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A GENRE BASED APPROACH TO TEACHING B1 LEVEL E-MAIL WRITING FOR THE WORLD OF WORK

Introduction

The worldwide survey *English at Work,* carried out jointly by Cambridge English Language Assessment and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) in September 2016,[1] organized its findings according to country. When asked how important English language skills were to their organizations, Italian companies ranked fifth, together with Switzerland and Belgium, where 96% of those interviewed considered English to be essential. In Italy, according to the survey, employers rated speaking as being the most desirable skill, but then also cited dealing with email as the most frequent task that employees perform, together with presentation skills, participating in meetings and reading reports. The levels required for email writing were 74% "advanced to native level" and 17% "basic to intermediate level."[2] This data was interpreted to mean that: "In every industry, there is a gap between the English skills required and the English language skills that employees have. Across all company sizes globally there is at least a 40% skills gap" (*Cambridge English Language Assessment and QS* – see footnote 1).

Professional communication has come to be interpreted in different ways by researchers in published literature as pointed out by Bhatia and Bremner (2017) who define it "broadly" as "all forms of semiotic resources (linguistic as well as multimodal) in and for academic as well as professional contexts, both spoken and written" (2017, xvi) and go on to say that this definition is common in both ESP and business communication literature. Given the high value accorded to email skills in the English at Work survey, however, professional communication in this discussion focuses on the narrower category of the written texts of emails in the context of the world of work, and examines ways in which a genre based approach may help Italian learners of English to improve their writing skills by focusing not solely on the categories commonly assessed by major examination boards but also by developing learner awareness of genre and register aspects. A framework for classroom work that may be applied by ESP teachers is also provided, which has been developed as part of a learner-centred approach designed to help Economics undergraduates at Verona University improve their email writing skills. This was initially based on Bhatia's work and adapted to meet the needs of the Italian context.

1. Language Competence Levels in Europe

As was mentioned above, a gap yawns between the actual linguistic competence of many employees and the levels that are required or desired by their employers. Developing language skills, however, is a key area in European education policies. The European Commission, together with the other stakeholders in the Bologna Process, have promoted and are still promoting language competence as a key skill for both academic and professional exchange in the European Area. One aim of the European parliament is, in fact,

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[1] This survey, *English at Work*, developed a worldwide, cross-industry overview of English language skills which are commonly used or required for the world of at work in different types of companies and industry sectors. The findings are based on data from over 5,300 employers in 38 countries/territories.

[2] See results on this page of the report: http://englishatwork.cambridgeenglish.org/#page_q_level. Last Visited June 22, 2017.

that "every citizen should master two foreign languages in addition to his or her mother tongue" (European Parliament 2017). The question of what it means to "master" a language, however, is complex, and the actual foreign language proficiency of most European citizens does not reach the higher levels. The European survey on language competencies (ELSC), was set up, in fact, by the European Commission to test the foreign language proficiency of European students in secondary education, in two foreign languages to establish a European indicator of language competence (European Commission 2012, 5). It was carried out in fourteen European countries and tested approximately 54.000 students' ability to understand spoken and written texts and to express themselves in writing, and the findings were published in 2012 (European Commission, 2012). Since this discussion is related to email writing these are the results which are of most interest. Tests ranged from Pre A1[3] to B2 and the results on the first foreign language show that than writing skills did not score highly (only 14% of those tested reached a B2 level), (European Commission 2012, 91) and that, perhaps not surprisingly, the scores on the first foreign language were higher than those on the second one. 29% of those tested, on the other hand reached a B1 level in writing. The report also states that performance in English language skills tended to be higher than in other languages, but, in any case, given the high-level requirements for the world of work, mentioned above, the need for increased language learning is clear. For this reason, in this article the choice is to concentrate on B1, or intermediate level writing, analysing learner production to see where competence is not being fully developed and suggesting ways to make it more effective for the workplace context. Before moving on to look at the teaching approach itself, however, it is worth taking a few minutes to look at some reasons why the writing being produced in classrooms may not be so successful at a B1 level when emails need to be written at work. Although there are many reasons for this, the influence of both European descriptors and assessment washback are probably major, contributing factors.

1.1 The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

The CEFR (Council of Europe) was published in 2001 and over the intervening sixteen years has been extremely influential both on testing and teaching criteria. Originally designed to provide guidelines to language learning in an attempt to describe abilities related to the different skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) regardless of the specific European language, it was innovative in its descriptors which focused on what individuals "can do" at various stages, rather than providing a rule-based description of language. As far as writing is concerned, the CEFR differentiates between written production, where the focus is on the individual capacity for expression, and written interaction, where the focus is rather on the interchange between various participants in the text writing. In Table 1 below, a comparison is provided of these two different aspects of writing at B1 and B2 levels (page numbers in the table). Although the CEFR mentions email, it was written when letters were more common, and therefore the descriptions of correspondence are the ones which approximate most closely to email. From these descriptions, where key words have been highlighted, it is clear that the B1 level contains ideas such as "simple" and "straightforward" and "familiar contexts" or "personal letters" as compared to the B2 level which would seem to correspond more closely to the needs of today's workplace when it comes to email writing particularly because it mentions higher order thinking skills[4] such as evaluating, synthesizing and commenting on the other correspondent's "news and views." The fact, then, that B1 is a widespread level of proficiency, and, in fact, is still often the required level of competence in university departments, may go some way to explaining the discrepancy between the desired skills and the actual expertise both of Economics undergraduates at university and of many who are already part of the workforce.

