

Doing business: knowledges in the internationalised business lecture

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This paper investigates the oracy (listening/speaking) genres enacted in an undergraduate entry point unit in the internationalised university and the kind of knowledges these genres elicit and perform. Focusing on a series of lectures in a business studies unit, it explores how anecdotal knowledge from both the lecturer's and the students' lived experiences was elicited for the curriculum. The analysis of lecture talk suggests that the business lecture is no longer a monologic display of expert disciplinary knowledge bestowed upon the learner. Rather, it is increasingly a multi-modal performance with an underlying ethic of engagement and interactivity. Of particular interest is the way international students' knowledges were elicited to resource the internationalised curriculum with authenticity and insight. The knowledges assembled are analysed through Bernstein's distinction between vertical and horizontal knowledge structures. The paper offers suggestions on how to maximise the potential and minimize the risks of this more interactive genre of lecture, with particular regard to enabling the participation of the international student.

Keywords: business; English as an additional language; genre; knowledge; lecture; oracy

Introduction – the research problem

Much work around the linguistic requirements of university study has focused on academic reading and writing genres. In contrast, this project investigates oracy genres (those involving listening and speaking) enacted in an undergraduate entry point unit in the internationalised Australian university of the twenty-first century to understand the impact of new pedagogies on new student cohorts. With more constructivist, student-centred approaches to pedagogy, there is a trend towards more dialogic interaction in lecture settings and more group work and oral presentations in assessment. These developments are changing the oral genres traditionally associated with university study. While this trend towards more interactive pedagogic oracy is underway, Australian universities are welcoming increasing numbers of international students, many of whom speak English as an additional language (EAL). Business faculties in particular have attracted the lion's share of international undergraduate enrolments (51.7% in 2007) (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008). This paper focuses particularly on the lecture genre observed in a Business Studies unit.

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Business Studies offers an interesting case in curricular politics with regard to how certain knowledges come to be institutionally legitimated. Though a relative newcomer, Business Studies is now well established in the academy as a program with a strong instrumental focus on professional preparation as opposed to the 'purer' scholarly discipline of economics. Over its history, the Business Studies degree has undergone some changes, both from within, in terms of fragmenting specialisations, and from without, in response to sectoral/system change and new student populations (Macfarlane, 1997). Conceived as the applied intersection of a variety of disciplinary knowledges, there are ongoing curricular debates about the balance between 'soft' and 'hard' disciplines and the decline of more 'difficult' subjects such as economics because of student preferences (Matchett, 2009; Millmow, 2002). Business expertise is distinguished by its protean opportunism, contextual responsiveness, self-interest and innovation. Unlike preparation in other professions, the technical skills acquired in business studies can be expected to have 'a short shelf life' (MacFarlane, 1997, p. 5), which makes the selection of curricular knowledge problematic. Should it be a curriculum of 'bankable' knowledge, one that develops renewable skills, or one that produces entrepreneurial acumen and dispositions of critical and strategic thinking?

This paper examines the learning context created when more oracy is asked of more linguistically diverse student cohorts in this field of business knowledge. It offers a socio-linguistically informed study of a series of lectures in first year Business Studies at an Australian university and reflections on the kinds of knowledges that the more interactive genre of lecture produced. These knowledges are understood through Bernstein's distinction between vertical and horizontal knowledge structures. The paper then offers suggestions on how to maximise the knowledge potential and minimize the pedagogic risks of this more interactive genre of lecture, with particular regard to enabling the participation of the EAL student.

Literature review

Written academic genres have attracted sustained attention from applied linguistic perspectives, which have informed academic support programs and language proficiency tests. These perspectives range from detailed linguistic analysis to more critical perspectives on how entrenched academic conventions position the culturally/linguistically different voice (e.g. Canagarajah, 2004; Pratt, 1998). As a recent example of the former, the collection by Ravelli and Ellis (2004) explores the written genre by comparing expert writing with that of novice writers, or first language writers' choices with those of second language students, to make evident the necessary learning for academic success. The collection demonstrates how, despite technology, internationalised student cohorts and global knowledge economies, there remain resilient linguistic conventions that continue to demand intricate, nuanced texts from novices. In general, this approach differs from the more critical perspectives in that it presumes that the problem and therefore the solution lies in EAL students' capacities, not in the practices of the academy.

