FACILITATING AUTONOMOUS WRITING PRACTICES THROUGH GENRE AND MOVE ANALYSIS

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Introduction

Professional writers face the challenge of crafting messages through a multitude of genres, each of which is constantly evolving. In addition, the nuances of each rhetorical situation call for innovative responses. While we may be able to introduce students to key genres they will encounter in their future careers, we cannot possibly cover all of them nor offer algorithmic generalizations that apply to all rhetorical situations. Because of this, a core tenet of my teaching philosophy is to increase student capabilities to autonomously navigate the wide-range and ever-changing genre networks they will encounter in professional settings. To this end, I teach students how to become genre analysts so that they can develop transferrable skills that can be used to help them understand and write through various genres.

In this poster, I will present a theory of genre and genre analysis that can be used in professional writing classrooms. Specifically, I will present move analysis as a valuable rhetorical construct to teach professional writers. The theoretical framework I will draw upon was developed by John Swales (1990; 2004) primarily for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP)— research traditions which aim to research and develop language support for specialized applications of English. Below, I show how this genre analysis framework aids in uncovering certain aspects of genre knowledge, and I present a teaching-learning cycle in which the analytical skills can be embedded.

A Move Analysis Framework for Discovering Rhetorical and Formal Knowledge

The following analytical framework, developed by Swales (1990; 2004), can be used as a tool to help writers uncover formal and rhetorical aspects of genre knowledge. By teaching students the analytical framework, it provides them with a transferable skill that they can use to analyze genres outside of the classroom environment.

This approach aims at revealing the conventionalized discourse structure(s) of a genre, often referred to as the **rhetorical structure** or the **cognitive structure**. These structures can be seen as arising as a result of communicators developing effective strategies for accomplishing their purposes, strategies which are used time and again due to their effectiveness (Tardy & Swales, 2014). Two types of conventionalized strategies are distinguished in the framework: **moves** and **steps**. Moves are segments of a text that perform "coherent communicative functions" (Swales, 2004, p. 228-229). That is to say, they are the roles that specific parts of the discourse play in the larger discourse. They are "coherent functions" because they work together to advance the purpose(s) the text. Moves, in turn, are broken down into steps, which are specific strategies used to accomplish a move.

A well-renowned example of a move analysis is shown in Table 1 to the right. The table is based on Swales' (1990) analysis of research article introductions in scientific discourse, referred to as the CARS (create a research space) model. As can be seen, 3 moves are distinguished, with several possible steps for each move. It should be noted that this model is not a prescriptive template nor is it meant to suggest that all texts descriptively embody such a structure; rather, it is a *prototypical* structure of a research article introduction. For instance, while the move sequence in the table (move 1 → move 2 → move 3) does represent the typical arrangement of moves, writers sometimes choose alternative sequences, such as beginning with an *occupying niche move*.

Table 1: Swales' (1990) CARS Framework

MOVE & STEP	DESCRIPTION
Move 1	**Establishing a territory**
Step 1	Claiming centrality and/or
Step 2	Making topic generalizations and/or
Step 3	Reviewing items of previous research
Move 2	**Establishing a niche**
Step 1A	Counter-claiming or
Step 1B	Indicating a gap or
Step 1C	Question-raising or
Step 1D	Continuing a tradition
Move 3	**Occupying the niche**
Step 1A	Outlining purposes or
Step 1B	Announcing present research
Step 2	Announcing principal findings
Step 3	Indicating RA structure

Addressing Concerns

Here are two concerns one might raise about this approach:

1. **Will this promote prescriptive teaching?** The ESP approach to genre pedagogy has been criticized for being overly accommodationist and prescriptive (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010), and here too one might worry that move analysis will encourage students to uncritically adopt conventionalized forms. In response, I would argue that, when attempting to tackle a novel genre and novel rhetorical problems, students need models to deconstruct to help them generate ideas. Also, by analyzing multiple models, this helps them build a repository of move options and see variation across texts.

