

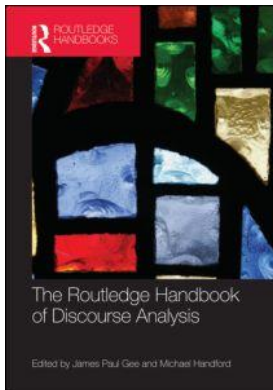
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English for academic purposes and discourse analysis

Ken Hyland

Introduction

English for academic purposes (EAP) is an activity at the forefront of language research and teaching today, with a distinctive focus on the particular linguistic preferences, discourse features and communicative practices used in specific academic contexts. Driven by the globalization of higher education and by the emergence of English as the international lingua franca of scholarship, EAP has crucially depended for its growth on its ability to identify accurately what these features and practices are, so that they may be taught to students and relayed to academics seeking to publish in English. In this enterprise discourse analysis, particularly text-based forms of genre analysis, has become established as perhaps the most widely used and productive methodology. It has helped to describe texts within textual and social contexts and has provided insights into the ways rhetorical choices are related to social and epistemological practices in the disciplines. This chapter will offer an overview of the importance of discourse analysis in this area of research and pedagogy, outline something of my own contribution to the area, and make some predictions about future research directions.

What is EAP?

EAP is usually defined as teaching English with the aim of assisting learners' study or research in that language (e.g. Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). In this sense it is a broad term, covering all areas of academic communicative practice such as pre-tertiary, undergraduate and post-graduate teaching, classroom interactions, academic publishing and curriculum issues, as well as research, student and instructional genres (e.g. Hyland, 2009a). The emergence of EAP in the 1980s, as a response to growing numbers of second language (L2) students in university courses and in a framework informed by English for specific purposes, originally produced an agenda concerned with curriculum and instruction rather than with theory and analysis. EAP was then largely a materials and teaching-led movement focusing on texts and on the search for generic study skills, which could be integrated into language courses to make students more efficient learners.

Since then, a developing research base in EAP has emphasized the rich diversity of texts, contexts and practices in which students must now operate. While it continues to be heavily involved in syllabus design and it needs analysis and materials development, EAP has moved away from purely pedagogic considerations to become a much more theoretically grounded and research informed enterprise. The communicative demands of the modern university involve

far more than simply controlling linguistic error or polishing style. In fact international research, experience, and practice provide evidence for the heightened, complex, and highly diversified nature of such demands. Supported by an expanding range of publications and research journals, there is a growing awareness that students, including native English speakers, have to take on new roles and engage with knowledge in new ways when they enter university. They find that they need to write and read unfamiliar genres and participate in novel speech events, and that communication practices are not uniform across academic disciplines but reflect different ways of constructing knowledge and engaging in teaching and learning.

The role of EAP has therefore changed in response to changing conditions in the academy. The huge expansion of university places in many countries, together with an increase in full fee-paying international students to compensate for cuts in government support, has resulted in a more culturally, socially and linguistically diverse student population than ever before. Moreover, with the rapid rise in refugee populations around the world and the consequent increase in international migration, it is common for teachers find non-native users of English in their high school classrooms for whom the concept of 'academic language' (expressed in any language) is an unfamiliar one. In other words, students bring different identities, understandings and habits of meaning-making to their learning, which means that teachers can no longer assume that their students' previous learning experiences will provide appropriate schemata and skills to meet the demands of their subject courses.

In addition, students now take a broader and more heterogeneous mix of academic subjects. In addition to traditional single-subject or joint-honours degrees, we now find complex modular degrees and emergent 'practice-based' courses such as nursing, management and social work. These new course configurations are more discursively challenging for students who have to move between genres, departments and disciplines. Further, while in the past the main vehicles of academic communication were written texts, now a broad range of modalities and presentational forms confront and challenge students' communicative competence. They must learn rapidly to negotiate a complex web of disciplinary specific text-types, assessment tasks and presentational modes (both face to face and online) in order first to graduate, and then to operate effectively in the workplace. The diverse learning needs of students are therefore focused on the challenges to communicative competence presented by disciplinary-specific study, by new modes of distance and electronic teaching and learning, and by changing circumstances, both within the academy and in society at large.

