

## 4 Genre in Linguistic Traditions: English for Specific Purposes

This chapter provides an overview of genre study within English for Specific Purposes (ESP), a field that bridges linguistic and rhetorical traditions. We will begin by defining ESP and identifying key similarities and differences between ESP and Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) approaches to genre, and then we will describe how ESP approaches have drawn on linguistic traditions in the process of developing their methods of applied genre study and teaching. We will examine these approaches, track major developments and critiques over the last twenty years, and then conclude by anticipating how ESP genre approaches relate to but also differ from more rhetorical and sociological approaches to genre, the subject of Chapters 5 and 6.

Positioned within the overarching category of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), English for Specific Purposes focuses on studying and teaching specialized varieties of English, most often to non-native speakers of English, in advanced academic and professional settings. ESP is often used as an umbrella term to include more specialized areas of study such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), and English for Medical Purposes (EMP). Although ESP has existed since the 1960s and although ESP researchers began to use genre analysis as a research and pedagogical tool in the 1980s, it was John Swales' groundbreaking book *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* that most fully theorized and developed the methodology for bringing genre analysis into ESP research and teaching. It is largely due to Swales' work and the research it has inspired over the last twenty years that ESP and genre analysis have become in many ways synonymous (see Belcher, Cheng).

Swales begins *Genre Analysis* by identifying two key characteristics of ESP genre approaches, namely their focus on academic and research English (which would be expanded to include occupational

English), and their use of genre analysis for *applied* ends. The applied nature of ESP has been a defining feature of the field from its inception. As Swales explains, ESP approaches can be traced to “quantitative studies of the linguistic properties . . . of *registers* of a language” for the purpose of identifying the frequency of occurrence of certain linguistic features in a particular register and then making these features the focus of language instruction (*Genre Analysis* 2). Early work in ESP thus resembled research in corpus linguistics with its quantitative studies of the linguistic properties of language varieties, and to this day research in corpus linguistics continues to influence ESP genre research (Belcher 168; Paltridge, *Genre and the Language Learning Classroom* 119-20). As Swales notes, however, ESP studies since the 1960s have “concomitantly become narrower and deeper” than those early quantitative studies (3). They are *narrower* in the sense that the focus has shifted from broader register categories such as “scientific” or “medical” language to a narrower focus on actual genre varieties used within, say, scientific and medical disciplines (Swales, *Genre Analysis* 3). At the same time, ESP analyses have also become *deeper* in the sense that they not only describe linguistic features of language varieties but also their communicative purposes and effects. This “deeper or multi-layered textual account,” Swales explains, signaled an interest in “assessing rhetorical purposes, in unpacking information structures and in accounting for syntactic and lexical choices” (3). It is in their focus on describing and determining linguistic effects that ESP genre approaches help bridge linguistic and rhetorical studies of genre.

#### ESP AND SFL: SIMILARITIES AND DISTINCTIONS

ESP’s expanded interest from descriptive analyses of linguistic features to analyses of genres and their communicative functions not only helps distinguish ESP research from corpus linguistics (for more on this distinction, see Tardy and Swales, “Form, Text Organization, Genre, Coherence, and Cohesion”),<sup>8</sup> but also reveals similarities and distinctions between ESP genre analyses and systemic functional linguistic genre analyses. There are several ways in which SFL and ESP genre approaches compare to and differ from one another. They both share the fundamental view that linguistic features are connected to social context and function. And they are both driven by the pedagogical imperative to make visible to disadvantaged students the connec-

tions between language and social function that genres embody. Such a “visible pedagogy,” according to Ken Hyland, “seeks to offer writers an explicit understanding of how target texts are structured and why they are written the way they are,” thereby making “clear what is to be learned rather than relying on hit-or-miss inductive methods” (*Genre and Second Language Writing* 11). Both ESP and SFL genre approaches are also committed to the idea that this kind of explicit teaching of relevant genres provides access to disadvantaged learners. As Hyland elaborates, “the teaching of key genres is, therefore, a means of helping learners gain access to ways of communicating that accrued cultural capital in particular professional, academic, and occupational communities. By making the genres of power visible and attainable through explicit instruction, genre pedagogies seek to demystify the kinds of writing that will enhance learners’ career opportunities and provide access to a greater range of life choices” (“Genre-based Pedagogies” 24).

