

Formality in Academic Writing: Investigating Stylistic Competence of Undergraduate EFL Learners

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Article History: Received: 19 Feb 2019 Accepted: 17 Apr 2019	ABSTRACT Academic writing is expected to be formal. The study, therefore, investigates the extent to which written text created by undergraduate learners of English as a foreign language is formal or informal. For this purpose, essay writing projects given to a class of 30 students of BS in Arts at Government Postgraduate Islamia College for Women, Faisalabad have been selected. The framework for analysis has been adopted from the frameworks of formality and informality suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) and Chang and Swales (1999), respectively. The analysis has been made by checking the frequencies of first-person pronouns, unattended anaphoric pronouns, conjunctive adverbs, sentence final preposition, listing expressions, second person pronouns, contractions, direct questions, exclamations to examine informality; while, prepositional phrases, larger and different words in the form of adjectives, verbs, adverbs and nouns, longer sentences and coherence markers to examine formality. Results of the study have implications for language testing, curriculum design, genre analysis and methods for teaching academic writing. There is paucity of research in this area in Pakistani context; therefore, the study not only contributes to the existing literature, but it can also help improve teaching and assessment methods for teaching essay writing to undergraduate students in Pakistani colleges. Key Words: Academic writing, EFL, formality, essays, F-score
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1. Introduction

The study is basically based on the question raised by Hyland and Jiang (2017) that technical writing is becoming more and more informal these days. According to Hyland and Jiang (2017), there is a “gradual shift away from standard detached and impersonal styles of writing to ones that allow more personal comment, narration and stylistic variation” (p. 40). Due to the use of social and digital media, it is common among

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students to use informal features or make errors; and a shift from formality to informality can be observed in the academic texts created by users of English as their first or second language (Harris & Dlit, 2015). However, academic writing is expected to be formal in nature (Chang & Swales, 2017; Swales & Feak, 2012).

The present study, therefore, determines the extent to which essays written by undergraduate learners of English as a foreign language at Government Postgraduate Islamia College for Women, Faisalabad can be considered formal or informal. It has been examined whether the students employ adjectives, adverbs, verbs, nouns, large and difficult words, articles, longer sentences structured with the help of joining and transition words as textual markers of formality; or in contrast, employ first person pronouns, conjunctive adverbs, listing expressions, sentence final preposition, second person pronouns, contractions, exclamations and direct questions as markers of informality. The frequencies of these features have been measured to eventually determine whether the text is predominantly formal or informal.

The underlying assumption of the definitions and approaches towards formality is mostly characterized by a special "attention to form" (Labov, 1972). Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) define formality as "avoidance of ambiguity" (p. 8) and describe formal style as "detached", "impersonal" "objective", "explicit" and less "context-dependent" and "fuzzy" (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999, pp. 2-9). Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) differentiate between "surface formality" and "deep formality" where the former is "characterized by attention to form for the sake of convention or form itself", while, the latter is "attention to form for the sake of unequivocal understanding of the precise meaning of the expression" (p. 5). What really makes a text deeply formal, according to Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), is the "minimization of ambiguity" by elaborating the "unstated assumptions" and bringing clarity through "explicitly stating the necessary references, assumptions, and background knowledge which would have remained tacit in an informal expression of the same meaning" (pp. 5-7). "A formal style will be characterized by detachment, precision, and "objectivity", but also rigidity and cognitive load; an informal

style will be much lighter in form, more flexible, direct, and involved, but correspondingly more subjective, less accurate and less informative” (Heylighen & Dewaele, 1999, p. 33). Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) suggest that the use of “deictic categories” including pronouns, exclamations, interjections, conjunctions, verbs and adverbs are associated with informality; while the use or higher frequency of nouns, prepositional phrases, adjectives, articles, long sentences and difficult and large words is associated with formality (pp. 13-33). Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) further elaborate, the formal, non-deictic category of words, whose frequency is expected to increase with the formality of a text, includes the nouns, adjectives, prepositions and articles. The deictic category, whose frequency is expected to decrease with increasing formality of speech-styles, consists of the pronouns, verbs, adverbs and interjections (p. 13).

Besides employing non-deictic or formal categories of words as suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) as criteria for analysis, the present study also considers the informal features, which include first and second person pronouns, anaphoric references, split-ins, exclamations, prepositions placed at the end of sentences and direct questions etc., as suggested by Chang and Swales (1999), for examining the essays.

