

Secondary Publication



Akbulut, Muhammed; Reitbrecht, Sandra; Gösweiner, Antonia; u. a.

Developing genre awareness in novice academic writers in secondary education : A longitudinal intervention study on students' academic writing development

Date of secondary publication: 24.07.2026

Version of Record (Published Version), Article

Persistent identifier: urn:nbn:de:bvb:473-irb-116319x

Primary publication

Akbulut, Muhammed; Reitbrecht, Sandra; Gösweiner, Antonia; u. a. (2025): Developing genre awareness in novice academic writers in secondary education : A longitudinal intervention study on students' academic writing development, in: Pedagogical linguistics, Amsterdam: Benjamins, Online First, pp. 1–19, doi: 10.1075/pl.24017.akb.

Legal Notice

This work is protected by copyright and/or the indication of a licence. You are free to use this work in any way permitted by the copyright and/or the licence that applies to your usage. For other uses, you must obtain permission from the rights-holders.

This document is made available under a Creative Commons license.



The license information is available online:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

Developing genre awareness in novice academic writers in secondary education

A longitudinal intervention study on students' academic writing development

Muhammed Akbulut, Sandra Reitbrecht,
Antonia Gösweiner, Ida Menditti
& Sabine Schmölzer-Eibinger
University of Graz

Genre-based approaches are widely used in the pedagogy of academic writing. Although they are seen as particularly suitable for novice academic writers, there is ongoing debate about how explicitly genres should be taught. Some genre pedagogues argue that the conventional method of teaching genres — referred to as explicit genre teaching — may be overly formulaic and prescriptive. Consequently, they advocate for fostering genre awareness in novice academic writers. However, there is no solid empirical evidence to support these discussions, particularly from a developmental perspective. To address this research gap, we are conducting a longitudinal intervention study in upper secondary education to compare the effectiveness of the aforementioned genre-based approaches (explicit genre teaching vs. genre awareness approach) in the context of academic writing. In this paper, we focus on clarifying the concept of genre awareness. We begin with a brief introduction to genre pedagogy and demonstrate how the concept of genre awareness emerged as a critique of established approaches to genre pedagogy. Building on this, we present the first part of our genre-based treatments to illustrate how we operationalised the genre awareness approach in contrast to explicit genre teaching.

Keywords: genre pedagogy, writing instruction, genre awareness, explicit genre teaching, academic writing, longitudinal study, intervention study

1. Introduction

Genre-based approaches are widely used in the pedagogy of academic writing and are influential in both first and second language learning contexts (Thaiss, 2012: 18; Paltridge, 2014: 303). These approaches focus on the analysis and the teaching of specific genres, e.g. research papers (Wingate, 2012: 28). Even though genre-based approaches are seen as particularly suitable for novice academic writers by providing them with linguistic scaffolds (Russell et al., 2009: 409; Han & Hievers, 2018: 44), there is an ongoing debate about how explicitly genres should be taught. Some genre pedagogues (Devitt, 2004; Downs & Wardle, 2007; Johns, 2008; Hanson, 2009; Clark & Hernandez, 2011) have argued that the way genres are usually taught – referred to as *explicit genre teaching* (EGT) – might be too formulaic and prescriptive, failing to adequately prepare students to adapt their writing to different contexts. Thus, explicit genre teaching may cause issues regarding transferability. In response, they suggest focusing more strongly on the development of *genre awareness* in novice academic writers. By doing so, the *genre awareness approach* (GAA) seeks to enable “learning how to learn in new writing situations” (Hanson, 2009: xii).

However, there is no solid empirical basis for these discussions around the advantages and disadvantages of different genre-based approaches to teaching academic writing, especially from a developmental perspective. To address this research gap, we are conducting a longitudinal intervention study in upper secondary education in which we compare the effectiveness of the aforementioned genre-based approaches (EGT vs. GAA) in the context of academic writing.

In this paper, we focus on discussing the concept of genre awareness. More specifically, we address the following questions: What exactly do some genre pedagogues refer to, when they use the term? How can genre awareness be achieved in the classroom? How can it be operationalised as a treatment? We begin with a brief introduction to genre pedagogy, presenting different notions of genre across different genre schools. In doing so, we demonstrate how the genre awareness approach has emerged as a critique of explicit genre teaching (Chapter 2). Building on this, Chapter 3 focuses on genre awareness within the broader framework of *metalinguistic awareness*: How are these concepts related, and which facets of metalinguistic awareness does the genre awareness approach address? Finally, in Chapter 4, we present the first part of our genre-based treatments in order to illustrate how we operationalised the GAA in contrast to EGT.

2. The emergence of the concept of genre awareness in genre pedagogy

Genre-based approaches focus on the analysis and teaching of specific genres and aim to enable “students to understand and control the conventions and discourse of their discipline” (Wingate, 2012: 28). The best-known international genre-based approaches to teaching (academic) writing are *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP; Swales, 1990; Hyland, 1999), developed in the UK, and the Sydney School, which has its origins in literacy projects for primary schools in Australia and builds on the theoretical foundations of *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (SFL; Halliday, 1978; Paltridge, 1997; Rose, 2012; Rose & Martin, 2012).

