

Reading genre: a new wave of analysis

David Rose

Abstract

Genre based literacy pedagogy has been developed over 25 years, in what has become known as the Sydney School (Martin 2000). The initial motivation was to improve the academic success of marginalised school students by giving them explicit models to organise the genres they were expected to write. In the 1980s the research focus was on writing genres in the primary school, and in the 1990s on writing genres across the secondary school curriculum. A new generation of genre-based literacy pedagogy, known as Reading to Learn (Rose 2004, 2005b, 2007) is now focusing on teaching reading at all these levels. As reading texts in any curriculum are highly diverse, learners and teachers need a flexible set of tools for identifying how meanings unfold through them. While the writing pedagogy focused on highly predictable staging of genres, the reading pedagogy focuses on smaller phases of meaning within each stage, that are more variable, and sensitive to register variations such as a text's field. Another wave of genre research is now identifying potential types of phases in various genres, as a basis for inform teaching of both reading and writing across academic curricula.

KEYWORDS: GENRE, REGISTER, LITERACY PEDAGOGY, READING, DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, PHASES, NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

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Introduction: genre and pedagogy

Research on genre in the early 1980s in the Sydney School (Martin 2000) was designed to provide teachers with tools to explicitly teach students to write successful texts for assessment. This work initially identified a small set of written genres that were highly valued in primary schooling, including recounts, narratives, procedures, reports, explanations and expositions (Martin and Painter 1986). Over the following two decades this work has been recontextualised in a plethora of teaching materials that privilege the social purposes, staging and some typical lexicogrammatical features of these genres. This work was expanded in the early 1990s in the *Write it Right* research project into secondary school literacy (Christie 1999, Christie and Martin 1997, Cope and Kalantzis 1993, Macken-Horarik 2002, Martin and Veel 1998, Rothery 1994, Unsworth 2000). Genres described in this work are summarised in Figure 1, and are comprehensively described in Martin and Rose (2006).

	genre	purpose		
Stories	recount	recounting events	English	Society and environment
	narrative	resolving a complication in a story		
	exemplum	judging character or behaviour in a story		
	anecdote	sharing an emotional reaction in a story		
Text response	personal response	reacting emotionally to a text		
	review	evaluating a literary, visual or musical text		
	interpretation	interpreting the message of a text		
Arguments	critical response	challenging the message of a text		
	exposition	arguing for a point of view		
Factual stories	discussion	discussing two or more points of view		
	autobiographical recount	recounting life events		
	biographical recount	recounting life stages		
	historical recount	recounting historical events		
Explanations	historical account	explaining historical events		
	sequential explanation	explaining a sequence		
	factorial explanation	explaining multiple causes		
Reports	consequential explanation	explaining multiple effects		
	descriptive report	classifying & describing a phenomenon		
	classifying report	classifying & describing types of phenomena		
Procedures	compositional report	describing parts of wholes		
	procedure	how to do experiments & observations		
	procedural recount	recounting experiments & observations		

Figure 1: Genres in the school curriculum

One context in which this work is currently being applied is the literacy program *Reading to Learn* (Rose 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2007), which uses genre as

a framework for training teachers in strategies for scaffolding reading and writing across curricula and education sectors. The pedagogic focus of genre based writing approaches on text staging and grammar has proven successful for many students because it focuses their attention on recognising meaningful patterns at different scales of discourse, that they can then use in their writing. Teaching reading on the other hand, requires a focus on intermediate patterns of discourse between text stages and clause grammar, since learners cannot comprehend a text as a string of clauses, any more than we understand a clause as a string of words, or a word as a string of letters. For these reasons, a major focus of the Reading to Learn reading pedagogy is on segments of discourse that are referred to here as phases.

A discourse semantic rank scale

Phases can be defined broadly as waves of information carrying pulses of field and tenor. Phases are intermediate in scale between stages that are defined from the perspective of genre, as highly predictable segments in each genre, and messages that are defined from the perspective of grammar, as non-dependent non-projected clauses, together with their associated dependent and projected clauses (cf. Martin 1992: 235). Each generic stage consists of one or more phases, and each phase consists of one or more messages. These layers of structure comprise a rank scale in the discourse semantic stratum as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: A discourse semantic rank scale

genre	minimal unit of text – in series in macrogenres such as textbooks, novels or conversation
stage	highly predictable segments in each genre
phase	more variable segments within each stage, carrying pulses of field and tenor
message	non-dependent, non-projected clause, together with associated dependent and projected clauses

As with the grammatical rank scale, the relation between genres, stages, phases and messages is not simply compositional but also realisational. A genre is realised by its stages, stages by their phases, and phases by their messages.

