

# Understanding Second Language Classroom Discourse Based on Genre Analysis

Nasour Rezaei

English Department, Payam Nour University, Qom, Iran

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## Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to expand our current understanding of second language classroom discourse through genre analysis. In order to carry out the exploratory study of language lessons, a multidimensional genre-oriented approach should be for both textual and contextual analyses of language lessons. By studying different researches done in this area, it was concluded that, rather than viewing a language lesson as a distinctive genre, it should be considered as a sub-genre of the classroom discourse genre by sharing broad communicative purposes with other classroom discourse sub-genres.

**Keywords:** Genre analysis, Classroom discourse analysis, Second language teacher education

## Introduction

Generally, research on classroom discourse has a comparatively long tradition in linguistics, applied linguistics, and education. This is due to the fact that communication is central in educational contexts (Seedhouse, 2004; van Lier, 1988, 1996). It is through language that teachers carry out their work and students display what they have learned. This is true for any classroom context. However, language in second/foreign language (L2) classrooms, serves a special purpose, one that is quite unique from that of other classrooms (Walsh, 2006b). Language in most L2 classrooms is not only the medium of instruction, but also the objective of the learning. In other words, the medium is the message in language teaching (Hammadou & Bernhardt, 1987), while teachers who teach in students' first language (L1)

also use the language as "the vehicle and object of instruction" (Long, 1983, p. 9), one difference between L1 and L2 classrooms is the fact that unlike L1 learners, L2 students in many cases have yet to develop high levels of proficiency in the L2 (Seedhouse, 2004; van Lier, 1988, 1996). Due to this reason, communication in the classroom is considered a "problematic medium" for both L2 teachers and learners.

This complexity is compounded by the fact that in many L2 classroom settings, teachers and students might come from dissimilar sociocultural backgrounds and may have different educational expectations that sometimes can lead to misunderstandings (Walsh, 2006a, 2006b).

Communication practices in L2 classrooms have a profound effect on the effective learning environments creation as well as on L2 learning processes (Hall & Walsh, 2002). Therefore, understanding the dynamics of classroom discourse is crucial in L2 education (Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Walsh, 2006b).

According to Walsh (2006b), interaction in L2 classrooms is essential for language learning to take place, as much of the learning during language lessons occurs through such interactions. Van Lier (1996) argues that "interaction is the most important element in the curriculum". In one of the most comprehensive review of L2 classroom communication, Chaudron (1988) concluded that teacher talk accounted for approximately two-thirds of L2 classroom interactions while students talk about one-third of the time. Even more recently, Nunan and Bailey (2009) maintain that this uneven distribution of communicative turns prevails in L2 classroom; in other words, "teachers dominate" L2CD.

**Corresponding author:** Nasour Rezaei, English Department, Payam Nour University, Qom, Iran.  
E-mail: nasourrezaei@yahoo.com

Some of the reasons for the unequal allocation of turns include teacher and student expectations of classroom behavior, the asymmetrical power relations in most classrooms where teachers have more control of the floor (Walsh, 2006b), and teacher talk providing valuable target language input for language learners; particularly in many English as a foreign language (EFL) settings, teacher talk may be the only “live” linguistic input students receive (Hernandez, 1983, as cited in Chaudron, 1988).

According to the dominance of teacher talk during language lessons, researchers have studied the discursive practices and pedagogical behaviors of L2 teachers in these interactions by entering language classrooms, or as Long (1980) puts it, going “inside the ‘black box’”, and gathering naturalistic data. The interaction analysis approach is one of the earliest approaches to researching classroom discourse. Different types of observation schemes have been utilized by researchers in this tradition for “real-time coding” of classroom interaction (D. Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Some of the well-known coding systems include Flanders’ (1970) FIAC (Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories), Moskowitz’s (1971) FLint (Foreign Language interaction), Fanselow’s (1977) FOCUS (Foci for Observing Communication Used in Settings), and Allen et al.’s (1984) COLT (Communicative Orientation to Language Teaching). These observation systems aim to describe classroom interaction in naturalistic conditions, which in turn may help teachers improve their interactional behaviors in the classroom.

Based on structural-functional linguistic principles, researchers have also used discourse analysis to examine the interactional features of classroom discourse (Chaudron, 1988). The initial work in this tradition is that of Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) on British L1 elementary school classrooms, who found, among other features, a consistent three-part exchange in teacher-student interaction: teacher initiation, student response, and teacher feedback/follow-up on student response (or IRF). Some of the early representative studies following the general framework of Sinclair and Coulthard include Chaudron’s (1977) study on teacher corrective feedback in French immersion secondary school classrooms; Bowers’ (1980) dissertation that expanded Sinclair and Coulthard’s categories; Hernandez’ (1983 as cited in Chaudron, 1988) study on teacher-student interaction in Spanish-English bi-

lingual elementary school classrooms; and Tsui’s (1985) study of teacher moves in teacher-student interaction in secondary school English language classes in Hong Kong.

