Language and Education in South Africa: The Value of a Genre-based Pedagogy for Access and Inclusion

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Introduction

This paper considers the role of language and language teaching in a post-Apartheid South Africa. It argues that one of the major aims of a new and evolving policy of language in education should be to bring about, for disadvantaged communities, greater possibilities of access to the technology of literacy and in so doing, bring about some of the conditions for a redistribution of power in society.

The paper draws on a relatively new body of theory and pedagogy in language and literacy — genre theory. A genre-based approach to language emphasises the cultural and social dimensions underpinning the formation and constitution of language and texts.[2] It allows us to understand what language does or is made to do by different people in order to make particular meanings. It tells us about the social needs and cultural values and meanings of its users.

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[2] G. Kress. "Genre a social process" *in* B. Cope and M. Kalantzis (Eds.). *The Power of Literacy* (London: Falmer Press, 1993).

A genre-based approach to language is both a political project as well as a project of pedagogy. As a political project, it aims to give disadvantaged students a more equitable access to the cultural and social resources offered by society. It argues that access to social, economic and cultural benefits have much to do with commanding the highest level of literacy skills. Taking this argument further, full access to and the control of social institutions is dependent on access to the most powerful forms of writing and the most powerful genres in one's own society. For those outside the discourses and cultures of certain realms of power and access, acquiring these discourses requires explicit explanation. Thus in schools or other institutions of learning, the "how" of language needs to be explicitly taught. This is the pedagogical project of the genre school.

The paper argues that the "hows" of language need to be brought into the fore in education particularly in the context of South Africa where the social mission of schooling is to provide historically marginalised groups with equitable access to a broad range of social options. It suggests that schooling is a significant site of struggle. Schools have the potential to forge a multi-lingual, multi-dialectical society which recognises and respects difference. However, schools cannot do this by immersion alone and thus need a theory which challenges the failures of both the traditional (classical) curricula as well as the progressivist approaches to education and language teaching and learning.

This paper will describe genre theory and contrast it to the pedagogies of traditionalism and progressivism. It will outline some different approaches to defining genre in relation to text and discourse and discuss some principles for establishing a genre-based approach to language teaching in South Africa.

Genre Theory

Genre theory "is in essence a theory of language in use".[3] It was developed by amongst others, Hasan, Kress and Martin,[4] as an extension of the work of Michael Halliday and other studies of systemic linguistics.

Genre theory has emerged in opposition to both "current-traditional" and progressive pedagogy (process approaches to writing) because of their perceived limitations to

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[3] J. R. Martin. (1993) "A contextual theory of language" *in* B. Cope and M. Kalantzis (Eds.) *The Powers of Literacy: a genre approach to teaching writing* (London: Falmer Press, 1993), 232.

[4] R. Hasan. "Text in the Systemic Functional Model" *in* W. Dressler (Ed.). *Current trends in Text Linguistics* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1978). G. Kress. *Learning to write* (London: Routledge and Kegan

the development of writing. The limitations of "current-traditional" approaches to writing have been summed up as follows:

> Learning literacy in the traditional curriculum meant memorising spelling lists; doing exercises in traditional grammar like filling in close gaps or simply rote learning grammatical rules; "compositions" marked according to its compliance with the conventions of "standard" English; and testing "correct" knowledge of spelling and grammar in formal examinations. Language learning became "the art of speaking and writing in English correctly" based on prescribed absolute standards in which grammar amounted to a set of facts, fixed with no unresolved problems.[5]

Process approaches to writing on the other hand have been criticised for failing to portray the nature of language in use[6] and, for creating a false impression of the nature of writing, for example, in higher education.[7] The two most important criticisms however, are the comparisons process theorists make between orality and literacy and their contention that language learning is natural. Cope and Kalantzis argue that orality and literacy are very different, not only in their discursive structures, but in the different nature of the learning process that is involved. They assert that progressivist approaches to the teaching of literacy (process approaches) fail to take account of the need to write differently for different purposes. According to Cope and Kalantzis:

> This is why the texts generated in the process writing classroom ("choose your own topic"; "say what you feel like saying") often end up monotonous and repetitive. Worse, the most powerful written genres are those generically and grammatically most distant from orality — for example, scientific reports which attempt to objectify the world, or arguments which are designed to persuade. [8]

The second problem genre theorists have with the process approach is its underlying philosophical assumptions about the nature of language learning — that is, that language development is essentially a process that occurs naturally. According to Callaghan et al. [9] the main starting point of genre theorists is the criticism of Piagetian based notions

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Paul, 1982). J. R. Martin. *Factual writing: exploring and challenging social reality* (Victoria: Deakin University Press, 1985).

[5] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid., 3.

[6] Martin et al. ibid..

[7] D. M. Horowitz. "What professors actually require: Academic tasks for the ESL classroom." *TESOL Quarterly*, 20, 1986, 445-462.

[8] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid, 6.

[9] M. Callaghan, P. Knapp and G. Noble. "Genre in practice" *in* B. Cope and I. M. Kalantzis (Eds.). *The Powers of Literacy. A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing* (London: Falmer Press, 1993).

of language development — the argument being not so much against Piaget's ideas of cognitive language development but the resultant "passive pedagogy" where teachers are encouraged to wait for learning to develop.

