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The teaching of academic writing to English as a second language students: A functional genre-based approach

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews how genre-based pedagogy has been conceived by researchers in the different scholarly traditions, and offers a particular view of genre-driven pedagogy and its practical applications in the English as a Second Language student classroom. This view of a genre-based teaching approach largely consists in a prior discussion with students of the socio-cultural context in which a particular academic genre occurs. This discovery process of the social circumstances that surround a genre can help students understand more readily the communicative purpose of a specific genre. A second complementary stage should be the explicit teaching of functions and language structures of typical academic texts, with a special emphasis on cross-cultural variation. By making learners aware of the similarities and differences in the rhetorical strategies preferred by the members of different disciplinary communities, L2 writers may feel more confident about the rhetorical options they can choose depending on the context and type of audience they are addressing.

Keywords: genre-based pedagogy; L2 students; academic discourse, cross-cultural variation.

1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, increasing attention has been given to the notion of genre analysis and its applications in the teaching and learning of languages for specific purposes. Genre analysis is generally seen as the study of linguistic behaviour in institutionalised academic or professional settings (Bhatia, 1997, 2002), whether in terms of rhetorical actions, as in Miller (1984/1994) and Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995); or communicative purposes, as in Swales (1990, 2004) and Bhatia (1993). Genre-based approaches, by developing a theory of language and a pedagogy based on research into the linguistic structures of texts and the social contexts in which they occur, have therefore had considerable impact worldwide. This can be seen, for instance, in the growing bulk of intercultural and cross-disciplinary genre-analytic studies that examine descriptively the differences (and similarities) between Spanish scholars' rhetorical practices when writing in Spanish and those of English-speaking background scholars when writing in English for an international audience (see, for example, Moreno, 1998; Burgess, 2002; Martín-Martín, 2005; Lorés-Sanz, 2009; Mur Dueñas, 2010; Sheldon, 2011, to cite just a few).

Three broad schools of genre theory can be identified in terms of their different conception and pedagogical approaches: Systemic Functional Linguistics, also known as the Sydney School (see, Freedman and Medway, 1994); North American New Rhetoric studies, and the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) tradition. Although these three research traditions share the common goal of analysing the relationship of social function to language use in particular contexts, mainly due to differences in the educational context to which they are applied, as Hyon (1996) notes, the various teaching applications have taken different directions.

This paper reviews how genre-based pedagogy has been conceived by researchers in the different scholarly traditions, and offers a particular view of genre-driven pedagogy and its practical applications in the English as an Additional Language (EAL) student classroom.

2. Pedagogical approaches in the three schools of genre theory

Genre-based applications in the Systemic Functional Linguistics tradition have been centered mainly in the context of primary and secondary schools, and more recently in adult migrant English education and workplace training programmes in Australia (Hyland, 2002). The goal of Systemic Functional linguists and genre-based teaching for primary and secondary schools has been to help students participate effectively in the school curriculum and the broader community. In order to achieve this goal, systemicists acknowledge the importance of teaching the social functions and contexts of texts. However, their main focus of attention has been placed on teaching students the formal, staged qualities of genre so that they can recognise these features (i.e. the functions, schematic structures and lexico-grammatical features) in the texts that they read and use them in the texts that they write. Genre-based instruction involves classroom discussion of the structures and features of texts. Their concern for teaching discourse conventions of school and workplace genres (e.g. reports, procedures, expositions, explanations, discussion, recount and narrative) is often framed in ideological terms, with genre-based instruction described as a tool for empowering students with linguistic resources for social success (Hyon, 1996).

