

Towards Rhetorical Genre Studies Some Conceptual Implications and Practical Considerations in Teaching Writing

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Abstract

Rhetorical genre studies have been seen as a critical shift in the theory of understanding writing — a contextualized and situated nature of genre. Educators have been seeking to realize this socio-rhetorical theory in the classrooms and have found it daunting. This study seeks to briefly discuss the key concept of social action and implications to pedagogy: cultivation of mindset, metacognition, and inquiry-based approach. This is followed by a description of an attempt to implement a rhetorical genre studies classroom in Rikkyo University, reflecting on its implications the implications. The study reveals some challenges faced in a rhetorical genre studies classroom: situatedness of writing scene and assessment of metacognition.

Keywords: *rhetorical genre studies, reading and writing, theory, course design, classroom practice*

Introduction

Pedagogical considerations have always been a challenge for situated approaches to writing such as rhetorical genre studies (RGS). Writing acts are increasingly seen as “complex social participatory performance, in which the writer asserts meaning, goals, actions, affiliations, and identities within a constantly changing, contingently organized social world, relying on shared texts and knowledge” (Bazerman, 2013, p. 11). This understanding of writing as a highly contextualized and situated act within an activity system is shifting the teaching of reading and writing away from a narrow understanding about writing. As we approximate closer in our understanding of writing and its writing process, the challenge is to design a curriculum that best reflects these complexities. Traditional teaching of writing has become increasingly unsatisfactory today where genres are merging and transforming in our postmodern world (Miller & Kelly, 2017). Students are reading visual essays and interactive e-textbooks while writing a vlog, infographics, or twitterature (Aciman & Rensin, 2009). The conventional way of teaching writing does not seem to take into account these new genres, including emerging ones. The progression from product and process writing to genre analysis is a testament of this dissatisfaction. In recent decades, the introduction of genre analysis and emphasis on rhetoric have in many ways attempted to address this dissatisfaction. Today, RGS has emerged as one having the brightest prospect, having “a profound impact on the study and teaching of writing” (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p 3).

The department responsible for the teaching of reading and writing courses at Rikkyo University was revisiting the writing curriculum and saw the need to revise the curriculum to respond to the changing landscape of the writing scene. As part of the committee, I decided to trial RGS in one semester and this paper is a description of that attempt. RGS may be a relatively new concept in the teaching writing at Rikkyo University and its choice is deliberate because of its apt representation of the natural thinking processes of a reader reading and a writer writing, under authentic settings. A critical and matured reader would immediately feel the effect of a text, its purpose, and the context

in which it is set. Similarly, a seasoned writer, about to pen her thoughts, would immediately think about the audience, her relationship with the reader, the conventions that befits the context of the writing genre, and the format to set the text in. RGS, as a writing approach, seeks to engender these thinking processes into the minds of students. In order to appreciate RGS, the paper begins with a discussion on its key concepts, followed by three pedagogical implications emerging from its key thrust of social action of writing acts. I will also attempt to show how these implications are played out in classroom teaching. The paper will end with challenges that the author feels that teachers face when using the RGS approach to teach writing.

RGS as a concept in writing

The notion of RGS began with the landmark reworking of the concept of genre by Miller (1984) into the central thrust that texts are forms of *social actions* — they deliver an effect on the reader with a social purpose. A genre is “not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have...” (Miller, 1984, p. 165). Indeed, building on Campbell and Jamieson’s (1979) understanding of genre as language actions “driven by an internal dynamic” (p. 21), this “dynamic” merges the message and linguistic features in response to specific social situations. This “internal dynamic” is the intended social action of the writer seeking to affect the “ends.” The writer interrogates the scene (context and specific situation) and bring forth the social communicative act of writing (or utterance) in a form (genre) that delivers the social effect. It is not dissimilar to Bakhtin’s “utterances” (1986, p. 60), which positioned the understanding of text and speech acts in a highly situated context of human activity that is individualized with none rendered the same or similar in any way. Although Bakhtin’s (1986) work on genre focused communicative acts as meaningful only when understood in their specific context, it was Miller (1984) who highlighted “that a rhetorical sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish” (p. 151). The rhetoric is thus accentuated in the genre to deliver the intended social effect adequately and appropriately. Learning to write is no longer just putting grammatically correct sentences in paragraphs and mimicking the genre form, but effecting a social action through the text.

