University literature essays in the UK, New Zealand and the USA: Implications for EAP

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Abstract

This paper reports findings from a preliminary study of upper-level and high-scoring undergraduate literature essays from the Academic Writing at Auckland (AWA) corpus, the British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus, and the Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Papers (MICUSP). The study aimed to identify differences in students' academic writing style in these contexts. Just under 100 argumentative essays were analyzed (25 each from Britain and New Zealand and 47 from Michigan), using the Multidimensional Tagger (Nini, 2014), the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (Pennebaker et al., 2015), measures of readability and manual analyses including counts of references. The essays from MICUSP were found to be the most interactive and conversational, and the essays from AWA were found to be the most formal and 'academic'. The essays from BAWE fell somewhere in the middle on most measures. This paper reports on these differences and suggests their implications for students studying in "Inner Circle" institutions, and for the teaching and learning of EAP around the world. Plans for the next stage of the research are also outlined.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Corpus Linguistics, Culture, Essays

Introduction

Essays, or 'library research papers', as they are called in some settings (Hyland, 2009), are widely acknowledged to be a key "pedagogical process genre", that is, a genre that plays an important role in facilitating student learning (Charles & Pecorari, 2016, p. 122). Essays are identified as one of the 13 genre families in the British Academic Written English [BAWE] corpus[1], a collection of nearly 3000 proficient texts written by students at UK universities. Nesi and Gardner (2012) contrast the Essay with the Explanation, a less demanding genre family which requires students to present shared and established information rather than their own perspectives. The primary purpose of the Explanation is to develop and demonstrate understanding of the object of study, whereas Essays require more elaborate construction and the application of critical thinking skills. Across disciplines, university essays generally require students to support a position using evidence derived from their reading and put forward views based on a sustained argument (Hyland, 2009; Nesi & Gardner, 2012). Essays link arguments with evidence (Nesi & Gardner, 2012) and move "beyond description to analysis and reasoning" (Hyland, 2009, 131).

Although the essay may be a challenging genre for novice writers, it is a very common assignment type in higher education (de Chazal, 2014; Wingate, 2012), especially in the humanities and social sciences. In the Arts and Humanities component of the BAWE corpus there are far more essays than any other type of assignment, and of the 111 BAWE assignments written by students of English, only 19 belong to other genre families. Essays cut across nearly all disciplinary fields of study, however, unlike for instance the Problem Question, a discipline-specific genre of central interest only to students of law (Jordan, 1997) or the Patient Case Study/Care Critique that is only relevant to students in the health disciplines (Gimenez, 2008). There is a more even spread of genre families amongst assignments in the Life and Physical Sciences, but of the 34 disciplines represented in BAWE, only one (small) Meteorology component contains no essays at all.

Because essays are so common and so widely distributed in higher education, they are often the main focus of EAP writing instruction. Arguments can be constructed differently in different disciplines, as Gardner (2012) reveals in her study of BAWE corpus essays from Classics, English, Law, Philosophy and Sociology, but in EAP a generic approach is often taken, without considering the different types of essays produced for different purposes in different contexts (Hewings, 2010). This tendency to treat 'the essay' as an undifferentiated single genre is possibly due to washback from university entrance language tests such as IELTS, and the need to teach students from a variety of disciplines in the same class, but it is also likely to be due to the fact that there is still very little written about the language of authentic essays, produced for real degree programmes. Unfortunately for EAP teachers, authentic, discipline-specific essays do not adhere to an established template, unlike essays produced for general academic language assessment (e.g., the 'five-paragraph essay' – see Wesley, 2000), or assignment genres such as Lab Reports. Part of the challenge of the essay-writing task is to develop and sustain an argument in one's own voice, while at the same time demonstrating critical and organizational skills appropriate to the topic, the discipline, the level of study, and local departmental conventions.

