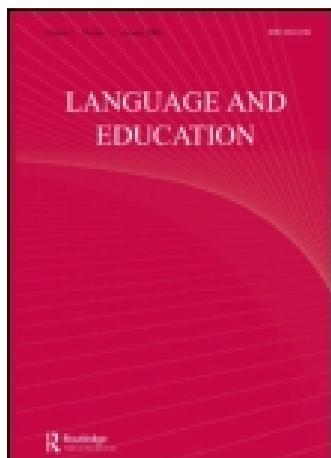


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### Linguistically based inequality, multilingual education and a genre-based literacy development pedagogy: insights from the Australian experience

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## Linguistically based inequality, multilingual education and a genre-based literacy development pedagogy: insights from the Australian experience

Peter R.R. White<sup>a\*</sup>, Giuseppe Mammone<sup>b</sup> and David Caldwell<sup>c</sup>

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This chapter addresses the issue of pedagogy and bilingual/multilingual education: how best to match teaching-and-learning approaches to the literacy development needs of students in multilingual educational settings. More specifically, it makes the case for what is known as the ‘Sydney school’ genre-based literacy development approach. It argues that, in providing explicit knowledge about the social functions, structures and stylistic properties of the modes of communication associated with academic success and social mobility, it has the potential to address the linguistically based social and economic inequality often experienced by students whose home language is other than the politically dominant, ‘majority’ language of the school. A brief account is provided of this ‘genre-based’ approach, followed by an account of its implementation in South Australia over the last decade or so in schools with large numbers of students who speak at home a language other than Australia’s majority language, English. Finally, outcomes for students involved in such genre-based literacy development are explored, with findings of a study reported which point to these students making significant advances in their literacy development. This study is of potential interest to South African educators, illustrating the long-term gains that genre-based pedagogies can afford socio-economically and linguistically disadvantaged learners.

**Keywords:** literacy; bilingual education; pedagogy; genre; systemic functional linguistics

### Introduction

Like other contributions to this collection, this paper is concerned with literacy development pedagogy in contexts where students speak at home a language or a variety of language other than the language which is educationally and ideologically dominant in the classroom, i.e. a language/variety of language other than the one in which educational achievement is determined. The authors of this paper also share the view of other contributors to this collection that literacy development outcomes are greatly enhanced when teaching and learning are conducted in both the student’s mother tongue and the dominant language. (In this we share the views of scholars as reported in García [2011] and Baker [2011].)

The current paper is not, however, directly concerned with whether or why teaching and learning should be multilingual in such contexts, but rather with how teaching in the

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dominant language (or variety of language) should be conducted, that is, to say with choices as to which pedagogic approaches are best suited for students whose home language is other than the educationally and politically dominant one. We believe this is an important addition to the discussion around bilingual/multilingual education, since gaining acceptance and support for the use of minority-language mother tongues in the classroom is just the first step. Then, pedagogies need to be designed which address the specific literacy development needs of students whose home language is a minority language or minority language variety.

This paper is specifically concerned with insights into literacy development pedagogy which have emerged from educational linguistic work in Australia over the past several decades. It reports on and advocates an approach developed in Australia with the specific objective of addressing linguistically based inequality, an approach now known internationally as the ‘Sydney School’ genre-based pedagogy (for example, Christie and Martin 1997; Martin and Rose 2008). The paper briefly outlines the key features of this approach by way of discussion of its fitness for multilingual education, reports on how it has been implemented in South Australian primary schools with significant numbers of students who speak at home a language other than standard Australian English, and finally provides some revealing findings from a recent study of the literacy development outcomes of students in these schools. Before turning to this discussion, some background is provided on the multilingual environment in which most schools in Australia operate and on language policy in Australia over the last several decades.

### **Languages and language policy in Australia**

Australia is a linguistically diverse nation as a consequence of its decades of immigration from a diversity of nations and the estimated 250 to 350 languages (McConvell and Thieberger 2001, 16) spoken by its indigenous inhabitants at the time of the British occupation in 1788. Even while English (as the de facto national language) predominates, schools in some areas report their students speaking as many as 40 different languages (McNeilage 2013). Even while there has been a tragic and drastic decline in the number of indigenous languages spoken, nevertheless, in remote area schools the students speak at home a range of different indigenous languages, contact languages and creoles. In addition, many indigenous students speak at home one of the varieties of what scholars term ‘Aboriginal English’ (Eades 1988), a set of related dialects of English which include features of both Australian indigenous languages and the various creoles spoken around Australia.

While Australian governments have offered in principle support for bilingual education programmes, this has not generally been translated into consistently supported, adequately funded bilingual programmes in schools. (For an account of the challenges faced by bilingual education involving indigenous languages, see Devlin [2009, 2011]). Consequently, bilingual education remains a relatively rare exception in Australia.

