Chapter 8
Critical Perspectives

Chapter Overview
This chapter discusses the critical issues that have been raised by researchers and practitioners in the fields of EAP, academic literacies and genre-based pedagogies. All of these fields are closely related to the work of LAC and CLIL. I shall discuss why addressing critical perspectives is both necessary and important in developing the theory and practice of LAC and CLIL if we are committed to addressing issues of social justice, diversity and creativity while at the same time trying to help students to access the communicative conventions and genres of the powerful elite in academia and society.

8.1 Genre-Based Pedagogies: Promoting Writing Template Culture and Constraining Students' Voices and Creativity?

A frequent critique of genre-based pedagogies is that they might promote a kind of writing template culture (i.e. teaching writing templates to students) and inadvertently constrain students' development of creativity. This critique is supported by the theoretical point that genres are dynamic, fluid and ever changing and are thus very difficult to fully capture and describe. When genres are reified as text types and taught to students in a non-reflective, reductive manner, students might easily get the misconception that all that they are required to do is to follow the static text-type template and reproduce a text following the template. Also, students are likely to be confronted with new, unpredictable contexts where the kinds of text types that they have been taught might not be appropriate or adequate. While the above is a highly synoptic representation of the critique, it does point to the theoretical debate of what

is more or less teachable/unteachable (or describable/un-describable) and the risk of over-simplifying complex communicative practices as simple teachable and learnable units. As Hyland (2007) puts it, proponents of genre-based approaches have to address 'the charge that genre instruction inhibits writers' self-expression and straightjackets creativity' (p. 152).

In response to this concern, we can consider the 'resource-oriented teaching' conceptualized in the Sydney School genre-based approaches (Martin 1994). Resource-oriented teaching emphasizes genre knowledge as resources and strategies for achieving one's communicative purposes rather than as prescriptions and rules for writing. For example, while the 'elemental genres' like report, procedure, explanation, recount and so on (see Chap. 3) are more predictable in terms of their rhetorical organization and linguistic features, students can also be introduced to the more dynamic 'macro-genres' and the strategies and resources for combining different elemental genres into macro-genres for achieving different communicative purposes. These strategies include elaboration, extension, enhancement and projection (for detailed examples, see Martin 1994; Martin and Rose 2008). A deep understanding and control of the elemental genres and the strategies for combining them will provide the building blocks (the resources) for creating more dynamic macro-genres. This can provide a useful counterbalance to reductive interpretations and implementations of genre-based pedagogies. Citing Bakhtin, Martin and Matthiessen (2014) have recently summarized their response to critique of genre-based pedagogies as follows:

> … creativity depends on mastery of the genre, that critique depends on mastery of the genres of critique and the genres that are being critiqued, and that managing multimodality depends on mastery of multimodal genres. Bakhtin voiced a similar position more than a generation before our re-iterations.

> 'The better our command of genres, the more freely we employ them, the more fully and clearly we reveal our own individuality in them… the more flexibly and precisely we reflect the unrepeatable situation of communication—in a word, the more perfectly we implement our free speech plan.' [Bakhtin 1986, p. 80]

> (Martin and Matthiessen 2014, p. 155)

After outlining above the major kinds of critique to genre-based pedagogies and some possible responses, in Sect. 8.2 below I shall discuss the 'access paradox', and in Sect. 8.3 I shall discuss critical pragmatic approaches as well as Hilary Janks' response to the 'access paradox' as possible strategies to overcome some of the difficult dilemmas captured in the notion of the 'access paradox'.

8.2 The 'Access Paradox' in the Context of Global Dominance of English

In the previous chapters, it is argued that one of the chief aims of LAC and CLIL is to help students access the target academic language and literacies, to master the necessary genres, registers and lexico-grammatical resources required to participate

and communicate successfully in the learning and assessment activities/tasks in different academic content subjects in educational settings. We can say that this is a pragmatic approach to academic literacies, EAP, LAC and CLIL—i.e. adopting the 'identify and induct' ('I & I') approach (see critique of this approach by Street 2004; Lea and Street 1998; Lillis and Scott 2007). Under this approach, we identify, describe and unpack the literacy conventions of academic disciplines and induct (apprentice) students into these conventions (e.g. genre structuring and associated linguistic features), without questioning the ideologies behind these conventions and in the process reifying and reproducing the domination of these conventions.