As a result, EAP has assumed greater prominence and importance in the academy, forcing it to evolve and to ask new questions. Instead of focusing on why learners have difficulties in accessing academic discourses, EAP now addresses the influence of culture and the demands of multiple literacies on students' academic experiences. These questions, moreover, accompany new challenges, which centre on the increased concern with the English language skills of non-native English speaking academics. The ability to deliver workshops in English, to participate in meetings, to make presentations at international conferences and, above all, to conduct and publish research in English are all demanded as part of such lecturers' competence as academics. This group's needs are now beginning to be noticed and analysed, and programmes are emerging which cater to their particular requirements.

Current EAP aims, therefore, at capturing thicker descriptions of language use in the academy at all age and proficiency levels, incorporating and often going beyond immediate communicative contexts to understand the nature of disciplinary knowledge itself. It employs a range of interdisciplinary influences for its research methods, theories and practices to provide insights into the structures and meanings of spoken, written, visual and electronic texts, into the demands placed by academic contexts on communicative behaviours, and into the pedagogic practices by which these

behaviours can be developed. It is, in short, specialized English language teaching grounded in the social, cognitive and linguistic demands of academic target situations and informed by an understanding of texts and of the constraints of academic contexts. Discourse analysis is a key resource in this research agenda and has made an enormous contribution to our understanding of academic communication.

What has discourse analysis told us about EAP?

Discourse analysis is a collection of methods for studying language in action, looking at texts in relation to the social contexts in which they are used. Because language is an irreducible part of social life, connected to almost everything we do, this broad definition has been interpreted in various ways across the social sciences. In EAP it has tended to be a methodology which gives greater emphasis to concrete texts than to institutional social practices, and has largely taken the form of focusing on particular academic genres such as the research article, the conference presentation, and the student essay. Genre analysis can be seen as a more specific form of discourse analysis, which focuses on any element of recurrent language use, including grammar and lexis, that is relevant to the analyst's interests. As a result, genre analysis sees texts as representative of wider rhetorical practices and so has the potential to offer descriptions and explanations both of texts and of the communities that use them.

Genres are the recurrent uses of more or less conventionalized forms through which individuals develop relationships, establish communities and get things done using language. Genres can thus be seen as a kind of tacit contract between writers and readers, which influence the behaviour of text producers and the expectations of receivers. By focusing on mapping typicality, genre analysis thus seeks to show what is usual in collections of texts, and so it helps to reveal underlying discourses and the preferences of disciplinary communities. These approaches are influenced by Halliday's (1994) view of language as a system of choices that link texts to particular contexts through patterns of lexico-grammatical and rhetorical features (Christie and Martin, 1997) and by Swales' (1990) observation that these recurrent choices are closely related to the work of particular discourse communities, whose members share broad social purposes.

A range of spoken and written academic genres have been studied in recent years. These include student dissertations (Bunton, 2002; Hyland, 2004c), research articles (Lewin *et al.*, 2001), scientific letters (Hyland, 2004a), book reviews (Hyland and Diani, 2009), conference presentations (Carter-Thomas and Rowley-Jolivet, 2001) and PhD theses (Swales, 2004)—as well as various 'occluded' (or hidden) genres such as the Master of Business Administration (MBA) 'thought essay' (Loudermilk, 2007), grant proposals (Connor and Upton, 2004) and editors' responses to journal submissions (Flowerdew and Dudley-Evans, 2002). This research demonstrates the distinctive differences in the genres of the academy where particular purposes and audiences lead writers to employ very different rhetorical choices (e.g. Hyland, 2004a). Table 29.1, for example, compares frequencies for different features in a corpus of 240 research articles and 56 textbooks.

We can see considerable variation in these features across the two genres. The greater use of *hedging* underlines the need for caution and opening up arguments in the research papers

Table 29.1 Selected features in research articles and textbooks

<i>per 1000 words</i>	<i>Hedges</i>	<i>Self-mention</i>	<i>Citation</i>	<i>Transitions</i>
Research articles	15.1	3.9	6.9	12.8
University textbooks	8.1	1.6	1.7	24.9

compared with the authorized certainties of the textbook, while the removal of *citation* in textbooks shows how statements are presented as facts rather than as claims grounded in the literature. The greater use of self-mention in articles points to the personal stake that writers invest in their arguments and to their desire to gain credit for claims. The higher frequency, in textbooks, of transitions, which are conjunctions and other linking signals, is a result of the fact that writers need to make connections far more explicit for readers with less topic knowledge.

