

Interacting with Text: the role of dialogue in learning to read and write

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0. Challenges for genre-based literacy approaches in EAP programs

Genre-based approaches to teaching reading and writing have been widely adopted in Australia and other western education systems, and have achieved spectacular improvements in student outcomes, from twice to more than four times expected rates of learning (Culican 2005, Rose & Acevedo 2006). The development of these pedagogies in Australia has been fuelled by a rapid growth in the proportion of students from non-English speaking backgrounds who require academic skills. Similarly, economic changes impacting on educational demands in China are now sparking interest in innovative approaches to English literacy, particularly in English for Academic Purposes. However, introducing a genre-based literacy pedagogy in English language programs presents a number of challenges, given the variations in education histories and current practices in China and the west. These challenges can be divided along two lines, firstly what it is that EAP students need to learn, including knowledge about language and skills in using this knowledge, and secondly how they can most effectively learn this knowledge and skills, and how to teach them. In this paper we will first examine the 'what' of literacy learning, in terms of the genre-based model of language and the skills that English language learners require, and second the 'how' of literacy teaching, by reviewing the role of dialogue in the genre-based language in education work of the Sydney School (Martin 2000/2006, Martin & Rose 2005).

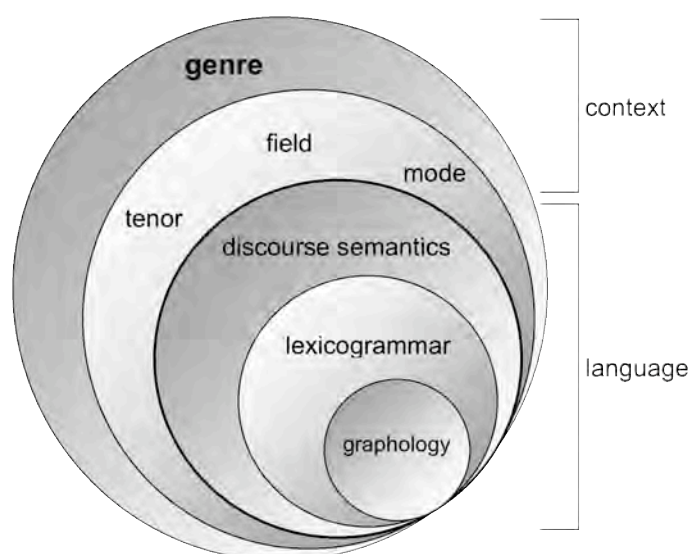
1. The genre-based model of language

Perhaps the most outstanding single feature of language is its immense complexity, involving thousands of options in multiple systems. For example, lexicogrammatical systems within the clause (or sentence) construe experience as processes involving people, things, places and qualities, at the same time as they enact speaking roles as questions, statements, commands or offers, and organise clauses as quanta of information (Halliday 1994/2004). Beyond the clause, discourse semantic systems construe sequences of activities and entities, introduce and track identities through a text, enact speakers' social relations in dialogue, evaluate their attitudes, and organise texts as waves of information at the levels of sentences, paragraphs, and text stages (Martin & Rose 2003).

This complexity is handled by various language teaching approaches in different ways. Course books in English language programs are often organised by levels of language, from words to word groups to sentences to texts. This organisation reflects two traditional assumptions in language description and teaching: that language is organised in a bottom-up hierarchy from smaller to larger units, and that the complexity of language must be learned in the same sequence, much as a wall is built up from bricks-&-mortar.¹

From a linguistic perspective, the issue here is the **stratification** of language - its organisation in levels or strata. In contrast to traditional linguistics and language teaching, genre-based approaches take a top-down perspective, starting with the global social functions of texts, such as recounting events, explaining processes, describing entities, debating issues, or evaluating other texts - in other words their genres. Genre weaves together three other dimensions of the social context of texts: field, tenor and mode. The field of an academic text is located within one or more disciplines; its tenor enacts relations of academic authority between readers, writers and other authors in these disciplines; its mode is typically densely written, technical and abstract, including accompanying images. These contextual dimensions - genre, field, tenor and mode - are realised as discourse semantic patterns in texts. Patterns of discourse are in turn realised as lexicogrammatical patterns in clauses, that are realised as patterns of sounds in speaking or graphology in writing. These strata of language in social context are diagrammed as Figure 1.

Figure 1: Strata of language in social context



From a pedagogic perspective, reading an academic text involves recognising its genre, as well as its field, tenor and mode. This requires recognising the discourse semantic patterns in which its genre and register are realised, as well as the grammatical patterns in which discourse patterns are realised. Writing an academic text involves using these patterns to construct its genre and register. The primary question for language teachers is then the genres our students need to read and write in academic contexts, and secondly the kinds of language patterns that are found in these genres. The complexity of English for academic purposes is thus reducible to a finite set of academic genres, involving a manageable range of language features. This top-down approach follows the course of natural language learning, in which new language features are encountered in meaningful contexts; it is the reverse of language teaching traditions that begin with lower level structures. Common academic genres are listed in Table 1, with their social

purposes and the typical stages they go through to achieve their goals (discussed in detail in Martin & Rose 2007).

