

A TEXT ANALYSIS SAMPLE:

ORIGINAL TEXT: (Area of expertise: Linguistics)

Genre in Three Traditions: Implications for ESL

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In the past 15 years, the concept of genre has been the focus of a wave of studies in a number of fields concerned with L1 and L2 teaching. Traditionally a literary construct, genre has become a popular framework for analyzing the form and function of nonliterary discourse, such as the research article, as well as a tool for developing educational practices in fields such as rhetoric, composition studies, professional writing, linguistics, and English for specific purposes (ESP). Candlin (1993) has marveled at the recent sweeping interest in genre across disciplines: "What is it about the term and the area of study it represents that attracts such attention? . . . Clearly, a concept that has found its time" (p. ix). Similarly, Freedman and Medway (1994b) observe that in composition studies, "the word genre is on everyone's lips, from researchers and scholars to curriculum planners and teachers" (p. 1).

The growing force of the genre movement in L1 and L2 teaching circles in various parts of the world is reflected in a recent proliferation of genre conferences, including Australia's "Working With Genre" series (1989, 1991, 1993) and North America's "Rethinking Genre" colloquium (Ottawa, 1992). The movement has also sparked substantial debate, particularly in Australia, where genre-based education has come under attack from process writing proponents (see the debates in Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1987; Reid, 1987; Sawyer & Watson, 1987; Threadgold, 1988), although similar controversies have begun to take off in North America as well (Fahnestock, 1993; Freedman, 1993, 1994; Williams & Colomb, 1993). Because of its fast-growing, controversial nature, genre scholarship has been a complicated movement to understand in a number of respects. It has been referred to as "a movement which . . . has the positive potential to mean many things to many people" (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993a, p. 2). It has also been on a fast track of change, with conference titles such as "Rethinking Genre" (Ottawa, 1992) and "Strictly Genre?" (Sydney, 1993) reflecting the dynamism of the field.

ANALYSIS

I find the above introductory paragraphs well-written because they clearly and efficiently describe various genre studies in the world. By quoting and mentioning different genre scholars, the author tries to locate the research tradition in different disciplines. This can be really helpful for students new to the genre field – they can obtain more information by looking up the relevant articles and books on the internet or in the libraries.

The dynamic, fast changing nature of the field is indicated together with its agreed-upon and controversial issues. Again, such information would be valuable to novice scholars and it might provide a springboard for further research.

I like the structure of the article: most important facts are at the beginning (the length of research, definition, disciplines), additional details, controversies are mentioned later. The context of the field is given – period of time ("in the past 15 years", years with cited articles and books) and geography (North America, Australia...).

The quotes are helpful in explaining/describing the notion of genre. By mentioning some of the conferences, which have taken place, the author suggests indirectly how important the field is to the different disciplines and their researchers.

Stylistically, the sentences follow each other logically, leading the reader to the main points/arguments of the article. The terminology is clear and if used in a new context (such as genre), it is explained (the difference between the traditional notion of genre and its meaning at present).