WRITING AS A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE: SAMPLE IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES OF A GENRE-BASED APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

A ESCRITA COMO UMA ATIVIDADE SOCIALMENTE RELEVANTE: AMOSTRAS DE ATIVIDADES DA SALA DE AULA DE LÍNGUA INGLESA EM UMA ABORDAGEM BASEADA EM GÊNEROS

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ABSTRACT
This papers aims at discussing some principles of a genre-oriented approach to foreign language teaching from the perspective of Functional Linguistics. We also argue in favor of the relevance of using technological tools to enrich writing pedagogy. To do that, we analyze some sample in-class activities that come from two different educational contexts: a Diploma course intended to English teachers in continuing education and a course on academic writing, designed to medical graduate students. Our findings point to the significance of combining a process and a product-oriented approach to writing, including instruction; text revision and rewriting; and scaffolding. Finally, we make the case that a functional view of language should underpin a genre-oriented pedagogy, as it opens room for analyzing language as a social enterprise.
Keywords: academic writing; functional view of language; English as a foreign language

RESUMO
Este trabalho tem por objetivo discutir alguns princípios da abordagem de ensino de línguas baseado em gêneros textuais pela visão da linguística funcional. A relevância do uso de ferramentas tecnológicas para enriquecer o ensino de escrita também é defendida. Para isso, analisamos amostras de atividades de sala de aula, oriundas de dois contextos diferentes: um curso de especialização destinado a professores de inglês em educação continuada e um curso de escrita acadêmica, voltado para alunos da pós-graduação da área de Medicina. Os resultados apontam para a importância de combinar a escrita como processo e a escrita como produto, o que inclui a instrução; a revisão e a reescrita de textos, bem como o *scaffolding*. Finalmente, defendemos que uma visão funcional da linguagem é importante para sustentar a pedagogia baseada em gêneros, já que ela abre caminho para a análise da língua como uma tarefa socialmente relevante.
Palavras-chave: escrita acadêmica; visão funcional da linguagem; inglês como língua estrangeira

INTRODUCTION

In Communicative ELT (English Language Teaching), text genre analysis is essential to uncover the social and the cultural basis of language. The notion of genre has largely drawn the attention of many scholars. It is incontestable that a genre-based approach to teaching greatly improves learners' skills, not only in academic settings, but also in professional scenarios (EGGINS, 2004). A genre-oriented approach to language teaching incorporates an understanding that language is purposeful and that structures emerge from use (HALLIDAY, 2004). Additionally, there is an increasing recognition of the relevance of taking into consideration language varieties, text-types, and text genres while designing reading and writing language programs (THORNE and REINHARDT, 2008).

As Martin (2002) points out, genres have been defined as staged, goal-oriented social processes. In these terms, as a level of context, genres represent 'the system of staged goal-oriented social processes through which social subjects in a given culture live their lives' (MARTIN, 2002, p. 56). In ELT, the concept of text genre sheds light on the influence of the context of culture on language. From that viewpoint, every culture structures particular ways of achieving communication goals in a given context through the production of written and oral texts.

The fact that English is considered the predominant language for communicating research findings makes it paramount that users of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) develop proficiency in research English across the skills of reading and writing (SWALES and FEAK, 2009; SWALES, 2004). In order to be part of the scientific community, EFL researchers need to understand 'the social processes by which knowledge about reality and the world are made' (PALTRIDGE, 2014, p. 303), that is, they need to be able to understand several genres that are part of academic social practice. Failure to understand written genres as social action may result in instruction that encourages the creation of texts to fit formal requirements, as opposed to the practice of achieving social goals (PALTRIDGE, 2014).

Technology also plays a role in assisting second/foreign language (L2) writing instruction. The Internet, social networks and digital media may provide EFL learners with greater opportunities for meaningful and authentic language use, which are usually interactive, social and multimodal. Learners can interact with other speakers of the language from different parts of the world, write blogs or create webpages and profiles in social networks and produce both written and oral language with a targeted community of speakers in mind (RICHARDS, 2014).

The aim of this paper is to discuss some principles of genre-oriented approaches to language teaching from the perspective of Functional Linguistics. We also highlight the relevance of using technological tools to enrich the teaching of writing. To do that, we present and analyze some sample in-class activities that we believe follow genre-based principles to teaching. These activities come from two different educational contexts: a Diploma Course (CEI FALE UFMG[1]), intended to teachers in continuing education, and course on academic writing, intended to medical graduate students.[2] Before we can present these in-class activities, we will discuss the theoretical foundation that underpins our view of teaching writing in both the general context, as well as in the academic scenario.

1. THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN FUNCTIONALISM AND A GENRE-ORIENTED APPROACH TO TEACHING

Functionalism views language as a means to create and share knowledge. According to Thompson (2014), the functional approach to language is increasingly being recognized as providing a very useful descriptive and interpretive framework for viewing language as a strategic, meaning-making resource. It encompasses the analysis of authentic products of social interaction, within a particular social and cultural context. The author also highlights that, from a functional viewpoint, the term 'function' can be interpreted in at least 3 senses:

– Grammar is designed to explain how language is used.
– Fundamental components of meaning are functional components.
– Each element of language is explained in reference to its function in the global linguistic system.