Overall Written Production 1 (61) (Expressing personal	B1	B2
	Can write **straightforward connected texts** on a range of	Can write **clear, detailed texts** on a **variety of subjects** related to his/her

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[3] The Common European Framework of Reference level descriptors are used here where A1 is similar to a beginner level and B levels are classified as "Independent User" with B1 as a lower level, equivalent to an intermediate level.

[4] Lower order and higher order thinking skills are the classifications in Bloom's (Bloom et al.1956) taxonomy of critical thinking, which provides a useful measure of the thinking skills involved in various tasks.

meaning)	**familiar subjects** within his field of interest, by **linking** a series of shorter discrete elements into a **linear sequence**.	field of interest, **synthetising** and **evaluating** information and arguments **from a number of sources.**
Self assessment grid (26-27)	I can write **simple, connected texts** on topics which are **familiar** or of personal interest. I can write **personal letters** describing experiences and impressions.	I can write **clear, detailed text** on a **wide range of subjects** related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, **passing on information** or **giving reasons** in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters **highlighting the personal significance** of events and experiences.
Overall Written Interaction – includes email (82-83) (interacting as a channel of communication or mediating)	Can **convey information** and **ideas** on **abstract** as well as **concrete** topics, check information and ask about or explain problems with reasonable precision. Can write **personal letters** and **notes** asking for or conveying **simple information** of immediate relevance, **getting across the point** he/she feels to be **important**	Can express news and views **effectively** in writing, and **relate to those of others.**
Correspondence (83)	Can write **personal letters** giving news and expressing **thoughts** about **abstract** or **cultural topics** such as music, films. Can write **personal letters** describing **experiences**, **feelings** and **events** in **some detail**.	Can write letters conveying **degrees of emotion** and **highlighting** the **personal significance** of **events** and **experiences** and commenting on the **correspondent's news and views.**

Table 1: CEFR descriptions of writing at B1 and B2 levels

2. Genre and Register

Another fundamental point to underline is that these descriptions see writing in terms of what the individual "can do" and focus, on the whole, on texts as isolated objects that learners produce, and isolated skills such as "can write personal letters or notes" or "can get the point across he/she feels to be relevant." The skills categories are closely related to expressing meanings through language, but not perhaps to discourse where the genre and register adopted are of crucial importance if relationships in specific contexts are to be initiated and maintained in real life writing.

Genre, in fact, is a "fuzzy concept" (Swales 1990, 33) in linguistics, which has been interpreted in a variety of ways over the past thirty years since genre analysis first became prominent, but one thing that can definitely be said is that it generally involves analysing complete texts or series of texts. Swales original definition is worth citing in full: "A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre" (1990, 58).

Biber echoes this idea that genre is related to recognition by expert members of a community and distinguishes genre from text types by describing it as being based on "external criteria" such as intended audience, purpose, and activity type (Biber 1988; EAGLES 2017). Another widely accepted description is Martin's notion of "people engaging in purposeful, goal-orientated activities" (2001, 163). Hyland adds the notion of "recurring situations" (2008). He describes genre as:

[…] abstract, socially recognised ways of using language. It is based on the idea that members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognising similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand, and perhaps write them relatively easily. This is, in part, because writing is a practice based on expectations: the reader's chances of interpreting the writer's purpose are increased if the writer takes the trouble to anticipate what the reader might be expecting based on previous texts they have read of the same kind. (2008, 149)

A genre, then, is a format that evolves as writing for a specific purpose is repeated and comes to be expected by the community, so that a recipe, for instance, is immediately recognizable as being such because of the way the whole text is structured. This means that the text is set clearly in its context and is connected to those participating in it both receptively and productively, and to be able to write successfully in a specific genre its norms need to be mastered.

To require employees to be proficient in email writing, in fact, is quite a tall order for the teacher as an email may not in itself always be considered to be a genre in its own right. It is rather a vehicle that can be used to house different types of writing for different purposes, between different people and in different contexts. In fact, in the workplace emails may differ considerably from one context to another and when written for different purposes. An email to organise a Christmas party among colleagues will be a very different piece of writing from one that reports the sales figures of the last year. A genre, then, is a functional classification of a type of writing and genres might be arrangement emails or report emails, which include their purpose in the description. When a series of "arrangement emails" are analysed together, for instance, they will have certain similarities, which are accepted and expected by members of a particular discourse community and that can be studied and classified on different levels.