From the ethnomethodological tradition, L2CD has been investigated following conversation analysis as well. Similar to the approaches above, conversation analysis allows researchers to analyze the moment-by-moment interactional patterns between teachers and students and among students themselves (Markee, 2005; Markee & Kasper, 2004). This approach is attractive to classroom interaction because it is a “methodology for analyzing talk-in-interaction that seeks to develop empirically based accounts of the observable conversational behaviors of participants that are both minutely detailed and unmotivated by a priori, etic theories of social action” (Markee, 2005, p. 355). One of the earliest to utilize this approach in L2CD research was R. L. Allwright’s (1980), who analyzed turns, topics, and tasks to identify patterns of participation in a case study of an L2 teacher and learner. Rather than imposing predetermined categories, the framework allows the participatory patterns to emerge from the data (Walsh, 2006b).

Actually, the basic assumption of research in these traditions is that classroom teachers’ communicative practices are improved by understanding communication patterns of L2 classrooms which in turn may lead to more productive student participation and learning opportunities. As Kumaravadevelu (1999) contends, “what actually happens in the classroom largely determines the degree to which desired learning outcomes are realized”. These various approaches have described and identified many complex dimensions of classroom communication, and they have contributed much to our understanding of L2CD.

In this regard, less attention has been given to the macro-structural organization of language lessons and to the contextual factors that influence and interact with teachers’ use of language to organize the structure and content of lessons, even though classroom lessons tend to be mostly pre-planned, structured events that progress through various stages (opening, middle, closure) within a given allotted time period, taking place in a particular location (J. C. Richards & Lockhart, 1996) but, the micro-levels of teacher-student interaction have been studied in these traditions. Even in the discourse analytic framework, where the unit

of analysis has extended beyond this interaction, most research in this tradition has often examined the distribution and functions of teacher and student contributions to the three-part IRF sequence. This also has a considerable impact on L2 learning. While van Lier (1988) agrees that language lessons are structured events, he also points out that “structural statements of the type of opening-middle (or main body)-closing do not amount to much, since the same statements can be made about practically any speech event” and he says that unless researchers are able to flesh out the separate stages in functional terms, this type of opening-middle-closing structure is “vacuous.” Nevertheless, he concedes that “we get the strong feeling that lessons have a sense of rhythm to them, or some form of cyclical progression,” which future research may “show regular and consistent cyclical rhythms in L2 lessons” (p. 162).

Johnson (1995) claims that the discursive practices of L2 teachers should be understood to realize the discursive patterns of language lessons because “patterns of classroom communication depend largely on how teachers use language to control the structure and content of classroom events” (p. 145). This sentiment is echoed by Walsh (2006b), who contends that even though classroom discourse is a collaborative effort, constructed by both students and teacher, the teacher ultimately is responsible for the construction of a lesson’s structure.

### Three traditions in classroom discourse analysis

Various approaches of different disciplines contribute to our understanding of L2CD. Many researchers believe that most L2 learning that happens in the classroom occurs within contexts of interactions between teachers and learners (as opposed to interactions directly between two or more learners) (e.g., Hall & Verplaetse, 2000; Hall & Walsh, 2002; Jarvis & Robinson, 1997). In this way, three of the most relevant traditions in classroom discourse analysis, their contributions and limitations of each approach are reviewed.

#### A) Interaction analysis approach

Rooted in behavioral psychology, interaction analysis (IA) approaches have made important contributions to classroom discourse analysis. Many advocates of the “scientific method” argue that IA approaches are “objective” ways of analyzing classroom discourse (Chaudron, 1988; Walsh, 2006b).

Using observation instruments, or real-time coding systems, researchers in this tradition propose that they are able to observe linguistic behaviors and establish objective and reliable classroom profiles through quantitative statistical procedures that are generalizable (Chaudron, 1988; Walsh, 2006b). Analysts use some system to tick boxes, make marks, and record what they observe at regular intervals. Although there are many coding systems, in fact, at least 200 according to McKay’s (2006) estimates, reviewing all of them is beyond the scope of the present study. Therefore, some of the more well-known schemes are reviewed here. According to Allwright and Bailey (1991), however, the starting point for much of the work on L2CD was Flanders’ (1970) pioneering work on “interaction analysis.” His ten-category FIAC (Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories) schedule was designed for general education purposes to give teachers scores reflecting the “directness” (e.g., criticizing or using authority) and “indirectness” (e.g., accepting or using learners’ ideas) of their teaching styles.

Modifying Flanders’ FIAC model, Moskowitz (1971) developed a 22-category coding system that she called FLint (Foreign Language Interaction), specifically for L2 teaching. This scheme aimed to identify “good” language teaching and as a way to provide feedback for teacher education purposes (D. Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Nunan & Bailey, 2009). Another familiar observation scheme is Fanselow’s (1977) FOCUS (Foci for Observing Communications Used in Settings) system that made considerable modifications to and expansions on Bellack et al.’s (1966) analytic system (D. Allwright & Bailey, 1991; Chaudron, 1988). While Fanselow’s (1977) scheme was developed for the purpose of language teacher training, D. Allwright and Bailey (1991) point out that it could be used for research on any human interaction, as it is not limited to specific categories for teachers and students. Finally, a departure from the earlier schemes is COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) (Allen et al., 1984; Spada & Frühlich, 1995). This sophisticated observation schedule, rooted in communicative language teaching principles, “is predicated on the assumption that the existence of an information gap, the deployment of sustained speech, the opportunity for learners to initiate discourse and so on, will facilitate language development” (Nunan & Bailey, 2009, p. 270). In other words, the COLT instrument was developed to measure the degree to which classroom instruction

was communicatively oriented or not, and to examine the effects of instructional practices on L2 learning (McKay, 2006).