There is a smaller research literature investigating the listening demands of academic settings and how EAL students fare in this regard. Flowerdew's (1994) edited collection explores problematic aspects such as comprehension, signalling cues and note-taking in lectures. Lynch's (1994) chapter offers suggestions on how to 'train' lecturers for international audiences, recommending that 'when preparing material for lectures they should allow time for two or three 'question pauses' – short

breaks in their presentation during which students would be free to raise queries about what has been said up to that point' (p. 284). Mason's (1994) chapter, reporting on an interview study of 26 foreign graduate students and 18 lecturers in US universities, observed that the lecture format was already becoming more interactive, but that foreign students found such participation difficult, which 'means that greater attention must be paid toward enhancing aural *and* oral skills' (p. 217, emphasis in original). Mason also described the emerging practice of formally assessing 'class participation' (p. 213).

Ferris and Tagg's (1996) survey of professors across four tertiary institutions in California similarly documented the growing expectation of 'unplanned' oral participation (p. 312). They reported particular concern over the EAL students' participation in such pedagogical interactions among business professors, 'given the relative importance of formal presentation skills in this field' (p. 311). Their recommendations were directed at language teachers who prepare EAL students for such environments and the need 'to help students add to their repertoires' (p. 312). Doherty and Singh (2005) describe such preparatory classes for international students at an Australian university and how performances of a business studies oral presentation and classroom discussion were carefully simulated and rehearsed. They argued that such preparatory programs invoked an imagined purity in academic conventions that denied the growing presence and effect of culturally and linguistically different students in student cohorts.

The blind spot in this literature on linguistic demands of academic settings is ethnographic description and analysis of authentic spoken interactions that ultimately contribute to students' academic success. In contrast to authentic written texts, spoken interactions are methodologically more difficult to handle, being more ephemeral, more open, multi-vocal genres that require expensive transcription for detailed analysis. If, however, assessment and pedagogical practices continue this trend towards oral performances and 'participation', oracy warrants similarly rigorous scrutiny.

One relevant study that does such detailed linguistic analysis of the spoken lecture genre is Camiciottoli's (2007) analysis of a corpus of 12 business studies lectures (6 in English at an Italian university and 6 in US settings). Her multidimensional analysis reveals the interdiscursivity involved in the field of business; the particular features of the spoken discourse; the knowledge dimensions and relations involved in the lectures; the technical lexis and use of metaphor; and the use of visual aids and extra-linguistic cues in shaping meaning. She summarises the business studies lecture as 'a speech event in which novices and experts come together to negotiate knowledge and establish their social identities' (p. 183). This paper will not replicate such micro-analysis but, with additional theoretical treatment, pursues the issue around negotiating knowledges and identities.

The remaining facet of this study involves the growing phenomenon of international student flows and the internationalisation of higher education. In their recent review of research in international education, Dolby and Rahman (2008) distinguish between the scholarly and the practically oriented categories of research in terms of their readership. Given the business imperatives of the practical category, they suggest that 'one of the weaknesses of (a portion) of this subset of literature is its uncritical stance toward both its own internal practices and the structures in which it operates' (p. 688). Doherty's (2008) ethnography of the design and conduct of an online internationalised MBA unit delves beyond the orthodox celebration of the presence of international students as evidence of internationalisation. Socio-linguistic

analysis of the online postings informed by theory of pedagogic discourse (Bernstein, 1990) revealed how the case study unit's design purposefully staged 'student subsidy of the curriculum' being 'the sharing of personal experiences and insights to exemplify, enrich or problematise theorisations offered in the curricular material' (p. 270).

This paper uses a similar approach, meshing socio-linguistics with sociology of knowledge to understand the student subsidy design of the interactive Business Studies lecture. The next section outlines further theoretical concepts that were used to analyse the knowledges produced in the lectures observed.

