New developments in genre-based literacy pedagogy

David Rose


Introduction

It is now over 30 years since genre-based literacy pedagogy of the ‘Sydney School’ (hereafter simply genre pedagogy) began making an impact on the teaching of writing in Australian schools (Hyon 1996, Johns 2002, Martin 2000, Rose 2008). Over these decades its practices, pedagogic contexts, and informing theories have expanded considerably, so this research review invited for the Handbook of Writing Research is timely. Genre pedagogy has emerged from a series of large scale action research projects including at least three phases in its development, through the 1980s and 90s, and diversifying in the 2000s. Throughout all these phases, a fundamental question has been how schools can more effectively redistribute the semiotic resources of contemporary culture, to democratise the outcomes of education. The design of theoretical models and research methods have flowed from this research question, shaped by the findings as the project has unfolded.

The first phase, known as the *Writing Project and Language and Social Power* project was initiated in 1979 by teacher educator Joan Rothery and discourse analyst JR Martin, and colleagues in schools and universities in Sydney, with the aim of designing an explicit pedagogy for teaching writing in the primary school. The second phase, known as *Write it Right*, extended the research to the secondary school and workplace contexts, exploring relations between writing and knowledge. The third phase has included the *Reading to Learn* program, exploring relations between reading, writing and classroom pedagogy (Rose 2014 Rose & Martin 2012), as well as the *SLATE (Scaffolding Literacy in Tertiary and Academic Environments)* project (Mahboob 2013) and the *DISKS (Disciplinarity, Knowledge and Schooling)* project (Martin & Maton 2013).

Theoretical models

The research project as a whole has drawn on two complex theories of language and its social contexts, including the model of text-in-context developed within systemic functional linguistic theory (hereafter SFL), and the model of pedagogic contexts developed in the sociological theory of Basil Bernstein (1975, 1990, 2000). On one hand, the research has applied the SFL model of text-in-context to describe the systems of ‘knowledge genres’ that students are expected to read and write in school. On the other, it has adapted Bernstein’s theory of pedagogic discourse to describe the ‘curriculum genres’ (Christie 2002) through which control of the written genres of schooling are acquired and evaluated.

SFL is a large, multidimensional theory of language as social process that provides a number of useful tools for educational research. In particular, SFL recognises three metafunctions of language: its interpersonal function to enact relations between participants, its ideational function to construe their experience of reality, and a textual function to weave the interpersonal and ideational together as discourse that is meaningful in context. Halliday (e.g. 1978) outlines a model of language and social context as complementary layers of meaning
in which each metafunction of language realises a dimension of social context, in the proportions:

ideational: field ::

interpersonal: tenor ::

textual: mode.

Martin (1992, Martin & Rose 2007, 2008) elaborates this model, exploring field as configurations of people and things involved in sequences of activities, oriented to global institutional purposes; tenor as relations of power and solidarity among participants; mode as the extent to which a text constitutes or merely accompanies what is going on (or how multimodal it is). Unlike Halliday, Martin goes further to stratify context as two levels, with genre specifying the particular combinations of field, tenor and mode allowed by a given culture, realised by the stages and phases through which a text unfolds.

This model treats a culture as a system of genres, realised through recurrent configurations of meaning (across language and attendant modalities of communication). Social context is thus modelled as genre, in turn realised through field, tenor and mode (collectively known as register), realised in turn through language (and other modalities of meaning). Alongside the stratal relation between language and context, language itself is organised in three strata, as discourse, realised as grammar, realised as phonology (in speech) or graphology (in writing). Figure 1 presents this model as a set of nested circles, in which each level is related to the next by realisation.

**Figure 1: A stratified model of language and social context**

We can use the SFL model to investigate the complexity of reading and writing tasks, in order to design curriculum genres that provide explicit guidance for each dimension of the tasks. A written text consists of patterns of letters in words (spelling patterns) realising patterns of words in sentences (grammar patterns), realising patterns of meanings across texts (discourse patterns), realising configurations of entities, activities and social relations (register),
realising global social functions (genre); in short an immensely complex task for a novice reader and writer.

In such a model of language as social process, writing and reading are understood as institutional practices, which the school has evolved to elaborate and reproduce. To understand relations between written ways of meaning and pedagogic practices, we turn to Bernstein’s sociological theory. Like SFL, Bernstein’s model is complex and multidimensional. For the purposes of this review we will draw on just two dimensions, his metatheoretical comparison of types of pedagogy, and his model of pedagogic discourse.