### **Background to the Australian genre-based approach to literacy pedagogy**

As indicated above, the central concern of this paper is not with bilingual education issues as such. Rather our concern is with a long-running Australian-based project to address the literacy needs of students who, either on account of speaking a language other than standard Australian English at home or on account of socio-economic disadvantage, face serious challenges in achieving the academic success which so often determines access to social mobility in Australia. Sometimes dubbed the ‘Sydney School’ genre-based

approach, this programme has been developed over the past three decades by J.R. Martin, Joan Rothery, Frances Christie, Beverly Derewianka, Mary Macken-Horarik, David Rose and their many colleagues both in Australia and elsewhere (see, for example, Rothery 1994, 1996; Christie and Martin 1997; Feez and Joyce 1998; Martin 2001; Johns 1997; Macken-Horarik 1998; Rose and Martin 2012), this project has had a major impact on literacy curricula and teaching practices in Australian schools, with the recently released new national Australian curriculum for English being strongly influenced by its precepts. Over the last decade or so, it has also had some influence on literacy curricula in a number of localities outside Australia. Since the project has its theoretical basis in the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) of Michael Halliday, it will here be termed the 'SFL genre-based approach/pedagogy'.<sup>1</sup>

While at first glance this project might appear not to be in line with bilingual educational concerns and objectives in that it has largely focused on literacy development in Australia's majority language, English, this would be to misunderstand both the project's underlying theoretical principles and its pedagogic and ultimately ideological objectives. As already briefly indicated, those involved in this genre-based pedagogy project have been motivated by precisely the same fundamental concern as motivates most proponents of bilingual education, namely with seeking to address linguistically based social and economic inequality. Crucial here is the central tenet of this project: the view that in order to address such inequality, it is necessary to operate with a pedagogy which is explicit about the skills and cultural understandings required for effective literacy and which, accordingly, provides explicit knowledge about the functions, structures and stylistic properties of the modes of communication associated with academic success and social mobility. This is on account of the observation that linguistically based inequality frequently arises for students who, on account of their domestic circumstances, have had little experience of the linguistic patterns and modes of discourse associated with the school curriculum and the social power of the dominant culture. While this explicitness may, possibly, not be needed for students whose home life has exposed them to the language patterns of the school and middle-class institutions, it certainly is required for many students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

This, of course, is where the connection with bilingual-educationalist concerns becomes apparent. This explicitness as to knowledge about the linguistic properties and social functionality of classroom language is precisely what is needed for bilingual-programme teachers and students. This is not simply a matter of the shift students are required to make into a language and a cultural setting other than that in which they operate at home. As well, there is the likelihood, given the socio-economic background of many bilingual-programme students (e.g. indigenous Australian students, South African students of African-language backgrounds, Latino students in the USA), that the student's home-language environment will not provide exposure to the 'middle-class' modes of discourse mentioned above. The need for explicitness, then, is twofold in bilingual settings: as a result of the shift both into a language and into a discursive mode or style other than that employed in the student's home. Thus, as result of its focus on explicitness, the SFL-based genre pedagogy has design features which make it an excellent fit for bilingual programmes. It provides a pedagogy to be deployed if, or once, arguments in favour of bilingual programmes have won the day and a bilingual programme has been given the go-ahead (as well as in contexts such as those which typically apply in Australia where bilingual approaches have not been implemented)

This is also where a connection can be made with circumstances in South Africa, as addressed in other papers in this collection. In this regard, some South African language

educators have taken up the SFL-based genre pedagogy as meeting the needs of South African students, coming as they do from a diversity of language, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and, accordingly, likely to benefit greatly from an 'explicit' approach.

### **A brief account of the SFL genre-based pedagogy**

The recognition that an 'explicit' pedagogy is likely to be highly beneficial for students from particular language and socio-economic backgrounds is, of course, only a first, if crucial, step. If an 'explicit' approach is to be effective it needs first to be able to provide a well-founded, systematic and relatively easily assimilated account of just what are the linguistic properties, the social functions and the underlying cultural assumptions of the text types associated with academic success and eventual social empowerment. Second, it must provide ways by which teachers can develop their own explicit knowledge of these properties, functions and assumptions, and by which they can then pass this knowledge on to their students. It is, of course, the position of those involved in the development of the SFL genre-based pedagogy that this is precisely what it has to offer: a systematic, theoretically consistent and accessible account of the grammatical, lexical and text organisational meaning-making resources associated with the types of text 'valued' in educational contexts, and, at the same time, a pedagogy by which students can be guided in achieving control over these meaning-making resources.

This paper is not, however, the place for a detailed review of this literature. Those interested in the specifics should refer, for example, to Rothery (1996), Derewianka (2003), Christie (2008), Martin (2000, 2001), Martin and Rose (2005) and Rose and Martin (2012). Here a brief overview of key elements must suffice. Following this, an account is provided of a genre-based pedagogy programme conducted over the last several years in a group of South Australian primary schools which have significant numbers of immigrant and indigenous students who speak languages other than standard Australian English at home.

