Sidestepping our “scare words”: Genre as a possible bridge between L1 and L2 compositionists

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Abstract

In light of the increasing student diversity in U.S. university composition classrooms, there is a strong need for collaboration between L1 and L2 writing specialists. Differences in the lexicons of our two fields, however, as well as the philosophical differences embedded in our word choices, can hinder productive L1–L2 communication. The purpose of our paper is to examine how genre can transcend disciplinary “scare words” and promote collaboration between L1 and L2 compositionists. We recognize, however, that genre is a fragile disciplinary bridge, as it has been approached differently in L1 and L2 language teaching. The paper therefore explores where our two fields share common ground in approaching genre, where we can learn from each other, and where we can accept our differences. We do this through analyzing our own experiences collaborating on common curricular guidelines and sharing genre-based teaching materials.

Keywords: Genre; L1 composition; L2 composition; Pedagogy

Introduction

As distinctions between L1 and L2 writing students and classrooms in the U.S. have blurred, researchers have called for greater curricular collaboration and communication between L1 and L2 writing specialists (Ferris, 2009; Matsuda, 1999, 2003). Yet as Ferris (2009) observes, “there is still a discouraging lack of communication among composition professionals (L1 and L2) in post-secondary contexts” (p. 147). Scholarship exploring the histories and ideologies of L1 and L2 composition in English (Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Santos, 1992; Silva & Leki, 2004) suggests that this lack of communication is due, at least in part, to differences in each field’s dominant epistemologies, views of language, pedagogical concerns, and political orientations (Silva & Leki, 2004).

Reflective of these differences is the lexicons of the two fields, which themselves can create L1–L2 communication obstacles, as we have seen in our own cross-disciplinary interactions. In working together on research projects and talking about our pedagogies, the two of us – Kim an L1 compositionist and Sunny an L2 compositionist – have found that our disciplinary histories and ideologies lead us to use particular words, such as ideology, power, critical, skills, and practice, that trigger discomfort in the other person and make collaborative communication difficult. We call words like these our “scare words” because they represent disciplinary differences that make us doubt whether we can adopt perspectives from “the other field” in ways that are consistent with our own teaching philosophies and practices.

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One word, however, that initially has seemed to calm our communicative angst and to open doors to more productive cross-disciplinary collaboration was genre. Because each of our fields has a history of using genre in scholarship and pedagogy, it has proven to be a useful L1–L2 rallying concept in our own U.S. university teaching context. For example, as our English department developed curricular guidelines for composition on our campus, both the L1 and L2 writing specialists felt comfortable with genre as a theoretical and pedagogical concept. As a result, genre is evident throughout the final version of the guidelines document (see Appendix A). Important to note, however, is that while genre did function as a productive bridge between our two fields as we were working to develop these guidelines, the fragility of this bridge started to emerge as we attempted to put these guidelines into practice. Indeed, as we began developing and sharing class materials with our cross-disciplinary colleagues, the differences in the ways that genre has been theorized and approached in L1 and L2 language teaching (Hyon, 1996) became more visible. This does not mean that we believe that genre cannot serve as a bridge between the two disciplines, but it does mean that if we want this bridge to be sturdy and the communicative ground to be productive, then we need to articulate for ourselves and for each other the values and assumptions we each have and make not only about genre, but also about the purpose of first-year writing courses, about what “good” writing is, and about one another’s disciplines. For if we settle too easily on genre as the common ground between our two fields without unpacking these kinds of values, ideologies, and assumptions, we may find ourselves down the road not connecting again, suspicious of one another’s approaches, and unable to dialogue together in ways that will benefit all of our students. Genre then may become just another “scare word.”

Our purpose in this paper, therefore, is to examine how genre, in spite of the various ways it has been theorized and approached in scholarship and pedagogy, can still help us to work through disciplinary differences and promote L1–L2 collaboration. We do this by first providing an overview of the published comparisons of our respective fields in order to provide a context for L1 and L2 compositionists’ different worries and assumptions about each other’s words. We then move to a discussion of several of our scare words, articulating why they trigger discomfort in some of our colleagues from the other field and outlining their histories and meanings in their home field. We then discuss how genre can address concerns generated by these scare words, using as illustration our experiences developing and implementing guidelines for our university’s composition program. Finally, as a pedagogical example of how genre can function as a disciplinary bridge, we present two versions of genre-based writing assignments from our L1 and L2 composition classes, including both our original materials and revisions to them as a result of our cross-disciplinary sharing. These we hope will show where our two fields share common ground in approaching genre, where we can learn from each other, and where we can accept our differences.

**Disciplinary paradigms, scare words, and the difficulty of L1–L2 dialogue**

Within the last 20 years, several articles have outlined dominant trends and views in L1 and L2 composition in ways that place these fields in binary opposition to each other: L1 composition is constructed as “ideological” and “political,” while L2 composition is identified as “apolitical” and “pragmatic.” For example, Santos (1992), an L2 expert, identifies the social constructivist strain of L1 composition as ideological. According to Santos, L1 composition’s ideological stance is evident in its focus on power and politics and in its emphasis on getting students to examine and challenge power structures influencing their own lives. In contrast, Santos asserts that L2 composition focuses, pragmatically, on helping students meet the immediate demands of their academic writing tasks and that “pursuing political goals and/or changing students’ sociopolitical consciousness is not on the ESL writing agenda” (p. 9).

In their comparison of L1 composition studies and applied linguistics (both parent fields of L2 composition), Silva and Leki (2004) make similar observations. They situate L1 composition studies’ ideological stance partly in terms of its “relativist paradigm” and its tendency to “see thought as determined by language; that is, one’s language determines or limits what one can think or conceptualize” (pp. 7–8). In contrast, applied linguistics, they say, has a more “positivist” perspective and a general belief that “language does not determine thought” (pp. 7–8). In terms of politics and pedagogy, Silva and Leki (2004) describe L1 composition as being “left to far left in its politics” (p. 7), as opposed to the center-left stance of applied linguistics. They observe that where critical pedagogies have been influential in L1 composition, “the L2 writing literature in applied linguistics mostly exhibits a kind of cautious apolitical conservatism, arising perhaps out of an attempt to be sensitive to the great varieties of social, cultural, and political contexts in which L2 writing takes place” (p. 8). Echoing Santos’ (1992) characterization of L2 composition as pragmatic, Silva and Leki (2004) note that in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tradition, “the writer is
assumed to be pragmatic and interested for the most part in learning how to meet the standards for academic success set by members of the academic discourse community’’ (p. 6).

This ideological vs. pragmatic binary is also reflected in Atkinson and Ramanathan’s (1995) study comparing one university’s ESL and L1 writing programs. One of the central goals of the L1 writing program, they found, was the use of writing to promote critical thinking. The program’s approach assumed “a cultural ecology in which school-based writing is frequently viewed and practiced not so much as a mode of communication, but rather as a tool for intellectual exploration, an avenue for debate and dialectic, and even an instantiation of democratic principles” (p. 558). The ESL program, in contrast, was oriented to giving students “immediately usable” academic forms (p. 569). Specifically, the courses were aimed at helping students produce deductively organized essays, what Atkinson and Ramanathan refer to as “workperson-like prose” (p. 560).

