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## TRENDS AND ISSUES IN GENRE-BASED APPROACHES

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### ABSTRACT

The increasing influence of genre-based approaches in English language teaching is now well-attested by the growing literature on the subject. The author in this article first sets out to clarify what is meant by 'Genre Theory' with its focus on text, purpose, meaning and choice. In the second part of the article she addresses the specific area of genres in the classroom and the importance of contextual analysis, planning and implementation. Finally in the conclusion issues are raised with regard to the need for effective implementation in syllabus design, materials development and the professional development of teachers.

### *Introduction*

Genre-based approaches are becoming increasingly influential in the field of English language teaching. Rodgers (2001) identifies genre-based approaches as one of the major trends in the new millennium, with discourse and genre analysis, schema theory, pragmatics and systemic functional linguistics 'rekindling an interest in functionally based approaches to language teaching'. Similarly, Hyland (2002) sees genre approaches as having a considerable impact on the way we see language use and on literacy education around the world. And Johns (2002) refers to a major paradigm shift over the past 15 years or so towards a more social, contextual approach based on genre theory.

Such approaches have been adopted in primary, secondary, tertiary, professional and community teaching contexts in programs for native speakers of English as well as ESL and EFL learners. Educators in countries as diverse as Singapore, South Africa, USA, Italy, Hong Kong, Australia,

UK, China, Canada, Sweden and Thailand are employing genre-based approaches in developing their syllabuses, materials and curricula.

It would appear to be an opportune time, therefore, to review the principles underlying such approaches and to address misconceptions and critiques that have arisen in the last few years.

Different groups working in the field of genre theory have differing points of focus. They could be ordered along a continuum ranging from those whose main interest is in the social, cultural and historical contexts in which genres operate through to those who are more interested in the nature of the genres themselves. (See Flowerdew 2002, Hammond and Derewianka 2001, Hyland 2002, Hyon 1996 and Johns 2002 for a more detailed overview.) In the former group (many of whom locate themselves within the New Rhetoric school), we find studies that explore how genres evolve in different sociocultural settings to achieve particular purposes, how genres cluster together in sets, and how genres form systems and networks (e.g. Miller 1984; Freedman and Medway 1994a, 1994b; Bazerman 1994; Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995). In the latter group (often working within the area of discourse analysis) detailed attention is paid to the communicative purpose, structure and language features of particular genres, primarily with a view to helping students achieve control over the genres that they will encounter in professional and academic contexts. This emphasis is often found in English for Specific Purposes, where researchers analyse and describe such genres as the literature review, business letters, science reports, formal meetings, sales promotion letters, job applications, legal documents, and so on (e.g. Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993; Dudley-Evans and St John 1998).

Towards the middle of such a continuum lie those who have an interest both in the context in which genres are produced and the linguistic features of the genres themselves—as well as the relationship between the context and language. The most influential are those working within the tradition of Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). Because of this group's impact on syllabus and curriculum in school contexts and because of the writer's familiarity with their work, this paper will tend to focus on this particular approach.

## *What Do We Mean By 'Genre'?*

The term 'genre' has in recent times been extended beyond its traditional use in literary contexts to include all purposeful uses of language: telling

someone how to make a toy boat, buying fruit in the market, sharing what happened on the weekend, reviewing the literature in a particular field, persuading someone to your point of view, and so on.

One of the first issues to arise in any discussion of genre is how to define the term. Those working within different genre approaches will emphasize different aspects depending on their particular interest. Most, however, would agree that genres are social practices that have evolved to enable us achieve our goals (Martin 1985; Painter 2001). As we go about our daily lives, we engage in numerous situations that involve predictable and recurring patterns of language use, without which our interactions would be random and chaotic. As members of particular social groups and cultures, we recognize the generic expectations of various situations and are able to respond by deploying the appropriate genre.

A further issue is the use of the terms 'genre' and 'text type'. Some writers use these terms interchangeably. In some cases, the term 'text type' has been adopted because it is more transparent and immediately accessible to teachers and students. There are also instances in educational institutions where 'text type' has been favoured because it is seen as less threatening politically, 'genre' being associated with left-wing ideologies and subversive activity. But among academics, the two terms often have quite distinct meanings (though there is not always agreement on what they mean). Here we will be using the term 'genre'. For those wanting to pursue the distinction further, see Lee (2001) and Paltridge (2002a).