As indicated, this genre-based approach has its roots in the SFL theory of Michael Halliday and his colleagues (Halliday 1994; Martin 1992). Accordingly, it operates with the notion that grammar and lexis are to be understood in terms of their ultimate meaning making potential in social contexts. It understands language to provide three broad modes of meaning making: (1) interpersonal meanings by which social roles, identities and relationships are construed, (2) ideational meanings by which particular representations of the experiential world are formulated and (3) textual meanings by which these interpersonal and ideational meanings are managed and interrelated in unfolding communicative events (texts).

In terms of its approach to literacy pedagogy, it has been strongly influenced by Halliday's landmark work on language development (Halliday 1977, 1993, 2004), and subsequent elaboration in work by various scholars, especially Painter (e.g. Painter 1984, 1996, 2005). Painter's work, providing a particular insight into how language learning occurs in the home in a child's early years, proved crucial for the early design of the genre-based pedagogy by the educationist, Joan Rothery, in the 1980s (Rothery 1989, 1996). Martin and Rose (2005, 250) note of Rothery's early work as follows:

From Halliday and Painter, Rothery took the notion of 'guidance through interaction in the context of shared experience', a principle which turned out to resonate strongly with (but was not initially influenced by) neo-Vygotskian notions of 'scaffolding'.

Rothery and her colleagues, working in the Australian government's Disadvantaged Schools Program, developed a teaching-and-learning cycle, primarily focusing on writing. This cycle, which lies at the heart of the pedagogy, typically focuses on a given genre (for example, types of storytelling, factual reporting, explanation, arguments, etc.) and a given topic or subject area. It then proceeds through steps by which (1) students develop a grounding in the subject matter and in the social context in which the given genre operates, (2) exemplar texts are scrutinised in order to develop students' understandings of the communicative purposes they serve and the linguistic resources typically employed to serve these purposes, (3) texts are jointly constructed with the teacher acting as a language guide, (4) texts are constructed individually by students, (5) students' texts are reviewed with a view to providing input into subsequent teaching-and-learning cycles. For a recent detailed account of what this cycle entails both in terms of pedagogic theory and teaching practice, see Rose and Martin (2012).

It does need to be acknowledged that there has been some misapplication of the genre exemplars by which they have ended up being treated as fixed recipes to be rigidly adhered to by students (see Derewianka [2003] for a discussion). Instead, these exemplars are meant to act as average, idealised and abstract descriptions of text structures which have been conventionalised in a given culture. They should be used to provide guidance to language learners and not as constricting recipes. It is always open to writers innovate, to defy established conventions or to invent new genre forms.

### **Implementing the 'genre-based' pedagogy in South Australian schools**

In this section, we turn to briefly providing some background on the implementation of the SFL genre-based pedagogy in South Australian primary schools over the last two decades, particularly in those schools with large numbers of students from indigenous, non-English speaking and low socio-economic backgrounds. The focus is specifically on the diagnostics that were developed as part of this programme for tracking and assessing student literacy development. We then turn to some findings as to literacy development outcomes arising from a study which referenced these and other diagnostics.

In South Australia, all students who identify as speaking at home a language other than standard English have their literacy level assessed. If it is determined that their English language falls below the minimum standard for their year level, they are classified as 'English as an additional language or dialect' (EALD) students (formerly ESL students) and, accordingly, receive tailored language support such as intensive English instruction or additional language support in a 'mainstream' classroom. In the early and mid-1990s, SFL genre-based pedagogy was introduced into the professional development training designed for teachers providing this language support (for details, see Polias and Dare [2006]) and currently all such teachers are required to undertake some form of this training. Consequently, all teachers working with EALD students should have at least a basic grounding in SFL and genre-based pedagogy. No such professional development is required of teachers working only with 'mainstream' students (i.e. students whose mother tongue is standard English) though some may optionally undertake such studies. In some schools, accordingly, the SFL genre-based pedagogy may not be deployed at all, while in others, it will be confined to EALD (ESL) teaching contexts. In some primary schools, principals have chosen to implement what they term a 'whole-school approach' by which the genre pedagogy is deployed for all students, regardless of their linguistic background, and across the entire curriculum (i.e. used in geography, history, science, etc. as well as in English).

A key component of the genre-based pedagogy programme in South Australia was the development of a linguistic-analysis-based protocol for 'scaling' the literacy level of these ESL/EALD students, by reference to the literacy level which might be expected of a native English speaking student of a given age or year level. An optimal or target scale was assigned for each year level – e.g. scale 7 would be optimal or expected for students in Year 3, scale 8 for Year 4 and so on, with single-scale increments expected each year. The intention of this was to provide a systematic mechanism for determining whether, or by how much, an ESL/EALD student's writing fell short of what would be expected or optimal for that student at a given year level, thereby signalling whether or not they should be provided with additional literacy development support in order to bridge the gap.

