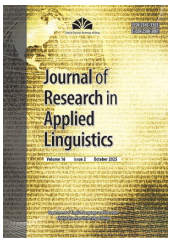
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Research Article

Talking to Learn: Genre Pedagogy for Spoken Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

Genre-based pedagogy (GBP) is a powerful approach for helping students understand and create a variety of written texts. Drawing on systemic functional linguistics, GBP views social communication as texts that belong to genres and proposes a scaffolded teaching cycle that leads students from aided to independent meaning-making. Abundant research has shown GBP fosters students' ability to write sophisticated and specialized texts while mastering disciplinary content. Despite such research, its application to spoken discourse, particularly in foreign language learning, remains underexplored, especially in under-resourced state schools. This study addresses this gap by exploring how an adaptation of GBP for spoken communication, which we call talking to learn (T2L), can help state school students in Colombia engage in authentic and independent spoken meaning-making in English as a foreign language (EFL). Data from a decade of research shows how T2L can increase students' ability to better organize their texts and mobilize a greater variety of lexicogrammatical resources. We analyze the use of pedagogical diagrams as a scaffolding tool that learners may use for planning and monitoring their spoken meaning-making. This study showcases a novel application of GBP for spoken meaning-making in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Genre-Based Pedagogy; Talking-to-Learn; Speaking; EFL; SFL-Pedagogy; Systemic-Functional-Linguistics.

1. Introduction

Genre-based pedagogy (GBP) has emerged in the last decades as a promising approach for promoting student literacy across various educational levels and disciplinary contexts. This pedagogy originated in Australia in the 80s to help indigenous students gain access to the privileged written codes of schooling (Martin, 1999). Based on Halliday's systemic-functional view of language, the pedagogy uses the concept of text as the fundamental unit for planning, delivering, and assessing instruction (Feez & Joyce, 1998). Texts are specific instances of actual language use – oral, written, or multimodal, that realize a social purpose. These texts correspond to particular genres because they follow a similar organizational pattern and draw on similar lexicogrammatical resources to achieve such purpose (Martin & Rose, 2008). This notion of text became the first block for building GBP, as founding scholars identified and described the written genres students needed to understand and produce to be successful in school (Rose & Martin, 2012). The understanding gained from these initial steps later evolved into a literacy approach that proposed a compelling teaching-learning cycle for apprenticing learners into written meaning-making (Callaghan & Rothery, 1988; Christie, 1999; Derewianka, 1990). Continuing to this day, the approach is grounded on a view of explicit and scaffolded language teaching (Derewianka & Jones, 2016) as the means for helping learners read, write, and develop critical literacy in diverse disciplinary contexts (Acevedo et al., 2023).

Abundant research has documented how GBP promotes students' literacy, helping them become aware of how texts work to pack key disciplinary meanings. This research has shown that GBP helps students write more abstract, specialized, and better-structured texts while they learn subject area contents (Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011; Fuzer & Cecchin, 2021; Gebhard et al., 2014; Jodairi Pineh et al., 2017; Jodairi Pineh, 2022). These studies have also focused on

the use of GBP for school reading, finding that it helps students develop an appreciation for literary discourse (Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014), understand the rhetorical logic of explanatory texts (Blecua Sánchez & Sánchez Garrido, 2017; Becerra et al., 2019), and become more engaged in reading and writing lessons (Benítez et al., 2021). More recently, this research has begun to address critical topics such as authorial positioning (Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011) or aspects related to discrimination or linguistic hegemony (Accurso et al., 2023; Harman, 2018; Iddings, 2021).

In the field of foreign language teaching and learning, GBP has gained increasing recognition in recent years (Mickan, 2022), focusing mostly on helping students read and write different kinds of texts. Continuing the trend of research in GBP more generally, this subset of research also shows that GBP favors students' ability to read and write (Abdel-Malek, 2020; Durán-Bautista, 2021; Pedrosa, 2017) as they become increasingly aware of the way the new language works to create meaning (Almacıoğlu & Okan, 2018; Kim, 2022; Montero-Arévalo, 2019), often by developing a metalanguage to talk about texts and their characteristics (Kongpetch, 2006; Perales Escudero et al., 2015). Not unlike research on the applications of GBP in first and bilingual contexts, this research has targeted a variety of genres, both every day and academic, including essays and arguments (Ahn, 2012; Flórez García et al., 2021; Huang & Jun Zhang, 2020), stories (Damayanti, 2017; Kuhn-Brown, 2021), reports and explanations (Becerra et al., 2019; Padilla De La Cerda, 2016), biographies and recounts (Menco-Haeckermann, 2021; Troyan, 2016), responses and reviews (Gebhard et al., 2014), among many others.

