

Beyond the Five-Paragraph Essay in EAP Writing

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Today's Session

A practical presentation, with teaching ideas for the EAP writing class

Slides available from: jennifermacdonald.ca

The 5-paragraph essay

- Formulaic “McEssay”
- As seen on IELTS and many EAP coursebooks
- Intro--3 body paragraphs--Conclusion
- Based on personal opinion/experience (vs. external sources/texts)
- Different from an argumentative essay

Why move past the 5-p essay in EAP?

- A genre that only exists in writing courses (ESL/EAP or L1)
- Corpus data suggest other genres more common in academic study (Gardner and Nesi, 2012; others)

British Academic Written English Corpus: 13 Genre Families
(Resources: [Flax BAWE Collection](#) ; British Council [Writing for a Purpose Collection](#))

Michigan Corpus of Upper-Level Student Papers: 7 Paper Types
(Resource: [Michigan Corpus of Upper-Level Student Papers](#))

SEARCH CLEAR SEARCH

include notes & references ?

You are browsing papers in 1 discipline at 4 levels of 7 paper types with 8 textual features.

▶ STUDENT LEVELS ?

▶ NATIVENESS ?

▶ TEXTUAL FEATURES ?

▼ PAPER TYPES ?

- No Restriction
- Argumentative Essay
- Creative Writing
- Critique/Evaluation
- Proposal
- Report
- Research Paper
- Response Paper

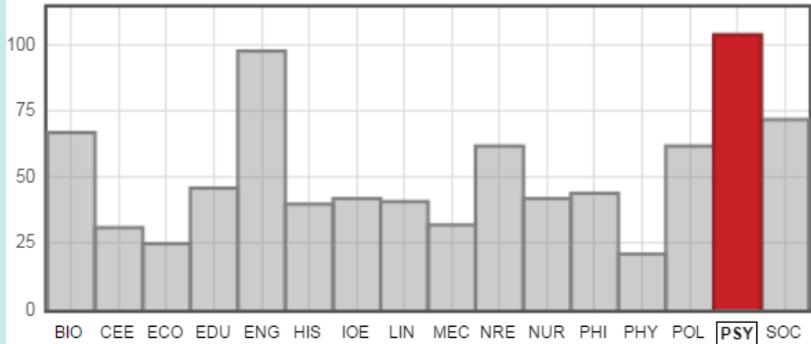
▼ DISCIPLINES ?

- No Restriction

DISTRIBUTION ACROSS DISCIPLINES

CLICK TO SELECT

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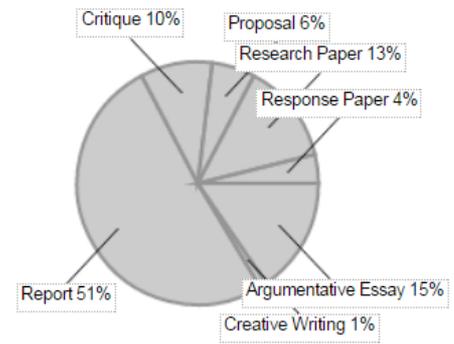
Showing 1 to 20 of 104 papers

Paper ID ?	Title ?	Discipline ?	Paper Type ?
PSY.G0.11.1	Psychology Underground of Power: Cell Phones	Psychology	Response Paper
PSY.G0.19.1	Thoughts on Positive Psychology	Psychology	Response Paper
PSY.G0.19.2	Throwing Caution to the Wind	Psychology	Response Paper

DISTRIBUTION ACROSS PAPER TYPES

CLICK TO SELECT

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BAWE Corpus

Thirteen Genre Families

1. Explanation
2. Exercise
3. Critique
4. Essay
5. Literature Survey
6. Methodology Recount
7. Research Report
8. Case Study
9. Design Specification
10. Problem question
11. Proposal
12. Empathy writing
13. Narrative Recount

Why move past the 5-p essay in EAP?