Thus for Cope and Kalantzis:

> "Natural" literacy learning is simply an inefficient use of time and resources. It leads to a pedagogy which encourages students to produce texts in a limited range of written genres, mostly personalised recounts.[10]

Many teachers and practitioners are caught in the dilemma of not wanting to return to traditional pedagogy but, at the same time, wanting to move away from the limitations of process writing. According to Cazden genre theory offers the possibility of going "beyond process." [11]

In contrast to traditional pedagogy with its emphasis on fixed rules and rote learning and progressivist pedagogy where language learning is seen to be a natural process, genre theory emphasises the social and communicative nature of language. Callaghan et al. make the following comment about the nature of language and the development of literacy:

> Despite the apparent natural progression of a child's language acquisition, this (genre) model assumes that, at very least, there is an equal input from the social in this process. Adults play a crucial role in providing language models for children . . . It is a social, interactive process, such that language development is best described as active construction, not passive acquisition.[12]

The role of an adult, for example, in offering models of language in use and guiding in the construction of texts with children, has been taken by genre theorists to be a pattern through which language learning can be achieved in schools. Thus a genre theory purports to be highly interventionist. It puts into the forefront the need for teachers to become involved in the teaching of literacy rather than wait for it to develop. In so doing, Cope and Kalantzis claim that

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[10] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid., 6.

[11] C. Cazden. "Foreword" *in* B. Cope and I. M. Kalantzis (Eds.). *The Power of Literacy. A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing* (London: Falmer Press, 1993).

[12] Callaghan et al., ibid., 180.

> genre literacy sets out to reinstate the teacher as professional, an expert on language whose status in the learning process is authoritative but not authoritarian.[13]

By way of contrast, in progessivist models of literacy, the concept of "student voice" reduces teachers to no more than facilitators who "give students space to voice their own interests in their own discourse." For Cope and Kalantzis, "The tendency of progressivism is to reduce the teacher to the role of facilitator and manager in the name of student centred learning which relativises all discourses." [14]

Thus a genre based approach to literacy teaching means engaging students in the role of apprentice with the teacher in the role of expert on language system and function. It means re-establishing the teacher as an expert on language and metalanguage which will, according to Williams, include a knowledge of grammar.[15]

Thus a second characteristic of genre theory is that it means teaching grammar again. At first glance, such a statement may seem to suggest that genre theory is not unlike current-traditional pedagogy which stresses the teaching of traditional grammar. However, genre theory is based on an understanding of language quite different from that of traditional grammar.

Unlike traditional school grammar where "meaning and the critical role of language in the building of meaning are simply overlooked..." a genre literacy encompasses systemic functional grammars[16] which organised to describe how meanings are made in texts. According to Williams: "Grammars which are of practical use in teaching have become available. They offer ways of describing real uses of language for genuine social purposes."[17]

Thus unlike traditional grammar which starts with words as "parts of speech" and rarely gets further than dissecting clauses and sentences, genre analysis is concerned primarily with whole texts and their social functions.[18] Sentence and clause analysis is

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[13] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid., 18.

[14] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid., 18.

[15] G. Williams. "Using systemic grammar in teaching young learners; an introduction" *in* L. Unsworth (Ed.). *Literacy, Learning and Teaching* (Melbourne; MacMillan Education Australia Pty Ltd, 1993).

[16] M. A. K. Halliday. *System and Written Language* (Geelong: Deacon University Press, 1985). R. Hasan. "Reading Picture Reading. Invisible Instruction at home and in schools." Paper given at the 13th Reading Association Conference, Sydney, 11-14 July 1987. J. R. Martin. (1993) "A contextual theory of language" *in* B. Cope and M. Kalantzis (1993), op. cit.

[17] Williams, ibid., 199.

[18] G. Kress. "Genre a social process" *in* B. Cope and M. Kalantzis (Eds.). *The Power of Literacy* (London: Falmer Press, 1993).

only performed in order to explain the workings of the whole text and how it realises its social purpose.

In thinking about the teaching of grammar, Williams finds it useful to distinguish between, on the one hand, teaching of grammar to pupils and, on the other, teachers learning a grammar in order to understand better practical education issues such as language development, literacy learning, learning difficulties and evaluation.[19] These two issues are quite different. With regard to the first, very little research has been done to explore the teaching of functional grammar in schools. Thus the question of whether or not aspects of this new grammatical knowledge could be learnt by students remains an open one and is one of the issues this thesis addresses.

With respect to the second issue, that of teaching teachers about language is equally under-researched and is according to Williams a major limitation on educational development.[20]

As mentioned earlier, for genre theorists, re-asserting the authoritative position of the teacher arises from the teacher's knowledge about language (discourse structure, functional grammar and so on). Currently, much of the metalanguage of teachers is concerned with the visual structure of a system of writing. They know the obvious terms like paragraph, full stop, letter and so on. Less explicitly teachers have to make judgements about the discourse structure of a text, particularly the schematic structures of genres[21] and judgements about a functional grammar.[22] According to Cope and Kalantzis, teachers need three types of knowledge of grammar. The first is a substantive knowledge of the grammar of discourses on educational success. The authors counted that history teachers and science teachers need to know grammar just as much as English teachers "to be able to make explicit the way text structure serves a particular disciplinary and social purpose".[23] Second, teachers need a knowledge of grammar to allow them to analyse the relation of text form to social purpose. The authors accede to the fact that it would not be possible for teachers to have a substantive knowledge of the range of possible discourses for their students, but knowledge of the grammars of key texts in school (college) literacy is essential. The third authoritative role for the teacher is one of being an expert on peda-

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[19] Williams, ibid.

[20] Williams, ibid.

[21] F. Christie and J. Rothery. "Exploring the written mode and the range of factual genres" *in* F. Christie (Ed.). *Writting in Schools: Study Guide* (Victoria: Deacon University Press, 1989).

[22] Wiiliams, ibid.

[23] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid., 19.

gogy. This means, according to the authors, being an expert on what constitutes worthwhile learning and how language is best taught.

For genre theorists, the question of authoritative teachers as opposed to authoritarian teachers is a crucial one. Indeed, the question how does an authoritative culture replace an authoritarian one is critical. For Cazden (1988) the answer to this lies in the notion of scaffolding.[24] Practically, teaching a language about language to students is too much to expect from individual teachers working in isolation even if they do have a requisite knowledge of grammar. The implication then is the need for a carefully planned programme, sustained over a long period of time, one in which a theory about the knowledge of language builds up and with it students cognitive and linguistic abilities.