Despite many parallels, the genre schools established slightly divergent notions of genre (Johns, 2008) and contributed different methodical elements to genre pedagogy. In ESP, genre refers to a class of communicative events (e.g. dissertations) (Paltridge, 2014: 303; Swales, 1990: 58), whereas in the Sydney School, genres are conceptualised at a more abstract level, distinguishing genres as, for example, descriptions, narratives or discussions (Rose & Martin, 2012: 53–57). The main common definitional aspects of genre between ESP and the Sydney School are their understanding of genres as *goal-oriented*, *social*, and *conventional* (Rose & Martin, 2012: 53–55; Swales, 1990: 58). Likewise, members of both schools assume a largely prototypical structure of genres and conduct empirical research to gain knowledge about these structures. Swales (1990) introduces the term *moves* to refer to the functional paragraphs in the discourse structure of genres. These moves achieve certain communicative intentions (e.g. establishing a territory in a scientific introduction), and they can comprise various *steps*, which, in turn, are realised through established linguistic features (e.g. claiming centrality, making topic generalisations, reviewing items of previous research) (Swales, 1990: 137–166; see also Paltridge, 2014: 303). Similarly, Rose and Martin consider genres as staged (2012: 53–55). The stages of a genre can be identified through textual analysis (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010: 176).

From an early stage on, both ESP and SFL tried to transfer their research results to teaching and learning contexts. Swales, for example, presents various activities (e.g. providing students with prototypical examples while also offering opportunities to recognise differences between genres across various discourse communities through transdisciplinary collaboration), that allow students in academic writing classes to gain genre knowledge through genre analysis and scaffolded writing activities. (e.g. Swales, 1990: Chapters 9 and 10). Other proponents of ESP or SFL have developed so-called teaching-learning cycles. These cycles comprise three to five phases (e.g. Feez, 1999; Rose, 2008) and guide learners towards writing a new genre by moving from analytical to productive work phases. The teaching-learning cycle of the Sydney School, for example, differentiates three

phases: deconstruction, joint construction and independent construction (Rose, 2008:155). The deconstruction phase guides learners in analysing prototypical texts as well as the communicative and cultural context of a genre. Joint construction means that, in the next step, the teacher and the whole class collaboratively write an example text in the target genre. In the final phase of the teaching-learning cycle (independent construction), students draft their own texts independently.

EGT is considered particularly suitable for novices in academic writing, as it provides linguistic scaffolds, follows a systematic approach, and is responsive to learners' needs (Hyland, 2008:547; Russell et al., 2009:409; Han & Hiever, 2018:44). Critics of EGT, however, argue that it is too product-oriented (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993), as well as too reproductive (Luke, 1996) and prescriptive (Prior, 1995). According to these critics, EGT might lead to formulaic knowledge that is limited to the mastery of a single genre and not transferable across different genres (Clark & Hernandez, 2011), and therefore may be demotivating in the long run (Lee, 2006). Proponents of the Writing Across the Curriculum approach (WAC) even questioned whether genres can be taught explicitly at all. According to this view, genre knowledge is tacit and can only be acquired through immersion in authentic contexts (Russell et al., 2009:409).

In reaction to the criticism of EGT, some genre pedagogues (such as Devitt, 2004; Downs & Wardle, 2007; Johns, 2008; Hanson, 2009; Clark & Hernandez, 2011; Tardy et al., 2022; Deng et al., 2024) have suggested not to teach genres too explicitly and in isolation from one another, but that genre awareness should be developed in novice academic writers. Ann Johns, who has made significant contributions to the development of this concept in recent years, defines genre awareness as the "rhetorical flexibility necessary for adapting [...] socio-cognitive genre knowledge to ever-evolving contexts" (Johns, 2008:238). According to Johns, the main premise of SFL-oriented writing curricula – teaching students a few selected, decontextualised key genres (such as exposition, discussion or historical recount) – is insufficient to prepare students for writing in real-life contexts (ibid.: 245). She emphasises that, because writing in real-life situations is highly diverse and context-dependent, it is crucial for students to develop the ability to adapt genre schemata to specific situations. As Johns (2002:239) argues, genres are abstract socio-cognitive schemata that constantly evolve in response to the changing communicative needs of discourse communities, which are influenced by social, technological and ideological shifts. She further points out that genres vary significantly in terms of prototypicality, with even widely recognised genres, such as the *research paper*, exhibiting considerable variation depending on context (ibid.: 246).

Based on this, the GAA aims to empower novice academic writers to become "good researchers into genre" (Russell et al., 2009:409) and "discourse analysts"

(Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010:184). The goal is to develop a “metacognitive understanding of genre” (Clark & Hernandez, 2011: 65) and the ability to “learn how to learn in new writing situations” (Hanson, 2009:xii). Genre awareness, therefore, focuses on “learning strategies rather than static features” (Devitt, 2004:197) and is based on the following methodological principles:

Analysing the context

In contrast to EGT, the genre awareness approach places a much stronger emphasis on a thorough analysis of the writing context. For example, Johns (2008:244) developed an extensive framework for prompt analysis, in which students are encouraged to analyse writing tasks according to important criteria such as purpose, writer’s role, content, audience, assessment, sources, etc. Devitt (2004) takes this a step further by encouraging students to immerse themselves in discourse communities using ethnographic methods such as interviews, observation logs, etc., to understand and critically reflect on the use of genres in authentic contexts. This approach is seen as pedagogically valuable, particularly for more advanced students:

In advanced composition courses, I have asked students to contact experts in using the genres they wish to study, people who have been using the genres for some period of time. From the experts and other sources, they gather samples of the genres to analyze. They interview the experts, including discourse-based interviews based on their analyses of the samples. (Devitt, 2004:201)

Comparing different genres

Comparing different genres plays a significant role in the GAA (e.g. Hyon, 2001; Johns, 2002; Devitt, 2004; Cheng, 2007; Yasuda, 2011). For instance, Johns (2002) and Devitt (2004) encourage students to compare familiar genres with unfamiliar ones to identify similarities and differences in form and function. Hyon (2001) compares diverse genres such as hard news stories, feature articles, textbooks, and research articles in terms of content, structure, language style, and purpose to raise students’ rhetorical awareness. Yasuda (2011) focuses on the genre of email and differentiates it based on varying functions (writing an e-mail to make an appointment, to express congratulations, to make an announcement, to apply for a job, etc.) in order to gain “insights into the extent to which [students] are aware of the social context and are able to use pragmatically appropriate expressions” (ibid.:119).

