

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Literature**

A review of related literature will be considered under three subheadings corresponding to the major areas of interest in the study: (1) theoretical views of genre theory, (2) related research on a genre-based approach, and (3) an overview of ESL writing instructions and approaches.

#### **Theoretical Views of Genre Theory**

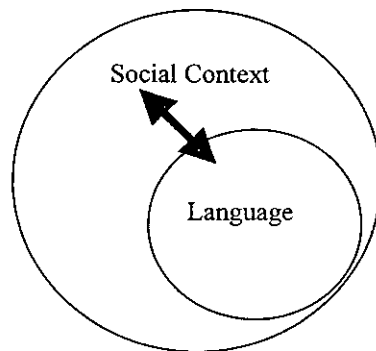
The word “genre” has long been used to refer to different kinds of arts or literature. In the area of linguistics, the term has been used in ways, which are different from those more common in literature (Littlefair, 1989). It refers to “different types of text”. Martin (1984) and Swales (1990) have developed the concept of genre in the area of linguistics which, Martin defines as “a staged, goal-oriented purposeful activity in which the speaker/writer engages as a member of the culture.” Martin further explains that “genres are referred to as social processes because people of a culture interact with each other to achieve their purpose; as goal-oriented because people get things done purposely; as staged because it usually takes more than one step for participants to achieve their goals”. Swales defines genre as “Being comprised of a class of communicative events, the members of which share a set of communicative purposes. For both Martin and Swales, it is communicative purpose that brings any genre into being.

Genre theory suggests that different genres convey different schematic structures to enable people to get things done or interact with each other through the medium of language. Language is an instrument of communicating some information, attitudes, ideas, or point of view to others. Language can be used “as a resource with which to structure and organize experience and meaning” (Christie, 1985:1). Thus, genre theory, applied to the teaching of writing, makes it clear to students how language functions in a particular context.

Genre theory also suggests that texts in different genres differ because they are used in different contexts and for different purposes. Quotes from Swales (1990:62), “It turns out that genre vary significantly along a number of different parameters. We have already seen that they vary according to complexity of rhetorical purpose—from the ostensibly recipe to ostensibly complex political speech”. Therefore, the key characteristic of genre theory is its focus on the study of language in social context. In this sense, genre refers to the structure of language used for a specific purpose in a particular social context.

As Martin (1997) reports, language is realized through social context, which comprises patterns of language. “Language is to be understood as text: any meaningful passage of language that serves some social purpose. Text is intimately related to context.” (Christie, F. 1999:759).

Figure 1: Language as the realization of social context (Martin, 1997)



With an explicit understanding of how language functions in a particular context, teachers can assist their students to create texts for different purposes, which address specific audiences, and convey particular meanings. This is essentially important for EFL writing.

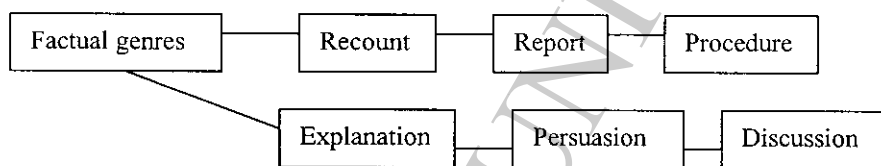
Thus, as Martin (1997) further stated, the function of language becomes our focal point. In other words, we study how we use language to fulfil all sorts of purposes and we also study the structure of what we use as language. These two aspects closely interact with one another. The purpose determines the structure of language we use. We can see that genre comes into being through the following frame work:

- social function;
- generic (schematic) structure;
- language features.

### Classification of genre

There are many ways of looking at genre such as journal articles, business letters, application letters, and news reports in ESP or EAP (Thomas 1994, Burns 1990, Gibbons 1992). Longacre (1971) establishes four categories of genre of discourse: narrative, procedural, expository, and hortatory. However, the major focus of Martin, Callaghan and Rothery (1988) has been in producing genre typology for school students. They identify categories of factual genres by analyzing students' written texts. The six main types of factual genres identified by them are:

Figure 2: Factual Genres (Martin, *et al*, 1988)



Further Martin (1985) explains that factual writing is designed not to amuse us but to explore the world around us. In this regard, factual writing need not restrain creativity or imagination.