The following paper is divided into two main sections: trends and issues in the development of genre theory, and trends and issues in the application of theory in genre-based pedagogy.

## *Genre Theory: Trends and Issues*

In considering trends in genre theory, we will focus on certain principles that are relevant in educational contexts and some of the issues surrounding these principles.

### *Focus on Text*
While the emphasis in language learning is often placed on the acquisition of syntax at the sentence level, in genre-based approaches the emphasis is on the creation of meaning at the level of the whole text. Rather than dealing with discrete instances of language, there is a recognition that meaning accumulates and evolves over a stretch of text.

Having focused initially on the analysis of short, prototypical texts (or in the case of EAP, on specific sections of texts), attention is now being paid to longer, more complex texts (e.g. Baxter 2002; Bunton 1999). While it could be argued that, for modelling purposes, it is preferable to use texts that clearly demonstrate the key features of the genre, ultimately students need to be able to deal with texts that are blends of different genres or that contain embedded genres.

One of the issues posed by an emphasis on meaning at the text level, particularly in EFL contexts, is the perception that students have difficulty with whole texts (even short ones) and that it is first necessary to master 'the basics'. While not denying the value of exercises that provide practice in specific points, most theories today suggest that it is the engagement with creating and comprehending meaning within the context of a text that promotes effective language learning.

*Focus on Purpose*

Genre theory starts from the premise that language use is goal-oriented. Genres evolve within a culture to enable members of that culture achieve their social purposes. Certain purposes might involve satisfying basic needs such as shopping for food or telling the doctor about an illness. Some, such as casual conversation or gossip, might have a more interpersonal purpose in terms of establishing and maintaining social relationships. Others, such as poems and songs, might be of a more aesthetic nature.

The following table outlines the social purpose of a number of genres identified as critical to success in educational contexts through an examination of syllabuses, textbooks, student texts and assignments, and the language challenges posed by the school curriculum.

For further details on the genres of schooling, see Butt *et al.* (2001), Derewianka (1991) and Feez and Joyce (1998).

Table 1. *Basic educational genres and their sub-genres.*

| Social Purpose | Genre | Sub-Types | Example |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 'To provide information about a particular person, place or thing' | Description | Objective Description<br>Literary Description | 'My Family'<br>'The Old Banyan Tree' |
| 'To provide information about a class of things' | Information Report | Descriptive Report<br>Taxonomic Report<br>—Class/subclass<br>—Part/whole<br>Compare/contrast Report<br>Historical Report | 'The Rainforest'<br><br>'Different Types of Planes'<br>'The Parts of a Clock'<br>'Bats and Birds'<br>'Dinosaurs' |
| 'To tell someone how to do something' | Procedure | Instructions<br>Experiment<br>Directions<br>Regulations | 'Making Nasi Goreng'<br>'Changing Solids to Liquids'<br>'How to Get to Main St'<br>'Our Class Rules' |
| 'To tell what happened' | Recount | Personal Recount<br>Factual Recount<br>Biographical Recount<br>Autobiographical Recount<br>Historical Recount | 'My Holiday in Macau'<br>'Thief Steals Car'<br>'The Life of Gandhi'<br>'My Childhood'<br><br>'The Qin Dynasty' |
| 'To explain how or why a phenomenon takes place' | Explanation | Sequential Explanation<br>Causal Explanation<br>Factorial Explanation<br>Consequential Explanation<br>Exploration | <br>'Life Cycle of a Frog'<br>'Why Hot Air Rises'<br>'The Causes of Erosion'<br>'The Effects of Poverty'<br><br>'Why Dinosaurs Became Extinct' |
| 'To explore the human condition through storying' | Story Genres | Narrative<br>Moral Tale or Fable<br>Anecdote | 'The Disappearing Dogs'<br>'The Fox and the Crow'<br>'When I Went to the Dentist …' |
| 'To respond to a literary text or artistic work' | Response Genres | Personal Response<br>Review<br>Interpretation<br><br>Critical Response | 'My Favourite TV Show'<br>'Novel of the Year'<br>'Crouching Tiger as a Metaphor…'<br>'Is Rap Really Subversive?' |
| 'To mount an argument' | Exposition | Persuasion<br>Discussion/Debate | 'War is immoral'<br>'The Pros and Cons of Living Alone' |

