Forum

# John Swales's approach to pedagogy in *Genre Analysis*: A perspective from 25 years on☆

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| A R T I C L E   I N F O | A B S T R A C T |
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| | It is now 25 years since the publication of John Swales's seminal book, *Genre Analysis: English in academic and research settings* and it is a good time to take stock of the influence of this book on language teaching. In this article, I review Swales's approach to the pedagogic application of genre theory for language teaching and consider how some of his major ideas might be developed in the light of present day theory. In the course of the discussion I also refer to Swales's own writing since *Genre Analysis*, where relevant. The strands of pedagogic theory I consider are: Vygotskyan theory; genre relations; corpus-informed pedagogy; and English as a Lingua Franca.<br><br>© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved. |

## 1. Introduction

John Swales's *Genre Analysis: English in academic and research settings* (Swales, 1990) (henceforth *Genre Analysis*) has had a tremendous effect on writing pedagogy, particularly in academic and, especially, research-related fields, but also more broadly in the whole area of language pedagogy. In introducing the notion of genre as the basis for programme design and classroom pedagogy, Swales led a move into new territory as far as the teaching of writing is concerned, away from approaches and issues which were prevalent at the time, such as process writing, organisation, revision, cohesion and coherence, grammar, vocabulary, and error analysis (see e.g. papers in Kroll, 1990).

The first sentence of *Genre Analysis* states that '[t]he main aim of this book is to offer an approach to the teaching of academic and research English'. In his second book in the same Cambridge University Press Applied Linguistics series, *Research Genres: Explorations and Applications* (Swales, 2004), some 14 years later, the focus was no longer on pedagogy, Swales now stating that "[he has] left more of the task of articulating the relation of genre to language learning and teaching to others" (p. 4).[1] He says this on the grounds that the genre-based approach to specialised language had become well established and was no longer in need of justification. It is probably true to say that, since *Genre Analysis*, Swales's attention in his publications and his reception in the Applied Linguistics research world has been more on the discourse analysis side of his work than on pedagogy.[2] Within discourse analysis, the aspect of Swales's work that has received most attention is his CARS (Create a Research Space) model of the rhetorical structure of academic article introductions, as presented in *Genre*

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[1] It should be pointed out however, that, in spite of this comment, the sections on the different research genres covered in the volume often conclude with rather specific recommendations for pedagogy.

[2] Swales's other monograph-length contribution, *Other Floors, Other Voices: A Textography of a Small University Building* (Swales, 1998), for example, presents an approach to discourse analysis combining text analysis with ethnographic techniques, but with no particular focus on pedagogy.

*Analysis*. While the CARS model and the move analysis procedure for developing it is undoubtedly worthy of the attention that it has gained, at the same time, Swales's contribution to pedagogy in *Genre Analysis* also needs to be acknowledged.

My purpose in this article is thus to occupy this niche. I will do this in two ways. First I will review what Swales has to say about genre pedagogy in *Genre Analysis* — this in itself, I believe, will be an interesting exercise, some 25 years after the volume's original publication; second, Swales himself having eschewed this option in his 2004 follow-up volume (Swales, 2004), I will consider potential developments of Swales's pedagogic ideas in *Genre Analysis,* also considering what Swales has had to say, where he himself has commented elsewhere on the issues I discuss.

## 2. Swales's views on pedagogy in *Genre Analysis*

Swales's views on genre pedagogy are conveniently summarised in the first chapter of *Genre Analysis*. Following the first sentence of the book, quoted above, stating that his aim is to offer an approach to the teaching of academic and research English, Swales continues by explaining that his pedagogic approach makes use of three key concepts: discourse community, genre, and language-learning task. He also states that the book:

> [t]ries to show that a genre-centred approach offers a workable way of making sense of the myriad communicative events that occur in the contemporary English-speaking academy — a sense-making directly relevant to those concerned with devising English courses and, by extension, to those participating in such courses (p. 1).

He furthermore clarifies that the focus is primarily on "post-secondary academic English" and that he wants to get away from a *remediation* approach to EAP. He wants to "try and build a bridge between English for Specific Purposes/Applied Discourse Analysis on the one side and L1 writing/composition on the other" (p. 2) and he is concerned with academic English "in first as well as second language contexts" (p. 8). The goal of a genre-based approach "is to arrive at sufficient understanding of academic discourse outside FL/ESL/L1 classrooms that language learning and development activities with them can have appropriate shape and purposes" (p. 8). His approach, he argues, "rests on a pragmatic concern to help people, both non-native and native speakers, to develop their academic communicative competence" (p. 9).

After the above description of the aims of *Genre Analysis*, making it abundantly clear that the purpose of the volume is pedagogic, Swales goes on to describe the underpinnings of his theory. *Genre Analysis* is founded on the three key inter-related notions of *discourse community, genre,* and *task* already referred to (pp. 9–10). These three concepts are elaborated on in other articles in this special issue, so I will not elaborate on Swales's treatment of them here, except to say that Swales emphasises how the three terms are inter-related: genres are the property of discourse communities, and the processing procedures involved with genres can be considered as tasks. An important thread binding the three terms of discourse community, genre and task is that of communicative purpose:

> It is communicative purpose that drives the *language* activities of the discourse community; it is communicative purpose that is the prototypical criterion for genre identity, and it is communicative purpose that operates as the primary determinant of task (p. 10).

Chapters 2–4 of *Genre Analysis* are devoted to outlining in greater detail the three concepts of discourse community, genre and task. In Chapter 4, Swales explains that the general framework for programme design should involve four inter-related stages: ethnography; review of currently available instructional materials; discourse analysis; and methodology (p. 68). It is worth noting here that this approach has become standard in EAP materials/programme development.[3] At the end of Chapter 4, Swales provides an extended example of how the notion of task might be applied to pedagogic activities. The activities focus on the area of academic correspondence (memos to dissertation committee members, request letters to academics working elsewhere, and application letters for fellowships assistantships, travel funds, etc.), the rationale being that Swales had noted that many students have difficulty with genres of this type, particularly with regard to organisation and phraseology.[4] Swales noted that these genres were required by a group of international students he had identified who, given the Anglophone turn in the international research community might end up as being part of "the lost generation" of researchers with inadequate English rhetorical skills (p. 78). The Anglophone turn that Swales refers to here, of course, has become much greater in the 25 years since Swales was writing (Flowerdew, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2013; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Pérez-Llantada, 2012; Tang, 2012).

The approach adopted by Swales towards fulfilling this mentoring goal is demonstrated with three short (authentic) request-for-papers letters.[5] In collaboration with the teacher, students are required to perform the following tasks:

1. compare and contrast (discourse) features of the three texts
2. discuss how to improve the texts to make them more effective and get a better response
3. evaluate the appropriateness of various rewordings

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[3] It is true that Swales does not include needs analysis in his curriculum model (and indeed this term is not used at all in *Genre Analysis*), but the ethnography stage can be considered as a particular approach to that procedure.

[4] It is to be noted that these tasks would mostly be conducted by email nowadays.

[5] Again, these would most likely be done by means of email today.