How Not to Perish: Using Genre Analysis for Professional Development: An Interview with Prof. Judy Noguchi

Ryan W. Smithers

Kwansei Gakuin University

Regardless of whether you are looking for work as a part-time, full-time, or tenured faculty member, you are likely familiar with the three- or five-publication-requirement *minimum* that universities frequently request applicants to meet to be considered for an opening. In fact, once CVs have been screened to see who meets the requirements listed, a ranking of applicants based on publications and presentations will follow—the higher your score, the greater your chance of being asked for an interview. Notably though, it is publications where most of us seem to be coming up short. Punctuating this point, Miller (2013) declares that 82% of university hiring committees in Japan have been dissatisfied with the number of publications that applicants have, which suggests that a great many in our field are either not submitting papers for publication or are failing to have their work accepted for publication.

Irrespective of which camp you fall into, this interview with Prof. Judy Noguchi, a pioneer in the field of genre analysis in Japan, might be the panacea you have been looking for to help you get your next article published in a top-tier journal. Conversely, if you are keen to learn how to improve the writing of your EFL students, Judy's expertise may guide you to a new way of teaching writing that has both you and your students becoming strong advocates of genre analysis.

This interview begins by probing the origins of Prof. Noguchi's passion for

genre analysis within the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Following this, Judy answers some questions about her own research in an appeal to logos, pointing teachers to genre analysis as a tool for improving their own writing and pedagogical practice. Finally, this interview concludes with Judy's advice on getting published as one form of professional development.

Prof. Noguchi's Background

Ryan Smithers (RS): After about 37 years in academia in Japan, you have left your mark on the field by revealing how researchers can improve their writing by analyzing the genre of research articles from an ESP viewpoint. Could you tell us how you first became interested in ESP within the field of TESOL?

Judy Noguchi (JN): The very first English class I ever taught was an English for Science and Technology class; there was no such thing as ESP at that time. A university had heard that I was a chemistry major and asked me to help teach English to their chemistry majors—who they said were struggling—and I just could not refuse.

RS: At what point did your interest in ESP lead to an interest in genre analysis and corpus studies?

JN: Well, after struggling in a field that had no guiding theory, methods or textbooks, I decided I needed to do something. I attended a week-long summer seminar at the University of Michigan, where I heard John Swales pondering about what was happening in the introduction section of research articles. He said he thought that authors were following a set pattern of information presentation. With my background in science, and the work that I was doing editing English research papers at that time, I did not think he was saying anything so remarkable. I was very surprised when everyone made such a fuss about "moves" and "steps". That is the process you use when you start a research project. I am so happy that Swales came out and clearly stated his CARS (Create-a-Research-Space) model (1990). That crystallized things for me.

Eventually, when I decided to do a Master's degree in TESL, I wrote all my papers from the ESP angle. This made me want to learn more about the language of science. In my Ph.D., I was able to combine ESP and corpus work for my

dissertation on how science constructs knowledge using language.

Applying Genre Analysis

RS: Recently, you have worked in applying a genre analysis-based approach to academic writing. So that our readers understand more clearly, could you briefly explain in simple terms what genre-based analysis is when applied to academic writing?

JN: All writing that is done for a discourse community is likely to be classifiable into genres, as defined from the ESP viewpoint, but this excludes writing done to teach writing. That is, the shared or common rhetorical organization, lexicogrammar, and even formatting of texts are what comprise a genre. So, for example, the writing for a technical report on a product will be one kind of genre, while an operation manual for the same product will be a different one. A genre analysis-based approach to academic writing entails having students carefully examine a genre so that they can learn how to create their own written product that is appropriate to the genre that it is written for.

RS: In your own work (1997, 2003, 2006), you have developed two frameworks to use during genre analysis: PAIL, a product-oriented framework, and OCHA, a process-oriented framework. Can you explain these briefly?

