La enseñanza basada en el género en inglés con propósitos específicos: una revisión sistemática*

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Resumen

El objetivo de esta investigación fue describir el estado del arte de la enseñanza basada en el género. Se hizo una revisión de la literatura con el uso de una base de datos especializada y búsquedas manuales en revistas de renombre en el ámbito de la lingüística aplicada y enseñanza de lenguas. El corpus fue revisado por dos investigadores independientes para identificar las categorías de análisis. Se analizaron 40 artículos. Las categorías resultantes incluyeron tendencias metodológicas, escuelas de género, destrezas y sexo, entre otras. La metodología basada en el género parece ser favorable en el entorno de Inglés con Propósitos Específicos (IPE), especialmente para la lectura y la escritura. Existe un grupo de variables (por ejemplo, sexo, edad y dominio de la lengua) que necesitan ser estudiadas debido a sus implicaciones pedagógicas.

Palabras clave: Inglés con propósitos específicos (IPE), enseñanza basada en el género, revisión sistemática, práctica basada en la evidencia.

Abstract

GENDER-BASED TEACHING IN ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

This research aimed at describing the state of the art of genre-based teaching pedagogy in ESP. Authors performed a systematic review by using specialized databases and reviews by hand in well-known journals in the context of applied linguistics and language teaching. The material was reviewed by two independent researchers to identify the categories for analysis. Forty articles were analyzed. Resulting categories included methodological trends, genre schools, skills and gender, among other. Genre based methodology seems to be good in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context, mainly for reading and writing. There exists a set of variables (for instance, gender, age and language proficiency) that need to be further studied due to their pedagogical implications.

Key words: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), genre-based pedagogy, systematic review, evidence based practice.

Résumé

L'ENSEIGNEMENT BASÉ SUR LE GENRE EN ANGLAIS Á DES FINS SPÉCIFIQUES: UNE REVUE SYSTÉMATIQUE

Cette étude visait à décrire l'état de l'art de la pédagogie de l'enseignement par genre dans anglais à des fins spécifiques. Il s'agissait d'une revue systématique. Critères de recherche inclus période (dix dernières années) et publié dans une revue scientifique indexée par des pairs, rédigée en anglais. Le corpus a été soigneusement examiné par deux chercheurs indépendants afin d'identifier les catégories à analyser. 40 articles en texte intégral ont été analysés. Les catégories résultantes pour l'analyse incluaient les tendances méthodologiques, les écoles de genre, les compétences et le genre, entre autres. La méthodologie basée sur le genre semble être assez favorable dans les environnements du AFS, en particulier pour la lecture et l'écriture. Il existe un ensemble de variables (par exemple, le sexe, l'âge, la compétence) qui doivent encore être étudiées en raison des implications pédagogiques.

Mots-clés: anglais à des fins spécifiques, pédagogie fondée sur le genre, revue systématique, Pratique fondée sur les preuves.

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1. Introduction

English for Specific Purposes (ESP), as expressed by Chalikandy (2013), is not the result of new theories in the field of applied linguistics but the result of the necessities of the times. In few words, the social needs due to different historical and social events like the 2nd World War and, later, the oil crisis in the decade of the seventies originated a social, labor and academic reality in which English mastery in different scenarios and for different purposes became mandatory. That new scenario in which, different to what EFL is nowadays, English was positioning itself as lingua franca of the scientific and academic communities (as claimed by Navarro, 2001 and Niño-Puello, 2013) generated specific needs for students (cornerstone of ESP). Therefore, teachers had to meet those needs in English courses that started to be demanded and differed from English for general purposes (EGP) courses.

Then, the demand for the mastery of specific skills and lexicon was on the rise. Besides, as technology appeared, English was strongly established as a world language for sharing knowledge, business and other purposes. Changes in students' needs generated other changes leading to the appearing of different branches of ESP like English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and even more specific branches (e.g., English for Business, English for Accounting, and English for medical purposes) (Vičič, 2011; Shandarma, Samail & Tsojon, 2014).