Given the foundational concern with school literacy, it is no surprise that most research on GBP to date has been concerned with helping students read and write, paying considerably less attention to students' ability to create meaning through spoken uses of the language, first or otherwise. To address such a gap, over the last 12 years we have developed a research agenda focused on how GBP can be adapted to support English as a foreign language (EFL) students in under-resourced state schools in Colombia in their aspiration to communicate orally in English. We have conducted these studies in Colombia given that the country has a low English proficiency ranking (EF EPI, 2002) and faces challenges in the global market despite the National Bilingual policies over the past few decades (e.g., National Bilingual Program, 2004–2019; *Programa Nacional de Inglés* 2015–2025: Colombia Very Well) focused on improving English language proficiency among its citizens. In this article we discuss the main findings of this research and also describe how we have tailored GBP to cater for the teaching of spoken texts in EFL. As we discuss in the literature review below, a mounting number of studies have targeted a similar purpose. This increasing interest seems to lie in the paramount importance of spoken communication for foreign language education (Sadeghi et al., 2017) to the point that it defines at first glance whether somebody may be considered to 'know' the new language or not. Our research, however, is unique in that it has consistently implemented our own adaptation of GBP for spoken communication, which we call Talking to Learn (T2L), and pays special attention to the use of pedagogical diagrams as a conceptual tool (Arievitch & Haenen, 2005) to scaffold students' increasing independence in spoken meaning-making.

2. Literature Review

Research in GBP has considerably increased in the last decade, to a point where it is virtually impossible to do a comprehensive review in a single article like this (see McCabe, in press; and Sritrakarn, 2022, for recent reviews). A recent critical revision listed at least 7846 academic papers – including books, journal articles, book chapters, and reports, that used the pedagogy or its principles on some form or another (Green et al., 2024). However, this review was criticized on the grounds that it failed to include much of the genre-based research that takes place in foreign language settings (Derewianka et al., 2024). Given such wealth of research, we will only review here the few studies that have addressed the issue of how to develop students spoken communication in a foreign language teaching/learning context through the use of GBP. We leave out those studies that have attended to spoken communication in first language contexts (Díaz, 2019; Sánchez-Gibbons et al., 2020) as well as most of our own work since it will be the focus of later analysis and discussion.

Unlike genre-based research more generally, the few studies about GBP for spoken discourse in FL contexts seem to have privileged everyday genres over academic ones. This research has analyzed students' ability to report daily routines (Mendoza Godoy, 2022), do reviews and biographical recounts (Khatibi, 2014; Parada Galindo, 2016), engage in casual conversations (Wilkins, 2019), and participate in discussion sessions after doctoral presentations (Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2019). It has also focused on students' listening ability, exploring how the approach may help students understand news reports, academic lectures, conversations (Kizi & Abdujabbarovna, 2025) as well stories (Pinillos,

2017). The results of this research, though varied, consistently reveal that GBP serves to enhance students' ability to engage in spoken communication in a new language. Several of the studies report improvements in learners' awareness of how the new language constructs spoken meanings (Querol-Julián & Fortanet-Gómez, 2019), resulting in better organization of their texts and more appropriate and varied use of clause types and circumstances (Mendoza Godoy, 2022), lengthening of utterances in casual conversation (Wilkins, 2019), students active engagement (Kizi & Abdujabbarovna, 2025) and more decided participation in lesson interactions (Parada Galindo, 2016).

Genre-based applications reported in the research have kept true to the founding principles of the pedagogy, adopting a scaffolded and explicit view of teaching spoken texts and their generic, registerial, discourse, and lexicogrammatical features. In terms of lesson delivery, all studies have followed the key stages of the teaching-learning cycle, namely modeling and deconstruction, joint construction, and independent construction. This consistency notwithstanding, some adaptations to the pedagogy have also been made for teaching spoken discourse. Mendoza Godoy (2022) incorporated a strong multimodal component during modeling and deconstruction and also used translanguaging to Spanish as a means to scaffold low-performing EFL learners, increasingly fading the amount of L1 used as support. She also extended the preparing for reading stage into 'preparing for topic and preparing for video'. Whereas Khatibi (2014) used generic consciousness raising tasks to help learners understand the social purpose and contextual factors of the genre, Querol-Julián and Fortanet-Gómez (2019) incorporated a detailed analysis of multimodal semiosis during the teaching learning cycle, engaging students in joint deconstruction. Rather than deviations from a faithful implementation of the approach, these adaptations show that the pedagogy can be flexibly deployed to cater for specific contextual conditions and students' needs while upholding its founding principles.

In sum, the research to date has confirmed students' learning gains that may be linked to the use of GBP for spoken discourse. However revealing, this research is still a work in progress, pending to disclose in detail how the specific strategies of the pedagogy may work for spoken discourse during moment-to-moment lesson delivery. This research also says very little about the ways in which students' independent spoken meaning-making may be scaffolded to overcome non-spontaneous or memorized communication (Herazo, 2010). We address those issues by describing the version of the pedagogy we have used, detailing how it may support students' meaning-making in different strata of language as well as analyzing the role of pedagogical diagrams in supporting students' (more) independent spoken communication.