JN: I developed the PAIL and OCHA concepts while trying to find ways to explain and raise awareness of the linguistic and genre features of texts to my students. The PAIL framework was what I presented at a KATE conference in Korea (Noguchi, 1997). The *P* stands for the *purpose* of a text, *A* is the *audience* for which it is aimed, *I* is the *information* that it should contain, and *L* is the *language features* that are employed to present this information in order to respond to the purpose as expected by the target audience.

The OCHA framework came later, as I continued teaching students in the sciences. I kept telling them to look for PAIL. Of course, after you start looking for something, you begin making observations. This is how I came up with the OCHA approach to raise awareness of the structural features of a text of a specific genre. The idea comes from the scientific approach in which you first *observe* a phenomenon, *classify* your observations, *hypothesize* about what you

can do next, and then try to *apply* your hypotheses to see if they work.

RS: How can PAIL and OCHA help academic writers?

JN: I believe academic writers who want to get published can use the PAIL and OCHA frameworks to learn more about what publishers are looking for in a paper. I recommend writers pick a paper on a topic similar to the one that they want to write about from the journal that they are aiming to be published in. First, use the frameworks to discover the rhetorical, grammatical, lexical, and technical features of every section of the paper, and then try to emulate the genre features in your own paper—do not forget to look at the PAIL of the title!

RS: I understand that you are passionate about using a genre-based approach to academic writing, and even prioritize it in your teaching. Could you first tell me a little bit about the students that you teach genre analysis to, and second, could you explain about the successes and problems you have experienced in educating your students or others in this approach to academic writing?

JN: I have used the genre-based approach with high school, undergraduate, and graduate students, as well as in translation training courses for adults (Noguchi, Misaki, Miyanaga & Terui, 2016). To begin, I introduce the idea of a genre analysis, and then have students analyze English texts. To do it successfully, I believe you need to start by having students analyze simple texts because the rules are the same regardless of text complexity. During the analysis, students are working to identify the language features of the text, so that they use what they learn to create a similar text of their own. For example, I once had my university students do genre analysis on safety rules for elementary school kids to learn how to successfully develop safety rules for biosafety level 4 labs (the highest level for a research laboratory that deals with extremely infectious materials). Alternatively, I have let students choose their own texts to analyze. Students look at women's fashion magazines, sports news, event posters, employee instruction manuals, etc., to discover the genre of the medium so that they can replicate it. The students may not always come up with a good creation, but that does not matter very much. I think the genre-based approach is a way of teaching them to fish, as in, "Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime". I am trying to teach the students how to view

language and how to be able to deal with new genres as they encounter them.

RS: For researchers who are new to publishing or struggling to get published, based on a genre-based approach to writing research, what steps would you recommend they take to get published?

JN: They should check out examples of writing in the target genre: research articles, book reviews, or chapters for a book. If possible, build a corpus of examples. This does not have to be that complex. Your purpose is to figure out how the grammar and words are used. You could simply print out two or three sample articles of the writing that you are hoping to emulate, and then begin systematically analyzing each of the sections in the articles, starting with the abstract or introduction. Then, identify the move structures and the hint expressions that guide the reader through the texts. For example, if you want to grab the reader's attention at the beginning of an article, you use a hook move. Different parts of the text have different purposes, which is what writers need to be aware of. To study moves—the purpose of a portion of a text—I recommend that you cross out all of the keywords, all of the words that are very important to your field. In the case of the title of a research paper, for example, what you are left with is a skeleton of sub-technical vocabulary that provides hints about what is going to be explained in the paper, such as a method, a survey, a mechanism, etc. In the conclusion section of a research paper, you should find conclusion moves signaled by phrases such as "in sum" or "in conclusion". Finally, after you have completed your genre analysis, do the writing and have a colleague read it and comment on it.

Advice on Writing up Research and Publishing

RS: To conclude our interview, I would like to ask you for some general advice about the publishing process and writing for publishing. Firstly, there are a lot of people who have conducted and written up small-scale research projects as part of a Masters or Doctoral degree, and who would like to publish their work. What advice do you have for those wishing to convert their essays or assignments into publications?