In spite of their valuable contributions to our understanding of classroom discourse, IA approaches have several weaknesses. First, they only provide a partial picture of the realities of classroom life in that they only measure what is observable and measurable (Nunan, 1989). As Nunan and Bailey (2009) contend, these instruments can “blind us to aspects of interaction and discourse that are not captured by the schemes but that are important to an understanding of the lesson we are observing” (p. 270). Secondly, observable patterns of interactions, in these approaches, have to be matched to a priori categories that the schemes have delineated. Any linguistic behaviors that do not match the fixed categories tend not to be accounted for (Walsh, 2006b), and, therefore, analysts’ observational lens will be colored by the particular instruments they use (Nunan & Bailey, 2009). These unaccounted items include overlaps, interruptions, false starts, and so on, even though these features of spoken discourse are very common in language classrooms just as they are in other communicative interactions (Edwards & Westgate, 1994).

Interaction analysis approaches assume that classroom discourse progresses in a neat, linear, sequential manner, with participants following a “one-pedagogic-move-on-one-level-at-a-time” procedure (Seedhouse, 2004). Wallace (1998) points out that such assumptions inevitably lead observers to miss the mark and may prevent them from being able to describe more fully the complexities of classroom interactions. Furthermore, even though these approaches claim that coding systems provide objective, reliable, and valid data and results. Chaudron (1988) notes that observers may fail to agree on how to record their observations, which questions the reliability and validity of their findings. Also, as Nunan and Bailey (2009) argue, “there is no such thing as (a) totally ‘objective’ observation”. Nunan and Bailey further contend that without two or more observers present in the classroom, inter-coder agreement is impossible to establish with these instruments because “real-time coding could never be checked against the original classroom interaction data, nor could actual utterances be analyzed”, unless classroom events are video-recorded. One of the most serious criticisms is put forward by Seedhouse (2004) who asserts that IA approaches oversimplify the context and eval-

uate all classroom interactions from a single perspective based on a fixed set of criteria. He goes on to say that structured instruments that fail to account for the complexity of L2CD are deficient in portraying what actually occurs during classroom language lessons.

### ***B) Discourse analysis approach***

Discourse analysis (DA) approaches are another framework used in classroom discourse analysis. Seedhouse (2004) proposes that most previous investigations on L2CD have “implicitly or explicitly adopted what is fundamentally a discourse analysis approach”. Following principles from structural-functional linguistics, DA approaches analyze the structural patterns and functional purposes of classroom discourse. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) were among the earliest proponents of using DA approaches to classroom discourse. Unlike IA approaches, Sinclair and Coulthard pointed out that their purpose was to better understand the nature of classroom discourse by subjecting it to analysis, and not necessarily to improve instructional practices, although they concluded that their study could have possible applications in educational contexts.

Sinclair and Coulthard developed their model based on analyses of recorded classroom interactions, albeit the data were from primary-level British classrooms. Their model involves a discourse hierarchy (or discourse units) consisting of different levels, each level being composed of elements from the previous level: Lesson → Transaction → Exchange → Move → Act. The highest discourse unit is the lesson, while the smallest unit is the speech act. Acts are described in terms of their discourse functions (e.g., cue, elicitation, evaluation). At the exchange level, Sinclair and Coulthard observed the following interaction characteristics: (a) question-and-answer sequences; (b) pupils responding to teachers’ directions; and (c) pupils listening to the teacher giving directions. Various combinations of these exchanges make up transactions. While they present an intricate description of classroom discourse, the question-and-answer sequence receives the most attention, which consists of three elements: (a) teacher question (or Initiation), (b) student answer (or Response), and (c) teacher’s feedback/follow-up to the answer (or Feedback/Follow-up), otherwise known as the IRF structure.

This “triadic dialogue” (Lemke, 1990) is considered to be the most distinguishing characteristic of classroom discourse, both in content-based and L2 classrooms (Nunan & Bailey, 2009; Walsh,



2006 b). In fact, van Lier (1996) notes that there is probably nothing that symbolizes classroom discourse quite as much as this structure, the much noted IRF exchange". For every student turn, there are two teacher turns. In this exchange structure, Chaudron (1988) points out that teacher talk embodies two-thirds of classroom discourse; even the absence of an explicit feedback move is considered feedback in that it can signal to the learner that the response is incorrect (O'Keefe, McCarthy, & Carter, 2007). Researchers adopting DA approaches have contributed to our understanding of the formal properties and functional purposes of classroom interaction (Chaudron, 1988), uncovering, for example, different types of question strategies (e.g., Yang, 2010) and repair strategies (e.g., Cullen, 2002; Jarvis & Robinson, 1997) that affect L2 learning.

