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SFL and genre in curriculum and methodology

Abstract

Each year Australia accepts different categories of migrants and refugees through its national migration program. For fifty years the Australian Government has funded a national English as a second language program for adult new arrivals as part of an overall settlement strategy. This paper will present the different approaches to language learning which have influenced the national language program over the past three to four decades. It will then outline how systemic functional linguistics and the concept of genre have shaped the current national curriculum and approaches to teaching.

Introduction

Since 1788 Australia has been a migrant nation, with large-scale migration occurring at different historical periods. For example, the gold rushes of the mid 19th century brought people to the country from all over the world and the devastation in Europe following World War II led many people to seek a new life in Australia. Each year the national government sets targets for migration and people currently can apply under the following categories (www.immi.gov.au accessed 23.5.09):

- *Settlers*
People arriving in Australia with permanent visas, New Zealand citizens and people eligible to settle such as overseas-born children of Australian citizens.
- *Humanitarian entrants*
Refugees and humanitarian and special assistance migrants.
- *Family stream entrants*
People sponsored by a relative who is an Australian citizen or a permanent resident of Australia.
- *Skilled entrants*
Migration program designed to contribute to Australia's economic growth – categories for prospective migrants are determined by demand in Australia for particular skills.

- *Skilled designated area sponsored entrants*
Skilled people sponsored by relatives to designated areas of Australia, particularly rural areas
- *Employer nomination entrants*
Highly skilled people nominated by employers who have been unable to find or train skilled workers in Australia
- *Business skills entrants*
Business people, with established skills in business committed to owning and managing a business in Australia
- *Distinguished talent entrants*
People with outstanding records of achievement in a profession, occupation, the arts or sport

Since 1945, around 6.9 million people have come to Australia as new settlers and one in four people have a parent or grandparent born overseas. In the 2008/2009 financial year more than 171 000 skilled and family stream migrants and 13 507 humanitarian entrants arrived in Australia and 670 000 people received temporary entry visas (www.immi.gov.au accessed 22.9.09). Figures 1 and 2, taken from the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007/2008 Annual Report, show source countries for skilled migrants and humanitarian entrants.

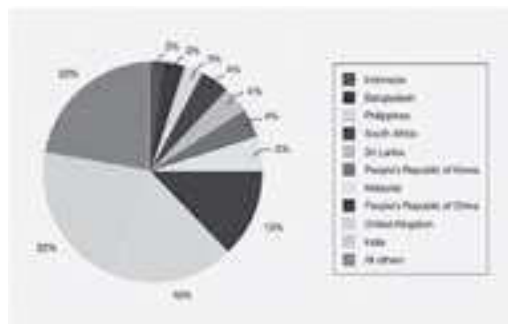


Figure 1. Source countries for skilled migrants 2007/2008

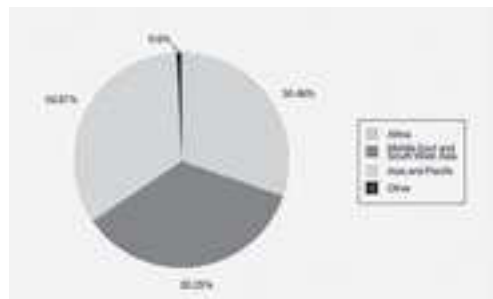


Figure 2. Source countries for humanitarian entrants 2007/2008

Among nations that have ongoing migration programs, Australia is unique in providing newly-arrived migrants and refugees with settlement and second language programs that have been nationally funded for over 50 years. The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is a national program, which is publicly tendered for periods of 5 years. The AMEP is primarily concerned with humanitarian entrants, who are entitled to between 610 and 910 hours of tuition, and family stream entrants, who are entitled to 510 hours of tuition. Additional employment-focused programs offer 160 and 200 additional hours to higher-level students. Face-to-face tuition is offered in full-time and part-time programs which run during the day, evening and on Saturdays. Students can study through a distance learning program and some providers also offer online courses. If a student cannot attend classes, they can be matched with a volunteer home tutor who comes once or twice a week to the student's home to assist them with their English and accessing services in the local area. Child care is provided at no cost to students and they can have three employment or educational documents translated for free. Most AMEP centres also provide individual learning centres and computer rooms. Educational counselling is also available but students are referred to other agencies for psychological counselling, if necessary.

In partnership with vocational training providers, the New South Wales Adult Migrant English Service (NSW AMES) also conducts a range of linked skills courses. In these courses students undertake a vocational course leading to a credential and are provided with simultaneous language support to assist them through the vocational training and work placements. These courses have been provided in automotive servicing, hairdressing, home and community care, hospitality, electro-technology, business, children's services, aged care, bus driving and retail.