In this view, grammar meanings are not considered as a collection of rules. They are contextualized and are associated with the practical uses which language is put to. Texts are thus considered authentic products of social interaction, negotiated within a particular cultural and social context. From this perspective, functionalists

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1 CEI (Curso de Especialização em Inglês - FALE UFMG) is a Diploma Course intended to English teachers in continuing education. The sample activities we analyzed in this paper were taken from some of the final papers produced in this study, from 2011-2015. Their full version is available at: http://150.164.100.248/cei/.
2 "Academic writing 1: Abstracts" was a course offered at the Tropical Diseases Graduate Program from the Federal University of Minas Gerais in the first semester of 2016. This 15-hour course was aimed at helping medical graduates develop skills needed to write research abstracts.

usually ask questions such as: "How is language structured for use"? According to Thompson (2014), an adequate response to this question may be:

Language is as a system of meanings accompanied by the forms through which those meanings are expressed.

Another important question to be posed by functionalists is "How are texts (and the other linguistic units which make them up, such as sentences or clauses) structured so that meanings can be made? " The answer to this question includes the three key dimensions of the situations impacting genre analysis. According to Halliday (2004), these 3 dimensions are:

a. The register variables of mode (speaking or writing, verbal, non-verbal)
b. Tenor: role relations of power and solidarity speaking to whom (teacher/student)
c. Field: topic or focus of the activity - the theme (weather/family life)

These 3 dimensions are also very relevant because they derive from the 3 meta-functions proposed by (HALLIDAY, 2004), which can be briefly described as:

a. Ideational/experiential (used to tell about subject matter) – refers to the internal or external worlds. Key element in genre analysis: FIELD
b. Interpersonal (used to interact with other people) - expresses the writer's role; the kind of relationship with the reader; and the writer's attitude towards the subject matter. Key element in genre analysis: TENOR
c. Textual (to structure the text) - refers to the way the text is organized as a piece of writing (spoken, written, non-verbal). Key element in genre analysis: MODE

Drawing on Halliday's model of language (Halliday 2004), Butt et al. (2003) have also very clearly outlined the 3 meta-functions, making the case that "use" is essential for any genre-based analysis:

1. Language has a representational function and it is used to encode the personal experience of the world; it conveys a picture of reality. Thus, it allows encoding meanings of experience, which realize the field of discourse (EXPERIENTIAL MEANING).
2. Language has an interpersonal function and it is used to encode interaction and to show how defensible the different propositions are believed to be. Thus, it

allows encoding meanings of attitudes, interaction and relationships that realize tenor of discourse (INTERPERSONAL MEANING).

3. Language has a textual function and it is used to organize experiential and interpersonal meanings of text development, which realize mode of discourse. A focus on Theme/Rheme and Given/New Structure is a major feature of this metafunction (TEXTUAL MEANING).

As we can see, the notion of genre is intertwined with a view of language as a purposeful enterprise; as a matter of fact, a functional view of language may be translated into genre-based writing pedagogy. In the next section we will present how the notion of genre can be applied to EFL by discussing writing as a process and product as we outline the tenets of genre-based approach to writing.

2. WRITING AS A PROCESS AND AS A PRODUCT

Writing in a foreign or second language can be approached by two competing, yet not mutually exclusive views: one that emphasizes the product over the process of writing and a second that engages learners in the discovery of ideas by emphasizing the processes of brainstorming, sharing ideas and collaborating in order to produce written texts. On the one hand, learners may benefit from being exposed to the conventions of written discourse by means of studying exemplars of a given genre as well as guidelines on how to construct texts, while risking following imposed models. On the other hand, learners may engage in identifying their own personal writing style and giving their own voice to texts they produce, while not being aware of social written conventions. A combination of both approaches would be ideal, without neglecting the process of writing and relying exclusively on product.

Process writing techniques involve brainstorming, peer and teacher feedback, and the production of several drafts. According to Hyland (2008, p. 100) 'writing is seen as a process through which writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to create meaning'. The flowchart in FIG. 1 illustrates the process:

Figure 1. a flowchart of the reading process (HYLAND, 2008: 100)

As the flowchart shows, process writing is a recurrent process, with constant revisions and rewritings, planning and editing in a recursive cycle. EFL teachers need to set pre-writing activities for brainstorming ideas and structure, encourage outlining, provide students with challenging writing tasks, encourage peer correction and give feedback on drafts, and finally provide a final correction (HYLAND, 2008).

According to Paltridge (2014), process writing was thought to not prepare learners to the demands of writing in academic contexts. Indeed, encouraging learners to brainstorm, revise, rewrite and allowing them to create their own writing style was not enough to drive learners to notice the conventions of academic written texts and thus be able to produce texts that would comply with academic conventions. In the 1980's, genre-based pedagogy came into prominence in the United States as a response to the perceived problems of process writing. Schools in Australia also operated similar change in their writing pedagogies.

