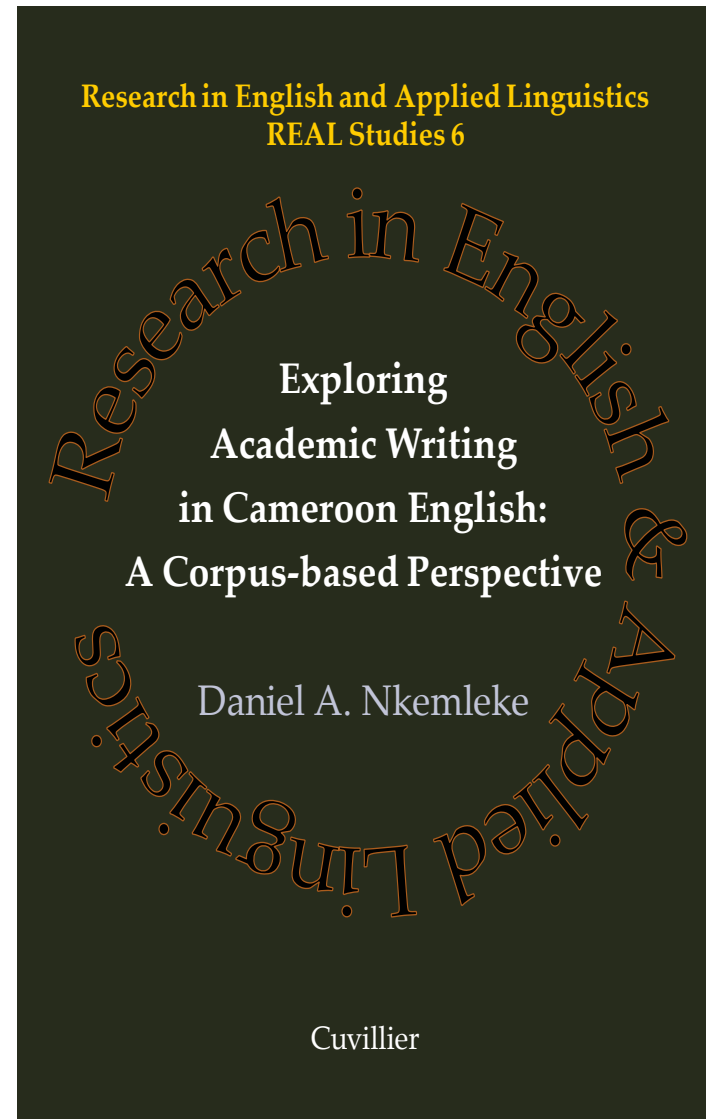# Modeling CARS: Findings of a Classroom Task on Writing Dissertation Introductions at Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS)Yaoundé

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1. Practice of EAP in Cameroon

- EAP course are located within English departments in state universities (Long essay tradition in the University of Buea)

- Within a brief time (usually a semester) students are expected to be taught skills that help them cope with research and academic writing

- EAP courses in almost all universities is limited to surface features issues of cohesion and coherence, rather than a complete socialization in the discourses of academic research

- Most students, therefore, get in contact with disciplinary discourse only when they begin a dissertation process, or at least **begin a "serious" course on academic** English as we have tried to do in ENS Yaoundé since 2009 (after my first AvH sponsorship in TU Chemnitz)

**Research in English and Applied Linguistics
REAL Studies 6**

Exploring
Academic Writing
in Cameroon English:
A Corpus-based Perspective

Daniel A. Nkemleke

Cuvillier

2. Bg. Concept: Social Genre/Cognitive Genre Model

- Genre has become a popular framework for analyzing the form and function of scientific text. While it has been a helpful tool for developing educational practices in fields such as rhetoric, professional writing and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), genre analysts differ in the emphasis they give to either the social contexts or the texts; whether they focus on the functions of texts in discourse communities, or the ways that texts are rhetorically organized to reflect and construct these communities [my emphasis] (Hyon 1996; Hyland 2002)