Destabilizing genre schemas

While EGT often aims to provide genre schemata for students to be used as templates, which then are supposed to be filled with context-appropriate content, this approach is criticised by some advocates of the GAA as being too prescriptive and “formulaic – a sort of ‘do it like this’ method” (Clark & Hernandez, 2011: 66). The GAA therefore seeks to destabilise students’ existing genre schemas from time to time and to encourage them to reflect on their subjective genre theories. Johns (2002: 246), for instance, points out that students, especially at the beginning of their studies, often have very simplistic genre theories. Thus, they tend to dismiss familiar school genres as mere expressions of opinion and, in contrast, view academic genres as being purely fact-based. By regularly destabilising students’ genre theories, the GAA aims to develop the ability for situation-appropriate schema revision. Additionally, Devitt (2004) and Coe et al. (2002) emphasise the need to reflect with students on the ideological and hegemonic implications of genres: “Who can – and who cannot – use this genre? Does it empower some people while silencing others?” (Coe et al., 2002: 6).

However, it should be noted that there are currently no studies comparing EGT with GAA to examine the assumptions put forward by genre pedagogues. It also remains unclear whether the GAA might be too demanding for novice academic writers, especially those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In addition, employing ethnographic methods in the classroom may pose some challenges. Furthermore, there is the question of whether novice academic writers might become confused if genre schemas are destabilised too early or too often.

Another gap in the research is the lack of sufficient clarification of what exactly is meant by “awareness” in the context of genre awareness. To address this issue, the next chapter will attempt to discuss the objectives of the GAA within the broader framework of metalinguistic awareness.

3. Facets of Metalinguistic Awareness in the Genre Awareness Approach

While metalinguistic awareness plays a role in all genre-based approaches, only the GAA establishes its development as a central goal. The following discussion examines the specific facets of metalinguistic awareness that the GAA emphasises.

First of all, the GAA can be linked to the concept of *textual awareness* (cf. Gombert, 1993; Feilke et al., 2014; Schicker, 2020; Akbulut & Schmölzer-Eibinger, 2023). In recent years, the concept of *textual awareness* has become a key concept in the linguistic and pedagogical discourse, especially in the German-speaking area. Textual awareness requires a reflective approach to texts, both in terms of the

text as a product and the writing process (Uebel, 2023: 219). It encompasses the capacity to “deal with text-specific linguistic units in a reflective and controlled manner” (Uebel, 2023: 189f.) and manifests itself in the “ability to communicate about texts” (Weidacher, 2007: 50), especially in “operations of evaluation and analysis of the linguistic features and deficiencies of a text” (Schicker, 2020: 50). The GAA targets the development of *textual awareness*, as it focuses on reflecting and evaluating the typical structural elements of genre-specific text types in line with their communicative objectives and functions within a given domain.

The GAA also fits in with the aim of the concept of *literal awareness* (Brockmeier, 1998). Brockmeier (1998: 228) defines literal awareness as the ability to engage with and reflect on written texts (Brockmeier, 1998: 311). In his view, literal awareness represents a reflexive approach to language that is specifically linked to the experience of writing and the options for language use offered by written communication (Brockmeier, 1998: 311). Brockmeier asserts that literal awareness is not only about texts but also about the act of writing itself. Given that written language can be viewed as “disembedded language” (Donaldson, 1978), that requires the capacity to reflect on “autonomous textual meaning” (Olson, see Brockmeier, 1998: 256), literal awareness manifests itself not only in the ability to reflect on structure but also on meaning. In this respect, literal awareness focuses not only on the reflection and evaluation of the typical structures of genre-specific texts, but also on their meaning and, beyond that, on the process of producing texts of a certain genre.

Moreover, Brockmeier claims that both language and thought can be regarded as an interwoven part of a discourse. This can be illuminated by examining the linguistic practices through which thought is expressed in language (Brockmeier, 1998: 231). In the context of writing, these are referred to as “literacy practices” (Baynham, 1995), which are shaped by domain-specific discourses and also manifest themselves in typical structures and schemata of genre-specific texts. These practices are also reflected in the GAA, particularly by destabilising and reflecting on the structural features and schemata of genres through joint reflection between learners (see Chapter 2).

The literacy practices associated with academic literacy are evident in the so-called “moves” (Swales, 1990), which can be perceived as manifestations of domain-specific language use within academic contexts. By reflecting on “moves” in academic text types, the GAA aims to promote students’ writing competence in the academic context. Therefore, this approach is designed to build confidence in the use of domain-specific literacy practices by exploiting genre-specific patterns of conventionalised language use.

