Chapter 3

Materials That Guide Genre-Focused Learning of Research Writing

If genre awareness and the awareness of genre*s* constitute two suitable learning objectives that contribute to the overall objective of raising learners' rhetorical consciousness in the graduate-level research writing classroom, then how can we achieve them? This and the next chapter address this question from multiple angles: designing pedagogical materials (Chapter 3) and guiding students' genre analysis (Chapter 4).

Genre-Focused Textbooks for Teaching and Learning Graduate-Level Research Writing

Once the learning objectives have been determined, instructors of graduate-level research writing classes often face the question of what input materials or teaching materials are suitable for developing students' awareness of genre as a conceptual framework as well as their awareness of the interrelated contextual, rhetorical organizational, and lexico-grammatical features in discipline-specific research genres.

This question about pedagogical materials is important given what some have noticed as the challenge in producing suitable teaching materials for their graduate-level research writing classes or workshops. In fact, the challenge may be the reason behind the non-existence of published textbooks for graduate-level research writing that led to Swales and Feak's effort to write the textbooks reviewed in this section (K. Sippell, personal communication, 2017 July 26). Swales later describes the "desperate feeling of 'I can't find the perfect text for what I want to do in class'" that leads to "hours. . .of leafing through textbooks, manuals, journal articles or websites," which may have motivated him to write the textbooks he coauthored with Feak reviewed in this section so that other instructors do not have to go through such a "desperate feeling" (2009b, p. 5). Given this and other dilemmas, such as the time-consuming process of producing EAP materials for one's classes in general (Anthony, 2011; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), instructors of graduate-level research writing classes may often feel the need to review and adopt published textbooks targeting this instructional setting. In fact, doing so is consistent with Swales' argument that an access route for the designer of a language learning program, including a program in teaching graduate-level research writing, is "the well-established and sensible practice of reviewing available instructional materials" (1990, p. 69). This section, thus, looks at some published textbooks that adopt a genre-based approach and target graduate-level research writing courses.

The Swales & Feak Volumes: Content and Pedagogical Applications

Arguably, the most influential published textbooks for the teaching of graduate-level writing have been the volumes written by John Swales and Christine Feak and published by the University of Michigan Press: *Academic Writing for Graduate Students* (Swales & Feak, 1994a, 2004a, 2012a); the *Commentary for* Academic Writing for Graduate Students (Swales & Feak, 1994b, 2004b, 2012b); *English in Today's Research World* (Swales & Feak, 2000); *Abstracts and the Writing of Abstracts* (Swales & Feak, 2009); *Telling a Research Story: Writing a Literature Review* (Feak & Swales, 2009); *Creating Contexts: Writing Introductions across Genres* (Feak & Swales, 2011); and *Navigating Academia* (Swales & Feak, 2011). These textbooks, by the authors' very understated admission, have achieved "some resonance in the scholarly literatures devoted to discussions of academic discourses and the acculturation of students to those discourses" (Feak & Swales, 2014, p. 301) as well as "commercial and critical success" (Swales, 2009a, p. 190).

Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills

The book with the longest history in the series is *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills* (hereafter *AWG*), now in its third edition (Swales & Feak, 2012a). According to Swales and Feak, *AWG* grew out of the first-year and second-year writing courses developed at Michigan's English Language Institute dating back to the late 1980s (Feak & Swales, 2014). The initial audience was international graduate students "with limited experience writing academic English," but later editions have also targeted proficient L2 users of English and L1 speakers of English (Swales & Feak, 2012a, p. ix).

The first unit of the current edition asks students to reflect on their "positioning" so as to write "academically" as competent members of their chosen academic disciplines (Swales & Feak, 2012a, p. 1). This positioning can be achieved through attention to six "considerations" in research writing—audience, purpose, organization, style, flow, and presentation (2012a, p. 3). A series of tasks then illustrates what is meant by each consideration and why each is important. For example, Task 3 in this unit asks the readers to compare and contrast two passages on the same topic. After presenting the two passages, Swales and Feak ask a series of questions to draw their readers' attention to how the differences in vocabulary, in the level of details, and in the use of definitions may be among the various resources one could use to target different audiences who may be differentially familiar with the topic. Attending to audience's needs and reactions is an integral part of analyzing and understanding the rhetorical context of any given genre or part-genre (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010) and is part of raising students' rhetorical consciousness (Swales, 1990). Numerous other tasks in the series similarly focus on drawing students' attention to audience's expectations and needs, as will become clearer later.

