmes in the CoT.

2.4.3.3. Technical Writing at the CoT

Leki and Carson (1997) maintain that the general underlying philosophy of EAP writing classes is to prepare students for writing in the different disciplines. Technical Writing 1 and 2 and Technical Communication courses focus on developing knowledge of the basic concepts and practices of technical writing. These courses introduce students to an everyday work-related environment where they will use their English language skills in different work-related scenarios (See Appendix 1 for Delivery Plans of the three courses). Although the course books and work books of these courses generally focus on all four skills (i.e. Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking), their foremost emphasis is on how students could acquire and learn (1) the technical writing skills they will need to use in practical scenarios of a work environment such as communicating with colleagues, superiors and business associates in written formats, and (2) the technical themes and vocabulary along with the interactive exercises that will help to prepare students for their future career endeavours (Ministry of ManPower a, b, & c, 2015). Accordingly, by the end of these courses, students should be able to write more effectively in different work environments, show effective interpersonal skills in working with a team to cooperatively carry out a certain written task, demonstrate familiarity with the technical terms needed in their careers, and analyse different work scenarios to propose possible solutions in writing. The course consists of four contact hours per week. Students are expected to be prepared for the lectures and submit course work on time. Assessment methods, (i.e. unannounced quizzes and written assignments) are administered to the students in order to assess their understanding and to monitor their general progress (see Section 4.6.1.1.1. for further details about the courses).

The TW course materials and tests are designed locally by lecturers known as course coordinators in the English Language Centres (ELCs). Students have to obtain the required pass score (50%) to be allowed to progress to the Post-FYP. If at the end of the two-year period students achieve a Grade Point Average (GPA) above 2.5 (out of 4), only then are they permitted to continue their studies. If students accumulate a GPA of less than 2.5 out of 4 they exit the degree programme and are awarded a two-year Diploma degree. Also, by the end of the third year, students should achieve a GPA above 2.75 (out of 4); only then are they permitted to continue their B. Tech. studies. If students accumulate a GPA of less than 2.75 out of 4 they exit the degree programme

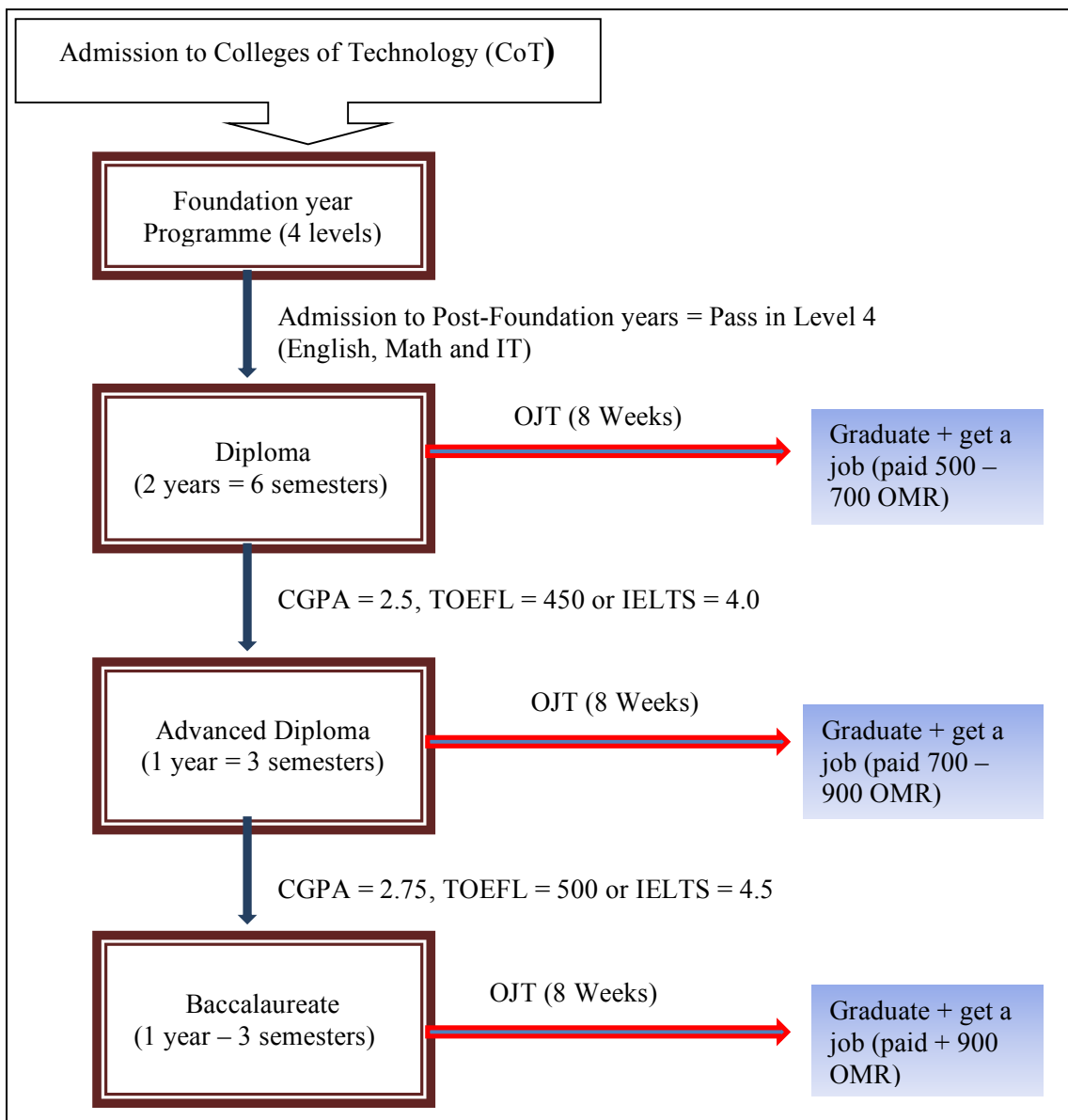


Figure 2: *The Structure of the Degree Programme in the CoT*

and are awarded an Advanced Diploma degree. It is worth mentioning here that, although there are around 10-11,000 candidates enrolled yearly at the CoT, only around 3000 graduate with a B.Tech degree, which means that only around 25-30% of the students proceed to complete the programme every year. All courses at CoT are taught by qualified national Omani staff members in addition to professionally-qualified English native-speaker lecturers and an international bilingual group of instructors.

2.5. Job Sectors in Oman

Since the 1970s, Oman's labour market has been growing actively (Al Harthi, 2011b). Although there was a substantial need for expatriates in building the infrastructure and for advanced technical and professional works, the demand for a skilled national workforce was considered essential. The massive entry of a foreign workforce has had a significant effect on Oman's job market (Matherly and Hodgson, 2014). The high rates of imported workers have a negative impact on the country. For Swailes *et al.*, (2012), employing non-nationals is critical in supporting stabilised and competitive businesses especially in small and medium size enterprises, although, at the same time, it leads to an unequal competitive market for local graduates. Accordingly, the government has given a considerable focus to the education sector in order to provide graduates with the high qualifications needed in the market. Al Barwani *et al.*, (2009) consider that, over time, due to the fast growing HE system in Oman, the number of graduates each year already transcends the number of jobs available in the labour market.

2.5.1. Public Sector

To avoid such transcending, around 75,000 new jobs were added by the government between 2011 and 2017 to employ Omanis, yet most of these jobs were provided by the public sector with only a few being offered by the private sector. Omani graduates prefer to work for the public (government) sector rather than private companies (Oman Daily, 2015) because of the uncomfortable working conditions and environment associated with construction and manual labour occupations. They hold the view that the

public sector is more attractive than the private sector because they expect the government to support them through providing educational and professional development opportunities, a permanent job, higher salaries, better benefits like retirement benefits, and shorter working hours than in the private companies (Matherly and Hodgson, 2014; Al-Azri, 2016). As the Omanisation rate is high in the public sector (85.9% at the end of December 2014, according to NCSI, 2014), the government is under pressure to look for strategies to increase the employment of locals in the private sector.

2.5.2. Private Sector

Upon graduation, graduates of CoT are employed in several private sector corporations. The private labour market is a powerful vehicle for securing good job opportunities in any economy (Al-Azri, 2016). The majority of the workforce in the private sector are non-Omanis: the latest indications, declared by NCSI (2016), showed that, up to the end of April 2016, the total number of expatriates working in the private sector was 1,705,215 (89%), whereas the total number of Omanis reached 210,074 (11%), with the majority being graduates of CoT. Telecommunication and banking corporations are the largest employers of these graduates.

2.5.2.1. Telecommunication

The telecommunication sector in Oman has become more and more competitive in recent years, due to the market becoming saturated. There are two operators in the Sultanate, with a third operator expressing an interest in bidding for a license. These operators are subject to supervision by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA). The TRA (2014) reported that, out of 4007 employees in the telecommunication sector, around 90.2% are Omani staff.

2.5.2.2. Banking

The steady expansion of the banking sector has resulted in a subsequent rise in the number of commercial and Islamic bank branches opened in various parts of the Sultanate. Oman's banking sector consists of 442

branches of 17 licensed local and foreign commercial banks and two specialized banks (Central Bank of Oman, 2017). The banks are subject to supervision by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), which regulates and licenses private banks, monitors interest rates, and issues development bonds and notes. Oman's banks are generally well capitalized with low non-performing loan rates. The banks and their branches cover a wide range of essential banking services and activities such as clearing-house facilities, inter-bank transfers and selling commemorative currency (Central Bank of Oman, 2017). It is expected that the omanisation of personnel in the banking sector will have reached 90% by December 2018 (ibid).

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed description of the academic and professional contexts in which this study was conducted. It has also highlighted the major issues related to TW teaching since it is the main concern of this study. The next chapter reviews the literature relevant to the main tenets which inform the current study.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

“The research on workplace writing, the introductions to composition textbooks and the wisdom of veteran teachers all maintained that employees had to have good writing skills to land jobs, keep jobs, and advance on jobs”

(Agnew, 1992, p. 29)

3.1. Introduction

The aim of this literature review chapter is twofold. Firstly, there will be a brief discussion of the main approaches to teaching and researching writing. Among these models is the Systematic Functional Linguistic (SFL) approach and the focus here will be on establishing the rationale for choosing SFL as a theoretical underpinning of the current study. The rationale will be established by providing a description of the SFL model and its background and by then demonstrating its suitability for this study. Secondly, this literature review chapter attempts to position the current study within the wider context of research on English for specific purposes (ESP) writing in general and technical writing in specific in both tertiary education and workplace contexts. Therefore, the second part of the literature review focuses on studies conducted about technical writing, e.g. report writing, since the present study is an example of these types of studies. Of particular interest are studies that have specifically focused on stakeholders’ perceptions of the factors that hinder graduates from mastering technical and report writing skills as well as those expected by their future workplace managers.

Part One

3.2. Approaches to Teaching and Researching Students’ Writing

Approaches to students’ writing have experienced several phases of development. Scholars offer brief and detailed surveys of frameworks to explore the main approaches to teaching and researching writing. They classify these approaches into three main aspects of writing (Hyland, 2015 & 2008). While the first category of these approaches concentrates more on texts as the product of writing, the second focuses on the writer and the

processes they use to create texts, whereas the third approach, viewing writing as a social practice, directs learners towards how they need to interact with their texts, context and audience while creating texts. It “expands the idea of context beyond the local writing situation to the reader’s context and what writers do to address the reader” (Hyland K., 2008, p. 103). The models are not mutually exclusive, and I would not want to view them in a simple linear time dimension, whereby one model supersedes or replaces the insights provided by the other. Rather, I would like to think that each model successively encapsulates the others, so that the last perspective takes account of the earlier ones, encapsulates them and builds on the insights developed there.

These different approaches are “more accurately seen as complementary and overlapping perspectives, representing potentially compatible means of understanding the complex reality of writing” (Hyland K., 2008, p. 91). This reality is that “writing is always a social practice, influenced by cultural and institutional contexts” (Hyland K., 2008, p. 107), and our research focus should be directed towards not only the writers but also “the texts our students will need and the contexts in which are likely to need them and then, through our classroom activities, to make the features and stages of these texts as explicit as we possibly can” (Hyland K., 2008, pp. 107-108). The journey of the development of theories that underpin students’ writing in higher education practices did not and will not stop at a certain point as many scholars “illustrate the need to draw on different theoretical models to create effective methods of teaching academic writing” (Hyland, 2007, p. 26).

3.2.1. Text-oriented Approaches

Text-oriented approaches consider written texts “either as objects or as discourse” (Hyland K., 2008, p. 92). Initially, scholars focused primarily on the structures, grammar and vocabularies of written discourses through the controlled/guided approaches, such as the Text-Based (TB) approach. Such approaches have been designated as discourse-based and rhetorical-function based, as they concentrate on acquiring language functions (such as discourse analysis, descriptions and comparisons) and on how the final

written production of the student is accomplished (Flowerdew, 2002). They are concerned with “the analysis of rhetorical modes in general texts from all origins” (Wingate, 2012, p. 27). Thus, writing is “a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences into prescribed patterns” (Silva, 1990, pp. 12-13) and “a ‘thing’ independent of particular contexts, writers, or readers” (Hyland K. , 2008, p. 92). Learning to become a good writer is “largely a matter of knowing grammar” (Hyland K. , 2008, p. 92).

The focus of these models is on textual patterns and analysis rather than on how the students’ writing abilities might be enhanced through practice (Wingate, 2012). It views writing as a “textual product” (Hyland, 2015, p.6) or artefacts of form and structure (Candlin and Hyland, 2014). Therefore, its main emphases are on the surface features and characteristics of the written text and its correct production, which indicates that the methods of analysing a certain text, from this perspective, have been either by examining the tangible surface lexico-grammatical structures of that text, by looking at its discourse structures or a combination of both (Hyland, 2015, p.5).

When talking about discourse, it is necessary to elaborate that there is no agreement in the literature on what the term “discourse” itself means since it is used in a number of different ways by various linguists (Nunan, 1993), though there have been some attempts to define it. For example, Grabe and Kaplan (2014) emphasise the importance of communicative intentions as a defining feature of discourse. According to them, discourse goes beyond the surface structures to include the communicative purposes or functions of the texts. This view is based on the premise that language is used for communication so the text is examined in terms of how it is structured to achieve this function; looking at the textual features not as separate entities, but rather as meaningfully and purposefully connected units aiming to achieve a specific communicative purpose. Based on this notion, text-oriented approaches looked at texts as discourse. Although different in focus, all of them share the common concern of exploring the ways in which writers manipulate the language options available to them to realize certain communicative functions within a given context. For example, discourse

analysis emphasizes that the different language choices that writers make should create a coherent text with a specific communicative purpose; thus they cannot be taught in isolation. Central to the notion of discourse analysis is the idea that the forms writers choose to convey their meanings vary according to the contexts (Hyland, 2015).

Text-oriented approaches have been criticised for their reliance on the now disputed belief that “we transfer ideas from one mind to another through language with no conflicts of interpretations or different understandings, because we all see things in the same way” (Hyland K., 2008, p.93). Even a most explicitly written text can “result in fierce disputes of interpretation” (ibid). The idea of transferability, where students for example learn the discipline-specific vocabulary and knowledge and the structural and textual conventions of their specialization and then transfer them to their future workplace context, does not necessarily mean that they will be successful writers. Likewise, it does not necessarily mean that it has no value or benefit for the students as well. Therefore, in such contexts, students who have a good knowledge of textual patterns and structures may succeed. However, they could also face some obstacles when it comes to writing more sophisticated genres as their competency depends heavily on a collection of fixed textual patterns which may not be enough to allow them to create new structures. Such an absence of creativity is likely to negatively affect their writing skills improvement. In fact, text-oriented models, which underpin programmes of composition and rhetoric, are less suitable for higher education systems like the Omani HE context, where students specialise in their discipline from the beginning (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Tribble (2009, p.402) argues in line with this that such approaches are more “concerned with the analysis of rhetorical modes in ‘general’ texts from all origins”. Yet, a question might be raised here as to whether the study of surface-features of texts have to be restricted to 'general texts'. In fact, it seems obvious that it is not restricted in this way as considerable amounts of research have been done into understanding how the formal aspects of texts (grammar, vocabulary, organization, etc) relate to specific genres/disciplines, etc.

3.2.1. Writer-oriented Approaches

The second broad category of approaches focuses on the writer, rather than the text. Specifically, these approaches emphasize students' personal experiences and opinions. Writing is seen as "a creative act of self-discovery" (Hyland K., 2008, p. 98). This can help generate self-awareness of the writer's position and to facilitate "clear thinking, effective relating, and satisfying self-expression" (Moffett, 1982, p.235). These approaches were normally entrenched in skills-based (SB) perspectives (Lea and Stierer, 2000), which have their roots in the psychological model of literacy. This model defines literacy, according to Street (1984) who labels it as the "autonomous model", as the ability to read and write, assuming that literacy is a psychological phenomenon related to individual cognitive skills and competencies. Consequently, literacy, based on the SB model, is autonomous, context-free, neutral, value-free, and an apolitical concept (Street, 2003).

The supporters of this approach believe that there is a "generic set of textual skills and strategies that can be taught and then applied in particular disciplinary contexts" (Baynham, 1995, p.19). Baynham elaborated on this, stating that writing is seen as a technical ability to acquire a set of "de-contextualised skills, such as essay writing or referencing" and once these skills are mastered, they can be transferred from one context to another (Baynham, 2000, p.19). Therefore, students' difficulties are usually attributed to their deficiencies or inability to acquire these required skills to be successful writers (Lea & Stierer, 2000). In other words, the emphasis of this model is on what students cannot do instead of what they can do (Crowther, *et al*, 2001). From this stance, the way to help students with academic writing is by conducting remedial classes or writing workshops aimed at teaching the technical skills that they need to master. According to Wingate (2012, p.31), writing is "a problem to be remedied by separate study skills instruction that attempts to teach writing as a set of discrete techniques without relation to curricula content". Based on this assumption, students' mastery of the linguistic and inscription rules will guarantee their proficiency in writing in future contexts (Lea & Stierer, 2000).

Scholars such as Lea and Stierer (2000), Baynham (2000) and Hyland (2006) say that to achieve such transferability of writing skills across disciplines it is assumed that the contexts of these disciplines are homogenous, a view that they find hard to believe because disciplines are different from each other. To demonstrate this, Baynham (2000) examined composition in the field of nursing training. His findings showed that such skills-based (SB) approaches did not help those trainees react properly to the writing prerequisites of their multiple disciplinary subjects that were related to the nursing specialization and that this was due to the differences that exist among these subjects. This apparently may undermine the view of the transferability of abilities (Zamel, 1998). Such differences are also applicable to the context of CoT, where this study is conducted, as students from different disciplines (for example, Engineering, IT, Business Studies, Designing, Applied Sciences, Pharmacy) are asked to carry out similar disciplinary writing practices in their TW classes. For example they may be asked to describe how to fix a broken tool and at the same time write about marketing it globally before usage. Even when disciplines share some genres' features, subtle differences can still be found, especially regarding disciplinary preferences in relation to the organisation of content and the register used in each discipline (Al-Husseini, 2014). In a study that highlights the academic writing skills that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Omani students demonstrate in their final year project reports, Al-Husseini (2014) found that these graduates' reports have similarities and differences in terms of conventions and rhetoric because of the difference between the disciplines of these students. The author argues that a wide-angle approach might be more appropriate to teaching the language skills that the students need for writing a final year project report (Al-Husseini, 2014). In addition, students are said to be in need of more exposure and training in the types of genres that are normally associated with their particular subject-areas rather than being taught generic skills that may prove to be of little use to them in their academic studies (Al-Badwawi, 2011).

The writer-oriented approaches were also critiqued for their heavy leaning on “an asocial view of the writer and on an ideology of individualism” (Hyland

K., 2008, p. 99). They assume that all writers have a similar innate creative potential which means that they tend to neglect “the cultural backgrounds of learners, the social consequences of writing, and the purposes of communication in the real-world where writing matters” (ibid). In addition, writer-oriented approaches like the SB model do not discuss deeply the fact that each discipline can be viewed as a separate culture (Zamel, 1998) with its own norms and practices of writing. Researchers, thus, have argued that a more discipline-sensitive approach is needed to take into consideration the diversity of readers, disciplines and contexts that exist in the target subject areas and the social purposes of students’ writing. Canagarajah (2002a) argues that students/writers should shift from a view of writing as an individualistic activity to one that is social. Thus, there is a need for an approach that goes beyond giving us insights into the ways students acquire and practise genre knowledge to a consideration of the ways in which texts are embedded in the communicative activities of the academic community (Paltridge, 2004). The professional context is also no exception to such a need (Bertha & Bhatia, 2013). The ‘writing as a social practice’ approaches, such as Disciplinary Socialization (DS) and Academic Literacies (AL), consider such diversities.

3.2.2. Writing as a Social Practice Approaches

A social practices approach to student writing recognises academic writing as an activity embedded in social and interpersonal ways of being (Lea and Stierer 2000; Lillis & Rai, 2013). These approaches place the social aspect of writing at the heart of their theory and deal with various contextual factors (e.g. audience and context) that impact the process of students’ writing. Their focus is on the social needs and requirements of preparing students for acquiring writing in disciplines and professional writing. Thus, the writing teaching programs tend to draw more on the insights of these social composition approaches (Matsuda, 2003). The main tenet of this movement is the notion that literacy is a social practice but not a de-contextualised ability to encode and decode meaning (Baynham, 1995; Lea & Street, 1998; Johns, 1998). In these models, the focus shifts from individual proficiencies or

deficiencies to literacy practices that differ across contexts and cultures (Maybin, 2007). Instead of conceptualising literacy as the acquisition of discreet, transferable skills, it is viewed as a situated socially constructed phenomenon taking place in a socio-cultural context that shapes the perceptions and the practices of the participants (Henderson and Hirst, 2006). Examples of these models are the disciplinary socialization (DS) approach and the academic literacies (AL) approach. These approaches to student writing are entrenched in the notion that writing is a social practice which is governed by contextual factors. However, the former is characterised by “a one-way process of students’ acculturation into their academic subjects”, while the latter can be seen as “a two-way process that encourages the negotiation of conflicting literacy practices” (Lea and Street, 2000a, p.34). This is because students interact actively in the process rather than being merely subjects of disciplinary acculturation (ibid).

The DS approach assumes that students need to be acculturated into the discourses and genres of particular disciplines by making these structures explicit to students and that this will lead to them becoming successful writers. Bartholomae (1986) stated that, in order for a student to succeed in the disciplinary contexts, he/she must “try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourses of a certain community (discipline)” (p.403). Therefore, “learning takes place in the form of apprenticeship with students learning the requirements of the university culture” (Paltridge, 2004, p.90) from their teachers, who are considered the experts in this context. Woodward-Kron (2004, p.141) states that “discourse community is an important concept in understanding the development of students’ writing from the disciplinary socialisation point of view because it provides a way of exploring the social practices and constraints that shape students’ writing and for understanding the acculturation processes that students undergo in their disciplines”. Discourse communities have been defined in different ways also, so that Swales (1990), for instance, sees them as having collective goals, while Johns (1998) suggests they have common interests, rather than goals. Barton (1994) takes a middle way and sees them as loose-knit groups engaged in

either producing or receiving texts. Writers achieve full membership into their community when they themselves are able to reproduce the accepted discourse types of their discipline. Therefore, the social practices of the community context determine the general characteristics of good writing authors need to produce in that discipline. Writers, as DS argues, may approach good writing through acquiring the complexities of writing and, at the same time, keeping in mind the preferences of their discourse communities or what is valued and rewarded in their writing contexts. Accordingly, the DS approach adopts the belief that students' acculturation into their disciplines comes through adapting their literacy practices to those valued by the members of their discourse community. This is why the DS approach is referred to as a one-way process because students in such circumstances are asked to conform to norms governing the academic culture of their chosen discipline. Implicitly, this means that students are viewed as merely passive recipients of the dominant culture, or what their teachers perceive as the accepted norms and values of the disciplines.

Similarly, in the workplace, writers like employees, especially those in the initial stages of their work, even after working in a professional department for some time and being exposed to the writing demands and requirements of that particular department, may not develop up to the point where they are considered to have fully mastered their specialisation's skills. However, this could be questioned, as students being asked to conform to the existing rules of the community does not necessarily imply they are 'passive', since acquiring the rules of a certain community and assimilating to its culture can still be an active process. For example, several studies have suggested that when writers simulate and follow certain templates to produce specific TW texts such as reports, emails and memos, they progress better (see for example, Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016; Obaid, 2009).

The issues of power relations and student identity are addressed in the academic literacies (AL) approach as well. The term 'academic literacies' was first used in the early 1990s, when practice-based research and literacy theory became significant in the UK (Bazerman, 2005). At that time, UK

higher education was experiencing an extraordinary expansion represented in an increase in the number of students and in class sizes without any significant change in the amount of resources (ibid), a case that is now being experienced in the Omani technical context. Such expansion negatively affected the method of teaching literacy in general and writing in particular. This gave rise to problems in students' writing as it was very difficult to teach academic writing as a disciplinary communication with such large numbers of students. One explanation for the problems in the students' writing might be the gaps between academic staff's expectations and students' interpretations of what is involved in student writing (Lea & Street, 2014). As a result, the emergence of the AL movement, which believes that literacy is a social practice rather than a disciplinary communication (Baynham, 1995; Lea & Street, 1998; Johns, 1998), helped resolve the abovementioned dilemma.

The AL method concentrates on identifying the practices, student identities and conflicts that individual language users experience in university writing (Russell et al., 2009). Street (2009, p.349) maintained that "a dominant feature of academic literacy practices is the requirement to switch practices between one setting and another, to deploy a repertoire of linguistic practices appropriately to each setting, and to handle the social meanings and identities that each evokes". Baynham (2000, p.17) illustrated the multitude of identities that students must alternate between, using the case of a nursing student who is "hurrying from lecture to tutorial, backpack full of photocopied journal articles, notes and guidelines for an essay on the sociology of nursing, a clinical report, a case study, a reflective journal". The problem of this nursing student, namely, the multiple disciplinary settings she needs to work in, is emphasized here. In addition, AL views students' texts as the product of the ideological interaction between several factors (Baynham, 2000), such as the teachers and the students themselves. Street (1984, p.36) argued that "whereas an autonomous model of literacy suggests that literacy is a decontextualized skill, which once learned can be transferred with ease from one context to another, the ideological model highlights the contextual and social nature of literacy practices, and the relationships of power and authority which are implicit in any literacy event". It is true that students may bring

different identities, understandings, and habits of meaning-making to their learning, but we, as teachers and researchers, "cannot assume that students' previous learning experiences will provide them with appropriate writing schemata for their studies" (Hyland, 2007, p. 149). In the context of the present study, the same interpretations are applicable to the students since they are struggling to meet their various subjects' requirements. They have to write several assignments for various departments or for different modules within the same section. For example, in my college, engineering students sometimes find they are expected to write a report about how to market a certain product, though this is more relevant to the students of the business studies discipline. For such issues, the proponents of AL, such as Lea and Street (1998) and Baynham (2000), have argued for its emergence as the dominant way of theorising student writing in higher education contexts, claiming its complete dissimilarity from the other approaches to writing in higher education.

Although social practice approaches have seen their role as "critical research frame" (Lillis, 2003, p.195) and as an "oppositional frame" (Lillis, 2006, p. 32) to instructional practices at higher education universities (e.g. Academic Literacies), researchers have provided much needed insights into the struggle that some students face with writing at university (see Ivanic, 2004; Lea & Street, 1998); however, the model has so far not come up with an alternative writing pedagogy, and the need to develop it into a 'design frame with a focus on pedagogy' has been acknowledged (see Lea & Street, 2006 & Lillis, 2006). Moreover, the landscape of teaching writing in higher education contexts has changed over the last decades, with increased emphasis on professional rather than purely academic study. Although this model has been influential in arguing for more emphasis on 'practice' rather than only texts or writers (Lillis & Scott, 2007, pp. 71-72), the central role of text in writing instruction is still significant (Wingate and Tribble, 2012). Hyland (2015) argues that we need to focus on the texts, tasks, language features, skills, and practices that are appropriate to the purposes and understandings of particular disciplinary communities. By ignoring them, he argues, we "run the risk of creating an unbridgeable gulf between the everyday literacy

practices that students bring with them from their homes and those that they find in the university” (Hyland 2002, p.392). Such a focus also makes us more able to show students “the complex ways in which discourse is situated in unequal social relationships and how its meanings are represented in social ideologies” (Hyland 2002: 393). As a result, scholars have increasingly grown ever more conscious that the dominant pedagogical orthodoxies, such as AL, are unable to address the language, as well as the writing, needs of our students (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). Such needs raise the concerns for a writing pedagogy that may help overcome the struggle that students face with higher education writing practices and how to make use of such practices in a way that serves writing in further contexts such as, for example, their future workplace.

“Allied to this is work in systemic functional linguistics (SFL) which has come to see student writing as being concerned with the processes of meaning-making and contestation around meaning rather than as skills or deficits” (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 159). There is a growing body of literature based upon this approach, which suggests that one explanation for problems in student writing may be the inconsistencies between workplace context (i.e. employers’) expectations and academia (i.e. graduates’) interpretations of what is involved in student writing.

3.2.3. Genre-Based Approach Informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

In the last two decades, increasing attention has been given to the notion of genre and its application in language teaching and learning (Hyland K., 2007). This is largely in response to the "changing views of discourse and of learning to write which incorporate better understandings of how language is structured to achieve social purposes in particular contexts of use" (Hyland K. , 2007, p. 148). There has also been an urgent need for more “theoretically robust, linguistically informed, and research-grounded text models to bridge the gap between textual and social writing and to prepare learners for their futures” (Hyland K. , 2007, p. 149). The genre-based framework is believed to be “the best-known approach to the analysis and teaching of professional and

academic discourse” (Flowerdew, 2000, p.369). Flowerdew (1993) recommended applying the genre-based method in his argument about “teaching professional genres by a process, or educational, approach. He stated that teachers can “show students the parameters which shape genre and the sorts of ways in which these parameters affect discourse structure and linguistic encoding” (Flowerdew, 1993, p. 309).

In fact, understanding the concept of genre is crucial to this study, as it helps determine the approach that should be taken to the analysis of students’ and employees’ reports. Hyon (1996) argued that work on literary genres had been conceived of in three distinct ways by researchers and practitioners with different backgrounds and representing different parts of the world, namely, the international ESP tradition, the North American New Rhetoric school, and the Australian systemic-functional school. The New Rhetoric scholars “have focused more on the situational contexts in which genres occur than on their forms and have placed special emphases on the special purposes, or actions, that these genres fulfill within these situations” (Hyon, 1996, p. 696). Swales’ (1990) and Bhatia’s (1993) version of ESP defines genres as communicative events within discourse communities which are characterised by their communicative purposes and their varieties of linguistic patterns, including structure, content, and intended audience. For Systemic-Functional Linguistics (SFL), the emergence of the genre-based approach informed by SFL is traditionally traced back to the language approaches developed in Britain in the 1930s-1950s (Bateman, 2017, p. 14). This genre-based approach has its origins in Halliday, McIntosh, and Strevens’s (1964) seminal work in register analysis, and has been developed into successful educational practice. One of its main aims is to use text analysis to enable students to understand and control the conventions and discourses of their discipline (*ibid.*). SFL is primarily associated with the Sydney school (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Martin, 1993) and has led to major innovations in Australian primary and secondary education (Martin, 2009). It has also been successfully used in higher education (Drury, 2004; Ellis, 2004; Wingate, 2012). Indeed, SFL and ESP are the two most frequently adapted and adopted frameworks in ELT for improving teaching materials and methodologies (Ng, 2017). The following

section (Section 3.2.3.1.) explains how SFL and ESP are distinct from each other.

3.2.3.1. SFL vs ESP

Before discussing the distinction between ESP and SFL, I shall explain that these two approaches are not completely distinctive from each other, as they overlap each other in certain aspects. For example, as genre-based approaches, they are generally regarded as a pedagogy that may fulfil the English-teaching needs, specifically in both EAP and professional writing contexts (Swale, 1990; Flowerdew, 2000; Johns, 2002; Flowerdew, 2002; Bhatia, 2017). Hyland agreed that these "genre approaches provide an effective writing pedagogy by making explicit what is to be learnt, providing a coherent framework for studying both language and contexts, ensuring that course objectives are derived from students' needs, and creating the resources for students to understand and challenge valued discourses" (Hyland K. , 2007, p. 149). SFL and ESP theories also give teacher-educators a role in preparing individuals to teach second language writing and to confidently advise them on the development of curriculum materials and activities for writing classes (Bateman, 2017). This assists the teachers in "grounding their courses in the texts that students will need to write in occupational, academic, or social contexts, helps them guide their learners to participate effectively in the world outside the ESL classroom" (Hyland K. , 2007, p. 149).

The structure of the writing lesson in these genre-based approaches also indicates a level of similarity between them. The lesson usually begins with a presentation and analysis of a model text, followed by either manipulation of some linguistic features of the text or a joint construction of a similar text by the students and the teachers. Finally, students independently produce a text showing their mastery of the target genre (Dudley-Evans, 1997). The focus of this instruction seems to be on the imitation of model or exemplary texts that students need to master in their academic lives (Badger & White, 2000, p. 156). According to Badger and White (2000), in the writing classroom, teachers need to replicate the situation as closely as possible and then

provide sufficient support for learners to identify the purpose and other aspects of the social contexts, such as the tenor, field, and mode of their writing. For instance (if using Badger and White's example), writers who want to be car dealers would need to take into consideration that their description is intended to sell the car (purpose), that it might appeal to a certain group of people (tenor), that it might include certain information (field), and that there are ways in which car descriptions are presented (mode). After experiencing a whole process of writing, the students would use the skills appropriate to the genre, such as redrafting and proofreading, and finally complete their texts. By following the conditions set out above, composition courses will not only afford students the chance to enjoy the creativity of writing and to become independent writers (Kim & Kim, 2005), but will also help them understand the linguistic features of each genre and emphasize the discourse value of the structures they are using.

However, SFL and ESP are distinct from each other in other aspects. For instance, SFL scholars view genre as one element in a complex social semiotic system, and consider that delineating and exploring the textual features of that system is empowering for both learners and (disadvantaged) citizens (Hyon, 1996). Indeed, SFL views the structure of language as a set of semantic systems, in which language functions as a tool for meaning-making (Halliday, 1978). Meaning is realized through the systemic choices the speaker or writer makes within the system available to him/her in a particular context (Eggins, 1994), and is "instantiated" in a text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 27). That is to say, texts are instances of the language system and its culture. A text can range from a note to a friend to a more elaborate text, such as a presidential speech; these instances are made systematically from the language system. However, these choices are constrained by different factors; for example, the context of situation limits the range of language choices available (Hyon, 1996). SFL, however, recognises the role of the social context as "predictive of text" (Halliday, 1978, p. 189) and describes genre as a "staged, goal-oriented social process" (Martin, 1993, p. 121) within a specific context of culture; for example, the language choices available to a person when writing an academic report describing an instrument needed to

fix a broken washing machine are different from the language choices available to the same person writing a report auditing a certain corporation's performance. Another factor is the limited access an individual has to the different contexts of culture, which in turn limits their possible choices (Christie & Unsworth, 2005); for example, a student who has little exposure to writing professional reports will have limited access to the language resources compared to an employee who is socialized in the culture of writing such workplace reports.

For Bhatia's ESP, the idea of genre is related to "the Vygotskian socio-cultural theories of learning and to the Hallidayan functional linguistics" (Hyland K. , 2007, p. 153). It pays attention to "the notion of scaffolding that emphasises the role of interaction with peers and experienced others in moving learners from their existing level of performance, what they can do now, to a level of 'potential performance,' what they are able to do without assistance" (Hyland K. , 2007, p. 158). Swales (1990, p. 58) provides a widely cited definition that describes genre as seen by the Bhatia's ESP tradition, by stating that:

a genre comprises a class of communicative events the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.

This definition indicates the importance of genre in interpreting the relationships among the members of certain societies who share multiple intentions to communicate either orally or in written forms (Flowerdew, 1993). One of these intentions is the writing of academic/technical students, which the current study investigates. Based on this importance, scholars have started theorising genre (ibid.). This Swalesian notion of genre is a way of conceptualising the relationship between the linguistic forms the writers decide to use and the features of their contexts. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of a discourse community, and thereby

constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains the choice of content and style (Flowerdew, 1993).

Hyon (1996) noted that “many ESP scholars have paid particular attention to detailing the formal characteristics of genres while focusing less on the specialized functions of texts and their surrounding social contexts” (p. 695). They also focus on the communicative purposes that are common between the same classes of genres (*ibid.*). According to Swales (1993), the purpose of the texts is the defining feature that sets them apart from other genres. These communicative purposes are important, as they determine the schematic structure of the texts and their content in accordance with the expectations and the conventions of a particular discourse community. Johns (1997, pp. 22-37) stated that people who share knowledge of the same genre also have in common “a shared name of the genre, communicative purposes, knowledge of the roles of the participants, knowledge of context, knowledge of formal text features (conventions), knowledge of text content, knowledge of register, cultural values, and awareness of intertextuality”.

The link between language and context (Martin, 1992) is another distinction with which both SFL and ESP proponents concur. Martin (1992, cited in Hyland, 2007, p. 153) argued that the SFL approach provides a systematic link between language and context highlighting the purposeful and sequential nature of genre. Similarly, for the ESP tradition, Swales (1990, cited in Christie, 2006, p. 6), for example, explains that the notion of context is still embedded in ESP-based teaching methodologies, which are developed around three key concepts, namely, “discourse community”, “genre” and “language-learning task or purpose”, whereas “genre is characterized by patterns of structure, style, content and intended audience”. Bhatia (1993) also claimed that genre and the social process (i.e., transaction in a certain socio-cultural context) are inter-related; therefore, “genres should be taught with a strong sense of the social relevance and purpose of communication”. Yet, while for many years, both SFL and ESP frameworks have been proven successful, SFL proponents like Christie (2006) consider

SFL as more powerful than ESP because the former has an “all-embracing theory of language and social experience”; this is something the latter lacks in addition to the absence of “detailed accounts of genres” although they both assume “a strong sense of social purpose and context in addressing text types” (Christie, 2006). Other researchers (see, for example, Devitt, Reiff and Bawarshi, 2003 among others) also report that SFL and ESP approaches are distinct from each other in that each has weaknesses that sometimes deprive them existing independently from each other. They examined the weaknesses of these approaches and proposed integrating them to create a holistic and more concrete approach to a systematic analysis of texts (ibid.). Martin and Rose (1997) also explained that within SFL, genre can be analysed through the functionality of a certain text and the themes to be proposed in that text (i.e., how texts were thematically structured). In order to explore this feature more fully, I shall introduce the functional notions of Theme and the related notions of Macro-Theme and Hyper-Theme (Martin & Rose, 2003). As shown in Figure 3, the opening stage of a text, referred to as the ‘theme identification/preview of theme elements’, has the function of stating both the theme or topic to be examined and the elements to be considered with respect to that theme. The stage termed ‘Element Evaluation’ then moves through a series of steps, examining each of these elements in some detail: each step may be thought of as a phase within the overall stage of the text. The final stage has the function of restating the theme, thus bringing the text to a close.

Theme Identification/Preview of Theme Elements	
↓	The writer states the theme or topic (Macro-Theme) and its elements (Hyper-themes) to be discussed in the text
Element Evaluation	
↓	The writer elaborate on each element/Hyper-Theme with details
Reiteration of Theme	
	Restating the discussed theme/topic

Figure 3:- *stages of thematic structure*

The term 'Macro-Theme', according to Martin and Rose (2003), refers to a statement, normally at least one sentence though it may be several, found at the start of a text, which serves to indicate what is to come. It is 'macro' because it establishes the major idea(s) that concerns the text overall, thus also predicting what is to come (*ibid.*). The Hyper-Theme, normally found at the opening of a new paragraph within the text, is an introductory sentence or sentences relating back to the Macro-Theme, while also predicting what is to come in subsequent sentences within the paragraph. It is 'hyper' because it provides the issues/ideas that will predominate within the paragraph (Martin & Rose, 2003). Thus, the Macro-Theme predicts what is to come, while the Hyper-Theme sentences both refer back to what has been predicted and refer forward to what is to come in each paragraph. Where the text works successfully, the overall patterns of Macro-Theme, Hyper-Themes and Themes serve to build a sense of overall unity in what is stated. We can pursue the pattern of Theme choices within any paragraph in a text, examining the Hyper-Theme and Theme choices in turn, while also using their absence as a way of diagnosing problems in texts that do not appear to work well (Forey, 2002, p. 157).

ESP is distinct from SFL, as the former implies using move analysis to analyse the structure of a certain text. Move analysis is an important method to describe genres (Swale, 1990). The basic tenet of move analysis is that a text usually follows a typical structural pattern or organization, consisting of a series of moves sequenced in a particular order (*ibid.*). A move refers to a text segment that performs a communicative function, contributing to the global function of a whole text. Moves are semantic, and functional units of texts have specific communicative purposes (Biber, Connor, & Upton, 2007). Each move both has its own purpose and contributes to the overall purposes of the text. A move's length varies from less than a sentence to much longer sections (Biber *et al.*, 2007, p. 31). Each move can be realized by one or more steps, that is, the sub-units of a move. Move analysis, pioneered by Swales (1990), has since been fruitfully employed in investigating the rhetorical moves in such diverse genres as grant proposals (Connor, 2000), job application letters (Henry & Roseberry, 2001), company audit reports

(Flowerdew & Wan, 2010), students' graduation projects (Al-Husseini, 2015), and students' laboratory reports (Parkinson, 2017).

Since, in this study, I needed to analyse the moves and the themes applied by both students and employees to structure their texts, I deployed an integrated model embracing both SFL and ESP perspectives for the analysis of students' and employees' reports (see Sections 4.5 and 4.6). Accordingly, I partly integrated ESP with SFL to establish the document analysis framework (see Section 4.6.3.3.2 for further details about the contribution of both ESP and SFL in this analysis). There are, in fact, many opportunities for research-based collaboration between SFL and ESP for analysing HE and workplace documents due to a lack of synergy between these two most frequently adopted frameworks in ELT. Such integration may guide teachers and course coordinators in designing a syllabus that can better fulfill the needs of learners (Flowerdew, 2005; Ng, 2017) by drawing upon the best from both sides despite "different views of genre and different pedagogies" (Hyland, 2007, p. 153).

3.2.3.2. Key Components of Systemic Functional Linguistics

The SFL's key linguistic components (as shown in Figure 3) simultaneously work together. Within SFL, different levels of representation are defined as distinct 'strata'. The importance attributed to stratification in SFL can be seen in Halliday's (1978) assertions that it is the separation of form from meaning via lexicogrammatical stratification. The first stratum is genre, which is followed by the register layer, whereas the third stratum is the language meta-functions. The following sections will deal with each level in turn.

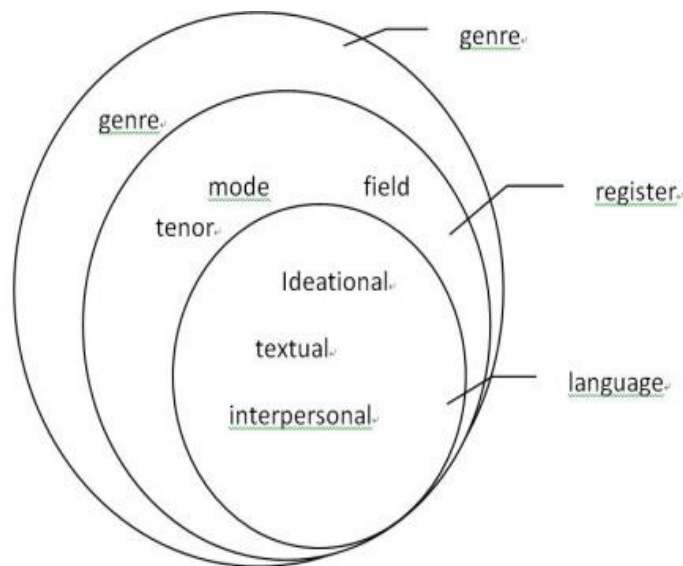


Figure 3: Key components of SFL - (J. R. Martin, 1997)

3.2.3.2.1. Genre

Genre, as used in SFL, accounts for relations among social processes with special focus on the stages through which most texts develop (Martin, 1997, p. 6). Thus, the notion of 'genre' here is a way of conceptualising the relationship between the linguistic forms the writers decide to use and the features of their contexts (Martin, 2016). It also describes the impact of the context of culture on the language in the text (Eggins, 1994; Martin & Rose, 2008). Genre is modelled at the stratum of culture (Martin & Rose, 2008). In other words, genre theory brings awareness to the cultural aspects embedded in the text by its description of how language achieves things and reflecting on what the culture involves (Eggins, 1994). For example, in a genre analysis of a corpus of 60 Arabic and English letters of applications for jobs written by native speakers, Al-Ali (2004) found rhetorical moves in Arabic texts that were not present in the English texts. The letter of application in Arabic included language that glorifies the potential employer, where the English language letter of application included a part where the candidate promoted himself. Even though Al-Ali used Bhatia's (1993) structure analysis and not SFL's genre theory as a framework for his analysis, the analysis revealed how intersubjectivity between reader and writer is realized differently in different cultures, confirming the genre dependency on the culture and its significance in teaching foreign languages, such as Arabic, and in doing more research in

teaching Arabic writing. Badger and White (2000) also argue that genre stresses the fact that texts differ according to the social contexts of their production. Thus, genres are conventionalized ways of presenting knowledge in a certain discipline as approved and valued by the discipline's discourse community.

Although genre has a social element since it looks at the relationship between text and context (Eggins, 1994), it is still largely linguistic in the sense that it “emphasises the internalisation of the linguistic forms and discourse structures that will lead to the production of appropriate examples of the target genres” (i.e. meeting the expectations of the discourse community). This would achieve the aim of balancing the emphasis on analysing textual features needed to be acquired to carry out disciplinary writing tasks and on the socio-political contexts of writing as well as the exploration of teachers’ and students’ social identities and power relations (ibid).

3.2.3.2.2. Register

The extensive research on written academic texts (textbooks and student writing) using SFL has been mostly done within the Sydney School genre tradition developed by Martin and colleagues (Veel, 2006). In their tradition, SFL deals with register in terms of three variables or parameters known as semiotic functions. For SFL, register is a relational concept that links the context of situation with linguistic choices which are affected by three variables: Field, Tenor, and Mode (Halliday 1978). “This tri-partite model of context is formulated slightly before the development of metafunctions as SFL’s paradigmatic formalization of deep grammar evolves in the mid-1960s” (Bateman, 2017, p. 48). Field is the area of external reality with which the text deals (the subject matter of the text), Tenor concerns the relationships between those taking part in the linguistic act (between speaker and listener or writer and reader) and Mode is the means through which the communication takes place (whether the text is spoken or written and its function in context) (Christie & Unsworth, 2005; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin, 2009; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). When any, some, or all of those variables differ, so do the patterns of meanings in the text. For

example, the language choices made in a corporate progress report review (Field) in a corporation forum (Mode) to this corporation’s managers/employees (Tenor) are different from those in the review of the same report (Field) in a newspaper (Mode) to the newspaper readers/the corporate customers (Tenor). Thus, these three parameters play a significant role in “determining the actual choices [instances] among the possibilities available in the language as system” (Halliday, 2009, p.55). With regard to the corpus gathered for analysis in my own research, both academic and professional texts were virtually similar in terms of Tenor and Mode, though they differed in Field. There will be more detailed comparison of these points in the chapter devoted to the findings (see Section 5.3.).

The Field, Tenor, and Mode relate to three meta-functions which realize the meanings conveyed in any text. These three dimensions of context are correlated with the ideational, textual and interpersonal meta-functions, respectively (Bateman, 2017). Table 1 outlines these correlations.

Extrinsic functionality (context)	‘reflected in ...’	Intrinsic functionality (metafunction)
Field	construed by	Ideational resources
Mode	construed by	Contextual resources
Tenor	construed by	Interpersonal resources

Table 1: *register (field, mode and tenor) and metafunctions ‘hook-up’-* (Bateman, 2017, p. 48)

Ideational meanings represent experiences and how the text is connected, and it maps onto the Field variable. The contextual resources are of the experiential elements ‘in other words, transitivity: participants (people and things), verbs (processes), and circumstances (e.g., of time, place, manner) and the resources that contribute to the logical connection of the text (e.g., conjunction, ellipsis and reference). The Interpersonal meta-function is concerned with meanings that have to do with interactions among people, and it maps onto the Tenor variable. The interpersonal choices are from the Mood, Modality, and Appraisal resources. The Mood analysis identifies the mood of the clause (i.e., interrogative, declarative or imperative) by analyzing the mood block of the clause (i.e., the Finite + Subject+ Residue). Together the

position of the Finite and Subject in the clause decide the mood of the clause. Sometimes, the tone also decides its mood. The Finite is part of the verbal group that carries the tense of the verb and its polarity, and the residue is the rest of the clause. Modality is expressed through Modulation (command and offer), which is used to express the different degree of obligation or inclination, or Modalization (statements and questions), which is used to express probability or usuality. White (2001) expanded the realization of the interpersonal metafunction with his Appraisal theory. This theory is concerned “with the language of evaluation, attitude and emotion, and with a set of resources which explicitly position a text’s proposals and propositions interpersonally” (p.1). Lastly, the Textual meta-function is concerned with the organization of the text and it maps onto the Mode variable (Halliday & Mattheissen, 2014; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). The textual choices are for thematic progression (Theme and Rheme), deixis (e.g., *that* and *the*) and cohesive elements in the text (e.g., connectors). The Theme is “the point of departure of the message” (Halliday & Mattheissen, 2014, p. 89). The Rheme is “the part in which the Theme is developed” (p.89); it usually contains the new information of the clause. (See Section 4.7. for further explanation of these metafunctions.)

3.2.2.1.3. The Language Strata

From the SFL perspective, language consists of three levels, or strata (see Figure 4): (1) discourse semantics is related to the meaning in the text; (2) lexico-grammar is related to the words and structures in the text; and (3) phonology/graphology is related to patterns and sounds of letters and words along with punctuation and tones (Rose & Martin, 2012).

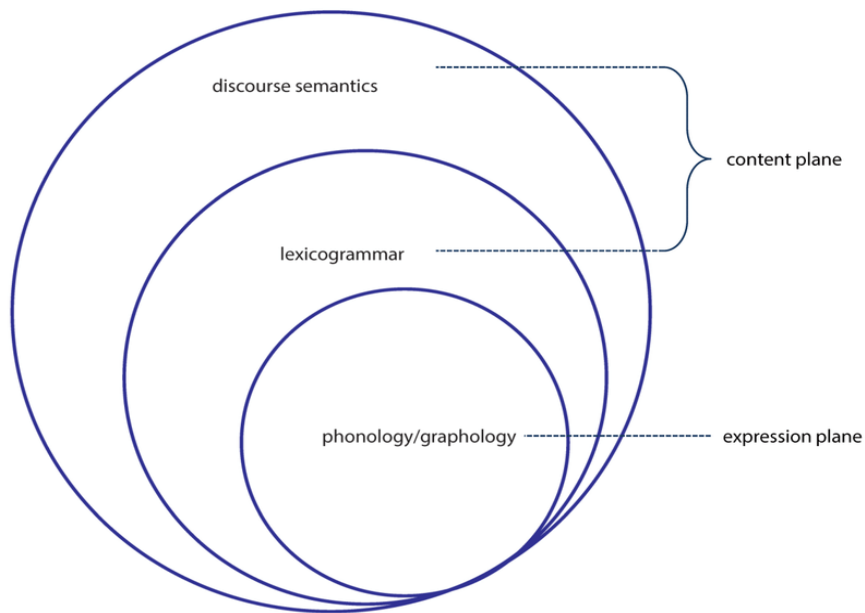


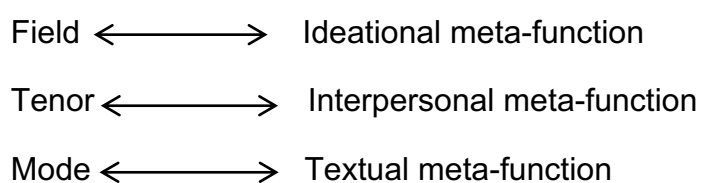
Figure 4: *The language strata - SFL* - (J. R. Martin, 1997)

SFL theorizes that the meaning in the text at the discourse semantic level is realized by the choice of lexicon (words) and grammar (structure) from the large network of systems that represent the language (Rose & Martin, 2012). The realization relationship between the discourse semantics, the lexicogrammar and graphology/phonology is where patterns of semantic meaning comprise patterns of lexico-grammar (Caffarel, 2010). The realization or manifestation between the discourse semantics, lexico-grammar and the graphology/phonology is non-directional as the line in Figure 3 illustrates (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; Martin & Rose, 2008; Martin, 1997, 2009). In other words, the discourse semantics realizes lexico-grammar, and lexico-grammar realizes the phonology/graphology, which is also realized in the opposite direction. However, as mentioned earlier, the language choices that express the realization between the language strata are restricted by the social context (i.e., register and genre) in which the language occurs, which I will explain in the next two sections.

Halliday's SFL studies the functional and situational organization of language in the social context (see Halliday, 1978, Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Particularly, it is attentive to how people use language in a specific context and how language is structured for use in that context

(Halliday, 1978). Thus, people construe meaning through systemic choices they make within the linguistic systems available to them in that particular context (Halliday, 1978). SFL is concerned with studying the relationship between language and its function in social contexts (Hyland, 2002b, p.15). Street and Leung (2010, p.298) state that “the idea of ‘function’ is understood in terms of the relationship between meaning and linguistic form. In other words, what people mean to say is realised by the specific linguistic means and features they select to manifest their meaning”.

These three meta-functions are the tenets of SFL components and they represent the main unit of analysis in SFL research. They work as the primary constructs for looking at the relationship between text and context (Coffin & Donohue, 2012). They mainly focus on exploring how writers select language to develop and structure texts and to construe meanings that creates a dialogue between writers and audience and forms cohesive and coherent texts. Also, it is not possible to tell how people are using language to produce a certain text if you do not take into account the context of use. Once a text is taken out of context, its purpose becomes obscured, with part of its meaning lost (Eggins 2004). Martin (2004) argues for the importance of these SFL meta-functions in analysing written texts as he indicates that they give value to both general and individual text patterns and meanings. Meta-functions can be paralleled to categories of register; Halliday (1978) argues that there is a close connection between these three linguistic meta-functions and the three semiotic aspects of register: field (the topic), tenor (the roles and relationships of the interlocutors) and mode (how written or spoken a text is). Indeed they dovetail into one another:



Within SFL, this means language cannot be divorced from the context in which it is produced and it also means that the three meta-functions act simultaneously and systematically, not distinctly or independently from each

other, in any text (Martin, 1997, 2004 & 2016). (See Section 4.5. for further details about how these metafunctions would be applied to analyse the collected reports.)

3.2.3.3. Why SFL?

The rationale for selecting the Genre-based approach informed by SFL as a theoretical framework – a model guiding document analysis - in the present study stems from Bhatia and Fage’s argument that “genre analysis approach has been a very relevant, insightful, useful and a popular discourse analytical framework for the last three decades, in particular for the study of academic and professional discourses and its applications to ESP and professional communication programme design and implementation” (Bhatia & Fage, 2017, p. 7). As “the main focus on language description and use has some limitations when it comes to bridging the gap between the academy and the world of work” (Bhatia & Fage, 2017, p. 7) and has “lack of understanding of professional practices in the real world of professions” (Bhatia & Fage, 2017, p. 8), I believe that adopting the SFL model would work towards uncovering such lack of understanding and towards bridging the gap between the academic and professional contexts in a number of ways. For example, SFL incorporates the notion that language is a social phenomenon, and in dealing with language it works at the level of the text as a unit of meaning. Thus, the collected texts in this study, as semantic units, are representative of the social phenomenon of the academic and workplace contexts. Since the initial aims of this research study were to gain a better understanding of the semiotic relationship between the technical academic and professional texts and the contexts in which they were produced, the collected texts were analysed so that the meaning found in each text's lexico-grammar could be understood in relation to its context (for example, its writers, intended readers, purposes, structure and content). The outcome of such an analysis could then be used to extend the existing knowledge related to technical writing in general and to academic and workplace technical texts in particular and to develop better pedagogical and enhanced methods of learning and teaching.

In addition, surprisingly, for years after the introduction of the idea of the genre approach, little progress was made to analyse writing, especially professional writing (Bhatia & Fage, 2015; Bhatia, 2017). There have been serious objections to analysing textual patterns and features of writing by theorists from Academic Literacies. Academic Literacies scholars have rejected what they call the 'textual bias' (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p.11) of the Genre-based approaches, which they subsumed under the label 'academic socialisation' (Lea & Street, 1998). They argue that the aim of these 'normative' approaches is, according to Lillis and Scott (2007, p.13), to 'identify and induct', while the scope of Academic Literacies is broader, including the investigation of writers' perspectives and of 'alternative ways of meaning making in academia' (Lillis and Scott, 2007). Therefore, some of the Genre-based approach proponents such as Benesch (2009), Canagarajah (2002) and Wingate (2012) have stressed the need to pay attention to the socio-political contexts of writing as well as the exploration of teachers' and students' social identities. Writing instruction in this tradition should raise critical awareness of power relations and inequalities (Morgan, 2009). Also, the ethnographic methods applied within SFL are more appropriate for examining writing with a writer-oriented focus rather than within a text-oriented one (Lillis, 2008, p. 359). Proponents of such a view believe that texts are "de-contextualised autonomous objects that are the result of a coherent arrangement of elements structured according to a system of rules" (Hyland, 2002b, p.6). These objects should be spoon-fed to the students by their teachers, who, in addition to the texts, play the role of the main provider of instruction and literacy (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Lea (2004), in the same vein, claimed that literacy should aim at recognising students' backgrounds, identities, and institutional power relations rather than just spoon-feeding the students certain linguistic chunks.

From a research perspective, the call for enhanced attention to the practices of academic writing (Lillis & Scott, 2007, p. 11) is certainly acceptable; from a practical perspective, however, it is questionable why Academic Literacies would marginalise the important pedagogic contributions which have flowed from genre research (Wingate and Tribble, 2011). I believe

that arguing that there should be further attention paid to the socio-political contexts of writing and to the exploration of teachers' and students' social identities and power relations as well as having more writer-oriented investigation are, to some extent, not enough to explain such negligence. Furthermore, Academic Literacies' critics have tended to ignore the fact that genre-based approaches have long moved from 'text-bound analyses of genre to research which provides a much richer account of the contexts in which they occur' (Jones, 2004, p.257). It might also be difficult to see how students would be able to challenge practices before they have fully understood them (Wingate, 2012). Therefore, they need always to acquire new academic and disciplinary/technical writing skills to overcome such challenges. As a result, some scholars, such as Lillis and Scott (2007), believe that the call for paying enhanced attention to the practices of writing in a way that meets all of the students' needs is certainly acceptable.

Furthermore, applying the SFL model to analysing written discourses provides an important comprehensive theoretical framework for analysing academic and workplace genres (Martínez, 2006). This theory offered a greatly enhanced insight and proved to be a very useful analytical lens for understanding aspects related to types, purposes, structure and content of the texts used in this study. In relation to the workplace context, a number of people within the field of SFL have stressed the need to research professional English (Bhatia & Fage, 2015). Forey (2002) argued that a greater understanding of the way in which meaning is made in workplace texts is crucial to the development of language skills for students at all levels and to the recognition of the need to develop materials for teaching about authentic contexts. Berry also suggests that when discussing the application of SFL theory within a workplace setting, "a text linguistic approach, with its concern for text types and their relation to producers and receivers and settings, does stand some chance of being perceived as relevant to their own concerns" (Berry, 1996, p. 6). Forster (2006, p.104) states that "the analysis of company documents can bring fresh insights to our understanding of organizational behavior". Thus, workplace documents help us to understand the context in which they were generated. They may demonstrate where organizational

power lies and the lines of communication both upwards and downwards (Koester (2004). Koester (2004, p.85) explains this kind of interaction as "relationships between co-workers, in particular "asymmetrical" relationships between managers and subordinates, where one person is in a position of power in relation to the other within a particular organization". Therefore, analysing workplace documents offers a rich source of information for academics creating English writing curricula as they reflect the language skills required of graduates to write successfully in the workplace. In addition, studying workplace and university documents aims at creating a holistic picture of the status of the learning and working environments in order to bridge the gap between what is provided in the learning environment and the needs and demands of the workplace. The situation in Oman is similar, yet earlier research on analyzing writing tasks tended to encompass assignments from only academic disciplines (see for example Al-Husseini, 2014; Al-Badwawi, 2011) and for workplace contexts the survey methodology was favoured (e.g. Al-Mahroqi and Denman, 2015 & 2016). While survey studies provided useful information on the types of writing assignments required in university classrooms or in the workplace sphere, their results were sometimes difficult to interpret due to the methodology used. For example, researchers asked the respondents, often faculty members in content areas or managers in certain corporations, to indicate which categories of writing tasks they wished to be assigned, without providing pre-determined categories of writing assignments practised in academia (e.g. term paper, essay, book review). One potential problem with this methodology is that terms used by the researchers to refer to the writing assignments might be interpreted differently by survey respondents, as Braine (1995) points out. As a result, it is not clear to what extent tasks reported in the studies accurately represented those actually required in the professional context and those which should be practiced in academia.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is considered a useful and indeed powerful tool for the analysis of various written genres (Banks, 2002). Therefore, it can be positioned as a key approach to the investigation of writing in higher education context since SFL has been successful in

explaining how meanings are construed through written texts. Using the genre theory rooted in SFL as a framework for pedagogical approaches (i.e., genre-based approach) to teaching language allows for the teaching of form and function as interrelated and connected to the social context of texts. In other words, the genre based-approach promotes the learner's understanding of the relationship between the purpose and features of the text (Johns, 1997); because knowledge about grammar and genre are more than knowledge about language forms, it is also knowledge about social practice (Schleppegrell, et al, 2004). In order to achieve social purposes, learners of a language need to know how culturally recognized situations are structured and how these situations are different from how the same situations would be organized in their own culture (Unsworth, 2001). In this respect, genre-based instruction informed by SFL sees language learning as expanding the language resources to different social contexts, which may support students' writing, especially when learning to write in a language of an unfamiliar culture such as Arabic.

In addition, I have decided that the Genre-based approach best acknowledges the aims of the current study, investigating the technical students' practices of writing in academia and in future workplace contexts. The purposes of the present study are to explore the complexities of students' writing experiences and to solicit their views of their EFL teachers, their subject teachers and their future employers regarding what is supporting or hindering the development of the students' technical writing skills. This would help me as a researcher and a technical writing lecturer to interpret how the varying practices of technical writing in academia and in workplace contexts would affect students' writing experiences. Wingate (2012) claims that implementing the GB approach is a powerful tool for understanding the experience of students and (perceptions of) teaching staff, and for locating that experience in the wider context of higher education.

Part Two

3.3. Experience of Technical Writing in Academia and in the Workplace

This section is devoted to a review and discussion of the literature on issues related to the factors pertaining to the graduates' difficulty in producing workplace reports as well as expected by their future employers. It first considers the nature of both university and workplace writing. It moves then to a discussion of a number of factors that affect the transition of writing between these two contexts such as quality of writing, awareness of the audience, authenticity of the texts, role of ESP teachers and absence of coordination between academic and professional contexts. The discussion will be incorporated with studies of academic and technical writing in general and of the genre of reporting in particular since this turned out to be an important genre in my data set and so I cover scholarly investigations of this genre. Although much of the ESP and workplace writing research has been conducted in western contexts, where available, research on contexts in the Arabian Gulf countries in general and in Oman in particular is reviewed, given its relevance to the present research.

3.3.1. Nature of University and Workplace Writing

Writing is crucial in graduates' academic and career lives. This is because it shapes their attitudes and approaches to learning in academia (Al-Badwawi, 2011) and plays a significant role in determining students' persistence beyond the university period since it is one of the aspects that influences their employability rates (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015). The last decades have witnessed an increased interest in investigating the nature of (and differences between) academic and workplace writing. Comparing and contrasting the nature of these two specific types of writing effectively uncovers the many differences between the two distinct environments (Obaid, 2009). The nature of writing in these two contexts is related to its role in identifying the purpose of writing, which accordingly distinguishes the type of audience students are writing for (Obaid, 2009). It enables the writers, either students or employees,

to consider what the reader is likely to know. The absence of such displayed knowledge can lead to students' omission of necessary information in their writings (Dovey, 2006).

The literature has consistently debated how this nature of writing is different or similar. For example, on the one hand, writing in higher education is seen as being influenced by “the requirements of educational policies, teaching methods, curriculum outcomes, and assessment criteria” (Turner & Scholtz, 2010, p. 239). It is also seen essentially as a process that students engage in to improve their composing skills and for illustrating and practising the literacy they have acquired (Freedman et al., 1994). Thus, in academic settings, workplace writing tasks are often ‘pedagogised’ for learning purposes (Winberg et al., 2005, p. 1). Turner & Scholtz (2010) explain such pedagogisation as adapting exercises that have originated in a workplace, simplifying and de-contextualising them for educational purposes and providing them in a bound set of notes and textbooks. According to Palmeri (2004), professional texts could be created for instrumental reasons and are normally read by multiple readers, whereas the audience in academia is likely to be an instructor, who reads the texts for evaluative and developmental purposes. Freedman *et al.* discuss this point, suggesting that in workplace writing “the prime concern is for what the reader can get from the text”, not “for what the writer got out of the process of writing”, as is the emphasis in the academic context (1994, p. 206). Writing in the workplace sphere, on the other hand, is normally contextualised within pragmatic or instrumental purposes that relate to the overall goals of the organization. Reither contends that writing in the workplace is for “the need to develop and maintain an identity and culture for the institution itself” (1993, p. 200). Thus, pedagogising workplace writing tasks may enable graduate students to enter the workplace with the ability to produce the types of business communication required, yet they may lack the rhetorical and discourse community knowledge needed to adapt these formats to the audiences of the workplace (Walters et al., 2007). Hewings (1999, p.145) adds that workplace writing aims “for the exchange of information between writer and reader.” Furthermore, the object of learning at universities is clear and explicit while in the workplace the focal point is on the

outcome, and participants do not feel that learning is taking place. Dias *et al* (1999, p.14) compare the objectives of workplace and university writing as follows: "in workplace settings it is in large part institutional rather than individual, plural and contradictory rather than singular and coherent, and ideological rather than merely communicative".

