

Research Article

Teachers' perspectives on genre pedagogy as language teaching across the curriculum

Eva Olsson¹, Pernilla Andersson Varga², Charlotta Olvegård³, Susanne Staf⁴ and Anna Maria Hipkiss⁵

¹Department of Education and special Education, University of Gothenburg, Sweden (ORCID: 0000-0002-9976-3643)

²University of Gothenburg/Centre for School Development, Gothenburg, Sweden (ORCID: 0000-0003-1354-4018)

³Department of Swedish, Multilingualism and Language Technology, University of Gothenburg, Sweden (ORCID: 0000-0002-3412-1922)

⁴University of Gothenburg/ Centre for School Development, Gothenburg, Sweden (ORCID: 0009-0009-9940-9212)

⁵Department of Pedagogical, Curricular and Professional Studies, University of Gothenburg, Sweden (ORCID: 0000-0001-7822-4782)

Increasing global migration has led to a growing number of students learning school subjects through a second language, which raises concerns about educational equity, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged contexts. In response, language-focused pedagogical approaches across the curriculum have gained attention, emphasising language as central to subject learning. Genre pedagogy is one such approach, aiming to make the language demands of school subjects explicit through attention to subject- and genre-specific linguistic resources. Previous research presents mixed findings, suggesting that while genre pedagogy holds potential for supporting students' literacy development, embedding the approach in practice may be challenging. This points to a need for greater insight into how teachers understand and engage with genre pedagogy when it is implemented across subjects at a whole-school level. This case study examines teachers' perspectives on implementing genre pedagogy as a language-focused pedagogical approach across the curriculum. It is situated in a comprehensive school in Sweden with a history of low school results, serving a linguistically and socioeconomically diverse student population, where the language of instruction is a second language for the majority of students. Genre pedagogy was introduced to enhance student learning through explicit subject- and genre-specific language instruction. Drawing on survey data collected at two points in time and focus group interviews, the study explores teachers' beliefs, interpretations, and reflections on genre pedagogy and its implementation. The findings show that most teachers perceived genre pedagogy as beneficial for students' literacy development, particularly in relation to text structure, vocabulary, and overall language proficiency. However, teachers often associated genre pedagogy primarily with writing, and implementation varied considerably. Many reported selectively implementing elements of genre pedagogy that they considered feasible within their subject areas and existing practices. The study highlights the complexity of implementing genre pedagogy across the curriculum and underscores the importance of sustained professional development and organisational support in linguistically diverse school contexts.

Keywords: Genre pedagogy; Language teaching across the curriculum; Second language learners; Subject-specific literacy; Teachers' perspectives; Whole-school development

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1. Introduction

As migration continues to increase globally, many students face the challenge of learning school

Address of Corresponding Author

Eva Olsson, Department of Education and Special Education, University of Gothenburg, Box 300, 405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden.

✉ eva.olsson@ped.gu.se

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subjects through a second language [L2] (Cummins, 2008). While multilingualism is widely recognised as a resource for learning, students who are developing proficiency in the language of schooling may nevertheless encounter challenges when engaging with subject instruction where the linguistic demands are not always made explicit or accessible to students who are still developing proficiency in the language of schooling. In Sweden, where the proportion of L2 learners has grown substantially in recent decades, these students are overrepresented among those who do not meet the admission requirements for upper secondary education and among early school leavers (Skolverket, 2023). Educational outcomes are closely linked to students' socioeconomic background and the broader opportunity structures of schools. Students and schools facing socioeconomic disadvantage may therefore be at greater risk of lower academic achievement, although this relationship should not be interpreted as deterministic. To address these challenges, schools need to develop context-sensitive pedagogical approaches that strengthen teaching quality, classroom management, student engagement, and access to effective learning opportunities (Asare et al., 2024; Blossing et al., 2014; Çimen et al., 2024).

In linguistically diverse contexts, this has led to increased attention to language teaching across the curriculum, an approach that emphasises language as central to subject learning and positions all teachers as teachers of language (Gibbons, 2015; Halliday, 1978; Schleppegrell, 2004). Such approaches are particularly important in schools where a substantial proportion of students are learning through an L2, as access to disciplinary knowledge is closely tied to mastery of subject-specific and academic language (Cummins, 2008; Snow & Uccelli, 2009). Genre pedagogy [GP] can be understood as a way of teaching language across the curriculum. Grounded in systemic functional linguistics, GP seeks to make the language demands of school subjects explicit by foregrounding the genres, text structures and linguistic resources characteristic of different disciplines (Jones & Derewianka, 2016; Rose & Martin, 2012).

This study focuses on a comprehensive school serving a linguistically and socioeconomically diverse student population, in which the language of instruction (Swedish) was an L2 for the majority of students, and where a decision had been made to implement GP on a whole-school basis. The initiative aimed to enhance student performance across subjects through explicit instruction of subject- and genre-specific language, recognising language as central to both disciplinary knowledge and literacy development (Cummins, 2008).

Given teachers' pivotal role in student learning (Johansson et al., 2024), their perspectives are crucial for understanding how language-focused pedagogical initiatives are understood, interpreted and experienced by teachers in practice. However, few studies have examined teachers' perceptions of whole-school GP implementation. This case study addresses this gap by exploring teachers' understanding of GP and their reflections on its implementation.

1.1. Genre Pedagogy

Developed in the 1980s, the Sydney school genre pedagogy (Jones & Derewianka, 2016; Rose & Martin, 2012) emerged in response to progressive writing approaches such as process writing based on personal experiences. These progressive methods were seen as benefitting primarily middle-class students, thus failing to promote equitable learning outcomes, which is a long-term goal of GP (Rose & Martin, 2012). From the outset, GP has therefore been closely linked to questions of educational equity and access to valued forms of school knowledge, particularly for students from linguistically or socially marginalised backgrounds.

GP rests on three theoretical cornerstones spanning ideology, linguistics and pedagogy. Its ideological foundation draws on Bernstein's (1996/2000) sociology of education, which seeks to redistribute educational capital, as social class tends to influence students' academic performance. Therefore, a visible pedagogy, benefiting students with limited educational capital, is central to GP. This emphasis on visibility positions GP as a language-focused pedagogical approach that seeks to make the often implicit linguistic expectations of schooling explicit across subject areas.

