

The role of genre and embedded genres in tertiary students' writing

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ABSTRACT

The concept of genre has provided a valuable framework for researching aspects of academic writing such as discourse organisation. However, there has been little research on the role of genre and writing for tertiary students' learning of disciplinary knowledge. This paper investigates the ways in which undergraduate education students' written assignments contribute to the students' learning of disciplinary knowledge. The texts for discussion are 44 undergraduate education students' assignments collected as part of a three-year longitudinal study at a regional Australian university. The theoretical framework is genre theory as developed within systemic functional linguistics.

The findings show that the students wrote primarily expositions and discussions; however, they also embedded a range of other genres in these macro-genre structures. The embedding of more descriptive genres such as exemplums allowed the students to review, exemplify, and build up knowledge within an expository structure. The findings from this discourse analytical study have implications for the ways in which English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and language support lecturers predict discourse structure from assignment questions and advise students on discourse organisation. The findings also provide insights into the ways in which successful writers embed genres to support not only their written arguments but to review and build up their developing disciplinary knowledge.

Introduction

A major focus of research into academic writing has been the investigation of generic features of professional academic texts such as research articles and book reviews (for example, Bazerman 1988; Swales 1990; Hyland 2000), as well as investigation into pedagogic genres such as introductory textbooks (Love 1991; Myers 1992; Hyland 1999; Love 2002; Woodward-Kron 2002a). Much of the research has been pedagogically driven, particularly in English as a second language teaching contexts, as practitioners have made available contextually informed discourse descriptions of academic genres whose form and social purpose remained elusive to students (for example, Drury 1991; Drury and Webb 1991;

Hewings 1993; Paltridge 1997; Swales and Lindemann 2002; Woodward-Kron 2003). Furthermore, there has been considerable interest in investigating genres in terms of social context, and in terms of the tensions and expectations associated with the production of genres (Freedman 1987; Berkenkotter, Huckin and Ackerman 1991; Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995; Cadman 2002; Paltridge 2004). However, there has been less interest in providing from the perspective of genre both a contextual and linguistic account of the ways in which students build up, review and learn specialist knowledge through writing.

Approaches to genre in academic writing

The research into academic genres cited thus far includes approaches that differ markedly in terms of their theoretical frameworks and associated pedagogies. Hyon (1996) has broadly classified approaches to genre into three pathways, which highlight the origins of the diverse genre frameworks: (1) English for Specific Purposes, (2) North American New Rhetoric and (3) Systemic Functional Linguistics. While Hyon classifies approaches to genre in terms of scholarly traditions, Flowerdew (2002) argues that genre theories can be broadly distinguished as primarily linguistic or non-linguistic in their orientation. According to Flowerdew, a primarily linguistic approach focuses on textual features and the rhetorical realisation of a text's social purpose, while a non-linguistic approach focuses more on the situational context and the attitudes and behaviours of a discourse community:

... the linguistic approach looks to the situational context to interpret the linguistic and discourse structures, whereas the New Rhetoric may look to the text to interpret the situational context. (Flowerdew 2002: 91–92)

Flowerdew's distinction is a useful one for signalling not only a researcher's theoretical orientation but also the researcher's primary focus as foregrounding either text or context, depending on the researcher's purpose. As this study examined the students' discourse organisation of their written texts in relation to the texts' social purpose (that is, both learning and displaying disciplinary knowledge), the theoretical approach adopted was primarily a linguistic one.

The systemic functional approach to genre and this study

Genre theory as developed by Martin and colleagues (for example, Martin 1985; Rothery 1985; Christie 1987; Martin, Christie and Rothery 1987; Martin 1992) within systemic functional linguistics (Halliday 1978; 1994) provided the study's methodological framework. This approach to genre is an extension of register theory, which is concerned with the contextual

variables of field (institutional activity), tenor (social interaction) and mode (medium of communication); however, genre theory differs in the emphasis it places on social purpose as a variable (Martin, Christie and Rothery 1987). Genres are defined as 'staged, goal-oriented social processes' (for example, Martin 1998: 412), which are realised through the register variables of field, tenor and mode. These in turn are realised through the language metafunctions of experiential, interpersonal and textual meanings. This stratal relationship of genre to register to language in the systemic functional approach to genre provided a systematic means of investigating the students' writing in terms of language, context and text.

