RESPONDING TO REVIEWERS – THE CASE OF A GENRE-BASED ACADEMIC WRITING TASK FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Ileana Oana MACARI[1]

ABSTRACT. *Responding to Reviewers – The Case of a Genre-Based Academic Writing Task for Doctoral Students.* This paper explores the application of genre pedagogy in teaching academic writing to doctoral students, specifically focusing on the genre of responding to reviewers' comments. Drawing on Yasuda's (2011) and Hyland's (2020) perspectives on genre analysis, as well as on insights from Shaw (2020) and Kindenberg (2021), the study aims to address two research questions: (1) Based on the task students were set, what can count as indicators of genre-awareness? and (2) Should L1 novice writers be expected to be context-aware naturally and consequently do well when they engage in this particular genre-based task? The research involved three cohorts of PhD students over three academic years, with data collected from students' written responses to reviewers' comments. The analysis focused on students' ability to recognize and utilize genre conventions, linguistic choices, and organizational strategies appropriate to the task. Results indicate that while some students demonstrated a good understanding of genre conventions and effectively addressed reviewers' comments, others struggled to adopt the appropriate tone and format, often resorting to familiar models that did not align with academic writing norms. Findings suggest that explicit instruction in genre awareness and linguistic features, coupled with practice tasks, can enhance students' proficiency in academic writing genres. The study underscores the importance of integrating genre pedagogy into writing instruction for advanced learners, offering insights for designing effective in-class activities

---

[1] **Ileana Oana MACARI** is Associate Professor of English at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the Faculty of Letters of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi. Her research and publications address English linguistics, Applied linguistics, and Romanian studies. Dr. Macari is currently working on a series of papers addressing linguistic mediation, second language acquisition, academic writing, ESP and EFL. Email: oanam@uaic.ro.

and resources. Overall, the research contributes to our understanding of genre-based approaches in teaching academic writing and provides valuable implications for L1 academic writing instruction at the university level.

REZUMAT. *Răspunsul către recenzenți - Cazul unei activități de scriere academică bazate pe genul funcțional pentru studenții doctoranzi.* Articolul explorează aplicarea pedagogiei genului funcțional în predarea scrierii academice studenților doctoranzi, concentrându-se în mod specific pe răspunsul către recenzenți. Bazându-se pe perspectivele lui Yasuda (2011) și Hyland (2020) cu privire la analiza genului, precum și pe ale lui Shaw (2020) și Kindenberg (2021), studiul își propune să răspundă la două întrebări: (1) Care sunt indicatorii de conștientizare a genului pe baza răspunsurilor studenților la comentariile recenzenților? și (2) Cercetătorii tineri care scriu în L1 se vor descurca în mod natural bine la activitățile de scriere academică bazate pe genul funcțional? Cercetarea a implicat trei cohorte de studenți doctoranzi din trei ani academici, cu date colectate din răspunsurile la comentariile recenzenților. Analiza s-a concentrat pe capacitatea studenților de a recunoaște și utiliza convențiile genului, alegerile lingvistice și strategiile potrivite activității. Rezultatele indică faptul că, în timp ce unii au demonstrat o bună înțelegere a convențiilor genului și au reacționat corespunzător, alții au avut dificultăți în adoptarea tonului și formatului adecvat, recurgând adesea la modele familiare care nu țin de normele scrierii academice. Concluziile sugerează că instruirea explicită în conștientizarea genului funcțional și a caracteristicilor lingvistice, împreună cu activități practice, pot îmbunătăți competența studenților. Studiul subliniază importanța integrării pedagogiei genului funcțional în instruirea cursanților avansați, oferind idei pentru proiectarea de activități și resurse eficiente. În ansamblu, cercetarea contribuie la înțelegerea abordărilor bazate pe gen în predarea scrierii academice și oferă implicații valoroase pentru predarea scrierii academice în L1 la nivelul universitar.

Introduction

Academic language manifested as both spoken and written texts is one of the varieties under the umbrella term *language for specific purposes* (LSP). In Hyland's view (2020, 507), the focus of the language-education component of

LSP is on its linguistic features, discourse practices, and communicative skills employed by target groups, and its subsequent success can be ensured by genre[2] analysis used to correctly identify the first two so they can be taught to learners. While noting that genre analysis is widely recognized as a valuable framework for studying specialized communication in academic, professional, and institutional context, Hyland additionally maintains that genre analysis involves describing texts within their textual and social contexts and rejects the notion of treating individual texts in isolation from their use or other texts. Pasquarelli cited by Yasuda (2011, 112) made a comparable observation in 2006 when she wrote that, "texts are shaped for different types of readers in response to particular social situations and to fulfill certain social goals".