2. **Won't it take too much time to teach these technical concepts?** Training students to analyze and identify moves and steps does require a time investment; however, if instruction already targets key rhetorical concepts, such as *purpose*, *exigence*, and *rhetorical appeals*, this can add a layer of richness to the theoretical part of the class. In addition, drawing upon a simplified version of Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1965) can be a helpful way of getting students to see how all uses of language are functional. This can then be extended to larger chunks of discourse. Finally, the model presented in the preceding sections provides the scaffolding needed to help students develop this ability.

Overall, I have found move analysis to be a fruitful approach in developing genre knowledge, and it creates capabilities that students can transfer to new environments to autonomously deconstruct and reconstruct genres.

Genres and Genre Knowledge

According to Swales' (1990, 2004) framework, genres are text types defined primarily in terms of their purpose(s). As Swales (1990) puts it, **genres are "communicative vehicles for the achievement of goals"** (p. 46). This is closely related an understanding of genre as a form of social action (Miller, 1984; Bazerman, 2013), and recent L2 approaches have drawn upon both of these conceptions (Tardy, 2009; Hyland 2008), seeing genres as conventionalized responses to reoccurring situational exigencies.

To effectively carry out a genre and accomplish its purpose, students must have **genre knowledge**. Key aspects of this knowledge include the typical discourse structures, the intended audiences, the social functions, etc. Christine Tardy (2009) presents a formalized model with four component parts, shown in Figure 1 below. The integrated whole formed by these components constitutes expertise in the genre.
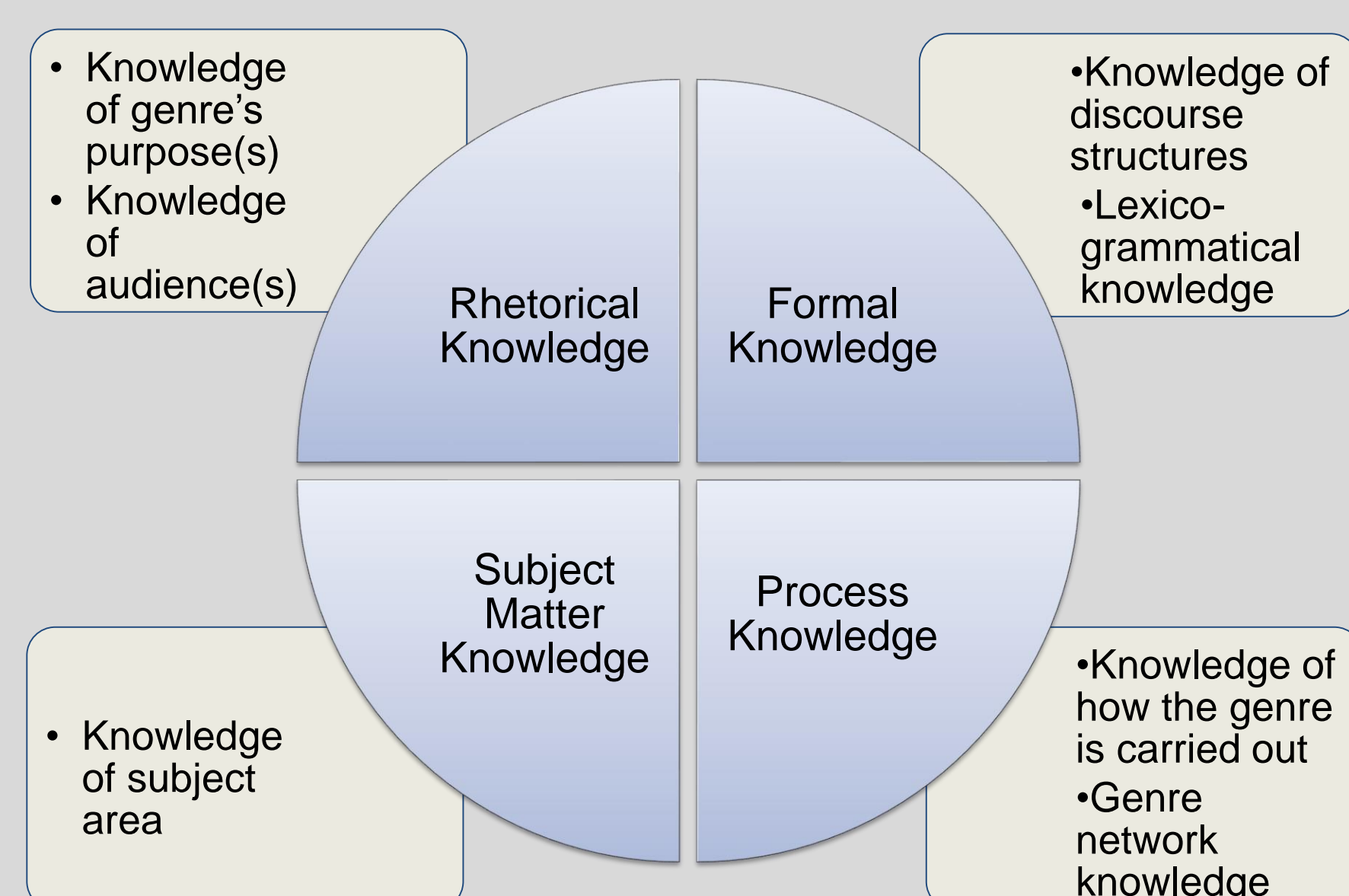