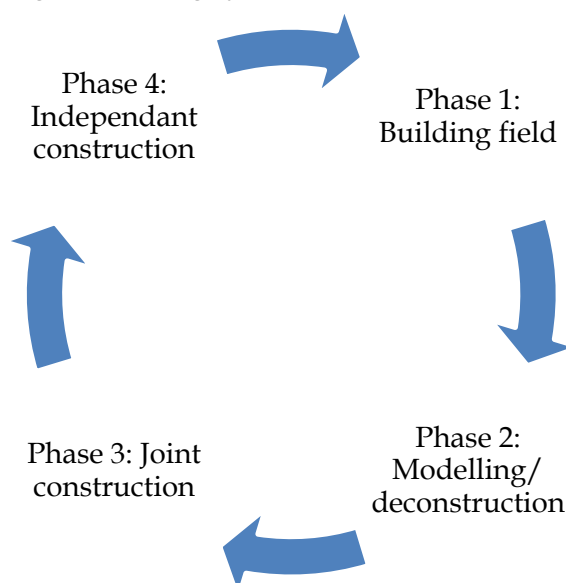
Genre theory (Martin, 2001; Martin & Rose, 2008) and systemic functional linguistics (Halliday,

1978, 2004) form the linguistic foundation of GP. Genres are viewed as recurring linguistic patterns encompassing lexicogrammar and linked to the register variables field, tenor and mode (Martin, 2001; Martin & Rose, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). As curricula are largely mediated through reading and writing, GP-based teaching begins with selecting and analysing the relevant genres, stages and lexicogrammatical features of target texts (Rose & Martin, 2012). From this perspective, subject learning is understood as inseparable from language use, and GP aligns with approaches that conceptualise language teaching as a shared responsibility across the curriculum.

Sociocultural theories (e.g., Wood et al., 1976) underpin classroom practice in GP, highlighting the importance of scaffolding. Learning is viewed as a social process guided by expert teachers (Rose & Martin, 2012). The four-phase Teaching and Learning Cycle [TLC], adapted from Rothery (1994, p. 8), illustrates this approach (Figure 1).

Figure 1

The teaching and learning cycle



This cycle can thus be understood as a pedagogical realisation of sociocultural principles, structuring how scaffolding is provided and gradually withdrawn as students gain increasing control over disciplinary language. Through interaction with students, the teacher leads the building of linguistic and subject knowledge (phase 1), then deconstructs a model text (phase 2) and provides scaffolded support for the joint and, subsequently, individual writing of new texts (phases 3 and 4). The teacher's social speech in interaction with students plays a central role in the enactment of the TLC, making linguistic reasoning explicit. This social speech is assumed to develop into students' inner speech and, ultimately, become an integrated part of their consciousness (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus, in GP, it is important that teachers possess linguistic and metalinguistic competence to support learning for all students (Acevedo, 2020).

During the 1980s and 1990s, the focus of GP was mainly on student writing. Since the turn of the millennium, GP has progressed and now also includes support for reading competence in various genres through the Reading to Learn programme [R2L] (Rose & Martin, 2012). Here, the TLC is expanded with reading strategies, such as *Preparing for reading* and *Detailed reading* (Rose & Martin, 2012). Thus, GP offers structured support for learning but requires that teachers possess both linguistic and pedagogical competence to achieve its intended potential. This requirement has implications for whole-school implementation as teachers across subjects may have differing levels of familiarity with linguistic concepts and genre-based instructional practices.

Some critical concerns have been raised regarding the theoretical assumptions of GP and its pedagogical application. Freedman (1993), a New Rhetorician, argues that the explicit teaching of specific genres is futile, as genres are social tools in constant evolution that can only be acquired

through socialisation. Further, Derewianka (2003), a leading scholar in the Sydney School of GP, warns against teaching genres as formulas, imposing structure onto a text rather than allowing it to emerge from functionality. Haugli (2020) notes that critics question GP for being reductionist, for the way it is implemented in schools, and for its underlying assumption that explicitly teaching genres will empower students. Such critiques are particularly relevant in studies of school-wide implementation, where pedagogical principles may be interpreted, adapted or simplified as they are taken up across different subjects and teaching traditions.

In contrast, other researchers emphasise that for socially marginalised students, explicit teaching is crucial for learning the school-based discourses required in educational contexts:

Students outside the mainstream, therefore, find themselves in an invisible curriculum, denied access to the sources of understanding they need to succeed. Thrown back on their own resources, they are forced to draw on the discourse conventions of their own cultures and may fail to produce texts that are either contextually adequate or educationally valued. (Hyland, 2003, p. 20)

Cummins (2014) argues that GP can contribute greater opportunities for disadvantaged pupils to master different text types, which is pivotal for participation and success in education, working life and society. In this sense, GP can be seen as a language-focused pedagogical initiative that seeks to balance explicit instruction with meaningful participation in disciplinary practices.

1.2. Research on GP in the Swedish context

Examining research on GP in the Swedish context provides a relevant point of departure for the present study, offering insight into how a language-focused pedagogical approach is reinterpreted and adapted in practice, and highlighting tensions between theoretical intentions and classroom practice.

GP has been shown to have some influence on Scandinavian education, particularly in Sweden (Hansson, 2013; Haugli, 2020; Kindenberg, 2021; Walldén, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). Liberg et al. (2012, p. 488) point to a strong influence of genre theory in the syllabus for Swedish: “This emphasis on the use of different text types may be interpreted as a consequence of an increasing interest in the genre approach in Sweden”. Further, Ridell and Walldén (2023), who analysed the core content in the syllabus for Swedish and Swedish L2² for school years 1–3, found that the global structure of narrative texts was foregrounded but the stages vaguely defined, and the metalinguistic specification downplayed. Andersson Varga et al. (2023) analysed compulsory school syllabi for the subjects of Swedish, civics and chemistry in search of influences from GP, reaching the same conclusion as Liberg et al. (2012) regarding Swedish. For example, it is stipulated that descriptive, explanatory, instructional and argumentative texts should be practised, and that text structure and typical language features should be covered (Skolverket, 2022). In civics, students are expected to learn genres such as explanations, expositions, and discussions. In chemistry, similar genres are indicated, including reports as well (Andersson Varga et al., 2023).