In genre pedagogy, the interrelation between two important variables - the purpose and the audience of a text – is, according to Yasuda (2011, 112), what a writer must consider to perform social actions, because they impact the "socially recognized features of the whole text" by encompassing "the larger structures of form and style and the linguistic features at the sentence and word levels". Consequently, she claims, it is generally difficult for novice L2 writers to manage the relationship of the variables simultaneously. But it is not for novice L2 writers only, I would add[3], since Haas's (1994) description of FL academic discourse in texts, tests and textbooks[4] partly aligns with the way L1 composition classes are taught in Romanian schools at pre-university level, where the most representative examples are the famous 'literary commentaries/analyses'[5]. For that reason, when I designed the genre-based task investigated in the present study, I started from the assumption that even if students were going to be satisfactorily aware of the grammatical issues, they might be less aware of the pragmatic ones when producing the required piece of writing. I also anticipated them to share with FL writers the belief mentioned by Yasuda (2011, 112), that such texts are autonomous and context free, a belief that could make writers

---

[2] Genre in LSP refers to the different types of texts that are used within a specific field or discipline. In LSP, understanding and writing texts within various genres is essential for effective communication within professional or academic contexts.

[3] Yasuda (2011, 112) convincingly distinguishes between the writing experiences of foreign language (FL) writers (that "occur within the confines of the classroom, in which writing is often simply a medium for grammar practice or vocabulary exercises") and those of second language (SL) writers. She expects FL writers to be "more aware of grammatical issues than pragmatic issues".

[4] "tests that ask students to recall and reiterate informational content only and textbooks that always seem to be written by nobody and everybody, as if the information embodied in them was beyond human composition". (Haas cited by Yasuda 2011, 112)

[5] They are a twisted variety of reaction pieces that secondary and high school students are expected to master in national exams especially.

unable to see writing "as a social action that is performed through interactions of purpose, audience, and linguistic choice." Given the analogy of FL writers with the L1 ones in the particular context of the current task, I decided to adapt Yasuda's proposed approach and to teach a genre-based pattern as "explicit instruction" presented to the students in the form of a template they were asked to 'customize'.

Two of the significant features that characterize LSP are relevant for the present discussion: on the one hand, the formality and accuracy of its (more often than not, specialized) vocabulary and grammar and, on the other, the contribution of genres that shape texts in accordance with their specific purposes and audiences. Even a brief look at research articles, conference papers, reviewers' comments to authors and author responses, abstracts, grant proposals (as examples of categories of research genres), at essays, exam answers, reaction pieces, presentations (as learner genres) or at textbooks, websites, lab instructions (as educational genres) will validate the observation Shaw (2020, 514) makes about how LSP discourses use the grammar of the general language with altered frequency and functions of some features that partly depend on the genre. Within the framework of genre analysis, the observation of the grammatical features of the language of research articles and related texts, especially author responses to reviewers' comments, will definitely need to additionally consider hedging defined as "[t]the interplay of functional, semantic, and grammatical-lexical categories" by Shaw (2020, 518). He argues the importance of the category of hedging by pointing to one of the main difficulties in academic writing, i.e., "to adjust the strength of the claim, to make it as strong as possible while maintaining credibility and approval in the eyes of the peers who are reading it" (2020, 519).

In line with Kindenberg (2021, 1) who mentions the role of genre-based approaches in making visible "the discourse patterns that can otherwise be opaque to learners", as well as in achieving academic literacy, I find it important to add that command of the categories Shaw lists above does not come naturally even to educated native users of language who – through extensive reading or through formalized practice - still have to be exposed to models they can learn and subsequently apply more or less creatively. One of the main claims of the present investigation is that L1 novice writers can also benefit from a genre-based approach by getting to realize the causal connection text – reader - context - goal, even when they read or write texts in their native language. As I will show further on, by situating some of the activities of the course *Academic ethics and integrity* under the umbrella of LSP and resorting to techniques from the genre pedagogy approach I actually aimed at using its framework and resources to make PhD students do better in fulfilling a specific task.

The article describes an application of genre pedagogy in the form of a writing task carried out in students' and instructor's L1, Romanian, although other languages (mainly English, but also French) were used in instructor's presentations and in class discussions and references, starting from the idea that most related skills are transferable from one language into another. Because all participants were native speakers of Romanian, linguistic knowledge was not an issue, so that the concept of genre was broadly understood as a 'guiding framework' rather than as a sequence of 'recurring linguistic structures'[6]. However, the investigation of students' genre awareness was at the core of this study; in it I analyze a corpus of 63 responses. mainly relying on Martin's 1992 definition[7] that highlights the central objectives of genre pedagogy: "Genres are defined as context-embedded, staged, goal-oriented social processes, enabling meaning to be realized through various, socially expected, configurations of linguistic resources".

Research

Research subject and research setting

The focus of the instructional approach recognized as *genre pedagogy* is, in broad lines, the development of students' command of a range of text types by guiding them into understanding their organization, conventions and communicative purposes. For the task investigated in this paper, the instructor first introduced one of the genres commonly found in academic interactions at graduate and postgraduate level - responding to reviewers' comments – by showing the doctoral students two presentations followed by class discussions. Students were then asked to respond to specific comments proving they were aware of and able to use the appropriate language, organization, and communicative purposes of this genre of academic writing. As I will show further on, the task has the right potential for helping students achieve command of this genre that although commonly used in their academic discipline is still quasi- or even completely unfamiliar to them. The goal was to develop students' ability to produce and understand this type of text within its specific communicative context.