- Knowledge of genre's purpose(s)
- Knowledge of audience(s)

Rhetorical Knowledge

- Knowledge of discourse structures
- Lexico-grammatical knowledge

Formal Knowledge

Subject Matter Knowledge

Process Knowledge

- Knowledge of subject area

- Knowledge of how the genre is carried out
- Genre network knowledge

Figure 1: Genre Knowledge (adapted from Tardy, 2009)

Model Activity: Teaching Job Application Letters

The activity below describes how move analysis can be incorporated into a pedagogical framework built around teaching genres. The framework, shown in Figure 2, is a genre teaching-learning cycle, adapted from Ken Hyland's (2007) work on genre pedagogies. Based upon the systemic functional linguistic tradition, this mentoring model of learning emphasizes the importance of scaffolding and collaboration, as students move from teacher-guided deconstruction, to teacher and peer collaboration, to independent composition (Martin, 2009). The model is also highly flexible and can easily be adapted for longer and shorter projects.

The activity demonstrates how to teach cover letters within this framework, with an emphasis on how move analysis can help students discover rhetorical strategies to organize and structure their work. Cover letters are a particularly apt genre for this framework since (a) the texts are relatively short, making analysis manageable; (b) students often lack familiarity with the genre, and (c) the genre is rhetorically challenging since it requires a balance of persuasion and professionalism.

Below is a description of the four steps as well as how this would apply to cover letters:

Build Context

Analyze Models

Joint Construction

Independent Construction

Figure 2: Genre Teaching Cycle (adapted from Hyland, 2007)

1. **Build Context**: First, the rhetorical situation of the genre is analyzed and discussed, most importantly the purpose(s) and audience(s). For cover letters, this can be done by holding a class discussion, inviting students to share their experiences. In addition, it is important to situate the genre within the larger genre set or genre network (Tardy, 2009). For cover letters, this involves drawing connections with other job application genres, such as resumes and interviews.

2. **Analyze Models**: Next, sample texts are deconstructed, in this case with an emphasis on uncovering rhetorical moves and steps. After showing analyzed samples, I have students examine models in small groups. I also have the groups record their findings in a class Google Doc, which serves as a move-step repository of rhetorical options that can be drawn upon during joint and independent construction.

3. **Joint Construction**: This step involves having students collaborate either with the instructor or in small groups to jointly compose a text or text section. For example, taking a sample cover letter and removing the introductory paragraph, I ask groups to write an introduction after reading the remainder of the letter as well as the resume connected with it. We then jointly write an introduction as a class. This allows for a focus on the moves and steps in this section.