- Bruce (2013: 4) observes that "because a genre category aims to describe and classify a unit of language that is an operational whole, it is important to consider the nature of the related underlying constructs, those of "text" and "discourse" (cf. Widdowson 2004)

Text and discourse: A distinction

- Text is the overt linguistic trace of a discourse process. As such, it is available for analysis. But the interpretation is a matter of deriving a discourse from the text, and this inevitably brings context into play. Text, therefore, is the written record on the page, such as a written document or the transcription of a dialogue (Widdowson 2004:169).

- Discourse includes the written record as well as the social and cognitive operations that surround it, in both its creation and **interpretation"** (Widdowson 2004:169).

- **"In** attempting a comprehensive operationalization of genre knowledge that accounts for elements of both text and discourse, Bruce (2013:4) has proposed a model of social genre and cognitive **genre"**

Social genre vs. Cognitive genre

- Social genre refers to socially recognized constructs according to which whole texts are classified in terms of their overall purpose[...]. Purpose here is taken to mean the intention to communicate consciously a body of knowledge related to a certain context to a certain target audience (Bruce 2008: 39)

- Cognitive genre refers to the overall cognitive orientation and internal organization of a segment of writing that realizes a single, more general rhetorical purpose such as to recount a sequence of events, to explain a process, to present an argument. Cognitive genres are organizational building blocks that are used in socially-driven ways to create extended texts from which discourse are derived [my emphasis] (Bruce 2008: 39)
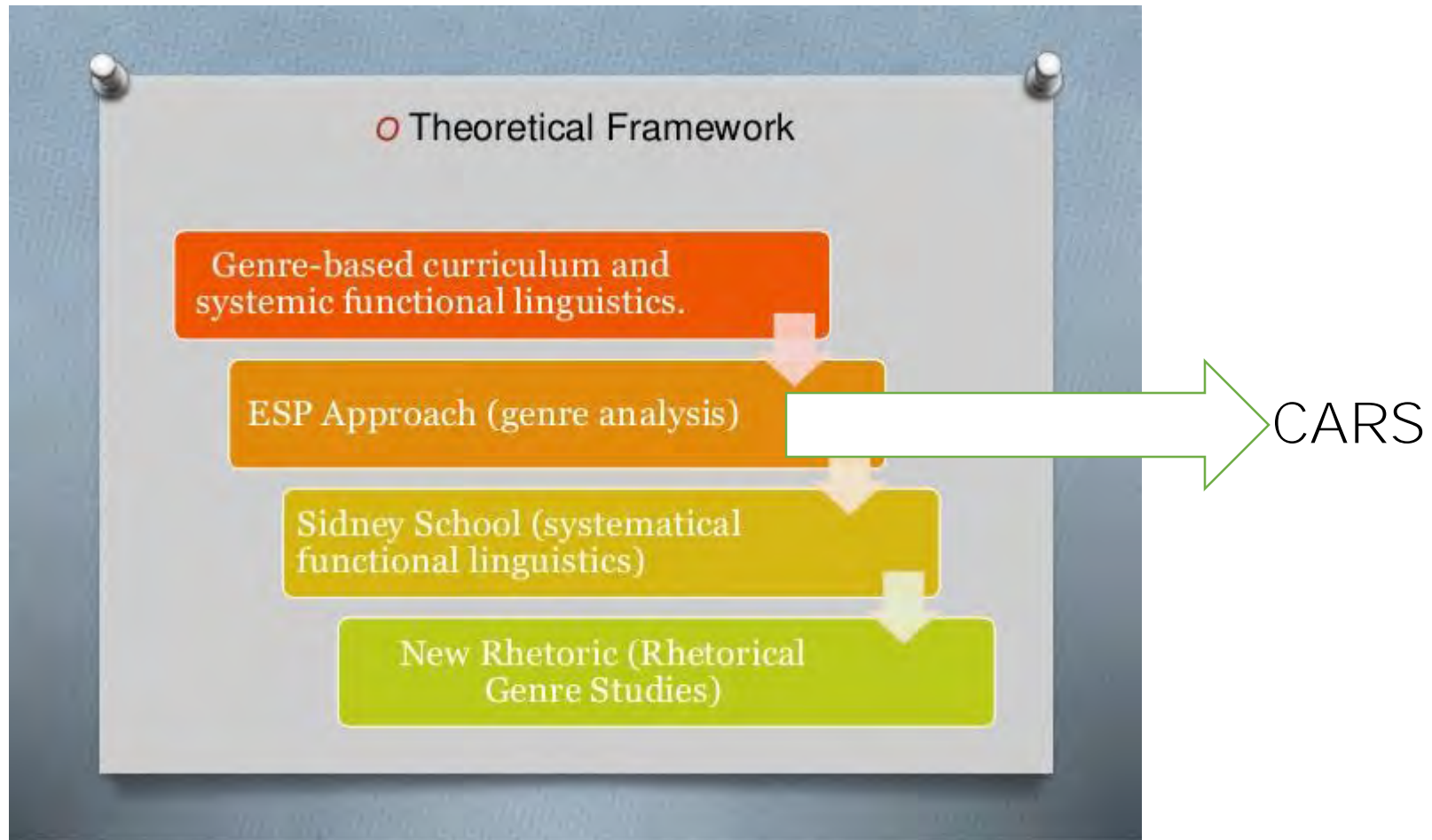
Knowledge elements of the social genre/cognitive genre model (Bruce 2013:5)