---

[6] This is a distinction mentioned by Hyland in a discussion of the pedagogical potential of genres. (2006, 48)

[7] Quoted in Kindenberg (2021, 3).

This study covers three successive cohorts of doctoral students (fall semesters 2021, 2022, and 2023) who were asked to respond to five revisions suggested by two reviewers for the improvement of a manuscript[8]. Students' responses were submitted in Turnitin in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the course *Academic ethics and integrity* included in the curriculum of the Doctoral School for Philological Studies[9].

Research aims

In Romania, although several authors have researched issues related to Romanian for Academic purposes[10], most of them intended as a guide for students' research papers (Barborică, Onu & Teodorescu 1967, Funeriu 1995, Andronescu 1997, Rădulescu 2006, Andrei et al 2007, Burcea et all 2017, Ristea, Ioan-Franc & Popescu 2017, Dincă 2018, Chelcea 2021, Boc 2022), even the most recent fail to deal with genre. This is not necessarily surprising since all the Romanian works are mainly theoretical and none describe actual procedures or assess learners as writers of academic papers. In my view, doctoral students are generally past the stage where they need to be taught the basics of writing a paper, so that their training should focus on some finer tuning that can effectively benefit from the results offered by LSP and genre pedagogy.

In the present study I started from the informed assumption that PhD students used to being very successful academically were going to have difficulty in taking criticism well[11], especially when it was directed at their first important research papers (i.e., their BA or MA theses) and that was going to blur their perception of the communication context, audience and goals. It was

---

[8] The (imaginary) reviewers' comments were actually created by this instructor and were formulated in a way that made them be applicable to any research paper regardless of their subject and topic. Students were instructed to respond to the comments as if the reviewers specifically referred to a particular manuscript of theirs.

[9] http://media.lit.uaic.ro/scoala_doctorala/program.htm

[10] In *Cum se scrie un text științific: disciplinele umaniste* (2008, 28), Ilie Rad proposes a more detailed list of the Romanian authors and their works on academic writing in Romanian research and updates it in the review of Oana Boc's *Scrierea academică în domeniul științelor umaniste* (https://ilierad.ro/oana-boc-scrierea-academica-in-domeniul-stiintelor-umaniste/).

[11] Carnovale (2019) mentions new researchers' need for practice in receiving criticism and defending their work, especially because "[s]upervisors are often so busy that the process of submission and revision is something of a mystery when starting out". She recommends the "CALM" approach - C: *Comprehend* (keep your cool!), A: *Answer* (amend or advocate!), L: *List* (make a list...check it twice!), M: *Mindful* (make it easy for the editor – they will appreciate it!) - that I include in one of my presentations in the course *Academic ethics and integrity*. I will return to the CALM approach in the Results and discussion section.

also safe to undertake that their experience with consistent formal reviewing and peer reviewing was at best limited, because only few, if any, classes at BA and MA level include in-class or follow-up feedback from instructors and peers[12].

Research questions

The main aim of this research is to see if the same results are true about L1 students and, in particular, if L1 students face similar issues when learning a genre and if exposing them to models of exchanges between reviewers and reviewees can impact the quality of their responses. Subsequently, I formulated the following research questions:

1. Based on the task students were set, what can count as indicators of genre-awareness?
2. Should L1 novice writers be expected to be context-aware naturally and consequently do well when they engage in this particular genre-based task?

Description of activity and methodology

The study is part of an ongoing project I set up in October 2021 and carried out in the fall semesters of 2021, 2022 and 2023 within the *Academic ethics and integrity* course for doctoral students in which it is a 4-hour module that accounts for 30% of the total number of class hours and 50% of the final assessment. This module focuses on one of the academic genres closely connected with academic integrity understood as honest, fair, respectful and responsible conduct in studies and academic work. It aims to familiarize students with a genre used in the process of preparing a research paper for publication and to have them understand and produce appropriate discourse. The topic of the module is *Applying the principles of ethics and integrity in academic writing. Responding to reviewers*, and, because of the potentially varied exposure of students to this genre[13], the instructor initiates in-class discussions to elicit students' opinions and to guide them in problematizing the concepts related to it. Discussions are followed by two PowerPoint presentations ("Revising your paper" and "How to prepare the revision of a journal paper") meant to illustrate

---

[12] In the Faculty of Letters of UAIC, depending on specialization (at BA level) and program (at MA level), students' participation in assessment varies from (rarely) none at all to a significant 40%. However, in many cases, the only written feedback resembling reviewing comes from students' advisors concerning their research papers.

[13] I had reasons to believe that some, but not all students had had some experience with editors and publishers during their graduate years.

the main strategies and techniques used in these processes and to have students acknowledge and reflect on their own practices, as well as corroborate them with their personal experience as writers.