However, as the communicative needs of discourse communities are in a state of constant flux (see Chapter 2), it is necessary to adopt a flexible approach

to the reflection and awareness of genre-specific texts, which is a main concern of the GAA. The GAA aims to facilitate an understanding of the genre-specific characteristics of a given text, thereby enabling adaptation to different communicative contexts. In order to facilitate the transfer of genre knowledge across contexts, it suggests concentrating on the socio-cultural practices associated with a given genre. Consequently, the question of what constitutes a genre in a specific communicative context becomes a key issue. This question can be answered primarily by a functional-pragmatic perspective (Uebel, 2023:192). In this regard, genre awareness is closely related to *pragmatic awareness*, which can be defined as an individual's knowledge about the interlocutor(s), the context, and the socio-cultural environment in which communication takes place (Eisenclas, 2011).

4. Explicit Genre Teaching vs. Genre Awareness Approach – comparing two genre-based treatments longitudinally

In this chapter, we give a detailed description of the first part of the two treatments of *EGT* (*explicit genre teaching*) and *GAA* (*genre awareness approach*), which we developed in our longitudinal intervention study. But first, a brief description of the study's research design will be presented to provide a clear understanding of the context behind the treatment development.

The research project *Developing Academic Writing – a Genre-Based Longitudinal Intervention Study* investigates the effectiveness of two genre-based approaches (EGT vs. GAA) in developing academic writing in upper secondary schools in Austria, as well as their effects on academic writing motivation. Therefore, the results of the two intervention groups are compared with the achievements of students in a control group (*implicit genre acquisition*), who only receive feedback on their academic writing performance. The longitudinal study comprises six measurement points (see Figure 1). All texts are written in German. In total, 364 students from 14 classes in 6 different Austrian schools participated in the first measurement point of the study.

At the pre-test in grade 9 (MP 1), several control variables (in particular reading comprehension [Bäuerlein et al., 2012], general intelligence [Weiß, 2019], and students' linguistic background) were assessed in addition to students' first academic writing performance and students' academic writing motivation. In grades 10 and 11, students in the two treatment groups will participate in three interventions, each immediately followed by a post-test (MP 2 to MP 4). In addition, two follow-up tests (MP 5 and MP 6) will be carried out to investigate transfer (to another genre) as well as the long-term effects of the different treatments.

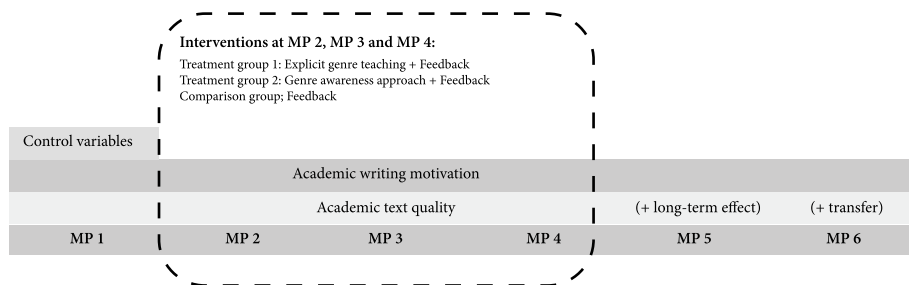


Figure 1. Design of the longitudinal intervention study (MP = measurement point)

Academic writing task

Solve the following writing task (time constraint: 100 minutes).

Dear students,

please imagine the following situation: You have passed your final school exams and now, you want to study at a university. For the application process, you are asked to write an academic paper (text length: more than 350 words) about a given subject.

The university asks you to write a text according to the following task:

Outline the scientific controversy in the three papers on the question ‘Does social media have an impact on mental health?’. Provide information on the current state of research by comparing and discussing the different positions and arguments of the authors. Finally, summarise your most important findings and draw comprehensible conclusions for research.

Figure 2. Academic writing task for the genre “Kontroversenreferat” (translated from German into English)

The genre used to assess the quality of academic texts is the so-called “Kontroversenreferat”, which was developed for academic writing instruction in German literacy classes (Akbulut et al., 2020; Bushati et al., 2018; Feilke & Lehnert, 2011). This genre requires discourse synthesis writing (Segev-Miller, 2007), in which learners synthesise (three) partly controversial scientific texts (each with an average text length of approximately 500 words) on a specific research question and derive a conclusion for the research in the field. To create a socially embedded writing situation, the writing of the “Kontroversenreferat” is imagined to take place during the admission procedure at the university. Thematically, the controversies refer to the area of health education (e.g. Does social media have an impact on mental health?) (see Figure 2).

To investigate whether an EGT cycle or a GAA shows a greater effect on the development of academic writing in an upper secondary school context, we

developed two different treatments for each of the three interventions. The following description presents the designs of both treatments for the first intervention phase at measurement point 2. The first intervention focuses on how to write the introduction to a research paper and lasts three lessons of 45 to 50 minutes each. It comprises three instructional phases (see Table 1): Both treatment groups participate in the analysis of an expert introduction (see Chapter 4.1) and in a collaborative writing task (see Chapter 4.4). However, the treatments differ in their core stage and the order of the classroom activities: Following the central design principles of EGT, students in the EGT treatment group are provided with “move posters” (see Chapter 4.2) in order to work intensively on explicit genre knowledge about introductions and the prototypical linguistic choices used to accomplish specific moves (see “In-depth work on linguistic features” in Table 1) before they fulfil the collaborative writing task. In contrast, students in the GAA treatment conduct a comparative analysis of introductions and other academic genres after writing a collaborative introduction, which allows for genre comparison and schema revision (see Chapter 4.3).