Firstly, Bernstein contrasts pedagogic theories along two lines, “whether the theory of instruction privileged relations internal to the individual, [or] relations between social groups [and] whether the theory articulated a pedagogic practice emphasising a logic of acquisition or... a logic of transmission... In the case of a logic of acquisition...the acquirer is active in regulating an implicit facilitating practice. In the case of a logic of transmission the emphasis is upon explicit effective ordering of the discourse to be acquired, by the transmitter.” (1990: 213-214). In these terms, genre pedagogy has always been both visible and interventionist - with a strong focus on the explicit transmission of knowledge about language with the aim of empowering otherwise disenfranchised groups. It contrasts with theories focused on the psychology or behaviour of individuals, that construe learning as either passive absorption or personal discovery of knowledge.

Secondly, Bernstein models pedagogic discourse as an instructional discourse “which creates specialised skills and their relationship to each other”, embedded in a regulative discourse “which creates order, relations and identity” (2000:46). Bernstein’s ‘discourse’ refers to social activity, for which he also uses the term ‘practice’, which will be sued here to avoid confusion with the SFL use of discourse.¹ Bernstein’s instructional practice can be interpreted in SFL terms as pedagogic activities (field), pedagogic relations between learners and teachers (tenor), and modalities of learning – spoken, written, visual, manual (mode), together with the knowledge and social values exchanged through these pedagogic activities, relations and modalities. A configuration of pedagogic activities, relations, modalities, knowledge and values constitutes a curriculum genre.

In this perspective, it is the social relations enacted over time in pedagogic activities that create ‘order, relations and identity’. It is not only knowledge that learners acquire through pedagogic activities, relations and modalities, but identities as learners that are more or less successful, and more or less included in the community of learning in the school. Differentiation in learner identities is a product of 1) continual evaluation, which positions them on a hierarchy of success and failure, 2) varying degrees of engagement in lesson activities and classroom interactions, and 3) varying control over modalities of learning, particularly reading and writing. By these means, pedagogic practice creates and legitimates an unequal social order and asymmetric social relations.
Phase 1: The Writing Project and Language and Social Power

In the first phase of genre pedagogy’s development, research questions included the kinds of writing that were most valued in the primary school, and how students could be explicitly guided to write them (Painter & Martin 1986). The primary research methods were to collect and analyse students’ texts, and to trial teaching activities through action research. Findings for this stage of the research included: on one hand the key written genres through which school knowledge is acquired and displayed or ‘knowledge genres’; and on the other hand a curriculum genre through which knowledge genres can be explicitly taught and learnt. More specifically, the research method involves comparison between genres, using the criteria provided by the SFL model; comparisons between knowledge genres to identify the nature of writing tasks in school, and comparisons between curriculum genres to identify and refine effective teaching practices.

Being able to name genres, and point out their differences, is liberating for both teachers and students. When genre pedagogy began, the only such terms available to many teachers were ‘story’ and ‘essay’. In the first stage of the research program, genres commonly written in the primary school were identified and named, along with their social purposes and typical staging (Table 1). This type of metalanguage is designed for teachers to be able to explicitly discuss with students the kinds of texts written for various purposes, and how they are organised.

Table 1: Key genres described in the first phase of research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>genre</th>
<th>purpose</th>
<th>stages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recount</td>
<td>recounting events</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Record of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrative</td>
<td>resolving a complication</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factual texts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>description</td>
<td>describing specific things</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>report</td>
<td>classifying &amp; describing general things</td>
<td>Classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explanation</td>
<td>explaining sequences of events</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>procedure</td>
<td>how to do an activity</td>
<td>Phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Purpose</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>exposition</td>
<td>arguing for a point of view</td>
<td>Thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arguments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reiteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discussion</td>
<td>discussing two or more points of view</td>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comparative method can also be usefully applied to analysing and designing curriculum genres. Joan Rothery and colleagues designed a curriculum genre in which writing could be explicitly modelled, discussed and guided, dubbed the ‘teaching/learning cycle’, or TLC. Figure 2 displays one version (Rothery 1994).
The cycle begins with Deconstruction of one or more model texts of the genre to be written, in which the teacher guides students to identify their organisation and key language features, using the metalanguage illustrated in Table 1 above. Deconstruction is followed by the central stage of Joint Construction, in which the teacher guides the class to construct a new text of the genre, following the general patterns of the models. Only after this guided joint practice, are students expected to write a text of their own in the Independent Construction stage, using the scaffolds provided in the Deconstruction and Joint Construction stages. Throughout each stage, the field to be written about may be built up through reading, discussion and note making, and the contexts for using the genre are established. As the inner circle suggests, the goal of the pedagogy is both control of the genre, and critical orientation towards texts, through guided practice.