Social genre elements	Cognitive genre elements
context (Widdowson 2004)	gestalt patterns of ideas (Johnson 1987)
epistemology (Lea & Street 1998)	general textual patterns (Hoey 1983)
Stance (Hyland 2005)	relationships between propositions (Crombie 1985)
content schemata (Hassan 1989; Swales 1990)	-

Social genre elements

- Context: Widdowson (2004:54) characterizes context in terms of schematic knowledge that involves both intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors. According to Bruce (2013:5), 'in relation to professional genres, extralinguistic factors involve the specialist, technical knowledge of the field to which the text belongs, and intralinguistic factors include the socially-driven forms of communication used in the particular field'

- Epistemology: This involves how experts working in a particular field perceive and use knowledge. In any discipline or profession, the knowledge-creating paradigms used (reflected in its research methodology) strongly influence its knowledge-communicating forms, such as its written and spoken genres

- Stance: The Russian formalist, Bakhtin proposes that writing, like speaking, is dialogic, a dialogue between the writer and reader. Consequently, writing is constructed with the expectations and knowledge of the reader in mind. From here Hyland (2005) identifies language devices to accomplished this, which he calls metadiscourse

- Content schemata: This relates to regularly-occurring, conventionalized patterns used in the organization of content within a genre (Eggins 1994, Swales 1990)

Approaches to genre: CARS emerged from EAP

o **Theoretical Framework**

Genre-based curriculum and systemic functional linguistics.

ESP Approach (genre analysis)

Sidney School (systematical functional linguistics)

New Rhetoric (Rhetorical Genre Studies)

CARS

- SFL Approach to genre
  - ✓genre is a staged, goal oriented social process
  - ✓relationship between text and context
  - ✓theoretical framework: **"field", "tenor", "mode"**

    - ○Examples:
      - recount (to reconstruct past)
      - Procedural (to show how a thing is done)
      - Reports (to present factual information)
      - Explanations (to give reasons for a state of affairs)

    - ○Genre description
      - Description tends to be in the present tense
      - Recount usually contain more action verbs

- The New Rhetoric View

✓ follows **Bahktin's notion of** dialogism; genre involves regularities and conventions (i.e. SFL), but they are more flexible, plastic and free. Genres are flexible instruments in the hands of experts

✓ highlights variability thus helps undermine a deficit view that sees writing difficulties as learner's weaknesses and that misrepresent writing as a universal, and non-contestable ways of participating in communities

✓ provides writers with socially authorized ways of communicating, genres promote the interest of those with the power to authorize these genres

  ○ Theoretical framework: New Rhetoric and composition (North America) derives essentially from cultural studies rather than analyses of texts
  ○ Question asked within NR
  - how do genres become respected and in whose interest?
  - what type of social organization are created and maintained by such prestige, who is excluded, who benefits?
  - what representation of the world does a genre show?

