



Charles Bazerman on John Swales: An Interview with Tony Dudley-Evans

When John Swales began to develop his work on genre analysis, he became very interested in the work of sociologists of science and people working in composition in the United States. This interest was strengthened by his move to the University of Michigan in the mid-80s, and increasingly there has been overlap between the work of composition teachers working with NS and ESP teachers working with NNS. The issues arising from the interaction between ESP and composition studies are discussed at the length in the interview with Charles Bazerman conducted by Tony Dudley-Evans.

TDE: How did you first meet John Swales?

CB: We had heard of each other's work, and he wrote me around 1982. In an early letter I mentioned that I'd be in England for a science studies conference. He invited me up to Aston and I gave a talk there. He introduced me to his students, they were doing interesting work with moves analysis. He took me into the reference collection where he had this enormous collection of pre-prints, off-prints and materials. I was just amazed, I didn't know there was that much work in ESP. He created another collection in Michigan; he has a very special library there.

TDE: What has been John's influence on your own work?

CB: Most concretely I've used it in textbooks and other places. It presents very clearly and sharply, and in easily intelligible ways what can be accomplished by certain kinds of genre analysis, and people can say, yes, that provides practical use, yes, that makes sense. In that very direct way I've used it.

TDE: So you've used move analysis in the writing textbooks you've written?

CB: In the most recent one I've used the three-part version of the CARS model in a side-bar. Then in an earlier textbook I used the earlier four-part version. The influence is in seeing the style of the work, and there is also an opening up of the possibilities of linguistics for the kind of things I'm interested in. Especially after he came over to North America, we were both working in related areas, had mutual friends and were influencing overlapping groups of people. This led to a more indirect development of the field. I think that's a very important part of the story.

TDE: Did you have regular contact with him on a personal level? Or just meeting at conferences?

CB: We certainly saw each other at conferences once he came to North America. At the beginning we had a fair amount of letter correspondence, then I was very excited to know that he was coming over to the US and we now see each other fairly regularly at conferences. We also had occasion to speak on the phone and carry on some other business concerning the ESP Journal. Recently we have been talking about the textographic book he's writing. So we've had fairly regular but not weekly contact.

TDE: What are the differences between your approaches? One obvious one is that the genre analysis work that John does comes out of work for NNS whereas your own work has been largely with NS. Is there any overlap?

CB: I think that's a minor difference because our work is concerned with the language form and the activities; the initial characteristics of the people learning to engage in these activities is actually a secondary matter. What we both came to study these things for is to help students of various characteristics.

What we wound up describing is the same kind of realms, though, of course, we developed it pedagogically for different kinds of students. So the textbooks and other pedagogical materials that John developed were always more linguistically oriented and concerned with linguistic forms because of the needs of NNS, and my own materials had much more on the rhetorical form because I was working with students who already knew the language, usually at a fairly advanced level. So that's where the difference is. But not really in the things we were studying and the kinds of account we were giving. There is some difference in the kind of accounts we were giving—he came out of a linguistics background, started from moves analysis and was thoroughly embedded in the tradition like the work on linguistic features—use of tense, modality and things like that, which was all news to me. It was very interesting and I started to see some of the possibilities of that. My work came out of a—let's say—more *ad hoc* descriptive tradition, a lot of sociological theory I'd been reading and a lot of historical information and technique. I guess people do say that I have a lot of literary technique and I have to own up to that. I'd say literary in the sense of noticing a variety of features, not having a particular set of identified features that I always look at, noticing a variety of things that might be going on in the text, but not through any particular linguistic method.

The overlap between linguistic and rhetorical is something that developed in our conversations. He also brought more people into the fold, the kind of students he was developing started to have contact with a variety of people in composition. Then there were third parties in the discussion like Aviva Freedman. The influence was in merging the discipline because of his wide-ranging interests and his openness to new approaches. So this involved merging the interests of applied linguistics and ESP with the Writing Across the Curriculum movement and creating this joint field with this continuing overlap. He created more of a disciplinary or inter-disciplinary space in which our work could flow back and forth more easily.