Perhaps the most productive application of discourse analysis in EAP has been to explore the lexico-grammatical and discursive patterns of particular genres in order to identify their recognizable structural identity. Analysing this kind of patterning has yielded useful information about the ways in which texts are constructed and the rhetorical contexts in which such patterns are used, as well as providing valuable input for genre-based teaching. Some of this research has followed the move analysis work pioneered by Swales' (1990) which seeks to identify the recognizable stages of particular institutional genres and the constraints on typical move sequences. Moves are the typical rhetorical steps which writers or speakers use to develop their social purposes, and recent work on academic genres has produced descriptions of the methods sections in research articles (Bruce, 2008) and the peer seminar (Aguia, 2004).

While analysing schematic structures has proved an invaluable way of looking at texts, analysts are increasingly aware of the dangers of oversimplifying by assuming blocks of texts to be mono-functional and ignoring writers' complex purposes and 'private intentions' (Bhatia, 1999). There is also the problem of validating analyses to ensure they are not simply products of the analyst's intuitions (Crookes, 1986). Transitions from one move to another in a text are always motivated outside the text, as writers respond to their social context, but analysts have not always been able to identify the ways these shifts are explicitly signalled by lexico-grammatical patterning.

One feature of academic genres to receive attention is writers' use of *evaluative that* constructions in articles and dissertations (Hyland and Tse, 2005), a structure that allows a writer to thematize evaluative meanings by presenting a complement clause following *that* (as in *We believe that this is an interesting construction*). Other recent studies have looked at circumstance adverbials in student presentations (Zareva, 2009), interactive features of undergraduate lectures (Morrell, 2004), and the common four-word collocations, or lexical bundles, which are typical of student dissertations (Hyland, 2008). A recurrent feature in much recent work has been to show how persuasion in various genres is not only accomplished through the ways ideas are presented, but also through the construction of an appropriate authorial self and the negotiation of participant relationships.

Academic discourse analysis research has also pointed to cultural specificity in rhetorical preferences (e.g. Connor, 2002). Although 'culture' is a controversial term, one influential interpretation regards it as an historically transmitted and systematic network of meanings that allow us to understand, develop and communicate our knowledge and beliefs about the world. Culture is seen as inextricably bound up with language (Kramsch, 1993), so that cultural factors have the potential to influence perception, language, learning and communication. Although it is far from conclusive, discourse analytic research suggests that the schemata of L2 and L1 (first language) writers differ in their preferred ways of organizing ideas that can influence academic writing (e.g. Hinkel, 2002). These conclusions have been supported by a range of studies over the past decade comparing the features of research articles in various countries (e.g. Duszak, 1997), in student essays (Kubota, 1998) and conference abstracts (Yakhontova, 2002).

Much of this contrastive rhetoric research assumes a 'received view of culture' that unproblematically identifies cultures with national entities and emphasizes predictable consensuality *within* cultures and differences *across* them (e.g. Atkinson, 2004). However, it is fair to say that, compared with many languages, academic writing in English tends to:

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- be more explicit about its structure and purposes with constant previewing and reviewing of material
- employ more, and more recent, citations
- be less tolerant of digressions
- be more cautious in making claims, doing it with considerable use of mitigation and hedging
- use more sentence connectors to show explicitly how parts of the text link together.

While we can't simply predict the ways people are likely to write on the basis of assumed cultural traits, discourse studies have shown that students' first language and prior learning come to influence ways of organizing ideas and structuring arguments when they write in English at university.

Research into academic discourse has not been entirely focused on the printed page, however. As Fairclough (2003: 3), among other, observes: 'text analysis is an essential part of discourse analysis, but discourse analysis is not merely the linguistic analysis of texts'. A number of studies have sought to show how academic discourses are firmly embedded in the cultures and activities in which their users participate. One example is Prior's (1998) study of the processes of graduate student writing at a US university. This draws on transcripts of seminar discussions, student texts, observations of institutional contexts, tutor feedback and interviews with students and tutors to give an in-depth account of the ways students negotiate their writing tasks and so became socialized into their disciplinary communities. Swales (1998), on the other hand, offers a 'thick' description of the literate cultures of academics themselves. Combining text analyses with extensive observations and interviews, he provides a richly detailed picture of the professional lives, commitments and projects of individuals in three diverse academic cultures: a computer centre, a herbarium and a university's English language centre.