Table 1. Phases of the two genre-based treatments on scientific introductions

Explicit genre teaching (EGT)	Genre awareness approach (GAA)
Analysing a research paper introduction using move-analysis	Analysing a research paper introduction using move-analysis
Developing control over the genre: In-depth work on linguistic features of prototypical moves in research paper introductions	Collaborative writing of a research paper introduction
Collaborative writing of a research paper introduction	Schema revision: Comparing a research paper introduction to a handbook article introduction and a preface

By ensuring that both treatments are of equal duration and differ only in a core phase, which reflects the key principles of each approach, we aim to minimise the influence of confounding factors in the interpretation of our results. The following sub-chapters provide a detailed description of the different phases and their pedagogical purposes.

4.1 Analysing a research paper introduction using move-analysis

The first phase, which both treatments (EGT and GAA) have in common, introduces students to academic texts, specifically the prototypical introductions of research papers. It is based on the principles of move analysis with the aim of modelling and deconstructing a certain genre (Feez, 1999; Swales, 1990).

The sequence begins with a joint reading of a *research vignette* (i.e., a short description of a research project, containing information on the current discourse regarding the topic) on the topic of ‘mental health and social media’. Since the research vignette aligns with the topic, methodology, and research questions of the introduction that will be analysed in the next step, students can fully focus on the linguistic analysis of the research paper introductions.

After reading the research vignette, the teacher introduces the concept of ‘*moves*’, thereby explaining the prototypical structure of a research paper introduction. The following moves (see Table 2), based on Bushati et al. (2018: 54–55), are used in both treatments and are consistently colour-coded across all materials, so that they can be easily identified by the students:

Table 2. Moves of the introduction to a research paper based on Bushati et al. (2018)

Move 1	Demonstrating the relevance of the topic
Move 2	Referring to the scientific discourse
Move 3	Identifying the need for research
Move 4	Describing plans/research project
Move 5	Explaining the structure of the text/work

After being introduced to the concept of moves, students receive a worksheet containing a research paper introduction divided into five sections, each representing a prototypical move commonly found in research paper introductions. All five moves are listed in a random order at the bottom of the worksheet. The students’ task (in pairs) is to match each move to the appropriate section of the text. For instance, in the first section of the text, students are supposed to identify the move *demonstrating the relevance of the topic*. The exercise is followed by a joint discussion of the students’ results. This task allows students to build a schema for a prototypical research paper introduction and develop an initial intuition for the linguistic features used to accomplish specific moves.

In order to deepen their understanding of the genre, in the next step students are provided with a so-called *move table* (i.e. a blank table that they can use to write down typical phrases for each move throughout the treatment) and exemplary phrases to help them understand the concept. For example, together with the students, it is explored that the phrase “in recent years [...] has been the subject of much debate” is used to accomplish the move *demonstrating the relevance of the topic*. The students are then asked to find typical phrases for each move in the research paper introduction and record them in their move table. The task is followed by a group review of the results to consolidate understanding of the moves in an introduction and the linguistic choices used to accomplish them.

The aim of this phase, which both treatments have in common, is to help students understand the conventions of scientific discourse by systematically breaking down and identifying the underlying moves and associated typical formulations in research paper introductions. This not only promotes analytical thinking and text comprehension, but also enables students to recognise patterns and structures within scientific texts. Furthermore, the completed move table can be used as a scaffold (Hyland, 2008) for writing scientific introductions.

4.2 Developing control of the genre

In the second phase of the *EGT treatment* (see Table 1), students continue to engage intensively with the moves of a scientific introduction, focusing on linguistic features and exploring alternative formulations. Thus, the students (working in groups) are provided with a new research vignette (see Chapter 4.1) and five *move posters*. The five move posters (see Figure 3 for an example) provide:

- detailed information about the relevance and function of the moves in a research paper introduction,
- typical phrases that can serve as scaffolds (Hyland, 2008) for students, offering linguistic support for the realisation of the moves, and
- a paragraph from an authentic research paper in which the move is implemented.

Students are encouraged to read the move posters attentively and to use the information and linguistic scaffolds provided to them to explore different possibilities for accomplishing the five moves of a research paper. The results are recorded on worksheets as intermediate products of the writing process that can be used in the next phase of the intervention (see Chapter 4.4). This idea of breaking down text production to a clause- or paragraph-level is in line with activities provided in existing EGT approaches (see e.g. Feez, 1999: 13; Swales & Feak, 1994).

In general, this phase of the treatment aims to develop control over the genre *research paper introduction*. In order to achieve this, the activities used in this phase are consistent with key stages in EGT cycles: Similar to the text modelling and deconstructing phase in teaching-learning cycles, learners are given “opportunities to explore, manipulate and practise language” (Feez, 1999: 13). Furthermore, the activities clearly represent the benefits of EGT identified by Hyland (2008: 547), especially those of explicitness, systematicity, and support. By implication, the learning activities presented in this subchapter can be seen as typical practices of EGT, which have been criticised by proponents of the GAA for being too prescriptive and product-oriented (see Chapter 2).