This protocol subjected students' writing to a close analysis which attended to their facility in structuring or 'staging' their texts appropriately according to the text's communicative purpose (i.e. its genre type), and in effectively deploying the interpersonal, experiential and textual meanings typically associated with particular genres. More specifically, the protocol specified the communicative outcomes a student needed to be able to achieve in their writing of particular genres in order to be assigned a given 'scale', alongside the linguistic resources typically required for such outcomes.

Even while the protocol was obviously applied to assess or characterise individual texts, it was also designed to be applied more globally to a collection of the different types of texts, as produced by a student at a given point in their schooling. Thus, a more holistic 'scaling' of a student's literacy could be determined. While this protocol, termed 'ESL Scope and Scales', has recently been reconfigured in response to the recent launch of a national Australian curriculum for English, documents describing the protocol in detail were still available online at the time this paper was written at [http://www.sacsa.sa.edu.au/eslevidence/esl\\_keyfeatures.asp](http://www.sacsa.sa.edu.au/eslevidence/esl_keyfeatures.asp).

### **Exploring student literacy development outcomes**

The authors of this paper were recently involved in a study of the literacy outcomes of students from a group of six South Australian primary schools with significant numbers of students who speak a language other than standard Australian English at home and where the SFL genre-based pedagogy was deployed, either in targeted EALD (ESL) teaching contexts or in the 'whole school' approached mentioned above. The study was conducted under the auspices of 'Text Construction and Text Analysis Research Project', within the South Australian Department of Education and Child Development. It sought to track literacy development by reference to two measures of development in the students' writing: (1) how their work was assessed by reference to the ESL Scope and Scales protocol outlined above; (2) and by reference to outcomes for these schools in the annual, Australia-wide 'National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy' (NAPLAN) – an assessment programme which assesses the writing of students at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in all Australian schools. (For details, see <http://www.nap.edu.au/naplan/the-tests.html>.)

A key element of the genre-based pedagogy is the production by students of 'pre-teaching' and 'post-teaching' texts: writing produced in response to a set topic or an essay question at the commencement of what is typically a term-long teaching-and-learning cycle, before the topic and subject matter have been introduced or any text modelling done (the pre-teaching text) and then again at the conclusion of the cycle (the post-teaching text). The pre- and post-texts can then be scaled according to the protocol outlined above, with a view to providing insights into any literacy development which may have

occurred over the cycle. Accordingly, for one component of the study, the pre- and post-teaching scaling data for 500 instances of student pre- and post-writing were assembled and analysed. It was found that in 98% of cases, there was a progression of at least two scales from the pre- to the post-teaching writing, with the writing of some students progressing by as much as five scales.

The study also had a longitudinal component by which the literacy development trends (i.e. progression through the ESL scales) in the students' writing were tracked over six years from 2005 through to 2011. Here the scaling protocol was applied holistically – i.e. on the basis of analyses of a set of texts, rather than a single text, produced by students towards the end of a school year. It was found that the minimum student scale improvement achieved by students in these schools was one scale per year (an outcome which is typically the case for 'mainstream' students but not so frequently the case for ESL-background students), with multiple-scale improvements each year often the case, especially after two or three years of involvement in a literacy development programme at one of the schools.

In order to demonstrate what is involved linguistically in a progression across these ESL scalings, we will briefly focus on a 'pre-teaching' and a 'post-teaching' text produced by a 10-year-old, EALD-background student from one of the schools. Specifically, these are the texts produced by the student at the commencement and at the conclusion of a term-long unit of work focusing on narrative writing. The student's pre-teaching text was assessed by his teacher as being at scale 6 (the scale associated with 7-year-old 'mainstream' students) and his post-teaching text was assessed as being at scale 8 (the scale associated with 9-year-old 'mainstream' students). Our purpose is to exemplify some of the kinds of literacy development which typically occur in this time frame, in classrooms where the genre-based pedagogy is being deployed.

Transcriptions of the pre- and post-texts are set out below, with copies of the student's original handwritten work available in the associated online file. Spelling errors and irregularities of punctuation have been regularised, with the original text shown in square brackets.

### *Pre-teaching text*

One day when a boy called Jack took a nap when suddenly [suddenly] the smoke alarm went off and then Jack woke up rushed out and [And] took his two rabbits called General flopsy and Agent 007. Then he noticed [notest] that the whole city was on fire. Then called his [he's] Mom but she didn't answer. He [he] tried again [agein] but she didn't answer. Then he ran to the police station but the tree fell on the road and it was blocked. Then he ran back to his [he's] house and ran to the back yard and climbed over the fence [fens] and [And] then ran to the police station but no one was there? Then Jack remembered [remard] that his [he's] Mom was at the mall. He [he] searched [sertched] everywhere [every where]. But his [he's Mom] was not there. Then [thene] he went home. Then suddenly he saw his [he's] Mom's car. Then he saw his [he's] Mom. Then [then] his [he's] Mom. Then [then] his [he's] Mom called [cald] the fire engine [agine]. Then Jack fall asleep.