Social action

Social actions are the “ends we may have...” (Miller, 1984, p. 165) in the communicative act. In other words, it is the outcome or effect felt by the reader. When this effect is felt by the reader, then the writer would have successfully achieved the writing act. The writer seeks this effect from his act of writing — the writer’s desired effect on the reader. But this social action is the result of “the social motives, relations, values, and assumptions embodied within a genre that frame how, why, and when to act” (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 77). It is a result of a much-considered act on the writing scene in its context and specific situation. These considerations are its purpose, context, topic, authorship, audience, structure, and format of the writing act. Arising from these many considerations, this social action becomes one of the “typified ways of acting within recurrent situations and as cultural artifacts that can tell us things about how a particular culture configures situations and ways of acting” (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 76). The social action is both a conception from and an end of a multifaceted consideration. It is more than just achieving the purpose of writing a text.

To illustrate this, let us consider the writing scene of a student realizing that he is late for class

owing to a train delay — a common occurrence in Rikkyo. All acts of writing begin with a writing scene, a specific situation where the writer has a social action to achieve. In this case, the student wants to convey a message of excuse for being late for class. This intended social action of the student sets in motion the consideration of the context of the writing scene. The student considers the *purpose* of the social action: — requesting for an excuse. Next, presumably, the student considers power distance of the *audience*, his teacher. Then, he may think about the *context*, the institutional requirements he needs to comply with in writing his request. The student may next think about the *topic*, what kind of content should be included in the message, what *structure* should be used in the message, and in what *format*. From the above illustration, we can see that a social action is derived from first interrogating the writing scene.

The student's primary social action, a request for an excuse, may carry alongside it other effects that he would like to achieve from his act of writing. In considering his *audience*, a professor, a person of a higher status and position, perhaps respect and goodwill should also be felt in the request. He also realizes when thinking about the *topic*, he should not only state the reason but also show proof to strengthen his *rhetoric* for the excuse. We can see that a social action that may have begun primarily as a request (*purpose*) for an excuse (*topic*), secondary social effects emerge alongside the persuasion (*purpose*) with proofs, and register (*audience*) of formal and polite language. There could be more, but the temporality of quickly putting this request together constrains the amount of time spent in the consideration. It is clear that a social action is not a single clean action but is accompanied by other equally desirable social effects shaped by the writing scene. This coalesced social effect is unique to the student and his writing scene. On a different day with a different writing scene, the message will be different. The interrogation particularizes the social effects as demanded of the writing scene.

RGS as a concept in teaching writing

RGS researchers have used this approach in teaching writing composition (Bawarshi, 2003; Devitt, 2004). It is contended that in order to learn how to perform a communicative act rhetorically in a situated manner, it is important to first understand how the rhetoric is conceived of in specific situation it is located in. Interrogating the genre texts prior to writing raises the awareness of not only how the genre is written but also the why, who, what and when. These questions when discussed, lift the learners from “an interior cognitive process located within individuals” to a “situated cognitive process” (Bawarshi, 2003, p. 10). The practice of writing is not a detached single enterprise, but a multi-dimensional and contextualized endeavor.

Learning through interrogating the social action (genre), including its context and situation, the rhetoric in the writing is understood in genre's situated message and linguistic features. The interrogation looks for regularities *and* irregularities of the social action that typifies the genre. It is not, however, the typified textual forms, but typified *actions*. As illustrated in the section on social action above, students are not learning the typified forms in order to replicate the forms in their writing. RGS is contrasted with genre analysis in that genre analysis expects the replication of these textual forms as expected of the genre. A classic example is Swales' Five Paragraph Essay as an academic essay structure, used for academic writing in most parts of North America (Johns, 2015). Genre analysis is akin to modeling the writing after analyzing the genre. This approach is to mirror what is out there (genre) and produce a similar textual form consistent to the genre type (Swales, 1990). To which, RGS is not.

