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▶ **To cite this version:**

Dacia Dressen-Hammouda. Adapting process-oriented writing approaches to cross-cultural contexts: the case of French university students. Third Biennial Conference on European Association of Teachers of Academic Writing, Jun 2005, Athens, Greece. pp.47-60. hal-01011773

HAL Id: hal-01011773
https://uca.hal.science/hal-01011773

Submitted on 24 Jun 2014

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European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing
22-24 June 2005
Athens, Greece

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Abstract

The process-oriented aspects of Writing for Academic Purposes are well-established within decades of research in applied linguistics, North American rhetoric and composition pedagogy. Various approaches to teaching process writing include increasing students' integral genre awareness (Swales & Feak 1994, 2000; Johns 1997); fostering an appreciation of writing genres as an ongoing, rhetorical process (Elbow & Belanoff 1989a; Freedman & Medway 1994; Hyland & Richards 2003); and an insistance upon dialogue as a means for developing discoursal competence (Harris 1986; Elbow & Belanoff 1989b). However, the approach also relies heavily on the learning and teaching conditions characteristic of Anglo-Saxon communities, raising issues of compatibility when used in cross-cultural contexts. For example, some of the approach's underlying assumptions are based on evaluations of time, perceived social relationships, and human communication as facilitating cooperation. It is argued that such cultural schemas come into direct conflict when the approach is used in other cultures. This paper will assess the process approach to teaching WAP in the French university system. It describes efforts by this researcher, trained in North American process/genre methods, to adapt the approach. After highlighting areas of divergence and identifying shared generalities, it will discuss implications for EAP in general.

Are the process and genre approach to teaching writing *universal*?

Despite the title of my paper, which promises to talk about something rather neutral, I've instead decided to talk today about why I'm a bad teacher. While this may seem to be a rather surprising way to begin a paper, what I will be doing actually is to focus on the 'problems' I've encountered over the past three years in using a process/genre approach to teaching ESP in a French university setting. Surely, one might ask, why is it interesting to focus on the problems? Clearly there are many positive things one can say, and these are the things teachers would rather talk about. But sometimes I feel it is necessary to focus on the problems we come across because of what they might reveal that is unexpected or how they might challenge our deep-held convictions.

Within the outlying frame of this initial problem, the question I am going to be addressing today is whether or not the process and genre approaches are 'universal'. In other words, can they help writers across cultural boundaries in the same way as they help Anglo-Saxon students ? And are they appropriate for all ?

Before trying to answer this question, however, I wanted to first set the bases for what I mean when I use the terms 'process' approach and 'genre' approach. This is important because by defining these terms more carefully, we can begin to gather certain clues about what's been going on in my classes, and can also start digging at some of the underlying cultural assumptions behind the genre and process approaches which may be less effective cross-culturally.

Defining the process approach : For Zamel (1983 : 165), process writing is a "non-linear, exploratory and generative process, whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning". Here, writing is a cognitive process, essentially a question of individual problem-solving, and the teacher's role is to be non-directive and facilitating, assisting writers to express their own meanings through an encouraging and co-operative environment. Part of the process approach also implies recognizing that there is a reader on the other end, and that as a consequence, the writing must be reader, rather than writer, oriented.

Defining the genre approach: While the process approach views the writing process to be so fundamental (i.e., cognitive) as to be universal (Bizzel 1992), the genre approach recognizes that people don't just write, they write to accomplish different purposes in different contexts (Miller 1984, Swales 1990, Halliday 1994). The term genre also refers to abstract, socially recognized ways of using language. It is based on the assumption that the features of a similar group of texts depend on the social context of their creation and use, and that these features can be described in a way that highlights the similarities from one text to another, in other words, that there are similarly recognizable patterns in the texts. Some genre theorists have of course successfully described various texts' recognizable structure in terms of their sequences and typical move structures (Bhatia 1999, Swales 1990).