Alongside making the teacher’s knowledge and evaluation criteria explicit, genre pedagogy is designed to narrow the gap between students by guiding the whole class to deconstruct and jointly construct the desired genre, before they attempt independent writing tasks. The goal is for all students to be well prepared before they reach high school.

Phase 2: Write it Right

The findings of phase 1 of the genre pedagogy research project thus included the common knowledge genres that students are expected to write in the primary school, their typical staging and language features, and an effective curriculum genre for guiding whole classes to write them effectively. The implications for writing instruction were borne out by a rapid take-up across Australian primary schools, leading to incorporation of genres in state curricula, and appropriation by educational publishers as teaching materials. Today the genre writing pedagogy is an international movement, increasingly popular for example in Scandinavia (Rose & Martin 2013), Latin America, China (Chen 2010, Liu 2010), South Africa (Childs 2010), Indonesia (Emilia 2010, Martin & Rose 2012), and the US (Schleppergrell 2013).
The second phase of research was dubbed *Write it Right* (by the sponsoring education department of NSW). The research questions for this large scale project were relations between knowledge acquired and applied in secondary schools and industry workplaces, and the genres in which this knowledge was written and read, alongside effective curriculum genres for teaching it. The method was to collect and analyse both samples of students’ writing and the curriculum texts they read across the secondary curriculum, as well as the documents that workers at all levels read and write in workplaces, and to develop teaching materials and work with teachers on refining genre writing pedagogy.

The findings of this project were many, and their implications for embedding literacy in teaching practice continue to unfold. Key publications include collections of papers in Christie (1998), Christie & Martin (1997), Martin & Veel (1998), and work on secondary subject areas, including English (Rothy 1994), and science (Rose, McInnes & Korner 1992). The range of knowledge genres identified in this and subsequent research are described in Martin & Rose (2008), and presented for teachers in Rose (2014).

**Phase 3: Reading to Learn**

The third phase of research in genre pedagogy has centred on the teacher education/action research program known as *Reading to Learn* (or R2L). This now international program began in the late 1990s with the research problem of enabling Indigenous Australian school students to read and write at levels appropriate for their age and grade, when they were consistently reported at an average 3 to 8 years behind the literacy levels of their non-Indigenous peers (Rose, Gray & Cowey 1999). Working with schools and teachers at all levels of education, R2L’s research questions expanded through the 2000s to ask how all children in the junior primary can be enabled to read and write independently, how all students in primary classes can be supported to read and write at the same levels (Rose 2011a), and how secondary teachers can embed the teaching of skills in reading and writing into their curriculum teaching (Martin & Maton 2013, Rose & Acevedo 2006).

The action research method of *Reading to Learn* combines the genre writing pedagogy outlined above, with multimodal strategies for teaching reading, at the levels of graphology, grammar, discourse and register, and closely designed teacher/class interaction cycles (Martin 2007, Martin & Rose 2007, Rose 2004, 2010, 2011b), embedded in curriculum programs informed by the *Write it Right* research, to simultaneously enhance the literacy skills of all students in a class. The methodology assumes that reading is a fundamental mode of learning in school, and that a principal function of writing is to demonstrate what has been learnt from reading. Secondly, it takes the inequality of skills in reading and writing, between students in every class, to be a fundamental problem of education, and targets the design of curriculum genres to enable teachers to overcome this problem, particularly by means of teacher-guided whole class activities.

A fundamental principle of genre pedagogy is that learners should be prepared by teachers before attempting learning tasks. Thus the genre writing pedagogy prepares students with Deconstruction and Joint Construction activities, before attempting independent writing. The Reading to Learn methodology extends this principle with three levels of guidance for reading and writing tasks, in Table 2.
Table 2: Three levels of guidance in R2L curriculum genres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>reading</th>
<th>writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st level</td>
<td>Preparing for Reading</td>
<td>Joint Construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd level</td>
<td>Detailed Reading</td>
<td>Joint Rewriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd level</td>
<td>Sentence Making</td>
<td>Spelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the first level, teachers prepare students to comprehend challenging texts, by giving an oral summary of the field as it unfolds through the genre, in terms that all students can understand. The effect is to reduce the semiotic load of the reading task, as students need not struggle to recognise what is going on as the text is read, but can follow without overload. If the text is read aloud, their load is further reduced, as they need not struggle to decode unfamiliar words. This technique of Preparing for Reading enables the class to work with texts that may be well beyond students’ independent reading levels. With short stories or novel chapters, the whole text may be read, and then discussed, but with denser texts, each paragraph may be briefly prepared, read and discussed. With factual texts, the teacher may also guide students to identify and mark key information in each paragraph, building their skills in recognising and comprehending key information.

