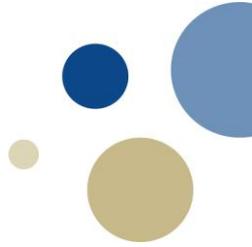


The concept of writing acts – an alternative approach to the concept of genre?

NFEAP Oslo 2018
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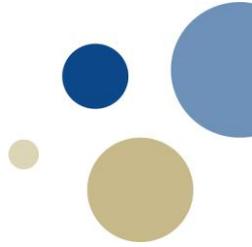
Outline



- The study
- Writing Wheel: writing acts and purposes
- Writing acts in bachelor theses
- Considerations about writing acts (activity-based) vs moves and steps (genre-based)

- Discussion

The study: aims and approach



Get insight into the fuzzy genre “bachelor thesis” through the examination of writing acts

Qualitative approach

- What are the writers doing?
- What do different acts look like in the texts, and how are they realized?
- Are the writing acts similar to acts in research papers?

Data



- 8 bachelor theses from English
 - 5 from Cultural Studies (ENGCULT)
 - 3 from Literature (ENGLIT)
- 7 bachelor theses from Media Studies (MS)

The concept of writing acts



The Wheel of Writing: a model of the writing domain for the teaching and assessing of writing as a key competence (Berge, Evensen, & Thygesen, 2016)

- A theoretical construct of writing that “is not anchored in any form of genre concepts” (p. 184)
- “a tool for conceptualising the complexity of writing in different cultural and situational contexts that constitute the arenas for writing in a society” (p. 172)