In the teaching of L2 writing, a combination of these approaches is often used to increase students' integral awareness of genre and structure, but also to foster an appreciation of writing as an ongoing, rhetorical process, as well as an appreciation of dialogue as a means for developing discoursal competence. On the basis on my teaching experiences in France, however, I would argue that both approaches rely heavily on cultural schemas that are not as prevalent in French culture — if not absent altogether — and this raises a problem of compatibility when used in this specific cultural context. For example, some of the approaches' underlying assumptions are based on expectations of individual autonomy, a perceived relationship of cooperation between instructor and student, and communication as being about facilitating cooperation. These assumptions come into direct conflict with the student culture in France, making the approach difficult to use.

When we go into a teaching situation, of course, we must necessarily begin by reproducing the learning and cultural frames we ourselves have learned, because if we were to do otherwise we would be ineffective and unable to function. As teachers, we continue to reproduce these cultural frames most often without thinking and without questioning their basis until, of course, they are challenged. In this sense, I believe that it's fair to say that the genre and process approaches — and

the ideals we attach to them — likely provide specific, cultural frames that generate how we "permit" student text production and discoursal learning. What works in one culture to permit discoursal learning can obviously be widely rejected in another, as we will see here.

My aim here will be to describe some of the difficulties I've encountered during the past three years I've taught using the process/genre approach in a French university, to identify what the reasons for the conflict are, and to offer a possible explanation for the conflict. I will conclude by discussing the implications for using the process/genre approach cross-culturally. In particular, I will describe what, from the process/genre approach, can be salvaged for teaching writing to French students.

The students described in this study are third- and fourth-year undergraduates enrolled in our Applied Languages for Business and Technology program. In this program, students obtain a four- or six-year university degree as language specialists, further trained in international business, the food industry and international law, in order to gain a foothold in the professional world in international trade and commerce, the food industry, or technical communication. By the time they take my class, these students have had at least some experience of the professional world because they've all completed one or more internships in private companies, during which they have been familiarized with the related tasks and language used to carry them out.

Using the process/genre approach in a French university: setting the stages for conflict

What I would like to do today is to examine aspects of the dialogue I've had with my students over the past three years, and to look more closely at how each side has influenced and been influenced by this dialogical exchange. It is, of course, very difficult to describe everything that's been done and said in a classroom, even more so when one tries to look at the problem over a longer period of time. For this reason, I will be focusing on only those aspects that saliently reflect the process and genre approaches in my own discourse as a teacher, and how my students have responded to them. The language I use to talk about my teaching is quite new to my students, but as you will see, is actually quite 'standard' for the process/genre approach. My first day speech the first time I taught the class went something like this:

TAKE 1. "Course description"

> This course is designed to introduce you to and give you extensive practice of the discoursal, grammatical and lexical structures of written Professional English. The basic premise underlying this approach is that using language is about strategic social communication, rather than just about using words or grammar from a list. Rather, language is always about using 'words for a purpose'. Therefore, you need to know about your communicative situation and use that knowledge to strategically plan what to write. The following factors will influence how you do that:

(1) Audience. One thing we consider during a communicative interaction is the audience and our positioning to it: whom we are addressing, the position of the addressee, the relationship between the writer and the addressee, who else may read the text, what information can be understood easily, what needs further explanation, what attitude we can expect the addressee will have toward the document, what possible objections he/she may have and the reasons for their objection, etc.

(2) Purpose. Effective communication involves more than reproducing correct sentences. If your intended audience is seriously misjudged or ignored, no amount of grammatical editing or terminological finesse will make the communication succeed. Therefore, you must also know what you want to do with your text, or what your purpose is: what you want your readers to do after they read the text, how you want them to react, when you want them to take action and what kind of action you want them to take, if any.

(3) Strategy. You also need to think about how exactly you are going to carry out your purpose using language: what words to use, how to order them, how to put them into sentences, how to string your sentences together.