RGS draws from these typified textual forms to see how they deliver the intended social action. While there are similarities in the genre analysis, the analysis takes it further toward the situatedness of the genre. The goal is to be aware that “genres predict...but do not determine...the nature of a text that will be produced in a situation” (Russell, 1997, p. 522). The focus is then on the awareness of how these typified forms perform the social action. This awareness informs and sensitizes the student to the textual forms that delivers the social action including its nuances. The interrogation of the genre’s writing scene becomes the center piece of the RGS approach. The interrogation yields the typified actions and how they are derived and situated in its purpose, context, topic, authorship, audience, structure, and format. Thereafter, the writer having been sensitized, approaches his future writing scenes with the same interrogation *before* writing. He interrogates the writing scene that he is in, shapes his social action *through* this interrogation *with* the awareness of the learned typified social actions. The final coalesced social action will be realized in the writing act of the genre. The writer may end up with a different genre form or even transform the genre type, as dictated by the intended social action.

Implications to pedagogy

A pedagogical RGS will have a vastly different look from the traditional approach of product or process writing styles that most writing teachers are trained for or used to. I will discuss three implications to a RGS classroom. First, RGS is engendering a mindset of interrogation, the centerpiece of RGS: an interrogation of *both* writing scenes of genre types *and* that of the student’s writing scene. The interrogation of the genre type looks for *typified social actions* embedded in the context and specific situation of the writing scene. This interrogation acquires the genre (social actions)— genre acquisition (Johns, 2015). Miller summarized this well in the following quote.

“What we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends (*social action*) we may have...” [Italics mine] (Miller, 1984, p. 165).

This genre acquisition *builds* the knowledge of familiarity with different but typified social actions of different genre types. This genre familiarity building does not cease once the student has acquired this practice; the student by default uses interrogation each time they read to write. The goal is to engender the interrogation mindset in reading *every* single piece of text. In fact, this should become the default reading strategy to cultivate an informed sense of reading and not reading solely for comprehension. This is the first stage of interrogation to acquire the genre.

The second stage of interrogation is genre awareness. This interrogates the writing scene that the student is in *before* the act of writing. This foregrounds an awareness of the student’s social action *within* the writing scene. As mentioned earlier, the student formulates their intended social action upon encountering their writing scene. But before they put ink to paper, they interrogate their writing scene to shape their intended social action.

For the student, “genres serve as *keys* to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community” [Italics mine] (Miller, 1984, p. 165).

From the student’s acquisition of typified social actions, they now use this knowledge and apply the

questioning of their intended social action and their writing scene to successfully participate in the community that they are in.

Therefore, this first implication of RGS in teaching writing is the *cultivation* of a mindset in the classroom. To cultivate habits of mind, students need to engage in cycles of cognition (Taczak & Robertson, 2016). The cycle of cognition in RGS is the repeated interrogation of the genre and the writing scenes. Through questions, students identify the purpose, context, topic, authorship, audience, structure, and format. Through these cycles of interrogation, students not only develop a robust understanding of genre but also and more importantly the habit of questioning the text.

The second implication is metacognition. It is established that metacognition (or reflective thought on connections between contexts) plays an important part in the transfer of skills and knowledge (Perkins & Salomon, 1988). Regular reflection can cultivate a “systematic activity keyed to transfer” (Yancey et al., 2014, p. 33). Transferability of writing skills has been of concern in the teaching of writing instruction for some time (Anson & Moore, 2016; Smit, 2004). Students have long been taught de-contextually. As a result, they encounter problems of transfer when they experience contextualized writing situations. RGS scholars have long argued that metacognition is cultivated when students engage in genre analysis (Bazerman, 2009; Beaufort, 2007; Taczak, 2015; Tinberg, 2015).

To engender a situated approach of interrogation, students should be provided with recurring opportunities for metacognition (Taczak & Robertson, 2016). When given the opportunity to question their own thinking as regards planning, monitoring, and evaluation, students engage in a situated mindset. “How will I do this differently? How will I alter my questioning to arrive at a more appropriate information? How does will I change my thinking when confronted with a different scenario?” These are metacognitive questions on an individual’s way of thinking. By their very nature, metacognitive questions interrogate the individual’s way of thinking in a situated manner. The implication of this in RGS is that students should be afforded the time and space to engage in metacognition to engender the mindset of interrogation. With these cycles of cognition and metacognition designed into the curriculum, not only will students develop the habit of mind (Meyer et al., 2010), but they will also encourage their own transfer to other writing contexts.