The pedagogical motivation of New Rhetoric research has been L1 teaching, including rhetoric, compositions studies, and professional writing. In line with their theoretical focus on socio-contextual aspects of genre, they have been less concerned with teaching text form and more with its role in helping university students and novice professionals understand the social functions or actions of genres. Miller (1984/1994), for example, considers that this concern with genre function should be central to writing instruction. Similarly, Bazerman (1988) argues that knowledge of social contexts surrounding texts is essential for helping writers select effective rhetoric that is appropriate for their situations. Since the primary concern for the New Rhetoric researchers is investigating the functional and contextual aspects of genre, their methodological orientation tends to be ethnographic (e.g. participant observation, unstructured interviews, etc.) rather than text analytic. Although some of these studies offer thorough descriptions of academic and professional contexts surrounding genres and the

actions texts perform within these situations (see, for example, Bazerman, 1988), this approach, as Hyland (2002, p. 114) notes, has not tended to address itself to the classroom, generally regarding it as an “inauthentic environment lacking the conditions for complex negotiation and multiple audiences”. In contrast to the applied focus of Systemic and ESP work, New Rhetoric has generally lacked explicit instructional frameworks for teaching students about the language features and functions of academic professional genres (Yunick, 1997). New Rhetoric scholars have rather focused on providing descriptions of genres and their contexts (i.e. specifying the features of the rhetorical situation, including the purpose of the text, the audience, and the circumstances of the writing), and have left it up to readers to infer their own teaching applications (Hyon, 1996). The main reason for this lack of explicit teaching can be explained by their dynamic vision of genres. As Freedman and Medway (1994) observe:

If genres are understood as typified responses to social contexts, and if such contexts are inevitably fluid and dynamic, what sense can it make to explicate features of historical genres (and all genres are historical) as a way of teaching and learning? (p. 10)

These authors further argue that genre knowledge and its use in social contexts is acquired through a process of socialization with the members of particular disciplinary communities, and that explicit teaching could even be an obstacle to this natural process.

The ESP research tradition has focused on the implications of genre theory and analysis for EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and English for professional communication. Scholars in this tradition, such as Swales (1990, 2004) and Bhatia (1993, 2002), have proposed that genre applications can help non-native speakers of English master the functions and linguistic conventions of texts that they need to read and write in their disciplines and professions. In contrast to the New Rhetoric perspective that opposes the idea of explicitly teaching genre conventions, ESP researchers, much the same as systemicists, place their main focus on teaching formal features of texts, that is, rhetorical structures and grammatical features, so that non-English-speaking background students can learn to control the rhetorical organization and stylistic features of the academic genres of English-speaking discourse communities. Many of these

ESP researchers have presented their descriptions of genres as useful discourse models for EAP and professional writing instruction. The work by Bhatia (1993) on business genres (e.g. sales promotion letters, business memos, job application letters) has been of great influence in recent genre-analysis in professional settings. The work by Swales (1990), based largely on the concept of “move”¹ analysis, has also been particularly influential in the pedagogical practice in English language teaching in academic contexts.

The emphasis on the analysis of structural organization of academic texts has revealed preferred ways of communicating intentions in specific genres. Hyland (2002), among others, has acknowledged the importance of genre analysis in as much as it provides useful information about the ways genres are constructed and the rhetorical contexts in which they are used. Bhatia (1997, p. 313) has also pointed out that genre analysis, in the ESP tradition, has become one of the major influences on the current practices in the teaching and learning of languages in specialist disciplines like engineering, science, law, business and a number of others, as it offers a dynamic explanation of the way expert users of language manipulate generic conventions to achieve a variety of complex goals associated with their specialist discipline by focusing attention on the variation in language use by members of different disciplinary cultures. The rhetorical features investigated in the ESP genre-based approach include a number of options that can be taken up for different textual effects in the teaching of academic genres. Regular tendencies in their use in texts should increase our understanding of writers’ rhetorical preferences and their beliefs about rhetorically appropriate ways of writing academic genres in different languages. The main advantage of this approach is that it strengthens students’ awareness of the texts they have to write, in as much as it develops an awareness of academic writing practices across languages through consciousness-raising, in order to facilitate second language learners the writing process and help them

¹ Rhetorical “moves” consist of functional text elements, as viewed in relation to the rhetorical goal of a text. Moves manifest themselves as text units that occur in typical sequences, and these can be realised by either one or a combination of “steps” or sub-moves. The concept of “move” thus captures the function of a segment of text at a more general level, whereas “step” refers to the more specific rhetorical choices available to authors to realise the function of “move”.

produce more communicatively successful texts according to the differing expectations and requirements of the specific disciplinary communities of which the student is aspiring to become a member. Awareness of intercultural rhetorical preferences is then particularly useful for postgraduate students and novice writers if they want to make informed choices about whether and when to conform to the expectations of the target audience.