(4) Structure. Most writing, even short pieces of writing, have regular, predictable patterns of organization. You can take advantage of these patterns, so that readers can still follow you even if you make errors. Research shows that if you say 'the right things at the right time', grammar mistakes become less of a hindrance to readers' understanding. Therefore, we will also be focusing explicitly on patterns of textual organization.

(5) Style. The language choices you make reflect your situation: your audience, your purpose and your strategy. Much of the specialized terminology and grammatical structures that characterize a particular text type respond directly to the text's typical situation. We say that the style has 'normalized'.

The strategies for writing you will learn in this class are tools that can be used time and again, outside of and well beyond the walls of this classroom.

"Give a man fish, he will eat for one day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime."

-Chinese proverb

So as you can see, I really used a combination of both process and genre approaches, by paying attention to both audience and structure. I began by giving them some general ideas to think about (e.g., audience, purpose, strategy, etc.) and then devised a set of exercises to illustrate these points. The first week we looked at Audience, Purpose and Strategy. The second week, we looked at Style and Organization. The third week, I gave them some models to go by (two or more) so as to highlight the genre structure and move sequences of a few text types, further describing what possible rhetorical purposes they were related to. I then asked them to reproduce the model using an elaborated scenario, which gave them all the clues they needed to know about their audience and their purpose in writing. The strategy was left up to them, but I generally assumed that they would use the models (and their move sequences) as well as the language described in class. The following week, I collected their papers, marked them, returned them with a penciled in grade, and asked students to revise them.

My approach was therefore quite typical for a process/genre approach where through dialogue, I tried to get students to dig out the meaning of a normalized social text, and to understand that successfully writing a normed text necessarily implies negotiating meaning with potential readers. The aim was to bring the students' texts closer to the features of more expert writing, but another underlying purpose was to give them a strategy for getting on by themselves in the professional world, by giving them the tools to understand and identify the structure of the different texts they would later need to learn how to write by themselves.

Before reviewing the evaluations I received after this first semester, it would first be useful, I think, to establish a profile for the typical French student writer.

Profile of the French student writer

Christiane Donahue (1996, 1997) has examined and compared high school writing strategies and instruction in the United States and France. Her findings are relevant here in how they set the basis for understanding student behavior in a French university classroom, by describing the sorts of ideas about writing students in France come to the university with. As she found,

- Students in France write as much, if not much more, than their school-aged American counterparts.

- All teaching of writing is heavily centralized and determined largely by the French Education Ministry. Over the years, French students are taught to write and master a number of school-based genres that are inscribed in the national program: during the primary school years, students learn to write summaries, narratives and stories. During middle school, the writing comes to be fundamentally different from the process of 'self-discovery' found in American schools: the narrative, for example, becomes a story with a thesis, lacking the underlying motive of self-discovery or self-understanding commonly promoted in writing instruction in the US. During high school, students learn to write the dissertation and argumentative text. Research-style papers, usually informative, are written in nearly every subject, and extensive writing is omnipresent throughout the curriculum. Once students arrive at the university, however, there is no longer any systematic writing instruction.

- Students learn to master these texts for one immediate and pressing reason: passing the exit exam at the end of high school, the Baccalauréat. The "good" writing required to pass the exam must show the following characteristics, as defined by the Ministry of Education: "to think abstractly, to argue effectively in an elegant and precise prose", to possess a "rich

personal culture" developed from a list of readings established by the Education Ministry; to produce a heavily normed text on demand; to write for a 'general audience', e.g., the universal and educated reader — in other words, the students' teachers. It is assumed that this is all the writing instruction students will need, as these 'genres' are assumed to carry over into all other types of writing required.

- Students are not taught to write by drafting or through process. The "process" in France is rather a process of repetition of similar forms. Writing is learned by doing the same kinds of essays frequently, by discussing approaches to essays and developing outlines in class, and by copying models.