When should such metacognition of their thinking processes take place in the classroom? It can occur *after* they have completed their interrogation of the genre and their writing scene. Students’ thinking about their thinking processes can be made visible through their written or verbalized reflections on these processes. Reflections can be done during the class after the genre interrogation or as a homework assignment. There can also be teacher and peer feedback on these reflections to learn from each other.

The third implication is the inductive and inquiry-based approach to learning that RGS affords and, in fact, is based on. RGS begins with asking questions of the genre and the writing scene. This characteristic of an inquiry-based learning approach contrasts teacher-led style of classroom. To begin learning with students asking questions is not only highly student-centered, but it also encourages a “bottom up” approach to discover the knowledge that needs to be acquired. Students, in asking questions, derive answers, make connections on their own, and set their own learning. Social actions are not fixed domains of knowledge but are interpreted and negotiated. Students interpret and negotiate their understanding of the social actions *from* the genres and similarly, interpret and negotiate their *own* writing scene to perform the act of writing to achieve their social action. After all, each individual act of writing is highly particularized in a contextualized and situated manner. What is the role of the teacher in a RGS class? The teacher facilitates the process of

interrogation, as well as probes and add more questions to deepen and broaden the students' journey of interrogation. In addition, an RGS class is highly amenable to the dialogic teaching process. Having outlined three broad implications to teaching writing using the RGS approach, I will now describe how they were attempted in an RGS class in Rikkyo.

An RGS classroom

Rikkyo's reading and writing program is offered to first-year students as a mandatory course involving teaching reading and writing in an integrated fashion over two semesters. The RGS intervention was trialed in the second semester in two stages: genre acquisition and genre awareness. The first half of the semester began with genre acquisition as the starting ground for students to be familiar with the cycle of interrogating the genre. The goal of genre acquisition was for students to familiarize themselves with typified social acts. After the grounding of genre acquisition in the first half of the semester, the second half sought to build this mindset toward genre awareness of interrogating the writing assignment. It was hoped that the students would automatically first interrogate their writing assignment before embarking on the writing process. In other words, for genre awareness, students are expected to draw from their genre acquisition in the first half of the semester to write their first assignment. Selected genre texts were used to for genre acquisition. These were source-based academic writing of exploratory and argumentative nature. Appendix A shows the planned interrogation of the categories of the genre and corresponding tasks in a weekly schedule.

In the "genre acquisition" semester of the first six weeks of classes, students were put through a cycle of pre-reading and quizzes every week together with group discussion on the texts. Diagram 1 shows the learning activities that the students went through on a weekly basis. The target genres, where students were expected to familiarize themselves with the textual features, were read before class for comprehension. During class, students first underwent an individual quiz with questions on their comprehension of the texts. The texts/ topics revolved around description, explanation, and rationale of RGS. The intent was to make students understand the rationale for using RGS in the



Diagram 1: Cycle of learning activities for genre acquisition and awareness

class. They also explained the different categories of questioning in the interrogation of the genre. This was the practice of reading skills as part of the required goal of this course. The second round of questions, however, were questions that interrogated the genre texts.

With each progressive week, the students were introduced to all the categories as shown in Table 1, interrogating the genre's purpose, context, topic, authorship, audience, structure, and format. Two additional categories were added to cater for language learning and social effect purposes. The category of "sentences" was included to have the students analyze the sentence structure and grammar while "rhetoric" was to draw the students' attention to the social effect of the writing at an earlier stage. This "rhetoric" category was revisited in the final set of questions in the later part of the semester to emphasize and focus on the rhetoric of writing.

Appendix B has examples of the quiz questions analyzing the genre that follows the different categories.