Despite the relative pervasiveness of the three-part exchange structure, many criticisms have been put forward. First, Walsh (2006b) argues that Sinclair and Coulthard's data were drawn from "traditional" teacher-centered classrooms at a time when the teacher-student power relations were more asymmetrical. According to Walsh (2006b), recent evidence suggests that in the contemporary student-centered L2 classroom there is more "equality and partnership," and the "more formal, ritualized interactions between teachers and students are not as prevalent" (p. 47), although the IRF exchange is still alive and well (Hall & Walsh, 2002). Moreover, Wu (1998) suggests that this model sheds some light on the structure of teacher-student exchange, but it does not do enough in capturing the dynamic nature of classroom interaction. Stubbs (1983, as cited in Walsh, 2006b) criticizes the model for its multi-functionality, as it is nearly impossible to accurately describe what act is being performed by the participants at any point in the lesson, while others contend that the functions are dependent upon pedagogical goals (e.g., Nassaji & Wells, 2000).

### **C) Conversation analysis approach**

Conversation analysis (CA) which rooted in the tradition of Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology has also contributed to our understanding of classroom discourse. CA was developed by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) as an approach to investigate the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction. The underlying principle of CA is the notion that social contexts are fluid and constantly being co-constructed by participants through their use of language in the interaction, and the ways in which

turn-taking, openings and closures, sequencing of acts, adjacency pairs, and so on are locally managed (Walsh, 2006b). According to the Heritage (2004) CA embodies a theory which argues that sequences of actions are a major part of context that the meaning of an action is heavily shaped by the sequence of previous actions from which it emerges, and that social context is a dynamically created thing that is expressed in and through the sequential organization of interaction.

Interaction is considered then to be both "context-shaped and context-renewing" in this perspective (Walsh, 2006b). One communicative turn is dependent on a previous turn and the following turn is contingent upon the previous turn, which creates a new context for subsequent actions. From a CA perspective, context is viewed as "both a project and a product of the participants' actions" (Heritage, 2004), and talk-in-interaction is considered to be goal-oriented in which participants strive toward some objective related to the institutional talk.

The multi-layered CA approach, and its emphasis on both the micro-context and the sequential organization of talk, has been a significant addition to L2CD research, but it has several limitations. Its strength in not imposing preconceived categories paradoxically is also considered its weakness. As Walsh (2006b) asserts, because it does not attempt to force any

"order on the apparent chaos of classroom interaction" (p. 54), snapshots of selected data seem random, contrived, and/or idealized to make a point in an ad hoc manner without connecting their significance to other exchanges or discourse as a whole; thus, making it seem "impressionistic." Furthermore, since CA is a localized microanalysis of interaction, analysts make no claim to generalizing their findings to other contexts. This inability to extend their findings to other contexts is also considered to be one of its clearest shortcomings (Rampton, Roberts, Leung, & Harris, 2002). Also, Rampton et al. (2002) point out that because CA is a local analysis of interaction, it can tell us very little of longitudinal effects of interaction on teaching and learning.

### **Three schools of genre theory**

Genre is not a clear-cut construct. Various disciplinary traditions have interpreted and researched it in different ways. One aspect of genre that these different perspectives agree with is expressed by

Tardy (Johns et al., 2006a), who notes, “If genre scholars across disciplines share one point of agreement it is the complexity of genres” (p. 248). Working independently, different theoretical traditions have defined the construct in various ways. According to Hyon (1996), three genre perspectives including Australian (or Sydney) School, North American New Rhetoric studies, and English for Specific Purposes have been most productive in theorizing, researching, and offering pedagogical applications of genre theory (see also Hyland, 2004; Johns, 2002b; Paltridge, 2007).

#### *a) The Sydney School*

The Sydney School of genre, named after its location, grew out of Halliday’s (Halliday, 1978a, 1985; Halliday & Hasan, 1989) linguistic theory known as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which views language as a social semiotic (Halliday, 1978b), in which language is a social phenomenon of making meanings through linguistic choices from the language system in specific contexts (Eggins, 1994). According to Halliday (1985) language is a tristratal construct of semantics (meaning), lexicogrammar (wording), and phonology (sound). The organizing concept at each stratum is the paradigmatic system: A system is a set of options with an entry condition, such that exactly one option must be chosen if the entry condition is satisfied. Options are realized as syntagmatic constructs or structures; a structure is a configuration of functional elements – functions or function bundles. The functions are motivated (non-arbitrary) with respect to the options they realize; the grammar as a whole is motivated with respect to the semantics. The only line of (relative) arbitrariness is that between content and expression (between the lexicogrammar and the phonology).

Systemic Functional Linguistics uses functional categories rather than describing language in grammatical terms and also it regards meaning-making as the primary purpose of language. SFL is based on four major assumptions about language: (a) language use is functional; (b) the function is meaning-making; (c) the social context influences meaning; and (d) the use of language is a social semiotic process in which language users construct meaning by making certain linguistic choices within a given social context.

The fundamental theoretical claim of this perspective is that the organization of language and social contexts are interrelated, built around three different types of meanings (or metafunctions): textual, interpersonal, and ideational (Eggins, 1994).

According to Eggins, textual meaning is related to how a text (spoken or written) is organized as a coherent message; interpersonal meaning expresses the role relationships between participants; and ideational meaning deals with representing or constructing experience within language—the topic, subject matter, or content. These three metafunctions are the interface between language and the context of situation, known as register. In SFL, register is composed of three dimensions or register variables: mode, tenor, and field (ibid). Mode refers to the role of language in an activity (i.e., the channel of communication), and it is related to textual meaning. Tenor is the social relations of participants in the activity, and it is related to interpersonal meaning. Finally, field refers to topic or focus of the activity (or the activity that is going on), and it is related to ideational meaning. Any spoken or written text constructed, therefore, is a matter of choices that are dependent on and constrained by the register.