We realize, of course, that these representations of our fields are necessarily reductive. In L2 composition studies, for example, a number of L2 writing researchers associated with critical EAP pedagogies embrace ideological stances that have typically been linked to L1 composition (Pennycook, 1997) for one, have advocated EAP curricula that moves away from the “vulgar pragmatism” of teaching students to assimilate to academic discourse without also critically examining academic knowledge as just one of the multiple valid paradigms. Other L2 writing scholars have adopted a similar concern with the ideological forces shaping academic writing and with how EAP instructors may help L2 writers not only to accommodate to these forces but also to negotiate with and sometimes resist them. Such approaches are seen as a way to protect individual L2 writers’ interests and validate the multiple identities and literacies they bring to the academy (Benesch, 2001; Canagarah, 2002; Casanave, 2003; Kubota & Lehner, 2004; Matsuda et al., 2003). Conversely, there are those in L1 composition who reject critical approaches to writing instruction for their perceived aim of liberation from oppression and advocate instead for the more “appropriate” goal of better writing, however that may be defined (e.g. Elbow, 1995; Fulkerson, 2005; Hairston, 1982; Zorn, 2006). Thus, we recognize the diversity of perspectives and approaches in both of our fields and realize that any attempt to represent our fields will necessarily miss nuances. The particular strands of L1–L2 composition outlined by Santos (1992), Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995), and Silva and Leki (2004) nevertheless do exist as general tendencies in the mainstream of each field and undoubtedly shape the perceptions each field has of the other. These published comparisons are also representative of our own individual predilections and tendencies, and as a result, they have contributed to the worries each of us has about the other field’s words and the views about language and literacy that they imply.

We have chosen to consider five discomfort-producing words for L1 and L2 compositionists: critical, ideology, power, skills, and practice. Based on experiences in our own teaching contexts as well as our reading of the scholarship in our fields, we believe that the former three are scare words for many L2 compositionists, while the latter two worry many L1 compositionists. We believe that the unease that these words generate is due partly to the fact that they are ubiquitous in our respective fields and thus their meanings often go unarticulated in our scholarship. This lack, therefore, forces teachers and scholars to make their own assumptions about the words’ histories, definitions, and implications. We attempt below to briefly review these words’ contexts, the angst-producing assumptions they trigger, and their connections to previous comparisons of our two fields.

Ideology, power, and critical

Among the words embraced in L1 composition that can make some L2 compositionists nervous are ideology, power, and critical. For some L2 writing experts, talk using these terms may imply an instructional approach that encourages students to resist rather than adopt mainstream discourses of power. However, these L2 fears about explicit attention to ideology and power may stem from a misunderstanding of what L1 compositionists intend when they use these words. Therefore, a brief history of the use of these terms in L1 composition scholarship might therefore be helpful here.

Power and ideology really came to the fore in L1 composition scholarship and pedagogy in the mid-1980s with the work of scholars like Bartholomae (1985), Berlin (1988, 1994), and Bizzell (1982) and their interest in reworking the relationship between ideology and language in the thinking of political theorists such as Goran Therborn, Luis Althusser, and Michel Foucault. Indeed, as Berlin notes, although ideology had almost always been a part of the discussion of writing instruction in the sense that rhetoric was seen as a means of mediating among competing ideologies, since the mid-1980s work of these scholars, rhetoric has no longer been viewed as independent of ideology in this way; instead, it has been repeatedly represented and discussed in L1 composition scholarship as “always already ideological” (p. 477). This means that when L1 compositionists use words like ideology and power in relation
to language and/or rhetoric, they mean that language is constitutive, rather than reflective, of all thought, knowledge, and identity. As such, it is imbued with power (conceived here as social and political force) and inevitably privileges one group and/or social, political, and economic structure over others. This understanding, which is not unlike Silva and Leki’s (2004) description of L1 composition’s view of language, is most fully articulated by Berlin (1988). Berlin, drawing directly on the work of Therborn (1980), states that “ideology” refers to belief systems that speak to three questions: “What exists? What is good? What is possible?” (479). He explains these questions thusly:

The first deals with epistemology . . . Ideology . . . interpellates the subject in a manner that determines what is real and what is illusory, and, most important, what is experienced and what remains outside the field of phenomenological experience, regardless of its actual material existence. Ideology also provides the subject with standards for making ethical and aesthetic decisions: “what is good, right, just, beautiful, attractive, enjoyable, and its opposites.” . . . Finally, ideology defines the limits of expectation: “what is possible and impossible.” (18) (p. 479)

With respect to power, Berlin (1988) explains that:

Ideology always carries with it strong social endorsement, so that what we take to exist, to have value, and to be possible seems necessary, normal and inevitable—in the nature of things . . . Power is an intrinsic part of ideology, defined and reinforced by it, determining, once again, who can act and what can be accomplished. These power relationships, furthermore, are inscribed in the discursive practices of daily experience—in the ways we use language and are used (interpellated) by it in ordinary parlance. (p. 479)

For L1 composition teachers working from this perspective, the study of language must inevitably involve the examination and critique of the ideology and the concomitant operations of power that make certain kinds of language use preferred in some contexts and dispreferred in others. That is, for ideologically oriented language teachers, teaching writing means teaching students that what counts as appropriate language use both shapes and is shaped by context. Doing so exposes (i.e., is critical of) the socially constructed nature of what counts as “right” and “true” in terms of language use. This, they believe, works to disrupt the assumption that academic discourse and the identities associated with it are naturally and inevitably superior to others in all contexts.

In contrast to what some L2 writing experts might assume, teaching from an ideological perspective and teaching literacy critically need not entail disdain of academic language or hierarchies, or a curricular focus on protest politics to the exclusion of writing instruction (although there are, of course, some L1 instructors who do this). Rather, for many L1 compositionists, attention to ideology facilitates the learning of academic discourse by helping students understand when, where, and why different discourses are ideologically and rhetorically appropriate. Thus, many L1 composition instructors ask students to read and write a variety of discourses (including academic ones) and to tackle these tasks with a critical eye to their shaping contexts. Far from desocializing students from academic standards, many L1 compositionists believe that this approach will enable students to participate in academic discourses in ways that still affirm the discourses with which they are already familiar.

Skills and practice

Consistent with the ideological paradigm dominant in L1 composition, the pragmatically oriented words of skills and practice in L2 work often elicit a negative response in L1 compositionists. Indeed, the term skills signifies to these teachers and scholars cognitive abilities that are stable, independent of ideology, and therefore transferrable across contexts. As such, this word is negatively aligned in many L1 compositionists’ minds with the “autonomous model of literacy,” which Street (1984) in his seminal work placed in direct opposition to the ideological model. According to Street, the autonomous model of literacy views literacy as a personal skill that “itself – autonomously – will have effects on other social and cognitive practices,” but is not shaped by cultural and ideological assumptions about what is “good” or “right” or “true” in terms of language use (p. 1). This view of literacy is problematic for many L1 compositionists for two reasons. First, in this view, to teach particular ways of writing without acknowledging that preference for these ways is socially constructed rather than natural and inevitable requires students to leave behind their “inferior” ways with language (and the inferior identities associated with them) in favor of the superior ways of the academy and its concomitant white, middle-class identities and values (Brodkey, 1996; Horner & Lu, 1998; Street,
and ideological knowledge. As Boland (2007) puts it, "unless we are talking about literally producing words on [a] page for the purpose of putting words on a page, writing is not a skill. It is a complex social activity that requires a conceptual appreciation of what might be said in a given context, for a given purpose, in light of myriad other rhetorical concerns" (p. 45). To imply that writing is an autonomous skill reduces the complexity of writing and the subject matter of composition such that one composition course is assumed to be able to teach students the "skills" they need to succeed in the academy; if students fail to acquire these skills in this course by virtue of their "inability" to write in other courses, it is either their individual fault or the fault of the composition course/instructor. This is problematic because (1) it leads to the demonization of composition programs and instructors who fail to teach students the academic skills necessary to succeed in college; and (2) it lends credibility to arguments for denying access to college to so-called "remedial" students, who, in the context of the autonomous view of literacy, are perceived as having failed to acquire academic literacy, and by virtue of this failure, are deemed "unfit" for a university curriculum.