Table 1: Some common academic genres

| genre | purposes | typical stages |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| descriptive report | classifying & describing things of the natural and social worlds | Classification Description |
| explanation | explaining processes of the natural and social worlds | Phenomenon Explanation |
| historical recount | recounting historical events | Background Record of events |
| procedure | steps in experiments & observations | Purpose Equipment Steps |
| technical report | recounting experiments & observations | Technical problem Method Results Recommendations |
| research report | recounting and interpreting results of research activity | Research problem Method Results Discussion |
| exposition | arguing for a point of view | Thesis Arguments Reiteration of thesis |
| discussion | discussing two or more points of view | Issue Sides Resolution |
| literature review | discussing multiple positions on a topic | Topic Issues Resolution |

2. Skills in academic reading and writing

Bottom-up language teaching programs implicitly assume a theory of learning, that language is learnt by studying and remembering lower level components of the language system, before applying them in reading and writing tasks, just as mathematics or chemistry are learnt by remembering sets of formulae, and applying them in incrementally more complex problems. Although this approach enables many students to develop skills in academic English, successful students are actually learning to do far more than remembering these components: more importantly they are practising skills in recognising, interpreting and using written language patterns in texts. These skills are less often taught explicitly in language programs, but are acquired tacitly by successful students in the process of doing exercises on selected language components, and later applying them intuitively to actual academic reading and writing. Those students who are already most experienced at reading and writing academic texts will be most able to tacitly develop these skills; those who are less experienced will be less successful.

From a linguistic perspective, the issue here is the **instantiation** of language systems in texts; that is, each text is an instance of the entire language system, and each language feature in a text is an instance of one of the options in the language system. The question for language teaching is whether we start with language systems or with instances of them in texts. Traditional approaches simply follow other academic traditions, in which the content of courses is determined by the structure of the discipline (a 'vertical discourse' in Bernstein's 1999 terms). To this end language courses start with the systems that have been described by traditional linguistics (vocabulary and syntax), give students exercises to practise remembering these systems, and then test their memories. This is the reverse of first language learning; no parent in any culture would consider teaching their child to speak or to read by getting them to remember

features in language systems, and then testing how well they remember each feature. Rather the features are learnt as they are repeatedly experienced in social discourse (i.e. as texts), and the child construes the systems of contrasts between features as they experience them (Bernstein's 'horizontal discourse').

Growing dissatisfaction with this contradiction sparked the progressive revolution in language teaching in the west from the 1960s, with notions such as 'communicative competence' in adult English language programs, 'whole language' and 'process writing' in schools, and more recently 'constructivism'. While progressive/constructivist theories recognised the importance of learning language from instances in social contexts, what they lacked was a clearly articulated model of the relations between language systems, texts and contexts. Instead learning was assumed to occur automatically in amorphous communicative contexts, and teaching of language systems was often discouraged, or tacked on haphazardly. In fact systematic studies of first language learning show that parents and others continually guide children to recognise and use features of language appropriately in specific predictable contexts of speaking and reading (exemplified in the next section). By these means children gradually come to recognise and distinguish the genres of their culture, and to use language that is appropriate to each genre. In Halliday's terms (1994: xxxi): "As a language is manifested through its texts, a culture is manifested through its situations; so by attending to text-in-situation a child construes the code, and by using the code to interpret text s/he construes the culture."

Whereas progressive/constructivist theories assume that language cannot be taught, only learnt in context, traditional approaches assume that language must be taught as it is described in school grammars, as a set of decontextualised systems. But the crucial skills that language learners actually need are to recognise categories of language patterns at each level as they read texts, to interpret each instance of these categories in relation to their experience and goals, and to use these language patterns flexibly in their writing.² Following the example of first language learning, a logical teaching sequence is to guide students, firstly to recognise language patterns in texts, secondly to interpret them in contrast with related language features in systems, and thirdly to use them to write texts of their own. In this way, language features are first learnt as they are experienced in actual meaningful contexts; the resulting understandings can then provide a meaningful basis for recognising systemic contrasts with related features. Teaching practice is thus informed both by what we know of language systems and their instantiation in texts that our students need to read and write. The primary teaching focus is on developing recognition skills that can be applied across academic study, and secondly on acquiring specific knowledge about language systems. And as language systems are learnt in the context of actual texts, so lower level systems are learnt in the context of higher levels systems, beginning with the genre and register of a text, followed by its principal discourse semantic patterns and grammatical features.

3. How language is learnt through interaction

We are all familiar with the ways in which speaking affords various kinds of interaction, in ways that writing does not. What is less clear is the role that interaction might play in

learning to read and write, even if the ultimate goal of literacy pedagogy is to have students reading and writing on their own. The literacy pedagogy of the Sydney School was inspired by Halliday and Painter's work on spoken language development in pre-school children (Halliday 1973, 1993, 2003; Painter 1984, 1986, 1998). Data such as the following, from spoken language development, were very influential. In the following exchange 1, Halliday's son, aged 22 months, is recounting a meal for his parents; the child and his caregivers reconstruct the experience interactively.³

Exchange 1

Child: Auntie Joan cook quack quack for you.
 Father: Auntie Joan cooked quack quack for you, did she?
 Child: Auntie Joan cook greenpea.
 Father: And green peas.
 Child: Began shout.
 Mother: Who began to shout.
 Child: Nila began to shout.
 Mother: Did you? What did you shout?
 Child: Greenpea.

Later that same day the child reconstructs the experience on his own, shedding the interactive support that his parents provided first time round:

Child: Auntie Jean cook quack quack for you...and green pea...you began to shout GREENPEA!

One point to stress about examples of this kind is that these texts are produced in the context of experience that has been shared by adult and child, which makes it possible for parents to ask the right guiding questions to extend the text. Another point to focus on is the way in which caregivers play a supportive and guiding role in the interaction. In exchange 1, the father monitors the child's comments in an interested and receptive way; and the mother probes deeper into the experience, with leading questions as to who shouted and what they screamed. This early spoken text in other words is a jointly constructed one. The parents' contributions enable the child to accomplish more in interaction than s/he would have been able to on her own. A related example from Painter's data (Painter 1993) makes a similar point as the child struggles towards an abstraction ('speed') with the support of his caregivers:

Exchange 2

Father: This car can't go as fast as ours.
 Child (4.8): I thought - I thought all cars could - all cars could go the same - all cars could go the same (pause) fast...
 Mother: The same speed.
 Child: Yes, same speed.