Several studies have acknowledged the influence of national and regional culture on the organization and style of student writing. Kruse & Chitez (2012), for example, compared university genres across three Swiss regions (Italian, French and German) and found that the Italian-speaking university they investigated stressed the expression of knowledge "in a personal voice", and that the French-speaking university stressed the voice of the discipline, arguing that "the personal should not appear in the text", while the German-speaking university required students to switch between the academic and the personal, according to genre. Variation has also been noted in the academic writing produced in countries where English is the first language - the "Inner Circle" as defined by Kachru (1985). For example, Ädel (2008) compared UK and US writing on general topics in the Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS), and Chen (2013) compared phrasal verb use in a British General Studies corpus (GS-UK), a US counterpart (LOCNESS-US), and a

selection of humanities and social science undergraduate essays taken from the BAWE corpus and the Michigan Corpus of Upper Student Papers [MICUSP][2] . In Ädel's study, the US writers were found to use significantly more personal metadiscourse than the British writers. In Chen's study, significantly more phrasal verb types and tokens were found in each of the two US subcorpora than in each of the two British ones; there were also significantly more phrasal verbs in the general argumentative essays produced for LOCNESS-US and GS-UK than in the essay selections from MICUSP and BAWE, which Chen considered to represent more formal and 'academic' writing. (2013, pp. 426-7). Similar differences between UK and US writing are noted by Connor (1990), reporting on a study of compositions produced by 16-year old high school students in England, the US and New Zealand, collected in the 1980s for the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. An analysis of fifty of these compositions, randomly chosen to represent each of the three countries, revealed that the US writers were significantly more likely to use colloquial and interactive features, as indicated by contractions, first and second person pronouns, and a low type-token ratio. The US writers were also less likely to nominalize and use conjuncts (p. 84).

The finding that academic writing conventions are not identical in different countries has implications for the success of student mobility programmes, and indicates a source of potential problems for academic communication at all levels, including between writing specialists around the world. Close register studies of student output in Inner Circle countries are few and far between, however, and we are not aware of any comparative studies focusing specifically on essays discussing works of literature, nor any general three-way comparisons of US, UK and New Zealand university student writing. The preliminary study reported in this paper seeks to establish whether the kinds of differences reported by Ädel (2008), Chen (2013) and Connor (1990) apply to proficient upper-level undergraduate literature essays, with a view to stimulating debate about possible differences in the expectations of university literature departments in Inner Circle countries generally. Such debate might help to inform writing tutors working with students from different educational backgrounds, EAP learners aiming for undergraduate level study, and producers of academic writing materials intended for different local markets.

Methods

Our data was collected from three corpora of university student writing: BAWE, MICUSP, and the Academic Writing at Auckland [AWA][3] corpus from New Zealand. Prior studies (e.g. Olinghouse & Wilson, 2012; Biber et al., 2014; Bruce, 2010; Charles, 2007) have shown that the student's level of attainment and the communicative demands of the specific writing task can affect register features in university writing. Thus, as "It is only against a background of sameness that differences are significant" (James, 1980, p. 169), we tried to match our data across the three university environments as closely as possible, in terms of the level of study, genre, and disciplinary area. All the assignments we collected had been given

high grades by subject specialists at their respective universities, and were therefore considered to have met departmental expectations regarding academic conventions and the quality of the language. They had also all been classed as argumentative essays by the original corpus compilers, and came from similar disciplines and covered similar topics. However, although we selected essays from comparable years of study where they were available, an absolutely perfect match was impossible to achieve as MICUSP contains no assignments below the final senior year of undergraduate studies (Year 4 for MICUSP) and neither BAWE nor AWA contained enough final year essays (Year 3 for BAWE and AWA) in the appropriate disciplines (AWA was still under construction). To make up numbers, we therefore added some essays from lower levels to the AWA and BAWE datasets. The MICUSP sample remained, however, considerably larger than those of AWA and BAWE.

There is also a further reason why the three datasets are not identical. All of the AWA writers were L1 users of English, but six of the 17 BAWE writers and three of the 40 MICUSP writers had other first languages. Two German speakers wrote three of the BAWE essays, three French speakers each wrote one essay, and we also included one essay by a Japanese speaker. Two of the MICUSP essays were written by an Urdu speaker and four by two different speakers of Chinese. Although all these writers were highly proficient users of English, as evidenced by their grades, the speakers of other languages who contributed to the BAWE dataset tended to use slightly shorter words and sentences, resulting in a lower level of reading difficulty. No such difference was noted for the MICUSP dataset. Details of the educational background of all contributors had been collected for the BAWE project, and so we knew that the French and German writers had received all their secondary education overseas and the Japanese writer had received just one year of pre-university education in the UK. MICUSP did not record the educational background of contributors, and it is possible that the Chinese and Urdu-speaking writers in the MICUSP dataset had actually received all their previous schooling in the US.

Examples of essay titles from the three corpora are provided below.