Theoretical framing

Bernstein (2000) offers a typology of knowledges distinguished by the structure of their 'social basis' (p. 156) and role in shaping educational contexts and identities. He firstly distinguishes between *horizontal* and *vertical discourses* – the former being the everyday ideas, language and practices that are commonly shared and circulated within a society, as distinct from the latter, which is more restricted in its distribution, taking 'the form of a series of specialised languages with specialised modes of interrogation and specialised criteria for the production and circulation of texts' (p. 157). Horizontal discourses tend to be acquired in everyday contexts, while vertical discourses tend to be learnt in formal pedagogical settings. With this frame one could make a distinction between the horizontal 'commonsense' discourse of business matters in public media and the more abstract, decontextualised and technical vertical discourse in business analysis publications, textbooks or research.

Bernstein further divides the category of vertical discourse into two forms: 'one is a coherent, explicit and systematically principled structure, hierarchically organised; and the second takes the form of a series of specialised languages with specialised modes of interrogation, specialised criteria for the production and circulation of texts' (p. 160). Applications of the first 'hierarchical' knowledge structure can be built from foundational axioms or theories. In contrast, the knowledges in the second 'horizontal knowledge structure' sit side by side as a collection of 'languages not translatable, since they make different and often opposing assumptions, with each language having its own criteria for legitimate texts, what counts as evidence and what counts as legitimate questions or a legitimate problematic' (p. 162).

To apply this typology to the knowledges collected in the business studies curriculum, horizontal discourse would be the everyday knowledge that students bring from their lived experiences and local contexts. This is the type of knowledge that 'student subsidy of the curriculum' (Doherty, 2008, p. 270) would most likely tap. Vertical discourse would be the specialised technical concepts and registers students acquire in relevant school and university programs. This vertical discourse may involve both knowledges that are hierarchically structured, for example within formal economic theory and modelling, and others that are horizontally structured, for example the psychology, sociology, history, law and politics of different national markets. This distinction is evident in course structures that firstly require specific prerequisite studies to stage hierarchical learning or offer competing electives to cultivate horizontal learning. The pedagogical challenge for both teachers and students is firstly to make coherent sense of the collection of vertical discourses; then to nurture professionals who can draw appropriately from the range.

Maton's (2007) work on 'knowledge-knower structures' in educational fields adds another analytical dimension to reveal how different knowledge structures (the epistemic relations) organise different types of knowers (the social relations) and vice versa. He gives a worked example of how the humanities have traditionally cultivated a hierarchical community of knowers (some better and more entitled than others) in a horizontally structured field of knowledges, in contrast to the sciences, which cultivate a horizontal community of knowers (all qualifiers welcome) in a hierarchically structured field of knowledge. The cross tabulation of possible knowledge and knower types provides a range of four possible legitimisation codes:

- the knowledge code (depends on what you know)
- the knower code (depends on who you are)
- the relativist code (depends on neither what you know or who you are)
- the elite code (depends on what you know *and* who you are).

These codes could be exemplified through the different knowledge/knower codes of the speakers observed in the Business Studies lectures. The lecturer had the necessary academic training and publications to legitimate her wisdom through a knowledge code. In contrast, a guest speaker was invited to speak on the strength of who he was, given his status and reputations as a business manager, and his expertise in matters of business, which constitute the premises of an elite code. Students could speak as representatives of certain cultural, gender or national groups (knower code) or as everyday consumers with personal experience of markets (relativist code).

The empirical study

The aim of the larger empirical project was to document and describe the nature of speaking and listening first year students were required to do in undergraduate entry points (first semester, first year units) in university settings and assessment tasks. The project was broadly conceived as classroom ethnography (Hammersley, 1990) of two first year units in an Australian university, which typically attract a high proportion of full fee-paying international students: one in business studies; the other in information technology. The project involved recording the first four lectures in both units, a tutorial group across the first four weeks in both units, and interviewing both lecturers about their design behind the student oracy tasks in their units. This paper reports on observations in the Business Studies lectures and a semi-structured interview with the Business Studies lecturer. A study of one unit is necessarily limited in scope but can serve to document emergent practices and flag processes of change in the academy's oral genres.