TDE: I very much agree with that. I too have been carried into that space. I

believe that people like you and me come from different traditions but have ended up with quite similar approaches. We applied linguists have moved away from the perhaps rather narrow view of applied linguistics that has sometimes prevailed. But what is the nature of this interdisciplinary space? Is it interdisciplinary or have we established a new discipline or at least a new discourse community?

CB: Rather than answer that directly, I'll talk about the Hallidayan work which has tried to define this space as a discipline. It was through the contact with John that I got interested in the Hallidayan view of language. When I returned to Singapore in 85–86, there was so much Halliday around I had to start to make sense of it. It was not an accident in a way—in terms of the ways that societies split up the work (who does what? What store do you buy your toothbrush in?). The work that was being done in composition in terms of literacy education at the high end was being done in composition, technical writing and fields like that for mostly NS in the U.S.A. And in Britain it was being done for NNS by applied linguists. Increasingly in continental Europe I'm finding they're doing it for NS too. It is linguists who do that as opposed to people out of English departments. Now rhetoric is one of the first places a person in the English department would go to deal with these issues. There is also a different relationship between linguistics and literature in Britain; stylistics is an example of that. So it comes out of a different tradition, but it's the same kind of work of helping students deal with more advanced and specialised forms of literacy.

There's one other element that entered into it, I think that on both parts there was a realisation that the higher literacy was mediated through particular forms of language. That's something that linguistics, at least certain versions of linguistics, does well, i.e. that it is mediated through certain forms and these are important to understand. So we both started focusing in on that, but also expanding out to what was being mediated through these particular forms into things like cognition, social roles and rhetorical stances. One of the interesting things about the moves is that they could be viewed simply as linguistic phenomena, i.e. organisation of larger parts of language. But they are also rhetorical, social and stance-taking, so that they are moving out very much. In the Hallidayan world Ruqaiya Hasan's analysis of moves in shop encounters is in a theory that describes itself as social. This is the most concretely social part of that system that I've found in that it moves to models of specific social encounters. John's work is closest to Halliday precisely in the moves analysis.

TDE: It strikes me that the three-move version of the CARS model is further down the road of the rhetorical and social aspects than the four-move version.

CB: I was very unreflexive about that. That was John's latest description of it, and I took his word for it. But I think that you are right. He's moving more towards simply describing the functions rather than defining the actual linguistic features. His problems in applying the model have not been in describing the functions; he's always been able to find the function being carried out, and I guess that's why he kept going with this. But how it

divided up in moves and jumps in moves, recursiveness in moves, and whether the two moves were on top of each other. That's where he was having the difficulty so that the activity seemed to be pretty well defined and stable, but the linguistic realisation got fuzzier and fuzzier.

TDE: Your own work, Greg Myers' and various others have had an influence in taking him to a more social view of the activity of writing, I think.

CB: It's also a shame because one thing that John and a couple of other linguists got me to do was to appreciate what could be done through a kind of fairly rigorous or fairly orderly, precise linguistic analysis with which you would actually try to tie things down. Then we have gone and fuzzed it all up.

TDE: Is that a need that you feel in your own work (i.e. the need for an orderly and precise analysis)? You mentioned at the beginning that you recognise that you use literary techniques.

CB: That was where my original training was and I have learnt a lot about language through literature. All this gets into fundamental issues about what we think about language and how language operates, which may also reflect the end at which we come at it from. One set of assumptions may be right coming from one end, another set of assumptions may be more correct coming from the other end. But let me just state the assumptions. Coming from the rhetorical end of things, i.e. the larger unit end of things and also coming from literature where things that have a uniqueness or novelty are prized, it seems that language is a historical moving target and people write different things at different points in history. People are very creative and individual. The move to genre was to try to understand some kind of order within this and how people create recognisability and some stability in actions, but essentially within a very fluid, creative, strategic use of language. People are always thinking about what they say, especially they think about what they write, because they have the time. Whereas linguists—even those who deny the *langue/parole* split—come from a notion that there is a fairly stable system, something like a *langue*. I do not believe in *langue/parole*, though I use it sometimes, and there are certainly things that look very much like *langue*, but the linguist's job is to map outlines. That is what they have done for this century. That has been their task. So we get with Halliday something which is social, i.e. the combining notion of utterance is still very important. What they want to do is map out stable systems by which we create utterances or at least, as they say, our resources for utterance. That's a formulation I can accept. In other words, I accept that at any point in history and sometimes over fairly long periods of history, some of the resources, like the most fundamental parts of the language, the smallest elements of the language, can be fairly stable, and can become very orderly resources for language. At certain levels there may be very stable things about language which even have to do with the way human minds and linguistic abilities are formed.