This kind of guidance through interaction resonates strongly with neo-Vygotskian notions of 'scaffolding', which assume that learning takes place as teachers construct a supportive scaffold for learners, and withdraw the scaffold as learners are able to perform the language task on their own.⁴ Turning to the written mode, we can see the same patterns of scaffolding in parent-child reading, exemplified by the following session with an 18 month old child and her mother (from McGee 1998:163). The extract is analysed into three interaction cycles, in which each move is labelled to the right. In one

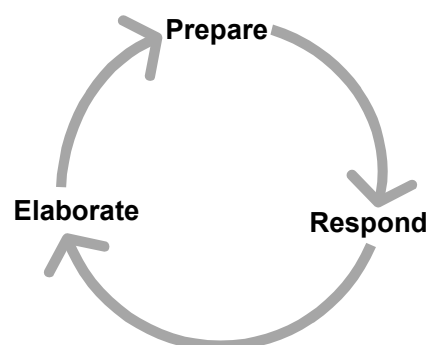
type of move, the mother prepares the child to recognise a feature of the text. The child then identifies a text feature, the mother affirms her, and may elaborate with more information.

Exchange 3

| | | |
|--------|--|-----------|
| Mother | The three little pigs [points to each of the pigs on the cover of the book]. | Prepare1 |
| Child | [points to picture of a tree] Tee [looks up at mother]. | Identify |
| Mother | Yes | Affirm |
| | It's a tree. | Elaborate |
| Child | [points to another tree in the picture] Tee [looks up at mother again]. | Identify |
| Mother | Um, um | Affirm |
| | [Points to each of the little pigs in the illustrations]. Here are the little pigs. Bye bye mama [waves her hand]. We're going to build a house. | Prepare2 |
| Child | [laughs, waves at the mama pig in the illustration and turns the page] | Identify |
| Mother | Oh oh, I see that wolf [points to the wolf, eyes get larger as if in fright]. | Prepare3 |
| Child | [turns page and points to wolf] Oh oh. | Identify |
| Mother | Oh oh. | Affirm |
| | He huffed and puffed [blowing on child] and he blewww that pig away. | Elaborate |
| | Very bad, isn't he? [in different tone directed toward child as an aside]. | |

This interaction cycle - of teacher/parent preparing, learner responding, and teacher elaborating – may be fundamental to human learning (Rose 2005a). It has been widely described in school classroom contexts as the 'IRF' (initiate-response-feedback) cycle (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975). We describe it more generally as the **scaffolding interaction cycle** (Rose 2004, 2005b), diagrammed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Scaffolding interaction cycle



In all the above examples, the child is being guided to recognise and use patterns of language, but these are not taught as categories in language systems, rather the categories are encountered in the context of social interaction, from which the child construes the systems. In Exchange 1, the child is supported to present a sequence of events in a recount of experience, and as a result is then able to put the whole sequence together himself. In Exchange 2, the child is guided to use an abstract noun as the Thing in a nominal group ('the same **speed**'), since he recognises that qualities like 'fast' cannot fill this role. In Exchange 3, the child is guided to recognise features such as sequences in written stories ('We're going to build a house' – child turns page), and interpret them in her own experience ('Bye bye mama' – child laughs and waves her

hand), or to recognise emotional reactions to events ('Oh oh, I see that wolf' – child turns page and repeats 'Oh oh').

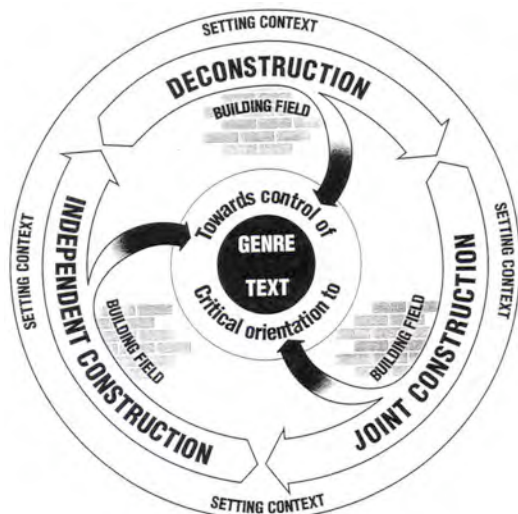
This research on language learning is at odds with traditional language teaching methods, in which teachers may demonstrate language features as they write on the board, students then perform exercises using the features, and teachers evaluate their performance. These methods provide relatively little scaffolding support, leaving a gap between the teacher demonstration and the independent exercises, and between the exercises and their application in reading and writing actual academic texts, that students must learn to bridge on their own. The solutions to these problems are threefold: to use actual texts to model reading and writing in the classroom; to jointly deconstruct the language patterns of model texts from the top-down, beginning with the genre; and to jointly construct new texts using these language features, supporting all students to apply them to reading and writing as the text and the lesson unfold.

4. Writing genres

From Halliday's and Painter's work on oral language learning, Rothery (1989, 1994, 1996) took the principle of 'guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience' which she adapted for classroom language learning contexts. Her challenge was to make learning to write a comparable activity to learning to speak for all students, irrespective of their home background and academic strengths. To achieve this, she and her colleagues designed a teaching/learning cycle, one representation of which is presented as Figure 2.

The cycle features three main stages - Deconstruction, Joint Construction and Individual Construction. Deconstruction involves teachers introducing students to a model of the genre they are expected to write, including as far as possible discussion of its cultural context, staging and linguistic features. Joint Construction involves teachers acting as a scribe and writing another text in the same genre with the class on a blackboard, white board or OHP. Independent Construction involves students writing a third text, in the same genre, on their own. All three stages of the pedagogy involve building field (so that students are familiar the content of the genre) and setting context (so that students understand the social purpose of the genre); and the ultimate purpose of the cycle is for students to take control of the genre, both in terms of being able to write it and also reflect critically on its role.