The first broad-level analysis of the observational data was a genre analysis of the lectures. The second level of analysis interrogated the kinds of knowledge elicited from students across the lecture series, drawing on the theoretical categories previously discussed.

Genre analysis

Christie (2008) argues that linguistic genres are 'best understood as themselves institutional in character, and part of the fabric of social life' (p. 29). The lecture and tutorial genres of Western university are particularly good examples of how linguistic

templates can structure relations between actors in different roles and how there are deep traditions in such linguistic scripts implicitly ruling who can talk, how and when. The traditional lecture was an expository one-to-many spoken monologue, ‘an institutionalized extended holding of the floor in which one speaker imparts his views on a subject’ (Goffman, 1981, p. 165), often performed as ‘aloud reading’ with the occasional moment of ‘fresh talk’ (p. 171) inserted to enliven the event. The lecture genre is conventionally paired with the contrasting genre of tutorial, being generative small group discussion or question/answer dialogue that radically reallocates talking rights and expectations.

Genre analysis is equally alert to the possibility of change in such scripts and can highlight both discursive continuity and change in order to understand ‘the necessary stability and the necessary flexibility that social life requires’ (Christie, 2008, p. 36). Bakhtin (1986) argues that any relative stability over a chain of genre instantiations is dependent on historical context. He distinguishes between simple primary speech genres and hybrid secondary ones that ‘arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication. ... During the process of their formation, they absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres’ (p. 62). This project documents the changing conditions of secondary genres in university classrooms and how new students, pedagogies, technologies and tutorial group size might change the institutional conditions that sustained the monologic lecture and the dialogic tutorial. The analysis below reveals how a process of change is indeed underway with the absorption of less formal, dialogic ‘primary’ speech genres and multimodal semiosis into the lecture genre. This would suggest that the lecture now operates more as a ‘macro-genre’ (Christie, 2002) tying together a variety of texts and interactional modes into a larger conglomerate structure.

Bhatia’s (1993) more sociological approach to genre analysis foregrounds not only the linguistic ‘form-function correlations’ (p. 16) but also the sociological and psychological motives behind the ‘tactical aspects of genre construction’ (p. 19) and argues for adjunct data from ‘specialist informants’ (p. 12) who can assist in describing the genre.

The interactive lecture genre ...

The four lectures observed in the Business Studies unit were more purposefully interactive than the traditional monologue lecture described above. These lectures retained some traditional features meshed with new moves and features. The analytic re-description of the observed lecture genre below reports on what Bhatia (1993) describes as the ‘structural interpretation of the text-genre’ and the typical pattern of ‘rhetorical moves which give this genre its typical cognitive structure’ and then turns to the lecturer’s interview data ‘to bring in relevant explanation rather than mere description’ (p. 34).

... is expository at heart

The lectures observed still drew on the tradition of expository monologue with significant chunks of extended talk by the lecturer. In this style, the lecturer regularly included an introductory overview to the lecture’s topic and structure and closed with a retrospective summary move, ‘summing up and setting the scene for next week.’

... is multimodal

At all stages this expository talk worked in tandem with the projection of a multimodal PowerPoint display, incorporating text, image and sometimes animation or a filmed resource. This technological 'resemiotization' (Iedema, 2003) of the pedagogic discourse has become widespread, taken-for-granted practice in Australian universities. The lecturer's bodily performance effectively became marginal to the gaze of the students who were observed listening to the lecturer's microphoned voice while visually oriented to the projected image or to their pre-printed version thereof. Where note-taking used to be a crucial oracy practice for students, note-giving is now a widespread expectation of lecturers. This has taken a considerable load off the academic listening skill of grasping the structure underlying oral text.