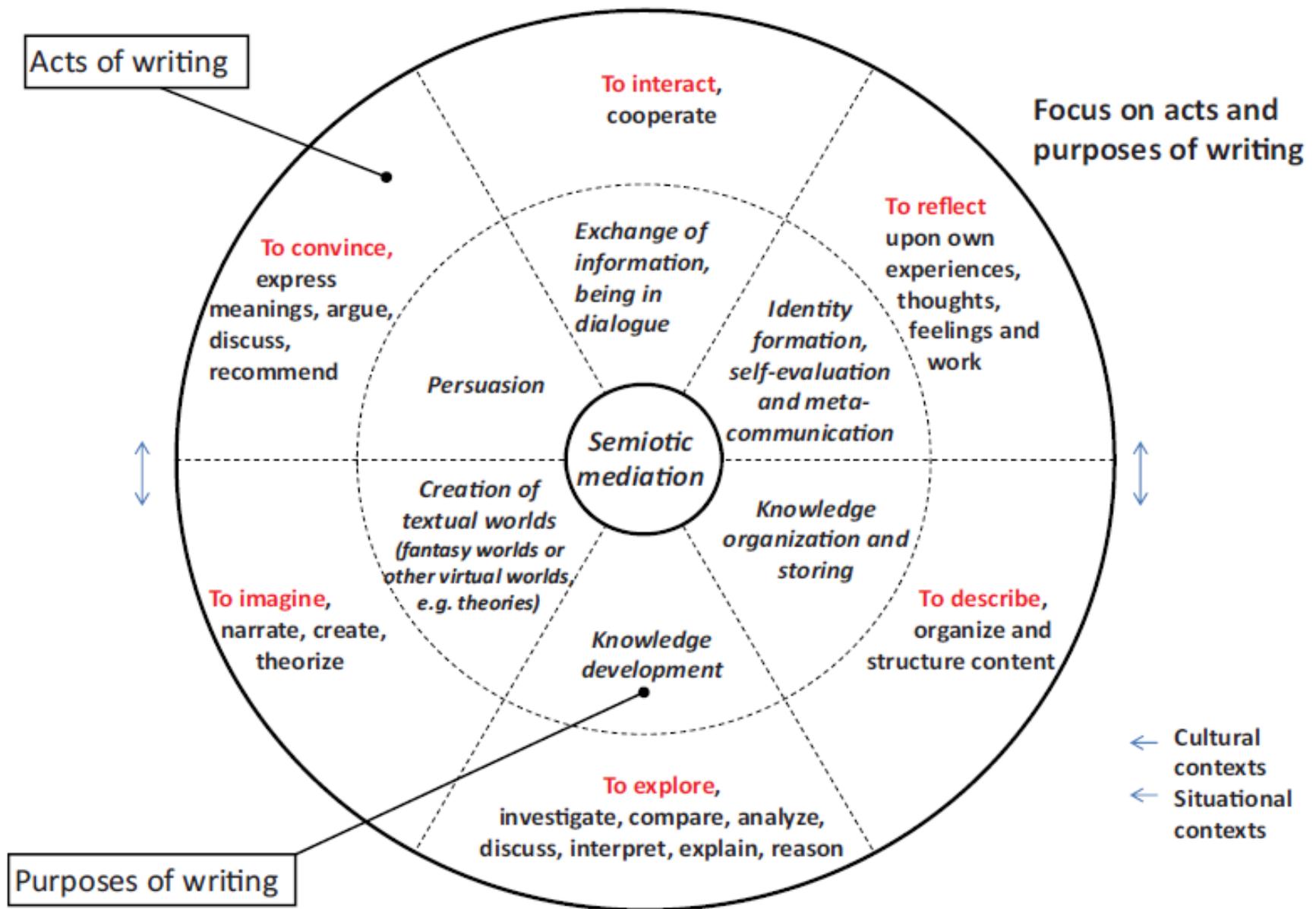


Figure 4. The Wheel of Writing: focus on intentionalities of writing: act and purpose.

(Berge et al., 2016)



WRITING ACTS (WA) IN BACHELOR THESES

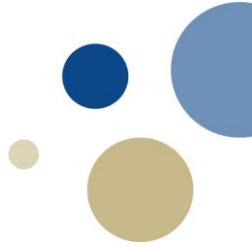
Main categories:

WAs that prepare the study

WAs that constitute the study

WAs that put the study into perspective

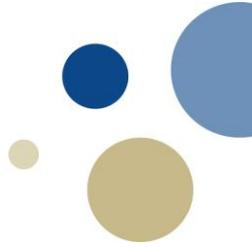
Writing acts in BA theses (1)



WAs that prepare/lay the ground for the students' study

- introducing the topic
- showing the relevance of the topic
- describing background/context
 - theories, terms, concepts
 - previous research
- presenting research question(s)
- presenting outline/structure of the paper
- describing methodological approach

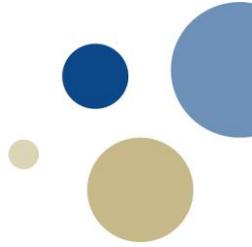
Writing acts in BA theses (2)



WAs that constitute the research

- recounting/describing “facts”
- presenting findings
- commenting/interpreting findings
- documenting findings/providing evidence
- comparing findings to previous research
- discussing findings

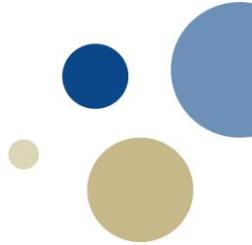
Writing acts in BA theses (3)



WAs that put the study into perspective

- restating the research question
- repeating findings
- mentioning achievements and/or limitations of the study
- showing relevance of the topic
- suggesting solutions/giving advice
- suggesting future research

WA analysis or move analysis?



Two examples of move analysis:

- Move analysis of research articles across five engineering fields: What they share and what they do not (Maswana, Kanamaru, & Tajino, 2015)
 - A genre-based investigation of discussion sections of research articles in Dentistry and disciplinary variation (Basturkmen, 2012)
- Is there any difference between an analysis of WA (activity-based) and the analysis of moves and steps (genre-based)?

Moves in RA (Maswana et al. 2015)



- Presenting background information
- Reviewing related research
- Presenting new research
- Identifying source of data and method
- Describing experimental procedures
- Describing data analysis procedures

- Reporting results
- Commenting on results

- Highlighting overall results and their significance
- Explaining specific research outcomes
- Stating research conclusions

Concept of moves and steps	Concept of writing acts
Genre-based: focus on textual structure	Activity-based: focus on doings
Developed for research on research articles	Developed for teaching and assessing writing at school
Highlight conventions in academic writing, developing schemes	Highlight the communicative situation: Who will communicate what to whom for which purpose?
Evaluation based on: is the text a (more or less) relevant representation of the genre?	Evaluation based on: is the text a (more or less) relevant representation of the act and its purposes?

