

Exploring genre pedagogy of learning transfer in L2 writing

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Proponents of genre pedagogy claim that academic writing can be learned by means of explicit instruction and systematic modelling on the distinctive features of a particular genre. However, genre pedagogy and its inherent deductive nature have been called into question. Many critics have argued that the genre-based deductive approach imposes rigid writing forms on students, which may constrain their writing voice, discursive diversity, and creativity. Genre pedagogy has also been criticized for instructing static textual features, which reinforces the norm of authorized power to EFL learners. While some researchers assume that deductive instruction can stimulate more learning transfer, others argue that the automaticity of learning transfer does not take place easily. The purposes of this study are to explore the effectiveness of genre pedagogy by looking at: how topic similarity/difference affects EFL writers' learning transfer; the writing elements which are transferable through model writing (implicit learning) and genre-based instruction (explicit learning) by EFL writers; and the EFL writers' strategies of learning transfer. Using a case study approach this research found that explicit genre pedagogy encourages more, and more stable, learning transfers than implicit learning. Moreover, the stigma that genre pedagogy reifies linguistic features of texts and accepts the discursive norms is rebutted. The findings suggest that explicit genre instruction does constrain writers' voice but enables EFL writers to critically negotiate genre power.

Keywords: genre pedagogy; transfer of learning; L2 writing; Taiwan

Introduction

Writing, which is not considered a self-acquirable linguistic skill (Casanave, 2002), has always been daunting to EFL writers. One of the greatest challenges for both L2 writing teachers and students is that writing instruction in the classroom is not always fully learned and transferred by the students into their writing (Fishman & McCarthy, 2001; McCarthy, 1987; Smart, 2000; Spack, 1997). Studies have extensively discussed how L2 writing pedagogies can improve teaching effectiveness and learning transfer. Given that novice EFL writers have little authentic socio-cultural exposure to academic discourse, it seems pragmatically necessary for L2 writing teachers to "intervene" (Hyland, 2003) by providing deductively genre-based instruction, explicit rhetorical comparison, genre analysis, and EAP/ESP discourse knowledge in writing conventions. Genre-based instruction focuses on form and has played an essential role in mainstream L2 writing studies due to its affordance of consciousness-raising, direct inputs, schema reinforcement, genre knowledge, scaffolding and modelling practice (Erlam, 2003; Hjortshoj, 2009; Hyland, 2002, 2007; Swales, 1990). Because genre knowledge is culturally specific and inaccessible to many L2 learners (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Delpit, 1988; Hasan, 1996; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999), genre pedagogy can scaffold students' textual and contextual knowledge necessary for them to critically interact in the discourse community (Hyland, 2003). Proponents of genre pedagogy

claim that academic writing can be learned by means of explicit instruction and systematic modelling on the distinctive features of a particular genre. Thus, genre pedagogy seems to promise a new paradigm (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993) in that it is rooted in the traditional prescriptive pedagogies but has shaken off the shackles of the grammar-translation approach; it has also moved beyond the cognitive process approach, whose emphasis on natural learning has been criticized. However, genre pedagogy and its inherent deductive nature have been called into question. Many critics have argued that the genre-based deductive approach imposes rigid writing forms on students, which may constrain students' writing voice, discursive diversity, and creativity (Elbow, 1994, 1998, 1999; Moffett, 1982; Murray, 1985; Perl, 1999; Smagorinsky, 1992; Swales, 1997). Genre pedagogy has also been criticized for instructing explicit textual features, which reinforces the norm of authorized power to EFL learners (Hyland, 2004; Tardy, 2009). While some researchers assume that deductive instruction can stimulate more learning transfer (James, 2009), others argue that the automaticity of learning transfer does not take place easily (Marini & Genereux, 1995; Perkins & Martin, 1986; Smart, 2000; Tardy, 2006). These pedagogical debates have problematized the issue and given rise to several inquiries. Little research has verified the effectiveness of a genre-based approach on learning transfer. It is unclear whether deduction-orientated pedagogy facilitates more learning transfer or more learning constraints, whether EFL novice writers who have been peripherally detached from the discourse community can gain legitimate peripheral participation in this demanding academic community through genre pedagogy, and whether genre pedagogy constrains or empowers EFL writers. This study attempts to investigate these issues.