Many L1 compositionists react negatively toward the word practice for similar reasons. As Fox (1999) notes, practice is closely associated with skill: "any approach that separates language features from intention and meaning for the purpose of ‘practice’ is a skills approach" (p. 52). Boland (2007) similarly observes that practice, like skills, diminishes the subject matter of composition because it suggests that what we and our students do in a class is not real language use but rather just training for the "real" language use to come in students’ other courses. For L1 compositionists, any language use is real and as such does ideological work on students and on the larger context. Failing to acknowledge this perpetuates the autonomous view of literacy that L1 compositionists seek to dismantle.

For many L2 specialists, however, skills and practice are positive concepts that are not necessarily associated with this decontextualized view of literacy. In second language acquisition scholarship, for example, skills are framed as sought-after language abilities that have become automatic for L2 learners (e.g., DeKeyser, 2007). Similarly, in L2 writing studies, skills are constructed as needed abilities for fluent composing. Indeed, a search of titles, abstracts, and keywords in the Journal of Second Language Writing reveals that skill(s) often collocates with achievement-oriented verbs such as develop, improve, and acquire. In this paradigm, the purpose of ESL writing instruction is thus to help students gain skills. In their instructor guidebook for teaching ESL composition, for example, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) state that in a composition course syllabus, the objectives should “identify what knowledge and skills students will acquire at the end of a course” (p. 97). L2 skills-oriented instruction, however, does not necessarily entail the autonomous views of literacy that L1 compositionists fear. In fact, understanding how language works in connection with social contexts is one type of automatic skill needed for proficient writing.

Practice in much L2 scholarship is similarly not equivalent to asocial rehearsal of language forms. Rather, it involves recurrent experiences of language use necessary for skills to become automatic. In second language acquisition studies, Ellis (2002), for example, argues that “the real stuff of language acquisition is the slow acquisition of form-function mappings and the irregularities therein. This skill, like others, takes tens of thousands of hours of practice” (p. 175). DeKeyser (2007), another second language acquisition expert, outlines a three-step acquisition model in which practice is crucial both for turning a learner’s “declarative knowledge” about the L2 into “procedural knowledge,” and for automatizing this knowledge so that it can be displayed “with complete fluency or spontaneity” (p. 98). Such practice may occur in controlled instructional formats, as reflected in the popular L2 communicative teaching framework of Presentation–Focused Practice–Communicative Practice, or PPP (e.g., Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1998; see also Ellis, 2003 for a critique of PPP in ESL teaching), whose “middle-P” stage may be too decontextualized for L1 compositionists’ tastes. However, practice for L2 experts can also be naturalistic and socially embedded. Tardy (2006), for example, reviews “practice-based” studies of writers acquiring genres through situated learning rather than through instruction. Thus, although some L2 conceptualizations of practice may be consistent with L1 fears about autonomous literacy, L2 writing experts use the term in more varied and nuanced ways than the L1 fears presume.

As we unpack what these scare words mean in our respective fields, we move a step closer to understanding why constructive communication between L1 and L2 compositionists can be difficult. Specifically, our reactions to each
other’s words showcase the suspicions each of us has of the other’s discipline, suspicions that are reinforced by how the fields have been constructed in previous comparisons. We also become more aware of how our mutual wariness is partly based on misunderstandings, or incomplete understandings, of what the words signify in their “field of origin.” As in any troubled relationship, recognizing the causes of our communicative breakdowns is a positive move toward avoiding them. In order to further strengthen our relationship, however, it is important to identify words and concepts that we both celebrate. It is here that we believe that genre can help us.

Genre as a bridge between L1 and L2 perspectives

In the 2008–2009 academic year at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB), a group of eight faculty comprising our English department’s composition committee – five L1 compositionists (including Kim), one literature faculty, and two L2 compositionists (including Sunny) – together created a set of guidelines for our re-vamped first-year undergraduate composition (FYC) program. Our collaboration was productive: By the end of the year, we had a common set of guidelines for L1 and multilingual (i.e., L2) FYC that we were enthusiastic about and that were approved by the department without dissent. Two related factors contributed to the project’s success: (1) our avoidance of scare words; and (2) our shared comfort with the concept of genre.

Regarding the first factor, in our multiple meetings discussing the FYC curricular goals, committee members side-stepped some of the scare words and instead tried to articulate whole concepts and positions in ways that they hoped would address the interests and concerns of their counterparts. In these discussions, we found much to agree on, including the central role genre can play in helping all students become better readers and producers of written discourse. Indeed, the term genre is employed throughout our FYC guidelines document (see Appendix A) in ways that we hope reflect L1 and L2 perspectives on what an FYC course should be and do. The very subject matter of FYC, in fact, is defined in the guidelines as “the study of the roles of language, context, purpose and genre as they create meaning.” This meaning-making role of genre is further explicated in the section outlining the program’s “Philosophical Assumptions.” We state that genres “are a kind of social action that allows writers to engage with others.” As such, focusing on genres “can help students determine what can be said in a given set of circumstances as well as how it can be said.”

The “Principles of Course Design” section of the FYC guidelines document describes specific ways that an FYC class can attend to genre. We note that course readings should serve, in part, as a means for analyzing how genres work, that they should be “discussed as rhetorical acts, as material shaped by and shaping specific generic choices for specific purposes.” Regarding writing assignments, we state that they “should ask students to think rhetorically about genre and other writerly concerns.” We also specify what genre-sensitive writing assignments are not: “isolated ‘modes’ papers,” such as the compare/contrast essay, the persuasive essay, and the narrative, “since these do not effectively reflect the complexities of genre and context.”

Our FYC guidelines therefore present genre as a framework for helping students understand relationships among rhetorical situations, messages, and writers’ linguistic choices. In addition, unlike modes-based pedagogies, the curriculum encourages students to see genres as “mixable,” as having fuzzy rather than fixed boundaries and as responding to specific social contexts. Our list of “Goals and Outcomes” further specifies what students should be able to do in such a genre-based approach, including understanding ways of using genre forms, reflecting on their own generic choices, and revising their generic strategies.

These descriptions of the program’s genre-oriented pedagogy enabled us to speak to the interests of both L1 and L2 compositionists while avoiding our scare words. For example, although skills never appear in the document, the L2 experts were satisfied that the stated genre-based goals of the curriculum addressed important language abilities. The guidelines also consistently put generic strategies and formal conventions in interrelationship with context and meaning-making, addressing the social complexity of writing that L1 experts may worry is lost in skills. Indeed, this concern is addressed even in the section on “Grammar and Vocabulary,” which states: “form, at all levels, from the sentence to the document, matters, but only in relation to the writer’s rhetorical project.” Practice is also nowhere to be found in the document, although L2 interests regarding practice are still addressed. Specifically, the guidelines indicate that students will have repeated opportunities for language use as they create, critique, and revise multiple texts. At the top of the “Goals and Outcomes,” we state that students will gain experience in all of the listed items that follow. For L1 compositionists, this word, rather than practice, also helps to construct the class as rhetorically real in itself rather than as a dress rehearsal for more authentic contexts later on.
Power and ideology, scare words for some L2 compositionists, are indeed still present in the guidelines, reflective of the fact that this was an L1-dominant committee. However, the ways in which these concepts are discussed in relation to genre and discourse make it clear that the curriculum is not necessarily designed to get students to resist powerful discourses or to adopt particular politics. Rather, the goal is for students to become aware of situational power dynamics and ideologies as factors that shape and are shaped by writers’ choices. For example, under “Philosophical Assumptions,” we assert that “the contexts of writing are implicated in relations of power,” which “help determine what can and cannot be said and what can and cannot be heard.” In addition, we state that the discourse of a specific community “carries and enacts the ideologies of the community” and that students begin to take on these ideologies as they use the community’s discourse. This acquisition of new discourses and ways of thinking, however, is not presented as something that must be avoided. In the “Goals and Outcomes,” in fact, it is clear that the students will be writing in rather than resisting various discourses, as they “creat[e] texts that respond to the language, discourse, and power dynamics in given contexts.” The focus on genre throughout the guidelines further helps to de-fang power and ideology for some L2 compositionists: They are just among various factors influencing writers’ generic choices, discourse forms and messages, not rallying points for student resistance to the academy.