Another major departure from traditional and progressivist pedagogies is of course the focus on "genres" themselves. Genre theorists criticise the progressivist tradition for encouraging the view that writers should "just write." All writing is not the same, and in school, and certainly in higher education, some forms of writing are more important than others. This view is shared by Reid:

> The whole movement towards child-centred education has foundered on the idea that children can understand and undertake history, geography and other subject areas "in their own words". That this is a necessary starting point, no one would deny, especially not those interested in genre-based approaches to writing development. But that children should be stranded there, writing stories for example as their only genre in infant and primary school, is impossible to accept. It cuts them off absolutely from any real understanding of what the humanities, social sciences and science are on about and denies them the tools these disciplines have developed to understand the world.[25]

Both Cope and Kalantzis and Reid conclude that schooling values certain genres more than others and "among those genres of greatest importance for school learning [are] the various factual genres."[26]

While the progressivist movement "simply reproduces educational inequities, given the inequities in the social value placed on 'different' voices in the world outside school,"[27] a focus on genres, particularly factual genres, serves to empower learners. Conversely,

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[24] C. Cazden. *Classroom Discourse: The Language of Teaching and Learning* (Portsmouth, N. H.: Heinemann, 1988).

[25] J. Reid. "ESL composition: the linear product of American thought." *College Composition and Communication*, 35, 1987, 64.

[26] Reid, ibid., 64.

[27] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid., 6.

denying learners access to genres disables them socially.[28] This view is shared by Christie and Rothery.

> Without the capacity to handle the written genre in which information is processed and understood in the contemporary world, people will be truly left out, unable to participate in a world of increasing sophisticated information, construction and exchange.[29]

Another crucial difference between genre theory and that of traditional and progressivist pedagogy is in the approach to the curriculum. Much has been written about the nature of the curriculum and its inherent values and the general conclusion reached is that curricula are not value free. Traditional curriculum transmits fixed cultural and linguistic contents through the curriculum but fails those who do not find a comfortable home in the culture of schooling. The progressivist curriculum on the other hand purports to be more open but is also founded on a set of cultural and linguistic presuppositions more inclined to favour a middle class culture and discourse.[30] By way of contrast, the pedagogy underlying genre literacy is that it establishes a dialogue between the culture of the discourse of institutionalised schooling and the cultures and discourses of students.[31]

Further, both traditional and progressivist curriculum fail to address questions of access and inequity in education. Traditional curriculum sets out to assimilate students by teaching them "cultural and linguistic uniformity" in the interest of constructs such as "national unity" without being able to accommodate those who do not meet these singular expectations.[32] The progressivist curriculum on the other hand recognises differences but leaves the social relations of inequity unchallenged. Genre theorists argue that giving students access to a range of genres means giving them access to a variety of realms of social power.[33]

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[28] J. Dixon and L. Stratta. "New demands on the model of writing in education — what does genre-theory offer?" *in* M. Hayhoe and S. Parker (Eds.). *Reassessing Language and Literacy* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992).

[29] Christie and Rothery, 6.

[30] D. F. Johnson. "The politics of Literacy and Schooling in Zimbabwe." *Review of African Political Economy*, 48, 1990, 99-106.

[31]. B. Ballard and J. Clanchy. "Literacy in the University: An 'Anthropological' approach" in G. Taylor (Ed.), *Literacy by Degrees* (Milton Keynes : OUP and SRHE, 1988). D. Bartholomae. "Inventing the University" *in* Mike Rose (Ed.). *When a writer can't write* (New York: Guilford, 1985). P. Bizell. "College composition: initiation into the academic discourse community" *Curriculum Inquiry*, 12, 1982, 191-207. A curriculum which ensures ways in which the structure of society and the use of language as well as the hidden elements of power behind discourse can be analysed.

[32] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid., 18.

[33] Cazden, ibid.; Cope and Kalantzis, ibid.; Kress, ibid..

Dixon and Stratta are however critical about what genre promises. They argue

> As for social empowerment, we fully agree that, if students are to have more control over events, they must learn to persuade, advise refute, report, inform, revise, plan, predict, speculate . . . emphasize, criticize and so on . . . but this is not just a matter of producing generic forms.[34]

For Dixon and Stratta, writers have no real power unless what they say has some effect on real people. Thus any social model of writing needs to include a systematic treatment of readers and their responses.

Cope and Kalantzis however recognise these concerns and suggest that

> even as the curriculum progresses, it is not simply a matter of transmitting "better" discourses, such as certain genres that have proved historically central to educational success. Curriculum should lend consciousness across cultural and linguistic boundaries without trying to erase these boundaries. It should give students new ways of meaning for unfamiliar social settings, but never because these new ways of meaning and social settings are considered superior or because acquiring these skills requires the denial of domestic or communal ways of meaning.[35]

Thus for these authors, "lending consciousness" does not involve cultural and linguistic assimilation. The dialogue continues to be multi-cultural and heteroglossic. They suggest however that

> this is not a multiculturalism of irreducible, relativist difference — the multiculturalism of progressivism. It is a multiculturalism of genuine dialogue that allows both sides of the conversation some sort of access to each other's cultural realms without either party attempting to exert cultural sovereignty over the other.[36]

In this way, it is suggested that difference is a potential resource for access. A genre literacy curriculum has the potential of being a site where cultures and discourses of the margins are also a subject for the literacy curriculum. These could be used not only to highlight or contrast the structures and purposes in the discourses of conventional school success and social power, but perhaps also to reshape these. It is possible through genre literacy that the discourses of the mainstream are influenced by the discourses of the

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[34] Dixon and Stratta, ibid., 86.

[35] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid., 18.

[36] Ibid..

margins. Indeed, it may be able to facilitate the cross-fertilisation of discourses and in so doing establish a basis for a more multi-cultural, multi-dilectical society.