As it has not been assumed that informality is absence of formality or vice a versa; and the question, if academic writing is becoming more informal, as raised by Hyland and Jiang (2017) also sets the foundation for this study, so the informal features suggested by Chang and Swales (1999) and already employed by Hyland and Jiang (2017) for analysis in their study, will also be combined with the informal features suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) to examine the essays. Out of around forty informal features of text suggested by Chang and Swales (1999), Hyland and Jiang (2017) picked up 10 features which include first person pronouns, unattended anaphoric pronouns, split-ins, conjunctive adverbs, sentence final prepositions, listing expressions, second person pronouns, contractions, direct questions and exclamations. In the present study, however, unattended anaphoric pronouns and split-ins out of the list of 10 informal features have not been employed for analysis.

Following are the research questions of the present study:

- What are the frequencies of both formal and informal linguistic choices in the essays created by undergraduate students at Government Postgraduate Islamia College for Women, Faisalabad?
- What is the F-measure of the essays?

Though it has been determined that the speakers of English as a foreign language employ an academic and formal register of English even while speaking English when they are expected to use a colloquial register, yet it is still required and important to understand the linguistic choices made by undergraduate students while writing essays in English. Possessing strong essay writing skills is essential for undergraduate students in Pakistan, considering that they may do Masters in English or other subjects, appear for competitive exams such as PMS or CSS, appear for IELTS or TOEFL, or do such jobs that require effective writing skills in the future. In this regard, the present study contributes to the research on academic writing skills of undergraduate students in Pakistan.

No study could be found on the academic writing skills of undergraduate students from Faisalabad. Moreover, the focus of this study on formality or informality also makes it unique because it can help the teachers concentrate on certain linguistics choices as essential components of academic writing. Mostly, teachers have to focus on mistakes and errors committed by the learners, while the rhetorical aspect of writing is neglected. The present study may also help the policy makers, teachers and curriculum designers to focus on linguistic devices related to formality, understand the stylistic development of the undergraduate learners of EFL and pay attention to the “particular writing demands” (Skyrme, 2018, p. 1276) of various disciplines and styles.

In short, this study is new in Pakistani context and it not only helps familiarize teachers with the patterns of formality or informality employed by undergraduate students but also sensitize them to teaching the use of these features more effectively. It also

contributes to the existing literature on formality and informality with special reference to learners of English as a foreign language in Pakistan. Moreover, the framework has been adapted from two frameworks suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) and Chang and Swales (1999), and this adapted framework has not already been employed. The study is unique in that the framework adapted in this research can further be employed for other research studies on formality and informality.

The study has been delimited to 2016 session of undergraduate students at Government Postgraduate Islamia Degree College for Women, Faisalabad.

2. Literature Review

So far as research studies carried out on formality or informality are concerned, Jassim and Nimehchisalem (2016) conducted a pragmatic study of apology strategies employed by postgraduate Arab learners of EFL in their speech acts in relation to formality or informality of the context and found that the students employed thirteen formal and informal strategies depending upon the context. Furuya (2017) studied only 3rd person anaphoric pronoun in English and proposed two types namely notional person that has semantic orientation and grammatical person which has morphological realization.

Zhao (2017) examined use of conjunction as a marker of linguistic expertise among native and nonnative writers of English essays and found that the issue was complex and the advantage of native speakers in academic writing skills couldn't be determined over those of the non-native speakers of English. Similarly, Pitarch et al., (2016) did a corpus analysis of the use of personal pronouns as informal features of language in 64 "About us" pages on American, British and Spanish banking websites to understand the academic English discourse in the domain of banking. They found that percentage of nouns in the websites was significantly higher than the pronouns. They also categorized the pronouns into object, possessive, subject and reflexive categories; while the frequency of possessive pronouns was found to be the highest.

Similarly, Abbas and Shahzad (2016) conducted a corpus study of the use of pronouns, using the framework of meta-discourse suggested by Hyland (2005) to determine stylistic variation in terms of formality versus informality or subjectivity versus objectivity in 104 research articles written by Pakistani scholars and found that Pakistani authors employ more exclusive pronouns than interactional pronouns, hence making the text more objective. Moreover, Bakhoda et al., (2016) suggested the use of students' dialogic interaction with their teachers as a ZPD strategy to improve formal style of intermediate learners of EFL. They adopted pretest-mediation-posttest paradigm to carry out the study and found that mediation through dialogic intervention by the teacher is an effective ZPD tool.