While SFL and ESP genre approaches share analytical strategies and pedagogical commitments, they differ in subtle but important ways. Most obviously, they differ in their applied target audience, with SFL genre approaches generally targeting economically and culturally disadvantaged school-age children in Australia, as we saw in the previous chapter, and ESP genre approaches generally targeting more advanced, often graduate-level, international students in British and U.S. universities, who, as non-native speakers of English, are linguistically disadvantaged. This difference in target audience has important implications for how SFL and ESP approaches perceive and analyze target genres. Because both approaches teach explicitly “genres often assumed to be tacitly acquired via the normal progression of academic acculturation” but denied disadvantaged students (Belcher 169), the question of which genres to teach becomes crucial. Primary and secondary school students are not often, if ever, asked to write in what would be considered disciplinary or professional genres. As a result, SFL scholars and teachers have tended to focus their attention on what Ann Johns, following Swales, calls “pre-genres” such as explanations, recounts, or description (Johns, “Genre and ESL/EFL”).<sup>9</sup> For ESP scholars and teachers working with advanced students whose academic disciplines and professional/occupational settings are more bounded and where the genres used within those contexts are more identifiable, the analytical and pedagogical focus has been on actual, community-

identified genres used within those disciplinary settings—genres such as research articles, literature reviews, conference abstracts, research presentations, grant proposals, job application letters, academic lectures, various medical texts, legislative documents, and so on.

The differences in target audience and genre focus between SFL and ESP approaches highlight a related difference in understandings of context. Because SFL approaches generally focus on pre-genres, they have tended to define context at a fairly macro level. As we discussed in the previous chapter, SFL genre approaches locate genre at the level of “context of culture.” ESP genre approaches, however, locate genres within more specifically defined contexts (what Swales first termed “discourse communities”), where the genres’ communicative purposes are more specified and attributable. As we will discuss next, defining genre in relation to discourse community has had important implications for ESP genre approaches, allowing ESP scholars to focus on context and communicative/rhetorical purpose. At the same time, defining genre in relation to discourse community has to some degree also shifted the pedagogical purpose of ESP approaches away from the more overtly political, empowerment-motivated goals of SFL genre-based teaching to a more pragmatic, acculturation-motivated pedagogy aimed at helping advanced non-native English speaking students acquire “knowledge of relevant genres so they can act effectively in their target contexts” (Hyland, “Genre-based Pedagogies” 22).

#### DISCOURSE COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATIVE PURPOSE, AND GENRE

Three key and inter-related concepts—discourse community, communicative purpose, and genre—frame Swales’ approach to genre study. Swales defines discourse communities as “socio-rhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals” (*Genre Analysis* 9). These common goals become the basis for shared communicative purposes, with genres enabling discourse community members to achieve these communicative purposes (9).

In *Genre Analysis*, Swales proposes six defining characteristics of discourse communities. First, “a discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals” which can either be explicitly stated or tacitly understood (24-25). Second, in order to achieve and further its goals, a discourse community must have “mechanisms

of intercommunication among its members” such as meeting rooms or telecommunications technologies or newsletters, etc. (25). Third, membership within a discourse community depends on individuals using these mechanisms to participate in the life of the discourse community (26). Fourth, “a discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims” (26). These genres must be recognizable to and defined by members of a discourse community (26). Five, “in addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis” which can take the form of “increasingly shared and specialized terminology” such as abbreviations and acronyms (26). Finally, “a discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursual expertise” who can pass on knowledge of shared goals and communicative purposes to new members (27). As such, genres not only help members of a discourse community to achieve and further their goals; genres also help new members acquire and become initiated into a discourse community’s shared goals, hence the value of genre as a teaching tool within ESP.

By proposing that a genre “comprises a class of *communicative events*, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (58; emphasis added), Swales defines genres first and foremost as linguistic and rhetorical actions, involving the use of language to communicate something to someone at some time in some context for some purpose. While a communicative event can be random or idiosyncratic, motivated by a unique, distinct purpose, a genre represents a class of communicative events that has formed in response to some shared set of communicative purposes. A genre, therefore, is a relatively stable class of linguistic and rhetorical “events” which members of a discourse community have typified in order to respond to and achieve shared communicative goals.