Because students' responses to reviewers' comments was one of the two components in their final portfolios, I chose to put particular emphasis on the variables recognized as significant in genre pedagogy - the purpose, the context and the audience of a text. My presentation[14] included the following points: editor's decision, how to write a "Summary of changes" to answer reviewers, how to answer a reviewer's comment. All slides either contained examples or were followed by others with examples, and the last slide contained links to sites that provided further resources. All the slides were in English, but they were presented in Romanian by the instructor who led the follow-up discussion in the same language.

As students learned at the beginning of the semester, the portfolio was going to be based on one of their completed, presented, or published papers[15] and specifically on their *Introduction* and the *Conclusion*. They received a document containing the comments of two reviewers[16] and were expected to respond in Romanian or English, or, by exception, in French or Spanish. The comments were very general so that they could apply to any research papers students might choose, at the same time allowing them to 'customize' their responses. The submission deadline (mid-November to mid-January) was generous enough to let students search for other examples and models than those discussed in class and to experience for themselves how they could use them. The whole pre-writing process was meant to maximize students' exposure to genre-specific terminology and text organization.

The models shown in the presentation displayed typical comment – response exchanges and the slides included bulleted lists of basic prompts (*first say thank you to the reviewers for the useful comments…; explain how you have*

---

[14] Based on Philippe Fournier-Viger's "*How to Answer Reviewers for a Journal Paper Revision?*", https://data-mining.philippe-fournier-viger.com/answer-reviewers-journal-paper-revision/

[15] Students could choose their dissertation or bachelor's thesis or an article they had published in a journal or conference proceeding.

[16] I created two imagined reviewers' comments so that students could practice this particular type of exchange. They are as follows (in my translation from Romanian): **Reviewer 1 (R1)** *1. You need to highlight the objectives of the paper. 2. The first sentence in the conclusions section is not useful and should be removed. 3. The overview of the obtained results needs to be reorganized to highlight the confirmation of the research hypothesis/hypotheses.* **Reviewer 2 (R2)** *1. The introduction is well-written, but it is not clear from it what motivated the choice of the topic and what were the most significant problems or difficulties that had to be overcome in its realization. Please clarify. 2. From the conclusions section, the paragraph dedicated to "personal contribution" does not clearly outline the most relevant aspects that constituted your contribution to the topic.*

answered each reviewer comment …) followed by some tips for organizing the document (*create a section for each reviewer; in each section copy the comments ….; cite each comment as a quote; explain how you have addressed the comment*). During the presentation, I highlighted the specific language aspects that shaped the text for the current type of reader (i.e., the reviewer) in response to the particular context (i.e., responding to suggestions) with a specific goal (i.e., getting author's paper published), as well as some organizational characteristics such as the absence of a salutation and a closing *per se* used in other formal written exchanges. We briefly discussed the role of peer-reviewing in the publication process. At this point, following the experience with the first cohort, whose answers lacked to some extent the expected understanding of the aspects above, I asked both the 2022 and 2023 cohorts to imagine the reviewers as their doctoral supervisors. I believed that putting a face to the imaginary reviewer would help students choose a more appropriate style, tone, and format, since it is easier to respond adequately to criticism from an authority figure than from a generic person. However, this approach only partially succeeded, as evidenced by the data in the 'Results and Discussion' section.

In summary, the task undertaken as an out-of-class assignment designed to provide training for this specific genre aimed at genre acquisition and awareness is to have students respond to R1 and R2's comments in a document subsequently uploaded in Turnitin. Responses were assessed in terms of students' genre and context awareness and linguistic knowledge as shown in their writing competence.

Material and data collection

Data collection involved gathering 1st year doctoral students' written responses to the same reviewers' comments and was carried out at the end of the fall semesters of three academic years: 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024. To address the research questions, I collected and investigated one of the components in the PhD students' portfolios[17] over the said semesters.

For the purpose of this research, students' submissions in each cohort were printed and numbered, so that, for instance, the document numbered as 1 in the 2021 cohort will be identified as S1-21, and the one numbered as 11 in the same cohort will be S11-21.

---

[17] Students were instructed to submit their portfolios in Turnitin. The portfolios had two components, both written in Romanian: a final revision document and another one – a response to two reviewers' comments. The present research uses only the latter for the analysis.

Data collection, analysis and communication ensured compliance with the GDPR. I am grateful to Mr. Bogdan Constantinovici, head administrator of the Faculty of Letters, for his help in providing data for this study.

Participants

All 63 participants were 1st year students of the Doctoral School for Philological Studies[18] in three consecutive fall semesters: 2021 (n = 24), 2022 (n = 21), and 2023 (n = 18). For 62 of them, Romanian is their L1 and for one, Romanian is their L2. N = 57 majored/minored in Romanian language and literature (n = 45), in English language and literature/American studies/ Applied modern languages – English (n = 30), in French language and literature/ Applied modern languages – French (n = 22), in German language and literature/ Applied modern languages – German (n = 16), in Spanish language and literature (n = 7), in Italian language and literature (n = 1), in Russian language and literature (n = 1), in Classical languages (n = 2), in World and Comparative Literature (n = 2), or in Theology (n = 1). For 6 of them I do not have information.