More research studies carried out on formality in academic writing and online communication are the following: Pavlick and Tetreault (2016) empirically analyzed formality in online communication by using Internet Argument Corpus; and found that among news, emails, blogs and answers, News stand at the most formal end of the continuum, answers at the informal end, while emails and blogs fall in between; with emails standing on second and blogs on third number. Niu and Carpuat (2017) suggested a model for investigating stylistic variation with special reference to formality by applying the framework to the analysis of distributional vector spaces through lexical paraphrases and found that the model could accurately be applied but had some limitations as well. In addition, Alamri (2015) found that there was a significant increase in the level of formality in the texts of teachers and students in Saudi Arabia due to the impact of social media. Constantinou, et al., (2019), however, found decrease in formality in 585 extracts of students' writings created in the UK over a period of ten years. Mukherjee and Jansen (2016) performed a statistical genre analysis of 800000 posts and 50000 blogs to analyze formality and found that the formality on twitter increased than that on Tumbler over a period. So far as research studies on formality, using the framework suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), are concerned, Eldusri (2014) used F-score to investigate

formality in blogs which could be categorized into personal and thematic based on their levels of formality.

Studies specifically based on informal features in academic texts are the following: Hyland and Jiang (2017) while raising the question of shift from formal to informal in academic writing did a corpus study of 2.2 million words retrieved from research articles published in renowned research journals related to Electrical engineering, Biology, Applied Linguistics and Sociology. They adapted the framework of informal features suggested by Chang and Swales (1999) and selected ten items, which include direct questions, split infinitives, exclamations, preposition ending, contradictions, listing expressions, second person, initial conjunctions, unattended reference and first-person pronouns, as criteria for analysis and found that there is an increase in the use of informal features in the journals published from 1965-2015. For instance, the use of pronouns has increased to 45%, but the change is not homogeneous in different disciplines or informal features. Overall, they found that the shift from formal to informal was around 2 to 3%.

Melissourgou and Maruster (2017) also analyzed informality in the research articles from Medicine, Philosophy, Economics and Business on the basis of the informal features suggested by Chang and Swales (1999). Jin (2015) studied the features of engagement that basically comprise of informal features, which make the writer be more interactive and involving, in the Korean students academic writing practices as compared to international writers and found that Korean students underuse engagement strategies, thus are more formal and detached.

Chen (2017) examined informality in a corpus of 210 theses written by Taiwanese students of Computer Science in comparison to 171 articles published in international journals of computer science and found that the Taiwanese students' academic writing was more informal. Leedham (2015) found growing level of informality in Chinese students' academic writing. Ivan (2016) conducted a survey to examine perceptions of native and

non-native speakers of English regarding formality of emails through seeking responses regarding the formality or informality of greetings, address forms and vocabulary and found that EFL perceptions, regarding the level of formality in emails, as compared to native speakers were salient.

However, none of the studies mentioned above, deals with the undergraduate or graduate Pakistani students in terms of essay writing. Moreover, the present study is also new and unique in the sense that it combines and adapts the frameworks of formality and informality as suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) and Chang and Swales (1999), which has not been done in case of the studies mentioned above. Moreover, the present study deals with essays than emails or journal articles as is the case with existing pertinent literature. The present study is also different and new because it takes students belonging to a women college in Faisalabad, Pakistan who have not been studied already through the perspective or formality or any other aspect of English as a foreign or second language.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Data Collection

The study considers a class comprising of thirty students from Government Postgraduate Islamia Degree College for Women as a case. This is the only postgraduate college for women in Faisalabad which is one of the major cities in Punjab, Pakistan. The essays written by undergraduate students' of 2016 session and comprising of 4925 words in total have been selected for analysis. The class consists of thirty female students doing BS in Arts and Humanities. They are taught the course entitled Academic Writing in the second semester. The students are 19-20 years of age. The essays were given to them as a major assignment for their final term evaluation. Essays were descriptive in nature and topics included corruption, co-education, floods, terrorism, life in a city or village etc. Students created essays of varied length ranging from 100 to 250 words. The prescribed word length was 300-350 words.