This is genre in principle. Genre theory is however, by no means unproblematic nor does only one view of genre prevail. This paper will now turn to discussing some major views of genre in the field of education. It is predominantly concerned hereafter with text structure in relation to social activity. In this regard it takes the view that

> language always happens as text; and as text, it inevitably occurs in a particular generic form. This generic form arises out of the action of social subjects in particular social institutions. Consequently, the action of individuals as social subjects is at the centre of the production of text in generic form...[37]

Defining genres

Although genre theorists are unanimous in their criticisms of "current-traditional" and process pedagogies they do not present a unified account of genre pedagogy. Cope and Kalantzis make the following point in this regard:

> as genre theorists line up against the external bastions of traditional and progressivist pedagogies — the debate within the genre school is at times even more heated. Among the proponents of genre as a matter of principle differing views emerge on the nature of language and on the viability of a worthwhile pedagogy.[38]

The concept of genre is not new. It can be traced back to Aristotle's epic, lyric and dramatic. Aristotle's work on genre has remained firmly the domain of literary theory until recently. Of late there has been a keen interest in the area of genre in education, particularly as an approach to academic literacy.[39] However according to Kress, the application of the concept to education has not been without problems.[40] Unlike the unproblematic use of the term to categorise aspects of popular culture such as the use of the labels "Musical," "Romance," "Western" and "sci-Fi," the use of the category in education has been highly contentious.

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[37] Kress, ibid. 36.

[38] Cope and Kalantzis, ibid., 2.

[39] G. Kress. *Learning to write* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982). G. Kress. *Writing a social practice* (London: Routledge, 1989).; F. Christie. "Writing in Schools: Generic structures as ways of meaning" *in* B. Couture (Ed.). *Functional Approaches to Writing. Research Perspectives* (London: Frances Pinter, 1986). Martin and Rothery 1986.

[40] Kress, ibid..

Indeed, there is very little agreement in education as to what genre is and in his recent book on genre analysis Swales,[41] traces the origins of genre to folklore studies, literary studies, linguistics and rhetoric. In each of these disciplines, different assumptions of genre are held. The functionalists in folklore studies for example see genre as a permanent form. Ben-Amos argues that legends and proverbs for example do not change their character over recorded history but rather "they have an independent literary integrity, which withstands social variation and technological developments."[42]

By contrast to the folklorists, literary critics and theorists have rejected permanence of form. In fact, many have considered the concept to be obsolete. Todorov remarks:

> To persist in discussing genre today might seem like an idle if not obviously anachronistic pastime. Everyone knows that they existed in the good old days of the classics — ballads, odes, sonnets, tragedies, and comedies — but today?[43]

Rhetoricians too have always been interested in classifying discourse. One way of achieving this has been by creating a closed system of categories through a top-down or deductive approach.[44] One recent example of this is Kinneavy's classification of texts into four main types. These are: expressive, persuasive, literary and referential. A discourse will be classified into a particular type according to which component in the communication process receives the primary focus. If the focus or aim is on the sender, the discourse will be expressive, if it is on the receiver, the discourse will be persuasive and if it is in the linguistic form or code, it will be literary. It the aim is to represent the realities of the world, the discourse will be referential.

Swales argues that while such classification systems are impressive and have considerable organising power, using it to classify a text at first glance as any particular genre, may be misleading.[45]

In sharp contrast to Kinneavy's approach of constructing a classification of genres, rhetorical scholars who take a more inductive approach have tended to take context into account. Miller for example advances the discussion of genre in a number of important ways. She argues that a "rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the

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[41] J. M. Swales. *Genre analysis: English in academic settings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[42] Ben-Amos (1976), cited in Swales, ibid., 34.

[43] T. Todorov. "The origins of genre." *New Literary History*, 8, 1976, 159-170.

[44] J. L. Kinneavy. *A theory of discourse* (London: Norton, 1971).

[45] Swales, ibid..

form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish."[46] Continuing in this vein, Miller draws attention to how genres are part of a wider social reality. She suggests that:

> What we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have...[47]

Ivanic and Moss support this view of genre. They would criticise Kinneavy's classification as a two dimensional model of genre which sets out different types of writing in fixed positions, with those sharing similar characteristics clustered together. They argue that such a model would result in:

> a rich tapestry of language, with the implication that all types of language are equal. This may be linguistically true but it is socially naive.[48]

Both the work of Miller and the later work of Ivanic and Moss draws attention to genre as a means of social action. For these authors, genre is situated in a wider socio-rhetorical context and functions not only as a mechanism for reaching communicative goals but also for clarifying what those goals may be.

In Linguistics according to Swales, the term genre has only been referred to by linguists with an ethnographic persuasion like Hymes[49] or amongst systemic linguists like Halliday.[50] The reluctance on the part of linguists to use the term genre specifically may be in part due to the fact that traditionally linguists dealt only with aspects of language below the level of text. It may be also be that the term genre is too closely associated with literary studies.

Although the term genre is used with some frequency by systemic linguists, the relationship between genre and the more established concept of register is not always clear.[51] There have been signs recently however that genre is becoming disentangled from register. Martin for example makes the following distinction. He claims that genres are re-

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[46] C. R. Miller. "Genre as social action." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 1984, 151.

[47] Miller, ibid., 165.

[48] R. Ivanic and W. Moss. "Bringing community writing practices into education" in D. Barton and R. Ivanic *Writing in the community.* Written Communication Annual; Vol. 6 (London: Sage, 1991).

[49] D. Hymes. "Models of the Interaction of language in social life." Directions in Sociolinguistics: *in* J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (Eds.). *The Ethnography of Communication.* (N. Y.: Rinehard and Winston, 1972), 35-71.

[50] M. A. K. Halliday and R. Hasan. *Cohesion in English* (London: Longman, 1976).