At this level, students are also guided to write successful texts, by jointly deconstructing the stages and phases of model texts in target genres, and jointly constructing new texts organised with the same stages and phases. The analysis of phases within text stages is more detailed than in earlier versions of genre writing pedagogy, as students are guided to appropriate the particular text patterning resources of accomplished authors, as well as the global patterns of the genre. For example, authors may build tension in the Complication stage of a narrative, by a series of worsening problems and characters’ reactions. Through fine-grained deconstruction of literary models, students learn to recognise and appropriate such types of phasal structuring (for stages and phases of knowledge genres see Martin & Rose 2008, Rose 2006, Rose & Martin 2012). In Joint Construction, the class imagines a new field for the story (i.e. plot, setting, characters) and follows the stages and phases of the model, substituting this new field. In evaluating texts, phases may include patterns of grounds, conclusions, examples, evidence, and so on, which are also deconstructed in accomplished models and appropriated in Joint Constructions. With factual texts, the information that has been marked in paragraph-by-paragraph reading is written as notes on the board, by students taking turns to scribe and dictate the wordings from the reading texts. The phases of information in the notes are then identified and labelled by the teacher, who then guides the class to construct a new text using the notes. In Individual Construction, students practise writing new texts with the same stages and phases that have been guided in Joint Construction, before attempting a completely independent writing task. For stories, they imagine a new plot, setting and characters; for evaluating texts they argue for an issue they have studied, or evaluate a text they have studied; for factual texts, they may use the same notes to write a text of their own.
In the second level, teachers guide students to read passages from the reading text in detail, by preparing them to recognise groups of words in each sentence, and elaborating on their meanings as students identify each word group, using carefully designed cycles of teacher-student interaction, in the activity known as Detailed Reading. At this point, students already have a grasp of the text’s overall field through prior Preparing and reading, so they are ready to focus on finer details. Passages may be chosen for Detailed Reading that are particularly challenging, encapsulate key information about the field, or are ideal models of language. The teacher prepares each sentence with a brief synopsis, reads it to the class, and then guides students to identify each chunk of meaning, which they highlight, giving them visual and manual control of the wordings. Guidance consists of a preparation giving the meaning to be identified, and the position of the words in the sentence. The students’ task is to identify the wording from the meaning and position cues. The whole class is engaged, by asking students in turn to identify each wording. As preparations are designed to enable every student to identify wordings successfully, all students are continually affirmed, in contrast to more typical classrooms where a small minority of students engage actively in dialogue (Nuthall 2005, Rose & Martin 2012). As all students have successfully identified the wording, all are ready for the elaboration of its meaning, which may involve defining new words, explaining unfamiliar concepts, or engaging students in relating their own knowledge. Detailed Reading typically runs for 20-30 minutes, by which time every student in the class is able to read the passage with complete fluency and comprehension, no matter what their initial reading levels. So Detailed Reading is a powerful strategy, not only to enable students to read and comprehend challenging texts, but to enable the class to work with texts that may be well beyond students’ individual reading capacities.

Following Detailed Reading, students are also guided to use what they have learnt from reading, by jointly rewriting the text passage that has been read in detail, using the same grammatical patterns for literary or persuasive texts, or the same field for factual texts. As all students now have complete control over the field and language patterns of the reading passage, they are able to focus on the complex task of using them for writing. With stories and evaluative texts, a new field is chosen, which the teacher guides the class to apply using the same grammatical patterns as the original sentences. Typically, each chunk of meaning in each sentence is worked on in turn, which students take turns to scribe. With factual texts, the class first scribes notes of the wordings that have been highlighted during Detailed Reading (as in Joint Construction), and the teacher guides the class to use this detailed information to write new sentences. So with stories and evaluative texts, the language patterns in rewriting derive from the original passage, with new content; whereas with factual texts the content is the same but new language patterns are created. Following Joint Rewriting, students attempt the same task in Individual Rewriting, using a new field with stories and evaluative texts, and the same field with factual texts. Top students find they are able to independently write well beyond their previous competence, allowing the teacher time to provide more support to other students. Joint and Individual Rewriting are powerful techniques for learning to appropriate the language resources of accomplished authors, and to control technical, abstract and literary language.