In order to accomplish their purpose, genres generally move through a number of stages (Martin 1985).

| | |
|---|---|
| Issue | Difficulty with reading is still one of the major problems facing schools today. It is estimated that some 30 per cent of students enter secondary school with poor levels of literacy. In order to address this issue, many schools are introducing 'Safety Net', an early literacy intervention program which targets pupils having difficulty with reading in their first year of school. |
| | Opinions are divided, however, on the effectiveness of this program, with advocates claiming miraculous results in a period of a few weeks and sceptics questioning the accuracy of these claims. |
| Position A | One of the supporters of Safety Net, Ms Cheryl Green, tells of Martin who, at seven years old, was rapidly losing interest in school. After 16 weeks of one-to-one tutoring for 30 minutes a day, his reading level had caught up with the class average and his self-esteem had soared. 'He went from being a little boy who hated school to one who couldn't wait to get there,' she said. |
| Position B | Professor Whelan of Brownsville University, however, quotes an evaluation of the program which found that only 65 per cent of the group undergoing Safety Net actually benefited from it, while 30 per cent of children who went through the Safety Net program would have improved without it. Professor Whelan cautioned that the Safety Net program was developed in the 1970s and that advances had been made since then in the teaching of reading. |
| Recommendation | While Safety Net is seen as a positive starting point, most recognize its limitations. There is a continuing need for further research into literacy development and for teachers to be fully trained in the most effective methods. |

Figure 1. *Discussion Genre: Stages*

These stages are relatively predictable because they are functional, that is, each stage (or 'move') plays a particular role in the developing text. In the above text, for example, the function of the first stage is to provide some background information for the reader and outline the issue.

There are a number of pedagogical issues surrounding the teaching of genres as purposeful and staged activities. First, in many cases, they have come to be taught as 'items' in a syllabus or textbook. Rather than asking 'what is my purpose in this situation?', students are often simply taught

the name and stages of the genre, detracting from students' ability to relate their writing and speaking purposes to an appropriate generic choice. By focusing first on a text's social purpose, students are able to understand why the text unfolds in a particular way, instead of simply 'following the recipe'.

Secondly, it is often the case that only a small handful of genres are taught across the years of schooling, as if these were the only ones that students would encounter. In addition, the various subtypes are often not recognized, so it might be assumed, for example, that just because a student has learnt to write a recount of personal experience, they are therefore capable of writing a historical recount, which calls for the ability to stand back from individual events and synthesize great stretches of time.

Thirdly, the stages of a genre are often taught prescriptively as if they were 'given'—structures imposed upon a text rather than moves arising naturally because of their functionality. Students are not always encouraged to identify the stages and reflect on what job they are performing in the text or how effectively they perform that job. The stages are presented rigidly, with little allowance for the possibility of optional stages or re-ordering of stages.

According to Melrose (1995), contemporary notions of genre emphasize the flexible and rhetorical nature of genres rather than formulaic and static rules or conventions, but when recontextualized into the classroom, genre theory is rendered more digestible by diluting its descriptive richness. While it is understandable that individual teachers do not have a full grasp of the intricacies of the various genres, syllabus designers and textbook writers are in a position to give guidance on how to move from the more predictable towards the more complex.

### Focus on Meaning and Choice

While the overall development of the genre in terms of its stages is of importance, equally significant are the meanings being created in each stage (and how they differ from stage to stage). These meanings are realized through the lexical and grammatical choices being made. Halliday (1994) sees language as a resource for making meaning and proposes that the language system has evolved to express two main kinds of meaning: experiential meaning (how we use language to represent our understanding of the world around us) and interpersonal meaning (how we use language to create relationships with others). These two key functions of language

are supported by a third function—the textual resources necessary to create cohesive and coherent texts.

