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Editorial

The past and possible futures of genre analysis: An introduction to the special issue



This special issue examines the theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical contributions of John Swales' seminal book, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*, in commemoration of its 25-year anniversary. As is well known to JEAP readers, Swales' key concepts in *Genre Analysis* (henceforth GA) include genre, discourse community, communicative purpose, rhetorical move analysis, and language-learning task. The majority of these concepts have been taken up enthusiastically in the past 25 years, as well as refined, expanded, and challenged, including by Swales himself. The eleven articles in this issue are devoted to explaining the nature of this uptake, demonstrating how central ideas in GA have been, and can be, applied in research and teaching.

As is true with genre studies as a whole, it is impossible to tease apart conceptual contributions in GA from those having to do with research methods and teaching. GA has contributed greatly to all three areas—discourse/rhetorical genre theory, methods of discourse analysis, and approaches to English language teaching. And yet, as John Flowerdew reminds us in this issue, the major driving force of GA is pedagogical, aiming, as Swales puts it at the outset of GA, “to show that a genre-centered approach offers a workable way of making sense of the myriad communicative events that occur in the contemporary English-speaking academy – a sense-making directly relevant to those concerned with devising English courses and, by extension, to those participating in such courses” (Swales, 1990, p. 1).

Given this inextricability between genre concepts, methods, and teaching, what we might call the more theoretical lines of inquiry revisited in this volume concern the following: the tensions between genre typification and variation by individual actors and local community goals, the focus on individuals operating within communities, the inter-relations among genres (e.g. genre chains, sets, networks, ecologies) in local and international research communication, the connections between genres and discourse communities, and implications of increased multi-functionality and hybridity. The methodological lines of inquiry have to do with possibilities and challenges for continued use of move analysis, especially in light of emerging socio-cultural variations in local uses of English for research purposes, increased awareness of the importance of context and of genre multi-functionality in understanding discourse, and new ways of examining moves through corpus-based approaches. Finally, the pedagogical lines concern the following: the tensions between fostering genre awareness vs. acquisition; strategies for building learners' capacities to reflect on their uses of genres; and renewed interest in the concept of pedagogical *task*. These three lines, again, are closely intertwined, each informed by insights from genre studies both within and historically seen as outside the scope of EAP, including Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) and the “Sydney” school in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

These eleven articles in some way both revisit constructs directly addressed in GA—e.g. move analysis, task, discourse community—and those that have been further developed after its publication, including genre relations, corpus linguistics, and English as a Lingua Franca, among others. Though they defy easy categorization, we have grouped the articles into three general sections. The first set of articles explores ways that key concepts in GA have been received and used in the past 25 years, as well as possibilities for further refinement and extension. Those in the second set focus specifically on uses of move analysis as an analytic method. The final set focuses squarely on pedagogy, both revisiting and offering suggestions for extending pedagogical arguments in GA.

1. Reception and extension of genre analysis

First, **Laura Aull and John Swales** in “Genre analysis: Considering the initial reviews” offer a brief and illuminating reflection on the early published reviews of GA, discussing the reviewers' prescience and the extent to which their judgments

may have been shaped by their disciplinary affiliations. The authors note that, by placing nearly equal weight on Swales' concepts of genre, discourse community, and language-learning task, the reviews did not predict that this third concept would have been "almost entirely still-born" in subsequent publications. (Note that the concept of *task* is taken up robustly in this special issue by Carmen Pérez-Llantada, John Flowerdew, Ann Johns, and An Cheng.) Interestingly, Aull and Swales' piece illustrates the value of discourse community as a concept for understanding readers' judgments of language use and intelligibility. In particular, the authors discuss an unusually hostile review from a scholar of English literature who pronounced Swales' book as "all but unreadable"—a judgment that, in contrast to reviewers in applied linguistics who positively appraised the book's clarity and pedagogical value, appears to reflect "discipline-specific ideas about a book's readability and use-value." This first article sets the stage for the special issue as a whole, considering the degree to which the early reviews anticipated the impact the book ultimately would have for genre scholars and EAP/ESP practitioners in socio-cultural contexts around the world.