ESP is a branch of English language teaching with its own approaches, materials, and methods which have been developed by adapting from some disciplines and integrating with others. On this vein, Saragih (2014) claims that ESP is based "...on the proposition that all language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language use needs for identified group of learners. It is also sensitive to the socio-cultural contexts in which these learners use English" (p. 59). In sum, ESP teaching methods must be suitable to the nature of the teaching environment that is based on students' needs; however, it is not always the

teaching reality for all teachers. For example, ESP teaching in Venezuela has been criticized because ESP courses are still being taught with inefficient syllabi and methodologies suitable for EGP, but not for ESP (Delmastro, 2000; Perdomo & De Jong, 2017; Zea & Gamero, 2012). In fact, in Venezuela, when attending to ELT conferences it is possible to observe that little is presented about ESP teaching methodology; the context would be similar in formal teacher trainee education through time (Hutchinson & Waters 1990; Girardot, 2006). For instance, it has been said that teacher training is mainly based on general features of the language instead of developing communicative competence (Chacón, 2006) and the inclusion of specific methodologies for ESP training (Delmastro, 2002). Then, current and future practitioners might have little access to knowledge about this important issue that can enhance their teaching practice in ESP settings.

Genre Based Instruction (henceforth GBI) is one of the teaching methodologies that have been developed for ESP. It is defined as the teaching practice based on the study and mastery of specific discourse genres (Osman, 2013). GBI has widely being accepted, particularly in the last decade, in the context of ESP in all its branches and for the teaching of different skills (Aziz, 2015; Huang, 2014; Trong, 2011; Wang, 2016a). However, in Venezuela no published paper about GBI was found in our search which may suggest little knowledge about it.

GBI is supported by the notions of discourse communities, genre, genre theory and genre analysis. Discourse communities are a group of communicators sharing a common purpose and having their own communication mechanisms, genres and lexis (Swales, 1990). ESP practitioners work with students aiming to be part of a specific discourse community that shares own discourse genres useful for communications among its members (e.g., engineers, physicians, dentists). In that sense, the students need to master those genres to become efficient members of the community. Then, ESP teachers work on oral or written mastery of those discourse genres, depending on the results of a comprehensive needs analysis.

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Regarding discourse genres for the purpose of this article, it is done as in Morales (2008) who consider them like:

Sociocultural and discursive constructions, basically defined by its external structure and context of use that use the different communities to communicate; they are distinguished from textual sequences (types of texts or superstructures) that we use to refer to cognitive-discursive constructions that structure and organize the discourse (p. 35).

After Swales (1990) definitions of discourse communities and genres, ESP started to become what it is nowadays. The Genre theory with the methodologies proposed by Swales' research started to enhance ESP teaching. It rests on the statement that there are particular discursive genres for each discourse community, and those genres must be analyzed to get a proper knowledge and mastery of the rhetorical, linguistic, textual and contextual issues related to them. For genre theory, genre analysis is mandatory. It is defined by Bhatia (1997) as the study of linguistic behaviors in professional or academic institutionalized contexts that may be approached in terms of rhetoric actions, regularities of social processes oriented towards a goal or purpose or set of communicative processes.

All the aforementioned notions converge in GBI that, as mentioned before, has proven to be efficient for ESP teaching. In Venezuela, ESP has been being incorporated in almost all the careers at universities since some decades ago. It indicates that the importance of the mastery of English in different specialties is being recognized because most of the scientific information is being published in English (Navarro, 2001; Niño-Puello, 2013; Perdomo & De Jong, 2017). However, whereas in other countries research and practice regarding ESP methodology has grown significantly, in Venezuela ESP teaching is not being properly performed in different careers because the goals and methodologies seem to be out of date and disconnected from students' needs. This claim can be supported by studies like Perdomo's (2018) who analyzed goals, methodologies and contents in ESP syllabi from public and private Venezuelan Universities.

