



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of English for Academic Purposes

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jeap

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.

The next three articles take up one construct from 1990's *Genre Analysis*, the methodology of move analysis. Together, these articles suggest ways to further develop this construct as a research and teaching tool, to challenge its continued viability in light of increasingly complex, multi-functional research genres, and to refine our understanding of how move structure analysis may be used to uncover sets of communicative purposes in a genre.

2. Revisiting move analysis

In the first article in this section, **“Furthering and applying move/step constructs: Technology-driven marshaling of Swalesian genre theory for EAP pedagogy,”** authors **Elena Cotos, Sarah Huffman, and Stephanie Link** explain the development and functionality of a powerful computer-assisted tool that provides learners with discipline-based writing instruction, specifically in use of rhetorical move-steps in their own research articles. The authors' automated writing evaluation tool, called the Research Writing Tutor (RWT), offers a glimpse of new levels of pedagogical application for move analysis. After explaining their corpus-based procedures for developing move/step schemas for various RA sections, the authors explain results of their automated analysis in terms of move/step distributions throughout the corpus, discipline-specific patterns, and linguistic realizations. The authors also describe how the RWT tool assists learners to analyze their own writing in comparison with discipline-specific exemplars. In noting the gains and limitations of their approach, they pose considerations for a pedagogical focus on genre variation versus genre standardization. In this way, the authors speak back in interesting ways to Pérez-Llantada and to Devitt, and they generate valuable ideas about future uses of move/step analysis in research and teaching.

Next, **Carmen Sancho Guinda** takes a questioning perspective on the concept of moves in her article, **“Genres on the move: Currency and erosion of the genre moves construct.”** This article explores two genres that are gaining prominence in published research articles, *teaser-abstracts* (or “summaries of summaries”) and *graphical abstracts*. These genres pose complications for the concept of moves—understood here as staged, rhetorical units through which purposes of genres are realized—because they lack clear text staging, demonstrate unclear move boundaries, express a high degree of *intra-disciplinary* variation, communicate more or different kinds of meanings to lay audiences than to specialized ones (in the case of graphical abstracts), and unduly restrict comprehension by readers outside highly specialized audiences (in the case of teaser abstracts). To make sense of the “erosion” of moves as a concept for understanding these and related genres, Sancho Guinda argues in support a revised, “looser” conception of genre and community in EAP. In this revised EAP genre framework, moves should be regarded as “secondary features” next to the more primary notions of social action and complexity.

A very different sort of complexity for move analysis is illustrated in the final article in this section, **“The suicide note as a genre: implications for genre theory”** by **Betty Samraj and Mark Gawron**. The authors start from the position that, while the suicide note is a decidedly non-academic genre, the difficult theoretical and methodological questions raised by examining it in terms of move structure analysis are of interest to genre studies. The authors' move analysis, informed by a computational examination of lexical and grammatical features, is perhaps most interesting because of what the complexities suggest. These include “lack of a discourse community, great variety in length, and the lack of any identifiable obligatory moves or fixed ordering of moves.” Based on these observations, the authors suggest that identifying a set of moves that are “core” or “minor” to the genre, where realization of at least one core move is decisive of genre membership, offers an alternative to viewing certain moves as obligatory. They also conclude that some genres, like the suicide note, may be understood as functioning in the larger context of culture, without a corresponding discourse community. In general, Samraj and Gawron's analysis offers a counter-perspective to Sancho Guinda's in that it points to the continued vitality of move structure analysis for illuminating genre functions.

3. Genre-based instruction

While most of the aforesaid articles do address genre-based instruction, the final three articles place pedagogical concerns in the foreground.

First, **John Flowerdew** in **“John Swales' approach to pedagogy in Genre Analysis: A perspective from 25 years on”** reflects on ways that the pedagogical arguments in *GA* may be further refined in light of three main developments that have gained traction in the past 25 years: the concept of genre relations, corpus-informed instructional methods, and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). Flowerdew begins by offering a detailed explication of Swales' approach to language instruction as outlined in *GA*, reviewing rhetorical consciousness-raising and the use of schemata in facilitating learners' genre acquisition. He then explores ways that Swales' approach may be developed in light of the three concepts mentioned, pausing to consider how the genre teaching cycle in SFL (e.g. [Rose & Martin, 2012](#)) intersects with, and could further refine, Swales' discussion of classroom tasks, as well as how corpus-based teaching helps hone attention to lexico-grammatical realizations of genres. An especially important point that emerges from Flowerdew's discussion is how much *GA* anticipated pedagogical concerns and strategies that would later occupy the attention of writing scholars, especially “transfer” of genre knowledge and the role of world Englishes in academic research. In these ways, Flowerdew's article connects with Devitt's discussion about fostering students' meta-awareness of their unique genre

performances, as well as Carmen Pérez-Llantada's rich discussion of the scholarly literature on English in research ecologies around the world.