Strengthening the genre bridge

In our FYC document, therefore, genre has replaced or at least disarmed some of our scare words and helped us find common ground – both linguistically and philosophically. However, as we have turned our attention to implementing these guidelines, we have become aware that genre as an L1–L2 composition bridge is fragile, that it, too, has the ability to become a scare word for each of the fields, especially in light of differences in L1 and L2 genre approaches well established in genre literature (e.g., Hyland, 2004; Hyon, 1996; Johns, 2008). Unless we unpack and discuss these differences openly, in a genuine effort to learn from each other’s definitions of and pedagogical approaches to genre, the bridge may collapse and we will again find ourselves suspicious of one another’s approaches and unable or unwilling to engage across our disciplinary divide.

As an illustration of how we might have such a dialogue, we consider below two genre-focused assignments developed for our two-quarter (20-week) first-year writing sequence – one each from Kim’s mainstream FYC class and Sunny’s multilingual (L2) FYC class. The two assignments form a useful basis for comparison of our approaches because both are focused on the genre of book reviews, but are also reflective of particular orientations in our two fields. We compare the assignments with an eye to the following: (1) similarities in our approaches to genre; (2) differences in our approaches to genre; and (3) what we are willing to adopt from one another’s approaches. We close by discussing how each of us would revise our assignments based on this comparison and thus build further L1–L2 common ground.

L1 and L2 genre assignments: A comparison in light of the disciplinary divide

Appendix B includes Kim’s book review assignment materials, including the actual assignment sheet and several supporting activity handouts: “workshop on Published Book Reviews,” “Draft Planning Worksheet,” and “Self-Assessment.” Appendix C contains Sunny’s book review assignment sheet and supporting activity handouts: “Book Review Moves Framework,” “Practice Identifying Moves,” “Evaluative Vocabulary in Book Reviews,” and “Draft Planning Worksheet.” We have also outlined the steps in our book review lesson plans in Figs. 1 and 2. Sunny’s “moves” activities and related handouts (Steps 1 and 2 in Fig. 2) were designed and taught by her graduate intern Florelei Luib the first time Sunny assigned the book review, and she has used them in subsequent teaching of the course.

Similarities between the assignments

Our two assignments are most obviously similar in the genre students are required to produce: a text that reviews a book, in whole or in part. In Kim’s class, the students have a choice of reviewing either Colton Simpson’s Inside the Crips or Sanyika Shakur’s Monster, both of which focus on gang violence; Sunny’s students review one chapter of their choice from Eric Schlosser’s Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal. Both reviews are to include at least some evaluation of the merits and/or limitations of the book/chapter. We also use some similar supporting class activities, including brainstorming about differences between book reviews and book reports (Fig. 1, step 1b; Fig. 2, step 1b),
analysis of sample published reviews on the books (Fig. 1, step 3; Fig. 2, step 2), and students planning the content of their reviews using guiding questions (Fig. 1, step 4; Fig. 2, step 4).

Differences between the assignments

Beyond these similarities, our book review materials reflect a number of differences in their approach to genre and genre-based teaching. Specifically, our assignments and activities vary in their treatment of the following aspects of the book review genre: purpose, audience, content, structure, and language. We compare our approaches with respect to each of these dimensions below and consider how they reflect L1–L2 disciplinary differences.

Purpose and audience

One area in which our two sets of materials differ markedly is the degree of attention paid to purpose and audience. Kim foregrounds the purposes of book reviews and student discovery of those purposes. Her assignment sheet, for
example, begins by describing the functions of book reviews for readers. During class sessions leading up to the assignment sheet, the class also discusses how reviewers may use their text as a platform for presenting their own views on social issues and how reviews themselves can work to confirm or challenge readers’ existing understandings of the issues raised in the book (Fig. 1, step 1b). Students reconsider these various purposes in preparation for writing their own review. The draft planning worksheet, for example, asks students to answer “what is the purpose of a book review?” and “what is your specific purpose in writing your particular book review?”

Sunny’s materials, in contrast, attend much less to genre purpose. Indeed, the assignment prompt does not mention any purpose(s) of reviews and instead begins directly with the students’ task: “you will write a critique of one of Eric Schlosser’s chapters in Fast Food Nation.” The only function implied is that the review is to evaluate the chapter, commenting on both its positive and negative aspects. Similarly, in the draft planning worksheet, the guiding questions do not ask students to consider the purposes of their review but rather to think about the strengths and weaknesses of the chapter. Also, unlike Kim’s materials, the underlying aims for why a writer might do such evaluation are not a focus for student reflection.

Kim’s materials also emphasize audience, a contextual factor closely related to genre purpose. As noted above, her assignment sheet links the purpose of a book review to the different ways that the reading audience may use and respond to it. The audience defined by Kim’s assignment is, in fact, complex, consisting of readers with varying levels of familiarity with the reviewed book and shifting mid-way through the assignment. Kim emphasizes that these
multiple audiences will shape the students’ reviews: In the draft planning worksheet, students are asked to consider “the mix of people who will read this review” and “the assumptions people might make about your book and its author.” In Sunny’s materials, by contrast, audience is not emphasized. Neither the assignment sheet nor the draft planning worksheet makes mention of the readers of the review, although the implied audience is Sunny.

The primacy Kim places on purpose and audience is consistent with genre approaches in L1 rhetoric and composition. Also known as New Rhetoric genre studies, these approaches emphasize situational context as the defining element of genre (see Hyland, 2004; Hyon, 1996; Johns, 2008 for comparisons of New Rhetoric with other genre schools), and a key contextual factor is the purpose, or action, that a genre accomplishes in a particular rhetorical situation. In a seminal article within this paradigm, Miller (1984) argues that “a rhetorically 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). Other L1 genre scholars like Freedman and Medway (1994) similarly contend that in learning a genre, “what has to be attended to are features of the situation...Knowing the gross surface features is the easy part, and insufficient on its own” (pp. 11–12). Flowerdew (2002), an L2 scholar, sums up New Rhetoric’s distinguishing focus on context, purpose, and audience thusly: “the New Rhetoric group is less interested in lexico-grammar and rhetorical structure and more focused on situational context—the purposes and functions of genres and the attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors of the members of the discourse communities within which genres are situated” (p. 91). Such an orientation is seen in Devitt et al.’s (2004) L1 genre-based composition textbook *Scenes of Writing*. Similar to Kim, these authors emphasize students first analyzing a genre’s context, or “scene,” including writer and reader characteristics and uses for the genre, before moving on to the genre’s structural and linguistic features.

It is important to note, however, that L2 genre work and EAP writing research in general have also attended to purpose and audience, particularly as they relate to academic communities that students may seek to join (e.g., Horowitz, 1986). Indeed, Swales’ (1990) oft-cited definition of genre is that of “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (p. 58). Swales and other L2 genre scholars have also attended to discourse communities, which function as genre audiences and producers (e.g., Hyland, 2000; Swales, 1998). In genre-based teaching applications, however, L2 approaches have tended to foreground text structures and linguistic features more heavily than purpose and audience elements, a point which we take up more fully below.