Critical perspectives, however, require us to consider the 'access paradox' and to confront ourselves with issues of linguistic domination, lack of discursive diversity and creativity, especially in the context of global domination of English, where LAC and CLIL programme models, which although can involve a whole range of languages other than English, are increasingly associated with promoting English as the target L2 in many contexts of the world. Put simply, the 'access paradox' (Lodge 1997, quoted in Janks 2004) states that if more people are provided with access to the dominant variety of the dominant languages, its dominance is perpetuated and reinforced. However, if students are denied access to this variety of languages, they continue to be marginalized in a society where this variety of languages is held up as a marker of distinction or as a gate-keeping requirement for access to higher education and/or high-end jobs, and hence there is this 'access paradox' confronting educators and researchers.

Closely related to the 'access paradox' is the critique that teaching genres of the powerful elite does not necessarily empower students from minority groups as mastery of the genres is necessary but not sufficient for them to access social mobility due to other sources of discrimination such as ethnicity, L1 background, gender, accent or simply skin colour (Luke 1996). Bourdieu's notion of the legitimate speaker is useful here. For instance, if a non-white speaker/writer in Australia produces an English text, the effect might not be the same as that produced by a white speaker/writer in a similar context. The non-white ethnic minority speaker/writer might still tend to be perceived as an imposter or an illegitimate speaker/writer of English (Bourdieu 1990). The argument is that just acquiring the dominant ways of speaking/using English is not necessarily a ticket to social mobility in contexts where racism still works in subtle ways against ethnic minorities (Luke 1996).

8.3   Critical Pragmatic Approaches to Academic Literacies and Hilary Janks' Discussion of the 'Access Paradox'

There have been different efforts by researchers and educators to integrate critical perspectives into their curriculum design and pedagogical practice. These can come under the umbrella term of *critical pragmatic approaches* to academic literacies. In particular, we shall look at the different proposals of Janks (2004), Harwood and Hadley (2004) and Lemke (1990).

Table 8.1 A critical approach to access to English language education (From Janks 2004, p. 35; reproduced here by permission of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English and Professor Hilary Janks)

Access without domination	Access without a theory of domination leads to the naturalization of powerful discourses without an understanding of how these powerful forms came to be powerful.
Domination without access	This maintains the exclusionary force of dominant discourses.
Access without diversity	This fails to recognize that difference fundamentally affects pathways to access involving issues of history, identity and value. It also limits the resources available for redesign.
Diversity without access	Diversity without access to powerful forms of language ghettoizes students and limits their futures.
Access without design	This maintains and reifies dominant forms without considering how they can be transformed.
Design without access	Runs the risk of whatever is designed remaining on the margins.

In an article on the access paradox, Janks (2004) provided a succinct analysis of how access can be provided together with raising critical awareness so that providing access to the dominant language variety/genres/registers does not contribute to reinforcing their dominance. Table 8.1 taken from Janks (2004) summarizes the different scenarios that can happen in an educational setting and their consequences.

In Table 8.1, we can see that apart from access, the three additional key notions are *diversity*, *design* and (critical awareness of) *domination*. If a curriculum can be designed that provides students with access to the dominant linguistic resources while at the same time alerting students that the dominant language varieties/ genres/registers are dominant mainly because of their gate-keeping functions (e.g. in public examinations) and not because they are naturally or universally superior and that there can be diverse ways of meaning-making (e.g. everyday, non-academic genres) that are not inferior, the access paradox can be partially overcome. This echoes what Delpit (1988) proposes in her seminal article in *Harvard Education Review* regarding the issue of whether to teach 'Standard American English' to African American children. Delpit's approach is to explicitly engage African American students in a critical sociolinguistic discussion of the differences between their own familiar African American varieties of English and standard varieties of American English which are dominant in society. Students' own familiar home and community language resources are affirmed and built upon while access to the dominant language varieties in society is provided by engaging students in such projects as that of designing a bilingual dictionary contrasting their everyday community varieties of English with the school varieties of English. In design/diversity projects like this, it is possible to achieve both access and critical language awareness. Access to dominant resources can thus be provided without denigrating the students' own familiar language varieties/genres/registers from their homes and communities.