Table 1: Categories of genre analysis

Phases	Categories of questions
Scene and situation of genre	<i>Context:</i> Where does the genre appear? What are the circumstances under which the text is written?
	<i>Topic:</i> What is the topic? What issues and ideas does the genre address?
	<i>Author:</i> Who writes this type of text (genre)? What role do they perform as writers?
	<i>Audience:</i> Which type of text (genre) is this? What role do they perform when they read?
	<i>Purposes:</i> Why do authors write this genre and why does the audience read it?
Patterns of the genre's features (What recurrent features do the samples share?)	<i>Content:</i> What content is usually included? What is excluded?
	<i>Rhetoric:</i> What rhetorical appeals are used? What appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos?
	<i>Structure:</i> How are texts in the genre structured? What are their parts, and how are they organized? What do you notice is different in the patterns of the texts in the genre? Does the difference affect the purpose of the texts?
	<i>Format:</i> What is format of the texts of this genre? What is the layout or appearance? How long is the text in this genre?
	<i>Sentences:</i> What are the types of sentences? How long are they? What tenses are they in? Are they simple or complex, passive or active?
Rhetorical patterns	How does the rhetoric patterns affect the reader and the purpose for the writer? How appropriate is it to the situation of the writing context, the audience, and community of practice? How does this writing achieve the effect for the author and the reader?

The individual quiz allows the student to analyze the genre on their own with no feedback provided. The lack of feedback feedback allows later discussion on the same set of questions for contestation and social construction. Here at the discussion stage, students are expected to convince others of and defend their choice, affording a robust discussion and analysis of the question and in doing so, continue the interrogation of the genre. The discussion stage reveals the "correct" answer to the questions. Through this cycle of choice, discussion, and reflection, students interrogate the genre at length.

After all the questions are resolved, the students were given an opportunity to note down their doubts on the issues raised and request for further clarity. This stage allows students to reflect and think beyond what was the "right" answer as prescribed in the feedback. These challenges and questions were later discussed in the class. Here was a deliberate attempt to demonstrate to the students that their voice, with reason, were equally acceptable as "correct" answers other than what was prescribed by the teacher. The deliberation at this stage affords a deeper discussion on and

understanding of the genre.

After the discussion of the questions and answers and supplementary instructions, the groups moved on to the application stage where they collaborated on the interrogation on their writing assignment in groups. Students went through one round of asking the questions shown in Table 1. After the discussion, the students embarked on their individual writing assignments. The writing went through one draft with feedback provided by peers, guided with a criterion-based checklist, and the second draft was submitted as the final draft.

After the submission of the final draft, the groups of students were given a discussion activity to reflect on their writing process. Semi-structured questions were provided to guide students to evaluate and suggest improvements on their thinking processes. This activity was to engender a culture of metacognition. This cycle of writing was repeated for the second writing assignment in the latter half of the semester.

Classroom pedagogy for RGS

As discussed in the pedagogical implications of RGS, the learning philosophy of a RGS class is highly student-centered with students beginning the class by asking questions. In answering the quiz questions in groups, students began interrogating the genre initially as an individual and later as a group. The teacher's input came in the form of the automated answers in the quiz. Even then, students had opportunities to question the prescribed "correct" answers in the quiz as well as the questions. This inquiry style approach together with collaborative learning is reflective of the RGS's interrogative style as well as the constructivist notion of learning.

The repeated cycles of interrogation weekly on different samples of the genre not only allow the students to cumulatively acquire the genre type but also cultivate the habits of mind. It is hoped that these repetitive processes will engender this habit of mind of the students to engage in genre interrogation before writing. Similarly, opportunities for metacognition were afforded.

Having gone through what I would consider to be an experimental attempt at approaching RGS in my reading and writing class, there are several gaps that emerged. I will briefly discuss three of challenges: situatedness, metacognition, and assessment.