Literature

Genre Studies

Genre studies can generally be divided into three major research traditions: (a) Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), (b) ESP approach, and (c) New Rhetoric (NR) (Hyland, 2003, 2004; Hyon, 1996; Johns, 2002; Tardy, 2009). Researchers of SFL focus on the macro-level of genre and view language as social semiotics for meaning making. Texts are the output of meaning construction, and linguistic features reflect the social context and function of texts (Hyland, 2004). In response to the inefficiency of the process approach, SFL proponents attempt to address students' needs by providing explicit instruction in underlying linguistic features (Tardy, 2009), and highlighting the genre structures and registers shaped by social purposes and contextual needs (Hyland, 2004). Genre, from the SFL perspective, is regarded as a practical resource for communication (Hyland, 2004) and for access to the membership of a discursive community (Martin, 1993; Tardy, 2009).

Extending the SFL genre-based approach, scholars, such as, Swales (1990) and Flowerdew (1993) pioneered genre analysis in teaching ESL/EFL academic writing. ESP genre studies tend to analyse the specific genre features used in academic, professional, and workplace contexts (Bhatia, 2015; Hyon, 1996; Swales, 1990). Like the SFL approach, ESP genre pedagogy underscores the relationship between texts and contexts (Tardy, 2009). ESP instructors view genre as a pragmatic tool for developing access to a specific discourse community (Hyon, 1996).

New Rhetoric (NR), in contrast to SFL and ESP, characterizes genre as social action (Miller, 1984), which is dynamic and socially constructed. Therefore, the authorized norms of a discourse community are open to being reshaped instead of being

embraced without question (Benesch, 2001; Hyland, 2003, 2004; Tardy, 2009). While both SFL and ESP recognize textual features, rhetorical structures, and contextual conventions, NR researchers claim that genre is not a set of normative skills, which are teachable and transferable, due to its social nature of instability (Hyland, 2004; Tardy, 2009). The NR approach to composing practice lacks deductive instruction (Hyon, 1996) and focuses more on exploring the relationship between texts and contexts (Hyland, 2003). Hence, NR genre researchers are more interested in issues, such as, contexts, history, development processes, or power of genres.

To summarize, although the three genre schools overlap in taking texts and contexts into account, they are distinct from one another in terms of conceptual foci, research methods, and pedagogical practices (Hyland, 2002, 2003). A major difference is that NR challenges the power of genres and questions SFL and ESP's static pedagogy, which acknowledges the authorized norm of a discourse community (Hyland, 2004).

Genre pedagogy

Genre-based pedagogy distinguishes recognizable textual structures from different genres and foregrounds deductive instruction which pragmatically scaffolds writers' literacy development (Bhatia, 1999; Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, & Yalop, 2000; Hyland, 2003, 2007). In a genre-based classroom, the instructor explains general rules to the students who then engage in specific practice tasks (Norris & Ortega, 2000). Hyland (2007) believes that this deduction-oriented pedagogy could help EFL writers "short-cut" (p. 151) the language acquisition processes. Genre scholars see writing as situated social practices, and genre is viewed as culturally and socially shaped to respond to the perceived contexts. Thus, genre-based pedagogy provides systematic links between language and the target contexts and opens the door to the target discourse community (Swales, 1998). Hyland (2007) argues that the intrinsic functional-structuralism of a genre-based approach does not constrain genre knowledge but endows it with social attribution thus empowering writers to construct their authorial identity and critically negotiate with the community discourse (Hyland, 2003).

Transfer of learning in writing

Transfer of learning is defined as the ability to make use of what has been learned in one situation and apply it in another (Perkins & Salomon, 1996). However many researchers have found that transfer is learning-context specific (Belmont, Butterfield, & Ferretti, 1982) and is difficult to stimulate (Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, & Kuehn, 1990; James, 2006, 2009; Perkins & Martin, 1986; Tardy, 2006).

Various theories of learning transfer have been proposed. Salomon and Perkins (1987) distinguish between near and far transfer. Near transfer refers to the transfer from one context to a relatively similar one while far transfer is between two relatively different contexts. Related to this distinction are low road and high road transfer. Low road transfer refers to reflexive performances that can be automatically triggered due to mastery through practice and contextual similarity (Perkins & Salomon, 1996). This requires response patterns to be well-automatized and stimulus conditions which are similar to prior contexts of learning. High road transfer involves more deliberate cognitive abstraction from one context to another. It is relatively conscious, effortful, and independent from contextual similarity, and can be triggered when time and related resources are available for exploring the transfer connections. Problem solving and

decision making based on prior knowledge usually requires high road transfer (Perkins & Salomon, 1996).