- Also, revision is unheard of. Early on, elementary school children are taught that "rature", erasing, or lack of cleanliness in anything they turn in is unacceptable. For example, my husband and I were impressed by the neatness of our son's written texts this year; he's in second grade. When we asked him about it, he told us that if his or his classmates' work is too messy, his teacher would simply take it, rip it up and throw it away, so they would have to do it over. All students write in ink from an early age, and carry heavy supplies of sophisticated white-out by the time they get to the university. As a consequence, there is little room for revision. Few students have personal computers at home, and having to physically write everything out in ink makes students wary about needing to correct later errors. In her research on French high school students, Donahue has also observed that students even struggle with the idea that it's ok to modify, to rethink what they said and to change it, simply because they haven't been taught to write that way. Instead, students must do all the thinking in their heads, and plan before they sit down to write. Writing is considered to be the final, end part of the process — *not* the beginning of a dialogue.

- To this, I would like to add some of my own observations. Students in France, for example, are not encouraged to think 'critically' in the way often intended in the US, in the sense that they are encouraged to discover their own individual voices. Instead, students are encouraged to learn and assimilate the voice of collective authority. Students *are* encouraged to think critically, and clearly, critical thinking is highly valued by French society, but only on the basis of what they have assimilated from the collective bed of social knowledge, their reading lists pre-defined by the Ministry, and the 'past'. If they don't draw from this shared and institutionally normed knowledge base, students' ideas have no cultural value and are considered naive. It is also expected that these ideas are to be neatly placed within one of the text types students have learned during high school to pass the exit exam.

- There is also no need for discovery learning, or going through a process of discovery to learn, because everything students need to know — the answers — are already *there*. They just need to be stated by the instructor and then learned by the student. Students often sit in large lecture halls where they 'passively' spend the class hour frantically writing down the professor's words which they then go home and memorize.

So in this sense, my class was both somewhat familiar and very new to the French students I was teaching. It was somewhat familiar to them, because I was explicitly teaching them text types, by analyzing and going over the structure of the genres together in class before the assignment. But this was similar to what they had done in high school, and some students resisted being treated like high school students, and not being taught anything 'new'. But the approach *was* very new in the sense that they were asked to revise their writing, that the grade wasn't 'set in ink' but could evolve through revision. But especially, rather than dictating the answer, I was asking them to discover the answer on their own through trial and error, something they hadn't done in this way before. And, as I was to quickly discover, my approach violated their expectations in many other important ways.

At the end of the first semester, I was told by the director of my department that my approach was too 'experimental' (I in fact almost lost my job); he had been willing to go along with it as long it produced results but the students were very unhappy. "My approach experimental?" I questioned, despite the now decades of solid research done by applied linguists, rhetoric and composition scholars and teachers? Experimental despite 'process writing' and 'the genre approach' being anchored in the landscape as the way things are done in so many other places where ESP/EAP is taught? I was quite surprised by the verdict, because nothing, it seemed to me, could be more accessible and practical than the process/genre approach. Nothing to me seemed to better capture how people learn because all typified language use has patterns; we learn how to master those patterns, at all levels, through trial and error, through dialogue. My own underlying cultural assumptions were hard at work and yet, I had to contend with the very obvious fact that the students weren't 'getting it'. As they explained to me, my approach was too esoteric, there weren't enough examples, and they didn't have enough guidance in general.

Student comments (1)

The first comments I received on the course concentrated on three principle points: I gave them too much work, the course content was too 'esoteric', and they wanted a standard correction after doing each homework assignment (23 from 50 responses), as reflected in the following comments

"Where is the standard correction ('correction type') we asked for?"
"You need to give us the standard correction"
"A standard correction would be useful to us to help us understand the documents' structure"
"To make this class better: have an example type of the exercises you ask us to do so we know what direction we need to go in"
"Standard correction desirable"
"We didn't get our standard correction! What a shame!"
"Because everyone doesn't write their report, GS-text or memo in the same way, it would have been interesting to have a standard text type"
"Having a standard correction of the exercises would allow us to evaluate our difficulties as well as our progress, and give a real idea of what we are aiming for"