Lea and Street (1998) state that one of the ways to research the nature of learning literacy is to explore how the different parties involved perceive literacy. Academic and workplace writing are no exception to such literacy, as researching the conflicting perceptions of university writing amongst such parties will throw light on the reasons behind the students' failure or success in acquiring academic writing skills (Lea & Street, 1998). Lea and Street (1998), in their examination of the contested meanings and perceptions of writing tasks among faculty and students, found that there is a gap between students' and faculty staff's interpretation of the requirements and expectations of student writing. Vardi (2000) and Harklau (2001) also separately found that teachers and students do not usually share the same conceptualisations of academic writing and its requirements. The most problematic issue they discovered was that different teachers' expectations for the same task differ though they might teach the same course or within the same units. A similar result was obtained in the Omani context by Al-Badwawi (2011) in her investigation of the issue of the varying demands between English and disciplinary teachers/departments.

A possible result of such conceptualisation variance is that there will be difficulties hindering students from producing good texts in academic contexts (Lea and Street, 1998). Lea and Street (1998, p. 161) argue that such confusion "led to difficulties for students not yet acquainted with the disciplinary underpinnings of faculty feedback". Lea and Street (1998) add that the idea of 'good' is not a definitive measure but subjectively constructed-not only in different contexts but also by different teachers in the same context. Thus, the problem here I think is not simply about being consistent but recognizing that such inconsistency is often a feature of writing and writers need to develop the academic literacy to recognize and interpret this

inconsistency. Perhaps what students have to discern from this is their own understanding of 'good' based on a range of different audiences, purposes and contexts so they can adapt. Regarding the difficulties, there is considerable research reporting these difficulties. For example, Krause (2001) suggests that undergraduates may face two categories of difficulties in writing: those related to the writing process itself and those related to the broader university context. The challenges related to the writing process are, for instance, deciding on the points to include in the essay (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Paltridge (2004) asserts that there are many factors that influence decisions a student makes while writing an academic text. Amongst these is the relationship between academic texts and the audience of the texts (ibid). Asaoka and Usui (2003) classify difficulties related to the writing process into four types: linguistic difficulties, researching difficulties, text-managing difficulties and time management difficulties.

Regarding language skills difficulties, in Evans and Morrison's (2010) longitudinal study of undergraduate students' writing, for example, students identified grammar among the most problematic areas of academic writing. Al-Badwawi (2011) also found that her first-year Omani students were confronted with the dual challenge of understanding the content of the subjects and expressing this understanding in a manner accepted by their teachers in the different disciplines. Needless to say, this is a very daunting task for students with limited English language proficiency, which is reflected in their writing, whether by making several grammatical or spelling mistakes or lacking sufficient and appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas. Al-Badwawi's students also had library research difficulties, such as finding sufficient and relevant references for their academic essays. Students reported that the availability of appropriate reference sources was the most difficult writing-related task for them. Al-Badwawi (2011) elaborated that students, in EFL contexts, have the added task of not only finding relevant references, but also finding relevant references that they can understand; i.e., written at their linguistic level. She indicated that unless these source materials and references are specifically written for EFL students, whether in books or on-line, they do not usually accommodate for students with low

language abilities, which makes it difficult for those students to find the required references to be included in their academic essays. With regard to text-managing skills, Al-Badwawi's students reported the task of summarising and synthesising relevant information from several sources and writing it in a proper manner using appropriate in-text and end-of-text referencing as 'challenging'. Such results were also reported in several earlier studies (see for instance Krause, 2001, Bacha, 2002, Vardi, 2000). These studies, in addition to Al-Badwawi's, reported other text-management difficulties including generating and organising ideas, employing a writing style appropriate to the requirements of the different disciplines and the different teachers evaluating their writing, and evaluating the significance of different pieces of information for the arguments that they are trying to make in their essays. The fourth challenge was related to the time available for completing a written essay. Al-Badwawi's students maintained that they could not make adequate time to write their essays because of the workload that they had, especially with lack of coordination of the assignment deadlines among the departments. This resulted in them not having enough time to submit multiple drafts to their tutors in order to get feedback on their writing (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Consequently, this affected the quality of their essays and the grades that they received for them. Al-Husseini (2005) analysed the technical students' linguistic needs to succeed academically. Other researchers also investigated the difficulties that HE students face in their English academic writing and recommended the establishment of a curriculum with more focus on practical strategies to overcome these challenges (see for instance Al Hinai, 2009; Al Mahroqi, Al Maamari & Denman, 2016). The reason for such a focus on classroom writing may be, as Bhatia suggested, that "language teaching has always treated writing as an individual activity, and it is only recently that we have discovered that out in the world of work, professional writing is invariably collaborative" (Bhatia, 2004, pp.205–206).

There is also a wider range of difficulties that can be found in professional contexts than might be seen in the classroom. An example of difficulties that students may face in their future workplace context is the ability to maintain the identity and culture of the institutions where they are working, as the

writing instructions there will be entirely different from those of the classroom (Obaid, 2009). Reither contends that writing in the workplace involves “the need to develop and maintain an identity and culture for the institution itself” (1993, p. 200), whereas in the classroom, students often write simply because they are asked to do so by their instructors. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find that a crucial difference between the two contexts lies in the constitution of the community producing the texts. While in the workplace there will often be considerable diversity among the participants in terms of knowledge, disciplinary background, work styles, experience and motives, and each will bring these to bear on the process, a student group, in contrast, is likely to be more homogenous in its make-up, with most members having similar levels of knowledge and experience, and most probably they will all be focused on the same goal. Dautermann captures this notion in her study of a hospital community: “within the writing group, each writer represented a unit, a speciality, a hospital role, or a level of commitment to the hierarchy” (1993, p. 103). Cross (2001) also talks about how members of functional units may take different approaches to writing. Despite the difficulty in maintaining the institution identity, I believe diversity may lead to the noticeable presence of intertextuality. Writers in the workplace can draw on previous examples of letters, progress reports and action plans, a practice reported by Flowerdew and Wan (2006), and by Freedman *et al.*, who say that “workplace writing is resonant with the discourse of colleagues and the ongoing conversation of the institution” (1994, p. 210), something also noted by Louhiala-Salminen (2002). Witte (1992) and Obaid (2009) also talk about the phenomenon of collaboration between employee writers by explaining that such collaborative influence in the workplace can be presented as workplace documents such as organizational guidelines or templates incorporating miscellaneous ideas and textual patterns. These texts will be drawn on in the production of further new texts (Turner & Scholtz, 2010). Dias *et al.* (1999, pp.119, 120) believe that the genres that are produced in the workplace reflect the organization's knowledge, power, culture and its writing practices. For instance, collaboration (or lack of it) which contributes to the writing tells us about the way the workplace is organized. In addition, the use or absence of templates reflects employee writing in the organisation, whereas university writing genres reflect

students' understanding about the subject of study (Davis et al 1999). This in turn means that graduate writing in university is "at the service of learning the discipline's values, beliefs, and ways of knowing" whereas workplace writing is "at the service of the community" (p.202). In contrast, students doing collaborative writing tasks usually tend to have few if any other real-world texts to refer to. Bremner describes such a situation by suggesting that students are often given a scenario in the form of a scripted context, and little in the way of intertextuality is present (Bremner, 2008). The Omani EAP context is no exception to this (Al Mahroqi, Al Maamari, & Denman, 2016).

There are consequences of the difficulties experienced in both environments: for example, students' perceptions that writing programmes are not responsive or do not offer what students need for their disciplinary study or for their future workplace requirements (Stanton, 2017; Al-Azri, 2016; Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2015; Al-Maskari et al, 2014). Obaid (2009) also referred to in appropriate writing communication skills in the workplace. She reported that such issues may result in a breakdown in communication among the executive level employees, which inevitably would lead to a breakdown among top-level administrators and ineffective exchange of information. These difficulties that lead to ineffective technical writing skills in the workplace context, such as irrelevant email or report writing, may detrimentally affect the graduates' productivity if they remain unidentified and unaddressed. Thus, to overcome such difficulties, needs analysis studies have been conducted (see for example Al-Lawati, 2016).

In fact, writing is complex and challenging for students, especially those studying in EFL contexts where English is the medium of instruction. In such environments, there are different levels of context that can be looked at when discussing students' writing. For example, Yiu (2009) discusses three levels of contexts: a) the immediate or the local context; b) the disciplinary context, and c) the institutional context. The immediate context refers to the environment in which students' writing takes place, and the interactions that the students have with their teachers and peers in this environment in the process of completing the assignment. Unfortunately, such interaction is absent in the

TW context of this study as teachers lack the knowledge of the content of the disciplinary courses students are studying. Al-Lawati (2016) suggests that students' creativity while writing requires elicitation by teachers through the activities they use. The disciplinary context refers to the varying demands made on students' writing ability from the different departments, which reflect the different disciplines' norms governing text production. In these cases, students need to "[put] two or more things together that do not belong together and [find] connections" (Maley, 2015, p.11). Tin (2013) uses the term "multicultural experiences" to refer to making connections between unrelated things (p. 4). Although such experiences should enhance students creativity (Tin, 2013), this situation is absent in the CoT context (Al-Lawati, 2016). Thus, the solution has been to develop ESP courses that could satisfy the needs of students of different specialisations (Al-Lawati, 2016). Finally, the institutional context refers to the characteristics of the place or the institution which impact on students' writing. To the previous three levels, Al-Bedwawi (2011) adds a fourth layer pertaining to the impact of the wider society outside the institution on students' negotiation of writing. These four levels or meanings of the writing context interact to create a unique environment that shapes students' experience with writing in the college. In this study, the context of writing should not be limited to the abovementioned levels, and a fifth layer has to be added to represent the future context of profession, as the students' university writing should be concerned with this context's needs and requirements.

3.3.2. Writing Transition between University and Workplace Contexts

Schneider and Andre (2005) found that "universities can prepare students for workplace writing by providing them with instruction and practice in common workplace genres" (p. 95). Ellis *et al.* (2007, p.300) believe that, in order to facilitate students' writing experience, "there is a need for proper training in the norms and practices of academic writing at the university". They add that there is also a need for students to have a clear understanding of the goals of their writing, as this will result in their perceptions about the development of their written practices being more positive. In the same vein, Walters *et al.* (2007) explored the transition from higher education to the

workplace and maintained that writers need to draw upon six knowledge domains when producing texts: subject matter knowledge, genre knowledge, writing process knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, discourse community knowledge and metacognitive knowledge. Mastery of all of these areas is a characteristic of successful writers (Turner & Scholtz, 2010). HE graduates, however, are often reported as lacking the kinds of linguistic and communicative abilities in the language that are required to achieve successful transition to the world of work (Stanton, 2017). This lack makes it difficult for them to carry out the professional writing practices in a manner that satisfies their employers (Stanton, 2017). Graduates of the Omani context are no exception (Al Mahroqi, Al Maamari, & Denman, 2016; Al-Mahrooqi & Asante, 2010; Moody, 2009).

A number of factors have been suggested to explain graduates' weaknesses and difficulties "despite the large investment, in terms of teacher training, curriculum reform, and curriculum development that HE system in Oman had received over the past decades" (Al Mahroqi, Al Maamari, & Denman, 2016, p. 60). Some of the suggested factors were, for instance, quality of writing (e.g. Lea and Street, 1998), awareness of audience (e.g. Paltridge, 2004), task authenticity (e.g. Forey, 2004), the role of ESP teachers: general or specific? (e.g. Obaid, 2009, Champion, 2016) and coordination between employers and academics (e.g. Dias, Freedman, Medway & Pare, 1999). These are not mutually exclusive. These have also been put forward in the Arab Gulf Countries' HE context in general (see for example: Obaid, 2009; Al-Azemi, 2016) and in the Omani context in specific as including textual and contextual factors (Al-Mahrooqi, Al-Maamari, & Denman, 2016; Al-Azri, 2016), among many others (e.g. Al-Busaidi, 1995; Al-lamki, 1998; Al-Harhi, 2011; Al-Badwawi, 2011).

3.3.2.1. Quality of Writing

The literature suggests that quality depends on "what constitutes the elements of a good piece of writing" (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 161), either academic or professional. These elements are usually the most important features that teachers or employers look for, Although as we have seen

understandings of this differ, when they read their students' or employees' texts. Thus, as Lea and Street (1998) argue, it is the confusion in perceiving how quality is being understood in different contexts that leads to difficulties for the writers who are not yet acquainted with the varied disciplinary underpinnings of their faculty feedback. Turner & Scholtz (2010, p. 242) point out that normally "the purpose for students' business writing in higher education is to practise and acquire the skills required for their entry to the workplace". To meet these requirements, lecturers set specific Business or Technical Writing course requirements and assessment criteria. Lea and Street (1998) investigated these requirements and assessment criteria among academic faculty in a number of UK universities and found that the key elements these teachers look for were 'structure', 'argument' and 'clarity' (p. 161). Current research shows that time allocated to writing instruction has been decreasing in recent decades while the rising demand for effective writers requires more not less attention to writing instruction so as to prepare students for an ever-changing world (Al-Mohammadi & Derbel, 2015; Applebe & Langer, 2006).

The nature of the quality of student and employee writing is, however, not a simple matter to establish. Different studies have identified a range of features that contribute towards such quality, for example, the feedback received from tutors or employers. Dunworth & Sanchez (2016) found that tutors' feedback is used productively by students to enhance their writing processes. Obaid (2009) also reported the effects of the feedback novice employees receive from their managers. Quality also depends on diversity of students, because students come to writing classes with multiple skills, backgrounds and needs; thus, attention should be given to this diversity so that writing teachers can create varied approaches and techniques to bridge the gap between the high and low achievers among the students (Al-Mohammadi & Derbel, 2015). University students, according to Anderson (1987), are not expected to enrich the knowledge of the discipline when writing as they write to show that learning has taken place. Dias *et al.* (1999) explain that the aim of writing at universities is to get a degree, whereas in the workplace writing is to get things done. Zhu (2004) examined the written genres required of students in

specific disciplines and found that much of what students need to write, particularly in upper division undergraduate and graduate level courses, is specifically tied to their disciplines. Al-Husseine's (2014) examination of report writing in specific disciplinary courses indicates that writing serves different purposes in different courses and requires students to assume different social roles. A key skill therefore is not so much the reproduction of assumed understandings of 'good' but recognizing that these understandings can vary and so a writer needs to be adaptable.

Another factor is the discrepancy between the employers' requirements and the type of instruction and writing students have in academia (Turner & Scholtz, 2010). Abdel Ghany & Abdel Latif (2012), for example, compared the requirements in writing programmes and of the job industry in Egypt. They examined the English language preparation of tourism and hospitality undergraduates in Egypt and its adequacy for workplace needs as perceived by teachers and students and found that these programmes do not prepare students for the workplace. Their data showed that one of the difficulties that students face is that the type of English language instruction these students received was inadequate and was unlikely to prepare them adequately for the instructions practised in their future careers in tourism and hospitality. One of the reasons was that each higher institute used a different textbook with senior students and each of these textbooks included mainly materials that the teachers collected from different sources. In addition, the textbooks were taught to all students regardless of the department they attended. The Omani technical context is no exception to these difficulties and their attributions as reported by different local researchers (such as Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2015; Al-Maskari, Al Shuaily, & Rajesh, 2014; Al-Balushi, 2008; Al-Busaidi, 1995). Accordingly, it is important to highlight the shortcomings of the English language instruction provided to the students in these contexts, as there is a need to reshape the instruction in a way that could help the graduates become better-prepared for meeting their future workplace requirements (Stanton, 2017). In addition, the technical writing courses taught to these students need to be revised in accordance with their expected uses of English in their workplaces. This can be also achieved if the

workplace context is itself as varied as the disciplinary context within the college.

3.3.2.2. Awareness of Audience

Researchers in the area of composition studies have also taken up “the student’s perceptions of the audience of their text” (Paltridge, 2004, p. 89). Ede and Lunsford (1985) and Park (1982) distinguished between two types of audience, namely “audience addressed”, where writers consider the readers’ characteristics, opinions and beliefs, and “audience invoked”, where writers construct an image of the anticipated reader. The relationship between texts and the audience of the texts is a major factor, among others, that influences the decisions a student makes while writing a text (ibid). Key scholars have brought the attention of second language teachers and researchers to the importance of audience while teaching and researching writing; for example, Johns (1993) suggested considering real audiences while teaching and researching writing. Swales and Feak (1994) also point out that, even before students begin to write, they need to consider their audience and to have an understanding of their audience’s expectations and prior knowledge, as these will impact upon the content of their writing. Audience is distinctly different in the higher education context from the workplace context. Starfield (2004, p.69) adds that “whether consciously or not, writers textually convey a sense of who they are . . . as well as their understanding of who their potential reader is”. Thus, business communication courses like the TW course in Oman context aim to ensure that students become competent in producing the business writing genres that their readers will require in future post-graduate education or workplace contexts.

Business texts in the workplace have a distinctly different audience from that in the higher education context. In HE contexts, the audience knows more than the writer; therefore, the writer’s purpose is usually to “display familiarity and expertise in the particular area, beyond simply reporting on the research and scholarship of others” (Paltridge, 2004, p. 90). Thus, “students are positioned by the person who has set the assessment task and who has control over them in terms of what they might say/(write) and how they will

value what they say/(write)” (Paltridge, 2004, p. 91). This means that the ‘real’ audiences of students’ writing are their lecturers and assessors, whereas in the workplace the audiences are ‘simulated’: they are imagined clients. According to Turner & Scholtz (2010, p. 242), “writers in the workplace communicate and share information with specific audiences (usually clients), ... (they) are the authority who writes to convey new or unfamiliar information to an audience who does not know, but needs to know and requires the information”. Forey (2004), among others such as Hewings (1999), Zhu (2004), Coe (2002) and Stanton (2017), explains that workplace writing is influenced and characterized by the audience, depending on factors like the writer and the receiver hierarchy in the company or whether they have communicated before or are familiar with the subject/topic. Hewings (1999) puts forward the importance of audience in business and academic writing, stating that "success in writing in both business and academic settings depends to a large part on analysing the particular communicative context and responding to the needs of the anticipated reader(s) within the written text" (p. 145). Meloncon & Henschel (2013) and Stanton (2017) consider audience analysis a core skill/requirement to be taught in the technical/professional writing disciplines.

The audience as a main factor to be considered in order to bridge the gap between academic and workplace writing has also been discussed in studies from the Arabian Gulf (e.g. Obaid, 2009) and from the Omani contexts (to name a few: Al-Harhi, 2011; Al-Mahrooqi & Tuzlukova, 2014; Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016 and Al-Azri, 2016). In a study to explore the relationship between audience awareness and students’ performance in composition classes and tests conducted by Al-Mohammadi & Derbel (2015, p. 197), it was found that It is vital for students to be aware of an audience that eventually determines what, why and how they will write. The authors also found that audience awareness and consideration have a strong impact on writing performance and achievement. Learners who do not determine who their readers are fail to write effectively and to clearly transmit their message. This is in line with previous studies which suggested audience awareness as an indicator of writing proficiency (Carvalho, 2002) and as an influential

criterion which distinguishes good writers from poor ones (Nehal, 2004). Most EFL learners in the Omani tertiary context are writing for their teachers, who end up as the sole audience for their students and who do not always prove to be a good audience, since they are perceived mainly as evaluators. In such composition classes where teachers often play the role of audience, many assignments, projects and papers require a secondary audience that varies according to the writing task. “Insensitivity to audience remains a reason why students fail to produce an effective piece of writing” (Al-Mohammadi & Derbel, 2015, p.198). Thus, de-contextualised writing situations should be avoided and teachers should try to specify a particular audience in all writing tasks and assignments (ibid).

3.3.2.3. Task Authenticity

Another factor is the students’ limited exposure to authentic materials and practical writing for real purposes. The concept of authenticity is still regarded as “a central criterion for the selection and evaluation of language teaching materials” (MacDonald, Badger & White, 2000, p. 253). Some broader issues concerning the role and type of ESP teaching materials are also well developed in Dudley-Evans and St John (1998). They begin by noting the pressures involved in producing specialized ESL materials:

“Not surprisingly, producing one hour of good learning material gobbles up hours of preparation time. Each stage of finding suitable carrier content, matching real content to learning and real world activities, composing clear rubrics, planning an effective layout, is time-consuming. Estimates vary but 15:1 can be considered a minimum”

(1998, p.172)

The principle of authenticity of language samples that course designers believe in is, as reported in Badger, MacDonald & White (2010), that “we should use texts which are not designed for the purposes of language teaching” (p. 579). This means that “language samples which come from non-language learning contexts are a better representation of language use outside the classroom” (ibid). Similarly, studies in the Arabian Gulf and Omani contexts (such as Al-Azri, 2016, Al-Mahroqi and Denman, 2016 and Obaid,

2009) suggest that authentic language samples should be replicated in the classroom as a way of using the language and learners are primarily expected to read or listen to such texts and only secondarily, if at all, to exploit them as the basis of the development of their knowledge.

Badger, MacDonald & White (2010) find this view hard to be argued against, yet it is important to recognize the limits of this principle. They suggest that “there will almost always be a difference between the text processes inside and outside the classroom and teachers need to consider the aspects of the text process outside the classroom that they want to replicate inside the classroom” (Badger, MacDonald & White, 2010, p. 581). They also add that this principle says nothing about issues such as motivation, level of difficulty of these texts, and whether the producers of the language are native or non-native speakers. There is also the question of “whether the target audience will find the sample material sufficiently interesting to enable their attention to become appropriately focused on it” (Swales J. M., 2009, p. 5). Badger, MacDonald & White (2010) believe that authentic texts which are motivating for some users may be boring for others. Authenticity also says nothing about the level of difficulty of a language sample; authentic texts which are easy for some language learners can be difficult for others (Badger, MacDonald & White, 2010, p.5). Students usually view writing as an artificial task which is all about testing and evaluation. This hampers the writing process and makes students unable to comprehend the interconnectedness between audience, writing purpose and form (Al-Mohammadi & Derbel, 2015). Therefore, Badger, MacDonald & White (2010) conclude that “contrived texts are less useful for language teaching” (p. 7). Mabrito (1999) also reports that “we will never be able to exactly duplicate in our classrooms many of the constraints and pressures that writers experience in the workplace” (p. 105). Johns, in addition, argues that “‘general’ academic English, employing artificially constructed topics and materials, is insufficient for students who are exposed daily to the linguistic and cultural demands of authentic university classes” (p. 706). This means that it is better to “indicate which authentic material language teachers should use in the classroom” (ibid).

Unfortunately the issue of task authenticity applies also to the university ESP writing programmes and materials in the Arab world, including Oman, as to a large extent these programmes and syllabuses do not seem to have developed in line with the continuous demands from and changes in the workplace (Obaid, 2009; Al-Khatib, 2005; Swales 1984). In fact, it can be argued that these programmes in Oman appear to have been selected without prior consideration of the requirements of teaching ESP, such as having suitable textbooks and training teachers (Al Riyami, 2016). This in turn increases the burden on English departments in Arab world universities and creates obstacles to their ability to meet the demands and changes in the business world (Khuwaileh 1991). Scholars such as Hyland (2002) have emphasised that teaching writing in higher education must involve teaching the literacy skills which are appropriate to the purposes and understandings of particular academic and professional communities. According to Berkenkotter, Huckin and Ackerman (1991, p. 19), “students entering academic disciplines need a specialized literacy that consists of the ability to use discipline-specific rhetorical and linguistic conventions to serve their purposes as writers”. Since there are substantial differences in the ways that writing is enacted in the workplace and the classroom, the presence of intertextuality will then be entirely different, and therefore will affect the students’ composing processes (Obaid, 2009). Nevertheless, such workplace intertextuality may encourage teachers to give their students a sense of how writing operates at work since these students are unaware of such tasks. Indeed, there has been much debate about whether the workplace can be recreated in the classroom or not as discussed above. Yet, some scholars look upon the provision of workplace-like tasks in the classroom as preparing students well for the workplace because there are similarities between the two contexts (see, for example, Stanton, 2017). Accepting the idea that there is a divide between the workplace and the classroom should not discourage teachers from exposing students to the writing practices of their future careers (ibid). With this aim in mind, researchers talk about the need to provide opportunities for students to practise. Paré & Smart (1994), for instance, contend that students need to engage with “a set of texts, the composing processes involved in

creating these texts . . . and the social roles played by writers and readers” (p. 147).

3.3.2.4. The Role of ESP Teachers: General or Specific?

As many scholars (Wu and Badger, 2009; Northcott, 2014; Campion, 2016) point out, teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) poses many challenges that teachers have to face. Many ESP teachers have to teach subject-specific texts from areas outside their primary areas of expertise and have to deal with areas of knowledge with which they are not completely familiar (Wu & Badger, 2009, p. 19). Thus, they, the teachers are frequently confronted with the dilemma that they do not possess sufficient knowledge of the specialist subject, and there is therefore a knowledge gap between them and their students, who may be more knowledgeable regarding the subject specialism (Campion, 2016; Spack 1988). Omani ESP teachers in the CoT are no exception. These Omani teachers are General English graduates in that their formal TESOL training was mainly concerned with General English (Al-Riyami, 2016). They are required to teach ESP to particular specialism students. Unfortunately, they have less conscious knowledge than their students, despite the fact that they have significant experience in teaching and are familiar with academic texts and/or the skills involved (Wu & Badger, 2009). Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 158) describe such ESP teachers as “reluctant dwellers in a strange and uncharted land”. Al-Mohammadi & Derbel (2015) found that, for EFL learners like the Omani students, the writing teachers’ role is pivotal since their approaches and teaching strategies will certainly affect learner perceptions and performance.

Wu and Badger (2009, p.20) argue that in the ESP field the distinction between “pedagogic content and subject matter knowledge” is affected by the “distinction between the ESP teachers’ knowledge of the subject and that of the subject specialist”. This is confirmed by Howe (1993, p.148), who reports a conflict between herself as a teacher of English for academic purposes and a law teacher over who should explain the phrase ‘time immemorial’ to students, with the law teacher’s well-reported comment: ‘You teach them the English, Mrs. Howe, and we’ll teach them the law’. Wu and Badger (2009)

also conducted research examining the decisions made by three teachers of Maritime English in a Chinese college when they had to cope with unanticipated issues related to their subject knowledge during class. The results showed a “strong preference for avoidance of risk taking” by the teachers in the context of the study (p. 28); the teachers also felt they should have more than just linguistic knowledge. Seirocka (2017) also conducted a research project into how language and subject specialists perceive the model and roles of the ESP teacher. The results revealed discrepancies with regard to teaching the language or the content. With regard to the Omani context, Al-Badwawi (2011) reported that ESP courses are considered a ‘bridge’ or ‘carrier’ to the subject study, which negatively affects the role of the ESP teachers. Students reported confusion in matching what is taught by ESP teachers and what is requested by disciplinary teachers.

Such discrepancies could be overcome by regular collaboration between linguists and subject specialists. Furthermore, language teachers can play a role in assisting students to acquire specific literacy through integrating authentic academic writing tasks in writing courses (Braine, 1988 & Johns, 1988). Madigan and Johnson (1994) point out the advantages of having language teachers work closely with discipline teachers, in that this would allow learners to acquire not only pedagogical genres, but also, and more importantly, disciplinary discourse models. Tchudi and Lafer (1996) also claim that this should be reflected in the academic community in that there should be more interdisciplinary cooperation between the humanities and science disciplines for more effective teaching/learning. Hence, the need must be addressed.

We know from Hyland's (2004a) important work that disciplines differ in their academic writing conventions. However, knowing about different disciplines is not enough to equip ESP writing teachers to teach writing; disciplines and disciplinary conventions are not static (Obaid, 2009). ESP teachers are faced with other obstacles: for example in Oman they are faced with increased teaching loads, large classes and administrative responsibilities (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Thus, as Spack (1988) argues, “English

teachers cannot and should not be held responsible for teaching writing in the disciplines”. Al Riyami (2016) also reports several attempts to reform the process followed in teaching English in general and in writing at the CoT but indicates concern that one of the main obstacles is that faculty are separated by specialization, which hinders cooperation between the English and the discipline faculty and perhaps even within the disciplines. The best we can accomplish is to create programmes in which students can learn general inquiry strategies, rhetorical principles, and tasks that can transfer to other course work (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Therefore, ESP teachers can receive help from the disciplines’ faculty to reinforce the development of the students’ writing skills (ibid). It is also worth mentioning other methods cited by scholars as to how discipline instructors in contexts like the Omani one can better help writing tutors prepare students to acquire the necessary writing skills and genres, thus reinforcing the importance of writing. These include methods such as collaborative writing (Obaid, 2009), technical writing focusing on language, organization and content with both discipline and English faculty involved (Jameson, 2006), motivating students through efficient feedback/grading and showing samples of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ writing (Pittenger, Miller & Allison, 2006). All this is not to undermine the importance of students preparing themselves for the job market with online practices such as e-mail writing (Al-Maskari, Al Shuaily, & Rajesh, 2014). Al-Balushi (2017) also suggests that ESP teachers familiarize themselves with both the ESP material and the language of the specialist subject. They should also take advantage of the knowledge of their students and allow student input regarding subject matter, whilst continuing to correct language errors. In this way students and teachers will enjoy mutual benefits (ibid).

3.3.2.5. Coordination between Employers and Academics

The last factor to be discussed in this section is the absence of coordination between academia and workplace. In fact, prior to starting writing in the workplace contexts, students need to acquire ESP knowledge, with vocabulary from the technical fields (such as Engineering, IT, and Business Studies) that they will work in in the future, and there should be an emphasis

on skills, functions and the practical use of language. Subsequently, there is a need for more specialized courses that match such needs (Stanton, 2017). The local literature indicates that there is an absence of coordination between academic faculty and employers to design courses and curricula that contain the linguistic skills and technical content necessary for many technical jobs (see for example: Al-Azri, 2016; Al-Maskari et. Al. 2014; Al-Busaidi, 1995). This absence leaves the undergraduates in a linguistic void, which is uncomfortable for them, their teachers and their future employers (Al-Balushi, 2017). Zelter & Zelter (2010) argue that students should have the opportunity to follow a course in specialist language which aims to focus on the particular requirements of the field the students are intending to work in after graduation (for example, banking, marketing, tourism etc.) as not all our students end up working in the field they have a major in. For example, we can find accounting graduates working in banks, or marketing graduates working in tourism (Al-Azri, 2016; Obaid, 2009).

Graduates need to be familiar with their future employers' requirements, as being knowledgeable of such requirements means success in the professional context, and enhancement of their writing communication in the workplace (Obaid, 2009). Surveys conducted by InterAct2 (2009) revealed that global companies regularly come across language and cultural barriers when they want to establish businesses with local companies abroad, such as in the Middle East, as the entrepreneurs and employees of these regional firms have insufficient knowledge of the language needed to communicate appropriately and effectively in particular social interactions. Regarding the Omani context, most of the workplaces have skilled labour and they are increasingly dependent on computerized processes as in writing emails (Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016). Such processes require sophisticated technical and communication skills on the part of employees. For the Omani technical graduates who are going to work in such environments, there is concern as to whether they are able to employ the English language representing the required information (Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Azri, 2016). Such limited skills may undermine their career potential. Therefore, employers argue that they have to be confident that their recruited employees and

trainees are able to distinguish and use technical English at a considerably high level (Stanton, 2017).

In fact, each context, academic and professional, has its own set of norms governing the production of texts, thus restricting what information to include and the manner in which knowledge is both conveyed and evaluated in a given subject area. Several researchers have internationally and locally explored the varying demands and expectations that these two contexts require from students' writing. These researchers have found that there is a gap between the academic and workplace context recommendations. As a possible solution to bridge this gap, employers' expectations need to be explicitly communicated to the academic staff. However, Leki (1995) argues that lecturers may lack the ability to communicate to the students what is required of an academic piece of writing, even though they know a good academic text when they see one. This seems interesting as it is not always easy to articulate explicitly what we know implicitly. This is especially true of writing, which is governed as much by procedural knowledge as by declaratives knowledge. 'As I am writing this I am not thinking explicitly about grammar but am using grammar, I am not thinking explicitly about planning my argument but I am making one'. The point made here is that it is the same for assessors of writing, they recognize quality but cannot always identify where the quality lies. The miscommunication or lack of communication about the discipline requirements makes students' attempts to write academic essays even more challenging as is the teacher attempts to put this often tacit or implicit craft knowledge explicitly into words.

For the language instructors, this conflation of views presents a dilemma as they feel unqualified to teach unfamiliar information (Al-Badwawi, 2011) like that to which the graduates are likely to be exposed to in their workplaces, just as, in the same way, the employers feel unqualified to teach technical writing. Stapp (1998) advocates overcoming such a difficulty by "enlisting the employer as a collaborator in the technical workplace English course as it ensures that information is presented appropriately and the language instructor can focus on language development within an unfamiliar technical

matrix” (p. 170). In addition, when designing an ESP course, Ellis and Johnson (1994) suggest a few specific steps to consider, such as (1) analyzing what students need to know in order to face the requirements of their future job environment, (2) assessing what level of language students have at the beginning of the course, (3) setting courses with fixed objectives and syllabus, (4) defining course objectives in relation to the needs analysis findings, (5) structuring the course according to the duration (number of weeks, semesters etc.), (6) learner expectations, and (7) evaluating students’ progress through written examination. Bremner (2010) also suggests addressing a number of specific differences between the two contexts and discussing ways in which more authentic activities can be set up in the classroom to narrow the gap between the classroom and the workplace. This suggestion results from his finding that a key reason for the writing challenges that faced the technical students who participated in his study was their teachers’ inability to bridge the gap between the culture of the classroom and the reality of the workplace as these two contexts differ in the way in which the construction of written text is enacted. Bremner attributes such differences in the writing practices to different factors such as “the way in which hierarchies and power relationships are arranged, differing levels of knowledge and expertise, and the (students) motives for writing” (2010, p. 121). Such steps may assist in overcoming some of the difficulties graduates could face in their future professional contexts.

3.4. Summary and Research Questions

This chapter provides the theoretical underpinnings for the present study with regard to the nature of writing in higher education in general, in addition to situating the study within writing in EFL contexts in particular. In the first part, the decision to adopt the Genre-Based approach informed by SFL to investigate students’ writing was informed by a review of the approaches of writing at tertiary level. From this review, it was established that this approach is suitable for this study because it encompasses the other approaches and takes into consideration the student-related and context-related factors influencing students’ writing. In the second part of this chapter, several studies exploring students’ and employees’ writing in EFL contexts were reviewed.

The findings of these studies underscore the complexities of academic, specifically technical, writing in both academia and the workplace, and the types of challenges that post-foundation undergraduates and employed graduates may face in attempting to write technical texts. Although each context is different, and although students' experiences with writing are far from being identical, these findings provide a general insight into the factors that may influence students' perceptions of their writing experience and the types of challenges that students in the study might encounter when writing texts for academic or professional purposes.

With regard to the conducted study, I concur with the need to further explore such issues, especially in the Omani context, as, despite the considerable number of studies on developing undergraduates' writing skills, these studies are limited to a consideration of writing in the classroom context. Accordingly, this study discusses the differences between writing practices in the workplace and the classroom and then examines how these differences can be tackled and how the gap between the two contexts can be bridged. To do so, it is necessary to highlight the difference between the workplace and the classroom in respect of writing practices, as workplace writing processes "are embedded, [and] differ significantly from the writing processes of individuals modeled in traditional pedagogy" (Gollin, 1999, p. 268). Based on this, the present study attempts to explore the English language instruction provided to undergraduate students at technical colleges in Oman, and to examine the extent to which this kind of instruction meets their future workplace requirements. Such an examination will be achieved in light of the views of students attending these higher institutes, their teachers and their future employers. To investigate technical report writing in academia and in the workplace, the study is specifically designed to answer the following main research question:

❖ Why are graduates of CoT unable to perform technical report writing tasks as well as expected by workplace managers?

Within this context and based on the employers' claim that the main cause of such inability is the mismatch between the reports students produce in

academia and the reports they are expected to produce in their future corporate contexts, there are two research sub-questions to be answered:

- **What are the factors that make graduates of CoT unable to perform technical report writing tasks as well as expected by workplace managers?**

To answer this question, semi-structured interview method was applied. I interviewed 19 stakeholders (i.e. students, Technical Writing course tutors, Technical Writing course designers, employees and employers). By analyzing the data, I should be in a position to find out the following:

- What are the participants'/stakeholders' perceptions of good writing?
- How do the perceptions of the TW teachers and course designers and the future employers of graduates regarding good technical composition affect graduates' practices of technical writing in the CoT?
- What do Omani employers of technical graduates specifically want in terms of their new hires' technical writing skills?
- What are written communication skills that stakeholders believe will be important for the students' success in their future employment?
- What are the textual and contextual factors that teachers, employers and students perceive as supporting or hindering the students' ability to achieve success in technical writing?

The research also discusses how English language teachers are perceived as less competent to teach ESP as they are not very familiar with the English needed for each technical specialisation. The idea here is not just to show whether English teachers are 'less competent' or not but also to demonstrate that any stakeholders that might teach writing to these students (not just English language teachers, but also engineering academics or engineering professionals, for example) might be limited by their own priorities and skills and so might only partially meet students' needs.

- **How are features of academic texts written in the Omani technological context are different from or similar to the features of texts written in the Omani professional context?**

To answer this question, document analysis method was applied. I analysed 100 reports written by students and 68 reports written by employees to find

out the features in which students' and employees' reports match and mismatch. By this analysis, I should be able to find out:

- The technical writing skills that graduates should possess from their study in academia/technical colleges.
- The technical report writing skills that new technical hires should pursue in their workplace.
- Whether the academic skills resonate with the skills that are compulsory in the work place and, if so, how.

Given the nature of the project and the time involved in carrying out the study, the study employed a chronological order of semi-structured interviews and document analysis methods based on a pilot study following an extensive literature review of theoretical and empirical investigation about technical report writing (see the Literature Review, Chapter 3). Thus, the final questions and instruments of investigation were the result of a consideration of the goals of the investigation, what was possible to achieve (reflecting the sociolinguistics of the Omani academic and professional situations), the literature review and the results of the pilot study.

It is hoped that answering the research questions may help to understand the textual and contextual factors that assist or hamper the progress of the undergraduates' technical report writing. It is also anticipated that such an understanding may guide course designers and writing lecturers to reflect on the preparations required to best sustain and develop students' negotiation of report writing to match the demands of academic and work contexts and to motivate students to take seriously the need to develop their writing skills. As the researcher, I also hopes, hope that answers to these questions will provide quality data on the importance of technical report writing skills, which could then be used to strengthen the case for Technical Writing courses and to help in designing the curricula and assessment decisions for these courses.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

4.1. Introduction

Having reviewed the relevant literature, in this section I detail the research methodology of the present study. It begins by explaining how the interpretivist paradigm was adopted as the philosophical aspect underpinning this study. This is followed by a discussion of how and why a multi-methods research design was adopted in this multi-case study to collect data. The study adopted a case study design, in which the cases were three HE institutions and two corporations in Oman, and the stakeholders within this context were TW teachers, TW course coordinators/designers, students, employees, and employers/managers. The design drew on interviews with stakeholders in order to identify the factors that prevent students' technical writing skills from resonating with the skills needed in the workplace. This was combined with text-based data analysis of academic and professional reports written by students in the TW courses and by employees from the two corporations in order to understand how the features of academic texts are different from or similar to the features of professional texts. In this part, I discuss what a 'multi-case study design' is and why I chose it. I then discuss the basic theoretical framework applied to analyse documents' data in this study: systemic functional linguistics (SFL). A discussion and justification of the choice of the research academic and professional contexts with difficulties encountered, the phases of data collection, and the applied research methods accompanied with illustration of the participants in each phase follows the description of the research design, and then an explanation of how the study's validity was tested and achieved. Finally, the ethical considerations of the study are presented.

4.2. Philosophical Aspects: Interpretivist Paradigm

According to Crotty (1998), researchers need to be aware of the paradigm they adopt to conduct their study since it influences their role as researchers, and defines the sequence, progression, and development of their research project. A research paradigm includes the researcher's ontological,

epistemological, and methodological premises (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thus, it is concerned with 1) the nature of reality (ontology), i.e., When is something real? (Creswell, 2007), What is the nature of reality? and What can be known about it? (Guba & Lincoln, 1994); 2) the nature of knowledge (epistemology), i.e., what we know and how we know it (Crotty, 1998), to inform the relationship between the known and the knower (Guba & Lincoln, 1994); and 3) the approaches employed to explore this reality (methodology).

When conducting research, a researcher should be aware of his/her own assumptions. Thus, adopting a paradigm acknowledges that the researcher's design and the selected methods are due to the researcher's perspective of the social world. Specifically, each researcher's personal ontology informs the design they would apply. To adopt an appropriate methodological paradigm, it is essential to understand the meaning and types of research paradigms and their assumptions.

Educational research scholars like Guba and Lincoln (1994); Crotty (1998); Denzin and Lincoln (2000); Ponterotto (2005); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011 & 2018) and Creswell (2009) have identified two main research paradigms, namely, 'positivist' and 'interpretive'. Some of these scholars differentiate between the two approaches, given the varying assumptions regarding the nature of these two paradigms, including the nature of knowledge or reality (ontology), how the construction of this knowledge by the participants is achieved (epistemology), the theoretical underpinning for understanding which best practices can be applied to a specific case (methodology), and the tools of data collection that each methodology incorporates (methods) (Crotty, 1998). Other scholars (Weber 2004) argue that though there are some differences between the two paradigms, such dissimilarities "have little impact on how excellent researchers conduct their research" (p.5), and do not mean that there is a total dissimilarity between the two paradigms (Guba & Lincoln 1994; Weber 2004). Alternatively, as they indicated, the two approaches still overlap in some themes and may overlap more at the methodological and methods level than at the ontological level. I discuss this overlap below after considering the two approaches' ontological and methodological assumptions.

Regarding the positivist paradigm, positivists, ontologically, consider 'realism' as a concept to describe reality. They believe that reality exists independently of the human mind and that the researcher can investigate it by observation. Therefore, as positivism indicates, reality is "out there to be studied, captured, and understood" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.9), and the researcher has to discover it through their research. Thus, investigating a representative sample of the whole population from which the sample was taken means the results, as advocates of this paradigm argue, are generalizable, and "the end-product of investigation can be formulated in terms parallel to those of the natural sciences (Cohen *et al.* 2011, p.10). This positivist idea of realism is contrary to the constructivist/interpretive paradigm, whose proponents promote using the notion of 'relativism' to describe reality. Constructivists view reality as subjective and multiple (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In other words, there is no distinct fact that is generalizable to other settings, as positivism advocates, but rather, various explanations of the same phenomenon based on each participant's perspectives and experiences (Creswell, 2009). Rolfe (2006) argues that realities diverge among people; therefore, we cannot generalize the same findings or interpretations to all participants.

In this study, the plural notion of 'perceptions' in the title indicates the presence of multiple realities; participants have different perceptions and views, and hence demonstrate subjectivity, as their opinions are not an object to be captured and nor are they separate from their minds. It is worth noting that positivists might also be interested in perceptions, for example, creating quantifiable attitude scales on a questionnaire. A positivist would also accept that different people believe different things, yet, they might be more inclined to view these perceptions as a fixed characteristic of an individual, that is, data that is 'out there' to be gathered, rather than a fluid characteristic always in the process of being constructed in a social context. This, in fact, might be an example of how the two paradigms might overlap at one level but not at another. Perceptions are at the heart of this study. Working within the interpretive paradigm, my aim is to understand the participants' multiple interpretations and constructions of knowledge. In this paradigm, the

researcher is responsible for finding out the participants' "insider view" (Mason, 2002, p.56), while the research participants' role is to help the researcher construct the subjective reality out of their experiences and perceptions. The multi-method approach allows for further and deeper exploration and understanding of the complexity of the reality these participants construct; it aims not to pin their views down, but to understand how they are being constructed. In this study, the educational and work place contexts in which they are formed are each likely to be exerting an influence in shaping these views about text.

To understand the phenomenon of the challenges that Omani technical students encounter in their study of academic writing that may result in their university writing not matching the style of writing required in the workplace sphere and the factors that hinder such mastery, the present study employed the interpretivist /social constructivist paradigm as the underlying research paradigm. The features that made this project interpretivist were as follows.

Firstly, my research assumptions were consistent and compatible with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of interpretivism. Ontologically, I aimed to explore the subjective reality regarding the possible mismatch between technical writing practices in academia and in the workplace from the participants' experiences and viewpoints. The interpretivist ontological position perceives that reality is multiple and also subjective in that it differs from one person to the next (Guba, 1990; Crotty, 1998; Scotland, 2012). Hammersley (2012, p.22) goes further to add that "interpretivists argue that we cannot understand why people do what they do, or why particular institutions exist and operate in characteristic ways, without grasping how those involved interpret and make sense of their world". The focus, therefore, in this study (as an interpretive research) has a two-fold emphasis: on the individual (Bryman, 2012; Pring, 2005; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011) and on the texts they produce, bearing in mind that the texts themselves are shaped by the contexts in which they are written.

Epistemologically, knowledge is perceived as a human product, one that is culturally and socially constructed (Prawat & Floden, 1994). In line with the

designated interpretivist nature of the study, it seemed appropriate to adopt a social constructivist epistemology. Knowledge is constructed within a social context, as participants often construct their views through personal interaction with their own environment and with each other (Williams & Burden, 1997; Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2013). The participants of this study had shaped their views on learning TW skills and the status and importance of TW in academia and in the workplace through their interaction with each other, their surrounding environment, their experience of transition from school to work life, and their educational and social lives. As a researcher, I have used my knowledge and experience of teaching academic and technical writing in the Omani higher education context to interpret what can be known about matches and mismatches between academic and professional reports, for example, understanding the technical writing challenges faced by the students in the Omani technical education institutions that prevent them from achieving the professional writing requirements. Through the use of a social constructivist epistemology, meanings can be seen as multiple and varied, whereby the researcher can then seek a complexity of views rather than simply narrowing meanings into a few ideas or categories (Creswell, 2013).

Secondly, in line with the exploratory nature of my study, its research methodology employed a sequential multi-method approach, a procedure for collecting, analysing, and integrating both qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the research questions. The methods were 1) semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2011), as this allowed participants to express their thoughts regarding the factors that lead to Omani technical graduates facing difficulty in producing workplace reports in line with employers' expectations, and 2) documents analysis (Bowen, 2009), as this method provides evidence to support or undermine the fact that graduates face difficulties in producing such reports. Qualitative and quantitative research were integrated so that one method could support the other (Bryman, 2012), and they could function as complementary strategies (Hammersley, 1996). However, it is important to note that in this study, the multiple methods were utilised for the data collection and analysis whereas the two data sets were integrated to interpret their individual findings in light of

each other at the discussion level. Finally, since researchers who apply this approach "seek to obtain information about how people perceive, interpret, and understand daily issues affecting them in their context" (Mason, 2002, p.6), such an approach, I believe, was in line with my role in the current study. Thus, my paradigmatic stance was interpretive since it aimed to produce an understanding of the context of a phenomenon and how this shaped both the texts and the beliefs about these texts (Walsham, 2006; Englander, 2012).

Although positivism is a legitimate approach, it cannot fulfil the aims of this study either epistemologically or ontologically, as in positivism, the researcher does not consider that he is the sole arbiter of the truth; rather, he regards the participants as partners in research/evaluation "in sustaining processes of communications in which meaning is never frozen or terminated, but remains in a continuous state of becoming" (Gergen, 2009, pp. 120-121). Moreover, although critical theory might seem to be another adequate choice besides interpretivism, it cannot fulfil the major aims of the study. Critical theory seeks to uncover the hidden agendas and power relations that perpetuate inequality in society and that need to be revealed and understood to bring about social justice. Both repression and domination often act to prevent social and individual freedoms (Habermas, 1988). Before embarking on this study, I had made no pre-assumptions nor predicted any outcomes or responses. The focus of the study is not viewed as a social justice issue, but as a socially constructed educational phenomenon that would benefit from the insights of interpretive enquiry to better understand how context shapes outcomes. However, one critical element is implemented in this study, namely, that concerning the raising of awareness. During the interviews, the critical issues of texts' authenticity, audience awareness, and collaboration between academic institutions and workplace organisations were raised to elicit opinions on them. Further, possible negative outcomes regarding the absence of these aspects were raised to capture those responses. This is an essential process, as Pennycook (2001a) argues that critically applied linguistic research must keep a sceptical eye on the givens and the concepts that may have become neutralised.

Applying an interpretivist approach sometimes incorporates adopting an interpretivist multi-methods design, which involves using multiple data-collection approaches in an investigation to produce understanding. The following section (Section 4.3.) presents this research design and discusses how quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed in this research study.

4.3. Multi-Methods Design

The current study's research design employed a sequential multi-method approach. A multi-method design involves collecting qualitative and quantitative data that are relatively complete on their own, and then combining them to form the essential components of one research program. Thus, each part of the study is planned and conducted to answer a particular sub-question, and the results of the research form a comprehensive whole (Morse, 2003). A multi-method design differs from a mixed-method design as the latter incorporates mixing data collection and analysis throughout the different stages of compiling data or involves quantitative and qualitative projects being combined in more than one stage of the study, for example, questions, research methods, data collection, data analysis, and discussion (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003), whereas with the former, the data are used together in the data interpretation or inference stage. Indeed, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) propose that a "truly mixed method methodology (a) would incorporate multiple approaches in all stages of the study (i.e., problem identification, data collection, data analysis, and final inferences), and (b) would include a transformation of the data and their analysis through another approach" (p. xi). Thus, it is important to note that in this study, the multiple methods are principally an aspect of data collection and analysis, but not of interpretation; which adopts an integrated approach. The application of a multi-method research design is preferable when studying complex human behaviours like teaching and learning, or when the researcher is trying to understand the problem under investigation from the participants' perspective (Cresswell, 2013). Using multiple methods also adds rigour, breadth, and depth to the investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Some multi-method designs seek to

provide different sources and methods to corroborate the same findings whereas others deliberately set out to explore contradiction and complexity. In such designs, the weaknesses of one approach may be compensated for by the strengths of the other. However, not all multi-method designs are about corroboration or contradiction; some, for example, test different aspects of the same research problem, as in this study. In my research, I followed an exploratory sequential research design, as I conducted the semi-structured interviews and then analysed the documents to help explain and elaborate on the results reached through analysing the interview data (see Figure 5). The relationship between the data sets is one not of corroboration nor of compensation but of explanation. The multiple data sets I had were not really about corroboration, as in this case, neither compensates for the inadequacies of the other because they address different aspects of the research problem and so have a different story to tell. In understanding what my participants say about texts, I seek to explain why the texts are as they are. It was intended that such a sequence would offer a deeper scope and understanding of the phenomenon (Sandelowski, 2003), and it has value when examining an issue that is embedded in a complex social educational context (Mertens, 2010).

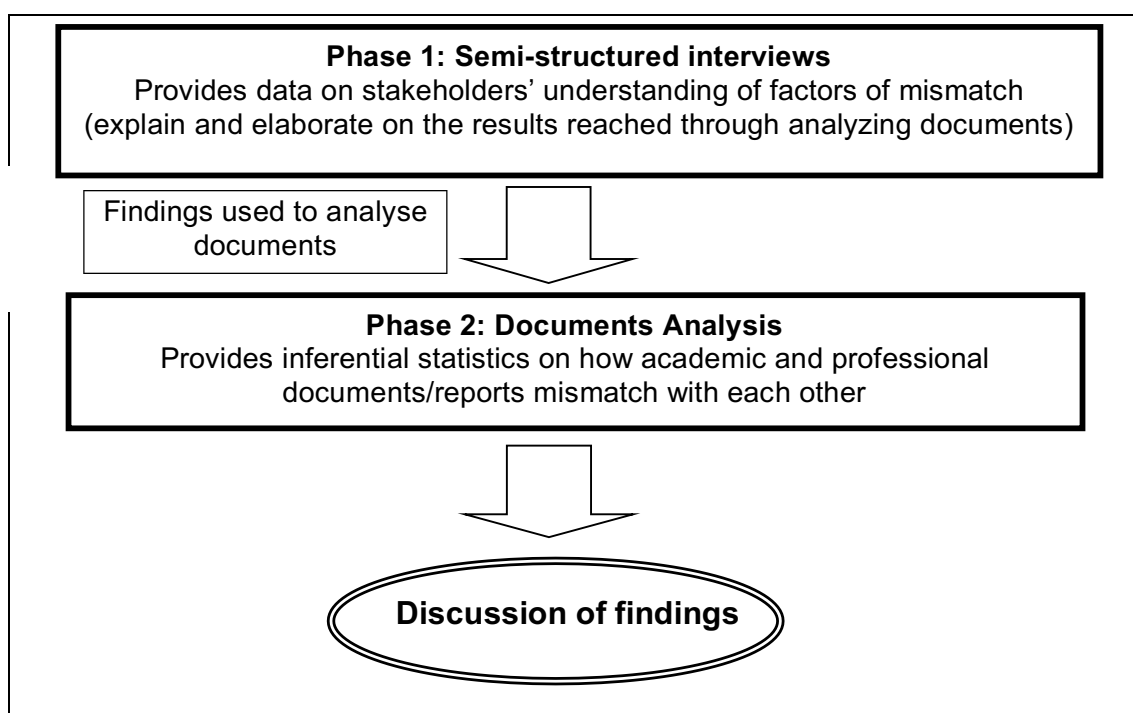


Figure 4: An illustration of the idea of a multi-method design in this study

Bryman (2016), among others, provided ten key principles of the qualitative approach by identifying the following characteristics: (1) it focuses on description, interpretation, and understanding, (2) it is dynamic, (3) it is conducted in different ways, (4) it follows inductive thinking, (5) it is holistic, (6) it is practised in natural settings, (7) it emphasizes the role of the researcher, (8) it provides an in-depth study, (9) it is characterized by words, themes, and writing, and (10) it is non-linear. These characteristics were pertinent to this stage of my research study. Dynamicity was an important feature, as the interview questions were modified during the actual study to correspond with the continuous amendments of the research aspects. Such amendments and modifications were present while carrying out fieldwork because, like other researcher, I obtained more practical experience. My research needed to be sufficiently flexible to overcome such adjustments; thus, like all qualitative studies, it was conducted, in the real world with all its unpredictable events and incidents. The benefit of comparing the collected academic and corporate gathered texts to each other and of the participants' views was that I developed a complex picture of the issue under investigation, i.e., the possible mismatch between technical writing practised in academia and in the workplace and any factors influencing this mismatch. Finally, this qualitative phase of my study was organized around identifying the social, political (e.g., Arab spring), and other contextual factors of the issue under investigation.

Although document analysis is considered as a qualitative research method (Bowen, 2009), within the scope of this stage of my study, it was better to conduct it as a piece of quantitative research, as I attempted to answer a research question that I had set (i.e., How are academic documents different from workplace documents?). To answer this question, it was necessary to collect representative samples of both academic and professional documents and quantify their linguistic characteristics to identify any differences or similarities between them and to see how consistent and marked each difference was between these documents. The quantitative data aimed to reveal linguistic patterns (albeit numerical patterns) so I could see how the texts differed (or not) but instead I interpret such data as a means of

understanding how texts are shaped by context. Following O’Leary (2014), I first created a list of sample texts to explore their features. I then considered strategies for ensuring their credibility and for maintaining ethical issues, such as the confidentiality of the documents (see Sections 4.7 & 4.8). Thus, I essentially determined what was being searched for, then documented and organized the frequency and number of occurrences within the documents. The information was then organized into what is “related to central questions of the research” (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). Replication is a feature of this method, as other researchers can repeat the analysis of the documents to verify or confirm the findings in another setting. (Bowen, 2009). This reinforces the validity of findings thus eliminating the possibility of spurious or erroneous conclusions (ibid.). In addition, the gathered data contained items that elicited measurable attributes; this is in contrast to the qualitative data, which depended on elaborated explanations. The use of inferential statistics in this study made it possible to identify the research areas that required the application of a qualitative method of semi-structured interviews to provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon at hand since the use of inferential statistics was insufficient to provide such an understanding. It was considered that the numerical data identified differences or similarities, but that the contextual data provided the means of understanding them.

Utilizing an interpretivist multi-methods-research design sometimes involves implementing several methodologies, such as case studies, ethnography, or grounded theory. To understand the participants’ perspectives of the challenges that students face in learning technical writing, this study applied a case study methodology.

4.4. Case Study

Generally, case studies are known as a form of methodology for conducting social research (Yin, 2014) within the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm (Stake, 1995). They look at individuals’ or a group of participants’ perceptions of a “contemporary” (Yin, 2014, p. 13) phenomenon within a tangible context (Yin, 2014; Scotland, 2012). Case study methodology, according to Creswell (2013, p. 97), “explores a real-life, contemporary

bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case themes". Thus, this type of ethnographic design is used to study a certain case or cases over time (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014), through comprehensive, in-depth data gathering using various sources embedded within a context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014).

Yin (2014) differentiated between two types of case study designs, namely, single-case designs and multiple-case designs. In the single-case design, a phenomenon is investigated in a typical representative organization among many different organizations to capture the circumstances and conditions surrounding the investigated phenomenon. When a study is about an issue or a concern, but the inquirer includes more than one single case to illustrate the issue (for example, studying several programs from several research sites or multiple programs within one single site), multiple case studies are used. Creswell (2013, p.99) argues that "selecting multiple cases is to show different perspectives on the issue". Multiple-case study is also frequently associated with several experiments or case studies to replicate the results across these multiple cases (Yin, 2014).

This study is a multiple-case study research, as it endeavoured to explore a phenomenon not in a single representative site but in several sites in that the study explores how the TW practised in academia differs from that practised at the workplace. It also examines the stakeholders' subjective perceptions of the factors that affect the experience that students and employees have with TW practices in these two contexts. To this end, the researcher selected three typical CoTs from the academic context and two corporations from the workplace context as samples of the population of other organizations within these two contexts (see Section 4.6.1. for reasons of choice). It is also a multiple-case design as, though I did not aim to replicate similar results or conduct several case studies and then compare their results with each other (Yin, 2014), yet, I aimed to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of TW practices by selecting different representative cases from

two different contexts (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2016). Replication is difficult when the contexts are different (Creswell, 2013; Bryman, 2016).

In undertaking such a multi-case study design, I constructed a phenomenon through my descriptions of individuals' experiences and views within certain organizations (Yin, 2014). This was achieved by (1) exploring how students, tutors, designers of TW courses, employees, and managers describe their understanding of the reality of TW's quality, its features, and the textual and contextual challenges that might affect graduates' mastery of writing in line with their future managers' expectations, and then (2) understanding these participants' practices in writing reports in academic and corporate contexts through analysing samples of reports written by students and by employees. Such an investigation of perceptions of multiple stakeholders and of practices of TW was vital to gain insights into the central phenomenon (i.e., the factors of an assumed mismatch in TW practices), and thus, the voices of those who worked, lived, and experienced the nuances of that phenomenon could be heard (Creswell, 2002; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014; Bryman, 2016). Such knowledge may, hopefully, provide a basis for developing a new understanding of technical education in general and TW development in particular. It also offered in-depth insights into the complicated nature of the language acquisition process pertaining to the social world in which the learners function. Last but not least, it is critical that this study was embedded within the local context and embraced local realities and discourses to understand how participants perceived their experiences of TW. Thus, adopting the case study methodology in this research was due to the intention to contribute to our current knowledge of the individuals' experience of the TW phenomenon within the investigated academic and professional contexts (see Section 4.6.1. for a description of the two contexts). Although there were some unexpected barriers to applying such a design, and Yin (2014, pp xiii – xvi) suggests examples of limitations that might be encountered while conducting case studies, I concluded that the advantages and the appropriateness of the case study methodology in answering the research questions outweighed any limitations associated with this type of research approach.

When conducting case studies, the researcher is recommended to take six steps (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Since step one - defining the research questions - has been completed, the following sections will focus upon selecting the cases and determining the data-gathering techniques (step two), preparing to gather the data (step three), and collecting the data (step four). Step five involves evaluating and analysing the data, and formulating and writing the report is the final step. Applying the case study methodology in the current study involved the use of two methods to collect data, namely, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. I shall describe the application of these two methods below (see Section 4.6.). Nevertheless, considering the importance of the context to this case study, background information on the location of the research will be outlined before the exact sampling and data collection and analysis procedures are described. Prior to this, I need first to talk briefly about how SFL was adopted as a theoretical framework and a model for analysing the collected documents (see Section 4.5.).

4.5. Theoretical Framework - Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as a Model for Analysing Texts

The topics of SFL theory, its notions, its key components, and why I chose it as a theoretical framework for analysing documents in this study were introduced in Chapter 3: Literature review - Section 3.2.3, in a general review of the literature concerned with approaches to writing in higher education. This point explained how SFL was adopted as a theoretical framework/model for textual analysis in this study. As explained earlier in Section 3.2.3., SFL, developed by Halliday (1978), is both a theory of language and a methodology for analysing texts and their contexts of use. Due to its dual nature, SFL aims to explain how individuals use language and how language is structured for its different usages (Eggins, 2004; Martin J., 1997, 2004 & 2016).

By adopting a multifunctional view of language, that is, language as it is used to accomplish certain social functions, SFL divides the meanings realized by language into three types: 'ideational', 'interpersonal', and 'textual' meanings (Bateman, 2017; Eggins, 2004; Martin J., 1997, 2004 & 2016).

These meta-functions, according to SFL, are usually reflected in a set of meaning production potentials. The three meta-functions work together simultaneously to create meaning: (ideational = what is being talked about; textual = how the text is created; and interpersonal = the relationships between the writer and the reader). The ideational function expresses the experiential and the logical content of the text through explaining the writer's experience of the outer world. The textual function deals with the features of cohesion and coherence to be applied while producing the text. This is done by organizing and structuring the linguistic information in that text's clauses. The interpersonal function deals with the social and power relations between the writer and the reader and between the writer and the text itself. Halliday states that interpersonal function "relates participant's situational roles to the discourse produced" (Halliday & Martin, 1981, p.328). With regard to the current study, the three meta-functions formed the core from which I conducted the document analysis process (see Section 5.3.). The relationship between the semantic meta-functions and aspects of register was represented, as can be seen in Table (2) below, through analysing the textual features of the collected documents (see Section 4.6.2.2.4. for further details).

Relationship	Textual feature	Examples
ideational function and the aspect of field	content of the analysed texts (disciplinary or general)	Was the text a report about 'how frequently customers applied for internet service connection' or was it about 'internet usage behaviours'?
the textual function and the mode aspect	how information was organized and how texts were structured	Structure of the text
the interpersonal function and the aspect of tenor	relations between the writer and his audience	Tone of the text (Was the author writing as a student for a tutor, or as a professional for a client or a manager?) and degree of formality

Table 2: *The relationship between the semantic meta-functions and aspects of register*

The relation between the ideational function and the aspect of field was realised in the processes used in shaping the content of the analysed texts, whether the content was about technical/specialized topic or about a general

one, (for example: in workplace texts, was the text a report about 'how frequently customers applied for internet service connection' or was it about 'internet usage behaviours'?; Was it about 'human behaviour' or 'a frequent activity'?). The mode aspect and its relation with the textual function could be seen in "theme, voice, and lexical density presented in the language of reflection or action role" (Gardner, 2012, p. 59). Thus, the textual meta-function, in my analysis, was represented through how information was organized and presented. This was illustrated through analysing the structures of texts. The relation between the interpersonal function and the aspect of tenor was represented by the equal/unequal power relations (for instance, was the author writing as a student for a tutor, or as a professional for a client, colleague, or a manager?). Thus, the analysis concentrated on representing the social roles and relations between the writer and his audience(s) through the degree of formality and purpose of text (whether declaring a certain information or imperative of a certain action, for example).

With regard to the corpus I gathered for analysis, both academic and professional texts were very similar in terms of Tenor and Mode, though they differed in Field. For academic texts, Field was the domain of academic/ESP writing, whereas for workplace texts, it was the domain of professional writing. There were some differences due to their being from different disciplines: the workplace texts dealt with job related topics, while the ESP texts were a kind of linguistic description of certain processes, and some of them were more precisely requests to do/undo these processes. The Tenor establishes the communication as being between a student and a tutor or, in the case of the workplace texts, an employee or group of employees and employers, other employees in that corporation, or customers. For the workplace, the situation was made more complicated by the fact that the channels of communication had gatekeepers in the form of managers. The writers had to convince and satisfy these gatekeepers before they could communicate with their ultimate addressees, for example, the customers of their corporations to whom they wished to communicate the message of their texts. Mode is usually conceived of in terms of written or spoken communication. In the case of my analysed texts, both academic and professional, the Mode was written to be read

silently. However, the academic ones were written to be read in a linear fashion where, in some texts, reading the introduction, for example, almost certainly followed the title. For the professional texts, particularly if the reader was familiar with such types of texts, some sections might be by-passed altogether.

