

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Genre Theory

2.1.1 *The Notion of Genre*

According to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, the concept of genre originally means a type of small picture representing a scene as a fancy way of referring to classes of real-world entities. This meaning was first introduced in the work of Aristotle who presents the basic classification of literary genre into three categories, namely, poetry, novel, and drama (Kinneavy, 1971). From then on, the study of genre became quite popular in the field of folklore studies, literary theory, and rhetoric and linguistic areas. Different fields have different definitions of genre with different concerns. In folklore fields, Ben-Amos (1976) considers genre as a research tool for categorizing and filing individual texts, that is, as an effective storage and retrieval system (p. 228). Todorov (1976), in literary studies, states that a genre, literary or otherwise, is just the codification of discursive properties. In the field of rhetoric studies, Campbell and Jamieson (1978) believe that a genre is a group of acts unified by a constellation of recurring forms and they stress the recurrence of similar forms in genre creation (p. 20).

Ever since the 1970s, genre has stepped into the domain of linguistic studies. In linguistics, a large number of scholars have studied genre, such as Bazerman (1988), Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), Couture (1986), Halliday (1978), Levinson (1979), Miller (1984), and Saville-Troike (1982). But the most influential definitions are proposed by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993). Despite the equivocations, linguistic contributions to the evolving study of genre lie in such emphases as (a) genres as types of goal-directed communicative events; (b) genres as having schematic structures; and most strikingly (c) genres as disassociated from registers or styles. All these three contributions can be found in the most classic working definition of genre given by Swales in his famous work, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Swales defines genre as follows:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. The purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one that operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action. (Swales, 1990, p. 58)

In this definition, Swales stresses the importance of communicative purpose, because it is the criterion to distinguish one genre from another. In addition, the contribution that Swales has made to genre is to consider genre from the perspective of discourse community and to link writer, reader, and social contexts together. The concept of genre enables writing teachers to look beyond the content, linguistic forms, and processes of writing so that they can assist students in their attempts to communicate with the reader. However, Swales underplays psychological elements, thus undermining the importance of tactical aspects of genre construction (Bhatia, 1993).

Bhatia (1993), another avant-garde in genre analysis, adds to the momentum in ESP (English for Specific Purposes) researches and makes further contribution in professional discourses. Based on Swales' definition of genre, Bhatia brings in the cognitive dimension of genre construction (Deng, 2010) and modulates the definition of genre as follows:

Genre is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s). (Bhatia, 1993, p. 13)

In comparison with Swales, Bhatia (1993) attaches more importance to psychological aspect of genre because it can not only provide a substantial description of the nature of genre but offer "relevant, though non-linguistic, answers to the oft-repeated questions: Why do members of the discourse community write the way they do?" (p. 19). A linguistic description of different genres is of great significance but it can "reveal very little about the true nature of genre and about the way social purposes are accomplished" (Bhatia, p. 18).

In accordance with this definition, the language use in a genre institutionalized setting is usually governed by rules and conventions which could be social, linguistic, cultural, academic, or professional. It also implies that awareness of these conventions is generally greater in those who professionally operate within specific genres than in those who start to be involved in such events. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the latter group's awareness of these conventions to make them sensitive to the genre structure (Blanton, 1984; Hill, Soppelsa, & West, 1982; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Swales, 1987).

As the two influential representatives in the field of ESP, Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993)'s views on genre are not contradictory. In fact, their definitions are

complementary to each other, which together form a comprehensive description of genre in ESP field. The common characteristics about genre, to them, are an emphasis on communicative purpose and social action, an interest in generic move analysis, a recognition that genres are suited within discourse communities, wherein the beliefs and naming practices of members have relevance, a distrust of classification and of facile or premature prescriptivism, and an understanding of the double generative capacity of genres—to establish rhetorical goals and to further their accomplishment.

