CHAPTER 8

Genre Analysis

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The term ‘genre’ can be traced as far back as Aristotle; it means ‘kind’ or ‘form’ and was used by the Greek philosopher in his Poetics to refer to major types of literature: poetry, drama and the epic. These divisions have expanded considerably, but the notion of genre as a particular type of literature has lasted into the present era. At the same time, it has been extended to refer to more popular cultural forms: soap opera, film noir, western, thriller. These are terms which have entered into the popular consciousness and which are studied in the fields of cultural and media studies. In the field of Applied Linguistics and Educational Linguistics, however, the term ‘genre’ is used rather differently and refers to different communicative events which are associated with particular settings and which have recognised structures and communicative functions. Examples of genres according to this conceptualisation would be business reports, academic lectures, news articles, recipes, religious sermons, political speeches, curriculum vitae, and more recent ‘virtual’ genres such as various types of e-mails, text messages, instant messages, tweets and Facebook pages.

Given the distinctive features of individual genres, they are amenable to pedagogic exploitation; systematic descriptions of the distinguishing features of genres, of how they are produced and how they are received provide targets for learning. In first-language contexts, some genres are acquired naturally in the home, but many have to be taught through the formal education system. In second-language contexts, especially those where there is little or no exposure to first-language contexts, all genres may need to be taught to a greater or lesser extent.

8.2 GENRE AND REGISTER

In the literature, as pointed out in note 1 in Chapter 2 on register, there is sometimes confusion between the terms ‘genre’ and ‘register’. It is important to differentiate the two, although there will inevitably be some overlap. In Chapter 2, we defined register as a type of language associated with a particular field of activity or profession. Given genres may also be associated with particular fields of activity or professions, but, as characterised in the previous section, in this book, they are specific communicative events. Instruction manuals (a type of genre) may be used in the field of aviation, by airline pilots, but they are also used in many other fields and by many other professions. Lectures are another example of a genre mentioned in the previous section. Lectures are attended by students of mathematics, but they are also attended by students in other fields. Lectures, therefore, represent a genre, but not a register. Another way of pinpointing the distinction between register and genre is in terms of communicative purpose. Register is a type of language associated with a particular field or profession, but this language may be used for various purposes. Communicative purpose, on the other hand, is a distinctive feature of genres. Martin (1993: 2), indeed, defines genre as ‘a category
that describes the relation of the social purpose of text to language structure. The purpose of a lecture is didactic; the purpose of a news article is informative; the purpose of a news commentary is persuasive.

Although communicative purpose may be considered as a defining characteristic of genres and a key one in distinguishing it from register, to define it simply in these terms is not sufficient. Indeed, various linguists have identified limitations to communicative purpose as a defining characteristic. Askehave and Swales (2001) note that it is often difficult to ascribe purposes to texts, thus making it difficult to consider purpose as a defining criterion: ‘If communicative purpose is typically ineffable at the outset, or only establishable after considerable research, or can lead to disagreements between “inside” experts and “outside” genre analysts, or indeed among the experts themselves, how can it be retained as a “privileged” guiding criterion?’ (p. 197). Bhatia (1993, 2004) talks about how writers have what he calls ‘private intentions’ in addition to more transparent socially recognised communicative purposes when they create a text/genre. They may seek to manipulate the generic characteristics for their own personal motives. A book review may have evaluation of the object of the review as its recognised communicative purposes, but a reviewer might at the same time seek to criticise the author for personal reasons. Similarly, a question asked in a conference may have the recognised purpose of eliciting information from the speaker, but may, at the same time, seek to undermine the speaker’s credibility or demonstrate the questioner’s knowledge.

8.3 OTHER CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF GENRE

There are a number of other features, in addition to purpose, which have been cited as distinguishing genres.

8.3.1 Staging

First, and this is perhaps the most easily recognised feature of many genres, they are staged. By staged, we mean that a genre has a specific sequential structure (which it follows more or less strictly). We can exemplify this if we consider instructions as a genre. Instructions typically follow a series of stages as in the following simple example (Figure 8.1), noted in a guest house (Alishan International Guest House) kitchen during a recent visit to Australia. Each stage in this text/genre, reading down each column and starting on the left, represents a different instruction or prohibition.1 The three sets of instructions are organised under the three headings of ‘SAY THE KITCHEN’, ‘FOOD ITEMS’ and ‘SAFETY ISSUES’.

8.3.2 Communities of practice

Another characteristic feature of genres is that they belong to particular communities of users (Bhatia, 1993, 2004; Swales, 1990, 2004). Lectures, for example, are engaged in by teachers and students. News articles involve journalists and newspaper readers. People who do not belong to such discourse communities or communities of practice may find it more or less difficult to participate in the relevant genres. Clearly, it takes a lot of expert knowledge to write an academic article in a given field. As Bhatia (2004: 25) notes, established members of a given professional community are likely to have a much better understanding of a genre than apprentices or outsiders. Outsiders are easily identified as such by members of discourse communities. On the other hand, certain genres are familiar to most people. The instruction genre exemplified in Figure 8.1 is a good example
of a genre that many people would be familiar with. Swales (1990) argues that casual conversation and narrative (‘genres’ with which we are all familiar) are outside the purview of Genre Analysis, being somehow prior to more institutionalised and specialised genres and classing them as ‘pre-genres’.2 This claim is debatable, however. Eggins and Slade (2005), for example, have broken down ‘conversation’ into a range of ‘sub-genres’ for the ‘macro-genre’ of conversation, as follows:

- narrative;
- anecdote;
- exemplum;
- recount;
- observation/comment;
- opinion;
- gossip.

This question of ‘pre-genres’ and professional genres is an important one for pedagogy. If genres are only located in professional discourse, they may best be dealt with within the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programmes. If they extend beyond specialised fields, then they can legitimately claim a place within the ‘general English’ curriculum.
8.3.3 Conventionalised lexicogrammatical features

A further characteristic ascribed to genre is that of conventionalised lexicogrammatical features (for example, Bhatia, 1993, 2004; Swales, 1990). If we look at our example of instructions in Figure 8.1 above, we can note a certain number of typical lexicogrammatical features. For example, the use of parallel grammatical structure for many of the instructions and the use of material process verbs (for example, make a mess, clean up, use, wash, wet, dry) is easily recognised as a feature of this particular genre. On the other hand, we can see a certain individual creativity in this particular example of the instructions genre, for example, the rather quirky heading SAY THE KITCHEN, and how the instructions in the left-hand column are presented as oppositional pairs – You make a mess/You clean it up, You use them/You wash them. Furthermore, most of the instructions in the left-hand column are not worded as imperatives, as is more typically the case with instructions (and as we find in the right-hand column), but with what might be called reduced conditionals ([If] you make a mess, you [must] clean it up, [If] you use them, you [must] wash them). Some genres are more conventionalised than others. Oaths of office, marriage vows and formal written invitations, for example, tend to be quite formulaic. Kuiper’s (2009) book, Formulaic Genres, deals with weather forecasts, livestock auctions, the chanting of tobacco auctioneers, supermarket check-out talk, pump aerobics, square-dancing and engagement notices, among other genres), all of which are classed as formulaic by Kuiper.

