Adelia Carstens

A multidirectional model for tertiary-level disciplinary writing

A B S T R A C T Genre approaches to academic writing are still enjoying wide support among pedagogues and applied linguists in the UK, US and Australia. However, genre-based pedagogies have been widely criticised for their explicit teaching of discourse structure and their emphasis on lexis and grammar. This article aims to demonstrate that the foundational principles of genre approaches are reconcilable with postmodern ways of reasoning and with most post-process approaches in language teaching. It is suggested that current method and postmethod pedagogies share an underlying component structure; they only differ with regard to their emphases. Based on the notion of 'principled pragmatism' a multidirectional, genre-focused model for teaching and learning academic writing in a tertiary education context is designed and justified.

Keywords: academic writing, applied linguistics, discipline-specific language teaching; genre-based approach; language teaching, postmethod pedagogy; principled pragmatism

1. Introduction

Designing language curricula is doing applied linguistic work. However, applied linguistics is not a mere application of linguistic theory. When Pit Corder argued that to be a good applied linguist one must, in addition to theoretical knowledge, possess "both imagination and a sharp critical faculty" (Corder, 1972: 5), it was regarded a groundbreaking statement. However, now, more than 30 years later, applied linguists agree that the discipline is all about understanding and very little about prescribing (Allwright, 1991; 2005).

A legitimate question to ask is whether this paradigm shift in applied linguistics has rendered structured methods, such as genre approaches to the teaching of writing, obsolete. This contribution argues that genre still constitutes a worthy focus for the design of writing courses, particularly courses that are aimed at serving specific academic disciplines or clusters of disciplines, provided that course design and teaching are situated within a flexible model.

In the following section I depart from an overview of the institutional problems that have given rise to a renewed search for teaching methods that "work". Section 3 critically discusses one of the possible solutions, *viz*. a genre-based syllabus. In section 4 I turn to an alternative to the notion of 'method', *viz*. the so-called 'postmethod condition'. By juxtaposing the foundational principles of genre-based teaching, generic principles for teaching academic writing (Butler, 2007) and postmethod language teaching principles (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; 2006) in section 5, it is demonstrated that method and postmethod are not as irreconcilable as suggested by postmodern pedagogues. Section 6 provides a possible explanation for the "coincidental" similarities between modernist and postmodernist approaches by suggesting that postprocess language pedagogies share an underlying schema. Section 7 departs from this schema and proposes a generative, multidirectional design model for teaching and learning the genres that are valued by disciplinary communities in tertiary education.

2. Background and rationale

Around the world university students, particularly additional language students, experience difficulties in acquiring the skills that are necessary to participate in the academic discourses of their chosen disciplines (Johns, 1995; 2002; Lillis, 2001; Hyland, 2004; Rossouw, 2006). University writing demands are very different from school demands – both qualitatively and quantitatively – yet most academic lecturers expect students to master academic discourse without explicit instruction.

Genre approaches to teaching academic writing, especially disciplinary writing, have won considerable support over the past two decades, as reflected in the following appraisal by Hewings and Hewings (2001: 80):

> [...] the recent trend toward genre-based approaches to the teaching of academic writing was a positive development when compared with those which represented a homogeneous view of academic writing, undifferentiated across genres. Indeed, in current thinking on tertiary academic literacy it is now taken almost as axiomatic that an understanding of generic conventions, particularly in terms of moves but also steps and their lexicogrammatical realisations, is essential in achieving academic success.

However, within the framework of the "new" applied linguistics, genre approaches may be regarded as prescriptive, and therefore outdated. Before an alternative is suggested, it is necessary to give an overview of what genre approaches entail.

3. Genre-based approaches to teaching academic writing

Genre approaches are, in essence, a functional drawing together of language, content (theme) and the context of discourse production and interpretation. Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics constitutes the theoretical basis of these approaches. John Swales (1990: 58), the doyen of genre analysis, offers the following characterisation of the notion of genre:

> A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.

Three distinct genre traditions have developed since the 1980s. One of these, the New Rhetoric school, has resisted the development of genre-teaching strategies, while the other two, *viz*. the Australian genre school and the ESP genre school, have developed their own pedagogies (Paltridge, 2001: 3; Hyland, 2004: 6: 11). Although both these schools see genres as "social actions", they focus rather heavily on the products of such actions. These products are believed to have predictable discourse structures that coincide with the purposes of the discourse community they serve. Furthermore, genre syllabi are typically staged, starting with exploration and context-building, followed by modelling and joint construction, and ending in independent construction (cf. Hyland, 2004: 123, 128; Hammond, Burns, Joyce, Brosnan, & Gerot 1992: 17).

Supporters of genre-based teaching regard a "visible pedagogy" to be beneficial to students, in that explicit genre instruction affords easy access to discourses that have accrued social and cultural capital in society. It is argued that learners benefit because they no longer have to rely on inductive methods such as the growing experience of repetition or teacher feedback on essays (Hyland, 2003).

However, not all writing pedagogues agree that genre-based approaches are effective. Critics of the original Swalesean genre analysis, such as Prior (1995), have raised concerns about an "overprescriptive" approach making use of "moves" that typically occur in a more or less fixed order. Others have regarded it to be an essentially textually grounded (product) model that reverts back to teaching the traditional rhetorical modes within a rigid structural template. Genre-based approaches have also been criticised for fostering passive learners (cf. Cope & Kalantzis, 1993: 2). Proponents of the New Rhetoric genre school, in particular, have questioned whether genres can be captured, taught and acquired in the classroom. The New Rhetoricians have argued that genres are so slippery and evolving that building a curriculum around them is virtually impossible (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Johns, 2002). Postmodern critical applied linguists have taken the criticism a step further, describing traditional staged genre approaches as a "one-size-fits-all" approach (cf. Prabhu, 1990: 173). Postmodernists have also retorted that through its prescriptiveness genre-based instruction perpetuates hegemony, because students are taught how to write the fossilised products of dominant cultures (Pennycook, 2001).