2.1.2 The Concept of Genre Awareness

Consciousness is defined as “creating an appetite in the mind—an appetite for understanding how language and discourse work” (Podis & Podis, 1991, p. 432). The concept of genre awareness, as understood by Johns (2008), implies developing students’ “rhetorical flexibility necessary for adapting their socio-cognitive genre knowledge to ever-changing contexts” (p. 238).

According to Swales (1990), a crucial element in genre awareness is the ability to produce a discourse that is appropriate to the situation or context (p. 155). This entails taking into account the targeted audience (Nwogu & Bloor, 1991), the communicative purpose of the discourse, and the conventions socially constructed by the discourse community, which, in turn, will impact on the linguistic choices (Swales, p. 73).

In ESP, language analysis tasks (Bhatia, 1993; Dudley-Evans, 1997; Swales & Feak, 1994) help learners gain awareness of the communicative purposes and linguistic features of texts that they need to read and write in their disciplines and professions. Thus, consciousness-raising is not a new concept. The language use in a genre institutionalized setting is usually governed by rules and conventions which should be social, linguistic, cultural, academic, or professional. It also implies that awareness of these conventions is generally greater in those who professionally operate within specific genres than in those who start to be involved in such events. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the latter group’s awareness of these conventions to make them sensitive to the genre structure (Blanton, 1984; Hill, Soppelsa, & West, 1982; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Swales, 1987).

Focusing on genre awareness can help extend the process of observing students’ writing performance from just the final written products to their genre-analysis tasks (Cheng, 2007). A heightened awareness of the relationship between the goals of a genre and the linguistic resources that realize them can thus serve as a springboard for novice foreign language writers to develop both writing competence and linguistic knowledge simultaneously (Yakhontova, 2001). It can be concluded that raising genre awareness is important for developing students’ generic competence.

2.1.3 *Definition of Generic Competence*

Generic competence, as Bhatia explains (2004), constitutes an important part of discursive competence.¹ It generally refers to the ability to identify, construct, interpret, and successfully exploit a specific repertoire of professional, disciplinary, or workplace genres to participate in the daily activities and to achieve the goals of a specific professional community (p. 145). In order to understand and investigate generic competence, a reference to either professional practice or disciplinary knowledge is crucial and necessary.

2.1.4 *Genre Analysis*

Genre analysis is the study of situated linguistic behavior in institutionalized academic or professional settings. Its fundamental aim is to “study the communicative purposes of a discourse and the language use strategies” (Qin, 2000, p. 42). As an approach to studying “written discourse for applied ends” (Swales, 1990, p. 1), genre analysis contemplates concepts such as intended discourse community, purpose, and rhetorical features of written texts. Therefore, genre analysis has been attracting the increasing interest of applied linguists (Bhatia, 1993, 2002; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Swales, 1981, 1990; Swales & Feak, 2000).

Genre analysis is originated from discourse analysis—a study of language use beyond the sentence boundaries. Bhatia (1993) summarizes the development of discourse analysis as a history of four stages: register analysis, grammatical–rhetorical analysis, interactional analysis, and genre analysis. Register analysis is a surface-level description, aiming to describe language variation in terms of lexical–grammatical features. Grammatical–rhetorical analysis, as a functional language description, attempts to capture the relationship between grammatical choice and rhetorical function in scientific writings. The third level is interactional analysis, stressing the interpretation of discourse by readers or listeners. These three approaches contribute a lot to the description of the linguistic aspects of text construction and interpretation, but they are still limited in some aspects. They lack sufficient explanation of sociocultural, institutional, and organizational constraints and expectations that influence the nature of a particular discourse type. Apart from that, they attach little attention to the conventionalized regularities in the organization of various communicative events (Bhatia, 1993). All these limitations call for the birth of genre analysis.