While skilled migrants are not eligible for the AMEP, some programs are offered at a state level. For example, NSW AMES provides one program focusing on jobseeking and orientation to the Australian workplace and another program of one-to-one mentoring.

Changing approaches in the AMEP

Since the 1970s, approaches to curriculum and methodology have gone through various periods of change in the AMEP. Some of these have been centrally driven and others have developed around theories of language, curriculum and methodology and have been driven by concerns at the local level.

In the 1970s and early 1980s English language in the AMEP was

taught using a centrally produced textbook: *Situational English*, which by all accounts the students liked (see Figure 3). This three-part series of textbooks, was produced by the Australian Government and distributed to all AMEP providers. It was innovative in that it focused on spoken language and adopted an aural/oral approach. It presented grammatical points *situationally in sentence patterns, which show their function and meaning and which are arranged in carefully graded teaching order* (Australian Government 1975: v).

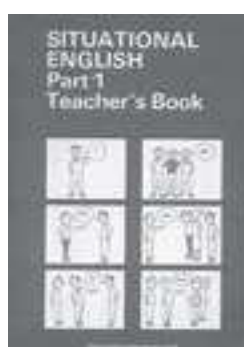


Figure 3. Book 1 of *Situational English* series (1975)

Students were assessed regularly as they completed units of work and having completed one book they would move to the next class and the next book. Teacher training was limited to familiarising teachers with the content and teaching a series of gestures to be used in class such as waving over the right shoulder to indicate past tense.

The 1980s was a decade of great change in curriculum and teaching in the AMEP. Communicative language teaching (Brindley 1986) became the dominant methodology and the curriculum moved to a decentralised, learner-centred and negotiated model (Nunan 1988). Within this individualised curriculum model each teacher developed a course for each group of students they taught, through a needs analysis process. The ridiculous situation often arose where teachers would ask groups of newly-arrived migrants and refugees what they wanted to learn and they would respond that they wanted to learn English. For students, especially those from very traditional educational contexts, this needs analysis process seemed to be an abrogation of responsibility on the part of the teacher, who after all should know what they needed to learn, as this student implied:

If you've never learned English how can you have goals. These develop once you have some English. (Burton 1991, p. 63)

In the late 1980s it became clear that classrooms had become islands unto themselves and the individualised curriculum lacked continuity

from one course to another, with students receiving little or no feedback on their progress. There was overall uncertainty about syllabus planning and content (Campbell 1986; Burton 1998) and people began to express concerns about what was happening in the AMEP. The students had no sense of progression from course to course, or indeed lesson to lesson, as this student indicated:

Lessons should be sequential, day by day, like in a school ... classes should be sequenced like a proper school. (Burton 1991, p. 63)

There were no consistent assessable curriculum outcomes that could give students a sense of achievement. This was measured solely against the five-point Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR) scale (DIEA 1984) and at the end of a 10-week course students rarely progressed on this scale. Courses often repeated content and students could miss out on key content and/or language skills as they moved from class to class.

Within the individualised curriculum the preparation load for teachers increased and many were unclear of the role of grammar and vocabulary in relation to communicative language teaching (CLT). For providers of the AMEP, this curriculum approach was very expensive and in many aspects very wasteful, with endless reinvention of the wheel as teachers continued to design the same courses over and over. The classroom became driven by the *photocopier curriculum* as teachers handed out reams of photocopied sheets, adding to the students' sense of confusion. The students continually stated that they wanted a textbook as a means of bringing some order to their learning, as this student requested:

It's too chaotic at the moment. A manual is what we need. (Burton 1991, p. 64)

This situation, which could be referred to as a period of collective madness, called for a more centralised approach to curriculum. An initial step was taken with the development of the National Curriculum Project Frameworks (Nunan and Burton 1988–91).

These frameworks aimed to guide syllabus development for different groups of learners and contexts, eg: *New Arrivals – Initial Elementary Proficiency*, *Young fast learners – educational focus*, *English in the Workplace*. (Burns & de Silva Joyce 2007, p. 9)

The second step in the move to a national centralised curriculum was the Learner Pathways Project (Colman 1991). This project endeavoured to systematically outline learner needs and goals and learning progression. At the same time education and training was moving to a national system of course accreditation and recognition of training. In 1992, NSW AMES developed the *Certificate in Spoken and Written English* (NSW AMES 1993), which was nationally accredited and was eventually adopted as the national curriculum for the AMEP.