When a pedagogy such as Sydney School GP is transferred to the Swedish school context, some recontextualisation is inevitable. The Swedish version of GP has been described as simplified, for example by Andersson Varga et al. (2023). In their analysis of materials from a national literacy development programme that were presented as grounded in GP, they found that linguistic aspects such as SFL and genre theory were weakly represented or absent (Hansson, 2013; Kirsten, 2019). Likewise, ideological dimensions of GP, such as the influence of a socio-economic background on school results, were not addressed. Instead, the materials foregrounded the pedagogical TLC (Figure 1) as an easily applicable teaching model. Similarly, Walldén (2017) found that GP-based teaching materials, such as textbooks, provided a weak functional foundation for writing tasks and vague treatment of metalanguage.

² The subject Swedish as a second language is offered if students’ proficiency in Swedish is limited, for instance, due to recent migration to Sweden (Skolverket 2022). Here, we refer to this subject as Swedish L2.

The implementation of GP at different educational stages in Sweden has been explored to some extent. Walldén's (2019a) observations in a primary school showed that genre-based instruction of Swedish and geography was characterised by a visible pedagogy where the teacher modelled and jointly constructed relevant genres. However, Walldén points to the risk of selecting model texts that are typical for specific genres rather than basing the choice on the subject content (see also Walldén, 2019b). Further, Walldén's (2019c) analysis of spoken communication in connection with writing narratives showed that talking about genre structures and logical connections functioned as a reference point for interaction, enabling teachers and students to objectify texts, thereby negotiating their meaning.

At the secondary school level, Kindenberg (2021), who observed genre-based writing instruction in a history class, found that the teacher implemented only selected elements of the TLC. Whole-class scaffolding during the deconstruction phase was omitted in favour of student group work, and the joint construction phase was entirely left out. In a different subject context, Uddling (2021) examined a linguistically diverse physics classroom and found that GP supported the teacher's planning and integration of metalanguage activities. Similarly focusing on disciplinary literacy, Halleson et al. (2018) investigated upper secondary students' opportunities to develop reading literacy in social science subjects. They found that R2L pedagogy offered a supportive structure before, during and after reading, and provided students with opportunities to engage with disciplinary text types. However, they also cautioned that the explicit and often teacher-led nature of R2L risks creating a monological classroom environment. Reflecting this complexity in an analysis of R2L tutoring sessions with teachers, Hipkiss and Andersson Varga (2018) concluded that it is a long-term process to develop a functional linguistic metalanguage and to apply the pedagogy effectively. In the practical application of GP in adult L2 education, research has found that teachers focus on writing formalities (Walldén & Winlund, 2024) and genre structure (Palm, 2024).

Kuyumcu's (2011) evaluation of a Swedish whole-school GP project is particularly relevant here, as the context resembled that of the present study. Both schools served linguistically diverse student populations, had a history of low academic results, and organised GP in-service training. However, the school in Kuyumcu's study was a primary school whereas the school in our study offered primary and lower secondary education. Kuyumcu found that teachers were generally positive towards GP but implemented it to varying degrees. Improvements in students' reading and writing competence were observed, especially among low-achieving students. Some teachers, however, found the pedagogy time-consuming and limiting creativity. In a later study, Kuyumcu (2013) reported that students at the school performed above the national average in Swedish/Swedish L2 tests in school years 3 and 6.

Taken together, research in the Swedish context suggests that while GP has influenced curricula and, to some extent, classroom practices, its implementation is often characterised by selective uptake, recontextualisation and pedagogical negotiation.

1.3. Professional Learning for Literacy Teaching

As the school in this study had initiated in-service teacher training in GP a few years before data collection, it is relevant to consider factors that may influence the success of such initiatives. Blossing et al. (2014) point out that an improvement process includes several stages: *initiation*, *implementation* and *institutionalisation*. The initial phase is often intense, including in-service training, school visits and lectures by experts. There is, however, a risk that the introductory phase is perceived as constituting the complete improvement process. Blossing et al. (2014) argue that the implementation is the most critical phase, when opposition to the innovative ideas is not unusual. Thus, continuous support from school leaders is highly important to facilitate an exchange of experiences between teachers. Further, patience is required as it may take three to five years before the process reaches the institutionalisation phase, when the new ideas have developed into natural

routines in the daily work. This staged view is particularly relevant for language-focused initiatives that require sustained engagement across subjects and over time.

The way that collegial processes for enhancing teaching are initiated and organised influences the outcome. One way is to organise professional learning communities, PLCs (Talbert, 2010). Talbert distinguishes between two types of professional learning communities: bureaucratically oriented PLCs, which are implemented top-down and focused on measurable outcomes, may cause teacher anxiety or resistance. In contrast, professionally oriented PLCs promote systemic change through collaborative evaluation of teaching practices. Effective PLCs require adequate time for collaboration and a shared belief that cooperation improves teaching and learning (Talbert, 2010). Such collegial structures have been highlighted as particularly important when literacy and language development are positioned as shared across the curriculum (Gibbons, 2015). From this perspective, collegial structures in professional learning can also be understood as shaping the conditions for teacher agency, influencing how teachers interpret, adapt and enact pedagogical initiatives in practice (Badal, 2025; Biesta et al., 2015). Kennedy (2016) highlights the challenges teachers may face when enacting new pedagogical ideas. Teachers' professional practice is multifaceted and shaped by a variety of possibly conflicting ideas, which means they may endorse new approaches in theory but continue established routines in practice. In-service training that introduces new pedagogical ideas may therefore challenge established practices and assumptions, which some teachers may be reluctant to change. This insight is relevant for understanding teachers' beliefs and sense-making processes in relation to language-focused initiatives such as GP.

Of particular relevance here are initiatives aimed at strengthening teachers' literacy teaching competence. In an Australian study, Humphrey and Macnaught (2016) found that a nine-month professional learning program based on GP led to some changes in literacy practice, with literacy becoming embedded across learning areas. However, they argued that teachers needed deeper linguistic knowledge to support student writing at higher levels, where expressing abstract ideas and objective explanations is required. Similarly, Matruglio (2019) argued that strengthening teachers' metalanguage would enable them to transform implicit knowledge of subject-specific texts into explicit teaching. In the Swedish context, Nilsson (2023) examined language- and content-integrated teaching in linguistically diverse classrooms and found that organisational challenges, including limited support for newly arrived students, hindered full implementation. Further, Kirsten (2019) examined how subject teachers related to literacy teaching in a professional development initiative intended to strengthen their competence in promoting student literacy. He concluded that a stronger focus on discipline-specific differences would be advisable.