Having established the research stance and design, I move now to discuss in fine detail the applied data collection and analysis methods.

4.6. Data Collection and Analysis

For data collection purposes, methods of semi-structured interviews and documents analysis were applied. Prior to commencing with the discussion of these two methods and of how the data collected through them were analysed, I shall introduce the context of the study and how I chose these sites to conduct my research.

4.6.1. Contexts of the Study

The study took place in three technical colleges and two Omani corporations. For academia, my research was conducted in three of the seven CoTs (see Section 2.4.2. for a general description of the CoTs). These three colleges were typical of the other colleges, as the profiles of their students and teachers had similar characteristics to ensure the optimal conditions for the success of the study. Students are allocated to the colleges electronically through the Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) based on their grades in the General Certificate Examination (GCE), which means that students at all colleges have approximately similar grades when they are enrolled in these colleges. For the corporations, the workplaces I gathered data from were mainly two companies: a famous telecommunications company, which is owned by the government, and a famous bank, which is a private-sector firm well known for being the best and most used banking-services provider in Oman (see Section 4.2.3. for a general description of the Omani market context). The two companies are the largest recruiter and trainer of graduates from CoTs compared with other private sector corporations in Oman (Ministry of ManPower, 2015). Below is an overview of

the academic and professional organizations from whom data were accumulated, but first I need to justify my choice of these sites to conduct my research.

4.6.1.1. The academic context: Colleges of Technology (CoT 1, CoT 2 and CoT 3)

The three CoTs cater for students studying in various programmes. They were established to educate the citizens of Oman by implementing high quality programmes in various technical fields. They offer programmes at the Diploma, and Advanced Diploma Degree levels (only CoT 1 offers Bachelor of Technology (B. Tech.) Degree level). The colleges have grown enormously from a student population of about 200 to the current size of about 5000 to 7000 (Ministry of ManPower, 2015). The colleges have more than 2,000 faculty and staff members and an annual intake of about 1,750 – 3,000 students onto their foundation programme besides transferred students in the upper levels. The colleges' entire teams are committed to quality education to meet the high technical manpower requirements of the job market in the Sultanate.

The colleges, like other CoTs, used to offer the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ), authorized by the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), UK, in Information Technology and Electromechanical Engineering (Ministry of ManPower, 2015). Due to rapid changes of technology and, consequently, the need for additional modes of teaching, the colleges implemented new programmes to comply with the pace of the technical world. Since then, the colleges have improved tremendously in terms of their facilities and technology as the total number of students, staff, and administrative and technical staff has increased significantly. Both technological and general educations are essential parts of the colleges' curriculum, enabling students to develop the self-awareness and social responsibility necessary to successfully compete in their chosen occupational fields. The programmes offered by the three colleges are directed towards serving the needs of all individuals within the community, as well as the needs of the community as a whole. The colleges believe that all individuals,

regardless of economic or social status, are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and should be provided with opportunities to develop their skills for the benefit of society. The colleges offer programmes in Engineering, IT and Business Studies.

For their disciplinary study in these colleges and the other CoT and to introduce the students to the use of English in a work environment where they will use various communication skills with colleagues and business associates, students have to enrol in three technical writing courses namely, Technical Writing 1, Technical Writing 2 and Technical Communication, throughout their Post-FYP study ((Ministry of ManPower, 2015).

4.6.1.1.1. Technical Writing courses

The technical themes and vocabulary along with the interactive exercises in these courses aim to help the students to succeed not only academically but also in their future careers. Thus, by the end of these courses, students are expected to have mastered the skills of technical writing in English to the degree of being able to write term exam papers, assignments, reports, and graduation projects showing competence in both their linguistic abilities and subject area content. These skills are important for the students since writing is a major assessment tool applied to judge their success in both degree level courses and future workplace tasks. Despite the disparity between the technical writing courses textbooks in each college, the learning outcomes of these modules are conflated with each other, as will be shown below.

4.6.1.1.1.1. Technical Writing 1

The technical Writing 1 course focuses on developing knowledge of the basic concepts and practices of technical writing for 1st year Diploma Level students. The course introduces students to an everyday work-related environment where they will use their English language skills in different work-related scenarios. It mainly emphasizes how students could (1) acquire the technical writing skills they will need to use in practical scenarios of a work environment, like communicating with colleagues, superiors, and business associates in written formats, (2) learn the technical themes and vocabulary

along with the interactive exercises that will help to prepare students for the future career endeavours, and (3) write definitions, descriptions, and texts based on graphs and charts, work-related reports, and college reports, and reflect upon their possible implications for their own future career and the social, economic, and technological development of Oman (Ministry of ManPower a, 2015). In the TW 1 module, students study 10 hours of English per week out of the total 24 teaching hours of the week. The English component of the course carries a weight of four credit hours. This is higher than the specialized modules, which carry three credit hours each. The number of credit hours is significant in students' academic achievement, as it determines the weight that a particular subject contributes towards their accumulative average grade.

As a part of the assessment scheme for the TW 1 module, students are asked to write two in-class graded assignments. The first assignment is either a compare-and-contrast essay or a description where students describe an incident that occurred in their study's lab/workshop whereas the second assignment involves either writing texts explaining and discussing a certain issue or writing texts based on charts, tables, and graphs. The assignments count for 20% (first assignment 10% and the same percentage for the second assignment) of the total mark for the year. The rest of the marks are divided, (as shown in Table 3), between midterm exam (25%), final exam (50%), and class participation (5%).

Assessment	Marks
Assignment 1 and 2	20 (10+10)
Midterm Exam	25
Class participation + Homework	5
Final Exam	50
Total Marks	100

Table 3: *TW 1's assessment pattern*

Both midterm and final exams have a variety of questions that require students to write answers ranging from short answers to short essays. The TW teachers are provided with a rating scale for assessing students' writing. In this rating scale, the grades are allocated to six categories as follows: (1)

organization (introduction, body and conclusion), (2) content, (3) grammar and language use, (4) punctuation, spelling, and mechanics, (5) vocabulary, style and quality of expression, and (6) process writing. Under each of these categories, more explanation is given to aid teachers in assigning marks from 10 to 0 to the assignments. Although the assessment of writing is subjective, the rating scale may be seen as an attempt to provide some consistency or standardization for this process.

4.6.1.1.1.2. Technical Writing 2

The technical Writing 2 course focuses on developing knowledge of the basic concepts and practices of technical writing for 2nd year Diploma Level students. Its foremost emphasis is on how students could cooperatively and individually write clear and precise instructions and write emails and memos, in particular the business types dealt with in class (Ministry of ManPower b, 2015). By the end of the course, students should be able to write more effectively in different work environments, show effective interpersonal skills in working with a team to cooperatively do a certain written task, demonstrate familiarity with the technical terms needed in their careers, and analyse different work scenarios to propose possible solutions in writing. The course consists of four contact hours per week. Students studying the TW 2 module also have 10 contact hours per week out of the total number of weekly contact hours. The module carries the same weight of credit hours as TW 1, that is, four accumulated hours. Like the TW 1 course, in the assessment scheme for the TW 2 module, the marks are divided out of the total mark of the year as in-class graded assignments (20%), midterm exam (25%), final exam (50%) and (5%) for class participation.

Students are also asked to write two in-class graded assignments. The first assignment is about writing instructive reports explaining how to do a certain task such as fixing and changing a car tyre or writing business emails with formal/informal phrases. The second assignment is on either writing enquiry, reply (giving information), complaint, or apology emails or writing memos of various types, such as memos issuing directives for people working on a certain site or organization, research-finding memos, or announcement

memos. The midterm and the final exams also have a variety of questions that require students to write answers ranging from short answers or short essays. The teachers of the course are also provided with a rating scale that may provide some consistency and standardization for the process of assessing students' writing.

4.6.1.1.1.3. Technical Communication

The Technical Communication (TC) course focuses on developing knowledge of the basic concepts and practices of technical writing for Advanced Diploma Level students. Its principal emphasis is on how students could acquire and learn some employability skills like writing part-by-part technical descriptions or reports of certain devices and presenting them orally, writing targeted job application letters, and writing targeted Curriculum Vitae (CVs) (Ministry of ManPower, 2015). By the end of these courses, students should be able to write technical descriptions relevant to their future workplace situations. For example, a company which makes appliances usually produces user guides to provide customers with information about the appliances. Students should learn to write the technical description of the appliances and instructions on how to use the appliances. They are also expected to learn how to write a job application letter based on the information provided in job advertisements and the steps they need to follow to prepare their targeted CVs to apply for a job. The course consists of four contact hours per week.

In order to evaluate the performance of the students in such a course carrying a weight of three credit hours, there are five areas of evaluation: quizzes, presentations, mid-term and final exams. The final exam carries 50% of the total marks. The mid-semester exam is conducted for 25% of the total marks, and students have to write a technical description of a product. Written assignments/quizzes are 10% of total marks, and an oral (presentation) is 15% of the total marks.

Having introduced the contexts of the study, I will now describe the collected academic and professional documents.

4.6.1.2. The workplace context

The workplaces I gathered data from were mainly two companies, Corporate 1, which is owned by the government, and Corporate 2, which is a private-sector firm well known for being one of the best and most used banking-services providers in Oman. These two corporations had been identified as forerunners in recruiting graduates of CoTs.

4.6.1.2.1. Corporate 1

Corporate 1 is one of first telecommunication companies in Oman and is one of the primary providers of Internet services in the country. It offers a full spectrum of telecommunication solutions to the people and businesses of Oman, which has enabled them to become an essential pillar of the Omani economy and a leading player in Oman's progress and national development. The government of Oman owns a 70% share in Corporate 1. The vision of Corporate 1 reflects a philosophy of togetherness as it leads the way in bringing individuals, families, businesses, and regions ever closer together using leading edge technology for communications. Corporate 1 mostly recruits and trains technical graduates who are specialized in IT, Computer Engineering and Network Engineering.

4.6.1.2.2. Corporate 2

Corporate 2 is a leading financial services provider in Oman with a strong presence in corporate banking, retail banking, investment banking, treasury, private banking, and asset management. It holds a rare distinction of being awarded a number of local and international awards, such as being voted the 'Best Bank in Oman' for seven years by The Banker, FT London and for nine consecutive years by Global Finance and Euromoney; receiving the prestigious Hewitt recognition as the Middle East's Best Employer in 2009; and being declared an Investor in People (IiP) organization in January 2007. Corporate 2 mostly recruits and trains technical graduates who are specialized in Business Studies, specifically in Accounting, Human Resources Management, and Financial Management.

4.6.2. Rationale for Choosing these Sites

Burgess (1984, p.59) maintained that, in choosing the research site, "the representativeness of the site is not a big deal, what really matters is choosing a site with the optimal conditions for success of the study, such as the willingness of individuals to cooperate, the convenience of access to participants, the logistics needed to carry out the research, and preferably where some contacts already exist". Based on this, I chose the abovementioned colleges and corporations as a research site for reasons of practicality, such as the geographic closeness of these colleges and corporations to each other and to me or to where I live. This was practical, as it helped me to visit the colleges whenever I experienced any issue or incident that required further clarification. In addition, my familiarity with these contexts facilitated my access to the required data. This meant that I used convenience sampling, as members of my targeted population met certain practical criteria of easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, and the willingness to participate (Dörnyei, 2007). Using such convenience sampling introduced some limitations to my study. For example, access to the required people and the resources needed to carry out the research was not easily attained, especially in the context of corporations for reasons of confidentiality and due to meetings being postponed.

Yet, working at a site like the CoTs with which the participants were familiar helped in constructing a peaceful atmosphere in a way that smoothed the document collection process, and thus the interviewees could elaborate on their views and enrich the investigation with plenty of useful data (Leech, 2002). Moreover, being a lecturer and administrator in two of these colleges and having good relationships with the Deans of the three colleges, and with the Heads of their English Departments and of their Academic Departments, (Engineering, Information Technology, and Business Studies), helped me gain access to the required people and the resources needed to carry out the research. In addition, with regard to the professional context, being familiar to the decision makers in these organizations, as we had met each other several

times previously to negotiate for further training chances for our graduates, eventually allowed me to achieve the aim.

Having introduced the context of the study, I now describe the methods applied to collect data from these contexts.

4.6.3. Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

I adopted the methods of semi-structured interviews with teachers, Post-Foundation year coordinators, students, employees, and employers, and of analysing documentary materials to gather data for this research study. One of the most appropriate methodologies for studying the target practices of any particular group, for example, workers or students, is to use a collection of authentic texts and semi structured interviews (Hutchinson and Waters, 1996; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Bryman, 2016). These two instruments are examples of ethnographic methods that focus “not just on the text itself [but also] on the context of production and reception of that text” (Flowerdew, 2002, p.237) and the importance of this context in understanding students' writing. A detailed clarification of these two data collection methods is presented in the following sections. Nevertheless, I first need to cite some considerations that can explain the rationale behind the selection and the chronological organization of the methods of semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

4.6.3.1. Rationale: Combining Semi-structured Interviews and Documents Analysis

Deciding on the methods to be utilized in this research study was mainly guided by various considerations, such as the nature of the problem being investigated, the research aims and research questions, the context of the study, the educational and linguistic background of the participants, the timing of the study in relation to the academic calendar of the institutions sampled, and the call for an expanded use of qualitative techniques in technical education (see, for example, Al-Husseini, 2014; Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2015; Al-Maskari et al, 2016; Al-Azri, 2016,). Albeit the literature had illustrated that the students' technical writing frequently mismatches the type of technical

writing requested in the market (see, for example, Al-Maskari et al., 2016; Al-Husseini, 2015; Al-Azri, 2016; Obaid, 2009), there has been no explanation of the factors of the mismatching between the two contexts of the' writing practices. Consequently, there was a need to engage multiple stakeholders in interactive discussions with the researcher to get to their ideas, perceptions, and thoughts about practices of technical writing both in academia and in the workplace to understand why graduates find difficulties to produce technical reports in line with their future employers' expectations. The individual discussions with the participants gave them the time to consider the issues to be discussed and to express this thinking elaborately. There was also a need to adopt document analysis to find out to what extent their suggestions are valid. Bhatia (2017) argues that genre analysts need a combined adoption of commonly, but often separately, used methodological frameworks including, for instance, ethnographic approaches of interviewing and text-oriented genre analysis.

The combination of these methods yielded data that would address the interests of a wide range of data users in the field extending from policy makers to other researchers, policy implementers, and front line practitioners (Gorard & Taylor, 2004; Kamindo, 2008). Therefore, the combination of these methods was important to address these people's interests. For instance, externalizing the internalized thoughts of these participants and integrating those participants in investigating the researched aspects helped obtain data which, I believe, at a later stage, may contribute to the designing of TW courses that would help bridge the gap between the technical writing skills taught at academia and the TW required in the graduates' future professions. While adopting other combination of methods may have yielded such data, the information obtained by document analysis and the situations that needed to be observed as part of the research were a consequence of suggested recommendations that were initiated through interviews with stakeholders and (Bowen, 2009, p. 30) Though, unfortunately, for reasons of confidentiality and lack of time, observations could not be carried out within the scope of this study, I still would not have been able to reach such information if I had applied other methods, for instance, surveys.

Concurrent with collecting data in each stage, data were also analysed. Thus, data analysis in this research study was not a self-contained phase that started after data collection had finished. Rather, it was “interactive in the sense that I constantly moved between it and the different stages and phases of the whole research process” (Al-Badwawi, 2011, p. 84). Therefore, as Cohen et al. (2018) argue, it was better for me to begin analysing my data as soon as I had started collecting them rather than waiting until the end of the collection phase. Such a process helped me lessen the amount of data accumulating without analysis as “letting data accumulate without preliminary analysis along the way is a recipe for unhappiness, if not a total disaster” (Bryman & Hardy, 2009, p. 9). It also provided me with opportunities to become familiar with important topics or subjects that needed to be paid enhanced attention throughout the remaining time for data collection. Table (4) represents a view and identifies the different applied methods and maps them to the research questions and aims and the size of sample for each data set.

Having explained why I chose these research methods and why they were in such a chronological order, I move now to explain these methods in detail.

	Research question	Research aim	Method of Data collection	Size of sample for each data set	
1	What are the factors that stakeholders (teachers, coordinators, students, employers and employees) perceive as supporting or hindering the Omani technical graduates' ability to achieve success in technical writing?	To give a perspective on the perceptual, textual and contextual factors that cause mismatch between academic and professional writing according to the stakeholders' opinions	Semi-structured interviews	TW teachers	5
				PF-coordinators	2
				Students	6
				Employers	2
				Employees	4
Total	19 interviews				
2	How do the technical writing skills that graduates possess from their study in technical colleges resonate/unresonate with the skills that are requested in their work place?	To give a perspective on what writers do in the academic and workplace context and how academic TW compares to professional writing.	Document analysis		Reports
				Academic	100
				Professional	68
				Total	168 reports

Table 4:- Mapping the data collection methods to the research questions and aims and the size of sample for each data set

4.6.3.2. Semi-structured Interviews

Generally, interviews are qualitative research methods that are conducted like conversations with a purpose which involves a researcher asking questions and receiving answers from the participants of the study (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Accordingly, they are concerned with gaining information on the participants' perspectives and experiences of the world. Kvale (1994) states that the qualitative research interview aims to "understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (p.1). They involve "the systematic collection, organization, and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or follow-up observation," (Malterud 2001, p.483). Malterud adds, "It is used in the exploration of meanings of social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves, in their natural context" (ibid.). According to Myers (2000), interviewing can be done in different ways, for example, through interactive verbal interviewing, where people are asked to describe their experiences verbally, or through written descriptions, where participants are asked to write about their experiences. Therefore, there are several types of interviews; these vary according to "the dimensions of degree of structure in the interview, how deep the interview tries to go, and the degree to which the interview is standardized across different respondents and situations" (Punch, 1998, p.175). However, distinctions are commonly made between three main kinds of interviews: fully-structured, which have predetermined questions with fixed wording, usually in a pre-set order; semi-structured, which also have predetermined questions, but the order can be modified based on the interviewer's perception of what seems most appropriate; and unstructured, where the interviewer has a general area or topic of interest and concern, but lets the conversation develop within this general area (Robson & McCartan, 2016; Cohen *et al.*, 2011).

In this study, the semi-structured interviews were used to collect the required data on the perceptions of the TW courses' teachers and coordinators and technical students from the academic context, and

employees and their employers from the workplace context about the practices of TW in academia and in the workplace. The semi-structured interviews set out to investigate the ways in which TW texts are interpreted by these different stakeholders. The aim was to reach a clearer understanding of how these EFL professionals and business people view the meaning-making going on in texts. Samples of academic and professional TW texts were discussed from linguistic, social, and other perspectives in order to examine whether a gap exists between what academics and business people judge as being appropriate language in written academic and workplace texts. The interviews mostly consisted of three main sections: the first is about good writing, i.e., what makes a good piece of writing/report in the eyes of academics, students, workplace managers, and employees. Secondly, findings relating to the need for students' and graduates' writing to be prepared for workplace writing along with employees' job-oriented needs are presented. The last section tackles the stakeholders' expectations of graduates when joining the workplace and their expectations of CoT to better prepare these colleges' graduates for the workplace.

Applying the semi-structured interview method in the current study had various benefits. For instance, it offered good opportunities for flexible semi-guided interaction for both me as the interviewer and for the interviewees. Both of us interacted with each other and illuminated points while expressing views and opinions to each other during the interview process (Opdenakker, 2006). This guided flexibility, I think, is exclusive to semi-structured interviews, as in the unstructured ones, the researcher might lack control over the direction of the interview because of the overly flexible nature of this type of interviewing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2011), and in the structured ones, my agenda could have fully controlled the interview because I would have predetermined the questions in such a way that they could not be adjusted or amended while the interview was being conducted. In addition, my being face-to-face with the interviewees stimulated them to be more confident to contribute effectively to the conversation and increased their attentiveness to the topic being investigated (Barriball & While, 1994), which potentially provided me with richer data (Kvale, 2007). My decision to use a face-to-face

interviewing technique in this study also entailed a higher response rate (Dommeyer & Moriarty, 2000; Kent & Lee, 1999). When comparing email surveys to conventional interviews and questionnaires, the “return rates for electronic surveys are somewhat lower than those for face-to-face interview” (Anderson & Gansneder, 1995, p.34). The high rate of responses from using interviews could be attributed to guaranteeing total anonymity of the respondents compared to the use of emailed interviews. Many email account holders, for example, use alias email address names, which makes it extremely difficult for the researcher to establish the real identity of the respondents. Especially among the female users of email in Oman, this practice is very common and is in line with the prevailing cultural customs pertaining to protecting women’s identity and personal details from strangers. Therefore, the level of anonymity achieved by guaranteeing them total confidentiality of their personal information probably reflected positively on the response rate from the participants in this study. In addition, as an interpretive researcher, I wanted to make sense of my participants’ feelings, experiences, and perceptions towards the investigated phenomena as they occur in the real world (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Simply gathering and collecting documents cannot achieve such an aim. Accordingly, the crucial aspect of data collection in this research study was to work with the data in its authentic context (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

Although the semi-structured interview consisted of several key questions that focused on particular themes, the interviewer showed openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having ready-made categories and schemes of interpretation as in structured interviews (Kvale, 1996). This openness allowed for the discovery of interesting information that provided useful insights into the research topic. Thus, most of the interview questions were open-ended questions, as an “open-ended question can catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour which ... are the hallmarks of qualitative data” (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.255). Open-ended questions, compared with close-ended questions, also allowed the respondents to express themselves spontaneously, fully, and in their own language rather than through the predetermined choices of the researcher

(Bryman, 2016). Brown (2001) also points to the advantage of “unexpected answers” that open-ended questions sometimes bring. Such unexpected answers, Brown argues, provide valuable opportunities for the researcher to explore the dimensions of the problem and formulate narrower and more easily interpretable questions. Therefore, in this study, no restrictions were imposed on the respondents regarding the length of their answers.

4.6.3.2.1. Participants

In this study, 19 interviews were conducted with stakeholders of 5 TW teachers (TWT), 2 Post-foundation programme coordinators (PF-Cord) and 6 technical students (TSs) from academia as well as 4 employees and 2 employers/managers from the workplace context (Tables 5 and 6 illustrate the total number and gender of the participants in the semi-structured interview stage from the academic and workplace contexts respectively).

		TW1	TW2	TC	Total
Teachers	Male	1	1	-	5
	Female	1	1	1	
PF- Coordinators	Male	1			2
	Female	1			
Students	Male	2	1	1	6
	Female	1	1	-	
Total					13

Table 5: *Participants from academic context: Semi-structured interviews stage*

		Corporate 1	Corporate 2	Total
Employers	Male	-	1	2
	Female	1	-	
Employees	Male	2	1	4
	Female	-	1	
Total		3	3	6

Table 6: *Participants from workplace context: Semi-structured interviews stage*

The interviews covered topics concerning TW courses, features of good writing, student performance, and expectations of students when joining the university and the workplace (see Appendix 5 for interview schedules).

4.6.3.2.1.1. Lecturers Interviews

The TWTs' sample consisted of 5 EFL teachers who taught technical writing skills in the post-foundation years (see Table 7 for their demographic information). They were of various nationalities, such as Omani, British, Indian, and Filipino. Most of them held PhDs and MAs in education. Their experience, both in and outside Oman, in teaching English for academic and specific purposes (EAP/ESP) ranged from three to twenty-five years. Their experience of teaching in the post-foundation programme ranged between teaching the three TW courses (TW 1&2 and TC) and one or two of the courses. For example, TWT 1 taught only TW 1, TWT 2 taught only TW 2 and TWT 3 taught both TW 1 and 2, but not TC. Seeking the views and the understandings of TW teachers ought to provide a useful basis from which to expand and develop the understanding of the challenges students face while practising technical writing in the CoT.

	Nationality	Gender	Place of work	Qualifications	Years of Experience	Taught TW Courses
T1	Indian	M	College 2	MA Education	16	TW 1
T2	British	M	College 1	MA Education	14	TW 2
T3	Filipino	F	College 3	PhD Education	14	TW 1&2
T4	Indian	F	College 1	PhD Education	+20	TW 1&2 and TC
T5	Omani	F	College 2	BA + CELTA	5	TW 1&2 and TC

Table 7:- Technical writing teachers who participated in the interviews phase

4.6.3.2.1.2. Post-foundation Programme Coordinators

In addition to the teachers, the study has also included two Post-foundation programme coordinators (see Table 8 for their demographic information). This was to understand their views about whether TW courses

are designed to help the graduates overcome the challenges they might face while practising technical writing in the future workplace and to obtain information on the departmental and ministerial policies regarding technical report writing since these policies determine the students' university and professional writing experience.

	Nationality	Gender	Place of work	Qualifications	Years of Experience	Designed TW Courses
PF-Cord 1	Omani	F	College 1	PhD Education	16	TW 1&2 and TC
PF-Cord 2	Omani	M	College 2	MA Education	7	TW 1&2 and TC

Table 8:- *PF- Coordinators who participated in the interviews phase*

4.6.3.2.1.3. Students Interviews

The students who participated were graduates of the General Education System where they had spent nine years studying English as a foreign language (EFL). They had finished a full foundation year programme (FYP) of extensive English, where it is supposed they had studied most of the required genres in the college's modules. In the FYP, "students are enrolled in order to achieve the level of English that is required in the academic specializations" (Al-Husseini, 2005, p.40), and "to improve their linguistic abilities and equip them with the necessary academic skills to succeed in the degree programmes" (Al-Badwawi, 2011, p.68). The students' mother tongue was Arabic. They had been selected randomly to represent students who have finished the FYP and started their specialization/post-foundation studies. Their level of competency at this stage is supposed to be adequate for academic learning due to the sufficient exposure to English in the tertiary stages (Flowerdew, 1993; Al-Issa, 2005). The Grade Point Average (GPA) ranged from 2 to 3.7 (out of a possible 4). It is worth recalling here that students are only permitted to proceed to the Bachelor degree (BA) if they have a minimum GPA of 2.5; otherwise, they graduate with an Associate Diploma. In the Associate Diploma, students are required to obtain 60 credits whereas in the BA, they require 126 credits. Only 20% of technical students proceed to the

BA degree, and although there are around 2,000 graduates yearly from CoT, only around 500 graduate with a Bachelor degree (MoMP, 2015). The purposes of interviewing students were as follows. Firstly, the aim was to obtain information directly from students and gain their insights about the TW courses and the methods applied to teach these courses. Six students participated: one female and five males, aged between 18 and 22. All spoke Arabic as their mother tongue. I tried to ensure that students were from a range of different specializations to reflect the diversity of discipline-related schemes available. The students were contacted, and they participated on a voluntary basis. To avoid bias by selecting high achieving students, nothing was known about the students' performance prior to the interviews. The students approached the interviews in a friendly manner and were given the option of conducting their interview in Arabic (see Table 9).

	Gender	Specialization	Qualifications to be graduated with	attended TW Courses
S1	M	Business Studies	B.Tech	TW 1
S2	M	IT	B.Tech	TW 1&2
S3	M	Engineering	B.Tech	TW 1&2
S4	M	Engineering	B.Tech	TW 1&2 and TC
S5	F	IT	B.Tech	TW 1&2 and TC
S6	M	Engineering	B.Tech	TW 1&2

Table 9:- *Technical students who participated in the interviews phase*

4.6.3.2.1.4. Employers/Managers Interviews

The workplace representatives consisted of employees and management. With regard to management, the Head of Human Resources in Corporate 1 and the Head of Training and Lifelong Learning in Corporate 2 participated in this research study. I chose them to introduce data about writing practices in the workplace and to examine how such practices differ from the ones that students experience during their studies. The following table (Table 10) shows further information about the profile of the managers who participated in the study.

	Nationality	Gender	Qualifications	Years of Experience
Manag 1	Omani	F	B.Tech	14
Manag 2	Omani	M	MBA	+20

Table 10: Employers/Managers who participated in the interviews phase

Donna (2004, p.2), discussing the importance of interviewing management personnel, claims that "they are the people most directly in touch with students' [graduates] real needs and they should also have an insight into their company's longer term foreign language needs." Moreover, management personnel are aware of the policies and procedures of their establishments, especially those concerned with the recruitment of graduates and the levels of English required by candidates. In this study, the interviewed managers had constant contact with CoT graduates, and had extensive experience in their current or previous jobs in the corporations. All performed their duties in English, apart from during contact with government bodies.

4.6.3.2.1.5. Employees Interviews

Four employees took part in this study (see Table 11). All were recommended by management. They used writing to perform their duties, and they had a minimum of two years of experience working in their current job, meaning they were familiar with the workplace and its demands of being able to write different types of genres. The employees participated on a voluntary basis.

	Nationality	Gender	Place of work	Qualifications	Specialization	Years of Experience
Emplo 1	Omani	F	Corporate 2	Technical Diploma	Business Studies	6
Emplo 2	Omani	M	Corporate 2	B. Tech	IT	2
Emplo 3	Omani	M	Corporate 1	Advanced Diploma	Engineering	4
Emplo 4	Omani	M	Corporate 1	B. Tech	Engineering	2

Table 11:- Employees who participated in the interviews phase

To conclude, it was necessary to include representatives of these different parties (academia and workplace) to obtain an insight into how each party perceived the other - i.e., how lecturers perceived graduates, workplace management perceived employees, and students perceived university teachers. This also helped to capture a more complete picture of the current situation and to contribute to the validity of the data as well as of the research instruments. Cohen *et al.* (2018) support the selection of multiple participants to add validity to the collected data. Having described the demographics of the participants, I now turn to explain how I facilitated my interviews to collect data.

4.6.3.2.2. Facilitating the Interviews

The main premise for facilitating my interviews stemmed from Kvale's belief that 'interview research is a craft that, if well carried out, can become an art' (Kvale, 2007, p.13). Before conducting the interview, I thought data collection would be an easy task, where I need only ask the questions, and the participants would answer them effortlessly. However, I faced some challenges during creating the interview schedules, piloting the interviews, and conducting the interview process. Therefore, I took the following steps to ensure that my interviews were well prepared and well conducted.

4.6.3.2.2.1. Creating an Interview Schedule

Creating an interview schedule (see Appendix 5) was the first step in the interview process (Wellington, 2000; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The schedule would serve as a guide for me, the interviewer, to ask and modify my listed questions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). It enabled me to think about "difficulties that might be encountered and how I could overcome them" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 59). I constructed my research schedule based on narrowing down my research questions so both of us, the interviewer and the interviewee, could relate our experiences to the topic being investigated (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Having established the whole area to be tackled, I then ordered the topics and sub-topics I expected would be raised in the interview in an appropriate sequence (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Therefore, my interview

schedule was designed with key questions organized according to the themes that would be discussed in the interview. The aim, as Wellington (2006) suggests, was "to start with one single, key question to act as a trigger for the rest of the interview" (p.75). Another aim for these key questions was to help me remember the themes and use them spontaneously with no need to refer back to the schedule itself explicitly (Newton, 2010).

However, as Marshal and While (1994), acknowledge, unique challenges can arise, and errors are commonly made when constructing questions for ESL subjects "as researchers often fail to consider the cultural and linguistic framework of targeted groups" (p.567). In my research, I faced this issue of formulating questions while constructing my schedule. I wanted the questions to be clear and easy to answer because English was not my interviewees' first language. To overcome the issue of simplifying the questions, I considered my subjects' cultural and linguistic abilities through two steps. The first step was through further explaining the questions that would arise during the interview or replacing difficult words in the questions with simple ones; for example, I replaced 'aspects of language' with 'linguistic skills', as it appeared more meaningful and would support comprehension. Marshal and While (1994) applied this technique and found it useful. The second step was through translating the questions into the participants' mother tongue, Arabic, which saved me a lot of time and effort while conducting the interviews. In fact, when piloting the interviews, I asked the students to talk in English, but I soon discovered that their language level did not permit them to freely express their thoughts on the issues under study. Therefore, I decided to use Arabic when interviewing the students to maximize their input and participation in the discussion. After constructing the schedule, I contacted the interviewees to identify a neutral place to conduct the interviews. Seeking a neutral interview location, as argued by Elwood and Martin (2000, p.653), encouraged me to "make observations that generate richer data that cannot be gleaned from the interview content alone". It also helped my interviewees to feel comfortable, and therefore, they revealed more detailed information (ibid.).

4.6.3.2.2.2. Piloting the Interviews

Before I embarked on the data collection process, I piloted the interviewing instruments; this was an essential phase in the data collection process to evaluate the clarity of interview questions, get first-hand experience of conducting interviews, and modify the research questions based on the results of the piloting stage. Three pilot interviews were carried out. The first two interviews were with two students, and the third was with a lecturer, as some of the questions for lecturers were different from those for students, although a number of general questions were common to all the interview schedules. While discussing the interview schedule with the lecturer another lecturer went into the office and asked to take part in the discussion. Since this lecturer has experience of more than twenty years in the CoT spent between teaching and designing TW courses his participation was fruitful to amend the schedule.

The piloting stage was critical for the study in different ways. For example, the piloting made me realize that an optimal time for the interviews would be no more than 45 minutes since participants tend to get impatient, and usually, no new information can be obtained from them after that time. This time-frame also meant that I must be careful with interview time and use strategies and prompts to ensure that the respondents did not deviate from the focus of the research and start talking about unrelated matters. In addition, transcribing the interviews revealed to me the difficulties associated with transcription. These difficulties were related to the quality and clarity of the recordings and the time needed for completing a single interview, especially since I had decided to transcribe entire interviews for the main study. This exercise also showed me the importance of starting the transcription process during the data collection stage and not leaving it until the end of the fieldwork. Last but not least, based on the pilot study, I modified the research design to include the PF-Coordinators in an attempt to gain a better understanding of how assessment through the use of assignments and essay writing affects students' experience with TW.

The piloting experience discouraged me from using the group interview technique, as this format could have been tiring for everyone concerned. The two pilot interviews, though they were individual interviews, took more than four hours. Such extended interviews might have been the result had the interviews been conducted in a group format. Hermanowicz (2002, p.487) suggests that the optimum duration of an interview is between 60 and 90 minutes. In addition, during the pilot lecturer interview, the lecturer was interrupted several times, by phone calls or requests to provide colleagues with documents. While it was felt that the potential for such interruptions would remain if the individual interview format was preferred, the likelihood of these occurrences would diminish since only one rather than, say, five interviewees could be called upon at any time. For all of the reasons above, and since the nature of this study required the greatest possible depth (Oppenheim 2003, p.30), the individual interview format was chosen for the main study.

4.6.3.2.2.3. Conducting the Interviews

The interviews were held in participants' places of work/study. At the beginning of each interview, participants were reminded about the aim of the study, and their informed consent and approval for the interview to be recorded was obtained. Confidentiality was a crucial concern (Yee and Andrews, 2006); thus, I distributed consent forms (see Appendices 2, 3, & 4), guaranteeing the confidentiality of the data and the destruction of the recordings after the analysis of the data. In the consent forms, they were informed that they had the right not to answer questions that they did not want to answer and that they could withdraw from the study at any point. In addition, they were given assurances about protecting their confidentiality and the anonymity of their responses, which were to be used only for the purpose of research. As such interviews usually generate huge amounts of qualitative data, and since the participants would reveal their views and opinions, they should be recorded. Silverman (2005) warns that interview data might be lost because of technical problems, so I used two devices for recording. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and were then

downloaded onto the computer and transcribed. All the audio files were saved onto my computer and onto two external hard drives to ensure against the possibility of data loss due any unforeseen technical problems.

While embarking on each interview, I attempted to build a relaxing atmosphere where the interviewees could elaborate in a way that would enrich the data collection process. Indeed, to establish such an atmosphere, a rapport with the respondents must exist (Leech, 2002). However, building a rapport with the respondents might not always be advantageous, as it might raise some unexpected ethical concerns, especially if the interviewer and the participants share the same ethnic background. For example, Ochieng (2010) interviewed participants from the same background and found that in such cases, it is difficult to separate general talk from the topic being investigated. More details about the ethical considerations are discussed in Section 4.8.

One significant issue I considered when conducting these interviews was that I, as the researcher, had been granted access and acceptance by the organizations to carry out the fieldwork required (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). To do so, I needed to request official permission to carry out the study from the institutions' governing bodies or from the administrative departments that govern the study's research sites, which were the colleges and the workplaces I conducted my research in. Accordingly, the Directorate General of Technical Education granted me a requesting letter (see Appendix 8) explaining the nature of the research and the types of data to be collected, to demonstrate the cooperation and assistance I would require while conducting the study. Having previously worked in CoTs as an English language assistant lecturer in College 1, as English language lecturer in Colleges 2 and 3, and currently working as Assistant Dean of student affairs and partnerships in College 2, I had very good relationships with the deans of the colleges, the heads of the English Language departments, and the employers who have partnerships with CoTs. This excellent affiliation in addition to the permission request letters (see Appendix 6) I had been given from the Director General of Technical Education assisted my entrée to and acceptance by my study's research sites.

The interviews yielded some clues as to how people go about writing such samples and for what purpose. Thus, interviewees were asked questions about specific language choices and about more general issues. For example, to discuss an active voice choice, a practitioner might be shown a passage he wrote and be told, "I noticed you used 'we drilled' here instead of 'was drilled,' even though the rest of the sentences say 'was drilled.' Do you have any sense of why you made that choice?" Similarly, a student might be asked, "I've noticed that when students write some sections, they use the passive voice almost exclusively. Has the passive voice ever come up in classes? Can you remember trying to use it – or not use it – in your own papers?" Again, a faculty member might be asked, "Do you tell the students anything about using the active or the passive voice?" The interviews are meant to be another perspective for interpreting the analyses; they are not the primary focus of analysis themselves. (Numerous topics for other aspects of the study were covered in the interviews as well; they did not focus solely on sentence structure and passive voice.)

Having launched the interview, my position was as an insider interviewer rather than an outsider one, working with participants, some of who had the same identity, language, and experience bases (Asselin, 2003). This role helped me be accepted by the participants, as I was already familiar to them, which facilitated my interviews easily and accordingly generated richer data (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). In my context, as discussed by Holliday (1994), the researcher is usually an outsider, an expert who is from another culture. Indeed, Al-Husseini (2004) found that outsider researchers spend a lot of time familiarizing themselves with the participants, and even then, the participants themselves try not to be open with the researcher. Regarding the researcher, this sometimes makes their questions ambiguous. All of this affects the data generation process. Insider researchers, in contrast, have the ability to raise meaningful questions (Berger, 2013), as they are able to understand the psychological, emotional, and/or cognitive precepts of the participants, and they have a deeper knowledge of the practical and historical events in the field (Chavez, 2008). Thus, as an insider researcher, I was able to understand the responses of participants who answer in multileveled and nuanced ways

(Berger, 2013), for example, the culture specific assertions and references they made. Thus, this provided an opportunity to better analyse their participations and discuss them in more depth. Furthermore, my awareness of the participants' life style, as I share with them features like language, ethnicity, religion, identity, life style, and culture, placed me in a good position to conduct ethical research that represents the participants' voices (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015).

Interviewees were another area of concern. Sometimes, they were not willing, for one reason or another, to provide all the required information (Nunan, 1992). Therefore, I found it difficult to conduct the interview and to obtain the data I wanted. A relaxed and secure atmosphere was essential to get the required information (Kelliny, 1994), and as a researcher, I thought it would be easy to establish a comfortable condition in my interviews. Therefore, I had read about how to conduct semi-structured interviews in the literature, but having commenced the interviews, I found that reading was not enough to make me sufficiently skilful in dealing with interviewees' unexpected behaviours (Robson & McCartan, 2016). Therefore, practice in interviewing was required, and self-evaluation after each interview positively enhanced my professionalism. Such evaluation was achieved through listing and reflecting upon the procedures performed and the challenges that arose in the interviews (ibid.).

4.6.3.2.3. Analysis of Interviews Data

The data, at this stage, consisted of interview data collected from stakeholders in semi-structured interviews, where I discussed with them the findings derived from the literature (i.e., there is disparity between the technical writing practised at Omani technical colleges and the writing practices demanded by the students' future workplace organizations). The aim was to detect the possible causes of such disparity from the stakeholders' points of view. Stressing the need to look outside the text and suggesting that the researcher should elicit information from concerned participants is a viewpoint shared by a number of researchers, including Poynton (1993).

Throughout my analysis, and since I opted to recognize emerging patterns and themes, and to interpret these patterns in line with the research questions, I adopted a non-linear process, which entailed me going back and forth between the original data and the coding process to establish new codes and evaluate the already existing ones. According to Creswell (2007, p.148), “qualitative data analysis consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion”. Moreover, the comprehensive nature of the qualitative data, which I gathered through interviewing different stakeholders’ parties over a period of time, demanded that I start the analysis process concurrently with the data collection. As mentioned previously, Cohen et al. (2018) argue that starting the analysis early reduces the problem of data overload and gives the researcher the opportunity to recognize significant themes that can be explored further in the remaining period of data collection, thus giving focus for the study.

In the current study, I used thematic analysis as the analytic lens to interpret the data elicited through semi-structured interviews. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) claim that thematic analysis is “a method for (1) identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data, and (2) minimally organizing and describing your data set in (rich) detail”. However, it frequently goes further than this and “interprets various aspects of the research topic” (ibid.). I also used thematic analysis, as this study endeavoured to analyse the existing educational disparity between the technical writing skills studied at the Omani technical colleges and the skills demanded by workplace organizations in Oman. This section illustrates the procedures followed to analyse the data collected through the semi-structured interviews.

Through following the guidelines set by Braun and Clarke (2006 & 2013) and Clarke and Braun (2013) (see Table 12 below) to apply thematic analysis, the analysis process of the data from my semi-structured interviews was conducted in six phases.

Phase	Processes of the phase
Familiarity with data	1. Transcribing, reading and re-reading data 2. Noting down initial ideas
Generate initial codes	3. Coding interesting features of the data 4. Collating data relevant to each code
Searching for themes	5. Collating codes into potential themes 6. Gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
Reviewing themes	7. Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set 8. generating a thematic map of the analysis
Defining & naming themes	9. Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the story the analysis tells 10. Generating clear definitions and names for each theme
Producing the report	11. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples 12. Final analysis of selected extracts 13. Relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature 14. Producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 12:- *Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006 & 2013; Clarke & Braun, 2013)*

Familiarizing myself with the data was the first stage in my data analysis. It involved verbatim transcription of the interviews either conducted in either English or Arabic. According to Marshal and Rossman (2011), the first steps in analysis are the transcription and, where applicable, the translation of the interview data. At the time of transcription, I transcribed all the utterances recorded. This helped me to develop a thorough grasp of my data since I had transcribed it all myself. When researchers transcribe their own data – rather than outsourcing this task to others – it helps them to think critically about the data when repeatedly listening to the recorded conversations (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Davies, 2007; Silverman, 2000). Transcribing the conversations myself as soon as possible after the interviews had been completed helped increase the data's reliability (Gibbs, 2007). Furthermore, it was easier for me to access specific information within a transcript than within an audio file (Shopes, 2013) for the purpose of giving

supporting quotations. A final reason for transcription was that in the case of data loss, the transcript would provide backup data for the conducted and future research. My focus was on identifying key themes for analysis during transcription (Bryman, 2016). There were also problems in transcribing words which do not have true equivalent in English. Using a bilingual dictionary and online translators, I found several suggestions and then used the one that best conveyed the students' meaning as I understood it. For example, when describing how clearly their TW teachers explain how to carry a writing task, students used the word (يغني/yughni), which the dictionary translates as 'enrich'. However, in the context of the interviews, the suggested translation is not appropriate because the Arabic word carries with it a positive connotation about teachers having a good style of teaching that is sufficient and requires no need for further elaborations or exemplifications. After I had finished transcribing the interviews, I read and re-read the transcripts and noted down the initial ideas stated by the interviewees, their general comments, and interesting issues that were emerging from the data.

The stage of generating initial codes encompassed "coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set and collating data relevant to each code" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). Bryman (2016) recommends that researchers code the data as early as possible after collection and throughout the coding process, as Gibbs (2007) suggests, produce a list of codes that can be used to identify relationships between all the codes. Thus, for this coding stage, I started the examination of the transcripts as soon as the interviews had been conducted. I went through all the transcripts, highlighting with different colours in the sorting process and assigning initial codes to chunks of data that were relevant to the general topic that I wanted to investigate through conducting the interviews, that is, factors in the mismatch between academic TW and corporate TW. Manual categorization was also conducted at the initial stages of the analysis in order to make sense of the data (Table 13 illustrates the coding and manual categorization of extracts from one of the interviews). Comments and notes were written in the margins of the transcriptions in order to understand the data more adequately.

Extract/Transcript	Codes	Manual categorization
<p>IH: What should good Technical Writing look like from your perspective?</p> <p>ITMang: I want to say that a good technical writing text should have the information required in a very simple manner in a way when you write an essay for example in a university you have to elaborate but when you write it in an organization where mostly the texts go to your management or to higher management, it has to be to the point, it has to be thorough, however it has all the information required to deliver a certain message. So it is, I don't want to say it is an executive summary because executive summary is usually very short, but it is in a similar manner where the information is captured but in a very critical way.</p> <p>IH: what kind of information you mean to be included?</p> <p>ITMng: it depends on what kind of technical report/writing you are writing, let me assume recruitment, we do a summary report, for example if there is a position has been offered, a summary report for all of the candidates who have been interviewed, so if the recruiter goes on and talked about everything the interviewee has said it wouldn't give me enough information to make decision whether this the right person to higher or not, but summarizing whatever happened in the interview gives me their evaluation of the candidate in few sentences, telling me what are the positive points of that person and his weaknesses, and give the conclusion of that interview in a very short way because I don't have time, we have hundreds of positions, I wouldn't go and read a full report on every candidate has applied. So this is basically what I mean: to the point but captured enough information. It is like a bird view, you can see everything and select what you need exactly without taking much time.</p>	<p>Manag 1 view of good TW acad. context: textual feature workplace context: textual feature Manag1 view of good TW Type of text: contextual feature Manag 1 view of good TW</p> <p>Type of text: contextual feature Type of text: contextual feature Manag 1 view of good TW structure of workplace report: textual feature + Acad. text vs. workplace text why report should be to the point: contextual feture Manag 1 view of good TW</p>	<p>Manage 1 view + textual & contextual features of a good TW text</p> <p>contextual features + Manage 1 view of a good TW text</p>

Table 13:- a semi-structured interview extract with initial codes and manual categorization

The large number of codes generated in the first stage of analysis was reduced to a more manageable number of sub-themes. Creswell (2007, p.148) suggests combining the codes into broader categories/sub-themes or themes, and displaying and making comparisons in the data graphs, tables, or charts. Thus, the sub-themes were grouped together into themes that could be discussed in relation to the research questions (see Graph 4.3.). Finally, the QSR NVivo 11 software programme was used to assist the analysis process. NVivo software is designed to assist researchers in analysing qualitative data such as interviews and focus group discussions after initial manual sorting. In this research, the interviews were all imported into the programme for the analysis process and to revise the manual coding where relevant. Nodes were created for coding purposes. Coding with nodes was through highlighting relevant texts and then dragging and dropping the text onto the appropriate node. Nodes were organised into hierarchies to show relationships between themes assigned out of the coding process. The analysis process using this software was very helpful and saved me a lot of time. I collated the final codes assigned in the previous stage into potential sub-themes (see Figure 6 for an example of this process) and then gathered all sub-themes relevant to each potential theme. The themes were derived from the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.89), searching for themes involves “sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded extracts within the identified themes”. Essentially, the researcher is starting to analyse the codes and consider how different codes may combine to form an overarching (sub)theme.

In coding responses, I encountered several dilemmas. For example, participants mentioned more than one issue in the same response. Therefore, some responses were coded under several themes or sub-themes. For instance, an employer mentioned several difficulties that his new employees encounter once they hold a post. Therefore, the response was coded for all the difficulties that he mentioned. Sometimes, a whole response revolved around a single issue, which made it easier for me to assign a code to the entire segment. Another drawback was related to NVivo. In fact, it was time consuming to become familiar with how to use this software. To overcome this difficulty, I watched some tutorials from YouTube, participated in workshops inducted in the university, and obtained guidance from my supervisors.

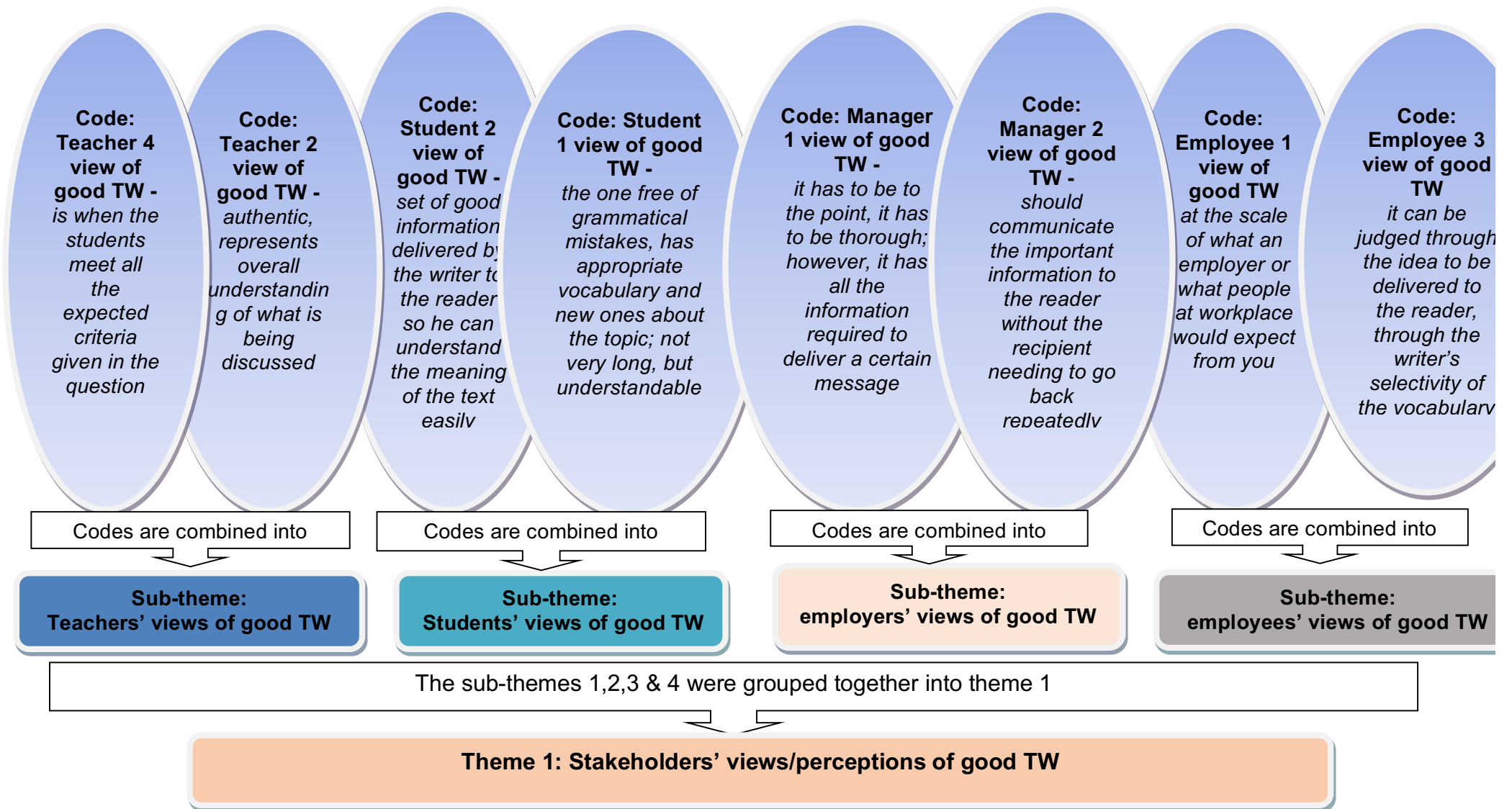


Figure 5: Process of collating codes into subthemes and gathering sub-themes to form themes

The process of reducing the codes and sub-themes into a small and manageable set of themes entailed thinking about the relationships between the different codes and grouping the relevant code extracts under the corresponding theme. That helped me see the broader story of the data and see how the different parts fit into an initial analysis framework.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.91) suggest that the researcher should “check if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set”. Accordingly, I reviewed the extracts of coded data under each theme to evaluate their coherence and ensure they formed a meaningful unit of analysis. Then, the coded data and their collated illustrative extracts were re-read and organized into a coherent and consistent story identifying the significance of each extract in relation to the aim of the study and the research questions. By the end of this stage, I had an analysis scheme/framework that consisted of codes, sub-themes and higher order themes, as can be seen in Appendix 9 (see p. 329) (Table 14 below, p. 132, presents the sub-themes and higher order themes part of the analysis scheme). After these procedures, I moved to present my interview data. At this point, I translated the extracts used to support my analysis. I have included both the original Arabic and the translation which, as a native speaker, I have provided myself. To ensure the accuracy of translation, the translated extracts were verified by an Omani colleague specialized in bilingual translation (Arabic to English and vice versa). Providing the Arabic translation within the text enables Arabic-speaking readers of this thesis to assess the accuracy of my translation for themselves. Translation is necessary in qualitative research when the language that is used in the primary data is different to the language used to present the findings. Despite the advantages of using my mother tongue (Arabic) to collect data, especially when interviewing Arab Omani participants, nevertheless, converting Arabic semi-structured interviews to English was not without challenges, both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, similarly to many Omani researchers, such as Al-Bedwawi (2011) and Al-Ghatrifi (2016), I had to use ‘free’ rather than ‘literal’ translation. Though Honig (1997, p.17) claims that using literal translation (word-by-word) is ideal to present what participants have said, as it “makes one’s readers understand the foreign mentality better”, I decided to use free translation to achieve the aim of conveying the essence of the Arabic-talking

participants' message in a clear and easy-to-read manner. In addition, literal translation is a time-consuming process that risks introducing inaccuracies which may affect the trustworthiness of the findings.

Sub-themes	Themes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers' views of good TW 2. PF-coordinators views' of good TW 3. Students' views of good TW 4. Managers' views of good TW 5. Employees' views of good TW 	Stakeholders' views of good TW
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers' views of students' readiness for workplace TW 2. PF-coordinators' views of students' readiness for workplace TW 3. Students' views of students' readiness for workplace TW 4. Managers' views of students' readiness for workplace TW 5. Employees' views of students' readiness for workplace TW 	Stakeholders' views of students' readiness for workplace TW
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authenticity: requirements of writing academic texts (language, organization and research skills are more important) 2. Authenticity: requirements of writing workplace texts (content should represent the corporate and satisfy its customers' needs) 3. Quality and purpose: teacher vs. manager feedback/guidance: marks/grades vs. written + face to face feedback 4. Authorship: writing collaboratively vs. writing individually 5. Authorship: politics surrounding writing: I am responsible vs. the corporate is responsible 6. Student vs employee attitude (I want to pass vs I want to be promoted) (Ts + Managers: most sts do not want to learn vs st: our colleagues who graduated are without jobs) 7. Awareness of audience of the text (I write for good marks vs I write to satisfy my customers' needs/for an end user) 	Assignment-related factors
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Absence of coordination between colleges and corporations: (Managers: it is not our duty to contact colleges, Ts: since we prepare students for disciplinary study then we prepare them for market + coordination is a huge project that should include different parties) 2. Absence of coordination between colleges and corporations (Employees: it is a totally new world for us to write at workplace, sts: during on-the-job training, we write nothing) 	Contextual factors

Table 14: *the sub-themes and higher order themes part of the analysis scheme*

4.6.3.3. Document Analysis

The document analysis aimed to investigate the ways in which academic texts differed from the professional ones. In this study, the SFL approach was utilized as a framework and a tool for the analysis of texts. This was not intended to be to the exclusion of other types of approach, which may well be useful and powerful in their own right, and in perhaps different ways. However, the scope of this study was limited to a discussion of SFL, and hence did not take into account comparative considerations between SFL and other approaches. In this section, I shall present a mini-corpus which was analysed with the aim of (1) demonstrating and outlining the semantics strata of the SFL model, specifically demonstrating the meta-functions that correspond to ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings and (2) exploring the differences between the academic and professional texts which were brought out by the analyses. For the purposes of my demonstration, the considered mini-corpus was of academic and professional reports. I selected these academic and professional documentations to understand their constituent features (for example, their purposes, their patterns of organization, and the language used to write them; see Section 4.7.2. for further discussion of the analysed features). SFL theorists assert that SFL is usually applied in analysing documents to accomplish certain purposes and to address specific audiences and specific textual features, like content and organization (Martin, 2016). Fundamental to the analysis of the documents was identifying the context of the documents, that is, establishing what these documents were and who wrote them (Robson, 2016).

Researchers of academic writing have suggested that the development of a good understanding of the writing produced by students in specific academic contexts requires an empirical investigation of students' writings, which can be achieved by collecting and analysing students' assignments in the target context (Spack, 1988; Bateman, 2017). The same is applicable to workplace writing texts, as such documents may play a critical role in explaining embedded practices and can sometimes provide information that can explain certain behaviours (Albaker, 2008). By analysing such written documents, a researcher interprets a collection of textual materials to give voice and meaning around a certain topic. In this research study, the purpose was to attempt investigation into the features of real examples of report genre from both academic and commercial sources.

4.6.3.3.1. Collection of Documentary Data

The textual materials for this study came from samples of writing by technical students studying in the three CoTs (see Section 4.6.1.1.) and workplace texts written by employees of the two corporations (see Section 4.6.1.2.) to examine whether a gap exists between what teachers and business people judged as being good texts/reports. The institutional texts were a useful source to obtain an idea of the expectations that TW teachers have of students' writing and to decide whether students were aware of these demands. Examining the workplace samples had given an indication of the approaches adopted by the corporations to carry the writing responsibilities in the market and of how these responsibilities differ from the ones taught in the institutions. Under each category, there were various kinds of texts, as explicated within this section. In addition, since these collected documents would reveal confidential information related to the participants, their place of study/work, and their customers, confidentiality was a crucial concern (Yee and Andrews, 2006). Thus, at this stage of documents collection, I distributed consent forms to my participants (see Appendix 3), guaranteeing the confidentiality of the data and the destruction of the documents once the analysis had been completed. Finally, the choice and restriction of analysis on samples of academic and professional reports was based on the fact that along with memos and emails, these are the most frequent writing practices that are taught within TW courses in the CoTs. In addition, analysing these three genres altogether was beyond the scope of this study.

4.6.3.3.1.1. Corpora of Reports

Similarities and differences between academic and professional texts were investigated in an undergraduate student corpus (STUCORP) and a professional corpus (PROFCORP) of reports.

	Reports	Total
Academic	100	168
Professional	68	

Table 15:- *Types and quantity of the collected academic and professional reports*

Both corpora consisted of approximately 300,000 words, with, as illustrated in (Table 15), 100 reports in STUCORP and 68 reports in PROFCORP. The STUCORP documents were written by post-foundation year (i.e., first, second, and third year) undergraduate students at CoTs in Oman as assessed assignments in the Technical Writing 1, Technical Writing 2, and Technical Communication skills courses (see Table 16).

	Reports
Technical Writing 1	50
Technical Writing 2	25
Technical Communication	25
Total	100

Table 16:- *source of the collected academic documents*

Brief assignment guidelines given to students stipulated what they needed to write in each report. The students who were enrolled in these courses were specialized in IT, Engineering, and Business Studies. They studied the courses collectively in their colleges (i.e., students from the three specializations in each college were mixed up together within similar groups). The STUCORP documents were a useful source to obtain an idea of the underlying assumptions about the nature of academic writing and the expectations the various TW teachers and coordinators have of students' writing, and to decide whether the students understand the demands of academic writing in the colleges. Where possible, I selected highly-graded assignments. The grades were assigned by 'TW tutors', a term used in the technical education system in Oman to include teaching fellows and other academic tutors who teach technical writing courses and sometimes set assignments for students. As Nesi and Gardner (2012, p. 6) state, as far as is possible, the inclusion of assignments awarded high grades maximises the possibility that the assignments conform to course expectations. This type of documents contained samples of various report genres from academic sources.

These academic report assignments were submitted by technical students, along with the feedback given by their TW 1 and 2 and TC course tutors and their final mark. I aimed to find out the matches and mismatches between such feedback and

the feedback style followed in the professional context. The provided feedback, I believe, is supposed to give students clear targets of proficiency, as with such guidance, students know what quality writing should look like before they start working. The assignments consisted of four types, namely, college reports, incident reports, instructive reports, and technical description reports (see Table 17 for types and quantity of the collected academic reports). From TW1, I collected 25 incident reports

	TW 1	TW 2	TC	Total
Incident report	25	-	-	25
College report	25	-	-	25
Instructive report	-	25	-	25
Technical description report	-	-	25	25
Total	50	25	25	100

Table 17:- *Types and Quantity of the Collected Academic Reports*

and 25 college reports. For the 25 incident reports, students wrote about incidents that had happened either in the laboratories they studied at or in a workshop site they imagined working at in the future. For the college reports, students wrote about issues like *'High school education in Oman'*. They were provided with sources like newspapers articles, graphs, and charts to be used in their writing. In total, 25 instructive reports were collected from the TW 2 module; students were asked to write a list of instructions to, for example, increase the speed of a computer. A similar number of assignments were collected from the TC module, where students wrote a description of a certain device, such as a laser computer mouse.

The collected samples, along written-exam texts, where students had to answer a set of questions using a pencil or a pen, were designed to assess students' learning of the three TW programmes and determine their proficiency level in these courses. Thus, to be eligible for transfer from one course to another, (for example, from TW1 to TW2), students had to attain a pass mark of 50% on these assignments and written examinations. The assessment scores were interpreted with regard to certain criteria listed in the form of rubrics. The TW courses' coordinators had developed these assignments and their assessment criteria, but they were not directly involved

in the administration or proctoring of them. Accordingly, the format and the level of difficulty of these assignments were highly variable, and there was no general consensus or consistent standard for their formats and level of difficulty. These assignments included long-essay writing tasks, as the results attained from such assessment would provide the impetus for trying different things to improve learning. I did not include categories that represent the empirical research assignments in which students were asked to present the research topic and questions, review-related research literature, describe research methodology, and if the students had carried out the research, report the findings and discuss the results, as such categories were not part of the three technical writing courses. It is important to emphasize here that though the sample size was limited, since gaining access to students' assignment was a bit limited, as there was, as of yet, no central repository to keep copies of the assignments in the colleges, nevertheless, the collected samples represent the range of written report assignment types across all CoTs. This is partly because the collected assignment samples were provided by students from various disciplines and from all stages of study of the TW modules.

For the workplace reports, the PROFCORP texts, as shown in (Table 18), were collected by the researcher from two corporations in Oman. They were written by employees working in these corporations, some of whom used to be students in the CoTs. Examining the workplace samples is intended to give an indication of the approach adopted by the employment organizations and working departments to carry the technical writing tasks in the market sphere and of how these tasks differ from the ones taught in the institutions.

	Reports
Corporate 1	30
Corporate 2	38
Total	68

Table 18:- *sources of the collected professional reports*

The collected samples, which were samples of independent reports or reports written within larger reports, came from four genres, namely, periodic report, service/progress report, and investigation and recommendation report (see Table 19

for types and quantity of the collected professional reports). In general, all these different collected professional report types were classified as either informational or analytical reports. If the author was only trying to convey information, then he/she had written an informational report, the main objective being to answer readers' questions or to provide the information necessary to make an informed decision. The periodic and progress reports are types of informational reports. Such reports signal the completion of a certain time-task period. Usually, they are written by many employees, each of whom writes a small part. These reports document time spent; they do not indicate directions for future research or raise questions. If the writer were trying to draw conclusions from information or persuade readers to take a desired action, then the written text was an analytical report. The main objective in writing such reports is to use credible facts to support the implementation and highlight the benefits of a certain recommendation. The investigation and recommendation report, since it contrasts several options and guides readers to choosing only one of them and draws conclusions from specific information, is representative of analytical reports. The collected samples were provided as they involved acquainting the employees, specifically the technical graduates who had assumed a post in both corporations, with the report writing approaches followed in these firms. Analysing these documentary reports assisted in investigating whether the standards of the requested product were clear to the employees and whether the employees were able to address such requirements. Unfortunately, I could not include other genres that are practised in the workplaces, like proposals and tender reports, for reasons of confidentiality.

	Corporate 1	Corporate 2	Total
Periodic report	10	10	20
Service/progress report	9	9	18
Investigation and Recommendation report	20	10	30
Total	38	30	68

Table 19: *Genres and Quantity of the Collected Professional Reports*

4.6.3.3.1.2. Participants

I have already discussed the students' and employees' profiles in Section (4.6.3.2.1.1.), through their participation in the semi-structured interviews data collection stage. Accordingly, in this part, I will be brief but explicit about the students and employees who provided the reports for analysis. Seventy-five students and employees took part in this document collection phase of my study. Table 20 presents the profile of the participating students from the three TW courses in each college

	TW 1	TW 2	TC	Total
Male	16	14	18	48
Female	9	11	7	27
Total	25	25	25	75

Table 20: *Students who participated in document collection stage of the study*

Regarding the employees, they were working in the two corporations. All were recommended by management. They used writing to perform their duties, and they had a minimum of two years of working experience in their current job. It should be added that both the students and employees participated on a voluntary basis. The following section elaborates on the procedures followed to analyse these reports.

4.6.3.3.2. Analysis of Documents Data

The document analysis was conducted through reviewing existing hard copy and electronic documents of the gathered report samples. This section explains the procedures followed and approaches applied to analyse the data from these documents. Before commencing the analysis, I decided to exclude features that Microsoft Word could deal with, such as spelling and punctuation and subject-verb agreement. Generally, analysing this study's documents entailed coding their content into themes in terms of certain textual features, namely, the purposes that these writing practices discussed, their patterns of organization and structure, and the language used to write their content. As I began with these categories, they were the starting points for my analysis based on SFL approach's meta-functions of meaning (Halliday, 1977). Table 22 represents what the analysed features were and to which SFL meta-function they were attributed.

