



Using CBI in ESP: The Role of Explicit Instruction

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v5i3.1374>

APA Citation: Shirav, A.(2023). Using CBI in ESP: The Role of Explicit Instruction. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 5(3).71-91. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v5i3.1374>

Received:
02/08/2023

Accepted:
20/09/2023

Keywords:
ESP, CBI, genre analysis, move analysis, lexical bundles, feature article..

Abstract

The current paper investigated the results of year-long teaching of a journalistic genre implicitly using a CBI-based syllabus. The participants were 20 Japanese learners of English at a vocational college in Japan. The feature articles written by the students at the end of the school year were compared to those provided as high-quality examples. The data were analyzed qualitatively. The two corpora were compared regarding genre-specific moves and lexical bundles used. The results indicated that the lack of explicit ESP-related instruction led to the inability of the participants to produce a feature article. They also supported a cognitive apprenticeship approach to raise learners' awareness of the learning process. In addition, the results suggested that using CBI in ESP can be beneficial when integrated with ESP-specific methods.

1. INTRODUCTION

A language teacher's duties include teaching vocabulary, grammar, phonology, and other essential aspects of language and communicating ideas and thoughts to different people in different contexts. In the modern world, where social media reigns supreme and can transform a person into a sales manager or a technology specialist overnight, a language teacher must recognize that certain aspects of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) (e.g., genre analysis, the introduction of specialized vocabulary) could significantly enhance language instruction and better meet the needs and expectations of a contemporary learner. It has become common practice to use authentic lectures, TV and TED talks, or even to develop materials tailored to the needs of specific students, depending on the topic and/or subject matter they are learning in the ESL/EFL context. The materials mentioned above often contain particular language and text structures that are features of ESP. Therefore, ESP is no longer used exclusively for

specific academic or professional contexts but also benefits general English language teaching (Kooroghli et al., 2018; Li & Heron, 2021).

This paper investigates whether content-based instruction used to teach general English helps students understand the main moves in a journalistic essay without explicit genre instruction but with the help of high-quality examples used as teaching materials.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Content-based Instruction (CBI) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Syllabi have traditionally been considered necessary in designing courses and teaching students in different contexts. Widdowson (1990) interprets a syllabus as “the specification of a teaching program or pedagogic agenda which defines a particular subject for a particular group of learners...a syllabus specification, then, is concerned with both the selection and the ordering of what is to be taught” (pp. 127). Currently, scholars distinguish six main types of syllabi: structural (teaching through a collection of the forms and structures), notional/functional (a group of the functions for language use), situational (a collection of situations where the language is used), a skill-based (abilities needed to use a language), a task-based (a series of tasks performed through the use of language), and a content-based syllabus (teaching of content using language) (Krahnke, 1987). This paper is interested in the last one.

Content-based instruction (CBI) became associated with EFL/ESL teaching in the late 1980s (Grabe & Stoller, 1997) and became popular due to its philosophy of teaching both language and content. In Japan, however, teachers were reluctant to employ this approach at first due to several potential difficulties, like the availability of resources and the need to present content through linguistic framework while paying attention to the proficiencies and needs of students (Butler, 2005). Meanwhile, different models of CBI started to appear. A “sheltered model” requires a language teacher and a field specialist to work together, an “adjunct model” that prepares language learners for lessons to be taken with L1 speakers, and a “theme-based

model” where the syllabus is organized around a theme or topic for the development of language skills.

The theme-based model became most well-known in CBI and is widely employed worldwide, especially in Asia (Anthony, 2019). English education in secondary schools in Japan focuses mainly on developing literacy skills. It lacks practices oriented toward oral communication, leading to an inability of Japanese learners to participate in conversations in English successfully and a lack of motivation toward learning English (Yanagi & Baker, 2016). The theme-based curriculum seems to be effective in overcoming these issues. This model and other content-based syllabi can improve students’ motivation through flexibility in the curriculum, adjustment to learners’ interests, and challenging student-centered activities, which lead to communicative competence (Grabe & Stoller, 1997). It also allows for combining cognitive-based and sociocultural approaches to language learning, as it is possible to influence not only the degree of language learning but also the extent of culture learning (Met, 1998).