These findings point to the importance of aligning professional learning with subject-specific practices and teachers' existing professional knowledge. They underscore the need to examine how teachers understand, value and engage with language-focused initiatives over time, particularly in whole-school contexts.

1.4. Educational Context of the Study

In Sweden, one year of preschool class is mandatory followed by nine compulsory school years. The vast majority of students continue to upper secondary education for three additional years. There are national curricula and syllabi for all school subjects where aims, core content and grading criteria are stipulated (Skolverket, 2022). However, schools and teachers are relatively free to choose teaching materials and methods, as long as the aims are in focus, the core content is covered, and the assessment corresponds to the stipulated criteria. Consequently, instructional approaches may vary considerably between schools and among teachers within the same school (Yang Hansen & Gustafsson, 2019).

1.4.1. The school

The school in this study is a municipal school for compulsory years (ages 6–16) located in a suburban area, with approximately 500 students and 40 teachers. The socioeconomic status and

educational level of the parents are below the national average (Skolverket, 2023). In 2020, when the research project began, 72 per cent of the students or their parents were born outside Sweden, compared to the national average of 26 per cent (Skolverket, 2023). Further, 43 per cent of Year 9 students did not meet the requirements for admission to upper secondary education, compared to the national average of 14 per cent.

1.4.2. The in-service training

As school results had been below national standards for several years, the need for pedagogical change became evident. After analysing the situation, teachers and school leaders concluded that strengthening student literacy was essential for improving academic outcomes. They explored alternative teaching methods, consulted relevant literature, and visited a school where GP had been implemented. In 2016, the staff agreed to a proposal to adopt GP.

Between autumn 2017 and spring 2019, the school organised in-service training in GP, based on a Swedish adaptation (Johansson & Sandell Ring, 2015). A middle leader/teacher with extensive expertise in GP planned and led the training, focusing on one genre at a time. Six genres were addressed: description, instruction, narrative, recount, explanation, and exposition. In sessions with all teachers or smaller groups, the middle leader presented and analysed examples of teaching materials (texts and exercises) to demonstrate how GP could be implemented. Pedagogical development groups, similar to the professional learning communities described by Talbert (2010), were formed. After learning about a genre, the groups planned a unit for classroom implementation and subsequently evaluated its outcomes.

In January 2020, the principals and the middle leader responsible for implementing GP left the school. The new leadership aimed to continue the project, and a new middle leader was appointed, though with less time allocated for supporting implementation.

In 2017, some researchers, including the authors, were invited to monitor the training and implementation of GP, without formal responsibilities or funding. Between 2017 and 2019, we visited the school occasionally, attending GP workshops and teacher group meetings. Our role was primarily that of critical friends to the middle leader and, at times, to teacher groups. In 2020, collaborative research funding through the ULF Initiative (<https://www.gu.se/en/culf/node/119189/about-ulf>) enabled more formal and regular engagement, including data collection for the present and subsequent studies (Hipkiss, Olvegård, Staf, Andersson Varga, et al., in press; Hipkiss, Olvegård, Staf, Olsson, et al., in press).

1.5. Purpose and Research Questions

Against this background, the purpose of this case study is to shed new light on an underexplored dimension of genre pedagogy by examining its implementation as a language-focused pedagogical approach across the curriculum, focusing on teachers' understandings of the pedagogy and their reflections on its application in teaching practice. The following research questions are addressed:

RQ 1) How do teachers understand the purpose of GP?

RQ 2) How do teachers characterise their own implementation of GP?

RQ 3) What are the benefits and challenges of implementing GP, according to teachers?

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

Methodologically, the study draws on theories of teachers' beliefs and understandings of teaching and learning, which emphasise that such beliefs are shaped by teachers' prior experiences and the contexts in which they work (Borg, 2015; Pajares, 1992), and are therefore central to understanding how language-focused pedagogical initiatives are interpreted in practice. This perspective informed our case study approach (Merriam, 2009) and the use of two complementary methods, surveys and focus group interviews, to explore how teachers at the school understood genre-based pedagogy and how they described and reflected on its implementation.

2.2. Participants and Data

Teachers from preschool to Year 9 participated in the surveys, with nearly all school subjects represented. In the focus group interviews, teachers from Years 4–9 took part.

2.2.1. Surveys

Two surveys were administered to gather information from teachers and provide an overview of their experiences with GP (Cohen et al., 2002). To enable analysis of potential changes over time, the first survey was conducted at the start of the project in August 2020 and the second in June 2022. The surveys included questions on teachers' (a) background, (b) understanding and implementation of GP, and (c) perceived effects of applying GP (Appendix 1). Both closed and open questions were included. The two surveys were similar but not identical, as some adaptations were made to reflect developments over the two-year period. For instance, a question on participation in R2L training was added in 2022, as such training had been offered by then.

The surveys were administered digitally at teacher assemblies, with researchers present to introduce them and clarify questions if needed. In both surveys, participants indicated whether they consented to their responses being included in the research data.

Table 1 shows the number of teachers who participated in each survey and how long they had been employed at the school at the time of completion.

Table 1

Years of employment at the school

Survey	Years of employment			
	Recently employed (n)	1–3 years (n)	4 years or more (n)	Missing (n)
Survey 2020 (N=31)	4	11	16	–
Survey 2022 (N=28)	2	10	13	3

Note. Missing indicates that no answer was given to the question.

As shown in Table 1, 31 teachers responded to the survey in 2020 and 28 in 2022. On both occasions, approximately half of the teachers had been employed at the school for fewer than four years, indicating a relatively high teacher turnover rate.

In 2020, most teachers (26 of 31) had participated in some or all of the GP in-service training organised between 2017 and 2019. Five teachers who had recently joined the school had received only a limited introduction to GP. In 2022, 15 of the 28 teachers had taken part in the training, while ten had received a limited introduction. In addition, six teachers reported participating in the R2L training that had been offered by 2022.