**Content**

Our two assignments also reflect different orientations to content in book reviews. In Sunny’s assignment sheet, the content is defined as explicitly evaluative, as students are told that they “should comment on both positive and negative aspects of Schlosser’s treatment of the chapter” and that although their assessments can lean more positive, they should try to include at least some weaknesses “in order to add balance to [their] evaluation.” The draft planning worksheet includes questions to elicit evaluative content for students’ critique, such as “What strengths does Schlosser show as a writer in this chapter?” Students are also asked to specify examples (with page numbers) of specific strengths and weaknesses, which they can then use in their reviews; however, they are not directed toward particular aspects of the chapter to evaluate.

Kim’s materials, on the other hand, describe the content of students’ reviews in fuller terms, going beyond just positive and negative critique. Her assignment sheet specifies that book reviews include discussion of “what the book being reviewed is about, who wrote it, what its purpose or point is, and how [the author] tries to establish it.” Reviews are therefore to include summary and analysis of the author’s argument, in addition to “ass[essment][of] whether the author does a good job.” To help prepare students to develop this content for their own reviews, the class analyzes model book reviews from the *Los Angeles Times* on Simpson’s and Shakur’s books, considering such questions as “Does the review offer a clear and coherent summary of what the author of the book being reviewed seeks to teach his audience?”; “Does the review explain the relevance of the book being reviewed?”; and “Does the review offer an interesting discussion of how Shakur/Simpson tries to make his case?” As compared to Sunny’s more open-ended directives to discuss “strengths” and “weaknesses,” these questions lead students to particular elements to assess within the content of their reviews.

**Structure**

Attention to structure is another element distinguishing our materials. Sunny focuses heavily on structural “moves” of the book review genre. In fact, in the opening activity of her book review unit, the class discusses how moves distinguish different written genres, much like steps distinguish different dances (see Fig. 2, step 1a). After
brainstorming on the board what moves may be found in book reviews, the class is presented with a handout that outlines the following moves typical of reviews (based on Toledo, 2005): general presentation, opening/hook, content description, and evaluation (positive aspects, negative aspects, and readership). Students then work in pairs identifying which of these moves are illustrated in short excerpts from published reviews of Fast Food Nation. Students then identify moves in a negative review of Fast Food Nation, noting ways that the “content description” and “evaluation” moves are often woven together and recycled throughout the review. For writing their own chapter critiques, the assignment sheet states that students should think about the moves as they organize their texts.

Sunny’s attention to macrostructure reflects a typical L2 English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach to genre-based teaching, which has an established tradition of moves analysis and moves instruction (e.g., Bhatia, 1993; Feak, Reinhart, & Sinsheimer, 2000; Samraj & Monk, 2008; Swales, 2004; Swales & Feak, 2004). ESP genre applications are also based in a belief that early and explicit instruction about text organization is important as students compose in new genres. As Johns (2008) points out, unlike New Rhetoricians, “ESP practitioners generally begin their pedagogical work with the language and structure of the text rather than the context” (p. 243). In addition, ESP genre materials, like Sunny’s moves handouts, often ask students to first identify moves in text samples (excerpted or whole) before attempting to use the moves themselves in exercises and then in their own compositions (e.g., Swales & Feak, 2004). This style of scaffolded practice before communicative production is a genre-based version of the PPP framework used in some L2 language teaching.

Kim’s attention to structure in book reviews is notably different. In her assignment sheet, students are not instructed in how to organize their texts, though Kim provides a bulleted list of “things your review should do or include by its conclusion,” which could suggest to students a possible order. The only explicit directive regarding structure is that the students’ reviews be “coherent and organized around your purpose in your review.” Thus, where structure is mentioned, it is tied to the focus of Kim’s materials on genre purpose. In addition, unlike Sunny, who begins her book review unit by discussing genre moves, Kim does not attend specifically to the structure of students’ reviews until after they have drafted them. Specifically in the self-assessment handout, she asks students to observe whether the content of their paragraphs matches their topic sentences. Still, no connection is made between the overall macrostructure of their texts and typical book review moves. Moreover, although Kim’s students do attend to structure when they analyze sample published reviews, it is not for the purpose of identifying prototypical move patterns. Rather, in the published book review workshop, the class considers how the reviews could be organized in various ways and thus have different effects on the audience. In this way, Kim’s focus is on the potential for structural variability and different rhetorical outcomes of such variability.

Language

Our different approaches to genre are also reflected at the level of sentence-level language, specifically vocabulary. Sunny spends a good portion of the book review unit on evaluative lexis. During one session, students work in pairs identifying positive phrases in review excerpts in the inside-cover pages of Fast Food Nation (Fig. 2, step 3) and in the next class session, students use their draft planning worksheet and list of positive evaluative phrases to compose two sentences evaluating their chapter, which they can later use in their critiques. By contrast, Kim does not attend explicitly to vocabulary. Although in discussing published book reviews her class may remark on how reviewers’ word choices influence readers’ perceptions, students are not required to isolate and use specific vocabulary from the sample reviews in their own reviews. Sunny’s more deliberate attention to these linguistic aspects is consistent with L2/ESP genre approaches, which consider lexico-grammatical features among the teachable aspects of genres and important for L2 students to control in order to become fluent genre users (e.g., Flowerdew, 2002; Swales & Feak, 2004).

Revising our pedagogies

After comparing and discussing our book review assignment materials, we recognize areas where we could learn from one another’s disciplinary orientations to genre-based teaching in order to better serve our students. Kim, for example, intends to work toward building students’ linguistic “skills” by integrating Sunny’s deliberate focus on the structural moves and vocabulary of book reviews into several activities, but with an eye toward how the moves vary according to writer purposes. For example, Kim will still ask students to gather several reviews, but, in addition to identifying their varied purposes and readership, students will also create a list of recurring moves, evaluative phrases, and the phrases’ meanings found across the reviews. They will then complete a “quick-write” discussing why these
moves and evaluative words may be common in terms of author purposes. Students will also underline instances of common moves and evaluative lexis from their previous lists that they find in *The Los Angeles Times* book reviews and discuss why these samples may use similar or different phrases. Finally, during the self-assessment activity, students will note what phrases they used from the lists they created for the published samples and, if they use similar or different words, they will explain why.

Similarly, after having reviewed Kim’s materials, Sunny plans to make revisions to her unit that ask students to address the shaping forces of texts more fully than she has in the past. Although Sunny may not refer to “ideology” and “power” per se (as these words still scare her a little), she will attend to the genre’s ideological context and the power dynamics among reviewers, reviewed authors, and readers by asking students to collect sample book reviews and then discuss as a class the various reasons this genre exists, including such less-thought-of reasons as presenting one’s own agenda on the issues in the book, increasing and decreasing book sales, and creating community among a book’s readers. Sunny will also require students to post their critiques to the web, as having a wide audience will be more motivating than just writing for the instructor, leading students to think about different functions of their reviews beyond describing strengths and weaknesses. For Sunny, more attention to context does not preclude the move analysis and vocabulary activities, which she still considers important for building students’ knowledge of generic structural and linguistic patterns, but these form-focused activities will now include discussion of how formal patterns are closely tied to purpose and audience.

In discussing and making these changes to our unit plans, neither of us has abandoned her original foci in teaching genres. However, we have moved toward a more balanced approach, with Kim leading students to notice sentence-level genre elements sometimes skipped over in L1 genre approaches and Sunny helping her students see the complex situational forces shaping genres sometimes given marginal attention in L2 genre approaches (Johns, 2008). Ultimately, our hope is that our pedagogies facilitate a kind of “genre awareness education” that Johns (2008) advocates, one whose goal is not as much to teach students to reproduce particular text types as to prepare them to be rhetorically flexible, researching and analyzing new genres in all of their situational and formal dimensions (pp. 238–239, see also Russell & Fisher, 2009).