As the fourth stage of development, genre analysis marks a significant shift of focus from surface-level analysis to deep description of language use. With its focus on the communicative purposes and language strategies, genre analysis combines

¹ Discursive competence is proposed by Bhatia (2004, p. 144) as a general concept to cover various levels of competence in order to expertly operate within well-defined professional and general sociocultural contexts. Discursive competence can be differentiated as textual competence, generic competence, and social competence.

sociocultural and psycholinguistic aspects of text construction and interpretation with linguistic insights, and offers thick description of language use in order to arrive at significant form–function correlation.

Genre analysis involves three important aspects. The first aspect, namely the surface-level, is the linguistic aspect analysis, which has been the primary concern of those applied linguists who have been using what has largely come to be regarded as some form of register analysis and, more recently, applied discourse analysis.

The second aspect is its sociological concern, that is, communicative purpose analysis, which makes it possible for the analyst to understand how a particular genre defines, organizes and finally communicates social reality. This aspect of genre analysis emphasizes that the text by itself is not a complete object possessing meaning on its own; it is an ongoing process of negotiation in the context of issues like social roles, group purposes, professional and organizational preferences and prerequisites, and even cultural constraints.

Last but not least, it comes to the psychological–cognitive or tactical aspect of analysis. This aspect reveals the cognitive structuring typical of particular areas of enquiry. This aspect of analysis largely offers insightful answers to the often-repeated question “why members of what sociologists call ‘secondary cultures’ write the way they do?” (Bhatia, 1993, p. 19).

Each genre is an instance of a successful achievement of a specific communicative purpose using conventionalized knowledge of linguistic and discursal resources. When conducting a genre analysis, one should look at the forms of two different texts within or across discourse communities. The purpose of this assignment is to help understand the importance of genre and discourse community knowledge to writers. Additionally, this assignment can reinforce understanding of the ways in which writing differs among various genres and allow strengthening writing skills in the genre of a textual analysis.

In order to undertake a comprehensive genre analysis, one needs to consider some of the following steps, depending upon the purpose of the analysis, the aspect of genre on which one wishes to concentrate, and the background knowledge one already has about the nature of the genre in question.

First, one needs to place the genre intuitively in a situational context by looking at one’s prior experience, the internal clues in the text, and the encyclopedic knowledge of the world that one already has.

Second, one needs to refine that situational–contextual analysis further by (a) defining the speaker/writer of the text, the audience, their relationship, and their goals; (b) defining the historical, social, geographic, economic, politic, philosophic, and occupational placement of the community in which the discourse takes place; (c) identifying the network of surrounding texts and linguistic traditions that form the background to this particular discourse; and (d) identifying the topic/subject/extratextual reality which the text is trying to represent, change or use, and the text’s relationship to that reality.

Third, the genre analyst decides at which level the most distinctive or significant features of language (for higher motivating problems) occur and then carries out the appropriate analysis, which may concentrate on one or more of the three levels of

linguistic realization: (a) lexical–grammatical analysis of surface features, which consists of a quantitative analysis of specific features of lexis and grammar predominantly used in that genre type; (b) study of text-patterning or textualization in a particular genre, which highlights the tactical aspect of conventional language use, indicating the way restricted values are assigned to the various aspects of language use in that particular genre by the members of that disciplinary culture; and (c) study of regularities of organization in genres, which reveals how the overall message is structured in order to communicate the intention of the author. This again highlights the cognitive aspects of language organization, answering the question why that particular genre is structured the way it is.

Finally, the analyst double checks his or her findings against a reaction from the specialist informant, who, generally, is a practicing member of the disciplinary culture of which the genre is a representative.

There can be a certain degree of flexibility in the sequencing of the moves in that they can also be varied, depending upon the specific situation to which the genre responds.

2.1.5 Genre-Based Approach

The pedagogical application of genre analysis has caught the attention of many fervent advocates of genre-based approach. As Dudley-Evans (1997) observes, many teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) find that the most efficient means of preparing international students for study in an English medium situation is to present and practice “genre knowledge” of the various texts that they need to be able to control. This presentation of genre knowledge involves making explicit certain underlying principles of academic discourse and presenting and practicing certain regular patterns of text, usually referred to as “moves” and the practice of language realizations of these moves and other linguistic features, which are characteristic of academic text. The idea of move analysis, as Bhatia (1997) points out, is not only to interpret and maintain generic integrity but also to account for the complex communicative realities of the world (Paltridge, 1997, 2004).