On the notion of *domination* Janks (2010) has recently further refined its explanation to allow for a more fluid, non-essentialized understanding of domination, drawing on Foucault (1978)'s notion of power as fluid and productive. After Foucault, Janks (2010) disagrees with the fixed and overarching conceptions of domination as a binary structure with dominators on one side and the dominated on the other, but interprets domination as taking manifold possible forms that can be exercised within society. Foucault emphasizes the central role of discourses which produce 'truth'. Foucault draws people's attention to the processes during which discourses are constituted and the way by which power constitutes discourses as knowledge—truth, and is then reinforced by truth. For example, in many modern nations, the official discourse of the standardized language as the 'proper form' of language is constituted as established knowledge ('truth'), and then this 'knowledge' is in turn used to reinforce the power of the state to spread the standardized language and to marginalize local languages as 'dialects'. To Foucault, power has a capillary form of existence that penetrates into every tiny aspect of people's daily life including their speaking, thinking and actions. Power shapes people's life by constituting (or producing) their subjectivities (i.e. their sense of self, their ways of speaking, thinking, acting, etc.) through the discourses that they inhabit (e.g. through the everyday 'common sense' discourses circulated in the media, by the government, or by schools or other institutions).

Janks (2010)'s critical literacy synthesis model thus proposes that different ways of doing critical literacy follow from different ways of conceptualizing the relationship between language and power by foregrounding one or other of the four key orientations: *domination, access, diversity* or *design*. These four orientations to critical literacy are crucially interdependent and should be integrated in practice. It has very important implications for the application of genre theory in education:

> Genre theory without creativity runs the risk of reifying existing genres; deconstruction without reconstruction or design reduces human agency; diversity without access ghettoises students. Domination without difference and diversity loses the ruptures that produce contestations and change. Reconstruction needs deconstruction in order to understand 'the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production' (Foucault 1978, p. 94). We need to find ways of holding all of these elements in productive tension to achieve what is a shared goal of all critical literacy work: equity and social justice. We need to weave them together in complex moves from deconstruction to reconstruction to deconstruction, from access to deconstruction to redesign, from diversity to deconstruction to new forms of access. These different moves need to control and balance one another. (Janks 2010, p. 27)

The above discussion brings us to another set of key notions to summarize the tension between non-critical and critical approaches. Non-critical approaches can easily become *prescriptive*, *normative*, reifying and naturalizing certain language varieties/genres/registers as superior and teaching them as the only target models and norms. Critical approaches attempt to raise critical awareness of these issues, to respect *diversity* and *creativity*, and encourage re*designing* and transformation of disciplinary conventions and practices to embrace diversity of student backgrounds while striving to provide access to the dominant discourses and resources. Harwood

and Hadley (2004) further call this a *critical pragmatic approach*, i.e. balancing the critical and pragmatic perspectives. For instance, it has often been taught as a norm in academic research writing that personal pronouns should be avoided. Harwood and Hadley (2004) have designed a series of activities to engage tertiary students in critically discussing/redesigning this norm; below is a snapshot of a fragment of one of the activities:

> Activity 2
>
> Look at the following extracts from academic papers.
>
> (i) Why do you think they decide to use these particular pronouns?
>
> (ii) What would be the effect of substituting a different first person pronoun in place of the original one used?
>
> (p. 369)

Drawing on both qualitative textual analysis and corpus tools, students are engaged in analysing different practices regarding the use of personal pronouns in different subject areas. The purpose of these activities is to engage students in critically examining the different practices related to (either following or flouting) the norm (e.g. of avoiding personal pronouns in academic research writing). As Harwood and Hadley (2004) put it,