2.2.2. Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews, allowing for follow-up questions and participant discussions on relevant issues (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Morgan, 1996), were conducted to gain in-depth insights into teachers' experiences of GP. Five focus group interviews, each comprising four to five teachers, were conducted between December 2020 and February 2021. The groups included teachers of Swedish/Swedish L2, social science and natural science subjects. Teachers of Years 4–9 were represented, but not those of Years 1–3, as subjects become more clearly defined and students are expected to read and produce subject-specific texts from Year 4 onwards. Table 2 presents the composition of the focus groups.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom due to pandemic restrictions. An interview guide specifying key discussion areas (Appendix 2) was sent to participants a week in advance for information, though no specific preparation was required. One or two researchers led each session, which lasted for approximately one hour. The approach was semi-structured; questions were

Table 2

Composition of focus groups

<i>Teachers' subjects</i>	<i>Teaching school years</i>	<i>No. of focus groups</i>
Swedish/L2 Swedish	4–9	2
Social science subjects	4–6	1
Social science subjects	7–9	1
Natural science subjects	4–9	1

based on the interview guide, but there was also room for follow-up questions and discussion. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The school organised the groups and participating teachers provided verbal consent.

No formal ethical review was required. All participants were adults who gave informed consent, and no sensitive data were collected.

2.3. Methods of Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis were applied. Quantifiable survey data, where respondents selected from predetermined options, were analysed using descriptive statistics (SPSS, version 29).

Open-ended survey responses were analysed using an approach inspired by summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), examining both the frequency and meaning of recurring ideas. Responses were colour-coded and grouped into thematic categories; a single response could be assigned to more than one category if it included several distinct aspects. For example, one teacher described their implementation of GP as follows: “I have focused on *structure* and worked with different *text types*. I have also worked with *expert words*.” (Teacher of Swedish, social sciences and mathematics, Years 4–6; italics added). Identified categories and their frequencies are summarised in tables.

Focus group transcripts were analysed using a conventional content analysis approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), allowing themes to emerge inductively from the data. Two researchers independently read and coded each transcript, then compared and refined their codes to develop a shared set of categories. These were subsequently applied across the dataset to identify recurring and contrasting themes. Selected excerpts from the interviews are presented to illustrate key findings.

In the presentation of results, findings from the surveys and focus group interviews are interwoven.

3. Results

The results are presented thematically, focusing on teachers' understandings and self-reported implementation of GP, perceived effects on student learning, and reported advantages, challenges and resistance.

3.1. Teachers' Understanding and Implementation of GP

In the surveys, teachers were asked to describe how, if at all, their teaching was based on GP. The categories identified in the analysis are shown in Table 3.

In both surveys, teachers most frequently mentioned that they paid attention to vocabulary and concepts as well as to text types and genres. In 2020, their responses largely reflected the content of the in-service training, in which model texts, text structure and the TLC were key components. Teachers mainly associated GP with writing, but by 2022 the focus on reading appeared somewhat stronger, and some teachers reported basing their teaching on the R2L approach.

Table 3
Teachers' descriptions of genre-based instruction

Survey 2020	Survey 2022
Vocabulary and concepts (11)	Specific text types/genres (15)
Specific text types/genres (9)	Vocabulary and concepts (14)
Model or example texts (8)	Reading (8)
Teaching and Learning Cycle (8)	Reading to Learn (5)
Text structure (8)	Teaching and Learning Cycle (5)
Producing/writing texts (unspecified) (5)	Model or example texts (4)
Grammar (3)	Producing/writing texts (unspecified) (4)
Reading (2)	Text structure (2)
Develop subject knowledge (2)	Grammar (2)
	Develop subject knowledge (1)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate number of occurrences per category.

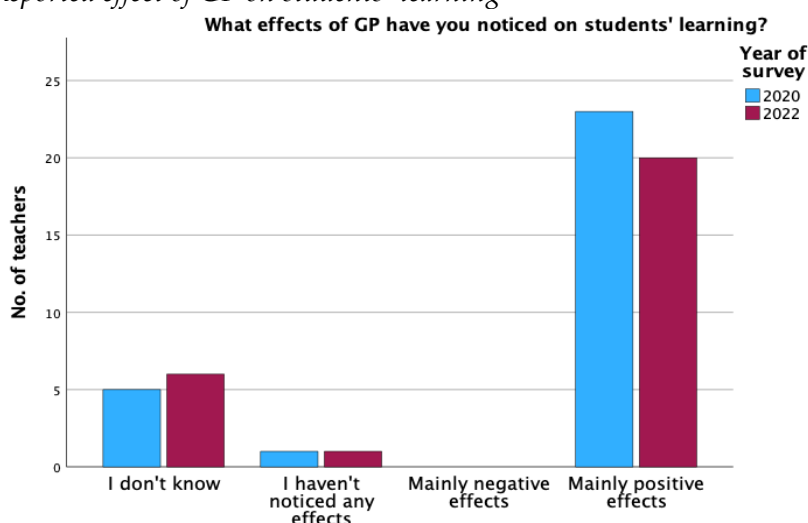
In the focus group interviews, most teachers described genre-based teaching as writing texts in various genres, although some also associated GP with the linguistic and conceptual aspects of subject knowledge: "I don't just think about producing texts, I also think about language development and increasing conceptual understanding and linguistic awareness" (Teacher of mathematics and sciences, Years 4–6). Some teachers viewed GP as a means of improving students' ability to express and communicate knowledge: "For me, GP is mainly about the students being able to reproduce knowledge, for example about Sweden, that they can tell or write about something they learnt, that they get a method to convey knowledge themselves" (Teacher of social sciences, Swedish and English, Years 4–6).

Our analysis also suggests that some teachers cherry-picked, that is, selectively applied, certain elements of GP: "When it comes to GP, it's not that I thought, like now I'm going to work with genre, but it's more that you weave it in, the best, that you've absorbed during these years that we've been working with GP" (Teacher of Swedish L2, Years 4–9). A remedial teacher for Years 4–9 shared similar reflections: "I work with genre, although I peel off quite a lot ...". Thus, some teachers expressed that they only applied aspects of GP that they found particularly useful and consistent with their previous teaching approaches.

3.2. Effects on Students' Learning

In the surveys, teachers were asked whether they had observed any positive or negative effects of GP-based teaching on student learning. The results are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2
Reported effect of GP on students' learning



Note. Two missing responses in 2020, one in 2022.

Figure 2 shows that the vast majority of teachers, 23 in 2020 and 20 in 2022, reported mainly positive effects of GP. No teachers reported mainly negative effects, although one in each survey indicated no effect. A few teachers, five in 2020 and six in 2022, responded that they did not know. Most of these were recently employed with limited experience with genre-based teaching.