### A Genre-based approach and the teaching of writing

Based on the premise of genre theory, a genre-based approach provides a model for explaining language in relation to the context in which it is used. Writing should be introduced in contexts that enable students to focus on questions such as

“What is my purpose and who is my audience?” rather than “What shall I write about?” So in order to achieve the purpose and satisfy the need of the audience, students are then able to choose an appropriate discourse form. In other words, *purpose + audience = form (schematic structure + language features)* For example in report writing, the *purpose* is to classify and describe the way things are, with reference to a whole range of phenomena, natural, cultural and social in our environment (Rothery1988). The *audiences* are those readers interested in this type of classification and description.

### **Form and function**

A genre-based approach has communicative purpose as its foundation and was developed through the systemic-functional linguistics of Halliday (1985). Its primary concern is the nature of language as a resource for conveying meaning: linguistic form is a function in nature; while grammatical structures are functional for conveying meanings. A number of linguistic specialists have been instrumental in developing the genre-based approach to writing, in particular Gunther Kress, J Martin, J Rothery and F Chistie.

In *Learning To Write* (1982) Kress used the term genre to focus on what it is that children learn when they learn to write. He distinguishes between oral and written language, especially in regard to lexical density and grammatical complexity and the significance of this distinction for the child who is learning to write. He discussed the importance of genre in the child’s developing understanding of written

language. Christie (1985) and Green (1987) also demonstrated a similar finding that learning to write means developing the capacity to recognize and use a range of written genres.

Based on Latin grammar, traditional grammar focuses on written language rules of syntax. Language is considered to be 'rule –governed'. Students are supposed to learn grammatical rules for correcting sentences. Exercises on the basis of these rules are designed to teach “correct usage” or formal grammatical rules for guiding children’s writing. Though students are able to recite grammatical rules, they are not able to communicate or produce meaningful language. In addition, traditional grammar concentrates on learning individual words, *e.g.* noun, verb, preposition. While these names of word classes or ‘labels’ are important, students often end with a fragmented knowledge of the system with little idea of how these words work together to convey meaning (Derewianka 1998:2)

In the late 1950’s and 1960’s, increasing interest was generated in Chomsky’s transformational grammar (TG) which aimed to describe syntax, that is to specify the grammatical rules underlying the construction of sentence. TG suggests that a set of grammatical rules can generate an infinite set of sentences in language. Consequently, most teachers of writing placed their emphasis on isolated sentence constructions.

Traditional and transformational grammars treat the nature of language from the standpoint of form rather than meaning. In contrast, Halliday sees linguistic form as functional in nature. Halliday’s analysis concluded that grammatical structures are

functional when they serve to convey meanings. Form and function are mutually dependent. We study the functions of language and we also study the structure of what we use as language. On the other hand, traditional and transformational grammar separated these two aspects: form and function.

A genre-based approach aims to make these two aspects of form and function explicit when we study language. This approach enables students to be aware of how language works and how a language system functions to make meanings in a social context. As Derewianka puts it:

A genre-based approach looks at how language enables us to do things-to share information, to enquire, to express attitudes, to entertain, to argue, to get our needs met, to reflect, to construct ideas, to order our experience and to make sense of the world...an emphasis on meaning and on how language is involved in the construction of meaning. (1990:3-4)

### **Information Report genre**

As genre theory suggests, genres vary in terms of purpose, schematic structure, and language features. According to Derewianka (1990), an Information Report belongs to factual genre which conveys a particular structure as follows:

The purpose of an Information Report genre is to describe the way things are, including a whole range of natural, cultural and social phenomena. Reports classify and describe a range of, natural, cultural and social phenomena. Therefore, this particular purpose determines its particular schematic structure and particular language features which convey the meaning of a report.

The schematic structure of an Information Report genre consists of the following parts:

1. General classification or a general statement
2. Description carries key features such as parts and their function, qualities, characteristics (location, color, shape, habits, behavior, customs, features, etc.).