3. A view of genre-driven pedagogy: from macrostructure to move-analysis

According to my own experience as an EAL scholar, it is mainly through the explicit teaching of textual features and their functions that novice writers and especially EAL writers can learn how to make the right linguistic choices in the appropriate social contexts. This includes a complementary discussion of cross-cultural rhetorical and stylistic variation and of the importance of accommodating to the rhetorical practices which are favoured by the English-speaking international disciplinary communities, in order to avoid the negative effects of the transfer of L1 writing features which may seem inappropriate to an international audience (see, Moreno, 2011).

3.1. Variations in the RA structure

In teaching the appropriate communicative skills of a specific academic genre, such as the research article (RA), in a particular field, I would thus suggest that a first stage might start with the development of rhetorical awareness of the overall structure of a prototypical RA. Cargill and O'Connor (2009) have noted the existence of four broad structures which vary across disciplines: In the case of the majority of experimental RAs, in fields such as Psychology or Medicine, the most frequent structure to which this genre conforms is the so called IMRaD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) pattern. On some occasions, an additional Conclusion section follows the Discussion, although these two last sections are very frequently intermingled in a single section under the label of Discussion. In these experimental disciplines, we can also find a variant (IRDM) to this prevalent structure which consists in presenting the

Methods section at the end of the paper. A third type of variation, the IM(RaD)C pattern, characterises the articles in the fields related to Technology and Social Sciences. This involves the reporting of separate results immediately followed by a discussion of these results, which are all brought together in a final Conclusion section that shows how the main points raised in the previous sections are all connected to the issues presented in the Introduction. Burgess and Cargill (2013) describe a further variant structure (IBC) which is typically used for argument papers in the Humanities and review articles in all fields. It is characterised by the absence of an independent Methods section and by the inclusion of a series of sub-headings which address various issues that make up the Body of the paper. The main implications drawn from the discussion of these issues are finally presented in a Conclusion section. Awareness of the typical rhetorical structure of a research paper in a specific discipline can be developed by exercises in which students are encouraged, through a series of questions, to think about the patterns of organization of a text and the reasons why those patterns are favoured by those in a particular community.

3.2. The analysis of moves and steps

The identification of the purpose of each of the macrostructural units of a RA should lead to the teaching of the functional categories (moves) which relate both to the writer's purpose and to the content that the writer wishes to communicate, and the options (steps) open to the writer in setting out the moves, in order to meet the expectations of the readers and to persuade them to accept their knowledge claims. This stage thus involves the use of the various move analyses of the different sections of the RA. Empirical evidence (see, Uzuner, 2008; Moreno et al., 2012) has revealed that the most challenging parts to write for EAL scholars are the Introduction and Discussion sections. We could thus begin with the analysis of the least demanding sections, i.e. the Methods, the Results and the Conclusion units², and then move on to the more

² Although the Methods section, due to its procedural nature, has received scarce attention in genre-analytic research, some studies have explored extensively the rhetorical organization of the Results section, such as those by Brett (1994) and Williams (1999) in sociology articles and

difficult task of analysing the most rhetorically complex sections, i.e. the Introduction and Discussion units.

3.3. The Introduction section

The most appropriate model that, in my view, can be used for the analysis of the Introduction unit is the one proposed by Swales (1990, - later extended and revised in 2004, as seen in Fig. 1). This model has in fact been adopted by many researchers in their analyses of rhetorical strategies in RA Introductions not only across disciplines, but also across languages and cultures. The key moves of this model should thus be explained clearly to students.