Additionally, the theme-based model is very adaptable to teaching materials. Some scholars believe that a theme-based model can be used to connect learning to students’ life experiences and promote positive attitudes in learners (Corrales & Maloof, 2009). Lipson et al. (1993) noted that curricular designers need to choose themes that learners can relate to and that can integrate the topic with the teaching of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Such a syllabus creates a base for a curricular framework known as “the four strands” proposed by Paul Nation (Lightbown, 2014). Nation (2007) views language teaching and learning in terms of four strands (meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, fluency development, and language-focused learning) which should be given roughly the same amount of attention throughout the course. Lightbown (2014) states that with the emphasis on meaning, the four strands can help understand how a theme-based syllabus can promote learning of both topic and language. Newton and Nation (2020) noted that the four strands should be integrated

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through the topic because it leads to varied repetitions of language features necessary for developing fluency and overall competence.

Grabe and Stoller (1997) defined some key features common to CBI. They are:

- promotion of incidental language learning;
- provision of comprehensible language that is linked to previous learning;
- contextualized discourse;
- content and language instruction are inseparable;
- content material is based on learners' knowledge and experience;
- peer cooperation and student-centered activities are encouraged;
- flexible curriculum.

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for General Purposes are two branches of ELT. ESP, first distinguished as a branch in the 1960s, focused mainly on science, technology, business, and other booming fields. It was then divided into English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), and these two branches also have sub-branches. Teaching methods and approaches can vary according to the needs of the subject area, but most importantly, according to the needs of the learners and their goals (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). The philosophy of ESP is that it focuses on language in context as language is integrated into a subject matter (Hyon, 2018). Dudley-Evans (1998) provided characteristics that are absolute for ESP. He is convinced that:

- ESP must meet the specific needs of the learners;
- teaching decisions should be taken with consideration to the discipline the learner is interested in;

- linguistic features most common to the specific discipline the learner is interested in should be taught.

It is difficult not to notice that ESP's perspective on language learning is somewhat similar to the basic idea of CBI. Although the use of CBI in ESP has been studied for some time, the results are inconclusive. Opponents of the idea claim that CBI's lack of suitable materials and insufficient explicit language instruction challenge learners' successful language use (e.g., Anthony, 2019; Warrington, 2010). On the other hand, numerous research findings indicate the positive impact of using CBI in ESP programs (e.g., Brinton, 2012, Tzoannopoulou, 2015). In addition, despite being a part of ELT, some researchers believe that ESP requires the use of specific teaching methods and procedures (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), while others insist that because CBI is a curriculum type, it can be used effectively to teach ESP (Brinton & Snow, 2017).

2.2. Move analysis and lexical bundles

Move analysis was originally introduced by Swales (1990) as a framework for describing the rhetorical organizational patterns of texts. A move is a part of a text that serves a particular communicative function. The combination of moves indicates patterns of rhetorical discourse. In addition to moves, Biber et al. (2007) emphasize the importance of recognizing steps. They explain that the steps of a move are textual elements used to achieve the purpose of the move. By identifying moves and steps that are typical of a particular genre, it is possible to help learners in their field, so this aspect of genre analysis should not be taken lightly.

There is a growing pool of research, which again underlines its importance, aiming to identify the discourse patterns of different genres, starting from occupational application essays (e.g., Ding, 2007; Henry & Roseberry, 2001) to academic papers (e.g., Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Peacock, 2002) and news articles (e.g., Masroor, 2013). Move analysis is a cognitive task that must be done manually; consequently, it is time-consuming even when analyzing small corpora

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(Biber et al, 2007). In addition, move identification processes are often scarcely explained (e.g., Peacock, 2002), making it difficult to replicate the study. That is why, recently, some researchers have tried other methods of move analysis, like identifying common lexical concordances of moves (e.g., Cortes, 2013; Li et al., 2020), for example.

Lexical bundles often reveal wording patterns central to genre-specific language (Hyland, 2008; Wood, 2015). Lexical bundles are a recurrent sequence of three or more words that serve important discourse functions (Biber, 2006; Mansoor et al, 2023). Recognizing and producing such sequences is important for the learner to develop fluency and naturalness in language use. The lexical bundles (n-grams) are often automatically identified using corpus analysis software. Such tools allow for generating lists of genre-appropriate n-grams that can help learners create coherent and well-organized texts (Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Nesi & Basturkmen, 2006). To support learners, not only the lists typical for particular genre and/or register could be helpful, but also the investigation of their use through the text. Biber (2006) categorized lexical bundles according to their functions: stance expressions (express facts and attitudes), discourse organizers (express relationships between parts of the text), and referential expressions (identify entities). As a result, moves are not the only building blocks of a text. The relationship between lexical bundles and rhetorical moves has been established in many studies (Biber et al., 2007; Cortes, 2013; Swales, 1990).