Most L2 writing studies of transfer have suggested that learners usually have difficulty in making learning transfer (Duppenhaler, 2004; Fishman & McCarthy, 2001; James, 2006, 2009; Johnston, 1994; McCarthy, 1987; Smart, 2000; Spack, 1997). For example, James (2009) found that, out of the 15 learning outcomes he studies, few transferred. He suggested that the transfer at the content and organizational levels is more task-specific than that at the language level, and task similarity/difference influences learning transfer.

The learning transfer generated from genre-based models writing

Macbeth (2010) adopted writing models in her genre-based writing classroom and investigated whether they straightjacket writers. She provided a template illustrating rhetorical moves and basic instructional objects, including thesis statement, support, citation conventions and other guidelines for novice writers. Macbeth reported that even though the students were informed of the template's deficiency, most of them transferred the model through direct borrowing. She reported that a considerable number of students adopted the model to compose their introductions and thesis statements by changing the key content words, or the topic but maintaining the order of grammatical structures and keeping some vocabulary from the model sentences. Indeed, some students prioritized the structure of the template over their content's quality or coherence. However, she indicated that her students experienced difficulties in transferring punctuation, citation conventions, unity between a thesis statement and body paragraphs, and supporting ideas across texts. She concluded that model texts offer visible structures that might be a compelling lure for novice L2 writers. She suggested that explicit instruction and writing models may encourage novice writers' imitation to an extent that may stifle writers' creativity or even mislead writers from the writing purposes. Macbeth's study focused only on the negative transfers of genre-based modelling, which leaves potential positive transfers unexplored.

The present study is designed to test the genre pedagogy embedded in the SFL and ESP genre models in order to explore whether topic similarity and genre pedagogy can enhance transfer of learning on L2 writing. It also aims to verify the NR's claim that the explicit instruction of SFL/ESP models discourages EFL writers' negotiation with genre power. Finally, it examines EFL writers' strategies. The research questions are:

1. How does the topic similarity/difference affect EFL writers' learning transfer?
2. What writing elements can or cannot be transferred through model writing (implicit learning) and genre-based instruction (explicit learning) by EFL writers?
3. What are the EFL writers' strategies of learning transfer?

Methodology

Most empirical studies of learning transfer utilized interviews (Tardy, 2009). The present study uses a case study approach to contrast EFL writers' genre transfer of implicit learning (modelling a writing sample) with explicit learning (receiving genre-based instruction).

Participants

Based on convenience sampling, two Taiwanese freshmen Shine and Pin, participated in this study. Their English proficiency was ranked as high-intermediate based on the

Scholastic Ability Test of Taiwan. These two freshmen were chosen because: 1) they had learned some English writing rules in their high schools but they claimed that they did not clearly remember those rules, and they had not learned the comparison and contrast writing mode used in this study; 2) they were the only qualified students who responded to a research recruiting advertisement and consented to go through the research procedures.

Research design and procedure

Two writing tasks were designed, with topics that are similar to and different from the assigned writing model. In addition, implicit model writing and explicit genre-based instruction were provided separately. As a result, four research contexts were included in this study: (1) model writing with a topic related writing task (Model-TR), (2) model writing with a topic unrelated writing task (Model-TU), (3) genre instruction with a topic related writing task (Genre-TR), and (4) genre instruction with a topic unrelated writing task (Genre-TU). The four tasks were carried out in sequential order with three-week intervals between them and are described in more detail below.

The Model-TR task

First, participants were given a writing model to read, titled “High Schools and Colleges”. Then, participants were asked to write one topic-similar article on the topic: “Comparing or contrasting the learning in high school and university” of about 500 words based on the writing model. The writing task had a similar but different topic from the model writing, and the prompt shared a similar level of complexity as the model writing. No explicit rule-driven writing instruction was provided. Instead, the participants were expected to inductively “notice” the forms and textual features from reading the writing model, asking questions, or through their writing process. Since the model writing and the writing prompt shared enough common writing features that the participants would perceive them as similar, it was expected that the task similarity would stimulate some near transfer.