This centralised and outcomes-driven approach contrasted sharply with previous curriculum development practices in the AMEP whereby teachers were free to design and deliver programs to meet the needs of individual learners with little or no accountability. (Burns 2003, p. 264)

The *Certificate in Spoken and Written English* was designed to provide a generic framework of text-based outcomes across four stages of development. The outcomes were expressed in competency-based terms, eg: *Can participate in a casual conversation*. The outcomes could then be contextualised by the teacher at the syllabus level to meet the needs and goals of the students. So the casual conversation taught in class could be one with neighbours in a general English course or with workmates in an employment-focused course. The curriculum outcomes covered spoken and written language and included knowledge and learning competencies.

These competencies were described in terms of the essential linguistic components of texts, the minimal performance required to achieve the competency, the variables that set out the boundaries of the performance and sample assessment texts and tasks.
(Burns & de Silva Joyce 2007, p. 10)

The accreditation period for national curricula is five years and this provides an opportunity to *renew* the curriculum on a regular basis. NSW AMES gathers feedback from all users of the curriculum as a lead-up to reaccreditation. The most recent version, accredited under the Australian Qualifications Framework, provides a four level curriculum framework – *Certificates I, II, III and IV in Spoken and Written English* (NSW AMES 2008). Three levels, as seen in Figure 4 below, are covered in the AMEP and the fourth level is used in other programs.



Figure 4. *Certificates in Spoken and Written English* (NSW AMES 2008)

The *Certificates in Spoken and Written English* (CSWE) have become the most widely used language curriculum in Australia across a number of educational sectors including adult English as a second language programs, programs for overseas students, high school programs and they are also being used in China, India and Vietnam. Each Certificate consists of modules that cover different aspects of language learning. Table 1 outlines the language outcomes in the modules at Certificate II level.

Modules contain learning outcomes that contribute to the purpose of the module. They define texts or skills with which learners may need to engage, eg casual conversations, written information texts, written reports, learning strategies, working with measurement and calculations. The modules are expressed in general terms and can therefore be adapted to different contexts, such as workplace and study contexts, and applied to a wide variety of learner groups.

(NSW AMES 2008, p. 4)

Compulsory**CSWE II A Post-beginner learning strategies**

- A1 Develop a learning/training plan
- A2 Participate in and contribute to the formal learning environment
- A3 Develop independent learning skills

Listening and speaking skills elective modules**CSWE II B Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for casual conversations**

- B1 Demonstrate understanding of a casual conversation
- B2 Participate in a short casual conversation

CSWE II C Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for transactional exchanges

- C1 Demonstrate understanding of a spoken transaction for information/goods and services
- C2 Participate in a spoken transaction for information/goods and services

CSWE II D Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for information texts

- D1 Demonstrate understanding of a spoken information text
- D2 Give information in a simple presentation

CSWE II E Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for telephone exchanges

- E1 Demonstrate understanding of a telephone message
- E2 Participate in a telephone exchange to leave a message

CSWE II F Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for instructions

- F1 Demonstrate understanding of spoken instructions
- F2 Give spoken instructions

CSWE II G Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for interviews

- G1 Demonstrate understanding of a simple interview
- G2 Participate in a simple interview

Reading and writing skills elective modules**CSWE II H Post-beginner writing skills for formatted texts**

- H1 Complete a formatted text
- H2 Write an accident/incident recount in a formatted text

CSWE II I Post-beginner reading skills for information texts and instructions

- I1 Demonstrate understanding of a short written information text
- I2 Demonstrate understanding of written instructions

CSWE II J Post-beginner reading and writing skills for informal texts

- J1 Demonstrate understanding of an informal written text
- J2 Write an informal text

CSWE II K Post-beginner reading and writing skills for story texts

- K1 Demonstrate understanding of a written story
- K2 Write a recount

CSWE II L Post-beginner reading and writing skills for information reports

- L1 Demonstrate understanding of a written information report
- L2 Write a short information report

CSWE II M Post-beginner reading and writing skills for opinion texts

- M1 Demonstrate understanding of a written opinion text
- M2 Write a short opinion text

Table 1. CSWE II language outcomes (NSW AMES 2008, p. 9–10)

At each level the curriculum specifies what is required to achieve a credential, as outlined here for Certificate II.

Successful completion of *Certificate II in Spoken and Written English* requires successful completion of **7 modules**: 1 core module and 6 elective modules. Elective modules **must** include 2 modules from the listening and speaking skills electives and 2 modules from the reading and writing skills electives. The 2 remaining modules can be selected from any of the elective modules, including numeracy. (NSW AMES 2008, p. 9)

Within the curriculum documents assessment criteria and conditions and methods of assessment are outlined for each learning outcome, as seen in Table 2, which shows the assessment information for casual conversation outcome B2 at CSWE II level.

