Genre Performances: John Swales' *Genre Analysis* and Rhetorical-Linguistic Genre Studies

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Abstract

Although scholars have studied some sources of variation within genres, the variation that is each individual performance of a genre requires further investigation. In *Genre Analysis,* John Swales combined rhetoric and linguistics to explain genre as grounded in shared communicative purposes and discoverable through text analysis. Although the disciplines differ in some of their purposes and settings, they share the difficulty of helping students advance beyond simplified understandings of genre to the complex decisions needed to address particular situations. Building from a rhetorical-linguistic genre studies and using metaphorically the linguistic concepts of competence and performance, this article proposes that genre theory and instruction should account for genre performances as well as genre competence. Genre theory can then better address such issues as identity, affect, and cognition. Genre instruction can lead students to examine not just similarity within a genre but also differences, in both communicative event and individual language-users. The uniqueness of each performance also affects assessment of genre knowledge and transfer, complicating the ability to assess genre competence through genre performance. Considering genre performances as well as competence within a rhetorical-linguistic genre studies allows genre scholars and teachers to address the fact that genre-in-use is simultaneously unique and shared.

Scholars within genre studies have investigated many sources of variation within a genre. While still based theoretically in understandings of the shared nature of genres—whether shared social actions (Miller, 1984), communicative purposes (Swales, 1990), or social processes (Martin, 1997)—genre scholarship has

demonstrated that texts within those genres vary in their prototypicality (Paltridge,

1997); across dimensions of textual clusters (Biber, 1988); by discipline (Soliday,

2011; Hyland, 2012); and historically (Bazerman, 1988; and many others). Research

on genres in the schools has found that students' genre knowledge and acquisition

vary, among other things, by socio-economic class (Spinello & Pratt, 2005; Myhill,

2005). An individual's patterns of variation across texts have been described as well,

in every literary or rhetorical study of an author's style but notably also in linguistic

studies of individual personas (Hyland, 2010, 2012). At times, scholars refer to

particular "performances" of a genre (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010) or "performing"

identity within disciplinary conventions and community repertoires (Hyland, 2010).

All such scholarship recognizes and helps to account for the variation that

necessarily occurs every time someone performs a genre in a particular text. At the

heart of all such variation is the fact that genres are at once shared and unique. Each

performance of a genre demonstrates its degree of prototypicality, disciplinary

membership, historical moment, authorial identity, and many other qualities shared

with other members of its category. Yet all of those sources of variation gathered

together cannot account for the unique text that an author performs in a unique

moment in a unique rhetorical situation, its unique action carrying out a unique

communicative purpose through a unique process. In the end, each text is a unique

performance. Stated so simply, the idea seems commonplace. Of course each text is

unique. Literary scholars and rhetorical critics have been acting on that fact for

many decades. In this article, I want to explore the implications of the uniqueness of

genre performances for our scholarship in genre studies and, especially, for our

teaching. Every time a writer writes, whether in our courses or afterward, that writer performs a unique action in a unique moment in a unique rhetorical situation, to carry out a unique communicative purpose through a unique process. Students could benefit from instruction in not only the shared genredness of that writing but also the uniqueness of what they must actually perform.

The preceding paragraph offers a unique introduction, one never performed before, but an introduction that follows the rhetorical moves of a research article as elaborated by John Swales in his influential work *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings.* Swales' Create a Research Space (CARS) model describes the rhetorical moves typical in introductions to research articles (140-145). In the case of the introduction to this particular article, the first paragraph begins by

- Move 1 "Establishing a territory" through "Claiming centrality," "Making topic generalization(s)," and "Reviewing items of previous research": *"Scholars within genre studies have established . . . and many other qualities shared with other members of its category."*
- Move 2 "Establishing a niche" through "Indicating a gap": *"Yet all of those sources of variations gathered together cannot account for . . .."*
- Move 3 "Occupying the niche," through "Outlining purposes: *"In this article, I want to explore the implications of . . .."*

The description of rhetorical moves illustrates the beauty of genre analysis, at least as practiced by Swales with his powerful blend of linguistics and rhetoric. Studying multiple examples of a genre can lead to discoveries of textual patterns. Interpreting those textual patterns as purposeful can lead to insights about rhetorical strategies.