4. The "postmethod condition"

The above-mentioned criticisms, and others, endorse the question of whether "traditional" genre approaches to teaching writing are still appropriate in the emerging postmodern era. Genre, like process and product, is a teaching method, and the term 'method' has come under critical scrutiny in recent times. Kumaravadivelu (2003: 28) regards methods to be based on idealised concepts, which in turn are geared toward idealised contexts. Scholars such as Allwright (1991), Pennycook (2001), Prabhu (1990) and Stern (1992) have cautioned language teaching professionals against the uncritical acceptance of methods. These critical applied linguists and pedagogues have gone even further, counselling teachers against the very concept of method itself, arguing that the concept is surrounded by myths (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 163-168), or even worse, that it is "dead".

Out of this awareness of the failures of "methods", such as the genre approach, has emerged the so-called "postmethod condition". In the next section the postmethod condition will be discussed in terms of three important attributes that distinguish it from method, the interrelated parameters on which it pivots, and a set of macrostrategies that are based on theoretical, empirical and experiential knowledge.

4.1 Attributes

The postmethod condition signifies three interrelated attributes. First, it signifies **an alternative to method** (not an alternative method), by enabling practitioners to generate location-specific, classroom-oriented innovative strategies. Second, it signifies **teacher autonomy**. The postmethod condition recognises teachers' experience, tacit knowledge and potential to know how to teach and act autonomously within the academic and administrative constraints imposed by institutions, curricula and textbooks, and also how to develop a critical approach to their own teaching practice (Freeman, 1991: 35; Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 33). The third alternative is **principled pragmatism**. In contrast to eclecticism, which is putting together practices from established methods, principled pragmatism is based on the pragmatics of pedagogy where the relationship between theory and practice is realised only within the domain of application. Teachers follow this principle by developing what Prabhu (1990: 162) calls "a sense of plausibility", which is their subjective understanding of the teaching they do. This sense of plausibility is shaped by self-observation, self-analysis, and self-evaluation.

4.2 Parameters

Kumaravadivelu (2003: 34) visualises a postmethod pedagogy as a three-dimensional system, consisting of the parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility. **Particularity** requires that language pedagogy must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 34). **Practicality** relates to the relationship between theory and practice, and entails a teacher-generated theory of practice, which "recognizes that no theory of practice can be fully useful and usable unless it is generated through practice" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 34). **Possibility** is derived from the idea that any pedagogy is implicated in relations of power and dominance (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 36), which calls for recognition of learners' and teachers' subject positions: class, race, gender and ethnicity, and for sensitivity towards their impact on education. The boundaries of these parameters are blurred, and each one is shaped by the other two. Furthermore, the result of the relationship is shaped by context and depends on what the participants bring to the situation.

4.3 Macrostrategies

It is assumed that the three pedagogical parameters outlined above constitute the basis of a postmethod pedagogy. However, a coherent framework is needed for guiding teaching professionals to "translate" the features of the pedagogy to the classroom context. In other words, the principles must have generative power. In line with this way of thinking, postmethodology theorists outline universal principles or strategies for learning an L2 (cf. Bell, 2003). For instance, Brown's (2002: 12) "'principled approach" lists 12 "relatively widely accepted theoretical assumptions", and Kumaravadivelu (2003; 2006) outlines a framework of

10 **macrostrategies**, *viz*.: maximise learning opportunities; facilitate negotiated interaction; minimise perceptual mismatches; activate intuitive heuristics; foster language awareness; contextualise linguistic input; integrate language skills; promote learner autonomy; ensure social relevance; and raise cultural awareness.

Macrostrategies are guiding principles derived from current theoretical, empirical and experiential knowledge of L2 learning and teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 208). They serve as broad guidelines according to which teachers can generate their own location-specific, needs-based **microstrategies** or classroom procedures, and they have the potential to constitute the operating principles for a situation-specific postmethod pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 201).

Although I fully support the notion of design principles, I wish to argue that these principles are not unique to postmodern perspectives. The idea of identifying general principles for course design is also found in Butler's doctoral thesis (2007: 42 ff.), which formulates method-neutral design principles for the facilitation of writing interventions in academic contexts. However, Butler's "key issues in the teaching and writing of academic writing" have a wider scope than Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies – they include pedagogical principles, institutional constraints as well as show significant resemblances with principles that can be inferred from genre-based writing methodologies. The following table highlights similarities between Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies, Butler's key issues in the teaching and learning of academic writing, and principles underlying genre-based teaching writing pedagogy:

Kumaravadivelu's pedagogical principles (macrostrategies)	Butler's key issues in the teaching and learning of academic writing	Core principles in genre-based pedagogy
K1 Maximise learning opportunities	B4 Consider learners' needs and wants as a central issue in academic writing	Identify learners' needs (Paltridge, 2001: 40ff)
K2 Facilitate negotiated interaction	B9 Acknowledge assessment and feedback as central to course design	Stretch learners' abilities through interaction with teachers and more knowledge-able peers (Vygotsky, 1978)
K3 Minimise perceptual mismatches	B9 Acknowledge assessment and feedback as central to course design	Facilitate a "visible pedagogy" (Hyland, 2004: 88)
K4 Activate intuitive heuristics	B3 Engage students' prior knowledge and abilities in different literacies to connect with academic literacy in a productive way	Validate learners' prior knowledge and draw upon students' previous experiences (Paltridge, 2001: 40ff)
K5 Foster language awareness	B11 Include productive strategies that achieve a focus on language form	Provide sufficient information about text structure, grammar and lexis, so as to empower students to make informed choices (Hyland, 2003: 131; 2004: 104-105)