Although it is not foregrounded in descriptions of discourse semantic systems in Martin (1992) and Martin and Rose (2003), such a discourse rank scale is implicitly assumed at many points. The rank of phases is most strongly articulated in this work in the description of hierarchies of periodicity. On the scale of phases, the first and final sentences in a paragraph/phase of written text may function as its hyperTheme and hyperNew, that predict and distil the field of the paragraph. On the scale of the genre, the first and last paragraphs of a written text may function as its macroTheme and macroNew, predicting and distilling the field of the text. In addition to the textual angle, Martin and Rose (2003) also discuss phases from the perspectives of APPRAISAL colouring phases of discourse, of IDEATION construing sequences of activity, and of CONJUNCTION organising texts as sequences of phases.

Other approaches to phasal analysis include Gregory and Malcolm (1981), who defined a *phase* broadly as a stretch of discourse that displays ‘at least partial registerial consistency’, that is consistency from each angle of field, tenor and mode. Cloran (1999) analyses parent-child interactions in the home in segments she calls rhetorical units. The subject matter of these phases is consistent enough for Cloran to classify them on ideational criteria as a relatively small set of sub-types, such as ‘commentary’, ‘reflection’, ‘observation’, ‘plan’, ‘prediction’ or ‘conjecture’. The discourse rank scale is also resonant with Martinec’s (1995) description of a hierarchy of rhythmic segments in spoken English, that are distinguished by timing of segments and pauses between them. Messages may correlate with his third and fourth-level rhythmic waves, phases with his fifth and sixth-level, and stages with his seventh-level.

Phases in story genres

Phases in story genres are the starting point for the discussion here, as both the genres and their typical phases have been well researched from ethnographic and pedagogic angles, and they ably illustrate the interplay of field and tenor in phases as a story unfolds. Five major story types have been identified in the Sydney School work, with varying staging, in oral stories (Jordens 2002, Martin and Plum 1997, Plum 1988), children’s written stories (Rothery 1990), casual conversation (Eggs and Slade 1997), literary fiction (Macken-Horarik 1996, 2002, Martin 1996), and traditional stories across language families (Rose 2001a, 2001b, 2005a). Each story genre typically but optionally begins with an Orientation stage that presents an expectant activity sequence, but varies in whether and how this expectancy is disrupted, and how the disruption is responded to.

Running through all these story genres we have identified a small set of phase types, that function to build the story within each stage. Work on phases

in stories includes Hoey (1983) who describes patterns of problem-solution phase types, Jordan (1984) who extends these types to all manner of texts, and Macken-Horarik (1996, 2002) and Martin (1996), who describe phases in literary fiction, but do not attempt to develop a taxonomy of phase types.¹ Hoey's and Jordan's description of problem-solution phase pairs is strongly influenced by Labov and Waletzky's (1967) focus on the Complication-Resolution staging of narratives, and by grammatical relations of cause and effect. In fact the problem-solution pattern is a relatively minor motif in stories; Plum (1988) found that the Complication-Resolution narrative structure accounted for only 15% of the 134 stories he recorded. The range of phase types in stories is much richer than this, and is not necessarily predictable from the bottom-up perspective of grammatical categories. We have found these phase types in a wide range of oral and literate stories in English and other languages, from children's to adult literary fiction. Each phase type performs a certain function to engage the listener/reader as the story unfolds, by construing its field of activities, people, things and places, by evoking emotional responses, or by linking it to common experiences and interpretations of life. **These basic building blocks of stories are manipulated by accomplished story tellers and writers to build, maintain and release tension, drawing readers into the imaginary realities they construe. Story phase functions are summarised in Table 2.**

Table 2: Story phases

phase types	engagement functions
setting	presenting context (identities, activities, locations)
description	evoking context (sensual imagery)
events	succeeding events
effect	material outcome
reaction	behavioural/attitudinal outcome
problem	counterexpectant creating tension
solution	counterexpectant releasing tension
comment	intruding narrator's comments
reflection	intruding participants' thoughts

While some of the terms for story phases resemble those used to denote genre stages, stages are distinguished with Initial Capitals and phases with lower case. Importantly, these are general terms for phase types, but any phase may be labelled more specifically according to its function in a particular story sequence, and there are undoubtedly other general phase types not covered here.