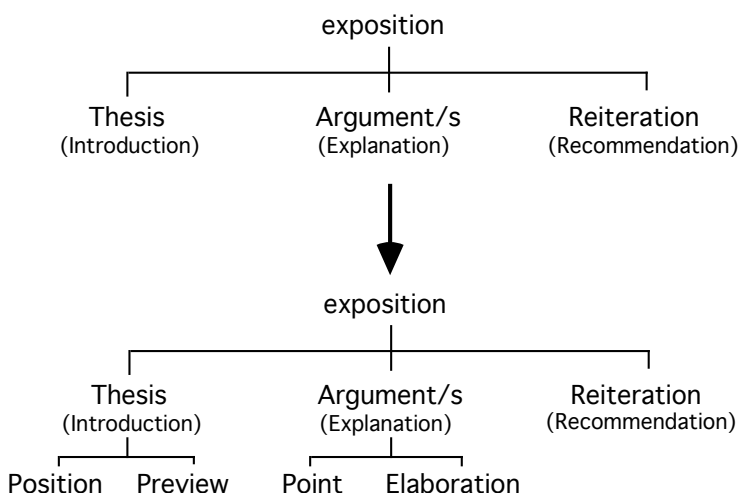
Figure 2: Teaching/learning cycle (Rothery 1994)



The Deconstruction and Independent Construction stages of the cycle will be familiar to writing teachers using traditional grammar and composition techniques.⁵ The joint construction phase will be less familiar and will be further explored here. For the Sydney School, this interactive stage is the one that provides the link between language learning in the home and language learning at school which is so crucial for students who otherwise have great difficulty learning to read and write.

To explore this stage, let's join a literacy class in Year 6 of an Australian primary school (students aged 11-12).⁶ The students are working on exposition, and have already been through one pedagogic cycle and written texts with canonical Thesis, Argument, Reiteration of Thesis structures. Their teacher is now working with them on previewing arguments in their Thesis, and using a topic sentence to introduce arguments in each paragraph. This structural development they are working on is outlined in Figure 3. Text 1 exemplifies successful instantiation of this structure by a student from this class.

Figure 3: Developing the structure of exposition



[1] Exposition for: Should an amphitheatre be built in Wiley Park?

I strongly believe that the amphitheatre in Wiley Park should be built for these following reasons, such as: it attracts more people to the area, shops and public transport will earn a larger profit, people will become more interested in Wiley park, and it is suitable for all ages.

My first reason is that it will bring more people to our area because there are not many main attractions in our community and it can be something to remember our bi-centenary by in years to come.

Another point to mention is shops will earn more money, for example, the new restaurant which will be built with in the amphitheatre. And not to forget Public transport which will create more money for the government and will be more easier for the disabled to travel by if they wish to do so.

And last but not least it is not only for the grown ups but it is also suitable for children for example, there will be entertainment such as concerts, plays and shows. In my opinion from a child's point of view I think it's going to be fun and it's about time the council did something like this.

I hope I have convinced you that we should have a amphitheatre at Wiley Park.

The issue the teacher is working on as we drop in is the reasons why students should go to school. The class has already completed work in small groups exploring this issue and consolidated their ideas on the blackboard with their teacher. Having built up the field, they begin work on the joint construction of a new text. Text 2 is from near the beginning of this interaction. So far the teacher has scribed *I strongly believe that children should go to school*, and is working with the students on how to complete this introduction. The italicised sections of Exchange 4 represent the wordings that students are selecting for writing, and the bold sections represent the writing which the teacher has scribed on the board for the class.

Exchange 4

T ...Filippa?

Filippa ***I strongly believe that children should go to school*** for these main reasons... um, and I'm going to list them all.

T Sorry, say that again.

Lisa *For these main reasons.*

T *For these main reasons.* Who can think of a different word other than main?

- Sts *For the following reasons.*
- T *For the following reasons.* Who can think of another word?
- Loukia *Listed.*
- T *For these listed reasons,* um. Who can think of another word?
- Filippa *For these reasons shown here.*
- T *For these reasons written here.* O.K. Who thinks *main reasons.* Hands up. Quick. A show of hands. *Main.* These *listed.* I've forgotten what the other ones were.
- Sts *Following* [in unison]
- T OK. Looks like *following.*
- Sts *For the following reasons.*
- T ***For the following reasons*** [scribes]. Now, trying to think, um, before we go on, before we list all of them, we want to include those things that you mentioned for that introduction, don't we? So how can we talk about that? Who can think? ***I strongly believe children should go to school for the following reasons.*** Filippa?
- Filippa You could, um, learn a wide range - a wide range of subjects and um religions and um...
- T Right. Who can keep going from that? ...

In this dialogue, the teacher is looking for a phrase which will allow students to preview their arguments in the Thesis stage of the genre. Various suggestions are canvassed, the class votes, and consensus is reached around for *the following reasons*. This is an important piece of superstructure for expositions (and explanations for that matter), involving the kind of grammatical metaphor these students will have to learn to read and write in secondary school.

In interaction of this kind the teacher acts as a kind of editor. The content for the genre has already been established and so ideas themselves come from the class; the teacher's role is to bridge between their spoken suggestions and language more suitable for writing. This enables students to participate in the construction of a text as it is being composed. Scaffolding of this kind is a very powerful technique for apprenticing young writers into a more mature control of genres because it so strongly reflects their experience of learning spoken language in the home, where caregivers model and elaborate on children's spoken language in supportive contexts of shared understanding.