Combined, the resulting linguistic and rhetorical genre description has become a primary way of studying and teaching academic genres, especially but by no means exclusively to non-native speakers. Before I argue later in this article that genre studies should pay more attention to unique performances as well as those patterned rhetorical strategies, I want to call attention to Swales' own rhetorical move in having solidified and established within English for Academic Purposes that combined approach to genre—Rhetorical-Linguistic Genre Studies.

In order to illustrate the nature and necessity of that move to combine rhetoric and linguistics in the study of academic genres, I call attention first through an unconventional move for an article: a personal history. In 1982, I completed my Ph.D. at the University of Michigan in English Language and Literature, specializing in English language and composition studies. I had taken courses in Linguistics, too, including an influential one from Robert Bley-Vroman in which I had chosen to analyze the structure of introductions in *Scientific American* articles (an initial glimmer of my future interest in genre study). Two years later, my dissertation almost accidentally discovered genre as a significant variable (see Devitt, 1989). In my quantitative study of how Scots-English language standards changed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, I controlled for genre, along with medium and audience, in an effort to control for textual differences. My results showed, surprisingly, that genre (but not audience or medium) was as significant a variable as time: that the language features varied just as much across different genres in the same time period as they did across 140 years of language change. And the process of language standardization happened in different patterns, at different rates, in

different genres. To try to explain why genre would have been so important to the historical changes in specific linguistic features, I drew on my knowledge of rhetoric. The different genres represented not just different texts but different contexts, I argued, with different purposes and settings as well as audiences. From 1982 to 1985, I presented the results of my research at the Modern Language Association conference and the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and I published a book solidly framed within linguistics with Cambridge University Press (Devitt, 1989), but I struggled to find a happy disciplinary home for my discoveries about genre as both linguistically significant and rhetorically meaningful.

Unfortunately for me, John Swales first taught at Michigan in 1985, three years after I graduated. Fortunately, in that same year, 1985, I discovered Carolyn Miller's (1984) article "Genre as Social Action" in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* which connected genre to semiotics and to recent work within rhetoric and communication studies. When, in 1990, I discovered in the campus bookstore Swales' contribution to the Cambridge Applied Linguistics series, *Genre Analysis,* my work found a second home. Twenty-five years later, my work is established within the Miller-derived tradition of Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS), but it remains colored by the Swales-derived work in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Occasionally, in the past, someone would mention that my work is a linguistic version of RGS—not surprising considering my upbringing in English language studies as well as composition. But I don't hear that comment as much anymore. I think that's because of the enormous influence of John Swales' Rhetorical-Linguistic version of genre studies (RLGS?).

Today, genre studies encompasses both rhetoric and linguistics[1], thanks in part to Swales having made such powerful links between the linguistic patterns of genre and communicative purpose, discourse community, and rhetorical moves. Recent discussions at the international conference Genre 2012 and other forums have brought together scholars from different traditions of genre studies, who are recognizing how much we have in common and how much we have to learn from one another. John Swales' *Genre Analysis* has led and enabled such collaboration across disciplines. Swales' influence on genre studies stretches outside of applied linguistics because the concepts he establishes are so powerful and widely applicable to genre theory and teaching alike. They are also highly rhetorical, involving such classically rhetorical concepts as purpose, audience, and means. Swales' very definition of genre grounds it in rhetorical communication with shared communicative purpose, purpose that is recognized and rationalized by a community. Although his study is clearly linguistic, full of linguistic detail and examples from the texts of English language learners, Swales' own discussion in *Genre Analysis* of the disciplines surrounding genre notes that, other than ethnographic and systemic linguists, linguistics as a whole at the time "has tended to find genre indigestible" (1990, p. 41).[2] Rhetoric, on the other hand, as represented by inductive rhetoricians like Carolyn Miller, offers a conception of genre compatible with his own and "suitable for the applied purposes of this study" (p. 44).