▪THE ESP View

- ✓researchers in ESP (Swales 1981; 1990, Bhatia 1993) also see genre as a social phenomenon, and with a primarily pedagogical motivation of using it as an analytical tool to inform the teaching of English to non-English-speaking background students of this language in academic and professional settings

- ✓genre description in ESP is often associated with the kind of moves analysis exemplified by Swales (1990) in his seminal description of research article introductions.

- ✓it describes the rhetorical patterns of a genre in terms of "schematic structure", similar to SFL, and describes the "moves" that make up a genre from the representation of text samples

- ✓each "move" is a distinctive communicative act designed to achieve one main communicative function and can be further sub-divided into several "steps".

The CARS Model (John Swales, 1981, 1990)

The research paper introduction serves the purpose of leading the reader from a general subject area to a particular field of research. Three phases of an introduction can be identified:

1. Establish a territory: bring out the importance of the subject and/or make general statements about the subject and/or present an overview on current research on the subject

2. Establish a niche: oppose an existing assumption or reveal a research gap or formulate a research question or problem or continue a tradition

3 Occupy the niche: sketch the intent of the own work and/or outline important characteristics of the own work; outline important results; and give a brief outlook on the structure of the paper

Moves and Steps of the CARS Model

MOVE 1 : **Establishing centrality**

        Step 1: Claiming centrality, and/or

        Step 2: Making topic generalization, and/or

        Step 3: Reviewing previous research;   *Declining rhetorical effort*

MOVE 2 : **Establishing a niche**

        Step 1A: Counter claiming, or

        Step 1B: Indicating a gap, or

        Step 1C: Question arising, or

        Step 1D: Continuing tradition;   *Weakening knowledge claims*

MOVE 3 : **Occupying the niche**

        Step 1A: Outlining purpose, or

        Step 1B: Announcing present research,

        Step 2 : Announcing principle findings

        Step 3 : Indicating RA structure   *Increased explicitness*

Daniel Nkemleke: CASE SYMPOSIUM, Chemnitz University of Technology- May 8, 2019

Cognitive genre elements

- gestalts: top-down, internal organizational structure that involves gestalts, known as image schemata (Johnson 1987) and reflects the higher-level organization of ideas

- textual/discourse patterns: this relates to the organization of smaller sections of the actual written text (Hoey 1983, 1991, 1994, 2001)

- Interpropositional relations: This accounts for low-level, more specific textual relations (Crombie 1985)

3. Describing the task: Teaching CARS through sample texts

- This presentation results from an ENG 417: Academic Writing course for Bilingual students at postgraduate level reading for a combined French-English Diploma in teacher training at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS)

- ENG 417 is designed to help students write their end-of-course dissertations in the second and final year of their training. They come in with a BA Degree, some MA in English, Literatures (African, American, British), African Linguistics, Bilingual studies from universities across the country

- On average we have 35-45 students a year; some come from schools, having been teaching for at lest 3 or more years

- ENG 417 has been taught over the past 10 years at ENS. The course load is 2 hours a week and involved lectures (20 %) and **students'** writing practice (80 %)

- Step 1: At the beginning of the lecture on writing dissertation introductions, I introduced the CARS Model to students as a template for learning to write the text. (However, the students were also aware that expert writers sometimes break this rule, as illustrated by the New Rhetoric school)