The Model-TU task

Like the Model-TR task, participants were asked to read the same writing model first, and then to compose a prompt that was different in topic but had a similar level to the model writing (Topic: “Comparing or contrasting Taipei city with XXX city”). No explicit writing instruction was provided. The different tasks were meant to create two different writing contexts, but the two tasks still shared some common features of genre and discourse, such as the writing structure, thesis statement, etc. The purpose of this design was to explore whether the participants could make far transfer of some common writing features they implicitly acquired from the model writing to a different writing prompt task.

The Genre-TR task

Participants individually received genre-based explicit instruction after reading the same writing model. They were first given PowerPoint instruction in genre analysis of a Comparison-Contrast essay. Thirteen generic features that are pivotal in academic writing or specifically related to Comparison/Contrast essays were addressed. Second, the model writing was explicitly and deductively analysed and explained with diagrams

and graphs to illustrate the 13 generic features. Third, after discussing the sample writings, students were encouraged to ask any questions that came to mind. Finally, when the participants thought they had a good command of all the 13 genre elements, they were asked to compose a writing prompt with a topic that was similar to the writing model (“Comparing or contrasting the problems that I encountered in high school and university”). All the instructional resources were available for them to reference during their composing process.

The Genre-TU task

Participants were asked to read the model writing first, then the teacher-researcher reviewed the 13 generic features that had been taught. Participants then wrote a prompt with a topic that was different from the model writing (Topic: “Comparing or contrasting my university with XXX university”).

Data collection and measurement

Multiple data were collected, including written texts, and retrospective interview data. The comparison/contrast essay writing mode is chosen for this study because its distinctive writing features are not usually taught in high schools in Taiwan but are commonly demanded in universities. Moreover, the comparison/contrast essay is one of the most common and important writing modes in the academic genre. It is frequently required in academic term papers and English proficiency tests (e.g., TOEFL, TOEIC, GEPT, and IELTS). The genre knowledge of the comparison/contrast essay that was offered in the Genre-TR and -TU contexts was adopted to serve as a measure of the participants’ writing products. The 13 generic features can be divided into two macro and micro levels. Macro level features are:

1. thesis statement (subject + main ideas + controlling idea)
2. topic sentence
3. supporting ideas (examples, factual evidence, expert’s opinions)
4. organization (classification of comparison and contrast, logical sequence, block format/alternating format)
5. introduction (moving from general to specific)
6. unity (connection between the topic sentences and thesis statement).

Micro level features are:

7. cohesive devices (transition, synonyms, pronouns),
8. formal/specific words
9. nominalization
10. qualifying statements
11. conciseness
12. avoiding first and second person
13. avoiding contraction

Data analysis

To minimize misinterpretation, the teacher-researcher double checked with each participant to clarify ambiguous parts of textual data on-site during the retrospective interviews. Moreover, the 4 writing texts were evaluated by two trained raters (the inter-rater reliability is 88%). Essays with scores that differed by more than two scale points

were read by the teacher-researcher to reach a consensus. The textual data were tabulated and triangulated with the retrospective interview data.

Findings

The data collected from the participants' written texts were categories based on the 13 genre elements (Table 1). These results were then scored using the following scheme:

- If the participants produced the target genre elements, each element received one point.
- If a produced text containing the target genre element that was rather a rough sketch or was not exactly correct, it was assigned 0.5 points.
- If the participants failed to produce the target genre elements or violated the genre conventions, 0 points were assigned.

For example, the Model-TU prompt asked the individual participants to compare and contrast two cities. Pin wrote her thesis statement:

“And now I am going to compare two cities I am familiar with, including Taipei, which is my hometown, and Dresden in Germany, which I travelled there for three weeks.”

Pin's thesis statement, consists of the subjects (Taipei and Dresden) and a controlling idea (compare the two cities), but it is merely a simple announcement about what she would like to do. This rough thesis statement failed to express the points of view (main ideas) that she would discuss in the body paragraphs. As a result, Pin's statement received 0.5 points. The scores can be seen in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 1. Data categorised by 13 genre elements