MICUSP
Father-daughter relationships in Shakespearian plays
Human-Animal Nature in H.G. Wells and Edgar Allen Poe
On Frames and Resistance in *Pride and Prejudice*
The Grey Zone of Shame in Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*
The Ladder: Sexuality of Ancient Greece as an instrument of social mobility

BAWE
Accommodating the disagreeable in Victorian text closures
Two writers' conceptions of social identity through the politics of space and/or place
The construction of gender and gender roles in *The Good Soldier* and *Mrs Dalloway*
Gender and speech or eloquence in nineteenth century American literature

Discuss the pursuit of justice with reference to at least two Greek plays

AWA
Mary Shelley's mad scientist and the birth of a monster
Clowns in two Shakespeare plays
Rhizomatic Territory within Stephen King's 'Dark Tower Series'
'Cerium' in Primo Levi's *The Periodic Table*
In the *Lysistrata* is the focus on sexuality just a diversion from the seriousness of war?

The disciplines, quantity and levels of the chosen essays are given in Table 1.

Table 1. *Disciplines, quantity & levels of selected essays*

	MICUSP	BAWE	AWA
	English	English	English
	46 (Year 4)	20 (Year 3)	7 (Year 3)
			15 (Year 2)
	Greek drama	Greek drama	Greek drama
	1 (Year 4)	4 (Year 2)	1 (Year 1)
		Film (Classics)	European Studies
		1 (Year 3)	1 (Year 3)
			1 (Year 2)
Total essays	47	25	25
Total writers	40	17	13

The majority of the essays were discussions of literary themes, but two each in MICUSP and AWA, and five in BAWE, can best be described as 'close text analyses', as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Type of essay*

	MICUSP	BAWE	AWA
General argument	45	20	23
Close text analyses	2	5	2

The essays were analysed manually and with the *Multidimensional Analysis Tagger* (MAT) 1.2 (Nini, 2014) and the *Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count* (LIWC2015) (Pennebaker et al., 2015). MAT uses an expanded and adjusted version of the Stanford Tagger to mark texts for the linguistic features used in Biber (1988).

LIWC2015 counts words per sentence, words of more than six letters, and parts of speech including function words (as a percentage of total words in the files). It also provides information about the psychometric properties of the words used in the files, but this information was not used in the current study as it was considered likely to reflect the nature of the literature under discussion, and would therefore not be a useful tool to reveal stylistic variation between groups of writers. The Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease Test, the Gunning FOG Index and the SMOG readability formula were also applied, using the online tool *www.thewriter.com/what-we-think/readability-checker*.

A text's readability score indicates the ease with which it can be read by an L1 speaker of English, calculated on the basis of word and sentence length. A lower score in the Flesch-Kincaid Test indicates greater complexity, and higher scores in the FOG and SMOG tests indicate that the reader needs to have a higher level of education. MAT and LIWC measure many of the features in a text that have been taken to indicate proficiency in prior studies of ESL academic writing. Generally, writing produced by learners of English moves from a more spoken style to a more written style as writing ability develops, according to findings from both qualitative (e.g. Shaw & Liu, 1998) and quantitative studies where more advanced learners have displayed greater lexical diversity (Yu, 2009) and used longer sentences (Bulté & Housen, 2014), longer words (Ferris, 1994), more passives and 3rd person/impersonal pronouns (1994), and longer noun phrases and a more nominal style (Crossley & McNamara, 2014). These tendencies have also been observed by Grant and Ginther (2000), who used the tagging system developed by Biber (1988) to examine timed essays produced by L2 writers for the Test of Written English.

Preliminary results

Measures of formal written style
The three readability formulae were applied as a first, broad measure of the level of reading difficulty of writing produced by the three groups of writers (see Table 3).

As can be seen, the New Zealand essays were judged to have the highest levels of complexity in written style (highest level of reading difficulty) according to these formulae, and MICUSP essays from the US were judged to be the simplest. For the BAWE essays, the level of reading difficulty was reduced by the inclusion of the seven assignments written by speakers of other languages. No such effect was noticed for the MICUSP essays.

Table 3. *Readability of selected essays, as measured by standard formulae*

	MICUSP	BAWE	AWA
Flesch-Kincaid	50.9 (10th to 12th grade; fairly difficult to read)	43.5 (College level; difficult to read)	41.7 (College level; difficult to read)
FOG	14.4 (College sophomore)	15.9 (College junior)	16.1 (College senior)
SMOG	10.7 years of education	11.7 years of education	12 years of education

The results from various measures using MAT and LIWC are shown in Tables 4 and 5. With references and footnotes removed, AWA essays ranged from 1074 to 3003 words, and MICUSP essays ranged from 803 to 4554 words. BAWE essays were the longest, ranging from 1111 to 4919 words. Although length has been taken as an indicator of writing proficiency in studies of timed high school essays, as reported by Connor (1990), the length of the BAWE, AWA and MICUSP assignments is probably of little significance, being dictated by local departmental rules.