2.3. Research Questions

The current paper would like to investigate whether ESP requires explicit teaching methods and procedures (Anthony, 2000). For this purpose, CBI was adopted as a syllabus for a year-long course to teach feature article writing implicitly. Owing to the existing gaps in the literature, this study has the following research questions:

1. How many moves that were common for the feature articles provided in the textbook were adopted by the students after a year of implicit instruction?

2. Were there any similarities in the use of linguistic features between feature articles provided in the textbook and the ones produced by the students?

3. METHOD

3.1. Teaching Context

A vocational school in Osaka, Japan, focuses on foreign language studies and offers four language departments. In addition to foreign language learning, the school also offers courses in airline, hotel, and global tourism.

The compulsory Contemporary Issues class students are 20 (N = 20) second-year students (2 male and 18 female). All students are native Japanese speakers aged 19 to 21. They had studied English for six years in junior high school and high school before attending a vocational school. All students at the school are required to take this course for two to three years, depending on the course they are enrolled in. The TOEIC scores of this class range from 450 to 650.

The vocational school gives teachers a lot of freedom in the classroom regarding teaching methods and activities. This class is held twice a week for 90 minutes. The required textbook for the class was "Life" by National Geographic, level five (Dummet et al., 2018). Since all students were required to purchase the textbook, it would be used fairly frequently during the course.

Very often the book assumes the function of a syllabus (Ur, 1996). According to the book evaluation criteria given by Ur (1996) (coverage, texts, assignments, and administration), "Life" (Dummet et al., 2018) made a mostly positive impression. Each unit is divided into six lessons (introduction, grammar, reading, listening, writing, and review). This structure allowed for the adequate development of the four strands (Nation, 2007). In addition, the unit topics were global (e.g., "Money," "Vacation," "News"), and students could easily engage with them, contribute to the discussion, share ideas, or learn other perspectives on the topic covered in the

book. The choice was made to use the theme-based model of the content-based syllabus as the most appropriate for the teaching context.

3.2.National Geographic Genre and Style

Today, National Geographic Partners, LLC is a world-renowned company involved in media, publishing, education, travel, and more. However, the company has a long history, beginning with a magazine first published in 1888. The magazine has been in print ever since. The magazine's topics generally deal with geography, science, nature, history, and world culture. It is famous for its outstanding images. As stated on National Geographic's official website, the genre the magazine uses is called "photojournalism" (nationalgeographic.com), which means storytelling through photographs. However, this study is interested in the text accompanying the images, a feature article.

A feature article is a genre commonly used in journalism. Examples of such articles can be found in magazines and journals. They are quite different from the newspaper article, another journalistic article genre. Williamson (1975) presented a vivid contrast between the two to highlight their differences and emphasize the critical characteristics of feature articles. For example, news articles usually report facts, while feature articles explain their significance. He said the main features are a deeper understanding of the topic, communicating subjective opinions, views, and ideas, and creating a sense of originality. Stovall (1990) added that feature articles are more detailed, and the main message of the text can be understood only towards the end. He also said that they can contain quotes and anecdotes to make the reading more entertaining. Pflaeging (2017) added that these articles have more of a narrative format. Hennessy (2013) said that feature articles tend to be more emotional. He noted that despite a variety of topics and article types (e.g., how-to articles, profile articles) that may link multiple events or people, there is always a general theme and message that the author wants to convey to readers. Also, how the message is delivered should have a lasting effect. Hennessy (2013) described a typical layout for feature articles. Its structural components are the headline (grabs

the reader's attention), the introduction (holds the reader's interest), the main body (highlights the main point; each paragraph contributes to the idea), and the conclusion (should be connected to the main body but have a summarizing function).

