



EAP Genre Paradox

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Genre pedagogy: issues

- **Socialisation** > classroom instruction – rhetorical approaches (cf. Bawarshi & Reiff 2010)
- Danger of **prescriptive** pedagogy (cf. Hyland 2007)
- **Multiple academic literacies**, practices not visible, a call to challenge dominant practices – Academic Literacies (e.g. Lea & Street 1998)

EAP genre paradox

Genres students read (textbook, journal article)



Genres students produce (essay, lab report, dissertation)

Social and discoursal mismatches
between student and expert genres

Social mismatches: Audience

Expert genres

- Less knowledgeable reader
- Peers



Student genres

- A more knowledgeable and powerful reader



- Shaw (1992: 304): “textbooks inform downwards from a position of authority, and articles report horizontally to peers, while writers of theses are required to display their knowledge and grasp of the subject ‘culture’ to superiors”

Social mismatches: Purpose

Expert genres

- Inform
- Disseminate knowledge

Student genres

- Display knowledge and demonstrate skills

- Hyland (2012: 141): students have to “to demonstrate an appropriate degree of rhetorical sophistication while recognizing readers’ greater knowledge of the field and power to evaluate their text”

Discoursal mismatches: Structure and language

Expert genres

- Structure and language chosen to match the purposes

Student genres

- Structure and language often prescribed
- Simplistic rules in writing guides
- Teachers believing students must follow the rules before breaking them
- Language imitated from expert genres might not be appropriate

Example: Topic sentences

“So while impersonality may often be institutionally sanctified, it is constantly transgressed. This is generally because the choices which realise explicit writer presence also contribute to a high degree of ego-involvement (Chafe, 1985), and are closely associated with authorial identity and authority. All writing carries information about the writer, and the conventions of personal projection, particularly the use of first person pronouns, are powerful means for self-representation (Ivanic, 1998, Ivanic and Simpson, 1992). Authority, as I noted above, is partly accomplished by speaking as an insider, using the codes and the identity of a community member (e.g. Bartholomae, 1986, p. 156). But it also relates to the writer’s convictions, engagement with the reader, and personal presentation of ‘self’. Cherry (1988) uses the traditional rhetorical concepts of *ethos* and *persona* to represent persuasiveness as a balance between these two dimensions of authority: the credibility gained from representing oneself as a competent member of the discipline, and from rhetorically displaying the personal qualities of a reliable, trustworthy person.” (Hyland 2001: 209)



Games academics play

- Student told 'Who are you to write like that [with authority]'?
- Subject tutor expecting students to spell out purpose in their writing
- Students using phrase *This paper is purposefully brief*

Is the *EAP genre paradox* a problem?

- Knowledge shared with the reader – content not developed in **depth** (Parkinson 2017), or sources not cited – impact on **academic integrity** (Chandrasoma et al. 2004; Parkinson 2017)
- When writing for an audience they know personally, novice student writers tend to use **spoken register** (Puma 1986, cited in Aull 2015)
- Writing to display knowledge means less **risk-taking** in terms of composition (Wong 2005)
- Students uncomfortable assuming **authority** (Hyland 2002) and expressing **criticality** (Jomaa & Bidin 2017) in their writing

Implications for research and scholarship

Research should not compare student and expert genres without considering discoursal differences

- E.g. Chen (2006): frequency of linking words in student writing (MA dissertation) v. expert writing (journal article) disregarding genre differences in terms of length and information density

Implications for teaching

1. Acknowledge the paradox

- acknowledge “multiple and conflicting purposes, audiences, occasions” of student writing rather than a single purpose and a single audience (Coe 2002: 203)

2. Clarify the intended audience

- “the intended audience should be clarified and explained to students” as part of writing task instructions (Wong 2005: 44)

3. Empower students to follow or flout conventions to achieve their purpose

- Understanding the rationale for conventions and possible effects of following or flouting them – Critical Pragmatic EAP (Harwood & Hadley 2004)

Provide students with student exemplars?

- Merely accentuates the EAP genre paradox
- Genre analysis (Swalesian, SFL) requires **access** to exemplars for analysis
- Students have limited access to student genres
- Reading a text for **content before analysis** (Thornbury 2005)
- Schema theory: Frequent exposure to a genre leads to the development of **formal schemata** (Carrell 1987)

Mismatch in purpose for reading and knowledge

Expert genres

- Read by students frequently
- Read for content
- Students probably have formal schemata

Student genres

- Limited access
- Not read for content
- Formal schemata need to be developed

Summing up

- Student and expert genres **differ** in multiple ways (purpose, audience, structure, language)
- Implications for the **acquisition** of academic writing (content, criticality, academic integrity, appropriate use of language)
- The problem cannot be avoided – **raise awareness** of students and teachers

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