Explicit Instruction of Research Genres in EFL Tertiary Education

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There has been much debate over the years about whether genres should be explicitly taught in the classroom. Genre theorists who highlight the disadvantages of explicitly teaching genres make sound arguments when dealing with native or near native speaker learners. However, in many foreign language classrooms in Japan, few language learners will be at an advanced level. Even at a tertiary level, many will still be struggling to understand fundamental aspects of practical communication in English. In such challenging contexts, an explicit approach may be more effective, especially in teaching research genres in tertiary education, albeit only if certain conditions are met. This paper covers these conditions and applies them to EFL second-year undergraduate science and engineering students at a Japanese national university. A discussion follows on what was learned from this application and suggests future plans for improving pedagogical practices.

授業で「ジャンル (genre) 」を教えるかどうかについて、長年、賛否両論の見解が出されてきた。否定的な立場からの議論は、母語教育に関しては、妥当性を有する。 しかし日本では、大学においてすら、英語の運用力が高い者はごく一部であり、英語でのコミュニケーションに必要な要素の中の基礎的な部分の指導が欠かせない。 このような現状にある日本の大学教育では、一定の条件の下で、ジャンルを正面から取り上げた方がよいのではないかと思われる。特に「研究 (research)」というジャンルを教える際にはそうである。本稿では、それらの条件を取り入れた、日本の国立大学法人理工学部二年生クラスでの授業実践を報告する。そしてその効果を検証し、大学の授業改善案を提出する。

University students in native speaker, ESL, and EFL contexts must use academic English in a diversity of educational contexts. One challenge they face is learning to write academic genres appropriate for a particular situation. Over the past three decades, this educational need has spurred interest in the concept of genre and its pedagogical potential. However, along with this increased interest, divergence in this concept has also evolved into three major genre theory schools categorized by Hyon (1996): English for Specific Purposes (ESP) analyses, North American New Rhetoric studies, and Australian genre theories rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics. One major debate among the genre schools is whether genres should be taught explicitly or learned implicitly.

Skepticism about teaching genres explicitly has been voiced by New Rhetoric theorists, who assert that genres should be learned tacitly (Coe, 1994; Freedman, 1994; Freedman & Medway, 1994). This argument is based widely on two New Rhetoric concepts, *dialogism* and *power*. Johns (2002) explains that dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981; Hunt, 1994) is the notion that genres are

in constant flux, dynamic and continually evolving, while being integral in ongoing discussions within specific communities. New Rhetoric theorists argue, therefore, that the only possible way to teach genres explicitly is if they are considered in hindsight or viewed historically (Freedman, 1994; Widdowson, 2003). Regarding power, a particular discourse community is partly defined by what genres are sanctioned and empowered by those in power (Coe, 2002). Coe (2002) further asserts that mastering the genre system is used to distinguish experts from neophytes within the community and between insiders and outsiders of that community. Hyland (2004) observes that this function of empowering some while oppressing others is why New Rhetoricians believe that the idea of extending access to privileged genres is fundamentally flawed.

New Rhetoric instructors mainly teach native speakers and are trained in areas such as literature, composition, and rhetoric (Johns, 2009; Paltridge, 2001). As such, New Rhetoric theorists who highlight the disadvantages of explicitly teaching genres make sound arguments, and their methodologies can be effective when dealing with native or advanced speakers. However, New Rhetoric concepts may be inapplicable in an EFL tertiary context where the ESP approach advocated by Anthony (2000) may be more appropriate. Anthony (2000) argues that few students in an EFL classroom will be at an advanced level. Additionally, perhaps many will still be struggling to understand fundamental aspects of practical communication in English. This difficult situation would be true of many EFL tertiary level courses in Japan. For example, Anthony (2000) points out that the time frame for these types of courses is often limited, and motivation levels of EFL learners are often considerably lower than that of ESL learners. This lack of motivation is primarily due to the reality of not having a pressing need for English in everyday life (Anthony, 2000; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). In such challenging contexts, Anthony (2000) proposes that an explicit approach may be more effective, if certain conditions are met. According to Anthony, inaccuracy in rules, the problem of overgeneralization, and the evolving nature of genres are the main criticisms of explicit approaches. His conditions address these issues while offering an effective model for explicit instruction. This model should be especially appropriate for university EFL science and engineering students, who are required to learn and write technical language and research genres used in their fields.