### *Post-teaching text*

One day I went to the hills. I was camping with Mom and Dad and Rex [rex] my dog. I was playing fetch [fech] with my dog Rex [rex]. Then Rex [rex] started barking. Then I smelled smoke. I felt [fellet] worried. After than I knew it was a catastrophic [catastrock] day and

[And] it was in the middle of summer. Then I ran up to Dad and I said. ‘Can you smell smoke?’ Dad replied [replid] ‘no’! Dad was worried too [to] and [. And] it hadn’t rained for 2 months.

After that Dad said ‘We’d leave in 3 hours [hrs]. After 5 minutes [mins.] I saw black smoke. I thought [thot] it was some one having a barbecue [bardiqu] but [But] it was getting hotter. Then [then] right in front of me a tree exploded [axploded] and [And] the tent was being burned. Then [then] I quickly [quiqly] took rex rushed to the car. Then Mom opened the door. I quickly [cuikly] jumped inside the car. After that Dad drove really fast. Then [then] I saw the door wasn’t shut properly. I tried to shut the door then Dad turned really hard. Then [then] I fell out of the car.

I sprained my arm. I was really hurt [heart]. I ran and I ran. I tried to catch up with my car by my car was too [to] fast. I had to camp for the night. The good thing is I have rex with me. The [the] next morning I woke up and then I saw rex with a big fish. Then I realised [realizd] that rex got the fish from that river. After that I had to light a fire. It took me 4 hours [hrs] to light a fire. Then I found a stick. I put the stick inside the fish then [the] I fried it. I took the scales [skals] out. I took the meat [meet] out and gave most of it to rex. Then I ate half of the fish. I put out the fire. Then [then] I smelled smoke again [agein]. I picked up rex and started to run. I ran as fast as I could. I ran all the way [away] to the city and [And] I saw our [awere] car. I saw it parked. Then I saw our [awere] house and I prayed [prade] that Mom and Dad would be there. They were.

Then suddenly Mom and Dad saw me. They [they] were so happy. Then suddenly we heard [herd] that the fire’s [fires] out and I was jumping for joy. The fire’s [fires] out. The [the] fire’s [fires] out. Then Dad and I went to the park and play soccer.

Obviously, one outcome of the student’s involvement in a genre-based teaching and learning cycle is a substantial increase in the length of the text produced. This, of course, is not of itself necessarily an indication of significant literacy development, not unless the increased length arises from growth in the student’s meaning-making potential. Closer analysis reveals that such growth has occurred, specifically with respect to (1) the student’s ability to manage text organisational and sequencing features associated with more compelling story telling, (2) the student’s ability to indicate a more animated personal investment in the events being narrated and (3) the student’s ability to construe a more diverse experiential reality for the world of his narrative. Each of these features is now considered in turn.

Both texts show features of the main stages of the type of story which has been given the label of ‘narrative’ (see, for example, Labov and Waletzky [1997] and Martin and Rose [2008]): Orientation - Complication - Resolution (Table 1).

The post-text, however, is a significant advance on the pre-text with regards to the internal structure of these stages, specifically with regards to what Martin and Rose (2008) have termed the ‘reaction phase’ of narratives (Martin and Rose 2008, 103): a

Table 1. Analysis by reference to narrative stages.

	Pre-text	Post-text
Orientation	One day when a boy called Jack took a nap	One day I went to the hills.
Complication	Then collected he’s Mom but she didn’t answer. . .	I saw black smoke. . . it was getting hotter then right in front of me a tree axploded.
	. . . but the tree fell on the road and it was blocked.	I sprained my arm I was really heart
Resolution	he’s Mom cald a fire agine then Jack fall asleep.	Then suddenly we herd that the fires out. . .

Table 2. Phasal structure of the two texts.

	Pre-text	Post-text
Orientation: setting	One day when a boy called Jack took a nap	One day I went to the hills.
Orientation: problem	When suddenly the smoke alarm went off. . .	Then rex started barking. Then I smelled smoke. . .
Orientation: reaction	—	. . . I felt <i>worried</i> . After that I knew it was a <i>catastrophic</i> day.
Orientation: solution	Jack woke up rushed out.	Then I ran up to Dad. . .
Complication: problem	. . . but the tree fell on the ground and it was blocked.	I sprained my arm I was really heart
Complication: reaction	—	the <i>good</i> thing is I have rex with me
Complication: solution	Then he ran back to he's house. . . And then ran to the police sta(tion)	I woke up and Then I saw rex with a big fish.
Resolution: solution	he's Mom cald a fire agine then Jack fall asleep.	Then suddenly we herd that the fires out. . .
Resolution: reaction	—	. . . I was <i>jumping for joy</i>

textual element where the behavioural or emotional outcomes of events are recounted. As outlined by Martin and Rose (2008), phases are less predictable smaller scale components which, in various combinations, typically come together to comprise the larger scale, more predictable genre stages. They identify the following as instances of the phases which operate in storytelling texts: setting (presenting context), description (evoking context – sensual imagery), events (succeeding events), effect (material outcome), reaction (behavioural/attitudinal outcome), problem (counterexpectant creating tension), solution (counterexpectant releasing tension), comment (intruding narrator's comments) and reflection (intruding participant's thoughts) (103).