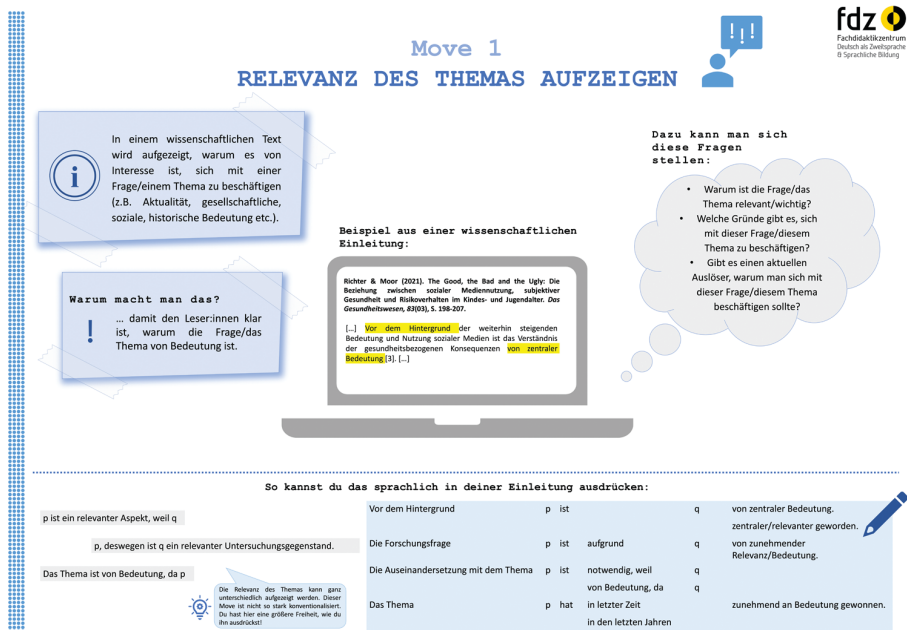


Figure 3. Move poster

4.3 Collaborative writing of a research paper introduction

As mentioned above, in both treatments, GAA *and* EGT, students are asked to write a coherent introduction to a specific research topic presented to them in their research vignettes (see Table 1). Students in the EGT treatment write their introductions based on the phrases and linguistic features that they have worked with in the two previous phases (analysis of an expert introduction, in-depth work with move posters) and which they have collected in their move tables. In contrast, the students in the GAA treatment write their introductions solely based on the moves and linguistic choices they have explored in the expert introduction (phase 1; see Table 1). The introduction is to be written on a blank poster using a different colour for each move. The students write collaboratively in small groups.

Once the scientific introductions have been drafted, the final texts are displayed around the classroom. Each group is then presented with an introduction written by another group on a different research vignette/topic than their own. The students are asked to read and analyse the introduction, focusing on the domain-specific realisation of the moves in a research paper introduction. The teacher then selects some introductions and discusses the students' results from their analysis of the text of another group.

4.4 Schema revision: Comparing a research paper introduction to a handbook introduction and a preface

In contrast to the students in the EGT treatment, the students in the GAA treatment write their own introductions immediately after the analysis of the expert introduction without further exercises focusing on linguistic features.

However, in accordance with the principles of the GAA, in the third phase of the GAA treatment, the students are confronted with further academic genres (see Table 1) and asked to compare them. This comparative approach aims to raise students' genre awareness in order to encourage them to make flexible use of the moves and linguistic features commonly found in research paper introductions. In doing so, it seeks to overcome the limitations of 'mastering a single genre', as emphasised in EGT (Clark & Hernandez, 2011), and aims to develop students' ability for schema revision (Johns, 2002) and knowledge adaptation for new writing situations.

The schema revision phase consists of three steps: First, the teacher begins by explaining that the prototypical moves of a research paper introduction should be seen as adaptable tools that need to be applied and used in different ways depending on the academic writing context. With this increased emphasis on the context of the target genre, a key principle of genre awareness approaches is realised in this treatment (Devitt, 2004: 201; Johns, 2008: 244). In addition, students are made aware that the expert introduction they analysed in an earlier stage is a prototype of an *empirical* research paper, while at the same time making students aware of the fact that not every academic text is automatically an empirical paper. In order to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of different types of academic texts, the similarities and differences between a literature review and an empirical paper are presented and discussed in the classroom.

The second step is dedicated to the comparison of different genres (see e.g. Hyon, 2001; Johns, 2002; Devitt, 2004). Students are given a worksheet with an expert introduction to a handbook chapter on social media and mental health. The text is divided into *three* sections and the students' task is to read the introduction and to analyse which moves can be found in which section. Students work in small groups to correctly match *three* of the five moves they already know from phase 1 (analysing an expert's introduction). In addition, the students have to find a move that is not marked as a separate section in the text but is part of another move (i.e. referring to the scientific discourse). Students are also asked to analyse a move that cannot be found in the introduction to a handbook chapter (i.e. identifying research needs) and to argue *why* this move cannot be found in an introduction to a handbook article. In addition, students are asked to find common phrases (for each move) in the given text that are used in scientific intro-

ductions. The results are then discussed in the classroom. The teacher emphasises that the moves do not always have to be followed in a strict order and that they can be interwoven, as the example of move 2 (referring to the scientific discourse) shows.

In the next step of this phase, further genre comparison work is conducted to deepen the understanding of different genres. Academic novices often struggle to differentiate between the linguistic choices of prefaces and introductions, so the students are given a preface to a bachelor thesis. In small groups, they are asked to read the preface and then write down similarities and differences between the preface and introduction found in various academic genres. Subsequently, the findings are again discussed in a plenary session to clarify that different moves are realised in a preface compared to a scientific introduction and that the type of language and phrases used are quite different.

The practices of genre comparison and reflection, as implemented in this phase, are central to the GAA and aim to destabilise genre schemata and guide students towards a more flexible and independent use of genres, their discourse structures and moves, and their associated phrases and linguistic features (e.g. Johns, 2002; Devitt, 2004).