Meanwhile, genre analysis has become more and more prevalent in many cross-disciplinary courses. For instance, in the teaching of EST (English for Science and Technology), teachers adopt genre-based approach, through which they can examine the ability students have to utilize schematic structures to communicate their scientific/engineering thinking, to teach L2 students scientific and technical writing (Marshall, 1991). This new advantageous pedagogical approach focusing on genre is based on the belief that helping students to demystify socially situated writing facilitates the learning of privileged forms of discourse and directing students’ attention to the relationship between the communicative purpose and its corresponding lexical–grammatical features at every discourse level of a text helps writers become aware that texts are shaped for different types of readers in response to particular social situations and for fulfilling certain social goals (Johns, 1997).

By acquiring ESP genre knowledge in writing and reading classes, EFL students learn how to analyze one genre or write a text suitable to discourse community's requirements. To create a well-formed and effective text, students need to know the lexical-grammatical patterns which typically occur in its different stages, and the teacher's task is to help students have a command of this through their awareness of target genres and an explicit grammar of linguistic choices. Student writers who are provided with knowledge of grammar shift writing instruction from implicit to conscious manipulation of language and choice. Besides lexical-grammatical features, communicative purpose and generic structure also need attention, because genre-based pedagogies support learners with a contextual framework for writing which foregrounds the meanings and text types at stake in a situation. At their core, these methods offer writers an explicit understanding of how texts in target genres are structured and why they are written in the ways they are. To make clear of such three aspects, a range of methods are employed in the classroom. These include investigating the texts and contexts of students' target situations, encouraging reflection on writing practices, exploiting genre sets, and creating mixed-genre portfolios (Johns, 1997; Paltridge, 2001).

The essential advantage of the genre-based approach over other writing pedagogies for L2 writers is that emphasizing the notion of genre promotes L2 writers' understanding of the relationship between the communicative purpose and the features of text at every discourse level (Johns, 1997); this approach helps writers become aware that texts are shaped for different types of readers in response to particular social situations.

In order to be able to employ genre-based approaches to their full potential, it should be known how students approach genre-analysis tasks, what they learn from them, and finally how they incorporate the insights gained through genre-based instruction into their own writing. Johns (2002a, 2002b) argues that the effectiveness of genre-based learning can be better observed by examining the learners' employment of genre awareness during their writing process. As a result, genre-based learning may help develop not only learners' genre awareness in generic features but also their awareness of the rhetorical considerations fostering those generic features.

Although text-based genre analyses are commonly pursued, research on how students analyze and produce genres in genre-based writing classes is still underexplored in the literature (Cheng, 2006). Despite the impact of the ESP genre-based framework of teaching discipline-specific writing to L2 learners, especially to L2 graduate students, the writing performance of learners within such a framework is still not fully explored (Porter, 2003). Genre pedagogies assume that writing instruction will be more successful if students are aware of what target discourses look like (Christie, 1987). Therefore, it is necessary to explore the process of acquiring and applying genre knowledge and fostering genre awareness as well as examine the effect of genre awareness on L2 writing and reading.

While genre approach has turned out to be fruitful, some researchers express their concerns about it. Dudley-Evans (1997) is concerned that the (teaching moves) model of genre approach for NNS & NS might be dangerous as both EAP

teachers and students tend to believe that such models are the only way academic writing can be presented. Bhatia (1993) also points out that in genre-based pedagogy the question of the use of a subject-specific authentic input to the ESP materials development process has aroused great controversy. Researchers like Badger and White (2000), Gao (2007) and Guo (2005) thus find a compromised process genre approach to circumvent the disadvantages of genre approach. Despite some of its limitations, genre-based pedagogy is widely used in L2 reading and writing classes. It draws on the social context of writing, taking into consideration notions such as target discourse community and purpose of the text (Negretti & Maria, 2011, p. 96). It focuses on the relationship between purpose, audience, and linguistic choice that is at the center of genre-based writing pedagogy. Genre pedagogy is strongly committed to empowering students to participate effectively in target situations.