Kumaravadivelu's pedagogical principles (macrostrategies)	Butler's key issues in the teaching and learning of academic writing	Core principles in genre-based pedagogy
K6 Contextualise linguistic input	B10 Provide relevant, contextualised opportunities for engaging in academic writing tasks	*Contextualisation of linguistic input is implicit in all genre-based designs, since all applications are related to authentic texts and real-world problems.*
K7 Integrate language skills	B13 Focus on the interrelationship between different language abilities in the promotion of writing	Integrate reading and writing skills (Johns, 2005: 35; Hyland, 2004: 113)
K8 Promote learner autonomy	B5 Create a learning environment where students feel safe to explore and find their own voices in the academic context	*Promoting learner autonomy is a feature that is only weakly represented in genre-based designs.*
K9 Ensure social relevance	B2 Include an accurate account of the understandings and requirements of lecturers/ supervisors in specific departments or faculties regarding academic writing	Identify the kinds of writing that learners need to do in their target situations (Hyland, 2003: 93) Make learners aware of the ways in which disciplinary writing conventions reflect the purposes of discourse communities.
K10 Raise cultural consciousness	B3 Engage students' prior knowledge and abilities in different literacies to connect with academic literacy in a productive way	Validate and draw upon students' previous experiences (Paltridge, 2001: 40ff) (their content schemata in this case)

Table 1: Kumaravadivelu's postmethod principles, Butler's key issues in the teaching and learning of academic writing, and foundational principles of genre-based pedagogy

The next section departs from Kumaravadivelu's 10 macrostrategies and elaborates on the assumptions about learning to write which they share with the other two sets of principles. I also indicate that the three sets of principles generate similar microstrategies or learning activities.

5. The interconnectedness of pedagogical principles, beliefs about language-learning and classroom strategies

Macrostrategy #1: Maximise learning opportunities

This macrostrategy is based on the belief that teaching is a process of creating learning opportunities and maximising learning opportunities entails a willingness on the teacher's part to modify lesson plans continuously on the basis of ongoing feedback, in order to meet specific learner needs, wants and situations. This strategy also addresses a key issue in the teaching of writing, which is formulated as follows by Butler (2007: 44): "Consider learners' needs (and wants) as a central issue in academic writing."

Both Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategy #1 and Butler's fourth key issue appear to be underpinned by the belief that learning to write is needs-oriented, which is also one of the central beliefs of traditional genre approaches (Hyland, 2004: 88). Genre scholars firmly believe that learners are more motivated when they are allowed to focus on the types of writing they have to do for their chosen academic disciplines or which are related to their future professions, than when the writing is only indirectly related to their immediate purposes. This does not necessarily imply a staged curriculum. In fact, most present-day genre scholars no longer adhere to a rigid curriculum. Hyland (2003: 67), for instance, reiterates the importance of continuous validation of a course design to ensure social relevance when saying:

> Behind every successful writing course there is a continuous process of questioning and revision to check the original results, evaluate the effectiveness of the course, and revise objectives.

Furthermore, Hyland (2004) says in connection with the stages involved in designing a genre-based speaking course as outlined by Burns and Joyce (1997)[1]: "[T]hese steps are often more simultaneous than sequential." He adds that the extent to which a teacher has the freedom to make such course decisions depends on the situation, and that teachers have the flexibility to select materials, tasks and contexts, or even start with "a broad process objective" (Hyland, 2004: 93).

Macrostrategy #2: Facilitate negotiated interaction

Negotiated interaction means that the learner should be actively involved in interaction "as a textual activity, interaction as an interpersonal activity and interaction as an ideational activity" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 202). It seems to be based on the belief that learning to write is a type of apprenticeship, during which the teacher facilitates learners' understanding and use of language as system, language as discourse between interlocutors, and language as representative of real-world concepts, including ideology. Kumaravadivelu (2006: 202) invokes studies on interactional modifications as empirical evidence to demonstrate that what enables learners to move beyond their current receptive and expressive capacities are opportunities to modify and restructure their interaction with their interlocutors until mutual comprehension is reached.

Genre approaches are fully compatible with this strategy (Faigley, 1986: 535; Hyland, 2003: 88). Building on Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development genre pedagogues claim that learners' abilities are stretched through interaction with teachers or more knowledgeable peers. To facilitate optimal development within each individual, the proponents of genre approaches encourage collaborative classroom activities, which include joint exploration of texts, negotiated construction of texts, and even generation of content (cf. Hall, 2001: 232; 238).

---

[1] Burns and Joyce's curriculum comprises the following stages: (1) Identify the overall contexts in which the language will be used; (2) Develop course goals based on this context of use; (3) Note the sequence of language events within the context; (4) List the genres used in the sequence; (5) Outline the sociocognitive knowledge students need to participate in this context; (6) Gather and analyze samples of texts; (7) Develop units of work related to these genes, and develop learning objectives to be achieved.

Butler's (2007: 49) ninth key issue, "Acknowledge assessment and feedback as central to course design" is fully compatible with Macrostrategy #2, *viz*. facilitate negotiated interaction. Butler's principle involves continuing dialogue between lecturer and student on the implementation of feedback in a non-threatening environment (Butler, 2007: 51). In particular, he advises the creation of sufficient opportunities for peer feedback and negotiation of meaning with lecturers and peers, which includes the involvement of learners in the process of materials development and task design.