However coming from my end, this is very far from what we look at. One reason that John's moves were so powerful is that he was looking at a very

particular discursive domain which had sedimented itself very strongly carrying out some very necessarily institutionally structured set of activities that identify the writer against a literature. The history of that isn't very long. In the first 150 years of scientific articles, that hadn't emerged, it only started emerging in the 19th century. That was why I studied Joseph Priestley who in the late 18th century was starting to play around with these things. But in the 19th century with the development of disciplines and disciplinary structures of universities, the notion of the literature became extremely important and institutionally central to disciplines and the notion of disciplines as progressive bodies of knowledge to which people are contributing. Within the last two centuries writers developed practices of positioning their work against the literature, identifying that you belong within that disciplinary literature; that these are the relevant parts of it that you will use to address a problem that is important; that disciplines not only have literatures but they have problems too. Actually that's even more recent than the literatures because, if you look at some late 19th century American stuff, for example, there's a review of the literature, but there's no problem there. It's as though they are saying, I'm going to do another piece of this. But all this, i.e. the positioning against the literature, the identification of problems, has clearly emerged as what disciplines do, so the positioning of each new article against that is a very important piece of business. It's become the first piece of business that you have to do now. And there are patterns by which writers have found that they can do it efficiently, so it has sedimented into a function that must be carried out early in the article. John's model grabbed hold of it and saw the power of it, but it's only within those very specific historic circumstances and institutional practices that have developed that you could get something that appeared so regular as that. He's found that there is still a lot of movement in there, so you get into trouble if you try to deal with it in too codified a way.

TDE: What has struck me most in your own work is that you point to the differences between disciplines. The assumption of John's original work is that there is a pattern common to all academic disciplines. Your own work seems to point to there being specific differences between disciplines.

CB: Fields use their literatures in different ways. I've never done a study of where the CARS model does not work. I taught a class with literary students and sociologists on how to write a graduate paper. To the sociologists the CARS model made kind of sense, but the theories you work with in sociology are important positionings against the literature, so it's useful more as an analogy about how you think about the literature and position yourself within it. The social problem has a greater force than, let's say, the scientific problem. Or could have. The theoretical positioning is very important and it's not so much this kind of adding up of findings, that we've intellectually got all these different pieces together and this is the next piece we need. So it was a little bit different. But for the literature students it was really subversive because literary studies don't work that way at all. And there are a variety of introductory moves, but that sense of a coherent

body of literary criticism which actually gets somewhere isn't there. To try to get the literary students to think about that was very subversive. So what is this field doing? What is the literature all about? How are you actually contributing to a discussion rather than alternative questions such as: How are you distinguishing the originality of your work and the originality of your person or voice? How are you identifying the political motive of a particular kind of critical analysis? How are you establishing the value of the aesthetic issue that you are going to discuss? There are different kinds of motivating questions. But, if you start asking what is the field of literary criticism adding up to, how are you carrying that forward, it's a mischievous question. When I use John's stuff, I use it directly in domains, but in some fields I use it indirectly or as an analogy to think about; it poses certain kind of problems to think about, even if your field has some different practices.

I would like to add to what I've said about the influence that the moves model has had on me. While I don't think I've ever overtly done moves analysis, it has helped me recognize that, within certain domains as sedimented as that, there are parts of that sort. In, for example, my work on patents there is a kind of similarity in the way I move through the features of the patents, which then become regulated by law. In the case of patents some of this got sedimented into governmental law which regulated the material that has to go into the patent application and the tradition backed up by the regulation of the patent examiners made sure that there was a series of moves made in a particular order ending up with a series of claims at the end.