While identifying the stages of a text is a useful starting point, we can only deal fully with meaning by delving into the grammar of the text. The term 'grammar' is not used here to refer to those rules and conventions that allow us to distinguish correct sentences from incorrect (though it is recognized that this perspective is also important, particularly in ESL and EFL contexts). Rather, language is seen as a dynamic, open network of interrelated systems. Each system contains a set of options from which the speaker/writer selects according to the meaning he or she wants to make (Lock 1996).

The role of the teacher is seen as extending the learners' repertoire of grammatical choices, both in their construction of meaning in texts and their comprehension of meaning in texts. And in many cases, genres *are* seen as opportunities for teaching grammatical structures in context (e.g. the present tense in information reports). A further step, however, would be to help students to become aware of how the grammar is creating particular meanings relevant to the genre in question. The 'timeless' present tense is used in an information report, for example, because in information reports we are concerned with representing generalized states and happenings rather than specific events (as we might in a recount).

*Language in Context*

While genre theory stresses the notion of language as a system of choices, it recognizes that such choice is constrained by the cultural and situational context in which the genre is used. We have seen that the social purpose, for example, influences the choice of genre and the stages it passes through. Our grammatical choices are also influenced by the context of the immediate situation—in particular, 'what the text is about' (the field), 'who is interacting with whom' (the tenor), and 'what role language is playing' (the mode). Together these variables form the register of the text. This does not mean, however, that the register *determines* the choices that can be made, as sometimes heard in (misinformed) criticism of the model. Rather, it is a starting point that indicates that certain choices are more probable than others. As the text is in the process of being constructed (orally or in writing), the choices made at any particular point form the context for subsequent choices, moving the text in a particular direction. At any point, however, the choice can be made to change the direction. Melrose (1995), for example, states that the situation is always fluid and

up for negotiation. The creation of a text is an ever-shifting, interactional process and the text and its context are mutually determining.

While the variable of 'field' is generally taken into consideration in language teaching (e.g. the various topics that students are asked to deal with and the language needed for developing them),[1] the notion of 'tenor' is often neglected. Tenor refers to the roles and relationships being established through interaction. Hyland (2002) notes how casual conversations are used to negotiate social identity and personal relationships and that academic texts also involve the construction of an appropriate authorial self and the negotiation of accepted participant relationships.

Using Halliday's model, we are able to predict the linguistic resources students need in order to respond to the 'tenor' demands[2] of the situation (e.g. the language used in participating effectively in interactions, in positioning oneself and others, in evaluating and critiquing, in negotiating increasingly subtle interpersonal stances, in making judgments, in sounding confident, in persuading others to your view, in varying the degree of commitment to a proposition, in acknowledging authority, and so on).

Similarly, the variable of 'mode' is not taken sufficiently into account. The teaching of genres generally privileges the written mode. It is important that students have the opportunity to develop the genre orally (e.g. an oral recount of personal experience, an oral retelling of an experiment, an oral explanation of a phenomenon) as a bridge towards the written text. Teachers need to keep in mind, however, that the language features of the oral mode will differ from those of the written mode. The language will generally be embedded in the 'here and now' and more exploratory, without the considered attention to the stages and to grammatical structures of the written mode. This oral 'rehearsal' is a very important phase in the learning process, as students come to grips not only with the concepts involved but with the language for expressing those concepts.

In addition to the oral counterparts of the various written genres, students need to learn genres not encountered in the written mode, such as the language of playground interaction, of groupwork and of classroom discourse. If, as current theory suggests, language is learnt through engagement in problem-solving, interactive tasks, then students need access to the language needed to participate in such interactions and teachers need to be aware of the kinds of linguistic resources required by these oral genres.[3]

Apart from written and oral modes, students increasingly need to be able to comprehend and create texts involving a variety of modalities: dia-

grams, icons, maps, video, charts, and the like. They also need to be able to perceive the relationship between a text and its graphic elements. Work has started on the grammar of images (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; Lemke 1998; Stenglin and Iedema 2001; Unsworth 2001), but little has made its way as yet into genre-based pedagogy.