It seemed obvious to me that the problem was that the students, in short, wanted *the answer*. My making them guess at the answer, through a discovery process of the genres' structure, but then never giving them the final word — a standard correction, or '*correction type*' — was frustrating to them. They wanted the answer to assimilate so that they could become 'autonomous'; without my final answer, they were missing something in their learning cycle and felt as though they would be unable to find the answer. This is of course contrary to the underlying philosophy of the process/ genre approach, which instead seeks to have students discover the structure on their own through dialogue, where the instructor is more of a well-meaning bystander, meant to give timely words of encouragement and guidance, rather than 'the answer'. However, it is also important to remember the learning schemas French students are inculcated with during their school years push them to learn the answer for the exam, and to learn to state the answer using normed, textual frames.

Another problem that came from me not giving the answer was the conflict it caused with my professional setting. In the institution where I teach, ESP had been taught through translation for the past 30 years. Such an approach leaves less room for individual grappling with the problem of writing because the original text has already been written, and just needs to be translated. Also, the students were still able to rely on the correction handed out after class. Once again, the teacher's discourse was the authority, and provided the norm to imitate. In this sense, students were not expected to "find their own voice" in English.[1] Instead, by imitating the norm, students would learn

[1] One of the colleagues in my department who read an earlier version of this paper had the following insight on the boundaries between public and private spheres, and their influence on education: "The French University is a public institution where students go to acquire skills they can use in their working life. The teachers, who are public servants, deliver the goods in a standard format - the teacher has little or no 'pastoral' role. The boundary between the public and private spheres in France accounts for a lot - education is in the public sphere, personal development belongs to the private sphere. Although teachers can and do help students to develop personally, this happens outside the system. Personal qualities such as initiative, conviction, inventiveness, are not normally evaluated by the educational system, or only marginally. The educational system is designed to provide skills and a common frame of reference to promote social cohesion, and so is very conservative and institutional (and also relatively egalitarian and consensual), but this doesn't worry the French. Personal development is the province of sports clubs, cultural activities, politics and so on - the "vie associative", which is very important in France - family, and work." (R. Ryan, pers. comm.)

to produce the correct answer to prepare for the exam. I, on the other hand, was lightly telling them that "I didn't have the answer", which also meant that I was *not* a voice of authority.

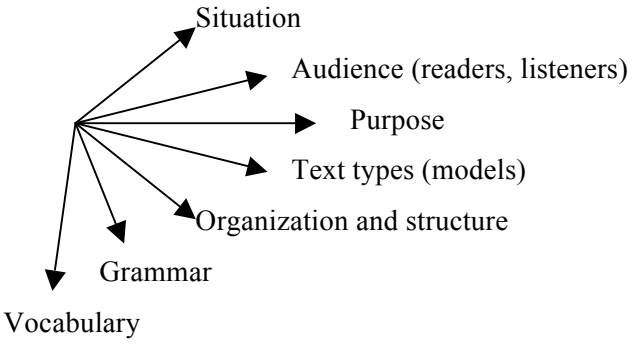
One other area of conflict was my observation that although students were clamoring at me for more models, more standard corrections, etc., by using the *genre* approach, I was giving them nothing but models and examples. I have to admit I was puzzled: how could they not be getting 'the answer'? Part of the explanation for this can perhaps be found in another very fuzzy cultural notion, namely, the difference between 'deductive' and 'inductive' thinking. In discussing with one of my colleagues, I began to wonder whether the reason students weren't getting the answer they needed was also because the way I was initially presenting the information interfered with their learning schemas. Rather than saying 'ok, here's a model, look at what it does, now get to it and use it' (deductive thinking), I should have been saying, 'look, here's a problem, what do you see? now let's compare what you found to what *I* can pull out of it' (inductive thinking).