Finally, studies conducted from a critical perspective have focused on how social relations, identity, knowledge and power are constructed through written and spoken texts in disciplines, schools and classrooms. Distinguished by an overtly political agenda from other kinds of discourse analysis, CDA has attempted to show that the discourses of the academy are not transparent or impartial means for describing the world; they work in order to construct, regulate and control knowledge, social relations and institutions. Particular literacy practices possess authority because they represent the currently dominant ideological ways of depicting relationships and realities, and these authorized ways of seeing the world exercise control of academics and students alike. Studies by Ivanic (1998) and Lillis (2001) show how this can create tensions for students in coping with university literacy demands, while Flowerdew's (1999) research suggests similar concerns among non-Native English scholars.

The findings produced by discourse analysis applied to academic texts have not only contributed to our understanding of such texts and practices, but have also had a major impact on EAP teaching. Analyses have provided teachers, materials designers and students with an understanding of how target texts are structured and the reasons they are written as they are. EAP practitioners draw on the findings of discourse analytic studies to determine what is to be learned and to organize instruction around the genres that learners need and the social contexts in which they will operate. Texts and tasks are therefore selected according to learners' needs and genres are modeled explicitly to provide learners with something to aim for: an understanding of what readers are likely to expect.

What has my work contributed to this area?

My own contribution to this research has mainly addressed two broad areas: the role of interpersonal aspects of academic persuasion and disciplinary variations in academic literacy practices.

First, my research has helped to establish that written texts embody interactions between writers and readers. While this view is not now news, it was once considered self-evident that academic writing was an objective, faceless and impersonal form of discourse, simply reporting the 'real' academic work that was done in the lab, the library or the field. It is now fairly well established, however, that academic writing is a persuasive endeavour, so academics are not seen as simply producing texts that plausibly represent an external reality, but as using language to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations. Discourse analysis can help show how writers seek to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views.

As this view gains greater currency, considerable attention has turned to the features that help towards realizing this interpersonal and evaluative dimension of academic texts, and much of my own work over the past decade or so has been devoted to this. Beginning with work on hedges (Hyland, 1996, 1998), I have explored various interpersonal resources such as personal pronouns (2001a, 2002a), reporting verbs (2004a), questions (2002b) and directives (2002c), as well as looking at the ways particular genres such as acknowledgements (2004b) and journal descriptions (Hyland and Tse, 2009) function to engage readers and convey the writer's position.

In addition to studying individual features, I have attempted to offer a framework, or rather two frameworks, for analysing the linguistic resources of intersubjective positioning. This has consolidated much of my earlier work and collected together a range of features under the headings of 'stance and engagement' (Hyland, 2005a) and of 'metadiscourse' (Hyland and Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2005b). The first of these attempts to capture how discursual choices help construct both writers and readers. *Stance* is an attitudinal dimension, which includes features that refer to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgements, opinions and commitments, either intruding to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or stepping back to disguise their involvement. *Engagement* (Hyland, 2001a), in contrast, is an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along through their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants. *Metadiscourse*, on the other hand, seeks to offer a more comprehensive and integrated way of examining interaction in academic argument, broadening the scope of interactional resources to include also features such as conjunctions, framing devices and glosses on content. While these are often considered as simply helping to tie texts together, they have an important role in relating a text to a community.

Interaction in academic writing thus involves 'positioning', or adopting a point of view in relation to both the issues discussed in the text and to others who hold points of view on those issues. When they claim a right to be heard and to have their work taken seriously, writers must display competence as disciplinary insiders. This writer–reader dialogue therefore occurs in a disciplinary context, and attempting to map the rhetorical preferences that help to identify these communities is the second main area of my work.