Move 1 Establishing the research context (citations required)

- via
- Step 1 *Claiming importance of the research topic
- and/or
- Step 2 Reviewing the research topic

Move 2 Creating a research space (citations possible)

- via
- Step 1A **Criticising previous studies
- and/or
- Step 1B Reporting contradictory findings
- and/or
- Step 1C Indicating a gap in existing literature
- and/or
- Step 1D Adding to what is known

medical articles respectively. Posteguillo (1999), apart from Introductions, also analysed the Results, the Conclusion and Discussion sections of RAs in the field of computer science. These studies have provided us with useful genre-analysis models can be applied in the EAP classroom.

Move 3 Presenting the Present Work (citations possible)

via

Step 1 (obligatory) Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposively

Step 2* (optional) Presenting RQs or hypotheses

Step 3 (optional) Definitional clarifications

Step 4 (optional) Summarizing methods

Sep 5 (PISF**) Announcing principal outcomes

Step 6 (PISF**) Stating the value of the present research

Step 7 (PISF**) Outlining the structure of the paper

* Steps 2-4 are not only optional but less fixed in their order of occurrence than the others.

** PISF: Probable in some fields, but unlikely in others.

Figure 1. Revised Move 3 structure (Swales, 2004, p. 232) for the analysis of RA introductions

At this stage it is also of particular importance to place emphasis on the interrelationship between rhetorical/persuasive function and linguistic forms. Although Swales (2004) has emphasised the functional nature of a move, he also recognises its frequent alignment with grammatical units (i.e. clauses and sentences) and lexical signals. It would thus be appropriate to teach the lexico-grammatical features associated with specific moves that writers in English and other languages, such as Spanish, use to serve rhetorical and persuasive purposes when reporting their research. For instance, according to Swales' (2004, p. 232) model (see Fig. 1), a typical English RA Introduction consists of a three-move structure, each of these moves performing a different rhetorical function:

In Move 1 (Establishing the research context), writers situate their work in their specific research field by highlighting the interest of the topic of their study (Step 1) and/or describing what is known about their research topic by reviewing items of previous research (Step 2), with the main purpose of reinforcing the

importance of their research and demonstrating their credentials as qualified writers.

In Move 2 (Creating a research space), writers must then justify publication, that is, they must create a research space which permits them to present their new claims to the other members of their disciplinary community. This mainly implies the criticism of any weak point in the previously published work by other researchers (Step 1A) and/or the reporting of contradictory findings (Step 1B), and/or the indication of possible knowledge gaps regarding previous work (Step 1C) and/or the presentation of one's work as a continuation of previous research topic (step 1D). It must be noted here that, in relation to the Spanish academic context, previous research (see, Burgess, 2002; Martín-Martín, 2005; Mur Dueñas, 2010) have reported a tendency to omit Move 2 in Spanish RA Introductions and abstracts. It seems that for the Spanish scientific community, expressing a critical attitude towards others' work constitute a face-threatening act, consequently, direct confrontation tends to be avoided in Spanish academic texts. This prevalent discourse practice in the national writing culture may be then transferred to the international context with its negative consequences. Moreno (2011, p. 58), on the basis of the typical remarks that reviewers of international journals make in their reports regarding the manuscripts submitted by Spanish scholars, contends that a failure to take a critical stance could represent an obstacle which prevents Spanish academics' research from being published in English-medium journals. Therefore, we have to make students well aware of the fact that in the international arena, in which the level of competitiveness is much higher, it is necessary to create a research space, mainly by means of the available options that writers have for the realization of Move 2. With regard to how to express critical speech acts, the types of rhetorical options may range from blunt criticism to the use of subtle hedging devices³, aimed at an individual or the scientific community as a whole (see examples 1-4 below).

³ Hedging refers to those expressions in language which make messages indeterminate or vague. In the academic context, hedging devices (e.g. modality, approximators of degree and frequency, impersonal constructions) are primarily used to mitigate the strength of the scientific claims that writers make in order to reduce the risk of opposition and minimise the face threatening acts that exist behind every act of communication.