2.1. Genre-Based Pedagogy for Spoken Discourse: Talking to Learn (T2L)

Not unlike genre-based pedagogy more generally, T2L is based on a notion of language use as text, sees teaching as the provision of assistance, conceives lexicogrammar as a meaning-making resource that should be taught explicitly through the use of metalanguage, and sees language learning as the process of increasingly appropriating the lexicogrammatical and discursive resources to mean in a variety of spoken textual contexts (Halliday, 1993). T2L sees any act of spoken communication as a text that belongs to a genre (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). These texts can be of an academic nature, like an explanation of how volcanoes erupt in an oral presentation, or more spontaneous and every day, like an exchange to buy fruits in a farmer's market or an informal conversation about a soccer game. These texts are also tightly connected to context, in a way that the choices made in lexicogrammar reflect and construct the cultural and situational context in which they occur (Eggins, 2004). As we will discuss in detail later, T2L takes the notion of assistance a step further by viewing it from a sociocultural perspective where metalanguage corresponds to conceptual knowledge that teachers and learners can use to mediate spoken meaning making (Herazo, 2021). In this view, pedagogical diagrams become fundamental because they condense such conceptual knowledge in visual form (Arievitch & Haenen, 2005), making it readily available for teachers and learners to mediate meaning-making at any moment during T2L teaching cycle.

To assist learners in understanding the intricate connections between text and context, T2L also draws on a scaffolded teaching cycle, where assistance is increasingly reduced as learners become able to mean. To that end, T2L mirrors the various levels of support of Reading to Learn pedagogy, adapting them to the teaching of spoken discourse.

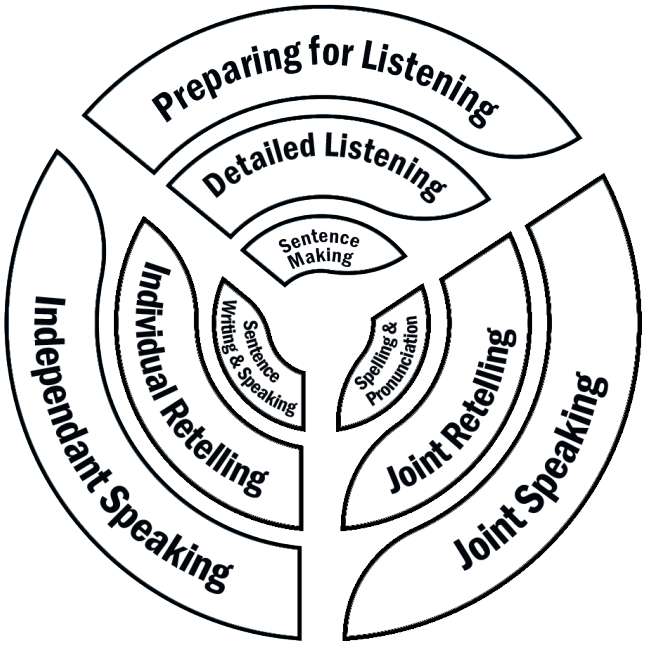


Figure 1. T2L Cycle

The first scaffolding level corresponds the outer layer in the diagram. This level works with whole spoken texts to prepare learners for understanding through activities that activate their background knowledge of a model text belonging to the genre. Learners and teacher discuss the purpose of the text and why the text was created, analyzing together its situational context (i.e., who participates, talking about what, and through what means). At this point the teacher provides a summary of the text, modifying his use of the new language or using translanguaging strategies so that learners can understand the general contents of the text before they listen to it for the first time. Depending on learners' level, teacher and students may then engage in joint and independent construction of a similar text of the same genre, or proceed to the second layer of support for more specific and focused supporting strategies. During Joint Speaking, students learn the metalanguage to talk about the rhetorical organization of the genre and how it became realized in the model text. The teacher may introduce at this point a pedagogical diagram representing the organizational and lexicogrammatical features of the genre. The diagram provides a visual support that students can use to understand the model text in detail and to create a similar text jointly. During Independent Speaking, students use the pedagogical diagram as support to plan and then create a unique spoken text of the same genre. The diagram offers conceptual and procedural support that learners can use to create spoken meaning as authentically as possible once the teacher is no longer present, fulfilling thus the goal of independent meaning-making of the T2L cycle.

The second level of support, represented by the middle layer, seeks to help learners understand how key lexicogrammar is used to mean in short segments of the model text. The first strategy is detailed listening of such segments, clause by clause, with the teacher asking questions that help students notice and note down in the pedagogical diagram specific meanings and wordings that are typical of the genre. The teacher may elaborate on students' answers, introducing and explaining the lexicogrammar, using metalanguage to that end. Students then use those notes during joint retelling to re-create the model text collaboratively. Finally, during individual retelling, students retell the same text individually, involving teacher's assistance or support from the diagram if necessary. This guided retelling of the text helps students become familiar with how the text creates meaning using particular features of the lexicogrammar.