Since "Life" (Dummet et al., 2018) is an English language learning textbook used in an educational context, it is understandable that the length and language of the reading text would differ from those that would appear in the magazine. Also, the content might be carefully selected or modified to fit the educational setting, whereas magazines are for entertainment. However, the general tone and characteristics mentioned above remained typical of feature articles. The texts could still be considered authentic (real-life use) and offered vivid examples for studying the genre.

3.3. The Corpus: Data Collection

As part of the final exam, students were asked to write a short essay (20-25 sentences) using the reading passages provided in the textbook as examples. Students were asked to choose a topic covered in the 12 lessons as the topic for the essay. They had two classes to do their research in preparation for the essay. Students then had one week to turn them in. All participants gave written consent allowing me to use their work for research purposes.

The current study conducted a move analysis of 20 essays written by learners and compared them to the moves used in 24 textbook reading passages that served as excellent examples of feature articles to determine whether ESP required explicit instruction and teaching methods. In the current study, a color-coding method was used to identify the main moves in the texts. Then, the two corpora were compared in terms of linguistic features.

4. RESULTS

Research Question 1

A qualitative analysis of the texts included in the textbook identified the five main moves common to feature articles. These moves could be observed in all 24 reading passages of the textbook.

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Move 1: The hook is a part of the introduction that grabs readers' attention and sets the stage for the story. The hook encourages readers to think about the continuation of the article and wonder what will happen next. Analysis of text passages in the textbook revealed that authors most often accomplished this step in two ways. They included a question or stated an interesting fact to draw the reader into the story.

“Everyone knows Buzz Aldrin, the famous astronaut, but how many of us have heard of Eleanor Francis Helen, an engineer behind numerous successful NASA space missions.” (p. 94)

“How do you find out what an animal is thinking? How do you know if it is thinking at all?” (p. 135)

“Humans on average spend a fifth of their waking lives listening to music.” (p. 51)

Move 2: The mood is a part of the introduction or the first paragraph of the main body that lets the reader understand the story's tone, whether it is going to be sad, funny, inspirational, or other. The length of this move varied and could be embedded in the part of the sentence or take up a few sentences.

“Grimms’ collection has helped to turn Disney into a media giant. The humble Grimms would have been embarrassed by such fame.” (p. 27)

“Yet, ‘The Afgan girl’ became one of the most famous images of our time.” (p. 106)

Move 3: The background is a part of the main body that has been given in all articles of the textbook as a way to validate the event, place, or person in the article. It can also familiarize oneself with the information if it is new to the reader or contains a particular term. It often includes facts relevant to the article's main idea.

Move 4: The angle is a part of the main body where the author presents the story from a certain perspective, possibly as evidence to prove a point or make the reader think about the main message in the article.

Move 5: The moral is a part of the conclusion that enlightens the reader about a message or issue the author wanted to convey or draw attention to. It was noted that the moral could be expressed directly or make the reader conclude by themselves.

“This boy was only six years old, but he had managed to come up with an excellent solution to a difficult problem.” (p. 130)

Table 1 provides the statistics of the moves comparing the two corpora.

Table 1.

Move Analysis

Moves	“Life”	“Life”	Students	Students
		(%)	(N = 20)	(%)
1. The hook	24	100	17	85
2. The mood	23	96	12	60
3. The background	24	100	20	100
4. The angle	24	100	5	25
5. The moral	24	100	3	15

As can be seen in Table 1, 85% of the participants used Move 1 in their articles. Move 2 was employed by 60% of the participants, and 100% decided to provide some background information in their articles. Moves 4 and 5 were used by 25% and 15% of the students, respectively. Overall, more than half of the students used three out of five moves in their articles. The majority of the participants could not grasp only the last two moves.

When looking at each piece produced by the students individually (Table 2), it could be seen that only three out of 24 participants could recreate all five moves that were common for the feature articles provided in the textbook.

Table 2.

Move Analysis by the participant

Participant #	Move 1	Move 2	Move 3	Move 4	Move 5
1	+	-	+	-	-
2	+	+	+	-	-
3	+	+	+	+	+
4	-	-	+	-	-
5	+	+	+	-	-
6	+	+	+	-	-
7	+	-	+	-	-
8	+	+	+	-	-
9	-	+	+	-	-
10	+	-	+	-	-

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11	+	+	+	+	+
12	+	+	+	-	-
13	+	-	+	+	-
14	+	+	+	-	-
15	+	+	+	-	-
16	+	-	+	-	-
17	+	+	+	+	+
18	-	-	+	+	-
19	+	-	+	-	-
20	+	+	+	-	-

It would be reasonable to say that only two moves, *The Hook* and *The Background*, were adopted by the students after a year of implicit teaching. *The Mood* was only partially adopted.