Macrostrategy #3: Minimise perceptual mismatches

A definition of communication as "a gradual reduction of uncertainty" seems to be underpinned by the belief that learning to write is optimised through transparency on the part of the facilitator, which I believe is what underlies macrostrategy #3. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006: 203) it is essential for teachers "to sensitize themselves to the potential sources of mismatch between teacher intention and learner interpretation", which may be of a cognitive, communicative, linguistic, pedagogic, strategic, cultural, evaluative, procedural, instructional or attitudinal nature. An example of minimising perceptual mismatches is provided in Butler's (2007: 51) discussion of Key issue 9, "Acknowledge assessment and feedback as central to course design," *viz*. ensuring the transparency of assessment criteria.

Genre pedagogy seems to be in tandem with this macrostrategy, since most genre scholars believe that learning to write requires explicit outcomes and expectations (Hyland, 2004: 88). Genre pedagogues from ESP and Australian persuasions suggest that teachers should be explicit about what is being studied, why it is being studied, and what will be expected of students at the end of the course. This is what Bernstein (1990: 73) calls a "visible pedagogy". The difference between method and postmethod positions in this regard is that postmethodologists seek to iron out perceptual mismatches through negotiation of understandings rather than by top-down communication of understandings.

Classroom strategies that may be derived from this principle are to be explicit about what is being studied and why it is being studied, and by formulating clear outcomes for the various lesson units.

Macrostrategy #4: Activate intuitive heuristics

Chomsky (1970) argued that one cannot learn the entire grammatical structure of a language through explanation and instruction beyond the rudimentary level, for the reason that no teacher/lecturer possesses enough explicit knowledge about language structure to provide adequate explanation and instruction. The teacher can at most assist learners' grammatical abilities by designing classroom activities in such a way as "to give free range to the creative principles that humans bring to the process of language learning ... [and] create a rich linguistic environment for the intuitive heuristics that the normal human being automatically possesses" (Chomsky, 1970: 108). However, even if this is the case, then Chomsky's underlying belief must be that learning is optimised if learners' existing cognitive schemata are utilised.

This strategy coincides with Butler's (2007: 44) third key issue, *viz*. "Engage students' prior knowledge and abilities in different literacies to connect with academic literacy in a productive way". According to Kumaravadivelu (2006: 204) one way of activating the intuitive heuristics

of the learner is to provide enough textual examples so that the learner can infer certain underlying rules of form and function. This advice is based on empirical studies showing that self-discovery plays a crucial role in learner comprehension and retention, regardless of learners' language ability (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 204).

Macrostrategy #4 features indirectly in genre pedagogy, in that it can be inferred from certain classroom procedures proposed by genre pedagogues. First, it is manifested in familiarisation activities – drawing on students' prior knowledge of the genre(s) in question, the contexts in which they are written, or the discipline in question. In this way students' previous experiences are validated, and integrated into the curriculum (Johns, 2005: 26). Second, the strategy is manifested by procedures such as eliciting (specific) existing knowledge about text structure, language and context to predict or pre-empt what is needed in the target situation (Paltridge, 2001: 40ff). Genre scholars from ESP and the Australian tradition use model texts to elicit tacit linguistic knowledge, a practice for which there is empirical support (Charney & Carlson, 1995: 111-112). Charney and Carlson (1995) show that models influence, in particular, the content and organisation of students' texts. The explanation is as follows: seeing a related or an analogous concept in a model may increase the salience or activation level of associated concepts in the writer's memory.

Macrostrategy #5: Foster language awareness

In the context of L2 learning and teaching language, awareness refers to the deliberate attempt to draw learners' attention to the formal properties of their L2 in order to increase the degree of explicitness required to promote L2 learning. Kumaravadivelu (2006: 205) explains this strategy as follows:

> Language awareness is based on strategies that emphasize understanding, general principles, and operational experience. Strategies based on language awareness have intellectual appeal and instructional applicability needed to speed up the rate of learning. They also help learners sensitize themselves to aspects of the L2 that would otherwise pass unnoticed, and unlearn initial incorrect analyses by supplying negative evidence.

Underlying this principle must be the belief that learning to write is enhanced by explicit knowledge of language structure and disciplinary culture.

Butler's 11th key issue, *viz*. "Include productive strategies that achieve a focus on language form" (Butler, 2007: 54), may be brought to bear on this principle. He cautions against a focus on form in the traditional structural sense, but supports timely, selective attention to specific classes of linguistic items through the use of pedagogic tasks that draw students' attention to "aspects of the target language code" (Butler, 2007: 55). Particular emphasis is placed on language structures that "dominate academic discourse".

There seems to be a good measure of consensus between postmodernist and genre approaches in this regard. Genre scholars adhere to the belief that when learning to communicate effectively, students learn that they have to make choices from grammar and vocabulary that relate to their particular purposes and contexts. Therefore the teacher should provide sufficient information about text structure, grammar and lexis, so as to empower students to make informed choices.

Classroom activities following from this principle or strategy include using relevant texts as catalysts to elicit sociocultural understandings about the context and discourse community in which the text is situated (Johns, 1995; 2005); identifying the rhetorical modes that feature prominently in the discipline and the genre under scrutiny; and identifying cohesive elements, tense, the preferred way of self-reference, politeness markers, formality markers and hedges (cf. Hyland, 2003: 131; 2004: 104-105).

Macrostrategy #6: Contextualise linguistic input

Syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of language cannot be understood as isolated linguistic components with a unidirectional information flow. They are acquired together in authentic contexts. It is therefore essential to bring to the learner's attention the integrated nature of language. According to Kumaravadivelu (2006: 205) the responsibility for contextualising linguistic input lies more with the classroom teacher than with the syllabus designer or the textbook writer.