In terms of Halliday's (1994) model of logicosemantic relations, setting and description phases elaborate the story line, by presenting or describing people, places or activities. Event phases succeed in time ('then'), without the implication of consequence or concession. Effects and reactions are consequences of preceding phases ('so'): effects are material outcomes; reactions are participants' behaviour or attitudes in response to preceding phases. Problems and solutions are counterexpectant ('but'): problems create tension by countering a positive expectancy; solutions release tension by countering the negative expectancy created by problems. The relation of comment and reflection phases to the story is more like projection, as saying projects locutions and thinking projects ideas. Comments suspend the flow of activity to intrude the narrator's comments, while reflections intrude the thoughts of participants.

Shifts from one phase to the next are typically signalled to the listener by a significant change in the Theme of messages. This may be a switch in the major identity presented as Theme, a circumstance of time, place or manner, or an explicit conjunction (since conjunctive relations are more often left implicit). These thematic variations are indicative of shifts in field and tenor from one phase to the next. But these register shifts themselves are realised by lexical changes, in the activity, the people, places and so on, and by appraisals in the case of evaluative phases (reactions, comments, reflections). In the presentations below, Themes are underlined, to show their roles in signalling transitions from phase to phase.

Story phase patterns are first illustrated in a traditional oral narrative, text [1], the opening passage of the Indian epic, the *Mahabharata*, in which King Shantenu falls in love with a woman who marries him but then throws all their children into a river.² The story is translated from an oral version in the south Indian language Kodava (see Rose, 2005a, for more detailed analysis). The original discourse patterns are maintained as closely as possible in this translation.

[1] traditional oral narrative *Shantenu Raaje*

Orientation

- setting Once upon a time, the king of Hastinapura, called Shantenu, went to the riverside to hunt. While hunting, he saw a very beautiful woman.
- reaction Having seen that woman, he fell in love. It was her he wished to make a wife.
- problem But she said 'I will become your woman, but you may never ask me any question.'
- solution Then he married her, and to him a child was born.

Complication

- problem However the child she threw into the river. In the same way, his next six children she threw into the river, and the seventh child she also threw into the river.
- reaction When she was going to throw the eighth child into the river, he asked why she was throwing the child.
- problem Then she said 'Because you have put the word to me after all, 'I am going to leave you, and that child I will also take.'

Evaluation

- reaction Shantenu the king was **very sad** in the palace.

Resolution

- setting One day he went hunting again.
- problem There he caught sight of a small boy. That boy knew who the king was but the king didn't know that it was his son.
- solution Just then his wife arrived there. She said 'That is your son and you may take him to the palace.' Having said this she disappeared.

From Ebert (1996)

The narrative staging is clearly indicated for the listener in text [1]: the story genre is signalled by the marked Theme *Once upon a time*, and the Complication is signalled by the concessive conjunction *However*. Shantenu's intense sadness both evaluates the Complication and expects the Resolution, which is signalled by the time Theme *One day*. The key organising principle in the narrative sequence is expectancy – falling in love, marrying and having a child expect an ongoing series of happy events. Countering this expectancy with shocking behaviour, such as throwing the children in a river, creates tension that engages the listener.

This pattern of expectancy is repeated at the smaller scale of phases within each stage, as the narrative is carried forward by swings in expectancy from phase to phase. The Orientation begins with a setting phase involving Shantenu in two activities, hunting by the river and seeing a woman. This setting already expects a probable range of events, which Shantenu's reaction of falling in love narrows and intensifies. This happy expectancy is momentarily countered by a problem, the woman's odd proviso to never ask any question, signalled by counterexpectant *But*. This cannot be the story's Complication as the potential disruption is immediately countered by marrying and having a child. By mildly disrupting the happy course of events, the overall effect is to intensify expectancy for an idyllic outcome, while paradoxically encouraging the seed of doubt. These pulses of expectancy are illustrated in Figure 2. The setting expects Shantenu's reaction, which expects marriage, but this is countered by the problem of the woman's proviso, signalled by *But*. This negative trajectory is then countered by the solution of marriage and child.

