A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ACADEMIC WRITING OF THAI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF A GENRE BASED PEDAGOGY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation reports on a study of developments in key aspects of the English academic writing of Thai students undertaking a writing course in a Thai university in 2006. The course employed the genre-based pedagogy associated with the so-called Sydney genre school (see, for example, Martin and Rose 2008) and focussed on two of the argumentative genres identified in the Sydney genre-school literature, the Exposition and the Discussion. The course was delivered to 72 English majors in two classes over a period of twelve weeks. The writing of six students was selected for close linguistic analysis, with the data set consisting of the three essays which each student produced at the beginning, middle and end of the course (18 texts in total).

The broad objective of the research was to investigate whether any developments could be observed in the student's writing, as a group, which could be interpreted as positive developments in their academic literacy and which might plausibly be seen as at least in part the result of the teaching and learning opportunities made available by the course.

It was found that a majority of the students produced essays at the commencement of the course, before any teaching, which (1) did not match any of the genre structural prototypes outlined in the literature, and which (2) seemed to be structurally and hence communicatively problematic, possibly on account of this. All students subsequently produced essays which did closely match one or other of the genre prototypes outlined in the literature and which seemed persuasively more coherent and easier to follow than the essays produced initially, before exposure to the genre-based pedagogy employed by the course. It is argued that it is plausible that the teaching and learning opportunities provided by the course played some role in this outcome.

As well, several trends were observed in the student's writing across the duration of the course by which they substantially increased the frequency with which they deployed the resources for construing inter-clausal relations (logico-semantic relations). In particular trends were observed by which the students, as a group, reduced the proportion of single clause sentences in their writing, increased the frequency of coordination (parataxis) and subordination (hypotaxis), made much greater use of mechanisms for referencing other

sources and voices, and much more frequently construed relations of consequentiality (cause-and-effect) and counter expectation. It is argued that these changes can be interpreted as positive developments in the writing of the students by which they extended their communicative range and by which their writing became more fluent and more nuanced. It is argued that it is plausible to see the course and its pedagogy as having a significant role to play in this outcome.

It is proposed that these findings, based as they are on longitudinal study involving a detailed and systematic analysis of specific linguistic features, lend strong support to claims about the efficacy of this genre-based approach to the teaching of writing.

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968, when it is accepted for the award of the degree.

Signed: _____Date:_____

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ABBREVIATIONS

IELTS	International English Language Testing System
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
HGS1	High group student 1
HGS2	High group student 2
MGS1	Middle group student 1
MGS2	Middle group student 2
LGS1	Low group student 1
LGS2	Low group student 2
para / p	parataxis
pr	projection
ng embeds / n	embedded clause functioning as a complete noun group
Q embeds / q	embedded clause functioning as a Qualifier in a noun group (i.e. part of a noun group)
att	"attempted" (as in attempted parataxis)
ach	"achieved" (as in achieved parataxis)
exI	internal extension (e.g."moreover", "what's more", "also")
exE	external extension (e.g. "and", "or", "instead of")
att exI	attempted internal extension; ach exI = achieved internal extension
tI	internal temporal relation (sub type of enhancement) (e.g. "firstly", "secondly", "lastly")
tE	external temporal relation ("when", "next", "until", "while", "then")
cI	internal causative relation (sub type of enhancement) (e.g. "therefore", "thus", "consequently")
cE	external causative relation (e.g. "because", "and so")
pp	purpose relation (sub type of enhancement) (e.g. "in order to")
coI	internal conditional (sub type of enhancement) (e.g. "Dinner is ready, if you are hungry.")
coE	external conditional (e.g. "if", "unless")

ct	counter expectation/concession (e.g. "however", "yet", "although", "but")
|	hypotactic boundary (i.e. division between clause which there is a hypotactic clause, e.g. a main clause plus a subordinate clause)