Learning through writing

In his work on children's language development, Halliday argues that children learn *through* language (Halliday 1999), and this emphasis on language as a meaning-making resource is also intrinsic to the systemic functional approach to genre.¹

While genre theorists in this tradition take texts as their starting point for analysis, Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), two genre theorists interested in the relation between learning and writing, focus instead on writers' cognitive interaction with the situational context. These different approaches to investigating the role of genre for learning ultimately raise the issue of what writing researchers from different traditions consider reliable evidence for learning: analyses which focus primarily on the product (the text) or analyses which focus on the process of learning. While text-based approaches (that is, linguistic approaches, to use Flowerdew's distinction) are considered in some domains to neglect important cognitive learning strategies, their focus on the product (the text) is similar to the focus on written assessment in many academic disciplines, which relies on students' written assignments as the main means of determining whether students have 'learned' or engaged with course content.

The students' texts

The study tracked the writing development of 16 education students at a regional Australian university. The main data for the study were the students' written assignments collected over a three-year period in a core strand of subjects (that is, Education I, II & III). The assignment data were supplemented by contextual data such as student and tutor interviews and departmental documentation; however, these data have not been included in this paper due to space constraints (see Woodward-Kron 2004 for a discussion of the impact of these aspects on the students' writing). The

cohort of 16 was reduced to 14 in the second year of the study due to student attrition. Forty-four texts form the corpus. Table 1 shows the assignment tasks as well as the number of texts in each grade range. The grading scale used by the faculty is: Pass (P) = 50%–64%; Credit (C) = 65%–74%; Distinction (D) = 75%–84%; High Distinction (HD) = 85%–100%.

Table 1: Assignment questions and distribution of grades

Assignment tasks	Number of assignments and grade					
	F	P	C	D	HD	Total
Semester 1, April 1999, essay: 'The age old Nature–Nurture controversy about the underlying causes of the course of development continues today, with some theorists attributing the course of development to genetic influences while others believe that the complex forces of the environment are responsible. Discuss the evidence for each of these positions and indicate how this debate will influence your work.'	0	4	4	5	3	16
Semester 2, October 2000, essay: Students were able to select from 12 essay topics. Individual topics are given with the students' essays.	1	0	8	3	2	14
Semester 2, June 2001, essay: 'What theory or theories of children's thinking and learning are the most defensible for your future role as a primary educator? In order to answer this question, you must critique all the theoretical perspectives in this subject as the basis for your position.'	0	1	6	4	3	14

The focus of the text analysis was generic structure. Generic structure refers to the distinct stages through which a text moves to achieve its overall purpose. The analysis was informed by descriptions of texts from genre-based literacy pedagogy and theory within the systemic functional approach (in particular, Martin 1985; Martin and Peters 1985; Derewianka 1990; Martin 1992; Halliday and Martin 1993). It was also assisted by Martin's (1992) point that genres can function as schematic stages in longer texts. This provided a means of addressing the variation in the schematic stages of the pre-service teachers' texts, as well as considering the function of the embedded genres for the students' learning. An analytical description of the genres and embedded genres in this study (referred to as macro- and micro-genres) is given in the following section.

The macro and micro-genres in this study

Preliminary analysis of the texts was undertaken in order to assess the adequacy of existing descriptions of genres for the discipline-specific

context of this study. As can be seen in Table 1, the student texts are referred to as 'essays' in the description of the assignment. The term 'essay' is used by several genre theorists (for example, Dudley-Evans 2002; Paltridge 2002) as a genre label together with the term 'text type' to refer to the considerable variation that can occur within these texts. However, for the purposes of this study, the descriptive label of 'essay' as a genre category did not adequately differentiate between the functional variation in the students' texts at the macro and internal levels. To account for the variation in the students' texts, Martin's (1992; 1995) work on text typologies and multi-generic texts provided a means of mapping text structure and variation. Martin uses the term 'Macro-genre' to refer to texts which combine, or have embedded in them, elemental genres such as recounts, reports, explanations and so on. To identify how embedded genres contribute to overall text organisation, Martin (1995) draws on Halliday's (1994) expansion categories for clause complexes (enhancement, extension, elaboration), providing a functional description of the relation between the embedded genres and the text in which they are embedded. In this paper, the terms macro- and micro-genres (lower case in order to distinguish from Martin's definition) have been adopted; however, in this paper macro-genre refers to the dominant genre of a student's text. In other words, the macro-genre is identified in terms of the text's main social purpose and its schematic stages. Micro-genre in this paper refers to genres that are embedded in the macro-genre. It should be noted that the schematic stages identified for each genre are not intended to function prescriptively in a pedagogic context; rather, their identification was functionally motivated for the development of an analytical descriptive framework.