A little further on the class continues work on their introduction. The main challenge has been to foreshadow arguments to be developed in the exposition without starting to elaborate them and at the same time to pick up the on the different groups of ideas the students have already worked on. The key breakthrough in this negotiation is the introduction of the abstract term *knowledge*, which is used to pull together their ideas about the benefits of learning a wide range of subjects.

Exchange 5

- T We've got to get down to the main reasons as well; we're going to have thousands of them. ***I strongly believe children should go to school for the following reasons: education is free, it can fulfil your time, parents can work and they don't have to worry about you while you're at school.***
- Siraj You're getting educated for free.
- T Right. How can we put that into a general thing? What's the big one there in that one? What's it all about? What are you actually going to gain?
- Loukia An education.
- Lynette Knowledge.

- Sts Knowledge.
- T You're going to what... gain knowledge, aren't you? So that might encompass [Sorry, Nicole, I don't know whether you're helping.] You actually, what do you actually achieve? You actually gain...
- Sts *Knowledge* [unison]
Knowledge, don't you? So, how can we put that into the next little phrase? O.K. We've got - your parents won't be worrying about you, you're at school. Who can give it to me in a sentence? [Just ignore him please.] Lisa. Can you give it to me in a sentence? About gaining knowledge.
- Lisa Which one?
- T ***I strongly believe children should go to school for the following reasons: education is free, it can fulfil your time, parents can work and they don't have to worry about you while you're at school.***
- Lisa You can learn a wide a wide range of subjects.
- T Right. [scribes]
- Vu *Knowledge*.
- T Right. *Which will give you a tremendous amount of ...knowledge*. Now, this introduction is getting quite long. Is there anything else you want to include in that? Nicole?
- Nicole Um, *helps you with your career*.
- T Right. So we could really, *which would really give you a tremendous amount of knowledge which will ultimately - help you in your career*. [scribes] O.K. Can you think of anything else? Right. Let's read through that.
- Sts&T ***I strongly believe children should go to school for the following reasons: education is free, it can fulfil your time, parents can work and they don't have to worry about you while you're at school, you could learn a wide range of subjects, which would give you a tremendous amount of knowledge which will ultimately help you in choosing your career.***

Space precludes a more detailed discussion of this dialogue and further interaction jointly constructing this exposition. We will however present the closing stages of the joint construction, in order to display the text which has been developed on the board (in bold italics below). This stage in fact features some interaction between the classroom teacher and an ESL teacher who is sitting in on the lesson (ESLT); even so, the students are given the final word in choosing *chance* over *choice* in relation to career or job prospects.

Exchange 6

- T OK. Ah, let's read this through. I might just, oh... It's one of those [?] ***I strongly believe children should go to school for the following reasons: education is free, it can fulfil your time, parents can work and they won't have to worry about you while you are at school. You can learn about a wide range of subjects, which will give you a tremendous amount of knowledge and ultimately help you in choosing your career. Finally, it is a place where you learn to socialise and develop in a warm and friendly atmosphere.*** OK. There's our Introduction done.
- Firstly, you learn about a wider range of subjects, cultures and people. For example, in maths, science, computers, social studies, spelling, art, craft, reading, language, library, sport, health, scripture, learning a new language and many more subjects. So ultimately, this allows us to achieve a greater understanding of the world and increase our knowledge. Secondly, after achieving this knowledge, it will then put all in - it will put all the individuals who attend school in a better position to pursue their own career or job prospects. I don't think I like that put. It will give all...***
- ESLT It will give.
- T It will give. Yes. But not *put*, not *putting*. *It will then* [unison] *give all the individuals who attend school a better chance.*
- ESLT *a better chance.*
- T Yes. ***...it will then give all the individuals who attend school a better chance.*** Now, let's see

- how I'm doing this as I'm reading it through; if I don't think it sounds right, that's when we just go through and edit to make it
- ESLT *a better choice in pursuing their own career or job prospects.*
- T Um, *the individuals who attend school a better chance, a better choice. A better chance to pursue their own. Who likes a better chance or a better choice?*
- Sts *Chance.*
- ESLT Alright.
- T ***...a better chance to pursue their own career or job prospects. Um, This will enable the individual to them support themselves or their...
...families.
Finally, at school. you learn how to behave, socialise with other children, share with each other, play, have fun, learn to be responsible, have our own self-discipline, obey the school rules and form friendships which we may keep for life.
I hope I've convinced you that children should attend school for the reasons I have mentioned, and hopefully every individual will have the wonderful opportunity to attend...
...school.***
- Sts

As illustrated in Exchange 4 above, following interaction of this kind, in conjunction with modelling in the Deconstruction stage, the pedagogy enables all students to gain control of the genre. Some may require more cycles than others; and this can be undertaken in small groups while successful apprenticed students are writing on their own. But they all get there, thanks in large part to the interaction that goes on. Monologue in other words evolves out of dialogue, with as much dialogic scaffolding as necessary provided along the way.

5. Reading genres

The genre-based approach to teaching writing, illustrated above, has had a profound impact on literacy education in Australia, particularly in primary schooling and in adult ESL and academic literacy programs. As writing is the principal means by which students' academic learning is evaluated, the goal of this methodology has been to provide students with resources to achieve success in formal evaluation. Over the past decade these successes have been extended into teaching reading, using carefully designed strategies to support students to recognise language patterns in academic texts, enabling them to read with critical comprehension, and to use these language patterns in their writing. This methodology, known as *Reading to Learn* (Rose 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007), approaches reading first from the perspective of genre, then the patterns in which a text's field unfolds through the genre, and finally the wordings within sentences that realise these discourse semantic patterns. The methodology is illustrated here with a lesson in which adult ESL students learn to read a discussion about immigration in Australia, in an academic preparation course. An extract is presented as text 2. The first paragraph presents the Issue, the second paragraph presents one position on immigration's impact on employment, the third presents the author's opposing position.