2.2 Process Genre Approach

The notion of the process genre approach refers to a synthesis of process approach and genre approach.² Since genre-based pedagogy draws on the wider social context of writing, taking into consideration notions such as target discourse community and purpose of the text (Negretti & Maria, 2011, p. 96), the process genre approach allows students to study the relationship between purpose and form for a particular genre as they undergo the recursive processes of prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing. Going through these processes can develop students' awareness of different text types and of the composing process itself (Guo, 2005, p. 20).

2.3 Input Theory and Output Theory

Input theory and output theory are influential in second language acquisition research. One of the issues on which all researchers appear to be in agreement is that there can be no second language (SL) learning or acquisition without language input. One of the strongest proponents of input as a means of second language acquisition has been Krashen (1982, 1985, 1991). Input theory, which is fundamentally based upon the Nativist Theory, is put forward by Krashen (1982). In his hypothesis, Krashen introduces the concept of comprehensible input, that is to say, language acquisition follows the pattern of " $i + 1$," meaning that language acquisition should take place if the comprehensible input is slightly higher than the learner's

² As pointed out earlier, Badger and White (2000) refer to the process genre approach as a synthesis of product approach, process approach, and genre approach. Just as Badger and White put it, genre approaches can be seen as an extension of product approaches (p. 155). So we simply regard this synthesis approach as the combination of process approach and genre approach.

original language ability. In a formulation of his input hypothesis, Krashen has stated that we acquire language by understanding messages and that “comprehensible input” (CI) is the essential environmental ingredient in language acquisition. Comprehensible input is necessary for language acquisition, but is not sufficient. The acquirer must be “open” to the input, i.e., have a low Affective Filter.... Also, the input needs to contain “ $i+1$,” an aspect of language that the acquirer has not yet acquired but that he or she is ready to acquire (Krashen, 1991, p. 409).

As the typical proponent of output theory, Swain (1985) argues that output, by its nature, is not the end of production, but rather a process of the language learning. Thus, output can contribute to the language learning as well if it is carefully dealt with. The major difference between input theory and output theory is that the former attaches more importance to the acquisition part while the latter seems to put a premium on the part of conscious learning and language processing.

In her seminal article, Swain (1985) argues that comprehensible input may not be sufficient for successful second language acquisition (SLA), but that opportunities for nonnative speakers (NNSs) to produce comprehensible output are also necessary (p. 375). Swain proposes a hypothesis which is related to the second language (L2) learner’s production comparable to Krashen’s comprehensible input hypothesis. She termed this as the “comprehensible output hypothesis” for SLA (p. 249). She claims that the comprehensible output hypothesis is linked to what is sometimes called the “interaction hypothesis,” the hypothesis that we acquire language from interacting with others. In addition, the comprehensible output hypothesis is closely related to the “need hypothesis.” The need hypothesis says that we acquire language only when we “need” to communicate, when we need to make ourselves understood (p. 75). She also states that comprehensible output (CO) is the output that extends the linguistic repertoire of the learner as he or she attempts to create precisely and appropriately the meaning desired (p. 252). She argues further that the role of learner production of comprehensible output is independent in many ways on the role of comprehensible input, claiming that comprehensible output is also a necessary mechanism which aids SLA in many ways: its role is, at minimum, to provide opportunities for contextualized, meaningful use, to test out hypotheses about the target language, and to move the learner from purely semantic analysis of the language to a syntactic analysis of it (Swain, p. 252).