Butler's 10th key issue (2007: 53), "Provide relevant, contextualized opportunities for engaging in academic writing tasks that students feel contribute towards their development as academic writers in the tertiary context", partially overlaps with this macrostrategy. However, he emphasises the broader disciplinary context, rather than the specific situational context, and develops a strong argument in favour of discipline-specific writing courses.

Genre approaches are by nature integrated and contextualised, in the sense that their main focus is social action (meaning-making) in a particular context within a particular discourse community. Therefore, genre pedagogues prefer to depart from authentic writing tasks and prototypical examples of target domain texts.

Macrostrategy #7: Integrate language skills

Language-centred movements in TESOL have taught the so-called "language skills" (listening, speaking, reading and writing) separately (Kumaravadivelu, 2006: 206). However, there is very little empirical or theoretical justification for such a pedagogy. In fact, all available empirical, theoretical, and pedagogical information points to the need to integrate language skills for effective teaching because the nature of L2 learning involves parallel integration of language (Selinker & Tomlin, 1986). The current, widely held belief that L2 learners do not acquire language skills separately is thus backed up by a sufficient body of evidence.

Butler's (2007: 55) 13th key strategy, "Focus on the interrelationship between different language abilities in the promotion of writing", coincides with this macrostrategy. Butler (2007) refers explicitly to an integration of reading and writing.

Although genre approaches are primarily aimed at improving writing, skills integration is emphasised by genre scholars such as Johns (2005) and Hyland (2004). Johns (2005: 35) contends that "any course that ostensibly teaches writing also must integrate the other traditional skills, especially the careful, analytical reading of texts". Hyland (2004) applies this principle in a genre-based marketing communication syllabus that is structured according to the ways genres are sequenced and used in actual language events. Some of the genres are

spoken and others are written. He claims that a syllabus which reflects a real-world use of genres "reaps the benefits of closely integrating reading, speaking and writing activities in the classroom" (Hyland, 2004: 113).

Genre knowledge is best acquired if students discover for themselves how they work. This can be facilitated by requiring students to read given examples in various ways (skimming, scanning, search-reading and comprehension reading) to elicit salient characteristics and generalise on the basis of these.

Macrostrategy #8: Promote learner autonomy

Kumaravadivelu (2006: 206) believes language learning to be an essentially autonomous activity. He urges language teachers to help learners learn how to learn and to equip them with the metacognitive, cognitive, social, and affective strategies necessary to self-direct their own learning. In this way the consciousness of good language learners are raised about the learning strategies they seem to possess intuitively and the strategies are made explicit and systematic so that they are available to improve the language learning abilities of other learners as well. Butler's (2007: 45) fifth key issue, "Create a learning environment where students feel safe to explore and find their own voices in the academic context", clearly ties in with this macrostrategy.

In contrast to the previously mentioned strategies, promoting learner autonomy is not one of the key features of genre-based approaches. Although the process of assisted learning includes a gradual reduction in teacher assistance and reliance on models, traditional genre-based syllabi leave little scope for self-directed learning. More time should be spent, not only at the end of a course, to encourage students to figure out on their own how new genres work. Students should also have the freedom to challenge genre boundaries and genre conventions throughout the course, and not merely after they have "mastered" one or more genres.

Macrostrategy #9: Ensure social relevance

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006: 207) any serious attempt to understand L2 education entails an understanding of social and political contexts in which language use is embedded. A large majority of post-process pedagogues believe that learning to write is a purpose-driven activity. Therefore, determining learning purpose is one of the language teacher's most important tasks.

Genre approaches are built on the premise that effective teaching entails identifying the kinds of writing that learners will need to do in their target situations, and incorporating the findings in the curriculum as well as in the materials selected and designed (Hutchison & Waters, 1987: 60; Hyland, 2003: 93). This macrostrategy may be seen as pivotal in teaching discipline-specific writing courses, particularly if the teacher departs from authentic writing prompts in disciplinary study materials.

Butler's second key issue (2007), "Include an accurate account of the understandings and requirements of lecturers/supervisors in specific departments or faculties regarding academic writing", may be subsumed under the notion of social relevance, because in actual fact this

issue has a bearing on the target situation of academic writing interventions (Butler, 2006: 43), *viz*. the disciplinary context. This context includes both surface features and the rhetorical characteristics of the discourse community.

Measures the classroom teacher can take to implement this principle is to depart from authentic disciplinary writing prompts/writing tasks, and to make these kinds of writing the focus of classroom activities and teaching materials.

Macrostrategy #10: Raise cultural consciousness

Traditionally, one of the goals of culture teaching was to help the learner gain an understanding of first language speakers from a cognitive, affective and behavioural perspective (Stern, 1992). Recent explorations by L2 educationists seek to expand the horizon of culture learning and teaching to include the development of sociocultural knowledge through additional language learners of English. In other words the L2 learner is treated as a cultural informant (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 268-270). Raising cultural consciousness then implies a belief that language-learning is enhanced if the teacher takes cognisance of how L2 learners construct meaning in cross-cultural encounters, and are encouraged to share their own experiences and perspectives with the teacher and peers.

This principle ties in with Kumaravadivelu's (2006) strategy #5, "Foster language awareness," which deals with a heightened consciousness of and reflection on certain practices in society. In addition, both can be related to an overt aim of genre-focused disciplinary writing, *viz*. to build on learners' content schemata (Hyland, 2004: 55-56).

Strategies associated with this principle is to elicit content and subject-field knowledge from students, and making them aware of how knowledge they already possess ties in with writing conventions. An article or a chapter from a book may also be selected in cooperation with a subject-field teacher, which may sensitise them to important epistemological considerations in the field.