In fact, noticing the different dimensions of genre becomes apparent very early in the book. For example, the letter of admittance (the good news letter) and the letter of rejection (the bad news letter) in Task 6 that are presented to show students the importance of recognizing the organizational patterns in writing are very useful in teaching students the concept of rhetorical moves. The letter of rejection often works especially well because the paragraph boundaries have been purposefully collapsed. Removing the paragraph boundaries as Swales and Feak do in Task 6 emphasizes the point that a move is "a functional term that refers to a defined and bounded communicative act that is designed to achieve one main communicative objective" (Swales & Feak, 2000, p. 35). Because a move "can range from a single finite clause to several paragraphs" (Swales & Feak, 2000, p. 35), the task very effectively conveys to students the point that they should not rely on, or merely rely on, sentence or paragraph boundaries to decipher what a move is. Instead, they should look closely at how a stretch of text constitutes a rhetorical move only when the segment of text "does a particular job" or performs a unified communicative purpose (Swales & Feak, 2009, p. 5). As shown in Chapter 2, developing genre awareness usually entails developing an awareness of the rhetorical organization, lexico-grammatical features, and the underpinning communicative context in the genre one focuses on. Therefore, helping students to develop their conceptual understanding of what a rhetorical move is, as Task 6 does so effectively, is crucial because students need to learn to recognize how the overall rhetorical organization in any research genre is made up of various rhetorical moves.

The task also effectively shows how a move and its lexico-grammatical features are driven by the readers' projected response, which is part of the rhetorical context of any given genre, thus driving home the message that any analysis of genre should focus on all three interconnected dimensions: the rhetorical organization, the lexico-grammatical features, and the underlying rhetorical context. It also shows students how a seemingly similar move may be written very differently when the underpinning communicative purposes are different, thus highlighting the need to recognize the close connections among the three dimensions of genre analysis (see Chapter 2). The "to close the letter" move shows how we can guide our students to recognize how lexico-grammatical features are driven by communicative purposes. In the good news letter of admittance, this move is written in a welcoming tone that points to the future, as seen in this sentence: "We look forward to welcoming you to Midwestern University and wish you success in your academic career" (Swales & Feak, 2012a, p. 9). The same move in the bad news letter of rejection, by contrast, closes the letter in a way that discourages any possible future communication: "I trust you will be able to pursue your academic interests elsewhere and wish you luck in your further endeavors" (Swales & Feak, 2012a, p. 10).

The focus of Unit Two is General-Specific (GS) and Specific-General (SG) texts. Swales and Feak (2012a) point out that the GS pattern can be used to answer an examination question or to provide the background to an analysis or discussion, among serving other rhetorical purposes. They illustrate how a GS text can begin with some general statements, with statistics, or with definitions, and they provide multiple tasks to guide their readers to consider the rhetorical effects of each type of opening. They then discuss how definitions, including sentence definitions and extended definitions, can be written. Again, rhetorical considerations are invoked in such a discussion. For example, readers' possible unfamiliarity with a concept or "the lack of agreement on or some ambiguity surrounding the meaning" of a term between the readers and the writer or within the discourse community in general are brought up as factors affecting the decision to provide or not to provide a definition (p. 67). Swales and Feak (2012a) note that the SG organization is frequently used in fields such as history and arts and in some medical or legal genres, such as case reports and case notes.

Unit Three focuses on the problem-solution pattern and the description of process often embedded in research genres such as research articles, research proposals, and case reports in certain fields. As is the case in other units, the authors present multiple sample passages, each with a series of discussion questions for readers to analyze in terms of the problem-solution and process-description patterns. For example, in Task One (pp. 101–103), after presenting a passage on the difficulties with research writing that some novice researchers in the sciences have encountered, they ask their readers to look at which sentences belong to which part of the four-part structure of the standard problem-solution text—situation, problem, solution, and evaluation, with the rhetorical purpose of each part listed. It is quite clear how a task like this continues to exemplify the genre-focused approach to teaching and learning research writing through guiding students to identify the rhetorical purposes and the resulting rhetorical moves in research texts.

Unit Three also consistently draws attention to many of the move-performing lexico-grammatical features through multiple tasks that ask students to recognize and practice such features. These include *-ing* clauses to indicate cause and effect (e.g., *"researchers worldwide are increasingly pressured to publish in English language journals, thus leading to a decline in publications written in languages other than English"*) (p. 115; original emphasis); the passive voice in process descriptions (e.g., *"the three virus strains are then combined to create the vaccine, blended with a carrier fluid and dispensed into vials"*) (p. 120); the *-ed* participles to help the flow of process descriptions (e.g., *"after the plants have been allowed to grow for some time, they are harvested and either incinerated or composted to recycle the metals")* (p. 128); active voice verbs that indicate a change of state in process description (e.g., *"the bean fractures when the load upon it becomes too great"*) (p. 131); and direct and indirect questions used to problematize issues, cases, and other problems in problem-solution texts (e.g., *"however, is the data reliable?"* vs. *"however, there remains the issue of reliability"*) (p. 135 and p. 136).

The unit on data commentary (Four) is a favorite among users because of its direct applicability to the findings and discussion part-genres in journal articles. I have frequently used this part with undergraduate students in the technical writing classroom to teach the Discussion section in technical reports and in teacher training courses or professional development workshops with instructors.