More recently, Swain (1995, 1998, 2000), refining the comprehensible output hypothesis developed earlier, proposed three different functions of output in SLA: it promotes noticing, it serves the second language learning process through hypothesis testing, and it serves as a metalinguistic function for language learners. The noticing function of output posits that while producing the target language, learners may “notice that they do not know how to say (or write) precisely the meaning they wish to convey” (Swain, 2000, p. 474), which then may bring their attention to something that they need to solve their linguistic deficiency. Output opportunities facilitate, according to this hypothesis, the noticing of problems in learners’ interlanguage and the related features in the input.

With the proposal of Swain’s Output Hypothesis (1985, 1995, 2000), output has been viewed not merely as an end product of learning but as an important factor to promote L2 (second language) learning. That is, producing the target language

provides learners with unique opportunities for a level of processing that may be needed for the development of target-like proficiency or the enhancement of accuracy (Swain, 1995, p. 32).

As for the practical significance of comprehensible output, Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993) believe that comprehensible output can result in actual improvement in second language acquisition. Besides Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993), Julio (1996) does a research on process assessment, in which Krashen's comprehensible input and Swain's comprehensible output hypothesis are widely applied in educational context. According to Julio, process assessment, an alternative assessment procedure which evaluates not only what "products" students have made but also how they have come to acquire the proficiency needed to produce them, gives ESP instructors as well as students the opportunity to improve outcomes when there is still time for so doing. In genre-based classroom, process assessment exists in class activities and interactions between instructors and students and among students.

In ESP field, comprehensible input refers to the students' and the institution's efforts and resources: efforts and resources ESP teachers count on before starting the course. Comprehensible output in ESP field refers to the students' midterm and final production or outcomes.

According to Julio (1996), process assessment includes input assessment, throughput assessment, and output assessment. Input assessment is, in general terms, the analysis of all the input variables ESP instructors should consider at the beginning of a course. These variables are of two kinds: individual variables and organizational variables. Assessment of the individual and organizational variables results in a thorough knowledge of the human and material resources ESP instructors will be working with. In this way, instructors know what the students and the institution expect from them and what they can expect from the institution and the students. The importance of throughput assessment lies in the fact that it is a window to the production process, enabling the ESP instructor to make adjustments to the methodology and the materials so as to make them match the results of the input variables assessment. The focus on assessment is allied with the growing awareness that process and product variables are essential components in the impact of any course (Prodromou, 1995; Spada, 1994). Output evaluation consists in analyzing the end product of instruction on a continuous basis and making changes in the process for the future if necessary.

There seems to be a close connection between output evaluation and input assessment as the output cannot be changed if the input remains the same. This output–input connection is established through the feedback process (Ellis & Johnson, 1994; Goldstein & Liu, 1994; Harris & McCann, 1994; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1993).

To sum up, input assessment gives ESP instructors the foundations to start building, while throughput assessment indicates how well the structure is being erected and if some bricks have not been properly laid and need adjustment. Only then can the evaluation of the building activity start to take place. But this final evaluation should consider factors such as the proper selection of bricks and mortar, a change of materials if they fail to meet workers' needs, and so on. Regular meetings, interviews, observations, and record keeping are considered to be a fundamental part of this final evaluation (Allerson & Grabe, 1986).

The specific process is as follows (Fig. 2.1):