Venezuelan ESP courses are mainly grammar and translation oriented and do not really offer participants the development of competences for an adequate integration to their professional communities or discourse communities (as defined by Swales, 1990). Delmastro (2000) analyzed the problem a decade ago and said that regardless of the progress in applied linguistics, the majority of courses were poorly designed; teachers used obsolete approaches that were badly implemented because they included homogenous selection of texts, contents and activities. After more than a decade since Delmastro talked about the issue, Zea and Gamero (2012) found no changes and asserted that Venezuelan ESP practitioners do not have enough knowledge on teaching methods for ESP. Later, Perdomo and De Jong (2017) state that Venezuelan ESP practitioners still do not incorporate suitable teaching methodologies (like GBI) in the classroom. This situation seems to be directly related to teacher trainee instruction because, as Giradot (2006) posits, ESP teachers have mainly received instruction on general English, or just one specialty like literature, so when they face the challenge of teaching ESP for sciences and technical careers, for example, they feel they do not have developed the competences to teach it.

Besides, it may be hard for some ESP teachers to devote time for researching, reading and evaluating the available evidence, because in most cases they work many hours in teaching to be able to make a living (Perdomo & De Jong, 2017). Then, how can Venezuelan ESP practitioners improve their practice by incorporating GBI in their classrooms if, as our search shows there is not a recently published study offering an overview, or an up-to-date paper about GBI? In that sense, as part of a broader project, this study aimed to describe the state of the art of genre-based teaching pedagogy in ESP with the purpose of facilitating ESP practitioners' decision-making centered on the premises of evidence based teaching.

2. Methodology in our search

It was a systematic review; a study that strategically seeks out for published scientific evidence on a specific topic with the purpose of providing an updated synthesis (Martín, Ahlgrim-

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Delzell & Budhrani, 2017). It differs from a traditional literature review because it emphasizes on the use of clear, transparent, structured and comprehensive methods for literature search (as indicated by Bearman, Smith, Carbone, Slade, Baik, Hughes-Warrington, et al., 2012) as well as the presentation of a structured synthesis of the results. It includes the use of scientific databases and a period for the search (it is a systematic review to observe the most recent trends and ranges between 5 and 12 years). In addition, keywords were selected for a systematic search in all databases, and criteria for selection and analysis were clearly chosen. Those details were observed as follows:

3.1 Search techniques and criteria

The search method included the use of *ERIC*, *iSEEK* and *Base* databases. Scholar Google search engine was also considered to retrieve articles that were not included in those databases. Additionally, a by-hand search was performed in the following journals:

Modern Language Journal, Language Learning, Tesol Quarterly, Reading Matrix, Journal of English for Academic Purposes, Educational Leadership, Journal of Pragmatics, Higher Education of Social Science, Language Learning in Higher Education and System. These are high quality peer reviewed journals publishing articles regarding language teaching and research; some of them might not be included in the mentioned databases and found through the aforementioned search engine.

3.2 Keywords and subject headings

Subject headings and key words in English were used to have access to articles written in any language, as long as even journals publishing in languages other than English (e.g., Spanish, French, German, Italian) ask the authors for an abstract (Kafes, 2012; Lorés, 2004). Several combinations were used by including Boolean logic operators for databases and Scholar Google Search; for instance, 'genre+based+teaching', 'genre+based+reading' (a similar combination was performed for the remaining skills). The search was performed according to the following criteria:

availability (free full texts available online), publication date (2008-2017), source (only articles published in indexed peer review journals), theme (any article referring to genre-based pedagogy regardless the study design), and teaching context (English teaching only).

The second and third criteria were controlled in the databases by using their filters and by-hand search by selecting the issues starting in 2008. The remaining criteria were applied as the researchers read the abstracts of the papers. There was no discrimination in terms of skills or study design because the objective was to provide the state of the art that included methodological and content focus trends during the last nine years.

3.3 Inclusion criteria and analysis

The corpus was carefully reviewed by two independent researchers to select the articles and to identify the categories for the qualitative analysis. In the first place, the researchers verified some epistemological criteria for paper selection and eliminated those who were not available full text peer reviewed journal articles and were not related to ESP teaching. Secondly, after the preliminary revision, all the duplicates of selected papers were eliminated. Later, the researchers separated those which seemed relevant for the study by reading the titles. The researchers separately read the abstracts to confirm that they were really dealing with genre pedagogy in the context of English teaching, no matter the study approach and design to be able to observe the research trends on the topic, as suggested by Bearman et al., (2012) for systematic reviews in higher education.