Table 4. *Essay length, lexical diversity & lexical density in selected essays*

	MICUSP	BAWE	AWA
Total words (footnotes & references)	93,411	75,217	45,267
Average essay length (no footnotes & references)	1,970 words (s.d. 718.7)	2,961.5 words (s.d. 1021.8)	1,774.5 words (s.d. 528.3)
Words per sentence	29.72	31.97	31.35
Type-token ratio	203.7	212.6	210.9
Lexical words %	46.8	47.7	48.4

On the other hand, measures of sentence length, type/token ratios and the proportion of lexical words, also shown in Table 4, suggest that the MICUSP essays were less phraseologically complex than AWA and BAWE, and used a narrower range of lexis. Lexical diversity is measured by MAT according to the number of types of words occurring in the first 400 words of the text, as in Biber (1988). If the type-token ratio is lower, the same words are being used more frequently. Lexical diversity in the MICUSP essays was significantly less than in the BAWE and AWA essays (p = 0.04). The AWA essays were the densest, containing the highest proportion of lexical

words to function words. Lexical density and lexical diversity are strongly associated with written as opposed to spoken discourse.

Table 5 indicates the same kind of differences between AWA, BAWE and MICUSP essays. AWA had significantly more conjunctions, generally associated with a more 'written' as opposed to 'spoken' style, as compared to BAWE ($p = 0.03$), and MICUSP ($p = 0.009$). MICUSP essays contained the lowest proportion of long words, and were also the least nominal, as measured by the proportion of nominalisations and attributive adjectives. Measures for the BAWE essays fell between those for MICUSP and AWA, as in Table 3.

Table 5. *Word distribution in selected essays*

	MICUSP	BAWE	AWA
Words longer than 6 letters %	24.15	26.54	29.14
Nominalisations %	2.9	3.2	3.6
Attributive adjectives %	6.3	7.4	7.6
Conjunctions %	0.5	0.6	0.8

Differences in style between the AWA and MICUSP essays are illustrated in the following examples. Example 1, from AWA, shows the way adjective and verbs have been converted to nouns (*support, diversion, seriousness, assessment, importance*) and nouns have been modified by attributive adjectives (*limited support, sexual humour*). This makes the writing denser and more abstract.

Example 1
Limited* support exists for the hypothesis that in Aristophanes' Lysistrata the focus on **sexuality** is just a **diversion** from the **seriousness** of war. In forming this view, an **assessment** will be made of the **importance** of scenes portraying the **seriousness** of war, immediately undercut by ***sexual* humour**, which may be seen to support the hypothesis. (**AWA**)
* Italics and bold font added to highlight attributive adjectives and nouns.

However, Example 2, from MICUSP, shows more evidence of human agency (*Many struggle, People feel, He would not let there be)*. Noun phrases tend to be shorter, there tend to be fewer words before the main verb, and the text is less dense.

Example 2
One common problem for the Christian tradition is the idea of evil in the world. *Many struggle** to believe in a faithful and loving god when there are so many apparent problems with society. *People feel* that if God is so loving and just, merciful and great, *He would not let there be* so much pain and struggle and toil in the world.

Toil is a concept thoroughly explored in William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. (**MICUSP**)

* Italics added to highlight use of human agency.

Measures of interactivity

A further difference between the three datasets relates to the degree of overt interaction with the reader. This was calculated according to the proportion of contractions, question marks, and 1st and 2nd person pronouns in the texts, as shown in Table 6. In corpus-based studies such as those reported in *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al., 1999) these features are all strongly associated with spontaneous speech rather than formal academic prose. Contractions are considered to be "typical of conversation", and "can be used to signal a degree of informality in writing" (1999, p. 43), while interrogative clauses tend to occur in "dialogue situations" (p. 203), and pronoun forms which refer to the speaker and the addressee (*I/me, you*) are "far more common in conversation (and to a lesser extent fiction)" than in the other registers studied (newspapers and academic prose) (p. 333).