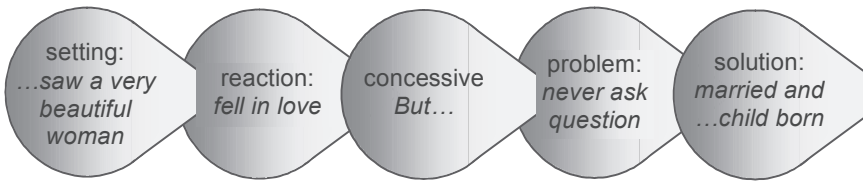


Figure 2: Phases as pulses of expectancy

Likewise, the Complication involves two problems, and Shantenu's reaction to the first problem, by asking his wife the prohibited question, gives rise to the second problem of her leaving him. This chain of events invites us to identify with Shantenu's predicament and empathise with his *very sad* reaction. The listener thus expects and desires a Resolution, but tension is further strung out in the Resolution stage, by the problem of not recognising his son, making the final solution an even more satisfying release. There is thus a kind of fractal relation between narrative stages and phases, each a mirror of the other at different scales, in both structure and function. As text [1] shows, settings, problems, reactions and solutions may occur in any stage.

The following extract from the novel *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, text [2] illustrates how series of problems, descriptions and reactions can be subtly deployed in literary writing. This extract follows the pattern of an anecdote, dramatically recounting the removal of the author's Aboriginal mother and her sisters from their family, and the family's reaction.

[2] literary anecdote from *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*

Orientation

events Molly and Gracie finished their breakfast and decided to take all their dirty clothes and wash them in the soak further down the river. They returned to the camp looking clean and refreshed and joined the rest of the family in the shade for lunch of tinned corned beef, damper and tea.

Remarkable Event

problem The family had just finished eating when all the camp dogs began barking, making a terrible din. 'Shut up,' yelled their owners, throwing stones at them. The dogs whined and skulked away.
Then all eyes turned to the cause of the commotion.

- description A tall, rugged white man stood on the bank above them. He could easily have been mistaken for a pastoralist or a grazier with his tanned complexion except that he was wearing khaki clothing.
- reaction Fear and anxiety swept over them when they realised that the fateful day they had been dreading had come at last. They always knew that it would only be a matter of time before the government would track them down.
- description When Constable Riggs, Protector of Aborigines, finally spoke his voice was full of authority and purpose.
- reaction They knew without a doubt that he was the one who took children in broad daylight - not like the evil spirits who came into their camps at night.
- problem 'I've come to take Molly, Gracie and Daisy, the three half-caste girls, with me to Moore Rive Native Settlement,' he informed the family.
- reaction The old man nodded to show that he understood what Riggs was saying. The rest of the family just hung their heads, refusing to face the man who was taking their daughters away from them. Silent tears welled in their eyes and trickled down their cheeks.
- problem 'Come on, you girls,' he ordered. 'Don't worry about taking anything. We'll pick up what you need later...Hurry up then, I want to get started. We've got a long way to go yet. You girls can ride this horse back to the depot,' he said, handing the reins over to Molly. Riggs was annoyed that he had to go miles out of his way to find these girls.

Reaction

- reaction1 Molly and Gracie sat silently on the horse, tears streaming down their cheeks as Constable Riggs turned the big bay stallion and led the way back to the depot.
- reaction2 A high pitched wail broke out. The cries of agonised mothers and the women, and the deep sobs of grandfathers, uncles and cousins filled the air. Molly and Gracie looked back just once before they disappeared through the river gums. Behind them, those remaining in the camp found sharp objects and gashed themselves and inflicted deep wounds to their heads and bodies as an expression of their sorrow.
- reaction3 The two frightened and miserable girls began to cry, silently at first, then uncontrollably; their grief made worse by the lamentations of their loved ones and the visions of them sitting on the ground in their camp letting their tears mix with the red blood that flowed from the cuts on their heads.