3.2 Data Analysis

The theoretical framework used for the analysis of essays has been adapted from two frameworks which are the frameworks of formality and informality suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) and Chang and Swales (1999), respectively (See introduction for important definitions). Features of formality, which include prepositional phrases, parallelism, larger and different words in the form of adjectives, verbs, adverbs and nouns, longer sentences and coherence markers, as suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999); and features of informality, which include first person pronouns, conjunctive adverbs, sentence final prepositions, listing expressions, second person pronouns, contractions, direct questions, exclamations as suggested by Chang and Swales (1999) have been selected for analysis. The reason behind adapting from both the frameworks is that it will give a comprehensive and detailed glimpse of the degree of formality and informality in the essays. Figure 1 in the following illustrates the adapted framework consisting of the features of formality and informality selected for analysis:

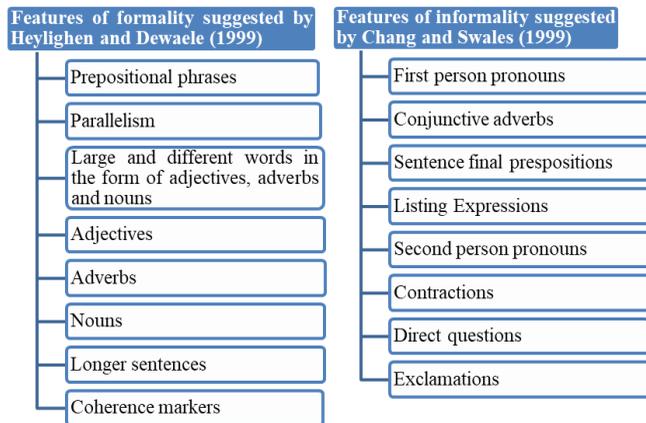


Figure 1.

Figure 1. Illustration of theoretical framework as adapted from Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) and Chang and Swales (1999)

Data have been analyzed by counting the frequencies of the features mentioned in Figure 1 and then comparing the cumulative values of formality and informality. Besides checking the frequencies of the above-mentioned features, the F-score or F-measure formula, suggested as an empirical tool by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) to measure formality, has also been used to check the level of formality. According to Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), “the more formal the language excerpt, the higher the value of F is expected to be” (p. 13).

To apply the formula in the present study, total frequencies of deictic categories, which are pronouns, exclamations, interjections, conjunctions, articles, verbs and adverbs; and formal or non-deictic categories, which are nouns, prepositions, adjectives and articles were counted and the following formula suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) was applied:

“ $F = (\text{noun frequency} + \text{adjective freq.} + \text{preposition freq.} + \text{article freq.} - \text{pronoun freq.} - \text{verb freq.} - \text{adverb freq.} - \text{interjection freq.} + 100)/2$ ” (p. 13).

As the formula can be modified according to requirements concerning data; because Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) state, “F * may show absence of certain item” (p. 13); so, in the present study, verbs, nouns and interjections have not been considered while applying the formula. However, frequencies of adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, articles and pronouns have been considered for checking F-measure of the essays. The data have been analyzed both quantitatively by checking the frequencies and using the formula and qualitatively by describing the frequencies.

4. Results and Discussion

Following are the frequencies and examples of the informal and formal features employed by the undergraduate students in their essays.

Table 1. Frequencies of Informal Features in Essays

Norman Fairclough's model as a research tool in the critical discourse analysis of Robert Frost's poem Fire and Ice.

Students	Essay Titles	First Person Pronoun	Conjunctive Adverbs	Sentence Final Prepositions	Listing Expressions	Second person pronoun	Contractions	Direct Questions	Adverbs	Exclamations
1	Pollution	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Life in Village and City	1	2	0	0	6	0	0	2	0
3	Corruption	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
4	Flood	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
5	Flood	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
6	Terrorism	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
7	coeducation	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	9	0
8	Terrorism	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
9	Corruption	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5	0
10	Poverty	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
11	Illiteracy	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0
12	Terrorism	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	5	0
13	Illiteracy	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
14	Co education	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
15	Pollution	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
16	Illiteracy	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	0
17	Pollution	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
18	Computer	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	4	0
19	Corruption	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	7	0
20	Mobile phones	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0
21	Mobile	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
22	Terrorism	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
23	Poverty	0	0	0	8	0	1	0	2	0
24	Flood	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
25	Blessings of Science	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
26	Noise Pollution	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27	Democracy	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	7	0
28	Agriculture and Industry in Pakistan	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
29	College Trip	19	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
30	Poverty	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Total	30 Essays	61	25	4	21	6	11	1	90	0

Table 1 illustrates that the frequencies of first person pronouns, conjunctive adverbs, sentence final prepositions, listing expressions, second person pronouns, contractions, direct questions, adverbs and exclamations are 61, 25, 4, 21, 6, 11, 1, 90 and 0 respectively; while the order of priority according to frequencies is adverbs, first person pronouns, conjunctive adverbs, listing expressions, contractions, second person pronouns, sentence final preposition and exclamations; while exclamations have not been used at all.