The challenge of situatedness

Each writing social act is embedded in a system of activity (Bazerman, 2017) in which we find ourselves. Whether it is in response to a written request or an initiation, we locate ourselves as an agent within the system, a system that affords its peculiar socio historical cultural context and network of agencies. This is the writing scene that the writers find themselves in. Moreover, when a teacher tasks the student with writing the system of activity that the student and teacher are in (let's call it the classroom genre) presents the situatedness of the writing context. How then does the student project themselves into performing the writing act of the target genre with this classroom genre situatedness "interfering" with the writing scene? The actual writing act, derived not out of a necessity or desire of the writing scene of the target genre, is supplanted by an injunction albeit contrived by the teacher. The teacher's requirement of a writing submission dominates the rhetorical genre analysis process where the student's consideration of his writing act is not located within the writing scene *but* located within the classroom genre system. In short, the student is confronted with and will be confused by *two* writing contexts: the target genre, and classroom writing scene

The nature of RGS in writing is a response, a social act, in a specific situation and context of the writing scene. In analyzing the genre within this framework, the student acquires the awareness of the writing genre by interrogating the writing scene. Through this process of interrogation, the student familiarizes themselves to the typified social acts of writing within these socio cultural contexts. In turn, with the familiarity of these typified socio cultural contexts, the student will arguably be able to respond adequately in similar social acts of writing upon encountering such socio cultural contexts. Inasmuch as this familiarity of these typified social acts are desired, the goal of RGS is not so much as acquiring this familiarity rather the ability to be aware of genres and begin engaging metacognitively as a writer in these writing scenes by first interrogating them.

If interrogation is the primary goal, then, when the writing scenes are of the classroom genre type of writing situation, the interrogation will be limited in its scope as students are regularly presented the same classroom genre throughout the course. The interrogation would repeatedly and invariably result in students identifying themselves as students and the audience as the professor to whom they are writing. Hence, for all the pieces of writing social acts, the contexts are rather fixed.

It is my suggestion therefore that for students to engender the interrogation of the context and situation in their future writing scenes, teachers can design role-playing writing scenarios for students to “act” out the scene. In so doing, students will interrogate their writing scene as they would, if they are encountering such similar situations in real life. While role playing is at best a simulation, it can offer a more realistic situatedness of the genre (social action) analysis when compared with the classroom genre type. Because “writing involves so many problem-solving judgments, it is best learned through a long sequence of varied problem-solving experiences in varied situations” (Bazerman, 2017, p. 34).

The challenge of metacognition

So, what exactly was being metacogitated? In RGS, students first familiarize themselves with the genre presented by interrogating other scenes of writing and thereafter interrogating their own writing scenes to write that genre. The metacognition is then, thinking about how they question the genre and how they practice the genre. Hence, it is not only thinking about the genre (Tinberg, 2015), the knowledge required for writing, but also the reflection on how they thought about the genre, including thinking about for thinking about their practice of writing and reflecting on their thoughts on their writing scene. It is instructive to note that the reflection here is “a mode of inquiry: a deliberate way of systematically recalling writing experiences to [frame or] reframe the current writing situation” (Taczak, 2015, p. 73). So, it is evaluating and improving their interrogation of the genre and not just recounting the process.

While my RGS class did afford opportunities for metacognition, there was no feedback and means to ascertain the types of metacognition that could have been discussed and improved. It was well and good that students engaged in discussion on what thinking to improve on, but how do I know this happened and what exactly was discussed? More likely my students were recalling their thought processes but did not seriously work on making changes to the way they think or question. The reflection activity assumed that metacognition occurred naturally or incidentally. While opportunities or activities for metacognition should be designed into an RGS classroom, some visible form should also be put in place for feedback and specificity.

Second, metacognition involves thinking and questioning one’s planning, monitoring, and evaluation (Taczak & Robertson, 2016). How did I organize my interrogation of the writing scene?

Was the process adequately performed? What aspects should I prioritize in the interrogation? What was my criteria in evaluating the purpose, context, topic, authorship, audience, structure, and format? Did I give sufficient time to interrogate the writing scene? These questions are what my students should have examined in metacognition. Yet, though ideal, these may require more time and space for engendering a good practice of RGS interrogation. These are clearly difficult challenges to the practice of RGS.

The challenge of assessment

RGS views genre as a social action. The acquisition and awareness of the genre occurs by interrogating the social action and writing scene of the genre. The first challenge in assessment is assessing the social action. How do we assess social action? Social actions are complex forms of “typified ways of acting within recurrent situations and as cultural artifacts that can tell us things about how a particular culture configures situations and ways of acting” (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 76). They are complex because of the very nature of “the social motives, relations, values, and assumptions embodied within a genre that frame how, why, and when to act” (p. 77). Clearly there are multifaceted and inter-connected values to consider when evaluating a social action in a piece of writing. The complexity of social action is a challenge to be observed and evaluated. If one were to deconstruct and concretize the social action into criteria for evaluation, it can be an unenviable task.