Email, however, may still be considered to be a pre-genre in Swales' (1990) terms or a macro genre in that there are certain similarities in the mode of expression that are repeated and that are useful for learners to familiarize themselves with, such as greetings and salutations, and the very fact that the mode is a hybrid between written and spoken language that changes as relationships between the participants change. An initial email may adopt a more formal style, and then, as the participants get to know each other their attitude may become increasingly friendlier and therefore more informal. If learners are to write successfully in the workplace it is the job of educators to help them become aware of such features. To help learners in ESP classrooms learner centred approaches have long been advocated and in this case it would be advisable to focus on the genres that the learners need to master, rather than simply looking at the macro organisation of emails. Hyland, in fact, stresses the usefulness of organizing writing in class around "real-life activities in which people do specific things through writing" (2008, 149). By adding such features to the learning process proficiency in writing skills may improve.

Approaching the study of language in a genre specific framework can encourage learners to look at language in a new, meaningful way. By looking at the context of language use together with the macro structures of different text typologies, areas of language, such as grammatical and lexical usage, often considered separately as isolated rules, can be clarified as being genre specific and then related directly to the tasks the L2 learner wishes to perform. Analysis, therefore, of genre specific language usage combined with a task based approach to learning can go a long way towards helping learners develop their performance in the L2. An awareness of genre, then, means noticing that texts that go beyond simple production and are contextualized norms of discourse, and yet, as is clear from Table 1 above, it is only at B2 that the CEFR even considers the other participant in correspondence.

Closely linked to genre is the notion of register, which is also difficult to pin down, in fact, when trying to differentiate between genre, register and style it is described by Lee as a "quagmire" (Lee 2001, 41). If genre looks at whole context situated texts in their entirety, however, register looks at the language choices, at the level of the sentence and below, such as nouns or verb phrases that go to create the text itself. Some of the most highly elaborated work done on register comes from Halliday's Australian tradition of systemic, functional linguistics (1994), where the constituents of register are field, mode and tenor. *Field* refers to content or subject matter, and this influences the lexical choice made. The lexis chosen to arrange a Christmas party, for instance, will differ from that chosen to describe a work problem. *Mode* refers to the

choice of written or spoken form, and with email is of particular interest as it can be considered to be a hybrid form with some aspects of written and some of spoken language. *Tenor* refers to the interpersonal zone or the relationships between the participants in the text. Biber and Conrad consider register as a different "perspective" on a text to genre, they say that: "The underlying assumption of the register perspective is that core linguistic features like pronouns and verbs are functional, and, as a result, particular features are commonly used in association with the communicative purposes and situational context of texts" (2009, 2).

This, then further confirms the idea of language choice in register and the idea of similarities across a series of texts which go some way towards contributing to what a genre is. Register, in fact, is the language choices made in a specific text, for a specific purpose and in a specific relationship with other participants in the discourse. In linguistics this goes far beyond the accuracy of the lexico-grammatical choices involved in creating meanings in discourse, which are the object of so much time and effort in class. Register, like genre, is related rather to the choices that are made because of conventional repetitions of these elements, in a similar way to generic structures. The fact that they are repeated is what creates an expectation in the community, so that, for instance, in academic writing the passive voice and nominalised verbs abound and those who would like to see their work published flout this norm at their peril.

Being aware of the choices that are acceptable ranges from an awareness that a student who addresses a university chancellor in an over familiar way, will possibly irritate or offend him or her. Likewise, an individual seeking funding for a new start-up would do well to know how to express his or her meaning to the bank manager or investor. An awareness of genre can mean the difference between success and failure, its mastery, on the other hand, can lead to empowerment. Taking account of the relationship with the person you are writing to, will condition the language choices you make in your mail and the reaction of the recipient is directly influenced by those choices, which could lead to creating positive relationships and a fruitful work partnership or might not. For this reason, a genre based approach which combines both genre and register analysis can empower learners sensitizing them to aspects of language that they had not, perhaps, hitherto considered. Why, then, are these aspects of language not explored in depth? Why do so many materials, exams and course programmes still focus on rule based grammar rules, acquisition of lexis and the four skills of reading, speaking, listening and writing to differing degrees?

To some extent this focus is the result of traditional expectations both of teachers and materials writers as well as administrators and the learners themselves but the washback effect on teaching which is the result of assessment also plays a role in this.

3. Assessment and Washback

Major examination boards, particularly in Europe, are informed by the CEFR criteria and this can be seen clearly in the assessment criteria applied to written performance in the Cambridge Assessment business exam BEC Preliminary,[5] taken from the Cambridge Preliminary Teacher's Handbook (Cambridge English Language Assessment 2016, 21) which can be seen in Table 2 below. The focus is on learner performance. One criterion, "language," focuses on the accuracy of vocabulary and grammar, although range is also taken into consideration. "Organization" focuses mainly on coherence and cohesion of the text, whether it is "logical and ordered." Cambridge also include a criterion related to task achievement, referred to as "content" and register is also included in the "communicative achievement" criterion (2016, 21): however, this is often interpreted to mean how formal or informal a text is in classrooms by both learners and teachers. This is underlined in the Cambridge Assessment Handbook, where teachers are encouraged help learners prepare for the written component of the exam. The suggestions are: "write and analyze memos and messages to help students recognize the different levels of formality involved" (11). The handbook, when describing the different tasks, however, does point to a differentiation between texts and genres by giving a macro umbrella vehicle which is defined as a "task" such as "internal communication" and examples of this such as "memo, message or email." This is then followed by what is referred to as the focus, which might be considered to be the genre, "(Re)arranging appointments, asking for permission, giving instructions" (2016, 11).