Exam Elements	Model Writing		Genre Instruction	
	Topic related	Topic unrelated	Topic related	Topic unrelated
1. Thesis statement	S: Yes P: No	S: Yes but rough P: Yes but rough	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes
2. Topic sentence	S: No P: No	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes
3. Supporting ideas	S: Yes (elaboration) P: Yes (elaboration)	S: Yes (examples) P: Yes (examples)	S: Yes (examples) P: Yes (examples, facts)	S: Yes (examples, facts) P: (examples, facts)
4. Organization	S: No P: No	S: No P: No	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes
5. Introduction	S: Yes P: No	S: Yes P: No	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes
6. Cohesive devices	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes
7. Unity	S: Yes P: No	S: Yes P: No	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: No

8. Formal/specific words	S: No (3 get*; 1 just) P: No (2 get)	S: No (2 get*; 1 a lot) P: No (1 kind of; 1 really)	S: No (2 get; 2 good; 3 thing) P: No (5 get; 3 kind of)	S: No (1 good) P: No (4 get; 3 kinds of)
9. Nominalization	S: No P: No	S: No P: No	S: No P: No	S: No P: No
10. Qualifying statements	S: No (2 all; 1 every*; 2 no*) P: No (1 every; 3 no*; 4 have to)	S: No (1 every*; 2 all; 1 should) P: No (2 every*; 1 must)	S: No (2 No*; 1 should) P: No (2 every*; 3 all; 1 have to)	S: No (1 every*; 1 all) P: No (1 all)
11. Concise	S: No (2 There + be) P: Yes	S: No (3 There+ be) P: No (6 there+ be)	S: No (1 There + be) P: No (1 There + be)	S: No (5 there + be) P: No (4 there + be)
12. Avoiding first and second person	S: No (11 you*) P: No (16 we; 2 you*)	S: No (3 you; 2 we) P: No (1 we; 1 you)	S: No (16 "I") P: No (7 we; 7 "I")	S: Yes P: No (1 we; 1 "I")
13. Avoiding contraction	S: No (1 isn't; 2 aren't; 1 don't) P: No (1 don't)	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes
Consulting Model Writing	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: Yes	S: Yes P: No	S: Yes P: No
Writing Score	S: 77 P: 70	S: 76 P: 70	S: 72 P: 77	S: 76 P: 78
Mean score	73.25	75.75		

* refers to the words that share the same string. Placed at the end of a word, it refers to the words that are of the same morpheme. The data codes in this study exclusively represent the following word strings: "you*" = you, yours, yourself; "every*" = every, everyone, everywhere, everything, everybody; "no*" = no, nothing, nowhere, none; "get*" = get, got, gotten

Table 2. Scores for learning transfer

	Model-TR	Model-TU	Genre-TR	Genre-TU
Thesis Statement	1	1	2	2
Topic Sentence	0	2	2	2
Supporting Ideas	2	2	2	2
Organization	0	0	2	2
Introduction	1	1	2	2
Cohesion	2	2	2	2
Unity	1	1	2	1
Specific Words	0	0	0	0
Nominalization	0	0	0	0
Qualification	0	0	0	0
Concise	1	0	0	0
Avoid 1st/2nd Person	0	0	0	1
Avoid Contraction	0	2	2	2
Total	8	11	16	16

