Genre Analysis and the Language-Learning Classroom

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Abstract: **In this paper, there are three articles that concentrate on the analysis of genres should be reviewed. Particularly so, these three articles shed light on the contribution of the corpus linguistics methodology to the analysis and application of academic genres. For easy reference, I have to label Article 1 on** *From Text To Corpus-A Genre-based Approach to Academic Literacy Instruction by C Tribble and U. Wingate***, Article 2 on** *Using Corpus-based research and Online Academic Corpora to Inform Writing of the Discussion Section of a Thesis, by L. Flower dew* **and Article 3 on** *An Integration of Corpus-Based and Genre-Based Approaches to Text Analysis in EAP/ESP: Countering Criticisms Against Corpus-Based Methodologies, also by L. Flower dew***.**

Keywords: **linguistics methodology,** *Genre-Based Approaches to Text Analysis in EAP/ESP.*

1.   INTRODUCTION

To properly introduce the discussion, the notion of genre has emerged as a subject of interest in various disciplines such as arts, media, linguistics and applied linguistics. A novel for instance, is one of the many examples that have been regarded as belonging to a genre and boasting off its own typical schematic structures. Important implications have grown out of this trend. An implication suggests that the nature of language should be seen as a functional tool for fulfilling particular communicative purposes. Also cannot dismiss the fact that genre-based language teaching has survived as an effective form of language pedagogy in schools (Derewianka 1990), at colleges and universities (Swales 1990), and in various professional contexts (Bhatia 1993). The underpinning theory is that explicit teaching of schematic structures that characterise particular genres is critical to learners' success in appropriating these genres. Being a concept with extensive applications, genre has been conceptualised in a diverse manner according to several different theoretical camps. As we shall see later, there are two major approaches to genre, the first is a text-based and the second is a situation-oriented approach (Flowerdew, 2002). The major divergence can be seen in the theoretical and pedagogic foci of these studies. A text-based approach describes and teaches generic features of genres while a situation-oriented approach views genre as a response to recurring rhetorical situations with its pedagogic focus on inculcating students' contextual awareness. While both textual scaffolding and contextual awareness have places in genre pedagogy, discussion has seldom been noticed on what students learn from texts and what has led to the development of a writer's capacity to use genre forms in creative light.

2. ARTICLE ONE REVIEW AND FINDINGS

Article 1 makes a general claim that the broadening participation in Higher Education and a drastic increase in bringing in batches of overseas students has urged academic bodies to admit on the literacy demands they require from their students, and to cater for the students' learning needs. With the different literacy requirements among the students, it has encourage higher education bodies to strategise on some approaches to teaching academic writing.

In terms of the procedure, Article 1 researchers had resorted to the KLC Apprentice Writing Corpus to provide the databank of exemplars- the corpus contains the following data: laboratory reports of MSc Pharmacy students and course assignments and dissertations of MA ELT and Applied Linguistics students. Before building on the corpus, researchers

are required to get the approval from the College Research Ethics Committee and obtain students' agreement on submitting their texts for analysis. In developing the writing course, the project consists of two phases- the first deals with text analysis and the development of materials that help students understand and control the conventions of the genre they are writing, and the second phase seeks to develop some extension materials for students who need to be assisted with the linguistic aspect of writing. The researchers had proposed a model that considers theories with orientation leaning on the social practices like Academic Literacies and Critical EAP where it encourages students to also pay attention to aspects like the social roles in their disciplinary genre analyses, where the model also looks into textual exemplars, and it also does not deny the importance of the cooperation between writing and the subject experts and novice writers.

I do not deny the fact that this first article does highlight some irrefutable advantages. The use of this model indicates that this novel process will be realistic- relevant parties will focus first on manageable sets of texts from particular genres as the platform to develop the instructional materials, and then it will move further to discipline-specific corpora of students' writing to develop the supplementary materials. Also, it will lend to the development of useful resources to improve students' writing skills in disciplinary genres.   Another advantage of the model rests in the fact that it enables students from all backgrounds to learn from both credible and not-so credible practices.