This paper will first cover the conditions proposed by Anthony (2000) with some clarifications. Anthony's model, as well as the concepts advocated in this paper, is influenced primarily by the ESP tradition and its subset, English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Then I will show how the Anthony (2000) conditions, with some modifications, are being applied in an undergraduate EFL tertiary context. Specifically, I will show applications in the explicit instruction of the Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion (IMRD) format research article genre to second-year EFL university students of science and engineering. Finally, I will report what was learned from applying Anthony's model and offer future plans for improvement in pedagogical practices.

The Practical Model

The practical model that I apply to my undergraduate EFL science and engineering students was first formulated by Anthony (2000). He proposes that an explicit approach to teaching a genre may be effective, if the following conditions are met:

- The group of learners is fairly homogeneous
- The instructor is willing to:
  - » prioritize which genres or parts thereof will be of central focus
  - » analyze these texts to ensure accuracy in teaching lexical, tense, and structural usage
  - » reanalyze the target genres on a periodic basis since genres

evolve over time
- There is collaboration with specialist informants during the design and implementation of the course

There is a danger of using genre teaching models inappropriately since many ESP practitioners come from backgrounds unrelated to the target discipline that they must teach (Anthony, 1999). This makes collaboration with specialist informants an essential requisite in ESP, and is seen as one of the key roles of being an ESP practitioner (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Anthony (2000) argues further that this is an obligatory condition for the explicit instruction of research genres to be effective. Anthony (2007) also suggests that ESP teachers can exploit their non-expert status by adopting a "teacher as student" approach in course development, seeking help and knowledge from both students and specialist informants.

The educational context explored by Anthony (2000), on which his proposed conditions are based, was a course with graduate students at a Japanese university. He considered the learner group homogeneous since they were studying computer science and were at similar beginning levels in English. The genre or what is considered the "part-genre" (Swales & Feak, 2009, p. 1) that was prioritized for study was the research article abstract. Anthony chose this part-genre since his students were required to include English abstracts in their Japanese graduation theses. Before instruction, he analyzed 600 relevant abstracts mainly investigating key vocabulary, tense usage, and structural features. To prevent bias, he collaborated with specialist informants to validate his findings. He also presented the raw data to his students, allowing them to form their own generalizations. Finally, with direction from specialist informants, he scheduled a repeat analysis after three years since genres evolve over time.

It seems that the Anthony's (2000) model was originally designed to work at a "micro" level of instruction for EFL graduate computer science students. His focus was the computer science research article abstract, which typically consists of 100-150 words. Due to this micro focus and the knowledge his students brought to the course, he could complete detailed analyses with his learner group. In addition to covering formal features like tense and structural usage, he could also explain nonformal aspects of abstracts, such as the writer's purpose and the intended audience.

Anthony still holds true to these conditions (personal communication, October 25, 2011). Additionally, although he did not go so far as to label it an obligatory condition, one area that deserves mention is corpus linguistics, the study of language use through a collection of texts. Anthony believes that corpus linguistics can be used as a powerful tool to address discipline differences, which may be important to language users within a specific discipline. He also strongly encourages students to conduct analysis on a corpus from their own field.

Anthony (2000) found that the conditions serve as a useful model for the explicit instruction of the research article abstract, and I will show how I apply his model to my situation. However, some modifications need to be made for application in the undergraduate EFL tertiary context. Although readers with knowledge about ESP practices can surmise what other genre(s) to which Anthony was referring in his article, it will be made more explicit here. I first propose to narrow the genres that would fall under these conditions to research genres taught in tertiary education, in particular, the Introduction-Methods-Results- Discussion (IMRD) research article genre. This paper may reach a broader readership, including proponents of other genre theoretical traditions where the concept of genre differs from that of ESP theorists. Additionally, it would be clear that not all learner groups would need to be homogenous in order for the explicit teaching of certain genres to be effective. Examples of such genres include procedure, narrative, or even other academic genres (e.g. expository and

argumentative essays). This is not to say, however, that Anthony's proposal is limited to research genres, as his conditions may apply to genres in other areas of ESP. In the next section, I will now go into further detail about my educational context and how I apply Anthony's model with modifications.

The Application

Before showing how I apply the Anthony (2000) conditions, I first divide the educational context for this paper into two areas: the general educational context and the specific educational context. The general educational context is the basic curricular framework within which I must work. In the specific context I have flexibility in course and syllabus design.

The general educational context encompasses second-year undergraduate science and engineering students attending a compulsory academic English course at the University of Electro-Communications (UEC), a Japanese national university located in Chofu, Tokyo. In 2010, the UEC English Department implemented a genre-based curriculum. The IMRD research article in its basic form is the main genre under study in the final semester of the second year. The English Department further prioritized which parts of the research article are obligatory or optional for instruction. The obligatory components are the *Introduction*, *Methods*, *Results*, and *Conclusion* sections. The optional components are the *Discussion* section, and *References*. The research article *abstract* is not mentioned as a part-genre to be taught. Instructors are to teach both writing and presentation skills.