Essentially, we can see disciplines as language-using communities that provide the context within which students learn to communicate and to interpret each other's talk, gradually acquiring the specialized discourse competencies to participate as group members. Texts are influenced by writers' memberships of disciplinary groups, which have objectified in language certain ways of experiencing and talking about phenomena. Assumptions about what can be known, how it can be known and with what degree of certainty all help to shape discourse practices, so that what counts as convincing argument, appropriate tone, persuasive interaction and so on is managed for a particular audience (Hyland, 2004a). This emphasis on what is 'shared' by a community has led to criticisms that the concept is too structuralist, static and deterministic (e.g. Prior, 1998). But, like any community, disciplines are composed of individuals with diverse experiences, expertise and

commitments, so that actions and understandings are influenced by the personal and biographical as well as by the institutional and sociocultural.

Successful academic writing, however, depends on the individual writer's control of the epistemic conventions of a discipline—that is, of what counts as appropriate evidence and argument—and my research has contributed to the growing body of work now devoted to elaborating upon the considerable differences in these conventions across disciplines. This body has explored both student and professional academic genres and has discovered rhetorical variation in, for example, the extent of self-mention (Hyland, 2001a), citation practices and reporting verbs (Hyland, 2004a), hedges and boosters (Hyland, 1998), sub-technical lexis (Hyland and Tse, 2007), metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005b) and lexical bundles (Hyland, 2008).

One of the most striking differences in how language differs across fields is the use of hedges. These function to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, implying that a claim is based on plausible reasoning rather than on certain knowledge. They indicate the degree of confidence the writer thinks it might be wise to give a claim while opening a discursive space for readers to dispute interpretations (Hyland, 1996). Because they represent the writer's direct involvement in a text, something that scientists generally try to avoid, they are twice as common in humanities and social science papers as in the hard sciences. One reason for this is that in the humanities there is less control of variables, more diversity of research outcomes and fewer clear bases for accepting claims than in the sciences. Writers can't report research with the same confidence of shared assumptions, so papers rely far more on recognizing alternative voices. Arguments have to be expressed more cautiously by using more hedges. In the hard sciences positivist epistemologies mean that the authority of the individual is subordinated to the authority of the text and facts 'speak for themselves'. The implication is that writers often disguise their interpretative activities behind linguistic objectivity. They downplay their personal role so as to suggest that results would be the same whoever conducted the research. The less frequent use of hedges is one way of minimizing the researcher's role.

This variation is also apparent in student essays (Hyland, 2009b) and dissertations (Hyland, 2004c) and in the *kinds* of writing that students are asked to do: even students in fairly cognate fields, such as nursing and midwifery, are given very different writing assignments (Gimenez, 2009). In fact the failure to recognize that discourse conventions are embedded in the epistemological and social practices of the various disciplines means that writing is a black box to students, particularly as lecturers themselves have difficulty in explaining what they mean. Entering the academy means making a 'cultural shift' in order to take on identities as members of those communities.

An example analysis of an EAP genre

Discourse analyses of academic texts takes a variety of forms, tending towards the textual, the critical or the contextual, but there have been two main ways of studying interactions in writing. Researchers have examined the actions of individuals as they create particular texts (Bosher, 1998), or they have studied the distribution of different genre features to see how they cluster in complementary distributions (Biber, 2006). The approach I illustrate here steps back from particular authors or readers to reveal interaction as a collection of rhetorical choices rather than as specific encounters of people with texts. To see how writers behave as members of social communities means going beyond the decisions of individual writers to explore the regularity and repetition of the socially ratified forms which represent preferred disciplinary practices. Writers are oriented to more than an immediate encounter with their text when composing; they also conjure up institutional patterns that naturally and ideologically reflect and maintain such patterns. These can only be seen by viewing their activity as a socially and culturally constituted mode of praxis.

One example of this is a study of *self-mention*, which concerns how far writers want to intrude into their texts through use of ‘*I*’ or ‘*we*’, or avoid it by choosing impersonal forms. The use of self-mention is a rather vexed issue in academic writing and remains a perennial problem for students, teachers and experienced writers alike; the extent to which one can reasonably assert one’s personal involvement remains highly controversial. While claims have to be warranted by appropriate support and reference to existing knowledge by fitting novelty into a community consensus, success in gaining acceptance for innovation also involves demonstrating an *individual contribution* to that community and establishing a claim for recognition for *academic priority*. To some extent this is a personal preference, determined by seniority, experience, personality and so on (Hyland, 2010), but the study illustrated here shows that the presence or absence of explicit author reference is a conscious choice by writers to adopt a particular community-situated authorial identity (Hyland, 2001b).