TDE: What changes have you observed since John moved to North America?

CB: Well, he started coming to the College Composition meetings to see what intersection was there. While he has been sceptical about some of the things in composition, he has, on the other hand, become much more aware of writing as a whole activity. When he was in Britain, his opening up was that linguistic features might be describable and might be responsive in terms of many other aspects that are not just simply narrowly describable. Where he is now he has much more a view of writing as something that people do, which has certain linguistic forms, but it is the doing and carrying out of that activity which is the primary motive. The textographic stuff (Swales, in press) is a kind of indicator that he's talking about people writing and creating their lives through writing. That's very much a composition kind of approach. He's also sceptical about some aspects of the process movement, but the textographic work is very much a process book about how people go about producing the texts in which they realise the main activities of their lives. That's a part of North America.

Another part I want to get to—and this may be more University of Michigan than general North America—my impression is that he's very much caught up in the intellectual life of the university. While at Aston I had the impression that he'd be off in his own corner even with the wide interests he had. When he came to Michigan, he took up with a lot of people in other departments and coming in as a professor of an institute it gave him a kind

of institutional place from which he could do this. He could clearly be marked as a full citizen and the University of Michigan has been a very rich environment for him and a place where he could explore a lot of interests. You see that with his textography book. In the course of writing it, he started to realise that he was working with time; it first came to his attention with botanists and how slow that world was. They'd lend out samples for 30–40 years and he was very much taken with it and he found this a very odd but charming part of the world. But then he said that he had to read the theory of time and then on the phone we started talking about Heidegger. So in North America he became caught up in the general intellectual round.

TDE: I'd like to ask about the textographic book. We've talked a lot about moves, but in a sense he's moved a long way on from that. It strikes me that he's left some of the move analysis behind and gone into the sociological analysis, doing work much more similar to your own.

CB: The textographic approach is a very original kind of ethnographic thing that he's doing. But I don't think he's left moves analysis totally behind; he's embedded it. He does some very nice things with standard forms in taxonomies, but then he relates that to ways of thinking, ways of data gathering, ways of focusing attention in that field, then also ways of developing careers and motives in a field. He's got comparisons of several people among the botanists and how they each work within different genres, which is then related to different life impulses and different life organisations so these things are tied together. He hasn't forgotten the moves analysis at all, but sees it as part of much bigger issues, such as the physical organisation of the building and floors that these people write in, and the organisation of space and time. And what they think of as really important to accomplish in their lives which then get accomplished through these specific forms.

TDE: Would you describe yourself as a genre analyst?

CB: Well I analyse genres from time to time. The way I'd currently put it is that written language goes to clearly marked social spaces and genre is part of the production of these clearly marked social spaces within which one creates local things happening within those social spaces. Those social spaces can travel through time and history so that you can read, for example, one of Bacon's works now, and, even though some of the local conditions of production and purposes for which his proposals for a new way of gathering knowledge were presented as a government proposal at a specific moment in time, nonetheless there is a space of contemplation about what science does that creates a relationship to a series of other texts before it and after it so that it does become interpretable. Genres help produce these locales and they help organise the work in those locales, organise the attention of people, organise expectations. Whether you want to call the whole thing genre theory or whether it's social organisation of discourse theory is fuzzy in my mind, partly because there is useful pointing to be done by using the word genre to mean, not text-type, but recognisable text-types. We have recognisable text-types that people name something or see as something. That's a genre. Even though I've always argued that genre is a lot more than

textual features, nonetheless it's through textual features that we recognise genre and we locate these discursive spaces. Or we could say that text form and textual features are very salient in the recognition of genres. So there may be a purpose in trying to keep the word genre closely attached with linguistic form even though it is the larger form typifications that are to me the primary encompassing kinds of issues. I can't provide a simple answer to what is genre analysis.

REFERENCE

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