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[5] This is the Cambridge Business English Certificate at B1 level.

Content	focuses on how well the candidate has fulfilled the task, in other words whether they have done what they were asked to do.
Communicative Achievement	focuses on how appropriate the writing is for the task and whether the candidate has used the appropriate **register**.
Organisation	focuses on the way the candidate puts together the piece of writing, in other words if it is logical and ordered.
Language	focuses on vocabulary and grammar. This includes the range of language as well as how accurate it is.

Table 2: Cambridge Writing Assessment Criteria for B1 Business Exams

Although the idea of analysing a series of real life memos, messages or email does point towards an approach that is genre related, this is further underlined by the suggestion "It is a necessary part of preparing for the test that students understand the uses of, and styles inherent in, different types of business communication so that they are aware of how and why different types of correspondence are used." How this should be done, however, is not explored in detail.

Although these suggestions for preparation would seem to indicate a need to explore genre and register, the writing criteria focus mainly on the mechanics of text construction and, as a result, the washback effect in teaching is that language accuracy and cohesion, at the level of linking devices, is often the focus rather than genre and register related features. Focusing on writing as purely a matter of text production, however, as has been explored above, leaves many considerations out of the picture. Emails are written in specific contexts, by specific people with differing relationships and for different purposes. All these aspects impact the language choices made, and need to be explored by learners as well as working on the actual accuracy of written production itself. Accuracy, in fact, is the first step in the process but a study of the genre can help learners acquire other skills too. The next question to consider, however, is what the best approach to teaching email writing in ESP might be.

4. Approaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

Specialized English such as the language required to be able to write effective emails comes under ESP, a field which deals with Academic English as well as Professional English. Littlewood (2014) points out the fact that ESP researchers frequently study the aspects of Specialist language but not, on the whole, methodologies for teaching this language.[6] He says (2014, 287) that this is probably because practitioners generally do not see the need to develop a separate framework from general English Language Teaching but only focus on the different content to teach. In ESP there is a wide range of handbooks or course-books offering activities to use in the classroom to teach specific language but few examples of principled frameworks for their application.

We are generally considered to be living in a "post-method" era (Kumaravadivelu 2001) as far as pedagogical approaches are concerned which means that, practitioners do not, nowadays, adhere to one specific method but tend to choose from the wealth of options available to them to suit the needs of specific

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[6] He cites various exceptions to this rule such as Flowerdew 2010 Lee and Swales 2006 (Littlewood, 2004).

learners in specific contexts. Littlewood (2014) advocates a teaching framework as a "communicative continuum" which ranges from analytical learning, which involves non communicative activities, on the one hand, to experiential learning on the other, where what is being produced is authentic communication. The content of this framework needs to be negotiated in contexts that are "specific areas of discourse activity" but which reflect the goals the learners need to achieve outside the classroom. In the case of professional English for the workplace this means successfully providing activities that scaffold learners from guided or simulated activities in class to authentic production in the workplace. This is a useful framework to base a genre-based approach on as it is not linear but a process where these factors continually interact, so that learners who have studied the rhetorical organization of a text, for instance may be able to experience it when reading, which further reinforces the notions of that text organization. The aim, however, is successful performance in the relevant discourse community.

4.1. Applying a genre combined with register based approach to L2 writing

How, then, can learners be helped towards more successful discourse that will help them to communicate successfully in their chosen fields? The focus, as mentioned above, needs to shift from text production or learner expression as discrete objects that are not part of a wider context, as tends to be the case when the constraints of washback from assessment norms over influence teaching, as discussed above.[7] Bhatia's work (1993), focused on authentic texts which he used as models for learner-centred worksheets on business writing for a UNDP Singapore Project[8] to foster business and technology related to writing skills. His approach in this project consisted in firstly analysing real life text in context on various levels:

1) a lexico-grammatical analysis of surface features;
2) the text-patterning or textualization in a particular genre;
3) regularities of organization in genres, which reveals how the intention of the author behind the overall message is communicated.

The materials, focusing on a 'sales letter' began with an analysis of the moves[9] in a specific text, followed by practice and analysis of such moves. This was followed by an analysis of different ways of executing those moves, reflecting different intentions by the author, so that a writer might establish his or her credentials either by writing from a personal "I" viewpoint, underlining his/ her or the company's expertise, experience and reputation, or may, on the other hand take a "you" approach, focusing on the needs the customer may have and how he/she or the company might meet them. The next step after this analytical work was a series tasks that can be said to be halfway along the analytical-experiential continuum in that they constitute a scaffolded approach to acquiring the lexico-grammar items required to complete the task. A worksheet was provided with a different text containing highlighted errors and guided discovery questions to help learners correct them. This, then, involves both analysis and production which is part of the experiential aspect. The final worksheet focused on errors of text organization, once again with guided discovery questions to help learners improve the text in front of them. This time the errors are elements such as duplicated moves or overlong sentences.

