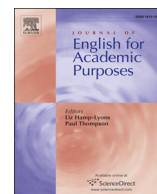


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Genres in the forefront, languages in the background: The scope of genre analysis in language-related scenarios



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ABSTRACT

Drawing on bibliometric methods (citation analysis and content analysis) and literature review, this paper offers some critical reflections of how genre analysis has been used, applied, expanded and refined to address the challenges of a culturally and linguistically diverse academic and research community. The first reflection opens with a brief review of the privileged status of English as the international language of academic and research communication to discuss contrasting scholarly positions that regard 'Englishization' as either 'help' or 'hindrance'. The second reflection focuses on rhetorical move analysis, an aspect of genre theory that to date has been little considered outside ESP/EAP traditions of genre analysis. It discusses how move analysis, in cross-fertilization with various theoretical/analytical frameworks, can add to our understanding of the way L2 academic English writers accomplish meso- and micro-rhetorical manoeuvres. The final reflection touches upon the impact of internationalization and research assessment policies on the current knowledge exchange, dissemination and publication practices to emphasize the value of the Swalesian task-based approach and advocate a multiliterate rhetorical consciousness-raising pedagogy. The paper concludes with some suggestions for future genre research and proposes ways of articulating cogent language instructional intervention to empower members of bi-/multiliterate academic and research communities professionally.

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The opening chapter of Swales' (1990) *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* informs its readers that the main aim of the book is pedagogical, namely, to offer an approach to the teaching of academic and research English. Doubtless, Swales' seminal work has an invaluable pedagogical orientation, but it also invites its readers to gain comprehensive insights into the three influential concepts underlying genre theory: discourse community, genre and language learning task. Drawing on these concepts as an argumentative scaffold, the broad aim of this paper is to offer some critical reflections on how genre analysis has been used, applied, expanded and refined to address the challenges of a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous research world.

The current sociocultural context is unprecedentedly complex. It is marked by the development of computerized societies and, at an epistemological level, by the changing nature of knowledge. It places emphasis on the local and the contingent, contests homogeneity while advocating heterogeneity and diversity, and claims the existence of a multiplicity of orders (Lyotard, 1979; Sarup, 1993). Within this context, today's academic and research communication, as a socioculturally

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constituted set of practices, draws upon a repertoire of genres that act as participatory mechanisms for small- (local) and large-scale (global) interaction. In this paper, I specifically aim to describe ways in which genres, and genre use in general, intersect with languages and language use in a sociocultural context that Pennycook (1994, 2007) describes as undergoing profound geopolitical and geolinguistic changes. In accounting for the intersection of genres/genre use and languages/language use, I seek to discuss how the three influential concepts of genre theory —discourse community, genre and language-learning task— have been approached in the past 25 years.

Given that *Genre Analysis* is entirely devoted to the role of English in the research world, in what follows I will draw on bibliometric methods (citation analysis and content analysis) to retrieve highly-cited publications in ISI-indexed journals in the past 25 years and analyse their perspectives on English in academic and research settings in relation to the existing scholarly literature. It should be acknowledged that the literature has also focused on academic languages other than English. This literature, though, will not be reviewed here for reasons of space. Acknowledging this limitation, this paper seeks to reflect on three language-related scenarios in which genre theory has been applied and can be expanded so as to re-examine the role of English for academic and research communication after 25 years of follow-up. The first reflection revisits some conceptual aspects of genre theory and critically reviews the controversial debate about the geopolitics of languages for academic and research communication. The second reflection addresses methodological aspects of genre analysis with a view to proposing cross-fertilization of genre theory with other theoretical and analytical frameworks. The final reflection touches upon the impact of internationalization and research assessment policies on scholars' research dissemination and publication practices, and tentatively proposes a cogent pedagogical intervention based on multiliterate rhetorical consciousness-raising.

1. The dominance of English: linguistic accommodation and asymmetrical convergence

My first reflection arises from Swales' (1988) early view that the spread of English as an international language was a decisive factor behind linguistic change in both communication practices and pedagogical endeavours. Today English remains the most widespread lingua franca in academic and research communication (Ferguson, 2009; Lillis & Curry, 2010) and it is not difficult to trace a lively debate in the literature, not without controversy, on the privileged status of English *vis-à-vis* other major and minor academic and research languages. A Web of Science Core Collection search of the keywords 'research genres' and 'languages' retrieves a list of 131 records of journal articles published between 1990 and 2014, all of them sharing the view that English has steadily become the privileged language for academic and research communication. These sources examine the phraseology and the rhetorical organization of research genres and part-genres in a contrastive (cross-linguistic) fashion and tackle issues of advanced learner academic writing and bi-literate composition practices based on genre knowledge transfer.

Content analysis procedures¹ identify three central, interrelated themes in these publications: i) the dilemma of whether or not the predominance of English is a serious threat to multilingualism, ii) the language-related burdens resulting from 'English-monolingualism' policies for research dissemination and publication, and iii) the extent of linguistic diversity in an 'English-only' research world (Belcher, Johns, & Paltridge, 2011). The most highly cited work found in the bibliometric search is House (2003), which compellingly contests the early views of English as a threat to national languages and multilingualism —English as 'a menacing Tyrannosaurus rex' (Swales, 1997)— as well as the ideological language debates siding against the dominance of English for research publication purposes —e.g. 'linguistic imperialism' (Canagarajah, 2002; Phillipson, 1992) and 'prescriptive monolingualism' (Ammon, 2001, 2006; Coulmas, 2007). House distinguishes between 'languages for communication' and 'languages for identification' (p. 556) to dispute these views and arguments and hence, in many respects, her distinction aligns with Swales' (1997) early observation that it is not that the speakers of other languages have accommodated, but rather that English is valued "as a wider window on the world" (p. 377). The pragmatic value of accommodating to English-medium communication may be considered, at least in part, as one of the effects of the intensification of knowledge exchange on a global scale that underpins the current 'knowledge-based economies' model. It is clearly relevant to mention here the intensification of international cooperation on research and development projects, and the growing interest in research networking and partnership (OECD, 2012; UNESCO, 2010; Royal Society, 2011) and the increasing proportion of international co-authored English-medium publications (Fig. 1), both of them responses to the socioeconomic interests associated with neoliberal globalization. These scientometric records may be taken as evidence that English has become a lingua franca not because it has been imposed but, as House (2003) states, because it facilitates the exchange of scientific knowledge worldwide. Another possible effect of the above-mentioned responses and a concomitant reason for the pragmatic adoption of English as a shared language for communication is, perhaps, the widespread implementation of research assessment policies that target at increasing a nation's international visibility and prestige (Pérez-Llantada, 2012; Englander & Uzuner, 2013) (see Section 3 of this paper for further discussion).

But gross generalizations about the reasons behind the adoption of English as the shared language for knowledge exchange, dissemination and publication purposes should necessarily be treated with caution since no uniform trend can be consistently observed across nations worldwide. While the advancement of English is reported by scientometric records, the

¹ Content analysis was conducted using computer-assisted techniques. High-frequency lexical items were first identified with corpus linguistics software. These items were analysed i) drawing on KWIC concordance lines and ii) interpreting the semantic relationship of the items with their expanded co-text. The aim was to retrieve the most prominent manifest contents addressed in the sources surveyed.

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