Coda

comment This reaction to their children's abduction showed that the family were now in mourning. They were grieving for their abducted children and their relief would come only when the tears ceased to fall, and that will be a long time yet.

Pilkington (1996: 43)

The peaceful events of the Orientation are disrupted by the ominous portent of dogs barking, so that the following description of an anonymous white man expects the family's reaction of *fear and anxiety*. The description of Constable Riggs' identity and authority expects their reaction of certainty *without a doubt*, and then his intention to take the girls expects their reaction of *silent tears*. The author manages appraisal through these phases to account for the family's resignation to the abduction of their children. First there is a surge of attitude at the dogs barking, which then pauses to appreciate the white man as *tall* and *rugged*, but affect surges again in the family's reaction to recognising him. The next description is strongly marked by the circumstantial Theme *When Constable Riggs, Protector of Aborigines, finally spoke*. The judgement of his voice with *authority and purpose* thus serves as a pivot, from the family's fearful reaction, to resigned acceptance. Their next reactions go from certainty *without a doubt*, to resignation *just hung their heads*, to passive sorrow in *silent tears*. To this point the appraisals chart a parabolic rise to the first reaction and descent to the last, diagrammed in Figure 3. By means of these appraisals operating through phases of expectancy, Doris Pilkington conditions her reader to recognise that resigned acceptance was the family's only possibly response to the white man as he abducted their children.

In contrast to comments, reflections intrude the participants' thoughts, either as dialogue, or as 'inner speech'; they are a pervasive feature of literary fiction, but are less common in oral stories and children's fiction. Here for example are the opening paragraphs from Grahame Greene's novel *The Quiet American* text [3]. This segment of the novel is presented as a dispassionate recount. Like much literary fiction it begins without an Orientation, as though the reader is already familiar with the setting.

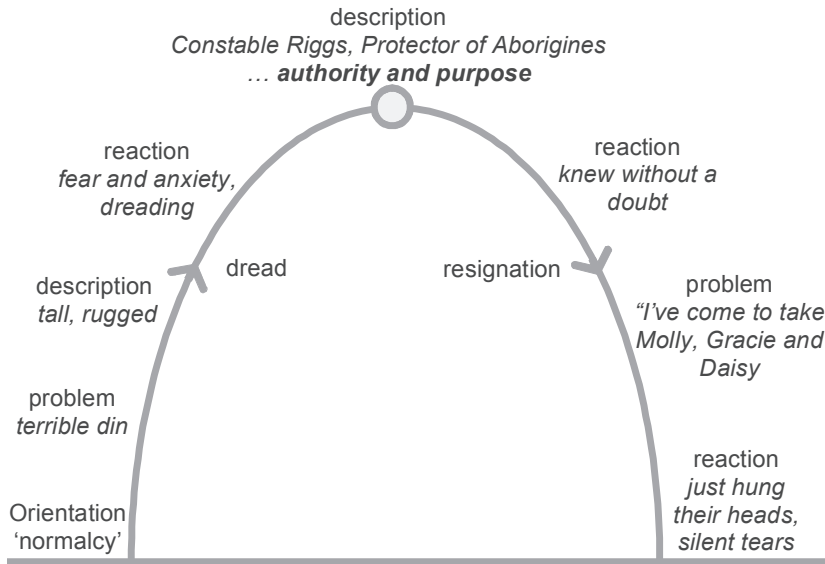


Figure 3: Patterns of expectancy and phases in text [2]

[3] literary recount from *The Quiet American***Record**

events After dinner I waited for Pyle in my room over the Rue Catinat; he had said 'I'll be with you at the latest by ten,' and when midnight struck I couldn't stay quiet any longer and went down into the street.

description A lot of old women in black trousers squatted on the landing: it was February and I suppose too hot for them in bed. One trishaw driver pedalled slowly by towards the riverfront and I could see lamps burning where they had disembarked the new American planes. There was no sign of Pyle anywhere in the street.

reflection Of course, I told myself, he might have been detained for some reason at the American Legation, but surely in that case he would have telephoned to the restaurant - he was very meticulous about small courtesies.