Those applied purposes, of course, are part of what distinguish Swales' work and the work of others in EAP from that of Miller and others in rhetoric. From the

start, *Genre Analysis* has as its main aim "to offer an approach to the teaching of academic and research English" (p. 1). Part IV of the work offers direct pedagogical applications and specific teaching materials. Where I have encountered some of the greatest limits on my happy marriage of linguistics and rhetoric is in the move to pedagogy[3], but even in pedagogical methods the two fields are overlapping more all the time. Those in Rhetorical Genre Studies have typically worked with writers, whether in school or workplace settings, in their primary languages and cultures (a limitation that seems to be beginning to change, with pushes from such scholars as Matsuda, 2006; and Tardy, 2006). The two disciplines have often applied their theories to different instructional contexts—students, teachers, and institutional settings—and as a result they have sometimes developed different genre pedagogies. According to Swales, RGS—and I—have not always adequately recognized that fact. Cut to another scene in my history with Professor Swales: a 2007 SIGET genre studies conference in Brazil. I had presented an elaborate, tagmemics-based, three-column analysis of three genre pedagogies: the explicit teaching of particular genres (teaching how to write a lab report, for example), teaching genre antecedents (choosing and using a genre for the skills and strategies it encompasses that students might draw on in other contexts), and teaching genre awareness (teaching students a consciousness of and process for analyzing, learning, and critiquing any genre they might encounter) (Devitt, 2009). Although I favored the latter two pedagogies myself, I was trying to value and tread lightly over our differences while arguing for a critical genre pedagogy that made students conscious of whatever genre they were using. Later in the conference, at the

microphone commenting after another presenter's talk, Professor Swales referred to my talk and what he saw as its dismissal of teaching genres and genre features explicitly. In fact, I saw myself as one of the few in Rhetorical Genre Studies who argued for some explicit teaching of genre features, but his comments raise one of the ways that I continue to struggle with the approach of Swales' *Genre Analysis* and all genre instruction, including my own.

Set aside for the moment the research on transfer that significantly challenges all writing pedagogies and that Swales himself first raised as "a highly significant investigative issue" (p. 234; for other examples of transfer challenges to genre pedagogies, see Artemeva & Fox, 2010; De Palma & Ringer, 2011; Nowacek, 2011; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Wardle, 2007). Consider first just the instruction in one genre for one type of task. While Swales' approach to genre instruction raises genre awareness and is helpful for those new to a genre task or unfamiliar with a genre's contexts, and I would willingly use his task- and text-based methods to teach students the conventions they need to get started, I don't think we in genre studies have solved the problem of how to help learners take the next steps. How do writers move from the linguistic and rhetorical patterns of a genre to the specific, unique textual instance of the genre that they have to produce? Teachers discern and teach even the most sophisticated rhetorical moves in ways that, necessarily, simplify the complex rhetorical decisions that experts in that genre make. Once students have discovered the relatively simplified patterns, once they understand a basic rhetorical move, how do we help learners move on to the independent judgments they can and must make in their unique responses to writing tasks? A genre-

awareness pedagogy, including my own argument for critical genre pedagogy,

shares the same obstacle. I might develop students' ability to see the values, beliefs,

and assumptions behind a genre, to recognize that the genre's conventions come

from and reinforce the community's purposes, and to consider alternatives to those

conventions that they might employ as needed for their unique situations and

unique identities. But the understanding of the rhetorical and ideological meaning of

a genre and its conventions remains broad and simplified, and how they might enact

that understanding in particular contexts remains mostly a mystery to be solved

when the time comes. It is a limit, perhaps, of all pedagogies based in genre analysis

(and perhaps of all pedagogies). Teachers approach genre instruction through

analysis, but more advanced learning happens through practice, feedback from

experts in the genre, reflection, and then practice again.

The fact that teachers are often working with novices who are not yet

members of their genres' communities is a limitation that the different areas of

genre studies have attempted to resolve. Some question the benefits of learning a

genre outside of immersion in its situation (see Freedman, 1993, most notably).

Others have developed sophisticated ways to pull students into genres' contexts,

including, in EAP, Swales' treatment of students as "amateur ethnographers" (p.

202) and Johns' (2002) methods of having students conduct ethnographic research

(Reiff, 2004 in RGS has proposed using critical ethnography similarly). Some in both

approaches to genre studies have emphasized teaching genre awareness, instilling

in students analytic methods for understanding and writing any new genre,

whatever it might be (Cheng, 2011; Devitt, 2004; Johns, 2002). In fact, most writing

teachers from any discipline recognize that learning to write genres, like learning to write generally, requires practice: performing rhetorical moves in unique ways to fulfill unique tasks in unique (discourse) communities; getting feedback on how well that performance worked; reflecting on that performance and feedback; and performing again. Even the most complex applications of Swales' work, even the most sophisticated versions of critical genre awareness pedagogy have their limits.