At the time they took the course, students were aged 24-55 and had graduated one or even two of a wide range of MA programs[19]. Of the 63 participants, 55 were female (2021, n = 19, 2022, n = 19, 2023, n = 16) and 8, male (2021, n = 4, 2022, n = 2, 2-23, n = 2). In keeping with the direction of their research, PhD students were enrolled in the literary module (n = 32) or in the language module (n = 31), but in this course they are not grouped by discipline. Their level of competence in the language of study is native or near native.

Results and discussion

When writing in Romanian, their L1, postgraduates are normally expected to experience few difficulties with identifying the right strategies that address the requirements regarding the linguistic and organizational problems of genre-based tasks. At this stage, they have been previously exposed to a wide range of genres over their school years and especially during studies in a university, and that should have equipped them with advanced academic writing

---

[18] https://litere.uaic.ro/prezentare-2/

[19] The MA programs are: German Culture in a European Context; Didactics of French as a Foreign Language and Intercultural Education; Christian Orthodox Doctrine and Hermeneutics; Foreign Languages, Literatures and Civilizations (Classical languages); Foreign Languages, Literatures and Civilizations (Spanish); General and Romanian Linguistics; Romanian Literature and Literary Hermeneutics; Comparative and World Literature; Education Policies and Management; American Studies; Francophone Studies; European Interlinguistic and Intercultural Studies; Theory and Practice of Translation - French Language; Translation and Interpretation; Translation and Terminology.

skills like properly searching, reading and citing the literature, summarizing information effectively, convincingly organizing arguments, and selecting and utilizing the appropriate genre and register. Moreover, because most PhD students are commonly high achievers, their writings (essays, term-papers, BA and MA theses, etc.) have typically met the learning outcomes in terms of structure, organization, and linguistic choices, even when they wrote in a foreign language. This may be particularly true especially when writing in a foreign language, not only due to the extensive resources available in the English, French, Spanish, Italian or German academic writing bibliographies, but also because some of the students had actually had no previous formal instruction in the subject through a specific course. That is the case of the postgraduates who had not majored or minored in a foreign language and literature and who had studied in programs whose language of study was Romanian. They were surprisingly less exposed to models and genres of the Romanian academic language, possibly because as native speakers they were supposed to do well naturally in their L1 and to manifest an innate ability to perceive genre and contextual information[20].

The students' ability to identify the indicators of genre-awareness while completing the task was the main focus of the first research question of the study. To that end, I examined their responses and assessed how writers had performed in recognizing and utilizing the specific conventions that apply to the genre involved. By *conventions* I understand the norms that regulate the said genre (and that are popularized in various forms by countless printed and online materials), the appropriate style (including structures, sentence stems and formulaic expressions), and the format (where I mainly looked at the introduction and the arrangement of the adjacency pairs reviewer's comment – reviewee response) participants were to use. The tips included in Carnovale's previously mentioned CALM approach were also used during the assessment, and it was interesting to note that C (Comprehend - *keep your cool!*) and A (Answer - *amend or advocate!*) posed the greatest difficulties to students, L (List - *make a list...check it twice!)* the smallest and M (Mindful - *make it easy for the editor – they will appreciate it!*) somewhere in between.

In terms of style and format, a few participants omitted any form of introduction where they thanked the editor and/or the reviewers for their feedback[21] (2021 - n = 5; 2022 - n = 9; 2023 – n-7). S12-23, one of the 3 participants who answered in English unexpectedly started directly with her

---

[20] In a way, because genres are not consistently taught in Romanian universities to students whose language of study is Romanian, it is as if novice writers were expected to acquire academic Romanian rather than to learn it.

[21] See S14-22's response to R1's first comment, in my translation from Romanian: *The objectives of the paper are clearly highlighted in the introduction through the use of expressions such as "je me suis proposée" and "Ce que je me propose," etc.*

response to R1's first suggestion, and instead placed her thanks at the end. Surprisingly, factors like BA and/or MA specializations, field of study/doctoral domain and age do not seem to have consistently influenced the participants' decision to omit introductory expressions of gratitude as well as any hedging strategies. There is, however, a much higher proportion of male students who skipped the introduction: half of the male participants in 2021 (2 in 4) and both (all!) in 2022 and 2023, respectively, went straight to business.

Although the students' academic vocabulary size and linguistic knowledge of their L1 should have enabled them to control the degree of formality in their responses and to make the appropriate linguistic choices to achieve the specific goals of the given task, some actually struggled to produce the right format in the right style and involuntarily resorted to more familiar models that nevertheless do not align with current academic Romanian. The introductory sections written by three participants, S13-21, S5-23, and S9-23, all female and aged 26, 24, 32, respectively, are rather suggestive of corporate and workplace communication, a genre that is widely available not only in business places but also online. One linguistic particularity of this type of text in Romanian is the use of anglicisms and mistranslations. In S13-21's introduction, for instance, the English noun *concerns* is imperfectly equated with *preocupări*[22], and the Romanian verb *a (se) adresa* is used with the meaning 'to deal with, treat' that only exists in English: "***mă voi adresa*** *cu mare drag şi comentariilor ce vor veni.*" The same sentence is additionally illustrative of a stylistic characteristic of workplace and corporate communication, as shown by the use (marked in bold in the quotes in the footnotes) of a (too) readily friendly, if polite tone that becomes effusive at places[23] , as well as of pretentious phrases[24] that appear out

---

[22] In fact, this whole sentence seems to be imperfectly translated from English: "*Sper ca în cele ce urmează să fi răspuns tuturor* **preocupărilor** *dumneavoastră şi sper că acum textul este unul mult mai inteligibil.*" A similar situation can be noticed in S5-23's "*Vă rugăm respectuos să observaţi în rândurile de mai jos*", which brings to mind the English 'we kindly ask you to'.