For the specific educational context (SEC), I teach three UEC second-year learner groups from three departments; Communication Engineering and Informatics, Mechanical Engineering and Intelligent Systems, and Engineering Science. During the semester, students work together in groups of four to five. They conduct their own research investigations and learn how to write their research articles through various class activities. They also learn how to make basic research presentations.

The SEC is my primary reference point: the proposed concepts in this paper are primarily based on this context and to a lesser degree, the teaching context of Anthony (2000). Similar to Anthony's context, the learner groups are science and engineering students. However, Anthony's students were graduate students whereas I am teaching second-year undergraduate students. In addition, my students are at an even lower beginning level of English proficiency than was Anthony's learner group. Due to these differences, I found it necessary to modify Anthony's model.

Homogeneity

In the ESP literature (Robinson, 1991; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Anthony 2000), the homogeneity of a class depends first on the study discipline and secondarily on the language level of the students.

One of my learner groups, students from the Department of Engineering Science, could be considered as homogeneous since they all come from the same department and have completed all of the compulsory English courses leading up to my course. However, being second-year students, some have not yet decided their specific area of study within that department such as electronic engineering, optoelectronics, applied physics, or bioscience and technology.

As can be seen with the foregoing scenario, the homogeneous/heterogeneous concept may be applied at different levels of discipline specificity. Therefore, I will view homogeneity and heterogeneity on a continuum as shown at the top of Figure 1. ESP teachers can place a learner group on this continuum depending on various factors particular to their circumstances.

Figure 1. The Homogeneous/Heterogeneous Continuum

Homogeneity reflects the extent of discipline specificity required to handle the research activity (bottom of Figure 1). If the learner group is specializing in optoelectronics, for example, then using optoelectronics research articles as authentic materials in class may be a very viable option. However, existing discipline knowledge is a key issue here. Anthony (2000) points out that a key to his success in explicitly teaching highly specific features of the target genre was the knowledge of the target discipline that the students brought to the class. In the SEC, though, my second-year students may not yet have the necessary experience or knowledge of the specific discipline for teaching highly specific content. With less homogeneous groups, I find it more effective to cover more general and easily observable genre features.

The proposed continuum model has additional caveats. Just because a class may be homogeneous does not necessarily mean that a narrow focus with highly specific material is called for in all cases (Belcher, 2009; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Other factors that affect discipline specificity are student activities (Robinson, 1991) and learner motivation (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) indicate that motivation has a profound effect on how specific a course should be. Dudley-Evans and St John report that in EFL EAP situations, students often hope for an English course with general variety, which covers topics outside of their subject courses. This wish can have a strong influence on the motivation levels of the students. Ultimately, discipline specificity in a course will depend on *needs analysis*, one of the absolute defining characteristics of ESP (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Strevens, 1988, cited in Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). It is important at this analysis stage, which ascertains the learning needs of the students, to factor in student motivation.

The way that I address the above factors is by using a model research article exemplar throughout the semester that is designed to be interesting for the students. This exemplar, which I created and wrote, is a research project that tests the hypothesis:

> *Students will feel less sleepy in the 3rd- period class at UEC if they eat a salad versus a Big Mac for lunch.*

There is a McDonalds next to UEC that students frequent, and the thought that there may be a way to overcome sleepiness in classrooms appears to catch their attention. At least it raises awareness of an issue that many students deal with in their daily life. While covering each section of the research article, students apply what they learn and assist in writing their version of the model exemplar throughout the semester. After classroom activities, I give them my version of the section under study, and the students can compare and contrast it to what they created in class. This process is designed to scaffold their learning as they eventually attempt to write their own research articles.

Another way in which I try to keep the students motivated is by giving them a certain amount of freedom and autonomy in their research projects. Therefore, students are allowed to focus their research on something field specific or something outside of their field that they find interesting to study. This flexibility is intended to give the students a sense of ownership of their research. As a result, there is rich mixture of qualitative and

quantitative research ranging from surveys and questionnaires to experimental designs. Overall, the result is that they stay engaged and motivated while keeping within the target research genre.