Meta-Function	Ideational	Textual	Interpersonal
Represents	what is being talked about in the text	how the text is created	the relationships between (1) the writer and the reader, and (2) the writer and the text
Analysed features	Topics/purposes of the texts	Patterns of organization and structure of the texts	Content readability of the texts (using graphics and illustrations, sentence structuring sentences, using causal connections, use of passive and active voice, and degree of formality)

Table 21:- *the attribution of the analysed features to SFL meta-function*

The analysis yielded information about these features. It also aimed to answer certain questions attached to each of them. For instance, in terms of field, I aimed to find out what were the types of reports that both students and employees wrote about and for what purposes. The aim here was also to identify to what extent the purposes of the reports relate to real workplace objectives and demonstrate real corporations' life topics. The analysis encompassed identifying the purposes that were discussed by the students and the employees in their writings and then counting how many texts were written within each topic carrying a similar purpose. Analysing the objectives would help to examine how achieving such aims had influenced students' and employees' writing because, as Bhatia (1993b) and Johns (1997) argue, there is an intimate relationship between the purposes of a certain text and its other textual features. The analysis also considered why the purposes for which students wrote their reports would not prepare them for the purposes they are expected to write their workplace texts for. It might not be obvious that colleges should try to emulate the types of writing done in the workplace, but considering the workplace purposes when teaching students on TW courses may help teachers determine what might be effective workplace writing for their students' future endeavours (Gains, 1999).

The analysis of the texts' patterns of organization involved investigating how strong the sense of overall organization was in the collected documents, whether

academic or professional. Christie and Dreyfus (2007, p. 236) argue that “the strong organization of the successful text ensures the reader has a clear understanding both of the points made and of the manner in which these are introduced and related to the texts’ overall purposes”. The analysis would consider how the documents were generally organised according to their rhetorical moves. In conducting my analysis and through following the steps outlined in Biber *et al.* (2007, p. 34) and Parkinson (2017, pp 4-5), I developed a protocol of moves for each genre, namely, reports, emails and memos, for coding the texts (for more explanation about generating each protocol, see Section 5.2.). Thus, the analysis would identify what rhetorical moves were applied by students and employees to organize their texts and whether they applied similar or different moves. The analysis would also consider why the moves applied by students might not prepare them for the moves they are expected to follow when writing their workplace texts.

The analysis also incorporated how the texts were thematically structured. Christie and Dreyfus (2007) argue that a text’s organizational strength is apparent in how the themes of a certain piece of writing as well as the constituent sentences and clauses that create those themes are sequenced (*ibid.*). Halliday (1994) describes the theme as the ‘glue’ that structures and binds the ideational (‘what the text is about’) and interpersonal meanings (‘who is involved in the text’), and Forey (2004, p. 157) indicates that it is “an important tool to help understand how a certain text is organized”. I have focused here on thematic progression, which is the author’s “capacity to offer abstract observations about the texts discussed, and later to elaborate on these to develop the discussion” (Christie and Dreyfus, 2007, p. 235), and its role in the organisation of the analysed writing and how it is different among the analysed documents from the two contexts. Theme structure is one of the major structural systems within the textual meta-function in the SFL approach, since it facilitates the development of well-structured text/message, thereby providing cohesion within language. The aim of the analysis was to examine whether students and employees had issues with elaboration while further discussing certain points they initiate in their texts.

With regard to the current study, this feature’s analysis identified how both students and employees thematically organized their texts, whether they were able

to build a sense of overall unity in what is stated in their texts, and to what extent they were able to offer abstract observations about the texts discussed and later to elaborate on these to develop their discussion. To achieve that, I counted texts with (1) relevant elaborations, (2) irrelevant elaborations, and (3) no elaborations; bearing in mind that texts would be labelled as not applicable if any were found with a different thematic structure. The analysis would also consider whether or not the thematic structuring followed by students would prepare them for what they were expected to follow when writing their workplace texts and why.

Last but not least, the analysis sought to find out what the content of these academic and professional documents was. I dealt here with interpersonal metafunction to show how the relationship between the writer and the reader and the writer and the text was established in each text. As it was difficult to cover all the features stated in the texts within the scope of this study, I restricted my analysis to the following features:

- sentence structure
- author's voice
- use of modals to form imperatives

While reading each report, I noted and recorded three variables: (1) how students and employees structured their sentences (i.e., whether in simple form or in complex form where two sentences (or more) with similar or different ideas are connected with each other through conjunctions), (2) how the use of active and passive sentences was deployed in both students' and practitioners' reports to explore whether practitioners' reports incorporated more/fewer passive voice verbs or more/fewer active voice verbs, and (3) use of modal verbs (should, must, etc.) to form imperative sentences. The aim of analysing the sentence structure was to reveal whether employees and students tended to use more simple sentences, that is, sentences containing just one clause, without subordinate clauses attached or other clauses embedded within, or whether they tended to write more complex sentences, with subordinate and embedded clauses that cover multiple ideas in single sentences. For the authors' voice, this was examined through finding out the use of active and passive sentences and the associated use of subjects and modals

(i.e., how frequently students and employees used the active compared to the passive voice and associated personal references). Thus, the analysis incorporated analysing the use of active and passive sentences and the associated use of first person pronouns (we, our, I) to show whether the practitioners used fewer or more passive voice verbs (i.e. more active voice) and more or fewer associated first person pronouns to write their texts than students did. This is an interesting point to look at and was also vital as it informs to what extent the stylistic register used by students and practitioners to write to their readers was different or similar.

Having presented the data collection and analysis methods applied in this study, it is time to present the findings of data analysis. However, I first need to demonstrate that the chosen methods were convincing in terms of quality and relevance and the ethical considerations were practically addressed. The following sections (4.8. & 4.9.) discuss the trustworthiness of the present study and the ethical considerations addressed while collecting data respectively.

4.7. Trustworthiness of the Research

Rigour in research tends to be assessed in different ways in multi-methods research. For quantitative data, judgments are usually made in terms of reliability, validity, and objectivity whereas qualitative data work with alternative but roughly corresponding concepts of confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability. These concepts are united under the term 'trustworthiness of research'. Creswell and Miller (2000, pp.125-126) state that "the validity procedures reflected in the constructivists' thinking present criteria with labels distinct from quantitative approaches, such as trustworthiness". Trustworthiness refers to the confidence or trust one can have in a study and its findings (Robson & McCartan, 2016). It encompasses applying the four aspects of confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability to assess the quality of the research (Cohen *et al.*, 2018; Richards and Morse, 2012; Morse *et al.*, 2002; Creswell and Miller, 2000). As I gathered mainly qualitative data in this research, I will explain how the trustworthiness of these data was realized.

Confirmability in qualitative research depends on "making the data available to the reader and this in turn depends on the transparency of representation" (Richards,

2009, p.160). To ensure the confirmability of my conducted study, there were "richer representations, with participants' voices and perspectives emerging clearly" (ibid.) as that guaranteed that the findings were conveying the participants' points of view and that they were not biased by the researcher (Shenton, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This description was compatible with the main goals of the current study. Since the subject being investigated was the factors of mismatch between students' technical writing in the university context and their technical writing in their expected future career context, this topic had dominated the discussion sections. In addition, the participants' opinions were delivered to the reader without any bias for one side over another.

Dependability in qualitative research "involves an interrogation of the context and the methods used to derive the data" (Richards, 2009, p.159). It also entails variation between people and contexts to provide "trackable variance" (Guba, 1981, p. 18). Such interrogation and variation were accomplished by explaining how the methodology suited the aims of the research, what were the best methods to gather data, how such methods were applied to achieve that, and how these data were analysed and processed. This, in fact, has been achieved throughout this thesis. For example, as explained in the preceding section, I have highlighted the appropriateness of the methodological approach adopted in this research study to investigate the Omani technical students' and employees' experiences and their teachers' and future employers' perceptions of TW in the academic and professional contexts. It was also achieved through applying multiple methods to collect a variety of data from multiple participants' perspectives to enrich understanding and explain the context.

Credibility is associated with "the focus of the research and refers to confidence in how well the data and the processes of analysis address the intended focus" (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p.109). The current study's credibility was achieved by ascertaining its aims, indicating its research fieldwork and samples, and identifying the techniques used to collect data. To establish such credibility, the use of the following methods was indispensable. First, a multi-methods design was used to search "for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories" in this study (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.126). The

significance of using it was that it provided “evidence(s) collected through multiple methods [...] to locate major and minor themes” (ibid, p.127) rather than depending on solitary proofs to support the researcher's arguments. Throughout the current investigation, the multi-methods design was achieved by implementing methods of semi-structured interviews and document analysis to elicit and collect data from multiple sources, namely, students, teachers, coordinators, employees, and employers. Another method involved prolonged engagement in the field, as “the longer (the constructivist) stays in the field, the more the pluralistic perspective were heard from participants and the better the understanding of the context of participant views” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.128). I spent around six months on the research site for the purpose of data collection to achieve such a prolonged engagement in the field.

Moreover, in order to ensure accuracy of the recorded data and presentation of participants' views, member checking (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was planned to be conducted. Through the process of member checking, the researcher can ask one or more of the study participants to check the accuracy of the accounts (Creswell, 2009). I planned to choose a number of my participants and send each one the transcript and an extended summary of the interview done with each requesting them to verify its accuracy. However, the distance precluded participants cross checking the transcripts and my interpretations. Yet, and in an informal sense, member checks were carried out verbally throughout the conduct of interviews. I was verbally summarising the answers of the participants who preferred their interviews to be conducted in Arabic and then translating the summary from Arabic to English to validate their answers. Although they confirmed the accuracy of the translation, two participants needed to clarify their views and elaborate with further details about the meaning of some comments made during the interview. Furthermore, I conducted an external audit where I asked colleagues (people outside the project) to conduct a thorough review of the consistency in coding and thematic categorisation (Paulus, et al., 2017; Creswell, 2009). After coding the interview transcripts and categorising the themes for all qualitative data, I asked two colleagues who are not associated with the study (my wife and a friend of mine who both teach English in HE institutions and doing their PhD studies in the University of Exeter) to look at the data, my codes and themes. They looked at it first, and then I sat with each of them separately and

discussed the codes and themes. Approximate Inter-coder agreement was assessed and achieved.

Transferability refers to the possible use or applicability of the results reached with new research environments (Richards, 2009). This findings of the study are transferable, as they form a basis or foundation for other studies to be conducted in tertiary CoTs and other higher education institutions either in or beyond Oman, as they depend heavily on assessing students through academic writing, and their educators need such a study to overcome their students' writing dilemmas. It also established a foundation for the stakeholders of the Omani workplace to launch further studies that could help them save time, money, and effort consumed in equipping new employees with skills they are supposed to have mastered before assuming a post in these organizations.

4.8. Ethical Considerations

Research associations, like the British Educational Research Association (BERA), promote ethical guidelines, most of which are concerned with themes such as harm, consent, privacy, and confidentiality, to help researchers carry out their research projects. I concur with Yee and Andrews (2006) that such ethical guidelines are vital for researchers. This section reflects upon the methods used to address the ethical considerations in the present study.

One of the significant ethical issues considered when conducting educational research is that of the researcher being granted access and acceptance by the organization to carry out the fieldwork required (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Thus, as a researcher, I needed to request official permission to conduct the study from the institutions' governing bodies or from the ministerial departments that govern these colleges. Accordingly, I acquired a requesting letter from the Directorate General of Technical Education explaining the nature of the research and the types of data to be collected to demonstrate the necessary cooperation and assistance I would require in conducting the study (see Appendix 6). As stated earlier, as I had previously worked in the CoTs as a lecturer and currently work as Assistant Dean of student affairs and partnerships, this led to me having excellent relationships with the deans of these colleges, the heads of their academic departments including English

Language Centres, and the employers who have partnerships with the colleges. This assisted my entree and my acceptance to my study's research sites, which were the colleges and the workplaces I conducted my research.

Informed consent was another aspect of the ethical considerations for this research, as it is a principle of respect for research participants. BERA (2011) clearly states the requirement that "participants in a research study, or their guardians, have the right to be informed about the likely risks and potential consequences involved in participating in the research." According to Patton (2002, p.407), gaining informed consent "involves providing the participants with information on the purpose of the research, the party for whom the data is being gathered, the use of the data, the questions to be asked, and the risks and/or benefits for the person being interviewed". Before beginning this study, the required information about the research was provided to the participants to seek their formal, written agreement to participate in the study. They were told that participating in the research was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the research whenever they felt that they might need to do so.

My concern here was that as I had taught some of the students participating in the research, it was difficult for me to be certain whether the students had consented voluntarily or if my authority as their teacher had compelled them to participate. If the latter, then the data might have been affected, as students might have appeared to cooperate out of concern over how they would be graded in the present or future courses if they had not consented. Stocker (2012) recruited his students as research participants in the Taiwanese higher education context and found that "students' involuntary consent-based participation was high because teachers had authority over students, and students were powerless to express their objections as such action might have negative consequences on their grading system". Therefore, I had to develop a research plan that included an ethical method of obtaining participants' consent in a total voluntarily way rather than because of pressures, such as undue inducement or coercion. It was important to make sure that participants, especially students, were aware of the ethical concerns related to the data collection procedures, for example, their freedom to participate and that no harm would happen

as a result of their withdrawal. Thus, consent of participants was attained in each phase of data collection.

As I work as the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs in College 2 and used to work as English language lecturer in CoTs 1 and 3, which could have had a negative influence on the students and teachers participating in the study. For example, the teachers might not have felt free to comment about issues they considered sensitive, such as college policies and practices, for fear of being harmed by such revelations. Al-Husseini (2004) found that interviewees in third world countries are more "reluctant to criticize government plans and they do not want to discuss questions about policies" (p.69). Therefore, it was imperative for me to make sure that while conducting my study, my participants had no such fears, and that I could guarantee them the total anonymity of their responses, as their answers were only for research purposes without any future consequences for their job prospects at the college. Therefore, as neither I nor the teachers or students at the CoTs can make any changes to the existing practices, I avoided asking such sensitive questions during the interviews.

Granting confidentiality and anonymity to participants involves "disguising the identities of the participants to ensure that their privacy and anonymity is protected" (Patton, 2002, p.411). The anonymity and confidentiality of participants was taken into account throughout the study (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Thus, they were assured that their names, colleges, or workplaces would not be revealed. While analysing the data, participants were identified by a symbol representing the department and the interviewing order rather than names; accordingly, findings were conveyed anonymously. For instance, TWT6 indicated a teacher who was the sixth TW teacher to be interviewed. The indication of the departments was only for the purpose of comparing the responses given.

4.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined and discussed the theoretical, philosophical, and methodological underpinnings of my research. The discussion of the research design process outlined the reasons for adopting a case study approach, the methods of data collection, the sampling process, and data analysis procedures. Finally, I

explained the steps taken to guarantee the trustworthiness of my data and the ethical considerations which underpinned this process. I discussed how the trustworthiness of the study was established through addressing the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In addition, I explained the measures taken to address the ethical considerations of acceptance and access to research sites, informed consent, avoidance of harm, anonymity, and confidentiality of participants. The present study followed the constructivist-interpretive research paradigm that stressed the subjectivity and multiplicity of people's construction of their experiences. Through employing multiple research methods of documents analysis of academic and professional reports written by students and employees respectively and of semi-structured interviews with technical students, TW teachers, PF-coordinators, and employees and their employers, this study generated rich data with the aim of obtaining multiple perspectives from the key players directly involved in the issue on the topic of students' technical writing. The following chapter presents the findings reached through analysing these data.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1. Introduction

The aim here is to investigate writing in the CoT and workplace. Data to be presented in succeeding sections of this chapter was collected through: (1) what informants said during interviews, which opened a window on the nature of the learning environment in both spheres; and (2) gathering documents relevant to students and employees writing in academia and workplace contexts. By utilising these two research instruments, and by involving participants from both environments, the workplace and academia, this study built up a detailed picture of stakeholders' perceptions, practices, needs and expectations in both worlds. The analysed data is accompanied, where appropriate, by authentic examples of academic and workplace writing.

The qualitative data collected through research interviews was prioritised over quantitative data collected through document analysis due to the study's ethnographic qualities. This relates to the study's main purposes, which was to understand the multiple perspectives of individuals (i.e. stakeholders of students, teachers, course coordinators and employees and their employers), and understand the texts as reflecting these social and cultural perspectives in both the tertiary and corporate contexts in Oman, with regard to perceptions of the factors that influence the graduates' ability to write reports in line with their future employers expectations and their insight on how to enhance TW curricula at the Omani CoT. Accordingly, this findings chapter is divided into two main parts that reflect these key areas and correspond to the main research questions that guided this study. Within each section, I present the findings of the discussed research questions, through the presentation of themes and sub-themes or categories as illustrated in Chapter 4, Section 4.6.). In the first section, I present the findings reached through analysing semi-structured interview data. The aim of this section is to explore the complexities surrounding students' negotiating of technical writing within the two contexts of the study, CoT and corporations. These complexities are based on the framework which was developed based on the analysis of the data and the literature review. Thus, the attempt is to capture the interconnectedness of various factors, either personal or contextual, affecting students' initial experience with writing for academic or

professional purposes. This will be aligned with discussion on the influence of each element on students' perception of their writing experience during the post-foundation years of the degree programme. In Chapter 3: Literature Review (Section 3.4.4), the difficulties facing undergraduates while practicing writing were categorised into difficulties related to the writing process itself and those pertaining to the wider context. This findings section follows a similar structure to understand the CoT graduates' difficulty in writing reports in line with their employers' expectations. There were assignment-related factors and contextual factors. Each factor represents a certain main theme as following:

1. Assignment-related factors:

- Understanding of writing quality
- Tasks authenticity
- Awareness of audience

2. Contextual factors:

- Absence of coordination between colleges and corporations

The assignment-related factors are to be depicted first, followed by factors pertaining to the wider college and workplace contexts. The aim here is to clarify why graduates are often seen by employers as struggling to produce the requested reports by employers from the stakeholders' perceptions. When first asked about these factors, most interviewees showed limited understanding of what factors might play a role in the investigated issue. Thus, it was not surprising that their responses tended to be limited. When questioned in greater depth about their experiences, however, their comments were more nuanced. Table 23 explains the symbols used to indicate the sources of citations in this chapter.

Symbol	Source of citations
TWT 1,2,3,4,5 PF-Cord 1,2 TSs 1,2,3,4,5,6 Mang 1,2 Emplo 1,2,3,4	Technical Writing teachers' interviews Post-foundation coordinators interviews Technical students' interviews Employers/Managers interviews Employees interviews

Table 22: *Symbols used to indicate the sources of citations*

This section will be followed by a detailed analysis of the collected documents in Section (5.3.) which will focus on presenting the differences between technical reports produced by students in the CoT context and reports written by employees in the corporate context. Using examples from the gathered samples, this section and its subsections seek to offer possible answers to the raised question about how workplace texts differ from the academic ones. In my analysis, I adopted the SFL theoretical framework, specifically through illustrating the ideational, textual and interpersonal functions of language (see Section 4.2.2.3.). To do so, the analysis considered:

- Ideational meta-function: (what the text is about)
 - Types and purposes of the texts;
- Textual meta-function: (how the text is created/presented)
 - Patterns of organising and structuring the analysed texts;
- Interpersonal meta-function: (how the writer-reader's relation is expressed)
 - Sentence structure: simple or compound sentences
 - Use of passive and active voice
 - Stylistic register: use of modal verbs (should, must, etc.) to form imperative sentences

5.2. Factors of Graduates' Difficulty to Write Technical Reports as Expected by their Future Employers

The participants perceived three main factors to be accounted for in the graduates' difficulty with producing technical reports, as expected by their employers. These three factors were:

- Difference in stakeholders' perceptions quality and authenticity of writing;
- Difference between academic and professional audience; and
- A perceived absence of coordination between colleges and corporations

5.2.1. Difference in Conceiving Writing Quality and Authenticity

Given the different emphasis highlighted by stakeholders, the data suggests that understandings of quality were attached to different criteria and different emphases in the tasks set. The following account explores these perceptions of quality in more detail. To Leki (1995, p.41), good writing is the writing "that meets particular

requirements set for a particular readership at a particular time and place". Therefore, it was important to include the views of those participants who set up report writing tasks either in academic settings (language lecturers and PF coordinators) or in the workplace (managers) and ask them about their views on what, to them, makes a good piece of writing. It is important to obtain answers from workplace managers, as these managers are able to articulate their understanding of the writing ability of graduates of the CoT in the work environment. A view likely to be influenced by the writing practices of the work environment. They can offer an insight into whether or not the colleges have succeeded in equipping students with the writing skills they need when entering the workplace. Their replies might inform the CoT in evaluating the authenticity of the tasks they set up as part of the technical report writing programmes so that graduates may be better prepared when joining the workplace. The views of the different stakeholders will be explored separately, compared, contrasted, and discussed so as to provide an account of informants' views in depth. Analysis of the interviewees' responses revealed that they have different views regarding this topic.

There were, amongst my sample, those who raised questions and had some insight into the difference in the instructions for writing academic and professional reports. There was a view that the two contexts valued different things: that in the workplace the focus mostly was on the purpose of the text while in academia the focus was on language use. Employees, for instance, see technical writing as something that has specific purposes whereas they consider tasks to reflect more general objectives at academia. Emplo 1 illustrated this opinion in her following extract:

"As far as academic, technical writing is concerned very general, the topics that we get there in college for technical writing are very generic and I would say that they are not at the scale of what an employer or what people at workplace would expect from you. Once you come into your workplace the whole technical writing perspective depends on what you're doing..."

Similarly, Emplo 2 stated that grammar and spelling are featured highly at academia, yet in the workplace the focus is more on *"the message of the text is clear, specific and the writer can convey it successfully"* in their writing. Emplo 3 added that:

“at the workplace, sometimes the writer pays less attention to grammar while writing but at academia grammar and spelling are always checked”

من ناحيه بيئه العمل احيانا الشخص لا يهتم بالقواعد اثناء الكتابه لكن في مكان التدريس(الكلية) كثيرا يتم الملاحظه والتدقيق في الاملاء والقواعد

Yet, he/she included language into her criteria to judge a good technical text by stating that:

“it sometimes can be judged through the idea to be delivered to the reader, through the writer’s selectivity of the vocabulary, good spelling and grammar”

احيانا يكون من خلال الفكره المراد توصيلها للقارئ وانتقاء الكلمات التي استخدمها الكاتب وطريقه كتابه النص من خلال الاملاء واستخدام القواعد الصحيحه

which shows that this employee does think language is important.

The employees generally affirmed that such differences lead to a state of frustration and confusion among them as they, on one hand, are asked to submit professional assignments without being properly trained in academia in how to write workplace texts. This puts them in a need for more time to complete these workplace-writing tasks. On the other hand, academically, they had to abide by their tutors’ instructions, which mainly focused on linguistic features as explained earlier, to complete the required assignments. Being lost between the requirements and perceptions of the two contexts’ stakeholders, academia and workplace, the result will be variance in conceptualising the quality of their produced texts in these two contexts, and thus inconsistency in these texts’ features.

Reflecting the views of their employees, the managers advocated criteria to judge a successful technical writing text as needing to focus more on the communicative purposes of the essays and on considering the audience of the text. That may explain why all their criteria of good technical writing revolved around getting the ideas across to the reader in a clear, logical and succinct way. According to Mang 2,

“a good technical writing text should have the information required in a very simple manner in a way when you write it in an organisation where mostly the texts go to your higher management”.

She/he added that:

“it has to be to the point, it has to be thorough. However, it has all the information required to deliver a certain message”.

Mang 2 explained that *“to the point but captured enough information”* means the writer:

“gives the conclusion of that report in a very short way because I don’t have time, we have hundreds of positions, I wouldn’t go and read a full report.”

Mang 1 emphasised this point by indicating that a good text/report should be:

“brief to the point, focused, and the text should actually communicate the important information to the reader without the recipient needs to reverse back repeatedly, asking for more information or clarifications.”

He/she elaborated that the writing that reports workplace activities: *“must be first and most important, concise, clear, and to the point in order to be useful”.*

Considering the various readers was another vital component in producing a good piece of writing, according to the managers. A piece of writing concerns not only the writer but also the reader, a fact pointed out by my interviewed managers. Mang 1 said:

“There should be a level of awareness of different language expressions that suits different contexts and different audiences.”

He/she added that:

“there should a level of carefulness and sensitivity while writing to the customers, employees, line managers, etc”.

Whereas Mang 2 believes that:

“writing to different levels of audience is critical and very important for their career development”.

He/she exemplified that:

“for the first line managers they should be able to write detailed reports, and then for the top management they have to write few lines”.

The fact that workplace writers clearly need to write different types of reports reminds us of the necessity to expose writers to a wide variety of technical and non-technical genres. Mang 2 claimed that graduates *“need to follow certain templates”*

to write their reports as “*they do not know which format to follow*” when writing certain reports. This is especially, “*problematic, from their perspective*”, because the report genres are highly practised at workplace. It is worth noting that employers here might infer that students at CoT seem to lack the desirable exposure to the wide range of report genres requested in the workplace as they are not, during their TW classes, exposed to such variety in report writing tasks. From the above-mentioned extracts of employers, it is apparent that the qualities of being concise, direct, and clarity in writing were the obvious first priority.

In contrast language lecturers have a rather different perspective than that of the employers on what makes a piece of writing good. They mentioned task relevance, adherence to grammatical and spelling conventions, authenticity and connection to workplace requirements. TWT 4 identified that:

“successful technical writing is when the students meet all the expected criteria given in the question, and have the ability to produce required type of writing, for example use the right kind of vocabulary and expression”

This teacher mentioned meeting and producing the expected answer, text or report by the tutor as the first criterion for judging successful writing. To exemplify, he/she talked about the feature of using the right kind of vocabulary and expressions throughout the text. He/she elaborated by emphasising that the writer’s inability to understand what is required in the task and thus produce it as expected by the reader, either a tutor or an end user, is an indicative of poor quality of writing as the following quotation implies:

“whereas unsuccessful writing is when students do not understand the question and do not meet the criteria or fail to recognise the task”

In some ways this seems to echo the views of the employees. It is possible that teachers value similar criteria to those of the employers but do not have the same view of what it is to meet these criteria. TWT 3 also prioritised the task relevance by suggesting ‘*students’ understanding of the task requirements*’ as a measure to do the task. Again, this seems to emphasise the purpose of the task rather than the language and so seems to have some sympathy with the employers’ viewpoint. Here there may be a similarity of perspective with the employers but a difference in terms of the nature of the task itself. So, both managers and lecturers talk about the

importance of the purpose of the task but still might be talking about very different kinds of tasks. A similar point was mentioned by TW5, who was the only teacher who connected quality in technical writing to the requirements of workplaces by perceiving a good technical writing text as the one which: “should be closer to any workplace demands”. In her elaboration, however, she also suggested a similar criterion to the one suggested by the other teachers, namely “*covering the requirements of the task or not*”. Such similarity was stated also by TWT 2, who stated his/her opinion about good academic writing as well by saying:

“it should be authentic, represents overall understanding of what is being discussed and the student should see the link between the writing they are doing in English and their other subjects”,

Here, TWT 2 did not limit his/her criteria to only representing how the student correctly understood what is required in the task but also indicated that a good technical writing text should be authentic and should be linked to the writing practices of their major specialisation. This emphasising of authenticity and the workplace was interesting in light of the employers’ comments. This informant also stressed the importance of formal accuracy and the correct use of mechanics including punctuation, spelling and grammatical correctness. TWT 2 claimed that: “*students think spelling and punctuation aren’t important*”, which he/she found “*frustrating*” because “*all parts of the language are important*”. He/she argues that:

“not having the words in the correct order or in the right form that suits the context of the text confuses the reader as to the meaning of the sentence”.

As was the case with the technical writing teachers, the course coordinators had approximately similar views about features of good technical writing. They mentioned achieving task requirements, adherence to grammatical and vocabulary conventions, critical thinking and quality of the technical writing taught to students. For example, PF-Cord 2 believes that:

“it depends on the type of technical writing, so each type of writing has its own requirements that would determine whether it is good or not”.

This seems to be referring to some notion of contextual appropriateness. Yet, it also indicates that this coordinator’s criteria correspond to the views of most of the teachers mentioned above. He/she went further to cite scientific lab reports as an example and justified that to have a good technical lab report a student needs to

know: “the parts of the lab report and how to write each of them in terms of content, vocab and grammar”. He/she also added “critical thinking” as another measure of good quality reports, by asserting that students’ *critical thinking* is their understanding of “how to analyse results, and how to interpret the results”. The other coordinator, PF Cord 1, linked the good quality of any technical writing text to: “the quality of the technical writing courses”.

The above analysis of the stakeholders’ interviews revealed that there is variance and similarity among participants in conceiving academic and professional writing tasks. Table 24 summarises informants' views.

Feature	Employees	Employers	TW Teachers	PF- Coordinators
1. Clarity/unambiguousness	√	√	×	×
2. Directness (to the point)	√	√	×	×
3. Considering the audience	×	√	×	×
4. Task relevance	×	×	√	×
5. Adherence to conventions of grammar and spelling	√	×	√	√
6. Authenticity	√	×	√	×
7. Connection to workplace requirements	√	√	√	×
8. Critical thinking	×	×	×	√
9. Quality of TW taught to students	×	×	×	√

Table 23: Informants' views on the features of a good piece of writing

Most lecturers and PF-Coordiators focused more on placing task relevance and conventions of grammar and spelling as main features of a good technical writing text. In fact, relevance and conventions of grammar and spelling were mentioned by

all informants, apart from employers. Critical thinking and quality of the taught writing were pinpointed by course coordinators only. Employers, contrarily, placed grammar and spelling at a lesser degree of importance and emphasised more on the features of clarity of the ideas, the communicative functions of the reports (i.e. the ability of the essay to communicate to the reader the ideas, the message or the information in a clear and logical manner) and on considering the audience. Thus, a good technical writing product was, from their perspective, the one that could deliver a clear, direct and to the point message to the reader. An interesting finding from the table was that there are features pertinent to the workplace and are raised by teachers correspondingly. What makes it an interesting finding is its indication of teachers' awareness of workplace needs even if they do not appear to mirror the workplace effectively. To sum up, this table can be summarised as a workplace emphasis on efficiency of language use, a teachers' focus on relevancy, even if this is not well matched to the workplace, and a coordinators' focus on textual and conceptual quality.

Participants, based on their perceptions of a good report, were also at variance in perceiving students' readiness to write such reports. With most of the teachers and post-foundation coordinators arguing that students, after being taught TW courses, are ready for writing academically and professionally whereas students, employers and their employees debate oppositely that they are still not ready. For example, most of the interviewed technical writing teachers indicated that students, after taking the TW courses, are supposed to be ready for the types of writing that they are asked to do in their workplace. This view has been stated by TWT 5 who claimed that:

“Yes, they are ready. Students are taught to write memos, emails and giving instructions. These kinds of writing are essentials at the workplace”.

This teacher asserted that the tasks students practice in TW courses are essentials in the workplaces and that means, from her point of view, students are ready to do such tasks once they join their future careers. A similar perception was reported by TWT 3 who mentioned examples of tasks that students, regardless of the profession they are in, would practice in their future workplace. He/she went further and suggested that:

“students in business industry may conduct feasibility studies where they gather data and find out different facts and then interpret the collected data or may be obliged to write an incident report because they work as employees in the private sector and they have to report on something that happened in front of them”,

and since *“all of these things are taught to students in the TW courses”* as at academia *“the tasks and assignments of TW courses are relevant output for students at this level because in the real world they are asked to do such practices”* then TWT 3 believes that *“they are relevant to the workplace context”*. Such relevancy and students’ ability to carry similar practices from his/her point of view means adequate preparedness or readiness to write for workplace purposes. TWT 4 was also in line with this view and argued that the TW courses’ curricula have been prepared to equip students with market needs, thus pre-fabricated sentences/expressions and vocabulary are provided to meet the requirement of such given tasks. According to TWT 4:

“Yes, they are ready. The syllabus and delivery plans are prepared keeping in mind the requirements of the marketplace”.

This idea of students’ readiness for workplace writing practices emerged among the PF-coordinators as well. PF-Cord 1, for example, was in line with the teachers’ point of view and suggested that:

“students are ready to write workplace tasks because they have achieved high grades in the disciplinary courses and assessment in these courses depends heavily on written assignments”.

Such a statement was opposed by almost all the interviewed students who stated that they are not prepared for the writing tasks of the workplace. For example, ITSs1 claimed that students are not ready to write in the workplace. He blamed the content of TW courses and had some insights into the different requirements of the two contexts. This can be inferred from the following extract by ITSs1, who said:

“we as students are not ready to write in the workplace as we just write what our teacher requires. We do not pretend to be employees or technicians or to have a problem that we may encounter in our future workplace”.

نحن كطلاب غير مستعدين للكتابة المتطلبه منا في بيئة العمل لعدة اسباب مثلا انا بالنسبه

لي كطالب أفعل ما يخبرني المعلم في كتابة النص وينظر المدرس ماذا كتبت. ليس هناك تهيئه لنا باننا موظفين او فنيين او تمثيل لمشكلة قد نواجهها مستقبلا في بيئة العمل

ITSs 1 mentioned in this extract the reasons why they, as students, are under-prepared for professional writing. The reason for this observation that, as ITSs 1 suggested, there are differences in the writing requirements and the conditions under which students are completing their writing tasks in academia and in the workplace but students still only write what they are instructed to do by their tutors. Unfortunately, there was no provision made to train students on the expected workplace functions of writing. TWT 2 was the only teacher among my participants who thought that students are not aware yet of the workplace writing requirements. He/she agreed with ITS 1 and commented on the disjuncture between what students are taught and the types of reports tasks required at workplaces:

“Generally speaking, the written communication we do here, like people in higher authority like managers and supervisors do writing emails, memos, researches, reports, etc. It is a good idea to teach them such high level practices, but they are not going to use the English they are learning here until they become managers or supervisors. How many years do they need until that is going to be?”

It is explicit that this teacher stands in contrast to the other teachers' general opinion of denying students' under-preparedness for workplace writing as explained earlier in this section. He/she thinks *“the TW courses' content goes beyond what is needed in the workplace”*. This indicates that teachers might be aware that writing in a workplace environment is different from writing in a university/college environment and the latter is based on formal and intentionally planned educational activities while the former is mostly depending on various situational requirements such as customers' services or proposing for tenders. Although the other teachers did not say this explicitly, yet their range of tasks and focus on language use suggest that this might be the case. So, a possible interpretation of this is not that the taught programmes might not be a poor match for the workplace but that the workplace is a place of limitations in terms of language use and that it, the workplace, does not appreciate the sophistication of the taught programmes. This might mean that teachers have a broader view of the skills needed and are preparing students for a career not for a job. The teacher's role might be viewed as looking beyond 'training' to a wider sense of 'education' and learning transferable skills. Thus, the

teacher much perspective view that the task should reflect the students' ability is important because it is focusing on learning and development but not simply on meeting the needs of the employer. Their role is more student-focused. This indicates the value of the lecturers' pedagogic knowhow to develop students.

Going back to the disjuncture between what students are taught and the types of reports tasks required at workplaces, the employees argued that this led to a state of frustration and confusion among them as they, on one hand, are asked to submit professional assignments without being properly trained in academia in how to write workplace texts. This puts them in a position of needing more time to complete these workplace-writing tasks. On the other hand, academically, they had to abide by their tutors' instructions, which mainly focused on linguistic features as explained earlier, to complete the required assignments. Being lost between the requirements and perceptions of the two contexts' stakeholders, academia and workplace, the result will be variance in conceptualising the quality of their produced texts in these two contexts and thus inconsistency in these texts' features.

In brief, it seems here that the five groups of participants, namely: employers, teachers, coordinators, students and employees, have varying perceptions of the CoT graduates' preparedness to write workplace reports. Employees, for example, claimed that difference in the requirement of writing academic and professional reports is a factor of difference between academic and professional reports. Employers, based on their perspectives of a good report, also claimed that graduates are not ready to produce such type of reports. They argued that there are certain skills that graduates need to be equipped with in order to produce such reports. Most of the TWT and PF-Coordinators disagreed with the employers and claimed that students are ready to produce workplace reports, yet they agreed with employers that graduates lack certain skills. Graduates and employees also listed a group of skills that they think they need to be equipped with prior to holding a post.

After citing the participants' various views about the characteristics of a good technical writing text and whether graduates are ready or not ready to write the reports the workplace requires of them, there was a need to understand the aspects that these groups of participants think are behind students' under-preparedness. This may be of assistance in explaining how different perspectives on these

requirements is a factor that results in students facing difficulty in producing reports in line with their future employers' requirements.

5.2.2. Aspects of Students' Under-Preparedness

This section analyses the nature of these aspects. Identifying such aspects is an “essential component in designing any ESP programme” (Obaid, 2009, p. 144) and TW courses in the Omani context are no exception. It is important also to listen to and consider the perception of the people who are dealing with these learners in order to have a comprehensive picture of what ought to be done to benefit students and improve their linguistic language needs. Therefore, it was important for me to ask what these aspects are and get the answers from people who are in direct and immediate contact with them, such as TW lecturers, students, courses coordinators, employees and workplace managers. By considering the perception of these different stakeholders, the course coordinators may be able to design a curriculum that better facilitates the graduates' transition into the workplace. In particular, academics and professionals highlighted the aspects of:

- Lack of teachers' specialised knowledge
- Students' low level of English language
- Student/graduate's attitude
- Absence of specialisation (streaming)
- Absence of guiding feedback
- Absence of training on writing job-oriented type of reports/assignments

5.2.2.1. Lack of Teacher's Specialised Knowledge or Students' Low Level of English Language

The aspect of teacher was discussed in two main views by the participants. On one hand, interviewees believe that the era of globalisation in the 21st century, where there is increasing mobility of graduate professionals, has placed a tremendous impact on the employers' demands of prospective technical students. This means that lecturers need to be equipped with an understanding of these demands, especially the communicative written ones. With such knowledge, lecturers would be able to make learning more relevant and meaningful to ease the transition of undergraduates from an academic setting to a workplace environment.

Such a view was emphasised by the interviewed students as they blamed the absence of specialised teachers to teach such courses. EngSs 1, for example, stated that they as students are:

“taught by teachers who are not specialised. It is better if we are taught by a teacher from a similar discipline because he knows what the course includes and what a student needs to learn in this course for his future workplace.”

انه يكون هناك مدرس من نفس التخصص لأنه يعرف ماذا يحتوي هذا التخصص وماذا يحتاج الطالب تعلمه من أجل بيئة العمل في المستقبل.

This was also highlighted by PF-Cord 2, who acknowledged the responsibility of the teachers in the difficulties students face with writing. He/she indicated that:

“the nature of the academic TW tasks requires specific skills like research skills (e.g. paraphrasing); however, there is no provision made to train students in these skills before they start writing their first disciplinary assignment as some teachers themselves do not know how to teach some skills like paraphrasing”.

On the other hand, teachers believe that when students do not understand the task they will fail to adhere to task requirements. TWT 3 suggested some negative consequences, like boredom, when students find tasks challenging.

“If the text is very challenging in the part of the students, the student then will get bored because they do not understand anything.”

This teacher seemed to be focusing more on the students' comprehension of the writing task. Thus, according to him/her, *“a good technical writing text should be based on the ability of the student”* to achieve the requested aims. It seems here that the belief is that a teacher is not only concerned with the needs of the employer but also with the learning needs of the student. If employers have a more limited set of writing requirements (brevity and specificity), does that mean that an educator should only consider these as pertinent to a students' education. Isn't it the job of education to consider a broader perspective than simply tailoring skills to a particular employment need?

Teachers believed that students might not be trained well on how to incorporate some skills into the different sections of the reports or other types of assignments. Nevertheless, they cannot let students carry out the assignment without making sure

that they understood how to use these skills in their texts. A plausible explanation may be that it was a personal initiative from these teachers which may not be a standardised practice among all the teachers in the college. This may explain the discrepancies in the teachers' and students' views regarding this issue. PF-Cord 2 assured such explanation by stating that:

“having teachers paying attention to equip students with such skills, that students are supposed to study previously, makes them astray away from the courses objectives and consume the courses' allocated-timing inappropriately.”

Interestingly, he/she continued to infer that other teachers who have the knowledge are not able to try training students practicing such types of writing before transitioning to PFY, because of the students' low level. PF-Cord 2 added:

“...but, because of the level of students that we get, the students who join the technical colleges from high schools are not ready for the level of technical English required at the specialisations”.

PF-Cord 2 exemplified that students lack basic research skills in English and moving from writing paragraphs and essays in the foundation year programme to writing researched reports in post-foundation proved to be a difficult transition for most students. He/she stated that in the following extract:

“I don't think that there is a lot of matching between what is done in the foundation programme and what is required in the specialisations. If we talk about writing, in the foundation year, the writing is mostly essays, this is fine for a foundation year, but if we look at the post-foundation level, there are other types of writing more important than essays.”

He/she voiced his/her disapproval about asking students only to write short essays to help them acquire the necessary competency to write their assignments successfully. Alternatively, he/she emphasised that there are other types of writing assignments more important than essays, and that teachers should ask their students to practice these in TW courses.

“Students at the foundation level have to conduct a survey and write a report and then present their results. Survey reports are not very important for specialisation study compared to other types of reports like lab reports.”

Thus, TW teachers, according to PF-Cord 2, seemed to be not quite sure about how to solve the perceived dilemma of the disjuncture between assignments/writing requirements and the students' low language level. On the one hand, they want to help students acquire the necessary competency in order to write their assignments successfully. However, if they do that, then they will find themselves not teaching the syllabus and straying away from the aims and objectives of the TW courses. That makes teachers, according to PF-Cord 2, *"spend too much time, in class specifically, preparing students focusing on improving their writing abilities in general and on revising stuff that students should have learnt previously in FYP"*, whereas they should train them to write the required assignments and help them *"acquire the new TW skills needed for higher education and future workplace"*. PF-Cord 2 suggested *"using E-learning resources, for example Moodle, to practice any general supportive skills"*.

In fact, this raises an interesting tension as whether lack of specialisation in programmes is due to teachers' lack of knowledge, students' lack of preparedness, or both. It also keeps me asking, how good is a teacher who ignores where the learner is?

In commenting on the students' level in writing, almost all teachers maintained that the main problems students have are in grammar, spelling and punctuation. In the next example, TWT 2 pointed out this view about students' writing by claiming that:

"Generally, I find here that the students' level of grammar is not good; the level of spelling and punctuation is not good..."

TWT 5 also expressed her agreement with this view by stating that students mainly have difficulties with *"grammar, organisation, and spelling"*. TWT 3 also agreed with this point of view and suggested, for example, that:

"Not all students know how to come up with a passive structure or how to use the simple past tense".

He/she explained that *"students cannot communicate the message that they wanted to say in good sentences with correct vocabulary"* and *"they do not know how to organise their ideas"* or *"how to express their thoughts"*. This suggests that, interestingly, he/she goes beyond the features of grammar,

structure and spelling to suggest that content features are also important. Thus, she recommended, as shown in the following extract, that students firstly need to look after the content of their texts and then the other linguistic matters like grammatical structure, spelling, and punctuation. TWT 3 described the content that students should consider by saying:

“One of the things is the content, is there a meaning in the sentence? Is there a meaning in the text that you are trying to write? Do you have the main idea? Are the supporting details there? Is there cohesion and coherence? And then the other features like grammatical structure, etc.”

When I asked the students to specify the problems that they face with writing or what do they think they need the most to improve their TW, all of them mentioned grammar and spelling as the major areas of difficulty. For example, BusSs 2 suggested that:

“grammar and spelling of new vocabulary, especially if they are not related to our specialisation.”

قواعد اللغة والإملاء من المفردات الجديدة، وخاصة إذا كانت لا علاقة لتخصصنا

Students perceived that grammar is important in improving their writing and felt that the practice of explicitly learning grammar in FYP helped them improve their writing. In PF year, however, instead of a grammar textbook, there are short exercises dealing with grammatical points in the TW courses' textbooks or handouts. Both students, and their teachers, felt that this lack of focus on grammar teaching is one of the reasons for the grammatical mistakes that students have in their technical writing or disciplinary assignments. ITSs 1, for example, commented on his/her experience with learning grammatical rules and stated that they needed more grammar practice in order to develop their technical writing either in TW or disciplinary courses:

“We faced problems mostly in grammar and the same thing in spelling ... so it was more difficult....”

واجهنا مشاكل في الغالب في قواعد اللغة ونفس الشيء في الإملاء... لذلك كان أكثر صعوبة.... نحتاج تدريب أكثر على القواعد

Students wanted more focus on language skills to ease their language-related difficulties in Post-FYP report writing. Teachers went further to mention specific types

of grammatical mistakes that students make while writing. Specific problems mentioned by TWT 3 included: *“lack of appropriate technical vocabulary, inability to organise ideas in a logical manner and using memorised expressions that do not necessarily serve the purpose of their writing”*. Students also reported that they were not trained on *“how to summarise and paraphrase information”*, although a few teachers stated that they did provide some in-class training for their students.

In relation to vocabulary, students reported that during FYP, they used to use simple general words whereas in the TW courses, however, there was a huge shift, as students are sometimes required to use disciplinary vocabulary and terminologies to write their reports. EngSs 2 expressed the following opinion regarding the choice of vocabulary for report assignments.

“In the foundation, we used simple general words but in post foundation, it is totally different. There is new vocab, scientific words, new terminologies...”

في الأساس،، استخدمنا كلمات بسيطة أن الكلمات التي تعلمناها في المدرسة ولكن، هو مختلف تماما. هناك مفردات جديده، والكلمات العلمية، والمصطلحات الجديدة ...

TWT 2 suggested, as a solution is to make students ready, that report writing, and other TW tasks, should be *“authentic”* - unlike what is happening now at CoT where *“students are taught writing and grammar skills separately and then they never put the two together”*. He/she explained that *“once students are taught grammar, they then go on and learn about writing practices”*. *“Unfortunately, according to him/her, these students do not think that they have learnt something in grammar about how to write a sentence and they need to put it together”*. Not only this, as TWT 2 added, the materials need to be authentic in a way that:

“Students should see the link between the technical writing they practice and (1) their other English language skills, (2) their disciplinary study (i.e. if they are studying engineering they need something related to engineering), and (3) to their future work as well.”

Again, this indicates that there are these moments when teachers seem very aware of the need to address the demands of the workplace and aware that an over-emphasis on language use is not providing a complete education.

PF-Cord 1's belief that there should be more focus given to grammar teaching in the college in order to improve students' report writing voiced a similar opinion. He/she stated that:

“I believe that they don’t spend enough time on grammar in the college ... in foundation, they only spent two ... two hours a week on grammar. If that was up to four or six hours, they wouldn’t be having these problems. I think grammar is very crucial and it needs to be taught from an earlier stage.”

Students agreed with their teachers and course-coordinators that they take a lot of time to understand what is requested in a certain task. They mentioned the TW courses’ content as a factor that impedes the development of the language skills needed to complete the assignments. These students added that the type of topics taught in these courses handouts does not help students’ efforts in responding to the assignment requirements. That is because there are some skills, new terminologies, and new information that students need to learn for the assignments as they are not related to their disciplines. Students are asked to submit the final drafts before they actually get the chance to learn some of these important details that they need in their writing. Students’ struggle with the writing task as a direct result of shortage of such details is exacerbated. One difficulty facing students in completing this task was the sparse background knowledge that they possess on a topic irrelevant to their major.

It might be worth pointing out that the tendency here for teachers and coordinators to see the problem as located in the students while the students see it as located in the course’s content. Coordinators and teachers attributed students’ linguistic difficulties in writing to these students’ low language level as it prevents them from expressing their ideas clearly when writing reports assignments. They argued that students’ low proficiency in English may be a crucial factor influencing how much knowledge they have or can understand about the topic of the assignment. Teachers also think that because of the students’ low level the topics of some of the assignments were very challenging to them. It takes time for students to write a long essay about some topics because they have little or no background information about them. This seems to be an emerging trend in different parts of the data.

Unfortunately, the teachers, coordinators and students’ focus on linguistic skills in this study did nothing towards setting down the consistently expressed desire on the part of employers for equipping technical graduates with strong written communication skills prior to commencing a post in their organisations. I need here

first to recapitulate what these employers and their employees suggested as the source of difficulties graduates should overcome to be familiar with the workplace text. In comparison to the academics, employers revealed that it is not a priority to them whether the assignments are written appropriately, with no spelling and grammar mistakes, or employees are trained to write about topics that they need to conduct research about. *“What is more important is that the message of the text is clearly expressed/delivered to the reader”* as Mang 2 suggested. I found this suggestion a bit peculiar as presumably having fewer spelling and grammatical mistakes improves the clarity of a text. Mang 2 added that the college-produced texts are read differently from the ways in which work-produced texts are read by their intended readers. Academic texts have only one reader, unlike in the workplace where many texts have multiple readers. Thus, each professional document should carry a clear message according to the circumstances or purposes it is produced for. It is not clear such a perception is continuously raised by employers. Having only one reader does not necessarily mean that the academic reports or texts do not carry a clear message or purpose. From my experience as a teacher who taught in CoT, I certainly expect my own students' writing to have a clear message according to its purposes. For the employees, though they concurred that their academic study helped them *“strengthen their linguistic skills”*, admitted that at workplace, it was not only a matter of *“expressing the text clearly”* but also, they as writers should ensure that *“the content of these texts conforms to the corporates’ main message”*. Both employers and their employees agreed that having students being prepared to write such texts with such precise content needs a lot of training and cooperation between the workplace organisations and the technical institutions, which unfortunately is unavailable as will be explained later in Section (5.3.2.).

The divergence in the views of this study's participants regarding the difficulties graduates face in assignment writing, with teachers, students and coordinators' groups stating that grammar, spelling and punctuation are the areas where students commit most of the mistakes while employers and their employees maintained that the more common problem is that the clear message of a certain text cannot be expressed linguistically and delivered to the reader by graduates, calls to further consider and overcome the linguistic and content difficulties that students and employees face when writing academic and professional technical reports. Yet, it is

not enough to interpret why there are possible mismatches between these two genres. Thus, understanding other difficulties may positively contribute in comprehending such an issue.

5.2.2.2. Graduate's Attitude

Another factor cited by the practitioners, especially teachers and employers, was the attitude that graduates held towards the context of their study or future career. There might be a tendency here to position the student as the problem and not the training, so to be clear, I am here reporting perceptions to these things and not necessarily the definitive truth about students.

PF-Cord 1 blamed the students themselves and suggested that *"they do not take their study seriously"*. He/she explained that the fact of students' low grades in TW courses: *"the majority are in C, C-, or D and a few of the students get A or B"*, does not necessarily indicate that students are not ready to write professional reports but may indicate that *"students are not taking their TW study seriously"*. Teachers also reported a similar view. Students are taking their education for granted and some of them are not thankful enough to all of the teachers that devote their time to teach or to the government that pays a lot of money to enhance the education. This view was stated by TWT 2, who declared that *"it is a matter of attitude"* as:

"around the world, many people fear that not having to pay for college will make students take college less seriously, but what is happening here that students are not only getting free education but also get paid a monthly allowance to go to school".

For this teacher, students are not aware of the importance of the writing skills that they should acquire but:

"students are more interested in marks rather than learning, students should focus more on writing skills like summarising and paraphrasing. But they lack such skills and our role as teachers is to help them acquire them."

He/she continued to explain that:

"There are some good students who go home and practice whereas 90% of the students they go home and do not look into their books until they come again to the college the next day,

and this is a matter of learning attitude being absent. Students are getting paid to go to the college, not many countries in the world have such a situation, to learn English students need a lot of practice and they have to have motivation to do that, but if they have to go to the college and get paid to learn English that is not a motivation.”

TWT 2 justified that students lack motivation to learn English in general and to practice writing in particular as their attitude is that they cannot see how English will affect them in the future when they leave the college because some of them, as a result of the unemployment problem in the country, might end up being job-less or working in a different position from the one they are prepared for. He/she said:

“if student is from a small village and his job will be helping his father in his farm, what’s motivation is going to be his to learn English or to practice writing reports, emails, etc.?!”

Other teachers agreed with TWT 2 that students lack interest to learn. For instance, TWT 1 and TWT 3 believed that they have the attitude that *“no one deal with them according to what they will be in future”*, whether as engineers, IT technicians or business staff. For example, no one treats engineering students as real engineers, IT students as real technicians, or business students as real staff in an organisation or as independent businessmen. Such findings were also reported in Obaid (2009). TWT 3 suggested that students should consider what they are going to do in future, and expect that:

“the writing they are doing here will not stop here but will continue the chain and do more in their future career”.

Employers also raised a similar concern about graduates’ attitude. Mang 2, for instance, asserted that:

“What I believe that what the colleges need to do is to help their students to have an attitude that they should love what they do, they should have the passion towards the work they are doing, train them to understand that they should not go to their work expecting themselves to know everything and they know how to do everything, and if not given what I am expecting then I will blame everything in front of me.”

Mang 1 was in agreement with Mang 2 as he/she concurred that lacking the attitude to love writing and reporting what students accomplished will negatively affect their abilities to learn, to write and to have the necessary competency needed to

accomplish different writing assignment they are assigned to write. Mang 1 elaborated and suggested: *“such attitudes should be addressed by a way or another”*. It can be addressed through:

“Soft skills training and these should be applied in the colleges programmes.” or by *“equipping students with proper employability attitudes”*.

Academics should make sure that such a course to equip these skills and attitudes *“is integrated in the students’ academic life”* as:

“the managers not always having the efforts and power and desire to teach their employees and help them to have such attitude”.

Employees often confirmed the presence of such attitude while they were students. For example, Empl 2 described his/her attitude by indicating *“My teacher asked me to do this task and I am doing it to get a good mark”*. He/she added that:

“When we were students, we don’t take it seriously as we know what is going to come in the exam, this what we have studied and for sure this is what is going to be in our examinations, this is what we have learnt and this what will come over there. If it is more scenarios based, we will definitely apply our minds”.

From these two extracts, Empl 2 emphasised the points that had been made by the teachers that most of the *“students are mostly interested in getting good marks and study to pass the exams”*. Students had also confirmed having such attitudes as well and mentioned different reasons to account for this. For instance, the *“overload of assignments and exams, the high percentage of unemployment”* among their graduated-colleagues and the *“lack of resources and facilities”* which help them study well. With regard to work overload, students referred back to the lack of coordination between the academic and English departments as a main cause of this overload. BusSs 2 said:

“There is no coordination ... for example, during the exams period, we sometimes have two exams on the same day and sometimes at the same time ...”

ليس هناك تنسيق... مثلا في فترة الاختبارات يكون بعض الاحيان عندنا اختبارين في نفس اليوم واحيانا في نفس الوقت...

In the above excerpt, BusSs 2 described an extreme case of the consequences of a lack of coordination among the departments. Other students also mentioned similar

instances regarding conflicts on exam days and dates for submitting projects or assignments where different exams or different projects are conducted or should be submitted in a similar day. Similar results were also mentioned by Al-Badwawi (2011). As in Al-Badwawi (2011), teachers also explained this by indicating that they do not want to lose teaching time by having students do the exams during the class time, especially as they are struggling to finish the syllabus and cover the learning objectives on time. For that reason, they usually set any assessment tasks either between 12 and 2 on Tuesdays, the hours allocated for extracurricular activities or from 4 to 6 on Thursdays as officially students are not to have classes after 4 on Thursdays, which is the last day of the working week. This means that teachers are competing for these times. It also means that students are deprived of any chance of participating in college activities throughout the semester. For those students who are living in hostels, this also means a late journey home for the weekend. For the matter of unemployment, ITSs 5 argued that *“they have to finish their college study as soon as possible otherwise their recruitment will be delayed”* and they are aware that a lot of their graduated-colleagues are still unemployed. He/she added that it is already four years since he/she graduated (BTech with Distinction GPA), but he/she is still at home waiting for a chance to work.

Other participants' comments implied that the problem is not with how teachers teach TW courses or with students' level or attitude but with other aspects such as class heterogeneity.

5.2.2.3. Absence of Specialisation (Streaming)

For the TW classes, TWT 4 argued that the classes are heterogeneous and set up for students with mixed specialisations, thus

“It is not always possible to get the desired results because students would not be able to learn and develop their language skills and proficiency in such circumstances”.

Such a view was emphasised by the interviewed students as well, as they blamed the absence of streaming. To express this view, EngSs 1 stated that they as students are *“studying in a non-streamed environment”* and exemplified:

“I remember that our teacher asked us to write about a problem in a refrigerator. My specialisation is HR - why do I need to write

about a refrigerator on a course where I am supposed to write HR reports, emails, etc.? We as business students are not competent enough to write reports about devices or tools and this consumes a lot of our time”.

. في مثال او موقف حظر لي شخصياً ان المدرس قام بإعطائنا موضوع عن إحدى الآلات المتخصصة بالهندسه ونحن طلاب دراسات تجاريه ليس لدينا معرفه كامله عن الكلمات المتخصصة بالآلات وأخذنا الكثير من الوقت في كتابة الموضوع.

For this student and his colleagues within the similar specialisation, the vocabulary used to write the reports is not related to their disciplines. So, they were wondering why they needed to study something irrelevant to what they are actually studying or going to study since these courses were supposed to prepare them for their own disciplinary writing. BusSs 2 explains this situation and its effect in the following extract:

“Vocabularies are not related to our specialisation. For example, I am an HR student, why do I need to learn vocabs that are related to engineering, to the process of fixing or changing a washing machine’s broken part. In such classes my colleagues from the Engineering Department spend only hours to write such reports or requesting emails about such parts whereas we need days and weeks just to understand how the process went on. Why do we have to be mixed up with other specialisations students in the TW courses? Why don’t we study TW courses that are related to HR or at least related to Business Studies?”

لا ترتبط المفردات لدينا التخصص. على سبيل المثال، أنا طالب الموارد البشرية، لماذا أحتاج إلى تعلم مفردات التي تتعلق الهندسة، لعملية تغيير جزء مكسور الغسالة. في مثل هذه الفصول الدراسية يقضي زملائي من قسم الهندسة ساعات فقط لكتابة هذه التقارير أو رسائل البريد الإلكتروني حول هذه الأجزاء في حين أننا بحاجة أيام وأسابيع فقط لفهم كيف الكورسات استمرت العملية. لماذا يجب أن تكون مع تخصصات أخرى، لماذا لا ندرس كورسات متعلقة الدراسات التجارية.

This might be difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming for basic writers like students, especially when confronted with topics they have not thought about before.

5.2.2.4. Absence of Guiding Feedback

There was also the issue of feedback given by teachers and by managers or trainers. The findings of interviews analysis have revealed a disparity among participants about the distinction in the way teachers and business people interpret students’ report writing. The academics’ and the business informants’ interpretations

differed at certain points. Teachers and others outside the workplace, such as course coordinators, perhaps tended to be overly sensitive to linguistic choices whereas the business informants appeared to take a far more practical view of the way in which language construes meaning. Thus, these employers believe, as we will see later within this section, that their concern that a text should be quick-and-easy to read and their preference for a de-modalised form of communication should be considered when developing pedagogic material. Failure to implement such requirements was viewed by the employers to lead to negative consequences on the students' part.

For the employees, when I asked them about the feedback that they received from their college tutors and from their work managers, they pointed to a huge gap between the two situations. They recalled how, while they were students, their teachers did not provide them with as accurate and detailed feedback as their job managers do. This is illustrated in the following extracts from interviews with Empl 3, Empl 2 and Empl 1 respectively. Empl 3 stated that:

“For example, in post-foundation, no one was telling me how to write an introductory section, I mean sort of feedback, so I benefited from this in writing my report accurately”.

مثلا في ما بعد الفاونديشن كان لما اكتب المقدمة مثلا ما كان احد يقيم ويخبرني اني لازم اعمل كذا وكذا...يعني نوع من feedback وبعدها انا استفيد من هذا وارجع اصلح التقرير

Empl 2 also recalled how his manager notified him that his writing is not work-style writing and how he/she advised him/her to write in a such style. He/she explained that:

“at the beginning of transition from school to the work environment, once I started writing, for example emails, to my managers, General Director, or one of the customers or co-workers, my writing lacked the features and details that related to work, so my manager used to explain for me that my writing is not a work-style writing and there are certain necessary points that I need to follow so in future he as a manager doesn't need to amend my writing and other staff won't need to come to ask me about what do I mean by X or by Z, thus I avoid such issues.”

في البداية من مرحلة الانتقال من الدراسة الى بيئة العمل، لما بديت ارسل ايميل لمسؤولي او المدير العام او احد الزبائن او الموظفين كان الايميل ناقص ما يشمل كل سمات الايميل وما فيه تفاصيل خاصه بالعمل فيجيني المدير ويقولني انه ناقص ويعطيني بعض القواعد

اللي نتبعها يعني ضروري تعطي تفاصيل اكثر لان يمكن المسؤول راح يسألك فيها ويمكن يجي احد الموظفين ويسألني ويش تقصد برسالتك فالمره المقبله انا اتجنب وقوع نفس هذا الشيء

Whereas Empl 1 elicited how feedback at academia and in the workplace is different:

“Yes, it is different. At a workplace we have to mostly take care of customers, they need to understand you, the most important thing is how the message of report, email, and memo reached them whereas in college you have to write according to what your tutor requested you to do. In addition, in academia, the more we wrote the more we got more negative feedback”

نعم اختلفت. في بيئة العمل لازم نهتم للزبائن، لازم الشخص يفهمك/ اهم شيء كيف توصل الرسالة له اما اللي اكتبها في الكلية كانت بالطريقة اللي يريدوا الدكتور/ الاكاديمية / وكلما كتبت اكثر كلما حصلت على negative feedback اكثر.

From the above extracts, it is apparent that the employees were not satisfied with the kind of feedback they used to receive from their tutors when they were undergraduates. Once they started their careers, they saw how responsible they should be when they wrote a certain text. Empl 1, thus, recommended that the guidance provided to students should be changed. He/she suggested that it should not only be the case that *“when students need help or guidance they go to the tutor to explain or clarify for them certain points”*, but that *“support should be initiated from the tutor himself by suggesting, for instance, examples of writing from workplace context”*. She argued that:

“if it (feedback) is more scenario based it will definitely be more helpful and more helpful in preparing students for future corporate potential.”

To understand whether and why feedback was different in the two contexts, as employees claimed, I asked both managers and teachers about their concerns while giving feedback to their students and their employees. They indicated diverse details. For instance, Mang 2 claimed that:

“There seems to be an absence of any formal or systematic procedure for providing feedback about what students are doing with regard either to writing or the teaching in general.”

He/she added that the effects for such absence would be that:

“Even very good graduates from CoT would be at a disadvantage in a requested workplace task, for example writing a business report, because they would not be immersed in business ways of writing, and that should raise assessment concerns for the department”.

Thus,

“Such students might still write reports with less errors, but their writing might still not be considered ‘good’ business writing”.

For teachers, TWT 5 summarised his experience with giving feedback to students through exemplifying some of the difficulties that students needed to overcome or improve by stating that: *“there is a lack of consideration for the required layout of the academic texts”*. And also, students report: *“consisted of fragments of translated ideas from Arabic to English, which causes difficulty, since the Arabic structure differs from the English one”*. It might be inferred that tutors are familiar with their students’ drawbacks and could guide them in written feedback formats to help them overcome such problems. Yet, when I went back through the students’ papers I found that the tutors’ feedback was in the form of given marks rather than detailing the positives and negatives of student writing and guiding how they may enhance their writing in general. If there is written feedback then it is in a form of short comments like ‘not relevant’, ‘why’, ‘topic sentence is missing’ and ‘you have not clearly discussed the advantages and disadvantages’. Using scoring strategies to provide learners with feedback makes the task more like a test exercise where the learners are focused on achieving high scores rather than on achieving the aims of learning to write (Bangs, 2003).

Teachers argued that the students had not succeeded in completely writing the requested texts as they were intended or expected to do, albeit that they understood what they were required to write. Thus, it is difficult for them as teachers to give feedback for something missing. Also, teachers had claimed that it is difficult to apply any remedy for two different reasons. Firstly, *“they teach large classes”* (each teacher is supervising four classes and in each class there are more than 30 students, which means around 120 students) and it is very difficult to provide individual support to each student within such a multi-assignment context. Secondly, there is little time to provide such support as teachers are overwhelmed with number

of sessions they have to teach every week (teachers have only two hours to meet with students for individual guidance and have to teach for 20 hours in a week). There might be a tendency here to position these as the problem but not the given feedback, I believe.

5.2.2.5. Absence of Training on Writing Job-oriented Type of Reports and Tasks

The students' under-preparedness for professional writing was perceived as being linked to the lack of systematic training in practicing technical writing prior to writing the first workplace task. This view was reflected in the employees and their employers' responses to the question about students' readiness for technical writing they are required to produce once they join their future posts. Employee 1, for example recalled her experience with writing at college and acknowledged the influence of the absence of practicing writing corporate reports on students' readiness for the writing demands of their workplaces. He/she claimed that it is a new world when he/she started writing for workplace purposes *"for me it was a whole new world when I started writing at work"*. He/she debated that though: *"the whole technical writing skill that I attained from my college was definitely put in to work"* because he/she believed that colleges prepare graduates *"linguistically"* but not practically as, according to him/her: *"when we say technical writing in college it's not specified to a certain major"*. As an example, he/she mentioned audit reports and elaborated how it is written in a professional context by saying:

"For example: audit. So, when I joined work, that's when I actually learnt how to develop reports, audit reports, and knew how to write those reports, what should be put in that, what should be the layout, etc".