Swales is careful to note that “exemplars or instances of genres vary in their prototypicality” (49), meaning that a text’s genre membership is not defined by “either/or” essential properties but rather along a spectrum of family resemblances, as we discussed in the section on Genre and Historical/Corpus Linguistics in the previous chapter. Since, according to Swales, “communicative purpose has been nominated as the *privileged* property of a genre” (52), a genre prototype is determined by how closely it corresponds to its communicative purpose. From there, as Swales explains, “[o]ther properties, such as form,

structure and audience expectations operate to identify the extent to which an exemplar is *prototypical* of a particular genre” (52). As such, it is the rationale behind the genre that “shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style” (58). In short, the rationale determines a genre’s allowable range of substantive, structural, syntactic, and lexical choices, and the extent to which a text exists within this range will define its genre membership.

Because a genre’s rationale as well as its schematic, syntactic, and lexical conventions are all defined against the backdrop of a discourse community’s shared goals, how members of a discourse community define genres is important to how genre analysts understand their function and structure. For this reason, ESP genre analyses, more so than SFL analyses, rely on a discourse community’s “nomenclature for genres [as] an important source of insight” (Swales 54). Such naming, as Swales suggests, can provide valuable ethnographic information into how and why members of discourse communities use genres. However, as we will examine later in this chapter, although research such as Ann John’s important work combining genre analysis and ethnography (1997) and Swales’ “textographic” study of a university building (1998) employ ethnographic strategies, the extent to which ethnographic approaches have played (or should play) a role in ESP genre analyses and the purposes for which such approaches have been used remain subject to debate.

### ESP APPROACHES TO GENRE ANALYSIS

Because it is communicative purpose (defined in relation to a discourse community’s shared goals) that gives rise to and provides the rationale for a genre and shapes its internal structure, communicative purpose often serves as a starting point for ESP genre analyses. A typical ESP approach to genre analysis, for example, will begin by identifying a genre within a discourse community and defining the communicative purpose the genre is designed to achieve. From there, the analysis turns to an examination of the genre’s organization—its schematic structure—often characterized by the rhetorical “moves” it undertakes, and then to an examination of the textual and linguistic features (style, tone, voice, grammar, syntax) that realize the rhetorical moves. The trajectory of the analysis thus proceeds from a genre’s schematic struc-

ture to its lexico-grammatic features, all the while attending to the genre's communicative purpose and the discourse community which defines it. The process is by no means linear or static, but generally speaking, it has tended to move from context to text (Flowerdew 91-92), with context providing knowledge of communicative purpose and discourse community members' genre identifications.

In *Analyzing Genre: Language in Professional Settings*, Vijay Bhatia outlines seven steps to analyzing genres, which reflect the trajectory described above. Not all ESP genre researchers will follow all these steps, and not always in the order Bhatia outlines, but together these steps provide insight into the range of ways ESP genre researchers go about conducting genre analyses in academic and professional contexts. The first step involves placing a given genre-text in its situational context. Step two involves surveying the existing research on the genre (22). With the genre identified and contextualized, step three involves refining the researcher's understanding of the genre's discourse community. This includes identifying the writers and readers who use the genre and determining their goals and relationships to one another, as well as the material conditions in which they function—in short, identifying the “reality” which the genre represents (23). Step four involves the researcher collecting a corpus of the genre. Step five introduces an ethnographic dimension, with Bhatia recommending that the researcher conduct an ethnography of the institutional context in which the genre takes place (24) in order to gain “naturalistic” insight into the conditions in which members of a discourse community use the genre. Step six moves from context to text, and involves the decision regarding which level of linguistic analysis to explore: *lexico-grammatical features* (for example, quantitative/statistical study of tenses, clauses, and other syntactic properties, including stylistic analysis) (25-26), *text-patterning* (for example, the patterns in which language is used in a particular genre, such as how and why noun phrases and nominalizations are used in different genres), and *structural interpretation* (for example, the structural “moves” a genre utilizes to achieve its goals, such as the three-move CARS [Creating a Research Space] structure of research article introductions as described by Swales). In the final step, Bhatia advises researchers to seek a specialist informant from the research site to verify findings (34).