> Having begun to investigate the functions and frequency of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives in a selection of subjects across the academy, the class is now in a position to make an informed choice as to whether to accept or flout their discipline's conventions. (p. 371)

In a sense, the aim of critical pragmatic approaches is to enable students to become critical genre/discourse analysts themselves and to relativize the academic literacy norms in any discipline, helping students to become critically aware of multiplicity of norms across different disciplines as well as the changeability of conventions to serve different new functions and new interests. This kind of critical awareness and genre/linguistic analysis activities can serve both the pragmatic function of providing access while encouraging critical awareness of diversity and changeability of norms in different disciplines.

In the same vein, Lemke (1990) calls for demystifying the language of school science by exposing students to multiple genres and language patterns used to talk about science topics, to explicitly discuss the value of different genres, while at the same time providing access to the dominant ones:

> The language of classroom science sets up a pervasive and false opposition between a world of objective, authoritative, impersonal, humorless scientific fact and the ordinary, personal world of human uncertainties, judgments, values and interests. … Their cumulative effect very often is to project science as a simple description of the way the world is, rather than as a human social activity, an effort to make sense of the world. Statements about the way atoms are or the earth is tend to be less interesting to many students than statements about who did what to come up with these unfamiliar ideas. (Lemke 1990, pp. 129–131)
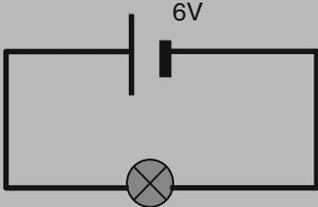
Fig. 8.1 An alternative assignment designed for Grade 9 integrated science students (From Fung 2010, Slide 8; reproduced by permission of Dr. Dennis Fung)

When assignments are designed in an innovative way, students' interest in learning science can be aroused. For instance, in Fig. 8.1, students are asked to write the story of the journey of an electron through a circuit from the first person perspective, i.e. personifying the electron and writing in the recount genre instead of the usual impersonal, explanation or description genres that are common in the science subject area.

This alternative assignment task has the following knowledge and skills objectives:

Knowledge Objectives:

(1) To describe the microscopic view of current.
(2) To link up different Physics concepts about the electric circuit.

Skills Objectives:

(1) To write creatively.
(2) To organize the knowledge in their own way.
(From Fung 2010, Slide 7; reproduced by permission of Dr. Dennis Fung)

And the following marking scheme is used:

(1) 1 mark is awarded for using each quantity provided. (Max.: 7 marks)
(2) 3 marks for creativity
(3) 1 mark will be deducted if a concept is used wrongly
(4) Maximum marks for the assessment is 10.
(Fung 2010, Slide 9; reproduced by permission of Dr. Dennis Fung)

