

## **CHAPTER 18.**

# **ACADEMIC GENRES IN UNIVERSITY CONTEXTS: AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' BOOK REVIEWS WRITING AS CLASSROOM ASSIGNMENTS**

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Previous studies on genre awareness have stressed its importance in the production of a piece of discourse that is appropriate to the situation or context of use (Askehave and Swales, 2001, Bazerman, 1994, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Hyland, 2000; Kress, 1999; Swales, 1990, 2004). These authors assert that knowing what is involved in genre writing may empower students to communicate effectively in society and participate in academic disciplines. This implies that when writing in any genre, one should take into account the target audience, the communicative purpose of the genre, the conventions socially constructed by the discourse community that will influence linguistic choices and their effect on the reader. As studies of genres produced in academic settings in response to assignments are still few (Belcher, 1995; Herrington, 1994), this study aims to report on the results of an investigation that compared the book reviews written by Brazilian and Anglo-American graduate students in the linguistics and education areas.

Based on the notion of genre as social action manifested in specific text structures and linguistic patterns, in this chapter, I address the following questions:

- How does writing of academic book reviews in response to a class assignment reveal students' expertise and knowledge of the conventions of the genre?
- What evaluative strategies do Brazilian and American students use when writing academic book reviews? Are they similar or not?

In attempting to answer these questions, I have analyzed both students' written assignments and responses to a survey on students' perceptions and

knowledge of genre conventions within the university context by examining two categories: text structure and evaluative comments.

## **THEORETICAL BASES**

### **CONCEPT OF GENRE**

Several rhetoricians have highlighted the notion of genres as recurrent social actions, practices of everyday life for particular rhetorical purposes in work (Bazerman, 1988, 1994, 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Bhatia, 1993, 2002; Miller, 1984; Russell, 1997; Swales, 1990, 1993, 2004). The concept of genre adopted in this work is aligned with Bazerman's thoughts that genres are "forms of life, ways of being, and frames for social action," (Bazerman, 1994) and they should be considered "what people, as groups and individuals, recognize them to be ..." (2005a, p. 92). This view implies looking at genre as a process that organizes individuals and groups around their interests, behaviors, thoughts, reasons, and that genre use also typifies their actions when shaping interactions. In participating in school activity systems, students "appropriate" knowledge on how genres are elaborated and then use them through practice until they become members of the academic community. Given that my interest in this study is to compare how graduate Brazilian and Anglo-American students reshape book and article reviews written in different contexts to convey meanings and position themselves in their disciplines, I investigate their particular textual practices seen as authorized and valued by the social groups, institutional sites (universities, classrooms), or discourse communities (students and teachers) used by student-writers in interactions as their understanding of writing book reviews.

### **BOOK REVIEW AS A GENRE**

The studies regarding book reviews as genres are few in number. Among them are those that focus on students' assignments (Belcher, 1995; Bezerra, 2001) and on scholars' characterization of textual features and strategies of appraisal to convey interpersonal features (Araújo, 1996, 2009; Hyland, 2000, Motta-Roth, 1995). Araújo's (1996) study on book reviews in the area of linguistics based on Swales's (1990) perspective revealed that scholarly book reviews have a typical and consistent pattern of information and organization displaying different rhetorical moves and that those exemplars of the genre varied as a response for meeting the expectations of a disciplinary community. One of

central and recognizable features of book reviews as a persuasive kind of text is evaluation that means “both a statement of personal judgment and an appeal to shared norms and values which are influenced by cultural considerations, socialization, and philosophical background” (Hunston, 2004, p. 193). Hyland (2000, p. 41) claims that book reviews are “crucial sites of disciplinary engagement, demand writers’ awareness of how to understand interpersonal relations when conveying meanings and addressing evaluative comments to a specific author and disciplinary community.” By interacting with a particular audience through their texts, the reviewer is not only assessing merit and an author’s reputation, but he/she is also publicly exposing the writer’s views of the text and of its author. Thus, the force of evaluation in this context of interaction is devastating, and writers must be cautioned to avoid friction with a specific author. In this particular study, I am comparatively examining how graduate students interact in different ways through their evaluative strategies in considering their purposes (for a class assignment), audience (teacher), situation (university classroom), and genre conventions.