Conclusion

In the U.S., first-year university composition is inhabited by an increasingly mixed population of L1 students, L2 students, and those in between. The complexities of this population and varied institutional constraints also often preclude dividing L1 and L2 students into separate composition sections with separate curricula. In light of such realities, Matsuda (2006) has challenged all composition instructors to see their classrooms as multilingual spaces, “where the presence of language differences is the default” (p. 649). In order to create such spaces, L1 and L2 writing researchers and teachers will need to collaborate on best practices for addressing first-year composition students’ interests and needs. As we have discussed, such productive collaboration can be hindered by L1 and L2 compositionists’ fears about each other’s words and underlying pedagogical paradigms. Genre, however, has the potential to break our communicative impasses. In our own curricular collaborations, it has been a concept that has helped L1 and L2 writing teachers see that we all want students to become astute examiners, readers, and/or writers of various discourses. In doing so, genre captures what we like best about skills, practice, power, critical, and ideology, and helps us to see these concepts not necessarily as scare words but as ideas that may each have a legitimate place in understanding genre. Tardy, in Johns et al. (2006), has noted that genres are “nexus among the textual, social, and political dimensions of writing” (p. 239). As such, genre is inclusive of the interests and concerns of various writing experts. As L1 and L2 compositionists take the further step of sharing their own versions of genre-based pedagogy, they may be inspired, as we have been, to expand their own and their students’ visions of genre. Our hope for genre’s future, therefore, is that it serves as a bridge between writing experts, building collaborations so necessary for our students.

Appendix A. Guidelines for first-year composition (FYC) program at CSUSB

Subject matter of FYC courses:

Unlike other courses, in which the topic and texts of a course might be perceived as its subject matter, the subject of FYC is conceptual knowledge about writing and language that we animate with, in, and through our course materials. Each FYC course should seek to engage students in a study of this question: how do we, as writers, use language to
make knowledge and participate in textual conversations meaningfully? The subject of FYC might thus be summed up as the study of the roles of language, context, purpose, and genre as they create meaning.

**Philosophical assumptions underpinning the above view of the subject of FYC:**

- Language constitutes meaning. It shapes what we know and how we know it.
- The language of a particular community or discipline embeds the habits of mind and ways of doing business of that community. These discourses shape who we are as well as what we know. They identify us and help create our identities, our subjectivities. As students or apprentices in a community begin to overtake the language of that community, they also begin to overtake the ways of thinking and seeing associated with it. The discourse carries and enacts the ideologies of the community.
- Writing consists of a series of choices (about content, genre, style, etc.) made in particular contexts; the contexts of writing are implicated in relations of power; as such, the contexts of writing help determine what can and cannot be said (and what can and cannot be heard).
- Genres are a kind of social action that allows writers to engage with others. While they may have recognizable boundaries or features, they are flexible forms of writing that writers typically mix in order to construct their meanings. Attention to genres can help students determine what can be said in a given set of circumstances as well as how it can be said.
- Reading and writing are interconnected processes. Writers enter conversations and communities through their words, which means writers must also be readers of text, of contexts, and of culture more generally, if they want their writing to be heard.
- Becoming literate in the information age is a social process. While students should develop the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively needed information, education in information literacy must also include critical reflection on how information is organized and how such informational structures both shape and are shaped by the social, cultural, and ideological contexts in which they are produced. It is this metaknowledge that will allow students to make informed and independent decisions in other situations beyond FYC.
- Knowledge production is intertextual and requires that writers think, in part, with other people’s ideas. Part of being literate is learning the text integration and citation practices of particular communities.

**Principles of course design**

**Choosing readings**

The selection of readings should be guided by the following purposes for including reading in composition classes: (1) they create a set of ideas or subject of inquiry (a theme) that the course will address or raise and that students write in relation to; (2) they provide a context for writing that determines the ways in which the theme will be addressed in relation to a given audience; and (3) they serve as rich examples of the kinds of choices, strategies, and options available to writers. Decisions about the quantity and pacing of course reading should reflect these purposes for reading in a composition class.

**Using readings**

Writing—text production—ultimately drives the central subject of the course. Course readings should be selected and assigned so as to provide a context and conversation for writing. They should be discussed as rhetorical acts, as material shaped by and shaping specific generic choices for specific purposes. They also serve as materials that students integrate into their own writing as they enter into the conversation that the coursework defines.

**Writing assignments**

Writing activities should be planned to build across the quarter(s), so that strategies used in earlier papers will support more advanced text production in later ones. Thinking in terms of project areas rather than isolated papers may best foster this approach. Each project unit should include a culminating text (e.g., a formal paper or other polished project text), but should also include a number of less formal writing activities that support the reading, writing, and thinking required of the culminating text. The number of culminating assignments is not fixed; however, instructors
may find it useful to have between two and four, keeping in mind that more complex, multi-component culminating
texts will necessitate (appropriately) fewer such assignments during the quarter. Specific writing assignments should
ask students to think rhetorically about genre and other writerly concerns; instructors should not assign isolated
“modes” papers (e.g. the compare/contrast essay, the persuasive essay, the narrative, and so on.), since these do not
effectively reflect the complexities of genre and context.

By the end of each quarter, students should have completed the equivalent of 10–15 final revised pages. Because
these culminating texts will involve multiple drafts and revisions, the total number of pages produced across these
drafts will much exceed the 10–15 final pages. In addition, these pages do not include the variety of less formal writing
assignments (e.g., reading responses) that students will complete in each culminating text unit.

Scaffolding

In addition to the sequencing principles described in the “Writing Assignments” section, above, instructors should
consider how the internal scaffolding of individual projects provides experience with various activities and strategies
that writers typically utilize, along with opportunities to reflect on how those activities and strategies enable the
writer’s making of meaning. These shorter “along-the-way” assignments within a project/unit thus provide support
for unfamiliar or challenging writing tasks, pay explicit attention to strategies for reading critically and rhetorically,
and ask students to interrogate their own writing and the contexts and conversations they are entering.

Attending to information literacy

Assignments that require students to conduct research should ask students to identify their own academic inquiries
and purposes for seeking out information. They also should provide them with opportunities for learning how to find,
evaluate, and use information that will help them address their inquiries. In addition, such assignments should help
students understand the relationships among published genres, research methodology, and the kind of knowledge
being made. Librarians are available for consultation and collaboration on these assignments.

Attending to citation practices and issues of intellectual property

Citation practices should be taught with reference to the contextual nature of knowledge production. Assignments
should offer students and teachers opportunities to discuss the conventions of research and citation as they are shaped
by social purposes and underlying ideologies and located in academic and civic communities.

Revision

In order to develop a critical perspective about what they know about writing, students should have the opportunity
for feedback, revision, and reflection. Feedback may take the form of teacher comments, class writing workshops, peer
critiques, and student teacher conferences. Revision assignments may direct students to rewrite an assignment in
response to feedback or may ask students to rethink a previous assignment in a new context or genre. Reflection can be
fostered through metacognitive writing and/or self-assessments.

Grammar and Vocabulary

Sentence mechanics, grammar, vocabulary, usage, and punctuation should be taught in relation to real rhetorical
contexts and purposes (the students’ texts, the texts of other course readings) and not as discrete skills via acontextual
exercises. Form, at all levels, from the sentence to the document, matters, but only in relation to the writer’s rhetorical
project.

Goals and Outcomes

Students will gain experience in:
• close reading of texts to improve understanding of the ways that word choice, syntax, and structure constitute ideas;
• analyzing texts to apprehend more fully the relationship between language use, power, and social hierarchies;
• discerning the various ways that generic strategies and formal, stylistic, tonal language, and discursive conventions
can be manipulated to contribute to meaning making in particular contexts;
• designing their own academic inquiries and developing strategies for finding, evaluating, and integrating
information purposefully in a given context;
generating their own texts by making use of various generic strategies and particular language conventions for particular contexts;
creating texts that respond to the language, discourse, and power dynamics in given contexts;
critiquing their own ideas, form, and style in light of the contexts for which they are writing and with awareness of the generic choices they are making;
substantively revising their own writing to improve form, style, and generic strategies and to intervene in a given rhetorical and discursive context.