JN: Find a journal with a scope that suits your work. Do not give up! If you

get rejected by one journal, try submitting to another. Remember that a research paper is simply stating your claims based on the research that you have done. It is important to get feedback from others about your work. That is the real reason you want to publish.

RS: What are some of the problems commonly experienced by authors trying to write up their research, and how can writers avoid or overcome them?

JN: From my experience, I find that writers have problems focusing properly and trying to include too much in one paper. After finishing writing a paper, it is a good idea to take a break from it. Do not look at it for a couple of days, and then reread it with a fresh set of eyes, paying special attention to the thesis statement and the content of the paper; be judicious. Remove anything that does not reflect back to the thesis statement. It is always painful to have to cut what you have spent a great amount of effort and time on, but in the end, it is about quality, not quantity. Also, when re-examining your paper, make sure that the structure and logic are sound. Make sure that every sentence supports what you are trying to say in that specific move, and that each paragraph is connected to the others within their respective sections.

RS: In your experience as an established author of textbooks and research articles, what sort of advice do writers typically receive from editors? Should writers heed all of the advice or is there room to negotiate with editors?

JN: You will get a wide range of advice from minor to major. The minor comments can sometimes be troublesome, but, in the end, you need to remember that the editor is viewing your work from a bird's eye view, and it is probably right in most cases. To get a book chapter published before, I needed to extensively rewrite the chapter about three times for one contribution!

RS: In closing, is there anything further that you would like to add to the interview or words of wisdom that you could pass along to the readers of the *OnCUE Journal*?

JN: Writing is a way to gain a voice in your discourse community. As a responsible member of that community, you should be willing to share your ideas and also be open to criticism, with the ability to defend your ideas or to change them if necessary. You need to keep developing.

Conclusion

Professional development is especially important in higher education because it is not only crucial to student improvement, but also, as Judy mentioned above, it is our duty as responsible members of the college and university educators' community. Although it is very easy to become complacent about professional development when you already have a job, neglect could become the Achilles heel to your success in this field. So why not avail yourself of the opportunity to utilize some of the tips that Judy spoke of in this interview to move your writing and pedagogy in a direction that produces outstanding results for you and your students. Apply any one or all three of the genre analysis models discussed in this interview: Swales (1990) CARS model, Noguchi's (1997) PAIL model, and/ or Noguchi's (OCHA) model. By creating your own corpus and analyzing the writing of a target genre, you may find that your writing improves and the process becomes a lot less of a struggle, not to mention that your publications might start finding their way into more and more top tier journals. Besides, as Judy herself said during the interview,

> "writing, from a professional viewpoint, is probably one of the most important points in professional communication because it crosses time and space; it is very important because you never know who is going to be reading your writing and who is going to be affected by it and how it is going to contribute to whatever it is that you want it to contribute to."

References

Miller, R. (2013). Publishing options to enhance your CV. *The Language Teacher*, *37*(3), 72-73.

Noguchi, J. (1997). Materials development for English for specific purposes: Applying genre analysis to EFL pedagogy. *English Teaching*, *52*(3), 303-318.

Noguchi, J. (2003). Teaching ESP writing: OCHA in a CALL class. *Cybermedia Forum*, *4*. (September, 2003) Retrieved from http://www.cmc.osaka-u.ac.jp/j/publication/for-2003/index.html

Noguchi, J. (2006). *The science review article: An opportune genre in the construction of science*. Bern, Germany: Peter Lang.

Noguchi, J., Misaki, A., Miyanaga, S., & Terui, M. (2016). Towards a robust, genre-based translation model and its application. In M. Minami (Ed.), *Handbook of Japanese applied linguistics* (pp. 385-414). Berlin, Germany: De Gruyter Mouton.

Swales, J. M. (1990). *English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Author bio

Ryan W. Smithers *is a full-time lecturer at Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan. He is also currently a Ph.D. student at Kyoto University and Chief Editor for the Osaka JALT Journal. His 18 years of TEFL experience have inspired his research interests in pedagogical grammar, reflective practice, and lifelong learning. ryanwsmithers@ gmail.com*