6. Where method and postmethod meet

The previous section has alluded to a possible explanation for the striking similarities between the sets of principles derived from Kumaravadivelu (2003; 2006), Butler (2007), and genre approaches to teaching writing: methodologists as well as postmethololologists seem to share certain core beliefs about how writing abilities are acquired, and these beliefs translate into pedagogical principles that are consciously or unconsciously applied in course design and classroom teaching. However, methodologists usually depart from classroom experience; they distil from this experience a set of beliefs about how students learn, build a syllabus around these beliefs (without defining mediating principles), and map classroom activities directly on teaching methods. Postmethodologists, on the other hand, claim to depart from empirical evidence, draw general principles from the evidence, and then allow classroom teachers the freedom to devise activities on the basis of these principles, without confining them to syllabi.

Despite this apparent irreconcilability of method and postmethod they seem to be underpinned by a single design process, of which certain phases are foregrounded and others are backgrounded, resulting in different trajectories within the larger process. Figure 1 represents the purported underlying process, and indicates the trajectories mapped out by proponents of the two opposing paradigms:
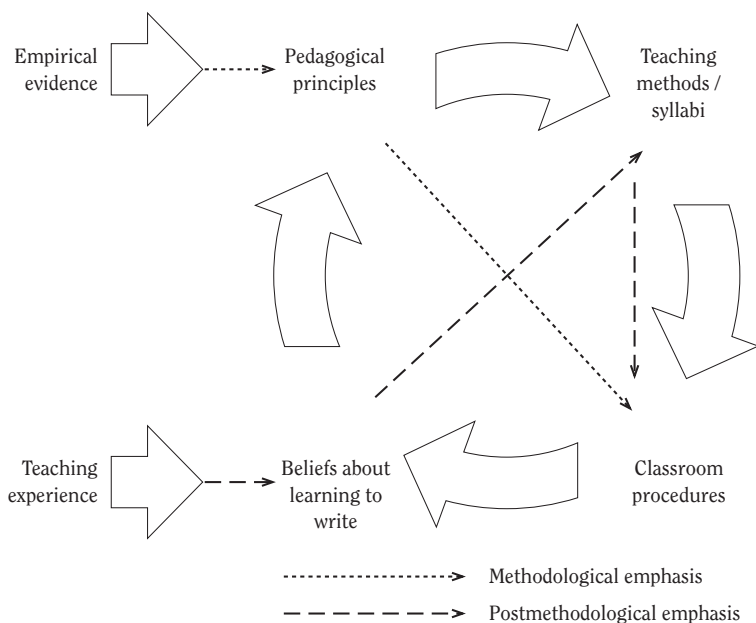
Figure 1: Pedagogical cycle underlying methodological and postmethodological approaches

The next section demonstrates how the notion of an underlying pedagogy can be integrated into a model for teaching genre-focused disciplinary writing at tertiary institutions.

7. A model for teaching genre-focused disciplinary writing at tertiary institutions

The foregoing explanation suggests that the difference between method and postmethod is a matter of focus, rather than a matter of mutual incompatibility. This line of thought resonates with Bell's (2003) preference for a position that mediates between top-down and bottom-up. Bell (2003) argues that "to believe in what we as teachers are doing inevitably requires us to have a set of prescriptions when we arrive in the classroom – a set of beliefs we are committed to". Even scholars of postmodern persuasions seem to be willing to accede that there is some kind of structure that mediates between a loose set of pedagogical principles and classroom practice. For instance, Kumaravadivelu (2006: 101-102) provides space for a "presyllabus" – a syllabus that is continuously revised on the basis of learner feedback; and Prabhu (1990: 175) acknowledges that methods have the "power to influence – to invoke, activate, interact with, alter in some way, and generally keep alive – differing teachers' differing senses of plausibility, thus helping to promote and enlarge the occurrence of 'real' teaching". However, unlike modernists, who tacitly adhere to a unidirectional (top-down) model, postmodernists posit a dialectic relationship between theory or principle, and classroom practice.