(1) Smith's (2010) approach was not included in our study because it is based on a narrow, potentially biased sample. (personal, without hedging)

(2) Smith's (2010) results are presented **somewhat** oddly and, therefore, **might** be open to misinterpretation. (personal, with hedging)

(3) However, we disagree with the definitions given in the majority of published work in this area, as none has dealt satisfactory with the issue of divergence. (impersonal, without hedging)

(4) Unfortunately, **little** empirical work on this aspect of academic discourse has been carried out. (impersonal, with hedging)

A taxonomy such as the one presented, for example, by Burgess and Fagan (2002) for the analysis of academic criticism (AC) can be useful for classifying the full range of rhetorical strategies available to writers to convey AC in academic texts across languages and disciplines.

As regards Move 3 (Presenting the present work), it is generally initiated with an indication of the main purpose of the study or a description of the main features of it (Step 1). Linguistic exponents typically used for realising this step are an explicit noun which indicates the purpose of the study (e.g. "The aim/purpose of this study was/is to examine/test/determine...") or the use of deictics to refer to the present text followed by a verb predominantly in present tense (e.g. "This paper reports/describes..."). Writers also have other available options associated with this move which are more recurrent in some disciplines than others (see Fig. 1). Salient among them are those promotional steps which allow writers to highlight the contribution of their research in an effort to convince peers of the relevance of their work to their field, mainly by anticipating the principal findings (Step 5) and enhancing the value of one's research (Step 6). Martín-Martín & León Pérez (forthcoming) analysed comparatively the presence of rhetorical promotion in the Introduction of RAs written in English and Spanish in two subdisciplines of Health Sciences and in two other subdisciplines in the field of Humanities/Social Sciences. Their results revealed that the English texts present a higher degree of rhetorical promotion than the Spanish texts in each of the subdisciplines analysed. This indicates that

the need to promote one's work, in order to increase the possibilities of getting their papers published, is greater among the members of the international English-speaking community in the fields examined. In order to meet the expectations of the members of their international disciplinary communities, EAL students should thus be informed of the various rhetorical strategies that can be used to anticipate findings and, more particularly, to enhance the value of one's research, by means of use of lexical items that explicitly refer to the importance and novelty of the research (see examples 5 and 6), by comparing the present research with previous work (see example 7), by mentioning explicitly the uniqueness of one's work (see example 8) or by pointing out the implications of the research for the disciplinary community (see example 9).

(5) These results further emphasize the functional **importance** of the nonhelical tail domains of keratin molecules.

(6) We used a **novel** variation on the naturalistic approach, by evaluating the relationship between life stress and a range of eating behaviors.

(7) Thus, our study adds to the small literature base and **improves on past studies** in a number of ways.

(8) Advancing beyond our previous research (Kalichman et al. 2002), **this study is the first that we are aware of to examine** the association between Internet use and coping and social support in people living with HIV/AIDS.

(9) The advent of a large-scale, consistent survey instrument administered immediately after elections in countries operating under a variety of institutional arrangements **allows us to shed some light on** the relationship between electoral rules, party systems and electoral participation.

With regard to Step 7 (Outlining the structure of the paper), within Move 3, Martín-Martín and León Pérez (forthcoming) also found that in the Humanities/Social Sciences corpus writers made extensive use of this step, as opposed to the Health Sciences corpus in which no instances of this step occurred. This communicative option generally appears as the last element in

the Introduction as a metadiscourse device which facilitates text comprehension by informing the reader about the remaining organization of the paper and the issues that will be addressed, as in the following example:

(10) This argument is developed through **four sections**. **The first section** summarises the March and Olsen framework. Drawing on this framework and on more specific empirical literatures, **the second** advances four conjectures about the trajectory and renewal of democratic governance. **The third** evaluates these conjectures through a summary case study of the post-war Australian political development. The wider implications of this analysis are tentatively explored in a **final section**.

By choosing to describe the content or the structure of the article at the end of the Humanities/Social Sciences introductions, writers show a reader-friendly attitude which fulfils disciplinary readers' expectations and, therefore, enhances the credibility of their research. It thus seems that writers in the Humanities/Social Sciences, in which there is more variation of textual organization, feel more strongly the need to guide their readers by using this step than in the Experimental or Health Sciences in which a well-established IMRaD pattern has been conventionalised. The same argument has been put forward by Posteguillo (1999) in relation to Computer Science articles. He found that authors in this discipline resorted quite frequently to describing the content or structure of the rest of the article at the end of the introductions, what he considers only natural in this discipline in which, as he contends, there is no well-defined conventions for the macrostructure of RAs.