Greene ([1955] 1973: 11)

As this example illustrates, reflections tend to be on the meaning of activities for the protagonist; the activity is construed as a token, and its value is given by the reflection. Although this example is in first person, reflections are equally common in third person. The following example [4] is from a short story that has been used for subject English examinations in Australian secondary schools.

[4] literary narrative from *The Weapon*

Orientation

- setting The room was quiet in the dimness of early evening. Dr James Graham, key scientist of a very important project, sat in his favourite chair, thinking. It was so still that he could hear the turning of pages in the next room as his son leafed through a picture book.
- comment Often Graham did his best work, his most creative thinking, under these circumstances, sitting alone in an unlighted room in his own apartment after the day's regular work.
- problem But tonight his mind would not work constructively. Mostly he thought about his mentally arrested son - his only son - in the next room.
- reflection The thoughts were loving thoughts, not the bitter anguish he had felt years ago when he had first learned of the boy's condition. The boy was happy; wasn't that the main thing? And to how many men is given a child who will always be a child, who will not grow up to leave him? Certainly that was a rationalization, but what is wrong with rationalization when it...

Brown (1984)

These are a few brief examples of the application of story phase analysis, although many more are possible. The types of story phases described above are set out in Figure 4. They are grouped according to their logical relation to the preceding phase in the story sequence, using the **logicosemantic categories of expansion and projection**. They are distinguished firstly on whether they **expand the activity sequence or are projected by it**, **secondly whether the type of expansion is enhancing or elaborating**, and **thirdly whether the type of enhancement is time or consequence**. Within these groupings, each phase type is specified by its particular function.

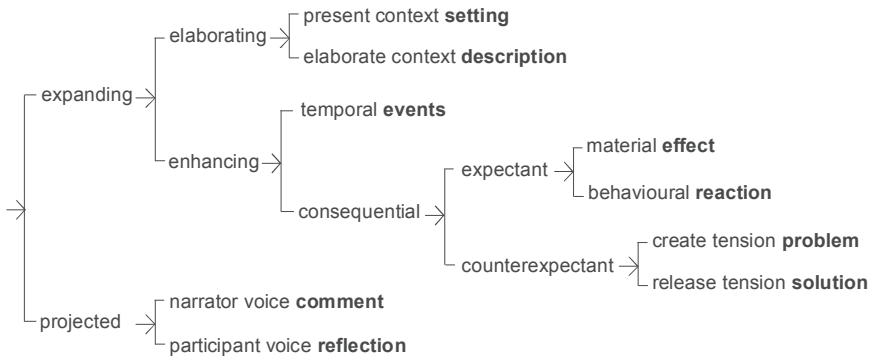


Figure 4: Common options in story phases

Elaborating phases establish and expand contexts and characters, while enhancing phases carry the story forward in time. Events phases do so without an implication of consequence or concession. On the other hand, reactions are behavioural/attitudinal consequences that are expected by preceding phases, and effect phases are material consequences (less common in stories and not exemplified above). Problems counter positive expectancy, while solutions counter negative expectancy created by problems. In contrast to these expansions on the story line, projecting phases intrude into the sequence of activities, interrupting its flow to comment or reflect. While most story phases are equally common in oral and written stories, reflection often dominates in literary fiction, where the focus is on inner development of characters.

We can also observe larger phases, and these are perhaps best modelled as complexes of the phases set out in Figure 4. Alternatively, Gregory (1985: 204) suggests that the scales of phases identified in a text is a matter of delicacy. However if smaller phases are treated as more delicate specifications of larger phases, where does the analysis stop at either pole? Macro-genres may then be modelled as the most general categories, with messages, or perhaps grammatical elements as most delicate. Instead the rank hierarchy proposed above nets in multiple perspectives on structures at each discourse rank. Along the lines proposed in Martin (1994) and Martin and Rose (2007), of macro-genres as series of logically related genres, we might term larger segments at phase rank as 'macro-phases', consisting of series of logically related phases.³

Phases in other genres

More work has been done to date on types of phases in stories than other genres. However descriptions of phases in other genres have also identified a range of types that are sensitive to variations in both genre and field. This work is exemplified briefly with a set of science reports and explanations that illustrate the roles of genre and field in types of phases. The first is a descriptive report [5], from the field of zoology.