Mangs 1 and 2 expressed their agreement with this point of view by indicating that graduates may have the knowledge to write but they do not have sufficient experience to write in a frame that fits the corporations' requirements as they have not been trained to write within such frames prior to joining corporations. Mang 1 suggested:

"Our new hired employees do lack certain skills until they become ready, but it is not necessarily that they lack knowledge, but I think they lack experience. They may have the knowledge to write well but it is not put in a frame that fits an

organisation.”

and Mang 2 blamed the academic institutions for the absence of such experiences:

“I have not seen any college that gives students experience on writing to-the-point reports for the management’s decisions”.

He/she compared between the two contexts by stating that in academia students are mostly asked to write research papers, which are not a priority for the organisations.

“They will ask them to write research. Research is needed even at workplace context, research is the basic of everything, but if we are talking about employability, then there is very limited space for research in organisations, it is not a priority”

These two managers mentioned another example of the absence of training students to write in a frame that fits the “corporations” requirements which was the use of active and passive voice in reports. They asserted that when using active and passive voice choices, graduates might have conscious knowledge of information structure in English, but they need to overtly emphasise the need to establish responsibility. They need to have information from other sources, such as previous models and it is important to make it explicit for the client who was responsible. Clients surely need to be convinced that it is a corporate liability not a personal one. Thus, texts act as a record for the client and for the firm that did the work, and as a legal record if problems arise and liability becomes an issue.

Based on this, these employers claim that academia cannot provide the experience required or the range of tasks required for the workplace, these professionals believe that CoT graduates might be confused once assuming a post. Such confusion is accredited to the seeming contradiction between the researching requirements to write reports that students learnt at academia and the corporations’ framework stressed by the workplace stakeholders. Thus, to overcome such confusion, students should be *“adapted to the workplace requirements”* while studying, employers suggested. Employers suggested *“simulation of workplace writing tasks at school”* as a partial solution to providing students with the necessary experience to write professionally (see Section 5.2.3.1. for further details). Hence, the question here is can academia provide the experience required to achieve such professional aims? In contrast to what employers have suggested perhaps it is the role of academia to highlight ‘*adaptability*’ through for example ‘*simulation*’,

academics believes that it is not simply a matter of what happens on transition into the workplace. They believe that fully adapting to the demands of the workplace can only happen in the workplace. They depended on two views to evidence such an argument: (1) the inadequacy of authenticity to be provided at academia; and (2) academia provides more pedagogical but not practical learning than the workplace requires. The latter, from one perspective, might be viewed as a strength of the academic provision not a weakness. They challenge as to whether academia should be limited to such requirements or continue to provide more in-depth learning than the work place requires? If the former happened, then, this might be a very narrow view about the overall purposes of education, I believe. There is after all more to a full education than simply supplying a workforce.

As a summary for this section, I may indicate that all of my participant groups seem to understand the problem but they all tend to position the cause elsewhere. Unfortunately, none of the participants seems to see it as their role to initiate a solution. Table 25 below shows that participants mainly blamed the TW courses, teaching methods followed to teach these courses, teachers' disciplinary knowledge to teach TW courses, students' competency and attitude, assessment methods and training or preparedness to writing for workplace purposes.

	Employers	Employees	Teachers	Coordinators	Students
1. TW courses	√	√	X	X	X
2. Teaching methods	√	√	X	√	√
3. Teachers knowledge	√	√	X	√	√
4. Students competency	√	X	√	√	X
5. Students attitude	√	X	√	X	X
6. Assessment methods	X	√	X	X	X
7. Proper training	√	X	√	X	X

Table 24: *Participants' views of causes of issue*

5.2.3. Difference between Academic and Professional Audience

This section highlights how the interviewees perceived the difference between the reader of the academic texts and the reader of the professional reports as a factor in the graduates' under-preparedness for professional writing. An understanding of who

will read the text holds another significance as the reader exerts a powerful influence depending on the context of the report. The influence takes the form of certain expectations the writer should achieve. Thus, satisfying the reader's needs varies within the two contexts. This was evident, for example, in the students' claim that they write to please the teacher more than an imaginary customer. They explained that in addition to playing the role of evaluators of student writing, their teachers also have the power to fail assignments as they give a course grade. Teachers also write letters of recommendation that may affect students' future careers. Such awareness of the teacher's power might incline students to write in ways that please the teachers. For the academic context, interviews revealed how the fact that the CoT undergraduates' reports are only read by teachers although these reports are supposed to be written for end users influenced these students' writing. BusSs 2 expressed this fact by saying that:

“For us the only one who would read the report is my teacher, sometimes my colleagues to know how to carry the task, I cannot imagine that it would be read by someone else, though sometimes it is supposed to be written for a customer.”

طبعاً انا أعتبر الذي سوف يقرأ التقرير هو المدرس فقط او احد من زملائي يريد معرفه
طريقة الكتابه فقط اما انه ينشر او يقرأه شخص اخر فانا غير متخيل ذلك بالرغم اننا
المفترض نكتب لشخص او زبون حقيقي

BuSs 1 added that though these teachers probably already knew the information that students wrote about, they still read the entire documents for purposes of grading. Accordingly, students only write about “*subjects given by the teacher*”, which means that students write to convince him that:

“their writing is free of grammatical and spelling mistakes and he accordingly gives us good marks.”

المدرس يعطيك الموضوع ونحن نكتب على حسب الموضوع الذي يعطينا إياه المدرس فقط
ثم ينظر المدرس إلى الموضوع الذي كتبتة ويصححه على حسب الدرجات من حيث
الأخطاء في القواعد و الإملاء

Students excluded the case where their colleagues read their reports just to understand how a task should be carried out. Other students also generally advocated a similar claim by indicating that the report tasks were not designed to fulfill the requirements of any particular customer. The customers mentioned in their reports were imaginary, and mentioned only as a writing requirement, they added. In a way, such narrowness regarding the student experience might simplify the

students' task in writing as they only have to meet the expectations of one reader and they do not need to be concerned with providing this reader with new or useful information, but rather to demonstrate their linguistic competence and thus achieve good marks.

In contrast to these affirmations from students, some teachers confirmed that their students are certainly aware of their audience when they write a certain report. For example, TWT 1 argued that "*definitely*" students "*are writing for someone else other than their teachers*". He/she exemplified that "*for instance, they pretend to be a safety officer who has to write an accident report to the manager, so the audience is the manager not the teacher*". TWTs 4 and 5 asserted that "*yes*" students are aware of the reader of their reports as, according to TWT 4,

"it is mentioned in the question to who it is being addressed. It is only then that students are able to meet the target."

TWTs 2 and 3, however, claimed that not all of the students are aware of their audience. The following two extracts illustrate this impression:

TWT 2: "*Maybe a few ones, especially the bright ones are aware, but generally no they are not aware. Generally, it is the marks they need, it is not important what they learnt by writing, to whom they wrote, marks are the main thing they are fighting for even if their sentences are not correct. Just passing the exam and getting the passing mark.*"

TWT 3: "*To be honest I do not think that they are aware of their audiences, I believe that they are writing just for the sake of doing the assignment, in other words it is just for the sake of writing.*"

These teachers here have justified why students are not aware of their audience by demonstrating that students are writing to get good marks, passing exams, or just to accomplish the assignments they were asked to do by the teachers. Such views raise the question of whether students are being blamed for not looking beyond the marking system or whether teachers have an awareness that the examination system itself might be mitigating against developing audience awareness. Thus, the problem seemed here to lay as much with assessment processes as with the student. PF-Cord 2 denied this argument and asserted that: "*there is no problem with the assessment system*" but with teachers as,

“they do not carry the courses requirements appropriately and wasting time with covering issues supposed to be covered in foundation year programme, like grammar and spelling”.

For the corporate context, workplace readers, in contrast, according to the interviewed employees, were typically more numerous (i.e. co-worker, client/ end-user, manager, etc.) and had various purposes for reading the employees' writing. Therefore, a professional report's reader might or might not read the entire document and probably is not always *“already familiar”* with what the writer is going to tell them. Empl 1, for example, reported the result of such situation in the following extract. He/she stated about awareness of his/her report reader as *“very much needed”*:

“I feel yes, it is very much needed, thus we write things and stuff that are important for the departments and customers, that is when I feel that it is a very helpful report”.

Empl 2 recalled the consequence of just writing for one reader, the tutor as it happens at academia, on his/her TW level when he/she was a student and compared it to his current experience as an employee. He/she indicated that:

“it had negative impacts because my focus was only to resolve the assignments and collect grades and succeed academically, but at work, you are prompted to write to satisfy the customer and this makes you paying attention to different requests. This positively affects your writing at work and here you have not to forget considering the content of your writing and delivering it clearly to the reader”.

اثر سلبي لان تركيزي الوحيد كان فقط لحل الاسايمنت وتحصيل الدرجات واوصل للنجاح
اكاديميا لكن في العمل انت مطالب تكتب لترضي الزبون لكن تكون مهتم لاكثر من طلب
وهذا يؤثر ايجابيا على كتاباتك في العمل وهنا يجب مراعاة محتوى الرسالة وايصالها
بشكل واضح للمستقبل واللغة لازم تكون صحيحة

Surprisingly, he/she has amended his/her argument and admitted that though getting to know one's readers is essential for professional technical writing, he/she, nevertheless, still sometimes writes a document just for the sake of applying his/her manager's instructions by explaining that he/she *“sometimes feels that it is just for the sake of work”* and *“just has to write the report”*, there is *“no sense, nothing”* only he/she *“has just to put words”*. Thus, *“it is just for the sake of management”*, he/she has *“to fill in the paper and send it to the manager”*. This seems to complexify the very simple 'school is artificial, and work is real' dichotomy that these participants were perceiving. Mang 2, opposite to this argument, emphasised that since readers

have varying interests and levels of technical knowledge,

“writing products depend on the audience levels, let us say detailed, summarised or even more summarised products as you go higher.”

Thus, workplace writers need to *“shape their texts in a way that accommodates as many groups of readers as possible”*. Upon such determination, the writers *“would be able to draw the corporate attention towards its customers”*.

From the stakeholders' views, in both contexts, it can be inferred that there is a perceived reader of students' and employees' reports, but in academia the fact that this is a teacher and not an end user might be creating an inappropriate sense of purpose for the task. This apparently affects establishing authenticity within the writing tasks. The advantage of authentic writing goes far beyond simply motivating to *“help students develop real-world writing skills that they will need when they are no longer writing for teacher”* (Lindblom, 2015). To tackle this issue, interviewees suggested that there are two elements that influence students' awareness of the supposed reader of their reports. First is the access to these reports (i.e. who has access to both students and employees reports? For how long will this report last? And will it be part of other larger projects or not?) and secondly, whether these reports are often collaboratively or individually written.

With regard to the access factor, students indicated that after a student writes a report and the professor has graded it and returned it, *“typically no one else will see or have access to that paper”* BusS 1. Students realise that as their reports' readers are not real then the reports' *“only effect will be on the course grade”* BusS 1. Students may not even keep their graded papers which means that these reports will not be a part of a future project. In the workplace, in contrast, employees implied that most workplace *“documents are kept for a long time”* and different kinds of readers, customers or co-partners, may be able to access them for many years afterward for information on past projects. Additionally, a single workplace document may be part of a set of larger documents in an on-going project, for instance, a progress report will be part of annual report. Employers asserted that knowing that their words may have long durability and wide-reaching readers may make their employees *“more cautious about what they write”* Mang 2. TWT 4 requested *“the learning outcomes and the curriculum to be changed in accordance with the requirement of the*

workplace...". He/she expressed his/her dissatisfaction with the current taught TW modules in the CoT that urged him/her to call for curricula modification by indicating that there are "some discrepancies" as "there are certain topics that are taught to students which are redundant".

Regarding the second factor, employers argued that workplace reports are often collaboratively written to satisfy different needs of different readers. Thus, collaborative writing is an essential skill in effective workplace communication. Employer 1 argued that if a document is intended for an external readership *"the authors can often be seen to be writing as the voice of the organisation"*. If a certain report causes an event that provokes a lawsuit, the individual author is not held responsible; the corporation is. Hence, even if one person is largely responsible for writing a particular report, it often undergoes extensive internal review cycles and revisions before it is released to external readers, a process that is absent in the CoT atmosphere. Surprisingly, despite employees agreeing that writing collaboratively is good to satisfy different levels of audience, yet they indicated how writing alone enables them to accomplish the task more efficiently and without distraction of going through a bureaucratic circle of unnecessary revisions. They think that the quality of work will not be as good as when an employee does it on his own. A similar result reached by Obaid (2009) where her interviewees perceived collaborative writing as a waste of time and impractical.

Yet, the experience of collaborative writing in the workplace does not seem to map on to the attempts of academia to provide this kind of experience. This might be because in academia it is a pedagogic tool whereby learning is seen as located in interaction, so it is more concerned with process and particularly the learning process than the product. This is less true in the workplace as the emphasis is definitely more on the product. This adds weight to the argument that the educational perspective and role does go beyond simply the supplying of a workforce. So, evidence of the benefit of such perspective was what students' claim that teamwork provides them with a better understanding of the tasks requirements. When they were asked about whether they write individually or collaboratively, they answered that *"some of the reports were collaborative, conducted by more than one student (between 2 and 5)", and some were presented individually"*. BusSs 1 also indicated that:

“The projects that required collaborative work. We carry them collaboratively but if the topic is personal we write individually. We prefer writing in groups. Teamwork helps me understand the task properly because sometimes I do not understand what is required in the task.”

نكتب على حده لما يكون الموضوع شخصي. اما إذا كان يتطلب الموضوع مجموعه نقسم إلى مجموعات وكتابة النشاط. اما الأفضل في رأي انه يكون جروب أحسن عن كل واحد على حده لأنه يكون أسهل في التوزيع وفي فهم معنى الموضوع. يعني في بعض الأحيان اكون غير فاهم في كامل الموضوع والمجموعة تساعدني في فهم الموضوع كامل

However, students asserted that such tasks do not always help a lot in preparing them to write for real-world readers as the final product often becomes the responsibility of one person. Students are expected to give appropriate credit to all of their group members but when good students are combined with others in a similar group, the whole group depends on that student and as authors they take ultimate responsibility for the whole work, so they do not lose marks they are in a real need for. EngSs 1 was not in favour of group projects reporting that in the past he/she has:

“done the "lion's share" of the work on such projects, while their supposed collaborators have made virtually no contribution.”

غالبا كنت أقوم بالعمل على هذه المشاريع وحدي، في حين أن الطلبة الثانئين لم يقدموا أي مساهمة تقريبا

However, in the end their colleagues have all been awarded a similar mark. Therefore, this, instead of enhancing collaborative skills, might be more likely to adversely affect both the active and the inactive students' confidence, as the inactive ones know very well that they have not contributed to the submitted work whereas the active ones will feel that the marking was unfair and did not value their effort. Consequently, instead of their self-esteem being enhanced it is likely to be damaged. Leki (2007) conducted a study of accounts of collaborative writing in projects in the field of business where the same thing happened. Obaid's (2009) participants also exposed similar results.

Teachers, on the contrary, claimed that teamwork prepares students to write for real-world readers through developing skills to interact and negotiate expertise with other members of the team and contribute to team effort by providing peer reviews. When these teachers were asked whether they think their students are writing for authentic work-world purposes, most of them confirmed that they were, arguing that they practice writing reports, emails and memos and these genres are practiced at

corporate spheres. Workplace managers, however, stressed that even if graduates have learned something about operating in teams during their university years, doing so in the workplace can prove to be far more challenging because of the diversity of the workforce. For instance, graduates will have to learn to work alongside colleagues with greater experience. For these managers, the issue is not of being only familiar with workplace genres, the issue is of being aware how to process the content of these genres according to each organisation's requirements. PF-coordinators, in response, made it clear that *“academic knowledge is divergence and cannot be limited to specific corporations' requirements”*.

5.2.4. Absence of Coordination between CoT and Corporations

In this section I present how the interviewees perceived an absence of coordination between CoT and corporations as a contextual factor in explaining the difference between students' and employees' reports. All of the teachers, without exception, highlighted the importance of coordination between the CoT and workplace organisations to help graduates develop their technical-report writing skills. They acknowledged the importance of such coordination to learn about what graduates would practice in their future workplace. However, these teachers' views reflected denial of the existence of such coordination. The teachers reported that there is no coordination between the colleges and the corporations at all. Some of the responses that I got with this respect were from the teachers. For instance, TWT 5 recommended that *“there should be kind of communication between the workplace and the academia”* as currently *“there is basically no communication, no correlation with the corporations we have here”*. He/she continued to describe how the gap is huge between CoT and employers of these colleges' graduates by indicating that:

“We cannot reach them, as if we are in a separate land; not knowing about what they exactly need or what they are doing.”

When asked about why they do not try to approach corporations and establish coordination between the colleges and corporations to improve students' writing, teachers complained that they do not have enough time in their busy timetables to do so. Some thought that it is not their responsibility to initiate such a process arguing that it is their job to teach and they barely can find enough time to deal with multi academic and administrative responsibilities barely related to their job as lecturers. They believe that there should be an allocated department to take care of

such tasks. TWT 3 expressed this view as the following extract illustrate that:

“It is not our responsibility to coordinate with the companies, there should be a section responsible about that, we are here to teach our students.”

TWT 1 also reported that *“I don’t know specifically what kind of writing they will do in their future workplace”* and he/she does not feel that he/she needs *“to get into that details because it’s none of his/her business”*. Nevertheless, this teacher mentioned that even if such coordination was found it would be difficult to be applied for several reasons. For example, as he/she reported:

“We have mixed classes, students from different specialisations are attending the same class, there is no streaming, so if we want to coordinate we need multi workplaces just for one class.”

Strangely, TWT 4, although he/she denied any coordination with corporations:

“There is no connection with the workplace, we need such interaction to know what is required at workplace.”

Thus, according to him/her:

“the learning outcomes and the curriculum need to change in accordance with the requirement of the workplace.”

They suggested that:

“For example, descriptive essays are not required at the workplace, but they are taught.”

There seems to be an interesting tension here as the teacher is saying that there is a need for communication with corporations to be addressed so that academics know what texts are important. But, at the same time, he/she says that descriptive essays are taught even though they already know they aren't important. It might be inferred that the problem here is obviously not attributed to the lack of communication with corporations. I suggested that the problem might be in the TW curricula. Thus, after I sought the teachers' views, I directed my question to the PF-coordinators as they are have some administrative responsibilities that enable them to create connections with the market stakeholders, and based on these connections they should design the TW courses in general and specific report writing tasks. The coordinators continued blaming the lack of coordination and mentioned different reasons for it. For example, PF-Cord 2 said:

“What is there in the strategic plan for the colleges, they want

us to do academic teaching which helps students cope with the demands of the departments, so here at the post-foundation, we are trying to serve the departments, we are preparing our students to be ready for the departments, by being in the departments they should be ready for the market.”

PF-Cord 2 here referred to the strategic plan of CoT and argued that the objectives listed there about the graduation attributes had articulated that students have to be ready for their higher level of education and by being in the department they should be ready for the market. This means, from this coordinator’s point of view, students are taught academic skills like referencing which might not be very related to these technicians’ future careers’ responsibilities and thus their workplace requirements. PF-Cord 2 continued to insist that higher authorities who are responsible for formulating the strategic plan have “*to be very precise in terms of what they really want*” before the course designers can produce courses that are really helpful “*in terms of either academic or workplace needs*”. In addition, PF-Cord 2 emphasised the point that to have coordination with the corporations to know what these corporations need in terms of report-writing skills, students should be first streamed in classes according to their future academic and professional specialisations. He/she highlighted the difficulty in applying such streaming for a lack of resources, especially human resources, as expressed in the following extract:

“We don’t have separate technical courses for different specialisations and as we need to address the requirements of as many specialisations as possible in a time that we cannot apply streaming for the time being at least because of the lack of teachers who can teach ESP courses, ESP materials, etc.,”

Thus, a lot of these teachers’ focus is directed to mainly help students acquire the needed linguistic and research skills whereas the TW courses are supposed to be preparing students to write not only for academic but also workplace purposes (see Appendix 1 for Learning Outcomes of the TW courses). I was both surprised and confused by this coordinator’s conflict in his/her statements. In his/her first quote, he/she declared that the graduation attributes do not mention that these writing programmes should be preparing students for workplace writing, but then she amended that TW are supposed to be preparing students to write for academia and for the workplace. This aim was clearly mentioned in the Strategic Plan (2013-2018)

of the CoT which stated that the mission of the CoT is: “To deliver high quality student-centred education that produces competitive graduates who enter the labour market with confidence, strong technological and personal skills, prepared for a life of contribution and success” (MoMP, 2013, p.1) and in the delivery plans of these courses as well, which declared that these courses “*introduce students to an everyday work related environment where they will use their English language skills in different work related scenarios*” thus the main aim of these courses is “*to introduce the student to the use of English in a work environment where they will use all four skills in communication with colleagues, superiors and business associates; the technical themes and vocabulary along with the interactive exercises will help to prepare students for the future career endeavours*” (MoMP, 2015, p.1) (see Appendix 2.4.). This raises a question here why he/she obviously thinks that this is not the role of their programme at all?! And if so, on what basis then he/she designed the materials used within these courses. PF-Cord 2 also attributed the absence of streaming to the fact that the English language teachers are less competent in teaching such TW modules as they are not very familiar with the English needed for each technical specialisation. Yet, other stakeholders that might teach writing to these students (not just English language teachers, but also engineering academics or engineering professionals, for example) and might be limited by their own priorities and skills and so might only partially meet the students’ disciplinary but not linguistic needs, he/she added. Students, when asked about their preference, favoured the courses of TW “*to be streamed in line with their specialisation studies*” and “*to be taught by a teacher who has experience and had knowledge of the same discipline*” (ENGSSs 1).

Students also added that being in an eight-week industrial internship training at various organisations serves little experience of what goes on in the workplace environment, which is opposite to what CoT aims out of such short internship periods. Mang 2 agreed with this point by stating that:

“I think the internships are actually very limited to just for orientation training rather than real projects work,

so:

“students should be assigned specific project work, they should be able to work with the business and under the supervision of

their faculty to develop pieces of work which can be criticised by the business executives”.

Employers, when asked about their role to initiate such coordination with the academic institutions, said though they welcomed such an idea and that they are ready for such coordination since it will save the effort, time and money they allocate to train the students on skills that are supposed to be acquired in the colleges, nevertheless insisted that such coordination should be inaugurated from the academic side not theirs. For example, Mang 1 said:

“In terms of collaboration as I told you, no colleges in fact contacted us regarding these businesses. I don’t think the colleges should assume that the responsibility from the organisations, if the colleges are expecting the organisations will come and take the responsibility for chasing them to get this done, it is not going to happen”

To overcome such a dilemma, he/she required that:

“colleges should take the responsibility for creating alumni and then providing incentives for these alumni to come and interact with the colleges,”

and proposed that these alumni to *“actually bring pieces of work they are required to do”* at workplace and *then show to the academic departments”.*

Mang 1 recalled a formal attempt to forge some correlation between the CoT and his corporation by stating that:

“Maybe a long time ago this has been done, I think few years ago when they were developing new subjects, there was some piece of work done between us and the technical colleges regarding the development of some programmes...”

Unfortunately, the researcher could not reach to a way of judging how successful this attempt was in bridging the gap between the two contexts.

The absence of systematic coordination meant that assignment writing became a highly challenging task for the graduates, especially with low linguistic proficiency, who are just beginning their occupational life as highlighted by the interviewed employees. These employees reported that graduates take a lot of time to know how to handle the tasks that they are required to write at their new workplace, mainly because they are not familiar with this new type of writing. In addition, though their work supervisors offer them further support to acquaint them with the requirements of these tasks, employees got afraid that seeking help might negatively influence

their reputation and thus they might not pass the orientation period, which means they are not qualified for this job. All interviewed managers acknowledged the existence of such conflict in their new hired employees writing and indicated that the “*graduates’ writing ability is below the expectations of writing for workplace commitments*” (Mang 2), thus, these employees are not able to meet the demands placed on their writing abilities in their new occupations. Mang 1 pointed out that supervisors “*might help their employees overcome issues related to the content of the texts but not the language aspects.*” If employees’ writing is generally weak and riddled with linguistic mistakes, then it is the TW teachers’ duty to improve these students’ language before assuming a post.

5.2.4.1. Opportunities for Coordination

There were some suggestions to find opportunities for coordination between CoT and corporations so graduates can overcome any transfer issues prior to assuming a post in the corporations. Participants proposed that modifications might be centred on updating the content of the TW courses through simulating workplace reports. Participants felt that the materials are out of date and often irrelevant to workplace requirements. Pedagogy in teaching TW courses was also seen to be in need of improvement as participants criticised the existing teaching methods followed by teachers. Such modifications, from the interviewees point of view, referred to writing skills in general and report writing in particular arguing that graduates lack such experience prior to joining the job market. Amongst those who raised this issue were employers, employees, students and even some teachers. Mang 2 argued that “*addressing these issues will definitely help the Omani companies to progress and also make the entire country more competitive*”.

For simulation, Mang 2 for instance thinks that “*simulation is very critical*” and this can be done through “*project work at the workplace*” where:

“Pieces of project work should be created in the workplace and students should be brought to the business environment to practice these and then the evaluation teams from businesses should be formed so that the students are able to write technically and their projects can be jointly evaluated by both the faculties and the business executives”.

The coordination from the college side within such projects could be carried by, as Mang 2 indicates, “*a lot of tutorial work for each step*”, so:

“it is not only the formal lectures but a lot of training tutorials should be included in the colleges’ syllabus to make sure that students do well, and then they can be critiqued by their colleagues so that they can get feedback and develop collectively”.

He/she also suggested that the colleges:

“take the responsibility for creating alumni and then providing incentives for these alumni to come and interact with the colleges, bring pieces of work they are required to do and then show to the academic departments”.

Mang 1 believes that simulation cannot be achieved through asking students to write adopting a certain model but through providing students with chances to be exposed to the workplace environment. He/she stated that:

“It is difficult usually to say for a person come and write like this way, what is better is to give him a chance understanding what is required in such environment and then achieve it creatively, there will be a chance for them to learn and be exposed to how such writings are done and carried.”

Therefore, for Mang 1 simulation is *“one of the ways and it might succeed in preparing the students”*. Nevertheless, according to him/her *“it may fail as it requires teachers with good knowledge of specific language used for each specialisation”*. He/she thinks that *“some of the teachers lack such abilities which negatively affects their students thinking of the future job”* and make *“the authenticity of the workplace absent”*. Thus, he/she recommended that *“first the teachers and academics in the colleges need to understand what is actually happening in the workplace”*, then they will be able to simulate workplace tasks. He/she exemplified by indicating that:

“If the teachers can understand what is the kind of summarising is required at workplace context, then I believe they will be able to prepare summarising tasks and design them within curricula that may address such needs.”

Otherwise, as he/she explains, it is better to have more qualified people from the corporations who can understand the nature of the gap between the students’ academic skills and future career requirements to assess students writing. He/she expressed this view by indicating that:

“We may better need people from the organisations to assess the students writing because sometimes teachers as academics

have their own focuses on linguistic skills and this is natural for English language teachers but if we have people from workplaces they might give better understanding where the good points that fits an organisation writing are and where the weak ones."

Mang 1 believes that such a step would *"allow more collaboration between academic and professional organisations"*.

TW teachers expressed their agreement with the managers that the TW courses need to be updated as the current tasks do not represent TW for workplace purposes. For example, TWT 2 asserted that the technical writing that students practice in academia is not actually technical writing. He/she said:

"It is really not as technical writing or as I think technical writing should be, it is more like communication, technical communication, emails, all what we teach in TW is how to write short instructions, emails, memos, so it is not really technical writing as I would say technical writing for workplace"

The amendments that teachers suggested to be updated and added to TW syllabus and taught in TW classes incorporated simulations of different kinds of workplace reports as well. This was highlighted by TW 3, for instance, who stated that:

"We may give them mock reporting a task they will do in their future workplace context, so we deal with engineering students as real engineers, with IT students as real technicians, with business students as real staff in an organisation or as dependent businessmen. Let them feel that this what you are going to do in future, and the writing you are doing here will not stop here you will continue the chain and do more in your future career like this."

He/she added that the current taught tasks within TW modules are not related to workplace as: *"it is difficult to get such essays because we do not have connection with workplaces to get essays from them"*.

For the employees, there was a feeling amongst them that students could have been being better prepared for the world of work by introducing *"real-world scenarios"* (Emplo 1) into what was covered. Emplo 3 was furious when he recalled how a foreign engineer in the company criticised with humour his lack of report-writing competency and blamed the lack of such report writing skills and the apparent lack

of exposure to different vocational genres while studying TW modules. Employees also criticised how technical vocabulary is presented in the curriculum as they are given few chances to practice using it in their reports. After having a look at how vocabulary is typically presented in TW modules, I found that the textbook requires students to match the words with their definitions or fill in blanks to complete sentences with appropriate words. This means that they are not given sufficient practice in using this vocabulary in sentences of their own or to write a paragraph by using these newly-introduced words. Consequently, it is obvious that graduates felt the need to modify the textbook as in the real world they will not be asked to match words or fill in the gaps.

Surprisingly, PF-Cord 1, argued that before thinking about coordinating with the workplace we need to first make sure that *students are linguistically prepared to study in their specialisations*. To achieve such preparation:

“It is necessary to know what kind of English students need and whether the English they studied is enough to succeed in their academic specialisations or not. For example, are business students competent enough to continue their study in the business department or not? It is similar also to the engineering and other specialisations students.”

PF-Cord 2 sees that once graduates are competent enough to study in their specialisations then, they are prepared for the market requirements. Students also commented that the structure of their disciplinary study affects the communication and the coordination between the colleges and workplaces. They stated that the lack of coordination is expected since there is a need first to coordinate between the work of the academic departments and the ELC regarding what to teach and, second, the timings for the exams and deadlines for the assignments and the projects. Regarding the effects of the absence of coordination between academia and workplaces, as students indicated, this resulted in missing the connection between the writing that students are learning in the colleges and the writing that they practice in their future workplaces. Yet, it is better first to, as PF-Cord 2 indicated, find chances of coordination within the CoT themselves than thinking about coordination with other organisations, either work corporations or any other organisation.

5.2.5. Conclusion: Inability to Write Workplace Reports is not Necessarily because of Inadequacy of Preparation

To summarise the findings from the interview analysis, as we saw, the stakeholders were often in agreement and strongly believe that the TW courses' tasks/curricula needed to be changed into tasks with more relevance to the ones that are practiced in the workplace. My own view, in light of the data, would be that there is less need to change the tasks as many of the participants assume because the difficulty that CoT's graduates face with writing reports as expected as by their future employers does not necessarily mean that they are inadequately prepared for future workplace report writing. In fact, what is being taught in the TW courses is to some extent relevant to what is being practiced in the workplace sphere. My own view is informed both by the interview data and the documentary data reported below in Section 5.3.: that the argument for change that is made so strongly in these interviews might be overstating the nature of the problem and this suggests that the issue is as much an issue of perception as of fact. In this case, stereotypical understandings of academia as distant from real life and as more theoretical than practical, might be informing opinion in these interviews. As I will show, the evidence from the writing produced in these two contexts reveals far less difference than these interviews suggest.

The interview data reveals that within academia there is an awareness of the need to be relevant but also a wider set of responsibilities to the students' own learning needs and to equip students both for a lifelong career as well as for their first post. With this in mind, academia may have a broader set of understandings of text quality which does not necessarily need to be viewed as problematic, except perhaps by those who put a very strong emphasis on a rather specific and narrower set of skills. In this sense, it is just as possible to talk about the limitations of textual understanding in the workplace as about the irrelevance of textual understanding in academia. Perhaps a full understanding of the issues raised by this thesis needs to pay attention to both these possibilities. Analysing the gathered corpus of academic and corporate reports endowed evidences for this claim.

5.3. Academic Reports vs Workplace Reports

The analysis included analysing purposes, structure and linguistic features of 100 academic reports and 68 professional reports. The text in italics below are quotes taken from these reports. Table 26 explains the symbols used to indicate the sources of citations from these reports.

Symbol	Source of citations
Acad. report 1,2,3	Academic reports
Prof. Report 1,2,3	Professional reports

Table 25: *Symbols used to indicate the sources of documents' citations*

The analysis of the collected academic and professional reports revealed that academic and corporate reports match and mismatch with each other in certain points related to:

- Purposes of reports
- Patterns of organisation and structure
- Language features

5.3.1. Purposes of Reports

The collected 100 academic reports were distributed equally between four text types, namely, as can be seen in Table 27, Incident report, College report, Instructive report and Technical Description report (See Chapter 4 – Section 4.6.2.2.4. for description of these types of academic reports), whereas the gathered 68 professional reports were samples of, as illustrated in Table 27 as well, Periodic report, Service/Progress reports, and Investigation and Recommendation report (See Chapter 4 – Section 4.6.2.2.4. for description of these types of workplace reports).

Writer	Text type	Main Purposes	Count
Student	Incident Report	Pretend to be an electrical engineering student reporting to College Council an incident happened to their teacher in the lab/workshop/class.	12
		Pretend to be a safety officer in a petroleum company reporting an incident where a new salesman involved in a fire while filling a vehicle.	13
	College Report	Summarise and paraphrase main ideas of a passage and a graph about Omani economy and how to strengthen it.	13
		Write a report summarising a newspaper article about high school education in Oman.	12
	Instructive Report	Write a list of instructions on increasing the speed of computer.	13
		Write a list of instructions about how to write assignment.	12
	T. D. Report	Write a technical description of a laser computer mouse.	25
Total			100
Employee	Periodic Report	Audit of the consolidated and separate financial services.	4
		Corporate (1st, 2nd, 3rd) quarter performance results.	12
		Performance of Islamic Banking.	2
		Corporate governance report for 2014.	2
	Service/ Progress Report	Analysis of Product Wise Performance - Providing fixed line, mobile and internet services.	9
		Analysis of Product Wise Performance - Application of banking cards, online banking and mobile banking systems.	9
	Investigation + Recommendation Report	Surveys of operation at customer service outlets and branches.	4
		Introducing electronic payment, online banking and mobile banking services for pre-paid services.	6
		Adopting further techniques to enhance customer services quality.	6
		Reporting factual findings of implementing auditors' comments.	6
		Staff professional development through training and education.	8
Total			68
Grand Total			168

Table 26: Counts – Purposes of academic and professional reports

Within 25 incident reports, students, in 12 reports, pretended to be an electrical engineering student filling out an incident report form reporting to the College Council an incident that happened to their teacher in the lab, workshop or class whereas in 13 reports they pretend to be a safety officer in a petroleum company reporting an incident of a new salesman was involved in a fire while filling a vehicle. Similarly, in the 25 college reports, students summarised and paraphrased the main ideas of a passage and a graph about the Omani economy and how to strengthen it in 13 of the sample texts while the remaining 12 reports concerned a newspaper article about high school education in Oman. 13 students wrote a list of instructions on increasing the speed of a computer and 12 students wrote a list of instructions about how to write assignment in 25 instructive reports whereas 25 reports were in a form of technical description of a laser computer mouse.

For the employees, within 18 periodic reports, they wrote four audits of corporations consolidated and separate financial services. These reports were prepared by a group of auditors from audit departments in the corporations. The group is normally first assigned to audit by the audit manager. These auditors work closely together by going to the company's different sections and departments to investigate and gather information about the company's invoices and financial statements and, most likely, to perform a stock take and interview certain employees. After gathering all relevant information, they are then ready to go back to their department to organise their notes, put their work together and create a report, based on their audit, which outlines their opinion of the accuracy of the company's financial statements. As previously stated, the aim of the present paper is to explore how communicative purposes are achieved through the structuring of audit reports and language realisations using current and authentic written auditors' reports. Employees also wrote 12 reports about the corporations' 1st, 2nd and 3rd quarters performance results, two corporate governance reports for the year 2014 and two reports of the Islamic banking performance. In 20 service reports, employees reported equally the progress of providing a fixed line with internet service and the progress of providing customers with new banking cards, online banking and mobile banking services. The other 40 reports, namely investigation and recommendation reports, were about surveying customer opinion about operation at customer services outlets (six reports), introducing electronic payment services for pre-paid

services (eight reports), adopting further techniques to enhance customer services quality (12 reports), staff professional development through training and education (six reports), and reporting factual findings of implementing auditors comments (eight reports).

The topics and purposes students wrote their reports about what might be viewed as irrelevant to the topics they would be expected to write about in their future workplace context. This may indicate the students' lack of preparation to write for real workplace purposes as spoken about in the interviews. It also indicates that students' reports appear irrelevant to typical workplace purposes. Few might be considered as relevant to real market purposes, but few students would be prepared for such a workplace-purpose. Thus, it appears from a first glance that there is no relationship between the types of reports produced by students and the ones produced by employees, since the objectives of the academic reports are not related to the goals of the professional reports. A possible conclusion of this recognition is that students' reports do not contribute to preparing them for writing the work reports they are expected to write in the future. Yet, such a comparison may unfairly represent the continuous preparation that students get in the various Omani HE institutions in general and CoT in particular and placing an undue emphasis simply on topic. To understand this more fully it is necessary to conduct a more accurate comparison. Going through the academic reports and work reports indicated that both students and employees achieved the following sub-purposes:¹

1. Wrote and described texts based on graphs, charts and tables
2. Extracted information from resources
3. Filled in forms and ready-made templates
4. Wrote clear and precise instructions
5. Discussed their texts main ideas and supporting elements
6. Described causes and effects

¹ *Sub-purposes here represent the outcomes that students and employees are expected to achieve by writing the academic reports and professional reports respectively*

7. Reinforced their analytic, summarising and paraphrasing skills

8. Reflected on their texts' possible implications for further development

Table 28 shows how these outcomes were represented in both academic and corporate reports.

Writer	Text type	Main Purposes	Count	Sub-purposes (Outcomes)							
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Student	Incident Report	Pretend to be an electrical engineering student reporting to College Council an incident happened to their teacher in the lab/workshop/class.	12	0	0	12	0	0	12	12	12
		Pretend to be a safety officer in a petroleum company reporting an incident where a new salesman was involved in a fire while filling a vehicle.	13	0	0	13	0	0	13	13	13
	College Report	Summarise and paraphrase main ideas of a passage and a graph about Omani economy and how to strengthen it.	13	13	13	0	0	13	13	13	13
		Write a report summarising a newspaper article about high school education in Oman.	12	12	12	0	0	12	0	12	13
	Instructive Report	Write a list of instructions on increasing the speed of a computer.	13	0	13	0	13	0	13	13	0
		Write a list of instructions about how to write an assignment.	12	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0
	T. D. Report	Write a technical description of a laser computer mouse.	25	25	25	0	25	0	0	0	0
Total and percentage of appearance			100	50 (50%)	63 (63%)	25 (25%)	51 (51%)	25 (25%)	51 (51%)	63 (63%)	51 (51%)
Employee	Periodic Report	Audit of the consolidated and separate financial services.	4	4	4	0	0	4	0	4	4
		Corporate (1st, 2nd, 3rd) quarter performance results.	12	12	0	0	0	12	12	12	12
		Performance of Islamic Banking.	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	2	2

		Corporate governance report for 2014.	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
Service/ Progress Report		Analysis of Product Wise Performance - Providing fixed line, mobile and internet services.	9	9	9	0	0	9	9	9	9
		Analysis of Product Wise Performance - Application of banking cards, online banking and mobile banking systems.	9	9	9	0	0	9	9	9	9
Investiga tion + Recomm endation Report		Surveys of operation at customer service outlets and branches.	4	4	4	0	0	4	4	4	4
		Introducing electronic payment, online banking and mobile banking services for pre-paid services.	6	6	0	0	0	6	6	6	6
		Adopting further techniques to enhance customer services quality.	6	6	0	0	6	6	6	6	6
		Reporting factual findings of implementing auditors comments.	6	6	0	0	0	6	0	6	6
		Staff professional development through training and education.	8	8	0	8	0	8	0	8	8
Total and percentage of appearance			68	68 (100%)	26 (38%)	8 (12%)	6 (9%)	68 (100%)	48 (71%)	68 (100%)	66 (97%)
Grand Total			168								

Table 27: Purposes & sub-purposes of academic & professional reports

It is apparent from Table 28 that both students and employees included sub-purposes 1 to 8 but with varying percentages. They mostly achieved outcome 7 where 63% of students' reports and all of the employees' reports were written to achieve this sub-purpose. Outcome 3 was the least to be achieved in both types of reports with only 33% of the total number of academic and corporate reports. The fact that both students and employees achieved similar outcomes challenges the claim made by employers that the purposes students write their reports for have no relation to the objectives they are expected to write about in their future workplace.

The results also indicate that employees achieved objectives 5, 6 and 7, which indicate that they are engaging in more analysing, discussing and elaborating of the main ideas of their texts with further details than is the case for the students. Such a difference could be attributed to the fact that employees are not confronted with new topics, new modes, and new audiences every few days, as in academic class. Instead, the subject matters of the reports are well known to the employees who write about them. For example, two employees participating in this study had written financial reports. These financial reports contained variations of numbers and figures, but the subjects being discussed were approximately the same every time. Also, though the service/progressive reports' content varied slightly the subject matter being reported remained similar. This difference might not be adequate enough to support the claim that students receive no preparation to write for authentic purposes. Alternatively, it might suggest that students need further training in academia to strengthen the skills of analysing, discussing and elaborating on their texts. This can be done through multiple methods as participants suggested in the interviews (see Section 5.2.). For example, they suggested incorporating professionals in designing and teaching the TW courses in a way that could benefit students academically and provide them with the necessary skills required for the workplace writing. Also, teaching the TW courses could be achieved by both ESP teachers and content teachers so students could gain the linguistic and content skills. But, asking students to, for instance:

- pretend to be in a workplace situation where, for instance, they work as a safety officer in a petroleum company reporting an incident where a new salesman was involved in a fire while filling a vehicle;

- to summarise and paraphrase main ideas of a passage and a graph about the Omani economy and how to strengthen it;
- to write a list of instructions on increasing the speed of computer; or
- to write a technical description of a laser computer mouse

might not be an effective solution. Although these practices are problem-oriented in the sense that students, as Zhu (2004a) suggests, identified problems, recommended solutions by describing a tool or a system they designed and justified recommendations, they yet seemed to make a limited contribution to the preparation of students for workplace writing. Writing about such purposes as those indicated above may not contribute in preparing most of the students for their future workplace writing as not all of the students will need to do such practices in their future work corporations, as indicated by one of the interviewed managers (see Section 5.2.). But the question here is do activities really need to be exactly the same as those that students do in any future workplace in order to contribute to preparing them for work? My view would be that it is possible to prepare students for the workplace using tasks not identical to those of the workplace. However, an academic context that teaches students from different specialisms together as a single cohort, only increases the tendency towards generic rather than specific tasks and this may be an issue that makes task relevancy more challenging to address. In such situations, these students, in fact, are responding to unfamiliar topics, chosen by their teachers, by “coaxing enough subject matter for a well-developed essay out of their personal knowledge” without being experienced or going to experience in future workplace life the issues they were asked to write about (Agnew, 1992, p. 34).

5.3.2. Patterns of Organisation and Structure

The analysis of the reports’ patterns of organisation involved investigating how the sense of overall organisation was in the collected documents, either academic or professional. Employing the rhetorical move analysis approach (Swales, 1990), this analysis presents the rhetorical moves applied in both students and the employees’ reports and examples for each move from the analysed texts.

5.3.2.1. Academic Reports

Table 29 shows that the structure of the 25 College reports consisted of three main parts, the introductory part, the body part and the conclusion part. The section entitled *Introduction* at the beginning of the reports referred to a section that contained the main ideas and provided a summary of each report. It also started with background information providing a kind of rationale for writing the report. The *Conclusion* section at the end of the report provided a summary of the reports' key ideas in addition to a set of recommendations to solve the reported issue in each report. In between these two sections, there was the body part where students discussed the ideas/components they condensed in their introduction. Seven rhetorical moves were identified in these three macro-sections as Table 5.7. depicts.

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number & percentage of appearance
Introduction	Move 1: introducing the topic.	<i>Omani economy is very important/this report discuss school education in Oman.</i>	18 (72%)
	Move 2: stating the aim.	<i>This report aims to make suggestions for the future of Omani economy.</i>	16 (64%)
	Move 3: indicating the resources used to write the report.	<i>The text is based on the article 'The Future of the Omani Economy' written by Raid Al Jamali on Al-Watan newspaper.</i>	20 (80%)
	Move 4: outlining road-map for the rest of the report (condense the components).	<i>The report discusses main foundations of the Omani economy and ways to strengthen economy.</i>	9 (36%)
Body	Move 5: identifying each outlined component.	<i>The main foundation of Omani economy is the money from oil sales.</i>	64 (84%)
	Move 6: elaborating on the main argument.	<i>This helps the country to increase the economy. People find more jobs, so they have money to buy for their families.</i>	66 (76%)
Conclusion	Move 7: summarising the 'journey' that report took.	<i>In conclusion, Omani economy faces a lot of problems....</i>	19 (76%)
	Move 8: indicating recommendations.	<i>There are some recommendations to the Omani government to strengthen the economy.</i>	19 (76%)

Table 28: Rhetorical moves in the College reports

Out of 25 College reports, students introduced the topic and provided the overall aim of the report in 18 and 16 reports respectively. The objectives are typically signalled by phrases like *'this report aims to'*. An important aspect of move 2, shedding light on the college reports' purposes, is that the purpose was stated in terms of students' learning how to summarise, paraphrase or extract the main ideas and information from certain resources as mentioned, for instance in this example, *'This report aims to make suggestions for the future of the Omani economy/school education in Oman'* or in the instructions to write this task. It is interesting that the pedagogical purpose is nevertheless recognised and sometimes expressed by students, as the workplace informants noted in their interviews, yet, in a workplace environment, these employers maintained that it is discouraged to have expressions of such pedagogical purpose, expecting a focus on professional rather than pedagogical aims (see Section 5.2.1.). Only nine students applied Move 4, and generally stated the main themes/points/ideas to be discussed in their reports. Moves 5 and 6 were more into the body of the report, thus this section had most words overall than any other section in the text. Students, in these two moves, identified each outlined-point's main argument and then elaborated with further details. Thus, these moves were repeated three or four times in about 80% of the texts. In Moves 7 and 8, the writers brought 76% of the texts to a close where they drew conclusion by summarising the report's main ideas and suggesting implications. These two moves were signalled in phrases like *'in conclusion'*, *'it is recommended'*.

Similarly, students structured their 25 Technical Description reports in three main parts, introduction, body and conclusion but only in six rhetorical moves (see Table 30). Within the introductory section, all students introduced the manufactured device and its usage in Move 1. In Move 2, they described some general specifications of the device such as length, weight and height and in Move 3, they outlined the road map for the rest of the reported text by making general statements about the device's main parts to be described in the report. Once again, Moves 4 and 5 were more into the body of the report thus they also, like the College reports, had the longest word length and most words overall of any other sections in the text. These two moves were repeated three times approximately within each text, thus most of the students introduced/described each outlined-part and then elaborated on the

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number and percentage of appearance
Introduction	Move 1: introducing the manufactured device.	<i>Laser Computer Mouse is a computer component used to....</i>	25 (100%)
	Move 2: describing some general specifications of the device.	<i>The weight of LCM is...</i>	25 (100%)
	Move 3: outlining the road map for the rest of the reported text (condense the components).	<i>LCM consists of the following parts.....</i>	25 (100%)
Body	Move 4: introducing each outlined part.	<i>Camera is the main part of LCM</i>	74 (98%)
	Move 5: elaborating on the description.	<i>It is small and fixed in the middle of the LCM</i>	73 (97%)
Conclusion	Move 6: indicating the reporter opinion about why it is recommended customers buy/own the device.	<i>In short, LCM is very important for every computer user</i>	22 (88%)

Table 29: Rhetorical moves in the students' Technical Description reports

description with specific features like shape and function of device. In Move 6, the writers drew conclusions by explaining why they recommended the device to be bought/owned. This move was signalled in phrases like 'In short', 'To conclude'.

Instructive reports formatting was a bit different from College and Technical Description reports. In 25 Instructive reports, students applied a two moves structure (see Table 31). In Move 1, students introduced the issue to be resolved (*how to increase the speed of a computer*) or a certain task to be carried (*how to write assignments*). In Move 2 students wrote a list of positive and negative imperatives that instruct the reader to solve the identified issue or to carry the task.

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number and percentage of appearance
Introduction	Move 1: introducing the topic/issue to be solved.	<i>When your computer gets slow, it is time to increase the speed of your computer.</i>	5 (20%)
Body	Move 2: identifying procedures to solve the issue/carry the task.	<i>Clean your computer up/do not use registry optimisers.</i>	25 (100%)

Table 30: Rhetorical moves in the Academic Instructive reports

It can be noticed from Table 31 that only 20% of the reports included an introduction though the samples they used in the TW course included this part of the text. This can be attributed to the fact that students responded only to the assignments' instructions where students were asked to include a proper heading, use these words: 'otherwise', 'unless', and 'if' at least once and use both positive and negative imperatives. Also, students might have thought that the headings they wrote '*How to increase the speed of your computer?*' or '*How to write assignments?*' can be considered as an introduction as they request a direct answer.

Incident reports were written in a different formatting as students had to fill in accident report forms to report imaginary incidents they encountered in their study laboratory, class or future work site in the former. The 25 Incident reports come in the form of a table where students fill in information about: 1) Name of the injured person; 2) Date of incident; 3) Type of injury; 4) Cause of injury; 5) Place of incident; 6) Explanation of how the incident happened; 7) Recommendations to avoid the accident in future; 8) The witnesses, if any; and 9) Signature of the reporter. Rhetorical move analysis was not applicable for this type of report.

5.3.2.2. Professional Reports

For the professional reports, the three main structural parts, which students applied in their College and Technical Description reports, were also represented in the corporate reports. Yet, there were some slight differences in presenting some sections in some of the corporate reports. I will illustrate and exemplify how each type of professional report was structured. To start with, the Periodic reports that worked as an audit of the financial services of the corporations encompassed three main sections, introduction, body and conclusion. Employees of both corporations used seven rhetorical moves to structure these reports (see Table 32).

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number and percentage of appearance
Introduction (Opinion)	Move 1: introducing the report.	<i>We have audited the consolidated and the financial statements...</i>	4 (100%)
	Move 2: condense the components of the report.	<i>...comprises the statement of financial position, statement of cash flows....</i>	4 (100%)
	Move 3: stating the reporter's opinion in general about the audited corporation.	<i>In our opinion, the accompanying statements present fairly the company's financial performance in accordance with...</i>	4 (100%)
Body (Key/audit matters)	Move 4: introducing each key matter.	<i>The accuracy and completeness of revenue amounts recorded is an inherent industry risk.</i>	8 (100%)
	Move 5: elaborating on the description of the key matters.	<i>The group's revenue is categorised into service and wholesale revenue. Service revenue mainly consists of... Wholesale revenue comprises revenue from...</i>	8 (100%)
Conclusion	Move 6: summarising the report – identifying procedures.	<i>We considered revenue recognition as a key audit matter... our audit procedures included...</i>	4 (100%)
	Move 7: re-stating reporter's opinion in general about the audited corporate.	<i>In our opinion, the final statements comply with the relevant requirements of the commercial companies Law 1974 of the Sultanate of Oman.</i>	4 (100%)

Table 31: *Rhetorical moves in the Periodic report - audit of the consolidated and separate financial services of the corporations*

In the first section, which was entitled *Opinion* and worked as an introductory part for the report, employees applied three moves: introducing the topic, condensing its components and making overall judgment about the audited company, a move which was absent in all the students' reports. Such a difference between students and employees regarding the '*making overall judgment*' move may indicate that students need to be further trained to situate themselves in the profession (i.e. to further situate their writing into their future professions by making judgments that represent them as engineers, technicians or accountants, for instance). This recommendation was specifically highlighted by the professional practitioners in their interviews (see Section 5.2.). This move was also present in the conclusion part where employees restated the overall of judgment of auditing. The following section presents the key matters to be discussed in the report with elaboration on discussing each matter.

Employees concluded each key matter with a general opinion about the auditor's progress to audit the identified matter. The last section was *Conclusion*, which provide a summary of auditor's progress to solve key matters, just like the students have done. This move was signaled explicitly by the use of '*In our opinion*' or implicitly by the use of '*our audit*'.

The Periodic reports of the corporations' 1st, 2nd, 3rd quarter performance incorporate three main sections, as illustrated in Table 32 The first section introduces the report to the shareholders whereas the second part presents a summary about each operation performance. For example, the *overview* in the second example, Table 33 started, in Move 1, with background information providing the aims of the report. The third part, entitled *Future outlook*, can be considered as a conclusion for the report, comes in a form of summary of the expected future issues and how the corporation would deal with these issues. Eight rhetorical moves were used in these three macro-sections. Almost all of the analysed periodic reports – the corporations' 1st, 2nd, 3rd quarter performance included the moves indicated in Table 33 except Move 2 which was applied in only 50% of the reports. This might be explained by the fact that reporters moved directly from introducing the report to discussing its components without indicating the aim of the report or condensing its components. Similarly, this structure was applicable to the two Periodic reports – *Islamic Banking performance* – as well.

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number & percentage of appearance
Introduction (Overview)	Move 1: introducing the report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ...present to you a summary of the results of the operations... ○ ...in line with Oman's commitment to achieving sustainable development through economic stability and underpinned by the objective to diversify the economy, the bank is proud to present this periodic report.... 	14 (100%)
	Move 2: stating the aim/function of the report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ...this report highlights our values which represent what we stand for, how we conduct ourselves as the trusted banking partner in Oman, and how we engage with our fellow employees, customers, shareholders, business partners and the communities we serve... ○ This periodic report highlighting the impact of our activities on the economy, environment and society. 	8 (57%)
Body (Operating performance)	Move 3: summarising each operation performance	<p>Group revenue has grown to RO 300 million, an increase of 6% compared to...</p> <p>The accuracy and completeness of revenue amounts recorded is an inherent industry risk.</p>	56 (100%)
	Move 4: elaborating on each operation performance.	The growth is mainly driven by broadband revenues by 16%, submarine cable sales revenue and...	56 (100%)
Conclusion (Future Outlook)	Move 5: initiating the future expected influences.	The Omani telecom market in 2015 will be mainly influenced by three key dynamics: the impact of the oil price...	14 (100%)
	Move 6: elaborating on/explaining causes of influence.	...the drop in oil price will potentially have an impact on consumer and spending business patterns...	14 (100%)
	Move 7: corporate's procedures to overcome influences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ...our focus on maximising the share of wallet and values per customer will assure we are able to further grow.... ○ ...In addition to CSR initiatives, the bank has made great strides to reduce its environmental impact... 	14 (100%)

Table 32: Rhetorical moves in the Periodic report – a corporation's 1st, 2nd, 3rd quarter performance

For the Periodic reports - *Corporate Governance Report* - the structure was as Table 34 shows below. These two reports also included introductory part, body and conclusion sections and were organised into five rhetorical moves.

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number and percentage of appearance
Introduction (Overview)	Move 1: introducing the report.	<i>("The Company") is committed to the highest standards of the Code of Corporate Governance.</i>	2 (100%)
	Move 2: condense the components of the report.	<i>The company has applied the various principles of the Code of Corporate Governance with regard to the appointment of members of the Board of Directors, ensuring the adequacy and efficiency of Internal Controls in all aspects of the Company's operations and transparency in all business dealings.</i>	2 (100%)
Body (Operating performance)	Move 3: introducing each component.	<i>The Board of Directors of the Company is composed of nine members.</i>	2 (100%)
	Move 4: elaborating on each component with further details.	<i>The composition of the Board is in the following order...</i>	2 (100%)
Conclusion (Acknowledgment)	Move 5: summarising the directors' acknowledgment of procedures to be taken in future.	<i>The Board of Directors acknowledges its liability for the preparation of the financial statements, the review of the efficiency and adequacy of internal control system...</i>	2 (100%)

Table 33: *Rhetorical moves in the Periodic report – Corporate Governance Report*

The general structure of the corporate reports - *Analysis of Product Wise Performance* - incorporated five moves distributed among, as can be seen in Table 35., three parts of *Introduction* (placed general information first), *Body* (stated the progress of providing certain services to customers of the corporate (some sections were easily to be read alone) and *Conclusion* (texts ended up with stating procedures to be applied in future). Five moves were applied within these three sections as depicted in Table 35.

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number and percentage of appearance
Introduction (Overview)	Move 1: introducing the report.	<i>The report provides update on the status of major telecom services in the sultanate.</i>	18 (100%)
	Move 2: condense the components of the report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>total revenue includes revenue from domestic operations - fixed lines, mobile and internet and wholesale services...</i> ○ <i>Applications of banking cards, online banking and mobile banking systems....</i> 	18 (100%)
Body (Operating performance)	Move 3: introducing each component.	<i>Mobile service includes post-paid, pre-paid and other value-added services...</i>	54 (100%)
	Move 4: elaborating on each component with further details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Mobile customer base (including resellers) continued to grow at a slower rate...</i> ○ <i>Subscribers growth remained under tremendous pressure...</i> 	54 (100%)
Conclusion (Outlook)	Move 5: bringing the report to a close with outlook of procedures to be taken in future.	<i>Our strategy remains focused on enriching customer experience, growth, retention, product innovation, and cost efficiencies, with the ultimate goal to enhance our shareholders' value.</i>	18 (100%)

Table 34: Rhetorical moves in the Service/Progress reports - Analysis of Product Wise Performance

In addition to applying Moves 3 and 4 three times in each report, employees varied in how they elaborated on each component with further details. Thus, the elaborations were accompanied with graphs, diagrams, and tables to further show the results of analysis. Such a feature was also absent in the students' reports, which once again necessitate the TW courses' coordinators and teachers in the CoT to incorporate such techniques within the TW curricula.

For Investigative corporate reports, where employees reported: (1) surveying operations at customer service outlets and branches; (2) surveying applying electronic payment, online banking and mobile banking services for pre-paid

services; and (3) adopting further techniques to enhance customer services quality, they similarly consisted of, as can be seen in Table 36, three parts, namely introduction, body and conclusion, and six rhetorical moves.

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number and percentage of appearance
Introduction (Issue)	Move 1: introducing the report/issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>The company conducted a survey of its current operation at its customer services outlet among the sultanate.</i> ○ <i>The issue is related to the job shop system... It was noticed form the current service procedure takes long time to serve the customer inside the outlet.</i> ○ <i>customers argue that there is inflexible procedure and unnecessary steps to be followed to get the service activated....</i> ○ <i>Our customer services and quality department has adopted various measures and techniques to obtain positive and negative feedback...</i> 	16 (100%)
	Move 2: stating the aim of the report.	<i>The survey was aimed to identify strength and weakness of the services which are provided through different outlets.</i>	4 (25%)
Body (Key/audit matters)	Move 3 introducing each procedure.	<i>It can adapt its current procedure to meet its growing customer's needs that could minimise the time spent inside the outlet to get the service required...</i>	16 (100%)
	Move 4: elaborating on the discussion of each component.	<i>...should have an information disc in any of its outlets. Therefore, when the customer enters the outlet, directly he should go to the information disc to ask for the service required... this process will reduce the time spent by customer.</i>	16 (100%)
Conclusion	Move 5: summarising or re-stating the issue.	<i>The current procedure of the services provided in outlets has some limitations especially in lead time...</i>	4 (25%)
	Move 6: bring the text to a close by stating recommendations.	<i>In order for the corporate to solve the issue (e.g. speed up the services requested by customers), we suggest that...</i>	16 (100%)

Table 35: Setting out the general structure of the Investigative & Recommendation reports

Similarly, six rhetorical moves were applied by employees in the other two types of Investigative corporate reports, which reported factual findings of implementing auditors' comments and staff professional development through training and

education as can be seen in Tables 37 and 38 respectively. These reports consisted of three parts, namely introduction, body and conclusion, as well. Six rhetorical moves were applied to the structure of each report of these two categories. What was distinct was that the reports of staff professional development through training and education were accompanied with tables and graphs to help clarify the numbers and percentages mentioned while elaborating on the results of implementing methods of assessing employees' performance, a step which was absent in the students' reports.

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number and percentage of appearance
Introduction (Issue)	Move 1: introducing the report/issue.	<i>We have performed the procedures agreed with auditors pursuant to the Capital Market Authority...</i>	6 (100%)
	Move 2: stating the issue/aim.	<i>The procedures were performed to assist auditors in evaluating the extent of the company's compliance...</i>	6 (100%)
Body (Key/audit matters)	Move 3: introducing the components/procedures.	<i>The procedures are summarised as follows:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>We obtained and check the corporate governance report...</i> ○ <i>We obtained the details regarding areas of non-compliance.</i> 	6 (100%)
	Move 4: elaborating on the discussion of procedures.	<i>Because the above procedures do not constitute a review made in accordance with international standards... We do not express any assurance...</i>	6 (100%)
Conclusion	Move 5: re-stating the aim/issue + summarising what it discussed.	<i>Our report is solely for the purpose set forth in the first paragraph of this report and for your information...</i>	6 (100%)
	Move 6: bring the text to a close by recommending usage of report.	<i>The report does not extend to any financial statements of the company....</i>	6 (100%)

Table 36: Setting out the general structure of the Investigative & Recommendation reports

Heading/Part of the text	Moves	Examples	Number and percentage of appearance
Introduction (Issue)	Move 1: introducing the report.	<i>The Human Resources Management and Learning and Development divisions draw up plans to provide our people with the necessary training...</i>	8 (100%)
	Move 2: condense the components of the report (propose methods of assessment).	<i>We achieved a series of successes in the sector, all of which reflect positively on the performance...</i>	8 (100%)
Body (Key/audit matters)	Move 3 introducing each component/method.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Our annual employee performance assessments are conducted through an online review process. ○ The method of assessment of capabilities and administrative competence for members of the mid and senior management requires assessing each member by his colleagues... 	8 (100%)
	Move 4: elaborating on the discussion of each component.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employees are evaluated against core competency areas... ○ Our virtual centre for assessment allows us to identify potential leaders. ○ This evaluation system has proved its efficiency and effectiveness... 	8 (100%)
Conclusion	Move 5: summarising the report.	<i>The learning and development programme follows modern systems and techniques...</i>	8 (100%)
	Move 6: bring the text to a close by stating recommendations.	<i>The company seeks to provide training that meet the overall requirements as per the latest standards...</i>	8 (100%)

Table 37: setting out the general structure of the Investigative & Recommendation reports

5.3.2.3. Contrasting Rhetorical Moves in Academic and Professional reports

After going through Tables 29 to 38 I found that students and employees applied 18 moves to structure their academic and corporate reports. Table 39 depicts how these moves were incorporated in the academic and professional reports. I have combined a number of separate categories from Tables 29 to 38 under single headings in Table 39 below as these categories are similar or have similar functions.

Main parts	Moves	Students' texts			Number and percentage of appearance (out of 75)	Employees' texts			Total number and percentage of appearance (out of 68)
		College Report (out of 25)	T. D. Report (out of 25)	Instructive Report (out of 25)		Periodic Report (out of 20)	Service/Progress Report (out of 18)	Investigation + Recommendation Report (out of 30)	
Introduction	1. introducing the topic/manufactured device/issue to be solved.	18	25	5	48 (64%)	20	18	30	68 (100%)
	2. indicating the resources used to write the report.	20	0	0	20 (27%)	0	0	0	0 (0%)
	3. stating the aim/function of the report.	16	0	0	16 (21%)	8	0	10	18 (26.5%)
	4. condense the components of the report/outlining the road map for the rest of the reported text.	9	25	0	34 (45%)	8	18	10	36 (53%)
Body	1. introducing each outlined part/key matter/component/procedures.	21	24	25	70 (93%)	20	18	30	68 (100%)
	2. elaborating on the main argument/the description/each key matter/each operation performance/each component with further details.	16	24	0	40 (53%)	20	18	30	68 (100%)
Conclusion	1. summarising the 'journey' that the reports took/ the progress to solve key matters.	19	0	0	19 (25%)	18	0	18	36 (53%)
	2. bringing the report to a close with outlook/acknowledgment/recommendation of procedures to be taken in future to overcome influences/key matters/issues.	19	22	0	41 (55%)	20	18	30	68 (100%)
Total		138	120	30	288 (48%)	114	90	158	362 (66.5%)

Table 38: Rhetorical moves in academic & professional reports

The above analysis of rhetorical moves applied by students and employees to structure their reports revealed that both students and employees had generally structured their texts according to the sequence shown below in Figure 6.

Introducing theme/topic of report + preview of the report's elements	
↓	The writer states the theme or topic (macro-theme) and condense its elements (hyper-themes) to be discussed in the text.
Elements evaluation	
↓	The writer identifies each element/hyper-theme and elaborates on it with further details.
Reiteration of theme/topic	
	Bringing the text to a close by restating or summarising the discussed theme/topic or identifying recommendations or procedures to overcome an issue/key matter.