Finally, the inner level of support helps learners develop control of lexicogrammar by focusing on patterns of words and sentences that are typical of the genre. To that end, the teacher may involve learners in sentence and word construction activities, recognition of morphemes and words, practice of sentence structure, spelling and pronunciation activities, among many other. Throughout this level of support, the teacher may explain the lexicogrammar in more detail, followed by lexicogrammar activities and exercises that relate to the contents of the text.

The three levels of support offer a flexible roadmap that teachers and students can journey in different ways, depending on the specific feature of the genre and on learners' interests, needs, and language level (Rose & Martin, 2012).

One path we have usually followed in our work is to do preparing for listening strategies first, then do the detailed listening activities that are typical of the second level of support, and finally do the clause-focused lexicogrammatical activities that are suggested for the third level of support. Then, students may engage in joint and independent speaking activities. This approach where a close focus on lexicogrammar is 'sandwiched' between more meaning-oriented activities is a response EFL teachers' concerns for explicit attention grammar and vocabulary learning as prerequisite for engaging students in more spontaneous and independent communication tasks.

3. Methods

3.1. Context and Participants

All our research on T2L has occurred in the context of EFL teaching in Colombian state schools. As has been widely documented in Colombian scholarship (Cárdenas & Miranda, 2014), most of these schools are under resourced, offer a limited amount of instructional time for EFL learning – usually no more than 3 hours weekly, and rely on insufficiently trained teachers. Despite recent governmental efforts to promote more communicative and content-oriented instruction (Colombia Bilingüe, 2016), EFL teaching in Colombia continues to place vocabulary and grammar teaching at the center, deferring communicative activities till the end of instructional units for students to demonstrate lexicogrammatical knowledge (Herazo et al., 2009). Given these conditions, it is no surprise that year after year standardized tests show that most students graduating from state schools struggle to communicate in EFL at the most basic levels, a situation that worsens for rural schools.

The schools where we have done genre-based research usually serve a large population of students, around 1300 per school, from pre-school to 11th grade, ages 6 through 17. To date, we have done five studies in equal number of schools, both rural and urban (see Table 1). In most cases, these students come from low income families and rarely have been exposed to EFL teaching during primary grades, which means that they are usually unable to participate in the most basic spoken communicative tasks. Our research has focused on students from 6th to 9th grade, whose ages range from 1 to 15 years old. The decision to focus on such grades was made by the teachers participating in our research studies rather than a decision that we have taken as researchers.

Our work has also involved a number of EFL teachers, both pre-service and in-service. All participating in-service teachers already had a masters' degree at the time of the research and had about a decade of teaching experience. They were chosen to participate in our research because of their interest in professional development and openness to try out new ways of teaching in their classrooms. None of these teachers had prior knowledge of genre pedagogy before being involved in our research, which implies that all of our studies have incorporated a teacher professional development component. Pre-service teachers have also been involved in our research because of their interest on teaching spoken communication. In the teacher preparation program where we work, pre-service teachers can opt for doing research during their last academic term as a required milestone for graduation. They can also be involved in '*semilleros de investigación*', student-led teams of collaborative research that focus on a specific research topic. In these *semilleros* they have had the chance to learn genre-based pedagogy and basic SFL concepts together with us and then use it to teach spoken communication during their research. The following table summarizes the characteristics of the teacher participants whose work we will discuss later.

Table 1. *Participating Teachers*

Pseudonym	Teaching Status	School Context	Teaching Experience at Time of Study
Leon	In-service MA	Rural, 9th grade	12 years
Ely	In-service, PhD	Rural, 6th grade	10 years
JD (first author)	Teacher educator, PhD	Urban, 6th grade	15 years
May	Pre-service	Urban, 8th grade	1 year (practicum)
Camelia	Pre-service	Urban, 7th grade	1 year (practicum)

3.2. Study Design and Data Collection

We have followed an explanatory case study design in almost all our studies. This kind of design is particularly fit for explaining how the process of teaching and learning may have led to specific learning gains (Bobkina &

Domínguez-Romero, 2023; Yin, 2014). The cases we have studied usually consist of small groups of students (usually 3 to 6) within a larger class (usually 35 to 45), whose progress we describe and analyze in depth by comparing it to other similar cases within the same class. These in-depth analyses of cases provide rich and illustrative detail of how learners' spoken discourse may improve during genre-based lessons, which may be useful for similar cases. We have also used a mixed-methods design with a larger number of students (N=11), combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, data analysis tools, and integration strategies to yield in-depth evidence for a case (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). We acknowledge that our research has involved a small number of participants, which may limit our interpretations. However, our goal has not been to generalize from our findings but rather to understand how the pedagogy may work for promoting spoken discourse in EFL classrooms (see Derewianka et al., 2024, for a related position). Table 1 shows the most salient design features of our research to date.