- Step 2: In groups of 4-5 students work to analyze sample texts, to identify the **"Moves"**

- Step 3: The group discusses the task until a consensus is reached

  - ✓The following is the result of one such joint class task

Move1: Establishing a territory

By Summarizing existing studies: Since the 1970s, many studies have focused on learning with illustrated documents. Globally, these studies have shown that the addition of an illustration to a text significantly improves memorization performance (Levie & Lentz 1982)

By Drawing inferences from previous studies: The various studies presented above suggest that the restoration of the explicit links between the text and the illustration helps improve the quality of the mental representations generated by the use of an illustrated document

Move 2: Establishing a niche

By Indicating a gap: In sum, research on the effect of discipline-related knowledge on EAP reading comprehension has failed to come up with a clear relationship between discipline-related knowledge and increased comprehension. So far, only a few studies, not without methodological shortcomings, have addressed the compensatory effect of discipline-related knowledge and English-language proficiency on EAP reading.

By Presenting positive justification: Clearly, these are issues that deserve to be investigated more thoroughly.

Move 3: Occupying the niche

Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposively: Thus, the purpose of the present study is to examine the effects of four different forms of listening support on listening comprehension of EFL college students at two listening proficiency levels. The four types of support are topic preparation (TP), vocabulary instruction (VI), repetition of the input (RI), and preview of the questions (PQ).

By announcing purpose: Specifically, the research addresses the following questions: • Will different types of listening support affect learners' listening performance differently? If yes, which type of support will lead to a higher level of comprehension? • Will the effects of each form of listening support be the same for learners at two levels of L2 listening proficiency?

4. The Writing task proper

- Write an introduction to your proposed dissertation topic following the CARS Model you have seen and applied in class

- ❖ Note: this was given in the 10th week of the semester as one of the two continuous assessment exercises

Before the task:

- Students were asked to rate their understanding of the CARS framework on the basis of the examples they had analyzed, on a scale of 1-3 (average, good, and very good)

- All the students indicated they understood how the Model works, and could actually identify them in a given text

- Asked whether or not they could write own texts using the Model, up to 75% of the students said they were not so sure; and that they perhaps needed more practice!

- However, I proceeded with the exercise at this point

5.1 Result of schematic structuring

MOVES (M)	Total	Observation
M1^M3	20	▪ Difficulties applying CARS chronologically for the most part
M3	06	
M1^M2^M3	05	▪ **Within "Moves", issues of cohesion and** coherence are clearly evident
M2^M3	02	
M1^M2^M1	01	▪ **Within "Moves", "Steps" may appear in** more than one place, often not necessarily chronologically. This is **typical of "The Aim of the study" (of** Move 3) which in any texts appear more than once, in different places
M3^M1^M3	01	
M1^M2	01	
M3^M1	01	
M1	01	
Others	02	
Total	40	

Sample of best text (Grade "A")

Topic: **The role of social media in learning English vocabulary**

[Move 1]

General statements about the subject : The 21 century has been seen as the technological era with an expansion of new technological devices (computer, phones, TV…). The last decades has witnessed the evolution of the mobile phone, from cellular to Android […….]

[Move 2]

Gap: Number of questions have been raised around the issue of the importance of mobile phone especially for youths. Some see it as doing more harm than good, while others see it as relevant in education. Yet, the impact of these social media on language, has hardly been treated [………]

[Move 3]

Aim/Method: The essence of our work will therefore be to analyze the role that social media plays in learning English vocabulary; English here as a foreign language. We will collect data from the answers of [………..]

