

Get ready with a genre-based approach: Enhancing L2 literacy through a TikTok genre

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RESUMEN

Introduction

In the contemporary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, teachers frequently employ topic-based or project-based approaches to contextualize lessons. While these methods are valuable for engagement, they often fail to provide students with the specific strategic and linguistic tools required to decode and produce varied text types effectively. This presentation reflects on a teaching practicum conducted in 2024 at ENS N° 10 "Juan Bautista Alberdi" in Buenos Aires with 26 second-year adolescent learners. Despite having an A1+ level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference, these students exhibited a strong reluctance to produce written or spoken language, often preferring to communicate in Spanish and viewing mobile phones as a source of distraction rather than a learning tool. This behaviour appeared to result from scarce proceduralization and automatization of their L2, along with a lack of engagement and interest in the topics addressed during lessons. This presentation will walk you through a teaching sequence based on Genre-Based Approach (GBA) that was built around a Tik Tok genre to transform students' familiar use of mobile phones into an opportunity for meaningful language learning, while providing an attractive proposal. We will describe pedagogical reasons behind this choice and the successive scaffolding stages (from genre deconstruction to independent production) that were designed to support students' fluency, agency, and functional literacy.

Theoretical Framework

The Genre-Based Approach (GBA) is fundamentally rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and the pedagogical developments of the Sydney School during the 1980s and 1990s. This framework was originally spearheaded by Michael Halliday in 1979, who proposed viewing language as a social semiotic—a resource for making meaning rather than just a set of rules. The Sydney School expanded on Halliday’s work to focus on the language learning needs of students, particularly those in vulnerable contexts, by making the linguistic structures of powerful genres explicit. Under this approach, a genre is defined as a staged, goal-oriented social process (Rose, 2012). It is social because texts are interactive events; goal-oriented because they unfold toward specific communicative purposes; and staged because achieving those goals usually requires multiple steps or phases. This perspective requires investigating texts both as a source of learning and as the ultimate outcome of the acquisition process. By making each stage of the genre explicit and guiding learners through a gradual sequence of deconstruction, joint construction, and independent production, GBA provides structured scaffolding that supports students in understanding what is expected at each step. As a result, learners can rely on the linguistic resources rather than improvisation, enabling them to participate more consistently in the target language. By adopting this framework, teachers can align their practice with the latest curricular guidelines of the City of Buenos Aires, which advocate for developing critical and creative subjects capable of pragmatic-discursive production in significant contexts.

Furthermore, Krashen’s notion of affective filter refers to attitudinal factors such as anxiety, confidence and motivation in order to facilitate L2 acquisition (1982). This pedagogical proposal allowed learners to choose from a variety of formats to produce their texts, aiming at reducing their anxiety and encouraging their participation in meaningful L2 communication.

Methodological Implementation

To bridge the gap between students’ digital lives and the official curriculum, a teaching unit was designed around the “Get Ready With Me” (GRWM) TikTok trend. The unit integrated mandatory contents—Present Simple and Present Progressive tenses and clothing vocabulary—into the stages of the GRWM trend. This genre was selected for its high cultural relevance to adolescents, serving as an authentic and motivating prompt for analysis. As a contemporary digital genre, GRWM videos pursue a recognizable communicative purpose: sharing the process of preparing for a particular event with an online audience.

According to Krashen (1982), the affective filter refers to attitudinal factors that relate directly to success in second language acquisition. Therefore, in this practice, the use of mobile phones was redirected into a purposeful task, in which students

could produce a text in varied ways and formats, without explicitly exposing their faces in a video, thus contributing to lowering their affective filter.

The implementation followed a rigorous scaffolding process:

1. Deconstruction and Vocabulary Building: Students analyzed videos to identify the genre's purpose and stages. Vocabulary development was prioritized to foster independence, using interactive games such as Wordwall, Fashion Taboo, and Hot Seat to make the lexis meaningful and fun.

2. Grammar Contextualization: Present Progressive was introduced through a textbook video (Where's Amy?), following a sequence of pre, while, and post-watching tasks. Students identified the structures orally before the teacher modeled them on the board.

3. Whole-Group Construction: The first writing instance was collaborative. Teachers mediated as the class negotiated content —such as where they were “going” and what they would “wear”— and even discussed the use of emojis to maintain the genre's digital authenticity.

4. Group and Individual Construction: Moving towards independence, students worked in pairs to write a GRWM script for a character, using a checklist to ensure all genre features were present. Finally, in the individual construction phase, students chose their own events and formats (written or video), fostering a sense of ownership and commitment.

Assessment and Feedback: Feedback was an ongoing, multi-stage process that moved from teacher-led to student-centered. Instead of correcting isolated grammatical errors, feedback was organized into three instances: meaning, genre, and grammar. Initially, the teacher confirmed that the communicative intent was clear (meaning). Subsequently, students used excerpts from their own work to identify if the social stages of the GRWM genre were accomplished and if the targeted grammatical structures were used successfully. This raised linguistic awareness and empowered students to create their own tools for improvement, such as personalized checklists.

Final Reflections

This experience suggests that the implementation of GBA transformed the classroom dynamic, lowering the affective filter and turning mobile phones into productive tools for creation. By integrating culturally familiar digital genres into Genre-Based Pedagogy, teachers can connect curricular objectives with students' everyday literacy practices, while maintaining a clear focus on language, genre awareness, and meaningful communication.

By deconstructing a familiar genre and providing clear scaffolding, students moved from passive understanding to active, effective communication. The staged-oriented process led students from genre analysis to joint construction and finally to independent production, emphasizing not only *what* to write but also *how* texts achieve their communicative purposes. GBA provided a structured pathway for literacy development, enabling students to communicate with confidence across different contexts and formats.

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