Appendix B. Kim’s book review materials

Kim: writing assignment sheet

Writing project #1: Book review of Inside the Crips or Monster

A book review is typically something that a reader uses to learn what a book is about and whether he or she might want to read it. Sometimes, too, a reader may read the book first and then consult the reviews to see what others thought of it and why. Given these reader expectations, it seems reasonable to assume that a good book review explains what the book being reviewed is about, who wrote it, what its purpose or point is, and how he or she tries to establish it. A reviewer typically also assesses whether the author does a good job and explains why.

In short, a reviewer does a number of tasks in a single review: summarizes what the author’s thesis or purpose is (what he/she teaches, argues, or answers), discusses how the author makes his/her points, and assesses the trustworthiness, quality, and relevance of the work. This is what I want you to do.

Remember, your audience for this review at first will be me and your classmates; some of your audience will have read your book and some won’t—keep both audiences in mind. Also remember that after you’ve revised your review, we are going to find a home for these reviews somewhere on the web, so you will have “real” readers for your review besides me. At that point, we will talk about the conventions of the book reviews on the website where you will be posting your review, how they differ from what you already have written and why, and how you will make revisions accordingly. For now, though, just focus on the following:

For those of you who like bulleted points, here is a list of things your review should do or include by its conclusion:

• A title (something a little more creative than “Review of Inside the Crips/Monster”).
• A bibliographic entry identifying the work under review (you can put this right under your review title, instead of at the end of the work). (Use an MLA style entry for WORKS CITED for this.)
• The name of the book and the author fairly early in your narrative
• A mention of what kind of book this is
• A mention (or more) of the author’s background and credentials—i.e. an explanation of why he is or is not a suitable person to write this particular book
• A discussion of what the book is about, what its point/purpose is, how the author makes the case, and whether and how this purpose is relevant to today’s society. (You will probably also need to include a discussion of what the author provides as evidence, explanation, or examples, whether you find these things credible, and why.)
• Your thoughts: a discussion of what is good, interesting, or troubling about the work.

You can certainly take your review beyond these parameters if you want, but it needs to cover at least this much (in narrative, not bulleted, form and in a way that is coherent and organized around your purpose in your review). Shoot for between 3 and 5 pages. Good luck!

Kim: workshop on published book reviews

I really have two goals for today’s workshop. One goal is for us to have thoughtful and critical discussions about the two books that the people in our class have read. What is the purpose of each of these books? Do they accomplish their goal(s)? Do they effectively engage with what’s going on in the world? If so, how? If not, how could they? As we read
the book reviews, I’d like us to consider the reviewer’s opinion and to engage it at the level of content. The other goal for this workshop is to consider the reviewer’s writing and his/her rhetorical choices. In other words, I want us to talk about the content of the books that you read and the content of the reviews that your peers have written. Does the reviewer have a main point? Does he/she meet the expectations of the readers of book reviews? What revisions could he/she make to his/her review? How would these revisions alter the piece?

With these goals in mind, I’d like us to follow this process for each of the essays that we read:

1. Read the book review as carefully as you can and really pay attention to what the author is trying to say and the way he/she has chosen to say it. Try to think about or consider how successfully the author meets your expectations for a review of a book that you are interested in reading (or one that you’ve read and are looking to see someone’s else’s opinion of it).
2. Answer the following questions briefly on a separate sheet of paper:
   (a) What do you like about this essay? What does the reviewer do well?
   (b) Does the reviewer tell you what kind of book this is? Where?
   (c) Does the review offer a clear and coherent summary of what the author of the book being reviewed seeks to teach his audience? Explain.
   (d) Does the review explain the relevance of the book being reviewed? If so, what, according to the review, is the book’s relevance? Do you agree? Explain. If the reviewer doesn’t explain the relevance, offer some suggestions for how the book being reviewed might be relevant to society today.
   (e) Does this review offer an interesting discussion of how Shakur/Simpson tries to make his case? Explain.
   (f) What else (if anything) would you hope the author would add to the discussion of how Shakur/Simpson makes his case? Why?
   (g) What does the review say about Shakur’s/Simpson’s credibility? Does the reviewer think Simpson/Shakur is a suitable person to write this book and make this case? Why or why not?
   (h) Do you think the reviewer liked this book? What do you think is the reviewer’s ultimate recommendation?
   (i) Finally, how could this essay be written differently? This is the question that will be coming up again and again—not because we are working from the assumption that every essay should be written differently, but because we are acknowledging that it could have been. There are so many ways to approach a topic, and we are always making choices as writers about what to put in and leave out, and how to say what we are saying. I want us throughout this quarter to become more aware of this.
3. Once you have jotted down answers to the above questions, we will discuss them as a whole. When we discuss this essay during the workshop, YOU will be primarily responsible for keeping the discussion going by tossing the monkey to someone else in the room. Remember: you can’t speak unless you have the monkey, and when you have the monkey, you must say at least something!

Kim: draft planning worksheet

Drafting your book review

Now that we have talked about the genre of the book review, I’d like you to think about the similarities and differences between the different sample book reviews we examined in relation to their different audience and purposes. Understanding the rhetorical situation and some general rhetorical patterns often helps writers make more effective and informed writing choices. So, before writing the first draft of your book review, I’d like you to answer the following questions about the genre of the book review and your purpose for writing it.

1. What’s the purpose of a book review?
2. What do readers expect or want from a book review?
3. Who do you imagine will be the readers of the book review you’re about to write? Try to describe the mix of people who will read this review and what assumptions and knowledge they will bring to it. (Consider both the people in this class as well as the readers of the places you might post this book review on the web. And also try to think about the assumptions people might make about your book and its author.)
4. What kind of information do you want to include in your book review and why? In other words, what is your specific purpose in writing your particular book review and given this purpose, what kind of information will you include? Be VERY specific here.

5. Write a complete draft of your book review—shoot for 3–4 pages.

Kim: self-assessment

Self-assessment: book review

Stage I:

1. What is the name of the book you are reviewing and who is its author?
   - Do you state this clearly in the beginning of your review? If so, underline it in your draft. If not, where could you incorporate this information. Note it here.

2. What is the purpose of your review? In other words, what statement do you want to make about this book? What do you want others to know about it?
   - Is this stated explicitly in your review? If so, where? Underline it. If not, why not? Should it be? If you think so, note where you could make an explicit statement of your purpose. If you don’t think so, explain why not.

3. What else do you think or hope your review might accomplish? (Think back to the variety of purposes we said the LA Times reviews served and see which one(s) might apply to your review.)
   - What elements of your review contribute to these other purposes? In other words, what choices that you made as a writer help serve this/these purposes?

Stage II:

1. Number each paragraph in the left-hand margin (1, 2, 3, etc.).

2. Read through your essay again and, as you do, make notes on it just as you would make notes on your readings:
   - a. In the right-hand margin, in one sentence summarize each paragraph. Write in one sentence what the paragraph is saying. If you can’t do this, it is possible that the paragraph isn’t focused enough, that it’s on too many topics, so check this out and make any changes that are necessary either now or when you are finished the self-assessment.
   - b. Underline the sentence containing the main point of each paragraph. (Don’t just underline anything. If it doesn’t really summarize the main point of the paragraph don’t underline it. You’ll have a chance to come back later and write a sentence that will serve this function if you decide that you need one.)
   - c. In the left-hand margin, rather than write what you are saying in each paragraph, write what the paragraph is doing for your argument. (Is it offering an example of something? If so say that and say what it is an example of. Is it helping to explain why your claim matters or might be important for us to realize? If so, say that.)
   - d. Circle the sentence that acts as your transition, the one that links the ideas in each paragraph. (It’s fine to have a sentence both underlined and circled!) Again, though, don’t just circle anything. Really make sure it’s a transition. If you don’t have one you can (should!) come back later to add one.