Table 6. *Interactive features in selected essays*

	MICUSP	BAWE	AWA
Question marks %	0.10	0.05	0.02
Contractions %	0.18	0.14	0.09
1st person pronouns %	0.63	0.61	0.23
2nd person pronouns %	0.26	0.23	0.11

The MICUSP essays contained the greatest proportion of all these interactive features, and it is notable that the use of 1st person pronouns is negligible in the AWA essays. It should be borne in mind, however, that some of the features occur in quotations from literary texts and therefore do not reflect the voice of the student writer, as noted by Gardner (2012) when comparing 1st person use in literature essays with essays from Law, Philosophy and Sociology in BAWE.

Use of references

Manual analyses revealed surprisingly large differences in the use of references and footnotes, as indicated in Table 7. BAWE essays had the most reference list entries, with an average of 10.5 compared to a 2.2 average for MICUSP essays. Taking essay length into account, both BAWE and AWA essays had on average a reference list entry for every 365 words of essay, almost three times more than the MICUSP essays. Almost half (47%) of the MICUSP sample contained only one reference, or

no references at all. Where given, these tended to be lists of "Works Cited" and/or numbered endnotes, which often only referred to the work or works under discussion.

Table 7. *References and footnotes in the selected essays*

	MICUSP	BAWE	AWA
Average number of reference list entries per essay	2.2	10.5	6.7
Average number of essay words per reference list entry	1056	365	365
Average number of words per footnote/reference	8	34	28

The BAWE and AWA essays also tended to make extensive use of footnotes containing the "comment, explanation, or information that the text can't accommodate", as advocated by the Modern Languages Association (*MLA Style Centre*, n.d.). The style of these footnotes is illustrated in the following examples, the first from BAWE (Example 3) and the second from AWA (Example 4).

Example 3
1. Baldock, p.20
2. *Agamemnon*, L.361
3. Lebeck in Segal (eds.), p. 76
4. Examples can be found: Agamemnon in *Agamemnon* L.1520, 1642-3, Cassandra in *Agamemnon* L.1047. For Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus there is no direct use of metaphor of nets, but the frequently occurred idea that they are killed with the same trap as they killed Agamemnon and the tableau in *The Libation Bearers* where we see corpses of these two and the murder-robe from the previous play together, may help the audience to create the image that the two adulterers are also died as a result of being caught up by the 'net' of fate.
5. *The Eumenides*, L.116-7
6. Earp, p.114
7. According to Prag (p.44), this pre-Oresteia notion is expressed on a metope from Foce del Sele that shows a young man struggling with a snake, described not as a heroic battle but as self-defence and an attempt to escape, which exactly coincides with the situation Orestes is put in towards the end of the trilogy.

Example 4

3. Chaïm Perelman, "The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Practical Reasoning," in *The Rhetorical Tradition*, (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), 1388.

4. In this essay, the term *rhetor* will be used to encompass all producers of rhetoric - i.e. both those who speak their argument and those who write it. *Orator* will refer to one who uses speech for argument, and *writer* or *author* to one who uses text.

5. Ibid., 1391.

6. Ibid., 1393.

On the other hand, only one essay in the MICUSP sample used footnotes, and some of these notes were rather different in style from those in AWA and BAWE, referring directly to the opinions and actions of the student writer: *my own personal opinion*; *I have added*; *I make no assumption*; *I wish to make the point* (see Example 5).

Example 5

<u>1</u>. While this is my own personal opinion, it is not solely my own. James Brundage refers to Margery as "uncommon" (504), and qualifies his analysis of her in the context of theorizing medieval marriage and sexuality by mentioning that she was "atypical" (507).

<u>2</u>. Neither of these quotations are the text's original italicizations; I have added them for emphasis.

<u>3</u>. I make no assumption that she had ulterior motives for such a naming – I believe her avoidance of artistic self-aggrandizement was borne of genuine reverence for God's creation. In this paper, though, I wish to make the point that her actual motives are not relevant: only the beneficial end-products of her choices.

Conclusion

Several factors reduce the ability to claim statistical significance for our results. Our datasets were quite small, and were not completely matched: there were considerably fewer BAWE and AWA essays than MICUSP essays, in AWA only 13 writers were represented, as opposed to 17 in the BAWE dataset and 40 in the MICUSP dataset, and all the AWA writers were L1 speakers of English, whereas six of the BAWE writers and three of the MICUSP writers claimed other mother tongues.