Table 2. *Design Features*

Spoken Genre Focus	Context	Duration	Design	# of Case Students	Data Sources
Shopping exchanges and recipes	6th grade	16 weeks	Comparative case studies	6	Observation (video and audio recorded)
Biographical recount	9th grade	12 weeks		6	Interviews to students and teachers (in-service)
Anecdote	8th grade	8 weeks		3	
News report	7th grade	10 weeks		3	Students' spoken texts Lesson artefacts
Non-academic Descriptive report	6th grade	12 weeks	Mixed methods	11	Pre- and post-tests combined with the above

As table 2 shows, studies have spanned from 8 to 16 weeks and have involved three main phases. The first phase occurred prior to implementation of T2L in order to have a baseline of students' spoken communication abilities as well as to determine the genre focus. The second phase consisted of a series of lessons following the T2L sequence described above. The third and final phase has usually involved interviewing students or teachers to explore their perceptions of T2L pedagogy. All studies have focused on non-academic and monologic genres because of participating teachers' preferences, students' needs, and curriculum requirements.

As the table also shows, we have collected data through a combination of procedures. Students' spoken texts produced before the lessons and from both joint and independent speaking stages of the T2L cycle. Observations and lesson artefacts have also been fundamental for understanding the teaching and learning process that occur during the T2L cycle. These observations have been video and audio recorded in almost all cases and later transcribed for analysis. Interviews to participating in-service teachers have also been used to collect data about their implementation of T2L and their perceptions of it. We have also used focus group interviews with small samples of students to explore their experience with this pedagogy. In addition to that, for the mixed-methods study we applied a pretest – posttest consisting of a speaking task that was alter assessed using a rubric. These varied data sources have allowed to ascertain whether T2L may have helped develop students' spoken potential to mean in EFL.

4. Data Analysis

All studies have used SFL categories to analyze students spoken texts from the initial stage prior to T2L lessons and from joint and independent speaking tasks. For generic structure, we used Rose and Martin's (2012) concept of genre stages and phases within the stages. The characterization of stages was drawn from relevant literature or defined by ourselves following Eggins (2004) procedures for schematic structure characterization. For interactive genres such as exchanges we followed Ventola's (1987) description of the dynamic construction of shopping exchanges. We have also relied on the transitivity system for analyzing students' ability to convey more or less content in biographical recounts and descriptive reports. We have also paid close attention to students' evolving use of lexicogrammatical resources that are typical of each genre, such as reporting and time expressions in news reports, expressions for evaluating the quality of a dish in descriptive reports, or for reacting to the unexpected event in anecdotes.

We have also analyzed students' realization of genres using a rubric addressing genre purpose, schematic structure, and lexicogrammar for descriptive reports. In the case of the descriptive reports study, three experienced teachers (a main rater and two secondary raters) took turns to rate students' descriptive reports so that they were scored

twice. We compared the pretest and posttest scores statistically using a Wilcoxon test. These scores were then further contrasted to our qualitative analysis of students' spoken texts through a joint display strategy.

Finally, we used a combination of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and discourse analysis to identify themes in data from observations, interviews, and artefacts. This analysis was particularly relevant for exploring students and teachers' experiences with T2L as well as to understand how T2L may have spurred students' spoken communication ability during lesson interaction. This analysis strategy has allowed us to understand, for example, the role of pedagogical diagrams in mediating students spoken meaning-making throughout the different instructional stages of theT2L cycle and for the various genres that have been the focus of our research.

5. Findings

Data analysis in our studies provides preliminary evidence that T2L may develop students' potential to make meaning in a variety of genres, helping learners organize their spoken texts better following the typical structure of the genres they have studied. In turn, learners also seem to appropriate an increasing number of lexicogrammatical resources that they use to realize different spoken meanings. Pedagogical diagrams play a crucial role in this process, as they serve to successfully mediate learners' spoken meaning-making throughout the T2L cycle. We discuss each of these findings next.

5.1. T2L and Learners' Spoken Semiotic Potential

Our analysis of the schematic structure of learners' spoken texts, learners' realization of speech functions, and their use of lexicogrammar suggests that T2L bolsters students' spoken potential to mean.

5.1.1. The Rhetorical Organization of Students' EFL Texts

One consistent finding across studies is that learners' texts realize a greater variety of stages and phases as students' progress through the T2L lessons. The following examples, taken from our study on spoken biographical recounts (Herazo et al., 2021), clearly shows how Willy, a 13 year old, became increasingly able to recount the life episodes of famous persons. At the onset of the T2L instructional sequence (Text 1), Willy could identify the person whose biography he was telling (Neymar, the famous soccer player), noting the name, age and occupation. Then he recounted the birth date and place, the first episode in a person's life.

Transcript 1. *Willy's Recount - 1*

He is Neymar Silva Santos,

He is 30,

His job a play soccer.