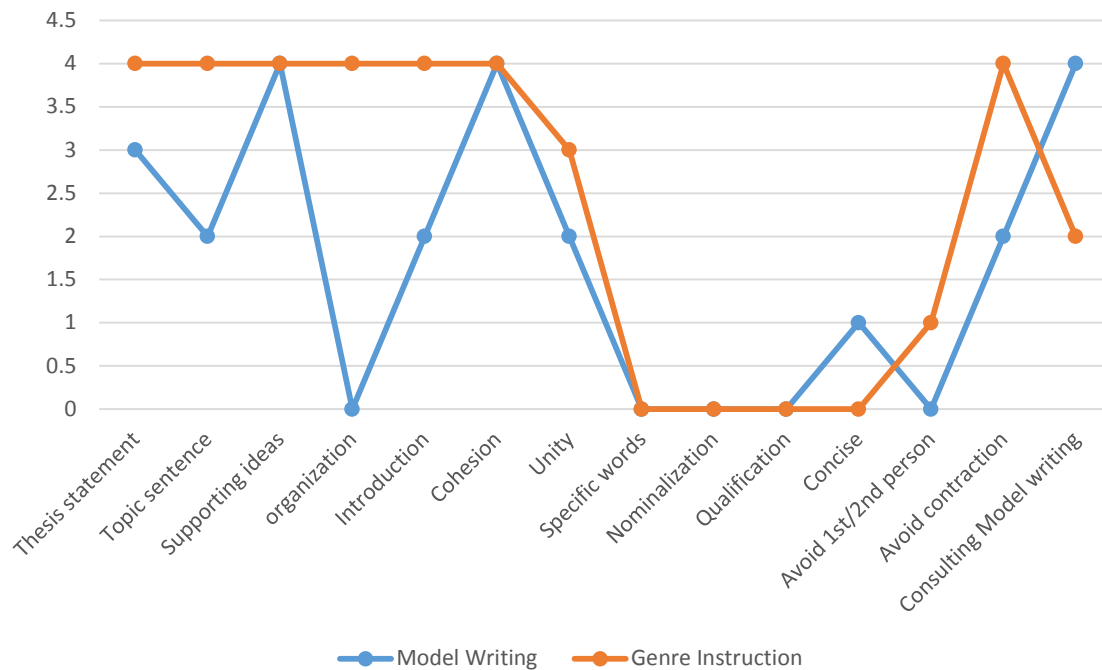


Figure 1. Learning Transfer from Model Writing and Genre Instruction

In general, the results show that explicit genre instruction produces more learning transfer than the implicit learning through model writing. As can be seen from Figure 1, model writing shows more fluctuations than genre instruction, which implies that the transfers of learning generated from implicit model writing are unstable.

Discussion

RQ. 1. How does the topic similarity/difference affect L2 writers' learning transfer?

According to Table 2, the two participants' writing performance of Genre-TU is the same as that of Genre-TR (16 points), but Model-TU (11 points) is better than Model-TR (8 points). This suggests that after receiving genre-based instruction, EFL writers with high-intermediate proficiency level are able to transfer learning across topics. That is, topic similarity or difference impacts little on the writers who have acquired genre knowledge. The results also suggest that topic similarity does not necessarily encourage more near/low road transfers from the implicit learning of the model writing. A possible explanation is that EFL writers who have insufficient genre knowledge cannot discover generic features inductively through model writing.

It seems that writers in the Model-TR/TU contexts were not affected much because they derived too few, and unstable, scaffolds from deductive learning to make noticeable transfers. They were also affected little by topics when they were writing in the Genre-TR/TU contexts because they were equipped with genre knowledge which allowed them to make far transfer across the topic barrier. This finding is inconsistent with that of James (2009) perhaps because the topics of TR and TU in this study were designed to share similar complexity and the same writing mode (comparison/contrast), which may make the TU context less challenging than previously assumed. This result

suggests that topic similarity/difference may not be a key factor of learning transfer. Instead, topic complexity or similarity/difference of genre modes may serve the pivotal role in affecting transfer.

RQ. 2. What writing elements can or cannot be transferred through model writing and genre-based instruction by EFL writers?

According to Table 1, the mean score of the Model-TR/TU (M=73.25) is lower than for Genre-TR/TU (M=75.75). This result suggests that genre-based explicit instruction is more effective than the implicit learning of a model text. Comparing the model based writings with the genre based writings (Figure 1), it is clear that genre-based instruction affords more stable learning transfer (N=4) of thesis statements, topic sentences, supporting ideas, organization, introduction, cohesion, and avoiding contraction. It is noteworthy that what can be consistently transferred after writers have explicitly learned the related genre knowledge are all rule-governed generic features at the macro level.

In the inductive learning context participants made fewer learning transfers, and the quality of transfer appears to be precarious. Figure 1 reveals that the participants under Model- TR/TU contexts consistently transferred only *elaborating supporting ideas* and *developing cohesive devices* (N=4). Contrary to the stable transfer produced by the deductive genre learning, inductive learning of model writing mostly generated unstable transfer in terms of composing a thesis statement (N=3), formulating topic sentences (N=2), developing an introduction (N=2), maintaining unity (N=2), being concise (N=1), and avoiding contraction (N=2). The features that were eventually transferred seemed not to be applied consistently. For example, Shine composed no topic sentence in her Model-TR, but accidentally presented unity between her supporting ideas with her thesis statement. Pin accidentally composed topic sentences in her Model-TU but failed to establish unity between her topic sentences and supporting ideas. Moreover, Shine and Pin admitted in the interview that they had unclear ideas about topic sentences, and they did not notice unity when reading the model writing. When asked about the unities she developed in both the Model-TR and TU, Shine shrugged slightly saying,

“I guess I strived hard to make sense of my points in a logical manner. I did not know what unity is, so I did not consult the writing model for that” (Shine, interview, 2017).