We can see that creativity is explicitly encouraged while accuracy of knowledge is also required. By designing an alternative assignment like this, teachers can create space within the science curriculum for students to express and organize knowledge *in their own way*. The benefits of having an alternative assignment like this confirmed Lemke (1990)'s idea that the more humanizing genres and registers for expressing knowledge can turn science from a cold, impersonal subject into an engaging subject for students. The students' writings also allow teachers to learn more about the everyday conceptions of students regarding the science topics that have been taught. So, this task can also serve a diagnostic purpose because when students are free to express what they know in creative and engaging ways, chances are that they are more willing to write more and this offers their teachers a better window on their thinking processes (see Figs. 8.2 and 8.3 for samples of students' writings). Teachers can then design follow-up activities/tasks to provide the missing knowledge or to clarify the scientific points not yet or partially grasped by their students.
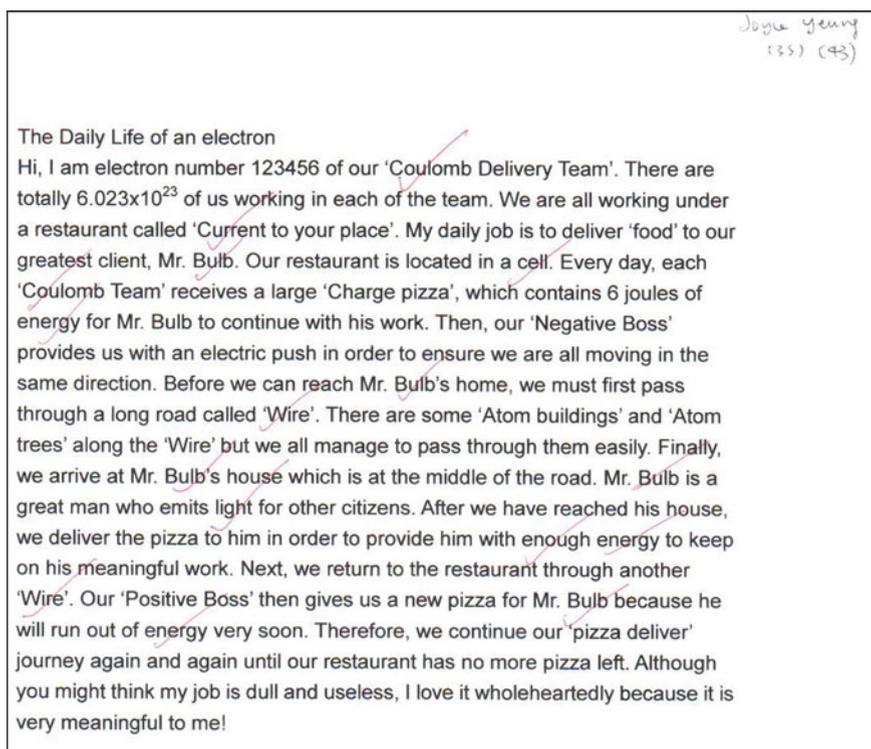

Fig. 8.2 Sample of a student's work (From Fung 2010, Slide 11; by permission of Dr. Dennis Fung)

> Hello I am electron! I am measured in coulombs and I live in a wire and carry charges. Once the wire is connected to conductors the cell pumps me to the light bulb and energy is transfered to charges. The light bulb then gives out light. After finishing my job, I rum back to the cell again, for another exciting journey. Oh wait, some one opened the switch, I have to go now, bye!
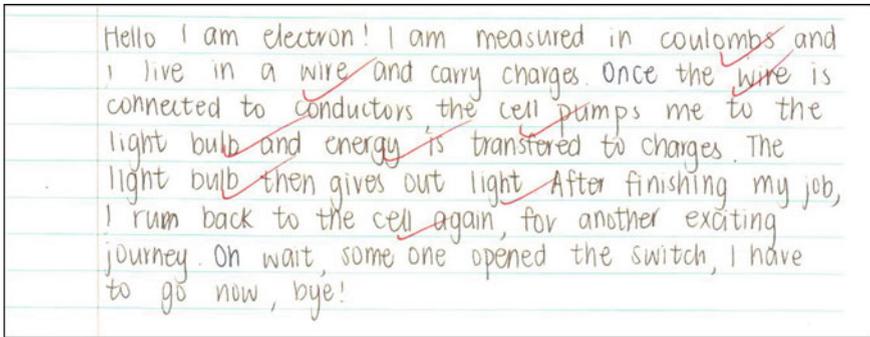
Fig. 8.3 Sample of another student's work (From Fung 2010, Slide 13; by permission of Dr. Dennis Fung)

Application Scenario 8.1
Figure 8.2 shows a student's writing on the story of an electron in a circuit. When I showed this example to a group of teachers in a workshop in Hong Kong, some teachers immediately raised the concern that this kind of writing will not be allowed in examinations and will not help students to succeed in examinations. Using the critical pragmatic approach, what can be some responses to alleviate such concerns? And what kind of complementary activities can be designed to ensure that students are exposed to and gain access to multiple kinds of genres (including the examination-required genres) while engaging their interest in science and enabling them to both like science topics and succeed in science examinations?