Research Question 2

Analysis of the lexical bundles used in the textbook articles and in the students' essays using software (e.g., AntConc) could not provide sufficient information, possibly due to the size of the corpora. A qualitative analysis of the individual moves in the textbook articles and the student essays revealed that the lexical bundles used in the first three moves are similar in both corpora. The use of n-grams by function (Biber, 2006) was also identified in the first three moves (see Table 3 and Table 4). However, the lexical bundles used significantly differed when comparing moves 4 and 5 with the text produced by the students after the third move. It was found that the students used very typical structures to express their opinions about the story they had described earlier. Therefore, it was decided to run these parts of the essays through a software called Online NGram Analyzer (www.guidetodatamining.com). The software was able to identify some of the most frequently occurring lexical bundles (see Table 5).

Table 3.

Move Analysis (textbook)

Move	Epistemic stance	Discourse organizing	Referential expressions
1	Is particularly evident Do you find Thinking how to How do you Have you ever You know if One good way		In the US Most famous of Is well known for

	<p>In order to We tend to To think of Once upon a time You probably think Find myself asking Whenever I read Me neither but Is a question Is there a</p>		
2	<p>More enchanting than Had ever heard That would fascinate As far as But rather than The answer lies Think about what That would lead to Believes that the It's so important to Try to find out Remains such a You might want to May have found May not have</p>		<p>In the 1960s</p>
3	<p>It is likely that The claim that More acceptable to Aimed at the It is because Could tell that We find this Can be seen Because of the It's expected With considerations for nothing less than</p>	<p>In other words To start with When he first Then one day At the same time Has since been In the story This is meant as For example in the</p>	<p>In the US One of the Many other countries According to the Some suggest that It can be found in It was reported</p>
4	<p>Need to be To be able to I suspect the Could have done To suggest a Believe that the It is possible that It gave them the</p>	<p>The main reason After a few weeks</p>	<p>When it comes Today they wouldn't Who lives in In the same situation From all the That day concerns At the same time</p>
5	<p>It gives you A difficult problem It seems that An excellent solution to Perhaps it explains why You probably didn't Quite possibly the Would live happily ever after Trying to highlight There is nothing wrong I don't think that</p>	<p>As a result</p>	<p>But as for the The others who In scientific terms In doing so It is exactly Only time will tell</p>

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	Probably would have If there were		
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Table 4.

Move Analysis (students' essays)

Move	Epistemic stance	Discourse organizing	Referential expressions
1	Do you know Do you think Have you ever How do you You may think You know that there Recently I read		In Japan Famous as a Is well known for
2	You won't be able Think about that May answer that May be a You could think		According to a In the world The world famous
3	Basically there are But it would be It is required The reason why	Moreover you should Eventually it was At that time To this day On the contrary After her death Was first investigated So far it is In the words By the time It is when In addition to As things change Along with this	It was thought In March 2019 One of the few

Table 5.

The analysis of the lexical bundles in students' essays after the third move

Move (Other)	Epistemic stance	Discourse organizing	Referential expressions
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	I want to (7) We can do (4) I would like to (3) I hope that (3) I thought that (3) Dreams come true (3) I learned the (3) I would like (3) I was encouraged (2) I think that (2) I was able to (2) I would like to (2) There are many (2) As much as possible (2) That I have (2) I have a (2)	When she was (3)	When I was (3) During that time (2) That's why I (2) At that time (2)
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Note. Frequency is indicated in the parenthesis