Genre based teaching (SWALES, 2004; HYLAND, 2007, 2008) sees text as discourse, or as "the way we use language to communicate, to achieve purposes in particular situations" (HYLAND, 2008, p. 93). It is anchored on the idea that one needs to understand and use language to achieve social purposes in a given context (HYLAND, 2007). As previously mentioned, teaching learners to recognize, analyze and produce written genres will help them participate in academic, occupational and social context in the real world (Hyland, 2007).

A genre-based approach to the teaching of writing should focus on identifying how texts work as communication, 'regarding forms of language as located in social action' (HYLAND, 2008, p. 94). This focus on language forms does not imply a focus on grammar, which is detached from meaning and use, but knowledge of grammar that would allow learners to manipulate language in an effective way. In terms of teaching approach, learners are led to notice, reflect on and use language to

produce well-formed and appropriate texts. Hyland (2008) proposes the learning cycle as an approach to teaching writing (FIG. 2):
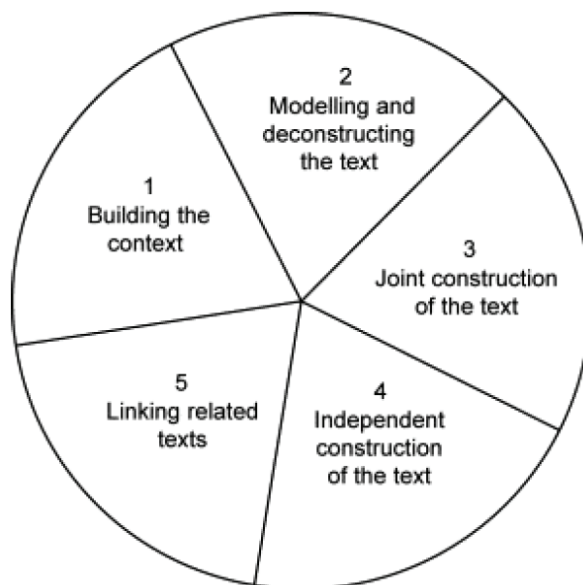
Figure 2. The teaching learning cycle (HYLAND, 2008, p. 96)

The learning cycle assists teachers in planning instruction by approaching learning to write genres as a series of stages. In a nutshell, the stages lead learners into understanding the purposes of genre (the why, who, to whom, what for and when) as well as degrees of formality; analyzing and modelling the stages and key features (including tenses, themes, vocabulary); supporting students in constructing texts; monitoring students while they write their own texts; and finally relating what has been learnt to other contexts and genres, thus highlighting the social use of texts in real communication.

According to Hinkel (2004), adopting the writing process pedagogy to EFL speakers does not lead to sufficient improvements that enable them to produce academic texts as required in the academy. In addition, 'extensive, thorough, and focused instruction in L2 academic vocabulary, grammar, and discourse is essential for developing the L2 written proficiency expected in general education courses and studies in the disciplines' (HINKEL, 2004, p. 7). In fact, in order to learn to write the formal prose required in academic and professional careers learners need to develop and advanced range of linguistic skills, including lexis and grammar.

Hinkel (2011) reviewed the research related to writing in EFL, showing that non-native written discourse is fundamentally different from L1, both in terms of its macro properties (discourse structuring and ideational development) and micro features (grammar and vocabulary). The author concluded that limited vocabulary and grammar are recurrent and frequent properties of L2 written texts. In comparison to L1 prose L2 texts exhibit less lexical variety, inconsistent use of verb tenses, more conversational and high frequency words, high rates of incomplete or inaccurate sentences, shorter words, repetition of content words and fewer modifying and descriptive prepositional phrases, as well as a higher rate of misused prepositions, to mention some of the differences. EFL learners' skill in grammar and vocabulary has a direct impact on the quality of L2 formal prose. These areas need to be addressed in the EFL classroom.

It should be highlighted that writing instruction should not only focus on grammar and vocabulary; yet, the development of EFL proficiency is one of the requirements for writing success. Learners also need to develop an awareness of discourse conventions and information flow. As a matter of fact, according to Hinkel (2004), much of the failure of process writing can be attributed to the disproportionate focus on writing with self-revision and editing, which are one of the essential components of good academic writing. The other two components – rhetorical organization and grammatical and lexical accuracy – are usually neglected.

Reppen (2002, p. 321) argues that

> An emphasis on a process approach often disregards the importance of written form and, in effect, takes power away from learners, particularly those from different language or culture backgrounds. For the L2 student, many writing conventions will remain a mystery unless teachers are able to bring these forms and patterns of language use to conscious awareness. Emphasizing the process to the exclusion of the product neglects direct instruction in certain text features, yet students are still evaluated by their control of these features (e.g., text organization, sentence structure).