An information-gathering sheet in Microsoft Excel was designed and validated by experts. Quantitative analysis included frequencies and percentages. Dynamic table and data segmentation tools were used to analyze quantitative data regarding the material. Qualitative analysis included content analysis of the articles.

3. Results

The first searched database was ERIC. The combination of subject headings led to an initial result of 520 items. Then, the other databases

consulted were 650. Finally, a by-hand search was performed according to inclusion criteria, but no matches were found for Tesol Quarterly, Language Learning, Modern Language Journal, Reading Matrix and Educational Leadership. Researchers significantly reduced the number by eliminating all those that did not meet the inclusion criteria, and all the repeated papers. Finally, the reading of the abstracts comprised a total of 40 papers (38 written in English and 2 in Spanish).

The results show the quantitative general description of the retrieved material. Categories for analysis were: methodological trends, genre tradition and studied genres, skills, gender, age, and specialties of the ESP courses. Some of the aforementioned categories (e.g., age and gender) are discussed along with other for which broader results were observed.

3.1 Papers general description

Forty papers were analyzed for a total of 265 pages. Table 1 shows distribution of papers sorted by country and continent.

Those articles were mostly published in Asia (25 out of 40) and America and Europe (7 each); only one article was found in Oceania. The Asian articles were mainly published in Iran (8) and China (6).

The material was analyzed by year of publication. Results are shown in Table 2, which shows an increase in the last five years. Besides, it also displays the countries in which they were published, for an overall view of the trend.

Those papers were published in journals from different areas. In other words, not only Journals of English teaching (11 articles) and applied linguistics (12 articles) publish articles on GBI. Some articles were also found in journals of Social sciences (8 papers), languages teaching (not just English teaching, 5 papers) and Higher Education and multidisciplinary journals (1 each). Besides, journals from specialties are also publishing papers on GBI in ESP (e.g., engineering and applied sciences).

3.2 Methodological trends

There were studies with different methodologies. Results are shown in Table 3. Quantitative studies included one quasi-experimental, ten experimental and some documental ones. Some details of interest like samples and corpora sizes were also analyzed. For genre analysis studies, the smaller corpus was 10 issues and the larger 969. The most commonly studied gene was research article which was studied either in terms of its whole rhetorical structure or particular features of specific sections.

Table 1. Distribution of articles sorted by country and continent

Continent	Papers	Country	Papers per
	per Continent		Country
America		Argentina	1
	7	Chile	2
		Colombia	2 2 2
		USA	
		China	6 1
		India	1
		Indonesia	1
		Iran	8
Asia		Iraq	1
	25	Japan	1 2 2
		Malaysia	2
		Philippines	1
		Taiwan	1
		Thailand	1
		Vietnam	1
Europe	7	England	2
		Italy	2
		Serbia	2 2 1 2
		Spain	2
Oceania	1	New Zealand	1
Total		-	40

Table 2. Distribution of the articles by country and year

Year	Country	Articles	Year	Country	Articles
2008	China	2	2015	China	2
2010	England	1		Iran	2
2011	Vietnam	1		Iraq	1
2012	Iran	1	2016	Argentina	1
	New Zealand	1		Chile	1
	India	1		China	3
	Iran	3		Colombia	1
2013	Malaysia	1		Iran	1
	UK	1		Italy	2
	USA	1		Philippines	1
	Indonesia	2		Spain	2
	Iran	1		Thailand	1
2014	Serbia	1		USA	1
	Taiwan	1	2017	Chile	1
				Colombia	1
				Japan	1
		18			22

Table 3. Methodology observed in the papers

Methodology	fr (%)	
Qualitative	10	
Quantitative	48	
Documental	32	
Genre studies	10	
Total	100	

Number of participants in descriptive studies ranged between 10 and 112 with an average of 40. Experimental studies reported samples between 30 and 150 participants with an average of 82. The quasiexperimental study was performed with 80 participants. Qualitative studies ranged between 1 and 25 students. Participants in descriptive, experimental and the quasiexperimental study were students. Only one study dated in 2017 considered teachers as participants to provide information on GBI.

