

# “Call for papers”: Analysis of the schematic structure and lexico-grammar of CFPs for academic conferences



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## ARTICLE INFO

Article history:  
Available online 17 July 2014

Keywords:  
Generic structures  
Lexico-grammatical analysis  
Call for papers (CFP)  
Promotional genre  
Evaluative genre

## ABSTRACT

Many studies analysing generic structures and linguistic features in academic settings have focussed on a single genre, while the structures of inter-related genres are relatively understudied. ‘Calls for papers’ (CFPs), as one example of the ignition of a genre chain of academic activities, could play a rather crucial role in attracting prospective submitters’ attention and also determining the quality of contributions. Yet, compared with the research on other academic texts, CFPs have received little attention from analysts. Thus, in this study 40 “Calls for papers” from various language and education-related conferences announced on the Internet were collected and their schematic structure and lexico-grammatical features were analysed. A manual multi-level move analysis as well as a computerised analysis of the textual elements was performed, followed by qualitative interviews with several conference organisers. Six major moves together with their sub-steps were identified, namely: Drawing attention, Identifying the discourse community coverage, Soliciting contributions, Presenting incentives for participation, Clarifying miscellanea, and Signing off.

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## 1. Introduction

Research on academic genres has been the focus of much attention from analysts over the past two decades, resulting in a number of related publications. For example, there are genre analyses of research papers focussing on their titles, abstracts, introductions, results, discussions and conclusions (Holmes, 1997; Haggan, 2004; Lorés, 2004; Samraj, 2002, 2005; Williams, 1999; Yang & Allison, 2003). For the genres of presentations and academic conference papers, a number of analyses have focussed on examining conference paper abstracts (Djuwari, 2009), speech acts in presentations (Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003), written texts in poster presentations (D’Angelo, 2010), comparisons of oral presentations delivered by English native speakers and non-native speakers (Rowley-Jolivet, 2005), and the contextual factors affecting conference speech between two contrasting cultures, such as English and Polish (Zapletalová, 2011).

Nevertheless, an inter-related text which ignites the appearance of the above texts has been less attended to in the research, that is, *Calls for papers* (CFPs). Obviously, without the CFP, most of the above written and spoken acts would not be easily or publicly circulated in academic journals and conferences. This notion is what Swales (2004) calls a “genre chain” “whereby one genre is a necessary antecedent for another” (Swales, 2004, p. 18). CFPs, according to Swales and Feak (2011),

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are an open genre which can be described as highly visible and publicly presented. However, research analysing this particular genre is relatively limited, despite its publically accessible nature when compared with other more occluded genres.

In this article, it is argued that a study of CFPs can shed light on the process of academic research production, a process of interest to EAP researchers and teachers alike. CFPs can be viewed as 'trend-setters' in directing current or future research interests. Specifically, this study explores how CFPs, as a catalyst genre in this process, stimulate academic research by promoting conferences and journals. CFPs also help to maintain the quality of the solicited research in this process; that is, a good CFP can serve as a gatekeeper controlling the quality of the contributions that follow and future publications, thus helping to achieve the intended communicative purposes. In addition, a study of CFPs can also raise awareness of how promotional purposes feature significantly in certain academic genres.

## 2. Theoretical framework of the research

### 2.1. CFP as part of a genre chain

For the most part, research tends to focus on single academic genres, while inter-related genres draw relatively little attention or comparison (Samraj, 2005). Genres, however, are rarely found in isolation in the real world (Hyland, 2007); rather, they form constellations in certain areas (Swales, 2004). Some of these related genres could be categorised as chains or inter-textual systems provided that they work toward a goal and appear in a chronological or linear order, in particular when one genre is a required antecedent of another (Swales, 2004) and many of the genre chains are "relatively occluded and foreground mediation of the following activity (e.g., a checklist that functions for the user as a mnemonic device and prompts a sequence of actions)" (Molle & Prior, 2008, p. 548).

Within academic discourse, the introduction section of research articles, treated as an independent but inter-related genre (Bhatia, 1997a), have been extensively researched. Swales and Feak (2011) have also investigated the related chain of genres graduate students have to master, beginning from writing personal statements to applying for a program, to writing curricula vitae or job application letters when moving on to an academic or research career after graduation. Similarly, Dessen-Hammouda (2008, p. 249) argues that novice students must "master an entire semiotic genre chain that underlies their discipline's specialist activity in order to begin writing like specialists." Moreover, Connor and Mauranen (1999) have argued that future studies of genres should systematically investigate groups of related genres to shed light on generic interrelations.

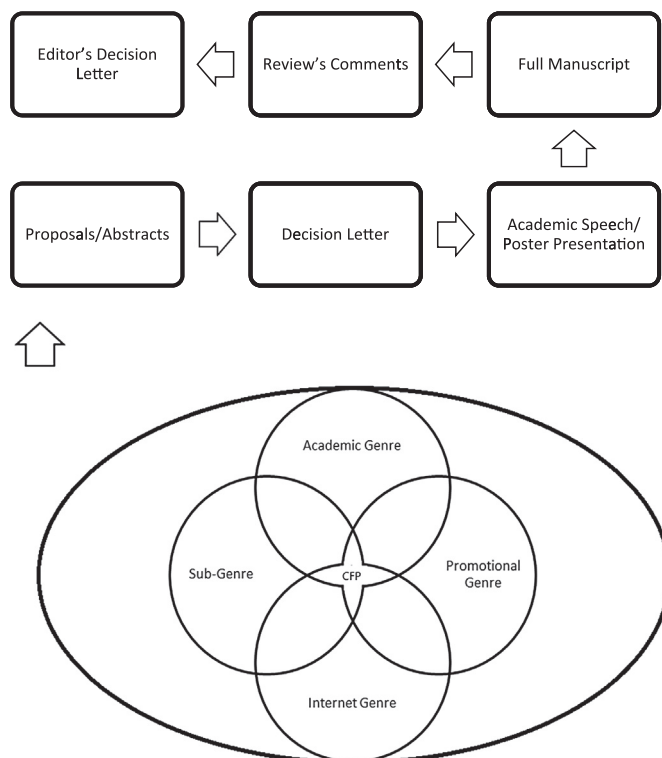


Figure 1. CFP as part of the genre chain.

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