The author then suggests a combination of process writing and activities targeting specific language skills and direct instruction on genre forms. His suggestion is anchored on two concepts: scaffolding and awareness. In the first one, the teacher has a central role in guiding learners to accomplish a goal. He or she needs to provide learners with models to help them accomplish a task until they gain enough control to be autonomous learners. In order to do so, the teacher needs to be familiar with the learning situation, material and specific features associated with the writing students are required to produce. As an example, in addition to guiding students into noticing genre organization, the teacher helped them notice the

verbs typically found in texts of different genres. Activities included individual and joint construction of texts, text analysis and content discussion of representative texts. The second concept focuses on raising awareness of the connection between organizing information and text purpose. By becoming aware of why texts display certain organization, learners become able to evaluate their own productions and then peer edit texts in a more effective way (REPPEN, 2002).

It is true that learners are usually assessed on what they produced as writers outside the classroom, not on how they produced texts. By combining process and genre-based instruction, language teachers may provide learners with the tools to enable them to write a variety of genres in real-world contexts.

In the next section, we will discuss and present experiences of genre-based teaching in academic writing. We will also analyze samples of writing activities, developed by English language teachers in the context of a diploma course from a public university in Brazil, that we consider are grounded on a usage-based view of language, and which also regard writing as a process.

3. PROCESS WRITING AND GENRE-BASED SAMPLE ACTIVITIES

In this section we report on an experience of teaching academic writing to graduate students and present and analyze some samples of activities developed to teach writing. The former was implemented as a course offered by the Graduate Program of Tropical Diseases in the first semester of 2016 and the latter were elaborated by English language teachers taking part in a Diploma Course from 2011-2015. Both courses are offered by a public university in Brazil.

3.1. Academic Writing: Abstracts

It is known that writing academically represents a challenge to those researchers who need and want to be part of the international scientific community, especially when English is not their first language. In fact, non-native speakers of English who are not familiar with the genre conventions of research articles have difficulty organizing their ideas when writing. Language can also be an issue (HUANG, 2014). Linguistic factors include lexical and grammatical errors, clarity and verbosity or repetition.

In order to help Brazilian scholars develop academic writing skills, a course on writing research abstracts was offered by the Graduate Program of Tropical

Diseases of a public university in Brazil. Since scholars have their manuscripts rejected mainly due to linguistic and methodological problems (MUNGRA and WEBBER, 2010), the course was conducted by a language professional and two Medicine professors. The interdisciplinary nature of the course provided graduate students with the tools to tap potential problems and difficulties in their written productions, namely the linguistic and methodological factors that account for the rejection of manuscripts.

The course was an attempt to provide Medical graduates with both linguistic and methodological knowledge that would enable them to write their own research abstracts, without resorting to language professionals and/or translators, as evidenced by Iglesias and Batista (2010). Writing in English is also considered an essential skill for Spanish scholars of Medicine, who have difficulty in having their research published in international journals. A recent survey showed that Spanish scholars have received little instruction in academic writing (MARTÍN *et al.*, 2014).

The course, offered in a blended mode, followed a genre-based approach to the writing of abstracts and also incorporated the ideas of process writing (RACELIS and MATSUDA, 2013). Learners were guided through the stages presented in Hyland (2008). The first step was an introduction to the concept of textual genre, functions and types of research abstracts, reasons for the rejection of manuscripts, followed by a presentation and analysis of genre moves (SWALES and FEAK, 2009) based on an abstract corpus created by learners themselves. They were then required to write their first draft of an abstract, that was later revised by peers in terms of rhetorical moves. The next step was to focus on the linguistic features of abstracts, namely verb tense use, linking words and cohesion, and vocabulary. After receiving peer and teacher feedback, learners had to write a second draft, which was submitted for a second revision. This time, teachers and learners jointly revised each text, producing a final and improved version.

The analysis of learners' written production showed that they not only attended to genre conventions but also improved their use of academic vocabulary, clarity and grammatical accuracy. Corpus analysis was an essential component of the course, raising learners' awareness to both genre conventions and linguistic features and also fostering their critical reading of abstract and research reports. In addition, learners improved their content knowledge in terms of research methodology through classroom discussions conducted by the Medicine professors.

3.2. Sample Activity 1

This task was aimed at teaching students to produce the genre 'article'. Learners first read an academic article for comprehension and then analyzed its language and organization features. FIG. 3 is part of an activity which compared the features of three different genres.

TEXT GENRE			
	A) Informal article	B) News report	C) Academic article
Image captions	If necessary, yes	If necessary, yes	If necessary, yes
Language	Informal to formal depending on the publication	Neutral	Formal

Figure 3. part of an activity on genre awareness

Following this, learners were then guided to notice the use of verb tenses in articles. The writing was prompted by a call to write a paper to a journal (FIG. 4):

Colleagues:

You are invited to submit a paper for possible inclusion in a special issue of *Learning for Democracy: An International Journal of Thought and Practice* (ISBN 1743-4912) *Learning for Democracy: An International Journal of Thought and Practice* is housed in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. This journal is sponsored by the AREA Special Interest Group: Democratic Citizenship in Education. The journal welcomes articles, dialogues, notes, book reviews and further comments thereon, in keeping with editorial policy, as set out in the founding Editor's remarks (see www.siue.edu/lfd).