Learning outcome: CSWE II B2 Participate in a short casual conversation	
Assessment criteria	Conditions and method of assessment
2.1. Participate effectively in a short casual conversation for approximately 1 minute Some errors may occur but these must not interfere with intended meaning. 2.2. Open conversation or respond to opening appropriately 2.3. Sustain dialogue, eg ask questions, respond to questions, make statements/ comments, recount events 2.4. Use interaction strategies, eg clarifying, seeking/providing feedback 2.5. Close conversation or respond to closing appropriately 2.6. Use grammatical structures appropriately 2.7. Use appropriate vocabulary, eg for giving simple compliments, commenting on the weather 2.8. Pronounce key vocabulary and formulaic expressions/utterances with sufficient sound clarity and stress to be intelligible to the interlocutor	Conversation: • with 2 speakers, one of whom is a fluent interlocutor, eg volunteer tutor, class teacher • approximately 1 minute in duration • on a familiar and relevant topic Sample tasks Learners participate in short casual conversations on eg: • weekend activities • holidays • work • family

Table 2. Sample assessment information (NSW AMES 2008, p. 61)

The social language theory at work in the curriculum

The curriculum framework provides a basis for developing courses in a second language context, where the aim is to equip students to communicate in the second language environment outside the classroom. As such it needed to be informed by a social theory of language and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) provided this theoretical base, as it is concerned with language as a resource for making meaning and with language as texts, or genres, which are socially constructed to achieve particular goals.

It was Michael Halliday, founding Professor of Linguistics at the University of Sydney from late 1975, who was to provide the catalyst for the development of genre theory ... Halliday's idea was to bring together linguists and educators to forge educational linguistics into a transdisciplinary, rather than simply an interdisciplinary, field ... Linguists must begin working with teachers and teachers in turn would begin to see linguistics as a practical, rather than an esoteric tool which they could use in their everyday work. In other words experts would start to examine the same problems from different points of view. (Cope, Kalantzis, Kress and Martin 1993, p. 231)

As the AMEP was moving to a more centralised curriculum, many of those involved in the development of the CSWE curriculum framework were undertaking post-graduate studies at the University of Sydney with Michael Halliday and his colleagues Jim Martin, Len Unsworth and Geoff Williams. At the same time SFL was being used to investigate the literacy needs of primary school students and how they might be addressed through more explicit methodology. This work provided a model for investigating texts and how they might be taught in adult language and literacy programs.

Genre pedagogy in Australia began when ... Martin and Rothery investigated and categorised many hundreds of samples of primary-school student writing as a first step in developing 'a language-based approach to teaching and learning' (Rothery 1996, p. 92). The different types of texts, or genres, they identified and described were distinguished by distinctive patterns of lexical, grammatical, and cohesive choices which 'construct the function of the stages of the genres' (Rothery 1996, p. 93). (Feez 2002, p. 54)

The SFL social model of language and the work being done in other educational sectors provided a solid base for the new AMEP curriculum,

which was to provide a means for students to develop language skills for social purposes outside the language classroom.

Genre is defined as *a staged, goal-oriented activity in which speakers [or writers] engage as members of [a] culture* (Martin 1984, p. 25) and the curriculum identifies the genres students need to communicate effectively in a range of contexts in Australian society. This element of the curriculum recognises that 'texts in their generic form are not produced *ab initio* each time by an individual (or individuals) expressing an inner meaning, but are, rather, the effects of the action of individual social agents acting *both* within the bounds of their social history *and* the constraints of particular contexts, and with a knowledge of existing generic types' (Kress 1991, p. 10). Table 3 outlines the listening and speaking elective modules for the Certificate II post-beginner level of the curriculum framework, with the genres highlighted. The identification of genres supports CSWE as a flexible curriculum framework because genres occur across contexts. For example, instructions occur in community, workplace and educational contexts. Outcomes are chosen to meet student needs and teachers and materials developers can focus the learning outcomes on general language development or English for specific purposes such as the language of child-birth or the language of a particular vocational or professional field.

Listening and speaking skills electives	
CSWE II B	Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for <i>casual conversations</i>
CSWE II C	Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for <i>transactional exchanges</i>
CSWE II D	Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for <i>information texts</i>
CSWE II E	Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for <i>telephone exchanges</i>
CSWE II F	Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for <i>instructions</i>
CSWE II G	Post-beginner listening and speaking skills for <i>interviews</i>

Table 3. Sample CSWE II outcomes (NSW AMES 2008)

The social theory of language, which underpins the curriculum framework, drives the development of syllabus at the local level, where topics and units of work are framed around social contexts of language use. For example, Table 4 outlines topics that commonly occur in an initial general English

course where students are developing language for community contexts, to support their settlement into Australia.