Martin and his associates (Martin, Christie & Rothery, 1987) developed a notion of genre based on Halliday’s theory of language. According to Martin et al., genre is the level of context above register that is the concrete realization of register in particular cultures, and below the level of ideology, the highest and most abstract context in various language uses. Their focus grew out of an interest in language and literacy education in primary and secondary schools in Australia for disadvantaged students (Hyon, 1996). In the Sydney School, genres are defined as a staged, goal-oriented, and purposeful social processes in getting things done through language (Martin et al., 1987). According to these scholars, genres are purposeful social processes because members of a culture purposefully interact to achieve them. They are also goal-oriented because they get things done. Finally, they are staged because multiple steps are taken to achieve particular goals (Eggins, 1994). In other words, genres are viewed as linguistic strategies for achieving general rhetorical social goals in a particular culture. Also, Eggins (1994) explains genre as “a concept used to describe the impact of the context of culture on language, by exploring the staged, step-by-step structure cultures institutionalize as ways of achieving goals” (p. 9).

The Sydney School researchers by applying functional notions of language analyze spoken and written texts to describe the functional purposes as well as the structural elements of texts that express

these functions. A genre is considered to be the schematic structure or “structural formula” (Hasan, 1984), that a group of texts in a culture shares for achieving certain communicative goals, which are realized by the lexico-grammatical elements. The major contributions of the Sydney School include the analysis of elemental genres such as reports, procedures, descriptions, expositions, narratives, anecdotes, and recounts, which can be combined to make more complex, sophisticated macrogenres such as news, stories and research reports (Martin, 1992). Christie and Martin (1997), Cope and Kalantzis (1993), Macken-Horarik (2002) and Martin (1992) are notable contributors in this school of genre theory, describing these elemental genres in terms of their social functions, generic structures, and lexico-grammatical features. According to Eggins (1994), a particularly distinctive feature of the Sydney School’s approach to genre analysis is that its purpose is to construct both a theory of and analytical tools for investigating language as a social process, which in turn allows for comprehensive, specific, and systematic descriptions of linguistic patterns.

#### ***b) The New Rhetoric***

Predominantly working in postsecondary L1 composition studies, rhetoric, and professional writing, a group of postmodern scholars in North America, who have come to be known as the New Rhetoric (NR) group (Freedman & Medway, 1994), has a different conceptualization of genre from that of the Sydney School (Hyon, 1996). Bakhtinian (Bakhtin, 2000) notions of genre and, particularly, Miller’s (1984) seminal article *Genre as Social Action* have shaped and propelled genre theory in the NR group (Freedman & Medway, 1994; Hyon, 1996). Miller (1984) argues, “a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish” (p. 151).

While similar to the Sydney School in their attention to the context of situation, the NR camp is less focused on the linguistic features of genres and more concerned with the situated context in which genres are produced and used (Hyon, 1996). As Coe and Freedman (1998) propose, genre in the NR perspective is considered “a socially standard strategy, embodied in a typical form of discourse that has evolved for responding to a recurring type of rhetorical situation” (p. 137). In this sense, genres connote more than “typical forms of utterances” (Bakhtin, 2000); they are recurrent, situat-

ed, and social actions that constantly evolve in response to situated contexts (Miller, 1984). In other words, genres evolve from repeated social actions in particular types of recurring situations in a culture, which in turn produce regular patterns in form and content (Bazerman, 1988; Coe & Freedman, 1998; Devitt, 2004; Miller, 1984). Even though genres constantly evolve, they are considered to be “stabilized-for-now or stabilized-enough sites of social and ideological action” (Schryer, 1993, p. 200). Because of this stability, individuals can understand, recognize, and produce genres for accomplishing certain types of social purposes. According to Miller (1984), genres embody features of “cultural rationality” and “serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community” (p. 165). Therefore, “a genre is a rhetorical means for mediating private intentions and social exigence; it motivates by connecting the private with the public, the singular with the recurrent” (Miller, 1984). That is, genres as social actions are mediated by both external social situations and internal motives of individuals.

In this tradition, critical issues regarding genres are examined, such as accessibility, political and ethical implications, and values and beliefs, because genres are viewed as “neither value-free nor neutral and often imply hierarchical social relationships” (Coe & Freedman, 1998). Genres function to empower some and, at the same time, oppress others. Furthermore, NR researchers tend to take an ethnographic, rather than a linguistic, approach to genre analysis to “explicate the knowledge that practice creates” (Miller, 1984, p. 155). They utilize such an approach with the purpose of providing thick descriptions of the attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors of the community participants in which genres are utilized and the social actions that genres are used to accomplish in the lives of particular communities (Freedman & Medway, 1994; Hyon, 1996). Some research taking this position of genre include studies on scientific research reports (Bazerman, 1988), documents produced by tax accountants (Devitt, 1991), texts produced at a central bank in Canada (Smart, 1993), student and professional writing in finance (Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994), and writing assignments at university (Molle & Prior, 2008). Rather than starting with the text, NR genre studies tend to begin with the social context and use the regularities in texts to interpret the context (Johns et al., 2006b), because there is, according to NR researchers, a need to go

beyond the simple “broad brushstroke references to the importance of ‘context of situation’” (Luke, 1994, p. ix) more commonly found in linguistically-oriented approaches.