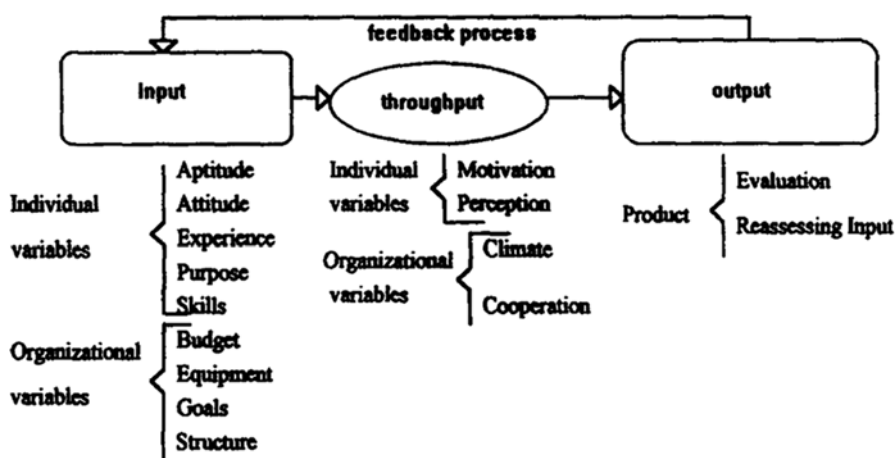


Fig. 2.1 Process assessment in ESP (cited from Julio, 1996)

In using genre approach, teachers focus on both acquisition and learning process in order to bring out the best for the learners.

2.4 Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory was originally put forward by Russian psychologist Vygotsky in 1978 in his book *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. According to Vygotsky (1978), humans are understood to utilize existing cultural artifacts and to create new ones that allow them to regulate their biological and behavioral activity. Among all the concepts under the umbrella of sociocultural theory, two major concepts closely related to the present study are zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding.

To Vygotsky (as cited by Freedman, 1995), zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the distance between the actual developmental level which is determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development which is determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The implication for learning to read/write is that students must be engaged in interactions which center on reading/writing tasks that they cannot accomplish alone but should accomplish with others' assistance.

Vygotsky (1978) puts forward the sociocultural theory, in which scaffolding theory constitutes the most influential one. The concept of scaffolding refers to the ways in which a more expert individual assists a child by performing a part of a task or by otherwise directing or supporting a child's task-related actions.

Scaffolding, as Gibbons describes, is "the process by which a 'mentor' helps a learner know how to do something, so that they will be able to do it alone in the

future” (1999, p. 26 as cited by Forman, 2008, p. 319). Similarly, it is also defined as the process by which an expert provides temporary support to learners to “help bridge the gap between what the learner knows and can do and what he or she needs to accomplish in order to succeed at a particular learning task” (Granott et al., 2002, p. 118). Forman (2008) makes further efforts in detailing the term by saying that in bilingual ESL classrooms local teachers’ use of L1 is also seen as scaffolding the building of knowledge.

The notion of scaffolding was first proposed by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) and is now combined into sociocultural approach to psychological development. Scaffolding theory is based on constructivism, depending on the studies of Vygotsky who created the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which, as the best-known concept of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, is defined as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The concept of scaffolding in this kind of frame is required for the development of learners’ further understanding of the question so that the complicated study task should be resolved in advance in order to progressively guide the learner’s understanding into depth. Scaffolding is defined as the process by which an expert provides temporary support to learners to “help bridge the gap between what the learner knows and can do and what he or she needs to accomplish in order to succeed at a particular learning task” (Granott, Fischer, & Parziale, 2002, p.118). Upon completion of this task, a learner is better able to make the connection between prior knowledge and new information. When the temporary support is removed, the student becomes more independent and confident.

Several key characteristics of scaffolding can be identified (Beed, Hawkins, & Roller, 1991; Wood & Wood, 1996). First, the interaction must be collaborative, with the learner’s own intentions being the aim of the process. Second, the scaffolding must operate within the learner’s zone of proximal development. Rather than simply ensuring that the task is completed, the “scaffolder” must access the learner’s level of comprehension and then work at a slightly beyond that level, drawing the learning into new areas of exploration (Rogoff, 1990, p. 98). The third characteristic of scaffolding is that the scaffold is gradually withdrawn as the learner becomes more competent.