As a result of these first reflections, the second time I taught the course I boiled down my message to something much more pragmatic. Rather than spending four weeks on "esoteric theory" and exercises, I gave it all to them in a five-minute introductory talk. I also changed the language: I was no longer talking about knowledge, but *skills*; no longer about genres but *models*; I hid the explicit language of audience/strategy/purpose so that the students wouldn't feel they were back in high school doing the same old stuff; and I talked about how they could do things with words. I tried to make the message simple and concrete, as seen in my second version.

TAKE 2. "Course description"

1. What are Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP)? Two views.

Linguistic point of view



Functional point of view: Professional English is

- basically about using good English, adapted to specific situations.
- *not* about learning to write literature, novels, plays or poetry. It
- *is* about learning how to structure and organize essential information
- and about using essential information to communicate in order to do the activities of industry, commerce and administration

2. Skills for Professional English

This semester, you will work on the following skills, which are the basis for all effective, written professional communication:

1. The basics of good English:
   - Clear, concise language
   - Clear structure and organization
   - Good grammar and punctuation

2. Specialized language structures:
   - Specific professional genres and their organization
   - Formulaic language (grammar and terminology)

3. Thinking of communication as a strategy for getting things done:
   - Applying linguistic skills (models, grammar) to particular communicative situations
   - Writing not for yourself, but for your *readers*
   - Planning, writing and revising texts

This time, however, I still felt I couldn't give them the 'standard correction' they wanted, because I steadfastly refused to be the sole voice of authority. This was especially because in my experience, giving them a standardized correction led to simple copying and not to learning —what *I* considered to be the road to their autonomy. Even so, I did work to make their corrections more concrete. So in addition to marking on their papers, I prepared a course segment that was based on the patterns of error I found in almost all of their papers for a particular assignment. I presented these general themes of 'error' in a class discussion and used their own errors to illustrate the problems on a handout, which we then corrected together in class . This was a compromise I had found in order to give them *some* sort of an answer, and allowed us to once again address issues of genre structure, the characteristics of *professional* rather than scholastic English, their French native speaker errors in English, and my favorite topic, the implicit, which is a bit tricky to teach otherwise. It gave me an opportunity to address the underlying propositions of the expressions they had learned but without having also learned what situations are and are not appropriate to use them in. In one scenario, for example, they were to write to an advertising company in New York to inquire about underfoot ads for their sporting goods store, and to suggest that a business partnership might be possible. It took them quite by surprise to learn that ending their letter, as almost all of them did, with "Thank you for processing this request" was not a wholly appropriate way to end such a letter.

Despite the interest they showed in these unexpected discoveries, at the end of this second semester of teaching the course, once again the students were globally unhappy with the approach. First, there were the ever-present institutional constraints. In France, students have 25-30 hours a week of classes, and often hold outside jobs to pay for their studies. Process writing, however, needs time

and investment. Students can go as far as they want with their homework in my class, but in reality at the end of the day they have little time or energy left for careful reflection. And once again, they still felt as though there was not enough direction. They still felt lost, as can be seen in the following comments which, while they are less direct and more mitigated than the first group's comments, still reveal the same underlying issue: the need to have the answer and an gnawing insecurity at not having it.

Student comments (2)

"We never really get a standard correction of our homework, even though it would be very helpful to allow us to understand."
"We only have some points to work with, but not all. We don't have all the tools we need."
"Clues are given only after when they should come before."
"We spend a lot of time preparing, without knowing if it's good or bad."
"Working alone on unknown docs is 'dangerous' because we don't know what we're doing."
"We need more examples, more exercises to practice."
"We need more exercises; even if we have a model, it's very difficult to do it for the first time."
"This class would be better, I think, if you could give more details on what we have to do, the way we have to write a certain paper… As far as I'm concerned, I was kind of lost, wondering what I was supposed to do."

One other comment I received was particularly insightful and revealing, and I'll come back later to its relevance to the problem posed here. This student wrote on her or his evaluation sheet: "*We know what we don't have to do but not precisely what to do. Maybe it's your method to make us think by ourselves but we don't know how to do it*." In response to these questions, which once again highlight the shortcomings of the genre and process approach for French students, I was still puzzled about why my approach wasn't working.