8.3.4 Recurrent nature of genres

We have noted how genres are conventionalised to a greater or lesser extent in terms of their communicative purposes, their staging, their lexicogrammatical patterning and how they are conventionally used by particular communities. Conventionality is an important feature when we come to consider how genre knowledge is acquired. Genre knowledge develops through repeated exposure and practice. Knowledge acquired through repeated exposure is stored in the form of what psychologists refer to as schemata (singular, schema), which are mental representations used to store information. These representations create expectations which are invoked when individuals participate in the performance of genres. If some generic feature meets our expectations in terms of our model of a given genre, then it is stored in memory as belonging to that genre. If a generic feature does not meet our generic expectations, then it is stored separately. This is how genre knowledge is built up over time and through repeated exposure. We can thus say that its recurrent nature is another important feature of genre.

8.3.5 Genre as a flexible concept

Given the hedging and provisos which have been given for each of these features in the above discussion (the ‘more or less’ nature of each of the features discussed), a ‘flexible’ rather than a ‘static’ view is required (Paltridge, 2005/2006: 89). Indeed, a number of scholars have argued that genre is beyond definition. Swales (2004), for example, prefers to talk about metaphors rather than definitions with respect to genres, on the grounds that definitions are not ‘true in all possible worlds and all possible times’ (cited in Paltridge, 2006: 86). Similarly, Paltridge (2006: 89) argues for genres to be considered as prototypes rather than defining features.4

There may be typical ways in which they are organised at the discourse level, typical situations in which they occur, and typical things they ‘aim to do’. It is not always the case, however, that these will necessarily be the same in every instance, even though they may be in the majority of cases.
Finally, Kress (2003: 101) has rather eloquently written about the tension around the claimed conventional features of genre, referring to:

the fundamental tension around genre, hovering uneasily between regularity and replicability on the one hand … and the dynamic for constant flux and change on the other hand.

8.3.6 Genre relations

Increasingly, genre scholars have come to acknowledge that, in order to conduct an adequate analysis, it is necessary to take into account other genres with which the target genre interacts (Bhatia, 2004; Swales, 2004). We can use the umbrella term genre relation to refer to the range of different ways individual instances of a genre can relate to other genres. Devitt (1991) uses the term genre set to refer to a range of text genres which a professional group uses in the course of their daily routine, for example, a conference presentation, a poster and a research article in the case of academics. Bazerman (1994: 97) talks about systems of genres. A genre system, for Bazerman, is a full set of genres which constitute a complete interaction (for example, a complete exchange of letters).

Raisanen (2002) refers to genre sets and genre systems, but she also considers genre chains, which are chronologically related sequences of genres in a given interaction. The following is a simplified version of the genre chain for a conference paper, as illustrated by Raisanen (2002) (also reproduced in Swales, 2004: 19), showing how other genres precede and follow the conference paper itself.

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Call for abstracts ↓
Conference abstract ↓
Review process ↓
[Acceptance] ↓
Instructions ↓
Conference paper draft ↓
Review process ↓
[Acceptance] ↓
Revised conference paper ↓
Review process ↓
Published conference paper ↓
Oral presentation
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My study of public discourse in the lead-up to and following the change of sovereignty over Hong Kong from Great Britain to the People’s Republic of China (Flowerdew, 2012a), is interesting for its involvement of a genre chain. The study focused on the post-colonial government’s promotion
of Hong Kong as a world-class city. This promotion involved a quite complex genre chain involving genres from the genre set used by many governments: public forums and exhibitions, focus group discussions, presentations to statutory and advisory bodies, a website, consultation documents, information leaflets and other publicity materials, including consultation digests, information leaflets and videos.

One might think that a consultation would follow a systematic sequence in a genre chain, if not a tight sequence, then a general direction in which these genres serve first to generate the ideas, then to present them to the public for feedback, then to generate a report based on this feedback, before promotional genres are produced to promote the idea to the Hong Kong public and the world at large. In actual fact, however, because the Hong Kong government ultimately controlled this ‘consultation’, the study showed, the promotional texts preceded the completion of the consultation. This is a very clear example of how the elements in a genre chain should interact, the meanings in one text influencing the meanings in the next member of the chain. But in this case, the flow was disrupted, suggesting that the so-called consultation was cosmetic, the Hong Kong government having decided what it wanted to do before conducting the consultation.

Uhrig (2011) brings together the notions of genre set and genre chain (he uses the term ‘genre network’) in his depiction of the genres an MBA student needed to participate in, leading up to an assessed oral presentation (Figure 8.2). As Figure 8.2 indicates, before students were able to perform the presentation, they had to participate in a range of other genres, including reading a business case, writing a recommendation based on the case, listening to lectures, reading textbooks and participating in classroom interaction.

A further notion we can classify under the umbrella of genre relations, in addition to genre set, genre system and genre chain, is that of disciplinary genre (Bhatia, 2004: 54). Disciplinary genres include all those genres associated with a profession or discipline (not just those involved in a particular individual’s sphere of activity (genre system) or specific activity (genre set and genre chain)). Disciplinary genre refers to a more abstract concept than the preceding three, in so far as it may not relate to the life world of individuals. But the concept is significant in so far as it can identify all of those genres which an individual might engage in in a particular domain, and which might, therefore, serve as an organising principle for a language programme. Table 8.1 sets out each type of genre relation identified here.
Each of the four different manifestations of genre relations listed above highlights how genres interconnect one to another. This is very important for Genre Analysis, because it demonstrates how an analysis of a given genre may be missing a lot if it is taken in isolation from other members of its set of relations. Genre relations are also very important for genre-based pedagogy. The genre set allows the learner to see the similarities and differences in move structure and linguistic realisation patterns across different genres in a particular field. The genre system allows the learner to see the similarities and variations in move structure and linguistic realisation patterns within one particular interaction. The genre chain also focuses on one interaction as it develops over time through different genres. Disciplinary genres allow the learner to see the full range of genres, move structure and realisation patterns in which they may be involved at some point in the future. Furthermore, participation in a set of genre relations may also aid in developing genre knowledge of individual genres within that set of relations (Tardy, 2009). Working with sets of genre relations is, of course, closer to real life than dealing with individual instances of genres and may be closer to the target activities of a language curriculum than dealing with individual genres in isolation.