*Culture and Ideology*

Genres are not uniform across cultures—they pertain to a particular community and its social institutions. In learning the genres of a culture, we are learning how to participate in the new culture, to make new meanings in new cultural contexts (Painter 1996; Lock 1996).

Genres are not neutral, but are 'ideologically driven':

> A central principle of genre theory is that genres are ideological. This is true in both the sense that no texts are free of the values and beliefs of their users and the sense that some genres are more dominant and hegemonic within a community. Genres are systems of meaning which help construct the social realities within which we live, and so this advantages those who have access and control of valued genres and disadvantages others who do not (Hyland 2002: 124).

Genre-based pedagogy recognizes that certain genres are more powerful than others and is concerned with helping students from non-mainstream backgrounds to acquire and critique the genres required for success in schooling. It proposes that students at risk of failure benefit from a visible curriculum—explicit induction into the genres of power—if they are to participate in the mainstream textual and social processes within and beyond the school (Macken-Horarik 2002). It further proposes that, because genres are socially constructed cultural artefacts, they can be deconstructed to reveal their inherent ideological positioning.

The approach has become, however, institutionalized. A more instrumentalist, structuralist stance is often adopted, where 'text types' are taught unproblematically as 'forms' in a culture-free zone. Hyland (2002) advocates the development of cross-cultural understandings through investigating the socially situated nature of genres.

*Genres in the Classroom: Trends and Issues*

There is no single teaching/learning approach associated with genre theory. Practices vary depending on such factors as the nature of the student group (e.g. EFL/ESL, beginner/proficient, tertiary/adult migrant/secondary/pri-

mary) and the emphasis placed on particular aspects of pedagogy (e.g. the degree of explicitness). Here we will concentrate on how genre theory has been applied in Australian educational contexts (e.g. Christie and Martin 1997; Feez 1998; Paltridge 2002) and some of the issues surrounding these practices.

## Genres and Learning

The learning of genres (and the role of genres in learning) has primarily been theorized in terms of learning a first language. According to Bakhtin (translation 1986), learning genres is a fundamental part of language development—it is our ability to predict the compositional structure and length of genres that enables us to communicate. Little work has been done, however, on developing a genre-based theory of second language learning, though functional linguists such as Lock (1996) and Melrose (1995) have sought to lay the groundwork. Lock contends that learning a second language means gaining progressive control over the systems of options in the new language, learning which options to select to make which meanings in which contexts. Beginning learners have very limited options (a few structures, some lexical items, some unanalysed chunks). More advanced learners have developed a greater range of options and are able to make more delicate distinctions of meanings appropriate for different contexts. Learning new genres is seen as extending the learner's meaning-making potential.

Genre pedagogy in countries such as Australia is based on Vygotskian learning theory. Language is learned through guidance and interaction in the context of shared experience. The teacher inducts learners into the linguistic demands of those genres that are important to participation in the school and wider community. Gradually responsibility is shifted to the learners as they gain increasing control of the genre.

While many of the principles apply equally well to learning both the mother tongue and a second language, further research is needed into the learning of genres from a second and foreign language perspective. Recent work by Hammond (2002) and Gibbons (2002) has investigated the microprocesses of scaffolding in ESL contexts, but little has been done in the area of EFL in terms of genre-based learning theory. More vigorous engagement with recent advances in sociocultural interactionist approaches to second language acquisition (e.g. Lantolf 2000) could be mutually profitable.

*Contextual Analysis*

As with any other pedagogical innovation, genre-based approaches should not be wholeheartedly embraced without reflection on whether they are sensitive to the prevailing views and practices regarding language teaching and learning (Holliday 1994). Before developing a genre-based program of study, the teacher or institution will need to conduct an analysis of the teaching/learning context. At its broadest level, this should take into account the culture, history and traditions of the educational setting as well as constraints posed by access to materials, teachers' confidence and English proficiency, learners' expectations, assessment requirements, and so on. A period might be needed in which the principles of genre pedagogy are adapted to the local context and trialled, evaluated and modified by groups of educators.