After many discussions with colleagues, both French and Anglo-Saxon, I realized it boiled down to something else. That in the presentation of my information, I was clearly interfering with my students' learning schemas, but it went well beyond differences in deductive and inductive reasoning. US students, for example, are valued for their openness, their flexibility and non-conformity, their autonomy and independent-thinking. The process by which they get there is divergent. Through their personal grappling with the content, structures and discourses, they are expected to converge toward the answer. French students, on the other hand, are valued for their convergence and reliance on past paradigms, and they begin by using convergent thinking, looking for how the new information fits with what they have learned and then applying it to all other situations. They have been taught to be information collectors in large lecture halls, to write down all that the professor says as information to be learned. The students integrate all sorts of models and attempt to converge their own thinking within these external models, rather than to internally

reproduce their own understanding of a model. In this sense, my French students simply hadn't been equipped with the skills for discovery learning on their own, and when faced with the new professional texts and methods I was using with them, they either lacked the confidence to grapple with the problem (because they hadn't been taught to grapple, but to imitate) or they were frustrated because they didn't have enough input (models) to copy from.

So at this point, I asked myself whether the genre/process approach was truly useful for these students, because the underlying expectations of discovery were difficult to apply; the students were very resistant and often felt as though they had been wasting their time and they still did not have the answer at the end. Their way of 'knowing' was different to what I was used to: for me, we know something when we've gotten there ourselves; no amount of telling is going to really get you there before you 'reinvent the wheel'. This is a learning schema that fits well with Anglo-Saxon cultures, where autonomy, independent thinking and finding new answers are valued. While certainly the French also share the need to find answers for themselves, the institutionalized schooling system also creates a different way of knowing: students 'know' when they can reproduce past schemas of knowledge and apply them to new situations. Therefore, my students didn't realize that they had actually learned something although they had given me, after revision, what I considered to be very good texts. They had missed the point of their learning, and hadn't realized that they had integrated structures they could use and later apply on their own. And so on one hand, my teaching strategy was successful because the students were demonstrating learning to me. But at the same time, it was a failure, because the students themselves had little confidence in this type of learning. The question was, how could I salvage my teaching approach, if there was indeed anything salvageable at all?

I worked to theoretically express the ideas that were inherent in my teaching, and came up with something that I thought was more useful to the French context because it was overtly more 'directed' and 'authoritative'. Remember that this is what the French students needed: to be directed and to be given the answer. The trick, however, was to devise an approach that took the best from both worlds: careful directing and giving an answer, but also having the students discover the answer on their own, using dialogue and examples to get them there.

Directed communicative modeling

What I came up with is a three-part approach that combines the teaching of formalized structures, authentic communicative situations and successive modelization. While this may sound a lot like the process/genre approach, what I really do is to keep the balance between process and genre at a

constant imbalance: I turn one on, and turn the other off, depending on where the students are at in their learning cycle.

1. **Direct teaching of linguistic structures:** part of the approach is genre-based, and gives students the concrete, formal tools and models (e.g., lexical, grammatical and discoursal) of the typified communications (or genres) used by the professionals they may later be working with. Here, the students start getting the answer.

2. **Communicative process:** at the same time, the process part of the approach intervenes by giving students the opportunity to practice strategically adapting the tools and skills they have learned. To do this, I use a scenario, or scene-setting story, to provide all the information necessary to writing a text as if in an authentic, communicative situation. A good scenario should contain domain specific content, information about the intended audience and its socio-cultural orientations, the most appropriate form of text for the task, the purpose of the communication, and some clues to assist the student in choosing the most well-adapted strategy to obtaining those goals. The scenario-based writing task seeks to have the student work on all competence domains at the same time, because the content of the scenario plays an important role in influencing all levels of the writer's choices: the purpose, rhetorical strategy, discoursal organization, linguistic style and register. In effect, imagining the exigencies of and strategically planning for an authentic communicative act is possible only if the audience and the motivation for the communication are clearly defined. Therefore, rather than have students approximate professional genres, I tried to get students to actively "recreate" professional genres that better resemble those of professionals, both in terms of identifiable, normalized discoursal strategies and in the organization of linguistic structure. Here, I was setting up the answer.