### 8.3.7 Intertextuality

In an educational context, working at the level of genre relations highlights the role of intertextuality – how there are references in one text to other texts (Kristeva, 1980; Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) (see Chapter 1). Intertextuality may take various forms. Fairclough (1992a: 117) distinguishes between manifest intertextuality – quotation, citation and paraphrase – and constitutive intertextuality – (generic) features which do not leave an obvious trace from the source. Devitt (1991) distinguishes three types of intertextuality: referential, functional and generic. Referential intertextuality is when one text refers directly to another one; it is close to Fairclough’s manifest intertextuality. This may be quite easily recognised. Functional intertextuality is when a text is part of a larger system of texts dealing with a particular issue (Bazerman’s genre set). Generic intertextuality is when a text draws on similar texts created in a similar situation (Fairclough’s constitutive intertextuality). Table 8.2 sets out each type of intertextuality identified here.

In two studies I conducted with Alina Wan (Flowerdew & Wan, 2006, 2010), focusing on tax computation letters and audit reports, respectively, each type of Devitt’s three categories of intertextuality was noted. Taking the later of these two studies as an example, referential intertextuality was noted in the audit reports in the way that they cited data from the company which was under audit’s accounting documents. Functional intertextuality was present because the audit reports were part of the whole audit process involving many different genres, most notably perhaps the company’s account documents, but also meetings and e-mails between the auditors and the company’s accountants and discussions among members of the audit team. Generic
intertextuality was a very notable feature of the audit reports, because the auditors followed very closely the format of earlier reports, in fact using templates. As a result, each audit report looked extremely similar.

It is worth mentioning here that generic intertextuality varies according to contexts. In workplace settings, there is a much greater tolerance for generic intertextuality, very often sections of one document being incorporated into another to the extent that, as noted in my studies with Alina Wan (Flowerdew & Wan, 2006, 2010), templates may be used. In other contexts, creative writing classes in schools and universities, for example, much greater value is placed on originality and creativity and copying or borrowing from other texts is frowned upon and classed as plagiarism. There is a fine line between generic intertextuality and plagiarism, however, which may be hard for learners to grasp.

All of these aspects of intertextuality are important for learning, in both mother-tongue and second-language contexts. There is clearly work to be done by the curriculum developer and the learner in raising to consciousness these features of genre, especially the more ‘hidden’ constitutive variety, which may not be obvious. Much genre-based pedagogy focuses on individual texts and this notion of intertextuality is lost.

### 8.3.8 Intercultural nature of genres

Given their grounding in communities of practice and the fact that communities of practice are likely to vary across cultures, it follows that genres are likely to be subject to intercultural variation. In early work, Kaplan (1966) noted differences in the way different cultures structured academic essays, making the strong claim that this was due to different cultural thought patterns. Kaplan has since withdrawn his strong cognitive claim and various writers have been at pains to avoid overgeneralising cultural differences across genres, preferring to see differences in terms of ‘the differences or preferences in the pragmatic and strategic choices that writers make in response to external demands and cultural histories’ (Kubota, 1997, cited in Paltridge, 2006: 96).

Notwithstanding the possible causes of generic differences, various researchers have noted significant contrasts. In one interesting study, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Fortanet-Gómez (2008) compared two corpora of peninsular Spanish and American English job résumés targeting multinational corporations. In spite of the fact that both corpora emanated from communities which shared what the authors, following Scollon and Scollon (2012), refer to as the Western utilitarian discourse system and that they shared the same communicative purpose, a number of differences were noted both at the level of assessments by members of the two communities of practice and at the level of rhetorical structure. One significant difference, for example, was that, while both groups of résumé writers mitigated possible threats to face by means of impersonalisation, résumés in the American
subcorpus accomplished this by means of omission of all first-person pronouns or determiners, while résumés in the Spanish subcorpus preferred to perform this same function by means of nominalisation. In terms of pedagogic application, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Fortanet-Gómez (2008: 70) concluded that ‘[i]n an increasingly globalised world, it becomes essential for ESP practitioners to learn more about résumé writing practices and their assessments by members of the same community of practice in different cultures to avoid miscommunication and misperceptions that may end in an unsuccessful job search’.

8.4 APPROACHES TO GENRE PEDAGOGY

Approaches to genre in Applied Linguistics and Language Education have developed differently in the diverse contexts of North America, Great Britain and Australia, most notably. In North America, genre theory has taken a more sociological approach, while in Great Britain and Australia the approach to genre has been more linguistic. In all three domains, genre theory has been applied in pedagogic practice, with differing emphases. In a much-quoted article, Hyon (1996) categorised genre study according to three approaches, or schools: the ESP school, the Sydney school, and the New Rhetoric (more recently Rhetorical Genre Studies [RGS]) school. We will discuss these three approaches one by one.

8.4.1 The ESP school

8.4.1.1 Key concepts

To begin with the ESP school, this work was started by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), the former investigating academic genres (primarily the research article) and the latter more interested in business and legal genres. The focus of this work was pedagogic, the idea being that good genre descriptions could feed into ESP materials development and pedagogy more generally. The basic idea is to establish systematic links between communicative purposes and properties of texts. Communicative purposes, it is argued, are expressed in characteristic ways in texts by particular discourse communities – the people who regularly participate in a given genre and who share similar communicative purposes. Communicative purposes are expressed in a staged or sequenced manner, a text being built up systematically through a series of what are called moves and steps (as we have already seen in our instructions text (Figure 8.1), for example. These moves and steps may be obligatory or optional, may vary in their sequencing, may be repeated, and may be embedded one within another (Swales, 1990: 58).

Perhaps the best-known model of generic staging is Swales’s (1990: 141) CARS (‘Create A Research Space’) structure, which he posits for academic research article introductions. The model indicates how scholars support and promote their contribution to the field by first identifying the field of enquiry and summarising previous research, then identifying a gap in the existing work, and finally summarising how they will fill this gap. The three stages of the model, with submoves, or steps, are as follows:

Move 1. Establishing a territory:
   Step 1. Claiming centrality
   and/or
   Step 2. Making topic generalisation
   and/or
   Step 3. Reviewing items of previous research.
Move 2. Establishing a niche:
   Step 1A. Counterclaiming
   or
   Step 1B. Indicating a gap
   or
   Step 1C. Question-raising
   or
   Step 1D. Continuing a tradition.

Move 3. Occupying the niche:
   Step 1A. Outlining purposes
   or
   Step 1B. Announcing present research
   Step 2. Announcing principal findings
   Step 3. Indicating research article structure.

As another example of schematic structure, Bhatia (1993) offers the following model of seven typical moves for the genre of sales letters:

1. establishing credentials;
2. introducing the offer;
3. offering incentives:
   a. offering the product/service;
   b. essential detailing of the offer;
   c. indicating value of the offer;
4. referring to enclosed documents;
5. inviting further communication;
6. using pressure tactics;
7. ending politely.