A further level of contextual analysis might involve the identification of the specific language demands encountered by the students in a particular educational context (e.g. writing explanations in science, reading narratives in English, participating in groupwork) or in a target situation (e.g. tertiary studies, business meetings). It is now a common practice to undertake a 'language audit' of a school, university department or business in terms of the genres regularly encountered. This information can be used to develop objectives and outcomes in planning the teaching/learning program. The Disadvantaged Schools Program in Australia, for example, undertook a massive survey of the genres over which students needed to gain control in order to participate successfully in the different curriculum areas in primary and secondary schools (e.g. explanations, reports, recounts, procedures, discussions, narratives, reviews).

An English-medium school in Indonesia with which the author worked released groups of staff members (executive, lower primary, upper primary, teachers of English) throughout a whole week to examine the language expectations of the entire school curriculum, which was being developed in terms of major thematic strands (e.g. 'Understanding the natural world', 'Ourselves and society') rather than the traditional subjects. Within each of the themes, they looked at the kinds of language resources the students would need in order to successfully participate in class discussions, complete projects, write assignments, read their textbooks, and so on. They identified key functions such as describing, explaining, analysing, recording and evaluating and then decided on relevant genres to include in each theme that would help develop these functions. For students extending their understanding of the natural world,

for example, the teachers of Grade 4 planned a project on the impact of humans on Antarctica. This would involve the students in describing the Antarctic region (using a multimedia information report), explaining how different human activities affected the ecology (using an oral explanation), and making recommendations about future activity (using a written argument). Having decided on which genres to include in each thematic strand, the teachers in each grade checked across the themes to make sure that a wide range of genres were being covered, with no major gaps or overlaps. Then the teachers from different grades looked at the genres in the themes from a developmental perspective to ensure that the students' control over each of the genres was extended as they progressed through the grades. By the end of the week, the teachers had developed a comprehensive curriculum framework that included a variety of relevant genres recycled from Grade 1 to Grade 6, sketched as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. *Example of curriculum framework showing how genres treated in a basic way in Grade 1 are recycled with increasing complexity through each of the grades*

|  | Theme 1 | Theme 2 | Theme 3 | Theme 4 | Theme 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grade 1 | Personal description | Personal recount | Simple explanation (single cause and effect). | Expressing an opinion | Telling a story (through pictures) |
| Grade 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grade 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grade 4 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grade 5 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Grade 6 | Information report | Historical recount | Complex explanation (multiple causes and effects) | Discussion (considering two points of view) | Extended narrative (multiple complications) |

## Planning

In the planning phase, the teacher needs to select an appropriate genre (or genres) to investigate over a period of several lessons. In a first aid course, for example, the teacher will want to make sure that students can read instructions, so it would be appropriate to spend some time on procedural genres. Or if the learners are doing projects on natural disasters, the teacher might familiarize them with the genre of explanation. In such

cases, the choice of genre is determined by the nature of the topic or theme of the unit of work.

In other circumstances, the teacher might decide to make the genre itself the point of departure. If, for example, the learners need to know how to write an argumentative essay, the teacher might spend a few lessons looking specifically at that genre as a topic in its own right. Or in an English lesson, the teacher might choose to look specifically at the genre of quest narratives. In this case, the starting point is the genre rather than the subject matter.

It is generally agreed that, as far as possible, students' knowledge of genres should be developed by participating in tasks which would naturally require the use of a particular genre. It is the role of the teacher to create contexts in which students can engage purposefully with the 'genre as process'. Johns (1993), for example, recounts how her students learnt to write argumentative texts in response to the raising of tertiary fees, enabling them to experience the genre as a socially embedded, goal-driven process.

*Implementation*

The practical application of genre theory has taken a variety of forms. In Australia, however, perhaps the most influential model has been the curriculum cycle developed by Rothery and Macken for the Disadvantaged Schools Program. (See Macken-Horarik for an example of the curriculum cycle in action, describing a ten-week unit of work on human reproduction focusing on the explanation genre with a Year 10 class.)