Not only does learning to write require practice in addition to analytical knowledge, but no amount of knowledge and practice combined can defeat a simple fact of language-in-use: each performance is unique. Each specific text necessarily differs from others in words, sentences, and content. Differences occur even in utterances that might appear identical to one another—a greeting, say, of "Good morning"—as acoustical linguists will report. That language-in-use varies has long been recognized by dialectologists and sociolinguists, who study language variation (though usually in the aggregate) and have developed the concept of idiolect to represent one individual's speaking patterns—the set of linguistic habits typical of a particular individual. Even idiolect, though, does not go far enough in recognizing the uniqueness of each linguistic performance, since not only the speaker but also the communicative event or task differs from one moment to the next. Idiolect is similar to "style" or "voice" or "consistent persona" (Hyland, 2010, p. 183), in describing a linguistic pattern across an individual's set of utterances. Rather than a pattern across utterances, I am arguing for recognizing the uniqueness of each utterance and each writing task and situation as well, including differences of the writer's role, readers, and purposes in a specific context. Such unique utterances are

examined by rhetorical critics when they evaluate previously created texts or speeches, investigating how one rhetor made more or less successful choices in a unique rhetorical situation: Kennedy's inaugural address in the context of 1961, for example, differs from Obama's address in 2013, though both share a genre. But the focus of those analyses generally is assessing the individual performance in light of its given context, not on teaching writers how to perform better in the future.

Philosophically, rhetorically, and linguistically, no two instances of a genre can be identical, but they can still share a genre. Utterances are both unique and dialogic (Bakhtin, 1986). Genre theorists like Miller (1984) have recognized that what we describe as similar communicative purposes and tasks may share enough similarities to be perceived as similar but still differ in important ways. The ways any specific occasion might vary are multiple: The unique language-user at a unique moment encounters a particular task in a distinct community setting. When I write this article, I am writing the genre from my specific experiences (of reading and writing essay and research article genres, as well as of scholarship, ideas, and life), with my idiolect as it exists at this moment in my language development, with some ingrained writing habits (and recent attempts to vary from some of those habits), and at this moment in my thinking about genre, to readers of *JEAP,* on the occasion of the anniversary of *Genre Analysis.* It is a particular performance of genre, and it leads to such variations (among many others) as the meta-commentary on the opening paragraph and the non-prototypical inclusion of my personal history. Genre studies, though, because of its object of study, has quite reasonably tended to focus away from the unique and toward the typical. A rhetorical-linguistic genre studies, I

believe, is capable of encompassing both the speaker and the communicative event, both the typical and the unique. I propose building further on the collaboration of linguistics and rhetoric, drawing on Swales' text-, task-, and purpose-based analysis and instruction to build genre competence while adding new methods of analysis and instruction to better understand and teach unique genre performances.

Incorporating unique genre performances is not completely new to genre theory or instruction, of course. Like many scholars in genre studies, Swales acknowledges the differences among performances throughout his work. The interaction of the unique and shared is visible in Part IV of *Genre Analysis,* where Swales illustrates some of the uniqueness of each person's situation through his use of individual cases*.* In addition to using individual cases in his pedagogical examples (see also, for example, his samples of "short request letters for papers" that his students critique, pp. 79-80), Swales notes the unique situations of particular writers behind some "highly-valued texts" in a genre, which might be written "by powerful luminaries who are consequently able to ride rough-shod over many of the accepted linguistic and rhetorical conventions in their given field" (p. 128). Importantly, though, Swales concludes that, "we may do better to operate on and with texts that are not extraordinary by virtue of import, authorship or whatever, for then they are more likely to be *prototypical* exemplars" (p. 129, emphasis in original). Since the goal is genre analysis, it makes perfect sense to focus on the perceived similarities and the prototypical, shared, and "accepted linguistic and rhetorical conventions." As a genre studies that is grounded in both rhetoric and linguistics continues to develop, I'd like to see scholars and teachers alike do more

to address, within the shared contexts of communities and genres, the uniqueness both of individuals' language-use at any given moment and of communicative purposes, tasks, and texts. With a focus on the patterned and the typical, genre studies may underestimate the importance of those particular linguistic and rhetorical circumstances for students or any language-users. As encountered and lived, genre is simultaneously unique and shared. Our theory and our teaching should not only recognize but work further to incorporate that fact.