According to Swales and Feak (2012a), the communicative purposes in a data commentary are to "highlight the results of research; use the data to support a point or make an argument; to assess theory, common beliefs, or general practice; to compare and evaluate different data sets; to assess the reliability of the data; to discuss the implications of the data; and to make recommendations" (pp. 140–141). They then lay out the basic rhetorical organizational pattern of a data commentary that often includes three moves: to locate the data/to provide a summary statement of the data; to highlight a certain data point; and to discuss the "implications, problems, exceptions, recommendations, or other interesting aspects of the data" (p. 144). When they use discussion questions to draw their readers' attention to these moves in this rhetorical organizational pattern, they ask a series of questions that draw attention to the purposes behind a certain move (e.g., *What are the purposes of Sentences 1–3?* and *Which sentence contains the author's key point?*), the overall rhetorical organization made up by multiple moves (e.g., *How is the commentary organized overall?*), and the rhetorical purpose of data commentary in general (e.g., *On pages 140–141, we listed seven common purposes for data commentaries. In which category (or categories) does this one fall?*) (p. 143).

The unit also provides multiple tasks that focus on the lexico-grammatical features that can help research writers provide data commentaries:

- location statements and summaries—for example, *Table 5 shows...* vs. *... are provided in Table 5* (p. 147)
- indicative vs. informative summary statements—for example, *Table 4 shows the types of internet misbehavior common among university students* (indicative) vs. *Table 4 shows that illegal downloading of music or films is common among students* (informative) (p. 149)

- verbs that can be used with indicative *vs.* informative summary—for example, *the verb* provide *cannot be used in an informative summary with a that clause that follows the verb* (p. 150)
- linking *as* clauses—for example, *as shown in Fig. 1…* (p. 152)
- ways of modifying or qualifying a claim—for example, *it is clear that…* vs. *it is possible that…* (p. 160)
- sentence patterns that deal with unexpected outcomes or problems, such as *may be due to …* (p. 174)
- prepositions of time when dealing with chronological data, such as *from the 10th to the 45th minutes….* (p. 183).

Unit Five turns to writing summaries; here Swales and Feak begin with some preliminary steps in writing a summary—such as skimming texts, understanding the genres of the source texts, and taking notes—and then present a sample source text on the topic of energy drinks to illustrate an important point: an academic writer's summary of a source text should depend on the claim the writer aims to support. The unit covers a range of issues related to writing summaries, such as preventing plagiarism and learning to paraphrase by using synonyms and by changing the grammar, and introduces linguistic resources such as using certain verbs in their correct tenses to identify sources (e.g., *Barinaga claims that…*) and synthesizing multiple sources by using cohesive devices (e.g., *similarly, in contrast to,* and *to differ from*). Because many of the textual resources introduced in this unit are applicable to many types of students and because of the close attention to the strategies for preventing plagiarism, for paraphrasing, and for citing sources, this unit is full of content for teaching summary writing to different student populations.

Writing critiques is the topic of the next unit (Six). Because of the inherent disciplinary variations in critiques, this unit works especially well given the multidisciplinary mix of students in these types of courses (see Chapter 1). For example, Swales and Feak point out that "critiques are a regular part of take-home examinations" in some fields but are rarely assigned in other fields (2012a, p. 228); they also discuss how different fields have varying accepted standards of judgment regarding critiques and that what is "fair and reasonable" or what should be emphasized in critiques are field-specific (p. 228). The tasks in this unit focus on three genres—book reviews (for publication and for class), published article evaluations, and reaction papers; for each, samples and discussion questions are provided. As in other units, the move-performing lexicogrammatical features in the book review genre are explored.

The final two units, in Swales' and Feak's view, "consolidate many of the aspects of academic writing that have been stressed in earlier units" into research paper genre (p. 277)—in particular those focusing on students' pressing need to learn the Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion (IMRD) pattern quickly. A unique feature in Unit Seven is a list (p. 286; see Appendix A in this book) in which they describe how the various organizational patterns in the previous units can fit into the different part-genres in the research article genre.

After describing the shape of a standard IMRD empirical paper and the rhetorical purpose in each section in this pattern (see Appendix B), Swales and Feak (2012a) look closely at the Methods section, raising disciplinary differences, including what the Methods sections are often called (*Methods, The Study,* or *Materials and Methods*) and what they often include in different fields (pp. 289–290). The seven moves often found in the Methods section are discussed and multiple samples presented, consistent with earlier units. The authors then move to the Results sections and the differences between data and results and those between results and discussions. Since the Results sections have a lot in common with data commentaries (Unit Four), they do not describe the organization of the Results sections in detail. They do, however, present different ways of commenting on data (*admitting difficulties in interpretation, citing agreement with previous studies, justifying the methodology,* and *pointing out discrepancies*). They draw upon from Thompson (1993) because they perceive commenting on data as remaining challenging for many novice research writers when they discuss their results.