Figure 4. Call for papers

Learners were encouraged to adopt a process writing to the task (FIG. 5). The teacher also provided them with a suggestion to write an outline. Learners were also encouraged to draft, revise and proofread their texts.

Any time you write a text – especially in the academic field – you need to consider some aspects, such as planning, drafting and proofreading. Here are some tips for you to improve your writing skills:

1. Always set aside some time to brainstorm the ideas you want to include in your text. You can write an outline of your text, as follows:
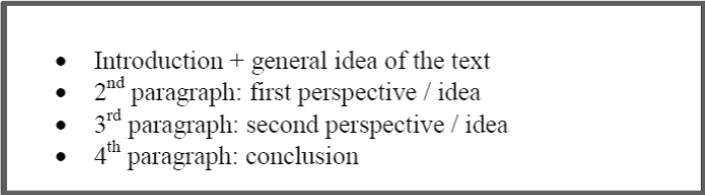
- Introduction + general idea of the text
- 2nd paragraph: first perspective / idea
- 3rd paragraph: second perspective / idea
- 4th paragraph: conclusion

Figure 5. Outlining an article

This task combined an approach to writing which raised learners' awareness to genre and some of its recurrent linguistic features with elements of process writing, such as brainstorming, outlining, drafting and revising. It also made use of authentic texts and provided learners with real-life practice since a Call for papers was the prompt for writing.

3.3. Sample Activity 2

An approach to writing that raises learners' awareness to genre organization and also provides them with language support can be seen in the activities that target the genre biography. The general topic of the lesson is Activism, leading learners to discuss the issue based on the biographies of activists that fought for social justice. Learners are guided into reading and grammar activities that explore the organizational and linguistic aspects of biographies. It is worth noting that both reading and grammar activities were not simply designed to assist writing but to develop learners reading comprehension skills and raise learners awareness to the use of past tense in biographies, in a contextualized and meaning-oriented context. FIG.6 is one of the reading activities:

Nina Simone
(February 21, 1933 – April 21, 2003) *was an American singer, songwriter, pianist, arranger, and civil rights activist. And was known as the 'High Priestess of Soul.*

Martin Luther King, Jr.
(January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968), *was an American Baptist minister, activist, humanitarian, and leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement.*

Malcolm X
(May 19, 1925 – February 21, 1965), *was an American Muslim minister and a human rights activist. He was one of the most influential African Americans in history.*

bio.

5) Write the important facts about Nina, Martin and Malcolm biography:

1. Martin was born in ___*January 15, 1929*___ and he was a leader in _____.
2. A _____, _____ and _____. Who was born on February 21, in 1933.
3. He was an important _____ Muslim minister, and he _____ born in 1965.

Figure 6. Reading sample from the activism lesson

The writing task asked learners to choose an activist and write a short biography (FIG.7). The activity started with a summary what learners may have noticed by reading and analyzing biographies in the previous exercises.

how to write a bio? A **biography** is defined as a non-fictional story written about someone's life. To get started it is important to define if you want to talk about their whole life or an specific part of it. Determine what is the most important fact about this person. It should be organized chronologically, so start from the beginning with birth and childhood, then adult life and so on.

Now that you know what a biography is, write a short one about the person that you admire the most. It must be about someone you know or that is close to you so you can interview this person, remember to say the reason that made you want to write about this person.

Figure 7. Instruction for the biography writing task

3.4. Sample Activity3

The second example explored the language of advertisements. After using advertisements for reading comprehension activities (FIG. 8), learners' awareness of the genre was raised through activities that explore the organization, structure and function of ads. FIG. 9 is an example of such activity, in which learners had to choose the correct answer to make true statements.

Figure 8. One of the ads used for reading comprehension activities and genre analysis

1. The images are _____ to comprehend the advertisement.

a. important   b. useless   c. unnecessary

2. The _____ text is important because it catches your attention.

a. long   b. difficult   c. short

3. The advertisements above are _____ .

a. selling a product   a. selling an idea   c. sharing an idea

Figure 9. Raising awareness of genre features

After that, the grammar activities explored the use of the Imperative mood to give recommendations and persuade the reader in advertisements. The writing task started by asking learners to brainstorm what they consider to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in the classroom. After brainstorming, they wrote the ad that should be published online with the help of Glogster (https://www.glogster. com/#travel), an online tool that allows the creation of interactive and multimedia posters. Learners were encouraged to revise their productions with the help of a checklist (FIG. 10) that did not only consider the linguistic features of an ad, but also its content and features.

Check the advertisement's production		
I used a video	Yes ( )	No ( )
I used pictures	Yes ( )	No ( )
The vocabulary calls attention of the audience	Yes ( )	No ( )
The spelling is correct	Yes ( )	No ( )
I used the imperative mood	Yes ( )	No ( )
There is organization between non-verbal and verbal language.	Yes ( )	No ( )

Figure 10 – Checklist for written production

3.5. Sample Activity 4

From the perspective of language awareness in relation to text genres, Thorne & Black (2008) have developed a very productive pedagogical framework with supporting materials for teachers to focus on what the authors call 'bridging activities' (THORNE and REINHARDT, 2008, p. 562). These activities involve 'incorporating and analyzing student-selected texts within the advanced foreign language curriculum in order to provide a context-situated teaching practice' (THORNE and REINHARDT, 2008, p. 562). Taken this approach to text genres into account, the following task was prepared by the teachers in the Diploma course in order to raise student's awareness of digital genres intended to serve the purposes of social media tools (in this case What´s App).