On the other hand, despite the fact that the task is to obtain both high-scoring and low-scoring texts from students, the shortage of low-scoring scripts was hard to dismiss, as less successful students would and had been naturally reluctant to submit their texts. It was also a fact that when it comes to analysing and establishing the data in the form of the samples, the study is not able to provide a full sense of the materials, as the scripts are long and detailed. Evidently, not all the extracts were able to be provided and even if they are illustrated, they were only published in chunks of texts.

Some findings in Article 1 are engaging to me. The first finding I find interesting and important is that the students, as the direct recipients of benefit out of this module will definitely understand fully how meanings are interacting and relayed within their own fields, and why different meanings would matter greatly in the development and transmission of disciplinary knowledge. Also, this module has been able to extract students' own participation and because of this, it is found that students can well criticise their own texts. Next, another finding that I think is worthwhile is to know that in future, they can be equipped with a resource bank which they may find useful in their future writing.

In a nutshell, the findings in Article 1 offer a realistic and sustainable way of providing focused, discipline-specific writing instruction to students of various levels. It also disseminates responsibility to writing and subject experts and via this active involvement, the instruction will be assured to be authentic and subject-specific. The development of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 will serve as a long-term investment for university programmes, as they are universal and highly of value for various levels and groups of students, and thus automatically suggesting that the model being discussed in this article will last longer than anybody would expect.

3. ARTICLE TWO REVIEW AND FINDINGS

Grounded on students' capability in writing, there are two claims made in Article 2. Looking at the growing internationalization of world universities and the pressure mounting on academic staff and their post-graduate students to publish high-impact journals, the increasing importance of academic writing programmes, specially aiming to aid post-graduate students write research articles, these and dissertations cannot be denied. This article also makes a firm claim that there are only few accounts on corpus-pedagogic applications specifically for doctoral students, and this subconsciously may help explain the purpose of this current work.

Touching on the procedure, there is a two-part workshop (the first was done in the spirit of Swales' approach to genre, where students were asked to make out the rhetorical functions in some extracts from the discussion section and underline any words or lexico-grammatical phrases which cue the particular rhetorical functions; the second workshop is more discovery-based, where students were asked to give phraseologies deemed appropriate and then to propose their suggestions against the corpus data) involved in this study; these workshops concern with writing the Discussion Section of a thesis as part of voluntary workshops to postgraduate students of science and engineering at a HK-based tertiary institution, followed by an individual consultation session on students' first drafting of work. For the consultation, 780 empirical research articles were used and they came from 39 different disciplines from the fields of Engineering and Applied Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences. From the compilation of articles, in each discipline 20 active, popular journals with high impact ratios were able to be enlisted.

As far as the advantages are concerned, the study provides students with a good strategy to get them to familiarize themselves with the types of searches they might be able to perform, other than the fact that it can highlight the strength of the corpus consultation arranged. Moreover, the CRA allows the act of uploading students' own corpora, so they can work on their own corpora of discussion sections of the journals in their respective branch of study. Nonetheless, what seems unavoidable is the fact that it is easy for students to become uncertain, when it comes to naming and understanding the actual functions of some grammatical items (in this study, the researcher had talked about students getting confused about the use of conditionals). Additional to this is the fact that searching from the software can only be performed by Discipline or section, not both, indicating that the search is rather limited. The program also makes do with a brief context of the word or phrase instead of a wider context encompassing various sentences. As evidence, students stated that although they were used to the vocabulary and phrases displayed in the concordance output, there was no evidence that they had used them in their writing. The finding of this article suggests that the workshops were commented by students positively and they had learned a lot of useful tips on writing the Discussion part of the thesis.

For the long run, it is easy to see that doctoral students should be able to learn on how to write the part of their theses better, and better concentrate on the possible shift from writing 'traditional thesis' to the article compilation model. The phraseology tasks in the second workshop still finds its relevance in the discussion part of thesis, since the limelight is on the regular, non-topic specific lexico-grammatical patterns. Broadly speaking, corpus-based research on experts' and learners' academic writing is also very valuable especially when we talk about creating and framing tasks in the corpus consultation.