The pre-planned sequence of slides was observed to structure and govern the progressive staging of the content. Thus the lecture genre still straddles the boundary between spoken and written modes, though now with a new division of labour – the PowerPoint was the fixed, prepared text that could be reproduced, while the spoken was the ephemeral text produced in the classroom moment (unlike earlier practices of ephemeral written text on blackboards to support the written then spoken lecture). The mouse click between PowerPoint slides typically marked a shift in topic, rather than any verbal link. The strength of this topic/slide association was evident in the consternation expressed by the lecturer when 'I put the slide in the wrong place'. At times the slides provided a summary sub-set of the spoken text but, at other times, the talk was a subset of the PowerPoint text and students were referred to the slides for more treatment of the topic ('I've given you a fair amount of notes') so one mode is not necessarily subservient to the other in this symbiotic mix.

Another demonstration of the powerful symbiosis between multimodal text and talk was an extended episode in Week 4 when the computer equipment did not cooperate and the lecturer struggled to continue with the planned lecture. She had carefully prepared images in her presentation and her commentary relied on making reference to features of these images. She interrupted the lecture on a number of occasions to address the problem, appealed for help, and took an early six-minute break in the two-hour lecture. The lecturer soldiered on with the occasional comment of frustration ('This has been absolutely dreadful') highlighting how integral multimodality is to today's lecture genre.

As another feature of the dual text modus operandi, at times the speaker's talk worked on the projected image. For example, one guest lecturer was a librarian whose task was to introduce students to a range of research tools. In contrast to the dominant expository genre of the lecturer's talk, the librarian's talk was peppered with procedural imperatives using exophoric referencing: 'Click on... Go to this ... Notice up here ...'. Semantically such 'show how' talk depended on the visual interface displayed, such that an audio recording without visuals would make no sense.

In her interview the lecturer outlined her plans to continue building up a bank of video and image resources for her unit. Her rationale was primarily to engage the students: 'That's what this generation is used to. They need to visualise things'.

... uses embedded interrogative sequences, such as ...

Where a conventional expository genre would employ declarative sentences and the occasional rhetorical question, this lecturer frequently shifted from declarative to

interrogative mood. In her interview, she justified this practice again with reference to who her students are, and therefore what kind of pedagogy they need:

Their attention span is probably about 15 minutes. ... So I need to break the attention span up, so that's one of the reasons why I do it. It's also important that I try to engage ... but the mere fact that I ask a question, even if they don't answer it, if I answer it back, I think there's a benefit in it.

These brief moments of questioning embedded into the expository genre fell into five broad types:

1: *checkpoints*

The lecturer regularly stopped the flow of expository ideas and offered the floor to the students with an open meta-cognitive 'checkpoint' question, for example: 'Any questions so far?' In her interview, the lecturer described these punctuation moments as 'breaking it up'.

2: *IRE sequences*

Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequences (Mehan, 1979) are interrogative interactions structured in three typical moves: teacher initiation/question; student response; teacher evaluation. They are different from genuine questions because the teacher knows the answer and is using the IRE format for pedagogic reasons. For example, the lecturer asked 'What about your books? Where were they made?' knowing the answer she was looking for, to prime the students' interest in the geography of markets. The question was answered by a number of students calling out at random and their contribution was taken as indicative of all students' knowledge, again typical of how IRE sequences work in classroom discourse. At times the shift to IRE was used strategically to highlight an important concept or idea, for example, 'What are non-tariff barriers?' The shift produced a change in texture, like a speed bump, to alert students to an important point.

Of particular interest here, IRE chains were used at other times to throw a spotlight on international students with a question to elicit their local knowledge, for example; 'Is it common to ... in Germany?' In her interview, the lecturer described these more as genuine questions to encourage dialogue and interaction: 'I think most people are very happy to talk about their own country, they have expertise and they know, they can say, "That's not true" etc., so this is one way of opening up.' However, such questions were observed to work essentially as IRE because the lecturer knew the answer she was looking for and staged the encounter opportunistically to legitimate her example through their 'authentic' knowledge of that context. She similarly called on female students and students from particular Australian locations to verify or authenticate examples she was drawing from their particular realm of personal (knower-mode) expertise. Such moments cropped up unpredictably, 'off the cuff' and without warning, requiring a quick aural/oral response from the targeted students.