In the third and most intensive level, teachers guide students to manually manipulate wordings, by cutting up sentences from a Detailed Reading passage, and rearranging them, in the activity of Sentence Making. This is typically a group activity, in which each group has a set
of sentences which the teacher has written on cardboard strips (but may also be used as an individual guided activity for students with additional needs.) The teacher guides the class to cut the strips into word groups, and then individual words, and students in groups mix up the cards, re-arrange them into their original orders, and into alternative patterns of their choosing. Sentence Making is extremely effective as it gives students total manual control over the meanings and wordings of written language, without the additional load of inventing and writing their own sentences. Once students have control over meanings and wordings through Sentence Making, the teacher guides them to spell individual words, by cutting them into their letter patterns and practising writing the letter patterns and words on individual whiteboards. As students are thoroughly familiar with each word from the perspective meaning, and they can easily practise and self-correct on the boards, the spelling activity is highly effective. This is the level at which students practise sound-letter correspondences, in the context of meaningful words in meaningful texts, in contrast to decontextualised phonics and spelling activities. Once they can spell most of the words, they write the whole sentences from memory in Sentence Writing, enabling them to practise fluent meaningful writing, without the load of inventing their own sentences. These intensive strategies thus embed foundation literacy skills in reading and writing curriculum texts, as Detailed Reading and Rewriting embed grammar and vocabulary in learning the curriculum through reading and writing.

These curriculum genres are practised in daily and weekly programs, that vary with the level of schooling. At the start of school, the intensive strategies are used to teach beginning literacy, from the alphabet to reading comprehension and writing, using sentences from reading books that the teacher has read to the class. In the primary, Preparing and reading each day is followed by Detailed Reading on a short passage, intensive strategies on one or more sentences, and Rewriting of the short passage; Joint and Individual Construction are weekly activities, leading to independent writing of focus genres every 2-3 weeks. In the secondary school, teachers use Preparing and reading to teach curriculum content, in place of the ubiquitous teacher talk; Detailed Reading and Rewriting are applied to selected passages at least every week; and Joint Construction is followed by independent writing every 4-5 weeks.

Evaluation

Outcomes of the R2L methodology have been repeatedly evaluated over 15 years. The program began with an action research project with Indigenous students from remote Australian communities, for whom literacy rates were on average 4 to 8 years behind the national Australian averages for their ages (Rose, Gray & Cowey 1999). Within the first year of this project, independent evaluators reported average improvements for junior secondary students at “2.5 [national English] Profile levels” (McCrae et al 2000:69). The Australian government’s Literacy Profile levels were measured by reading accuracy and comprehension and writing standards. Each Profile level corresponded to expected literacy growth over 1.5 school years. Hence, a growth rate of 2.5 Profile levels in less then one school year approximated growth rates normally expected over 4 years.

A large scale R2L professional learning program has been run by the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) since 2003. Outcomes have been tracked using a combination of measures, including the DART reading assessment, running records and writing assessments.
Culican (2006:57) reports that the “approach was highly successful in accelerating the literacy performance of over 95% of the target students underachieving in literacy... average literacy gains across all schools and classes, and among students from all backgrounds and ability ranges, was consistently more than a CSF level in improvement within approximately three school terms, or approximately double the expected rate of literacy development. Furthermore, 20% of students made gains of two or more CSF levels, or four times the expected rate of literacy development”. CSF levels (Curriculum and Standards Framework of Victoria) were identical to the national Literacy Profile levels discussed above. More recently, CEOM has been calculating outcomes of its R2L programs in terms of effect sizes, using similar measures. Hattie 2009 defines the outcomes of standard pedagogic practice as an effect size of $d = 0.4$. CEOM’s R2L 2011 data for primary schools showed a mean effect size of $d = 0.94$, and for secondary schools of $d = 1.03$. As with previous evaluations, these average effect sizes are over double expected growth rates.