[23] „**M-am bucurat la fiecare comentariu în parte**" (S13-21); "*mă voi adresa* **cu mare drag** *şi comentariilor ce vor veni*" (S13-21); "**Mii de mulţumiri** *pentru că*" (S5-23); "*Am adoptat* **cu bucurie** *majoritatea sugestiilor făcute de recenzori, acestea fiind extrem de pertinente.*" (S5-23); "*Cu drag am răspuns comentariilor dumneavoastră*" (S9-23).

[24] "**ţin să vă mărturisesc** *că acestea au contribuit considerabil la îmbunătăţirea lucrării mele*" (S13-21); "***va da naştere unui nou val de controverse***" (S13-21); "***ne-aţi oferit şansa de a avea*** *o versiune complet revizuită a lucrării [...] şi pentru că* **aţi avut amabilitatea de a ne-o** *trimite în forma cea mai corectă* [sic!]*, atât din punct de vedere gramatical, cât şi estetic,* **spre a servi cu succes la susţinerea** *publică în cadrul comisiei stabilite la nivelul Universităţii Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iaşi,* **în vederea primirii titlului de licenţiat** *în Studii Francofone.*" (S5-23); "***Apreciem timpul şi efortul pe care dumneavoastră şi recenzorii implicaţi în acest proces le-aţi dedicat pentru a oferi cele mai bune gânduri, păreri şi opinii*** *despre lucrarea noastră şi* **suntem veşnic recunoscători** *pentru comentariile pertinente şi punctuale, dar şi pentru rectificările însemnate aduse lucrării noastre.*" (S5-23); "***în speranţa că*** *acestea au fost benefice lucrării*" (S9-23);

of place in this communication context. Similar, but less extreme issues with the introduction are present in around 20% of the papers, especially where this section tended to be longer than 4-5 lines[25].

In several papers, the introduction was preceded by an opening of the kind used in e-mail messages. Thus, in the 2021 cohort, students' introductions started *Stimate doamne, stimați domni* (n = 1), *Stimate (domnule) recenzor/Stimați recenzori*[26] (n = 3), *Bună ziua* (n = 1), *Stimate domnule* + name (n = 1), *Dear editor* (n = 1); in 2022, *Stimate (domnule) recenzor/editor/Stimați recenzori* (n = 5); in 2023, *Stimată doamnă profesor*[27] (n = 1); *Stimate domnule profesor* (n = 2); *Stimate domn* (n = 1); *Stimate (domnule) recenzor/editor/Stimați recenzori* (n = 3). The fact that 6 participants omitted the appellative *domnule* (the equivalent of 'sir'/'mister') is probably the result of the influence of the English models, where such appellatives do not combine with job titles and/or names.

A total of 32 of the students in the three cohorts used the authorial *we* in their responses and that demonstrates their adherence to the rule (promoted in most Romanian guides to academic writing) stating that in the introduction and the conclusions of an academic paper (where the use of 1st person is allowed) the singular should preferably be avoided and replaced with the plural. This guideline inadvertently made students resort to the authorial *we*[28] when they answered the reviewers' comments, their responses thus acquiring a professorial tone that eventually indicates their inability to correctly identify their reader. In association with the use (and abuse!) of verbs like *a considera* ('consider')[29] and *a crede* ('think', 'believe')[30], the authorial 1st person plural may furthermore indicate that participants unpredictably have underdeveloped

---

[25] S1-22's introduction is an example of best practice: "*În primul rând, țin să le mulțumesc recenzorilor pentru observațiile utile în vederea îmbunătățirii lucrării. Am luat în considerare sugestiile primite și am făcut modificările necesare, iar în cele ce urmează puteți găsi răspunsul la fiecare observație în parte*".

[26] The automatic choice of the masculine gender would make an interesting topic for discussion, but it is outside the scope of this investigation.

[27] S9-23 selected this opening probably influenced by the suggestion I made for the students to envision themselves addressing their doctoral supervisor, hers indeed being a female professor.

[28] *Royal, Editorial, or Otherwise: The Vague "We"* (https://tweedediting.com/2010/11/royal-editorial-or-otherwise-the-vague-we/) is a great read on the topic.

[29] S1-22 used variations of *a considera, a lua în considerare, după părerea mea* 7 times in her entire response and S20-22 used the verb *a considera* in the authorial plural 4 times in only one paragraph of 168 words and 9 times total.