[2] Plus to immigration equation

Both before and since the White Australia policy of the 1950s, immigration has been a political hot potato – yet the economic evidence shows immigration has been extremely good for the nation. In spite of the facts, today's economic nationalist parties – One Nation, the Australian

Democrats, Advance Australia, the Greens and Australia First – espouse policies of greatly reduced or zero net migration. They do so for several reasons.

The most common argument against allowing migrants in numbers is based on a lopsided view of the impact on Australia's economy. The Advance Australia party wants to call a "halt to all immigration until we have solved our unemployment problems" as if the only impact of migration is to take jobs which might otherwise be available to unemployed Australians.

But the impact of immigration is determined not only by the number of jobs migrants take, but also by the jobs they create. Population growth through migration creates demand for housing, goods and services which is met through higher production which in turn leads to higher employment. Depending on the size and composition of the migrant intake, most studies show the net impact of immigration on unemployment is positive.

...

Before reading the text, this lesson began with a discussion about immigration and the Australian economy and political parties, 'building the field' of the text as Rothery (1994) has described it. This was followed by the teacher outlining the social function and stages of the discussion genre (see Table 1 above), and then a summary of the text's field as it unfolds through each phase of the discussion. This is known as Preparing before Reading in the *Reading to Learn* methodology. The text was then read aloud paragraph by paragraph. Each paragraph was prepared with an oral paraphrase in terms that all students could understand, and then read aloud by the teacher. These three levels of preparation, including the background to the text's field, a summary of the whole text, and a paraphrase of the paragraph, enable all students to understand the words as they are read aloud, without struggling to follow them. Key meanings in the paragraph, such as metaphors and unfamiliar details of the field, can then be discussed in elaborating moves after reading. This cycle is illustrated in Exchange 7.

Exchange 7: Preparing before Reading

| | | |
|-----|--|------------|
| T | So the first paragraph here, at the very top, this paragraph here at the top [demonstrating], is about the Issue. The Issue is that there's always been arguments about immigration, but it's good for Australia. | Prepare |
| | <i>Both before and since the white Australia policy of the 1950s, immigration has been a political hot potato. Yet the economic evidence shows that immigration has been extremely good for the nation.</i> | Read aloud |
| | Why do you think he calls it a 'hot potato'? You can't hold a hot potato can you? You've got to throw it from one hand to another [demonstrating by moving hands to imitate throwing from hand to hand]. You see? | Elaborate |
| Sts | Yes [others nod with understanding] | Affirm |
| T | So it's a metaphor for a debate. We throw the idea this way, we throw the idea that way, because it's so hot [demonstrating]. You can't hold it, yeah? 'Hot potato'. | Elaborate |
| St | Excuse me, what's mean <i>white Australia policy</i> ? | Query |
| T | <i>White Australia policy</i> . OK. | |
| Sts | [some students have hands up] | |
| T | Some people have heard of it. Before 1972 the government policy was called the white Australia policy. It kept people from Africa and Asia away from Australia. So people from Asia and Africa were not allowed to come to Australia. So it was a racist policy. Worse than discrimination is... | Elaborate |
| Sts | Racism | Select |
| T | Racism [writing on board]. The policy was changed when the Labor government came in, in 1972. | Elaborate |

The next stage, known as Detailed Reading, supports students to read the text themselves, sentence by sentence. A carefully designed scaffolding interaction cycle is used to prepare all students to identify the word groups in each sentence, which they highlight as they go. In each cycle, particular students are asked to identify and say the wordings in turn, ensuring that all students participate equally. Student responses are always affirmed, and the meaning of the identified wording may be elaborated, by defining words, explaining concepts or discussing the students' knowledge. These cycles are illustrated for one sentence in Exchange 8.

Exchange 8: Detailed Reading

| | | |
|-----|---|---------------------|
| T | Now in the next sentence the author tells us that some political parties want a separate national economy for Australia, and they want less or no immigration. So I'll read this. <i>In spite of the facts, today's economic nationalist parties – One Nation, the Australian Democrats, Advance Australia, the Greens and Australia First – espouse policies of greatly reduced or zero net migration.</i> | Prepare sentence |
| T | Now, it starts off by saying ' <i>in spite of the facts</i> ', and I'll tell you what that means. ' <i>In spite of the facts</i> ' means that even though the facts are there, they are not looking at the facts. They're still going this way [demonstrates by walking across]. | Elaborate |
| St | Ignore? | Select |
| T | Ignoring the facts, that's right. <i>In spite of the facts.</i> | Affirm |
| T | And then it tells us which parties. And I'll ask these people at this table to tell me [indicating table]. Today's...? Can you tell me what kind of parties? | Prepare |
| Sts | <i>Economic nationalist parties</i> | Identify |
| T | Exactly. So that's what I want you to highlight - <i>economic nationalist parties</i> – if you can just highlight those three words? [checking students' highlighting] That's perfect...that's exactly right, <i>economic nationalist parties</i> . Beautiful...perfect...OK...we're on the right track. | Instruct Affirm |
| T | Then it tells us the names of these parties. You guys can tell me the names of these parties. Don't highlight them, just tell me the names, have a look. | Prepare |
| Sts | <i>One Nation, the Australian Democrats, Advance Australia, the Greens, Australia First.</i> | Identify |
| T | So Lyndall Rowe [the author] has mixed all these parties up, and they're all very different. But he's grouping them together and he's calling them ' <i>economic nationalist parties</i> '. | Elaborate |
| T | Can you see what they espouse? Two policies. <i>Policies of...?</i> | Prepare |
| Sts | <i>Greatly reduced or zero net migration.</i> | Identify |
| T | Exactly. | Affirm |
| T | Let's highlight those two. <i>Policies of...</i> | Instruct |
| Sts | <i>Policies of</i> | Identify |
| T | And then those two policies... | Prepare |
| Sts | <i>Greatly reduced</i> | Identify |
| T | <i>Greatly reduced</i> | Affirm |
| Sts | <i>Zero net</i> | Identify |
| T | <i>...or zero net migration.</i> | Affirm |
| T | So, <i>greatly reduced</i> ? What do you think that means? [demonstrates by pointing downwards]. Can we say that in a simple way? | Prepare |
| St | Much less | Select |
| T | Much less, that's exactly right, Tatyana, much less. | Affirm |
| T | <i>Zero net</i> ? 'Net' means what you have in the end. So if you have one minus one [writing equation on board $1 - 1 =$], what do you get? | Prepare |
| Sts | Zero. | Identify |
| T | Zero, that's right. That's <i>zero net</i> . | Affirm Elaborate |

