Exploring Reading into Writing: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Postgraduate Students' Literature Review Essays

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Abstract : Reading into writing is one of university students' most required academic skills. The current study explored postgraduate university students' writing quality using a corpus-based approach. Twelve postgraduate students' literature review essays were chosen for the corpus-based analysis. These essays were chosen because students had to incorporate multiple reading sources in these essays, which was a new writing exercise for them. The students were provided feedback at least two times which comprised of the written comments by the tutor highlighting the areas of improvement and also by using the 'track changes' function. This exercise was repeated two times, and students submitted two drafts. This investigation included only the finally submitted work of the students. A corpus-based approach was adopted to analyse the essays because it promotes autonomous discovery and personalised learning. The aim of this analysis was to understand the existing level of students' writing before the start of their postgraduate thesis. Text Inspector was used to analyse the quality of essays. With the help of the Text Inspector tool, the vocabulary used in the essays was compared to the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP), which describes what learners know and can do at each Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level. Writing quality was also measured for the Flesch reading ease score, which is a standard to describe the ease of understanding the writing content. The results reflected that students found writing essays using multiple sources challenging. In most essays, the vocabulary level achieved was between B1-B2 of the CEFL level. The study recommends that students need extensive training in developing academic writing skills, particularly in writing the literature review type assignment, which requires multiple sources citations.