As encountered and lived, language itself is also simultaneously unique and shared. In addition to Saussurean conceptions of *langue* and *parole* and other time-honored acknowledgements of the differences between a language and that language-in-use, linguistics offers a pair of concepts to capture the interaction I have been describing in this article: the distinction between competence and performance. I propose to apply those terms metaphorically to capture the distinction for genre studies. I propose using the terms only metaphorically because they have received vigorous debate within linguistics and whole linguistic schools have developed around privileging one over the other. Rather than making a theoretical case for this distinction within language-users' minds, I intend here only to use the distinction to give terms to what genre studies might have been underestimating and how teaching might incorporate it—and to show that a rhetorical-linguistic genre studies could contribute even more complex understandings of how genre works.

Chomsky (1965) usually receives credit (or blame) for the distinction, as he needed for his purposes to separate what a person might have in mind

(competence) versus what might actually come out of the person's mouth (performance). Chomsky (1965) defines competence more formally, of course:

> an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows [the speech community's] language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of this language in actual performance. (3)

The "actual performance" is the other part, the specific utterances actually produced, which are indeed affected by the individual's memory, motivation, and other conditions. Within linguistics, in simple terms, followers of Chomsky and generative grammar study competence, while those in sociolinguistics and pragmatics study performance. The distinction has been further elaborated as well as debated (see Czechowska, 2002, for some examples), but even this simple distinction serves my metaphorical purpose.

Much of the work in genre studies abstracts an idealized competence from actual performances, but genre theory has already gained from situating genres in their contexts and can gain further from situating genres in individual performances. Necessarily, in order to see the genre patterns and similarities, genre analysis ignores differences that might be attributable to unique circumstances, as I have argued. Genre theory, as well as analysis, in early days emphasized the abstracted conceptualization of genre, at times treating genres as idealized within homogenous discourse communities. Moving beyond the "completely homogeneous

speech-community" to a more critical genre theory (see the introduction in

Freedman & Medway, 1994 for an early critique) has complicated and therefore

increased the understanding of genre theoretically. Seeing genres not just as

idealized concepts but as collectively experienced in the world, genre theory has

developed better understandings of how genres relate to power, ideology, and

exclusion and inclusion of community members. A similar advance in genre theory

can come from seeing genres as individually experienced in the world. Attending to

individual performances can develop better understandings of how genres relate to

such concepts as identity, affect, and cognition, and can support or complicate the

treatment of genres as typical. Building on the work of Hyland on disciplinary

identity (2012) and individual expert writers' "consistent language choices" (2010,

p. 181) across texts, researchers can examine the genre performances of "speaker-

listeners" who are less than "ideal" and may know the community's "language" less

than "perfectly" to better understand how genre-shaped identity and individual

identity develop and shift not only across individuals but also in each particular

textual instance. Paying greater attention to individual writers can also enable

research into the role of affect in genre. In addition to some writers explicitly

expressing more affect than others—as Hyland (2010) demonstrates Swales does in

the corpus of Swales' writing—individuals' attitudes toward genres implicitly shape

how individuals respond to their situations and how genres are enacted (Reiff and

Bawarshi, 2011; Devitt and Bastian, forthcoming). Paying greater attention to

individual performances could also include investigating genre cognition, including

such "irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention

and interest" that surely are shaped by the particular task and the particular genre-user as well as the particular genre. Even considering "errors (random or characteristic) in applying his [sic] knowledge of this language" in individual performances can lead to a better understanding of acceptable ranges of generic typicality and the very nature of what constitutes a genre.