Application Scenario 8.1 addresses the concerns of teachers who are worried that using more everyday life genres (e.g. stories, recounts) might get students stranded in these everyday genres without gaining access to the language of science and the academic genres required for success in examinations. Regarding how teachers can provide access to the language of science while building on students' familiar resources to engage them in learning science topics Lemke (1990) has proposed a range of practical activities:

> Students will begin to grasp semantic and conceptual relationships in colloquial language first. Then they will substitute scientific, technical terms for colloquial words. … Along the way their version of scientific language will be… a sort of hybrid of colloquial and technical registers. The teacher will need to use these different varieties of language as well, and keep them straight for the students. In order for this to work, and in order to increase students' fluency and flexibility in using the foreign register of science when dealing with topics that are initially equally unfamiliar, they need practice in translation as well. Students should regularly have oral, and occasionally written, practice in class in restating scientific expressions in their own colloquial words, and also in translating colloquial arguments into formal scientific language. (p. 173)

Read the following sentences. Recognise any *Conversational Style (CS) Sentences*, and *Academic Style (AS) Sentences*. Then, rewrite these sentences into their counterparts.

(1) Mold, yeast and bacterial will spoil our food. (_____ style)
_____
_____

(2) Food preservatives are used to maintain the freshness of food. (_____ style)
_____
_____

(3) To be healthy and fit, we should have a balanced diet. (_____ style)
_____
_____

Fig. 8.4 One way of designing translation practice between everyday and academic styles

Lemke argues that translation practice needs to go both ways; i.e. from scientific and colloquial (or everyday) and from colloquial to scientific. This is akin to what we have discussed in Chaps. 3 and 4 about the need to help students unpack and repack academic language, and to shift comfortably between everyday and academic genres/registers, without privileging either but raising students' awareness of both. This view is also summarized in the rainbow diagram (See Fig. 5.12 in Chap. 5). Figure 8.4 shows an example of how translation practice can be designed to help students shunt between everyday and academic styles in English.

However, we must recognize that while colloquial and academic styles and genres might be abstracted as opposite categories in theory, in practice there will be many instances of language use lying in-between (Lemke calls them hybrids), just as BICS and CALP should not be conceived as binary opposites (see discussion in Chap. 2) although in theoretical modelling it might help to see them as the two poles of a continuum. We thus need to remind ourselves (and our students) that in actual language use, what people do is much messier than theoretical/linguistic modelling, and that in different contexts in different disciplines, different hybrids will actually be encountered and used (e.g. the more dynamic macro-genres; see Martin 1994; Martin and Rose 2008). If we can alert students to these critical issues, then we shall not be misleading students into thinking that language use falls nicely

into neat categories, but that flexibility and creativity is always a driving force in enriching, expanding and transforming the different fields of knowledge and the ways and styles people communicate in these fields. As Lemke (1990) proposes:

> Teachers should use all the stylistic and rhetorical means available to communicate science to students, including narrative and dramatic presentations; humor, irony, and metaphor. (p. 174)

While Lemke talks about science in particular, his proposals are equally useful for other disciplines. And in line with critical pragmatic principles, we should also provide students with explicit guidance on how to master those formal academic varieties/genres/styles that will help them succeed in examinations and in gate-keeping encounters (e.g. formal academic presentations/writing) while also raising critical awareness about them: i.e. they are not superior to other everyday, colloquial genres and styles. In sum, critical and pragmatic perspectives can be productively integrated into our approaches to academic literacies, EAP, LAC and CLIL. Critical perspectives help us to move away from *deficit* models of students' repertoires of communicative resources and to appreciate *diversity* of communicative styles, genres and resources. While recognizing the domination of certain varieties/styles/genres in society and the importance of providing access to them (pragmatic perspectives), we do not reify these patterns of meaning-making as static and universally superior (critical perspectives). In contrast, together with students we can analyse them and provide access to them and in the process raising critical awareness of both their functions and limitations and their dynamic, fluid changeability.