A glimpse of this impact can be seen in the next article. In **"Genres in the forefront, languages in the background: the scope of genre analysis in language-related scenarios,"** Carmen Pérez-Llantada explores how genre teaching and analysis have illuminated practices in culturally and linguistically diverse research communities around the world. First, the author uses computer-assisted bibliometric methods to examine the scholarly literature on "research genres" and "languages" in the past 25 years, discussing three interconnected themes emerging from her investigation: the role of genre ecologies in assisting communication in international research communities; the persisting burdens of "English monolingualism" research practices and expectations; and differences in uses of English across global research ecologies. In the second reflection, the author considers how the method of move analysis has been used to identify cultural-linguistic variations on research genres, reflecting on continued methods for clarifying culturally-based rhetorical patterns. In her third reflection, the author argues for a genre-based pedagogy that foregrounds a "multiliterate rhetorical consciousness-raising pedagogy." Here, the author astutely observes that, extending from GA 25 years later, genre scholars need to consider in greater depths the ways genre systems are "used across local research communities with different lingua-cultural backgrounds." To conclude, Pérez-Llantada draws on Swales' concept of language task to propose instructional interventions that promote rhetorical consciousness-raising in various forms.

Next, in light of one specific national context, Désirée Motta-Roth and Viviane M. Heberle offer **"A short cartography of genre studies in Brazil."** In their nuanced overview of genre-based developments in this country, the authors explain the approach they refer to as Critical Genre Analysis (CGA)—an approach that emerges from an eclectic integration of the British tradition of English for Specific Purposes, Critical Discourse Analysis, Systemic Functional Linguistics, North American Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), and Socio-Discursive Interactionism (SDI), combined also with other, local influences and goals. In carving out the uniquely interdisciplinary Brazilian tradition of CGA, the authors push back against the notion that the Geneva school of genre, or SDI, has been the sole or even principal influence. In arguing that CGA resists single disciplinary associations, and instead fuses together the "relevant and harmonic features" of multiple traditions, the authors emphasize locally-responsive instructional aims, ones that unite attention to discourse, lexicogrammar, sociocultural context, and ideology.

The next two articles in this first section argue for ways to extend and refine Swales' key concepts of rhetorical positioning within genres, communicative purpose, and discourse community. Ken Hyland's **"Genre, discipline and identity"** takes up Swales' understanding of genres as "community situated actions," exploring how writers working in specific disciplinary communities use language to establish "proximity" to their communities while also positioning themselves as individual actors within them. In so doing, Hyland interrogates the contested concepts of discipline and identity in genres. Specifically, by examining disciplinary patterns in academic homepages, scholarly prize applications, academic bios, and two authors' distinct approaches to research articles, Hyland shows that scholars are not simply constrained and positioned by community genres but also exercise agency, pulling from "the rhetorical options our communities make available" to create distinct identities. Hyland's focus on the tension between community proximity and positioning offers a lens for genre analysis that illuminates our understanding of the genre strategies that individuals use to navigate the tension between constraint and choice.

Continuing with the focus on individual actors, Amy Devitt in her article **"Genre performances: John Swales' Genre Analysis and rhetorical-linguistic genre studies"** further elaborates the view that individuals perform and position themselves through genres. She argues that scholars need to give more attention to individual, specific, unique genre performances—that is, to how individuals respond to "the particular task ... as well as the particular genre." Using as a metaphor the well-known dichotomy in linguistics between competence and performance, Devitt argues that, while genre scholars have excelled in identifying patterns of language use that point to writers' genre competences, as indicated by their control of *typified* genre resources, scholars and teachers need to attend more closely to writers' specific, unique genre performances. While also attending to shared genre patterns, focusing on genre performances with learners means asking them to account for variation in specific texts and to reflect deeply on their own uses and adaptations of genres. Devitt shows that the stakes of this work for writing studies are high. Putting genre performances at the forefront troubles common assessment practices and challenges instructors to move beyond genre "mastery," or competence in particular genres, as ultimate learning goals.

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