These moves and steps are not all obligatory, it should be emphasised again, nor do they necessarily follow the sequence given, and, in some cases, they may be repeated, or recursive.

As well as having a prototypical schematic structure, the various communicative functions of a genre exhibit typical conventionalised verbalisation patterns, or realisations, which are again recognised as such by the discourse community. The following are examples of authentic realisations of the first step of the first move of Swales’s research article introductions, ‘claiming centrality’, as cited by Swales (1990: 144):

- Recently, there has been a spate of interest in how to …
- In recent years, applied researchers have become increasingly interested in …
- The possibility … has generated interest in …
- Recently, there has been wide interest in …
- The time development … is a classic problem in fluid mechanics.
- The explication of the relationship between … is a classic problem of …
- Many investigators have recently turned to …

It is important to stress that there is no one-to-one relation between move and realisation pattern (unless a genre is extremely conventionalised, such as vows at a wedding, or the oath at a public swearing-in), but, in many institutional genres, there is a good possibility of typical verbalisation
patterns occurring, such as those presented here by Swales. In the examples just cited, for example, we can immediately note the recurrence of recently/in recent years, interested in and classic problem, along with the use of the present perfect tense in more than one instance.

Knowing how to perform a genre, according to this ESP view, involves knowing both its schematic structure, or staging, on the one hand, and the specific form–function correlations of each stage, on the other. Someone participating in a genre who does not have a command of these specific patterns and the limits to their possible variability is quickly recognised as either incompetent or an outsider; an important consideration from the L2 perspective, where non-native speakers may need to compete with native speakers in academic and professional contexts.

Since their original book-length treatments of genre, both Swales (2004) and Bhatia (2004) have developed their insights further, both indicating how there is greater complexity to genre than perhaps suggested in their original coverage of the topic. Bhatia (2004), for example, contrasts what he characterises as the relative simplicity of the ‘ideal world’ of his original analysis with the greater complexity of what he calls the ‘real world’ of his later conception. The ‘real world’ view incorporates three main insights. First, that genres occur in relation to other genres and should not be considered in isolation. Second, that genres are dynamic and have a propensity to develop and be exploited in their composition by expert users. Third, that there are disciplinary differences in genres, a feature which had been underestimated in the earlier approach.

In more recent years, attention has been turned on the part of some ESP practitioners to the application of Corpus Linguistics techniques to Genre Analysis. Corpus techniques have proved to be powerful tools in highlighting typical lexicogrammatical patterns functioning with and across generic moves (Biber et al., 2007; Flowerdew, 1993a; L. Flowerdew, 2005, 2008a, b; Flowerdew & Forest, 2009; Gavioli, 2005; Gledhill, 2000; Lee & Swales, 2006; Partington, 1998).

At the same time, as A. M. Johns (2003: 206) has noted, ESP ‘is becoming increasingly context-driven, and the overlap between the New Rhetoric [RGS] … and the ESP research and theory, becomes greater every year’. A focus on context as much as text was always in fact a part of ESP Genre Analysis. Take, for example, the seven stages Bhatia (1993: 22–36) recommends for Genre Analysis, as follows, five of which (1, 2, 3, 5, 7) are to do with context.

1. placing the given genre-text in a situational context;
2. surveying the existing literature;
3. refining the situational/contextual analysis;
4. selecting a corpus;
5. studying the institutional context;
6. levels of linguistic analysis;
7. consulting with specialist informants.

It is just that, in practice, much of the focus in ESP has been on the linguistic level, stage 6. Some ESP approaches employing a more contextual approach would include studies by, for example, Boswood and Marriott (1994), A. M. Johns (1997, 2002a), Paltridge (2004, 2008), and Swales and Luebs (1995) (see also the discussion in A. M. Johns et al., 2006).

**8.4.1.2 Application to pedagogy**

Application of ESP genre theory has focused on tertiary-level contexts, helping students to prepare for both undergraduate and postgraduate study. A very popular textbook in universities throughout the world is Swales and Feak’s (2012) *Academic Writing for Graduate Students*, a volume which incorporates many of the findings of ESP Genre Analysis conducted by Swales and Feak and their collaborators.
In his 1990 volume, Swales indicated how a genre-based pedagogy can be developed as part of a task-based approach. He provided an example of the genre of request letters for academic papers. The learning activity is broken down into four tasks, as follows, based on a set of genre samples (in this case, request letters).7

1. analysing the similarities and differences in the subject and purpose of the samples;
2. describing what changes might be made to increase the effectiveness of the samples;
3. A. examining extracts of the letters for their lexicogrammatical features and their appropriateness to the situation;
   B. drafting a letter;
4. collecting examples of correspondence received by students in the form of short letters and sharing with classmates.

Swales’s approach represents a fairly conservative application of genre theory to a concrete pedagogical situation. The procedure is one of familiarisation with the genre and its generic features, consciousness raising vis-à-vis the social and lexicogrammatical dimensions of the genre, hands-on practice in producing a genre and critical reflection on the whole process.

One of the most influential applications of the results of ESP genre has been Swales’s CARS model and adaptations to various contexts. Baker’s (2010) recent description of his pedagogic application of the CARS model in the Chilean context is fairly typical. Baker describes how the following steps of reading, speaking, noticing and writing were applied to a given academic article:

1. Students read the article outside class.
2. The students’ reaction to the article is discussed in class.
3. Students underline citations, rhetorical phrases, lexis and signpost language.
4. The rhetorical use of the underlined language is then discussed.
5. A three-paragraph reader response is written.

Results from the discussion recorded by Baker include the following:

1. The first person ‘I’ can be used.
2. ‘You’ is never used to address the reader.
3. Introductions include the three-move ‘CARS’ model (Swales, 1990).
4. Contractions are not used.
5. Modals are used to soften claims (hedges) and mark degrees of certainty.
6. Citations are a prominent feature and positively affect the writer’s credibility.
7. Conclusions are short, precise and restate the aims of the article.
8. Passive voice is a prominent feature.
9. Formal vocabulary is used.
10. Noun phrases (nominalisation) often replace verbs.
11. Phrasal verbs are rarely used.
12. A rich variety of rhetorical phrases is used to achieve cohesion and coherence.
13. Sentence length, word order and word choice affect the writer’s ‘voice’.
14. Impersonal language is seen as objective and unbiased.
15. Unsupported claims negatively affect the writer’s credibility.