- Academic courses require students to demonstrate knowledge of a source text much more frequently than ESL/EAP courses so (Leki and Carson, 1997)
- Break the mould: Continuing to teach the 5-p essay can facilitate a (continued) uncritical approach to text: one-size-fits-all “zombie writing” (formulaic writing; canned responses; limited development of topics, lack of critical thinking, etc.)

Why move past the 5-p essay in EAP?

Differences exist between disciplines in specialist vocabulary, grammatical structures, **genres**, disciplinary conventions and expectations. (Jordan, 1997, pp. 249-250)

“**[We] empower learners** by initiating them into the ways of making meanings that are valued in their target courses and disciplines[...]

” (Hyland, 2006, p. 31).

“Both pre-sessional institutions and universities **have the responsibility to develop and maintain student motivation [by]** establish[ing] a closer link between language learning activities and content learning activities and tasks that are on university academic courses” (p. 130). (Woodrow, 2013, as cited by Gillet, 2014)

What to do?

Tackle the issue of genre in class and raise genre awareness in your students.

Genre

A simplified definition of genre:

- Different text genres for different (academic or professional) contexts
- Exemplars of a genre show similarity of purpose, audience, structure, style and content (Swales, 1990)

Genre - a simplified definition

Examples of genre: BAWE Genre Families

Explanations

Literature Surveys

Methodology Recounts

Research Reports

Critiques

Event Recounts

Case Studies

Design Specifications

Problem Questions

Proposals

Teaching genre - the footwear metaphor

- **Various genres/types of footwear:** high heels, soccer/football cleats, winter snow boots
- **Purpose.** Each has its purpose: to make its wearer look good, to provide traction and allow for speed, to keep feet warm and dry
- **Expectation of a community.** If you don't wear what's expected in that context, it can seem inappropriate.
- **Shared style/structure.** Each genre of footwear shares structural and style characteristics: (a pronounced heel, laces and spikes, rubber and lugged sole), without each pair being exactly the same.

Beyond the 5-p Essay via Genre

How?

- Teach concept of genre and get students to think about it before and during writing
- Provide resources on genre to be accessed independently
- Carry out activities to raise genre awareness in class
- Assign (for reading and writing) a variety of texts of the types students are more likely to encounter in their academic career

Resources for Genre

Easily accessible sources of authentic texts of different genres

Peer-reviewed Articles:

[Directory of Open access journals](#) ; [List of engineering publications \(Wikipedia\)](#)

Student work:

BAWE (British Academic Written English) Corpus via [Flax BAWE Collection](#) ; British Council [Writing for a Purpose](#) Collection; [MICUSP \(Michigan Corpus of Upper-Level Student Papers\)](#)

Independently Accessible resource:

[British Council - Writing with a Purpose](#)

Genre Awareness

Train students in the basics of **genre awareness**, the “rhetorical flexibility necessary for adapting...to ever evolving contexts” (Johns, 2008).

How?

- Teach concept of genre and get students to think about it before and during writing → unpacking a university writing assignment
- **Footwear metaphor:** What type of footwear do I need for this situation? What do people expect? What will everyone else be wearing?

Genre Awareness

Classroom idea: Have students carry out a genre analysis on a text from their field

- B2+
- Example: economics abstracts, biology lab reports, marketing case studies
- Gather several examples
- Analyze any number of aspects of purpose, audience, structure, style or content: sections, formatting, moves, hedging, common phrases, etc.
- Adapt the level of detail to the context

Genre

Variant: Compare and contrast reports from different fields

- The “report” is found in many fields, with differences
- Allows students from different fields to work together
- This could also be done with abstracts

Reading and Writing Beyond the 5-p Essay

Eight Academic Genres to Try in the EAP Classroom:

- Explanation
- Definition
- Methodology Recount
- Literature Survey
- Case Study
- Proposal
- Abstract
- Professional biography

Methodology Recount

Methodology Recount: “A description of procedures undertaken by the writer, possibly including Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion sections, written to develop familiarity with disciplinary procedures and methods, and additionally to record experimental findings.” (Gardner, 2011)