[5] Goannas

Classification

Australia is home to 25 of the world's 30 monitor lizard species. In Australia, monitor lizards are called goannas.

Description

- appearance Goannas have flattish bodies, long tails and strong jaws. They are the only lizards with forked tongues, like a snake. Their necks are long and may have loose folds of skin beneath them. Their legs are long and strong, with sharp claws on their feet. Many goannas have stripes, spots and other markings that help to camouflage them. The largest species can grow to more than two metres in length.
- diet All goannas are daytime hunters. They run, climb and swim well. Goannas hunt small mammals, birds and other reptiles. They also eat dead animals. Smaller goannas eat insects, spiders and worms.
- reproduction Male goannas fight with each other in the breeding season. Females lay between two and twelve eggs.

Silkstone (1994)

The Description phases 'appearance', 'diet' and 'reproduction' are highly predictable in zoological reports, at least in pedagogic texts. Descriptive reports in other fields also often have predictable but different phase types. Ethnographic reports about groups of people are likely to include phases such as 'location', 'means of production', 'social organisation', 'religion' and so on. Geographic reports about countries typically include 'location', 'climate', 'population' etc. While the phases of the Description stage in descriptive reports vary with the field, description phases in classifying and compositional reports are predicted by the genre: phases in classifying reports [6] are 'types' of the phenomenon described, whereas phases in compositional reports are its 'parts'.

[6] classifying report *Producers and consumers*

Classification: class

We have seen that organisms in an ecosystem are first classified as producers or as consumers of chemical energy.

Description: types

- type1 Producers in ecosystems are typically photosynthetic organisms, such as plants, algae and cyanobacteria. These organisms build organic matter (food from simple inorganic substances by photosynthesis).
- type2 Consumers in an ecosystem obtain their energy in the form of chemical energy present in their 'food'. All consumers depend directly or indirectly on producers for their supply of chemical energy.
- type3 Organisms that eat the organic matter of producers or their products (seeds, fruits) are called primary consumers, for example, leaf-eating koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*), and nectar-eating honey possums (*Tarsipes rostratus*).
- type4 Organisms that eat primary consumers are known as secondary consumers. Wedge-tailed eagles that prey on wallabies are secondary consumers.
- type5 Some organisms consume the organic matter of secondary consumers and are labeled tertiary consumers. Ghost bats (*Macroderma gigas*) capture a variety of prey, including small mammals.

Kinnear and Martin (2004: 38)

Explanation genres vary in the logical relations between phases of the Explanation stage and the Phenomenon it explains. Sequential explanations involve a series of implicational steps unfolding in succession. In factorial explanations the Phenomenon is an outcome from multiple contributing factors. In consequential explanations it is an input leading to multiple consequences. Sequential explanation is illustrated in Text [7].

[7] sequential explanation *Fire – a natural process*

Phenomenon

Since the advent of the present vegetation pattern around 10,000 years ago, fire has been crucial in modifying the Mallee environment. Regeneration of the Mallee depends on periodic fires.

Explanation: sequence

- step Old mallee produces a build-up of very dry litter and the branches themselves are often festooned with streamers of bark inviting a flame up to the canopy of leaves loaded with volatile eucalyptus oil.
- step A dry electrical storm in summer is all that is needed to start a blaze, which, with a very hot northerly wind behind it will race unchecked through the bush.
- step The next rain will bring an explosion of ground flora; the summer grasses and forbs not able to compete under a mallee canopy, will break out in a riot of colour. New shoots of mallee will spring from the lignotuber and another cycle of succession will begin.
- step The dead branches become hollows for Major Mitchell cockatoos and other birds on whose eggs the goanna feeds. The more open bush provides green 'pick' for kangaroos and emus. The low shrubs give a home for zebra finches, but the abundant litter need by the mallee fowl to build a nest is no longer available.

Corrigan et al. (1991: 100)

The serial structure of the explanatory steps in this text is diagrammed in Figure 5, with each implicational step dependent on the preceding step.