[51] E. Ventola. "Orientation to social semiotics in foreign language teaching." *Applied Linguistics*, 5, 1984, 275-286.

alised through registers, and registers in turn are realised through language. Genres on the other hand are:

> how things get done, when language is used to accomplish them. They range from literary to far from literary forms: poems, narratives, expositions, lectures, seminars, recipes, manuals, appointment making, service encounters, news broadcasts and so on. The term genre is used here to embrace each of the linguistically realised activity types which compromise so much of our culture.[52]

Martin advances two main reasons for the argument that genre is a system which underlies register. First, genres appear to constrain the way register variables of field, tenor and mode can be combined in a particular context. For example, some topics may be more suitable than others for a lecture or for informal conversation. The second reason is that genres have beginnings, middles and ends of one sort or another and are thus "staged purposeful social processes through which a culture is realised in language." [53]

Couture supports this position and sees the distinction between genre and register as one where register imposes constraints at the linguistic levels of vocabulary and syntax, while genre constraints are present at the discourse level of text. Thus "unlike register, genre can only be realised in completed texts... [as] it specifies conditions for beginning, continuing and ending a text." [54] For Couture, genres and register have to be used separately as terms as genres are completed, structured texts while registers represent more generalisable stylistic choices. Genres thus have "complimentary" registers, and communicative success with texts may require "an appropriate relationship to systems of genre and register." [55]

From the above review of the origins of genre and how it is viewed in different disciplines, three dominant pedagogical perspectives can be discerned: Genre as a textual entity; Genre as a social phenomenon and Genre as a psychological phenomenon. These approaches to genre have developed in three distinct directions with little or no overlap.

One of the concerns of this study is to find a way in which genre can be used to classify texts internally as well as allow writers to write appropriately to context. One of the major contributions of this study to the existing literature is that it proposes a model of

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[52] J. R. Martin. *Factual writing*, 250.

[53] Martin and Rothery, ibid., 243.

[54] B. Couture. *Functional Approaches to Writing. Research Perspectives* (London: Frances Pinter, 1986).

[55] Couture, ibid., 86.

genre which takes account of a text's internal features as well as context. Before this model is introduced, the three approaches to genre are discussed below.

Genre as a textual approach

Literary studies or literary formalists have adopted a descriptive approach to genre. This approach is primarily concerned with distinctive textual features, which are the global, rhetorical aspects of text or the localised features of text.

At the rhetorical level, the roots of genre theory can be traced back to Aristotle. A detailed study of genre has been limited, in the main, to a study of the narrative or so called "story grammar." [56] According to Andrews, there has been a tremendous growth in the understanding of narratives in the last thirty years.[57] Most researchers argue that narrative is the first genre to be acquired. Freedman and Pringle for example advance the argument that children are exposed to written narratives from an early age.[58] Stories are read to children and typically the first books they themselves read are stories. Wilkinson supports this argument. For him the question of what makes it so difficult to acquire the structural knowledge of other genre forms, particularly argument, is crucial. Wilkinson suggests that although there are elements of everyday language, these do not translate into formal structures.[59]

Some research has explored the structure of the story with a view to examining the organisation of story knowledge and its use in comprehension. For researchers and teachers of English, the main aim has been to determine what the main elements of story texts are. Several frameworks to define the structure of a story have been developed [60] but the one used most frequently in education for examining story production as well as judgements about what stories should contain is that of Stein and Glenn. These authors consider a narrative to be composed of a setting category and an episode system. The

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[56] N. L. Stein and C. G. Glenn. "An analysis of story comprehension in elementary school children" *in* R. O. Freedle (Ed.). *New Directions in Discourse Processing*, Vol. 2 (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1979).

[57] R. Andrews. *Narrative and Argument* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989).

[58] A. Freedman and I. Pringle. "Why students can't write Arguments," *English in Education*, 18, 2, 1984, 73-84. A. Freedman and I. Pringle. "Contexts for developing arguments" *in* R. Andrews (Ed.). *Narrative and Argument* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989).

[59] A. M. Wilkinson. *The Quality of writing* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986).

[60] W. Labov and W. Walezky. "Narrative analysis" *in* J. Helm (Ed.). *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967). D. E. Rumelhart. "Notes of a scheme for stories" *in* D.G. Brown and A. Colby (Eds.). *Studies in Cognitive Science* (New York Academic Press, 1975).

setting category "introduces the main characters and describes the social, physical and temporal context in which the remainder of the story occurs," [61] while the episode system consists of a number of inter-related episodes or behavioural sequences.

In the main the authors suggest that the following structural elements are likely to be present in a narrative:

> Major Setting; Minor Setting; Initiating Event; Internal Response; Internal Plan; Attempt; Direct Consequence; Reaction.[62]

The Stein and Glenn framework was used by Bereiter, Scardamalia and Turkish, who were interested in whether children knew which structural elements were present in a narrative and whether they could access this knowledge consciously.[63] The authors worked from the assumption that knowledge of the formal elements of discourse is normally tacit. In an experiment designed to test this assumption, they provided the following description of the structural elements which appear in the narrative genre:

> Setting; Introduction to Character; Description of Character; Plot Action; Motives; Direct Consequence; Resolution; High Point; Dialogue; Moral; Role; Cause; Initiating; Action; Time Reference; Scenery; Feelings.[64]

The Stein and Glenn elements have also been used by Pringle and Freedman who applied the framework to short stories produced by professional writers before using it as an analysis of students' narratives.[65]

Outside simple stories, however, psychologists do not know which formal elements play a role in guiding the comprehension or production of discourse. It has been noted that the narrative genre has been the focus of genre studies but recently there have been some studies which examine the generic structures for non-narrative writing.[66] Even

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[61] Stein and Glenn, ibid., 59.

[62] Stein and Glenn, ibid..