**Writing Assessment in Reading to Learn**

In 2008, a writing assessment was designed to accurately but simply analyse the language resources that each student brings to the writing task (Rose 2014). Teachers identify these language resources in students’ writing, using 14 criteria. The criteria are derived from the SFL model of text-in-context outlined above, recontextualised to facilitate a simple, practicable text analysis for each piece of writing. At the level of genre, evaluation focuses on the social purpose, stages and phases of the text. At the level of register, it focuses on the text’s field, tenor, and mode. At the level of discourse, lexical, appraisal (evaluative), conjunction and reference resources are identified. At the level of grammar, the variety and accuracy of grammatical resources are evaluated, and at the level of graphic features, spelling, punctuation and graphic presentation are marked. The sequence of analysis is thus from the ‘top-down’, from genre to register, to discourse features that realise field, tenor and mode, to grammatical patterns that realise discourse patterns, to graphological features that express these patterns in writing. Questions are used to interrogate each of these criteria, summarised in Table 3 below.
Students’ writing samples are compared with analysed writing exemplars at each school year level, which are moderated against state and national standards, and each criterion is given a score from 0-3 against the standard in the exemplar. A score of 0 indicates no evidence of the criterion at the standard for the year level, 1 is present but weak, 2 is good but could be improved, 3 is excellent for the year standard. Teachers are asked to assess the writing of students from low, middle and high achieving groups, in order to compare the growth of each group in the class. Independent writing samples from at least two students in each group are collected at the start of the year, and at the end of each school term. Teachers are repeatedly guided to use the assessment in the R2L training, and further moderate the assessments with colleagues in their schools. Following initial training and moderation, teachers’ assessments are remarkably consistent, with only a few points divergence between independent assessments of the same piece. This consistency is due in part to the design of the assessment, that gives equal weight to each component of the writing task, and in part to teachers’ rapid control over the text analysis with guided practice. This practice has the added advantages of giving teacher conscious knowledge of the language features they are working with, in order to design their teaching, and discuss language with their students.

The assessment is applied here to analyse the improvement for one low achieving junior secondary student. Text 1 was produced before R2L teaching, as follows. Appraisals (evaluative items) are marked in bold (Martin & Rose 2007).

In this book I like that I could connect with it as it’s suitable for my age. By the end it dragged on a bit to much for my liking.

This text is the genre known as a personal response, characterised by expressions of personal feelings and reactions to the text, and often produced by weaker students when asked...
to evaluate a text (Rothery & Macken-Horarik 1991, Martin & Rose 2008). From the interpersonal perspective, of the three evaluations here, two are subjective reactions I like that I could connect with it, but it dragged on a bit to much for my liking, and one objective valuation it’s suitable for my age. Ideationally, the only lexical items are this book and my age. The lack of any description of the text and its contents is inadequate for a text response. Textually, references indicate the writer I, I, my, my, and the book this book, it, it’s, the end, it.

In terms of tenor, this response assumes a familiar peer relationship with the reader; in terms of field, it lacks any description of the book; in terms of mode, it is context-dependent speech written down. As this student is soon to enter secondary school, the tenor would be regarded as too familiar for its academic context, the field as inadequate, the mode as far too spoken, and the genre as inappropriate for the task of evaluating a literary text.

Text 2, by the same student following one semester’s instruction with R2L, is an interpretation, which appreciates a novel and interprets its themes (Table 3). This is the canonical genre of literature studies in the secondary school. Interpretations typically begin with an Evaluation stage, followed by a Synopsis of elements of the text that carry its themes, and conclude with a Reaffirmation of the evaluation (Rothery 1994, Martin & Rose 2008). Again, appraisals are in bold below. Marked Themes signalling phase shifts are underlined.

Table 3: post R2L interpretation (Text 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>“The Recruit” is a fantastic novel by Robert Muchamore, which was first published in 2004. This realistic narrative is for young teenagers who would easily relate to this story as the characters face problems of today's teenagers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Synopsis</td>
<td>The main character, James Choke (Adams), goes through tragedy and adventure throughout his young life. Through the novel, he has to adjust to his losses in life. He finds out who he really is and discovers a lot of new things in life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plot</td>
<td>After being separated from his sister (Lauren), James had to live in an orphanage. Towards the end of the narrative James becomes a spy and knows what it feels like to belong and make new friends in a whole new environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaffirmation</td>
<td>The author Robert Muchamore made the novel very realistic by making James’ life not so easy. James had a rough life until something amazing happened to him and totally changed his life. Many young teenagers go through the same problems as James does.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composition</td>
<td>Throughout this novel the composer has used informal modern language that would appeal to teenage audience. There is swearing, references to popular culture and references to technology. The third person narration gives a lot of information to the audience. It describes the characters from an objective perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appeal</td>
<td>Every now and then the novel made me feel sad and angry, knowing what James had to go through in life. I would have liked if the author mentioned Kerry a bit more. I believe this story is written well and outstanding novel with a believable plot that many young people would enjoy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within its staging, the Synopsis includes two paragraphs which identify the novel’s themes and synopsize its plot. The Reaffirmation evaluates its relevance for teenage readers, its literary composition, and its appeal to the writer and potential readers. While genre stages are
highly predictable, phases within each stage tend to be more variable, depending on factors such as the field and writers’ imagination.