This interview data may lead to the assumption that the two stable transfers of implicit learning, providing supporting points and cohesive devices, may have occurred spontaneously based on writer’s logical intuition rather than conscious transfer of implicit learning. Moreover, Figure 1 illustrates that rhetorical features of the micro level, such as using specific words, nominalizing a verb phrase, and qualifying statements are the most challenging to transfer because neither inductive nor deductive instruction facilitated learning these.

It seems that genre-based deductive instruction encourages more learning transfers of the rule-driven features at the macro level. Moreover, the amount of the learning transfers prompted by explicit learning is higher and the quality of the transfer is more stable. In contrast, the learning transfers generated from model-based implicit learning are fewer and are more haphazard. Lastly, rhetorical features at the micro level are the least transferrable for both the inductive and deductive learning models.

RQ. 3. What are the L2 writers' strategies of learning transfer?

The two participants employed a few strategies that affect learning transfer. Triangulating the texts and the interview data, shows that direct transfer from the received genre instruction, avoiding difficulties, repeatedly reading the composing texts when writing, and economical generalization are common strategies applied by the two participants. For example, economical strategy explains why EFL writers may be more capable of transferring rule-governed generic features, but the transfer of generic features involving abstract concepts may be lacking or ineffective. Avoidance is another popular strategy frequently applied by EFL writers; for instance, both Shine and Pin admitted in the interview that they did not notice the generic feature of nominalization at all when writing in the implicit Model-TR and Model-TU contexts. As a result, no transfer of nominalization took place through implicit learning. Interestingly, both the writers claimed in the interviews that they remembered nominalization after receiving the genre-based instruction; however, they gave up applying it in their Genre-TR/TU writings after a few unsuccessful attempts. Nominalization was perceived as an imperceptible rhetorical feature which was unintentionally ignored in the implicit learning context but intentionally avoided in the explicit learning context. While the transfer outcome of nominalization may look the same due to avoidance strategy, the writers' writing processes are different. This finding deserves researchers' attention because when examining learning transfer, not only products but also processes should be taken into account.

The most compelling strategy is the critical negotiation strategy in which learners employed the learned generic features to negotiate a generic convention. For example, in the Genre-TR context, it was explicitly explained to participants that academic discourse usually avoids the use of first and second person in order to construct a formal and impersonal voice. When composing the Genre-TR prompt, "Compare and contrast the problems I encountered in high school and university," the first-person voice was maintained by both Shine (16 times) and Pin (7 times) (see Table 1). When asked about their use of generic features, Shine said that she remembered the generic convention of avoiding first-person voice, but she eventually decided not to apply it:

"I noticed that the topic asks 'me' to explain the problems 'I' encountered in high school and university. If I avoid using the first person, the story will not sound like my personal experience. Therefore, I decided to remain the first-person voice but try to create formal academic tone by choosing formal grammar structures and vocabulary" (Shine, interview, 2017).

Shine's example is inconsistent with the finding of Macbeth (2010). It suggests that only when writers have a good command of genre knowledge and is well-informed with contextual information for exploration, can they be empowered to make high road and low road transfers to negotiate abstract genres or to challenge the power relation of genres. In short, the students' critical negotiation strategy verifies that although genre pedagogy recognizes generic features and focuses on texts and forms, its explicit instruction scaffolds EFL writers to acquire genres and the related knowledge of sociocultural contexts. If the explicit genre instruction can be fully acquired, it does not straightjacket EFL writers' writing agency but empowers L2 writers to critically construct their authorial identity (Hyland, 2003).

Conclusion

This study contributes to genre studies by offering empirical evidence from the perspective of learning transfer on the long-running arguments over the effectiveness of implicit and explicit learning as well as the absence of power negotiation of genre pedagogy. Embedded in SFL and ESP genre models, the explicit genre pedagogy designed in this study encourages more, and more stable, learning transfers than implicit learning does. Moreover, the stigma that genre pedagogy reifies linguistic features of texts and accepts the discursive norms is also rebutted. The findings suggest that explicit genre instruction enables EFL students to critically negotiate the genre power of the academic discourse community. These findings blur the distinction between the Schools of SFL/ESP and NR and shed new light on genre studies.

About the author

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