## THE STUDY

This study used a combination of text analyses and closed-and open-ended survey to investigate the writing of reviews by a group of 14 Brazilian and eight Anglo-American graduate students in the humanities as assignments for one of the courses taken in the first/second year of their degree, as well as their perceptions of the purposes, roles and structure for writing critical reviews. We looked at their compositions to see how these written texts reveal their understanding of discursive practices, social purpose, audience, and roles as participants of an academic community constituted by teachers and students in the university settings.

## SETTING, PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

The first group of participants was 14 Brazilian graduate students enrolled in a one-semester compulsory course on Applied Linguistics Research Methodology required for all students in their first year in the graduate program at the State University of Ceará (UECE), Brazil, in 2006. Research Methodology is thus an important subject to help them acquire the necessary tools to improve their initial research proposals when entering the master program. All of the volunteers were required to write an article review after having discussed in class as part of the course assignment.

The second group consisted of eight American graduate students from the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). Three of them were PhD candidate students affiliated to the Education Department who wrote their book reviews between 2005 and 2006 for different courses and professors. The remaining students (five) were first year PhD students enrolled in Sociolinguistics 203 in the Linguistics Department, in the fall of 2006.

The corpus analyzed was thus 22 reviews as one of the assignments for course students were taking in their respective graduate departments. For Brazilian students, the assignment had the aim of having students reflect on the literature about research methods in applied linguistics, develop their analytical and critical thinking skills, and learn how to express the standards of evaluative comments. Students were asked to read research articles selected from international scholarly journals in the area of Applied Linguistics, to present and discuss the selected articles orally in the classroom and, finally, to write a two to three page critical review intended only for grades.

For American students, the assignment had the aim of having students reflect on the literature of recent developments in Sociolinguistics (Department of Linguistics) and Media Studies (Department of Education) as well as demonstrate their critical thinking skills. The students were oriented towards completing the assignment after reading and analyzing book reviews written by scholars and were guided by a three-page handout containing essential information on book review writing. American students were given the option to write their reviews for a class assignment or for publication. Most of them, especially students from the Linguistics Department, preferred to write them for a class assignment, considering that this was their first experience in writing critical reviews.

## QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

Ten closed- and open-ended written questions on the students' perceptions of their reviews writing were completed in a survey by all participants after they had written the critical review. Their answers as representing writers' voices were used in the analyses to examine their expertise shown in the compositions. For the purposes of this chapter, only the questions 4, 6, 9 and 10 were analyzed.

- Q1: The frequency students read book/article reviews
- Q2: The frequency students write book/article reviews
- Q3: The way students learned how to write book reviews
- Q4: The social purpose for writing book/article reviews
- Q5: The length of reviews and who determines the length

- Q6: The purposes for writing book/article reviews for classrooms
- Q7: The teacher's expectations for the written book/article reviews
- Q8: The purpose for writing book/article reviews for other situations
- Q9: The way information is organized in academic reviews
- Q10: The degree of politeness devices in the writing of book/article reviews

Two categories of analysis are considered. The first, *text structure*, examined how students convey meanings and organize information of academic reviews through rhetorical strategies (Araújo, 1996). The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data consisted of a detailed investigation of the 22 selected reviews comparing the regularity and relatedness of pieces of information in the texts conveyed. The second, *evaluative comments*, focused on evaluative strategies based on Hyland's (2000) study on praise and criticism. Some examples from the corpus are used to illustrate and support the points discussed in the analyses. Codes are included to identify students such that BS1 means Brazilian student while AS1 means American student. Their compositions are referred to BSR1, which means Brazilian Student Review 1 while ASR1 stands for American Student Review 1. Questions from the survey are numbered as in Figure 1, and they are referred according to their number Q1, Q2, Q3 and so forth.