There were 10 experimental studies in the analyzed papers. Only 3 of them considered the variable gender as related to GBT effectiveness but none found evidence supporting an effect. There was not a study, which investigated age as variable affecting GBI.

3.3 Genre tradition and studied genres

The genre tradition or school more referred in the studies is Swales' ESP (35 articles out of 40), but there were also documental studies in which the authors established theoretical discussions on two schools (ESP and New Rhetoric) (e.g., Bex, 2010) and the three of them (e.g., Muñoz, Garofolo & Padula, 2016).

Experimental studies were mainly based on Swales' ESP (9 out of 10) and only one studied reading comprehension under the underlying principles of new rhetoric tradition. No study regarding Systemic Functional Linguistics was observed in the experimental and quasi-experimental designs, it was only considered in two documental studies in the retrieved papers.

A variety of genres was included in the analyzed papers. That variety included essays, news articles, textbooks, clinical case, and brochures, among other. Nevertheless, research article was the genre most considered by the authors in discourse analyses (e.g., Basturkmen, 2012; Stoller & Robinson, 2013) and quantitative studies (e.g., Shabani & Fallage, 2012).

3.4 Skill

Investigators have studied GBI from different methodological approaches (e.g., Negro, 2016; Shabani & Fallage, 2012) and with varied objectives including different skills. In the analysis of the present review, researchers found reading as the most commonly considered skill (40%) (e.g., Muñoz et al., 2016; Rodríguez, 2017) followed by writing (30%) (e.g., Trong, 2011).

Experimental studies reported in the papers were distributed in terms of studied skills as follows: nine (9) out of ten (10) experimental studies found in the corpus dealt with reading whereas only one (1) was on speaking (Khatibi, 2014). The quasiexperimental study considered writing (Nueva, 2016). From those experimental researches evaluating GBI effectiveness in reading comprehension, three (3) included the effect of the variable gender and found no effect of it on GBI instruction effectiveness (Aziz, 2015; Naderi & Pishkar, 2015; Reza & Hajazi, 2015).

Descriptive research reported in the papers was also mainly directed towards GBI for teaching reading. Those studies included description of classroom experiences, proposals (Muñoz, *et al.*, 2016) and action research in the ESP classroom (Rodríguez, 2017). The unique case study found in the corpus was related to writing (Huang, 2014). No article was observed related to speaking, but one referred to four skills (Alesi, 2016) while two dealt with both reading and writing together. Most of documental studies were oriented to theoretical discussion rather than the teaching of a particular skill (e.g., Bex, 2010; Bogdanović, 2014).

3.5 Field of specialty

Studies were performed in different teaching settings. Some of the courses were concentrated on just one specialty pertaining to a broader category: medical sciences, engineering, and social sciences, for example. In some cases, the teachers were working with just one specialty, but in others there was a mixture of them; for example, architecture and technology, linguistics and pharmacy, finance and marketing, public relations, advertising and publishing, and finally, tourism and hospitality. On the other hand, studies held in classrooms for

only one specialty included: chemistry, computer engineering, dentistry, medicine, and specialties of engineering. In all those contexts, GBI showed to be beneficial for students.

4. Discussion

The authors aimed to describe the state of the art of genre-based teaching pedagogy. Researchers' interest has increased, especially in the last four years and BGI instruction has gained a place even in journals from specialties not related to applied linguistics and language teaching. It may be said that nowadays interest on this methodology has grown worldwide in different ESP contexts. Even Latin-American countries have started to investigate about GBI which confirms that this methodology for ESP has being gaining popularity. This is a positive news because ESP teaching in Latin countries like Venezuela has been criticized for being out dated and for lacking the incorporation of efficient promising ESP methodologies instead of EGP ones (Zea & Gamero, 2012). Then, this emergence of interest for the use and testing of GBI is positive in ESP teaching in Latin America, and particularly in Venezuela.