In the interviews, some teachers specified what the students had learnt from the genre-based teaching, and at times, what remained to be developed:

No, I would say that what I have noticed is that when we work with the last part [phase four in the TLC], when they have to write themselves and I read their texts, regardless of whether it is descriptive or instructive or narrative text, the structure is there. But there are other things, the linguistic bit, for example word order, sentence structure. I have noticed that there is a lot to work with. (Teacher of Swedish, social sciences, Years 4–6)

Thus, teachers expressed that while students had learnt genre structures, limited Swedish proficiency still impeded their ability to express subject-related knowledge. Below, teachers' views on the advantages and disadvantages of GP are further developed.

3.3. Advantages of GP

The surveys invited teachers to identify advantages, if any, of applying GP. Table 4 provides an overview of the results.

Table 4

Reported advantages of teaching based on GP

<i>Survey 2020</i>	<i>Survey 2022</i>
Improvement in writing proficiency (6)	Improvement in language proficiency (6)
Improvement in language proficiency (6)	Improvement in text types/structure (5)
Improvement in text types/structure (5)	Improvement in writing proficiency (5)
Improvement in subject knowledge (4)	Improvement in subject knowledge (2)
Improvement – not specified (5)	Improvement in reading (1)
	Improvement – not specified (4)
I become a better teacher (5)	I become a better teacher (3)
Teaching is explicit and structured (4)	
Common base for teaching (3)	Common base for teaching (3)
Cross-curricular cooperation (1)	Cross-curricular cooperation (1)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of occurrences per category.

Table 4 shows that teachers primarily reported improvements in students' language and writing proficiency, including knowledge of text types and text structure, when GP was applied. Some also noted gains in subject knowledge, and a few mentioned that the explicit and structured approach of GP helped them become more effective teachers.

In the interviews, teachers highlighted strengthened learning among specific groups of students: "Above all, I like working with model texts with newly arrived students. They learn phrases and expressions that they can use at a later stage when they write texts on their own" (Teacher of newly arrived students, Years 4–9). Others observed that GP was beneficial for both language development and content knowledge among students across proficiency levels: "A greater possibility to reach all students, regardless of their level of language competence. Their proficiency in Swedish is enhanced but also their competence in the school subject" (Teacher of maths, Swedish, English, social and natural sciences, Years 4–6).

A teacher of Swedish and social sciences for Years 4–6 provided an example illustrating the positive effects of teaching based on GP:

One of the texts was an argumentative text [...] we had immersed ourselves in writing where the students had been given the language, language they mastered, about Law and Order. It was used by the students in their writing. And there it becomes quite clear to me, the fact that we have worked with and read, processed, discussed ... They had got the words which meant that they produced ... they chose topics which they could produce good writing about and included words like 'perjury' and other things when they wrote. So it was pretty cool to see, I think.

Reflecting on this experience, the teacher expressed that linguistic scaffolding can support students' academic performance.

3.4. Challenges of GP

In the surveys, teachers were also asked to describe challenges in implementing GP. An overview of the results is provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Reported challenges of teaching based on GP

<i>Survey 2020</i>	<i>Survey 2022</i>
Time for planning (10)	Time-consuming teaching (7)
Time-consuming teaching (7)	Difficult for certain students (6)
SFL terminology/grammar (4)	Joint construction (3)
Joint construction (2)	Connect to subject (3)
Choosing/finding texts/exercises (2)	Too little knowledge about GP (3)
Too little knowledge about GP (2)	Terminology (2)
Connect to subject (1)	Choosing/finding texts/exercises (2)
	Hard to vary teaching methods (1)
	Subject teachers vs primary school teachers (1)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of occurrences per category.

Table 5 shows that time constraints were the most commonly reported challenge. In 2020, teachers pointed to insufficient time to plan GP-based units, and in both surveys, they described GP instruction as time-consuming. One teacher noted that applying GP was particularly difficult at the secondary level, where subject teachers meet students less frequently.

Some teachers found the terminology of SFL difficult to understand and apply in the classroom, and several expressed a need for deeper knowledge of GP. The joint construction phase of the TLC, in which teachers and students compose a text together, was also reported as challenging. In 2022, a new issue emerged: six teachers noted that genre-based instruction could be difficult for students with low language proficiency. Additionally, a few teachers mentioned difficulty in finding suitable materials.

In one interview, the issue of transferring genre competence between subjects was raised. Students had written an argumentative text about school uniforms during their Swedish lessons in Year 6, and the science teacher had expected this to serve as effective preparation for writing an argumentative text on a scientific topic:

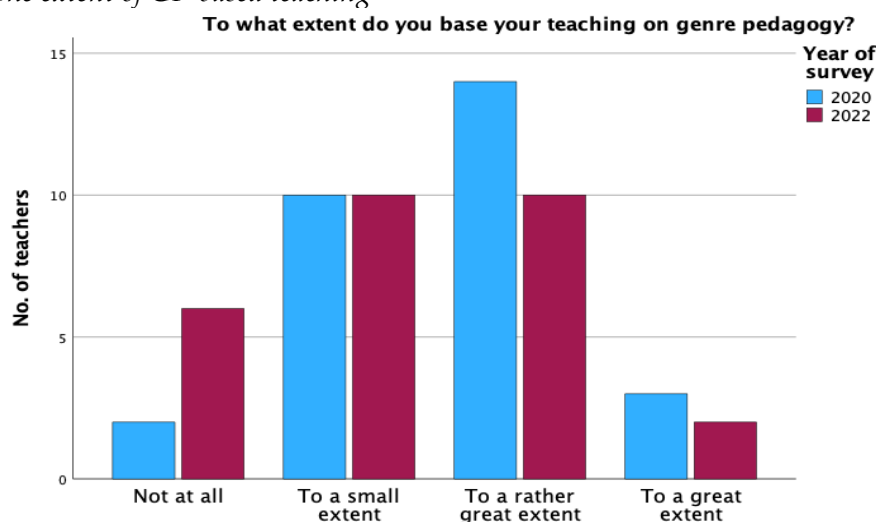
Now they should write an argumentative text about energy sources. And then we had to study energy sources really hard and how things work, and which concepts ... and we have had a lot of words and such to get that knowledge before [writing]. But then all the difficulties with writing that type of text arise once you have acquired the knowledge of the subject. It has been a challenge or is still a challenge [...] They did argumentative texts in Swedish class, so I still thought ... I believed that they would be more prepared. But it was almost, just because it's a different subject, it almost feels like it's become harder for them for some reason. So, they've had a really hard time getting started and sort of understand what to do. (Teacher of mathematics and natural sciences, Years 4–6)

The quotation indicates that teachers may struggle to understand that genre competence develops gradually and further, how literacy requirements differ between subjects. For example, in science arguments must be supported by discipline-specific concepts and substantiated reasoning, while arguments about school uniforms can rely more on personal opinions that do not need to be justified to the same extent.