Genre instruction, as well as genre theory, has largely emphasized genre competence. In the case of text-based task instruction, attempts to increase genre competence begin with specific performances, but the pedagogy uses those performances to show students what a genre looks like abstracted from individual variation and to raise general genre awareness or consciousness. That instruction is helpful, and necessary, and valuable. Many in genre studies, including those following the work of Swales, have developed rich, grounded, and elaborated pedagogies to improve students' genre competence (see, for example, Johns, 2002; Giltrow, 2002; as well as Swales). My own instruction in genre antecedents and awareness aims to develop students' genre competence, in strategies and understanding if not particular genres (Devitt, 2004). What is still required, though, is instruction in genre performances, the ways that abstracted genre competence plays out in actual texts, including ones the students will write. A time-honored way of addressing performance is experiential: having students write, offering feedback, and having students reflect and revise. That instruction, too, is helpful, and necessary, and valuable. Experiencing their own performances is surely the most powerful way for students to learn to write better. To educate students more fully, though, and prepare them for leaving our classrooms and transferring their genre

knowledge to other contexts, it would be helpful if they also had a higher-level understanding of why their performances still-to-come will differ from both the competence they have gained and the practices they have performed. The texts they write in their next courses will differ from the ones they wrote in this course, as the teacher, subject matter, and assignment will differ, along with their own knowledge of the subject and their experiences with writing. The texts they write in the workplace will differ from the ones they write in their courses as they write for different audiences and purposes and take on different roles. Each text they write will differ from texts they've already written, even as it will draw on their prior knowledge and experiences. Along with explicitly teaching generic competence, teachers could help students adapt to those shifts by explicitly teaching generic performance.

Such explicit teaching of performance could occur and has occurred in many ways. Even as teachers guide students to see the similarities across texts of a genre, they can guide students to see the differences in each text, and they can discuss potential rhetorical and linguistic reasons for those differences. Cheng (2011) examines how L2 graduate students in his courses, for example, noticed "non-prototypical" features of a genre in texts they were analyzing and, through them, better understood the genre's context. Swales points out that we need to understand better the disciplinary variations in research articles, for example, but even that is asking for more discovery of competence—the ideal writer in a homogenous disciplinary community. Individual performances appear often in *Genre Analysis* as Swales provides many individual versions of each rhetorical move, but they are

analyzed for their typicality. Such analysis is, of course, appropriate for that work's purposes at the time. Even though it is not part of his primary purpose, Swales comes close to encompassing performance as well as competence when he evaluates some samples for their effectiveness in making a move. Swales has students examine different performances of a genre, like the short request letter, for their rhetorical effectiveness and then perform their own version of the genre (pp. 78-81). The samples Swales offers in his case studies show another way of noticing performances. More fully attending to actual performance requires noticing the language used in a specific text, successfully *and* unsuccessfully, in ways that seem to fit a genre *and* ways that don't. Varying from a genre in a particular performance can be as rhetorically significant as conforming to a genre. When students begin to see that each performance differs, they can begin to analyze why that must happen—and how it will happen for them.

Teaching genre performances as well as competence might be as simple as adding one step when teaching a particular genre: looking at the variations in the genre samples after discovering the commonalities. Swales' analyses of genres, with their tasks and moves, as I described in the preceding paragraph, becomes a method for teaching genre performance as well as competence if only by having students notice and then discuss the differences across examples. The teaching-learning cycle described by Cope and Kalantzis and others in one version of Systemic Functional Linguistics (see Macken et al's diagram, as cited in Cope and Kalantzis, 1993, p. 11), for example, typically begins with analyzing the rhetorical purposes, social functions, and organizational and textual features in some models of a particular

genre. To encompass genre performance, a new next step could be noticing the differences across the multiple models, since each text would necessarily differ in some ways. Each model text would have not only different individual writers but also at least slightly different specific rhetorical and social contexts—their audiences, their more particular purposes, their community settings, their tasks— and would differ in how they carry out the commonalities. Each model of a research article might include a results section, for example, but some might use more graphs and charts, some might spend more time explaining the results in words, some might spend pages on results while others spend a few paragraphs and move more quickly to a discussion section. Noticing those differences, first, would call students' attention to the fact that each writing task is unique and demands a unique performance. Discussing why one writer might make particular choices helps students learn to consider how their choices depend on context and their own rhetorical and creative decisions. Describing a writer's style or persona establishes that each writer constructs a unique identity in a particular text. Noticing which individual writers have the power or prestige to vary from or disrupt the genre more drastically helps students begin to consider how their own positions in their communities will influence how they might perform in particular instances. As the class moves on to composing their own texts, the teacher can continue to call their attention to both genre standards and individual variations, helping students to improve the quality of their performance as well as competence by encouraging them to make deliberate decisions and conscious choices as they write and revise.