While the extent to which step five (conducting an ethnography) is utilized in ESP genre approaches varies both in terms of its frequen-

cy and specificity, in general Bhatia's methodology for genre analysis describes the trajectory that most ESP genre approaches have taken, moving from context to textual analysis and, at the textual level, applying various levels of linguistic analyses, from lexico-grammatical features to language patterns to larger structural patterns. Swales' well-known and influential analysis of the research article in *Genre Analysis* generally exemplifies these levels of linguistic, textual, and structural analyses. For example, in analyzing research article (RA) introductions, Swales first identifies the typical "moves" authors make within the introduction (Swales and Feak have defined a "move" as a "bounded communicative act that is designed to achieve one main communicative objective" within the larger communicative objective of the genre) (35): from "establishing a territory" (move 1) to "establishing a niche" (move 2) to "occupying the niche" (move 3) (141). Within each of these moves, Swales identifies a range of possible "steps" RA authors can take, such as "claiming centrality" and "reviewing items of previous research" in move 1 and "counter-claiming" or "indicating a gap" in move 2. From there, Swales examines steps more specifically by analyzing text-patterning and lexico-grammatical features within different steps. In analyzing step 3 (reviewing items of previous research) within move 1 (establishing a territory), for instance, Swales looks at patterns of citation, noting patterns in which RA authors either name the researcher being cited in their citing sentence or reference the researcher in parenthesis at the end of the sentence or in end notes. Moving from text-patterning to lexico-grammatical features, Swales then identifies the frequency of "reporting verbs" (such as "show," "establish," "claim," etc.) that RA authors use "to introduce previous researchers and their findings" (150).

This general approach to genre analysis within ESP—from identifying purpose to analyzing a genre's rhetorical moves and how these moves are carried out textually and linguistically—and the research that has emerged from it has contributed greatly to our knowledge of discipline-specific genres, notably research articles as well as what Swales has called "occluded genres" that operate behind the scenes of research articles (genres such as abstracts, submission letters, review letters, etc.). Such knowledge has enabled graduate-level non-native speakers of English to gain access to and participate in academic and professional discourse communities (Swales, "Occluded Genres" 46).<sup>10</sup>



## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ESP GENRE STUDY

Over the past twenty years (see Diane Belcher's "Trends"), ESP genre research has focused on issues related to communicative purpose, context, and the dynamic, intertextual nature of genres. Eleven years after the publication of Swales' *Genre Analysis*, Inger Askehave and John Swales, reflecting on the notion of "communicative purpose" in light of more complex, dynamic understandings of context and cognition, wonder if "'communicative purpose' has assumed a taken-for-granted status, a convenient but under-considered starting point for the analyst" (197). They point to research that "has, in various ways, established that . . . purposes, goals, or public outcomes are more evasive, multiple, layered, and complex than originally envisaged" (197), and note how genre researches such as Bhatia had already recognized that while genre conventions constrain "allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form, and functional value, . . . these constraints . . . are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s)" (Bhatia 13). Askehave and Swales acknowledge that "we are no longer looking at a simple enumerable list or 'set' of communicative purposes, but at a complexly layered one, wherein some purposes are not likely to be officially 'acknowledged' by the institution, even if they may be 'recognized'—particularly in off-record situations—by some of its expert members" (199).

In an effort to account for the complexity of communicative purpose, Askehave and Swales suggest that researchers begin with a provisional identification of genre purpose and then "repurpose" the genre after more "extensive text-in-context inquiry" (208). For example, in his recent study of research genres, Swales examines the use of humor in dissertation defenses, arguing that the use of humor enables the achievement of the more serious purposes of the dissertation defense: The purpose and use of humor helps to "lubricate the wheels of the genre" and enables the participants in the defense to proceed "in an informal atmosphere of solidarity and cooperation" (Swales, *Research Genres* 170). More recently, Sunny Hyon has examined the multi-functionality of communicative purposes in university retention-promotion-tenure (RPT) reports. Analyzing how report writers use playfulness and inventiveness in RPT reports, Hyon suggests that while not overturning the reports' official communicative purposes,

“the inventiveness . . . may *add* unofficial purposes to these reports” (“Convention and Inventiveness in an Occluded Academic Genre” 178). Likewise, Ken Hyland has recently analyzed the strategies that academic writers use in different academic communities to construct themselves and their readers. Focusing on “stance” and “engagement,” Hyland examines how writers insert their personality into their texts through the use of hedges, boosters, and attitude markers, and how they construct their readers through the use of questions, reader pronouns, and directives (Hyland, “Stance and Engagement”). Hyland’s research demonstrates that, within the conventions of disciplinary discourses, individual writers can “manipulate the options available to them for creative and rhetorical purposes of their own” (Johns et al., “Crossing the Boundaries” 238).