- Lab report.
- Find a demo of a scientific experiment on Youtube/carry out a simple science or social science experiment and write it up.
- Re-write a study published in a mass media source in this style (Scientific American, Popular Mechanics, etc.)
- Lots of examples of first-year lab reports online for exemplars

Explanation

Explanation: “A descriptive account, written to demonstrate understanding of the object of study and the ability to describe and explain systematically how it functions.” (Gardner, 2011)

- Can be a paragraph (topic sentences and paragraph-level skills can be introduced)
- What to describe? Anything! Draw on web, Youtube, Wikipedia, textbooks, students’ prior knowledge

Definition

Definition/extended definition as found in dictionaries, glossaries, encyclopedias or even (gasp!) Wikipedia

- The structures used in this genre are of particular interest: defining, impersonality, objectivity
- From Wikipedia's submission guidelines:

6 **Rule 6.** Cite, cite, cite

7 **Rule 7.** Avoid shameless self-promotion

8 **Rule 8.** Share your expertise, but don't argue from authority

9 **Rule 9.** Write neutrally and with due weight

Literature Survey

Literature Survey: “A summary including varying degrees of critical evaluation, written to demonstrate familiarity with literature relevant to the focus of study.”(Gardner, 2011)

- Present a collection of texts at a level and source appropriate to the class.
- Doesn't even have to be full texts: could be headlines or summaries or abstracts.

Case Study

Case Study: “A description of an exemplar or particular case with recommendations or suggestions for future action, typically written to gain an understanding of professional practice (e.g. in business, medicine, or engineering) (Gardner, 2011)”.

- Tricky in a mixed class without shared background knowledge
- All Ss can approach the same case, but recommend further action from the point of view of their own discipline, e.g. focus on the the Alberta Oil Industry from an economic, environmental or technological point of view
- Can also do a linguistic case study of a piece of learner writing; students will have to draw on linguistic metalanguage to describe and recommend action

Proposal

Proposal: “A text including an expression of purpose, a detailed plan, and persuasive argumentation, written to demonstrate the ability to make a case for future action” (Gardner, 2011).

- Similar approach to case study can be taken

Abstract

Paltridge (1996) analyzes the moves in an an abstract. Interesting model to read.

- Easy to compile a “micro-corpus” of abstracts from a certain field, and have students analyze them for various features: moves, use of passive, use of personal pronouns, use of different collocations
- An abstract can be written based on a student’s own research, an existing research paper, or accounts of research from easier-to-read publications like Scientific American

Professional Bio

Academic/professional biography; Twitter/LinkedIn bio

- Gather samples from conference programs, the bottom of research articles, social media
- Analyze for content, vocabulary, grammatical structures
- Students can write bios for themselves, or for famous people, historical figures, etc.

Challenges to Moving Beyond the 5p Essay

- **Adapting to your context.** Can't have full authenticity of purpose, audience, structure, style and content of texts in an EAP context with a mixed class. Aim for as many of these features as possible.
- **Work arounds for research.** Can't always draw on the authentic, discipline-specific research that certain genres would draw upon in their academic context. Get creative.

Challenges to Moving Beyond the 5p Essay

- **Finding resources.** Many textbooks don't approach text in this way. Compile your own samples, decide what to focus on.

But...!!!??!!!

- *“The essay is a really good way to teach sentence/paragraph structure!”*
- Some shorter genres even better than multi-paragraph genres for teaching sentence structure: definition, explanation, the short answer, etc.
- *“But I have no idea what genres are used in psychology/engineering/dentistry, etc.!”*
- We’re not (usually) teaching disciplinary practices, but teaching awareness of disciplinary differences
- Provide students with tools and skills necessary to observe differences and adapt to them.
- Corpora, institutional partners, discipline-specific writing books/website can help

To discuss

1) How do you raise genre awareness in your EAP classroom?

To discuss

2) Which one of these text genres would you be most likely to bring into your context?

To discuss

3) How do you deal with the question of resources?

Where do you turn to find exemplars of genres to use in class?

What commercially available resources have you found that go beyond the 5-p essay?

References

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Thanks!

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