Explicit teaching of genre performance can also come through students' own performances without analyzing or even specifying a genre first. After students respond to an assigned writing task, whether or not a specific genre like "essay" or "literacy narrative" was named, the teacher can help students explore how each student responded differently, and students can consider potential sources for those differences—discussing how each interpreted the task differently, emphasized different purposes, drew on different language habits, took on different roles, and wrote under different personal circumstances. In one of my own writing classes, for example, students wrote in class on the first day on a given topic without a specified genre. Across the class, students commonly wrote what they described as either five-paragraph themes or personal narratives (Devitt, 2006). The class could then explore why these genres seemed appropriate to the task. To teach genre performance as well as competence, the class could further discuss why individual students might have chosen one or the other genre, and examine how students' individual choices varied within each of those genres. Many students apparently drew on past English classes and their expectations about college in believing that my task necessarily called for an analytical essay, the type they had learned in high school. One student, for example, followed many of the conventions of a five-paragraph theme in his introductory paragraph, but then started telling a personal story in his second paragraph. This student also revealed that he liked writing narratives more than any other genre, even though he had been trained to write five-paragraph themes. Discussing such individual variations in actual genre performances can lead to our discussing issues that will affect their writing

performances still-to-come—including their assumptions about and perhaps stereotypes of the new communities they'll enter; how the genres they've learned and the ones they prefer can influence what they write when they're uncertain how to perform; how they might combine genres effectively; and, generally, how there is no one right way to perform any writing task.

The differences in what genres students choose to write, given a choice, may derive from their past experiences with a genre and their prior genre knowledge, an element of genre competence. To build that competence into better genre performance, as I am urging, teachers might apply what research on transfer suggests: that teachers emphasize strategies within a genre and assign frequent reflection in order to develop students' metacognitive awareness (Artemeva & Fox, 2010; Beaufort, 2007; Nowacek, 2011; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011). As Swales hypothesized, transfer is more likely to happen if, among other things, "The acquired genre skill involves not only competence with the product but also a raised rhetorical consciousness" (p. 234). Swales' approach to genre analysis already emphasizes strategies, in the form of rhetorical moves, attention to communicative purpose, and grounding in discourse communities. Since the publication of *Genre Analysis,* reflection has become a more explicit part of writing instruction and can easily be incorporated to reinforce those lessons. Whenever assigning a new writing task, teachers can ask students to write reflectively on what they have written in the past that might be relevant to this new task and how this new task will differ from what they have done before. As students begin developing their individual texts, they can reflect on what makes their writing situations unique, where the genre

they're writing might fit well and where it might need to be adapted, and the decisions they as writers will have to make. Once they have completed a version of their text, students should reflect on what they thought was most successful and what might still need improvement, what obstacles they encountered and how they might respond to those obstacles next time, why they made the decisions they made, and, perhaps most important of all, what they learned from responding to this writing task. Teachers can then lead the class in discussing what all of them might have learned from the writing project and go on to exploring the contexts in which they might use what they have learned in the future. What other communities might have similar needs, leading to similar rhetorical purposes? When and where might the students encounter such communities? What might be some of the important differences they will encounter? Having worked on a research article, for example, students can consider how publishing such an article in a scholarly journal would draw on similar purposes and strategies even as its audience and setting would change, or how workplace research reports would share some purposes with research articles but differ because of the workplace context. In some courses, students already see future applications for what they are learning and, with some prompting, can lead the discussion of how those applications will affect their performances still-to-come. Such metacognitive awareness helps to build genre competence while preparing for future genre performances.

Seen from this metaphor of competence and performance, the issue of assessing genre knowledge—and assessing transfer in particular—takes on some different coloration. Genre instruction often attempts to improve students'

competence, but much assessment examines students' performances, especially

when that assessment is grounded in particular texts. Distinguishing performance

from competence complicates assessment of both genre knowledge and transfer of

that knowledge—being able to use skills and knowledge acquired in one context for

one task in a different context for a different task[4]. By definition, in fact, competence

cannot be studied reliably through any performance since the performance will

necessarily be affected by (what Chomsky, 1965, and others would consider

extraneous) other factors. Within second language research, De Palma and Ringer

(2011) make a different but related argument about transfer of genre knowledge.