Shopping	Health	Your child's school	Transport	Neighbours	Employment
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Table 4. Sample topics for a community focused ESL course

In developing units of work within the topics, the social theory of language is combined with ethnographic understandings of the real-life sequences that occur in the Australian cultural context, highlighting how spoken and written language are integrated into daily life. Table 5 focuses on the real-life sequence of visiting the doctor, which would be covered under the topic of health. Through this process the genres are highlighted and related back to the curriculum outcomes. This also enables exploration of similarities and differences between various social practices in Australia and the students' countries of origin.

Making an appointment	Spoken transaction
Greeting receptionist	Spoken transaction
Giving personal details and medical history	Formatted text
Consulting with the doctor	Doctor's consultation
Filling prescription to chemist	Spoken transaction
Reading instructions on medicine labels	Procedural text

Table 5. Real-life sequence around a visit to the doctor

The analysis of different genres enables model texts, which reflect authentic discourse structure, to be designed for different levels of students. For example, when developing units of work within the topic of health, teachers usually focus on the doctor's consultation. The structure of a straightforward consultation with a general practitioner in Australia can be represented in this way (^ = followed by):

Opening ^ Eliciting symptoms ^ Examination ^ Diagnosis ^ Treatment ^ Closing

This structure shows the obligatory stages that must be there for a consultation to be successful in the Australian context and is reflected in the following dialogue for a lower-level class.

Opening	Doctor:	Come in and take a seat.
	Patient:	Thanks.
Eliciting symptoms	Doctor:	What's the problem?
	Patient:	I have a very sore throat.
	Doctor:	Any headaches or fever?
	Patient:	No.
Examination	Doctor:	I'll just check your throat. Tilt your head back. Open wide.
Diagnosis	Doctor:	I think you've got a throat infection.
Treatment		I'll give you some antibiotics. Also get some lozenges. Make sure you take all the tablets. If it doesn't improve in a week or so come back and see me.
Closing	Patient:	Thank you.
	Doctor:	Bye.
	Patient:	Bye.

Although possibly not the case in our grandparents' day, in today's world it is appropriate for patients to ask questions of the doctor. Patients are informed about health issues through the Internet and the media, although some doctors may say not for the better. A patient enquiry may occur at any stage of the consultation but is more likely to occur after the diagnosis or treatment stages, as can be seen in this dialogue for higher-level students. The enquiry and response to enquiry are shown in parentheses to show that they are part of an optional stage.

Opening	Doctor:	Come in and take a seat.
	Patient:	Thanks.
Eliciting symptoms	Doctor:	What seems to be the trouble?
	Patient:	I've got this rash on my arm.
	Doctor:	Has it been itchy?
	Patient:	Yes.
	Doctor:	When did it first appear?
	Patient:	About a week ago.
	Doctor:	Any other symptoms? Like sore eyes?
	Patient:	Yes my eyes have been stinging a little.
	Doctor:	Have you been putting anything on the rash?
	Patient:	Only some Calamine Lotion.
	Doctor:	Can you think of anything that may have caused it? Food or anything?
	Patient:	Well it started after I'd been gardening on the weekend.
Examination	Doctor:	OK, roll your sleeve up and I'll take a look. Turn your arm over. Uh huh. Open your mouth and I'll look at your throat. OK, now tilt your head back and I'll have a look at your eyes. OK, you can roll your sleeve down now.
Diagnosis		It looks like an allergic reaction to something, probably something in the garden.
Treatment	Patient:	I see. What should I do about it?
	Doctor:	I'll give you some capsules to take and some cream for the arm. Rub the cream in twice a day and it should clear up.
(Enquiry)	Patient:	Do you think I should have allergy tests?
(Response)	Doctor:	We might run some tests to check for allergic reactions, if it doesn't clear up in say a week. OK?
Closing	Patient:	Fine, thanks doctor.
	Doctor:	OK, bye.
	Patient:	See ya.

Depending on the level of the students, teachers can begin to explore cross-cultural similarities and differences in the staging of such encounters. For example, would students expect a doctor's consultation to be structured in this way and would they feel it appropriate to ask the doctor questions.

It is important to ensure that the generic structure and language features presented in model texts for the classroom are based on analysis of authentic spoken and written discourse gathered from social contexts outside the classroom. Analysis of authentic discourse reveals how the grammatical features of the discourse align to the stages and enables teachers to integrate the teaching of vocabulary and grammar into units of work and to make practice with language features immediately relevant to the students. For example, Table 6 aligns grammar, language features and vocabulary to the stages of the doctor's consultation.