The model schematised in Figure 2 derives its basic design from Breen, Hird, Milton, Olivier and Thwaite's representation of "Teacher conceptualizations and classroom practices" (Breen *et al.*, 2001: 473). However, it pivots on the postmodern notion of principled pragmatism, and is situated in the context of teaching and learning to write according to tertiary-level institutional and disciplinary norms.
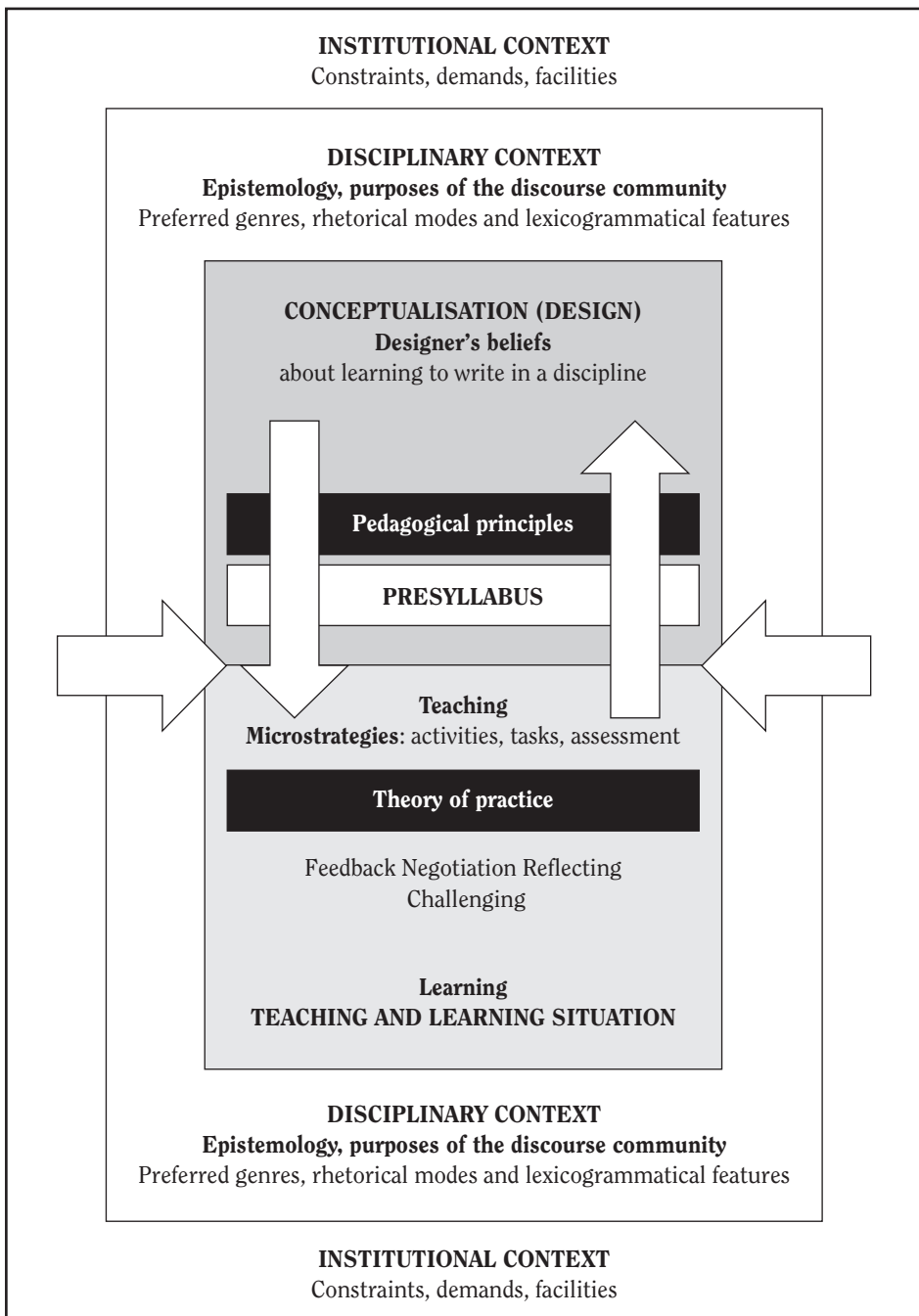
INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT
Constraints, demands, facilities

DISCIPLINARY CONTEXT
Epistemology, purposes of the discourse community
Preferred genres, rhetorical modes and lexicogrammatical features

CONCEPTUALISATION (DESIGN)
Designer's beliefs
about learning to write in a discipline

Pedagogical principles

PRESYLLABUS

Teaching
Microstrategies: activities, tasks, assessment

Theory of practice

Feedback Negotiation Reflecting
Challenging

Learning
TEACHING AND LEARNING SITUATION

DISCIPLINARY CONTEXT
Epistemology, purposes of the discourse community
Preferred genres, rhetorical modes and lexicogrammatical features

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT
Constraints, demands, facilities

Figure 2: A teaching-learning model for tertiary-level disciplinary writing

The model can be explained in the following way: Pedagogical principles (macrostrategies) and their related beliefs constitute the core of this applied linguistic design. However, these principles and the procedures generated from them form part of a network of dynamic relationships.

Both the design component and the practical component (teaching and learning) are embedded in an institution imbued with specific ideologies, practices, demands and constraints, and both components are surrounded by academic disciplines, whose interests have to be served by courses aimed at improving students' academic literacies. A dialectic relationship exists between disciplinary communities and the language professionals who are responsible for course design and presentation. The teacher of disciplinary writing classes is presumed to have the ability, the responsibility and the freedom to adapt and transform design principles according to learner needs. The teacher, in turn, is transformed by his or her experience in the teaching-learning situation. Over time, language teachers evolve a coherent pedagogic framework which will eventually lead them to construct their own theory or theories of practice.

Justification of the model is derived from Weideman's (2008) general characterisation of applied linguistic designs. He regards the design process to comprise five stages, including (1) an awareness of a language problem, (2) a bringing together of the designer's technical imagination and the theoretical knowledge that potentially has a bearing on the problem, (3) a preparatory formulation of a solution to the problem, (4) theoretical justification, and (5) implementation of the design to test its appropriateness. Similarly, the model depicted in Figure 2 presupposes a problem or a need arising from the institutional and disciplinary context. Based on a combination of the designer's beliefs about learning to write and sound pedagogical principles the designer proposes an instructional design or presyllabus, which is modified and fine-tuned through evidence generated from application in the teaching and learning situation.

8. Conclusion

This article has argued that writing course design focused on preferred genres within specific disciplines cannot simply be dismissed as prescriptivist. Approaches across the spectrum, stretching from postprocess methods, such as genre, to different varieties of postmethod pedagogy, seem to share an underlying structure. The components of the schema are beliefs about language learning, principles or methods derived from them, syllabi or presyllabi, and teaching strategies or classroom procedures. The components that are foregrounded depend on the theoretical vantage point.