Students can introduce their reports by a general statement or a general classification, which locates their subject matter in the universe of all things. The rest of the report consists of a description of facts about parts or function, qualities and characteristics can be presented by giving examples, by comparing and contrasting, or by describing. Some particular language feature are chosen such as generalized participants (a whole class of things – e.g. bikes, white monkeys) rather than specific participants – e.g. my bikes, her dog), and simple present tense is used.

The language feature of an Information Report genre is characterized by the following parts:

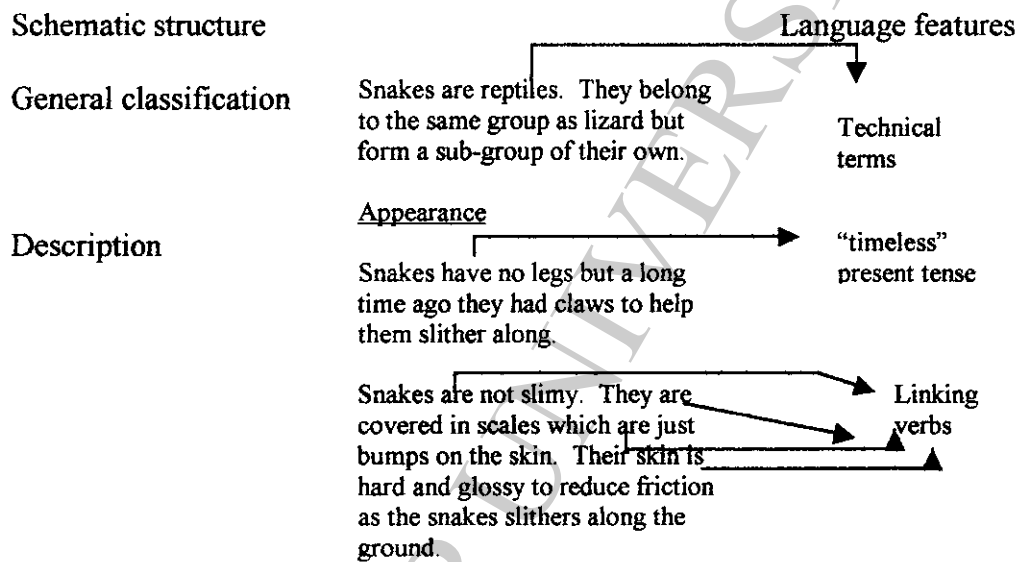
1. Focus on generalized participants (groups of things)
2. Use of timeless present tense (are, exist, grow)
3. Use of “linking verbs” used to link bits of information or one part of the clause to another, e.g. is, are, has, have, belong to.
4. Use of some action verbs, especially when we describe behavior of animals or actions happening around us, e.g. climb, eat.



5. Use of descriptive language: no expression of personal feelings, opinions and emotion; no use of first person pronouns (I, We); a certain formality; the use of specific words instead of vagueness.

### Information Report analysis

Derewianka (1990:54) analyzed an Information Report genre as follows:



The consistency in application of participants in writing helps to keep the theme or topic logically connected. Then the ideas of the writer can be expressed fluently. According to Somsonge (1991), there are mainly three kinds of participants. They are defined as follows:

1. Main participant (MP) has the highest degree of topic continuity and is considered to be the thematic participant. In other words, it appears at the beginning continues until the end.
2. Secondary participant (SP) is distinguished from the main participant in that it is never the thematic participant of a whole story, but can be set up as a locally thematic participant at least once in the entire story.
3. Tertiary participant (TP) is unlike secondary participant, which may or may not be in the locally thematic part. The role of tertiary participant is small, disappears from the stage faster than other participants.

### **The curriculum cycle**

There are three main stages in this curriculum cycle for teaching different written genres. (adapted from Metropolitan East DSP-Language And Social Power Program, 1988, Sydney).

Table 1: Curriculum cycle

Stage 1. Modeling
Stage 2. Joint Negotiation of a Text
Stage 3. Independent Construction of a Text

At modeling stage, activities revolved around the discussion of the purpose of a particular genre, around schematic stages of a genre, or around language features of a genre.