### *c) English for Specific Purposes*

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) researchers are interested in genres as both an analytic and pedagogical tool. For ESP genre analysts, information acquired from analyses of specific genres can be applied to the design of curricula and materials and to the teaching of various genres. While ESP does not have a distinctive theoretical perspective on genre, it is considered a separate approach to genre studies that is “eclectically pragmatic” (Belcher, 2006) and embraces theoretical orientations and analytical tools from both SFL and NR (Hyland, 2002, 2004; Johns, 2002a). According to Hyon (1996), the ESP approach, similar to NR, is concerned with the social functions of genres, but it also draws heavily from Sydney School’s understanding of text structure, despite lacking a systematic theory of language of its own (Hyland, 2002). The origin of ESP genre analysis can be traced back to Swales’ (1981, 1990) pioneering work. According to Swales (1990) a genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.

According to this definition, genres vary, and manipulating them is possible, but they are nevertheless recognizable by a discourse community (Swales, 1990). A genre is recognizable by members of a discourse community due to their “prototypical” schematic structure, or the most typical realization of the patterns of the events (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). These structures are developed through a sequence of rhetorical “moves” (and component “steps”) and the linguistic features that realize these moves. Each rhetorical move is a “bounded communicative act that is designed to achieve one main communicative objective” (Swales & Feak, 2000, p. 35). While a move can vary in length and size from one sentence (or utterance) to several paragraphs (or utterances), it generally contains one proposition. The sequences of moves represent the schematic structure of a genre in accomplishing deliberate social actions, and to the coherent understanding of the discourse. A (spoken or written)

text, therefore, should have certain features present for the discourse to be an exemplar of that particular genre. In any genre, there are choices and constraints: genres are dynamic and open to change, but they are not “anything goes” (Swales, 2004)

As presented above, discourse community is a very important concept in ESP genre analysis. Swales (1990, pp. 24-27) proposes six defining characteristics of a discourse community:

a) A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals.

b) A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.

c) A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.

d) A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.

e) In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis.

f) A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursual expertise.

ESP genre researchers view genres as being characterized by the recurrent rhetorical moves (similar to “stages” in the Sydney School) and the lexico-grammatical features that realize these moves used by a particular discourse community to achieve some communicative purposes. While interested in genres as employed by specific discourse communities, Hyon (1996) points out that ESP researchers mostly examine and detail the formal, linguistic and rhetorical, properties of genres, similar to the Sydney School. Utilizing Swales’ (1990) framework, numerous researchers in this tradition have described the rhetorical move structures and linguistic features of various academic and professional genres (e.g., Bhatia, 1993; Dudley-Evans, 1986; Halleck & Connor, 2006), although others in the ESP camp have also incorporated ethnographic methods (e.g., J. Hyland, 2001; Samraj & Monk, 2008). Unlike the Sydney School, however, ESP does not see genres as linguistic strategies for achieving general rhetorical goals in a culture. Rather, because ESP views discourse communities and their genres as being closely linked, genres are considered the property of particular communities rather than the culture at large (Hyland, 2002).

Bhatia (2004, 2008) has argued that ESP genre analysis needs to move beyond linguistic analysis and integrate socio-cognitive and sociocultur-



al analysis to gain a more complex understanding of how these factors contribute to the construction of genres in different disciplines and institutions. Bhatia contends that genres are not pure with clear demarcations, nor are they necessarily the property of a specific discourse community. Rather, he argues that the tension between the mixing and embedding of genres but maintaining their generic integrity is the key to acquiring professional expertise. In this view of genre, Bhatia combines elements from different schools of genre and proposes a multidimensional approach to genre analysis that draws on various discursive and non-discursive analytical techniques. Such a multi-perspective approach, he contends, would offer new perspectives and insights into how different types of texts are generically structured in the real world of discourse.

The three genre perspectives view language as a primary aspect of human behavior, and rather than being an instrument for the transmission of ideas, it is believed that “language through genre helps construct meaning and social context” (Hyland, 2004, p. 50). The three traditions diverge in terms of their definitions, intellectual frameworks, primary foci, and educational/professional contexts; however, they share a common goal: to analyze the relationship of genres to various contexts and to teach students how to act meaningfully in specific contexts (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Hyland, 2004). As Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) maintain “what connects these various approaches is a commitment to the idea that genres reflect and coordinate social ways of knowing and acting in the world”. Further, Swales (2009) observes that while distinctions between the various schools “have not entirely disappeared,” the division has become “much less sharp” and there has been a “coming-together of views” of some sort over the years (p. 4), as evidenced in recent publications from some of the principal representatives of the three schools of genre (e.g., Bhatia, 2004; Devitt, 2004).