Learners' awareness of the moves and the various steps available to writers for their realization throughout the Introduction section can be tested and developed, for example, through "reordering" exercises (see, Dudley-Evans, 1995, p. 299), in which students are asked to put the sentences presented in a jumbled order into the correct order. The various activities that would teach the discourse conventions of each move of the prototypical texts should also include the variations possible in each case. As Flowerdew and Peacock (2001, p. 599) argue, the genres presented in the classroom should not be treated as "fixed, rule governed patterns", but rather as prototypes which allow for individual variation.

3.4. The Discussion section

Turning to the other most rhetorically complex unit in RAs, the Discussion section, a similar procedure to the one described above can be followed for the teaching of the various moves associated with this section. It is here where writers make their final claims about the importance of their research by discussing the implications drawn from the results obtained, usually in the light of comparisons with previous studies, or by giving possible explanations. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995, p. 45) have suggested that the Discussion section of RAs typically contain the three original moves proposed by Swales (1990) for the Introduction sections, but in reverse order:

Introduction	Discussion
1) <i>Establishing a territory</i>	1) <i>Occupying the niche</i>
2) <i>Establishing a niche</i>	2) <i>(Re)establishing the niche</i>
3) <i>Occupying the niche</i>	3) <i>Establishing additional territory</i>

These authors explain clearly the relationship between the Discussion and the Introduction units in the following terms:

The three moves of the Introduction can be seen as working “from outside in”: first talking about the field as a whole, then progressively narrowing the scope so that only the current investigation is being addressed [...]. Conversely, the three moves of the Discussion can be seen as working “from inside out”: The authors begin by referring only to the study at hand, but then progressively widen the scope to include related work by others (p. 419).

Following this argument, the moves found in the Discussion units of RAs may be seen as reversing the direction of the Introduction by moving from the study to the field as a whole. First, the writers emphasise what is new and interesting in a statement of principal findings. In Berkenkotter and Huckin’s terms, the writers reassert their claims to the “niche” created in the Introduction and occupied in the other rhetorical moves of the paper. Second, the writers establish a relationship between the results obtained in their study and the “niche” created in the Introduction by, for example, explaining the results

obtained or comparing the findings with those obtained in previous research. Finally, in order to “establish additional territory”, the writers may opt for making a comment on the implications of the study or giving recommendations for future research. A fine-grained description of the Discussion section, that can have useful applications in the EAP classroom, is the one provided by Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988, p. 118). These authors identified 11 moves for the description of this section in Natural Science articles: 1) *Background Information* 2) *Statement of Result*, 3) *(Un)expected Outcome* 4) *Reference to Previous Research (Comparison)*, 5) *Explanation of Unsatisfactory Results*, 6) *Exemplification*, 7) *Deduction*, 8) *Hypothesis*, 9) *Reference to Previous Research (Support)*, 10) *Recommendation* and 11) *Justification*. The proposed moves seem to be recurrent in other disciplinary areas. Holmes (1997), for example, found that most of these moves were present in the Discussion section of Social Sciences RAs, specifically in the disciplines of History, Political Science and Sociology.

The Discussion section is indeed the most persuasive part of the research paper in which the strongest claims are made, therefore, writers have to be specially careful about how to state these claims, since the making of a claim may threaten the other members of the scientific community, as it implies a restriction on what they can do from that moment onwards. In the social interaction which implies a negotiation between writers and readers (editors/reviewers), the appropriate use of hedging thus becomes an important rhetorical strategy used by researchers to make claims more acceptable to readers, mainly the English-speaking community. Ventola (1997, p. 167), for example, has pointed out that some areas where EAL users need most textual training are in the awareness of cultural differences in “global and local structuring of texts and modality”. As stated in Martín-Martín (2008, p. 148), Spanish writers’ orientation towards the use of modality expressions seems to be different from that of the writers in English. It appears that fewer probability expressions are felt to be needed in the Discussion (and Conclusion) section of Spanish texts. However, Spanish writers should be conscious of the important use of modality to mitigate knowledge claims in English academic writing, since, as Salager-Meyer (1994, p. 150) has pointed out, an academic text in which claims have not been modulated with the appropriate use of hedging devices may sound arrogant for English-speaking editors and reviewers of international journals.