GBI has proven to be useful in higher education contexts to prepare students to master professional and academic genres they need for a successful inclusion in their target discourse communities. It has shown to be good even in courses with students pertaining to more than one specialty, which is not the ideal scenario, but is a commonly observed context in Venezuela's ESP courses (Perdomo and De Jong, 2017). It shows GBI as a suitable choice in Venezuela where unfortunately, it is still frequent to face ESP mixed courses.

Research article is the most studied genre, and the most used in the classroom even when it is not the unique genre in those communities, and it would be of students' interest to approach other genres. For example, for engineering students, besides research articles, it might be useful to approach manuals and technical reports; but no study was related to those genres in the corpus. The study of those materials would be possible through the interaction of ESP practitioners with real, current and well-established members of the discourse

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communities as suggested by some authors (e.g. Morales, 2008).

Osman (2013) claims that ESP practitioners may not be able to know the whole range of genres future graduates will encounter in the course of their career, but through GBI they can offer proper guidance in how to approach and understand those genres. However, no study has been found regarding the opinion of graduated students in terms of how ESP classes under GBI methodologies helped them to become efficient members of the community. At the same time, no study reported the criteria teachers followed to select the genres they included. It opens some new scenarios for research: do teachers communicate with members of the discourse community for selecting genre inclusion in the ESP classroom? Is that selection a result of the needs analyses they perform? Is the teaching of those genres useful for students to accomplish their goals as future members of the communities?

Swales' ESP genre tradition seems to be more popular than the other two, even in Oceania and American countries. In regards to genre analyses studies for GBI, the focus was mainly on rhetorical structure, or particular features of specific sections of the research article. Other genres are still in need for further genre analyses studies to enhance GBI in ESP classrooms.

In the light of GBI usefulness for teaching different skills in the corpus, it showed to be good for reading in ESP; in fact, reading was the most tested skill when studying GBI effectiveness. Moreover, it also seems to be a good choice for writing as Wang (2016) pointed out affirming that GBI has proved to be an effective way for teaching writing in both native and nonnative language environments.

In terms of methodological trends and studied variables, research on GBI is diverse. Average of participants per nature of study (descriptive, experimental and quasiexperimental) is high enough as a good contribution in terms of scientific evidence for decision-making. In some of those studies, students were asked about their opinions on the method usefulness to develop skills, but teachers' perceptions and opinions on GBI

have not been approached except by one study performed in 2016. The view of GBI from the ESP practitioner's point of view, as well as the study of some variables related to its effectiveness (e.g., age and gender which have not been deeply studied) emerge as fertile soils for further research on GBI in ESP environments.

The usefulness of a systematic review is directly related to the fact that it provides up-to-date information on a specific issue. This systematic review shows evidence on GBT methodology for ESP teachers to make decisions in their courses as used in the context of evidence-based teaching. Hence, results from the preset research are valuable for Venezuelan and other Latin-American ESP practitioners because they become useful insights to start changing the realities described by Perdomo, and De Jong (2017) y Zea and Gamero (2012), concerning lack of sound methods for teachers to offer high quality ESP classes according to EBT premises.

5. Conclusions

The aim for this systematic review was to describe the state of the art of GBT in ESP with the purpose of facilitating ESP practitioners' decision-making. The general scenario shows an increasing use of GBT in different ESP contexts for the development of different skills, being reading the most common. It becomes good news for ESP teachers because it represents an option for their practice. However, it was found that more research is still being needed.

GBI seems to be a good choice for ESP practitioners to offer students a more effective learning experience, attending to their specific needs. Even when it demands a lot of effort from ESP practitioners (including permanent communication with experts of the target discourse community), it really seems to help students to become more competent to be recognized as members of the professional target community.

Finally, based on the available evidence, it can be said that GBI represents a good methodological option that could be used by Venezuelan ESP teachers who, according to the literature, still lack proper methods for ESP teaching. Nevertheless, the usefulness and appropriateness of the method will depend on the results of needs analysis because as it is widely known in the language teaching context: "there is not a unique formula suitable for all contexts and students".

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