3. **Dialogical modeling:** Finally, through a process of ongoing teacher-student dialogue, I modeled the normed structures, both by giving them explicit examples of the structure in my correction, as well as giving hints about problems I believed they could fix on their own. I repeatedly and progressive modeled our shared classroom discourse to move them toward targeted student competence. Here, finally, the answer was confirmed.

Once again, this is an approach that on the surface at least, looks quite similar to a typical process/ genre approach. However, it responds to the French context in ways that specifically orients it to French student culture. In practice, what this means was that I added more in-class exercises and corrections before having students actually write the text. Crucially, I also gave them an increasingly concrete evaluation of their errors, and explanations for why there was error. We still did the class corrections of general points, but each student also received a personal letter in which I began by stating what was positive, and then highlighted the specific points of difficulty, explaining in a few words what they needed to do to correct it, without necessarily always telling them how. At the end of this third course, the response to my approach was quite different. While one student was honest, writing on her or his evaluation sheet, "I didn't always understand what you meant", the overwhelming majority (42 from 50 students, or 84%) at last felt as though they were getting the guidance they needed to understand and correct their errors.

What had happened? Where had I succeeded where before I had failed? For the first time, I believe, students were able to identify the instructor-student interaction as a dialogue which was giving them the answers. Of course, in previous semesters I had written the same comments on student papers and had spent as much time correcting them, but in contrast, I had written my comments directly *on* their papers, like an editor, and like instructors often do in the US. Although this may seem to be an unimportant detail, it was in fact significant: all along, students had been missing the dialogue and error support I was giving them. Because students in France lack the experience of revision, they were unable to identify what I was doing, and to identify my 'revision genre' as something that would help give them the answers they so desperately needed. This time, however, the rhetorical intention of my own teacher genre — text correction — was made explicit to them, because I had formulated it using a dialogical genre they could identify: a letter.

As a consequence of receiving individual feedback that they could identify — and not just a bunch of scribblings on paper they didn't know what to do with — they were able to confidently close the cycle of their learning. They accepted to look for the answer themselves, because they knew I was there behind them to give them the answers they needed. Without the cycle being completed, French students place a heavy burden on the instructor for giving the answers. They are uncomfortable with their own answers if you don't 'prove it' to them.

Conclusion

To conclude today, I'd like to come back to my original question about whether the genre and process approach can be considered to be universally 'useful' to teaching writing cross-culturally. In a sense, the answer is yes, because these approaches undeniably reflect the underlying cognitive processes of how people learn (e.g., discovery of patterns and variation, dialogue, verification, application, realignment). However, at the same time, these approaches are clearly *not* universal, first because using them in different cultural contexts challenges our own unacknowledged knowledge schemas that we assume are inherently a part of the approaches we use to teach. As we have seen here, from culture to culture, learning styles can be different, ways of knowing can be different, and institutional purposes can be different. Much of what 'clashed' with the French students I work with is simply assumed to be 'the way things are' in other cultures. Furthermore, the process/genre approach cannot be truly *universal* simply because genres are always intimately tied to the local conditions of their use, and understanding these conditions includes accounting for the complex web of social structures, institutions and interactions that characterize particular communities.

The good news is that the process/genre approach is highly malleable, and can be reoriented to reflect different learning styles, ways of knowing and institutional imperatives. To do so, however, local knowledge is essential, not only for understanding how people are used to learning and what role students are expected to play in society, but also for gauging exactly how to balance the teaching of structure (genres) and process (dialogue and discovery) in order to best facilitate their culturally unique learning process.

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