In recognizing the complexity of communicative purpose and broadening the range of analysis to include “sets of communicative purposes,” recent ESP approaches to genre study acknowledge the dynamic, interactive nature of genres. In addition to analyzing occluded genres that function behind the scenes of more dominant genres, ESP genre researchers have begun also to attend to what Swales calls “genre chains,” whereby “one genre is a necessary antecedent for another” (Swales, *Research Genres* 18). Attending to networks of genres reveals that genre competence involves knowledge not only of individual genres, but also of how genres interact with one another in complex ways to achieve dynamic purposes. Bronia P.C. So has explored the implications of this complex set of relations for ESP genre pedagogy, concluding that: “To enable students to cope with a wide range of genres in today’s world, it is important to help them acquire not only the knowledge of the rhetorical context, audience, generic conventions, as well as overlaps and distinctions, but more importantly also the knowledge and understanding of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in genre writing” (77).

To examine genre intertextuality, some ESP researchers have emphasized ethnographic approaches to genre study. Ann Johns, for example, has promoted the idea of students as both genre researchers and genre theorists to help bridge the gap between what genre researchers know about genres (as complex, dynamic entities) and what student are often taught about genres (as static, fixed forms) in literacy classrooms (Johns, “Destabilizing and Enriching” 237-40; see also Johns, “Teaching Classroom and Authentic Genres”). In *Text, Role, and Con-*

*text: Developing Academic Literacies*, Johns invites students to become ethnographers of the academic contexts in which they are learning to write, including the values and expectations underlying the genres they are asked to write and what role these genres play in their academic contexts. In “Destabilizing and Enriching Novice Students’ Genre Theories,” Johns shifts the analysis to students’ own theories of genre in the context of a “remedial” EAP course, inviting students to reflect on the (often limited and limiting) theories of genre they bring with them and encouraging them “to broaden their concepts of genre and their genre repertoire” at the same time as they acquire new academic genres (244). This more auto-ethnographic approach enables students to become more “aware of the interaction between process, intertextuality, and products, and the variation among texts even within what is assumed to be a single pedagogical genre such as the research paper or five-paragraph essay” (246).

Brian Paltridge has recently described the use of ethnography in a writing course for second language graduate students at the University of Sydney, in which students interview their professors in order to find out why they want students to write in certain genres and what purposes these genres serve within the discipline. In so doing, students can deploy their “thicker” understanding of genres within their disciplinary setting in order to “negotiate the boundaries, values, and expectations of the disciplines in which they are writing” (Johns et al., “Crossing the Boundaries” 236). Such ethnographic approaches in ESP genre teaching signal a recognition among ESP genre researchers of the deeply social nature of genres, not only in the sense that genres are embedded in social contexts such as discourse communities, but also in the sense that genres help shape social contexts—a view of genre acknowledged by Ken Hyland when he writes: “It is through this recurrent use of conventional forms and communicative practices that individuals develop relationships, establish communities, and get things done. Genres therefore not only embed social realities but also construct them” (Johns et al., “Crossing the Boundaries” 237). As Swales puts it in his “textographic” study of a university building (1998), genres help connect “lifeways” and “textways” (*Other Floors*).<sup>11</sup>

Despite recent attempts to bring a more dynamic, complex understanding of genre into ESP classrooms, ESP genre approaches have been subject to critique by scholars who contend that such approaches are often subject to a pedagogy of accommodation, prescriptiveness,

and genre competence rather than genre performance. To counterbalance these motivations, some ESP scholars have called for a more critical approach to genre study and teaching within ESP.