[63] C. Bereiter, M. Scardamalia and L. Turkish. (1980) "The child as discourse grammarian," cited in C. Bereiter and M. Scardamalia. *The psychology of written composition* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1987).

[64] Reported in Bereiter and Scardamalia, ibid..

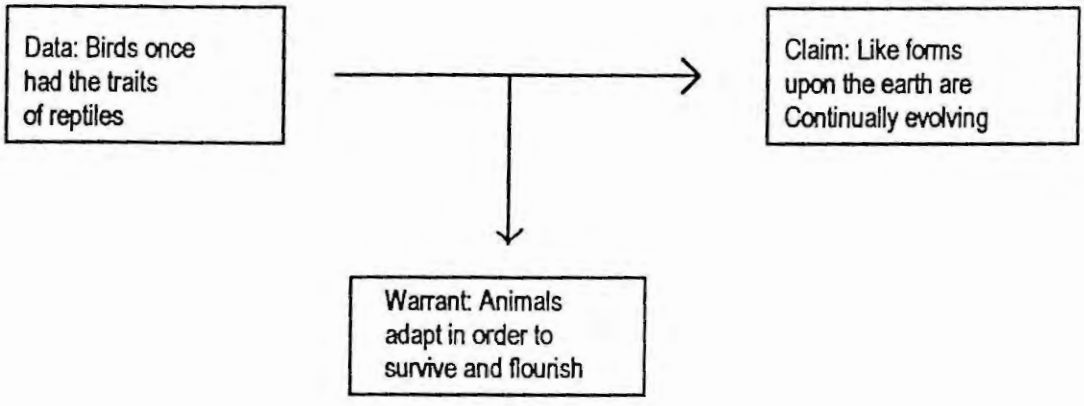
[65] Pringle and Freedman, ibid..

[66] B. K. Britton and J. B. Black. *Understanding Expository Text* (Hillsdale, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1985). Freedman and Pringle, ibid., A. Freedman and I. Pringle. "Why students can't write Arguments," *English in Education*, 18, 2, 1984, 73-84. S. Stotsky. "Research on written composition: a response to Hillocks' report." *Research in the Teaching of English*, 22, 1, 1988, 89-99.

though the Toulmin model or argument has existed since the 1950s, it has only been recently that the model has been used in the analysis of students' texts.

Toulmin proposes that all arguments contain at least six parts, which are Claims; Data; Warrant; Qualifier; Reservation; Backing. Data, Claims and Warrants form the three core concepts and may be illustrated as follows:

Figure 1 - The Toulmin model of "argument" [67]



The example above might be paraphrased as follows: if birds once had the traits of reptiles, then life forms upon the earth are continually evolving, since animals adapt in order to flourish.

Although the framework is one of the few attempts to formalise the structure of argument, Fulkerson suggests that there are problems with the model.[68] First it is assumed that the Toulmin model applies to an entire discourse and not just to a single argument. Second, the model is a tool for analysing existing arguments and not a system wherein which arguments can be created. Fulkerson concedes however that there is real potential in the Toulmin's framework for the teaching of argument. Indeed Toulmin's model for argument has been used by a number of theorists including Stratman who extends the method of analysis in order to analyse more complex argument structures.[69] Stratman found the model useful in teaching written argument because it helped students to define

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[67] S. Toulmin. *The use of argument* (Cambridge University Press,1958).

[68] R. Fulkerson. "Technical logic, comp-logic and the teaching of writing." *College composition*, 9, 1988, 436-452.

[69] J. F. Stratman. "Teaching written argument: the significance of Toulmins' layout for sentence combining." *College English*, 44, 7, 1982, 718-733.

the structure of a potential argument and that it informs students about what kinds of additional information is needed.

Dixon and Stratta however found the framework slightly wanting in respect of its ability to provide specific identifiable criteria which needs to be met if a text is to be judged as a successful or unsuccessful instance of a particular genre.[70] In this regard, Freedman and Pringle have given the debate on the nature of argumentation fresh impetus by establishing what they call "a minimal set of criteria for argument." [71] To satisfy the norms set out by Freedman and Pringle, a written argument would need:

> a clear thesis (either explicit or implicit in the beginning) and a substantiating set of logically developed points and/or illustrations providing the thesis and forming the body of the essay.[72]

There is in fact a more recent view that there is a closer relationship between narrative and argument that is usually assumed.[73] This does not mean to say that narrative and argument should be seen as a single "mode", but that they are not "opposite poles of the rhetorical world." [74]

Bereiter, Scardamalia and Turkish who set out to examine whether students had declarative knowledge of the structural elements of argument, defined the following categories which are closely modelled on the Toulmin structure of argument:

> Statement of Belief; Reason for; Elaboration; Example; Repetition; Statement on Other Side; Reason Against; Conclusion; General Statement; Personal Statement.[75]

So far the genres argument and narrative have been discussed. Andrews however asks the question "what about expositions?" Of the three genres, exposition "seems the least able to shape, transform and generate." [76] Because of its emphasis on expositional clarity, the same degree of importance is not attached to the concept of sequence inherent both in narrative (where sequence is of the very nature of the genre) or in argument

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[70] Dixon and Stratta, *Writing narrative.*

[71] A. Freedman and I. Pringle. "Contexts for developing arguments" *in* R. Andrews (Ed.). *Narrative and Argument* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989), 75.

[72] Frieedman and Pringle, ibid., 76.

[73] R. Andrews (Ed.). *Narrative and argument* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1989). Kress, *Writing.* P. Medway. "Argument as social action" *in.* Andrews, op. cit..

[74] Andrews, ibid., 3.

[75] Bereiter, Scardamalia and Turkish, ibid..

[76] Andrews, ibid., 2.