3.5. The Extent of Self-reported Implementation

In the surveys, the teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which their teaching was based on GP. Figure 3 shows responses from 2020 and 2022.

Figure 3

The extent of GP-based teaching

Note. Two missing responses in 2020.

In 2020, most teachers, 17 of 31, reported that their teaching was based on GP to a great or rather great extent, while only two stated that they did not base their teaching on GP at all. In 2022, fewer teachers, 12 of 28, reported using GP to a great or rather great extent, and the number of teachers who did not do so had increased to six. Given the number of new teachers with limited or no introduction to GP (see 2.1.1.), this increase could be expected.

3.6. Signs of Resistance

The interviews revealed some signs of resistance to the implementation of GP, most noticeably among teachers of Swedish and Swedish L2:

But I think we have jumped too quickly from what the students have read to the actual writing process. I think we would benefit from having longer discussions about what we have read in a slightly more relaxed form and not immediately after reading focus on producing something similar [...] Instead, open up a discussion about the things we read to capture interest. And that, I think, is a bit about pace, also, perhaps, how you as the teacher sometimes want to move forward in order to end up with some kind of final product for assessment. (Teacher of Swedish/Swedish L2, Years 7-9)

Here, the teacher expressed a feeling of losing something important when implementing GP, preferring to spend more time discussing what students found interesting in the texts rather than moving on too quickly to text production.

Another teacher questioned the focus on informative and evaluative genres:

I think that descriptive [sic] texts are often the texts that are quite accessible to children, young people. This is where you can use your own imagination and your own life. And that's where you can 'bubble' more with your own stuff, the others [informative/evaluative] are much more 'square' to me... For me it is about helping children to find the joy of writing. (Teacher of Swedish and social sciences, Years 4-9)

At the beginning of the quotation, the teacher appears to refer to narrative texts, although using the term "descriptive". The teacher contrasts genres in which creativity and personal expression are central with those that are less open to personal expression. Several Swedish/Swedish L2 teachers expressed a subject conception that favours reading and writing for pleasure, based on the belief that students learn best when the content connects to their personal interests.

Some resistance to GP was also evident among teachers of other subjects in Years 7-9:

Yes, but I think, I don't know, we get a bit scolded sometimes too, that we don't do all things. But to be able to cover a full circle [four phases in the TLC] only in science or social science lessons [...] it is

almost required that you have Swedish [teachers] with you to be able to cover a full circle. (Teacher of natural sciences, Years 7-9)

Thus, some teachers expressed that they lacked sufficient time to fully implement GP. For example, when teachers of Swedish and science cooperated, the Swedish lessons were often used for writing based on science content.

4. Discussion

This case study explored teachers' perspectives on implementing GP as a language-focused pedagogical approach on a whole-school basis, drawing on surveys and focus group data. Teachers' understanding of GP largely reflected the in-service training completed prior to data collection. Most teachers perceived GP as an effective approach for teaching students to write common school genres. While many reported drawing on the TLC and emphasising vocabulary, concepts and model texts, fewer explicitly connected GP to subject knowledge construction or broader literacy development (Andersson Varga et al., 2023; Walldén, 2019a). Support for reading was mentioned mainly by teachers who had attended R2L training, which placed a stronger focus on reading than in the GP in-service training at the school.

Teachers generally reported positive effects of GP on students' writing, particularly in relation to text structure and overall language proficiency, findings consistent with previous research (Kuyumcu, 2011; Walldén, 2019c). However, fewer than half reported extensive use of GP in 2022. This decline may reflect high teacher turnover and the limited introduction to GP among newly employed teachers. Even among those who had participated in in-service training, time constraints and varying depth of knowledge of GP and SFL posed challenges (see Moore et al., 2018). This was evident in the focus group interviews, where few participants used metalinguage. As noted in previous research, metalinguistic competence is essential for genre-based teaching but develops gradually (Hipkiss & Andersson Varga, 2018; Matruggio, 2020). Many teachers also reported applying GP selectively, sometimes omitting the joint construction phase of the TLC, which they found difficult to implement (see Kindenberg, 2021). Overall, teachers appeared to adapt GP in ways that aligned with their prior practices, beliefs and perceived feasibility (Biesta et al., 2015; Kennedy, 2016).

In the second survey, several teachers reported that GP-based teaching could be demanding for students with low language proficiency. One important aim of GP is to support learners who struggle with school language (Rose & Martin, 2012), and this concern therefore warrants reflection. Some teachers' self-reported limited knowledge of GP may constitute one obstacle. In addition, many teachers lacked in-depth, formal training in teaching Swedish L2, which may be particularly consequential given the student population. Nilsson (2023), for instance, highlights the complexity of including students with minimal proficiency in the language of instruction in mainstream classrooms. Without sufficient L2-related pedagogical knowledge, adapting teaching to diverse language needs may be challenging.

The results also revealed signs of resistance to GP. Although the decision to implement GP was made locally, not all teachers appeared equally involved or committed. Research suggests that initiatives perceived as top-down often generate resistance (Talbert, 2010), and that opposition is common during the implementation phase when new pedagogical ideas challenge established practices and professional beliefs (Blossing et al., 2014; Borg, 2015). In such situations, open discussion and opportunities for professional dialogue are crucial (Kennedy, 2016). In our study, secondary-level subject teachers were more reluctant than primary teachers to fully implement GP, frequently citing time constraints.

Some resistance was explicitly expressed by teachers of Swedish, who were reluctant to abandon practices they considered pedagogically valuable. Some of their comments reflect a subject conception that privileges reading and writing for pleasure, based on the assumption that connecting to students' personal interests enhances motivation and learning (Anyichie et al., 2023; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Resistance to GP may thus stem from concerns that its structured

nature could undermine motivation, if perceived as overtly instrumental. While Halleson et al. (2018) reported positive outcomes of GP-based teaching, they also cautioned against the risk of resulting in monological classroom environments. In the Swedish context, where recent decades have seen a shift toward learner autonomy and independent work (Andersson Varga et al., 2023), the teacher-led scaffolding characteristic of GP may challenge dominant pedagogical ideals.