3: *'survey' questions*

The third type of questioning often sprinkled through the lecture was a quick appeal 'surveying' the students, to indicate with their raised hand whether they fell into a

particular category, for example: ‘How many of you ...?’ Students would raise their hands indicating the relative strength of the attribute in the class population. This demanded a form of non-verbal participation by all.

4: student-generated question sequences

Across the four two-hour lectures observed, it was very rare for a student to ask a substantive question during the lecture, despite the lecturer’s frequent encouragement: ‘Feel free to ask any questions’. There was, however, the occasional question sequence from a student about matters of assessment. After a chain of such questions, the students were told ‘I’ll stay back after the lecture, so if you’ve got questions ...’ indicating where and when she wanted such interaction to fit in the lecture genre.

5: informal question time

The lecturer made herself available to answer students’ questions before and after the lecture, as well as during the break. She offered this opportunity publicly and purposefully remained at the centre front stage podium. These episodes could be considered to be ‘bracketed’, ‘marked off from the ongoing flow of surrounding events by a special set of boundary markers’ (Goffman, 1974, p. 251). The lecturer would announce a break, turn away from the microphone to engage in one-to-one dialogue with students who approached her, then later resume the lecture ‘proper’. The students who came down to the podium seeking this form of interaction initiated the interaction, asked their question and decided when the interaction was finished. Students waiting for their turns often gravitated into the small group discussion adding their questions when relevant. From observation, these questions usually focused on assessment procedures rather than clarification of lecture content.

... displays an ethic of interactivity

In her introductory session and at later points, the lecturer repeatedly invoked a moral order in which students could and should initiate contact and ask for help. The direction, ‘Make and maintain contact with your tutor’ was displayed on the first week’s PowerPoint. She devoted considerable time to outlining a variety of contacts and means of communicating with the unit teaching team and repeatedly stressed that student-initiated contact was welcome: ‘Any issues, please let us know as soon as possible ...’. Thus the good student was one that spoke up.

... includes frequent shifts from impersonal to interpersonal

While in formal expository genre, the lecturer’s talk reflected the didactic tenor associated with the traditional lecture, that of expert informing the novice. However, at times this tenor shifted suddenly, from talking about the content to talking to the student. This talk was more like a coach – addressing the students directly as ‘You’ with advice regarding their future role/identity as a business person (‘You need to be mindful of ...’) or regarding assessment (‘You need to consider ...’, ‘You need to know this’). In these episodes her talk resembled a procedural genre with lists of instructions or directions, particularly regarding how to undertake the assessment

tasks. In her interview, the lecturer reflected on this strategy and linked it to her students' instrumental focus: 'it's sort of become part of my repertoire because we do need to say, given the environment we are in, the students want to know, "How does this relate to me as a person?"'

... stages episodes of student – student interactions en masse

On two occasions, the lecturer directed an activity in which students were to talk to other students. In the second week, students were asked to 'reach out now – introduce yourselves'. In Week 3 students were set a conundrum to discuss 'with someone you have not talked to'. Each time, the room immediately started to buzz with student-student dialogues. The lecturer was silent through these episodes then resumed talking after approximately two minutes. When interviewed about this strategy, the lecturer explained her design as one of purposefully mixing domestic and international students: 'so what I'm saying is reach out. Try and reach out to your Australian colleagues. If you are a domestic student, try and reach out to your international students.'

... is multivocal

The lecture series included guest lecturers and audiovisual materials to augment the content. The lecturer described her reasoning behind this design as a way to access authentic workplace knowledge and expertise by importing voices of authority (elite mode or knowledge mode): 'What I tried to do was, given the fact that they are such large classes, how do I bring the business world in?' She also pursued this strategy to promote student engagement: 'So I needed to reflect on how can I make this interesting. I think if students are interested in something ... it makes it so much more easy and enjoyable.'. With these two purposes in mind the lecturer devoted considerable effort to develop engaging audio-visual resources, with successful business people talking about their experiences. Two case studies were shown as embedded episodes in the lectures observed. After each, the lecturer elaborated on the content, with an IRE sequence explicating points of interest in the filmed resource.