More similarities than differences?

“understanding of writing as a social act related to one or more purposes”
(Berge et al., p. 174)

“focus on texts representing different acts and purposes”
(Berge et al., p. 174)

“genres are communicative vehicles for the achievement of goals”
(Swales, 1990, p. 46)

“emphasis on communicative purpose and social action”
(Swales, 1990, p. 45)

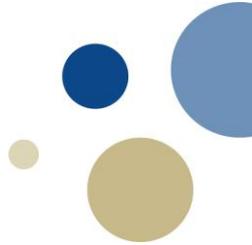
Ideas of genre(s) comes through



In this assignment, I have tried to answer [...]. Thus, I have fulfilled my aim with this assignment, because I have answered the questions I intended to reveal. However, this assignment does not explain users' own perspective on diet apps, because I have conducted a theoretical discussion of the identity processes. Therefore, further research can aim to map out how users use diet apps.

(WA: mentioning achievements/limitations and suggesting future research – Ruth, MS)

The usefulness of genre



- We are not acting in a vacuum – we communicate through genres
- Genre conventions help us to recognize the situation and to act in an appropriate way
- Genres are recognizable, communicative means for communication

In what ways can an activity-based approach...

Describe background

Document findings

Discuss findings

...contribute to a genre-approach?

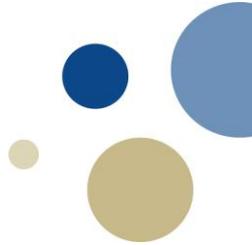
Textbook

Master thesis

Research article

Bachelor thesis

The usefulness of writing acts (1)



Helps to...

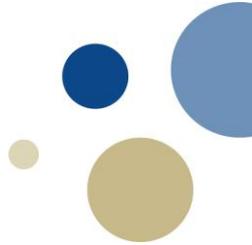
- describe genres and their purposes and differences/similarities between them
- make disciplinary differences/similarities visible
- understand expectations/criteria of fuzzy educational genres (“assignment”)
- formulate meaningful writing tasks
 - who communicates what to whom for which purpose?
- show how WA are intertwined

Acts are intertwined (example)



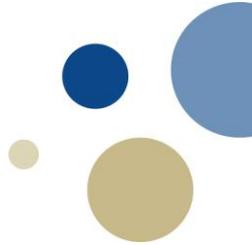
The laptop appears to be a highly personal item *[present and interpret findings]*. It was a key component of their life as a student as well as in their leisure time *[present and interpret findings]*. One participant also mentioned that the laptop is his most valuable item *[present findings]*. It seemed like the personal computer is ubiquitous and inseparable to the participants' everyday life *[interpret findings]*. However, the highly personal and emotional connection to the private laptop can also counteract aesthetic or economical obsolesces (Remy and Huang, 2015: 261) *[using a source to discuss findings]*. An emotional connection can encourage a longer ownership and prevent disposal *[discuss findings]*. (Berit, MS)

The usefulness of writing acts (2)



- Contributes to faculty and teacher discussions about expectations and criteria for the BA thesis
- Draws the attention to writing as communicative activity and the writer as agent
 - Helps to understand that the communicative situation and its purposes (who communicates what to whom for which purpose) is more important than to adjust to/follow certain conventions or recipes

Questions for discussion



- What do you think about the two concepts of genre and writing acts?
- In which ways might the different concepts/terms be useful...
 - as theoretical models/constructs of writing?
 - as concepts/tools in research/analysis?
 - for teaching writing (writing courses, instructions)?
 - for formulating and evaluating writing tasks?

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Basturkmen, H. (2012). A genre-based investigation of discussion sections of research articles in Dentistry and disciplinary variation. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 11*, 134-144.

Berge, K. L., Evensen, L. S., & Thygesen, R. (2016). The Wheel of Writing: a model of the writing domain for the teaching and assessing of writing as a key competency. *The Curriculum Journal, 27*(2), 172-189.

Maswana, S., Kanamaru, T., & Tajino, A. (2015). Move analysis of research articles across five engineering fields: What they share and what they do not. *Ampersand, 2*, 1-11.

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.