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches, comprising frequency counts and text analysis of a corpus of published articles and a series of interviews with academics from the same fields. The text corpus of 240 research articles consisted of three papers from each of ten leading journals in eight disciplines selected to represent a broad cross-section of academic practice in the fields of engineering, physical sciences, social sciences and humanities. The texts were scanned to produce an electronic corpus of 1.5 million words and searched for expressions of self-mention using WordPilot, a text analysis programme. The search items were the first person pronouns *I*, *me*, *my*, *we*, *us* and *our*; cases of self-citation and references to work conducted elsewhere by the same authors; and examples of self-mention terms such as *this writer* or *the research team*.

The most immediately striking features of the text analysis was the saliency of self-mention in the articles and the variety of its disciplinary and formal expressions. While research articles may well be characterized by abstraction and high informational production (Biber, 2006), human agents are integral to their meaning. There are sufficient cases of author-reference to suggest that writers have conspicuous promotional and interactional purposes, every article containing at least one first person reference. Overall, there were roughly 28 expressions of self-mention in each paper; 81 per cent of these were pronouns and 16 per cent self-citations. There were considerable differences between the disciplines (Table 29.2): an average of 44 cases per article in marketing, and only 7 in mechanical engineering.

Perhaps the most obvious form of self-mention is to refer to one’s earlier research, but the extent of self-citation in these papers was surprising, about 70 per cent of the papers in the study containing a reference to the author. This was particularly frequent in biology, where an average

Table 29.2 Average frequency of self-mention per paper

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Self-citations</i>	<i>Pronouns</i>	<i>Other</i>
Biology	26.9	10.8	15.5	0.5
Physics	21.0	2.8	17.7	0.5
Electronic eng	15.9	3.8	11.6	0.5
Mechanical eng	6.8	3.7	2.6	0.5
Average hard fields	17.6	5.3	11.9	0.5
Marketing	43.9	4.9	38.2	1.0
Philosophy	36.7	2.2	34.5	0.0
App Ling	36.5	3.2	32.3	1.0
Sociology	35.3	5.1	29.4	0.8
Average soft fields	38.1	3.9	33.6	0.7
Overall	27.8	4.6	22.7	0.6

of 11 citations per paper was registered, and it was particularly prominent in the sciences and engineering, where it made up almost 11 per cent of all references (compared with only 5 per cent in the soft fields). These broad variations indicate the underlying differences in the research practices of these communities that I noted above. References in sciences and engineering tend to be tightly bound to a particular research topic and contribute to a sense of linear progression in these areas. Because of the heavy financial investment in technical equipment on which scientific research often depends and because of the sheer volume of knowledge generated, scientists tend to participate in highly discrete and specialized areas of research from where they can follow defined paths and make precise contributions. Research on particular issues is therefore often conducted at a restricted number of sites and by a limited number of researchers, allowing writers to draw on their own work to a greater extent than in the soft knowledge fields.

The high proportion of personal pronouns in the soft knowledge articles, on the other hand, suggests quite different research and rhetorical practices. Establishing an appropriately authorial persona and maintaining an effective degree of personal engagement with one's audience are valuable strategies for probing relationships and connections between entities that are generally more particular, less precisely measurable, and less clear-cut than in the hard sciences. Writers in the sciences are seeking to establish empirical uniformities through research that involves precise measurement of a limited number of controlled variables. There are familiar procedures and relatively clear criteria of acceptability, so that writers can downplay their personal role in order to highlight the phenomena under study, the replicability of research activities and the generality of the findings. By electing to adopt a less intrusive or personal style, writers can strengthen the objectivity of their interpretations and subordinate their own voice to that of nature. In the soft knowledge fields, in contrast, successful communication depends to a larger extent on the author's ability to evoke a real writer in the text. The first person assists authors to make a personal standing and to demarcate their own work from that of others.