Stage	Grammatical and language features	Examples from text	Vocabulary
Opening	Formulaic greetings	Hello.	
	Polite directions	Please take a seat.	
Eliciting symptoms	Wh questions ¹	What seems to be the trouble?	Parts of the body
	Polar questions	Has it been itchy?	Symptoms
	Modalised questions	Can you think of anything which may have caused it?	Ailments
	Short answer forms	About a week ago.	Time phrases
Examination	Imperatives	Turn your arm over	Parts of the body Action verbs
Diagnosis	Modalised statements	It seems to be an allergic reaction	Modal verbs Ailments
Treatment	Future tense	I'll give you some capsules to take	Medicines
Closing	Formulaic greetings	Bye	

Table 6. Alignment of language features to sample genre

1. Wh-questions are questions which begin with who, when, where, why or how eg: *When will you be back? Where are you going?*

Explicit methodology

From the late 1980s there has been growing dissatisfaction with communicative language teaching as an underpinning methodology in the AMEP. Students have continued to express concern about:

- the less hierarchical roles of teachers and learners and the expectation that they take some responsibility for their own learning
- activities that focus on communication and language use rather than language form and grammar
- the integration of activities across the macroskills
- the lack of a textbook (Burns & de Silva Joyce 2008, p. 4)

Across all sectors of language and literacy education, curriculum developers, materials writers and teachers have begun to explore notions of 'visible pedagogy' (Bernstein 1990, p. 73), in which teachers are explicit about their role in the classroom, their planning processes and the purpose of classroom tasks and activities. This includes a clear view of the need for pedagogic tasks as well as authentic tasks and the need to teach the elements of language that students need to participate effectively in communicative activities. Systematic considerations of what visible pedagogy means in language and literacy education are associated in Australia with SFL and genre pedagogy, developed through the work of the Sydney School and based on the linguistic concepts and theories of Michael Halliday, the educational sociology of Basil Bernstein (1996), the early work on scaffolding by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1978) and the later work on scaffolding by Hammond and Gibbons (2001).

Education, I take it, means enabling people to learn; not just to learn in the natural, commonsense ways in which we learn in our daily lives, but to learn in an organised, progressive and systematic manner according to some generally accepted principles about what people ought to know. (Halliday 1992, p. 1)

Scaffolding is what the teacher uses to intervene in the learning process to assist students to succeed in tasks and activities where they would not be able to succeed alone.

Scaffolding can occur before lessons through the plans and activities the teacher devises for students in order to meet certain goals. Hammond and Gibbons (2001) refer to this as *designed-in scaffolding*. Scaffolding also occurs during lessons through the nature of the moment-by-moment talk between teacher and students. Hammond and Gibbons (2001) label this type of support *contingent scaffolding*.

Thus, in explicit approaches to language teaching the teacher:

- has a clear understanding of the skills and knowledge to be learnt
- sets a clear purpose and endpoint for classroom tasks
- offers guidance and support during activities with a view to gradually withdrawing these as the learners are able to achieve tasks independently.

(Burns & de Silva Joyce 2008, p. 6)

One of the key concepts underlying explicit pedagogy is *the zone of proximal development* (ZPD) (Vygotsky 1978), which is the space just beyond students' current capabilities where, with support from their teacher, they can successfully learn new knowledge and skills. For Vygotsky learning does not just occur in the mind of the learner but is embedded in the social learning environment.

... learning and cognitive development are *socially* mediated by more skilled and knowledgeable others in the immediate social context of the learner. The skilled people in the social context play a significant part in making learning accessible to the developing learner. For Vygotsky, language and the way it is used in the learning situation is a critical tool for learning as it provides the symbols (words) through which knowledge is organised ... Although at first learners may rely heavily on the help of others, they gradually shift towards greater independence as they acquire skills and knowledge for themselves.

(Burns & de Silva Joyce 2008, p. 6)

Genre "pedagogy was initially presented to [Australian] teachers in the form of a cycle of teaching and learning designed to build literacy in primary schools ... it exemplifies a visible pedagogy (Bernstein 1990, p. 73) in which what is to be learned, and assessed, is made clear to students and in which teacher-learner interaction is valued, as well as interaction between learners" (Feez 2002, p. 56). Figure 5 shows a version of the teaching-learning cycle, which was adopted in the AMEP. The aim of the cycle is to move students to control of texts through an explicit cycle of building field, modelling the text, joint construction and independent construction.