The notion of a universal post-process pedagogy may serve as a justification for a multidirectional model of teaching writing in an institutional context. A **top-down** directionality provides a guiding framework that departs from a predetermined set of design principles for academic writing that have been derived from the syllabus designer's beliefs about learning to write. These are, in turn, anchored in teaching practice and empirical evidence. A **bottom-up** orientation, on the other hand, creates space for teacher and learner autonomy. It empowers and liberates the classroom teacher to apply these principles creatively through the design of needs-based classroom strategies in order to serve the needs of particular student groups, and challenges its own pedagogical foundations if they do not survive the litmus paper of practice. A **sideways** orientation promotes authenticity, increases student motivation and stimulates inter-departmental collaboration. Furthermore, the model suggests that both the course designer and classroom teachers should anchor themselves in the social, political, economic, epistemological and educational particularities of the surrounding context, and remain

focused on the purposes and conventions of the disciplinary communities they serve. Such a model is believed to embody the transformation that applied linguistics has undergone – from prescription to understanding.

REFERENCES

Allwright, R.L. 1991. *The death of the method*. (Working Paper #10). England: The Exploratory Practice Centre, The University of Lancaster.

Allwright, D. 2005. From teaching points to learning opportunities and beyond. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39(1): 9-31.

Bell, D.M. 2003. Method and postmethod: Are they really so incompatible? *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(2): 325-336.

Berkenkotter, C. & Huckin, T.N. 1995. *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: cognition/culture/power*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bernstein, B. 1990. *The structuring of pedagogic discourse: Vol. 4. Class, codes and control.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Breen, M.P., Hird, B., Milton, M., Olivier, R. & Thwaite, A. 2001. Making sense of language teaching: Teachers' principles and classroom practices. *Applied Linguistics*, 22: 470-501.

Brown, D. 2002. English language teaching in the 'Post-Method' era: Towards better diagnosis, treatment and assessment. In: Richards, J.C. & Renandya, W.A. (eds.). *Methodology in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 9-18.

Burns, A. & Joyce, H. 1997. *Focus on Speaking*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University.

Butler, G. 2007. *Framework for course design in academic writing for tertiary education.* D.Phil. thesis, University of Pretoria.

Charney, D.H. & Carlson, R.A. 1995. Learning to write in a genre: what student writers take from model texts. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 29(1): 88-125.

Chomsky, N. 1970. BBC interviews with Stuart Hampshire. Noam Chomsky's view of language. In: Lester, M. (ed.). *Readings in applied transformational grammar.* New York: Holt & Rinehart: 96-113.

Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (eds.) 1993. *Powers of literacy: a genre approach to teaching writing*. London: Falmer Press.

Corder, S. P. 1972. Problems and solutions in applied linguistics. In: Qvistgaard, J., Swart, H. & Spang-Hanssen, H. (eds.). *Applied Linguistics: Problems and solutions. Vol. III of the Association Internationale de Linguistique Appliqué Third Congress, Copenhagen*. Heidelberg: Julius Groos Verlag: 1-23.

Faigley, L. 1986. Competing theories of process: a critique and a proposal. *College English*, 48: 527-542.

Freeman, D. 1991. Mistaken constructs: Re-examining the nature and assumptions of language teacher education. In: Alatis, J. (ed.). *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics* 1991: Linguistics and language pedagogy. *The state of the art*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press: 88-115.

Hall, D.R. 2001. Materials production: theory and practice. In: Hall, D.R. & Hewings, A. (eds.). 2001. *Innovations in English language teaching: a reader*. London & New York: Routledge: 229-239.

Hammond, J., Burns, A., Joyce, H., Brosnan, D. & Gerot, L. 1992. *English for social purposes: a handbook for teachers of adult literacy*. Sydney, Australia: National Center for English Language Teaching and Research.

Hewings, A. & Hewings, M. 2001. Approaches to the study of disciplinary variation in academic writing. In: Hall, D.R. & Hewings, A. *Innovation in English language teaching*. Routledge: London and New York: 71-83

Hutchison, T. & Waters, A. 1987. *English for Specific Purposes: a learning-centred approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hyland, K. 2003. *Second language writing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hyland, K. 2004. *Genre and second language writing*: Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Johns, A.M. 1995. Teaching classroom and authentic genres: Initiating students into academic cultures and discourses. In: Belcher, D. & Braine, G. (eds.). *Academic writing in a second language. Essays on research and pedagogy*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex: 277-292.

Johns, A.M. (ed.). 2002. Introduction. *Genre in the classroom. Multiple perspectives*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum: 3-13.

Johns A.M. 2005. Research and theory in the teaching of second/foreign language writing: implications for pedagogy. Paper read at SAALA 2005 25th anniversary conference, Dikhololo. 6-8 July.

Kumaravadivelu, B. 2003. *Beyond methods: Macrostrategies for language teaching.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Kumaravadivelu, B. 2006. *Understanding language teaching. From method to postmethod*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lillis, T. 2001. *Student writing: access, regulation and desire*. London: Routledge.

Paltridge, B. 2001. *Genre and the language learning classroom*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Pennycook, A. 2001. *Critical applied linguistics. A critical introduction.* Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Prabhu, N.S. 1990. There is no best method – Why? *TESOL Quarterly*, 24: 161-172.

Prior, P. 1995. Redefining the task: an ethnographic examination of writing and response in graduate seminars. In: Belcher, D. & Braine, G. (eds.). *Academic writing in a second language.* Norwood. NJ: Ablex Publishing: 47-82.

Stern, H.H. 1992. *Issues and options in language teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Swales, J. 1990. *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weideman, A. 2008. Constitutive and regulative conditions for the assessment of academic literacy. Paper prepared to be read at a symposium on 'Testing the academic literacy of additional language students', AILA 2008, Essen Germany. 26 August.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adelia Carstens
Unit for Academic Literacy
University of Pretoria
Pretoria
0002
Email: adelia.carstens@up.ac.za