(where sequence can be described as one of a range of rhetorical resources). Andrews considers that it may be because the function of exposition is more referential than persuasive. He further argues that this genre is the most "inert," borrowing structures from narrative or argument in order to give itself shape and direction. He notes that exposition has been conflated with argument and often subsumed within it. Andrews suggests that exposition needs to be analysed as a genre but that the relationship between exposition and argument and analysis needs further investigation. The concern is shared by Piccolo who argues that, like argument, a norm for expository genre is required if we are to understand what makes a text a successful incidence of a particular genre.[77]

Stainton argues that exposition, unlike narrative and argument, does not appear to have a global structure.[78] Rather it encompasses a wide range of forms. She uses Haberlandt's term "macrostructure" as the key to understanding expository genre;[79] Meyer's classification system based on macrostructures which include genre; Meyer's classification system based on macrostrutures which include Co-variance (Cause and Effect);[80] Attribution (description, in terms of attributes and examples); Sequence; Comparison (adversative); Response (problem and solution) is described by Stainton as one structural framework from which exposition could be treated as a genre.

Alternatively, Winter whose work is used extensively by Hoey and Jordan,[81] proposed a framework built on the following four discourse elements:

> Situation (the context to which the account relates)
> Problem (an aspect of the situation that requires a response)
> Solution (the response to a defined problem) and
> Evaluation (the effectiveness of the solution to meet the problem).[82]

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[77] J. A. Piccolo. "Expository text structure: teaching and learning strategies." *The Reading Teacher*, 40, 9, 1987, 838-847.

[78] C. Stainton. *Metadiscourse and the analytical text: a genre-based approach to children's written discourse.* Unpublished Ph.D.: University of Manchester, 1993.

[79] K. F. Haberlandt. Understanding research on expositions: a review of Britton, B.K. and Black, F.B. (Eds.). Understanding Expository text. *Contemporary Psychology*, 31, 1986, 19-20.

[80] B. J. F Meyer. *The organisation of prose and its effects on memory* (New York Elsevier, 1975).

[81] M. Hoey. *On the Surface of discourse* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983).

[82] E. O. Winter. Lecture notes: Hatfield Polytechnic, 1981.

Genre as Context

Many theorists would not accept that genre can be discussed as purely a phenomenon which occurs within the text alone. They would argue that genre cannot be separated from the broader social context. The introduction of the term "context" raises questions however about how this may be defined. Stainton,[83] citing Werth (1984), offers a useful distinction between "co-text" which is the context of text itself and the "context of situation" which is the total -non-linguistic background of the text. A similar distinction is made by Coirier.[84] The context of situation is further divided into an "immediate context" which essentially means the conventions relevant to a particular genre[85] or the "context of culture" which determines which kinds of genre are appropriate for a particular cultural context.[86]

There are a number of problems associated with this view of genre in relation to context. Swales argues for example that Kinneavy's classification of texts into four main types by means of the primary focus of communication is problematic. He illustrates this by showing that although the scientific paper by Kinneavy's classification ought to be an instance of a referential text, it is in fact not so.

Purves and Purves on the other hand argue that the discussion of genre in relation to cultural contexts has not progressed far enough. There are assumptions that academic genres are similar across cultures but what constitutes an academic essay may actually vary across cultures. In France for example, the Hegelian ideal form which follows the pattern of thesis-antithesis-synthesis is considered appropriate.[87] In China the Confucian "eight legged" essay, in which the prescribed eight paragraphs each have to conform to a particular form throughout the history of a given culture. They may have their own peculiar

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[83] C. Stainton. *Metadiscourse and the analytical text: a genre-based approach to children's written discourse.* Unpublished Ph.D.: University of Manchester, 1993.

[84] P. Coirier. "Summarising an argumentative text: the role of typological characteristics and of the reading instructions." Paper submitted to the third European conference for Research on learning and instruction. Madrid, September 1989.

[85] J. L. Kinneavy. *A theory of discourse* (London: Norton, 1971).

[86] V. Connor. "Argumentative patterns in student essays: Cross-cultural differences" *in* V. Connor and R.B. Kaplan (Eds.). *Writing across languages: analysis of C2 texts.* (Reading, M. A.: Addison-Wesley, 1989). W. Grabe. "Contrastive rhetoric and text-type research" *in* V. Connor and R.B. Kaplan (Eds.). *Writing Across languages: analysis of C2 texts* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1989). A. Purves and W. Purves. "Culture, text models and the activity of writing." *Research in the teaching of English*, 1986, 174-197.

[87] R. Clignet. *Liberty and equality in the educational process* (New York: Willey, 1974).

way of beginning, developing and reaching a conclusion. To another culture, even where it shares the same language, such structures may seem alien.

This argument however must not be mistakenly aligned with the rather crude arguments proffered in what has become known as the "doodles article"[88] which argues that the rhetorical structures of languages differ. Kaplan's article was severely criticised for attempting to reduce the whole of linguistics to a single issue.

In a more recent article, Kaplan addresses these concerns in the light of recent evidence that there is indeed cultural variation in rhetorical patterns of discourse.[89] This line of research is being pursued in contrastive rhetoric. The International Study of Written Composition for example was undertaken to describe the situation in composition teaching to different cultures.[90] An area that has been neglected but has recently begun to receive attention is the teaching of argument and expository texts to students of different cultures.[91]

Genre and cognition

Some theorists view genre as a cognitive/psychological phenomenon. Schmidt for example holds that "genre should be conceptualised in terms of cognitive phenomena instead of feature sets abstracted from media produce (e.g. texts, films)." [92] Schmidt argues that genres form a subset of cognitive schemata which we use for making sense of the world. Olson *et al.* who adopt a cognitive approach to genre recognise that textual features are significant.[93] They describe genre in terms of surface textual features and an underlying cognitive structure. Although the authors set out to establish a cognitive theory of genre, they note that there are limitations in their work and that it will be some time before a complete theory is reached. The works of Schmidt and Olson both point to the fact that the role of schemata in writing is to provide a top level framework for the structuring of the discourse. What is also clear is that for writing to be successful students need to acquire

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[88] R. Kaplan, 1966.