Transfer, they argue, is always adaptive: prior knowledge is always reshaped for

new tasks and in different contexts.

Analyzing a particular performance of a genre in order to assess genre

competence, then, requires some caution. Textual analysis might discern that a

particular text meets generic expectations— for example, using appropriate

rhetorical moves, or including hedges appropriately—thus suggesting genre

knowledge and competence. But the particular text that *fails* to meet those

expectations does not necessarily demonstrate a lack of competence. Many

"extraneous" factors might have affected that one textual performance, from the

writer's memory to motivation, while the writer might indeed have greater genre

competence than demonstrated in that particular performance. Even the text that

appears to meet expectations might mislead about the writer's genre competence

because of performance variables: the teacher might have offered a model that the

student copied without understanding and would not be able to replicate; or a peer

might have suggested where and how to add hedges, demonstrating the peer's genre competence rather than the student's.

For linguists, studying competence and studying performance have required different methodologies. In genre studies, too, different methods might access and assess different types of knowledge and transfer, illuminating the genre competence potentially informing any given performance. Chomsky (1965) asserted the elusiveness of competence:

> Obviously, every speaker of a language has mastered and internalized a generative grammar that expresses his [sic] knowledge of his language. That is not to say that he is aware of the rules of the grammar or even that he can become aware of them, or that his statements about his intuitive knowledge of the language are necessarily accurate. (p. 8)

To draw out students' genre knowledge beyond a single performance, discourse-based interviews (Odell, Goswami, & Herrington, 1983) might be especially useful since such interviews ask writers to explain why they make particular choices in a particular textual performance. If students' ability to perform a genre with a given task in the given context is what's being assessed—whether or not students could articulate conscious knowledge of their genre choices—then a student's repeated performances of that genre might be appropriate evidence. Repeated patterns across multiple texts would still seem to me to offer evidence of genre competence—or of genre change across texts diachronically, as was evident in my study of the anglicization of Scots-English. When it comes to studying transfer or any assessment of genre knowledge, researchers and teachers need to be careful

that performance doesn't become the object of study while competence has been the object of instruction. If researchers were to work to incorporate performance more fully into genre studies, different methods of assessment as well as instruction could emerge.

With such attention to genre performances as well as competence (and genre variations as well as standards[5]), scholars can more fully account for how genres construct writers and writers construct genres, and teachers can prepare students for the fact that no writing situation they encounter will fit the abstracted genre perfectly or even fit one genre only. Every writing situation requires writers to perform in unique ways, to dance without knowing all the steps, to improvise their own moves. A genre studies that includes both competence and performance is a genre studies that includes both rhetoric and linguistics, for the disciplines combined enable us to see, as does Swales' work, that genres are grounded in shared communicative purposes and realized in particular linguistic utterances. A rhetorical-linguistic genre studies also requires both analysis and action, for at the heart of genre studies lies this paradox: that our scholarly conception of genre grounds itself in rhetoric, analysis, and awareness, while the material reality of genre lies in language, production, and text. In the continued work toward a productive cross-disciplinary genre studies, scholars and teachers, like their students, may discover that they need to improvise some moves.

[1] Genre studies encompasses pedagogy as well as rhetoric and linguistics, and I will comment on the pedagogical application later in this article. To continue my own textual history, I would point to my discovery of the 1987 Australian collection *The Place of Genre in Learning,* edited by Ian Reid, which Sigmund Ongstad kindly sent me after the first genre conference in Ottawa in 1992.

[2] Any reference to Swales' work should be understood as referring to Swales 1990.

[3] The methodologies of linguistics and rhetoric have been different historically, of course, though there has been some overlap. As both disciplines incorporate a wider range of methods, and as mixed methodologies become more common, those methodological differences may become less distinct.

[4] For more complex definitions and discussions of transfer in writing studies, see DePalma and Ringer; or Wardle.

[5] For more on standardization and variation within genre, see Devitt, 1997. As I argue in that article, the linguistic concepts of standardization and variation also tie rhetoric and linguistics together within genre studies.

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