The analysis showed that the students' texts were either expositions or discussions. In systemic functional approaches to genre, expositions are texts whose social purpose is to present a logically sequenced argument in favour of a judgment. Discussions are texts whose social purpose is to consider arguments for both sides of a topical issue, and to make an informed recommendation (for example, Martin 1985; Derewianka 1990). The schematic structure of these genres functioning as macro-genres in the students' texts is given in Table 2, while descriptions of the social purpose and schematic structure of the genres that occur as micro-genres in the students' texts are provided in Table 3.

The descriptions of the genres occurring as macro-genres in this study (Table 2) were used to categorise the macro-genres of the data collected and to identify their schematic stages. Preliminary analysis, however, showed that

other genres were embedded in the texts. These genres, referred to as micro-genres, were distinct from the schematic structure of the genre in which they were embedded as they had their own internal schematic structure.

Table 2: Descriptions of the genres occurring as macro-genres in this study

Genre	Social purpose	Schematic stages	Sub-stages
Exposition	To present a logically sequenced argument in favour of a judgment. (eg Derewianka 1990)	Thesis [^] Argument [^] (Implications) Reiteration	Thesis: orientation, position, preview Argument: point, elaboration Implications: point, elaboration, recommendation Reiteration: summary, reiteration, implications
Discussion	To present both sides of an issue and to make an informed recommendation (eg Derewianka 1990)	Issue [^] Arguments/ Viewpoints [^] (Implications) Position	Issue: orientation, issue, preview Argument/Viewpoints: point, elaboration Implications: point, elaboration, recommendation Position: summary, position, implications, recommendations

The symbol ^ means that the element to the left precedes the following element.
Stages in brackets () are optional stages

Table 3: Description of the genres occurring as micro-genres in this study

Genre and social purpose	Schematic structure	Excerpts from students' texts (unedited)
EMPIRICAL ACCOUNT The social purpose is to provide a record of an experiment as evidence for a point within an argument (Woodward-Kron 2002b)	Orientation (reason for the experiment) Recount of experimental procedure	To refute the sceptics' criticisms (being that identical twins are mostly raised together in the same environment, and are treated in a similar or identical fashion), studies of identical twins raised apart were conducted. The University of Minneapolis study, conducted between 1970 and 1984, and reported by DiLalla et al. In 1996, took a sample of 217 pairs of identical twins reared together, 114 pairs of fraternal twins reared together, 44 pairs of identical twins reared apart, and 27 pairs of

Table 3 continued

Table 3 continued

Genre and social purpose	Schematic structure	Excerpts from students' texts (unedited)
<p>EXEMPLUM</p> <p>Plum (1988, cited in Eggins and Slade 1997) describes exemplums as texts whose purpose is to comment on the significance of an event for the context in which the event is told.</p> <p>DESCRIPTIVE REPORT</p> <p>In primary teacher education, descriptive reports describe phenomena and theoretical approaches (adapted from NSW Department of Education 1996)</p>	Report of findings	<p>fraternal twins reared apart. For the twins reared apart, the median age for separation was 2 1/2 months, and the median length of separation was almost 34 years. The results shown on pages 494–498 of Weiten (1998) show that identical twins, even when reared apart, still have more similarities in their personalities than fraternal twins who are raised together in the same environment. This is strong evidence that genetics have a large role in personality development. [CONTINUED].</p>
	Evaluation	
	Orientation	<p>I intend to integrate play into each day of my teaching career. I hope to be able to make school a fun place to be, where the children will respect me and I will respect them. I have recently seen a classroom where a teacher has modelled exactly how I hope not to teach. [CONTINUED]</p>
	Incident	<p>When I took this class for the first lesson (during which I taught Science, this involved growing Brussel Sprouts, they learnt a lot about the environment, and had a lot of fun). Completing a fun, practical experiment like this one helps children to observe what is happening, rather than just hearing about it from their teacher or, seeing pictures in a book. It provides experiences that they can relate to.</p>
	Interpretation	<p>Vygotsky's sociocultural-theory focuses on how culture (values, beliefs, customs and skills of a social group) affects the next generation" (Berk 1997 p. 27).</p>

Table 3 continued

Analytical procedure

In expository writing, arguments tend to be organised into paragraphs, with each paragraph containing an argument in support of the thesis. Therefore the paragraph divisions in the student texts were seen as a starting point from which to investigate the students' organisation of their texts. In the discussion of the results, the student texts are referred to in clusters, that is, lower-grade range texts (Fail to Credit grades) and higher-grade range texts (Distinction and High Distinction texts).

