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Sunny Hyon, *Introducing Genre and English for Specific Purposes*

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Ann M. Johns

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RÉFÉRENCE

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- 1 In 1996, Sunny Hyon published an article in the *TESOL Quarterly* entitled “Genre in three traditions: Implications for ESL,” the first well-publicized discussion for ESL/EFL practitioners of the genre theories that have supported research and curriculum development for many years. Although officially, this article has been cited 1,258 times, it has had a much broader readership. In the process, Hyon’s article has inspired the work of others, including me, as I drew from it extensively to edit a volume for which I invited expert practitioners in the three traditions to share how their theories influenced pedagogies. In that volume, the author’s article stands out as the lone chapter focusing on genre and reading (Hyon 2002).

- 2 The 2018 volume reviewed here updates these theories, or “traditions,” but also offers considerable assistance to researchers and practitioners as we continue to extend our genre-based studies and curricula. Focused on genres of all types —written/spoken, “everyday”/academic/professional, and cross-cultural— the book is divided into three parts: Part I, a short history of ESP and an introduction to the chapters in the volume; Part II, approaches to genre analysis; and Part III, ESP genre-based learning, teaching, and assessment. Throughout the volume, Hyon includes pedagogical tasks, assisting readers, as well as their students, to understand the concepts presented and claims being made. Both the tasks and discussions are highly accessible, so we have several opportunities to delve into the material and practice its application.
- 3 Each of the parts should be of interest to readers, both experienced and novice, as the author updates and synthesizes ideas and trends in genre-based research and curriculum development. In Chapter 1, in addition to introducing the reader to the volume’s purposes and structure, the author lays out a short history, describing how the term “genre,” particularly in non-fiction written texts, became central to the English for Specific Purposes movement. The principal historical moments described generally mirror the work of John Swales’ *Episodes in ESP* (1985a), a volume that is unfortunately out of print. A second section of the Chapter 1 introduction contains an update on the three theories, or “traditions,” that Hyon introduced in her 1996 article. She points out their remaining distinctions, but notes, as well, that the theories have begun to coalesce, particularly North American Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) and ESP.
- 4 In Part II, Chapter 2, Hyon begins quite delightfully by comparing the moves of spoken and written texts with dance moves, demonstrating with photos that like dance, texts in a genre have moves which distinguish them. Yet, the author cautions: “genres, like dances, allow for variation across individual performances of their moves” (p. 27). This analogy assists the author to turn from dance to the nature of moves as *functional units* (author’s italics) in related texts that maintain “family resemblances” while sustaining

context-driven variation (pp. 16–17). Much of the remainder of this long chapter is devoted to moves analyses of varied written and spoken texts, from a birthmother letter to a bargaining session at a Chinese street market. The chapter also covers the use of expert informants' views found in moves analysis research, cross-cultural moves comparisons (both “large” and “small” cultures), and the academic introduction research made famous by John Swales (2011 [1981]). At the end, the author ties the chapter together with a summary of long-established moves analysis steps as well as a model moves analysis based on a TED talk. This chapter has the longest and most detailed discussion of both oral and written moves that I have found, a distinctly valuable resource for both teaching and research.

- 5 For the most part, Chapter 3 is devoted to explaining how corpora can assist researchers, practitioners, and students to analyze the lexico-grammatical features of spoken and written genres. Following these explanations and some tasks for completing classroom analyses using corpora, the author focuses on some of the important lexico-grammatical features that have been studied: hedges, backchannels, and stance. As is the case in Chapter 2, Hyon concludes the chapter by making connections, this time by providing a task that connects lexico-grammar and moves.
- 6 Chapter 4 takes the reader to genre contexts, initially demonstrating with mission statements how texts from a single genre can vary. The author then goes on to discuss how genres relate to each other in “systems”. The final thirteen pages of this chapter are devoted to possibilities for research into genres in context, principally through ethnographies and textographies (Swales 1998). Included are specific instructions for designing interviews and observations from a context and then for analyzing and coding the data collected. The chapter concludes with tasks devoted to critical ethnographies, an area that may be somewhat unfamiliar to ESP teachers and practitioners
- 7 Part III, “ESP genre-based learning and teaching”, turns from genre-based research to course design. In Chapter 5, arguing that “needs analysis has been a hallmark (and perhaps *the* hallmark) of ESP course design” (p. 103), Hyon devotes several pages to explaining different types of needs (target needs, learning needs, and student rights), completing this section of the chapter with a lengthy “how to conduct needs assessments” for practitioners, drawn from the work of a variety of scholars. Moving on to course design and again drawing from a variety of sources, the author suggests four curricular types: genre-focused, theme-focused, project-focused and site-focused (e.g., at the workplace), each of which is outlined in detail.
- 8 Chapter 6 is my favorite, because even as an experienced teacher, it helped me to rethink with considerable care my own practice and to absorb new ideas. Why? Twenty-five of its thirty-two pages consist of richly-described tasks, covering top-down possibilities (e.g., scaffolded text production and revision) and more sentence-based ones (e.g., noticing lexico-grammatical features) as well as tasks in which context is the focus. Expanding my pedagogical repertoire, I immediately put some of these tasks to work in my graduate writing class where, as I write this review, we are digging into the literature review.
- 9 Chapter 7 deals with some of the work on genre innovation and forms of play that are particularly interesting to the Rhetorical Genre Studies practitioners (Bawarshi 2003; Devitt 2011), though an excellent volume on the subject has also been written by Tardy (2016) whom we, in ESP, claim as our own. This chapter concludes with a discussion of

transfer, a subject made famous in composition studies by RGS scholar Elizabeth Wardle, who has argued for its centrality in the U.S. Freshman Year Composition class (2007). Hyon explains major concepts related to this topic (e.g., high road and low road transfer) and cites some of the recent research, again winding up the chapter by integrating its major topics.

- 10 I am hoping that the readers of this journal will come away from my commentary with an appreciation for the important integrative and up-dating work that Hyon has done in this volume. I have a few quibbles: some of the text exemplars (e.g., the birthmother letter) that may be unique to a small segment of the American population; more might have been devoted to assessment, often a neglected feature of curriculum design; and because I know that actors in the ESP movement quite well, I would have liked to have seen a bit more behind the scenes comments on the motivations for early work, e.g., learning why John Swales, central to the development of the ESP movement, wrote his widely-circulated textbook, *Writing Scientific English*, while he was teaching, and then not teaching, in Libya, described in John's *Incidents in educational life* (1985b), which I highly recommend.
- 11 But my complaints are minor, and perhaps even petty, compared to my appreciation for Hyon's relatively short, accessible, and useful volume. In this book, the author has succinctly updated our understanding of the theories and concepts that underlie genre in ESP. In addition, she has given practitioners and researchers a great deal to work on, and with, as we continue our efforts to improve our genre-based studies and instruction.

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