[30] S14-22 actually starts 4 of her 5 responses with the verb *crede*: "*Cred că prima frază din secțiune* [sic!] *concluzii nu trebuie eliminată*", "*Cred că partea de sinteză a rezultatelor obținute...*", "*Cred că introducerea acestei lucrări este bine scrisă și motivația alegerii temei este evidentă*", "*Cred că secțiunea* [sic!] *concluzii paragraful...*". She is one of the two participants who rejected all five sugestions made by the reviewers. Similarly, S17-22 starts all her responses to R1's comments with "*Nu sunt de acord cu această observație, întrucât...*".

competence in their L1 that prevents them from selecting the register appropriate for the task. When novice writers do not effectively control (all the) variables that are relevant in genre pedagogy – the purpose, the context and the reader – their texts will miss their communicative goals, as happens with S20-22's puzzling answer to R2's 2nd suggestion, in which he announces his decision to avoid personal contribution lest he should exaggerate the importance of his own work[31]. The same student, in breach of the common conventions of this genre, addresses R2 directly and even teaches them a lesson about the named personal contribution[32]. Such attitudes suggest that a few participants (probably 5 at most) struggled to see the main goal of peer reviewing. If novice writers understand that the goal of their text is to convince the reviewers that they have appropriately addressed all the suggestions so that their manuscript is more suitable for publishing, that even in peer-reviewing one party has the upper hand and that is the reader, not the author, they will get a better grasp of the task and achieve better results with the same resources.

It is true that a genre like *responding to reviewers* is not generally taught at undergraduate and graduate levels, as it involves a type of interaction typically beyond the scope of BA and MA students. Based on this, it was anticipated that some issues might arise concerning how specifically the younger participants[33] would respond to criticism. One finding was that a large proportion of the answers, over 65%, validate the idea that at pre-university level the practice of expressing opinions is more widespread than critical writing, which negatively impacts students' ability to organize a convincing argumentation. Consequently, especially (but not only) when disagreeing with the reviewers' suggestions, writers project an image of self-sufficiency and a curt tone that does not really become young researchers, as in "*Apreciez sugestia, dar sunt de părere că*" (S23-21) or "*Nu sunt de acord cu recenzia primită*" (S14-21) or "*Nu sunt de acord cu această modificare, întrucât cred că obiectivele lucrării sunt bine conturate*" (S15-23).

However, because most related skills are transferable inter-linguistically, those students who had a good command of language functions like expressing agreement and disagreement, most probably from their FL classes, did quite well and stayed more focused (for example, S16-23[34]: "*Am citit observaţia*

---

[31] "*Contribuţia personală alegem să o evităm deoarece considerăm că doar am exagera importanţa propriei noastre lucrări*"

[32] "*Contribuţia trebuie dedusă fie de cititor, fie de dumneavoastră domnule recenzor; în cazul în care ea nu poate fi dedusă, înseamnă că ea nu există, deci prin urmare orice încercare de motivare ar fi inutilă*".

[33] S1-22 was 24, S14-22 was 27, S17-22 and S20-22 were 25 at the time of the study.

[34] For whatever reasons, S16-23 replaced R1's 2nd comment with "*Există probleme de tehnoredactare*" and responded to that instead of the original one. The source seems to be the presentation in class and even the model answer in it is mirrored in her response.

dumneavoastră și, într-adevăr, la o relectură mult mai atentă am remarcat și eu faptul că obiectivele nu sunt suficient de bine evidențiate. Am extins primul paragraf al lucrării, punctând mult mai clar obiectivele urmărite pe parcursul lucrării, după cum urmează…"). As I had anticipated, almost all students came up with more constructive responses to R2's first suggestion because it opens with a positive comment ('The introduction is well-written, but…'). In fact, even those who had previously used no hedging strategies and no expressions of gratitude for the reviewers[35] were quite cooperative in this case.

A good proportion of the participants, n=56, attempted to make it easy for the editor (the M in the CALM approach) and either filled in the tables provided in the original blank document or arranged the reviewers' comments in a row, each followed by the respective answer, sometimes using alternating colors. Only 4 students (S9-21, S10-21, S8-23, S11-23) chose a less reader-friendly arrangement placing their responses in the right-side panel (like when using track changes).

The results suggest that students who did not favor critical writing skills like reflecting, researching and analyzing over the more familiar ones used in opinion writing had probably acquired only a basic understanding of the genre practiced in the task and subsequently struggled with the appropriate language choices and organizational strategies in their responses. They took less clear positions and supported their arguments less convincingly, often in the wrong tone, which translates into limited success in the current writing task.