As we all know, there have been many different social networks being used nowadays. What´s App® is very practical and widely known: "How is interaction brought about on What´s App ® messages?"

IN PARIS:

Analyze the message below.

Who are the interlocutors of this message? Are they distant or close friends?

Is the language used formal or informal? Give examples that justify your answer.

What are they interacting about? What is the main purpose of the interaction?

Write a follow up to this conversation, by adding at least 4 more threads to it and by using at least 2 non-verbal clues.

Now, convert the instant messaging text to a formal text. What kind of changes should be done? Would you still insert non-verbal clues to it? Why? Why not?

Figure 11. genre awareness activity

The following section briefly discusses the role of technology for language learning and presents some suggestions of tools and resources that can be used in the EFL writing classroom.

4. TECHNOLOGY FOR EFL LEARNING AND THE TEACHING OF WRITING: SOME SUG-GESTIONS TO ENRICH WRITING PEDAGOGY

In recent years, the growth in the use of computer, Internet and communication tools has brought new possibilities for the design and implementation of foreign language learning activities (PAIVA, 2012). Learning can be extended beyond the physical walls of the classroom, increasing learners exposure to the target language (THOMAS, 2009). Such technologies can provide access to authentic instances of language, enhance communication among students and speakers of the target language and foster discover-oriented learning as well as cooperative and collaborative learning experiences. In other words, current information and computer technologies enable learners to access and build knowledge by experiencing with authentic language, develop communication and intercultural skills, and immerse themselves in the language and culture of the target language.

When learners engage in experiences with the language in online environments they are likely to be in contact with comprehensible input and output and interactional processes that may support overall language development, and not only a specific skill. As a matter of fact, online tools and resources provide learners with a variety of written and spoken texts and may have features that support the development of a variety of skills. Social media can also provide learners with rich language experiences. Take the blog, as an example. Students can read blogs and comment on the items they have read, moving from observers to participants. Since blogs encourage feedback from anyone connected to the Internet, they offer literacy practices. Such type of reading and writing facilitates the expression of viewpoints, fosters discussion and cultivates critical thinking. More recently, voice or audio blogs allow users to record video or voice, extending the opportunities for language experiences (HUNG, 2011).

Facebook is a social network with potential for academic engagement, facilitating interactive exchanges which ultimately may lead to deeper understanding. Despite concerns over invasion of privacy and possible distractions, users of Facebook for teaching purposes take on its widespread use as a communication tool and its applications, innovative ways and resources to help students develop language learning skills. Facebook, when used as a new learning platform, may "provide cognitive scaffolding, promote socio-pragmatic competence, and sharpen critical thinking, grammar, and writing skills of students", according to a review by Rubrico and Hashim (2014). In order to avoid distractions, Braga (2013) reminds us of basic prerequisites to have full advantage of Facebook. First, learners need

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to be highly motivated to develop the learning tasks. It is then the teacher's role to devise activities that are relevant and meaningful. Second, learners need to be mature enough so as to engage in learning. And third, teachers need to mediate and monitor discussions to ensure that students stick to the goal of the activity.

It is not only Facebook that has been attracting the attention of teachers and researchers interested in capitalizing learners interests and free time activities for the benefit of language learning. It is known that there is a great deal of incidental learning when people engage in online gaming, virtual environments, and fan fiction. Thorne *et al.* (2009) have showed that such endeavor result in social interaction in which meaning is central, fostering the development of specific language competencies within particular genres. Participation in online gaming, virtual environments and fan fiction can also be integrated with language instruction, since it 'may help to strengthen the ecological linkages between forms of language use and identity dispositions developed within instructed EFL settings and communicative pursuits associated with other life contexts'. In other words, learners may be relating the language they see in the classroom with real communication for social life, thus blurring the boundaries between learner and language user.

In addition to blogs, videos and other online resources, learners and teachers can benefit from corpus resources and concordancing tools. On the one hand, as Hafner & Candlin (2007) suggest, learners can explore corpus tools to complete a task, to investigate language forms in context, or use it as a feedback tool to writing assignments. On the other hand, teachers can resort to concordancing tools to supplement their intuitions and to describe the frequency of a given structure or construction. They can also use concordancers to provide feedback on students writing (HYLAND and HYLAND, 2006).

Technology means nothing without pedagogy. Garrett (2009) reminds us that the use of technology for language learning is not to be seen as a teaching method, and that studies trying to research its efficacy have missed the point. Efficacy depends on how the teacher approaches technology, that is, how teachers design language activities that will be supported by technology and how integrated it is into the syllabus.