... includes personal narratives

In her talk, the lecturer often embedded personal narratives and narrative examples of theoretical ideas with self-deprecating humour. These planned narratives of her own experiences, for better and for worse, were supplemented by personal photos in the visual displays to exemplify ideas and add interest. Thus she wove together curricular knowledge from both knowledge mode and knower mode, recounting her own experiences in the business world.

... demonstrates an ethic of care

The lecturer at many points across the observed lectures expressed care and concern for the students at this early stage of their university studies, checking on students' computer literacy and their allocation to tutorial groups. She also directly acknowledged and celebrated the presence of international students in the lecture group and encouraged students to 'reach out' and make new connections. When asked about this

aspect of her pedagogy, the lecturer gave an account of her own challenges as an international student, which informed her current practice: 'so I bring all that to my teaching, having been an international student and the experience'. Later she explained that this ethic of care extended to all her students:

I think I made the comment, that 'If you're a green Martian and in my subject' ... I don't care ... it could be international students, it could be regional students ... if you are interested in my subject, well I'm interested in looking after them.

This personal investment in her students' wellbeing is a far cry from the remote academic in an ivory tower and possibly speaks to a realignment of relations between students and academic staff and a reduction of social distance between the two positions. This was evident in the friendly, more personable tenor of lecture room interactions.

To summarize, the above analysis of oracy across a series of business studies lectures suggests that the lecture genre in today's university may no longer be a monologic expository display of expert disciplinary knowledge-mode content bestowed upon the learner. Rather, it is a multi-vocal, multimedia performance driven by an ethic of care, engagement and interactivity, which acts as a macro-genre embedding episodes of dialogic, narrative and procedural genres within the conventional exposition. The discussion now turns to how this more interactive style of lecture differently positions students and engages their knowledges as part of the curricular mix.

The knowledgeable student identity

Anecdotal knower mode knowledge from both the lecturer's and the students' experience was included as legitimate grist for the curriculum. Of particular interest is the way international students' knowledges were elicited through IRE chains at times to resource the curriculum with authentic insights. The lecturer explained how this 'knowledgeable student' identity was integral to the student subsidy design behind her interactive lecture genre:

I think we have to think of our students not as empty vessels but as people with their own background, their own thinking and what we do is to complement that. That's why I think it's important that hopefully I go away from these lectures learning something as well. ... We can learn from each other.

This position contrasts with Camiciottoli's (2007) view of the business studies lecture as 'a speech event in which novices and experts come together' (p. 183). The lecturer observed in this study is constructing quite different identities and speaking positions for her students, ('I think it's a two way street, it's not me as the expert') with implications for the knowledge structure of the curriculum.

Doing business through horizontal discourse

The lecture is a genre associated with a powerful institution steeped in tradition. However, it will continue to evolve in response to new pedagogies, new student cohorts and new knowledge structures, as this paper has explored on a small scale. Changes will encompass both benefits and risks. The following discussion explores both potentials.

The curricular field of Business Studies as observed seems to legitimate, perform and circulate both knowledge and knower mode claims, the latter being expressed through everyday horizontal discourse. There was a vertical discourse with its own conceptual register evident in the textbook, the exposition and the PowerPoint slides of these lectures. However, theoretical ideas from the vertical discourse were being exemplified, elaborated and extended through the horizontal discourse of personal anecdote – the lecturer’s, the case study subjects’ and the students’. To process the resulting horizontal discourse and build the vertical theoretical discourse, some general point, comment or principle needs to be explicitly extracted. That way the professional knowledge base legitimated will not be a collection of personal anecdotes with implicit links, but rather wisdom produced through explicit synthesis. The risk of student subsidy design and more interactivity in lectures is whether personal stories are allowed to pool in everyday horizontal discourse and ‘speak for themselves’. While it could be argued that the entrepreneurial disposition thrives on such an opportunistic mix of horizontal connections between diverse knowledges and experiences, such claims to knowledge need more intellectual processing in a curriculum if they are to consciously build a rigorous vertical discourse of professional expertise.