5. DISCUSSION

The results of the first research question showed that the students followed only the first three of the five moves identified for the feature articles. When analyzing their texts after the third move, it was found that the participants (n = 17) felt the need to explain the reason for choosing the topic/story or to explain the impact of the story/event told on their lives. Such structure is expected in reflection essays, in which the author describes a significant event from a first-person perspective. In feature articles, subjectivity is not withdrawn, but the main message is usually conveyed by reporting facts (Hennessy, 2013). The pronoun "I" was used 125 times in 20 student essays, while it was used only 15 times in 24 textbook articles. One of the reasons for the frequent use of "I" in essays of Japanese learners of English is sought in the rhetorical patterns that learners transfer from their L1 (Natsukari, 2012). However, it could also be hypothesized that participants did not understand the linguistic or procedural operations (de Beaugrande, 1980) used in the sample articles to convey the author's opinion (Move 4) and the moral (Move 5) of the story to the reader. Instead, in order to establish credibility for the story being told and to provide justification to others, participants described similar situations and outcomes that had occurred in their lives. It may be that because of the CBI's emphasis on the connection between the learner's background and the content, the inclusion of the learner's own experiences in the essay was a logical step, which is a common idea for humanizing pedagogy

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(Elbow, 1994). Moreover, reflection as a kind of high-level thinking process (Kaune, 2006) is often encouraged in EFL, the context in which the present study was conducted. It is believed to help students internalize and contextualize new information (Cisero, 2006). Therefore, it was unsurprising that students included personal experiences in their writing.

The results of the first research question were also supported by the results of the second question. Using lexical bundles made it possible to clearly see which moves the students could grasp and which not. The lexical bundles in the first three moves were similar in both corpora. Students frequently used formulas that conveyed the communicative purpose of the rhetorical moves, which they could clearly understand. However, Moves 4 and 5 had a somewhat more difficult cognitive load, indirectly expressing the author's point of view and the main message. The vagueness of ideas can also be traced by the use of lexical bundles in textbook articles. The epistemic lexical bundles used to express personal attitudes, emotions, and perspectives (Biber, 2006) were represented mainly by hedges (e.g., it is possible that, could have done, perhaps it explains). The use of hedging by EFL learners has been discussed extensively, and the pragmatics behind hedging have been found to be difficult for learners to understand (e.g., Takimoto, 2015). Therefore, explicit instruction is preferred when teaching hedges and boosters (Baker & Bricker, 2010). The importance of stance features lies in the meaning they negotiate, which should be brought to learners' attention.

Three specific findings of the present study need to be highlighted. The findings support Dudley-Evans & St. John's (1998) contention that ESP requires specific teaching methods and procedures (e.g., rhetorical analysis, corpus-based learning). It was found that without specific instruction on rhetorical and linguistic features of the genre (i.e., feature articles), learners could not produce similar text even after a full year of exposure to high-quality authentic examples. Additionally, the results reinforce the claim made by Anthony (2000) and Hyland (2009) that ESP teaching benefits from explicit instruction. Another finding suggests that CBI could be

used to teach ESP as learners got a gist of some of the main moves observed in a feature article, as Brinton and Snow (2017) argued.

The pedagogical applications of the findings are important in at least two major respects. First, exploring the content of different texts is often a primary goal of language teachers, and we should also call attention to their structure (Le, 2009). The present study emphasizes that explicit teaching of rhetorical structure and language is important for learners to communicate a specific purpose. Teachers cannot simply rely on incidental learning of genre specificity by providing examples of the final product. Learners also need additional help and the provision of meta-cognitive strategies to overcome the challenges posed by linguistic and communicative practices related to writing. It is also known as the apprenticeship approach in education. Second, this study used CBI as a curriculum that is commonly used in both ESL/EFL and ESP instruction. The results suggest that focusing on content is not necessarily a bad strategy when teaching a journalistic genre, but it is definitely not enough. ESP-specific methods should be integrated into language instruction when introducing a particular genre. The results suggest that explicit awareness of patterns belonging to a specific genre could have helped students learn how to write a feature article successfully.

In this study, the interpretation of moves and language use in feature articles was conducted by one researcher. While this study provided further evidence of previous research, the validity of the results could be questioned. It is recommended that the study be replicated using a larger cohort of students with different mother languages to provide empirical evidence.

6. CONCLUSION

In English for Specific Purposes, genre analysis focuses on the features of texts that distinguish them. The present study used genre analysis to assess learners' understanding of a feature article. Learners did not receive explicit genre instruction, and no ESP-related teaching methods were used. After a one-year course, the Japanese learners of English could not fully

understand and master a feature article. Therefore, the study argues that ESP has specific methods and procedures, and explicit teaching in this area is needed.

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