## Genre and classroom discourse

However, genre studies have done much in uncovering the formal patterns of various academic and professional genres and the ways in which members of particular discourse communities acquire and use genres for various communicative purposes, most of the work has been on specialized varieties of written texts (i.e., school, academic, and professional genres). Although there have been some

genre analyses of casual conversations (Eggins & Slade, 1997), service encounters (e.g., Ventola, 1987), conference presentations (e.g., Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005; Shalom, 1993), and academic lectures (e.g., Thompson, 1994; Young 1994), comparatively speaking, there are fewer studies of spoken genres in general (Hyland, 2002), and classroom discourse in particular. This, perhaps, is due to the perceived rhetorical messiness of classroom discourse. As Crookes (2003) notes, much of classroom teaching involves improvisation, as L2 classrooms and other classroom contexts are somewhat unpredictable settings. Teachers often have to assess the classroom situation (including student attitudes), “reflect-in-action” (Schün, 1983), and make on the spot decisions that respond accordingly to the situation at hand.

However, J. C. Richards and Lockhart (1996), state that L2 classroom lessons are planned and structured events that are fairly easy to recognize and distinguishable from other communicative events. According to them lessons proceed in a certain manner, with a beginning, middle, and end. They further point out that these events take place in particular settings (i.e., schools and classrooms), usually involve two types of participants (i.e., teacher and student), consist of recognizable activities (e.g., lectures, teacher-student interactions, role plays, and have a broad communicative purpose (i.e., language learning). J. C. Richards and Lockhart describe some of the ways that language teachers can open and close a lesson, such as beginning a lesson with a short review or preview (McGrath et al., 1992) or ending a lesson by reviewing key points of a lesson. In addition, they provide descriptions of sequencing and transition. These descriptions, however, are based on very little empirical evidence. In fact, J. C. Richards and Lockhart (1996) are only able to draw on two studies in L2 research that have explored the schematic structures or lexico-grammatical features of L2CD: McGrath et al. (1992) and Wong Fillmore (1985). Even more recently, Crookes (2003) could only add one more study on topic formulation by Lopez (1995, cited in Crookes, 2003) to this list. As McGrath et al. (1992) point out “a theoretical nature” of the treatment of lesson openings, or for that matter entire lessons, in the applied linguistic literature is surprising, particularly when the majority of writers call for a better understanding of L2CD.

In the world of genre studies, those working in the Sydney School and ESP camps have examined

the schematic structures and linguistic features of classroom discourse, albeit university lectures. The examples presented here are limited to these two perspectives because the NR group has mostly dealt with written texts, due to their tradition in literary studies. Using the SFL framework, Young (1990, 1994) conducted one of the most comprehensive studies on the macrostructure and micro-features of university lectures for L1 students. She identified six “phases” (or discontinuously recurring discursive strands) that form the macrostructure of lectures: discourse structuring, conclusion, evaluation, interaction, theory or content, and examples. A particularly crucial strand is the discourse structuring phase, which signals linguistically to the audience the directional flow of lectures (e.g., What we’re going to start to look at today) and, thereby, assisting listeners in the processing of new information. Young (1994) points out that in academic lectures, there are many beginnings, middles, and ends, because phases recur throughout a lecture. She also found that different linguistic features coincide with certain phases (e.g., very important and more (direct/exact) way were consistently found in the evaluation phase). These results are consistent with Wong Fillmore’s (1985) findings in her study of teachers’ instructional language use in elementary school classrooms for “limited in English proficiency” children. As Wong Fillmore points out, the successful lessons in any given subject are framed in almost the same way. In fact, the teachers in her study seemed to be following, according to her, “lesson scripts” that they have internalized.

Using Swales’ analytic framework, Thompson (1994) and J. J. Lee, (2009) examined the rhetorical moves and linguistic features of academic lecture introductions, a part-genre of the lecture genre, for L1 students. Thompson (1994) identified two rhetorical moves (with various steps): Setting up lecture framework and Putting topic in context. She also found several metadiscursive devices (e.g., What I’m going to do in this session is) that realize those moves in monologic lectures. Following up on Thompson’s study, J. J. Lee compared small- and large-class lecture introductions. Similar to Thompson’s moves, J. J. Lee found the two moves that she discovered, but also identified one more move, Warming up. Also, findings of J. J. Lee suggest that the size of the audience constrains the rhetorical as well as the linguistic choices available to lecturers. Likewise, Morell’s (2004) study of interactive and non-interactive English lectures for EFL

university students showed that the major differences between the two types of lectures are the level of formality and the amount of teacher-student interaction. She found that interactive lectures tend to be characterized by a greater number of the pronouns you and we, elicitation markers (e.g., What do you think about...?), questions, negotiation of meaning (e.g., clarification checks), and lecturer-audience interaction. Non-interactive lectures, on the other hand, tend to be more formal and lack student involvement. The level of teacher-student interaction and the size of the audience not only influence the rhetorical structure, but also the linguistic choices afforded in the discourse (J. J. Lee, 2009; Morell, 2004). In addition, other studies show that discourse structuring devices (e.g., First let’s take a look at), or macro-markers (e.g., Chaudron & Richards, 1986), and discourse signaling cues (e.g., Jung, 2003) in the text structuring of lectures play a substantial role in facilitating L2 listeners’ understanding of lecture discourse.