The EAL learner in all this

How does the first year EAL learner cope in this more interactive lecture genre, with its complex knowledge moves? While the traditional lecture has its own benefits for the EAL learner (for example, one voice to adjust to, coherent and predictable structure, no pressure to interact on demand), there are also benefits for the EAL learner in the more engaging, multimodal genre. The multimedia display offers strong linguistic scaffolding for the EAL listener. Key terms can be reinforced in the visual display, while models can help visualise and clarify connections being made in the talk. Icons and colours can be used in other semiotic ways to flag structure and content.

The use of checkpoints and informal question times is also potentially valuable for EAL learners. However, the onus in these episodes falls on students to initiate topics, which could be a deterrent. One way to reduce this risk would be to quickly review the conceptual progress made in the vertical discourse to that point, before opening the floor at a checkpoint. Alternatively, students could be invited to attempt a summary to each other and then ask questions where uncertain. This allows the EAL learner an opportunity to express ideas using the vertical discourse, without the performative stress of speaking alone at short notice to the lecture theatre.

One risk in the episodic use of personal anecdote, case studies and student subsidy is the unpredictable vocabulary that surfaces with each narrative. A rapid fire string of examples, when heard through an EAL learner’s filter, could present as a confusing set of jumbled cues. More careful meta-textual comments to mark each pragmatic shift, such as, ‘As another example of the concept of ...’, ‘let’s consider ...’, with visual cues, might help the EAL learner navigate the knowledges presented and make the intended cognitive links. Initiation-Response-Evaluation moments for eliciting student subsidy are potentially powerful, but tended to crop up haphazardly and unannounced, putting the relevant students on the spot to produce insight on demand. A more careful sequence in which all students are asked to consider relevant local/contextual knowledge, before calling for some volunteers, might achieve more thoughtful contributions and could help draw out the vertical knowledge dimension to knit the horizontal discourse’s knower-mode contributions together.

Conclusion

This article offers an ethnographic description of a series of first year Business Studies lectures as enacted in an internationalised, multi-mediated Australian university in 2008, with interview data used to link the observed practices with the lecturer's intent and design. This description of authentic oracy events serves to update nostalgic notions of academic tradition and to augment the well developed literature on academic literacy. The lecture genre like any socially constructed script will undergo evolutionary change as new pedagogies, new parties, the knowledges they bring and the nature of the discipline shape it. Business Studies, more than other academic fields, has attracted international enrolments and has an intrinsic interest in drawing students' knower-mode knowledges into the curriculum to supplement the vertical technical discourse of the discipline. This has fostered a more interactive, multimodal and multivocal genre of lecture premised on a marked degree of parity between lecturer and student as knowers who can contribute to the curriculum. These developments place a premium on student interactivity as value-adding pedagogy for all parties. However, such interactivity needs to be carefully staged and mindfully facilitated to maximise the substantive contribution by EAL students and their capacity to learn within this interactive genre.

This interest in promoting students' oral interactivity for both curricular subsidy and pedagogical engagement is not restricted to the area of Business Studies and lecturers in other areas may well recognise aspects of their practice and design in the description offered. Similarly, the trend to multimodal and multivocal lectures is evident across disciplines, offering both opportunities and risks for the EAL learner. It is not enough to expect the preparatory program, entry tests and EAL student to deliver the oracy proficiency necessary for such emergent practices. Rather, it behoves the academy to recognise and dignify the presence of EAL students in the student body and to ensure that innovations work for and not against this growing cohort. This will require a degree of reflection and purposeful planning of how student interactivity will happen and consideration of what demands the invoked oracy places on the EAL student.

The analysis also made evident the different types of knowledge aggregated through the mixture of personal knower-mode anecdotes with expert and knowledge mode claims. Again, the practice of using knower-mode anecdotes to explore, extend or exemplify knowledge mode claims is not limited to Business Studies and other disciplinary areas may benefit from a similar consideration of how the practice of pooling personal knower-mode anecdotes might better be further processed to explicitly re-articulate the vertical discourse of the formal curricular content.

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