Like Flowerdew, **Ann Johns** also considers ways that Swales' early approach may be extended in her article **“Moving on from Genre Analysis: An update and tasks for the transitional student.”** Whereas Flowerdew foregrounds Vygotskian theory, the genre learning cycle in SFL, and corpus linguistics, Johns focuses on developments in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), in addition to Swales' own pedagogical texts (e.g. [Swales & Feak, 2012](#)). The author first revisits the concepts of genre and task, pausing to consider Swales' increasing concern for *context* in genre research and instruction—not just as a “tokenist nod in the direction of its relevance” ([Swales, 1993](#), p. 691) but as a more central goal for understanding genres. Using these reflections, Johns then offers a detailed explanation of the development of pre-writing tasks used with bilingual (Spanish/English) secondary students as part of an instructional unit on the college application essay or “personal statement.” The approach is broadly aimed at raising students' “genre awareness,” both for this genre and “for any text or context.” In particular, Johns outlines an approach designed to enable students to reflect deeply on the context for the college application essay, its purposes, relationships with antecedent genres, audience expectations for “voice,” and organizational options. Johns' focus in this article echoes Devitt's argument to foreground attention to genre performances, as both authors are concerned ultimately with fostering students' reflective meta-awareness of genre rather than command of a single genre.

The final article in this section considers how EAP instructors' own genre knowledge can be further refined through the same kind of deep reflection that Johns and Devitt are advocating.

In his essay **“Genre analysis as a pre-instructional, instructional, and teacher development framework,”** **An Cheng** draws on a single “incident” in one of his EAP courses to explore ways that genre analysis can operate not just as a “pre-instructional” framework for guiding instructors' design of classroom tasks and materials, which has been the predominant use of genre analysis in EAP instruction, but in two additional ways. First, it can be used during instruction as a framework for assisting learners to expand their rhetorical knowledge of their own disciplinary contexts. Second, it can be used as a teacher development framework for even highly experienced EAP instructors to further hone their genre knowledge. The single “incident” that Cheng discusses involves one graduate student's move analysis task, where the student apparently mis-identified (on repeated occasions) a rhetorical move in a research article introduction from her own field. In addition to the detail and sensitivity in discussing this learner's rhetorical reflections, the point Cheng makes is that the “incident” may have resulted from his own instructional emphasis on “identifying a gap” as the predominate option for establishing a niche in the RA introduction. Through this sustained reflection, Cheng argues for more research that examines *how* learners' actually use move analysis in their learning of EAP, as well as genre analysis projects that are focused on learners' “real needs” to understand specific genres in their fields.

In closing, an important question engaged in this volume is where Swalesian genre analysis is going from here. This question is explored by a number of the papers, though within the specific confines of their individual contributions. Taken as a whole, the volume points to the need to continue examining the relationships between local and global uptakes of genre. It points to the need, as well, to examine the tensions between individual actors and community goals and between genre standards (or exemplars) and motivated variations and disruptions of these standards. The volume also suggests the need to examine closely how different disciplines and approaches to genre analysis understand and treat these various tensions.

In terms of the spirit of Swalesian genre analysis, it is important to point out that several of the articles in this volume, as they reassess, refine, or challenge concepts from *GA*, pause to consider how Swales has often done the very same thing in his own subsequent publications (see, e.g., Flowerdew; Johns), particularly in regards to the role of context and criteria for genre membership (e.g., [Askehave & Swales, 2001](#)). These frequent moments of critical reassessment underscore the open-minded inquisitiveness and concern for empirical backing that characterizes Swales' contributions to genre studies. On this point, [Hyland \(2010, p. 177\)](#) has noted that Swales, in his prose, “presents an identity as a reasonable and open-minded seeker of truth, more interested in reaching a plausible interpretation for events than pushing his own.” We are confident that many contributors and readers of this special issue will attest to this identity at work in Swales' interactions with them in his roles as scholar, mentor, colleague, and teacher.

On a personal note, we the guest editors have had the great fortune to learn from Swales' open-minded inquisitiveness, first in the midst of our doctoral work when we took an “independent study” course on genre analysis and corpus linguistics with Professor Swales at the University of Michigan. Throughout the course and since, Professor Swales has encouraged us to grapple with various intellectual approaches to genre research, remaining both open to and generously critical of our research and writing decisions. We have found that, while he does not hesitate to pose objections, he is consistently open to and respectful of our ideas, even when they may not align with his own. These scholarly qualities are surely ones that the contributors of this volume would associate with Swales' work, and we are hopeful that readers will appreciate them in each of the eleven papers included herein.

References

- Askehave, I., & Swales, J. M. (2001). Genre identification and communicative purpose: a problem and a possible solution. *Applied Linguistics*, 22(2), 195–212.
- Hyland, K. (2010). Community and individuality: performing identity in applied linguistics. *Written Communication*, 27(2), 159–188.

Rose, D., & Martin, J. R. (2012). *Learning to write, reading to learn: Genre, knowledge and pedagogy in the Sydney school*. Equinox.

Swales, J. M. (1993). Genre and engagement. *Revue Belge de Philologie et D'histoire*, 71(3), 687–698.

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills* (3rd ed.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Zak Lancaster, Guest editor
Wake Forest University, United States
E-mail address: lancasci@wfu.edu

Laura Aull, Guest editor
Wake Forest University, United States
E-mail address: aulll@wfu.edu

Moisés Damián Perales Escudero, Guest editor
Universidad de Quintana Roo, Mexico
E-mail address: musadayan@gmail.com