Results and discussion

THE MACRO-GENRES AND SCHEMATIC STRUCTURE

In response to the essay assignment tasks the students wrote either discussions or expositions. Table 4 shows the results for genre type and the grade awarded for the 1999, 2000 and 2001 assignments. In 1999, the discussion genre predominated in the lower-grade ranges as well as in the higher grades. That is, seven of the eight Fail to Credit grade texts were discussions, and six of the eight Distinction to High Distinction texts were, likewise, discussions. The predominance of the discussion is not surprising considering the assignment required the students to *discuss the evidence for each of these positions*. In other words, students were expected to canvass a range of viewpoints and conclude with a statement of their informed position. However, as Table 4 shows, expositions were also a possible response to this assignment task. In the second year, 2000, the exposition genre marginally predominated in the lower-grade ranges, with five expositions compared to four discussions, whereas in the higher-grade range expositions featured exclusively in the five texts. As in the first year findings, students wrote either discussion or expositions in response to 'discuss' type essay questions. Three of the five higher-scoring exposition texts were responses to a 'discuss' type essay question, as were the five Credit-scoring expositions. In the third year, 2001, each student was required to answer the question of *what theory or theories of children's thinking and learning are the most defensible for your future role as a primary educator?* The findings show that approximately half the students in the lower-grade range responded in the exposition genre, while the other half responded in the discussion genre. In the higher-grade range the exposition genre predominated.

The findings on macro-genres are that essay assignments can result in either discussion or exposition genres. Another finding is that expositions predominate in high-scoring texts, even in response to 'discuss' essay questions. These findings should give EAP lecturers and language and

learning advisors pause when predicting monolithic generic structures from assignment questions.

Table 4: Results for macro-genres, 1999–2001

Genre and grade awarded for assignment						
	Fail	Pass	Credit	Distinction	High Distinction	Total students
1999		Discussion (3) Exposition (1)	Discussion (4)	Discussion (3) Exposition (2)	Discussion (3) Exposition (2)	16*
2000	Discussion (1)		Discussion (3) Exposition (5)	Exposition (3)	Exposition (2)	14
2001		Discussion (4) Exposition (1)	Exposition (2)	Discussion (2) Exposition (3)	Exposition (2)	14

* 2 students withdrew from course

The choice of macro-genres provides insights into what learning to mean involves in this particular educational context. The assignment tasks aimed to develop students' capacity to develop a logical argument, present a balanced discussion of different viewpoints and make an informed decision. For undergraduate students, these processes are one means of learning the valued knowledge-making practices of the discipline. However, they present an incomplete picture of the learning processes the students draw on in their writing. For a more detailed understanding of written genres as a means of learning, it is necessary to turn to the results for genres functioning as micro-genres embedded in the discussions and expositions.

MICRO-GENRES

The students included a number of genres embedded as micro-genres in their expositions and discussions. These micro-genres are predominantly of a descriptive orientation. That is, the descriptive reports and taxonomic reports function to describe and classify phenomena, while other ostensibly descriptive genres have an explanatory dimension. These include the genres of empirical account and exemplum. Table 5 shows the distribution and frequency of micro-genres in individual students' texts.

The most common micro-genre in the 44 student texts was the descriptive report, occurring in six students' texts in 1999, two students' texts in 2000, and three students' texts in 2001. Taxonomic reports also featured across the three years of study, occurring in four first-year texts, one 2000 text, and three 2001 texts. Other micro-genres featured sporadically, suggesting that the field or topic played an important dimension in

Table 5: Distribution and frequency of genres functioning as micro-genres in the students' texts

	1999 F to C-grade range students										D and HD-grade range students						
	s 11*	s 12	s 1	s 14	s 16	s 5	s 8	s 3	s 9	s 2	s 6	s 10	s 15	s 4	s 7	s 13	
Empirical account		1		3					2	2				2			
Exemplum																	
Taxonomic report	3	1						1	1								
Descriptive report	1	1					7	1	2		1						
Explanation																	
Evaluative account																	