Preparation moves enable all students to identify the wordings in the text, and elaborations extend their understanding, in terms of either the field (eg, grouping different parties as 'economic nationalist parties'), or language (eg, defining conjunctions 'in spite of', or technical terms 'zero net'). Continual success and affirmation opens up the potential and motivation for further learning, enabling students' continuous close attention, grasp of higher level meanings, and retention of information about the field and language patterns of the text. Working through the text in this fashion enables all students to read it with complete understanding, no matter what the starting levels of the students, or the difficulty of the text (as long as its field can be adequately built up before reading).

The wordings that were highlighted in this lesson were the lexical items carrying the key information in each sentence. In the next stage, Preparing for Writing, these wordings were written as dot point notes on the class board, by students taking turns to scribe, as other students dictated the highlighted words to them, and instructed the scribe in how to spell them. The teacher's roles in this stage are to prompt the dictating, support with spelling and pronunciation, and reiterate discussions of difficult wordings and text organisation. Joint note making is particularly useful for English language students, providing continuous opportunities for careful supported practice with speaking and listening as well as writing.

When one side of the board has been filled with notes, they are then used to write a new text on the other side of the board, in a stage known as Joint Rewriting, again with students taking turns to scribe while the whole class selects what to write, guided by the teacher. The teacher prepares the class to select new wordings for each sentence, by pointing to the notes and asking for each element of the sentence in turn, and suggesting appropriate wordings where the students cannot do so themselves.

Exchange 9: Joint Rewriting

| | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| T | [indicating notes on the board] What does it mean to say 'a political hot potato'? | Prepare |
| Sts | <i>Arguing</i> | Select |
| T | Arguing, OK. | Affirm |
| T | And who's arguing? | Prepare |
| St | People | Select |
| Sts | <i>Political parties</i> | Select |
| T | <i>Political parties</i> . OK, Political parties are arguing. | Affirm |
| T | And what are they arguing about? [indicating notes] | Prepare |
| Sts | <i>Immigration</i> | Select |
| T | <i>Immigration</i> , OK. | Affirm |
| T | So what's our sentence? <i>Political parties</i> ...? | Prepare |
| Sts | <i>Arguing</i> | Select |
| T | <i>Have been arguing</i> ... | Elaborate |
| Sts | <i>About immigration</i> | Select |
| T | <i>...about immigration</i> . | Affirm |

| | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| T | OK, let's start with that. And who are we up to, to write? Li Ching? | Instruct |
| T | Tell her, Wang. She's going to start with political parties? | Prepare |
| St | <i>Political parties</i> [Li Ching scribes on board] | Instruct |
| T | It's a capital letter – it's here on the board [indicating notes] | Elaborate |
| T | And parties, can you spell parties? | Elaborate |
| St | [Wang spells aloud – Li Ching scribes on board] | Instruct |
| T | ...i-e-s, that's good. | Elaborate |
| Sts | <i>Arguing</i> | Select |
| T | Well, they've been doing it a long time, so I suggest we say ' <i>have been arguing</i> '. | Elaborate |
| St | <i>Have been arguing</i> [Li Ching scribes] | Instruct |
| St | [student spells aloud] ...u-i-n-g [Li Ching scribes] | Instruct |
| T | No 'r', just take the 'r' away, that's good – ar-gu-ing [saying syllables]. | Elaborate |
| Sts | <i>About</i> [Li Ching scribes] | Instruct |
| Sts | <i>Immigration</i> [Li Ching scribes] | Instruct |
| T | And how long have they been arguing about immigration? Since yesterday? | Prepare |
| Sts | No, <i>since the 1950s</i> [Li Ching scribes] | Select |
| T | And we say <i>the 1950s</i> . <i>Since the 1950s</i> [Li Ching scribes] | Elaborate |
| T | Beautiful, and we put an 's' on the end [Li Ching scribes] | Elaborate |
| T | And is that the end of our sentence | Prepare |
| Sts | Yes [Li Ching scribes full stop] | Select |
| T | Thank you very much [next student comes up to scribe]. | Affirm |

As students select the wordings, and scribe the sentence on the board, the teacher may elaborate with language issues at various levels, including graphology (punctuation, letter formation and cases, paragraphing) and grammar (eg, English tenses 'have been arguing', and deixis 'in the 1950s'), so that students can practise using these in context. These language features can also be named, building up a metalanguage for categorising them in systems. In extension activities following Detailed Reading and Rewriting, various language features can be studied as systems abstracted from the text, such as the English tense and reference systems. Students are then far more able to understand and remember these systems, as they have already recognised and used their functions in actual meaningful texts. Importantly, the processes of reading and writing are not interrupted to study language systems, rather the elaborations occur rapidly as the text unfolds. As each phase of the new text is written up, higher level language patterns may also be elaborated and reiterated, such as the names and functions of each text stage, as follows:

T So this is our first paragraph. This is the Issue that the text is about. And now we're going to come and say what the first argument is...