Appraisals are concentrated in the Evaluation and Reaffirmation, including a much wider range of text valuations, reader reactions, and judgements of characters. Sourcing of attitudes is now far more objective, with personal sourcing limited to the final evaluation, and valuations attributed to potential readers: young teenagers, many young people.

Ideationally, lexical resources construe the texts’ themes and their relevance for readers, and the field of literature. Some of these literary resources have clearly been scaffolded by the teacher, but they are used coherently here by the student writer. The novel’s plot is condensed as an activity sequence in just two sentences.

Textually, reference to the book now begins by naming it, and then presuming it: a novel, this narrative. Characters are also presented first by naming, and then presuming: his young life, his losses, who he really is. As well as presenting each phase as separate paragraphs, the shift from phase to phase is also signalled by clause Themes that are made prominent, either by doubling an identity, or starting with a time or place, underlined in Table 3.

Tenor unfolds subtly through the text, beginning with strong valuation to engage the reader: a fantastic novel, then amplified judgement for its themes: totally changed his life, and amplified valuation for its relevance: very realistic. While these are all presented objectively, the personalised reactions in the last paragraph enact solidarity with teenage readers. The field here is multi-layered, with one field, the novel’s plot, projecting a field of personal growth (its themes), and the field of literary appreciation (Rothery 1997). The mode is now at an appropriate level of written language for the end of primary school, and the genre is masterfully controlled. This student is now well prepared for the writing demands of secondary literature studies.

In practice, teachers make quick judgements about the assessment criteria, described in detail above. Quick overall judgements are made about genre and register criteria, and discourse features may then be highlighted in part of the text to display the student’s resources. Text 1 scored just 10/42, with 0 for most contextual and discourse criteria, as its two sentences are so far below the standard expected for junior secondary school, although they meet minimum standards for lower level criteria. Text 2 scored 34/42, with 2-3 for all criteria, as it meets an average to top standard for genre, register and discourse criteria.

In middle primary (Year 3/4), growth for the low achieving group is exemplified with writing samples from one student in Texts 3 and 4 (Figure 3). The pre-intervention Text 3 on the left is an incomplete recount that borrows elements from the animated movie Shrek. The post-intervention Text 4 on the right is modelled on a literary description studied in detail by the class. Text 3 scored 9/42, while Text 4 scored 26/42.
Findings

Texts 1-4 illustrate potential rapid growth in literacy skills using R2L’s explicit teaching strategies, informed by systematic knowledge about language-in-context and designed to equally engage all students. These kinds of growth have been replicated again and again by teachers undertaking R2L training programs over 15 years. As teachers are asked to measure their students’ literacy before and after R2L teaching, this data forms a useful comparison of literacy outcomes of standard teaching methods, including various standard remedial interventions commonly provided to failing student groups. An example of such a comparison is the following analysis of one R2L training program, in which approximately 400 primary and secondary teachers were trained in western NSW in 2010 (Koop & Rose 2008, Rose 2011c). The sample thus represents a large set (~400 classes x 20-30 students per class, or ~8-12,000 students). The large sample size helps to minimise potential biases.

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the gap between low, middle and high achieving student groups, before and after the intervention. Figure 4 charts the pre-intervention scores for each student group and school stage in Term 1. Figure 5 charts the post-intervention scores for each student group and school stage, after 3 terms of R2L teaching. School stages surveyed include kindergarten (K), junior primary (Yr1/2), middle primary (Yr3/4), upper primary (Yr5/6) and junior secondary (Yr7/8). Note that the same students are represented in each cohort in Figures 4 and 5, before and after the intervention. The data do not show longitudinal growth rates from
year to year; rather these data are only from the year that teachers were being trained in the R2L program.

**Figure 4:** Pre-intervention scores show gap between student groups before R2L teaching

In Figure 4, pre-intervention scores at the start of kindergarten show the gap between low and high achieving students at 16% of the total possible score. By the start of Yr1/2, the high group has accelerated to acceptable standards but the low group is still near zero - the gap between low and high students has tripled to over 50% of the total. This gap then continues throughout the years, decreasing slightly. The low group improves very slowly from Yr1/2 to Yr7/8, but remains in the failing range, the middle group remains steady the low average range, and the high group remains in a high average range, falling slightly.