Examples of Informal Features from the Essays:

Conjunctive adverbs:

- Both the village life and the city life have their own charms and colors. Mostly people in village are simple and uneducated but the people in city are clever and educated.

Listing expressions:

- There are different effects of corruption like lack of quality in services, lack of proper justice, chance of unemployment, poor health, lack of respect for lack of faith and trust etc.
- It causes unemployment and poor health, due to poor quality of food etc.

Contractions:

- They can't play any positive role in the society.
- Many poor parents don't send their children to school...

Sentence final preposition:

- Peace is what they need for.

Direct questions:

- How can a device smaller than our palm make differences?

Table 2. Frequencies of Formal Features in Essays

Students	Essay Title	Total Words in an Essay	Adjectives	Prepositional phrases	Articles	Parallelism	Sentence length	Large and difficult words
1	Pollution	114	11	2	5	1	1	2
2	Life in a village and city	135	7	2	5	3	2	5
3	Corruption	124	9	0	11	2	2	3
4	Flood	100	9		4	1	2	2
5	Flood	110	7	1	5	1	1	2
6	Terrorism	172	17	2	8	1	3	5
7	Coeducation	230	11	2	14	0	3	4
8	Terrorism	150	14	0	12	1	2	3
9	Corruption	152	11	2	11	1	2	4
10	Poverty	250	14	0	12	1	3	10
11	Illiteracy	95	5	0	8	0	0	2
12	Terrorism	130	11	0	11	0	1	5
13	Illiteracy	100	3	0	8	0	0	0
14	Co- education	142	7	2	9	0	1	7
15	Pollution	116	6	0	5	0	1	5
16	Illiteracy	111	6	0	8	0	0	0
17	Pollution	114	8	0	7	0	0	4
18	Computer	219	18	0	18	3	3	4
19	Corruption	124	10	0	7	1	1	4
20	Mobile phones	300	16	3	12	0	3	5
21	Mobile	100	5	2	2	0	1	6
22	Terrorism	120	12	2	7	0	3	6
23	Poverty	300	33	0	35	2	4	14
24	flood	250	14	2	16	0	4	12
25	Blessings of Science	250	24	0	27	0	5	14
26	Noise pollution	220	28	0	19	0	4	10
27	Democracy	300	23	6	35	0	4	8
28	Agriculture and Industry in Pakistan	119	6	2	13	0	1	2
29	College Trip	193	12	0	8	0	2	5
30	Poverty	85	3	0	3	0	0	1
Total	30 Essays	4925	360	30	345	18	59	154

Table 2 shows that the frequencies of adjectives, prepositions, articles, parallelism, sentence length and large and difficult words are 360, 90, 30, 345, 18, 59 and 154 respectively; while the order of preference according to frequencies is adjectives, articles, large and difficult

words, adverbs, prepositional phrases and parallelism; while adjectives have been used 360 times and parallelism has been employed 17 times.

Examples of formal features from the Essays:

Adverbs:

- Based on terrorism any government can easily be kicked out.

Adjectives:

- There are green fields and flowing streams around the villages whereas there are factories and mills around the cities.

Parallelism:

- On one hand there are super stores, schools, colleges, hospitals and public parks in cities. On the other there are not such facilities in villages.

Prepositional Phrases:

- Terrorism produces great fear among the people and they feel themselves unsafe in their state and then in the whole world. (Conjunctive adverb and adjective can also be observed.)
- One common form of corruption in our country is receiving cash money, through online transfer or in form of costly gift.
- Co-education means the teaching of boys and girls under the same roof.

Conjunctive Adverbs:

- The terrorists organizations give money to their families in return of bomb attacks and other wrong activities.