4. ARTICLE THREE REVIEW AND FINDINGS

Article 3, next, claims that the many corpus-based analyses in EAP/ESP from a textlinguistic perspective tend to be side by side with those analyses of lexical and grammatical items or lexico- grammatical patternings at the sentence-level, where many of the textlinguistic corpus works have been concerned on genres. The researcher contends further that both corpus and genre-based approaches to text analysis in EAP/ESP, in combination, can somehow, address some major criticisms that have been broiling on the corpus linguistic analyses- it is said that these analyses tend to apply bottom-up rather than top-down methodologies and also, they fail to dwell into the socio-cultural setting that is vital when dealing with decontextualised corpus data.

It is interesting that the procedure for this article actually entails comparing the two camps of text analyses. Flowerdew (2004) concerns with the idea of looking at two approaches: 1) English for Specific Purposes based on the Swalesian genre tradition, 2) North American New Rhetoric studies. In brief, ESP stresses on the social function and form of spoken and written language in academic and research settings, targeting at analysing non-NNS writing. New Rhetoric, on the other hand, focuses on composition studies and professional writing in L1 (the first language) context. Apart from shedding light on the social purposes that genres seek to address in some situational contexts, scholars of the New Rhetoric also see genres as dynamic, social texts and at the same time ongoing processes of discourse production and the reception moulded by other relevant texts and utterances of the socio-cultural context.

Looking at the advantages, many of the linguists from the ESP camp have been able to create a number of tagging systems for coding the generic 'move structures'- covering aspects like background, scope and purpose in the introductory sections of reports. This is exemplified by Thompsons' examination of the use of citations in a corpus of 20 PhD theses written by native speakers from varying disciplines in the field of Agriculture at the University of Reading. Here, Thompson drew a tagging system that distinguishes between the integral (the ones in sentences), and the non-integral citations (citations separated from the sentence by brackets and which plays no role in the sentence). It also dwells into the politeness strategies, so this goes to suggest that the cultural role that the participants could play in shaping the discourse is not cast aside. On the other hand, Non-Rhetoric proponents account for the ethnographic dimension, or in other words, the interviews and observations, rather than the linguistic or rhetorical methods.

There are some difficulties emerging as far as the Swales' corpus-based methodologies are concerned. Swales' main tool is concordancing software, so it will automatically put a restriction to the analysis to the bottom-up research of the corpus data. It also disregard the contextual features of the text, let alone the visual and the social contexts that can help interpret the concordance lines. In terms of the tagging, the tedious task of having it to do it manually has made it unfeasible to carry out this task on large-scale corpora that have millions of words. It also necessitates close scrutiny of the text and

because of that, it is very time-consuming, making the focus rest on small specialised corpora. Characteristically, ESP is more suitable with texts of mixed genres with various move structures, so understandably it is difficult to assign a specific function to certain rhetorical features as the interpretation is governed by various contextual features.

The proponents of New Rhetoric also consider the influence of intertextuality- the influence of other texts in the discourse construction- both are seen as the diadvantages of this approach. Nonetheless, a corpus-based study shows that to compensate for the lack of knowledge of appropriate lexico-grammatical phrases, what we have is the students who have becoem very dependent on the rubrics provided in the report-writing guidelines.

5. CONCLUSION

All in all, we have been able to conclude that worthwhile corpus-based investigations have been stemming from Swale's notion of ESP, or incorporating the elements of the New Rhetoric approach to genre. They can actually complete one another in the sense that corpus-based methodologies have been informed by the genre text analysis, while simultaneously genre theories can equally take corpus-based methodologies for their plus points. It is evidence that the knowledge of contextual features may facilitate greater use of discourse-based tags. Also, the use of small corpora is deemed useful not only for analysis, but also for teachers and their pedagogical strategies. Put simply, the more the corpus draws on features from students' own socio-cultural background, the easier it should be for the teacher to play a mediating role, or particularly as the specialist informant of the raw corpus data, this makes the data more authentic and potentially more interesting and engaging to be used in language classrooms.

As has been demonstrated, various parties or actors in language classroms can well benefit from genre analysis studies, and the above mentioned reviews of the three journals have provided an excellent illustration of this fact.

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