This is a classic approach to genre analysis which is still extremely valuable in ESP teaching today and it has been used as the basis for a framework developed to help Economics students at Verona University.

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[7] Many educators use authentic texts as models for a starting point for study. The question, however, of whether or not to use such texts continues to be discussed. There are two aspects of this debate to consider. Firstly, in the light of negative past experience when learners were confused and discouraged by authentic texts, including background noises and other contextual markers. Widdowson, in particular maintains that texts in a classroom are pedagogical artefacts and that "Pedagogy is bound to be a contrivance" designed to bypass the slow process of learning in natural conditions. (Widdowson 1990, 163). It would seem preferable in the classroom to use semi-authentic texts. That is, texts that retain many of the features of authentic texts but are easily comprehensible to the learners, and are graded linguistically for the assumed level of that learner (Thornbury 2005; McCarthy and Carter 1994). Secondly, there has been criticism of genre analysis as a return to some extent to a prescriptive model approach to writing which leaves little room for creativity and, when it was at its height, often imposed native speaker models as being the correct choice.

[8] This was a United Nations Development Project: *UNDP-Government of Singapore project on the Teaching of English in Meeting the Needs of Business and Technology* (1984-87).

[9] Moves are rhetorical steps in Bhatia's terms (1993, 156). They are stretches of text that are commonly to be found in a specific genre such as "establishing credentials" in a sales letter.

5. A genre-based approach to writing adopted by Economics undergraduates at Verona University

The approach adopted at Verona University catered for the needs of B1 English level undergraduates who study Economics. They generally have little or no experience of the workplace, and therefore the model texts were provided by the teacher. In order for the work to be learner-centred, then, a comparison was made between the texts learners produced with no preparatory analysis, as a guided writing task, with the features of a model text that had been selected for them as an example of the genre of professional arrangement emails. The work was carried out according to the following format:

Stage	Procedure	Learning Process Aim
Stage One	Selection and analysis of authentic arrangement emails, and choice of one model text for use with the learners.	
Stage Two	Writing task carried out 'cold' by the learners.	Experiential but scaffolded by the task.
Stage Three	Analysis of the learner production for surface errors and lexico-grammatical features that require action.	
Stage Four	Learner analysis of the model text with four basic questions • What is the purpose of the text? • What are the moves in its organization? • What is the relationship between writer and recipient? • What is the writer's intention?	Analytical
Stage Five	Guided discovery and discussion of the learner texts (with basic surface errors already corrected) from the point of view of the register of some key choices related to the action areas.	Analytical
Stage Six	Scaffolded rewriting of the email.	Experiential

Table 3: Verona University genre based analysis approach procedure in an analytical-experiential framework to ESP.

Stage One

The model chosen after consideration of various arrangement emails was the following and the generic structure was then used to create the task in Stage Two.

Hi Anna,	**Greeting (typical of email macro genre**) Informal 'Hi' plus use of the first name here, as the recipient is well known to the writer.
How are you? I hope everything went OK at your talk yesterday!!	**Personal comment to recipient, no bold with the parenthesis** used to maintain and further build the relationship**.**
I just wanted to let you know we're having a small project meeting next week – only about 5 people- and I hope you'll be in Verona so that you can come. I know you haven't got much time but it's on Friday so you could come for the weekend.	**Providing Information and invitation to attend the meeting** (This could be said to contain two sub moves as it has the information giving stage followed by the invitation with further details.)
I can pick you up from the station if you let me know when your train gets in	**Offer to help** (This is still a move in itself even though it only covers the first part of the sentence, as it has a distinct function of its own.)
and there's an excellent hotel (space) near the university where you can stay a couple of days,	**Suggestion of accommodation**

which would be great.	
I do hope you can make it as I haven't seen you for ages and I'd like the chance to catch up.	**Final Comment** (Once again this is interpersonal with the aim of maintaining and building the relationship.
Speak to you soon, Sandra.	**Salutation (typical of email macro genre)** Informal 'Speak to you soon' plus use of the first name here, as the recipient is well known to the writer.

The model was then analysed from the point of view of register to see which lexico-grammatical features were used that were typical of the genre. A complete analysis can be seen in Appendix A but the main features to emerge from this as "action areas" were:

- The use of modality: "I can pick you up/you could come for the weekend," etc.
- The use of projected mental clauses: "I hope you'll" etc.
- The use of the Present Progressive for arrangements and events that have already been organized
- The use of contractions and the conventions of email which allow for ellipsis and fragmented utterances more common in spoken language (.)
- The avoidance of direct commands by using the hypotactic conditional enhancing clause: "tell me when your train arrives, and I'll collect you."

These are the main action points that can be used as a focus in the lexico-grammatical worksheet in stage five.