The pre-text does not include any of these 'reaction' phases, while the post-text makes strategic use of this element to produce a significantly more engaging and dramatic story line. The first examples are from the orientation stage, the second are from the complication stage and the third are from the resolution stage (Table 2).

In order to implement these 'reactions', the writer has made use of a range of attitudinal meanings, i.e. meanings by which positive and negative emotional reactions and assessments are indicated. These and further attitudinal meanings occurring in the post-text are as follows:

I was worried  
 a catastrophic day  
 Dad was worried too  
 the door wasn't shut properly  
 I was really hurt  
 my car was too fast.  
 The good thing is. . .  
 They were so happy  
 I was jumping for joy

Such expression of attitude is entirely absent from the pre-text. Running alongside these expressions of authorial attitude, we also observe the frequent use of intensifying

meanings, various types of amplification by which the storytelling is rendered more dramatic. In the pre-text there are just four instances of such meanings.

when *suddenly* the smoke alarm went off  
 Jack woke up *rushed* out and took his two rabbits  
 He searched *everywhere*.  
 Then *suddenly* he saw his Mom's car

In contrast, the post-text employs a significantly more diverse range of these dramatizing meanings:

After that I knew it was a *catastrophic* day  
 Then *right in front of me* a tree *exploded*  
 Then I *quickly* took rex and rushed to the car.  
 I *quickly* jumped inside the car.  
 After that Dad drove *really fast*  
 then Dad turned *really hard*.  
 I was *really hurt*. *I ran and I ran*.  
 but my car was *too fast*.  
 I saw rex with *a big fish*.  
 I ran *as fast as I could*.  
 I ran *all the way to*  
 Then *suddenly* Mom  
 They were *so happy*.  
 Then *suddenly* we heard that the fire's out and I was *jumping for joy*. *The fire's out*. *The fire's out*.

Additionally, there are developments revealed by a comparison of the two texts which relate to what the SFL literature would term the 'Field' of the text: the nature of the experiential world construed by the text. These developments are subtle but nevertheless show the author developing the ability to portray a more diverse and differentiated reality.

These are revealed first by an analysis of the what SFL terms 'circumstances' (typically adverbs and prepositional phrases by which information is provided about the timing, place, manner, purpose, causes, etc. of the main event of the clause). This is not a matter of frequency, they occur at approximately the same rate in the two texts when the different word lengths are taken into account (12 in the pre-text and 33 in the post-text). Rather, it is a matter of the range of different circumstantial meanings deployed by the writer. In the pre-text, they are very largely circumstances of place, 8 out of a total of 12: for example, 'to the police station', 'on the road', 'back to his house'. In contrast, in the post-text, there is a much more diverse set of circumstantial meanings employed, including circumstances of manner ('quickly', 'really fast', 'properly', 'really hard', 'as fast as I could', 'suddenly'), circumstances of accompaniment ('with Mom and Dad and Rex my dog', 'with my dog rex', 'with my car') and one circumstance of cause ('for joy').

Second, these developments with respect to experiential range are revealed via an analysis of the range of the verbal processes deployed by the student writer. The SFL literature divides verbal processes into five broad types: material (by which actions in the material world are construed), mental (processes associated with human consciousness), verbal (process associated with communication), relational (process by which entities are identified or characterised) and behavioural (mental, verbal or physiological process whose grammatical behaviour aligns them with material processes) (Table 3).

While the development in experiential range from the pre-text to the post-text is relatively subtle, a clear trajectory can nevertheless be observed in which the domination of

Table 3. Distribution of process types (for the analysis from which these statistics are derived, see the supplemental data).

Process type	% of total processes	Number	% of total processes	Number
Material	62.07	18	53.25	41
Verbal	6.90	2	5.19	4
Behavioural	0.00	0	2.60	1
Mental	13.79	4	16.88	14
Relational	17.24	5	22.08	17

verbs of doing (material processes) in the pre-text has diminished in the post-text, associated with a wider use of both mental and relational processes in the post-text.