Figure 6: *Setting out the stages in the schematic structure of the academic & professional texts*

The formatting of the reports likely started within an introductory section, which set the context of the written report within the subject area by stating the theme or topic (macro-theme) and condense its elements (hyper-themes) to be discussed in the text, outlined the approach that writers took in their writing and gave the reader an indication of the road map for the rest of the reported text. Writers then moved to the second section, where they evaluated each element by identifying each element/hyper-theme and elaborated on it with further details. The texts after that ended through reiterating the topic of the report. Writers here restated or summarised the discussed theme/topic or identified recommendations or procedures to be applied to overcome an issue/key matter. Both students and employees organised their reports in such a format, and I believe, had a result that the readers, either a teacher, employer or an end-user, could follow the writers' thinking process more easily as writing in such contexts focuses on demonstrating the abilities of the writers as well as satisfying the reader's needs. In spite of the similarities between students and employees in structuring their texts, yet some suggestive differences between them can be noticed. For example, one difference was related to how both employees and students were able to elaborate on each item they discussed in their reports. In the employees' written reports, the overall patterns of themes (i.e. macro-

themes and hyper-themes) served to build a sense of overall unity in what is stated. Thus, employees' texts were very focused, and this depended on the fact that the employees had a sense of how to marshal their information and deploy them from one stage of the text to another when they elaborate with further details (Agnew, 1992). Figure 7 presents an example of how the patterns of macro-theme and hyper-themes were set out in the corporate reports.

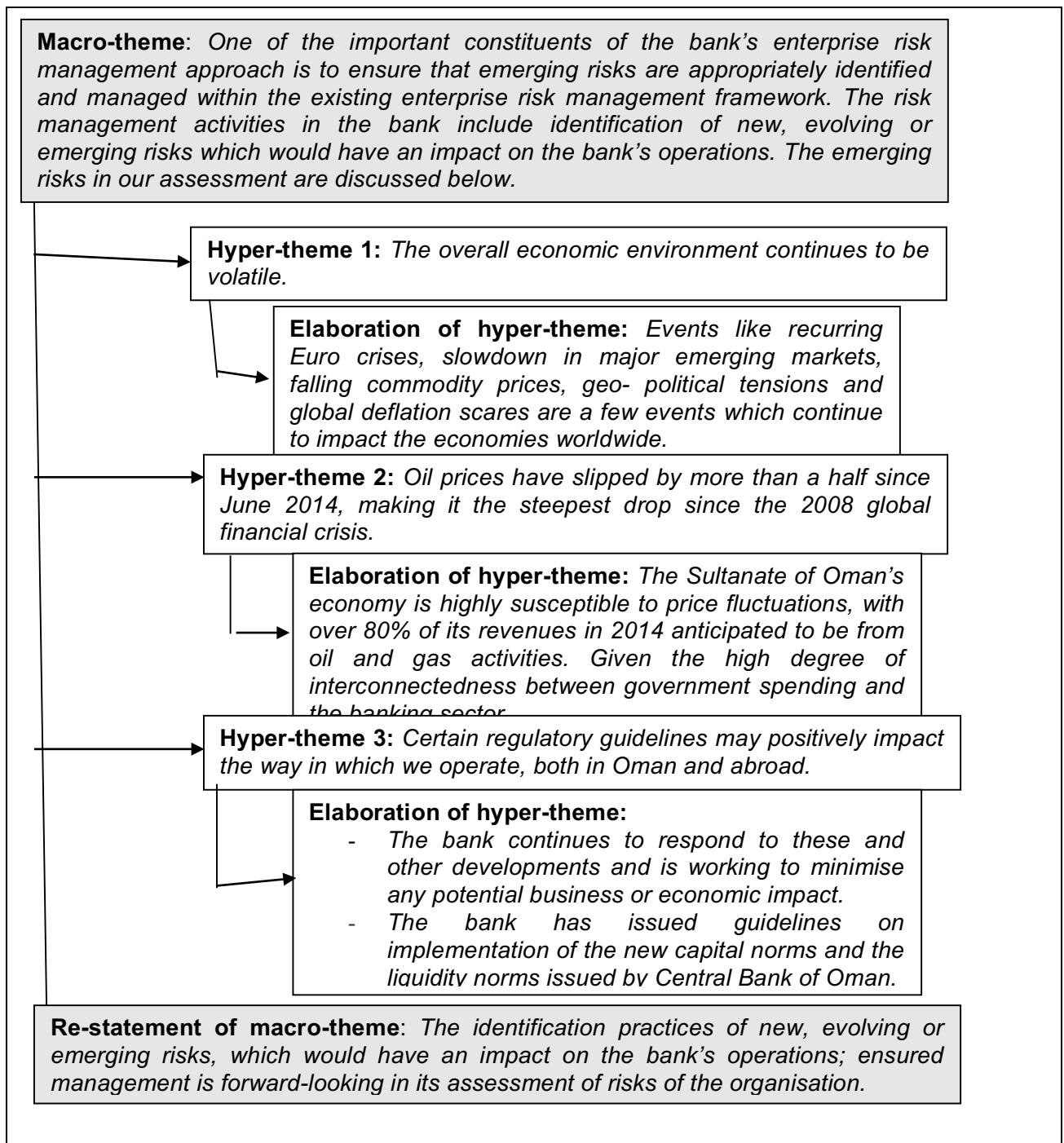


Figure 7: The pattern of macro-theme and hyper-themes in the corporate reports

We can see how the macro-theme predicted what was to come (i.e. *the emerging risks*) in this part of a financial Periodic report, while the hyper-themes choices (*the economic environment, the falling of oil prices and the applied regulatory guidelines*) referred back to the macro-theme (*emerging risks management*) and referred forward to what was to come (*details of each emerging risk*) in each paragraph.

In contrast, most of the students' writing lacked such a thematic feature of unity for the reason that although they were sometimes able to create macro-themes and hyper-themes they were unable to elaborate with further details on them. Despite having identified the initial elements, to be discussed in their topics, in their brief opening paragraphs, these students experienced difficulties in proceeding, for they did not develop each of these elements in any structured way, so that their subsequent paragraphs showed little relationship to any of the initial elements. Accordingly, the tendency in the way the students wrote was to digress into presenting the macro-themes and hyper-themes of the topics they were discussing, while drifting rather haphazardly from one point to another which meant that they were not successfully elaborated in the subsequent related paragraphs. If we consider, for example, the following text (see Figure 8) in which one of the students created a micro-theme and hyper-themes but, unfortunately, the rest of the paragraphs failed to sustain elaboration of the hyper-themes, drifting into information that was not demonstrated to be relevant.

Unfortunately, either the elaborations of the hyper-themes did not relate to the specific issue (*Omani economy*) that was supposed to be discussed in this text or no elaboration was found in the analysed text. This could mean that students had not succeeded in completely using their knowledge to write the requested texts as they were intended to do, albeit they understood what they were required to write. A skilled writer, like a professional employee, could in fact make use of the elements students chose in order to develop more specific details about the topic they wrote about, but in the hands of unconfident writers, like the students, they did not provide an adequate basis for the subsequent development of the texts.

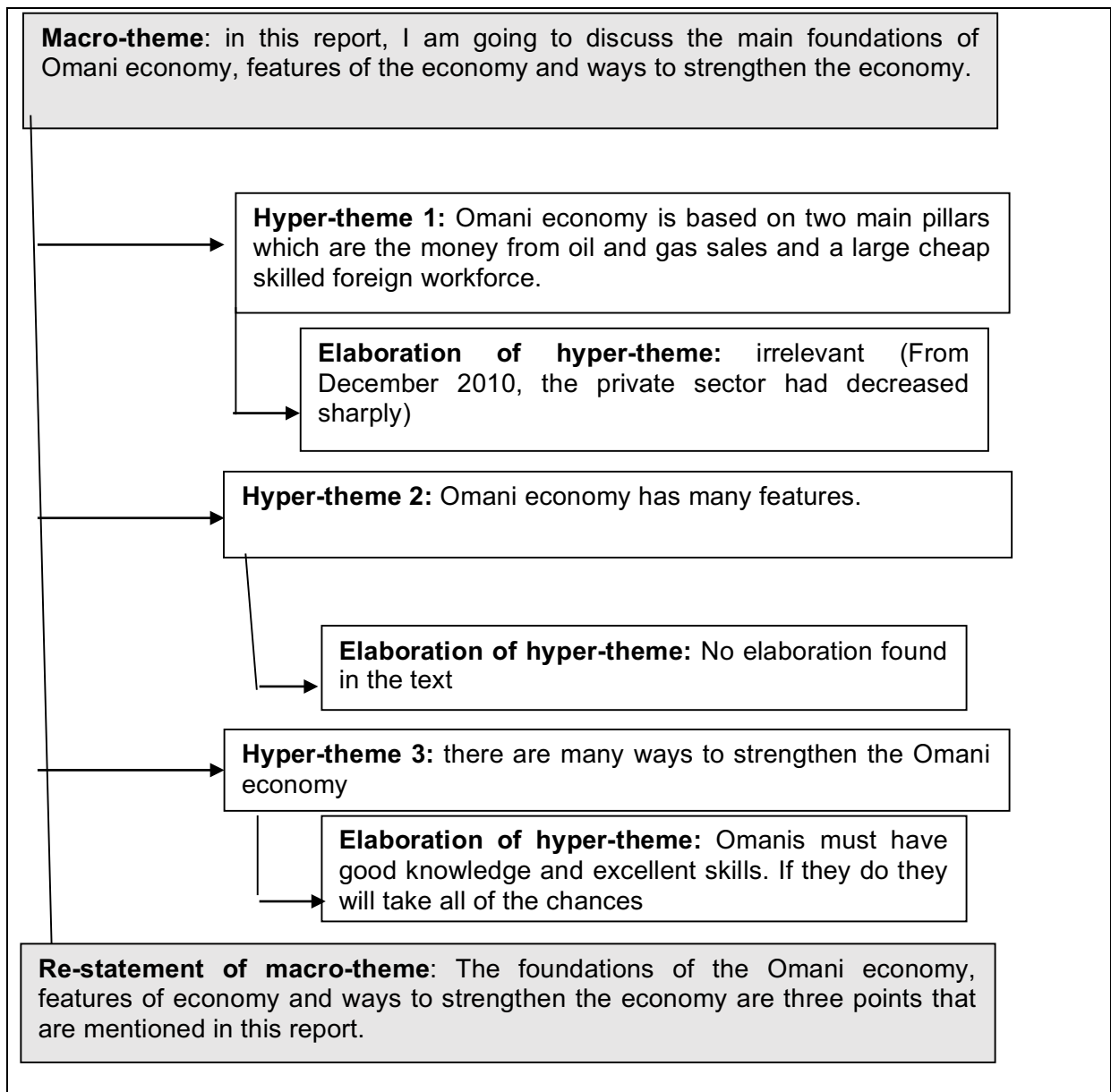


Figure 8: *The pattern of macro-theme and hyper-themes in the academic reports*

With students writing only five '*relevant elaborated hyper-themes*' reports, two college reports and three technical description reports, whereas all of the employees' 20 periodic reports, 18 recommendation reports and 30 investigative reports were relevantly elaborated in terms of hyper-theme elaboration. In contrast to the employees, 50% of the students' reports were irrelevant or non-elaborated (see Table 40).

Writer		Themes				Total
		Relevant elaborated hyper-themes	Irrelevant elaborated hyper-themes	Non-elaborated hyper-themes	Not applicable	
Student	Incident Report	0	0	0	25	25
	College Report	2	8	15	0	25
	Instructive Report	0	0	0	25	25
	T. D. Report	3	10	12	0	25
Employee	Periodic Report	20	0	0	0	20
	Service Report	18	0	0	0	18
	Investigative and Recom. Report	30	0	0	0	30
Total		65	18	27	70	168

Table 39: Counts – Thematic organisation of reports

Looking more closely at the details of what was stated in creating the macro-theme, the feature of unity was available in the professional reports but rarely was found in the academic writings. The employees had the capacity to offer micro-theme and hyper-themes of the texts discussed in their texts, and later to relevantly elaborate on these to develop their discussion, whereas with students the problem was the irrelevancy or absence of elaboration on the hyper-themes of their topics. Skilled writers, like the employees, who were able to elaborate on their created macro-theme and hyper-themes, could position themselves as successful writers. They were able to proceed by avoiding mere repetition of unnecessary details in their corporate reports, offering instead broad interpretive claims about the texts concerned. Writing such genres of reports by students involved stating details of the points (i.e. micro-theme and hyper-themes) being discussed, students had trouble bringing the discussion into the service of the argument, a matter that was clear through noting the lack of consistent development in the manner in which the hyper-themes choices unfolded throughout the sections of their texts. This could have been related to the fact that students intended to give details that provided evidence of elaborating upon the hyper-themes of the text discussed, but the given elaborations were not fully-related to the discussed topic. This difference in the reports' format accounted for the length of professional reports over academic ones.

Also, given the fact that “busy workplace readers may pick and choose only sections of the document” (Hovde, 2003, p. 141), employees, in contrast to students, placed general themes first and detailed more information about each theme later and that enabled their readers to read each section separately without the need to read the other parts. For employees, the main body of the analysed reports, as Robins (2010, p. 4) states, “is the part of the corporate reports that will usually be relied upon most by analysts”. The exact layout of these reports’ main body depended on the type of the work being done. Students and employees also differed in concluding their reports. For example, academic writers offered a clear statement of their own nuanced response to the report’s question or task expressed in the report’s title or introduction. This response flowed from the arguments that they set out in the body of the assignment. In so doing, they also summarised the ‘journey’ that their reports took. Employees, in contrast, mostly ended their texts up with stating recommendations to be applied.

5.3.3. Language Features

The aim at this section was to analyse the language used to express what the writer wrote to their reader, (i.e. the relation between the writer (students/employees) and the reader (tutor/end user), in both the 100 academic reports and the 68 corporate reports. Performing extensive analyses with such large amount of data was inevitable and vital for the study. Thus, to explore these language features, first, all reports were counted and read several times to investigate the spread of features. While reading each report I noted and recorded three variables: (1) how students and employees structured their sentences (i.e. whether in simple form or in complex form where two sentences (or more) with similar or different ideas connected with each other through conjunctions); (2) how the use of active and passive sentences was deployed in both students and practitioners’ reports to explore whether practitioners’ reports incorporated more/less passive voice verbs or more/less active voice verbs; and (3) use of modal verbs (should, must, etc.) to form imperative sentences. This analysis presents how these features were applied in each type of the students’ and employees’ reports with examples for each feature from the analysed texts. The number and percentage of appearance of each category in each type of reports are illustrated in Tables 5.3.a. to 5.3.q, see Appendix 9). Summary of the analysis is shown in Table 41 below.

Linguistic feature	Categories	Students' texts				Total Number and percentage of sentences	Employees' texts			Total Number and percentage of sentences
		Incident Report	College Report	Instructive report	T. D. Report		Periodic Report	Service/Progress Report	Investigation + Recommendation Report	
Structuring sentences	Simple sentences.	203 (74%)	286 (71%)	181 (86%)	696 (78%)	1366 (77%)	552 (62%)	567 (78%)	594 (63%)	1713 (68%)
	Complex sentences: sentences with similar ideas connected with each other through conjunctions.	61 (22%)	95 (24%)	29 (14%)	193 (22%)	378 (21%)	334 (38%)	161 (22%)	346 (37%)	841 (32%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with different ideas connected with each other through conjunctions.	9 (3%)	18 (4.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	27 (1.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Use of active & passive sentences	Use of active voice.	248 (91%)	351 (88%)	210 (100%)	736 (68%)	1545 (87%)	1220 (92%)	775 (94.5%)	1258 (93%)	3253 (93%)
	Use of passive voice.	25 (9%)	48 (12%)	22 (10%)	302 (28%)	397 (22.5%)	148 (17%)	159 (22%)	268 (30%)	575 (23%)
Stylistic register	Imperative: associating sentence's subject (noun or 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns) with modals (should, must, etc.).	70 (25%)	133 (33%)	181 (86%)	0 (0%)	384 (22%)	0 (3%)	0 (0.3%)	458 (49%)	458 (17.5%)

Table 40: *linguistic features in academic & professional reports*

As shown in Table 41, in the 25 Incident reports, students wrote 273 sentences. Among these sentences they mostly wrote simple active sentences. Similarly, 80% of the 399 sentences that students wrote in their 25 College reports were simple active sentences. Within the Instructive reports, students wrote 210 sentences and once again they were mostly simple active sentences. Only five of these Instructive reports had introductory sentences and none of them included a conclusion section. Among 889 simple and complex sentences written by students in 25 Technical Description reports, none of students used complex sentences where two sentences (or more) with different ideas are connected with each other through conjunctions and imperative sentences as well. Once again, like the other type of academic reports analysed in this study, students wrote mostly simple active sentences. For employees the situation was approximately similar as their reports' sentences are mostly simple active as well as illustrated in Tables 41 above. They, in their 20 Periodical reports wrote 886 sentences.

The above analysis revealed that both students and employees noticeably tended to use simpler active sentences to write their reports. Around 80% of the practitioners' and students' sentences more often contained just one clause, without subordinate clauses attached or other clauses embedded within. Practitioners and students writing tended to have single ideas expressed in each sentence, for example, *we will continue the settlement rates of May for June and July*. The frequency of simple sentence structures, as Conrad, Pfeiffer, & Szymoniak (2012) note, might be due to the writers' need to make information as easy as possible for readers to follow and to the fact that such simpler sentences keep meaning as unambiguous as possible. This interpretation could be valid in this case of students' and employees' writing. For instance, students, as they explained in their interviews, need to show their tutors that they have understood the task, so they can express their ideas clearly. Moreover, they want to avoid losing marks, which usually happens when they write more complex sentences. For employees, using simple sentences means better clients' understanding and more corporate liability.

Labelling practitioner and students' sentences as "simple" does not mean that their whole reports were free of complexity, however. As Table 5.9. shows, all of the students and practitioners' reports had embedded/subordinate clauses within a

sentence, yet they slightly differed in how the complexity was presented in their reports. Students, on the one hand, wrote more complex sentences with subordinate and embedded clauses that cover multiple ideas in single sentences than practitioners. For instance, a student wrote a compound sentence that described a certain idea; for example, the power needed for a certain device, and then attempted to express a different idea about the location of fitting that device. Around 27 of the students' sentences covered multiple ideas in each sentence and were in contrast to the practitioners' ones where no sentence covered more than one idea. The students' complex sentences were typically used for expressing reasons, purposes, and sources of information. Students' compound sentences combined information unnecessarily or irrelevantly, either making the information difficult to follow or raising questions in readers' minds about why the information is combined. For example, in the sentence, "*the device has a cylinder shape while the camera is used to...*", there was no good reason why the information about the "*camera*" should be placed in a clause with *while*, making it subordinate to the earlier information in the sentence. Furthermore, the subordinator *while* is most common for information about time, but this is information about shape and usage. The complex clauses in students' writing were often in direct opposition to readers' needs for being able to understand information quickly. Such students' use of complex phrases impacted the construction of sentences as the content became vaguer, thereby also went against the need in disciplinary study and future workplace for accuracy and clarity (Conrad, Pfeiffer, & Szymoniak, 2012; Conrad & Pfeiffer, 2011).

On the other hand, for practitioners, at first glance, their sentences appeared complicated, but the complex structures were noun phrases and prepositional phrases making precise information. This information was dense even though each sentence typically expressed only one main idea, whereas in students' texts, the information is less dense overall, and when the students used complex noun phrases, the nouns were more often abstract. Practitioners do use subordination and embedding in some sentences. When they do, however, the structure tends to remain straightforward. Practitioners' subject-verb-object ordering of each clause typically remains obvious and only one subordinate clause is used per sentence. The ideas are unclear due to vague prepositional phrases which resulted in grammatical choices that made students' writing less precise and more abstract. In discussing

sentences such as these in interviews (see Section 5.2.), practitioners made repeated reference to the concern of the need for precise information that can be easily read by their clients accordingly fulfil a need to communicate with them with as little ambiguity as possible. “Ambiguous or inaccurate writing can result in an unintentional increase in liability for a firm and have serious financial consequences” (Conrad, Pfeiffer, & Szymoniak, 2012, p.2). Practitioners also suggested the factor that employees are following models written by experts in their corporations and they are more concerned with presenting easily-read and to-the-point content for their customers whereas students were more concerned with showing their tutors, as they are English language teachers, that they have mastered grammatical patterns required to write compound sentences or phrases.

Analysing the use of these sentences in the active and passive voice showed that both students and practitioners used fewer passive voice verbs and more active ones as I explained earlier in this section. For students, the passive voice’s usage was most notable in Technical Description reports where they described for instance certain parts of an object, tool, system or software. They, for example, said (*this part of device can be used to*). It also existed in the other types of academic technical reports. This was true where a student reported for example an incident happened (*The accident was caused as a result of ignoring the safety instruction*). In TW classes, as students reported, they were regularly told to use a passive voice to avoid first-person pronouns because it is non-academic to use first-person pronouns in their reports (see Section 5.2.). Students generally made no attempt to say who did the work or made assumptions. Generally, the students were assumed to be responsible for the work without an overt mention of that fact. However, as Conrad & Pfeiffer, (2011) argue, “*when students get a message to sound academic, they can generalise it in ways that are inappropriate for workplace writing*” (p.11). For instance, “*students’ use of passive voice may contribute to ambiguity*” (ibid). For example, in the following student paper, it is not clear who designed the device or who recommended it: ‘*the device was designed..... It is recommended that to have it is necessary.....*’. In this sentence, the use of passive voice and past tense for the recommendation suggests someone else made the recommendation earlier, but no one else is identified in the paper. The sentence is consistent with students trying to avoid first-person pronouns, something that students in interviews have

repeatedly noted they learned to do because using such structure does not sound academic. My interviews with managers suggested that students unfortunately apply such rules of using passive voice without understanding that the problem with students' use of passive voice is its frequent contribution to ambiguity (see Section 5.2.). This result was also noted by Conrad & Pfeiffer in their study about student and workplace writing in civil engineering. Conrad & Pfeiffer found that "*students follow the writing rules and use passive voice even when it makes meaning ambiguous or when knowing who made an observation and recommendation would be useful*" (see Conrad & Pfeiffer, 2011, p. 13).

Practitioners' grammar choices exhibited no remarkable differences from students' choices. They also generally used less passive but more active voice verbs in all their reports, just like students. Yet, as they were writing for clients, colleagues or managers, etc.; thus they "were far more concerned with establishing their firm's responsibility for certain work or decisions" (Conrad & Pfeiffer, 2011, p. 10). Typically, they achieved this by using 'we', as subject of sentences they write. This can be seen in the following example from a periodical report '*We have achieved a net profit of 10 million since the year ended 2014*'. In this sentence 'we' refers to the firm, not the specific writer of the text. Occasionally practitioners use '*our + noun phrase*', or the firm's name, e.g. *Bank X*, as shown in the following two sentences, rather than *we*, but first-person pronouns were a more common choice in practitioners' reports: '*Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the consolidated financial statements...*'; '*Bank X commenced a process of divestment of its stake...*'.

The results of analysing active and passive voice has also disclosed that practitioners in their reports placed no value on "*sounding academic*" as students did, who held a perception that the use of active voice with personal pronouns "*just doesn't sound academic*". Alternatively, practitioners used an active voice with first-person pronouns to make their firm's responsibility clear. Mentioning responsibility and liability feature steered me towards clarifying how this feature contributed in entitling students' and employees' reports different degrees of formality. Thus, after hearing the results of my analysis of passive voice, for academics the use of active voice and personal pronouns "*just doesn't sound academic*" whereas practitioners place no value on "*sounding academic*", thus, as seen in the analysis above, using active voice and first-person pronouns is more encouraged in a workplace context to

make the responsibility clear. The analysis of the passive voice has also highlighted another problem that arises for preparing students to write in the workplace. Though technical reports in academia and technical reports in the professional context shared some features as Table 41 shows, there were other concerns of the practitioners, related to liability for instance, that were not central to academia.

Analysing the use of first-person pronouns (we, our, I) in the imperatives showed that although students were told to avoid first-person pronouns as it does not sound academic, students used first-person pronouns similarly to practitioners to write their reports. This might have confirmed the fact that the tone of reports' language in general was seen as more individual than corporate as the style applied in such reports appeared to be largely consistent and characterised by, as Flowerdew and Wan (2006, p.146) state, "*using the semi-formal tone of co-operative business colleagues*". Thus, this element can be interpreted to mean that the business "*relationship between the participants was valued, with both the writer and the reader being actively present in action*" (Flowerdew & Wan, 2006, p.145). However, this use of reference is not consistent with the generally accepted corporate nature of much business writing and suggests greater positive politeness than might be expected.

In addition, in the academic samples, the students' association of sentences' subjects (nouns or 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns) with modals (should, must, etc.), for example: '*you should order the camera by now..*' to form imperatives represented a hierarchical relationship between the writer and the reader. The writer might have expectations placed upon them, (e.g. *you should, you are expected, you must*). The writers expected their intended readers to comply with their demands, as if stating that we will order and you do the work. The writers assumed a lot of power in terms of relationship by showing that they were higher above, so they had all the authority to command and to instruct the readers. By contrast, the corporate samples' imperative phrases placed no expectations on the readers. Instead, the employees had chosen to depersonalise such a hierarchical relationship employed in the students' texts. This was true though, as about 50% of the Investigation and Recommendation reports included association of sentences' subjects with modals. This might indicate, in general, that students and employees used different stylistic register to write their reports. Yet, both students and practitioners might be

considered have observed “*standard conventions for written business English*” (Gains, 1999, p. 86). Thus, with the academic and corporate reports, a formal stylistic register had been raised in all of their 168 reports. However, though the formal register was dominant, nonetheless there were instances in these reports where the stylistic register was lowered from what appears to be the norm of formality, to adopt a more informal and personal tone.

Overall, then, this analysis of language features tells us about practitioner and student writing, that the grammatical choices of both do reflect certain similarities within report writing practices. Yet, students still lack the use of relatively simple clause-level structure for precise, accurate information that is as unambiguous as possible so that it can be read quickly by clients, colleagues, and managers; and intentionally increase the firm’s legal responsibility than their personal responsibility. On the other hand, students’ complexity in clause-level structure is diametrically opposed to clients’ reading needs, and conveys less precise, less accurate information. The problems in the students’ sentences are tied to ambiguity for clients – matters that are central to future careers practice. Some of the student sentences would be more effective if they applied principles that are often covered in basic technical writing classes, such as placing relative clauses immediately after the nouns they modify.

5.3.4. Conclusion of Reports’ Analysis

To summarise, this part of my study has shed a light on certain textual features related to purpose, structure and language of academic and professional technical reports. The analysis was to understand whether TW programmes offer the course work and opportunities graduates need. Analysing these textual features showed that there are similarities and differences between students’ and employees’ reports with regard to these features. The similarities mean that the programmes seem to some extent to be preparing students for the workplace practices of writing. The differences, however, do not necessarily support the claim of employers that graduates are unable to produce the reports they are expected to produce in their future workplace because they are not prepared to carry such tasks in academia.

5.4. Summary and Conclusion

To summarise, this study has shed light on the factors that might account for the mismatches between technical report writing taught in the CoT and technical reports required in the corporate context. Knowing these typical factors can guide academic and professional faculty members to enhance the standards of written communication in the workplace. In this chapter (Chapter 5), I have shed light, through analysing academic and corporate reports, on how the claim of the employers that CoT do not prepare their graduates to write reports as expected as by these employers might be challenged. I also investigated, through analysing interviews with stakeholders, the factors that these individuals think as factors of difference between the two contexts reports. The first factor was the difference between academic and professional instructions to write reports/tasks' authenticity. To explore this factor, I investigated the variance in the participants' perceptions of a good technical writing report/text and the aspects that hinder them from writing such good reports.

This data raises questions about the professional assumption that student texts are inadequate for the professional workplace. Differences are insufficient to indicate that students are not adequately prepared to structure their texts in a workplace-text like manner, as employers argue. I may concur with the claim that students need further training on how to elaborate with their texts or make authentic judgment while writing reports related to the field they are specialised in for instance but I feel it is not sufficient to say that students are totally not prepared to structure their texts in a like manner of how employees organise their reports. Thus, the above analysis of how both students and employees structured their reports is ample to perhaps challenge such a perception. Further to this, however, is that the data offers more than a conclusion about adequacy by adding to a discussion about pedagogy and how student might be supported, about the range of different texts they might be supported in writing, about the institutional context and how this shapes the texts that are being produced, supporting student individual learning needs rather than simply modelling text structures, offering a range of examples rather than only typical examples. The point is that the teachers' role is concerned with balancing breadth of learning with honing very particular skills— the closer the tasks come to work based examples the narrower the learning and the less adaptable the student becomes and

the less able to perform critical literacy even as they become highly skilled in very a narrow set of tasks. So in balancing these things the institution can remain open to accusations of poor preparation for the workplace.

The findings may question the extent of knowledge required to successfully build up successful technical reports, as the disparity between the stakeholders' perceptions of a good technical report/text suggests that teachers are at times oversensitive to linguistic features and professionals require more attention to be paid to the way in which the content is construed in the texts. Participants also believe that writers' voice while writing academic and professional reports and the absence of coordination between CoT and corporations are factors of mismatch between academic and professional reports. Yet, analysing academic and corporate reports has proved that there are similarities and differences between the two genres of reports. This means that TW programmes are partly offering the course work needed to carry corporate reporting tasks. This urged me to inquire then about what else can be done to bridge the gap between these two contexts as my participants, especially from corporate context, perceive. The answer was in fact reported by one of the interviewed coordinators who claimed that achieving such a project is beyond the scope of this study as it needs a huge national Needs Analysis project encompassing different parties from both government and private sectors representing the Ministries of Higher Education, Finance Affairs, Manpower and private higher education institutions in the sultanate (see Section 5.2.). Nevertheless, it is worth trying to at least initiate foundations for such a project. I believe that first, before analysing the needs of the market in relation to TW, so it can be taught in the CoT, there is a need to learn why such a gap between the two contexts exists. Further research is needed to find out what factors exist other than the mismatching between writing tasks practiced in academia and those practiced in the workplace, and non adequate graduates' preparation in academia to carry workplace reporting tasks, and stand behind graduates' inability to produce the writing they are expected to produce in their future workplaces. For instance, more research is needed to better align TW core curricula to the report-writing requirements in the industry. In addition, further investigation is to be carried out to learn the best ways students may learn in these university courses in a way that helps them satisfy their employers' needs. Also, a more detailed approach to collaborating with members of the

workplace, for example understanding the processes involved in the construction of texts, understanding the ways in which writers may become 'good writers' and become aware of their readers, may prove to be useful in the development of further research and pedagogy related to workplace practices of technical report writing. The following chapter presents a detailed discussion of the analysed results.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of the data collected for the current study, both from the qualitative and the quantitative strands. The themes that were identified through the analysis of the data in the previous chapter are discussed in relation to the aims and research questions of the study and the available literature on students' report-writing in foreign language academic and professional contexts. To reiterate, the study was designed to explore the CoT graduates' technical report writing experience in the contexts of (1) CoT, where English is the medium of instruction (EMI), and (2) work organizations that employ the graduates of these colleges. Specifically, it was undertaken to investigate the factors, from the perspectives of stakeholders (i.e. students, TW course teachers and coordinators, employers and employees) that cause CoT graduates to encounter difficulties or be unable to produce reports as well as expected by their future employers even though they studied TW courses that are supposed to have prepared them to produce such reports. To examine this preparation, the study aimed also to find out how the technical reports produced by CoT graduates are similar to/different from the reports produced by employees in the workplace. Accordingly, this chapter discusses the main findings on stakeholders' perceptions of the factors influencing students' ability to produce reports as expected by their managers. It also focuses on probing the matches and mismatches between students' and employees' reports. These factors, matches and mismatches were identified from the data analysis in Chapter Five. Thus, in the subsequent sections, the findings of the study are interpreted and discussed according to the themes that emerged through the analysis of the results. These themes are presented focusing primarily on how stakeholders conceptualised the graduates' technical writing experience prior to starting their work life and the factors shaping this experience.

6.2. Factors of Influence: Why Graduates have Difficulty in Producing Workplace Reports in Line with Employers' Expectations

The aim of this section is to explore the complexities surrounding graduates' negotiation of technical writing within the two contexts of the study, namely CoT and

corporations. It begins by presenting the perceived factors based on the analysis of the data and the literature review. The attempt is to capture the interconnectedness of the various factors, either personal (related to report writing) or contextual (related to the context of writing), that affect graduates' experience with writing for professional purposes. This will be followed by a discussion of the influence of each element on graduates' report-writing experience and the suggested remedies from the stakeholders' point of view.

The analysis of the findings of the current study suggests that the difficulty that graduates of CoT face in writing reports as expected by their future employers can be attributed to different factors related to authenticity, the voice of the writer and the absence of coordination between academic and professional contexts. These factors can be classified under two main themes: 1) task related factors, which represent stakeholders' perceptions of the requirements of report writing tasks in each context (quality and authenticity of the reports) and the writer's voice (including an understanding of the audience of the reports); and 2) contextual factors, which focus on any lack of coordination between the institutional context and the professional context. It became obvious that all the stakeholders had a clear perception that written tasks in academia were a poor match for those written in the work place; however, this view should be treated with some caution as will be shown in Section 6.3.

6.2.1. Authenticity and Quality

The literature acknowledges the importance of the graduates' disciplinary and practical knowledge (see for example Bhatia, 2017; Hyland, 2017; Stanton, 2017; Wiwczaroski, 2015). Yet, such knowledge is insufficient, as it will not provide these graduates with the same advantages as that provided by the TW module preparation for writing authentic texts (Stanton, 2017; Wiwczaroski, 2015). Regardless of graduates' knowledge in their field and their competence in the subject matter, without mastering technical writing skills, including report writing, this will still not be sufficient to secure them a good job (Wiwczaroski, 2015; Al-Mahroqi and Denman, 2016). Mastering writing skills and being a successful writer in one context does not always make it easy to know what is required in another (Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011). Thus, employment is one of the main reasons for which graduates seek to be

well equipped with adequate technical writing skills (Stanton, 2017; Wiwczaroski, 2015; Al-Mahroqi and Denman, 2016). In fact, technical writing has become so deeply intertwined with careers that the two have almost become inseparable (Wiwczaroski, 2015). In today's world, and with the spread of globalisation, mastering report-writing skills is one of the main criteria in any job application, and students need to "orient themselves towards an international market" (Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011, p.19). According to Wiwczaroski (2015), "should a job applicant not possess the right communication competencies and skills required to carry out job-specific tasks, then this lack may have direct and negative economic consequences for the company deciding to hire him/her" (p. 4).

The current study's participants have a common belief that graduates of CoT have difficulty in producing texts or reports that meet the expectations of their future employers due to the lack of academic preparation to write authentic professional reports. They believe that students need to acquire the requisite authentic literacy needed for technical report practices in their future workplaces. Such preparation will maximise their chances in "securing better jobs and achieving their personal goals either related to further studies, or to being professionally further promoted" (Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011, p.20). Thus, it would seem to be a valuable asset. These findings have been reflected in the literature as well, both globally (Stanton, 2017; Linton, 2015; Wiwczaroski, 2015) and in Oman (see Al-Azri, 2016, Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Lawati, 2016). However, the required preparation is neglected, as interviewees believe that report writing task instruction is different in the two contexts, namely academic and workplace. TW lecturers have a perspective on what makes a piece of writing good. In this study, teachers mentioned a number of criteria: not only correct understanding of what is required in the tasks but also task relevance, adherence to grammatical and spelling conventions, authenticity and connection to workplace requirements. Critical thinking and quality of the taught writing were pinpointed by course coordinators only. For employers and employees, the qualities of concise, direct and clear writing were the obvious first priority. In contrast to participants from academia, employers and employees gave grammar and spelling less importance but placed greater emphasis on the features of clarity of the ideas, the communicative functions of the reports (i.e. the ability of the essay to communicate to the reader the ideas, the message or the information in a clear and

logical manner) and consideration of the audience. Thus, a good technical writing product was, from their perspectives, one that could deliver a clear, direct and to the point message to the reader. Robinson (1998, p.112) argues that workplace writers "must be able to get to the point right away and eliminate any unneeded verbiage. Brevity and clarity are highly valued characteristics" because writing in a workplace context, is a process which "investigates problems, formulates solutions, and creates products" and which "never takes place in isolation, but rather proceeds through a complex network of individuals and departments" (ibid).

The differences of report task requirements/instruction in the two contexts have led to a state of frustration and confusion among graduates on taking up a new post as, on the one hand, they are asked to submit professional assignments without being properly trained in academia in how to write workplace texts, which puts them in the position of needing more time to complete these workplace writing tasks, and, on the other hand, academically, they have had to follow their tutors' instructions, which mainly focus on linguistic features, to complete the required assignments. Trying to balance the requirements and perceptions of the two contexts, it is not surprising that the graduates have difficulty conceptualizing the quality of the texts they need to produce in these two contexts and the result is inconsistency in these texts' features. These findings have also been reflected in ample research. Obaid (2009), for instance, attests that a number of the difficulties that students have with report writing assignments can be traced back to several aspects, one of which is the differences between the instruction for the writing tasks that students are exposed to during their study of business writing courses and the instruction for the writing tasks that they are expected to write in their future workplace.

Technical writing, of which report writing is one type, is a highly complex ability. It can be inferred from the points of view of the stakeholders in my study that producing an authentic piece of written text in the Omani context may encompass numerous reasons for frustration not only for graduates but also for both their teachers and their future employers, especially during the early stages of study or work experience. Authenticity is a criterion which requires continual updating. Authenticity has been extensively researched, in order to "devise a principled approach to using authentic documents and texts in both the teaching and testing of

language skills” (Wiwczaroski, 2015, p. 5). Teachers are aware of the complexity of writing in general and of writing authentic pieces of work in specific. The support that students get from their teachers is crucial in determining their confidence in writing (Al-Badwawi, 2011), either in academia or in any future workplace context. This confidence in turn is closely linked to their self-esteem and attitudes towards writing or even learning in general (Hyland, 1998, Lea, 1994).

The findings of this study suggest that interviewees believe that there are several aspects pertaining to the inadequate authenticity of reports that students get to practise to prepare for their future workplace reporting tasks, which to some extent affect the quality of their writing. The first aspect relates to the absence of a specialized teacher who can teach such reports. The notion and the roles of the ESP teacher have to-date been extensively discussed by numerous researchers. Most academics agree that the role of the ESP teacher goes far beyond teaching. Dudley-Evans & St John (1998, pp. 14-17), for example, introduced the term ‘practitioner’ encompassing the roles of teacher, course designer, materials provider, researcher, collaborator or evaluator, which reflects the variety of challenges and tasks that every ESP teacher has to face. Sierocka (2017) highlights that “a knowledge of fundamental principles of the subject area and/or an understanding of the nature of the material of the ESP specialism would be sufficient” (p.1).

Employers’ demands of prospective technical students seeking to be employed in the future workplace have resulted in the expectation that assigned lecturers will be equipped with the knowledge of the communicative needs, especially the written needs, of their technical students’ future working environment. Banned and Lock (2010) suggest that, in addition to being proficient in English, an effective lecturer should also have sound content knowledge of the discipline. With such knowledge, lecturers are believed to be able to make learning more relevant and meaningful to ease the transition of undergraduates from an academic setting to a workplace environment. A similar finding was reported by Khaldi (2015), who claimed the lecturer’s “proficiency in the subject matter a very important feature” (p. 3). As many scholars (Tudor, 1997; Basturkmen, 2006; Campion, 2016; & Seirocka 2017) point out, teachers of courses for specific purposes, like TW in the Omani context, are presented with many challenges as they have to deal with domains of knowledge

which the average educated native speaker could not reasonably be expected to be familiar with. Thus, from the outset they have far less subject-matter knowledge or they have less conscious knowledge of a particular specialism than their students, despite the fact that they have significant experience in teaching and are familiar with academic texts and/or the skills involved (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Basturkmen, 2010; & Seirocka 2017). According to Richards (2001, p. 99), “inadequately trained teachers may not be able to make effective use of teaching materials no matter how well they are designed”.

In the current study, participants (mainly students, PF-Coordinators, employers and employees) were in consensus over the point that it is a convoluted task for lecturers of TW courses to attempt to make a distinction between the pedagogic content and subject matter knowledge while teaching these courses. This was confirmed by the PF-Coordinators who suggest a conflict amongst these lecturers between being teachers of English TW courses and being knowledgeable of the disciplinary content that should be taught to students’ from various technical disciplines. The teaching of writing, according to the PF-coordinators, is not sufficiently foregrounded in much classroom practice. At times, this is because teachers assume that some writing skills have not been sufficiently taught in foundation programmes or because of students’ low performance levels, and both should therefore require further attention. Teachers agreed with PF-Coordinators; however, they blamed the students’ incompetency in English writing in general (i.e. their low level of writing in English). In tertiary education, technical report writing performance is of fundamental importance in assessing and evaluating students’ overall learning. Teachers believe that their students are still facing difficulties with writing in English skills in general (i.e. grammar, spelling, etc.) which hinders them from acquiring the skills needed in technical report writing. Almost all teachers maintained that the main problems students have are in grammar, spelling and punctuation. Thus they devote a lot of time to making sure that students are competent enough to write for disciplinary purposes. It might be worth pointing out that there was a tendency here for teachers to see the problem as located in the students while the students see it as located in the course content, as we saw in the findings chapter (see Section 5.2.). The PF-coordinators require, in this way, little formal teaching of such skills, and more dependence on e-learning to provide

students with chances to practise such skills in writing is seen as more sensible. Al-Bedwawi (2011), however, believes that “writing is in fact a significant skill, and even the most able of students continue to benefit from formal teaching about it”.

Teachers also believe that TW course in the context of CoT should be taught in cooperation with subject teachers. Similar findings were reported in Al-Badwawi (2011) and Al-Lawati (2016). However, the subject teachers in Al-Badwawi (2011) maintained that their duty is to teach the content of their disciplines and that teaching courses of writing for general or specific purposes is the duty of the language teachers. Similarly, the findings of Carter (2007) showed that subject teachers argued that focusing on students’ writing would result in them not having sufficient time to finish the course content. This perception is significant as it underlies a view that form and meaning are separate and thus should be taught in isolation from each other (Al-Badwawi, 2011). The subject teachers’ assertion that English teachers are responsible for students’ writing in these two studies and other similar studies may be explained in line with the writer-oriented approaches which view writing as a generic skill that once learned in the English department can then be transferred to writing in the disciplines and then to the future workplace settings, a view that was confirmed by the coordinators in this study. This view that writing is a skill separate from the disciplines, in fact, is a debate that is contested and aired in the literature (see for example Hyland, 2008 and 2002). The link between reading and writing is well established as competent readers become competent writers, and reading within a discipline hones the reader’s ear to the voice or register of a given discipline. This would argue for drawing on the implicit knowledge of those within disciplines who, as readers, are always interpreting and evaluating texts. This implicit knowledge needs to find expression to support writers within disciplines but, by viewing writing as a skill separate from the disciplines, this possibility is limited, I believe. In addition, academic disciplines and future workplace settings vary in their requirements of students and graduates’ texts.

My participants’ comments also implied that the problem is not only with how teachers teach TW courses but with other aspects such as students’ low level of competency in English language, graduates’ attitude towards English, and class heterogeneity. Attributing the students’ difficulties in TW to the students’ low

language level as it prevents them from expressing their ideas clearly when writing report assignments is not in doubt. While there is an obvious link to writing ability this might not be the only explanation for their difficulties. Students' low proficiency in English may be a crucial factor influencing how much knowledge they have or can understand about the topic of the assignment. Teachers think that because of the students' low level the topics of some of the assignments are very challenging to them. It takes time for students to write a long essay about some topics because they have little or no background information about them. Students agreed that they take a lot of time to understand what is required in a certain task. It can be claimed that several of these students' difficulties with assignment writing can be traced back to the disjuncture between their past writing experiences either in school or in the FYP and in the post-foundation year (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Al-Badwawi adds that students are usually not trained in how to write essays in the Foundation Year; however, in Post-FYP, essay writing is the main form of assessment in several departments.

With regard to the problems that students face in writing assignments, there are difficulties with referencing, paraphrasing and summarizing. Al-Badwawi (2011) and Obaid (2009) assert that such difficulties also featured high on their participant students' lists of problem areas, immediately after grammar and spelling difficulties and, for some students, in joint position. This can be explained by contrasting the writing requirements in the post-FYP and in the Foundation Year. As the writing tasks in FYP writing do not require students to use multiple sources of information, there is no training in research skills. In post-FYP, however, research skills are of critical importance to students in completing the essays since they are required to obtain information from external sources and synthesise them into a coherent assignment. Students are also required to use secondary sources of information in which they were expected to "engage with and incorporate in their writing works of an interpretative nature - monographs, research articles and so on" (Moore and Morton, 2005, p.52). In order to be able to successfully use external resources, Al-Badwawi (2011) suggests that students need training in essential research skills, such as defining the topic of the essay, developing a list of relevant key words and phrases, locating resources in the library/internet, evaluating the appropriateness of information, paraphrasing and summarising relevant information, and completing the

reference list. However, such difficulties were reported by employers and employees in this study as less prioritised in the workplace context, which places emphasis instead on difficulties with writing reports which are direct and to the point.

The disjuncture in perceiving the writing difficulties students face in the academic context and those that their employers believe they might encounter once joining the market potentially has significant consequences for the students' readiness for professional writing. These consequences may be related to whether academic literacy practices are transferable to professional writing. Students and teachers in this study acknowledged the influence of lack of similarity between writing tasks and the requirements of academic technical report writing and writing professional reports. They believe that such lack of similarity may indicate the lack of training and under-preparedness of students in CoT in the essential report writing skills needed for market purposes, as professionals argue. Employees who participated in this study reported that, when they joined their work environment, they were not ready yet to write workplace reports because they were unfamiliar with writing such reports and did not have training in the prerequisite skills. Because of that, they also felt that their TW learning experience in the CoT was not relevant to their workplace reporting tasks since it did not prepare them to handle the professional writing process successfully. Inconsistencies between the two writing experiences may also make it difficult for students to transfer their previous learning experiences to new situations and thus risks undermining the very rationale for having such TW programmes in the first place. Leki (2007) reported that transfer is more likely to occur when the contexts of learning are highly similar and, when this condition is absent, transfer is more likely to fail. Since the employees in this study regard their experiences in CoT and corporations as totally different, there seems to be little chance that they would transfer the report writing skills that they acquired during their academic study to the new writing contexts in the market sphere. Such concerns were also raised in the Omani context by Al-Mahroqi and Denman (2015 and 2016) and Al-Azri (2016).

A third aspect cited by the practitioners, especially teachers and employers, was the graduates' negative attitude towards the context of their study/work. This result contradicts the results of a study conducted by Al-Maskari, Al-Shuaili, & Gnanarajesh (2014) aimed at identifying employers' perceptions concerning the employability

skills and knowledge needed in Information Technology (IT) related jobs in the Sultanate of Oman. Results from this study showed that “the graduates’ positive attitude towards jobs was rated among the highest” (p. 48). Attitudes could be related to students’ learning experiences, as students come to the college with diverse experiences that have resulted from their past language learning experiences (Al-Badwawi, 2011). These learning histories influence students’ perceptions, expectations and attitudes towards the new learning situation and shape their subsequent experiences, as several writers have emphasised. For example, Vardi (2003, pp.89-90) argues that “when attempting a new learning task, students rely on the insights that they gained through their prior knowledge and experience with similar tasks”. In the same vein, Rinnert and Kobayashi (2009, p.39) conclude that “students’ previous writing experience and training has an impact on the development of their writing and on their attitudes and perceptions of writing in general”. Kalikokha (2008, p.93) also concluded from a study of the perceptions of first year undergraduate Malawian students of the essay writing process that:

“The students’ education background may have influenced their negative attitude towards essay writing. At that early stage of tertiary education, most students tend to compare the learning style at university with that of secondary school, and some students tend to get frustrated when they are confronted with wholly new learning situations, such as instructors’ ways of teaching writing. Students also get frustrated when they receive grades that they were not expecting, especially considering that at secondary school most of these students were performing excellently. The result is that some students lose interest in learning academic writing as well as the writing process during this transition period”.

There are destructive effects of such attitudes. Al-Badwawi (2011) argues that negative attitudes can adversely affect students’ writing skills transition from one level to another, adding another impeding factor to the obvious low language ability. The difficulty of transition to workplace writing in this case study is no exception. The perceived students’ inability to respond to and accommodate the new requirements of writing professional reports, where they are asked to write more complex pieces of writing, was attributed, especially by employers and employees, to the absence of previous training. Employers added that negative attitudes could also affect the chances of future employment. EY (2015) designed a survey of students and

employers across the GCC to identify the major challenges that employers face in hiring and retaining nationals. One of the factors emerging from the survey was the negative attitudes of young people toward employment, which were as a result of a fundamental misalignment between the expectations of both sides. Although employers see a number of significant benefits in employing young nationals, as nationals have local knowledge, connections and networking opportunities that expatriates are unable to match, new hires often lack the skills and behaviors that would enable them to build long and successful careers in the private sector. Therefore, commitment and attitudes toward employment, together with behavioral attributes and lack of communication skills, make it difficult to retain nationals (EY, 2015)

In the current study, students confirmed the possibility of the existence of such an attitude among them. They mentioned different reasons to account for this such as learning background, overload of assignments and exams, lack of resources and facilities which help them study well, the high percentage of unemployment among their colleagues who had already graduated and issues of self-esteem. Students' previous experience/learning background was one of the issues that emerged as a contributing factor influencing their experience with writing in the workplace. Elaborating on their response that writing is the most difficult skill, the first reason employees mention was that it is totally different from the type of report writing that they were asked to do in CoT. This finding resonates with findings of other studies of graduates' writing in acknowledging the influence of students' prior educational background on their attitudes towards writing in other situations such as higher education (see for example Al-Badwawi, 2011) or the workplace (see Al-Azri, 2016).

Regarding the issue of unemployment, students cannot be blamed for their negative concerns, as the latest reports issued by MoMP show unpleasant facts. According to the Employment in Oman official report, conducted by MoMP (2015), the majority of CoT graduates are employed in the Public Sector. From 2011 to 2015, less than ten per cent of all the graduates from these colleges had a career in the private sector (out of around 40,000 graduates from all the CoT from 2011 to 2015, less than 20 per cent were employed in the private sector). This report, in my opinion, justifies the claim that unemployment is a significant reason for negative

attitudes among students. According to the current status of TW course policy in Oman, if it continues with the same rate of employment in the Public Sector, it serves the needs of only about 20 per cent of students. 80 per cent do not need such a high proficiency in English in general and TW in specific, as they will eventually work in the Public Sector, which mainly requires Arabic. Thus, it is important to investigate, in future studies, the reasons for such a low percentage, because the findings of this study clearly demonstrate that one of the stated justifications for learning TW is not viable. In addition, this could generate increased political and social controversy in Oman in that those who are lucky enough to do well in English in general and in TW in specific during their studies could get better careers. In line with issues such as “men are more powerful than women”, this would include matters such as those who “attain English have better career prospects” (Patten, 2001). Therefore, the social structures maintained by such issues need to be critically analysed to show how graduates are stuck in unequal relations of power (Pennycook, 1998).

Mastering good report writing skills for employment requires more than merely mastering a language for work-related and practical use. The unemployment issue seems to incorporate other psychological factors besides being efficient in using English. It also relates to the graduates' self-esteem and self-ego (Al-Azemi, 2017). It is hard for graduates to consider themselves, for example, engineers when they cannot write reports as expected by their non-Arab supervisors and colleagues, especially when these supervisors make fun of their poor written English, a situation that was experienced by one of my participants. Graduates feel it is their responsibility to find a means of communication through report writing to convey what is expected by those working with them, something which is possible only through English. Besides, there are also consequences for those who do not find employment, as they are likely to find themselves in an embarrassing social situation, as is the case of those students whose family and friends expect a lot from them once they graduate as engineers, for instance. Inability to fulfil these expectations could be considered a failure, resulting in possible psychological side-effects, and breed resentment that would stay with these students for a long time (Al-Bakri, 2013). This may justify why we should not blame students for maintaining such an attitude. A question that arises is why Arabic is not applied in writing these reports. It could be argued that this reflects how the work sectors and institutions in

Arab countries do not make sufficient effort in promoting Arabic (Troudi, 2009). Indeed it seems that the Omani government believes it is easier to promote equipping students with the English writing skills needed for reports and other forms of communication than to fund the continuous translation of ample data from different resources. Furthermore, the Oman government believes that, instead of spending vast sums of money on providing extensive Arabic courses for expatriates who eventually will return to their own countries, it is better to spend that money on developing TW courses whereby Omani technicians acquire another language. Thus, it is a matter of lifelong learning and long-term investment.

On another practical consideration, Hirvela (1997) mentions that the heterogeneous nature of ESL classes is another problem facing language teachers attempting to teach discipline specific writing courses like TW. Transition to college writing entails, among other things, handling the varying and sometimes even contradicting requirements from the different academic departments that the students belong to (Lea and Street, 1998). This is due to the existence of specific ways of meaning making and presenting meaning in a manner accepted by the different subject groups within academia (Zamel and Spack, 2004, Carter, 2007). Ramanathan and Kaplan (1996, p.29) state that “each group uses and writes the English language differently, for different purposes, about different things, in different formats”. Yet, having TW classrooms that usually consist of students from several departments makes it difficult to cater for the specific writing needs of all students in the class (Al-Badwawi, 2011). This makes it difficult, frustrating and time-consuming for basic level writers, such as students, who are confronted with topics they have not had to consider before. Similar situations arise with new employees. Researchers have questioned the notion of transfer of learning in those TW contexts where writing is more generalised to the disciplines or to the workplace contexts where specificity is more required. For example, Hooper and Butler (2008) maintain that the knowledge and skills gained in one context do not automatically transfer unless the gap between contexts is narrow with extensive overlap between the original learning context and the new one. Opening a social work textbook, for example, may automatically trigger reading habits acquired elsewhere, but expecting students to transfer writing and thinking skills gained in English composition courses to social work writing assignments may require more than reflexive automaticity (Al-

Badwawi, 2011). The inability to achieve such learning transfer from an academic context to a workplace context, as employers in this study suggested, may have negative consequences for the students. This suggests that the educational context should focus on recognizing and adapting to different discourse patterns rather than endlessly practising one. Thus critical literacy becomes key for the academic institution even though it is not valued by the employer.

As a possible solution for this issue, several researchers have discussed the idea of collaboration between English teachers and teachers from the subject departments, both in the global context (see Wiwczarowski, 2015; Elton, 2010, Obaid, 2009; Bacha and Bahous, 2008) and in relation to Oman (see Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015&2016; Al-Azri, 2016): EAP teachers have the knowledge of the language and the subject teachers have the content knowledge and the subject genre knowledge (Al-Badwawi, 2011), both of which are needed for good writing. In the same vein, Shukri (2009) argues for collaboration between teachers from different disciplines in order to improve students' writing, stating that

“when teachers from different departments cooperate, they are exchanging and constructing new knowledge. Through social interaction, if the Engineering teacher, for instance, is scaffolding the ESP teacher with relevant content and in return the ESP teacher communicates the essential language awareness to the Engineering teacher, “they should be able to build relevant new knowledge that is available to all students” (Shukri, 2009, p.3).

This is also applicable to the workplace context, where employers cooperate with TW teachers and course designers. Employers have suggested being involved in designing these courses and recommend changing them to be in line with what is being practised in the corporations. Similar results were also indicated by Obaid (2009) and Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2016) and this will be discussed further in Section (6.2.3.).

The findings have also raised the disparity between the extent and range of ways in which teachers and business people interpret and assess reports. Teachers and others outside the workplace, such as course designers, tend to be overly sensitive to linguistic choices, whereas business informants, who are directly involved in producing and receiving workplace texts, appear to take a far more practical view of

the way in which language constructs meaning and the message to be delivered to the reader. TW teachers are uncertain about what to consider when assessing students' written communication abilities (Al-Azemi, 2017; Al-Badwawi, 2011; Obaid, 2009). The significance of these findings is that "students' awareness of the varying foci of their teachers influences their approach to assignment writing in the different disciplines and for different teachers" (Al-Badwawi, 2011). In their study of students' writing experiences in an EAP class and an MBA class, Raymond and Parks (2002, p.162) discovered that all the students perceived differences in the way they carried out the written assignments in EAP and MBA contexts, with most of them (9 out of 13) associating writing in these two contexts with different underlying purposes. When doing the EAP assignment, students stressed they had to pay attention to language and format; in contrast, in the MBA programme, what was emphasised was accuracy of content. Similarly, the students in my study considered the focus of the teachers when completing their essays; they maintained that, in order to get good marks, they took into consideration their TW teacher's focus and wrote their reports in accordance with that teacher's preferred style or requirements. Similarly, employees maintained that they paid more attention to the linguistic aspects when writing in TW courses, while focusing more on the clarity of the content and message to be delivered when writing reports in the workplace context. The employees also claimed that the teachers did not provide them with as accurate and detailed feedback as their job managers do. This may be because many academics never reflect on how engineering communication, for example, in academic settings differs from that in workplace or public settings. The result is that a student (or faculty member) who can communicate well in an academic setting may not necessarily be successful in workplace engineering communication (Hovde, 2003, p. 140).

Teachers assume that when a person communicates effectively in one context, that person will automatically communicate well in all contexts. However, studies of recent graduates moving into workplace settings indicate that novices face a challenging transition as they move into the world of work (see for example Al-Azri, 2016; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2016; Obaid, 2009). Teachers in this study argued that most of their students do not succeed in writing the required texts as well as expected, although they understand what they need to write. Thus, it is difficult for them as teachers to give feedback for something missing. Furthermore, the teachers

claimed that it is difficult to give individual feedback because of the size of the classes (each teacher is supervising four classes and in each class there are more than thirty students, which means around hundred and twenty students in total). It is very difficult to provide individual support to each student within such multi-assignment contexts.

It seems that there is a tendency here to position the student as the problem and not the feedback provided. In my opinion, the abovementioned comments from the teachers, while generally are accurate, do not provide much assistance as to how students can improve their writing. The feedback provided in the form of either marks or short comments is insufficient and could undermine the students' motivation to understand how to overcome their writing difficulties. Using scoring strategies to provide learners with feedback makes the task more like a test exercise, where the learners are focused on achieving high scores rather than on achieving the aims of learning to write (Bangs, 2002). Students only know the grades of the assignments at the end of the semester, but are unaware of why they achieved these grades, how well their writing aligns with the requirements of discipline-specific writing, or what they can do to improve their future writing in the subject courses. This practice of the TW teachers raises the question of how students can learn the specific demands of writing in their future workplace, for example, without teachers' feedback on their texts. Students need to learn from feedback, not just be appraised (Nunan, 2003). If TW teachers are too focused on ensuring that young people pass exams at the expense of equipping them with the life skills needed for success academically and professionally, the consequences will be undesirable. In this study, students stated that some teachers did not discuss the criteria for judging the assignments and, in the case of the English teachers, they had to deduce the teacher's focus when the marked assignments are returned, as almost all the mistakes indicated by the teachers relate to spelling and grammar. In the case of the subject teachers, students noticed that they usually get higher marks in the assignments, which led them to conclude that the disciplinary teachers focus less on the language of the assignment than the English teachers. Tutors are expected to have different perceptions and expectations about student writing, and the assessment tasks they assign will also differ considerably across fields (Hyland K., 2017). However, teachers can help students by explicitly stating their expectations of academic writing

so that students are consciously aware of them rather than depending on their own invention or that of the university (Bartholomae, 1986). A similar solution was proposed by Al-Badwawi (2011).

The workplace informants in this study are concerned that texts and reports should be quick and easy to read and prefer a de-modalised form of writing to be considered when developing pedagogic material. Their interpretations of texts would appear to verify the researcher's interpretations and to add credibility to a detailed lexico-grammatical analysis of a larger corpus. The views of the informants helped to relate the findings to the intended use of such texts in the context of the workplace. The informants continually stressed the way in which the language of one or the other report is appropriate or inappropriate in the workplace. The discussions with informants demonstrate that there are a variety of linguistic choices available to a writer and that different choices will resonate differently with different readers. It is clear here that these stakeholders have a perception that written tasks in academia are a poor match for those written in the work place, although this view should be treated with some caution, as will be shown in Section 6.3.

6.2.2. Audience Awareness

An understanding of who will read the text is also of significance as the reader has a powerful influence over the method, structure and genre of the report to be written in a certain context, academic or professional (Craswell & Poore, 2012). The reader's influence may be represented in the form of certain expectations the writer should fulfil. Thus, satisfying the reader's needs varies within the two contexts of this study, academic and corporate, as the nature of the audience can influence the style of a report (Craswell & Poore, 2012).

In the current study, the interviewees perceived the difference between the readers of both the academic and the professional reports as another factor related to the graduates' under-preparedness for professional writing. On the one hand, students claimed that they write to please their teacher more than a definite customer, even if this customer is imaginary and the report tasks are not designed to fulfill the requirements of any particular customer. Students asserted that the task in the writing assignment is only to meet the expectations of one reader and they do

not need to be concerned with providing this reader with new or useful information, but rather to demonstrate their linguistic competence and thus achieve good marks. They attributed this to their belief that their teachers play the role of evaluators of their writing and have the power to fail assignments as they give a course grade. Teachers also write letters of recommendation that may affect students' future careers. Such awareness of the teacher's power means that students tend to write in ways that please the teachers (Nolen & Putten, 2007); their awareness about who will read and assess their writing and their response to this awareness influence their writing process (Nolen & Putten, 2007). The students are not writing in a vacuum, but rather they are writing with a specific reader in mind so that their written texts would match the reader's expectation of that text. When students' reports are written without a specific audience other than their TW instructor who grades their exams, this may create undue influences and power imbalances that could affect students' ways of writing. In such contexts, where teachers hold authority over students, students may hesitate to express their different ideas in favour of striving to please tutors. In addition, students need to be trained to be responsible for the work without overt mention of that fact.

In contrast, when students are trained to write for clients, their grammar choices will exhibit some striking differences, as these students will be far more concerned with establishing their firm's responsibility for certain work or decisions (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Pare, 1999). A report reader in this context is not so concerned with knowing who wrote the report and does not have to make judgments about the writer's work (*ibid*). Rather the full responsibility lies with the corporation. As a result, the managers interviewed in this study argued that students need to be trained in how to establish the credibility and significance of the content in order to achieve the message of the written text for the intended readers, whether customer, end user or any other reader from inside or outside the organization. This indicates that the power of the corporation is more present in the workplace texts/reports than personal power. These issues emphasise the relevance of audience awareness in addressing students' under-preparedness for workplace writing. This awareness can be achieved, as I said earlier, through enabling students to deal with an audience other than their teachers. Indeed, this might involve adjusting a sense of audience from a single reader to many readers and from a personal voice that will be marked

to a that will be used (Obaid, 2009). These aspects seem important and lead me to ask not only 'what should academia do?' but also 'what can academia do?' as will be explained in the recommendation chapter (see Chapter 7). Interviewees suggested that there are two elements that influence students' awareness of the supposed reader of their reports: the first relates to access to these reports (i.e. Who has access to both students' and employees' reports?; How long will this report last?; Will it be part of other larger projects or not?); and, second, whether these reports are often collaboratively or individually written.

In contrast to the students, most of the teachers confirmed that their students are certainly aware of their audience when they write a certain report. Before students are asked to write their essays, TW teachers provide written instructions which are explained to students over several classes. They also explain to the students the criteria that will be used to evaluate their writing and welcome their questions and requests for further explanations during office hours ('office hours' refers to the time allotted by teachers for tutorials in the teacher's office). This is of course in addition to providing students with feedback on multiple drafts before the final submission date. It can be claimed that, by doing this, the TW teachers believe that they have provided a clearer understanding of the audience that students should write for, which would facilitate their understanding of the requirements and expectations of producing a good report. Research shows that, while teachers tell students to consider their audience when writing, they do not make explicit how to address a specific audience through language (Paltridge, 2004; Turner & Scholtz, 2010). Brisk (2012) made the following observation: "audience was often mentioned in relation to content, purpose, and text structure but not in relation to how audience influences language choices" (p. 454). In order to write a successful essay, students need to have an understanding of the audience and to take the expectations of the intended readership into consideration during the writing process (Paltridge, 2004).

In the workplace, a piece of writing concerns not only the writer but also the reader, a fact pointed out by the managers I interviewed; in their view, considering the reader is a vital component in producing a good piece of writing. Robinson (1998, p. 112) explains that "employees need to be able to get their ideas down on paper quickly and organise their writing into different formats for different purposes and

audiences". Like the informants in Davies *et al* (1999) and in Obaid (2009), the manager participants in my study made it clear that their employees should consider the audience when writing to the extent that they tailor it to suit the receivers' style. In Bataille's (1982) study, graduate informants highlighted the importance of considering the audiences in the workplace (the end-user), explaining how they write for each one in a different style. For instance, conciseness was used when addressing superiors, whereas persuasiveness was a priority when addressing potential customers. Thus, the first step towards producing successful academic texts should be to have a clear understanding of the audience and his/her expectations and needs so that these issues are taken into consideration during the writing process (Kalikokha, 2008, Krause, 2001). Here the role of the teacher becomes of great importance in familiarising the students with the requirements of writing academic texts for the various disciplines, a fact that has been mentioned in the Omani context as well (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Al-Harhi, 2011; Al-Mahroqi & Tuzlukova, 2014; Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016 and Al-Azri, 2016). Zhu (2004b) asserts that, to avoid any negative impact, faculty members should stress the importance of audience awareness as an academic writing skill. Audience awareness means that students should be enabled to deal with an audience other than their teachers (*ibid*). Students' modifying their approach to writing for the various disciplines can be seen as an indication of their consideration of audience of their texts, in this case the teacher-audience assessing their assignments.