4. **Independent Construction**: Finally, students are assigned to compose a text or text section on their own. To consolidate student understanding of the moves in this genre, I have students analyze, discuss, and evaluate their rhetorical moves during peer review activities and for reflective memos. It is important to return to the context once again as part of a reflective activity.
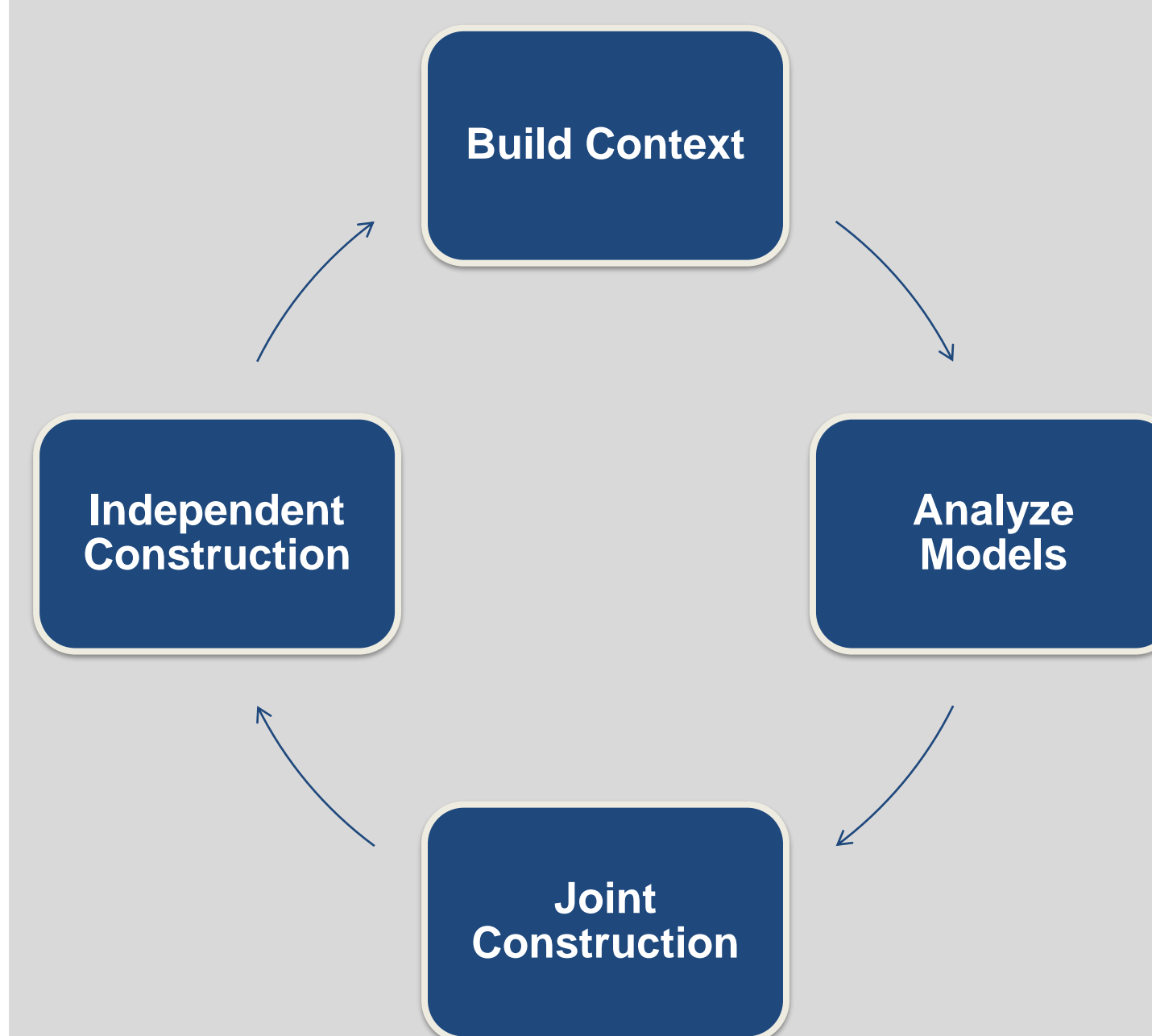
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