Recently, there have been a growing number of corpus-based studies of university classroom discourse. While corpus linguists have been criticized for their insensitivity to context (e.g., Widowson, 1998) and for their “somewhat atomized, bottom-up type of investigation” of language (L. Flowerdew, 2005), corpus-based studies have made major contributions to our understanding of the lexico-grammatical features of academic lectures (Biber, Conrad & Cortes, 2004). Corpus-based analyses of academic lectures show an abundance of metadiscursive chunks used to structure ongoing speech (e.g., Today we’re gonna talk a little bit about), which signal to the listeners what is to appear in the upcoming talk (e.g., Crawford Camiciottoli, 2004; Mauranen, 2001). In a study of lexical bundles, or recurrent multi-word sequences, in university teaching and textbooks, Biber et al (2004) found that university classroom teaching far exceeds other academic genres in terms of frequency, range, and functions of lexical bundles: stance bundles (e.g., I don’t know if, you need to know), discourse organizing bundles, (e.g., what I want to do is, going to talk about), and referential bundles (e.g., those of you who, one of the things). As Biber et al. (2004) explain, university classroom teaching mixes characteristics of oral and literate genres in its use of lexical bundles. Taken together, these studies show that the structural organization and the linguistic devices used to realize those structures create a cognitive frame for listeners to help

them process ongoing information. Additionally, they indicate that much of classroom talk is structured and organized, and a great deal of instructional language is routinized and patterned.

However, most of the studies on university classroom teaching have taken a text analysis approach, simply treating them as textual artifacts (Bhatia, 1993). According to Bhatia (2004) text-internal factors can provide valuable insights into the identification of the communicative purposes of genres, but on their own they can be misleading. These rhetorical and linguistic analyses tell us very little of what Bhatia calls text-external factors such as the discursive and professional practices of a particular discourse community; that is, text-internal factors do not provide insights into the multiple discourses, voices, norms, and conventions of the specific community that may contribute to lecture discourse. For example, are university instructors' rhetorical and linguistic decisions conscious or unconscious? Which discursive practices in the professional or institutional community affect their lectures? How do they prepare for a lecture? Are their teaching practices the conventional way of carrying out their work? How did they learn to teach? Did they learn through formal training, classroom teaching experience, "apprenticeship of observation" as students (Lortie, 1975), or a combination of these? Neither do these textual analyses provide much in the way of information on students' perceptions or attitudes towards the textual features in lectures or their contributions in shaping the discourse. In other words, text-internal analysis of academic lectures provides us with very little situational information, the kind of ethnographic data that the Sydney School and ESP camps often have been criticized for overlooking.

Clearly, university lectures and language lessons are not the same. They have different educational purposes, contents, participants, and educational contexts. The purpose of university lectures is the teaching and learning of the contents of particular disciplines, while the educational purpose of language lessons is the teaching and learning of an L2. Furthermore, university lecturers are disciplinary specialists and the audience members are university students learning the contents of those disciplines. On the other hand, L2 teachers are language teaching specialists and their students are individuals learning the language; they may or may not be university students.

Despite the dissimilarities in terms of specific

purposes, contents, participants, and contexts, they share broadly similar instructional purpose. Also, research on academic lectures indicates some of the potential for genre studies of language lessons. Textual analyses of lecture discourse demonstrate that classroom discourse is a structured event with recurrent rhetorical patterns and linguistic features for achieving particular communicative purposes, in this case pedagogical. The contextual analyses illustrate the perceptions and problems of the lecture discourse, and the strategies teachers and students use to compensate for these challenges; information that was not available by analyzing text-internal factors alone. Additionally, studies of the social contexts in which lectures are situated demonstrate the powerful impact of sociocultural factors in the success (or lack thereof) of lectures. As J. Flowerdew and Miller (1996) conclude, analyzing classroom discourse from either a textual or contextual approach only gives a partial picture of what actually transpires. Bhatia (2004) echoes this theme and extends it by arguing that text-internal factors must be confirmed by referring to text-external factors, and vice-versa; text-external factors can only be understood by examining text-internal factors. He maintains that in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of genres, analysts need to adopt a multidimensional approach to genre analysis that involves looking at both of these factors simultaneously.

## Conclusion

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Comparatively, research in genre studies has mostly concentrated on written genres and considerably less on spoken discourse. This limitation of genre studies may be due in part to a lack of availability of audio- and video-recording devices that are user-friendly and cost-effective and partly due to the challenge of transcribing spoken data and making it publicly available. Recently, this situation has been changing with the growing availability of corpora of spoken discourse (e.g., Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English). Because of the relative dearth of research on spoken genres, genre analysts have been calling for more research in this area. Addressing this gap, there have been steady increases in the number of studies on spoken genres including those concerning "the more work-a-day functions of teaching and learning" in university settings (Hyland, 2009, p. 96). Even though this research has been valuable in describing genres EAP

students and teachers may need to focus upon, there continues to be a lack of research conducted within EAP classrooms and on those who actually teach such courses. This study aimed at making a small contribution in advancing our understanding of the rhetorical structure and linguistic features of language lessons in an EAP setting, in this case an IEP. By examining lessons taught by experienced IEP teachers, the study provides a generic profile of a sub-genre of classroom discourse (i.e., language lessons) that is of importance to the lives of both IEP teachers and students. It demonstrates that there appears to be English for the specific purposes of language teaching that experienced teachers have automatized in order to respond to the recurring situation of providing language learners with meaningful, purposeful, and structured lessons.

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