Building knowledge of the field 'is an essential stage when dealing with unfamiliar texts ... The longer the time spent on exploration of the general contextual background to the text during this segment the more the learners will bring to the modelling phase when dealing with a specific text' (Joyce 1992, p. 44). The purpose of this stage is to explore

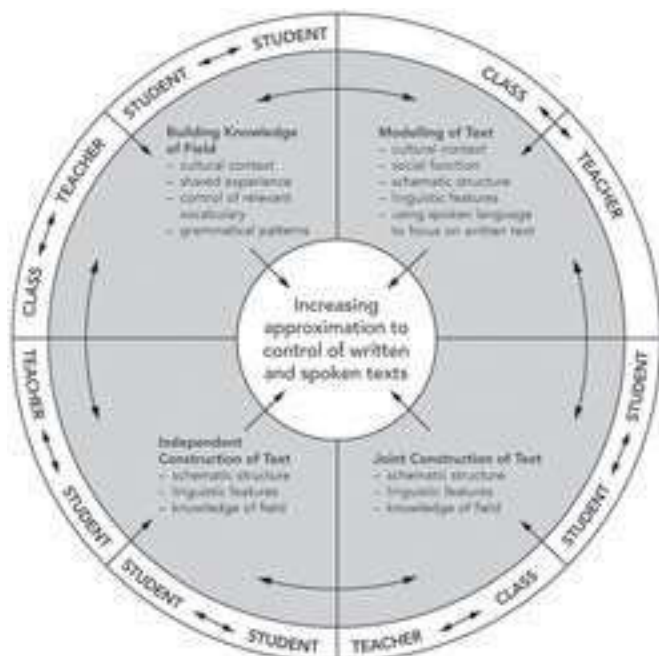


Figure 5. Teaching learning cycle (Burns & Joyce 1991 adapted from Callaghan and Rothery 1988)

students' experiences of the social context and to share cultural and social knowledge of the text. The teacher can gauge how familiar the students are with the genre and the vocabulary and grammatical patterns that occur in the text. It is also an opportunity to develop spoken language resources to talk about texts.

Modelling the text involves deconstructing a model text to show students 'the schematic structure of the text and the relevant vocabulary and linguistics features and relating these to the cultural and social contexts [in which the text would occur]' (Joyce 1992, p. 45). The degree of technicality the teacher uses to talk about the language of the text will depend on the level of the students but it is essential that all students 'begin to develop a language [metalanguage] to talk about contexts, texts and language, if they are to become independent [language users] in the longer-term' (Joyce 1992, p. 45).

Joint construction of a text draws on the shared knowledge that has been developed through the previous two stages. The teacher and the class may complete a written text or a dialogue on the board or, depending on the level of the students, groups may jointly construct texts or segments of texts for the teacher to write on the board. 'The important aspects of this

segment are the talking about and analysing of the text [and when dealing with written texts] [m]uch of this talk will centre on the characteristics of written language as opposed to spoken language with the teacher deliberately rephrasing learners' oral language forms as written language forms before accepting it as part of the jointly constructed [written] text' (Joyce 1992, p. 46). This stage of the cycle provides additional support to students before they are asked to independently deal with texts and also practice with applying knowledge and skills. In this stage the teacher can also assess whether the students should move to the next independent stage or should return to more modelling and joint construction.

Independent construction provides the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills independently. Here the teacher can assess the students, provide individual assistance or work with weaker students to provide more support. It is important that teachers diagnostically assess the resulting student texts for common errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling and other language features. This enables the teacher to move back into the teaching-learning cycle in order to provide more input and more practice with language features.

The teacher can decide to enter the cycle at any point and the stages of the cycle can incorporate various types of tasks and activities. These can relate directly to model texts or can be developed in response to student texts, where, for example, student errors can be used to draw attention to grammatical features.

Descriptive reports have a generic structure of general statement followed by a number of descriptions of the various features of the topic (General statement ^ Descriptionsⁿ), as can be seen in the following student text.

General statement

My hometown is Harbin which lies in the north east of China, near the border of Russia. Harbin is one of the largest cities in China with a population of 4 million people and many heavy industries.

Descriptions

Feature 1 – Winter

The winters in this part of the country are very severe with the temperature often falling to 40°C below zero. At this time of year Harbin sits in the middle of a silvery world of ice and snow. All the buildings, streets and trees are covered in a white coat. People become snowpeople whenever they go out into a snowstorm.

Feature 2 – Special event

Every winter there is an ice lamp show in Harbin. The people make thousands of ice sculptures which they light with lamps. The sparkling sculptures glow with many colours and the town is turned into a winter wonderland.