However, although it is possible that factors other than educational context may have influenced some of the differences we discovered, a clear trend of less complexity in the MICUSP essays and greater complexity in the AWA essays was identified, with BAWE essays falling between these two on most measures. AWA texts were found to be more lexically diverse, and to contain longer sentences and words, and more nominalisations, attributive adjectives and conjunctions than the MICUSP texts. All these are markers of a more highly literate style (Bulté & Housen, 2014; Crossley & McNamara, 2014; Ferris, 1994; Grant & Ginther, 2000; Yu, 2009). MICUSP essays were rated easier to read (using the Flesch-Kincaid Test), more suitable for readers at

lower levels of study (using the FOG and SMOG formulae), and more interactive, containing five times as many question marks, twice as many contractions, almost three times as many 1st person pronouns, and more than twice as many 2nd person pronouns as the AWA essays. All these findings support the results reported by Ädel (2008), Chen (2013) and Connor (1990). The notable difference in the type and quantity of references to other works also indicates that referencing, a key aspect of professional academic writing, was less important for the MICUSP undergraduates.

Reasons for such differences can only be surmised, as further research is required in this area. However they point to the possibility that the general expectations for proficient undergraduate student writing vary across the three countries, and may apply across genres and disciplines rather than only to essays on literary topics. UK and New Zealand undergraduate writing may be expected to be closer to that required at postgraduate level, whereas a greater distinction may be made between undergraduate and postgraduate writing in the US. Differences in education participation rates might be influential in this respect; mass participation in tertiary education is still a relatively new phenomenon in New Zealand and the UK (Ganobcsik-Williams, 2006) compared to the US, where tertiary education has been accessed by a higher percentage of the population for longer. The more spontaneous 'oral' MICUSP style noted in our findings may possibly have developed as a result of, and as an encouragement to, this wider participation, because it enables undergraduates to express their own critical response to the literature before they have acquired all the skills associated with professional academic writing.

Our findings have a number of possible implications. Assumptions about the similarity of proficient student writing across the three countries, and the equivalence of language proficiency assessment systems, such as the US-based TOEFL, and IELTS, used more in UK and New Zealand, could be challenged, especially if the differences identified in the literature essays in our samples are also found in writing from other disciplines across the three countries. Because of such differences, high-achieving US students (or students who have received a US-influenced education elsewhere in the world) may do less well if they continue their studies in other Inner Circle countries. Writing tutors everywhere need to be made aware of this possibility, in order to give the best advice to internationally mobile students. For EAP tutors, a clear understanding of the expectations for undergraduate writing in the target country of study would help them to adapt their writing courses appropriately, and prepare learners to meet such expectations. The awareness that expectations can vary across countries, and that there is not necessarily one correct way to write, could also help learners understand the context-specific nature of written genres, and to adjust their writing to suit these contexts.

For those producing tertiary-focused EAP writing materials, it may be more helpful to focus on a local rather than international market. Exemplars drawn from one country, for example, may not be appropriate models for students aiming to study in another country. Anecdotal evidence suggests that US-based EAP teaching materials

are often rejected by New Zealand teachers because the style of the sample writing employed is more personal and informal than that required in a New Zealand university. The MICUSP and AWA essay data suggest that such differences in student writing in the US and New Zealand are real, and might therefore be seen to justify the New Zealand teachers' response.

Of course, any consideration of pedagogical implications must acknowledge the preliminary nature of the current study. Our next step will be to develop larger and more comparable datasets, use fuller statistical analyses, and explore in more detail the interplay between the writers' own voices and those of the writers and characters whose words they quote. However, despite its preliminary nature, we suggest the current study illustrates the contribution corpora-based studies can make to an understanding of expectations for academic writing, and as a guide for the adaptation of EAP teaching and learning to specific contexts. While still under development, AWA is now freely available as a searchable resource, which researchers and students may access and interrogate in the manner of BAWE and MICUSP.

Notes

1. See www.coventry.ac.uk/bawe. The British Academic Written English (BAWE) corpus was developed at the Universities of Warwick, Reading and Oxford Brookes under the directorship of Hilary Nesi and Sheena Gardner (formerly of the Centre for Applied Linguistics [previously called CELTE], Warwick), Paul Thompson (formerly of the Department of Applied Linguistics, Reading) and Paul Wickens (Westminster Institute of Education, Oxford Brookes), with funding from the ESRC (RES-000-23-0800).
2. See http://micusp.elicorpora.info/. Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Papers (2009). Ann Arbor, MI: The Regents of the University of Michigan.
3. See https://awa.auckland.ac.nz Academic Writing at Auckland.

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