However, if social action are “typified ways of acting” embodying “the social motives, relations, values, and assumptions” of an actor, it is the actor who can provide the criteria for assessment. After all, the social act of writing that emerges out of the multifaceted and inter-connected values of purpose, context, and rhetoric of the writing scene seeks to realize *that* social act of the writer. Second, the social act that is intended by the writer has to be evaluated by the reader of the social act of writing. The reader, performing the role of the intended audience in the writing scene, is well positioned and valid to make judgments on the effect of intended social act. The reader, then, in his perception of the intended social act of the writer, makes the judgment.

Therefore, it would seem natural to include the intended social action of the writer as part of the assessment, as the intended social action would embody the confluence of the “the social motives, relations, values, and assumptions embodied within a genre that frame how, why, and when to act” (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 77). This can be achieved with the writer, in this case, the student, to indicate the intended social action, which will form part of the assessment criteria of the writing assignment. The assessor, would in turn, play the role of the reader of the writing scene to evaluate the expressed intended social action. This would also “complete” the genre writing scene, unless of course if the scene entails action in a genre system. The inclusion of the student’s criteria in assessment is reflective of the participatory act of students in having a say in the curriculum design (Eisner, 2001; Freire, 1993).

The second challenge to the assessment in an RGS class is the assessment of metacognition, the linchpin of RGS. RGS is about cultivating knowledge about writing (genre acquisition) through the practice of interrogating the writing scene (genre awareness) in order to perform the social action (genre). The first consideration is its necessary inclusion in the assessment of the writing act. Writing teachers have long evaluated pieces of writing as finished products including drafts. Metacognition, or thinking about thinking, is rarely observed, and assessed. If metacognition processes are prized in RGS, it would be meaningful to include it in the assessment.

But how do we assess this cultivation and practice of interrogation? Writing teachers have long

used written drafts to observe the progress of students' writing process and provide feedback. Writing portfolios that include prewriting and drafts of the same writing piece has been used to trace the development and editing of a piece of writing. However, cultivation and practice of interrogation are thinking processes and are not discrete knowledge of genre. How can we observe these processes of planning, monitoring, and evaluating of their thinking? Think-aloud protocols and reflective diaries are known to record metacognition of students, including surveys and interviews. Whatever forms it takes, it is suggested that in RGS classrooms, metacognition should be observed and assessed.

Conclusion

In discussing the concept of RGS in writing, recasting genre as a social action offers educators an authentic way to teach writing as it should be — interrogating the writing scene, both as a way to acquire the genre and a resource to “participate in the actions of a community” (Miller, 1984, p. 165). The pedagogical implications of RGS necessitate the engendering of habits of mind of constant interrogation of texts as a reader and interrogation of writing scenes as a writer. Such mindsets will surely put any student of reading and writing in a competent place to be a successful communicator of social acts. It is acknowledged that in seeking to cultivate habits of mind to engage in metacognition before and during a writing social act is not an overnight exercise but one that requires sustained and regular practice (Meyer et al., 2010). A study into the effects of this approach should suitably follow to illuminate this. The challenges to the RGS classroom emerge when the writing pedagogy enters uncharted territories of engendering of habits of mind of constant interrogation of texts. But when and if we are able to appropriate the challenges of situatedness, observe and assess metacognition, and cultivate mindset, we may reap untold treasures in our students' ability to write well in their ever-changing writing scenes and genre.