	2000 F to C-grade range students							D and HD-grade range students						
	s 8	s 3	s 12	s 11	s 5	s 6	s 9	s 14	s 16	s 10	s 13	s 15	s 2	s 4
Empirical account														
Exemplum														
Taxonomic report														1
Descriptive report	2													1
Explanation														
Evaluative account									2					

	2001 (June) P to C-grade range students							D and HD-grade range students						
	s 5	s 8	s 12	s 13	s 11	s 16	s 3	s 14	s 2	s 15	s 4	s 6	s 9	s 10
Empirical account														
Exemplum	6	3				2			1	1				
Taxonomic report		2	2			1								
Descriptive report				3		2								
Explanation				1		1								
Evaluative account														

* 's' refers to student. Students are numbered from 1-16

selection of micro-genres. For example, in the first year 'nature–nurture' assignment, students included empirical accounts. In the macro-genre environment of the exposition, the empirical account functioned to provide tangible evidence in support of one of the perspectives on the course of child development. In the third-year assignment on philosophy of teaching, exemplums occurred in five of the students' texts. Their function was to describe incidents in the classroom to support the argument presented in the macro-genre structure. The presence of these more descriptive genres embedded in the students' expository texts suggests that descriptive writing is intrinsic to students' attempts at analytical, expository writing (Woodward-Kron 2002b). However, the small number of occurrences of the descriptive genres embedded in the more successful students' texts in their third year of study suggests that the more competent writers relied less on descriptive elements to develop their arguments as they progressed in their studies.

Table 6: Distribution and frequency of micro-genres organised as paragraphs

	1999 F to C-grade range students					D and HD-grade range students			
	s 11*	s 12	s 14	s 8	s 3	s 9	s 2	s 6	s 4
Empirical account		1	3			2	2		2
Exemplum									
Taxonomic report	3	1			1	1			
Descriptive report	1	1		7	1	2		1	
Explanation									
Evaluative account									

	2000 F to C-grade range students			D and HD-grade range students
	s 8	s 11	s 16	s 4
Empirical account				
Exemplum				
Taxonomic report				1
Descriptive report	2			1
Explanation				
Evaluative account			2	

	1999 F to C-grade range students					D and HD-grade range students	
	s 5	s 8	s 13	s 11	s 16	s 2	s 15
Empirical account							
Historical account							
Taxonomic report		2	2		1		
Descriptive report			3		2		1
Explanation			1	1			

* 's' refers to student. Students are numbered from 1–16. Only students' texts that had embedded genres are in this table

To gain a greater understanding of the role of the micro-genres for students learning specialist knowledge through writing, it is necessary to refer to the more detailed results for macro- and micro-schematic structure. The results show that in many instances the micro-genres functioned implicitly as part of the argument stage of a discussion or exposition. In some cases, the micro-genre was followed by the explicit sub-stages of 'point, elaboration' for the macro-genre argument, subsuming the micro-genre within the macro-genre's structure. In other instances, the micro-genres were orthographically distinct from the argument component of the text. Table 6 shows the occurrence of micro-genres in the students' texts that were orthographically distinct, that is, organised into paragraphs (indicated by shaded areas).

The micro-genres occurring as distinct paragraphs often precede a new argument in the exposition or discussion. For example, in Text Excerpt 1 from Student 13's 2001 discussion, the taxonomic report in paragraphs 22 and 23 is embedded between one viewpoint on learning in paragraph 21 (that is, *conclusion to Vygotsky's theories*) and another area of learning developed in paragraph 24 (that is, *information processing*). The taxonomic report describes the theory of information processing and its components, yet in the macro-genre environment of the discussion, it allows the student to not only display her understanding of information processing but also to review her understanding of this theory. Thus, it can be argued that the taxonomic report appears to function in this text as a textual 'learning bridge'. In other words, the micro-genre interrupts but also bridges the argument stages of the macro-genre discussion by providing the student with the opportunity to clarify, reiterate or explain a phenomenon or concept either to herself or to demonstrate to the marker that the student has understood the concept. Furthermore, illustrative genres such as exemplums, which describe incidents in the classroom, and empirical accounts, which report on experimental procedures, are a means through which the students can link or bridge theory and practice.