Sample of poor text (Grade "C")

Topic: **Teaching Methods and the performances of students in English: The case of6eme in Lycée Obala**

[MOVE 3, only]

Definition: Teaching is the act of transmitting knowledge. It is a process that involves two main actors: the teacher and the learner, who both attempt to reach the same goal established by the curricula [……]

 Aim: The topic entitled "Teaching Methods and the performances of students in English: The case of6eme in Lycée Obala" aims at evaluating the teaching methods used by the teachers in 6eme at that school, in order to see which ones work and which ones should be changed in accordance with the context [……]

Method: To carry out this research, we are going to analyze the problem from a contrastive perspective: we will compare and contrast the teaching methods with the results obtained by the students at the end of the sequence[……]

5.2 Related issues: say more in few words

- Due to the development of English through out the globe, it has come to be the world's number one language and people are getting more and more interested in it (SE16-AWB-19)

- Language, this essential and even indispensable tool in human interactions, is subject to many ups and downs. It has been ascertained by many researchers that a previously acquired language always succeeds to find itself in next languages acquired or learned by an individual. The presence of the first language in the second language can either be conscious or unconscious. It is therefore obvious that languages influence each other (SE30-AWB-19)

English has become the world's first language.

Research has established that L1 interferes with L2, and this interference is often conscious.

5.3 Related issues: textual/discourse patterns

- **Linguistics** is known as the scientific study of language. For several years now, **linguistics** has constituted the core of numerous scientific works by exposing a good number of convincing elements that baffled the scientific community. **Linguistics** is segmented into various branches that have been explored and whose exploration has yielded some empirical findings (SE29-AWB-19)

Problems of argument and clarity were more prevalent than expected (2-3 instances in every texts)

5.4 Related issues: top-down internal organization structure

- There has been a precarious vulnerability in the boundaries of the world in recent years. There is the question of mass migration which mostly involves African moving to the Western world for political, social or economic reasons. Our proximity to the major issues of our time has demanded involvement of all kind. While some are rather neutral, others tend to develop arguments concerning the issues. This is why this paper is an interdisciplinary study which marries migration studies and postcolonial literature (SE17-AWB-19)

Comment:
- This is an attempt to sound big, but which is weak in coherence

5.5 Related issues: use of metadiscourse, technical, specialist language

- Writing appears to be the most difficult skill to perform by the English foreign language learners compared to the other skills which are speaking, listening and reading. **However,** many theories have been produced by linguists concerning the methods necessary to come out with skilled, proficient and coherent writing. (SE31-AWB-19)

- Why "However"?

5.6 Related issues: Writing in the discipline, conventional phraseology or long drawn out syntax

Student's text	Community's expectation
Many researchers have embarked on phonological works such as William Labov, Christophersen, Daniel Jones (SE29AW09)	Scholars (e.g. Labov, Christophersen, Jones) have investigated phonological **aspects of…**
Since the entry of bilingualism in **Cameroon's educational (around** 1980s), may research on tenses performed by English francophone learners in their essay writing has been carried out (SE10AW19)	With the introduction of bilingualism in education in Cameroon in the 1980s, a lot of research has been done on tense usage by francophone learners of English

6. Conclusion/recommendation

- My experience in modeling CARS in ENG 417 Class is mixed

- After this experiment I decided to add the following activities to the course requirements

✓Reading: Each student is expected to read an article in any of the available English and Applied Linguistic journals in a week

✓Discussion: Classroom discussion focuses on their feedback from the reading assignment

✓Writing: Assigned writing task are based on the discussion; either students rephrase the debate raised in the papers they read, in their own words (2-3 pages) or they analyze sample academic introductions to see conformity to and/or divergence from CARS

- We want to see how the next phase on writing Introductions will be (i.e. end-of-course dissertations)

Recommendation

- Academic writing instructors should integrate the teaching of both social and cognitive genre elements in their teaching, in order to facilitate the development of overall discourse competence of ESL students in the genre

- Specifically, they have to focus writing instruction on:

✓ subject specific lexis, conventionalized patterns for content structuring

✓ general rhetoric. i.e. knowledge that involves the structuring of smaller sections of text to achieve a general rhetorical purpose

✓ linguistic knowledge, principally related to the achievement of cohesion and coherence within extended written texts

✓ effective reading in the discipline (journals, books in linguistics and applied linguistics)

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