At joint negotiation stage, preparation for joint construction of new text in same genre, including activities like: observation, research, note-taking, discussion, and role -playing. Then joint construction of a new text (by students and teachers) in the same genre.

At the independent construction stage, individual writing of drafts in the same genre, consultation with teacher, peers about writing, editing and reworking of writing before publishing.

#### **Related Research on GBA**

The application of GBA to Second English language teaching has been very influential in the field of ESP, EAP and literacy teaching. The following review concerns mainly those fields and a general review of writing instruction and approaches is also included.

The use of a 'curriculum genre' has been advocated in which the teacher and students work through a series of stages in order to achieve a particular goal. First, the genre is introduced through a model text. The emphasis at this stage is on the text's social purpose, how this is achieved through its schematic structure, and its linguistic features. Second, a text of the genre is constructed jointly by the teacher and the students, which involves reading, research, pooling, and collating

information. Finally students choose and research a topic, and prepare their own texts on the selected genre. (Callaghan *et al.* 1993, Kay & Dudley-Evans, 1998)

Martin (1985) analyzed some sample report writings from primary school students. The following is one of the child's writing:

Genre-Report (students' sample 1, year 2)

### The Bat

Schematic structure		Language feature
Generalisation	The bat is a nocturnal animal.	Participants
Description	It lives in the dark.	(Action verb)
verb)	There are long nosed bats and mouse eared bats.	(Linking verb)
(Action)	Bats hunt at night. They sleep in the day and are very shy.	

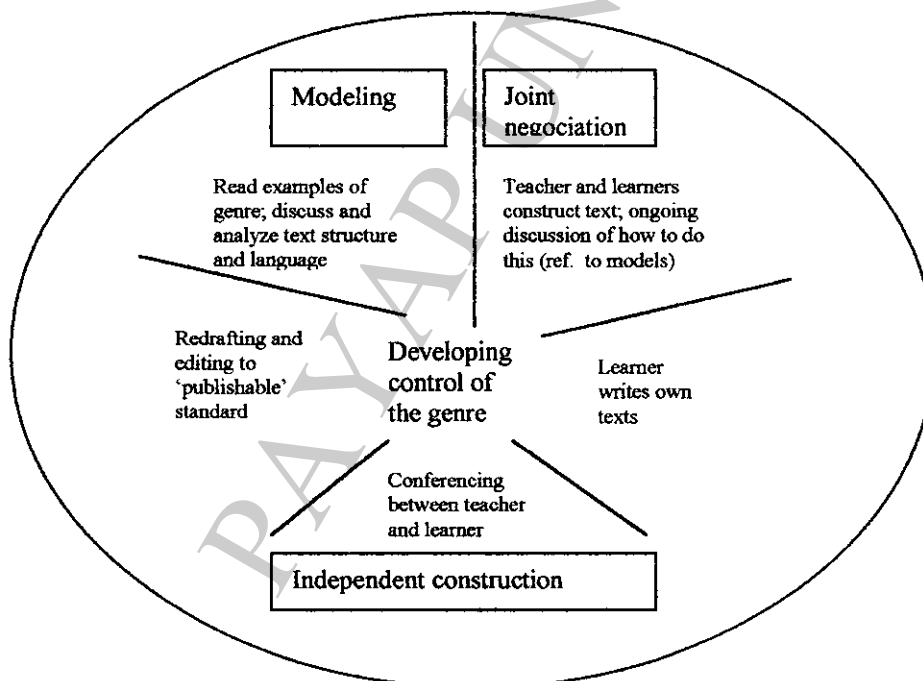
Sample 2 (year 2)

### All about Ghosts

Schematic structure		Language feature
Generalization	<u>Some people</u> <i>believe</i> in <u>ghosts</u> but some don't.	Participants
Description	Some ghosts <u>are</u> big and some ghosts <u>are</u> little. Ghosts <u>have</u> a big white sheet over them.	Verb to be, to have
	When people <u>are</u> dead, some don't go to heaven. They <i>go</i> in you and <i>stay</i> there.	Descriptive language Action verbs Simple tense