Since Swales’s (1990) initial work on ESP genre, ESP researchers and practitioners have been mindful of accusations of overgeneralisation and prescriptivism in the application of genre descriptions to pedagogy. Thus, Swales (1990: 213) already suggested ‘consciousness-raising’ rather than overt teaching. Similarly, while Dudley-Evans (1997: 62) writes that ‘the main argument in favour of
the use of genre analysis in teaching ESP is that it provides non-native speakers with the linguistic and rhetorical tools they need to cope with the tasks required of them, and that ‘of course, the linguistic forms are important’, he nevertheless argues that ‘one should make apparent the range of possibilities for expressing a move or other units constituting a genre’ (emphasis added). I myself argued that, in certain circumstances, a ‘process’ or ‘educational’ approach to the teaching of genres (Flowerdew, 1993b) is to be preferred to a more prescriptive ‘training’ model and that understanding of the principles underlying generic patterning is more important in developing generic competence than specific features of individual genres.

In a recent monograph, Tardy (2009) conducted a study of the development of genre knowledge on the part of a group of graduate students in a North American university. Tardy’s findings provided answers to three fundamental questions in her study. The first of these questions was: ‘How do writers move toward expert genre knowledge?’ Tardy concluded that six main resources and strategies are drawn upon in this enterprise: (1) prior experience and repeated practice; (2) textual interactions; (3) oral interactions; (4) mentoring and disciplinary participation; (5) shifting roles within a genre network; and (6) resource availability. Tardy’s second question was: ‘What impacts the shape of genre learning?’ Tardy identified three factors: the individual, the community and the task. The third question was: ‘Can genres be taught?’ Tardy’s response was affirmative, although she noted that proficiency in genre performance cannot be exclusively developed in the context of the classroom.

In order to promote effective genre learning, Tardy offered three principles for pedagogy.

1. Build a genre-rich environment which provides students with a range of strategies and resources.
2. Help student learners develop complex and dynamic views of texts, while at the same time allowing that texts may sometimes need to be simplified.
3. Consider genres in the context of their networks.

8.4.2 The Sydney school

8.4.2.1 Key concepts

This approach to genre is referred to as the Sydney school because it developed out of work conducted at the University of Sydney, among followers of the systemic functional linguist (SFL) Halliday, under the leadership of Martin, Martin and Rose (2012: 1) explain that the term Sydney school was first used by Green and Lee (1994), although it became more popular following the paper published by Hyon (1996), referred to above. The Sydney school employs a methodology derived from Hallidayan SFL, a model which, as shown in Chapter 2, is particularly powerful in identifying the close correlations between form and function which are a characteristic of particular linguistic situations.

To remind ourselves of this model, as presented in Chapter 2, Halliday posits three parameters of context, or context of situation. These are field, which is the subject matter and activity type of the text; tenor, which corresponds to the relation between the participants in the text; and mode, which refers to the rhetorical channel and function of the discourse – what part the text is playing (for example, Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). These three contextual parameters are associated with their respective macrofunctions, or purposes: ideational (conveying factual information), interpersonal (expressing the speaker’s attitude and indicating and maintaining social relations) and textual (creating texts which are coherent and cohesive within themselves and which fit the situation in which they are created).

As defined in Chapter 2 and in this chapter, above, register is a particular language variety, usually associated with a particular group of people or activity. As noted in Chapter 2, Halliday is ambivalent about the role of genre in his model and it is not a part of his habitual metalanguage.
Some of Halliday’s fellow systemicists, however, have devoted considerable attention to the notion of genre and how it might fit into an SFL model. For Martin (1992: 505–506), most notably, following Gregory and Carroll (1978), communicative purpose, as the motivation of genre, is integral to all components of a text’s meaning – ideational, interpersonal and textual. It therefore merits a separate level to register. Genres, for Martin, as the unfolding of communicative purposes, create different permutations of ideational, interpersonal and textual meaning, or register. Two genres, such as live commentary and newspaper story, may typically unfold differently – the commentary starts at the beginning and the news story with the result – but may belong to the same register, sports.

Just as the Sydney school shares with the ESP school the notion of communicative purpose as essential to genre, so do they share the notion of staging. Terms used to refer to this feature in the SFL tradition are schematic structure or structural formula (Hasan, 1977, 1979, 1985; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2012; Ventola, 1987). So, the Sydney school conception of genre is in accordance with the distinction made at the beginning of this chapter between register and genre, in emphasising communicative purpose and staging as the distinctive features of the latter. Bringing together the notions of communicative purpose and schematic structure, Martin (1984: 25) thus defines genre as ‘a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity’.

Paltridge (2002) highlights an important difference between the Sydney school and the ESP approach to genre, making a distinction between genre and text type. Genres can be recognised according to external criteria and are named by their users. Laboratory reports, research articles, lectures and tutorials are examples of genres. Following Swales (1990), these, or their component parts, are the focus of ESP Genre Analysis. Text types, on the other hand, are rhetorical modes that follow systematic internal discourse patterns. Problem–solution, exposition and argument are examples of text types. Text types, referred to as elemental genres, are the main focus of the Sydney school. Elemental genres, or text types, combine together to create what are called macro-genres (e.g. laboratory reports, essays) by the Sydney school.

Martin (1992) traces the notion of schematic structure back to Mitchell (1957), who, like Halliday, was greatly influenced by the British linguist, Firth. Mitchell, although not using the term ‘genre’, specified the following elements for shop transactions as they are conducted in Libya, where he did his research.

1. salutation;
2. enquiry as to the object of sale;
3. investigation of the object of sale;
4. bargaining;
5. conclusion.

Later, as an example of SFL genre work on schematic structure, Ventola (1987) proposed the following prototypical set of moves for service encounters.

1. greeting;
2. attendance allocation;
3. service bid;
4. service;
5. resolution;
6. goods handover;
7. pay;
8. closing;
9. goodbye.

Table 8.3 shows the schematic structures of key elemental genres, as developed by the Sydney school (Lock & Lockhart, 1998, cited in Hyland, 2004: 33).
Figure 8.3 shows the secondary school genres mapped in terms of their social purposes.

To show how schematic structure and form–function correlations interact, interesting work has been done by Coffin (2006). Coffin shows how the school genre of *historical account* typically develops according to the three stages of *background, account sequence* and *deduction*. In
the account sequence stage the writer chronicles events as they unfolded in past time. Instead of being simply presented as following one from another, however, events play an agentive role in producing subsequent events (p. 211). This is realised in the grammar by means of nominalisations (the use of nouns, where more usually verbs would be used) in initial clause (thematic) position. This form–function relation of nominalisation realising event as agent is illustrated in the following text, where the nominalisations are ‘belief’, ‘abuse’, ‘period’, and ‘resistance’ respectively.8

As a result in their belief in ‘terra nullius’, from 1788 onwards the English began to occupy sacred land and use Aboriginal hunting and fishing grounds. This abuse by the new British government soon led to Aborigines becoming involved in a physical struggle for power. The first main period of Aboriginal resistance was in the Sydney area from 1794 to 1816 when the Eora people, under the leadership of Pemulwuy, resisted the Europeans through guerrilla warfare. This resistance resulted in the colonisers using different methods of control.