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Appendix A

Outline of weekly schedule of RGS in a semester

	RGS progression	Tasks
1	purpose, context, topic, author, and audience.	Reading 1, Quiz, Discussion
2	purpose, context, topic, author, and audience.	Pre-Reading 2, Quiz, Discussion
3	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, and structure.	Pre-Reading 3, Quiz, Discussion
4	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, and sentences	Pre-Reading 4, Quiz, Discussion
5	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, and sentences	Pre-Reading 5, Quiz, Discussion, Writing
6	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, format, rhetoric, and sentences.	Pre-Reading 6, Quiz, Discussion, Writing
7	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, format, and rhetoric of Writing Assignment 1	Draft 1, Peer review
8	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, and structure.	Pre-Reading 7, Quiz, Discussion Draft 2 Submission, Metacognition
9	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, rhetoric, and sentences.	Pre-Reading 8, Quiz, Discussion
10	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, rhetoric, and sentences.	Pre-Reading 9, Quiz, Discussion
11	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, and rhetorical patterns.	Pre-Reading 10, Quiz, Discussion
12	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, and rhetorical patterns.	Pre-Reading 11, Quiz, Discussion
13	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, and rhetorical patterns.	Pre-Reading 12, Quiz, Discussion
14	purpose, context, topic, author, audience, structure, format, and rhetorical patterns of Writing Assignment 2	Draft 1, Peer review Draft 2 Submission (1 week after class)

Appendix B

Question 8.

This question is about content. In the first sentence, this phrase, "...students are given the space to question, analyze, and understand why and how a text is written... (L6-L7), what is the writer using the content for?

Answer

- a. The author is describing the audience of the RGS.
- b. The author is describing what RGS is and the process of RGS.
- c. The author is describing what RGS is and knowledge transfer.
- d. The author is describing what RGS is and the disadvantage of RGS.

Question 6.

This question is about the structure of Pre-Reading 3A. Which of the following best describes how the different parts are organized?

Answer

- a. Introduction of RGS - Summary of what is RGS - Benefits of RGS.
- b. Introduction of RGS - Benefits of RGS - Future of RGS.
- c. Introduction of RGS - Benefits of RGS - Summary of what is RGS and benefits.
- d. Introduction of RGS - Summary of what is RGS and benefits - Future of RGS.

Question 6.

This question is about the sentences in the Pre-Reading. What types of sentences does this text generally use?

Answer

- a. Present tense.
- b. Past tense.
- c. Continuous tense.
- d. Future tense.

Question 7.

This question is about the language AND organization of the Pre-Reading 4. How does the author use language to organize the important ideas?

Answer

- a. Uses cause and effect: hence, therefore, etc.
- b. Uses problem and solution: state the problem and give the solution.
- c. Uses numbering to sequence the ideas: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.
- d. Uses conjunctions to connect the ideas: Lower case. but, however, etc.

Question 5.

This question is about the Lower case use in the Pre-Reading 7. How did the author convince you convince you of the number of the rhetorical strategies to use at the end of the essay?

Answer

- a. The author uses logoi to convince me to write them well, which is better than using all three.

- b. The author uses ethos to convince me to write them well, which is better than using all three.
- c. The author uses pathos to convince me to write them well, which is better than using all three.
- d. The author uses words like “write them well” and “poorly” to convince me to write them well, which is better than using all three.

Question 6.

This question is about the Lower case use in the Pre-Reading 7. Which of the following phrase did the author use as part of the rhetorical strategy to convince you on how many of the rhetorical strategies to use at the end of the essay?

Answer

- a. “While it may be more convincing to use all the three strategies,..”
- b. “It is more important to write them well in our essays to achieve the effect.”
- c. “A poorly written essay with all three may not be as persuasive as one that is well written.”
- d. “Rhetorical strategies such as logos, ethos, and pathos are necessary...”

Group Discussion Application Questions

Refer to the Sample essay titled, “Is Fashion Really Important?” (315 words)

Discuss in your group and answer this question.

Analyze the structure of this essay.

- 1. How many reasons did the writer use to support his claim, “that fashion is important” (L2)? State the number.
- 2. Did the writer write something negative about fashion? (Yes or No)

Refer to the Sample essay titled, “Gun Control Essay” (313 words)

Discuss in your group and answer these questions.

TAQ4: Analyze the claim of this essay.

- 1. How many supports did the writer write in his claim? State the number.
- 2. Is the claim clearly stated? (Yes or No)
- 3. Did the writer restate the claim of his essay again in the conclusion? (Yes or No)