Application Scenario 8.2
Students in the humanities and social sciences are often confronted with complex academic style sentences like the one below:
e.g. 'His farsighted acts in accepting the Truce of Villafranca, in stopping Garibaldi from marching on to Rome, and in allying with Bismarck made the unification movement possible.'
Can you design a 'translation task' (in Lemke's sense) to help students shunt comfortably between everyday communicative styles and academic communicative styles? Remember that multimodal resources such as diagrams, cartoons and graphic organizers can also be used in coordination with language resources.
Can you also design a task to raise students' critical awareness of the different ways of communicating the topics (e.g. contrasting the use of a cartoon strip story and an academic exposition) and to discuss their different functions and uses in different contexts without privileging any way/style as naturally or universally superior?

Apart from helping students to become *genre and register analysts*, students also need to be alerted to the fact that genre templates (e.g. writing templates) are just mere abstractions (synoptic descriptions at best) made by genre analysts from observing numerous instances of similar texts serving similar communicative purposes in similar situations (e.g. a lab report, a sonnet, a haiku) and that genres are changing and can be changed. As Lemke puts it:

> Each enactment of a ritual, each performance of a song, each making of a tool, each writing of a sonnet will be unique and different, but it will also re-enact criterial features common to the type, to the cultural formation, the social practice. Other, initially incidental features, may in the course of cultural change become newly criterial ones for an evolved type. There is an essential dialectic between types and their 'tokens', between abstract practices and formations and their individual instances. This is a dynamic dialectic: it leads to change, it mediates the process of change. (Lemke 1993, pp. 267–268)

If genre-based pedagogies can also integrate activities raising the kind of critical awareness mentioned above, then students are not led to mechanically reproduce texts according to a writing template, but are also provided with the space to experiment with innovative features that can contribute to enriching and transforming the genre, as well as combining genres in creative ways serving their ever-changing communicative goals. Although much more curriculum research in this direction is needed, we are hopeful that a viable response to the critique that genre-based pedagogies might constrain creativity is both possible and feasible. In the next chapter, we shall chart out the different directions of future research that will contribute to the field of studies in LAC, CLIL and academic literacies.

Chapter Summary

This chapter addresses the concerns raised in the literature about the 'identify and induct' ('I & I') paradigm of EAP, the danger of reductive interpretations and implementations of genre-based pedagogies (e.g. the writing template teaching culture) as well as the 'access paradox'. All these are centrally related to the research and practice LAC and CLIL if LAC and CLIL pedagogies are to address issues of social justice, diversity and creativity. The chapter then focuses on critical pragmatic perspectives and ideas on how to build on students' familiar resources while developing their mastery of the dominant codes and discourses. All these perspectives converge on a dynamic view of language and genres as fluid resources and strategies that can be creatively renovated and used by students to achieve their ever-changing communicative goals.

End-of-Chapter Discussion Questions

1. Three major kinds of critique have been outlined in this chapter regarding the theory and practice of LAC and CLIL. Can you summarize the responses to each one of them, respectively? And what would be your own response to each of these critiques?

2. Some people might argue that critical approaches (i.e. raising critical awareness, either of the static nature of writing templates or of the dominance of a certain variety of languages) tend to confuse young students. Do you agree with this view or not? Is students' ability to do critical thinking often underestimated? If you are to design a lesson to engage young EAL students using a critical pragmatic approach, how would you design it without confusing students while still raising their critical awareness? You can borrow insights from Lisa Delpit's seminal study in 1988 where she engaged students in actively comparing and contrasting language features of African American English and standard American English while alerting them to the issue that a language variety has become standardized not because it is intrinsically superior but because of political domination of the social groups speaking this variety.

3. It can be hard for teachers (especially content teachers) to guide students in practising translation between everyday and academic styles of language. The reasons for this difficulty may include first of all the teachers' lack of awareness about the importance of teaching this; secondly, not all teachers are proficient in both styles. How can these teachers be trained and where and how can they get more resources and confidence to design such kinds of translation (or 'shunting') practice?

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