[89] R. Kaplan. "Cultural thought patterns revisited" *in* V. Connor and R.B. Kaplan (Eds.). *Writing across languages: analysis of L2 texts* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1989).

[90] A. Purves and S. Takala. "An international perspectives on the evaluation of written composition." *Evaluation in Education*, 5, 3, 1982, 207-390.

[91] Connor, ibid.. Grabe, ibid..

[92] S. J. Schmidt. "Towards a constructivist theory of media genre." *Poetics*, 16, 1987, 371-395.

[93] G. M. Olson, R. L. Mark and S. A. Duffy. "Cognitive aspects of genre" *Poetics*, 10, 1981, 283-315.

knowledge of the linguistic forms which allow them to fill in the top level framework from the bottom up.

Developing a genre-based approach to literacy in South Africa

Most of the approaches discussed above hint at the need for a framework which pays attention to helping students gain an understanding of the top down and bottom up strategies for the production of written discourse.

Gaining control over a particular genre requires, by definition, an awareness of the top level formal and content features schemata for structuring it, and of the lexis and syntactic forms which realise it. An exclusive focus on top level features has limited potential. It may for example provide and outline section headings for a text but will not result in a full and comprehensive realisation of it. Conversely, an exclusive focus on form, at the sentence level, will not help students in the creation of discourse which is coherent. What is required is a framework which supports the top down and bottom up generation of text.

As this paper shows, on the one hand theorists have shown an interest in generic structures and there have been attempts to define classification systems for genres. For example, some studies have attempted to identify and explicate the global or rhetorical features of different genres, such as the work of Stein and Glenn and Freedman and Pringle on Narration; that of Dixon and Stratta. Toulmin and Bereiter et al. on Argumentation and the work of Winter on Exposition. Although these frameworks are useful, they provide only a partial picture of genre. On the other hand, there is distrust in some quarters for classification and an emphasis that genres should be situated within discourse communities. Thus there is an emphasis on communicative purpose and social action. The problem is that providing students with the idea that genre can empower still does not answer the question how they can be taught to write adequately for a variety of purposes.

In addressing this problem the LERN project of J. Martin,[94] which to date has had the broadest educational influence most commonly associated with genre pedagogy, set out to analyse the textual demands of school literacy. The project sought to establish what sorts of texts schools expected students to generate and on what basis some texts were regarded as more successful than others.

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[94] J. R. Martin. (1993) "A contextual theory of language" *in* B. Cope and M. Kalantzis, op. cit..

This project has been criticised from within the genre school Kress[95] and from those outside.[96] Kress and Barrs are concerned about the continuous classification of new genres as a result of educational practice as in Martins's project. Teachers, it seems, keep stumbling over "new" and important texts which do not seem to fit the generic descriptions. Kress on the other hand is less interested in classifying textual form than he is in the potential for using certain kinds of text for certain social purposes. In so doing, Kress has remained closely aligned to the origins of genre literacy in Halliday's systemic functional linguistics.[97]

While many genre theorists agree that it is important in principle to be explicit about text structure and its relation to social activity, the LERN project, and to some extent the SAIL project which sought to make the genres in use in higher education explicit and to teach students the conventions of good argument and analysis face the charge of being "formalistic." [98] Kress in particular is concerned that in Britain such formalism in genre could lead to a slide back to educational authoritarianism. Kress thus calls for rnore openness about curriculum contents instead of principles of modelling that lead to the transmission of textual forms.[99]

Thus there are, as this paper demonstrates, many different points of view with regard to genre literacy but many crucial questions remain unanswered.

The first such question is whether it is possible to use genres for teaching purposes without "reducing courses to narrow presciptivism or formalism and without denying students opportunities for reflecting upon rhetorical or linguistic choices?"

Second, how can we, on the basis of the various definitions of genre, begin to distinguish one genre from another?

Third, How can we decide what makes a text a successful or unsuccessful instance of a particular genre?

Given the differences in understanding, which currently exist within rhetoric, linguistics and psychology, and the limitations of each of these approaches, the best approach would be the integration of text and context.

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[95] Kress, op. cit.

[96] Dixon and Stratta, op. cit., M. Barr. "Genre Theory: What's it all about" *in* B. Stierer and J. Maybin (eds.) *Language, Literacy and Learning in Educational Practice* (Clevedon: OUP, Multilingual Matters, 1994).

[97] Halliday, *System and Written Language.*

[98] D. F. Johnson. *The effectiveness of a genre based approach to teacher trainees and trainers in Zimbabwe.* Unpublished Ph.D.: University of Bristol, 1994.

[99] Kress, *The Power of Literacy.*

Friedemann, for example, argues that, by themselves, neither a text internal nor a text external approach to genre, is adequate.[100] Despite the need for a synthesis of approaches, theorists in general are not placing a great deal of emphasis on merging the two areas. Some theorists are placing an equal weighting on text and context while others acknowledge one area and concentrate on another.

What is required is a combination of the various approaches to genre within a framework which can begin to provide a typology of genre where one genre can be distinguished from another genre with reference to a clear set of criteria.

Going into the details of such an approach requires another paper and is indeed discussed more fully elsewhere.[101] For the purposes of this paper, it may be useful to outline briefly a set of principles for thinking about a language curriculum in South Africa. Some of these principles draw on the work of Kress.[102]

This paper has begun to address the question, what is genre theory and how can it be distinguished from current thinking on literacy? It reflects the most crucial departures of genre theory from current-traditional and progressivist pedagogies and suggests that genre theory offers a new theoretical conceptualisation of a pedagogy of literacy.



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[100] L. Friedemann. "Text, text types, poetic texts." *Nottingham Linguistic Circular,* 3, 2, 1974, 21-31.

[101] Johnson, ibid..

[102] Kress, ibid..

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