Date of birth 5 of February::: 1992,

Date of place (Mogi das Cruces) Brazil

Willy's initial attempt at recounting a biography revealed he was barely able to go beyond the identification of a person and initial episodes in his/her life. In contrast, during the independent speaking stage of T2L, Willy's recount of Miguel Calero's biography – another soccer player, showed a greater number of stages and phases.

Transcript 2. *Willy's Recount - 2*

he is Miguel Calero

his birth was in 14 of April,

he was born in 1971

he debuted as profession player, -- started in Barranquilla, Colombia,

he signed his main contract with Pachuca in Mexico

he first obtained the Mexican title versus Tigre de UNAL

Calero was taken to emergency, in a day of Sunday noviembre 25, with a cerebral thrombosis and he died in Mexico city

He was 41 years old

He died in December 4th 2012

In addition to identifying Calero by name, Willy recounted some key episodes in his life, such as birth, initial debut as professional player, main contract and title, and the details concerning his death (cause, place, date, age).

5.1.2. Lexicogrammatical Repertoire

As may be apparent from the previous illustrative analysis, the realization of a richer text organization implied that learners became able to mobilize a greater variety of resources from the lexicogrammar. The following table shows how Leisy, a 13-year-old from our study on news reports (Quintero, 2025), incorporated a greater variety of modals, conjunctions, tenses, and typical news reports expression to tell news.

Table 3. *Leisy's Report*

	T2L stage	Modals	Conjunctions	Tenses	Typical news reports expressions
Leisy	Joint Retelling	Must	in addition, and	Present simple ("young people participate")	"it is suggested that…" "thank you for watching"
	Individual Retelling	(Not used)	And	Present simple ("this peace agreement marks")	"residents hope that…", "thank you and stay tuned for more updates"
	Independent Speaking	must, could, have to	And, so, also, but, because, however	Present simple, Past simple, future simple (we bring you", "It was a bit bad", "the students will regulate")	"Welcome to School news", "today we bring you information about…", "I think…", "thanks to the agreement…", "thank you for your attention"

As the table shows, Leisy's news reports about a neighbors' dispute included a richer variety of modals of obligation and conjunctions from the beginning till the end of the T2L lessons. These resources helped her stress the force of obligation of her statements as well as establish different logical connections between her utterances. While for joint retelling she was able to express only addition using 'in addition' and 'and', by the independent speaking stage she expressed not only addition but consequence (so), contrast (but, however), and provide reasons (because). Similarly, she became able to use simple tenses in combination by the end of the instructional unit, a feature of authentic discourse as used in news reports.

5.1.3. Speech Functions in Shopping and Selling

Our analysis has also revealed that T2L lessons appear to be consequential for increasing the repertoire of speech functions students can achieve in EFL. This became particularly salient in our study on shopping exchanges in a farmers' market (Herazo, 2014), where students incorporated a greater variety of the speech functions that are necessary for realizing the stage of Service in these spoken exchanges. The case of Yini, an 11-year-old girl, is telling of how she fulfilled more functions in her texts as the genre-based lessons progressed. Table 3 shows the speech functions, the instructional stage where they occurred, and the number of times Yini realized them (in parentheses).

As the table shows, Yini fulfilled an increasing number of Service speech functions, nine in total, from the beginning to the end of the genre-based sequence of lessons. Similar to other student cases in that study (see Herazo, 2014), the mounting diversity of functions responded to the typical realizational patterns of shopping exchanges. Intriguingly, the table also shows some speech functions whose realization emerged during the independent speaking stage. That is these functions were not explicitly taught in previous lessons but rather negotiated incidentally between teacher and learners to fulfill the purpose of shopping and selling. In our view, this reveals the authenticity of the spoken interactions Yini engaged in by the end of the teaching cycle and that were facilitated by T2L, allowing these kinds of meanings to emerge contingently depending on how specific exchanges evolve.

Table 4. *Speech Functions*

Speech function	Onset of Instruction	Joint speaking	Independent speaking
Request service	Can I have…please? (1)	Can I have…please? (2) Could I please….? (1) (predicate have missing)	Could I please….? (3) (predicate have missing)
Comply			Sure, absolutely (2)
*Non-comply			I'm sorry, I don't have any (1)
*Refuse to allocate turn			Wait a second (1)
Inquire for more needs			Anything else? (3)
Specify additional needs		Eh::: yes, can I have …. please? (1)	That's all (3) One onion, please (1)
*Specify quantity of goods		A basket of (1)	
*Accept offer			Yes (1)
Thank			Thanks (3)

5.1.4. The Mediating Role of Pedagogical Diagrams

Our analyses across studies also suggest that students' gains during T2L lessons may be tightly linked to teacher's and students' use of metalanguage – conceptual knowledge of how the new language works, as it is represented visually in pedagogical diagrams (Herazo, 2014; Becerra et al., 2019). The following diagram, for example, was introduced by May, an eighth-grade teacher, to represent the purpose and structure of anecdotes to her learners (Salgado & Doria, 2019).