Stage Two
The task that was given to the learners was the following and some rhetorical moves, based on the analysis of the model text above, were already included in the task descriptions as was the information that the writer knows Anna well, so that this task is already situated into a realistic context:

Your department is organizing a small project meeting for colleagues arriving from Munich. Write an e-mail to your German colleague Anna, who you know well. (You also know that she is very busy at the moment and may not want to travel so far). In your e-mail, you should

1) inform her about the meeting
2) offer to pick her up from the airport
3) suggest she stays at a good hotel close to the company's head office for a few days

Fig. 1: Email task: writing an email to arrange a colleague's visit

Stage Three
The next stage is to work on the surface errors in the lexico-grammatical choices made. Working directly with the learners' texts is also a way to make this analysis relevant to the learners themselves and, as a result, motivating. Two sample answers[10] (see Fig. 2) were chosen to work on in class, showing different features that require action. Guided discovery questions were provided to aid self or peer correction and to promote discussion among the learners, who were given the opportunity to answer the texts before class and then discuss them further in class.

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[10] The names have been altered to ensure anonymity.

Text One
Dear Anna,
how are you? I hope you are well! Next week **there is** (It would be better to say: "We're having a project meeting" Why?) our project meeting, so I'm inviting you! When **you'll** (Use the simple present here. Why?) arrive at the airport, I'll pick you up and **than** ("than" or "then"? What's the difference?) we'll go to your hotel where you'll refresh **yourself** (Can you choose a different expression?). How about staying in Verona for a few days?
Write to me soon
Love
Giulia

Text Two

Hi Anna

Next Friday we **organize** (Why is the present continuous better in this case?) our project meeting and you are invited.
The meeting is in the hotel "De La Ville" near the company's head office in Vicenza.
If you **came** (came or come for a fut. Cond.?) by plane I'll pick **her** (Why "her"? Why would "you" be the best choice? Avoid copying directly from the question.) up. **Say** (Tell) me what time the plane **arrive** (Verb form?).
(Add "on" before Friday) **Friday** evening you'll sleep at the hotel and you'll stay **here** ("In Vicenza" is clearer)all **the** (not necessary) week end.
Please reply **my** (to me) in (add "a") few days so I can **organize me** (organize myself).
See you soon

Paolo

Fig. 2: Self correction of surface errors in learner texts

A glance at Fig. 3 below, however, shows that even after surface errors have been corrected when, Giulia's email, for instance, on a level of accuracy and range of expression may be said to be successful, there is actually little awareness of register or genre appropriate norms, as the comments on the "corrected version" (see Fig. 3) show. Analysis of such target areas can help learners to communicate much more effectively.

Analysis of learner text after surface errors have been corrected.	Register related points
Dear Anna,	Giulia's mail has complex clauses, which are successful and interpersonal features such as "How are you? I hope you are well". This is a good, natural start but:
How are you? I hope you are well.	1) the focus is, too much, thematically on "I" or Giulia's point of view, giving the text a narrative flavour. 2) The choice of "will" in several cases is over-emphatic and an awareness of modality would help to make the text more natural. 3) Greater interpersonal cohesion by using phrases, such as 'if you'd like to' would help to make the flow smoother and the topic development more logical.
Next Friday we're having our project meeting so I'm inviting you.	
When you arrive at the airport, I'll pick you up and then we'll go to your hotel where you'll freshen up.	4) The choices of 'having' collocated with 'project meeting', 'so I'm inviting you', 'Write to me soon' or 'Love Giulia' as a salutation are not appropriate for the genre.
How about staying in Verona for a few days?	

Fig. 3: Analysis of learner text after surface errors have been corrected

Stage Four

Stage four is an analytical stage that aims to sensitize learners to the fact that this type of email is not simply a text but is a contextualized text so a class discussion can be held where learners look at the model email (see Stage One) and answer the following four questions about it:

- What is the purpose of the text?
- What are the moves in its organization?
- What is the relationship between writer and recipient?
- What is the writer's intention?

Depending on the level of the particular class, learners could then be asked to look at the model text and see how these elements are expressed. Some information, of course, has already been supplied in the task instructions themselves.

Stage Five

In Stage Five a worksheet is provided for learners to look at these discourse related features and analyse them together. The following procedure is a suggested one for teachers:

1) Look at the two examples from the forum (see Stage Three above) and ask learners which one they like best and why?

2) Correct using the on-line suggestions and asking learners to discuss why these corrections have been made.

3) Look at corrected versions and work with the guided discovery worksheet to consider other differences.

Arrangement Email Worksheet

Look at the two corrected e-mails:

1) How does Giulia connect her ideas? What about Paolo?

2) What sort of "typical phrases does Giulia use to "structure" her message? What about Paolo?

Look at these examples:

"…<u>next week</u> we're having a project meeting..."

"<u>Next Friday</u> we're having our project meeting…"

"<u>On Friday evening</u> you'll sleep in the hotel."

Both Giulia and Paolo begin the main "body" of the e-mail with a time reference. Is this a neutral choice

in English or does it over-emphasise the time references?