Text Excerpt 1

Para	Theories of children's thinking and learning – implications for teaching Excerpt from Student 13's June 2001 discussion (Credit), unedited	Micro-genres and sub-stages of macro-genre	Macro-genre (discussion)
21	Children have a natural competence to learn, all that is needed at the beginning is the presence of learning around them. Learning will without a doubt continue to grow; however it will increase	Point Elaboration	ARGUMENT (viewpoint)

Text Excerpt 1 continued

Text Excerpt 1 continued

Para	Theories of children's thinking and learning – implications for teaching Excerpt from Student 13's June 2001 discussion (Credit), unedited	Micro-genres and sub-stages of macro-genre	Macro-genre (discussion)
22	<p>under the optimal conditions of adult-child interaction. This is where the role of teacher becomes significant. As the ultimate goal for education is to promote effective thinking, by maximising the learning acquisition process through discussion, teachers may intensify children's general intellectual development. Providing a learning environment and psychological safety within which productive learning can prosper. This would positively be an effective role for the teacher and is consistent to Vygotsky's theory of language and cognitive development rather than that of Piaget.</p> <p>Information processing is the process involved in thinking, examining how people encode, organize, interpret, store or respond to stimuli. The learning process consists of three broad stages; selectively attending to relevant stimuli received through our senses – Encoding; processing the information presented by the selected stimuli – Temporary Storage; and storing it so that it may be used at a later date – Permanent Storage (Berk, 1997). The method in which we accumulate information in essence affects our recovery of it, our prior knowledge of a circumstance or subject manipulates the way we process the information being given to us.</p>	<p>Implications</p> <p>TAXANOMIC REPORT: Description of parts</p>	
23	<p>Information processing involves both cognition – the broad range of mental processes involved in thinking and metacognition – the understanding that cognitive strategies are available to us. According to Wood (1996) children are “limited processors of information”, they have not yet gained the expertise that adults have acquired through experience this limits their ability to pay attention, organize their own learning and solve problems. Much of the research in Information Processing determines that when young children are given the proper instruction and support they are capable of performing tasks efficiently however if they were left to their own devices they may have found these tasks impossible.</p>		

Text Excerpt 1 continued

Text Excerpt 1 continued

Para	Theories of children's thinking and learning – implications for teaching Excerpt from Student 13's June 2001 discussion (Credit), unedited	Micro-genres and sub-stages of macro-genre	Macro-genre (discussion)
24	I feel that Information Processing model is extremely important to teaching if implemented in the correct way. Relating the context of a topic to what a child is already familiar with gives the child a greater chance of processing the information into their long term memory, as stated in Miller (1999), "In order to store unrelated information, the person must do something special to the material." Capturing the children's attention is a key aspect to teaching and if the children enjoy and are able to relate the meaning of the content then they are more likely to transfer the subject matter in their short-term memory to their long-term memory.	Point Elaboration	IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion and implications

The finding that, despite 'discuss' type essay questions, students could respond in discussion or exposition genres has implications for EAP and language and learning advisors working with both English-speaking and non-English-speaking background students on assignment writing. That is, the commonly used strategy of helping students to 'get started' with their writing by working with students to predict the discourse structure of their assignments from the assignment question should be seen in conjunction with the disciplinary context and its valued discursive practices. In the teacher-training context of this study, particularly in later years of the degree, the exposition genre, in which students foreground their informed opinions and arguments, appears to be more valued than discussion texts, which canvass a range of opinions before drawing conclusions. Second, the presence of genres embedded as micro-genres in the various arguments in an expository structure suggests that the micro-genres have a learning function, referred to in this paper as textual learning bridges. These embedded genres functioning as textual learning bridges appear to assist students to build up their disciplinary knowledge within an expository structure, particularly in the early stages of their degrees. This has implications for EAP teachers and language and learning advisors' understandings of discourse structure and variation in disciplinary contexts, as well as how weaker students can be assisted to clarify their meanings through writing within expository structures. A greater understanding of the types of

practices that support students' learning through writing, and how these practices are integrated into successful texts, would no doubt be of valuable assistance to struggling students. Furthermore, more research is needed in other disciplines to determine if, and to what extent, embedded genres feature in students' writing and to determine their function.

NOTES

¹ The focus on meaning features in the title of an early genre publication, *Writing to mean: Teaching genres across the curriculum* (Painter and Martin 1986).

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