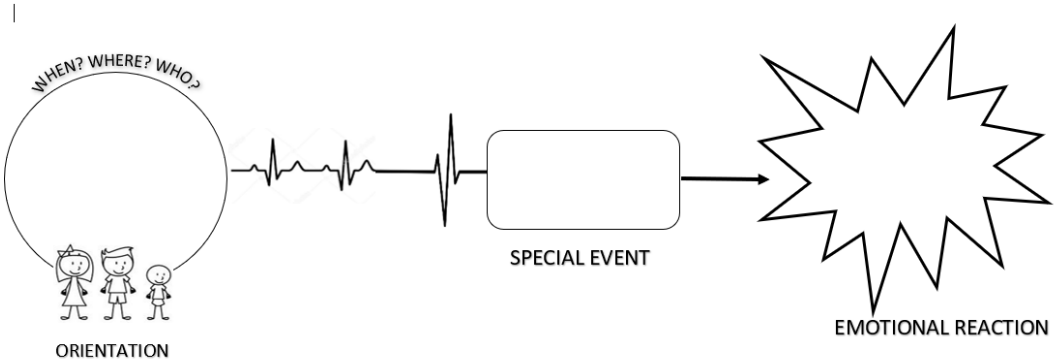


Figure 1. Pedagogical Diagram of Anecdotes

The diagram is organized as a timeline that starts with the image of some participants of an age similar to learners and the questions 'When? Where? Who?' to indicate the key contents of an orientation. Then, it depicts a beating line to indicate a normal flow of events in a person's daily life that are suddenly interrupted by a special event, the second stage in the anecdote genre. The occurrence of this special event leads to (represented by the pointed arrow) an emotional reaction that is represented by an explosion bubble.

These visual representations are used at different moments during T2L for different purposes. For instance, May and her eighth graders used the diagram to map out the lexicogrammatical choices that they could later use during the different stages of their anecdotes, as shown in the following transcript from the joint speaking stage of the T2L lessons. Their interaction around the diagram occurred mostly in Spanish, students' L1, and was translated here. Instances where the teacher or students used English appear in italics and in bold.

As the transcript reveals, the diagram served as tool to visualize the purpose and stages of the anecdote genre at the time that students and teacher identified specific wordings that could realize the stage of orientation. By engaging in

such metalinguistic talk with support of the diagram, as shown in Transcript 1, learners begin to link specific wordings to the functions they fulfill in each stage of the genre.

Transcript 3. *Pedagogical Diagrams in Teacher-Student Interaction*

1	May	where it says **ORIENTATION** .. (points at diagram)) you know there are three questions, **when? where?** and **who?** Right, if I don't want to use '**today**', which other expression can I use?
2	SS	(no answer)
3	May	To tell something, if it didn't happen today, when could it have happened?
4	S1	Tomorrow
5	S2	**Tomorrow**
6	May	**Tomorrow?** Something that happened tomorrow?
7	S?	**yesterday**
8	May	**Yesterday** let's start taking notes under **orientation**, let's note down **YESTERDAY**.
9	SS	(Take notes on diagram)
10	May	What other expression? You love that **yesterday,** you write it in all our exams
11	S3	**Last XXX**
12	May	**Last** what?
13	S3	**Last night**
14	May	**Last night, okay**, let's write that one down too, under **yesterday,** which other, **next week?**
15	SS	**Last**
16	May	**Last week, great!!** Let's write down **last week**
17	SS	(students write on diagram)

The pedagogical diagram is also crucial for learners to plan their spoken participation in advance without having to write a script of what they will say. This is of paramount importance to fulfill the aspiration of independent and, in many cases, spontaneous spoken communication that is usually the goal of many EFL classrooms. In the following example, taken from our study on descriptive reports, three sixth graders plan their independent descriptive reports of a typical dish using the diagram as support. The diagram consisted of a chart showing the stages of a descriptive report of a typical dish, with specific wordings uttered in English (italicized and in bold) that could be used in each stage.

Transcript 4. *Pedagogical Diagrams in Student-Student Interaction*

1	S1	The first one is **presentation** (looks at diagram); we can say, "**This is sancocho**"
2	S2	Yes, we can also say **we have sancocho**, and then the **ingredients** (pointing at diagram)
3	S3	And which one is the **side dish**?
4	S1	What do you eat soup with? **With rice!**
5	S3	Agreed, and we eat it at **lunch**
6	S1	Yes, and we can add that it is **delicious**.

The transcript showcases students' collaborative decision-making regarding how they would realize their reports of a '*sancocho*', a typical dish from the Colombian Caribbean. They all contributed specific wordings that appeared in the diagram and that they could use in their spoken descriptive texts later. The metalinguistic talk shown in Transcript 2

served a mediating function by anticipating the specific wordings that could realize the various stages of their descriptive reports of a typical dish. Indeed, our mixed-methods analyses for this study showed that students' higher scores in the posttest were statistically significant (Z= -2.944, *p*=.003), suggesting the T2L instructional sequence may have helped students to create meaning in spoken descriptive reports.