There has been much attention paid to GBA in the field of teaching ESP. Anne Burns (1990) applied GBA to teaching beginning ESL adult learners how to write a job-application letter through three stages: modeling, joint negotiation of text, and independent construction (see figure 3). The results show that learners have drawn upon the model provided by the teacher to structure the text appropriately in terms of layout and overall presentation. In addition they have used appropriate schematic staging. And Burns concludes from her study that a genre-based approach provides students with learning activities presented within a social contextual framework which encourages them to focus on language and which assists them to become more independent and analytical learners.

Figure 3: The teaching and learning cycle



Alex Henry (1998) conducted an empirical study on the use of a genre-based approach in teaching writing of short tourist information texts in an EAP context. He chose thirty-five subjects and divided them into two groups-- the genre group and the non-genre group. Each group was given a pretest followed by six hours of instruction over a three-week period and was given the same test again as a post-test writing.

The results of this study clearly indicate that a teaching approach focusing on rhetorical organization can be successful in an EAP/ESP teaching situation. Further research is required to determine to what extent students can transfer the skills acquired during genre-based instruction to different activity types. John Flowerdew (1993) examines the distinctive features of professional genres in order to illustrate some of the types of variation which genre are subject to, and which learners need to be made aware of. The results show that teachers can adapt a genre approach in courses more broadly based than those courses in which GBA has mainly been applied in the past. Sarah Thomas (1994) in her study argues that there are characteristic rhetorical and organizational features and linguistic options which distinguish different genres and, without prior identification of these variables, ESP teaching will be 'ad hoc' and cannot expect to help learners cope with the demands imposed on them by the need to read and write in their specific disciplines. Thomas concludes that successful pedagogy which aims at enabling learners to master these genres must draw on linguistic descriptions which provide insights into the features and organization of the texts.

Furthermore, other research results indicate that GBA is effective in assisting ESL learners developing English language skills. L2 students have an inadequate knowledge of textual structuring and need direct instruction on written discourse. Writing models can have a beneficial effect for L2 students who are limited in linguistic abilities (Hammond 1990, Humphrey 1990, Grabe & Kaplan 1996, Silva 1997).

### **Overview of ESL Writing Instructions and Approaches**

This review is a summary of Reid (1993) and Raimes (1991) on reviewing of ESL composition.

Research of and into ESL writing has been on-going for more than twenty years, to some extent following NES composition theory and practice. In the 1960's, audiolingual methodology was the dominant mode of instruction. In the language instruction, writing took the form of sentence drills, fill-ins, substitutions, transformations, and completions. In the 1970's, most ESL writing classes focused on sentence-level construction, on the teaching of grammatical sentence structures that support the grammar-rule approach, and on controlled writing. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, as ESL writing teachers became more aware of current practices in NES composition, there was movement from strictly controlled writing to "free writing" or "guided writing". Closely related to this emphasis on "guided writing" is the emphasis on teaching writing as a language skill.

In the late 1980's, the field of ESL writing research has expanded significantly. Studies in discourse analysis have sought to discover writing problems

specific to ESL students and solutions to those problems. Some other research has been done on writing processes and on the developmental processes of student writers.

In short, "current classroom approaches appear to be following the trend in NES composition classes: a more balanced approach toward process and product" (Reid, 1993). Yet Raimes (1991) concludes that writing instruction is less clearly defined in 1991 than it was in 1966. "Now teachers have to consider a variety of approaches, their underlying assumptions, and the practices that each philosophy generates. ... We have gone in search of a new theoretical approach or approaches to L2 writing instruction" (Raimes, 1991:413).

Out of the studies cited above, most of which have been done in the field of English for specific purposes and English for academic purposes in ESL/EFL setting or in the field of literacy education in the native speaking countries. Few have been done in the field of teaching general English writing to EFL students. The following research will apply the studies done by Derewianka (1990) cited above, with some adaptation made to fit the specific group of subjects.