5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to discuss the concept of genre awareness, which has gained prominence in academic writing discourse in recent years, and to explore how it might be defined and operationalised within the context of an academic writing intervention in upper secondary education. To this end, the most prominent genre-pedagogical approaches were introduced and traced historically, examining how genre awareness emerged as a response to critiques of the predominant genre-pedagogical approaches known as *EGT* (*explicit genre teaching*). This discussion also outlined the fundamental principles of *GAA* (*genre awareness approach*) and how these can be implemented in the classroom.

The paper then sought to illustrate how genre awareness can be situated within the broader concept of metalinguistic awareness – an endeavour that presents certain challenges, as the term metalinguistic awareness itself lacks a consistent definition and is conceptualised differently across research traditions. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated that metalinguistic awareness plays a major role in the GAA, as it aims to develop not only textual but also literal and pragmatic awareness.

Finally, it was shown how, within the *Developing Academic Writing* project, the genre-based approaches of *EGT* and *GAA* are operationalised to examine

their longitudinal impact on academic writing skills and academic writing motivation. The results of the project, the first longitudinal intervention study on academic writing, will provide insights into whether the frequently voiced criticisms of EGT are justified and whether the GAA can effectively address the problems commonly associated with EGT.

Funding

This research was funded in whole, or in part, by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [10.55776/P36976]. For the purpose of open access, the author has applied a CC BY public copyright licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript version arising from this submission. Open Access publication of this article was funded through a Transformative Agreement with University of Graz.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to the study participants for their commitment and interest in the research project. Special thanks also go to our student assistants, Victoria Gregory, Sophie Saurer, and Melanie Loitzl, for their valuable support in data collection and processing.

References

-  Akbulut, M., & Schmölzer-Eibinger, S. (2023). Sprachbewusstheit und Schreiben. In A. Wildemann, & L. Bien-Müller (Eds.), *Sprachbewusstheit: Perspektiven aus Forschung und Didaktik* (p. 141–179). Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer Fachmedien.
-  Akbulut, M., Schmölzer-Eibinger, S., & Ebner, C. (2020). Zum Begriff der Sprachbewusstheit in der Schreibforschung und -didaktik: Ein Beitrag zu seiner theoretischen und empirischen Fundierung. *Zeitschrift für angewandte Linguistik*, 1, 1–32.
- Albino, G. (2015). The effect of an explicit genre-based approach to teaching workplace writing (Doctoral dissertation). Open University, United Kingdom.
- Bäuerlein, K., Lenhard, W., & Schneider, W. (2012). *LESEN 8–9: Verfahren zur Erfassung der basalen Lesekompetenz und des Textverständnisses*. Göttingen, Germany: Hogrefe.
- Bawarshi, A. S., & Reiff, M. J. (2010). *Genre: An introduction to history, theory, research, and pedagogy*. Anderson, SC: Parlor Press LLC.
- Baynham, M. (1995). *Literacy Practices: Investigating Literacy in Social Contexts*. London, England, & New York, NY: Longman.
- Brockmeier, J. (1998). *Literales Bewusstsein: Schriftlichkeit und das Verhältnis von Sprache und Kultur*. München, Germany: Fink.
- Bushati, B., Ebner, C., Niederdorfer, L., & Schmölzer-Eibinger, S. (2018). *Wissenschaftlich schreiben lernen in der Schule*. Baltmannsweiler, Germany: Schneider.

- doi Cheng, A. (2007). Transferring generic features and recontextualizing genre awareness: Understanding writing performance in the ESP genre-based literacy framework. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26(3), 287–307.
- doi Clark, I. L., & Hernandez, A. (2011). Genre awareness, academic argument, and transferability. *The WAC Journal*, 22, 65–78.
- Coe, R. M., Lingard, L., & Teslenko, T. (Eds.). (2002). *The rhetoric and ideology of genre: Strategies for stability and change*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (Eds.). (1993). *Powers of literacy: A genre approach to teaching writing*. London, England: Falmer Press.
- doi Deng, Y., Lei, J., Jin, T., & Chen, J. (2024). Developing genre awareness in collaborative academic reading: A case study of novice academic learners. *English for Specific Purposes*, 74, 9–22.
- Devitt, A. (2004). *Writing genres*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Donaldson, M. (1978). *Children's Minds*. Glasgow, Scotland: Fontana/Collins.
- doi Downs, D., & Wardle, E. (2007). Teaching about writing, righting misconceptions: (Re)envisioning “first-year composition” as “Introduction to Writing Studies”. *College Composition and Communication*, 58(4), 552–584.
- doi Eisenchlas, S. A. (2011). On-line interactions as a resource to raise pragmatic awareness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(1), 51–61.
- Feez, S. (1999). Text-based syllabus design. *TESOL in Context*, 9(1), 11–14.
- Feilke, H., & Lehen, K. (2011). Wissenschaftlich Referieren: Positionen wiedergeben und konstruieren. *Der Deutschunterricht*, 5, 34–44.
- Feilke, H., Köster, J., & Steinmetz, M. (2014). Zur Einführung – Textkompetenzen in der Sekundarstufe. In H. Feilke, J. Köster, & M. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Textkompetenzen in der Sekundarstufe II* (p. 7–18). Stuttgart, Germany: Fillibach bei Klett.
- Gombert, J. (1993). *Metalinguistic development*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotics: The social interpretation of language and meaning*. Baltimore, MD: University Park Press.
- doi Han, J., & Hiver, P. (2018). Genre-based L2 writing instruction and writing-specific psychological factors: The dynamics of change. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 40, 44–59.
- Hanson, J. K. (2009). Knowing more than they can tell: An assessment of genre awareness among students in writing intensive zoology and civil engineering courses (Doctoral dissertation). University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH.
- doi Hyland, K. (1999). Academic attribution: Citation and the construction of disciplinary knowledge. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(3), 341–367.
- doi Hyland, K. (2008). Genre and academic writing in the disciplines. *Language Teaching*, 41(4), 543–562.
- doi Hyon, S. (2001). Long-term effects of genre-based instruction: A follow-up study of an EAP reading course. *English for Specific Purposes*, 20(1), 417–438.
- Johns, A. M. (2002). Destabilizing and enriching novice students' genre theories. In A. M. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* (p. 237–246). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