A series of tasks can be designed to help students make rhetorically informed choices to express tentative claims in academic writing. Ventola (1997, p. 171), for example, proposes an activity that involves a text extract in which all modal verbs are removed from the text, and then students are asked to fill in the slots with the modal verbs they think most suitable to the context, in order to see how students perceive the modalization meaning and whether they would use the same value choices as the original author. Other tasks may be those which aim to understand and identify the degree of protection that the different strategies used for the function of hedging perform, and the linguistic devices available for their realization (see, Martín-Martín, 2008). These tasks should aim at making it clear that, for example, the use of the strategy of depersonalization (e.g. agentless passive and impersonal constructions) diminishes the writer's commitment to the proposition expressed to a larger extent than modal devices, as the former strategy allows writers to greatly distance themselves from the claims made, and therefore represent a higher degree of detachment and deference to the community and this implies a higher degree of protection. Furthermore, the combination of two or more hedges (e.g. the use of modals in conjunction with the passive voice) in one proposition increases the degree of protection both to the proposition and the author's face. Students, as Moreno (2011) notes, should also be clearly informed of the appropriate situations in which hedges must be used, i.e. in those cases in which writers do not have sufficient evidence to convey categorical claims or when they need to show deference towards the members of their disciplinary communities. Once students are aware of the different functions that the various rhetorical features may perform in academic texts, a final type of exercise could involve an approach in which students are asked to write a simulation of a full text based on some data or information provided by the EAP teacher, in order to consolidate both what they have learnt from instruction and their overall knowledge of academic writing.

4. Analysing the writing process and the social context

Apart from the focus that has been placed here on teaching the product or forms of writing, a great deal of attention should then be given to the writing process. Jacoby et al. (1995) propose some assignments to foster increasing

independence as students learn to meet scientific discourse conventions while working through the process of planning, executing, revising multiple drafts, and receiving feedback from their peers. Dudley-Evans (1995, p. 308) also considers the important role that writing process plays in writing courses. He describes a task in which a student produces a piece of writing that is copied and distributed to other students in the group which, either individually or in pairs, discuss the writing and makes suggestions for improvement. The suggestions may range from corrections at the level of the sentence to the level of discourse. These are then discussed with the writing teacher acting as a kind of referee. After this, students revise their original drafts in the light of the discussion. These types of activities promote the autonomy that students need to achieve effective academic writing. As García-Mayo (2000) notes, the procedures adopted in an academic course should consider the idea of the students' autonomy, that is, the student has to be in control of his/her own learning process and relate the different elements learnt in the classroom with his/her own personal experience.

Burgess and Cargill (2013) describe an approach to course design and implementation in which genre analysis and corpus linguistics are used in combination to teach publication skills, in a way that helps participants gain autonomy in the drafting of their own papers. This approach involves the selection of exemplary research articles by the actual course participants, a macro-level and micro-level analysis of the texts selected, an analysis of the readership to which the papers are addressed, and the writing of a first draft of a paper by the participants themselves on the basis of sentence templates or frameworks that help them avoid the risk of plagiarism. This is followed by an introduction to corpus analysis that allows participants to use concordancing programmes which can provide them with evidence of language use in their specific disciplines, fostering in this way learning autonomy.