We present a list of links to tools and online resources that can be used to develop learners' writing skills. It is advisable that the teacher experiment with the tool before trying to apply it in the classroom.
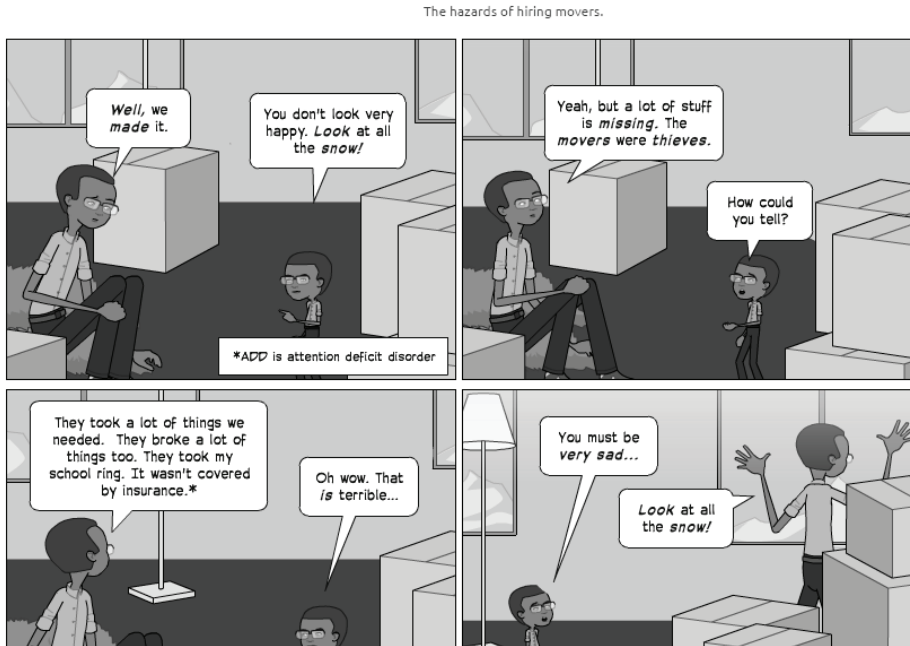
Figure 12. Pixton (https://www.pixton.com) – tool to create cartoons.

Figure 13. Powtoon (https://www.powtoon.com/) – allows you to create animated presentations
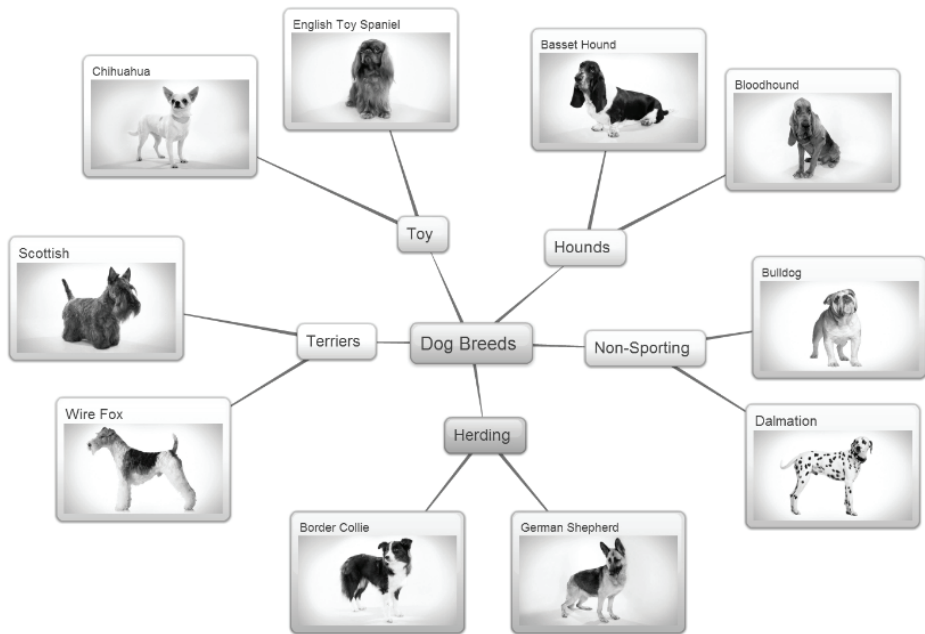
Figure 14. Bubblus (https://bubbl.us/) – create mind maps online
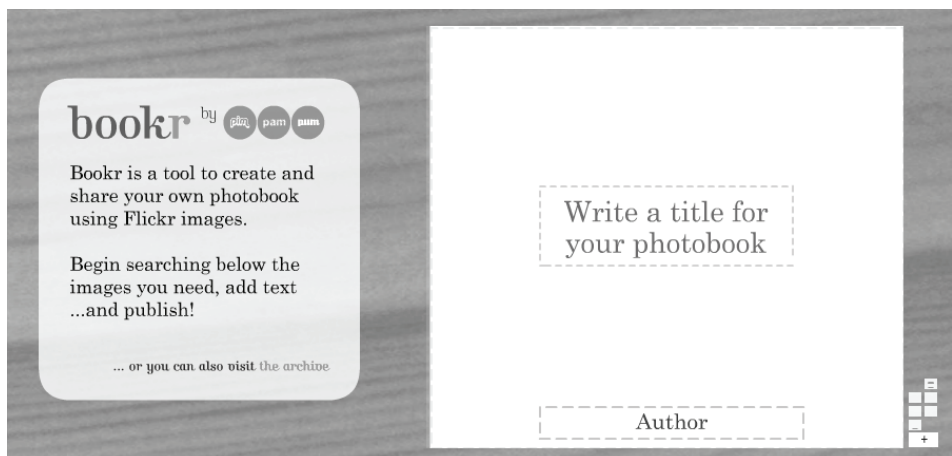