Long sentences & Large and Difficult Words:

- Corruption is a form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority often to acquire personal benefit.
- The cause of flooding also varies by geographical location. High tide combined with a stormy weather and low atmospheric pressure is one of the main causes of flooding in coastal region.
- But some points can minimize it like end impunity, reform public administration, promote transparency, empower citizens, close international loopholes etc.
- It is said that boys and girls being allowed to mix freely run every risk of going astray and suffering the total frustration of their education career.

According to the F-measure formula, following is the F-score:

$$7.30 + 0.60 + 7.0 - 1.82 - 1.23 - 0.12 + 100/2 = 55.865$$

Thus F-measure of the essays is 55.865. The results show that students tend to employ formal features more than informal ones; and the essays are formal in style. The results vary from the findings of Chang and Swales (1999), Melissourgou and Maruster (2017), Jin (2015), Chen (2017), Constantinou, et al., (2019) and Leedham (2015) who found the texts to be more informal or displaying a shift from formality to informality; but the present study, in contrast, shows that the essays are formal. Following the framework of Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), Pavlick and Tetreault (2015), however, noted that in threads of online communication, a movement from formality to informality could be observed due to context dependence and estrangement or familiarity between the communicators. Change and Swales (1999) also found an increase in the use of adjectives, as markers of relative formality suggested by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999), and the same can be observed in the present study as well. It is evident, however, that the learners still need to improve on using complex lexical items, sentence length, parallelism and

prepositional phrases. It implies that the essays still lack in what Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) consider “rigidity and heaviness” (p. 1) as markers of formality. Less use of various informal features and similarity in their usage in the essays may also reflect that either the students don’t know how to employ these features, or they have consulted the same source for preparation. Self-writing could perhaps create diversity.

With reference to these findings, it is important to note that helping books which students use to memorize essays partially affect the level of formality. Besides, financial and social backgrounds due to which these students don’t speak or learn English at home, academic issues including lack of individual attention paid to the students due to imbalanced teacher-student ratio in colleges, excessive workload on teachers, inattention to the use of diverse learning materials etc. and social factors for these female students in particular often make them rely on memorizing essays instead of developing a habit of self-writing. According to Horowitz and Wilburn (2017), “dialogic communication can be used as a vehicle to scaffold student revisions of text” (p. 365), which is why, it is important for teachers to give proper feedback and encourage the students to write on their own. Keeping what Tu (2017) notes as L2 “learners’ learning environments, language communities, ecologies, and economic statuses” (p. 162), the findings show that level of formality maintained by the learners may also be an indicator of less exposure to diverse registers and styles due to not speaking English in the classroom or at home or memorizing from helping books.

Hyland and Jiang (2017) claim that increased formality helps reduce the impact of “social characteristics” of academic writers and lead to “intelligibility”, “persuasion” and “lesser chance of misinterpretation” (p. 44); therefore, teachers should impart appropriate knowledge of formality to the learners to reduce the impact of above-mentioned social or linguistic factors. In this regard, however, Barrs (2019), critiquing teaching how to write in the UK, states, “direct teaching of particular linguistic features is no substitute for substantial and extended experience of both reading and writing” (p. 19). Therefore, the purpose is not to emphasize that teachers should teach features which make

writing what Barrs (2019) pinpoints as “bad writing” which is ostentatious, but to develop a culture of reading and writing as well, which leads to learning of multiple style of writing and pertinent features independently.

4. Results and Discussion

The frequencies show that the essays created by undergraduate students in Government Postgraduate College for Women in Faisalabad, Pakistan are formal in nature. The students have used fewer informal features in their essays; however, the F-score also indicates that the level of formality is not drastically high. Besides, researchers of this study also observed many errors while analyzing the essays, which also show lack of linguistic competence. The reasons behind less use of informal features may involve the culture of cramming from text books, more academic nature of English learnt by the undergraduate students in Pakistan, lesser exposure to colloquial forms of expression or spoken English, inadequate use of English by the teachers while delivering lectures and length of the essays etc. As clear majority of the participants belong to social classes that can't afford English medium schools and parents are also uneducated, so it is understandable that they learn through reading or memorizing. It is, therefore, important that teachers adopt such interactive and task-based teaching methods that develop self-writing habits and skills of students and give them understanding of rhetorical devices, instead of the students passively memorizing from helping books and replicating the same. Studies can be carried out on level of formality in different forms of academic, technical, literary or scientific texts created by Pakistani students. Besides, students' tendency to memorize essays and teachers' ratio of speaking English and Urdu while delivering lectures can also be explored.

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