Finally, organisational factors appear to have constrained the GP initiative at the school. Key personnel who initiated and led the training left during the implementation phase, a period when strong leadership support is particularly important (Blossing et al., 2014). Under the new leadership, the middle leader responsible for GP was allocated less time, and pedagogical development groups met less regularly. Limited introduction to GP for new teachers further weakened continuity. As Talbert (2010) argues, successful pedagogical development requires sustained collaboration and shared beliefs, which take time to establish (see Biesta et al., 2015; Borg, 2015; Pajares, 1992).

Despite these challenges, our findings suggest that most teachers perceived GP as contributing positively to student learning, aligning with arguments that visible, language-oriented pedagogy is especially important in contexts of educational disadvantage (Bernstein, 1996/2000; Cummins, 2014; Hyland, 2003; Rose & Martin, 2012). However, our results also suggest, in line with Kirsten (2019), that greater attention to subject literacy and to differences in literacy demands across subjects is needed in teacher training for GP. This points to a potential gap between the principles of GP and how it is introduced and taken up in teacher training, where subject-specific dimensions may be less explicitly addressed.

5. Conclusion

Most teachers perceived genre pedagogy as beneficial for students' literacy development, particularly as it provides tools for explicit teaching of vocabulary, concepts, and text structures. At the same time, teachers largely associated GP with writing, and the extent of implementation varied considerably. Many reported applying GP selectively, cherry-picking elements that suited their subjects or teaching contexts, while omitting others. These findings suggest that teachers' interpretations and use of GP are influenced by the depth of their understanding, their prior beliefs and practices, and the subject and educational stages they teach.

The study highlights that whole-school implementation of GP, understood as a language-focused pedagogical initiative across the curriculum, is a long-term and complex process. Supportive organisational conditions are crucial, including sustained opportunities for collaboration, ongoing professional development and systematic introduction for newly hired teachers. Developing the linguistic and pedagogical competence required for genre-based teaching takes time before GP is fully integrated into teaching practices across the school.

As students' linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds continue to influence educational outcomes, the gap between high- and low-achieving groups is widening in many countries, including Sweden. Addressing this gap requires language-focused pedagogical initiatives not only at the school level, but also within teacher education and education policy. By foregrounding teachers' beliefs, interpretations and experiences, this case study contributes to a nuanced understanding of how genre pedagogy is negotiated in practice and offers insights into the potential and complexity of strengthening language and literacy development across the curriculum in linguistically diverse school contexts. More broadly, it demonstrates that new language-focused pedagogies are enacted through teachers' sense-making and adaptation, rather than being taken up in a uniform way across classrooms.

Future research could further examine ways of strengthening teacher agency in professional development for genre pedagogy, particularly in relation to teachers' selective uptake and signs of resistance, as well as how students experience and make sense of genre-based teaching across subjects.

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analysis. The first and second authors drafted the initial version of the manuscript. All authors critically reviewed, revised and contributed to the final version of the manuscript and approved it for submission.

Data availability: The data underlying the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical restrictions and the terms of informed consent provided by the participants.

Declaration of generative AI: ChatGPT 5.1 (ChatGPT Education) was used for limited language editing.

Declaration of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix 1. Survey questions (translation of the original version)

The surveys were given in Swedish and administered digitally. The layout differs to some extent from the digital version (e.g. spaces for writing answers are not shown here).

1. For how long have you worked as a teacher in total?

- ☐ This is my first year
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21-25 years
- ☐ 26-30 years
- ☐ More than 30 years

2. For how long have you worked at this school?

- ☐ Recently employed
- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21-25 years
- ☐ 26-30 years
- ☐ More than 30 years

3. Which school years and which school subjects are you licensed to teach?

4. Which school subject have you been teaching the last three years? Mark all that apply.

- ☐ Swedish
- ☐ English
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Social science subjects
- ☐ Natural science subjects
- ☐ Physical Education
- ☐ Crafts
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Art
- ☐ Swedish as L2
- ☐ Home economics
- ☐ Mother tongue
- ☐ Modern languages (e.g. German, French, Spanish)
- ☐ Other:

5. Have you any formal training of teaching Swedish as a second language? If so, please state for how long / the number of university credit points.

6a. Have you participated in (any part of) the in-service training of genre pedagogy that started in the autumn of 17 at X school, or taken part in any introduction to genre pedagogy?

- Yes, I participated in large parts of the training that started in 2017
- I participated in some parts of the training that started in 2017
- I have been offered some introduction to GP at school
- No, I have not attended training or taken part in any introduction

6b. Briefly describe the GP training or introduction that you have participated in.

7. Have you taken part in Reading to Learn training?

- Yes, I have participated in (at least) one course
- Yes, I have participated in workshops at school.
- No, I have not participated in Reading to Learn training.

8. To what extent has your teaching been based on genre pedagogy during the last school year?

- To a great extent
- To a rather great extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all

9. In what ways would you describe your teaching as based on genre pedagogy? Please, elaborate your answer.

10. What challenges have you faced when basing teaching on GP?

11. What advantages/opportunities do you see with genre-based teaching for you as a teacher?

12a. What effects of genre-based teaching have you noticed on students' learning?

- Mainly positive effects
- Mainly negative effects
- I haven't noticed any effects
- I don't know

12b. Describe the effects you have noticed.

13a. Do you think you have received the training you need for implementing genre-based teaching?

- Yes
- Yes, but I need more in-depth knowledge
- No

13b. What is missing? What would you like to know more about?

Appendix 2. Interview guide (translation of original version in Swedish)

Primarily, the following topics will be discussed.

Focus teaching and planning teaching:

- Subject-specific language features in your subject(s). Differences between subjects that you teach (i.e. between physics, chemistry and biology/between history, geography and civics/between Swedish and L2 Swedish).
- The design and content of genre-based teaching in your subject(s).
- Differences between GP and "ordinary" teaching. Changes in teaching after the in-service training.
- Collaboration between teachers related to GP, e.g. planning and evaluation.
- Collaboration Swedish/L2 Swedish and other subjects.

Focus student learning:

- Linguistic challenges for students in your subject(s).
- Describe subject literacy demands that students are expected to meet.
- Inclusion of newly arrived students.
- Possible gains or drawbacks with genre pedagogy.