Prioritize, Analyze, and Reanalyze

Trying to cover the four major parts of research article stipulated by the general educational context while teaching both writing and presentation skills might seem a daunting task. However, in the SEC, all sections of the IMRD research article including the *abstract* are covered within the 15 lessons. This is accomplished by prioritizing:

- the order in which the sections of the research article will be taught
- what textual features will be of focus in order to realize the rhetorical function(s) of each section
- how much time will be spent on learning each section

Here are some illustrations of how I approach the task of prioritizing the instructional tasks. The first step is for my students to select a research question or hypothesis, which is part of the Introduction. However, I actually teach the Methods section first, for the following reasons. Firstly, this section is generally easier to write than the Introduction (Swales & Feak, 2004). Secondly, this allows students to immediately start designing their research.

The primary textual features of the Methods section on which I have students focus include writing in the simple past and passive voice. This decision is influenced by a study by Heslot (1982, cited in Swales, 1990), which found that 94% of Methods sections in his corpus were written in the past tense and 17% in the active voice. However, I advise students that the active voice is also sometimes used, and give them the freedom to choose as they wish. This freedom is intended to foster their analytical and critical thinking skills and ultimately encourage them to make their own writing decisions. These decisions are based on the generalizations they form when analyzing authentic Methods sections in class.

Many of the so called "harder sciences" utilize Methods sections that Swales and Feak (2004) label "*very condensed*" (p. 225, original emphasis). To the uninitiated, the texts read like incoherent checklists (Swales, 1990). They are based on well-established field protocols, and rely heavily on readers' background experience and knowledge for understanding. Many of the students in my courses, however, are still struggling with basic vocabulary and grammar. Faced with this issue, teaching highly enigmatic Methods sections seems unrealistic. I therefore focus on secondary textual features like sequential temporal conjunction (e.g. next, then, finally) and anaphoric references (e.g. using "it" to refer to a noun in the previous sentence). These foci help students understand and produce cohesive and coherent texts. Developing and further enhancing these skills will also be useful when writing other sections of the research article as well as in other academic genres they may encounter. Since the Methods is generally easier to write than other sections of the research article, I spend about one and a third classes (two hours) on this section.

Another example of utilizing the three prioritizing elements is the Introduction, which I teach near the end of the course. Here, the students are introduced to a simplified version of the *Create a Research Space* (CARS) model (Table 1, after Feak & Swales, 2011; Swales, 2004) to heighten their awareness of the rhetorical functions of what is often a difficult section to write.

Table 1. The SEC Modified CARS Model

Move 1:	Establish a general research area
	a. Show that the general research area is important or interesting
	b. Provide some background information with at least one citation (online source)
Move 2:	Establish a particular need in the research area
	a. Show something missing from or a problem with previous research
Move 3:	Fill the particular need of the research area
	a. State the purpose of your research
	b. State your research question and/or hypotheses
	c. State why your research is important or interesting
	d. State what your paper reports

I give my students both the Feak and Swales (2011) simple version and the original Swales (2004) version as references, and recommend that they analyze Introductions in their field on their own. As Hyland (2009) advocates, I encourage them to reflect on how language is used to communicate research.

Since citations to previous literature are an obligatory aspect of research article Introductions, I spend about an hour on basic citation practices in the SEC. The textual features of focus are reporting verbs and expressions. The use of reporting verbs varies considerably across disciplines (Hyland, 1999). In his corpus of 80 research articles, Hyland identified over 400 different reporting verbs. However, attempting to cover even the top 10 percent would be difficult given the limited course duration. Therefore, I cover only key reporting verbs often used in the harder sciences. Hyland (1999) also found an absence of quotation citation types in the hard sciences, and therefore, summarizing and paraphrasing are of central SEC focus. In total, two lessons (three hours) are spent exclusively on the Introduction. General aspects of Introductions are also covered in the Discussion, and again when students learn reference formatting.

During the needs analysis phase, I collect authentic research articles from various journals and analyze the articles to ensure accuracy in teaching lexical, tense, and structural usage. Due to the prioritization mentioned above, I only focus on textual features that are easily observable and more general given the SEC. To avoid overgeneralization, I also give students authentic materials in class, advise them of the problems of overgeneralization, and encourage them to reach their own generalizations based on the texts they are given as well as other research articles they may look up on their own.

As for reanalyzing target research genres on a periodic basis, I generally follow the Anthony model. However, every year there are minor changes to the syllabus and teaching materials as new information, ideas, and experiences along the way justifies ongoing reconsiderations. As with genres, pedagogical approaches and methodologies also change and evolve.

Collaboration

In the SEC, collaboration with specialist informants is not as in-depth as for Anthony (2000), because instruction is at a more general level dealing with more easily observable formal aspects of each section of the IMRD research article. Collaboration practiced in the SEC overlaps the first two stages of what Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) classify as *cooperation* and *collaboration*. At the cooperation stage, I connect with other subject courses and interact informally with UEC field specialists. I also gather information and materials from target contexts (e.g. specialist

informants, presentations, meetings) for analysis and teaching materials design.