Another approach involves the working together of the EAP teacher and the specialist teacher or expert member of the particular disciplinary community in the same classroom, as proposed by Dudley-Evans and St Johns (1998). With this approach, the language teacher and students can gain a fuller understanding of the expectations of the community in a specific culture that cannot be gained through purely text-product analysis. This involves discussion with students of the social context of the discipline students are entering. Through direct

questions students can better understand the importance of audience in writing and their different expectations. Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) argue that knowledge of the audience's attitudes, beliefs and expectations is essential for students writing in a second language. Johns (1995) also acknowledges the value of consulting expert writers about the purpose of a text, its form and style, as well as about how the genre is changing. Similarly, Paltridge (2002, p. 24) argues that focusing on aspects of genre "beyond the text" into the social and cultural context which surrounds the genre is very important in order to fully understand its purpose and use and the impact on the language choices. In the New Rhetoric tradition, Hyon (1996) provides an example of a direct teaching application of genre writing, which basically consists in describing helpful tasks for sensitising students to the influence of rhetorical contexts on the genres they write. These types of tasks may contribute to acknowledge a functional understanding of writing contexts, and the notion that language is socially situated and employed to achieve personal and institutional purposes. This view requires that not only must descriptions be based on naturally occurring linguistic forms, but an analysis of academic discourse must also focus on the interactional and social aspects of scientific communities. As Hyland (1998, 2000, 2002) notes, discursive practices represent the processes of text production and interpretation. The goal of linguistic analysis is then to explain how discourses are produced and the purposes they serve in particular communities. In this sense, the interpretations of expert informants can be greatly beneficial for an understanding of academic writing.

Classroom discussion of the social contexts surrounding texts should thus be paramount in genre-based instruction, that is, EAP teachers ought to specify the features of the rhetorical situation, including the purpose of the text, the audience, and the circumstances of the writing, such as the analysis of the writer's cultural background and the educational systems from which texts emanate.

5. Conclusion

The type of teaching suggested in this paper attempts to integrate both a product and process approach to the learning of academic genres, and adopts a

social constructionist standpoint in which it is assumed that students or novice writers learning to write in a discipline need to be introduced to the ways in which knowledge is created and communicated in their specific disciplinary cultures.

My pedagogical conception of genre-teaching mainly considers that teaching explicit textual features, especially to non-native speakers of a target language, can be useful for helping them grasp the rhetorical conventions of a specific genre. Notwithstanding, I also believe that the socio-cultural situation (the language and culture) in which genres are produced should be taken into consideration. This includes the analysis of the writer's cultural background and the educational systems from which texts emanate. As Miller (1984/1994) and Bazerman (1988) point out, genres respond to socio-cultural phenomena in particular contexts of use, therefore we cannot fully understand genres without understanding the culture of which they are part. The contextual situation should be taken into consideration in a pedagogical approach to genre teaching, in as much as the rhetorical features which characterise an academic genre in different language-cultures are largely based on the socio-pragmatic context in which a particular genre is shaped, namely the interpersonal relations between writers and readers. I would thus liken my position to that of Bhatia (2002), as stated in the following quotation:

Ideally, one may need to position oneself somewhere in the middle, looking at the use of language as genre to achieve non-linguistic objectives, thus maintaining a balance between the study of linguistic form, on the one hand, and the study of context, in a broad sense of socio-cultural factors, to focus on why members of a specific disciplinary culture use the language the way they do and what makes this form possible (p. 22).

I further believe that academic genres, such as the RA, are better learnt by becoming a member of the discipline community that uses them, that is, once learners (especially non-native speakers of the target language) are aware of the rhetorical and linguistic conventions of an academic genre, a next step for a better acquisition of its discourse conventions is actively participating in academic communication by using it and receiving actual feedback of the other expert members of that community. In these respects, this genre analysis

perspective also draws from the genre-based instructional notions propounded by the New Rhetoric research tradition.

To sum up, my view of a genre-based teaching approach largely consists in a prior discussion with students of the socio-cultural context in which a particular academic genre occurs. This discovery process of the social circumstances that surround a genre can help students understand more readily the communicative purpose of a specific genre. A second complementary stage should be the explicit teaching of functions and language structures of typical academic texts, with a special emphasis on cross-cultural variation. By making learners aware of the similarities and differences in the rhetorical strategies preferred by the members of different disciplinary communities, L2 writers may feel more confident about the rhetorical options they can choose depending on the context and type of audience they are addressing.

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