In scaffolding, as children develop mastery over target skills, adults gradually turn mastered components over to children. In so doing, their scaffolding raises children’s actions to new heights. Scaffolding supports the production of higher-order actions so that children can perform the necessary acts of internalization, appropriation, or reconstruction that ultimately bring about developmental change. The process is learner-focused: assistance by the teacher is contingent on the learner’s immediate needs, with the aim of developing the learner’s competence in a specific knowledge base or skill. Scaffolding can occur both verbally and through action and it involves a variety of instructional behaviors, including modeling more sophisticated approaches to the problem than the child currently uses, encouraging the child to work on the problem and try out new strategies, and segmenting a

problem into steps that are more easily understood and managed by the child. By carefully monitoring the child's progress, the more experienced partner adjusts the activity to make it accessible to the child and provides assistance when needed. In a successful encounter, as the child skill increases, the more experienced partner reduces the amount of support so that eventually the child can execute the task in a skilled fashion on his or her own.

Gauvain (2002) maintains that scaffolding includes social scaffolding, ecological scaffolding, and self-scaffolding. Social scaffolding refers to the processes by which co-regulated exchanges with other persons' direct development in novel directions. Ecological scaffolding refers to the ways in which one's relation to or position within the broader physical and social ecology moves action towards novel forms. Any action necessarily occurs within a physical and sociocultural context that provides feedback to individual action or otherwise constrains and directs action (pp. 189–190). Self-scaffolding refers to the ways in which products of the individual's own actions create conditions that direct and support the production of novel forms of action and meaning. In self-scaffolding, individuals change their environments or representation of the environment in such a way as to direct further problem solving and the construction of novel meanings (p. 193).

Scaffolding involves offering suggestions, giving gentle feedback, and altering the environment in order to facilitate learning opportunities. Scaffolding occurs not only in an adult–child one-on-one process, but has also more recently been extended to classroom-level processes in which the social context of activities are mediated by instructors, caregivers, and other peers (Duncan & Tarulli, 2003; Scrimsher & Tudge, 2003; Winsler, 2003). Such application of scaffolding in educational context can be named as a scaffolding approach with more guidance from the teacher at an initial stage, and more peer collaboration and independent analysis at a later stage. In the educational context, the final goal is for the learner to become independent, having internalized the knowledge required in order to complete the task. The theoretical underpinning of this pedagogical approach is determined by Vygotsky's (1978) emphasis on the interactive collaboration between the instructor and students, with the instructor taking an authoritative role to “scaffold” or support learners as they move towards their potential level of performance (p. 142). This scaffolding is most evident at the early stages of learning a genre during which the instructor helps learners acquire knowledge and finish tasks that learners cannot acquire and finish by themselves. The instructor intervenes at this stage to model and discuss texts, deconstructing and analyzing their language and structure. This support is strategically diminished as students make progress gradually, with instructor and learners sharing responsibility in the joint negotiation and construction of texts, often through several drafts and with peer assistance, until the learner has the knowledge and skills to perform independently. Graves et al. (1996) have worked out a number of strategies that can be used by the instructor to support students in post-task phases. These included checking for understanding, reteaching key points, discussion and encouraging various representations of concepts inherent to the task.

Though it is most often studied in educational or teaching contexts with the emphasis on the development of problem solving and other cognitive skills,

scaffolding may also take place within other cultural developmental contexts, such as social interaction. Adults may scaffold young children's social experiences with their peers, through involvement in peer interactions. Adults often have explicit notions of how young children should interact with one another and may transfer these values through a variety of social scaffolding techniques (Parke & Buriel, 1998, p. 252).

The above are the related theories which constitute the general theoretical framework for the whole study. What is to be discussed in the forthcoming chapter is concerned with how the Chinese EFL learners' genre awareness is fostered.

2.5 Summary

This chapter aims to establish the theoretical framework for the whole study by embracing genre theory, process genre approach, input theory, output theory, and sociocultural theory. Based on the existing theories, this chapter elaborates on the definitions of genre, genre awareness, generic competence, and genre analysis and discusses how input and output theory and sociocultural theory are combined with genre theory to foster Chinese EFL students' genre awareness and their generic competence.

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