By way of exploring further indicators of literacy development by students at these schools, an analysis was made of data provided via the Australian government's NAPLAN, as mentioned above. Under this testing regime, each year students across the nation in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sit an examination which tests their reading, writing, grammar and spelling. For the written literacy elements, students are given 30 minutes to compose a text in response to a previously unseen 'prompt', for example, 'Too much money is spent on toys and games' and 'It's cruel to keep animals in cages' (for details, see <http://www.nap.edu.au/naplan/the-tests.html>). All scripts are then submitted to a central authority for grading by a large team of trained assessors, typically teachers experienced in literacy development. Each student's work is assigned a grading by reference to a marking protocol by which points are awarded for criteria such as 'audience', 'text structure', 'ideas', 'vocabulary', 'cohesion', 'paragraphing', 'sentence structure', 'punctuation' and 'spelling' (see <http://www.nap.edu.au/naplan/about-each-domain/writing/writing.html> for a full account.) An overall score is then derived for each student's work which locates their writing in one of the 10 'bands', with each band indicating what is the 'minimum standard' expected of students in a given year: Band 2 is the minimum standard for Year 3, Band 4 for Year 5 and so on (see <http://www.nap.edu.au/results-and-reports/how-to-interpret/how-to-interpret.html>). Consolidated results for each year for each school (for example, the percentage of Year 7 students who scored the 'minimum standard' Band 5 and the percentage who scored above or below this standard) are made publicly available via the Australian government's MySchool website ([www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)), while results for individual students are provided to students' caregivers and teachers.

For this study, the NAPLAN literacy results achieved in 2011 by a grouping of three of the above primary schools were analysed and compared with the results of other relevant groupings of schools, to be outlined in detail below. These three schools were singled out because they deployed what is termed a 'whole-school' approach with the SFL genre-based pedagogy, as mentioned above.

More specifically, for the purposes of this study, the NAPLAN results for these three schools were compared with the mean average of results for the following groupings.

- (1) 'Western Adelaide': The 28 government schools which comprised the Western Adelaide educational region – typically schools with at least some students who speak at home a language other than English and with significant numbers of students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In all these schools, there was

- some EALD (ESL) teaching and, accordingly, some use of the SFL genre pedagogy, even if only in a limited number of classes.
- (2) 'DECS': All South Australian government schools, hence combining 'high' and 'low' socio-economic schools, and combining schools where significant numbers of students who received EALD (ESL) support and schools with few or no EALD students.
  - (3) 'STATE': All schools in South Australia, i.e. combining government and fee-charging independent or 'private'-sector schools. In private-sector schools, students are typically from higher socio-economic backgrounds with significantly lower numbers of students who speak a language other than English at home.
  - (4) 'National': All schools across Australia – combining both government and fee-charging 'private-sector' schools.

An analysis of the results for these three schools revealed that, on average, their students had received higher gradings than the students for all the above groupings across all three years and across all the literacy areas covered by the NAPLAN test. Specifically, the average NAPLAN score for students at each of the three schools was higher than the average score for students in the Western Adelaide region, for students in all South Australian government schools, for all students in all South Australian schools (government and private) and for all students in all Australian schools (government and private). This higher score was repeated for all three years included in the test (Years 3, 5 and 7) and for all areas of literacy covered: reading, grammar, spelling and writing.

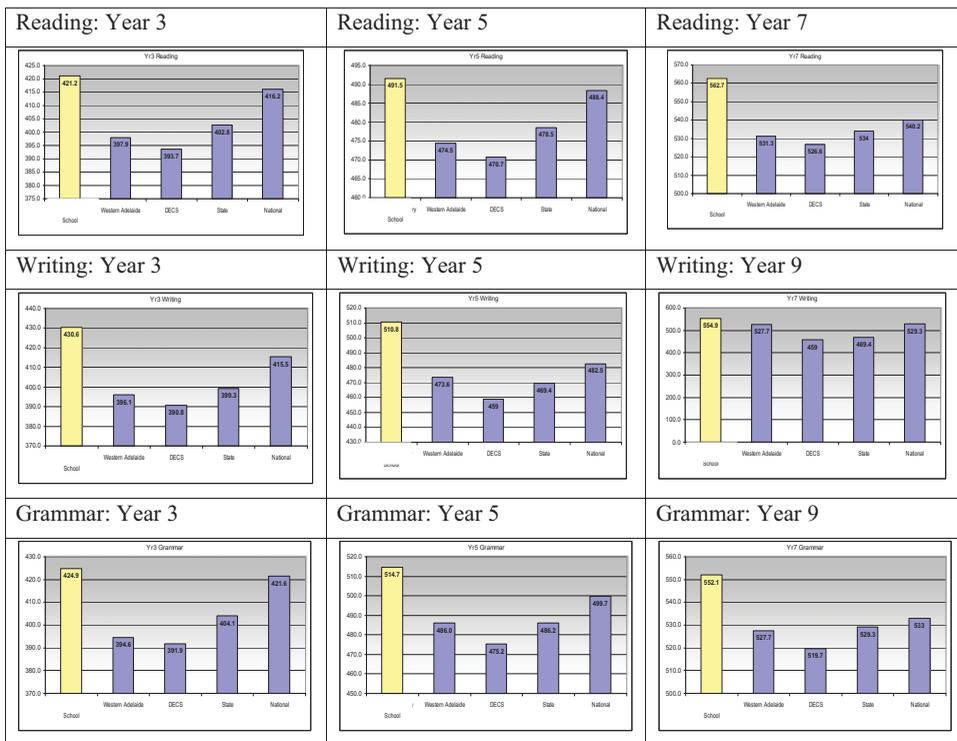


Figure 1. NAPLAN results.