In contrast with the teachers in this study, managers seem to be less concerned about clarifying the requirements of writing corporate reports to their employees. Managers believe that they are not free to spend time continuing to familiarise employees with such demands; they are overwhelmed by other responsibilities and duties during worktime. This information was obtained from the employers' interviews, in which they stated that developing employees' report-writing skills is the duty of the CoT. The underlying assumption here is that report writing is a generic skill that can be learned in the CoT, specifically the English Department, and then be applied to writing in the corporate context. There may be several plausible explanations for this observation. Employers may possess tacit knowledge of the specific requirements for producing a good report and thus may not be able to explain it to the employees, believing that these employees should have been

prepared to write such reports. This is in line with the findings of other studies, which argue that employers can recognise a good report, but find it difficult to explicitly articulate how to write one (for example, Obaid, 2009). In their study about how Omani graduates' English-language communication skills in the workforce are perceived, Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2016) found that employees' abilities to consider their audience through interpreting accurately clients' needs and wants are important for professional communication skills. This is interesting as there are a number of links to the issue about writing being taught as a generic skill by language specialists rather than by those from within a particular field. There seems also to be a case here for non-writing specialists in both the workplace and academia to render explicit their own craft knowledge in terms of writing.

This confirms what previous studies have revealed about the identification of 'audience awareness' skills as an essential component of effective writing, for example Gray, Emerson and Bruce (2005). The authors stated that a number of employers highlighted as a specific area of dissatisfaction the difference between the academic writing science students were accustomed to produce for college instructors and the 'real-world' scientific and business writing that businesses needed their employees to be able to deliver. This was evident in this study, as employees declared that they were not taught to take into account potential end-users. In fact, the customers were imaginary, mentioned only as a composition requirement. Zhu (2004) asserts that faculty members should stress the importance of audience awareness as an academic writing skill. These faculty members themselves, when writing academic pieces for colleagues, have a sense of what those colleagues expect and why they might be reading that article. Thus, the purposes of the readers influence how authors write their texts. However, different groups of readers may read only specific parts of the document: managers, for instance, may read the overview, the budget and the timeline, while technicians may read only the overview and the appendices. This is exactly what happened with the professional reports in this study: these reports were written in a way that enables the reader not to spend time reading the whole report as some parts may not be related to their particular needs.

The above discussion indicates the discrepancies that exist among the

stakeholders regarding this issue. It also highlights the need for more effort to be exerted towards providing discipline-specific guidance and support to Post-FYP students so that they can be familiar with how report writing is carried out in the workplace. This view regarding flexibility and purpose as key attributes for trainee writers is to some extent borne out in the textual data discussed below in Section 6.3. Managers also need to realise that report writing is discipline-dependent; therefore, improving students' writing is not solely the duty of the language teachers. If they want students to produce well-written reports in their departments once they assume a post, employers have to be more involved with these employees' writing, even before they join the workplace, and take responsibility for making clear to them the genres and audience expectations of good reports in their disciplines. It is right that, in both academic and professional contexts, there is a perceived reader, but in academia the fact that this is a teacher and not an end-user may create an inappropriate sense of purpose for the written report, which can affect finding authenticity within the task of writing that report. The advantage of authenticity goes far beyond simply motivating to "help students develop real-world (report) writing skills that they will need when they are no longer writing for teacher" (Lindblom, 2015). Students need not only to write to other experts or people who theoretically know what the students already know (i.e. the teacher) but also to write to other divisions/people who can be expected to not know what the writer knows. In other words, students need to be encouraged to find something worth communicating to people who they will really experience working with (managers or colleagues) or dealing with (customers). Students also need to write for a real-world reader not more than just the truism that they need feedback.

6.2.3. Absence of Training and Inadequate Collaboration between Academic and Professional Contexts

Employers' dissatisfaction with tertiary graduates' level of report writing abilities is widely documented in the literature (see for example Stanton, 2017; Wiwczarowski, 2015; Obaid, 2009; Linton, 2015; Al-Mahroqi & Tuzlukova, 2014; Agnew, 1992). It is argued that the cause of such dissatisfaction is the existence of a large gap between literacy practices and those expected by the future disciplinary/work community (Spack, 1988). In an exploratory study carried by Al-Mahroqi (2016) to examine how

important currently-employed Omani school and college graduates believe English-language communicative skills are for the workforce and what challenges, if any, they face with these skills when entering the workforce, participants claimed that being well prepared for the job market in terms of communicative skills is *essential* and *vital* (p. 180). It is the role of HEIs to prepare learners with the appropriate skills and knowledge required by the labour market (Al-Azri, 2016, p.176).

Like their counterparts in similar contexts, employers in this study perceived that CoT graduates have lower report writing abilities than what is expected from college graduates and that graduates are not yet ready to write professional reports. As was described in the findings, teachers generally tend to blame, for instance, students' previous schooling and language proficiency. Instead of placing the blame entirely on students' lack of readiness for workplace report writing, employers believe that it is also legitimate to question the ways in which other contextual factors aggravate the difficulties students face in transition to work level writing. Thus, stakeholders in this study mentioned that the lack of adequate training for the types of reports students would practise in their future workplace is the result of lack of cooperation between CoT and corporations to find opportunities to practise such tasks. Teachers, employees and employers all denied the existence of such coordination. Employers requested alignment of writing practices at academia to the practices in the workplace. Employees asserted that there is no systematic training, prior to writing the first workplace task, in practising the technical writing tasks that they are expected to do in the workplace (Obaid, 2009). The participants in a study carried out by Obaid (2009) into graduates' business writing in Bahraini academic and market contexts expressed similar views. They also considered the point of non-alignment between the practices of the two contexts. According to Paretti (2006), alignment of the different requirements of the higher education context and the workplace context is where the higher education context requires that students produce writing to 'perform knowledge' and tailor their writing to meet the needs of the market assessors. These assessors believe that novice employees entering the workplace lack the rhetorical and discourse community knowledge needed to adapt formats to the audiences of the workplace (Paretti, 2006). It is not easy as "students struggle to shift from using writing to perform knowledge for an evaluator to using writing as a means to exchange information with a colleague or a client" (Turner &

Scholtz, 2010, p. 243). Turner & Scholtz (2010), for example, found that while applying alignment novice employees encounter difficulties to take accurate instructions and messages, and to produce minutes of meetings, labels, Systems Application Programming (SAP) documentation and corporate letters to directors. Only regular practice and exposure to these genres in the workplace but not in academia saw improvements in novice employees' writing. It was difficult for these novice employees to adjust to the transition from higher education to the workplace as they did not know how to put their knowledge into practice.

The managers in the current study added that graduates may have the knowledge to write but they do not have sufficient experience to write in a frame that fits the corporations' requirements, as they have not been trained to write within such a frame prior to joining the corporations; for example, when choosing between active and passive voice, graduates might have conscious knowledge of information structure in English, but they need to overtly emphasise the need to establish responsibility, by using the appropriate verb form. They need to have information from other sources, such as previous models, and it is important to make explicit for the client who was responsible for a certain task. Clients certainly need to be convinced that it is a corporate liability not a personal one. Thus, texts act as a record for the client and for the firm that did the work, and as a legal record if problems arise and liability becomes an issue. Unfortunately, training in such issues is absent and colleges do not approach the corporations and job sectors to establish opportunities for cooperation. The teachers explained that it is not their duty to approach the corporations to encourage coordination between the two contexts. Although some of them agreed that coordination is absent, they argued that TW courses include tasks that are aligned with the future workplace tasks and that these should prepare students for the writing required in the workplace, providing the following example from the TW curricula relating to a scientific report as evidence for their claim. The aim was to show the "students that their future jobs may involve dealing with scientific topics" (Al-Lawati, 2016, p. 9). In this way, regardless of their specialization, they may be able to make connections between what they study and what they will practise in their future work. Al-Lawati (2016) believes that this can be achieved by teaching business reports where the topics are scientific. So, for

example, the unit which teaches the writing of business reports includes the following activity:

Imagine that you work for a company which has made a new type of candle. The manager wants to post information about the high quality of the candle on the company's website. He wants this information to include details about the ability of the candle to stay lit for a long time. So, he asks you to investigate what can help in keeping the candle lit for a long time. You decide to focus on the amount of oxygen which the candle gets when it is used. Accordingly, you do the experiment shown in the pictures given on the next page. Write a business report on this experiment.

Figure 9: business report task (Al-Lawati , 2015b, p. 27)

The unit, then, presents the following experiment in pictures.

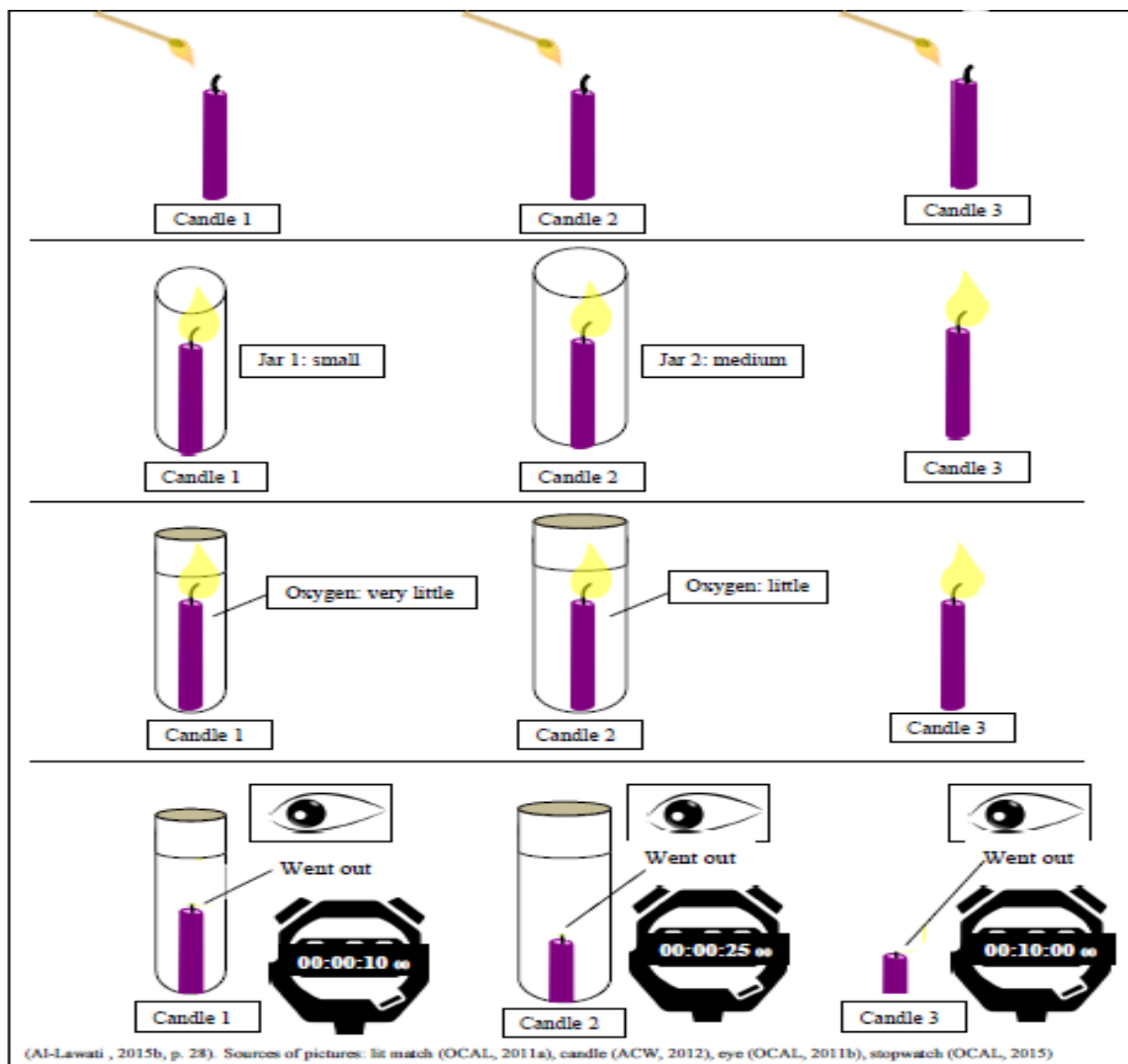


Figure 10: scientific experiment (Al-Lawati , 2015b, p. 29)

After that, the unit presents the following business report sample.

Report on How the Candle Made by the Company Can Burn for a Long Period of Time

Introduction
The manager has asked me to write this report about how the candle manufactured by the company can keep burning for as long as possible.

Terms of reference
Details about the high quality of the candle must be provided on the company's website. This should include information about the fact that the candle can stay lit for very long. In order to find out what can help in keeping the candle lit for the longest time possible, I decided to study the effect of the amount of oxygen around a candle on the burning time of the candle. The amounts of oxygen I looked at were very little oxygen, little oxygen, and the normal amount of oxygen available in the air.

Method
First, I brought 3 candles and lit them. Then, I placed the first candle in a small jar and the second candle in a medium size jar. However, I did not put the third candle in any jar. After that, I covered the jars in which I had put the first and second candles. So, the oxygen around the first candle in the small jar became very little, whereas the oxygen around the second candle in the medium size jar became little. In contrast, the oxygen around the third candle was of the normal amount available in the air because I had not put the candle in a jar. Then, I observed all the candles to see when they went out. Finally, I recorded the results in the table given below.

Results and discussion
The results are shown in Table 1 below.

Candle number	Amount of oxygen it got	When it went out
1	Very little	At 10 sec
2	Little	At 25 sec
3	The normal amount available in the air	At 10 min

Table 1: The effect of the amount of oxygen which the candles got on the duration for which they burned

As the table above shows, the first candle, which got very little oxygen, was the first candle to go out. The second candle, which got little oxygen, burned just 15 sec more than the first candle did. However, the third candle, which was exposed to the normal amount of oxygen available in the air, stayed lit for the longest time and went out the last. This not only suggests that the candles needed oxygen to burn, but it also suggests that they needed sufficient oxygen to burn.

Conclusion
The candle made by the company stays lit for the longest time possible when it gets sufficient oxygen, or the normal amount of oxygen available in the air. The duration for which it burns decreases as the amount of oxygen becomes less.

Recommendations
The information posted on the company's website should explain the importance of exposing the candle made by the company to sufficient oxygen so that it stays lit for as long as possible. For further clarification, the experiment above may also be posted on the company's website.

Figure 11: Sample of business report (Al-Lawati , 2015b, p. 29)

The unit then “makes a further connection” between business and scientific reports by using the same pictures above to present a sample scientific report. This is done through the following activity.

The duration for which a candle burns depends on a number of factors. One of these factors is the amount of oxygen which the candle gets when it is used. The pictures given (above) show an experiment that focuses on this factor. Use the pictures to write a scientific report on the experiment.

Figure 12: connection between scientific and business reports (Al-Lawati , 2015b, p. 34)

After that, the unit provides the following sample scientific report that students are expected to come up with.

The Effect of the Amount of Oxygen to Which a Candle is Exposed on the Duration for Which the Candle Burns: An Experiment

Aim
To discover the effect of the amount of oxygen to which a candle is exposed on the duration for which it burns.

Hypothesis
The normal amount of oxygen available in the air helps a candle to stay lit for the longest period of time. The duration for which a candle burns decreases as the amount of oxygen it gets becomes less.

Materials

- 3 lit matches
- 3 candles
- 1 small jar
- 1 medium size jar
- 3 stopwatches

Method
Three candles were first lit using 3 lit matches. Then, the first candle was placed in a small jar and the second candle was put in a medium size jar. However, the third candle was not put in any jar. After that, the jars used were covered. So, the oxygen around the first candle in the small jar became very little, whereas the oxygen around the second candle in the medium size jar became little. In contrast, the oxygen around the third candle was of the normal amount available in the air because the candle had not been put in a jar. Then, all the candles were observed to see when they went out. Time was kept track of using 3 stopwatches. Finally, the results were recorded in the table given below.

Results and discussion
The results are shown in Table 1 below.

Candle number	Amount of oxygen to which it was exposed	When it went out
1	Very little	At 10 sec
2	Little	At 25 sec
3	The normal amount available in the air	At 10 min

Table 1: The effect of the amount of oxygen to which the candles were exposed on the duration for which they burned

As the table above shows, the first candle, which got very little oxygen, was the first candle to go out. The second candle, which got little oxygen, burned just 15 sec more than the first candle did. However, the third candle, which was exposed to the normal amount of oxygen available in the air, stayed lit for the longest time and went out the last. This not only suggests that the candles needed oxygen to burn, but it also suggests that they needed sufficient oxygen to burn.

Conclusion
A candle stays lit for the longest time possible when it gets sufficient oxygen, or the normal amount of oxygen available in the air. The duration for which a candle burns decreases as the amount of oxygen decreases. This confirms the hypothesis made above.

Figure 13: sample scientific report (Al-Lawati , 2015b, p. 35)

The teachers indicated that if alignment is too specific and too strong it can lead to unpleasant consequences. For example astray away from equipping students with knowledge and preparing them for life occupations to only preparing them for specific jobs. Within Turner & Scholtz's (2010) study, graduates were trained in the higher education context to perform most of the electronic communication requirements of the workplace and, although these training programmes emphasised proficiency in computer skills and the use of electronic communication, graduates showed a lack of advanced knowledge of Excel or basic computer skills, such as the setting up of a computer. Therefore, limiting students' abilities to only writing in order to communicate specific information accurately and appropriately to specific audiences might not always be beneficial. Students should be trained to write "in order to communicate information to multiple audiences" (Turner & Scholtz, 2010, p. 243). This struggle for complete alignment between higher education and the workplace may account for one of the key barriers to the transfer of communication skills from the academic environment to the workplace, as students struggle to shift from using writing to perform knowledge to using writing as a means to exchange important information with specific audiences (ibid). Thus, should academia be limited to only the specific requirements of the market or should it continue to provide more in-depth learning than the work place requires? If the former happens, then I believe this reflects a very narrow view of the overall purposes of education.

Surprisingly, with regard to the absence of training, students' reports incorporated features of professional reports, as was shown in the document analysis stage of data analysis (see Section 5.3.). I shall discuss this point in the following section (Section 6.3.). However, there were calls for better coordination between the two contexts' organizations among my participants. The absence of systematic coordination means that technical writing tasks become a highly challenging task for the graduates who are just beginning their occupational life, as highlighted by the interviewed employees. Such findings were also reported in Obaid (2009). Graduates are supposed to acquire the appropriate discursive knowledge and practices associated with their different workplace disciplines through cooperation between their TW teachers, their subject teachers and their future employers since they are considered the experts in report writing skills and discipline-specific knowledge. Failing to acknowledge their role in training students in the disciplinary

genres may be taken as an indication of lack of awareness of these genres in the first place. In addition, as none of the CoT have asked their alumni for their feedback on the applied TW programmes, and whether they have served their future workplace needs, this would suggest that the nature of learning these courses for workplace purposes is not at the top of the educational pyramid. It is therefore important for CoT to implement a critical approach to the policy of teaching such courses to offer perspectives “that serve their challenges, aspirations, and interests more effectively” (Canagarajah, 1999a, p. 17).

There were also a number of suggestions that opportunities for coordination between CoT and corporations be found so that graduates can overcome issues prior to assuming a post in the corporations. Modifications proposed by the participants focussed on updating the content of the TW courses through simulating workplace reports. The pedagogy of the TW courses ought also to be improved as graduates criticized the current teaching methods employed by staff. Such modifications, from the interviewees’ point of view, reflect the writing skills in general and report writing in particular that graduates lack prior to joining the job market. According to Stanton (2017, p. 15):

“if the goal of an academic programme is to produce students who have a breadth and depth of knowledge in their field of study, with the goal of transferring as seamlessly as possible into the world of work, it would make sense that the world of work would have a voice in what the students were taught. This relationship between industry and academia is crucial yet difficult to establish and nurture. And while some in academia may want input from industry, there must be a balance between getting input from industry and still having the freedom to be creative and develop a programme that is exactly what students need, as decided by the programme director”.

Harner and Rich (2005, p. 209) comment that “there is not a typical curriculum for a technical/professional writing programme”, instead the technical communication programme is often “called upon to fulfill wish-lists of skills” for industry, a role that those in academia may find too restrictive and demanding (Johnson-Eilola, 1996, p. 247). Similarly, in this study, participating employers and teachers suggested involving workplace professionals in designing the courses of TW in the CoT. Stanton suggests that “one way we might be able to receive input from industry while

maintaining autonomy as a programme would be to invite people from industry to serve on advisory boards” (Stanton, 2017, p. 16). This can be helpful and can infuse energy into the programme, but others steer clear of such boards. Meeder and Pawlowski (2012), in their study about how advisory boards might work as a gateway to business engagement, report on a business advisory board that provided a transformation for their programme; they felt the board helped programme directors know better what students needed in order to be well equipped to go into the workplace. Moreover, employers expect that technical graduates will not be prepared for every workplace challenge they face, as academic faculty members do not focus on the differences between the writing those graduates do in college and the writing that they will do in the workplace. Thus, amending the TW curricula in a way that fits the requirements of the job market is necessary. Faculty, however, believe that they should not teach only workplace communication abilities; academic communication practices are appropriate and necessary for academic settings, just as workplace practices are appropriate and necessary for their settings. Most students will need competence in workplace communication abilities; in order to train faculty members to assess student written communication abilities that would be appropriate for the workplace, it is important to describe the differences explicitly.

Writers need also to be aware that people who are not part of the originally intended group of readers may also read the document and they need to decide how much they wish to adapt their document for that group. It is significant that, for instance, engineers and politicians not only have different sets of terminology but also different ways of thinking. For instance, politicians often make a decision based on perceptions, facts and political factors: elements that technical writers may not always take into account. Graduates of CoT who are likely to be effective in workplace communication need to demonstrate that they can adapt their thinking to the typical and complex expectations of their readers. Students need further training in academia to strengthen skills of matching their reports to the purposes and expectations of workplace stakeholders. This can be done through multiple methods as participants suggested in the interviews (see Section 5.2.). For example, incorporating professionals in designing and teaching the TW courses in a way that could benefit students academically and provide them with the necessary skills required for workplace writing. Furthermore, teaching the TW courses could involve

both ESP teachers and content teachers so that students could gain both the linguistic and content skills.

A further suggestion is to introduce collaborative writing as it is practised in the workplace context. Collaboration is a common practice as shown in Davies *et al.*'s (1999) study, where 82% of employees indicated that they write collaboratively, as do participants in many other workplace studies. McDonough (1984, p.93) stresses the importance of collaboration in the workplace: "people in professional and occupational roles need to talk in group settings: they have to attend in-company meetings, undertake external negotiations, participate in conferences, help solve technical problems and in general be involved in decision-making at many levels." And this collaboration can extend to writing. For instance, Beaufort (2000, p.198) reports how one of her informants described collaboration in a very simple way: "here writing is such a collaborative process anyway cause everybody in the office reads everybody's things and comments on it". Obaid (2009) also reports that collaboration in the workplace occurred in her study but in a distinctive way and in a way which was culture-specific: collaboration usually occurred after employees composed their first draft and subsequently approached colleagues for help (*ibid*). Graduates' readiness to write workplace reports as well as expected by their employers is closely associated with the availability of support mechanisms that facilitate their transition to workplace settings. Thomas (2002, p.426) sees preparedness as the extent to which students feel they are ready to carry out higher levels of writing and the ways in which the institution provides the support needed to reach that level.

6.2.4. Conclusion: Difficulty to Write Workplace Reports is not because of Inadequacy of Preparation

To summarize, it appears that most of the professionals involved in this study are of the opinion that academia cannot provide the necessary experience or the range of context specific tasks required in the workplace. Graduates, on taking up a position, may feel confused because of the seeming contradictions between the requirements for writing reports that they learnt in academia and the framework employed in the corporations. The employers suggested that, to overcome such confusion, students should be introduced to the workplace requirements while

studying. The stakeholders were in consensus in having a strongly held belief that the TW course curricula need to be changed to incorporate tasks similar to those that are practised in the workplace. A similar finding was also indicated by Al-Mahroqi & Tuzlukova (2014), who found that students are only moderately prepared for workplace writing and that this calls for “a re-examination and revamping of language programmes with the intention of integrating more communication skills into content-based courses throughout the different majors’ study plans” (p. 473).

Hence, the question here is whether academia can provide the experience necessary to achieve such professional aims. Teachers in this study claim that simulation of workplace writing tasks at school may partly provide students with the necessary experience to write professionally. This seems to be important in relation to finding authentic tasks and authentic purposes for writing in academia. Conversely, as these participants suggested, it may be the role of academia to highlight ‘*adaptability*’ as a skill that needs to be addressed, but it is also a matter of what happens on transition into the workplace; in other words fully adapting to the demands of the work place can only happen in the work place. The participants raised two points to support this argument: firstly, the inadequacy of authenticity provided in academia and, secondly, the fact that academia provides depth of learning but not the practical learning that the work place requires. The latter, from one perspective, might be viewed as a strength of the academic provision rather than a weakness. It could also be argued that the workplace context does not offer enough support in inducting new employees into workplace practices and, as these might be individual to different employers, this might be viewed as the role of the employer rather than the educator. Indeed, increased collaboration could consider how tasks in the education context and employer induction programmes might be better aligned so that change in both contexts would form part of any solution.

All in all, I believe the argument for change is less compelling than the participants assume because the difficulty that CoT graduates face when writing reports as well as expected by their future employers does not necessarily mean that they are inadequately prepared for future workplace report writing. Given the dominant belief in poor and irrelevant report writing skills there was a need to explore how true this was by looking at the texts themselves.

6.3. Unpacking Reports

The report analysis showed that reports practised by students in academia and reports required in the workplace have similarities and differences. This means that what is being taught in the TW courses is to some extent relevant to what is being practised in the workplace sphere. As Ledema points out:

“To appreciate the constructive power of administration and its language, we need to ‘unpack’ the discourse, i.e. go into the grammar and show how the features of administrative language contribute to its power over social organization”

(Ledema, 1995, p. 134)

Thus, the following ‘unpacking’ incorporates a discussion of the analysed linguistic features of both academic and professional reports in this study.

As was noted in Section (5.3.), the investigation was conducted according to the purposes of the written reports, their organization and structure, and the language used to write these reports. Professionals worldwide transact business via messages whose length, language and structure often bear little relation to those encountered in Business English textbooks and classrooms (Ehrenreich, 2010; Kankaanranta, 2006). The SFL approach was applied as guidance while analyzing these documents. This approach is based on the view that students should be taught the language resources they will need for writing academically and professionally if they are to become skilled writers.

It seems from the analysed academic and professional reports, purposes and types that not all graduates will need to carry out such reports in their work corporations. The question arises as to whether activities in academia really need to be exactly the same as those of the future workplace in order to contribute to preparing students for work. If a document fulfills the intended purpose for its intended readers, then it can be said to be “effective.” Analysis of the structure of the academic and professional reports was also carried out. Move analysis was applied at this stage as it provides a description of the communicative purpose of the text associated with specific moves, as professional genres can be distinguished by their content, structure and format (Swales, 1990, 2004). Many researchers have

explored the moves found in professional and academic genres such as law research articles (Tesutto, 2015), research articles (Al-Husseini, 2014), graduation project reports (Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988), magazines and newspapers (Nwogu, 1997), public reports (Harvey, 1995), letters of application (Henry and Roseberry, 2001) and dissertation acknowledgements (Hyland, 2004). These studies have shown that professional genres have their own structure and moves which have been accepted by the particular discourse community, a finding that was also reported in the current study. In my own study the analysis revealed that the academic and professional reports share certain structures and moves.

Nevertheless, there were certain differences. For example, the employees' texts were highly focused, and this was based on the fact that the employees had a sense of how to marshal their information and deploy it from one stage of the text to another when they elaborated further. Moreover, most of the students' writing lacked the thematic feature of unity for the reason that they sometimes were able to create macro-themes and hyper-themes but not to elaborate on them with further details. The feature of unity was evident in the professional reports but was rarely found in the academic writings. The employees in my study offered micro-theme and hyper-themes of the texts discussed in their texts, and later elaborated on these with relevant details to develop their discussion, whereas with the students' texts the problem was the irrelevancy or absence of elaboration on the hyper-themes of their topics. This could be related to the fact that students intended to give details that provide evidence of elaborating upon the hyper-themes of the text discussed, but the elaborations provided were not fully related to the topic under discussion. They are more analyzing discussing and elaborating the main ideas of their texts with further details than students. Similar findings were also reported in Christie and Dreyfus (2007), who stated that such a difference could be attributed to the fact that employees are not confronted with new topics, new modes, and new audiences every few days, as in academic classes. Instead, the subject matters of the reports are well known to the employees who write about them. In this study, students claimed that there were neither professional writing courses to attend nor a particular professional report layout to follow. Each teacher had their own style, which was conveyed to students through verbal instruction. Therefore, reports required in the same discipline differed among themselves in terms of layout and content.

Dissimilarity in academic genre structure is reported by previous research (e.g. Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988; Flowerdew, 2000; Al-Husseini, 2014). Al-Husseini (2014) even found that reports belonging to the same genre, i.e. mechanical engineering final year projects, differ in terms of structural pattern.

With regard to the similarities and differences between students and employees in the language features of their reports, one finding was that both of these report types were generally written in simple active sentences. The frequency of simple sentence structures, as Conrad, Pfeiffer and Szymoniak (2012) note, may be due to the writers' need to make information as easy as possible for readers to follow and to the fact that such simple sentences keep meaning as unambiguous as possible. This interpretation could be valid in this current case study of students' and employees' writing. For instance, students, as they explained in their interviews, need to show their tutors that they have understood the task, so they express their ideas clearly. Moreover, they want to avoid losing marks, which tends to happen when their writing does not fulfill their teachers' expectations. Al-Badwawi (2011) reported similar results. For the employees in this study, using simple sentences means better client understanding and more corporate liability, a finding that was also reached by Obaid (2009). On the other hand, students included more complex clauses than employees. The complex clauses in the students' writing were often in direct opposition to the readers' needs to be able to understand information quickly. The grammatical choices of both groups reflect certain similarities within report writing practices. However, the students' texts still lack the use of relatively simple clause-level structure for precise, accurate information that is as unambiguous as possible so that it can be read quickly by clients, colleagues and managers, and, in this way, increase their future firm's legal responsibility rather than their own personal responsibility. The students' use of complexity in clause-level structure is also diametrically opposed to clients' reading needs, and conveys less precise, less accurate information. Thus, the problems in the students' sentences may result in ambiguity for clients, matters that are central to future career practice. Some of the student sentences would be more effective if they applied principles that are often covered in basic technical writing classes, such as placing relative clauses immediately after the nouns they modify.

The students' use of complex phrases impacted the construction of sentences as the content became more vague, thereby going against the need in disciplinary study and future workplace for accuracy and clarity (Conrad, Pfeiffer, & Szymoniak, 2012), and Conrad & Pfeiffer, 2011). Practitioners made repeated reference to the issue of the need for precise information that can be easily read by their clients and, accordingly, fulfill a need to communicate with them with as little ambiguity as possible. "Ambiguous or inaccurate writing can result in an unintentional increase in liability for a firm and have serious financial consequences" (Conrad, Pfeiffer, & Szymoniak, 2012, p. 2). Practitioners also suggested the factor that employees are following models written by experts in their corporations and they are more concerned with presenting easily-read and to-the-point content for their customers, whereas students are more concerned with showing their tutors, as English language teachers, that they have mastered the grammatical patterns required to write compound sentences or phrases.

With regard to the use of active and passive voice, students reported being regularly told to use passive voice, and to avoid first person pronouns because these were seen as non-academic. However, as Conrad and Pfeiffer (2011) argue, "when students get a message to sound academic, they can generalize it in ways that are inappropriate for workplace writing" (p.11). For instance, "students' use of passive voice may contribute to ambiguity" (ibid). Students unfortunately apply such rules of using passive voice without understanding that the problem with its use is its contribution to ambiguity (see Section 5.2.). Although the subjects students used have interpersonal meaning due to their realisation as *you* and *I*, for this particular context the use of personal pronouns was too familiar, which resulted in a negative feeling where the *you* (the reader[s]) was being reprimanded. That could be described as "personal impressionistic" (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997, p.185). This may be related to "the fact that the students often confuse the objective, logical treatment of a point and the judgment of its value" (ibid). This result was also noted by Conrad and Pfeiffer (2011) and Conrad, Pfeiffer and Szymoniak (2012) in their studies about student and workplace writing in civil engineering. Conrad and Pfeiffer (2011) found that "students follow the writing rules and use passive voice even when it makes meaning ambiguous or when knowing who made an observation and recommendation would be useful" (see Conrad & Pfeiffer, 2011, p. 13).

The tone of report language in general was more individual than corporate as the style applied in such reports appeared to be largely consistent and characterized by “using the semi-formal tone of co-operative business colleagues” (Flowerdew and Wan, 2006, p.146). Thus, this element can be interpreted to mean that the business “relationship between the participants was valued, with both the writer and the reader being actively present in action” (Flowerdew & Wan, 2006, p.145). However, this use of reference is not consistent with the generally accepted corporate nature of much business writing and suggests greater positive politeness than might be expected. Student writers, in contrast, assumed considerable power in terms of relationship by showing that they were higher, and that they had all the authority to command and to instruct the readers. They incorporated imperative phrases that place certain expectations on the readers. This could also be interpreted as a means of showing the teacher that they understood the structure they were trained to practise during the TW classes. The imperative phrases employed in the corporate samples placed no expectations on the readers. The employees had chosen to depersonalize the hierarchical relationship which was suggested in the students’ texts. This might indicate, in general, that students and employees used different stylistic registers to write their reports. Yet, it is likely that both students and practitioners have observed what can be described as “standard conventions for written business English” (Gains, 1999, p. 86). Thus, with both academic and corporate reports, a formal stylistic register had been employed. However, although the formal register was dominant, there were instances in these reports where the stylistic register was lowered from what appears to be the norm of formality to adopt a more informal and personal tone.

This discussion might indicate a tendency amongst stakeholders to overstate the differences in the texts and overlook the similarities even though similarities have been identified as part of this study’s findings. In fact, the strong impression of difference remains even when there are similarities as well as differences. The positioning of HE as overly theoretical and out of touch with ‘the real world’ is a commonly held stereotype which may be informing expectations here, even though there is evidence of attempts on the part of the college to be authentic and relevant while still maintaining a role for education as being something more than ‘training’. An education establishment should perhaps have rather more ambitious aims for

their students than only the narrow range of skills required by the employer. This is not to suggest that offering relevancy and authentic tasks is not part of their remit but that adaptability might be as useful for a student as particularity.

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, the main findings of the research were discussed in the light of the research aims, the literature review and the particular contextual factors in the college. Graduates of CoT have a difficult experience with writing professional reports for workplace purposes because of multiple factors that interact to shape it, thus affecting graduates' initial stages of transition to the workplace, which, in turn, would have an impact on their subsequent professional experiences and their overall approach to the learning process at workplace level.

This chapter attempted to discuss the complexities associated with graduates' report writing from the perspectives of stakeholders (teachers, students, course designers, employers and employees) in the contexts of the current study. In the first part of the chapter, and based on the analysis of the results and the literature review, an explanatory framework was proposed which attempted to depict the influence of three main factors on students' transition to workplace report writing. These factors are the task requirements, authors' voice and the lack of coordination between the corporate context and the institutional context. In the second part of the chapter, the support for academic writing was discussed, highlighting the actual practices of writing reports in academia and in the workplace and how the support can be improved to facilitate students' acquisition of professional report writing.

Interestingly, although there is nearly a twenty-five-year gap between research studies conducted in Oman and Arab Gulf countries separately, they seem to produce the same results regarding bridging the gap between market and tertiary education with regard to teaching TW to fit the requirements of the market. Thus, nothing much has changed. This supports the idea that the problem does not lie in the type of teaching approach, textbooks or teaching staff, as usually indicated in these studies, but rather it is related to other topics such as the policy of teaching TW itself. By repeating the same findings from researchers in different but similar contexts, it is my belief that this calls for the issue to be tackled from a different

perspective. In the next chapter, the practical and theoretical implications of the findings will be presented.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1. Introduction

This chapter draws together the conclusions and implications of the research findings. It starts by presenting a brief overview of the research aim and the methodology used for the data collection. Then, a summary of the main findings is provided. This is followed by the main theoretical and practical contributions of the study, its recommendations for theory and practice and for further research with regard to technical writing in general and particularly for report writing in the Omani tertiary and professional contexts. Finally, the study's limitations with a reflection on my experience of conducting this research are presented.

7.2. Summary of the Main Findings

This study was conducted to investigate the experiences of Omani CoT graduates regarding technical writing in English, particularly the textual and contextual factors that influence the students' mastery of technical report writing skills as expected by their employers. The study was interested in obtaining stakeholders' views about the graduates' writing ability and the difficulties they face in writing the assignments since they constitute a substantial aspect of workplace evaluation criteria. In order to provide a detailed and rich account of this phenomenon, a multi-method research design was adopted in the study to gather data from multiple sources. These sources were (1) nineteen semi-structured interviews with stakeholders such as teachers, students, TW course designers, employers, and employees and (2) various documents related to the writing of report tasks, written by students of three CoTs and employees of two corporations, one from the telecommunications field and one from the banking sector.

The findings suggested that stakeholders perceive that CoT graduates' experiences of writing for workplace purposes in the contexts of the study are influenced by both institutional and contextual factors. These factors interact to hinder the graduates' mastery of context-appropriate writing. The key institutional factors are a) task requirements, and b) awareness of a text's audience. The key contextual factor is the absence of coordination between the two investigated

contexts, namely, CoTs and corporations. Within each of these broad categories, there are also subcategories that further demonstrate the complexity of graduates' writing and the many elements that shape graduates' writing in both the university and their future workplace. For the textual analysis, the texts offered a less clear picture of the difference than did the stakeholders' perspectives. They, the stakeholders, mostly believe that the types of reports students produce at academia differ significantly from the professional reports they are expected to produce in the workplace. Following analysis of samples of reports from both contexts, the results indicated that there are similarities and differences between these two genres.

7.3. Main contributions of the Study

In this section, I will address the main contributions to existing knowledge this study makes in relation to TW teaching and learning, and the particular implications of these in the Omani context as well as internationally. I will be focusing in turn on the theoretical and the practical contributions of the study.

7.3.1. The theoretical contributions

The current study makes a major theoretical contribution to knowledge not only in the Omani context but even internationally in the sense that it provides new insight into the relationship between professional and academic technical writing. The study integrated SFL and Swalesian views of genre to provide a holistic framework for analysis of data. Theoretically speaking, the novel approach to integrating two strands not normally considered together is a major theoretical contribution to knowledge as it gives rise to a new model of knowledge circulation. In this way, knowledge can be increasingly distributed among numerous and diverse networks of individuals (i.e. educators, graduates, and professionals) who can have the capacity to become creative producers of information and learn from each other.

7.3.2. The practical contributions

This study intends to contribute towards an emerging body of research regarding the issue of the relationship between professional and academic technical writing in a number of ways. First of all, in relation to investigating stakeholders' beliefs of factors of the perceived mismatch between professional and academic technical

writing; this study adds to the body of research done in this area both locally and internationally (e.g. Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2015; Al-Maskari, Al Shuaily, & Rajesh, 2014; Stanton, 2017; Obaid, 2009). This study confirmed that there textual and contextual factors influence graduates practices of TW as well as their perceptions of quality and authenticity of TW; something which as besides, Al-Azri (2016) have stressed not a great deal of prior local research has focused on.

Besides this, although an increasing range of local and international literature focuses on particular aspects of TW in professional and academic contexts, there is a paucity of literature addressing the spectrum of the perceived mismatch between these two contexts' TW in the eastern countries (Bertha & Bhatia, 2013) as previous research and theory have been mostly directed toward business communication in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in Europe. Some scholars claim that this emphasis has given the literature a Western bias (Bertha & Bhatia, 2013). This study attempted to contribute in correcting this imbalance in global and local business communication research through shedding light on business communication in the Omani context. Such research is needed as Oman's location plays a major role in connecting Asian Nations and Western countries economically. Thus, the current study provides an insight into the challenges that students face while practising technical writing in the university context and the contextual aspects that shape their experiences to deal with such challenges, and compare it to the demands of the labour market. Through such an investigation, it is possible to create a balance between the technical writing difficulties that students face academically and the requirements of the employers through a series of recommendations to bridge this gap.

It also moves toward establishing a framework to guide future research in Oman on technical communication in general and report writing in specific. Gaining an up-to-date understanding and updated research on business written communication in the Omani context may form a comprehensive picture of the daily processing patterns of local workplace communication and how it could be related to the evolving international and intercultural business communication. This study, hence, tried to address this issue by investigating the TW programmes applied in my

context, namely CoT. For example, while it added to the body of research done in Oman and investigated business writing in academia and in the workplace (e.g. Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015; Al-Maskari, Al Shuaily, & Rajesh, 2014; Al-Busaidi, 1995), to the best of my knowledge, this research is the first attempt in Oman that investigated both the TW practices in both the academic and professional contexts.

Concerning TW programmes, the current research practically contributes to the design, administration and evaluation of these programmes. There is a growing realization to make a meaningful shift in TW curricula from transmission platforms of education that considers the role of graduates as passive knowledge absorbers to more constructivist views of education that assumes these graduates to be self-directed in their own professional learning and growth (Stanton, 2017) as these programmes in the Omani HE education organisations in general and technical education in particular follow a top-down system that is based on transmission models of graduates development. The current study; thus, practically and actively engaged a group of stakeholders from both academic institutions and work corporates in Oman. Such engagement resulted in suggesting certain enhancements to the current programmes to include more participatory models of TW (e.g. simulation of workplace texts) which is based on post-transmission models of graduates' learning. The design of such models is based on socio-constructivist paradigm of graduates' learning where graduates could construct knowledge of their own when engaged in practicing writing such texts (Vygotsky, 1978). In fact, an emphasis is often locally and internationally placed on the benefits of collaboration within a professional community for supporting graduates' learning and practice of TW activities (see for instance, Al-Mahroqi & Denman, 2016; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015; Al-Maskari, Al Shuaily, & Rajesh, 2014; Stanton, 2017; Obaid, 2009 among others). This study; thus, has a practical contribution in this area since it encouraged involving professionals to share knowledge and expertise while designing TW programmes.

Methodologically speaking, the current study adopted a multi-methods design to achieve the research aims and at such it has another methodological contribution in the area of investigating practicing TW at academia and in the workplaces using

multimethodos. This is because, some researchers have found a lack of multimethods work either locally (e.g. Al-Azri, 2016) or internationally (Obaid, 2009) and called for more practical guidance to design and develop these kinds of approaches. The current study has sought to go some way to filling this gap. It adopted multi-methods (semi-interviews and document analysis); it used semi-structured interviews for an in-depth qualitative investigation of the factors of the perceived mismatch between academic and professional TW practices followed by documents analysis of reports written by students and employees to contribute to the right changes and improvements of TW programmes. The phases and ways followed in this research can provide useful guidelines for educational researchers in Oman and internationally on how to develop multi-methods designs to advance a richer understanding of the investigated area.

7.4. Recommendations of the study

The findings of this study suggest certain recommendations for theory and practice and for further research with regard to technical writing in general and particularly for report writing in the Omani tertiary and professional contexts. The practical and theoretical recommendations are mostly for designers and tutors of TW courses and for corporate officials.

As students need standardised and uniform support from both academia and the workplace so that they can learn and put into practice the requirements of producing well-written texts and reports, designers and teachers of TW courses should first seek to make writing a greater part of the skills students are developing in university, rather than having them learn to consider writing as separate from their specializations, engineering, IT, or business or learning just to follow rules and structures that may not transfer well from academia to practice. Teachers of English for Specific Learners need to be made aware that professional genres have predictable or expected structures and writing them requires some awareness of those structures since each structure has its own purpose to serve. Apart from that, preparing learners to produce authentic professional genres requires knowledge of the professional world. Therefore, TW practitioners in the CoT should encourage their learners to conduct projects which involve members of a discourse community by, for example, inviting practitioners from corporations to give talks to the learners

and by holding educational visits to the organizations. Learners need as much exposure as they can get to understand the real world and be effective communicators in that world (Abdul-Rahman, Hamzah, & Abdullah, 2015). Students have a right to be better prepared for the battleground that is the jobs market. Thus, students' views about various aspects of their university education have become a factor in designing university programmes and in maintaining their reputation. (Schneider & Andre, 2005, p. 196). I believe all of the concerns my informants mentioned are of vital importance, and it is the task of academics/course designers to consider all these factors and incorporate them into TW curricula in CoTs to better prepare students to produce a good piece of writing as perceived not only by academics, but also by employers. Students need further training in academia to strengthen skills such as analysing, discussing, and elaborating on their texts. This can be done through multiple methods, as participants suggested in the interviews (see Section 5.2.), for example, incorporating professionals in designing and teaching the TW courses in a way that could benefit students academically and provide them with the necessary skills for workplace writing. Also, teaching the TW courses could be achieved by both ESP teachers and content teachers so students could gain the required linguistic and content skills.

TW course designers are also responsible for considering the authenticity of the technical reports students might need to write while studying TW courses in CoTs. Such authenticity would better prepare students to produce a well-written report as perceived not only by academics, but also by employers. Therefore, there is a need for pedagogy for teaching technical writing that facilitates competent workplace writing activities. This would include teaching authentic tasks which foster success in writing for workplace purposes, as authentic texts can raise students' awareness of the socially situated nature of business writing (Schneider & Andre, 2005). Documents taken from the workplace (that are not confidential) could be used in the classroom. This would allow students to become "familiar with the registers and styles of the workplace and to develop a sense of the audience, purpose and the setting that constitutes the workplace context" (Turner & Scholtz, 2010, p. 244). To do so, "now is the time (for TW courses' designers) to reposition themselves in their university curricula and ask for business support" (Stanton, 2017, p. 1). These designers should meet the authentic needs of report writing in a targeted manner.

There is much to do to ensure that the knowledge delivered through these courses is relevant and applicable in real life, as such knowledge “not only helps individuals thrive at work and become assets to their employers, but they can also improve abilities to enhance careers, while saving businesses money” (Wiwczarowski, 2015, p. 8).

To support students becoming better acquainted with their audience, teachers of TW programmes also need to clarify to students what constitutes good report writing in their respective future careers and the criteria upon which their writing is going to be read, understood, and assessed. By doing this, teachers “would demystify the conventions of (professional reports) writing’s requirements for the novice writers” (Al-Badwawi, 2011). This can be accomplished through providing information in handouts that students keep and use as a reference when they are writing. Teachers also can help by allocating time during the lessons to explaining such reports, outlining expected instructions, and clarifying the guidelines that students have to follow. In the findings, employees reported that it would very useful if TW teachers were to provide such practice. However, there may be a danger in presenting students with guidelines and criteria in a vacuum; i.e., not in relation to a particular text. One reason for this is that different teachers have different conceptualisations of good writing even when there is a consensus on the criteria themselves. After explaining the guidelines and the assessment criteria and presenting model reports, the next important stage is giving students opportunities to practise writing these reports and providing them with feedback on their writing. Similar steps were recommended by Al-Badwawi (2011). Developing professional writing in general and report writing in particular is a lengthy process since it entails the acquisition of several skills that require time to be mastered fully. It is only through regular cycles of practice and feedback that students can learn to integrate the various sub-skills they need to complete their writing (Kalikokha, 2008).

Also, the methods of assessment in the academic classroom need to be aligned more with the requirements in workplaces, as much current assessment is “inadequate to help prepare students for a lifetime of learning” (Boud & Falchikov, 2005, p.1). Thus, the new methods of assessment should take into account preparing students for the independent work they will be required to do when they

enter the workplace. Active involvement in the assessment experience “promotes the acquisition of life-long skills” (Ballantyne, Hughes & Mylonas, 2002, p.428), which goes beyond higher education for students’ future learning and careers. Also, teaching for transfer across different contexts has to be adapted to make sense within a different context and a different audience. Thus, students should be provided with opportunities to apply their knowledge in authentic simulations of the workplace. But perhaps also students need to recognize how these might vary and so be prepared to be adaptable writers rather than simply reproductive writers. An emphasis on identifying and adapting to different writing conventions might be more pertinent than simply replicating them.

There are also suggestions related to how CoTs and corporations could respond to disjuncture in the workplace. The Findings and Discussion parts outlined certain areas of disjuncture between the writing practices in higher education and those of the workplace. The challenge for TW course lecturers and coordinators is how to bridge the divide between teaching for academic purposes, including academic assessment, and teaching to enable students to transfer knowledge to the workplace environment. As Abdul Halim, Attan, Khairi, Masputeirah, and Noor (2013) reported, the written communication skills are among the important qualities sought by employers when selecting prospective employees. Accordingly, there should be some form of collaboration between the developers of the writing curricula and workplace professionals, particularly in the area of content and skills to be assessed. Such cooperation would enable the workplace professionals to be engaged as informants. The study recommends that internal and external communication is needed between CoTs and corporations, as through the establishment of such effective channels of communication between these camps, we will be able to bridge the current perceived gap and better equip graduates for the challenges of workplace writing. It is hoped that founding such communicative channels may be beneficial to comprehend the contextual factors that assist or hamper the undergraduates' progress regarding their technical writing. It is also anticipated that it may guide course designers, writing tutors, and discipline lecturers to identify the preparations required to best sustain students' negotiation of technical writing to match the demands of academic and work contexts. It should be noted that in such particular TW programmes, it is not always possible to prepare all students

adequately for the workplace, given the varied areas of employment, the broad range of tasks, and the different employing programmes with which students have to engage. However, academics should be cognizant of how best to respond to the requirements of workplace business writing skills in order to work towards the transition from higher education to the workplace.

With regard to the workplace, after being appointed to a post, students need to communicate effectively in their respective domains to retain their employment and for professional growth. While the causes of poor communication can be daunting, there are plenty of remedies that can help alleviate the problem. Training, for instance, is essential and must be done continuously to overcome the problem of poor written communication skills. Whether in the guise of workshops or seminars, it is important to tackle the issue of poor writing as it has a significant impact in the workplace. Continuous positive reinforcement between management and employees is also essential and could be an instant remedy for the poor communication problem.

Theoretically, the results from the empirical data indicate that further research should be conducted in both Omani contexts, namely, academic and workplace, to further clarify some of the issues raised in this study, such as identification of the specific aspects in which technical report writing in English is felt to be a barrier towards success academically and professionally. Thus, there is an urgent need for the policy makers to study the linguistic dilemmas in workplaces. A policy statement is also needed in relation to the maintenance of graduates' technical communication skills in general and report writing in particular. Preparing students for the workplace is a joint effort between academia, the workplace, and graduates. A university cannot work in isolation, without consulting the workplace; thus, academics should bridge the gap between language lecturers and subject specialists, and graduates should communicate with the university and voice their opinion on what they felt they lacked when they joined the workplace.

In this way, there is a need to offer support to the belief that, due to the strong link between English and employability in Oman, the school and college curricula should be reformed to better equip learners in these areas. Recent reforms that have aimed to achieve this include the introduction of the Basic Education system at the school

level and the introduction of the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority standards for foundation and post-foundation English at the tertiary level. However, as these reforms are yet to result in improved English outcomes, it is important for administrators and instructors to focus on conducting more research about aligning teaching more closely with the English language communication needs of the local job market. By taking such actions, it may be possible for the education system to more completely address the English-language communication needs of Oman's workforce, thereby enhancing school and college graduates' levels of employability. University prospectuses are now full of programmes and initiatives that should be promising to give students more than just a degree; they should equip students with the skills they need to make them more attractive to employers. Does this suggest that employers always know what is best? Perhaps employers need educating to see the benefits of employees with adaptable and transferable skills as well as immediately useable skills.

The findings of this research have also suggested that more research is needed in a number of areas. For instance, this study has discussed several issues in broader terms, such as issues of texts' authenticity, quality of writing, ESP teachers' knowledge, and addressing the audience's needs. It is suggested that further research investigate thoroughly every aspect separately. This will give deeper insight and provide detailed descriptions of the issues, which will consequently provide a sound basis to derive better conclusions. Interviews and document analysis were the only methods of data in this study, however. Future research could encompass and gather more information by incorporating other methods, such as observations and focus group interviews with all stakeholders' parties, to provide a wider range of viewpoints, which could be valuable in providing contrasting opinions and perceptions. There needs to be a greater focus on the issue of TW lecturers' competency, as future research can give more insight into the level of TW knowledge of teaching ESP. This study has shown that there are complaints among different stakeholders especially students with regard to comprehending lectures. Future studies could look at this issue thoroughly and in greater detail. Further research is needed about teaching TW in the Omani private institutions, as they also provide the market with graduates, to see if they encounter the same problems.

7.5. Study limitations

Facing some potential difficulties when conducting research studies is inevitable and has to be dealt with and thought of in advance. Given the scope of the current study, there were inevitably several limitations that could have affected the findings of the study. However, these limitations along with the overall findings of the current study do suggest directions for future research that might be carried out in a number of areas within the Omani technical and occupational education contexts and that may also be applied to other contexts.

In regard to aspects of research methodology, for example, the applied methods focused on the produced text but not the process of creating these texts especially in the professional context for the reason of confidentiality. Besides, the data collected for the study were based on inquiry into the individuals' experiences of writing, which could not give a complete picture of the process of the development of college students' technical writing abilities. That is because the writing experience is an ongoing process that students start when they first join college and which continues to be modified throughout their college studies and then throughout their work progress. Observing how employees create, draft, redraft and negotiate their reports with their co-workers and managers could have provided a better chance to understand how writing these texts is carried in professional environment. This may help in simulating such a process to be applied in the classroom and thus provide a holistic picture of writing professional genres. There were also other challenges concerned confidentiality of the data used like consent of all parties involved. Research in the workplace normally presents a wide range of challenges to researchers. In business settings, there is the problem of confidentiality. Confidentiality normally translates into limitations in terms of the quality and quantity of the data to which researchers have access. In this case, there was also the added issue of obtaining the written consent of all the parties involved. As I, the researcher had contact only with the donor of the data, it was finally decided to ask for the written consent of all parties involved. However, this decision had practical consequences, as the data could not be analysed or the analysis finalised until everybody had sent their written consent. These two tensions exemplify how the research was affected by changes in the contexts and in the nature of the data under investigation.

Another issue was related to guaranteeing the access and acceptance to the research site and to the required people and resources to conduct this study. The colleges and corporates' proximity to where I, as the researcher, live (between 15 to 45 minutes-drive away from my home) incorporated in the success of conducting such a project in such sites as it eased the visits to the research sites whenever I needed to. In addition, being an academic (English language teacher) and administrative staff (assistant dean of student affairs) at these colleges and having good relationships with their administration as well as teachers and good contact with the corporates admins also facilitated conducting the study successfully with a minimum rate of difficulties. Such familiarity eased the access to the required people and the resources needed to carry out the research. Leech (2002) suggested that working with familiar applicants can help constructing a peaceful and friendly atmosphere in which the interviewees' elaboration may be maximised which will result in enhancement in the data collection stage.

There was also difficulties in managing the time needed to conduct this study, as I had to work on more than one site to collect data, and I had to travel several times between my country, where I conducted the study, and the UK, where I wrote the thesis. To avoid the time management issue, I tentatively adhered to a specific plan and procedures which helped in tackling this problem. Also, conducting the interviews was costly and required much time and effort from me, as I had to travel to the locations of the interviews several times. In addition, once the interviews had been recorded, they had to be transcribed, processed, and analysed; otherwise, they could be susceptible to loss (Kvale, 2007). I was concerned that such issues might affect the data's validity and reliability (Marshal & While, 1994). To overcome such anxieties, it was very helpful to practise interviewing before conducting the real interviews. A number of actions are to be taken to deal with these problems in future. For example, similar studies will be conducted in the other CoTs in future to obtain a holistic picture of the technical writing practices in the contexts of the remaining colleges and other corporations. Further studies that explore how students experience these differences in technical writing are to be conducted. This can be done, for instance, by identifying employers' needs, wants, lacks and attitudes toward the technical writing mastery for the purpose of including it in the curriculum and excluding what is considered to be inconsequential. Such an inclusion may help

in bridging the gap between the learning outcomes of the courses and the needs of the labour market, which would empower graduates to equip themselves effectively with the necessary skills before launching themselves into the job market.

There are also potential difficulties in implementing this study's recommendations. The first difficulty is related to the Omani socio-political context. Recently, the policy making authorities started and are still arguing for the Arabic language to be adopted as the medium of instruction and learning and of teaching in the educational institutions and universities (see A'Shura Council, 2011). They argue that when students gain and receive knowledge and skills in their native language, this step may address the problems facing the educational system to fulfil the requirements of the labour market. In line with Al-Mahrooqi (2012), Al-Issa (2006) and Al-Husseini (2005), I believe there is an urgent need to upgrade the students' proficiency of English linguistic skills acquisition, as it is a vital requirement of the job market so Omani workers may take over expatriates' positions.

Another dilemma is related to the relationship between theory and practice. In Oman, there is a huge gap between theory and practice, as most of the recommendations in the literature support informing the wider debate for further investigation about how communicative skills, especially writing, are taught in higher education institutions. A few, to the best of my knowledge, recommend a particular practice to overcome this problem. Hargreaves (2006) claims that in the educational field, a study that aims to enhance a certain practice sometimes needs to suggest recommendations to be implemented. Accordingly, I will follow up the outcomes of this study by both trying to convince the higher authorities to implement its recommendations and by conducting further research within similar contexts.

Last but not least, the issue of how can a balance be found between the market's communicative writing needs and the students' academic writing abilities resulting in a work environment where students can communicate fluently without any further training from the organizational side? Achieving this might be a complex task, as there are a number of dependent and independent variables to control, such as job managers' perspectives and attitudes, college deans' visions and missions, teachers' previous experience and individual differences in language proficiency, future plans to develop the technical colleges, differences in individual learners' language

proficiency, and other variables.

7.6. Reflection on this research experience

With regard to my experience as a researcher in the University of Exeter, during my first year as a PhD student, I had to enrol in an MSc in Educational Research programme. At first, it was a challenging experience since it was the first time that I had experienced the concepts of ontology, epistemology, and paradigms in education. My first master's degree focused more on applied linguistics and English; thus, what I experienced during the second master's was a completely new experience. Prior to enrolling in this programme, I was convinced that research should not only contribute to knowledge but should also solve a current problem and be evidence-based. My tutor Dr. Shirly Larken once told me that contribution to knowledge is not an easy task. I then remembered a verse in the Holy Quran which says: *[And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little* **أَوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا أَقْلِيلًا** *وَمَا* then I asked myself what knowledge a person like me would contribute to this little. However, the knowledge I gained from my journey throughout this PhD journey was important, as it made me realise the relationship of paradigmatic concepts to my PhD research. It provided me with new scopes in educational research, and provided me with knowledge that allowed me to understand, convey and conduct research in a sound practical way. Today, at the end of this journey, I realise that my contribution is great. Carrying out this PhD study was in fact a highly rewarding experience. Doubtless, I experienced various effects, both positive and negative, while conducting it, and the effects will remain with me for a long time after concluding the study. This experience has been truly unforgettable, and I have been blessed to be able endure such a positive endeavour in fulfilling one of my major goals in life: attaining a PhD. Was it really worth taking the risk? Yes.

I believe that it is my responsibility now to take with me to Oman the experiences and knowledge I have gained. I have the enthusiasm and the intention to continue my academic work and publish in the area of English language teaching and learning to improve the current context and to benefit the different stakeholders. Surely, this study is merely the beginning of an academic quest.

Appendices

Appendix 1: TW 1&2 & TC Delivery Plans

Technical Writing 1-Tech Talk Series Delivery Plan

Course Code	Course Title	Course Pre-requisite	Level/Specialization	Semester	Credit/Contact Hours	Sections	Passing Grade
ENTW 1100	Technical Writing 1	Completion of Foundation	1 st year diploma	Semester 2 2014-2015	4	All groups	D (55-59)

Course Description:

The course is focused on developing knowledge of the basic concepts and practices of technical writing for 1st year Diploma Level students studying in all specializations. This course introduces students to an everyday work related environment where they will use their English language skills in different work related scenarios. The course book and work book focuses on all four skills (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) in practical scenarios.

Course Goal:

To introduce the student to the use of English in a work environment where they will use all four skills in communication with colleagues, superiors and business associates; the technical themes and vocabulary along with the interactive exercises will help to prepare students for the future career endeavors.

Objectives:

At the end of the semester, the students should be able to:

- Read, write, listen and speak more effectively in different work environments
- Show effective interpersonal skills in working with a team
- Demonstrate familiarity with the technical terms needed in their careers
- Analyse different work scenarios to find possible solutions

Delivery Plan Details:

Week No	Outcomes: By the end of this course students should be able to:	Topics / Activity Titles	Contact Hours	Remarks
2 Jan. 11-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify different jobs in certain work fields (i.e. I.T. Engineering) ❖ Identify noun forms of verbs ❖ Recognize appropriate form of verbs in the simple present tense 	Unit 1-What's the Job? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs 	4 hrs	
3 Jan. 18-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Make requests using modal expressions <i>Can I, Could you, Would you like</i> 	Unit 1-What's the Job? (Contd.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming and Going 	4 hrs	

4 Jan. 25-31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Write emails and internet addresses ❖ Recognize imperial and metric measurements 	Unit 2-Is that Correct? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling things out • Measurements 	4 hrs	
	Quiz 1	Outcomes of Unit 1	20 minutes	10 Marks
5 Feb. 1-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Exchange information on the phone ❖ Report defects 	Unit 2-Is that Correct? (Contd.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defects 	4 hrs	
6 Feb. 8-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Recognize written vs. numeric forms of numbers ❖ Use <i>will or won't</i> ❖ <i>Identify countable and Uncountable nouns</i> 	Unit 3-What are the Numbers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Planning 	4 hrs	
7 Feb. 15-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Use comparative adjectives in sentences 	Unit 3-What are the Numbers? (Contd.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Comparisons 	4 hrs	
	Checking assignments	Outcomes of units 1, 2 and 3		
8 Feb. 22-28	Verify their continuous assessment marks Revise their learning throughout the course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision of Units 1,2, and 3 	2 or 3 hrs	
	Mid-Term (tentative date)	Outcomes of units 1,2 and 3	1 hour	25 Marks
9 March 1-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify vocabulary of gadgets ❖ Use "for"+ verb + -ing for purpose ❖ Use <i>can</i> and <i>enable</i> ❖ Describe causes and effects ❖ Use check and control 	Unit 4-How does it work? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gadgets • Cause and Effect • Checking and Controlling 	4 hrs	
10 March 8-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Use past simple of verbs in paragraphs 	Unit 5-What Happened? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explaining what happened 	4 hrs	
	Quiz 2 (tentative)	Outcomes of Unit 4	20 minutes	10 Marks
11 March 15-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Analyze movements on graphs 	Unit 5-What Happened? (Contd.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rises and Falls 	4 hrs	

12 March 22- 28	❖ Use troubleshooting questions	Unit 6-Can you fix it? • Troubleshooting	4 hrs	
13 March 29- April 4	❖ Use the present continuous ❖ Use malfunction adjectives ❖ Use repair verbs	Unit 6-Can you fix it? (Contd.) • Repairs	4 hrs	
	Checking assignments			
14 April 5-11	<u>Final Exam (tentative date)</u>	Outcomes of all the units covered	2 hours	50 Marks

Course Specific Information

Assessment and Evaluation:

The course consists of four contact hours per week. Students are expected to be prepared for the lectures and submit course work on time. Unannounced quizzes may be administered to the students in order to assess their understanding and to monitor their general progress.

Assessment Pattern:

Assessment	Marks
Quiz 1	10 Marks
Midterm Exam	25 Marks
Quiz 2	10 marks
Homework assignments	5 marks
Final Exam	50 Marks
Total Marks	100 Marks

Grading System:

Grade	Percentage Range	GPA
A	90-100	4.0
A-	85-89	3.7
B+	80-84	3.3
B	76-79	3.0
B-	73-75	2.7
C+	70-72	2.3
C	67-69	2.0
C-	60-66	1.7
D	55-59	1.0
F	Less than 55	0.0

Minimum grade required to pass the Course: D

Class Attendance: Refer to <http://Bhatia.ict.edu.om/> (Student Zone/Student Policies/Student Attendance)

Cheating Policy: refer to <http://Bhatia.ict.edu.om/> (Student Zone/ Student Policies/ Examination Malpractice)

Plagiarism Policy: refer to refer to <http://Bhatia.ict.edu.om/en-us/pages/QA/Plagiarism.aspx>
Preparation for Class:

All students are expected to come to class prepared. This involves: (a) bringing stationery (pen, pencil, ruler, paper, etc.); (b) having read work assigned by course lecturer; (c) having completed assigned written work; and (d) being prepared to discuss materials in class. Studying with other members of the class is encouraged.

Class Participation:

- Students are expected to contribute constructively during lecture sessions.
- Students found distracting or disturbing others will be marked as absent.

Technical Writing 2-Tech Talk Series Delivery Plan

Course Code	Course Title	Course Pre-requisite	Level/ Specialization	Semester	Credit/ Contact Hours	Sections	Passing Grade
ENTW 1200	Technical Writing 2	Completion of ENTW 1200	1 st year diploma	Semester 2 2014-2015	4	All sections	D (55-59)

Course Description:

The course is focused on developing knowledge of the basic concepts and practices of technical writing for 1st year Diploma Level students studying in all specializations. This course introduces students to an everyday work related environment where they will use their English language skills in different work related scenarios. The course book and work book focuses on all four skills (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking) in practical scenarios.

Course Goal:

To introduce the student to the use of English in a work environment where they will use all four skills in communication with colleagues and business associates; the technical themes and vocabulary along with the interactive exercises will help to prepare students for the future career endeavors.