8.4.2.2 Application to pedagogy

In contrast to ESP, with its pedagogic focus on tertiary-level contexts, Sydney school genre theory has been developed primarily within the context of Australian primary schools (also in secondary and indigenous contexts), where it has been used as a tool for developing a fully fledged pedagogy (Martin & Rose, 2012). This started with work by Martin and Rothery (Martin & Rose, 2012; Rothery, 1996, cited in Feez, 2002: 54), who categorised primary school text types, or genres (Feez, 2002: 54), resulting in five major ‘genre families’ of stories, histories, reports, explanations and procedures, each characterised by distinctive schematic structures, which were in turn characterised by typical lexical, grammatical and cohesive patterning (Martin & Rose, 2008, 2012). This taxonomy was then developed into a ‘language-based approach to teaching and learning’ (Martin & Rose, 2012; Rothery, 1996, cited in Feez, 2002: 54) which, in particular, sought to give less-privileged children access to genres which are highly valued in the society at large. A teaching–learning cycle was developed, which drew on Vygotsky’s (1986) dialogic model of learning, with the teacher providing scaffolding to help learners participate in the joint construction of learning tasks (Martin & Rose, 2012).9

The text-based syllabus upon which the genre pedagogy model was developed (Feez & Joyce, 1998) is presented to learners by means of a multistage model of classroom interaction on the lines of that presented in Chapter 2, for register, and consisting of: (1) building the context; (2) modelling and deconstructing the text; (3) joint construction of the text; (4) independent construction of the text; and (5) linking related texts (Feez, 2002; Feez & Joyce, 1998; Martin & Rose, 2012). Perhaps surprisingly, Sydney school genre-based pedagogy has not been greatly employed in ESP settings (although see Flowerdew, 2002; and Jones, 2004).

This methodology can be incorporated into a model of course design, as developed by Burns and Joyce (cited in Hyland, 2004: 92), as follows:

1. Identify the overall contexts in which the language will be used.
2. Develop course goals based on this context of use.
3. Note the sequence of language events within the context.
4. List the genres used in this sequence.
5. Outline the sociocognitive knowledge students need to participate in this context.
6. Gather and analyse samples of texts.
7. Develop units of work related to these genres and develop learning objectives to be achieved.
In school contexts, this model might effectively be used with the curriculum map illustrated in Figure 8.3 above. Such a map can be used to indicate to teachers how to select and analyse texts within the context of their overall programmes (Martin & Rose, 2012).

Less well known than their work on writing, Sydney school linguists have applied their genre model to the teaching of reading (Martin & Rose, 2012). This is very noteworthy, because most applied genre work has focused on writing (although see Hyon, 2002, for a notable exception). Martin and Rose’s approach to reading works with the same sequential phase approach of their descriptive work. The description of the generic stages, or phases, as they are now referred to, is used to inform the preparation before reading; the teacher is able to paraphrase the text which is about to be read. Martin and Rose (2012: 131) describe this procedure as follows:

This type of preparation summarises the sequence of phases identified in the analysis above, in terms that all students can understand, including its key events, and using many of the words from the passage. It also starts by relating the passage to the preceding events. Such a preview gives students a map of how the text will unfold, including a series of signposts so that they will recognise key elements as they occur. No student will struggle to comprehend what is happening at each step, so all will be able to follow the words closely as they are read. If the text is read aloud, weaker readers need not struggle to decode unfamiliar words as it is read to them. If students are likely to find the text comparatively easy to follow, the preview can be brief, as in the chapter preparation above. If the text is more challenging, the preview can be more detailed, summarising its phases.

8.4.3 The Rhetorical Genre Studies school

8.4.3.1 Key concepts

Viewed from the perspective of RGS, the ESP and Sydney schools have more in common with each other than sets them apart. It is true that, in directing their attention to schematic structure, on the one hand, and form–function correlation at the level of the clause, on the other (and also the interaction of the two), the ESP and Sydney schools are both linguistic in approach, setting a lot of store on the relationship between communicative function and linguistic form.

RGS scholars – few, if any, of whom have a background in linguistics, as A. M. Johns (2002b) tells us – have a much more social way of looking at genre (for example, Freedman & Medway, 1994a, b), seeing the linguistic orientation of the ESP and Sydney schools as too deterministic and simplistic. The linguistic approach of the ESP and Sydney schools, these researchers argue, tends to reify genre, in not allowing for the fact that genres are all the time evolving (see, for example, Bazerman, 1988; Yates, 1989). The linguistic approach, they argue, also fails to take account of the multiple purposes of genres; of the different purposes of reader and writer or speaker and hearer; and of how purposes develop as a genre progresses (A. M. Johns, 2003). The linguistic approach, according to these RGS scholars, also overemphasises the conventional nature of form–function relations at the clause level and thereby neglects the potential for creativity within genres. The linguistic view, furthermore, fails to take account of the intertextual nature of genres (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Kristeva, 1980), the RGS school contends, of how each unfolding of a genre draws on participants’ previous experience of that genre and related genres; finally, according to RGS, the linguistic approach fails to take account of the hybrid nature of genres, of how they intertwine with each other and how some elements are more easily recognisable as generic than others (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995: 17).

If the above are the negative aspects of the linguistic approach for the RGS scholars, what are the features of genre which they themselves emphasise? Hyon (1996: 698) tells us that RGS
focuses more on situational context than linguistic forms and that it emphasises social purposes and the actions resulting from these purposes within specific situations. In a seminal paper for RGS, Miller (1984: 151), one of the most influential members of the RGS group, claims that a definition of genre should be focused on the action it is used to accomplish rather than its substance or form.

An important outcome of this emphasis on action is that Genre Analysis methodology needs to be ethnographic rather than linguistic; it must focus on the attitudes, beliefs, activities, values and patterns of behaviour of the discourse community engaging in the genre or genres which is/are the focus of study. There is, therefore, a need to go beyond what Luke (1994: ix) refers to as the mere ‘broad brush-stroke references to the importance of “context of situation”’ of more text-oriented researchers. Or, as Coe (2002: 199) puts it, ‘genres are not just text types; they imply/invite/ create/(re)construct situations (and contexts), communities, writers and readers (that is, subject positions’.

A good example of this social approach would be Schryer’s (1993) account of the attitudes of clinicians and researchers towards the manuscripts they write and read. Another example would be Casanave’s (1992) study of a graduate student in sociology and how the types of writing she was required to do alienated her from the discipline, because they seemed remote from the reason she had been drawn to it, to help the underprivileged. Further examples would be Artemeva’s account of how novice engineers learn their professional genres (Artemeva, 2006) or Smart and Brown’s (2006) study of professional writings of students placed as interns in various professional contexts.