Feature 3 – The people

The citizens of Harbin are friendly and sociable. They are proud of their ice sculptures and welcome visitors from all over the world to see them.

(Text from moderation data for the Certificates in Spoken and Written English project in de Silva Joyce & Burns 1999, p. 122)

To illustrate the variety of activity and task types which can be incorporated into the teaching-learning cycle, Table 7 below presents a range of activities which can be used when teaching descriptive reports.

As an independent task students can write a descriptive report about a country or a city.

Stage	Sample activities
Building the field	• write sentences about a country and highlight grammatical features such as present tense • ask students to write similar sentences and to mark grammatical features • provide students with grammar exercises related to present tense eg: substitution activities or drilling • provide students with activities in which they must build generic noun groups • put categories related to descriptions of countries on the board and ask students to list vocabulary in each category • ask students to work in groups to write sentences using categorised vocabulary on board • put student generated sentences on an overhead transparency (OHT) and correct any grammatical mistakes with class • bring in travel brochures and ask students to highlight grammatical features such as present tense and descriptive noun groups • provide students with incomplete sentences to complete • provide students with pictures of various locations and ask them to work in groups to prepare a description of a scene • ask students to present a talk to the class and while they speak note down points to write on the board as sample sentences

Modelling of text	• put a model text on an OHT and highlight stages • give students another model and ask them to mark stages of the text • cut up a text into stages and ask students to sequence the text • ask students to identify descriptive reports from a collection of other text types • use coloured overhead projector (OHP) pens to identify the grammatical features of the text • ask students to mark grammatical features on another model text • give students clozes which focus attention on various grammatical features • ask students to identify vocabulary (lexical) chains in text • cut up clauses into groups and phrases and ask students to sequence them • give students separate clauses and ask them to join them with the appropriate conjunction • ask students to build nominal groups about countries or cities they know well • give students sentences beginning with different circumstances and ask them to complete them
Joint construction	• ask students what stages of a descriptive report are and write these on the left-hand side of the board • tell students that you are going to write a report about a country together on the board stage by stage • ask for suggestions from students about each stage and as they give their input correct it in terms of grammar and appropriate written expression • ask students to extend the nominal groups which they suggest • ask students to check that the text is correct in terms of tense and other grammatical features • ask students to prepare a text about a country in a group, put the texts on OHTs and ask the students to correct the grammar mistakes • diagnose group texts for recurring grammatical mistakes and prepare grammar exercises to practise these particular features • put grammatically incorrect sentences and clauses from student texts on an OHT and ask the class to correct them

Table 7. Sample for stages of the teaching-learning cycle when teaching descriptive reports

Conclusion

Curriculum and teaching in the AMEP have come full circle in that the centrally produced textbook of the 1970s has been replaced by a centralised curriculum framework. However the *Certificates in Spoken and Written English*, based on the SFL social model of language, provide a flexibility to meet student needs in different contexts that the earlier textbook ignored. The development of this curriculum framework was supported over the years with regular professional development, national conferences and assessment moderation sessions and by a series of action research projects, funded by the Australian Government. This research explored various aspects of the curriculum through investigating actual classroom practice. The research projects resulted in a series of books, *Teachers Voices* (listed under Further Reading) and maintained a focus on the dynamic interplay between curriculum and teaching.

Genre pedagogy, like language pedagogy generally, is evolving and changing. The way teachers in the AMEP are working with the pedagogy is also changing as different teachers interpret it in different ways. When teachers first applied genre pedagogy, many superimposed the paradigms of the grammar-translation and structural approaches onto descriptions of text structure and language features. This resulted in teachers teaching text structure as fixed rule rather than in terms of functional variation within malleable prototypes. It also resulted in some teachers feeling they had to abandon the learner-centered methods developed as part of needs-based, communicative approaches and return to teacher-centered classrooms. As teachers gain knowledge, skill, confidence, and a sense of ownership of the curriculum, they are becoming increasingly adventurous and innovative in the way they adapt and integrate the best of our language-teaching heritage into text-based approaches. Teachers are also able to articulate the areas of genre theory they would like to see renovated or developed in relation to ESL. (Feez 2002, p. 69)

The current Australian Government does not seem to recognise the rich educational environment of the AMEP curriculum and classrooms, nor its historical development. The collegial environment in which the AMEP moved to a centralised curriculum and more explicit pedagogy has been fragmented through an ethos of competition. The program is being seen solely in terms of cost and, while accountability for the use of public money is essential, there is a danger that the program will lose its “evidence-based foundation for principled curriculum evolution and innovation into the future” (Feez 2002, p. 69).

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