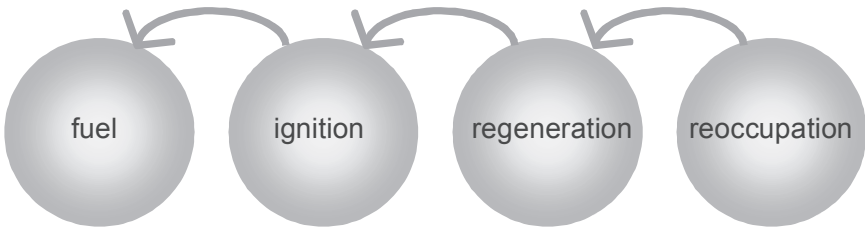


Figure 5: Serial structure of sequential explanation in text [7]

Conclusion

In the act of teaching reading across curricula and educational sectors, it has become necessary to refine and extend our analysis of genres. The entry point for teaching reading is through the phases in which a discourse unfolds. These phases are used to scaffold learners into recognising patterns of field and tenor unfolding through a genre, and to produce such patterns in their own writing. Descriptive research across genres has revealed types of phases that are consistently predicted by genre and field. The best described are those for stories, in which a small set of story phases have been found to constitute

the basic building blocks with which storytellers and writers construct their texts, from the simplest oral stories to elaborate literacy fiction. More work is required to expand this research across other genres, but a number of common phases types have been established for genres in the natural and social sciences. This descriptive work has in turn required development of our theoretical models, particularly with respect to discourse semantic structures. Work on discourse semantic systems has frequently assumed various scales of discourse structure, through which other systems are realised. Theorising the position of phases in the model has suggested a discourse semantic rank scale, in which phases are intermediate between generic stages and messages. They are construed in the model as information waves carrying pulses of field and tenor; so they can be analysed from the metafunctional perspectives of IDEATION and CONJUNCTION, as sequences of activities and lexical relations construing an unfolding field; of APPRAISAL as concentrations of attitude that scope over adjacent phases and stages; and of PERIODICITY, as the initial and culminative phases that predict and distil a text's field and tenor, or as the initial and culminative messages in a phase predict and distil its own pulse of field and tenor.

These discourse semantic patterns are the focus of attention in the reading pedagogy designed from this theoretical base (Martin and Rose 2005). The entry point from genre, field and phases opens the door for all students to rapidly learn to read and write texts at the level of complexity expected of their level of academic study. This pedagogy has been explicitly designed for all learners to access the meaning patterns of literate texts, and so has significant potential for redistributing access to the discursive resources of their society. This action research program, and the genre based writing projects from which it grew, are outstanding examples of the power of pedagogic practice that is grounded in a functional theory of language, that is in turn informed by careful observation of language learning in home and school. Systemic functional linguistics is the paradigm example of such a dynamic theory, that continues to evolve in the contexts of the action research it informs.

About the author

Dr. David Rose coordinates an international literacy program known as *Reading to Learn*, which trains teachers in a unique methodology for scaffolding reading and writing. He is also an Associate of both the Faculty of Education and Social Work and the Department of Linguistics at the University of Sydney. His work has been particularly concerned with Indigenous Australian communities, languages and education programs, with whom he has worked for 25 years. He is the author of *The Western Desert Code: an Australian cryptogrammar*. Canberra:

Pacific Linguistics, 2001; *Working with Discourse: meaning beyond the clause* (with J. R. Martin) London: Continuum, 2003; and *Genre Relations: mapping culture* (also with J. R. Martin) London: Equinox, 2007.

Notes

- 1 Phase transitions in stories are also identified in a pragmatic analysis by Ji (2002), using marked Themes as criteria, although without using Halliday's terms, approximately at the stage SFL genre research had reached around 1980. Ji's analysis of story phases is no more delicate than 'episodes'.
- 2 The river is in fact the Ganges, and the woman is the goddess Ganga. This is the first half of the *Shantenu Raaje* myth. In the second half of the story Shantenu falls in love with the daughter of a fishmonger, who refuses to let her marry him as he already has a son who will inherit his kingdom. Accordingly his son selflessly leaves home and becomes a great religious sage *Bishma*.
- 3 The term macro-phases was suggested by Sally Humphrey in personal communication.

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