Stage III: Now that you’ve re-seen your essay, you’re ready to re-vise it – almost. First make some more notes right on this page.

   a. Reviewing the notes in your right-hand margin, check yourself: Does your summary match your topic sentence in each paragraph? Does each paragraph really have a topic sentence? (It should!) If not, what paragraphs do you need to change and how will you change them – by adding a topic sentence, changing the one you have, combining two or more paragraphs? Mark them in some way to remind yourself.
   b. Again reviewing your right-hand margin, is each topic sentence developed or supported by the paragraph’s details and examples? If not, where should you add supporting explanation, evidence, or examples? Where should you delete unrelated details?
Stage IV: Go back and revise your essay with all of your answers to these questions in mind, making sure that in your third draft, you’ll be able to answer “yes!” to all of these questions. The final draft and all of the accompanying materials is due on Thurs.

Appendix C. Sunny’s book review materials

Sunny: writing assignment sheet

Take-home final paper: critique of one Fast Food Nation chapter
At least 2 full pages typed, 12 point Times font, 1 inch. margins.
Bring your paper to class Friday (on a disk) at 12 noon, and we will continue to work on it.
What you should bring to class on Friday:

1. Your critique
2. Fast Food Nation
3. Your notes/outline for the critique
4. Dictionary (optional)
5. Coursepack (optional)

For this take-home final, you will write a critique of one of Eric Schlosser’s chapters in Fast Food Nation. You should select a chapter that you feel strongly about, but it cannot be the one you did your group presentation on.
In your critique of this chapter, you should comment on both positive and negative aspects in Schlosser’s treatment of the chapter’s subject matter. It is OK if your critique is more strongly positive than negative, but, in order to add balance to your evaluation, you should still try to describe some limitation(s) or weakness(es) in the chapter.
In organizing your critique, think about the moves we have discussed for book reviews/critiques, including:

- **Introduction**: Hook, general presentation of chapter, initial evaluation of the chapter
- **Positive evaluation (strengths) and content description to support evaluation**
- **Negative evaluation (weaknesses/limitations) and content description to support evaluation**
- **Conclusion**: Audience for the chapter and final evaluation

Note: Do not focus on merely summarizing the chapter!
As you discuss the chapter, you will inevitably have to summarize some of the material in the chapter (your “content description” move). Such summary, however, should be used to support your evaluation and should not be the main focus of your critique. Thus, your body paragraphs should focus right away on evaluating some aspect of the chapter (positively or negatively), and then for support you can describe parts of the chapter content that illustrate your evaluation.

Sunny: book review moves framework

Book review moves.

*Move 1*
General presentation
This book is about fast food, the values it embodies, and the world it has made.

*Move 2*
Opening/hook
Everyone frets about the nutritional implications of excessive dining at America’s fast food emporia, but few grasp the significance of how quickly fast-food restaurants have fundamentally changed the way Americans eat.

*Move 3*
Content description
Schlosser documents effects of the fast food industry on American’s economy and agribusiness.

*Move 4*
Evaluation
- Positive aspects
  Mr. Schlosser is a skillful and persuasive investigative performer.
- Negative aspects
  Mr. Schlosser’s appraisal is not comprehensive but a hodge podge of impressions, statistics, anecdotes and prejudices.
- Readership
  This book will interest fast food consumers and anybody who is concerned with the individual issues discussed in the book.

Adapted from: Toledo (2005).

a Content description may be embedded (included) as part of evaluation.
Sunny: practice identifying moves

Some excerpts of reviews of Eric Schlosser’s Fast Food Nation

Move(s): ______________________
“Fast food. It is fast, and fast is generally seen as good. Enough people are willing to accept it as food. It is convenient, apparently (fast, generally close at hand, of uniform and predictable “quality” everywhere). It is, generally cheap—at least nominally (although, as Eric Schlosser points out, there are many hidden costs).” — The Complete Review’s Review

Move(s): ______________________
“In his new, fine and very vivid piece of muckraking, Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser asks how it is possible that a convenience food—what started out as an occasional treat for the kids—has ended up defining a way of life … Everywhere in his thorough, gimlet-eyed, superbly told story, Mr. Schlosser offers up visionary glints.” — Stephen Metcalf, The New York Observer

Move(s): ______________________
“One of the best reasons to read Eric Schlosser’s blazing critique of the American fast-food industry is his bleak portrayal of the alienation of millions of low-paid employees” — James Meek, London Review of Books

Move(s): ______________________
“On occasion, Mr. Schlosser undermines the substantive points he wants to make by seeming eager to blame the industry for every contemporary ill. Talking about restaurant robberies, he writes that ‘crime and fast food have become so ubiquitous in American society that their frequent combination usually go unnoticed.’ Talking about teenagers who take jobs after school to buy a car, he complains that “as more and more kids work to get their own wheels, fewer participate in after-school sports and activities.” — Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times.

Move(s): ______________________
“Fast Food Nation is the kind of book that you hope young people read because it demonstrates far better than any social studies class the need for government regulation, the unchecked power of multinational corporations and the importance of our everyday decisions.” — Deirdre Donahue, USA Today

Sunny: evaluative vocabulary in book reviews

Identifying evaluative vocabulary in reviews of Fast Food Nation

On the back of Schlosser’s Fast Food Nation and on the first few pages inside the cover, you will find excerpts of reviews that have been written about his book. Together with a partner:

a. Underline words and phrases in these excerpts that evaluate his book positively
b. Discuss possible meanings of these words.
c. Write down a list of the words that you discussed. You can draw on this list in writing your own review.

Examples of review excerpts on Schlosser’s book that the students discuss:

“A fine piece of muckraking, alarming without being alarmist.” — New York Times Book Review

“As disturbing as it is irresistible … Exhaustively researched, frighteningly convincing … channeling the spirits of Upton Sinclair and Rachel Carson.” — San Francisco Chronicle

“[In] this illuminating, detailed study of the fast food industry, which is just as profound as it is witty, Schlosser has done for the fast food industry what Upton Sinclair did nearly a century ago …” — Korea Times
“Eric Schlosser’s compelling new book, *Fast Food Nation*, will not only make you think twice before eating your next hamburger...”—*International Herald Tribune*

“[Schlosser’s] style combines folksy storytelling with solid reporting.”—*Boston Globe*

“A reasoned attack on the fast food culture... In the best muckraking tradition.”—*Newsweek*

**Sunny: draft planning worksheet**

*Preparing to write your critique of one of Eric Schlosser’s Chapters*

Name of the chapter you are critiquing: ____________________

What makes this chapter excellent? (or not excellent?)
(Give specific examples and page numbers)

What strengths does Schlosser show as a writer in this chapter?
(Give specific examples and page numbers)

Are there any weaknesses or problems with this chapter?
(Give specific examples and page numbers)

Who would most appreciate this chapter? Be interested in it? Why?
(Give specific examples and page numbers)

2. Compare your notes above with one or two other classmates who are reviewing the same chapter. You can share and borrow ideas from one other and write them on this sheet.

3. Take out your list of positive evaluation phrases from last class. You can also look at the phrases you underlined in the reviews of Schlosser in the first few pages of the book.

Now write at least two sentences about some positive points you mentioned in your list above, using at least two positive evaluation phrases.

**References**


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