### ESP AND CRITICAL APPROACHES TO GENRE

Sarah Benesch was one of the first EAP scholars to point out the ideological consequences of giving non-native English speaking students access to academic and professional discourse communities through explicit teaching of genre conventions (see *Critical English* and “ESL, Ideology, and the Politics of Pragmatism”).<sup>12</sup> By ignoring the ideological implications of such a pedagogy of accommodation, Benesch argues, EAP teachers unwittingly reproduce the very academic cultures of power that exclude non-native speaking students in the first place. As such, “EAP’s accommodation to traditional academic practices” may actually “limit the participation of nonnative-speaking students in academic culture” (Benesch, “ESL, Ideology, and the Politics of Pragmatism” 713). Benesch has not been alone in questioning the implications of what Pennycook has called ESP’s “vulgar pragmatism.” As noted in Belcher, Peter Master has called on ESP to be more self-reflective about its role both in spreading global English and in helping language learners meet the needs of institutions and workplaces without questioning what and whose interests these needs represent (Master 724). Likewise, Alan Luke explains that a “a salient criticism of the ‘genre model’ is that its emphasis on the direct transmission of text types does not necessarily lead on to a critical appraisal of that disciplinary corpus, its field or its related institutions, but rather may lend itself to an uncritical reproduction of discipline” (314).

Such critiques do not reject an accommodationist approach entirely, but call instead for what Pennycook calls a “critical pragmatism,” one that still aims to provide non-native speakers of English with access to genres of power and opportunity but that does so more critically. The difference between Pennycook’s “vulgar” and “critical” pragmatism hinges on what ESP researchers and teachers mean by “explicit” analysis and teaching of genres. The kind of explicit analysis and teaching called for by critical pragmatism would go beyond explicating genre patterns and features to include an analysis of the ideologies, identities, and power relations embedded in and reproduced by these patterns and features. As Brian Paltridge explains, a critical perspective

on genre “might explore the connections between discourse, language learning, language use, and the social and political contexts” while providing “students with the tools they need to succeed” (*Genre and the Language Learning Classroom* 121). Such an approach argues that effective participation within a discourse community requires more than just the ability to follow genre conventions as these relate to communicative purposes; it requires the ability to know why genres and purposes exist, whose interests they serve and whose they exclude, what they make possible and what they obscure, and so on. This more critical approach to genre, its proponents argue, shifts the focus from a pedagogy of cultural accommodation to what Pennycook calls a “pedagogy of cultural alternatives” (264), whereby students can potentially adapt genre conventions in order to represent alternative purposes and/or their own cultural perspectives.

Related to the critique of ESP’s pedagogy of accommodation has been a concern with ESP’s potentially prescriptive view of genre. Christine Casanave has warned, for example, that ESP genre-based approaches can privilege “a socially situated product perspective” (82), while Kay and Dudley-Evans observe that ESP approaches tend to focus on the teaching of “conventionalized lists of genre-identifying features” which can lead to “an imposed rather than a responsive notion of text” (311). The result can be characterized as a competence-based rather than performance-based acquisition of genres, in which students recognize and reproduce a genre’s constitutive conventions but are not as able to apply and adapt these genre conventions in response to actual communicative goals and situations.

In “Understanding Learners and Learning in ESP Genre-based Writing Instruction,” An Cheng takes up the distinction between “noticing” and “performing” genre (86). Cheng critiques ESP genre approaches for focusing too exclusively on examining target genres, and calls for more learner-and-context-focused research that “examines learners’ learning of genre and their development of generic/rhetorical consciousness” (77). The slighting of learners and learning in ESP genre approaches (a charge that could also be leveled against rhetorical genre approaches) raises important questions about what it means to use genres. To what extent does genre competence (knowledge of genre conventions) translate into genre performance? Is knowledge of genre conventions enough, or does genre performance require inter- and extra-textual knowledge that exceeds the ability of text-based

genre analyses to deliver? If genre knowledge involves more than just knowledge of genre conventions, then what does genre knowledge entail? And how do genre researchers and teachers access and identify that knowledge? Questions such as these push at the disciplinary edges of ESP genre approaches, bringing us to the boundaries and debates between ESP and Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) approaches.