In all disciplines, writers' principal use of the first person was to explain the work that they had carried out by way of representing their unique role in constructing a plausible interpretation for a phenomenon. In the hard knowledge corpus and in the more quantitative papers in the soft fields, this mainly involved setting out methodological procedures so that self-mention helped to underline the writer's professional credentials through a familiarity with disciplinary research practices. In addition, it acts to highlight the part the writer has played in a process that is often represented as having no agents at all, reminding readers that, in other hands, things could have been done things differently. In more theoretically oriented articles writers sought less to figure as practical agents than as builders of coherent theories of reality. Explicit self-mention here establishes a more personal form of authority, one based on confidence and command of one's arguments.

It has to be said that the relationships between knowledge, the linguistic conventions of different disciplines and personal identity are fuzzy and complex. Yet it is equally true that these broad differences suggest that self-mention varies with different assumptions about the effects of authorial presence and rhetorical intrusion in different knowledge-making communities. These are issues worth addressing and exploring further with students, for only by developing a rhetorical consciousness of these kinds of features can they gain control over their writing in academic contexts.

Looking to the future

Predictions are always difficult to make, but it is clear that the influential role of discourse analysis in assisting teachers to prepare students for their language-related experiences is unlikely to diminish any time soon. The findings of discourse analytic studies have replaced intuitions

about academic writing based on impressions of scientific discourse, revealing that texts are highly persuasive and interactive and that writers in different disciplines represent themselves, their work and their readers in very different ways. There are, however, a number of areas where research is likely to make an increasing impact on EAP.

The first is the area of clarifying the interdisciplinary complexities of the modern academy. Many student genres remain to be described—for instance counselling case notes, reflexive journals and clinical reports—while analyses of more occluded research genres would greatly assist novice writers in the publication process. We also know little about the ways genres form ‘constellations’ with neighbouring genres (Swales, 2004); or about the ‘genre sets’ that a particular individual or group engages in; or about how spoken and written texts cluster together in a given social activity. In addition, as I have mentioned earlier, the mix of academic subjects now offered to students impacts on the genres they have to participate in, compounding the challenges of writing in the disciplines with novel literacy practices that have barely been described. Discourse analyses have much to contribute in all of these areas.

Second, it is also clear that much remains to be learnt and considerable research undertaken before we are able to identify more precisely the notion of ‘community’ and how it relates to discipline and the discursual conventions that it routinely employs. Nor is it yet understood how our memberships of different groups influence our participation in academic discourses. For now, the term *discipline* might be seen as a shorthand form for the various identities, roles, positions, relationships, reputations, reward systems and other dimensions of social practices constructed and expressed through language in the academy, but these concepts need to be refined through the analyses of academic texts and contexts.

A third broad area is that of understanding the increasing role of multimodal and electronic texts in academics contexts. Academic texts, particularly in the sciences, have always been multimodal, but textbooks and articles are now far more heavily influenced by graphic design than ever before and the growing challenge to the page by the screen as the dominant medium of communication means that images are ever more important in meaning-making. Analytical tools developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and others, for example, provide a starting point for researchers and teachers to explain how visuals have been organized for maximum effect, while considerably more work needs to be done to understand the role of multimedia and hypertext in EAP classrooms.

Conclusions

While EAP is a practically oriented activity committed to demystifying prestigious forms of discourse, unlocking students’ creative and expressive abilities and facilitating their access to greater life chances, it is grounded in the descriptions of texts and practices. By providing teachers with a way of understanding how writing is shaped by individuals who make language choices in social contexts, it contributes to both theory and practice. In particular, it shows that it has nothing to do itself with topping up generic language skills, but involves developing new kinds of literacy: equipping students with the communicative skills to participate in particular academic cultures. While these ideas have been around for some time, it is only through discourse analysis that we have been able to specify more clearly what this actually means.

Further reading

Flowerdew, J. (ed.) (2002) *Academic Discourse*. London: Longman.

A collection covering key approaches to academic discourse analysis and illustrated by empirical studies.

Hyland, K. (2004) *Disciplinary Discourses*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

An argument for disciplinary variation drawing on a range of features and genres.

Hyland, K. (2009) *Academic Discourse*. London: Continuum.

A non-technical orientation to a wide range of spoken and written academic genres.

Swales, J. (2004) *Research genres*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

A rich and accessible account of research genres.

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