Based on the notion of scaffolding (Bruner 1978) the curriculum cycle provides opportunities for both teacher and learners to take responsibility at different phases in the teaching/learning process. In the early phases, the teacher takes a more direct role in developing the necessary knowledge and skills, with the learners in an 'apprentice' role. As the learners develop greater control of the genre, the teacher gradually withdraws support and encourages learner independence. The cycle consists of a number of phases:

- developing an understanding of the field;
- familiarization with the genre;
- developing control over the genre;
- independent construction;
- extending and critiquing;
- creative exploitation of the genre.

*Developing an understanding of the field.* If students are expected to read and write effectively, then they need a good grasp of what they will be reading and writing about. Developing an understanding of the field and the language needed to express this knowledge is particularly important for students of non-English-speaking background. During this phase, the teacher would include activities for developing the knowledge base, extending students' research skills, introducing relevant vocabulary and probing any cross-cultural differences in how the field in question is construed.

*Familiarization with the genre.* In familiarizing the learners with the genre in question, the teacher might begin by introducing them briefly to the genre and then immersing them in sample texts, perhaps as part of an extensive reading program. When students have experienced a sampling of the genre, the teacher could then focus in more explicitly on a selected text which illustrates the main features of the genre. This is referred to as *modelling* the genre. At this point the teacher would display the model text (using an overhead transparency or on the whiteboard or as a large poster) and encourage the students to reflect on such questions as:

1. For what purpose do we use texts such as these? What job does such a text do?
2. Where would we find such texts?
3. Who do you think would write a text like this? For whom?
4. Have you read or written texts like this before? Why?

After the students have considered the nature and purpose of the genre, the teacher could discuss with them the way in which it is structured and why it is structured in this way. Later on, the class might explore some of the language features of the genre, either as another modelling session or in the context of activities such as guided reading or writing conferences:

1. What words give us details of 'where', 'when', 'how', etc. in this procedure? What would happen if we omitted those groups of words?
2. Where are the time markers in this recount? How do they help you to follow the sequence of events?
3. What tense is this narrative written in? What would be the effect if we changed it to the present tense?
4. What words indicate the writer's personal judgment in this argument? Are they convincing? Or perhaps too emotive and emphatic?
5. How is language being used to develop a vivid image in this description?

*Developing control over the genre.* For those students needing additional support before writing independently, it is useful to do a joint construction of a text so that they can experience what is involved in writing this type of text. In a joint construction, the students actively participate by providing the 'subject matter' for the text. The role of the teacher is to demonstrate how that subject matter can be organized into a coherent text.

Using an overhead projector or the board, the teacher might start by brainstorming—jotting down in fairly random order ideas on the topic suggested by the students. The teacher might then ask the students to start grouping these ideas, perhaps drawing their attention to one of the model texts examined previously. Having thought about the content of the text and how it might be organised in broad terms, the students collaboratively write a text with the guidance of the teacher.

*Independent construction.* Having been provided with guidance and support in coming to a familiarity with the genre they are working with, students are encouraged to draw on their understandings as they work through the processes of composing their own independent texts. This will involve further researching if necessary; jotting down ideas and notes; thinking about how to organize these effectively; writing drafts; revising drafts in the light of comments from peers or teacher; preparing a final draft and editing it for surface features.

*Extending and critiquing.* When students feel comfortable with using the genre in question at a basic level, provision should be made to extend into more complex areas and to critically analyse texts. Beyond looking at the core stage/s and the more typical optional stages, students might examine model texts in order to identify:

1.  optional stages which are less typical (e.g. in a procedure, students might identify cautions, alternative steps, or a prediction of the outcome);
2.  other ways of ordering stages (e.g. instead of stating his or her position at the beginning of an argumentative text, the writer might choose to wait till the end to present the thesis statement as a culminating point);
3.  instances of embeddings, where one genre functions as a stage within another genre (e.g. a travelogue might include directions for how to reach the destination);
4.  mixed genres, where a text has dual purposes (e.g. television

'docudramas' where documentary programs are dramatized to add interest).

A critical approach to the study of genres should be encouraged. If genres are social practices reflecting the values of the culture, then they are open to critique and even subversion.