Because, for the RGS school, genre focuses on action, it must be related to cognition, since cognition and action are related one to the other (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010: 79). Bawarshi and Reiff (2010: 79–80) draw on Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), leading RGS theoreticians:

Genre knowledge (knowledge of rhetorical and formal conventions) is inextricably linked to what Berkenkotter and Huckin refer to as procedural knowledge (knowledge of when and how to use certain disciplinary tools, how and when to inquire, how and when to frame questions, how to recognize and negotiate problems, and where, how, and when to produce knowledge within disciplinary contexts). Genre knowledge is also linked to background knowledge – both content knowledge and knowledge of shared assumptions, including knowledge of kairos, having to do with rhetorical timing and opportunity. As forms of situated cognition, thus, genres enable their users not only to communicate effectively, but also to participate in (and reproduce) a community’s ‘norms, epistemology, ideology, and social ontology.’

At the same time, perhaps because of its social nature, RGS stresses the fluidity of genres, how they are ever changing and may be manipulated by their participants (Schryer, 1993, refers to ‘stabilised-for-now’ structures of genres). One ramification of this fluidity is that even conventionalised genres may be open to change when manipulated by particularly influential or powerful individuals. Bazerman (1988), for example, shows the powerful effect Newton and Edison had in shaping the scientific research article. Genres have also undergone much more sudden and striking changes and development with the advent of new technology-dependent genres such as blogs and podcasts.

Returning now to the role of the individual in genre creation, every time someone engages in a genre, the question arises as to how much they should rely on the prefabricated patterns and routines, the standardised generic features, which have been made available to them from previous repeated encounters with the genre and how much they should be creative and innovative by choosing non-standard forms. To a degree, this choice will depend upon the extent to which a genre is conventionalised. A genre such as a wedding ceremony, coronation or presidential swearing-in leaves little, if any, room for choice. But a dinner-table conversation, a poem or a personal letter all provide room for individual creativity; indeed, one’s performance of genres such as these may be judged according to how creative and original one is. An important part of an individual’s genre
knowledge is thus knowing when and how to follow the conventions, on the one hand, and when and how to be creative, on the other.

Given the dichotomy of genre as at one and the same time fluid and yet conventionalised, genre may be open to contestation and struggle. These two opposing generic forces of fluidity and stability were referred to by Bakhtin (1986), the precursor of contemporary writing on genre, as centripetal and centrifugal forces, forces which he saw as fundamental in language use. With contestation and struggle within genre studies we enter into the realm of language power and the potential for a critical Genre Analysis, an approach aimed at the ‘revealing of unseen players and unmasking of others’, as Freedman and Medway (1994a: 2) put it.

Another feature of genre from the RGS perspective is its reflexivity: how, on the one hand, society reflects generic structures, because generic structures are there before society can make use of them, but how, on the other hand, generic structures reflect society, because they are continually modelled and remodelled by society, their users. An important implication of this view for Genre Analysis is, again, that it needs to be dialectic; it needs to study both the society which is using the genre or genres which are the focus of study, but at the same time it needs to study the generic structures themselves. Analysis must thus be a constant to-ing and fro-ing between context and text, text and context.

A final feature of work in RGS we can mention here is how it is often complemented with other theories, such as activity theory, situated learning theory, theories of distributed cognition, Giddens’s structuration theory and Bourdieu’s social theory of practice (Artemeva & Freedman, 2006a).

Although we have highlighted the salient features of the RGS perspective its reflexivity: how, on the one hand, society reflects generic structures, because generic structures are there before society can make use of them, but how, on the other hand, generic structures reflect society, because they are continually modelled and remodelled by society, their users. An important implication of this view for Genre Analysis is, again, that it needs to be dialectic; it needs to study both the society which is using the genre or genres which are the focus of study, but at the same time it needs to study the generic structures themselves. Analysis must thus be a constant to-ing and fro-ing between context and text, text and context.

As explicated in their theoretic formulations, these two approaches [ESP and Sydney school, on the one hand, and RGS, on the other] have much in common. Both insist on the limitation of traditional conceptions of genres which focused only on recurring textual features. Both stressed the need to recognize the social dimensions of genre … Both approaches emphasize the addressee, the context, and the occasion. … It is not so much in their theoretic formulations, but rather in their realization within research, that the differences between these two approaches are most salient.

8.4.3.2 Application to pedagogy

RGS has been mainly confined to North America and has primarily focused on genres in academic and professional contexts. A lot of RGS research has focused on the acquisition of genres by novices in new communities of discourse (Artemeva & Freedman, 2006b: 2). However, as A. M. Johns (2002b: 10) has written, ‘many proponents [of RGS] are sceptical about genre pedagogies, about the ways in which schooling might assist students in acquiring, critiquing, and using genres for their own purposes’. This is because genres, for RGS, are always situated in real contexts and involve real participants and audience. These situations cannot be recreated in the classroom, but can only be acquired in those situations through a process of what Lave and Wenger (1991) call ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. As Adam and Artemeva (2002) put it: ‘People learn at home, at work or in a community without explicit instruction’. That is not to say that RGS has nothing to say to the teacher. As A. M. Johns (2003: 210–211) has written, again:

Certainly ESL/EFL composition instructors should acquaint themselves with the literature in RGS, if for no other reason than to provide cautions against reductionist pedagogies that
portray text descriptions as fixed templates instead of opportunities for studying evolving, negotiated, situated discourses.

The approach to pedagogy for RGS is an apprenticeship-based model combined with a familiarisation on the part of learners with the target contexts and related genres (Freadman, 1994). Freedman (sic) (1987) insists that learning a genre can only be done by practising it: ‘full genre knowledge (in all of its subtlety and complexity) only becomes available as a result of having written’ (p. 207). She has a model for acquiring new genres, which duly emphasises this minimalist approach (p. 102).

1. The learners approach the task with a ‘dimly felt sense’ of the new genre they are attempting.
2. They begin composing by focusing on the specific content to be embodied in this genre.
3. In the course of the composing, this ‘dimly felt sense’ of the genre is both formulated and modified as (a) this ‘sense’, (b) the composing processes, and (c) the unfolding text are interrelated and modify each other.
4. On the basis of external feedback (the grade assigned), the learners either confirm or modify their map of the genre.