Although it may appear from the above analyses that the Detailed Reading and Rewriting processes could be laborious, they should actually occur very quickly, so that a page long text may be read and rewritten in around an hour of class time. Text 3 is an extract of the discussion that this class rewrote from their notes, to illustrate the purposes and outcomes of Joint Rewriting.

[3] A Balanced View of Migration

Political parties have been arguing about immigration since the 1950s. We know from the economy that immigration is excellent for the nation.

Parties that want to protect the national economy want to lessen or eliminate migration. These parties have three main arguments. They have an unbalanced view of how migration affects the economy. Some parties think that migrants take jobs from unemployed Australians.

However, migrants take some jobs but they also produce new jobs. More people need more houses, more goods and more services so more of these are produced and this more jobs.

Research shows that the effect of immigration is good, although it depends on who comes and how many people come.

...

In terms of mode, this text is closer to what this group of students would be expected to write at this stage of their academic preparation course. The level of metaphorical and idiomatic language has been reduced, while holding the field of the text constant. In the process students have learnt to read highly metaphorical, idiomatic academic English, to identify the key information in each sentence, to write this information as notes, and to use it to write their own text - fundamental skills required for academic study. At the same time they have encountered and practised using a variety of English language features, that may later be accumulated and named in systems.

These skills can be practised at any level of academic study, with texts of any difficulty. At more advanced levels, short segments of academic texts may be studied with Detailed Reading, in order to orient students to the field in key passages (such as abstracts), as well as to their academic language features. Longer passages of text may also be studied in less detail, by identifying and elaborating key elements in each paragraph, rather than each sentence. The highlighted elements may then be written as notes, and used for writing a summary, or to contribute to a new text drawing on multiple sources. The three stages of the genre writing strategy, illustrated in section 3 above, can then be used to model and practise constructing whole new texts.

6. Implications

In this paper we have outlined the important roles assigned to knowledge about language and to interaction in dialogue as far as the literacy pedagogy of the Sydney School is concerned. This orientation to literacy teaching gives rise to important challenges for both research and teaching in China.

The kind of knowledge about language shared by teachers and students is very critical, and we have emphasised above the importance of a text focused approach which concentrates on meaning. Although China features an impressive range of expertise in functional linguistics, the models of language informing literacy teaching remain very traditional in character. We are of course familiar in Australia with the challenge of introducing new ways of thinking about language into classrooms, although we have often worked in contexts where no grammar or any other kind of knowledge about language had been taught for almost a generation (Martin 2000). China at least has traditional grammatical knowledge to build on. Our experience is that it is easiest to begin with the concept of genre and genre structure and then to move to the question of how constellations of genres are used to build knowledge in specific disciplines such as science, geography, history and so on (Christie 1999, Christie & Martin 1997, 2007, Feez 1998, Whittaker et al. 2006). This orientation provides a context for introducing

discourse analysis and functional grammar in ways that are meaningful for language teachers and subject teachers and their students. The challenge for China is to engage their functional linguists in projects of this kind, and to find the funding necessary for the massive injection of pre- and in-service training and support materials required. Our advice would be to start small, in targeted schools and communities, find out what works, and move on from there.

As far as research on interaction is concerned, there is a need for systematic analysis of classroom discourse, comparing and contrasting different types of literacy pedagogy, including traditional, progressive/constructivist and genre-based programs. Martin & Rose 2003 introduce some important tools for analysing interaction (NEGOTIATION), affect (APPRAISAL) and multimodality (i.e. the relation of language to images and behaviour). What we would like to emphasise here is that it is just as important to analyse how reading and writing are taught as it is to analyse the texts that students read and write.

Turning to pedagogy, there is an urgent need for action research programs that explore ways of moving students and teachers from traditional forms of literacy teaching to more interactive styles. Genre-based teaching programs in Australia took advantage of the ways in which the progressive paradigms had opened up a wide range of possibilities for teacher-student interaction (weaker framing in Bernstein's 1975/1996 terms) - including individual and small group work (featuring peer-peer interaction or with the teacher participating), alongside the more traditional teacher-centred approach (stronger framing). This has implications ranging from the way in which teachers and students conceive of their interpersonal relationship with one another to the arrangement of desks and chairs in classrooms. We have no doubt that genre-based literacy initiatives will have to be adapted to the Chinese context; and we are equally confident that action research projects undertaken by Chinese researchers and teachers can find effective ways of introducing interaction into literacy learning in ways that make it possible for every student to learn to read and write the academic and professional discourses to which they aspire.

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¹ Halliday (1996:21) recommends that the ‘the bricks-&-mortar model of a “lexicon” of words stuck together by grammatical cement can be abandoned as an outmoded relic of structuralist ways of thinking.’

² See also Freebody & Luke’s 1990 ‘four resources model’ of reading.

³ The notes in this section have been adapted from Martin and Rothery 1991.

⁴ Applebee & Langer 1983 refer directly to Halliday’s work when popularising the term ‘scaffolding’, which had been originally coined by Bruner and his colleagues (Wood et al. 1976).

⁵ Progressive pedagogy (whole language, process writing) puts much less emphasis on modelling, and may recommend skipping this stage altogether and simply advising students to write about whatever they like in any form they choose; this assumes that students have already experienced or can readily access models of genre in some other way (see Martin 1999 for discussion).

⁶ Most of the students in this class come from migrant non-English speaking backgrounds (Arabic and Vietnamese) and have learned spoken English at school.