*Creative exploitation of the genre.* An awareness of what is typical and what is possible provides the basis for being able to 'play' with the genre, to manipulate it in various ways, to act creatively upon it. Through activities such as the above, students can be led to recognize the potential available to them and to exploit it in appropriate ways. Painter (2001) reminds us that generic patterns are unconsciously expected by native speakers and hearers, making it possible to play with these patterns in various ways, to be ironic or outrageous. Such effects are possible only against a background of what is expected.

The curriculum cycle has been developed within a specific educational context involving primarily speakers of English as a first and second language. Little has been done as yet to investigate appropriate pedagogical strategies for teaching genres in different EFL contexts.[4] One such example is provided by Flowerdew (2002), who worked with content teachers in the Middle East, using both 'top-down' strategies (problem-solving, hypothesizing) and 'bottom-up' exercises (presentation, practice, production):

1. Presentation of complete text or range of texts with similar schematic structure as models for writing (modelling).
2. Identification of text structure of model texts by means of information transfer activities such as completing tables, or by colour-coding different information slots.
3. Exercises in metacommunicating—glossing model texts in terms of their structural moves and examining the linguistic realizations of the various moves.
4. Reassembling jumbled model texts into the correct sequence in order to create awareness of schematic structure.
5. Examing relations of form and meaning for individual moves.
6. Cloze exercises focusing on key signalling items of moves of model texts.
7. Intensive lexico-grammatical language work. Discrete items, as per the generic description, are singled out for intensive presentation and practice, for example, formation and use of the passive, postmodification, subtechnical lexis.
8. Completion of model texts with move or sentences deleted.

9.  Exercises in paraphrasing. Students provide alternative possible encodings for the moves.
10. Eliciting information to be included in the writing task, based on the schematic structure.
11. Creating tables or charts based on the schematic structure.
12. Creating the text from the schematic structure table or chart.
13. Group/pair work assessing the effectiveness of the finished text.
14. Comparing text types across different genres (Flowedew 2002: 101).

Paltridge (2002) and Johns (2002) also offer practical, accessible and theoretically grounded approaches to genre pedagogy and include many useful suggestions for classroom practice.

## Conclusion

Genre-based pedagogy is not without its critics. Even within the 'genre community', concerns are expressed about whether it is feasible or desirable to teach genres. The assumption that students will benefit from the explicit, supported initiation into academic genres is questioned by North American genre researchers (Freedman and Medway 1994b), who argue that genres are too ineffable to be subject to instruction, by social practice theorists who believe genres are too complex and varied to be removed from their original contexts and taught in classrooms (Lave and Wenger 1991), and by Australian critical theorists (Luke 1996) who question whether genre pedagogy genuinely empowers students or simply reinforces the status quo.

As genre-based approaches become more firmly established in syllabuses and curricula in a variety of international contexts, it is salutary to recall their pedagogical and theoretical origins. Will they reinvigorate and perhaps radicalize the curriculum, providing a focus for the coherent integration of grammar, vocabulary, discourse and culture within the context of socially embedded, text-level activity?[5] Or will genres become just another discrete component of the syllabus, a list of text types to be covered? Critical to the effective implementation of such approaches will be factors such as well-informed syllabus developers and materials designers, the professional development of teachers, continuing research into the learning of genres by second and foreign language learners, further analysis of genres and sub-genres in a variety of social environments, and culturally sensitive adaptation of genre approaches in local contexts.

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## NOTES

1. Studies investigating the language of a variety of disciplines: the physical sciences (e.g. Halliday and Martin 1993a; Rose 1997, 1998; Fuller 1998); geography (e.g. Halliday and Martin 1993b; van Leeuwen and Humphrey 1996); the social sciences (Veel and Coffin 1996; Lewin, Fine and Young 2001), and so on.

2. I.e. the 'interpersonal' grammatical resources.

3. See Gibbons (2002) and Christie (2002) for recent work on the genres of classroom interaction and Burns (2001), Burns and Joyce (1999) and Eggins and Slade (1997) for spoken discourse.

4. But some first steps in this direction are now evident (e.g. Ma Ling 2001; Reppen).

5. For an example of such a syllabus, see English K-6 (NSW Board of Studies) (Hhttp://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/k6/k6english.htmlH).

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