Comparing results between Figures 4 and 5, post-intervention scores show average growth in kindergarten is 70% above pre-intervention scores; all groups are now scoring in the high range, and the gap between low and high achieving groups is halved. In the other year levels, growth is 30-40% above the pre-intervention scores, and the gap has halved from 50% to around 25%.

**Figure 5:** Post-intervention scores show growth and reduction in gap after R2L teaching
**Implications**

These data provide an unusual opportunity to compare the outcomes of different approaches to pedagogy, from a large set of students, classes and schools. This is not a comparison between teachers, classes or schools, because it is averaged across the whole set of schools and classrooms. What is compared in Figures 4 and 5 are the outcomes of standard teaching practices in each stage of school, with the outcomes of carefully designed strategies in the R2L intervention. The pre-intervention scores in each stage represent the outcomes of the preceding 1-2 years of standard teaching practices.

Clearly this research design differs from small-scale projects common in educational research. It may be criticized for lacking the precision of the randomized control experiments borrowed into education from biomedical research; rather it employs a pre/post methodology sometimes known as ‘quasi-experimental’. However it may also be argued that a control equivalent in this research design is the literacy standards that students had achieved before the R2L intervention. The critical factor in this data is the gap between more and less successful students, which the R2L methodology takes as the fundamental problem to be addressed in education.

Figures 4 suggests that this gap is present at the start of school, but that standard literacy practices of the early years triple its effects in the first years of school. This exaggerated gap continues throughout the following stages of school, as low achieving students remain in the failing range, the middle group in the low average range, and the high group within the high average range. In order for the high achieving group to maintain its position in the high average range, these students must keep developing their literacy skills at a standard average growth rate. However for low achieving students to get out of the failing range, up to a passable average range, they must develop their skills at more than double the rate of the high achieving students. This rarely happens with standard teaching practices. Nor does it happen with targeted interventions such as phonics programs, withdrawal reading programs, leveled readers, leveled reading groups or special education programs, which may produce incremental but not exponential growth (Hattie 2009).

Genre pedagogy, and *Reading to Learn* in particular, achieves exponential growth rates because:

- In the infants school, foundation literacy skills are taught explicitly in the context of meaningful, pleasurable shared book reading activities with whole classes, rather than individuated decontextualised activities such as commercial phonics programs (Rose 2011a).
- In the primary years, skills in learning from reading and writing genres are explicitly taught in the context of reading age appropriate literature, and studying topics across learning areas, in teacher guided whole class activities, rather than differentiated practice at ‘instructional levels’ (Hattie 2009).
- In the secondary school, skills in acquiring and demonstrating knowledge through reading and writing are embedded in studying each subject in the curriculum, rather than treating knowledge as separate from the texts in which it is written, and leaving reading and writing development to each student’s intuitions (Martin & Maton 2013).
• Teacher education programs are designed to provide teachers with knowledge about language and pedagogy to independently select and analyse texts in their curriculum programs, and plan and implement detailed lessons that simultaneously enhance the skills of all students in their classes (Rose & Acevedo 2006, Culican 2006, Rose 2011d, to appear).

Further research in genre pedagogy is currently being conducted in many contexts, such as schools in developing nations (Dell 2011, Emilia 2010), tertiary education (Mahboob 2013, Millin 2011, Rose, Rose, Farrington & Page 2008), knowledge in school (Martin 2013, Martin & Maton 2013), knowledge about language (Schleppergrell 2013, Rose & Martin 2012, Rose to appear) and teacher education in western Europe (Acevedo & Lövstedt 2014, Coffin 2014, Gouveia 2014, Whittaker 2014).

Further research is also needed to design genre pedagogy programs appropriate to varying contexts, such as US schools, where literacy debates tend to be unhelpfully polarised between conservative and progressive/constructivist positions. Genre pedagogy subverts such ‘literacy wars’ by giving teachers the knowledge they need to make all students successful, regardless of their backgrounds and curriculum. In this regard a key area for further research is how to make genre pedagogy a part of pre-service teacher training in various national systems. To date the primary mode of dissemination has been through in-service programs for practising teachers, as they and their schools have demanded effective literacy pedagogies. In contrast, there has been far less demand from teacher education faculties, except where genre pedagogy has become an official part of state syllabi, obligating universities to provide pre-service training. In general, pre-service training the world over has been spectacularly unsuccessful in providing graduates with the skills they need to make all their students successful. It is common for teacher educators to blame schools for subverting the training they provide to teachers, but research is urgently needed in how to recontextualise effective literacy pedagogy as effective teacher education.

References


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