Figure 15. Bookr (http://www.pimpampum.net/bookr/) – tool to create photobooks using images from Flickr
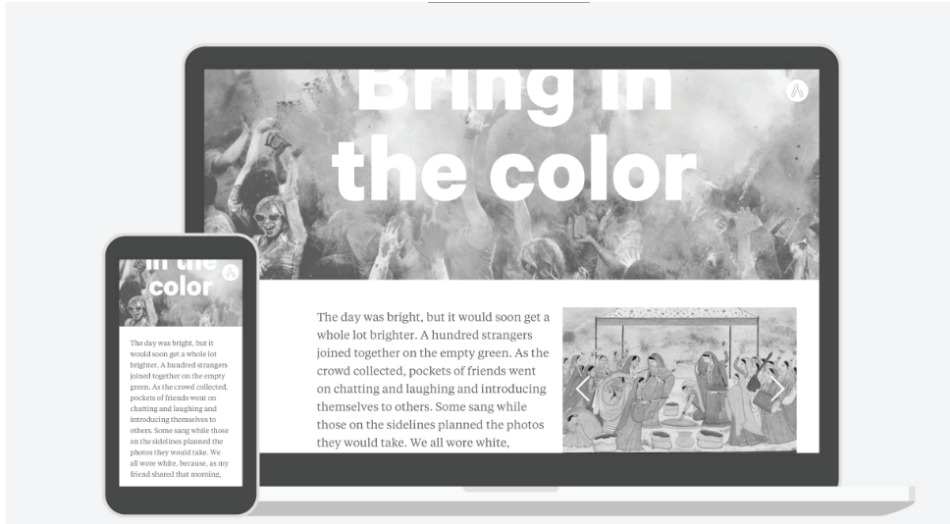
Figure 16. Atavist (https://atavist.com/) – tool to create ebooks

Figure 17. Glogster (https://www.glogster.com/) – create interactive posters

Figure 18. Fakebook (http://www.classtools.net/FB/home-page) – be whoever you want to be by creating fake profiles

Figure 19. Foldingstory (http://foldingstory.com/) – engage in collaborative storytelling
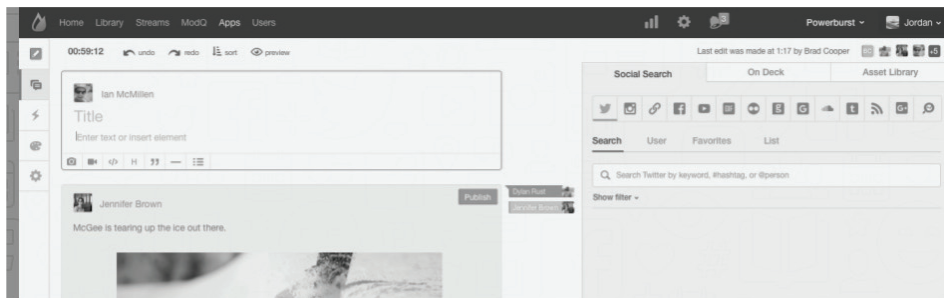
Figure 20. Storify (https://storify.com/) – create, edit and publish stories

In the next section, we will make some final remarks on the potentialities we believe a genre-oriented approach to writing may have in terms of teaching language for real communication.

FINAL REMARKS

Genre-based instruction offers a valuable approach to the teaching of writing, both in English for Specific Contexts and in General English. Learners are assisted in the production of effective and relevant texts that they may need to write in their target contexts, ultimately allowing them to be part of real world communities of language users. As Hyland (2007, p. 151) has put it, 'providing writers with a knowledge of appropriate language forms shifts writing instruction from the implicit and exploratory to a conscious manipulation of language and choice'.

The mere focus on the process of composition, text content and grammar prescriptions is not in itself sufficient to assist EFL users in achieving social purposes in a given communicative context. Nevertheless, the integration of process writing and genre-based pedagogy represents the combination of process and product in writing instruction, with revisions, rewriting and scaffolding as the underlying principles to be followed by the teacher. We also believe that this goal can be more effectively pursued when teachers can rely on practical and ready-to-use technological tools, combined with a theoretical informed view of language as oriented to social use.

At last, this paper attempts to argue in favor of functionalism as a central theoretical framework to genre-oriented approaches to writing, since it opens room for analyzing language as a social enterprise, in addition to a means to generate and share culture and knowledge.

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