In spite of scepticism such as that of Freedman, some RGS scholars have addressed more overt pedagogical issues, even producing textbooks (for example, Bullock, 2005; Devitt et al., 2004; Trimbur, 2002). One favoured approach is to develop what Bawarshi and Reiff (2010: 192) refer to as meta-genre awareness, an awareness which stresses the interaction between genre and context. Bawarshi and Reiff (2010: 193–194), describe how (with Devitt) they developed such a model in a textbook (Devitt et al. 2004), adopting the following activity stages:

1. Collect samples of the genre.
2. Identify the scene and describe the situation in which the genre is used:
   a. setting;
   b. subject;
   c. participants;
   d. purposes.
3. Identify and describe patterns in the genre’s features.
4. Analyse what these patterns reveal about the situation and scene.

Other RGS researchers have described how researchers can combine research and pedagogy, as, for example, in Smart and Brown’s (2006) study, cited above, of a group of workplace professional writing student interns, where the researchers combined research and pedagogy and assisted the student interns in developing their generic competence, not just in their specific context, but for a range of workplace settings that they would be likely to encounter in their future careers. Furthermore, Artemeva (2006), in her study on novice engineers, also cited above, shows how her participants developed professional genre knowledge through academic, as well as workplace, experiences.

8.5 CRITIQUE

When we consider critique of genre theory, we really need to deal with each of the three schools discussed in this chapter separately. If we consider, first, the conception of language, of the two ‘linguistic’ schools, the ESP school is rather eclectic in its approach, while the Sydney school works with a well-developed linguistic theory and descriptive model. The former is easier to apply, while the latter is more detailed, but requires training in the theory and analysis. On the other hand, the RGS
school does not have a model of language per se. One problem with all of the schools is that the term genre is rather slippery and difficult to define. This presents problems of application, it goes without saying. We reviewed above the main problems that RGS has with the two linguistic approaches – the issue of the multiple purposes of genres, claimed overemphasis on the conventional nature of form–function relations at the clause level, claimed neglect of the potential for creativity within genres, and claimed failure to take account of the intertextual and hybrid nature of genres. These ‘problems’, on the other hand, would probably be refuted by the two linguistic schools, although they remain issues worthy of consideration, whatever one’s perspective. The main critique on the part of the two linguistic schools of the RGS school would be that it neglects the important focus on language and form. Those working in ESP and SFL are more concerned with teaching non-mainstream populations, making language and form especially important, perhaps.

Moving now to critiques of genre-based pedagogy, Paltridge (2001: 122–126) discusses a number of what he calls ‘limitations’ of the approach in general. The first of these is the difficulty in assigning texts into specific genre categories, already mentioned as a problem in genre theory in the previous paragraph. Another problem of the genre-based approach for Paltridge is the difficulty for teachers who are working in communities where the target language is not in widespread use. In such contexts, there may be a difficulty in gaining access to examples of appropriate spoken and written genres, especially if the context for teaching is a foreign-language classroom. A further issue for Paltridge is the question of creativity: to what extent should learners be taught the conventional features of genres and to what extent should they be encouraged to develop an independent voice? As one unidentified contributor to a well-known blog wrote (http://rsa.cwrl.utexas.edu/node/5649), ‘ESL students learn a few sentence structures really well and deploy them repeatedly rather than attempt to try anything novel. Trying something novel, after all, risks failure. It is better to write monotonously without error than adventurously and risk error’. This issue of convention versus invention applies to all three schools, not just the two linguistic ones. A final issue concerned with teaching in a foreign language mentioned by Paltridge is the difficulty for the teachers of finding suitable texts and a potential lack of familiarity with the particular features of the target genres. At the same time, learners in such contexts may have difficulty in finding an authentic audience for their English-language communications, although developments with the internet have opened up more opportunities in this regard.

8.6 APPLICATION TO PEDAGOGY: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

We have already discussed pedagogic application throughout this chapter and in our discussion of each of the three schools of genre pedagogy above. Here we will limit ourselves to a consideration of some general principles in support of a genre-based approach. A number of advantages of genre-based teaching are mentioned by Paltridge (2001: 7). First, for Paltridge, genre-based teaching, following Bhatia (2002), develops the acquisition of generic competence, ‘that is, the ability to respond to new and recurring genres’. This does not just mean the development of linguistic and communicative competence, for Paltridge. In a genre-based approach, learners develop not only language and discourse skills, but also skills to interpret and apply knowledge about culture, circumstances, purposes and motives that prevail in particular settings (Paltridge, 2001: 7).

Second, for Paltridge, genre-based pedagogy offers the advantage of providing access to genres which have high cultural capital, that is, genres which are highly valued by society. This idea is controversial (see, for example, Luke, 1996, and below under ‘critique’), but many educators feel that it is essential that students should be given the opportunity to access these genres which may be essential for full participation in social life. Gee (1997, cited in Paltridge, 2001: 9), for example, believes that genre awareness is essential so that learners learn ‘the purposes that different genres serve in society and culture’. Similarly, Martin and Rose (2012: 5) are strongly in support of this view,
invoking a UNESCO document which argues for ‘full and equal opportunities for education for all … to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity’.

A third advantage of genre-based teaching for Paltridge is that it allows for the inclusion of the best aspects of other syllabus types, acting as an overarching framework incorporating grammar, vocabulary, functions and notions, tasks, situation types and content areas.

Hyland (2004: 10–11) lists seven advantages of genre-based writing instruction (all of which can also be applied to the other skills of reading, speaking and listening), as follows.

Genre teaching is:

1. *Explicit.* Makes clear what is to be learned to facilitate the acquisition of writing skills;
2. *Systematic.* Provides a coherent framework for focusing on both language and contexts;
3. *Needs-based.* Ensures that course objectives and content are derived from student needs;
4. *Supportive.* Gives teachers a central role in scaffolding student learning and creativity;
5. *Empowering.* Provides access to the patterns and possibilities of variation in valued texts;
6. *Critical.* Provides the resources for students to understand and challenge valued discourses;
7. *Consciousness raising.* Increases teacher awareness of texts to confidently advise students on their writing.

This list provides a fittingly positive note with which to end this chapter.

8.7 QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Write down the names of five genres with which you are familiar. What are the communicative purposes of each of these genres?
2. Think of a genre and design a genre chain or network to show the other genres with which it interacts.
3. Think of, or find examples of, a written genre in your L1 and your L2. What similarities and differences do you notice in the generic features of each?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a genre-based approach to teaching?
5. Of the three approaches to genre pedagogy – RGS, ESP and Sydney school – which one do you prefer? Give your reasons.
6. Based on Bawarshi and Reiff’s ideas about developing *meta-genre awareness*, choose a genre and then:
   1. Collect samples of the genre.
   2. Identify the scene and describe the situation in which the genre is used:
      a. setting;
      b. subject;
      c. participants;
      d. purposes.
   3. Identify and describe patterns in the genre’s features (schematic structure and lexico-grammatical features).
   4. Analyse what these patterns reveal about the situation and scene.

8.8 FURTHER READING