By way of exemplification, the results for one of the schools are presented in [Figure 1](#) above. Results for the other two schools were similar. The *x*-axis provides the mean average NAPLAN results score for students in a given grouping for the indicated NAPLAN test areas of reading, writing and grammar. Each of the groupings of schools is indicated on the *y*-axis. The groupings are as follows: the individual school (the focus of attention) in the left-most column, then government schools in the Western Adelaide region, South Australian government schools, all South Australian Schools (government and private), all Australian schools (government and private).

What is noteworthy here is the fact that this lower socio-economic school (the left-most column) with large numbers of EALD (ESL) students consistently scored better in these tests than groupings which included higher socio-economic schools and schools with few EALD (ESL) students. The data here, of course, are not such as to permit a conclusion of necessary cause and effect: i.e. we cannot conclude that the deployment of the SFL genre pedagogy in a ‘whole-school’ approach was necessarily the cause of these higher averages. There are multiple other factors which might potentially be influential here, such as differences in the specific socio-economic make-up of student cohorts, relative teacher capacity and so on. Nevertheless, the results are suggestive and point to a strong likelihood that the genre-based pedagogy had at least some role to play in the above-average literacy results for this school and for the other two schools which achieved similar results.

## Conclusions

As outlined above, the SFL-based genre approach has firmly established itself in Australia and elsewhere in literacy development projects concerned with redressing linguistically based inequality. Its key underlying principle is that what students are expected to learn (curriculum) and how they are to be assisted in this learning (pedagogy) should be made explicit. With respect to what is to be learnt, it is concerned that teaching practices should make explicit what is conventionally entailed in successful communication, especially with respect to the various genres that are highly valued in school/academic contexts and which potentially empower students socially and politically. Thus, students should be offered overt guidance with respect to those linguistic resources which they need to master if they are to produce texts which are structurally appropriate, which manage audience relations effectively and which provide for coherent formulations of the text’s experiential domain. With respect to explicitness and pedagogy, the numerous accounts of the teaching/learning cycle available in the literature are directed towards providing teachers with a coherently articulated and principled methodology by which they can assist their students in developing this mastery of key genres.

Some educationalists and literacy-development theorists working in monolingual, mother-tongue contexts may question the value of this explicitness in pedagogy and curriculum. Thus, for example, Michael Rosen, Professor of Children’s Literature at Goldsmiths, University of London, and presenter of BBC radio’s ‘Word of Mouth’ programme may reject the genre-based pedagogy and suggest that what students need is a background along the following lines:

I came from a home that elevated reading, argument and debate into a secular religion. Not a day went by when my parents didn’t concern themselves with what I was reading, talking about reading, talking about talk, talking about what was coming out of the radio, talking about what they read out loud to each other or to us coming out of newspapers, Radio or TV

listings mags - any bit of written text. They didn't stop telling stories about their lives, and relating those stories to the values that underlay them - as most people do, when they tell stories, actually.

Now, I hesitate to elevate my personal experience to the status of an educational programme but, and I will return to this - I will ask the question - what are the alternatives to Genre Theory education within schools and schooling? (Rosen 2011)

Many educators, of course, are working with students who will not have been so immersed in the genres, and especially the written genres, which are associated in most cultures with success in schooling and the potential for social and economic mobility. This will obviously be the case in multilingual educational contexts where the language and the genres being rehearsed in the home will often not be the same as those which the students need to master for academic success. At the very least, these students need to cross a language boundary and in many cases they also need to make the challenging transition from the oral genres of the home to the written genres of the school and the work place. In such contexts, it would seem obvious that what is required, beyond all else, is an explicit curriculum by which otherwise hidden cultural assumptions and communicative expectations are made manifest.

### Supplemental data

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed here.

### Note

1. This SFL-based approach to genre needs to be distinguished from the analysis of genre associated with the ESP-related work of Swales (for example, Swales 1990) and Bhatia (for example, Bhatia 1993), and from that of North American 'New Rhetoric' theory. These different 'schools' operate with different theoretical underpinnings, typically with different types of data and with different pedagogical objectives. For a discussion of these different schools, see Hyon (1996), Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) and Martin (2014).

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