Here are a few examples of the payoff from these activities. Hyland (1999) found that the two most frequently used reporting verbs for so called "softer sciences," such as applied linguistics, sociology, and marketing, were *suggest* and *argue*. However, these two words did not even make the top six in "harder science" disciplines such as physics, electrical engineering, and mechanical engineering. I checked for consistency with specialist informants from the three disciplines at UEC. I presented Hyland's data and sought advice on the reporting verbs that I should focus on teaching. The feedback I got enabled me to hone in on what verbs to include in my teaching materials.

On another occasion, I received from specialist informants presentation slides that were created by field experts from three different countries. This collection was for the purpose of analyzing the type of fonts that are usually used in presentations slides by field experts. It is perhaps a minor matter; however, this analysis allowed the students to see why field experts have a tendency to use sans-serif fonts in their presentations.

Finally, as a language teacher with a background in the softer sciences, I am quite familiar with the American Psychological Association (APA) citation and reference formatting. However, when I asked a number of field specialists at UEC, it was very clear that the students should learn the Institute of Electronic and Electrical Engineers (IEEE) format in their citations and references. Without collaboration on this one topic alone, I could have wasted time and energy teaching APA style.

Discussion

This paper describes my efforts to apply the Anthony (2000) model at a general, "macro" level of instruction. For example, in contrast to Anthony's micro focus on a part-genre, I teach the entire IMRD research genre over a 15-lesson semester. Due to this limited time frame, a broader view of rhetorical functions and textual features is required. Given the size of the text, I chose to focus on more general and easily observable formal features of each section. Additionally, my collaboration with specialist informants is more at an informal level discussing the target field in general terms. Occasionally, I do ask about specific aspects of technical writing, especially technical vocabulary used in the target discipline. However, this inquiry is usually more for my own personal understanding of the discipline. To teach such specific technical aspects is unrealistic given that the SEC learners in most cases have not yet decided which specific field they wish to enter in their undergraduate third year. Ultimately, a macro approach is called for because my students are less homogenous and at a lower English skill level than Anthony's learner group. Although modifications are required for the Anthony model to work in the SEC, my general conclusion is that I find his model to be a highly useful guide in teaching the IMRD research article in my courses.

To be sure, other problems have arisen because the students are less experienced. For example, students sometimes lost the handouts that I gave at the beginning of each class, which created situations where a number of students did not have all of the materials they needed for reference when writing their research articles. The result was that only about 10 percent of the students would submit an excellent first draft incorporating all of the skills that were taught during the course. This problem required me to return the first submittals of most of the students with comments on how to improve their paper, and give them another chance to submit a revision. In my comments, I would refer to specific handouts; however, often students then asked me for previous handouts they had lost. After reflection, I realized that expecting students to keep all the handouts in an organized fashion is in itself a challenge in addition to understand their contents. To preempt this potential problem in the future,

I plan to combine all of my teaching materials into one large handout to be given out at the beginning of the semester. Doing this will lessen the burden for students having to keep track of all of the materials, and will allow some who choose to study ahead if they are eager to improve their academic writing skills.

Johns (2009) argues that EAP at the undergraduate level, especially for the first two years of university, is significantly more complex and elusive than most other categories of ESP, due to students having to implement academic English in a diversity of target contexts. This paper demonstrates how this complexity can be broken down into manageable parts, at least for the explicit instruction of the IMRD research article for undergraduate EFL science and engineering students. This paper shows how the obligatory conditions proposed by Anthony (2000) can be applied at the EFL undergraduate tertiary level with some modifications. Anthony has shown that explicit teaching of research genres at the EFL graduate tertiary level can clearly be effective. I argue that the same can be said for EFL undergraduate tertiary level as well.

Hyland (2009) argues that students' explicit awareness of recurring organizational patterns can be an essential element in becoming a successful academic writer. Additionally, Swales (2004) reinforces this stance, arguing that attention to discoursal features can assist students in gaining confidence and competence in understanding research genres. Explicit instruction of the IMRD research article to EFL second-year undergraduate science and engineering students can be effective when fulfilling certain conditions, and perhaps the implications point to the exploration of effective explicit instruction of other genres in particular academic or professional contexts.

Bio Data

Steven Taro Suzuki was born in Japan and raised in the United States. He returned to Japan in 1997, and is currently teaching at the University of Electro-Communications and the Center for English Language Education in Science and Engineering (CELESE) at Waseda University. His research interests include corpus linguistics, genre analysis, and genre-based pedagogy in EFL tertiary education.

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