Objectives:

At the end of the semester, the students should be able to:

- Read, write, listen and speak more effectively in different work environments
- Show effective interpersonal skills in working with a team
- Demonstrate familiarity with the technical terms needed in their careers
- Analyse different work scenarios to find possible solutions

Delivery Plan details:

Week No.	Outcomes By the end of this course students should be able to:	Topics / Activity Titles	Contact Hours	Remarks
2-3 Jan. 11-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Analyze test procedures ❖ Use passive forms of verbs correctly 	Unit 11- How do you do it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing. • Understanding Instructions. 	6 hrs	Book Distribution
Jan. 18-19	<u>QUIZ 1 (In class)</u>	Outcomes of unit 11	30 minutes	10 marks
3 -5 Jan. 20 – Feb.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify different warning signs ❖ Use warning expressions ❖ Make suggestions 	Unit 12- Watch Out! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warnings • Making Suggestions 	8 hrs	
5 - 7 Feb. 3-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Listen for specific information ❖ Use prepositions of place correctly ❖ Read a map and give directions ❖ Ask for directions 	Unit 13- Out and About. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving Directions • Getting Around 	8 hrs	
7 & 9 Feb. 17 – 19 March 1 -5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Recognize dimensions and measurements ❖ Identify when to use <i>tall and high</i> in sentences ❖ Use quantifiers correctly in sentences 	Unit 14- Tell Me About It. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dimensions. • Quantities. 	6 hours	
Feb. 22-26	<u>Mid Term Exam Week 5</u>	Outcomes of Units 11, 12 & 13	1 Hour	25 marks
10 March 8- 9	<u>Quiz 2 (in class)</u>	Outcomes of Unit 14	30 minutes	10 marks
10 – 11 March 8-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Identify expressions used in different communicative situations ❖ Use prepositions of time <i>by and until</i> correctly in sentences ❖ Write e-mails 	Unit 15- What's The Schedule? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Arrangements. • Writing Emails. 	8 hours	

12 March 22 – 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Match descriptions to job titles in the logistics field ❖ Create compound nouns about logistics ❖ Recognize recycling vocabulary and procedures 	Unit 16- What's The System? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing Logistics. Recycling	6 hours	
13 March 29 – April 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Revise their learning throughout the course 	Review	6 hrs	
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Verify students' learning of the course throughout the semester 	<u>FINAL EXAM</u>	2hrs	50 marks

Course Specific Information

Assessment and Evaluation:

The course consists of four contact hours per week. Students are expected to be prepared for the lectures and submit course work on time. Unannounced quizzes may be administered to the students in order to assess their understanding and to monitor their general progress.

Assessment Pattern:

Assessment	Marks
Quiz 1	10 Marks
Midterm Exam	25 Marks
Quiz 2	10 marks
Homework assignments	5 marks
Final Exam	50 Marks
Total Marks	100 Marks

Grading System:

Grade	Percentage Range	GPA
A	90-100	4.0
A-	85-89	3.7
B+	80-84	3.3
B	76-79	3.0
B-	73-75	2.7
C+	70-72	2.3
C	67-69	2.0
C-	60-66	1.7
D	55-59	1.0
F	Less than 55	0.0

Minimum grade required to pass the Course: D

Class Attendance: Refer to <http://www.ict.edu.om/>
(Student Zone/Student Policies/ Student Attendance)

Cheating Policy: refer to <http://www.ict.edu.om/> (Student Zone/ Student Policies/ Examination Malpractice)

Plagiarism Policy: refer to refer to <http://www.ict.edu.om/en-us/pages/QA/Plagiarism.aspx>

Preparation for Class:

All students are expected to come to class prepared. This involves: (a) bringing stationery (pen, pencil, ruler, paper, etc.); (b) having read work assigned by course lecturer; (c) having completed assigned written work; and (d) being prepared to discuss materials in class. Studying with other members of the class is encouraged.

Class Participation:

- Students are expected to contribute constructively during lecture sessions.

ELC Post Foundation, Academic Year 2015 - 2016

Technical Communication Delivery Plan*

Week	What
1 Sept. 6 - 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration Weeks, • Add & Drops • Introduction
2 Sept. 13 - 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the Course: issuing Course Book, explaining Course Outline • Unit 1: Technical Vocabulary
3 Sept. 20 - 24	Eid Al Adha - Holidays
4 Sept. 27 – Oct.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 1: Technical Vocabulary (continued) • Unit 2: Technical Vocabulary
5 Oct.4 - 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 2: Technical Vocabulary (continued) • Unit 3: Writing Part-by-Part Technical Descriptions
6 Oct.8 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 3: Writing Part-by-Part Technical Descriptions (continued) • Quiz
7 Oct.11 - 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 3: Writing Part-by-Part Technical Descriptions (continued)
8 Oct.18 - 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving effective presentations & spoken descriptions within presentations ([Presentation topics issued/discussed] • Unit 4 (Section 1): Job Search Techniques
9 Oct.25 - 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 4 (Section 3): Writing Targeted Job Application Letters • Unit 4 (Section 2): Job Ads -----MSE Week-----
10 Nov. 1 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 4 (Section 3): Writing Targeted Job Application Letters (continued) (1 hr) • Unit 4 (Section 4): Writing Targeted CVs
11 Nov. 8 - 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit 4 (Section 4): Writing Targeted CVs (contd) • Unit 4 (Section 5): Job Application Forms • Unit 4 (Section 6): Job interviews

COURSE DESCRIPTION	3 Credits Grade to pass : D Point Grade : 1.0 marks 55% - 59% Prerequisites : ENTW 1200(Technical Writing 2)
TEXT /BOOKS REFERENCE BOOKS	Technical Communication Student Course Book, 2010 – 2015 (Ministry of Manpower)

12 Nov. 15 - 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' Presentations
13 Nov. 22 - 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' Presentations (continued)
14 Nov. 29 – Dec.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' Presentations (continued) Practice & Revision for Final Exam
15 Dec. 7 - 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FINAL EXAMINATION

***Subject to change**

General Course Policies

Attendance: Attendance and active participation in class activities are required. Irregular attendance will be dealt with according to item 75 in section 8 of the "College Bylaws for Technical Colleges"

(Ministerial Order No.72/2004). Students must have an official sick leave from a government hospital or written, signed permission from the HoD/HoC. Three incidences of lateness (5 – 10 minutes) will be considered one absence. Students coming more than 10 minutes late will be marked absent for one hour.

Late Assignment: For late submission of assignments, students need a legitimate reason, and they need to inform the instructor in advance of the reason. Otherwise, assignments will be marked down by 5% (eg.80% will be 75%). The deadline for the final project will be specified by the teacher.

Plagiarism and Cheating: Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's work, words, or ideas as if they were one's own. It ranges from an entire assignment which is not the student's own work to specific passages within an assignment which are not the student's work but taken from a source without acknowledgement. Students are responsible for ensuring that they understand and follow the principles of proper documentation and scholarship.

Cheating is usually understood as copying from another student. However, it also includes a student or a group of students, using or attempting to use unauthorized aids, assistance, material, or methods in assignment, reports, presentations and/or examinations. If an instructor determines that the student has cheated and/or plagiarized, the college will take punitive action and a grade of zero will be assigned for the affected assignment, report, presentation, or examination.

ASSESSMENT PLANS: The student grade is assessed based on the performance in the following five areas of evaluation.

Final Exam

- Final Exam is conducted for 50% marks and it contributes 50% of total marks.
- Final Exam is of 2 hours duration

Mid-Semester Exam is conducted for 25% of total marks (Week7)

- Mid-semester exam is conducted for 20% of total marks
- Mid-Semester is of 1 hour duration/ Week 7
- Content: Write a Technical Description of a product.

1 Written Quiz is of 10% of total marks

1 Oral (presentation) is of 15% of total marks

Grading Scheme	Marks Total 100
Quiz No.1	10%
Mid- Semester	25%
Oral (presentation)	15%
Total (CA)	50%
Final Exam	50%

Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form – Semi-structured interviews



Thank you for allocating time to take part in this research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information.

Title of Research Project:

The Perceptions and Practices of Post-Foundation Students' Technical Writing at the Colleges of Technology in Oman

The purpose of the project:

The study aims mainly for a deep understanding of how the matches and mismatches between technical writing practices at academia and workplaces in Oman could affect the technical writing skills required for success in both academia and workplace. The results of the study are hoped to be beneficial to comprehend the textual and contextual factors that assist or hamper the progress of the undergraduates' technical writing. It is also anticipated that such a comprehension may guide course designers, writing tutors, and discipline lecturers to detect the preparations required to best sustain and develop students' negotiation of technical writing to match the demands of academic and work contexts and to motivate students to take seriously the need to develop their writing skills.

Why have I been chosen to take part in this research project?

You have been chosen to kindly take part in this project as you are either studying or teaching in one of the Omani Technical Colleges, an official working in the Directorate of Technical Education, an employee who graduated from the technical colleges or an employer of the technical colleges' graduates.

What will participants be expected to do if they take part?

As the research will rely on interviews to gather information from the participants, thus all what you, as a participant, need to do is to answer some questions in an interview. You will be told which questions you shall answer. By providing responses to the questions, you are expected to reveal your thoughts about what is the nature of technical writing, what constitutes a good technical essay, and why there are certain matches and mismatches between technical writing practices at academia and at workplace. Your answers will contribute in indicating how the approach adopted by the employment organizations and working departments to carry technical writing responsibilities into the market differ from the ones taught in the institutions and how such differences affect the practices of writing at academia and at professions.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is entirely voluntary, so please do not feel obliged to take part. Refusal will involve no penalty whatsoever and you may withdraw from the study at any stage for any reason and without prejudice. However, it is important that the responses you provide are your own and not shared views of other colleagues.

Will all my details be kept confidential?

You should be aware that all the personal information is entirely confidential. The collected data will be anonymised and will be analysed thoroughly to come into some findings. Be assured that everything related to the research including the tapes of the interview will be destroyed after the research has been conducted. Accordingly, any information or data

obtained from these interviews will not be shared with your College; neither will your identity be disclosed in the research report.

I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the abovementioned information. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.
- I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.
- I understand that there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed.
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me. Any information, which I give, will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations. If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form. All information I give will be treated as confidential. The researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in the above study

I do not agree to take part in the above study

.....
(Signature of participant) (Date) (Printed name of participant - optional)

EFL teacher Subject teacher student employer employee
(Occupation)

*Should you have any enquiries, please email them at: iasa201@exeter.ac.uk

*If you have concerns about the project, please contact the project supervisor Dr. Philip Durrant at P.L.Durrant@exeter.ac.uk

Sincerely,
Issa Al Hinai - PhD researcher
College of Social Sciences and International Studies
University of Exeter - United Kingdom
Phone number: +96896603462

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

*a copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form – Document Analysis



Title of Research Study:

The Perceptions and Practices of Post-Foundation Students' Technical Writing at the Colleges of Technology in Oman

Welcome:

Thank you for allocating time to take part in this research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information.

What is the purpose of the project?

This is a PhD study aims to investigate the issue of the technical writing challenges that Omani post-foundation students face in their tertiary education context. This will be done through exploring these students' perceptions and practices of technical writing at the Colleges of Technology in Oman. It will also look at the perceptions of their English and disciplinary teachers and their future employers with regard to how to ensure current writing practices prepare the students for their future workplace technical writing practices; it also examines how this would help them to overcome the challenges they face. One of the data collection methods that this research will rely on is the analysis of documentary materials from both the academic institutions and workplaces and students writing samples. Accordingly, you are presented with the form as the researcher is putting it together to collect some textual documents necessary to complete his project.

Why have I been chosen to take part in this research project?

You have been chosen to kindly take part in this project as you are either studying or teaching in one of the Omani Technical Colleges, an official working in the Directorate of Technical Education or an employer of the technical colleges' graduates.

What participants will be expected to do if they take part?

All what you, as a participant, need to do is to provide some textual materials (if you are a teacher or an employer) or samples of your writings (if you are a student or an employee). The textual materials will include (1) institutional guidelines on writing, for example, the description of the Post-foundation English Language courses, such as Technical Writing and Technical Communication, assessment guidelines from the Directorates of Technical and Vocational Education, and disciplinary courses' outlines and assignments and exams instructions, (2) samples of the students' written assignments and reports and technical writing exam papers (3) samples of workplace assignments and report instructions and (4) samples of the employees' written reports and assignments. The institutional guides and students' writings samples will be a useful source to obtain an idea of the underlying assumptions about the nature of academic writing and the expectations the various departments and teachers have of students' writing, and to decide whether the students understand the demands of technical writing in the colleges. Examining the workplace samples both the official documents and the employees reports and memos will give an

indication of the approach adopted by the employment organizations and working departments to carry the writing responsibilities into the market and of how these responsibilities differ from the ones taught in the institutions.

Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is entirely voluntary, so please do not feel obliged to take part. Refusal will involve no penalty whatsoever and you may withdraw from the study at any stage for any reason and without prejudice. However, it is important that the responses you provide are your own and not shared views of other colleagues.

Will all my details be kept confidential?

You should be aware that all the personal information is entirely confidential. The documents and samples collected will be anonymised and will be analysed thoroughly to come into some findings. Accordingly, any information or data obtained from these documentations will not be shared with your College; neither will your identity be disclosed in the research report.

I [Please write your name (optional)]

confirm that I have read and understood the abovementioned information. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.

- I agree to take part in the above study
- I do not agree to take part in the above study

Signature: Date: / /

*Should you have any enquiries, I would be happy to answer them at the email address: iasa201@exeter.ac.uk

*If you have any concerns about the project, please contact the project supervisor Dr. Philip Durrant at P.L.Durrant@exeter.ac.uk

Once again, thank you for taking part in this study.

Sincerely,
Issa Al Hinai
PhD researcher
College of Social Sciences and International Studies
University of Exeter - United Kingdom

Appendix 4: نموذج موافقة المشاركين



بداية اتوجه لكم بالشكر الجزيل على تخصيص جزء من وقتكم للمشاركة في هذا المشروع البحثي. قبل أن تقرر المشاركة فإنه من المهم بالنسبة لك أن تكون لديك الصورة لماذا يجري هذا البحث وما سينطوي عليه. لذا يرجى أخذ الوقت الكافي لقراءة المعلومات التالية:

عنوان مشروع البحث
مهارات وممارسات الكتابة التقنية الأكاديمية (باللغة الانجليزية) عند طلاب الكليات التقنية ومدى موائمتها للمهارات الكتابية المتطلبة في بيئات العمل المستقبلية لهؤلاء الطلاب

الغرض من المشروع
تهدف هذه الدراسة أساسا لبحث مجالات التطابق وعدم التطابق بين الممارسات الكتابية التقنية في الأوساط الأكاديمية وأماكن العمل في سلطنة عمان وكيف يمكن أن تؤثر هذه المجالات على مهارات الكتابة التقنية المطلوبة للنجاح في كل من الأوساط الأكاديمية ومكان العمل. يأمل الباحث في أن تكون نتائج الدراسة مفيدة لفهم العوامل التي تساعد أو تعيق طلاب الكليات التقنية من اكتساب المهارات الكتابية اللازمة للنجاح أكاديميا ومهنيًا. ومن المتوقع أيضا أن مثل هذه الدراسة قد توجه مصممي ومعلمي مناهج مهارات الكتابة في الكليات وارباب الاعمال المزمع التحاق خريجو الكليات مستقبلا بها علي العمل جنبًا لجنب لايجاد الوسائل التي من الممكن ان تساعد طلاب الكليات التقنية علي اكتساب المهارات الكتابية اللازمة للنجاح أكاديميا ومهنيًا.

لماذا تم اختيارك للمشاركة في هذا المشروع البحثي؟
لقد تم اختيارك للتكرم بالمشاركة في هذا المشروع كونك إما احد الدارسين أو العاملين بسلك التدريس في إحدى الكليات التقنية، أو كونك احد المسؤولين الاداريين المشرفين علي برنامج ما بعد المرحلة التأسيسية بمراكز اللغات بالكليات التقنية، أو لكونك احد خريجي الكليات التقنية العاملين بمؤسسات العمل العمانية أو احد ارباب العمل بهذه المؤسسات.

طبيعة المشاركة بالبحث
بما أن البحث سوف يعتمد على المقابلات لجمع المعلومات من المشاركين، وبالتالي كل ما عليك، كمشارك، القيام به هو الإجابة على بعض الأسئلة في مقابلة يجريها الباحث معك والذي سيبين لك الأسئلة التي تيرجي منك أن تجيب عليها. من خلال ردك على الأسئلة، فإنه يتوقع منك أن تبين ماهية أفكارك حول طبيعة الكتابة التقنية، ما المقال الذي يمكن اعتباره مقال تقني جيد، وما هي اسباب عدم التطابق بين الممارسات الكتابية التقنية في الأوساط الأكاديمية وفي سوق العمل وكيف يمكن لهذه الاختلافات أن تؤثر على ممارسات الكتابة في الأوساط الأكاديمية وفي المهن المتوقعة ان يعمل بها الخريجون مستقبلا

هل يجب عليك المشاركة؟
تأكد من أن مشاركتك بالبحث طوعية تماما، لذا فأنت غير ملزم بالمشاركة وبالتالي لن يكون هناك اي توابع سلبية عليك على الإطلاق في حال رفضك للمشاركة. كما يمكنك الانسحاب من هذه الدراسة البحثية في أي مرحلة ولأي سبب من الأسباب، من دون الحاجة لتفسير ذلك. مع ذلك، فإنه من المهم أن تعبر اجاباتك علي اسئلة المقابلة عن وجهة نظرك الخاصة بك. كما يجب عليك أن تدرك أن جميع المعلومات والبيانات الشخصية الخاصة بك سيتم التعامل معها بسرية تامة والبيانات التي سيتم جمعها سيتم تحليلها بدقة للحصول علي النتائج المرجوة ومن ثم فإن كل ما يتعلق بالبحث بما في ذلك أسئلة المقابلات سيتم التخلص منها وتدميرها بعد أن اتمام إجراءات البحث. وفقا لذلك، لن يتم إعطاء أي معلومات أو بيانات تم الحصول عليها من هذه المقابلات مع الكلية أو المؤسسة التي تدرس او تعمل بها؛ ولن يتم الكشف عن هويتك في التقرير البحثي في حال نشره مستقبلا .

أؤكد ما يلي:
١. لقد قرأت وفهمت المعلومات أعلاه وأنا أفهم أن مشاركتي طوعية وأنا حر في الانسحاب من البحث في أي وقت وبدون ابداء تبريرات
٢. لقد كنت على علم تام حول أهداف وأغراض المشروع
٣. لدي الحق في رفض الإذن لنشر أية معلومات عني وسيتم استخدام أي من المعلومات، التي ادلي بها، فقط لأغراض هذا المشروع البحثي و سيتم التعامل مع جميع المعلومات التي أقدمها على أنها سرية.

أوافق على المشاركة في الدراسة المذكورة أعلاه

لا أوافق على المشاركة في الدراسة المذكورة أعلاه

(توقيع المشارك بالبحث) (التاريخ) (اسم المشارك بالبحث - اختياري)

.....
(صفة او وظيفة المشارك بالبحث)

iasa201@exeter.ac.uk* إذا كان لديك أي استفسارات، يرجى إرسالها بالبريد الإلكتروني على العنوان التالي
أو الاتصال بالمشرف على المشروع د. فيليب دورانت
P.L.Durrant@exeter.ac.uk

عيسى الهنائي-
جامعة اكستر - المملكة المتحدة كلية العلوم الاجتماعية والدراسات الدولية
رقم الهاتف: +96896603462
*سيتم الاحتفاظ بنسخة من هذا النموذج من قبل المشاركين ونسخة ثانية من قبل الباحث

Appendix 5: Semi-structured Interviews Schedule

- Post-Foundation Technical Students

Section One: Demographic data

Question	Probe
What is your specialization?	
What is your current level of study? (Diploma, Advanced Diploma, B. Tech.).	

Section Two: General Concerns

What makes good technical writing (product - quality - characteristics)

What should effective Technical Writing look like from your perspective?	How would you judge successful or unsuccessful writing?
I have noticed that you wrote about "....." topic, How effective was writing about this topic? What are its strengths/weaknesses? Do you think this topic is a real life topic you chose to write about or just an academic topic you wrote to fulfill your course assessment requirements? Do you think that you will write about the same topic in future workplace?	How did this affect your writing? What are you pleased with? What might you change? How typical is it of technical writing in the workplace?
I have noticed that you sometimes were able to identify the initial elements, to be discussed in your topics, in the brief opening paragraphs, but you experienced difficulties to elaborate with further details on them: Have you been shown how to develop more specific details about the topic you write about? Can you remember trying to elaborate with further details on a specific point you were discussing in your writing?	Provide examples
I have noticed that when you wrote Methodology section, you used passive voice almost exclusively, Has passive voice ever come up in classes? Can you remember trying to use it or not to use it in your own papers? How effective was using this example of passive voice? What are its strengths/weaknesses?	What are you pleased with? What might you change? How typical is it of technical writing – what makes it typical?
I noticed that you used "we drilled" here instead of "was drilled", even though the rest of the sentences say "was drilled". Do you have any sense why you used that choice? How effective was using this example of active voice? What are its strengths/weaknesses?	What are you pleased with? What might you change? How typical is it of technical writing – what makes it typical?
I have noticed that most of the emails you wrote were sent to discuss formal matters with the tutor, the dean, or other formal character designated by your tutor, Do you think you will use a similar formal tone to contact with your future work's teammates? How effective was (more explanation is needed) using such a formal tone?	What are you pleased with? What might you change? How typical is it of technical writing – what makes it typical?

What are its strengths/weaknesses?	
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1.2.2. What makes a good technical writer (understanding audience – understanding the task – understanding voice)

Are you aware of your audience when you write a certain paper?	Can you find examples in your own writing of how you have written to take account of the audience?
For the assignments, how does your tutor make sure that you understand what is expected from you?	
Do you write individually or collaboratively?	Do you find it easy/difficult How does it help you as a writer Does it always help?
Who else will see or have access to the papers/emails/memos you write?	What difference does this make to how you write?

How to get better (teaching – support – assessment – feedback)

How well do you think your college's study of technical writing prepare you for the writing you will do in your future work lives?	
Can you tell me about the feedback you get from your TW tutors to improve your technical writing?	Give examples of feedback

The context (classroom – workplace)

What types of writing tasks/practices in English do you perform at your work?	
How long do you take to write each task?	
To whom do you write usually? Do you write to local/overseas personnel?	

- o Technical Writing Teachers and Disciplinary Teachers

Section One: Demographic data

Question	Probe
What is your qualification?	
How many years of teaching experience do you have?	
How many years of teaching experience do you have in Oman?	

Section Two: General Concerns

What makes good technical writing (product - quality - characteristics)

What should effective Technical Writing look like from your perspective?	How would you judge successful or unsuccessful writing?
How would you judge successful or unsuccessful technical writing?	

What makes a good technical writer (understanding audience – understanding the task – understanding voice)

Can you think of a student whose writing really impresses you? What was it about their writing that impressed you?	
How do you think students better learn the writing demands of your class?	
How do you address problems of students' technical writing practices?	
Are these measures your own preferences or a departmental policy?	
What is your sense of students' writing development in this semester?	

How do you monitor students' progress in writing?	
For the assignments, how do you make sure that the students understand what is expected from them?	
What do you think students' need to improve their writing?	
Are your students aware of their audience when they write a certain report/email/memo?	
Do they usually write individually or collaboratively?	What is the value for writing development in each case?
Who else see or have access to the papers/emails/memos your students write?	

How to get better (teaching – support – assessment – feedback)

How do you perceive your technical students' writing preparation for workplace writing?	Do you think your students' college study of technical writing prepare them for the writing they will do in their future work lives? If yes how? If no, how do you think they might be prepared? Do you think the school-based simulation of workplace writing can prepare graduates for professional writing? Why?
What is your purpose in giving feedback?	
What sort of feedback do you usually provide to students?	
In marking students' assignments, what do you usually look for?	
Do you comment on everything? What are the main issues that you focus on when giving feedback?	
Do you have any departmental policy guidelines regarding the assessment of students' writing? Are students familiar with these guidelines?	
What sort of guidance do you provide for students to show them the rules of technical writing (explicit instruction, model essays...etc)?	

The context (classroom – workplace)

Do you think that there are mismatches between the level of writing skills of Omani technical undergraduates and the demands of workplace writing?	
Why do you think there are mismatches between the level of writing skills of Omani technical undergraduates and the demands of workplace writing?	
To what extent do you think the workplace genres can be learned outside the workplace/at academia?	

o Heads of Section for Curriculum/Post-Foundation-Programme Coordinators

Section One: Demographic data

Question	Probe
What is your qualification?	
How many years of teaching experience do you have?	
How many years of teaching experience do you have in Oman?	
How many years of administration experience do you have	

as HoSC/PFPC?	
Section Two: General Concerns	
What makes good technical writing (product - quality - characteristics)	
What should effective Technical Writing look like from your perspective?	How would you judge successful or unsuccessful writing?
What makes a good technical writer (understanding audience – understanding the task – understanding voice)	
Do you think that the students finishing foundation are ready for the type of assignments that they are required to write when they start PF study?	
Tell me about PF students. How do they perform in technical writing?	What do you make of students' level in technical writing in general? How would you judge it?
What difficulties do they have, how does the module try to address them?	
What do you think students' need to improve their technical writing?	
How to get better (teaching – support – assessment – feedback)	
How do you perceive your technical students' writing preparation for workplace writing?	Do you think the school-based simulation of workplace writing can prepare graduates for professional writing? Why?
Do you have any departmental policy guidelines regarding the assessment of students' technical writing? How these guidelines are shared amongst the staff?	
What sort of guidance, (explicit instruction, model essays...etc), do you provide for teachers to show them the characteristics of technical writing needed for sts' success academically and professionally?	
Do experts from the ministry design the policy/programme regarding this issue or is it your own initiative?	
What do you think about the technical writing courses being allocated twelve contact hours in Post-Foundation programme?	Do you think that it is a justifiable decision? Is this enough to support all students? Some subject teachers say that there is a lot of focus on the TW at the expense of the discipline, how would you answer to that?
Can you tell me more about the current format of the TW modules? How were they designed, why?	
What about the textbooks, who decides what textbooks to be used and what are the stages of choosing them?	
As a HoSC/PFPC, are you able to influence the delivery of the TW curriculum?	
Some subject teachers claim that the TW course in its current format does not prepare students for their future specializations or their future careers, how would you answer to that?	
What approach to teaching technical writing is used? What are the strengths and weaknesses of	

this approach?	
If you had the chance, what would you like to see changed in the current TW course?	
Who decides the topics for the assignments and how is it done?	
What feedback do you get from the technical writing tutors and students regarding their reactions on the topics of the assignments?	
Were the content and scope of the assignment decided by the student writer or did they follow a set of guidelines to meet the expectation of a certain reader?	
Can you tell me about the assessment criteria used for the technical writing assignments?	
How much weight is given to the writing question of the final exam?	
How was the format of the final exam agreed upon?	
What support does the English department provide for the students to improve their language skills especially writing?	Can you think of ways to improve students' technical writing?
What support does the college provide for students to develop their technical writing skills? In the college network? In the ELC?	

The context (classroom – workplace)

Do you think that there are mismatches between the level of writing skills of Omani technical undergraduates and the demands of workplace writing?	
To what extent do you think the workplace genres can be learned outside the workplace/at academia?	
You have been assigned as coordinator for technical writing, so can you tell me more about your role in this position?	
What are the duties of the technical writing tutors?	
Is there any collaboration work between the English department and the other departments regarding assignment topics , deadlines for students' handing-in work, exam dates...etc?	
Do you get feedback from the academic departments about student performance in writing?	What do you know about the assessment requirements of the academic courses? Have you tried to link the writing assessment of the foundation to the academic courses? Do you think this is feasible?
Do you have an idea about the sort of assignments that the students are asked to write in the subject departments?	Do you get feedback from the academic departments on how their opinion on the preparation that student get from the English department before they join their specializations?
What kinds of assignments best prepare a student for the demands of the workplace?	What kind of feedback is likely to be taken up by students?

	Can the writing tasks of different aspects of the course be better targeted or better integrated?
How would you describe the relationship between the English department and the workplace administration?	

Employees

Section One: Demographic data

Question	Probe
What is your specialization?	
What is your qualification?	
How many years of working experience do you have?	

Section Two: General Concerns

What makes good technical writing (product - quality - characteristics)

What should effective Technical Writing look like from your perspective?	How would you judge successful or unsuccessful writing?
How would you judge successful or unsuccessful writing?	
In your opinion, how has the English language you used to write reports, emails and memos while studying changed during the time you have used English at work?	
I have noticed that you wrote about “.....” topic, - Do you think this topic is a real life topic you chose to write about or just a topic you wrote to fulfill your manager requirements? - How did this affect your writing? - Do you think that you should have written about a similar topic during your college study?	
I have noticed that you were able to identify the initial elements, to be discussed in your topics, in the opening paragraphs, and were able to elaborate with further details on them: - Have you been shown how to develop more specific details about the topic you write about at academia? - Can you remember trying to elaborate with further details on a specific point you were discussing in your writing? Was it at academia or workplace?	
I have noticed that when you wrote some sections of your papers, you used active voice almost exclusively, - Has active voice ever come up in your academic classes? - Can you remember trying to use it or not to use it in your own academic papers?	
I have noticed that the emails you wrote were written with a mixture of formal, semi-formal and informal tone to discuss matters with different people, do you think you used similar tones to write your academic emails?	
I have noticed that students write three kinds of memos, directive memos, announcement memos, and research findings memos at the college: - Do you write similar types of memos at your workplace? - How effective do you think practicing writing such types of	

memos at academia for future workplace purposes?	
I have noticed that in your writing samples you concentrated on the need <i>to satisfy the potential customer needs</i> : - Have you been trained to write in a similar style at your college? - How practicing writing in such style affected the writing you acquired at academia?	

What makes a good technical writer (understanding audience – understanding the task – understanding voice)

Are you aware of your audience when you write a certain paper?	
Do you write individually or collaboratively?	
Who else will see or have access to the papers/emails/memos you write?	

How to get better (teaching – support – assessment – feedback)

How do you perceive your technical writing preparation for current workplace writing?	Do you think your college's study of technical writing prepared you for the writing you currently do in at your workplace? If yes how useful such preparation was? If no, how do you think you may be prepared?
Can you tell me about the support that you get from your tutors during your college to improve your technical writing?	Was it sufficient to prepare you for the workplace writing?
What sort of guidance do you think should be provided for students to show them the type of writing they need to succeed academically and professionally (explicit instruction, model essays...etc)?	

The context (classroom – workplace)

Throughout your experience at academia and workplace, what is the overlap between workplace and academic written communication practices?	
Is the ability to write in English important at your work?	
How frequently do you write in English?	
What types of writing tasks/practices in English do you perform at your work?	
How long do you take to write each task?	
To whom do you write usually? Do you write to local/overseas personnel?	

- Heads of Human Resources and Employment (Employers)

Section One: Demographic data

Question	Probe
What is your qualification?	
How many years of working experience do you have in Oman?	
How many years of experience as a HHRE do you have in Oman?	

Section Two: General Concerns

What makes good technical writing (product - quality - characteristics)

What should effective Technical Writing look like from your perspective?	How would you judge successful or unsuccessful writing?
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What are the necessary workplace technical writing skills you think that you need to equip your new hired employees with before they embark on their professional career?	
In what ways do students' sentence and organizational structures differ from the practitioners'?	

What makes a good technical writer (understanding audience – understanding the task – understanding voice)

How does the difference in students' written sentence and organizational structures from the practitioners' affect the students writing?	
How will lacking the necessary workplace technical writing skills that new hired employees should be equipped with before they embark on their professional career affect their writing?	
Are your employees aware of their audience when they write a certain work paper?	
Do your employees write individually or collaboratively?	
Who else will see or have access to the papers/emails/memos they write?	

How to get better (teaching – support – assessment – feedback)

How do you perceive your employees technical writing preparation at academia for workplace writing?	Do you think that there are mismatches between the level of writing skills of Omani technical undergraduates and the demands of workplace writing in general?
How do you think the college study of technical writing may prepare your new hired employees for the writing they will do in their workplace?	
What do you think should be taught in the Technical Writing courses?	
Do you think the school-based simulation of workplace writing can prepare graduates for professional writing? Why?	
Why do you think there are mismatches between the level of writing skills of Omani technical graduates and the demands of workplace writing?	
Why do the new hired employees lack the necessary workplace technical writing skills needed before they embark on their professional career?	
Why do you think the current TW courses and the followed approach to teach TW to students does not adequately prepare graduates for achieving success in writing at workplace contexts?	What are their strengths and weaknesses?
If you had the chance, what would you like to see changed in the current TW courses and teaching approach so they adequately prepare graduates for achieving success in writing at workplace contexts?	

The context (classroom – workplace)

What are the writing difficulties do the new hired employees encounter at workplace, how do you address them?	
---	--

How would you describe the relationship between the English department and your organization?

Is there any collaboration work between the English departments in the technical colleges and your organization regarding identifying the necessary workplace technical writing skills needed before the technical graduates embark on their professional career?

Appendix 6: the permission request letter from the DGTE

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Manpower
Directorate General of Planning and
Development



سلطنة عُمان
وزارة القوى العاملة
المديرية العامة للتخطيط والتنمية

Ref. No. :

Date :

الرقم : ١٨٠١٩٨
التاريخ :
الموافق : ٢٠١٥/٧/٨ م

المحترم

الفاضل/

تشهد وزارة القوى العاملة بأن الفاضل/ عيسى بن عبدالله بن سعيد الهنائي يعمل لدينا اعتباراً من : ٢٠١٠/٧/٢ م ، وقد تم إيفاده في بعثة دراسية على نفقة وزارة التعليم العالي الى جامعة (Exeter) بالملكة المتحدة خلال الفترة : من ٢٠١٣/٩/٨ م ، وحتى : ٢٠١٧/٩/٣١ م لنيل درجة الدكتوراه في التربية، (موضوع الدراسة:- تقييم المهارات الكتابية عند خريجي التعليم التقني ومقارنتها بالمهارات التي يتطلبها سوق العمل بالقطاعات العام والخاص) .
لذا نأمل التكرم بتقديم التسهيلات اللازمة التي يحتاج إليها الباحث لإجراء الدراسة الميدانية .

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام

محمد بن حمد العامري
مدير مسجل دائرة تنمية الموارد البشرية

ص ب : ٤١٣ مسقط - الرمز البريدي : ١٠٠ - سلطنة عُمان - هاتف : ٢٤٣٤٤٣٩٨ - فاكس : ٢٤٣٤٤٣٢٠
P.O Box : 413 Muscat - Postal Code : 100 - Sultanate of Oman - Tel : 24344398 - Fax : 24344320

Appendix 7: Certificate of Ethical Research Approval

D/14/15/19

MSc, PhD, EdD & DEdPsych theses.



Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

MSc, PhD, EdD & DEdPsych theses

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications> and view the School's Policy online.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: AL Hinai, Issa

Your student no: 630057933

Return address for this certificate: iasa201@exeter.ac.uk

Degree/Programme of Study: PhD in Education

Project Supervisor(s): Dr. Philip Durrant & Dr. Susan Jones

Your email address: iasa201@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: UK: 0044 7467692076 Oman: 00968 96603461

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Issa AL Hinai', written over a horizontal line.

date: 7/1 2015

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: March 2013

Certificate of ethical research approval

TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT:

The Perceptions and Practices of Post-Foundation Students' Technical Writing at the Colleges of Technology in Oman

1. Brief description of your research project:

In this study, there is an attempt to triangulate the perceptions and the practices of the students, EFL teachers, disciplinary teachers and employers regarding students' writing with the aim of understanding this complex phenomenon from the points of view of the people who are most concerned with its development. The study endeavours to unveil what these four groups think is the nature of writing and what constitutes a good technical essay. As for the subject teachers, the focus is on discovering what they look for in students' texts and how they weigh the linguistic accuracy of students' written assignments. For the employers, the main aim is to detect the technical writing competencies that employers believe the students should possess in order to be employed in their organizations.

2. Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

	Participants	Materials to be collected
1.	Post-Foundation technical students who are studying in the Colleges of Technology.	Samples of the students' written assignments, technical writing exam papers and projects
2.	The EFL teachers who teach technical writing skills in the post-foundation years and the subject teachers whose disciplines have writing as an assessment tool	Institutional guidelines on writing, for example, the description of the Post-foundation English Language courses, such as Technical Writing and Technical Communication, and disciplinary courses' outlines and assignments and exams instructions
3.	The Heads of the English Language Departments in the colleges and the	Assessment guidelines and the departmental and ministerial policies regarding academic and technical

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: March 2013

Anonymity and confidentiality: The participants will be assured that there will be no mention of their names, their college or the files they provided in the thesis or its appendices. Accordingly, for the data analysis purposes, each document provided in the study will be given a unique symbol instead of any indication of the place they have been provided from or the person who provided them. Each symbol consists of two parts, i.e. ENG5, COM3, to identify the department either academic or employer, the document belongs to and its order among the provided documents. Any identifying information in the documents themselves will be replaced with place markers (e.g. 'NAME'). This strategy will assure that the results are reported anonymously.

4. Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

One of the data collection methods that this research will rely on is the analysis of documentary materials. The textual materials will include

- (1) Institutional guidelines on writing, for example, the description of the Post-foundation English Language courses, such as Technical Writing and Technical Communication, assessment guidelines from the Directorates of Technical and Vocational Education, and disciplinary courses' outlines and assignments and exams instructions.
- (2) Samples of the students' written assignments and reports and technical writing exam papers
- (3) Samples of workplace assignments and report instructions
- (4) Samples of the employees' written reports and assignments.

The institutional guides and students' writings samples will be a useful source to obtain an idea of the underlying assumptions about the nature of academic writing and the expectations the various departments and teachers have of students' writing, and to decide whether the students understand the demands of technical writing in the colleges. Whereas, examining the workplace samples both the official documents and the employees reports and memos will give an indication of the approach adopted by the employment organizations and working departments to carry the writing responsibilities into the market and of how these responsibilities differ from the ones taught in the institutions.

For me, as and with all of these types of documentations to be included in the research writing process, for sure I, as being someone who writes in order to clarify his thoughts, will categorize the collected documents by setting out the main points to be discussed in my thesis and link each document to the related point. For example, the students writing samples and academic documents will be used under the Technical Writing in Higher Education's section. Such a process will allow me to seek certain orders in which I might present the data gathered from these documents. It will also balance the key points necessary for the logical progression throughout the study with illustrations and examples that might engage the readers' interest. Accordingly, the documents' collection process will be based with the overall aim of providing something that would inform knowledge and benefit the field of educational research in general and of the Omani technical context in particular.

This project has been approved for the period:

7/1/15 until: 31/9/15

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature):

 date: 7/1/15

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference: D/14/15/19

Signed:  date: 21/1/15

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

Appendix 8: A semi-structured interview extracts with initial codes

Extract/Transcript	Initial codes
<p>IH: What should effective Technical Writing look like from your perspective?</p> <p>ITMng: I want to say that a good technical writing text should have the information required in a very simple manner in a way when you write an essay for example in a university you have to elaborate but when you write it in an organization where mostly the texts go to your management or to higher management, it has to be to the point, it has to be thorough, however it has all the information required to deliver a certain message. So it is, I don't want to say it is an executive summary because executive summary is usually very short, but it is in a similar manner where the information is captured but in a very critical way.</p> <p>IH: what kind of information you mean to be included?</p> <p>ITMng: it depends on what kind of technical report/writing you are writing, let me assume recruitment, we do a summary report, for example if there is a position has been offered, a summary report for all of the candidates who have been interviewed, so if the recruiter goes on and talked about everything the interviewee has said it wouldn't give me enough information to make decision whether this the right person to higher or not, but summarizing whatever happened in the interview gives me their evaluation of the candidate in few sentences, telling me what are the positive points of that person and his weaknesses, and give the conclusion of that interview in a very short way because I don't have time, we have hundreds of positions, I wouldn't go and read a full report on every candidate has applied. So this is basically what I mean: to the point but captured enough information. It is like a bird view, you can see everything and select what you need exactly without</p>	<p>Textual feature</p> <p>Contextual feature</p> <p>Audience, Contextual feature</p> <p>Textual feature</p> <p>Textual feature</p> <p>Type of text/contextual feature</p> <p>Textual feature</p> <p>Textual feature/contextual feature</p> <p>feature structure of</p> <p>report/textual feature why report</p> <p>should be to the point</p> <p>what is a to the point</p>

taking much time.

IH: What are the necessary workplace technical writing skills you think that you need to equip your new hired employees with before they embark on their professional career?

ITMng: our new hired employees do lack certain skills until they become ready, but it is not necessarily that they lack knowledge but I think they lack experience. What happen is that they try to focus in university no matter how much you try to input that in a way when they do it they will always have it in a manner it is a report where they elaborate and have references, in an academic research style, they have to have it like this, nobody will accept an essay without references, so they may have the knowledge to write well but it is not put in a frame that fits an organization. For example, let us assume that somebody is studying recruitment in a college here in Oman or even abroad, they are asked to write reports on candidates, the first thing that they will be asked to give literature review (what is the best way to select candidates), then they will be asked to give evaluation of the people selected, and then conclusion and it will be at least one thousand words, this is the least requested, I have not seen any college that gives students experience on writing shot to the point reports for the managements decisions. They will ask them to write executive summary, which is ok to do it, but it is not always enough. I don't want to say that academic skills like summarizing, paraphrasing and referencing are not required at workplace context, in fact I would like to see more of summarizing and paraphrasing, research is needed even at workplace context, research is the basic of everything, but if we are talking about employability, then there is very limited space for research in organizations, it is not a priority, if a person is going to continue his academic study in colleges, teach in colleges, then yes academic skills and referencing and all of this will be the first priority but if a person is going to go to an organization, we don't use

report/textual + contextual
feature

Graduates lack skills +
experience Graduates not
lack knowledge Graduates have
knowledge to write in academic
style but not professional

demands of writing in academia

demands of writing at workplace

demands of writing in academia

demands of writing in academia

demands of writing at workplace

demands of writing in academia

demands of writing at workplace

demands of writing in academia

these skills much.

IH: Do you think, based on your explanation above, that the technical writing taught in academic context is to succeed in academia but huge part of it is not to succeed at workplace context?

ITMng: yeah, I mean it will give them basic foundations but it will not give them immediate adaptation to the organization. And they need to learn it, at least when they will come and join us they will not have it, they will learn it by the time and sometimes they will need to go to additional courses to learn how to master it.

IH: In what ways do students' sentence and organizational structures differ from the practitioners'?

ITMng: in fact, I haven't had an experience with a staff who brought me a report and I asked him to change it because it is written in an academic style, nevertheless I think our employees for example know that they need to summarize but they do not know what to summarize and how, sometimes they try to make it pretty with a lot of academic words, starting points, etc. and a lot of explanations that are irrelevant and not needed when you are at workplace. I will give you an example, we have a system where the employees can raise questions to the HR department so one of the new employees was responsible to respond to the raised questions by the employees, of course he needs to put texts on the system and we have coached him and his colleagues how to do it. That employee went on wrote a very nice email/essay with a very nice language, if you judge it by the language, but it doesn't fit the workplace context. It may answer the question but you have to be sensitive when you write to the employees for cultural reasons, especially with female staff, (so you cannot say oh my dear valuable employee, or you are one of the nice/good/excellent etc. staff in the organization), so I cannot elaborate so much when you are asking me about something specific. So they need to understand the audience they are talking to. So as an employee you have to be sensitive towards the

Demands of writing in academia
demands of writing at workplace
demands of writing at workplace

Linguistic difficulties impressive
but irrelevant

social conventions

Employer guidance/feedback

Employer guidance/feedback

Employer guidance/feedback

demands of writing at workplace

demands of writing at workplace

demands of writing at workplace

demands of writing at workplace

words you are using and making your answer short and simple. You don't want an employee to regret something or reject one of their request, you cannot put so many physical words and at the end you tell him that his request is rejected, such a style won't be taken seriously, you have to be a bit professional, tell them that for reasons 1, 2, & 3 your request has been rejected, or your request doesn't have the required documentation and we apologize for rejecting it. To go on and elaborate will not be the right approach to address employee needs and to adapt in a workplace context.

demands of writing at workplace

Employer guidance/feedback

demands of writing at workplace

academic cotxt vs. corporate

cotxt

Note: there seems to be issues here

- 1) Academic writing is not appropriate for the workplace – i.e. it is difficult to transfer one style into a new context
- 2) New employees all have to adapt to the workplace whatever their background – i.e. this is not really a writing issue – but is perceived as a writing issue here
- 3) Value of academic writing at workplace: academic writing does not match the needs of the workplace but also that your participants have a rather stereotypical view of academic writing i.e. it is long winded – overly complicated – lacks clarity – is written to impress not to communicate.

IH: How does the difference in students' written sentence and organizational structures from the practitioners' affect the students writing?

ITMng: first of all it will affect the voice that a student may use when he writes to his audience. As I said earlier, being very polite and using too much wording is not a style that is requested at a workplace environment, what is more authentic is to use a direct to the point voice. Whatever the effects are, the academic institutions should have an apparent role in developing the students writing skills. I believe that there is a natural development going to happen, it is a personal development, you will never find a perfect employee, there will always be gaps here and there, there should be some foundations to make them ready, so they should always understand different audiences for example, they should always be able to understand different languages that they use, but they will not be completely ready because whatever we use at Omantel might be different in other organizations or maybe in another section within the same organization because there will never be a standard thing that they will always follow or you can always prepare them for, maybe you can prepare them to have the attitude to understand the things then they will be ready to come and learn. It also requires some patience from the leaders of the organizations, as their new hired staff will not come ready to do whatever they require. For example, some people might think a person who writes elaborated email, report or memo might not fit to work in their organization so they will start writing negative development comments on their performance reports, whereas what they needed is just some guidance, just tell them that this is not the right method, next time I am expecting you to do 1, 2, 3, for sure next time they will learn something and in the third time they will be ready. If they did not learn, then that is what should result in more treatment and would be better to start such treatments from the basic levels in the colleges. In sum, I am encouraging having long-term training courses where a certain number of students from certain

Effects of mismatch
academic cotxt vs. corporate
cotxt: an example of seeing all writing
problems as located in a single place
Employer guidance/feedback
demands of writing in academia
demands of writing in academia

contextual difficulties: If writing
conventions do vary within an
institution does this challenge the idea
of any student being work place
ready?

Attitude/student

Attitude/employer

Employer guidance/feedback

teacher guidance/feedback

specializations should stay in our organization for not less than six months, we train him, guide him, and show him what is requested of him and how he can report what he has done, then once we feel he is ready for the market, he may go back to the college and graduate. This is I believe a 1-1 situation, the colleges will get the people who are unready to join the organizations ready, and the organizations will utilize the people at that period of time. At the end it is a belief that there is not a perfect employee or a perfect student, the student who joins the college for sure he lacks certain skills, and when he joins work he will also lack certain skills, we have to be convinced of this fact that it is a continuous development that happens naturally to any person.

What I believe that what the colleges need to do is to help their students to have an attitude that they should love what they do, they should have the passion towards the work they are doing, train them to understand that they should not go to their work expecting themselves to know everything and they know how to do everything, and if not given what I am expecting then I will blame everything in front of me. Going back to your question, one of the effects is the cultural shock and frustration. Students expect to apply the writing styles that they learnt at the college but once they encounter the differences between the two contexts then

attitude/ employer + teacher

I think there are several ideas in tension here

- The college should prepare people for writing in the work place
- The college can't prepare people for writing in the work place
- Writing conventions differ – even within the workplace
- Writing conventions are not the only problem in adapting to a new work place

coordination between colleges and corporations

Effects of mismatch

coordination between colleges

the above results will affect their work. One of the ways to address such negative effects is through training, a long-term training, and it could be addressed through soft skills training and these should be applied in the colleges programmes. Such attitudes should be addressed by a way or another but the should be addressed, in fact I encountered a lot of examples for candidates who lack basic elements of personality and we as organizations do not have the time to give feedback to every candidate what was his negative points and unfortunately it takes a long time for every candidate to realize his mistakes which makes it very tough for us to choose such people.

IH: How will lacking the necessary workplace technical writing skills that new hired employees should be equipped with before they embark on their professional career affect their writing?

ITMng: as I said earlier, we do not expect that the graduates will come fully equipped with the skills needed to do our required work duties as these graduates used to do tasks and work in academic environment where their aims were mainly to succeed academically. However, being in a workplace environment where they are required to accomplish duties related to certain jobs and under supervision of different people not only one tutor as it was in academia should entitle them with the attitude to love what they do, to love reporting their daily tasks in a technical or job related style. Coming to work with an attitude that they know everything and that they are not convinced of being doing small tasks or writing after every task they accomplish, I believe needs to be addressed. Lacking the attitude to love writing and reporting what they accomplished I believe will negatively affect their abilities to learn, to write and to have the necessary competency needed to accomplish different writing assignment they entitled to write. Lacking such skills will also affect their ability to build their career and also will hinder their chances for future improvement and professional development. Not to forget to add that it will also hinder their chances to work with other department, as they will lack the

and corporations

attitude/writer or student
contextual factors: feedback at workplace participant moves from writing to personality
While this may not be directly linked to the question it resonates with the idea that adapting to a workplace is a wider issue than simply adopting written conventions

Attitude/employer

academic purposes

workplace purposes

academic audience vs

workplace audience

attitude/employee

attitude/employee

Effects of mismatch: attitudes

mismatch

a link is made here between academic approaches and being fixed and

abilities to work in teams.

IH: Are your employees aware of their audience when they write a certain work paper?

ITMng: new ones, not really, they need coaching. I will give you an example, one of our new hired wrote an email to a customer and he wrote a sentence stating that: "we would like you to be ware that doing this once again.." "نود تنبيهك", and then we received a comment from the line manager that the customer did not like/was bothered of the mentioned sentence as he did not do anything wrong. So there should be a level of carefulness and sensitivity while writing to the customers, employees, line managers, etc. and such thing I believe does not come except with experience. Lacking awareness of audience I think is caused as a result of lacking language skills as employees, especially new ones, sometimes write very tough emails to senior managers or to other colleagues. There should be a level of awareness of different language expressions that suits different contexts and different audiences.

IH: Do your employees write individually or collaboratively?

ITMng: both cases but mostly if they are technicians they wrote as a team. In addition, there are ready-made templates they have to fill them in with a simple language. I mean they do not have to use complicated sentences or to compound ones as we have studies earlier. In the colleges I believe such technical writing courses should focus more on the message that the engineer, technician or business student need to convey not on the grammar and structure of the sentences and essays. I think teaching such courses should be carried by people with specialized knowledge not by English language teachers and if the English teachers are required to do that they should be trained well to teach these specializations.

inflexible

Awareness of audience

Awareness of audience

Awareness of audience

Awareness of audience: causes

Awareness of audience: solution

Awareness of audience

Collaborative writing: workplace

individual writing: workplace

college vs workplace: language

Collaborative writing: workplace

IH: Who else will see or have access to the papers/emails/memos they write?

ITMng: anyone can access, however initially it is just us, If we take an example our department here, Recruitment Department, after decision is made the papers will be filed but anytime any information is required from that requirement then anyone from this department is eligible to access it. With regard to the customers, they are eligible to access files prepared by customer services departments such as monthly reports annual reports, etc. and frankly such reports are not written by fresh graduates or new employees but by professional writers.

IH: How do you perceive your employees technical writing preparation at academia for workplace writing?

ITMng: yes I mentioned that there are some mismatches but once again I insist that the reasons behind these mismatches are mostly because of the employees and students attitudes and technical knowledge more than because of the linguistic skills.

IH: How do you think the college study of technical writing may prepare your new hired employees for the writing they will do in their workplace?

ITMng: yeah it could be by for example as I said earlier changing their attitudes towards learning workplace duties. Other ways, maybe the case studies, first the teachers and academics in the colleges need to understand what is actually happening in the workplace, for them to conduct case studies that may address their concerns is recommended. For example, if the teachers can understand what is the kind of summarizing is required at workplace context, then I believe they will be able to prepare summarizing tasks and design them within curricula that may address such needs. But if they continued focusing on linguistics skills like grammar and sentences structures then they will keep always assess these reports on these points.

Access to document: workplace

Access to document: workplace

Access to document: workplace

Contextual factors: attitudes & technical knowledge

coordination between colleges and corporations

Professional writers perceptions of academic writing: in this example there is evidence that they are constructing academic writing in quite a narrow and stereotypical way

IH: What do you think should be taught in the Technical Writing courses?

ITMng: I will focus on equipping my students with proper employability attitudes. I will make sure that such a course is integrated in the students academic life as the first thing when a person apply for a job to be assessed is their attitude towards their new job. Learning other things might happen through time under the supervision of their line managers when they have time and effort and desire to teach their new employees and this is another problem that the line managers not always having the efforts and power and desire to teach their employees and help them to have such attitude. I believe that some of the teachers also lack such abilities, which negatively affects their students thinking of the future job.

IH: Do you think the school-based simulation of workplace writing can prepare graduates for professional writing?

ITMng: yes and no, it is (school-based simulation of workplace writing) one of the ways and it might succeed in preparing the students. Nevertheless, it may fail as it requires teachers with good knowledge of specific language used for each specialization, the authenticity of the workplace will be absent, and the ways of teaching such skills as I mentioned earlier differs from an organization to another and from a section to another. So it is difficult usually to say for a person come and write like this way, what is better is to give him a chance understanding what is required in such environment and then achieve it creatively. Another point is that they did not reach the level that makes them ready to write such samples, however there will be a chance for them to learn and be exposed to how such writings are done and carried. We may better need people from the organizations to assess the students writing because sometimes teachers as academics have their own focuses on linguistic skills and this is natural for English language teachers but if we have people from workplaces they might give better understanding where the good points that fits an organization writing are and where the weak ones and I believe this allow more collaboration between academic and

Coordination between colleges and corporations: wider issues of 'fitting in to the work place
attitude: employees/students

causes of mismatch: contextual factors

School-based simulation of workplace writing

School-based simulation of workplace writing: conditions

coordination between colleges and corporations

coordination between colleges and corporations

coordination between colleges and corporations

professional organizations.

IH: Why do you think there are mismatches between the level of writing skills of Omani technical graduates and the demands of workplace writing?

ITMng: no communication between workplace and academic organizations, the curriculum is design only to help students succeed academically. With regard to their linguistic skills, you will find people with strong language and people who are linguistically weak and this depends on each graduate learning background. For example students who studied in private schools they have better linguistic skills than the general education graduates. But honestly, the current graduates are much better in terms of writing, delivering messages, being aware of audiences and structuring sentences than the previous ones. Maybe having more qualified people who can understand what is the gab between the students' academic skills and future career requirements. In addition, it becomes as a culture to learn English language more than before.

Contextual factors :
interviewees' assumption

Employer feedback

Appendix 9: Analysis framework (codes, sub-themes & themes)

- Ts = teachers
- Ss = students
- PFs = Post foundation coordinators
- Ms/Mngs = managers
- Empos = employees

Codes	Sub-themes	Themes
Free of grammar and spelling mistakes – textual feature (T1,2,3,4&5)	Teachers' views of good TW	Stakeholders' views of good TW
Relevant (answers the task) – textual and contextual feature (T1,2,3,4&5)		
Authentic – textual and contextual feature (T2&5)		
right kind of vocabulary and expressions		
Relevant (to workplace context) – textual and contextual feature (T5)		
Free of grammar and spelling mistakes – textual feature (PF1&2)	PF-coordinators views' of good TW	
achieving task requirements – textual feature (PF1&2)		
critical thinking – textual feature (PF1&2)		
quality of the technical writing taught to students – contextual feature (PF1)		
Relevant (to future specialisation) – contextual feature (PF2)		
Clear (have information required) – textual feature (M1&2)	Managers' views of good TW	
more authentic/use direct (to the point) voice – textual feature (M1&2)		
Depends on type of text – contextual feature (M1)		
Summarising and evaluative – textual and contextual feature (M1&2)		
Considering the audience - textual and contextual feature (M1&2)		
Relevant (to workplace context) - textual and contextual feature (M1&2)		
has specific purposes/depends on type of text – contextual feature (emplo1&2)	Employees' views of good TW	
Clear (have information required) – textual feature (employ 1,2&3)		
Direct (to the point) – textual feature (emplo1&2)		
Considering the audience - textual and contextual		

feature (emplo1)		
Ready as taught TW courses are relevant to workplace writing (T1,2,3,4&5)	Teachers' views of students' readiness for workplace TW	Stakeholders' views of students' readiness for workplace TW
Ready as pre-fabricated sentences/expressions are provided to meet job requirement (T1,2,3,4&5)		
Ready as tasks are relevant to workplace writing (T1,2,3,4&5)		
Ready as vocabulary are provided to meet job requirement (T1,2,3,4&5)		
Not ready as level of tasks is higher than /goes beyond the level they will work in/academic writing does not match the needs of the workplace (T2)		
Ready as taught TW courses are relevant to specialisation which is relevant to workplace writing (PF1&2)	PF-coordinators' views of students' readiness for workplace TW	
Ready because they have achieved high grades in the disciplinary courses (PF1&2)		
Not ready as we just write what our teacher requires (Ss1,2,3,4,5&6)	Students' views of students' readiness for workplace TW	
Not ready as we do not pretend to be what we are in future (e.g. employees or technicians) to have a problem that we may encounter in our future workplace (Ss1,2,3,4,5&6)		
Not ready as we do not pretend to solve a problem that we may encounter in our future workplace (Ss1,2,3,4,5&6)		
Not ready as they aren't properly trained in academia in how to write workplace texts (Mang1&2)	Managers' views of students' readiness for workplace TW	
Not ready as they don't have the experience of writing for workplace (Mang1&2)		
Not ready as they don't have the attitude of writing for workplace (Mang1&2)		
Partly ready as they have the linguistic knowledge of writing but lack content knowledge//have knowledge to write in academic style but not professional		
they will not be completely ready because there will never be a standard thing that they will always follow or you can always prepare them for		
Not ready as they aren't properly trained in academia in how to write workplace texts (employ 1,2&3)	Employees' views of students' readiness for workplace TW	
Not ready as tutors' instructions mainly focused on linguistic features (employ 1,2&3)		
Not ready as they cannot do their managers requirements (employ 1,2&3)		

Ready as they linguistically prepared at academia (employ 1&3)		
Demands of writing in academia: students should elaborate with less grammar and spelling mistakes	Authenticity & quality: requirements of writing academic texts (language, organization and research skills are more important)	Assignment-related factors
Demands of writing in academia: students should summarise, paraphrase and use references/ they do not know what to summarize and how (linguistic difficulties)		
Demands of writing in academia: students should write literature review		
Demands of writing in academia: students' writing is research based		
Demands of writing in academia: less authentic		
Demands of writing at workplace: writers should be direct, to the point		
Demands of writing at workplace: summarising, paraphrasing and research skills are less prioritised/ there is very limited space for research in organizations		
Demands of writing at workplace: considering the audience and the message to be delivered		
Demands of writing at workplace: more authentic		
Demands of writing at workplace: sensitive to the managers, employees and customers needs		
TS: writers need to write different types of reports	Quality and purpose: teacher vs. manager	
Ms: graduates need to follow certain templates		
academic writing is long winded and overly complicated – lacks clarity – is written to impress not to communicate.		
academic writing lacks clarity and is written to impress not to communicate.		
Ts: Students are interested in marks more than learning	feedback/guidance: marks/grades vs. written + face to face feedback	
Ts: we cannot give individual feedback thus they write comments to students		
we have to coach him/them how to do it		
what they needed is just some guidance, just tell them that this is not the right method, next time I am expecting you to do 1, 2, 3,		
would be better to start such treatments from the basic levels in the colleges		
Absence of steaming	Authorship: writing collaboratively vs. writing individually	
Access to document: my teacher is my only reader (academia)		
Ss: teamwork provides us with a better understanding of the tasks requirements		

the final product often becomes the responsibility of one person		
Access to document: different readers (workplace)		
workplace reports are often collaboratively written to satisfy different needs of different readers		
I am responsible vs. the corporate is responsible	Authorship: politics surrounding writing	
the authors can often be seen to be writing as the voice of the organisation		
Writing conventions are not the only problem in adapting to a new work place/ adapting to a workplace is a wider issue than simply adopting written conventions		
To go on and elaborate will not be the right approach to address employee needs and to adapt in a workplace context		
writers should ensure that the content of these texts conforms to the corporates' main message		
they do not know which format to follow		
I want to pass vs I want to be promoted	Attitude: student vs employee	
Ts + Managers: most sts do not want to learn		
st: our colleagues who graduated are without jobs		
Effects of mismatch: cultural shock and frustration		
Ss: I write for good marks	Awareness of audience of the text	
Emplos: I write to satisfy my customers' needs/for an end user		
There should be a level of awareness of different language expressions that suits different contexts and different audiences		
My teacher is my audience		
writing to the customers, employees, line managers, etc.		
Managers: it is not our duty to contact colleges,	Absence of coordination between colleges and corporations	Contextual factors
Ts: since we prepare students for disciplinary study then we prepare them for market		
PF: coordination is a huge project that should include different parties		
Employees: it is a totally new world for us to write at workplace		
sts: during on-the-job training, we write nothing)		
Value of academic writing at workplace: academic writing does not match the needs of the workplace		
finding opportunities for coordination between the CoT's departments and between CoT and corporations (treatment)		
Simulation of workplace texts/ introducing students to "real-world scenarios" (treatment)		

providing students with chances to be exposed to the workplace environment (treatment)		
have more qualified people from the corporations who can understand the nature of the gap between the students' academic skills and future career requirements to assess students writing (treatment)		
colleges need to help their students to have an attitude that they should love what they do (treatment)		

Appendix 10: language features in students and employees reports

Linguistic feature	Categories	Number of sentences used to write		Total Number and percentage of sentences
		The incident	Recommendations to overcome the incident	
Structuring sentences	Simple sentences	188	15	203 (74%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with similar ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	44	17	61 (22%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with different ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	6	3	9 (3%)
Use of active & passive sentences	Use of active sentences	213	35	248 (91%)
	Use of passive sentences	25	0	25 (9%)
Stylistic register	Imperative: Associating sentence's subject (noun or 1st person pronouns) with modals (should, must, etc.)	0	70	70 (25%)

Table 5.14.: language features in the students' twenty-five Incident reports

Linguistic feature	Categories	Number of sentences used to write			Total Number and percentage of sentences
		Introduction	Body	Conclusion	
Structuring sentences	Simple sentences	62	162	62	286 (71%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with similar ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	5	57	33	95 (24%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with different ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	1	16	1	18 (4.5%)
Use of active & passive sentences	Use of active voice	44	214	93	351 (88%)
	Use of passive voice	24	21	3	48 (12%)
Stylistic register	Imperative: Associating sentence's subject (noun or 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns) with modals (should, must, etc.)	15	61	57	133 (33%)

Table 5.15.: language features in the students' College reports

Linguistic feature	Categories	Number of sentences used to write		Total Number and percentage of sentences
		Introduction	Body	
Structuring sentences	Simple sentences	18	163	181 (86%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with similar ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	0	29	29 (14%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with different ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	0	0	0 (0%)
Use of active & passive sentences	Use of active voice	18	192	210 (100%)
	Use of passive voice	9	13	22 (10%)
Stylistic register	Imperative: Associating sentence's subject (noun or 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns) with modals (should, must, etc.)	15	61	133 (33%)

Table 5.16.: language features in the students' Instructive reports

Linguistic feature	Categories	Number of sentences used to write			Total Number and percentage of sentences
		Introduction	Body	Conclusion	
Structuring sentences	Simple sentences	147	430	119	696 (78%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with similar ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	20	145	28	193 (22%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with different ideas are connected with each other through conjunctions	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Use of active & passive sentences	Use of active voice	157	516	63	736 (68%)
	Use of passive voice	24	215	63	302 (28%)
Stylistic register	Imperative: Associating sentence's subject (noun or 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns) with modals (should, must, etc.)	0	0	0	0 (0%)

Table 5.17.: language features in the students' Technical Description reports

Linguistic feature	Categories	Number of sentences used to write			Total Number and percentage of sentences
		Introduction	Body	Conclusion	
Structuring sentences	Simple sentences	18	462	72	552 (62%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with similar ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	14	234	86	334 (38%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with different ideas are connected with each other through conjunctions	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Use of active & passive sentences	Use of active voice	42	948	233	1220 (92%)
	Use of passive voice	12	110	26	148 (17%)
Stylistic register	Imperative: Associating sentence's subject (noun or 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns) with modals (should, must, etc.)	0	6	22	0 (3%)

Table 5.18.: language features in the employees' Periodical reports

Linguistic feature	Categories	Number of sentences used to write			Total Number and percentage of sentences
		Introduction	Body	Conclusion	
Structuring sentences	Simple sentences	101	364	102	567 (78%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with similar ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	2	121	38	161 (22%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with different ideas are connected with each other through conjunctions	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Use of active & passive sentences	Use of active voice	103	534	138	775 (94.5%)
	Use of passive voice	2	123	34	159 (22%)
Stylistic register	Imperative: Associating sentence's subject (noun or 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns) with modals (should, must, etc.)	0	0	2	0 (0.3%)

Table 5.19.: language features in the employees' Service/Progress reports

Linguistic feature	Categories	Number of sentences used to write			Total Number and percentage of sentences
		Introduction	Body	Conclusion	
Structuring sentences	Simple sentences	54	432	108	594 (63%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with similar ideas connected with each other through conjunctions	50	224	72	346 (37%)
	Complex sentences: two sentences (or more) with different ideas are connected with each other through conjunctions	0	0	0	0 (0%)
Use of active & passive sentences	Use of active voice	152	864	242	1258 (93%)
	Use of passive voice	42	180	46	268 (30%)
Stylistic register	Imperative: Associating sentence's subject (noun or 1st, 2nd and 3rd person pronouns) with modals (should, must, etc.)	18	344	106	458 (49%)

Table 5.20.: language features in the employees' Service/Progress reports

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