The way that RGS scholars have taken up the above questions reveals important differences between ESP and rhetorical genre approaches, having to do with the sociological nature of genres and the extent to which genres can and should be taught explicitly. While both ESP and rhetorical genre scholars acknowledge the dynamic relationship between texts and contexts, and while both recognize genres as situated rhetorical and linguistic actions, RGS has tended to understand genres not only as situated within contexts such as discourse communities, but also as constitutive of contexts—as symbolic worlds readers and writers co-construct and inhabit. That is, for RGS, context provides more than valuable background knowledge regarding communicative purpose(s), discourse community members, genre nomenclature, or even genre chains and occluded genres—significant as these are. Generally speaking, then, while ESP genre scholars have tended to understand genres as communicative tools situated within social contexts, rhetorical genre scholars have tended to understand genres as sociological concepts embodying textual and social ways of knowing, being, and interacting in particular contexts.

Even when more recent ESP genre research has acknowledged the sociological nature of genres, such as when Ken Hyland, cited earlier, describes how genres “not only embed social realities but also construct them,” the emphasis of ESP genre analysis has remained on explicating genre conventions (schematic and lexico-grammatic) against the *backdrop* of the genre’s social context.<sup>13</sup> So while both ESP and Rhetorical genre approaches recognize genres as relating texts and context, the point of emphasis and analytical/pedagogical trajectory of each approach has differed, so that, generally speaking, in ESP genre study, context has been used to understand texts and communicative purposes while in Rhetorical Genre Studies, texts have been used to study contexts and social actions—in particular, how texts mediate situated symbolic actions.

The difference in emphasis between communicative purpose and social action not only reflects different analytical trajectories between ESP and rhetorical genre approaches; it also underscores different pedagogical philosophies and goals. Rhetorical genre researchers, for example, tend to question whether explicit teaching of genre is enough, arguing instead for a more immersion- and ethnographic-based pedagogy in which students encounter, analyze, and practice writing genres in the contexts of their use. Such an approach, RGS researchers argue, allows students to get at some of the inter- and extra-textual knowledge that exceeds knowledge of genre conventions and that genre users must possess in order to perform genres effectively. Around the time of Swales's *Genre Analysis*, Charles Bazerman was describing this rhetorical/sociological view when he suggested that writing instruction should go beyond "the formal trappings" of genres and instead help make students aware that "the more [they] understand the fundamental assumptions and aims of [their] community, the better able [they] will be . . . to evaluate whether the rhetorical habits [they] and [their] colleagues bring to the task are appropriate and effective" (*Shaping* 320, 323). As Mary Jo Reiff recently put it, "Making genre analysis the focal point of ethnographic inquiry . . . ties communicative actions to their contexts and can illustrate to students how patterns of linguistic and rhetorical behavior . . . are inextricably linked to patterns of social behavior" (Johns et al, 243).

The debate between explicit and more sociological approaches to genre teaching is not absolute, of course, and many genre scholars and teachers employ hybrid models that cross boundaries of the debate, as we will examine in the next two chapters and in Chapters 10 and 11. But as Diane Belcher explains, "for learners faced with linguistic and literacy barriers . . . ESP proponents contend that immersion is not enough" (171). Christine Tardy, while acknowledging genres' complexity (as a "kind of nexus among the textual, social, and political dimensions of writing"), likewise advises that, given the non-native English speaking population most often targeted in ESP genre approaches, it is necessary to compartmentalize genres. As Tardy writes, "some of the advanced ESL writers I observed, for example, had difficulty analyzing genres from a linguistic *and* rhetorical perspective and then drawing links between these features and the rhetorical scene. They found little relevance in such analysis and at times saw the complexities of genre as too abstract to be of use. Perhaps at some stages

and for some learners, more filtered or compartmentalized views of genre are also necessary” (Johns et al, 239).

This pedagogical debate and the set of theoretical questions that inform it bring us to the permeable yet dividing boundaries between not only ESP and rhetorical genre approaches, but between linguistic and rhetorical traditions in genre study. In Chapter 5, we will explore rhetorical genre theory, tracing its roots, current theories and approaches, and its analytical and pedagogical possibilities, and in Chapter 6, we will examine how these theories and approaches have informed the study and teaching of genre within Rhetorical Genre Studies.