6. Discussion

Our analysis revealed that T2L has the potential to develop EFL students' ability to mean in a new language by enriching the semiotic resources they can use to realize the typical stages of genres, appropriate a richer variety of lexicogrammatical resources, and fulfill an increasing number of speech functions. These findings confirm previous research on spoken discourse claiming that genre pedagogy helps learners organize spoken texts better as well as master their lexicogrammar (Kizi & Abdujabbarovna, 2025; Mendoza Godoy, 2022). Our findings also add to a mounting number of studies demonstrating that genre-based pedagogy is consequential for student literacy learning, helping learners gain control of the organizational patterns of genres as well as of their key lexicogrammatical resources (Acevedo et al., 2023; Derewianka et al., 2024). By focusing on spoken rather than written discourse, our research expands those claims by demonstrating that genre-based pedagogy can help learners create meaning in all language skills. Though revealing, or research is limited in the sense that it focused mostly on monologic genres and covers only a handful of case studies. More research is needed that explores the use of T2L for conversational and interactive spoken genres involving a larger number of learners.

One key lesson to be learned from our findings is that T2L may be especially helpful for fostering authentic communication in EFL that goes beyond the reproduction of memorized scripts (Herazo et al., 2009). As the analysis of Yini's realization of speech functions revealed, T2L may help learners internalize the underlying logic of the genre, equipping them to handle the unpredictable, moment-to-moment demands of real interactions. This directly counters a potential criticism that explicit pedagogy such as T2L may lead only to stilted performance and hinders students' creativity (Bourke, 2005). More research may be needed to address the important issue of how genre-based pedagogical sequences may provide the occasion for incidental language teaching that is concurrent with learners' authentic language use.

A cornerstone of T2L, and a key factor explaining its success, is the strategic use of pedagogical diagrams as mediating conceptual tools. As our findings demonstrate, these diagrams function as a crucial bridge between the abstract metalanguage of genre (e.g., stages like 'Orientation' or 'Special Event') and the concrete lexicogrammatical choices students must make when speaking (Humphrey & Hao, 2020). In line with a Vygotskian perspective (Arievitch & Haenen, 2005), the diagrams provide a shared, visual anchor for the metalinguistic talk that always emerges during genre-based lessons. By pointing to, annotating, and discussing the diagram (as shown in the transcript of May's lesson; see also Herazo et al., 2025), teachers and students co-construct an understanding of how language works to achieve a specific purpose. This process makes abstract concepts tangible and accessible, allowing learners to internalize the typical features of the genre, which they can then draw upon for more independent production, as we saw in data from Ely's class.

Crucially, the diagrams in our research function not as literal representations of a single text, but as conceptual condensations of a genre's features. This distinction is vital. While a tool like a video still aids in reconstructing a specific text (Mendoza Godoy, 2022), a conceptual diagram may become an 'expert tool' to help learners generate novel texts. While other research on genre pedagogy has adopted a process approach to learners' production of spoken texts, involving learners in rounds of note-taking, editing, and redrafting (Khatibi, 2014), we believe such an approach may work for spoken genres that incorporate a planning phase (e.g. giving a lecture) or are realized with the support of scripts (e.g. a news report). However, it fails to address one of the fundamental challenges in teaching spoken communication in EFL classrooms: How to provide sufficient scaffolding without resorting to memorized scripts that sacrifice the authenticity and spontaneity of many spoken genres. The diagram may act as a mediating planning tool, allowing students to organize their ideas and key language resources in advance, thereby freeing up cognitive capacity for more fluent and flexible meaning-making during the act of speaking. In this way, the pedagogical diagram empowers learners to move beyond simple reproduction and toward authentic, independent communication. Future research should address these issues in more detail, exploring for example how learners' use of diagrams for one genre may transfer to other genres.

7. Conclusions

Our research suggests that a principled adaptation of genre-based pedagogy such as T2L has the potential to enhance EFL learners' spoken communicative abilities. After a decade of T2L research, we have learnt that this approach is a concrete, adaptable framework for teaching spoken language in challenging EFL contexts such as ours, helping teachers move beyond the traditional grammar-translation or PPP models. By placing a unique emphasis on pedagogical diagrams as conceptual tools, T2L provides a practical and theoretically-grounded method for scaffolding learners from a deep understanding of genre to independent and authentic spoken meaning-making. This approach offers an alternative to traditional methods, integrating an explicit focus on grammar and lexis with meaningful communication. Indeed, the "sandwich" approach (meaning-oriented > focus on form > meaning-oriented) we suggest may offer a practical solution for teachers concerned about neglecting grammar while promoting communication.

Information on Informed Consent or any Data Privacy Statements

Informed consent was secured from both teacher and students prior to data collection in all studies reported here.

Author Contributions

First author: Project director, data collection and analysis, write-up and edition

Second Author: Data collection, data analysis, manuscript write-up and edition

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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