-  Johns, A. M. (2008). Genre awareness for the novice academic student: An ongoing quest. *Language Teaching*, 41(2), 237–252.
- Lee, K. (2006). The effect of genre-based instruction: Improving English writing ability in the classroom. *English Teaching*, 61(1), 257–281.
- Luke, A. (1996). Genres of power? Literacy education and the production of capital. In R. Hasan & A. G. Williams (Eds.), *Literacy in society* (p. 308–338). London, England: Longman.
-  Paltridge, B. (1997). *Genre, frames and writing in research settings*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.
-  Paltridge, B. (2014). Genre and second-language academic writing. *Language Teaching*, 47(3), 303–318.
- Prior, P. (1995). Redefining the task: An ethnographic examination of writing and response in graduate seminars. In D. Belcher & G. Braine (Eds.), *Academic writing in a second language* (p. 47–82). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.
- Rose, D. (2008). Writing as linguistic mastery: The development of genre-based literacy pedagogy. In C. Bazerman (Ed.), *Handbook of writing development* (p. 151–166). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Rose, D. (2012). Genre in the Sydney School. In J. Gee & M. Handford (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (p. 209–225). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Rose, D., & Martin, J. N. (2012). *Learning to write/reading to learn: Genre, knowledge and pedagogy in the Sydney school*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.
-  Russell, D. R., Lea, M., Parker, J., Street, B., & Donahue, T. (2009). Exploring notions of genre in “academic literacies” and “writing across the curriculum”: Approaches across countries and contexts. In C. Bazerman (Ed.), *Genre in a changing world* (S. 395–423). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.
- Schicker, S. (2020). *Förderung der Textbeurteilungskompetenz von Lernenden: Eine Interventionsstudie in sprachlich heterogenen Klassen*. Münster, Germany: Waxmann.
- Segev-Miller, R. (2007). Cognitive processes in discourse synthesis: The case of intertextual processing strategies. In G. Rijlaarsdam (Ed.), *Writing and cognition* (p. 231–250). Leiden, Niederlande: Brill.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J., & Feak, C. (1994). *Academic writing for graduate students*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
-  Tardy, C. M., Buck, R. H., Jacobson, B., LaMance, R., Pawlowski, M., Slinkard, J. R., & Vogel, S. M. (2022). “It’s complicated and nuanced”: Teaching genre awareness in English for general academic purposes. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 57, 101–117.
-  Thaiss, C. (2012). Origins, aims, and uses of writing programs worldwide: Profiles of academic writing in many places. In C. Thaiss, G. Bräuer, P. Carolino, L. Ganobcsik-Williams & A. Sinha (Eds.), *Writing programs worldwide: Profiles of academic writing in many places* (p. 5–22). Anderson, SC: Parlor Press.
-  Uebel, E. M. (2023). Sprachbewusstheit auf Textebene. In A. Wildemann, & L. Bien-Miller (Eds.), *Sprachbewusstheit: Perspektiven aus Forschung und Didaktik* (p. 181–223). Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer Fachmedien.

- Weidacher, G. (2007). Multimodale Textkompetenz. In S. Schmölzer-Eibinger (Ed.), *Textkompetenz: Eine Schlüsselkompetenz und ihre Vermittlung* (p. 39–57). Tübingen, Germany: Narr.
- Weiß, R. (2019). *CFT 20-R: Grundintelligenztest Skala 2*. Göttingen, Germany: Hogrefe.
- doi Weigate, U. (2012). Using academic literacies and genre-based models for academic writing instruction: A literacy journey. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11(1), 26–37.
- doi Yasuda, S. (2011). Genre-based tasks in foreign language writing: Developing writers' genre awareness, linguistic knowledge, and writing competence. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 20(2), 111–133.

Address for correspondence

Muhammed Akbulut
 Fachdidaktikzentrum Deutsch als Zweitsprache & Sprachliche Bildung
 Universität Graz
 Universitätsplatz 3/I
 8010 Graz
 Austria
 muhammed.akbulut@uni-graz.at

Co-author information

Sandra Reitbrecht
 Fachdidaktikzentrum Deutsch als
 Zweitsprache & Sprachliche Bildung
 Universität Graz
 sandra.reitbrecht@uni-graz.at

Antonia Gösweiner
 Fachdidaktikzentrum Deutsch als
 Zweitsprache & Sprachliche Bildung
 Universität Graz
 antonia.gösweiner@uni-graz.at

Ida Menditti
 Fachdidaktikzentrum Deutsch als
 Zweitsprache & Sprachliche Bildung
 Universität Graz
 ida.menditti@uni-graz.at

Sabine Schmölzer-Eibinger
 Fachdidaktikzentrum Deutsch als
 Zweitsprache & Sprachliche Bildung
 Universität Graz
 sabine.schmoelzer@uni-graz.at

Publication history

Date received: 18 November 2024
 Date accepted: 24 March 2025
 Published online: 12 June 2025