Conclusion

I designed and developed this genre-based activity aimed at providing doctoral students with an example of a specific situation in which academic Romanian is required. It was meant to have students work on it in a L1 context that mimicked a real-life situation so that they were encouraged to identify the purpose of the response to reviewer's comments, the appropriate information that needs to be included, and the proper form. During the presentation and the follow-up discussions, students' attention was also drawn to the relationships between them (as writers) and the reviewers (as readers), by pointing to the roles and statuses of the parties involved in the peer reviewing process and to how they shaped the texts produced in terms of form, structure and content. Engaging both receptively and participatively with the task enabled novice writers to raise their awareness of a new genre and the use of its particular functions. The pedagogic phase that included teacher's presentation of models

---

[35] These participants were also the least willing to accept suggestions and to express disagreement based on other arguments than personal opinions and beliefs.

and explicit explanations played a crucial role by preparing students to show what they have learned through the task they were to submit.

Mastery of academic language can be difficult even for native speakers[36], because it requires knowledge of linguistic norms and awareness of contextual language besides syntactic rules. Some formulaic, genre-specific expressions and sentence stems were introduced explicitly in the presentation, then other examples were provided and discussed with the class so that students could also understand the suitable degree of formality and the appropriateness of linguistic choices in the given context. Most of these expressions, phrases, and examples were translated into Romanian from English by the instructor, who based this decision on three assumptions: the Romanian literature does not consistently provide such models, novice writers do not necessarily have an innate command of the genres and conventions of their L1 academic language, related knowledge and skills are largely transferable between languages. These assumptions underpin the belief that the current genre-based task can be useful beyond this specific class. Students, for instance, can revisit the proposed model whenever necessary and use it as a template to write responses in any language required, thus transforming an exam requirement into a convenient reference.

To acquire genre awareness students were guided to explore the conventions of this academic genre starting from the idea that the rapport between the writer and the reader is established through the text that needs to be shaped in accordance with the goals, audience and context of communication. In terms of practice and pedagogy in L1 academic writing, this investigation proposes a model task that can be replicated, recreated and adapted when designing in-class activities for L1 and/or L2 writing classes for advanced university-level learners.

WORKS CITED

Carnovale, Catherine. 2019. "How to respond to reviewer comments – the CALM way." April 3. Accessed March 2024. https://www.elsevier.com/connect/how-to-respond-to-reviewer-comments-the-calm-way.

Cheng, Angelia Poon Mui. 2006. "Understanding learners and learning in ESP genre-based writing instruction." *English for Specific Purposes* 25: 76-89.

Ennis, Michael Joseph, and Jemma Prior. 2020. *Approaches to English for Specific and Academic Purposes: Perspectives on Teaching and Assessing in Tertiary and Adult Education.* bu, Press.

---

[36] Yearly, mass media offer counterexamples from secondary and high school students' production in the national exams.

Gnutzmann, C. 2009. "19. Language for specific purposes vs. general language." In *Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning.*, edited by K. Knapp and B Seidlhofer, 517-544. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton. doi: https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214.

Hyland, Ken. 2006. *English for academic purposes: an advanced resource book.* Routledge.

Hyland, Ken. 2020. "Genre and Discourse Analysis in Language for Specific Purposes." In *The Concise Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, edited by Carol A. Chapelle, 507-513. Singapore: Wiley Blackwell.

Hyon, Sunny. 2018. *Introducing Genre and English for Specific Purposes (Routledge Introductions to English for Specific Purposes).* 1st. Routledge.

Kindenberg, Björn. 2021. "Fixed and flexible, correct and wise: A case of genre-based content-area writing." *Linguistics and Education* 64: 1-12.

Martin, Jeannett. 1992. "Genre and Literacy-Modeling Context in Educational Linguistics." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 13: 141 - 172.

Ötügen, R., M. Takkaç, and O. Yağız. 2021. "Genre analysis in ESP: A review of move analysis models and metadiscourse taxonomies." *e- Kafkas Eğitim Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8: 67-85.

Shaw, Philip M. 2020. "Grammar in Academic Writing." In *The concise encyclopedia of applied linguistics*, edited by Carol A. Chapelle, 514-521. Singapore: Wiley Blackwell.

Tao, Hongyin, and Howard Hao-Jan Chen. 2019. "Chinese for Specific/Professional Purposes: An Introduction." In *Chinese for Specific and Professional Purposes. Theory, Pedagogical Applications, and Practices*, edited by Hongyin Tao and Howard Hao-Jan Chen, vi- xiii. Springer.

Tardy, Christine M. 2020. "Genre-Based Language Teaching." In *The Concise Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, edited by Carol A. Chapelle, 503-506. Singapore: Wiley Blackwell.

Wang, Haidan. 2019. "From Construction of Meanings to Meaning Design: A Literacy and Genre-Focused Approach to Academic Chinese." In *Chinese for Specific and Professional Purposes. Theory, Pedagogical Applications, and Practices*, edited by Hongyin Tao and Howard Hao-Jan Chen, 3-24. Springer

Williams, Erica J. 2018. "Teaching and Assessment of Presentation Skills." In *English for Specific Purposes: A Multidimensional Challenge, 9th UAS Language Instructors Conference Proceedings, 25 – 26 May 2018*, 171-174. University of Applied Sciences, FH Technikum Wien.

Yasuda, Sachiko. 2011. "Genre-based tasks in foreign language writing: Developing writers' genre awareness, linguistic knowledge, and writing competence." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 20: 111-133.