Look at these examples:

"<u>I'll </u>pick you up..

<u>We'll </u>go to your hotel where you'll freshen up…

<u>You'll </u>sleep in the hotel…

What effect does this repeated use of "will" have?

Look at these examples:

Fig. 4: Guided Discovery worksheet for analysis of learner production

Stage Six
The final stage in this work consists in asking the learners to rewrite their emails following the scaffolded version in Fig. 5. This type of guided writing exercise can be used after learners have read texts as models and can help them with many of the features just mentioned. Of course, the work done has to fit in with the four questions discussed previously in Stage Four, so the exercise needs to be made relevant to the learners of each specific group. It can, however, easily be adapted.[11]

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[11] This format, for instance, was recently used after reading stories about historical events. To introduce a motivating ludic element into the work, each student wrote in the role of one of the historical characters and the other members of the class then had to find out who they were from the e-mail.
This is, of course, just one of many ways of working with texts and can be adapted to innumerable teaching contexts.

Hi ………………………..,

how are …………………..? I hope ………………………………………………………………..!!

I just wanted to let you know

……

……

……

and I hope you'll………………………………………………………………………………………..

I know you…………………………………………………………………………………………….

……

but it's on Friday so you could…………………………………………………………………………

Fig. 5: Scaffolded model for learner production of arrangement email after analysis of genre features

Below in Fig. 6 is an example of the revision of the second sample text that was produced in Stage Six where the difference between the first and the final versions can clearly be seen (Surface errors have been corrected[12]):

Hi Anna,

How're you? I hope you're well and that your presentation was good last week.

I just wanted to let you know we're organising the project meeting for next Friday, we'd like to see you, so I hope you'll come.

I know you have a lot of work but it's Friday so you could stay for the weekend and we can catch up and maybe go to Lake Garda. I can pick you up from the airport if you let me know when you arrive, and there's plenty of time to enjoy ourselves and have our meeting too.

Fig. 6: Example of final learner production after the genre analysis procedure

Conclusion

Although there has been criticism of this type of approach as being a return to an over rigid, prescriptive product based approach to learning, and the notion of moves as being unclear to some extent, (Crookes 1986) this largely depends on how it is implemented. Alerting learners to ways in which they can express their purposes and intentions with language that is repeatedly used in specific discourse communities is not a matter of being prescriptive but of offering opportunities and strategies that aid their own expression.

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[12] Although this final text shows evidence of encouraging improvement compared to the first attempt, and clearly meets the CEFR and Cambridge Assessment B1 criteria outlined above, there are still issues that may interfere with its effectiveness such as repetitions of lexical items such as "plane" which interfere with smooth cohesion and a certain amount of copying directly from the language in the task. This leads to the question, once again, of whether B1 is a sophisticated enough level for those wanting to participate in professional communication.

Features such as genre and register should, in fact, be included in ESP teaching to help them do this. Genre, however, tends to be left out in the cold when it comes to ESP writing classes. This happens for various reasons, including the inevitable washback effect assessment criteria have on what is taught in the classroom. Nevertheless, if our true aim is to help learners become successful L2 users, in specific work situated contexts, teachers have to be sensitized to ways in which they can include genre and register.

Many B1 level learners will need to interact in the L2 in the workplace and their knowledge of interpersonal communication techniques and elements such as rhetorical moves, register choices related to modality or projected mental clauses, in the case or arrangements, could have an important effect on the success of their communication. This lack of expertise is clearly reflected in the European survey on writing levels in high schools mentioned above and, in fact, a B1 level is probably not sophisticated enough for many emails that employees in the workplace need to produce. This may in fact be one reason why writing emails at higher levels of linguistic competence, is considered to be of such importance by Italian companies, as revealed by the Cambridge QS survey. Although the analysis stage may be time-consuming for teachers and learners it leads to an elaboration of language features in depth which can only make them more memorable for those who carry out such a study. The process of helping learners notice and use certain genre-related discourse features, in fact, in my experience makes for an exciting and fruitful voyage of discovery both for learners and teachers.

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Appendix A

Register Analysis of Model Text

The register analysis of the model text was carried out with an approach based on Halliday's systemic functional grammar (space) (Butt et al. 2003; Bloor and Bloor 2004). Here the primary focus is on the text as a series of steps and analyses the organizational movement whereas the secondary analysis is of the lexico-grammatical choices made.

Text of a model arrangements email

Step 1) Hi Anna,

Step 2) how are you? I hope everything went Ok at your talk yesterday!!

Step 3) I just wanted to let you know (space) we're having a small project meeting next week

– only about 5 people- and I hope you'll be in Verona so that you can come.

Step 4) I know you haven't got much time

but it's on Friday so you could come for the weekend.

Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis according to moves

| | Primary clause | | | Secondary clause | | |
| | THEME | | RHEME | THEME | | RHEME |
STRUCTURAL	INTERPERS.	TOPICAL		STRUC/INTER.	TOPICAL	
1)		Anna				
2)	How are	you			I PROJ.	talk, yesterday

3a)		I	PROJ.		We	project meeting, next week
3b) and		I	PROJ.		you	can come
4a)		I	PROJ.		you	Time
4b) but		it	Friday	so	you	Weekend
5a)		I	Station	if	you	gets in
5b) and		there	hotel near the university	where	you	couple of days
6a)		I (do inter.)	PROJ.		you	make it
6b) as		I	for ages	and	I	catch up
7)		I	soon			

The steps contain mainly different combinations of paratactic and hypotactic relationships. What is interesting is that:

1) out of what actually amounts to 20 steps here there are 9 instances of "I" as being thematic and 1 of "We;"

2) out of 9 clause complexes 5 are linked by projections of some kind.

3) Anna is thematic either lexically (Anna) (1) or referentially (you) (7) in a total of 8 instances, and these are always in the projected or secondary clauses.

4) The only other themes in this e-mail are "there" in step 5b (primary clause) which is a dummy subject relating to "hotel near the university," and "it" which is a reference to the project meeting which appeared in the rheme in 3a and is picked up thematically in the 4b.

In depth analysis and discussion of the text

The fact that "I" and "You" are thematic is not surprising because the writer is informing the other person of her and her company's (space) plans and asking her to do certain things whilst offering her help in doing other things. These commands and proposals are dressed up on the whole metaphorically through modality and by using mental/verbal processes of transitivity. E-mails are an interesting hybrid as they are a mixture of spoken language, calling on the "here and now" in much the same way as might be done in a conversation, and including incomplete clauses etc. here there is the example of what is actually an embedded clause in step 3 "– only about 5 people –" which modifies "the project meeting" although part of the phrase is ellipsed and could be "there'll be" or it might be a preposition "with" or a finite verb "including" (although the latter is less likely) and "I'll" is omitted in step 7 "Speak to you soon" which is, again, a typical case of ellipsis in spoken language as are the contracted forms "I'm," "I'd" or "you'll."

E-mails also, however, contain distinct features which are more common to the written language such as complex logical relations between clauses and conjunction. In this e-mail most cases of reference are exophoric "you" and there is, in fact, only one instance of endophoric reference which is "it" in step 4b, referring anaphorically to the meeting, to pick up this subject and give more information about it after making an intervening comment to acknowledge the reader's lack of availability. The references to "I" and "You" do create cohesion in this text, as do the instances of conjunction and the relations between the clauses but possibly the most important element in weaving a cohesive texture in this type of e-mail is the lexical cohesion, the way the writer moves from one topic to the next.

The lexical topics in this e-mail are related to the writer (Sandra) the reader (Anna) mental or verbal processes such as "know" "hope" "let you know" (metaphorical rendering of "tell" which is so common as to

be completely acceptable) and possibility for the reader "can," "the meeting," "the company," travel, accommodation, time and "catching up."

The text moves from a request for information (polite acknowledgement of the reader as a person with her own life) and there are frequent occurrences of this in the e-mail) to what is in effect the "topic sentence" of the e-mail "We're having a project meeting" which is then described, and ends with a request for availability.

The subject of availability is then taken up again in the next phase where the theme is in fact the statement: "I know you haven't got much time" where the writer expresses her awareness of Anna's lack of availability but the asks her to come anyway, explaining why this may be possible "it's on a Friday" which makes the assumption that Anna is more likely to be freer at the weekend than during the week. At the same time, the writer offers her hospitality implicitly in the phrase "you could come for the weekend." On the face of it this is a declarative clause expressing what is possible for Anna, but underlying this is an invitation so, it is, in effect, another interpersonal metaphor, which is actually saying "Come and stay for the weekend." *There is an interesting "space" between step 4 and 5 where the writer assumes that Anna will have accepted this proposal because she now goes on to talk about travel arrangements as though it were clear that Anna would definitely be coming.*

So, in fact the invitation in step 4 leads straight on to the metaphorical command in step 5. Sandra is actually saying "tell me when your train arrives, and I'll collect you" but it is expressed as a hypotactic conditional enhancing clause, rather than a direct imperative. The effect of putting the primary clause first also means that it is the writer's hypothetical action that is highlighted rather than what she is asking the reader to do. The underlying idea is "Look what I'll do for you!"

She then elaborates on this offer with her suggestion of a hotel near the office, again disguised as a declarative clause describing the availability of accommodation at a convenient hotel. This is the only step where the topical theme of the clause is not, either I or You (except for the one reference to the meeting as "it" in 4b) and therefore is quite significant in this text. The fact that there is accommodation available is a key point in the text, which will probably, in the writer's mind, be attractive to the reader. The clause is giving more information to make the invitation attractive, so textually this leads on again from the invitation, which is then concluded with an expression of opinion as the writer says "which would be great." The appraisal is clear here as the writer chooses the informal word "great" to show how much she would like Anna to come.

In the final part of the mail the idea that "it would be great" is taken up again, as the writer expresses her desire to see Anna after such a long time.

In this way it is clear that the lexical topics in this e-mail weave a tight logical and cohesive texture.