### CATEGORY 1: CONVENTIONAL TEXT STRUCTURE OF CRITICAL REVIEWS

The students' critical reviews displayed similarities and differences for rhetorical moves of text structure, showing how they consistently appropriated certain conventions. The majority (18 out of 22, 81.8%) of graduate students used a consistent and typical pattern, as shown in Table 1, when they employed three rhetorical moves to realize the social function of genre and respond to the teacher's assignment; an exception to the pattern were two Brazilian students whose reviews (BSR5 and BSR7) displayed no Move 1 (Introduction) and two other reviews (BSR9 and BSR13) that displayed no Move 3 (Conclusion). It is worth highlighting that four students 5, 7, 9 and 13 at the moment of the research had completed their undergraduate language teaching courses, but they had not had systematic courses on academic writing to learn book reviews. Their responses indicated when they had to accomplish the assignment, they had to learn from other sources accessible to them: reading and analyzing book reviews in periodicals at the university library.

Table 1 shows how students' reviews are similar to those of scholars in the area of linguistics by situating the reader within a theoretical or methodological context in the opening paragraphs when talking about the topic, author, aims, intended audience, previous studies, and a brief book evaluation (Move 1).

**Table 1. Frequency of moves in students' critical reviews**

<b>Moves</b>	<b>Brazilian Students</b>		<b>American Students</b>	
	<b>Frequency = 14</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency = 8</b>	<b>%</b>
I - Introducing the book	12*	86	8	100
II - Summarizing the content	14	100	8	100
III - Providing general evaluation	12**	86	8	100

*\*Students 5 and 7    \*\*Students 9 and 13*

Move 2 tends to describe the book organization, to report on its content, make comments on strengths and weaknesses, and sometimes offer suggestions for the author to improve the book. Move 3, the concluding paragraph(s), serves the purpose of evaluating the book as a whole by recommending or (dis)qualifying it for readership by a particular audience. These three parts represent the functions they play in the genre, and may be accomplished by one or more strategies to convey meanings in their texts.

Their written reviews demonstrate how they attempted to meet the audience's expectations (the teacher) by showing their knowledge of genre conventions, despite their limited experiences in writing reviews. Interestingly, nine students, as a group, responded that they were writing a review for the first time (Q2 in the survey, see Figure 1). However, they also responded that they were aware of how to do it, when responding to Q4 on their perceptions for the communicative purpose of the genre and Q9 on the sequence of information in the reviews.

The two Brazilian students (BS5 and BS7) whose articles had no introduction, and the two (BS9 and BS13) whose reviews had neither conclusion nor global evaluation at the end seem to demonstrate a mismatch between their responses and written texts. In answering how information is organized in reviews (Q9), BS5 appeared to reveal a lack of knowledge or even misunderstanding of what was required in this question, given that her answer focused on linguistic features. However, although BS7's comments on Q9 showed knowledge of the genre concept and recognized that introductions are part of the text structure in reviews, this student preferred not to write them. Thus, the fulfillment of the genre purpose for BS5 and BS7 is realized in Moves 2 and 3 only. Although student BS9 recognized that "reviews have a canonical fixed structure" and BS13 only gave a vague response to Q9, these two students seemed to display a lack of knowledge of genre conventions and awareness of importance in expressing an evaluation at the end as a means of consolidating positive views introduced in Move 2. The lack of an introduction and a conclusion in their reviews may

signal the students' lack of ability in establishing an interpersonal stake when interacting with their audience: the teacher.

Although the strategies varied, the most preferred ones Brazilian and American students used for reviewing the book and article were: *making topic generalizations* for introducing the book and article in Move 1, summarizing the content of the book/article by *describing its organization, reporting/discussing the content*, and *evaluating parts of the book* in Move 2, and *a general evaluation* of the book/article at the end in Move 3. Indeed, making topic generalizations seems to be one of the main features of scientific discourse as a means of creating a context for the reader to follow their reporting of content and their evaluation of parts of the book/article. As discussed previously, the data revealed that not all students are aware of the generic conventions of critical reviews, as inferred from their responses in the survey. For some of them (four Brazilian students), reviews are similar to a synopsis in that they do not need to situate the reader or evaluate the book in the conclusion, especially when writing for the teacher. To a certain extent, the use of these rhetorical strategies for most students is similar to the ones used in scholars' reviews (Araújo, 1996, 2009) addressed to disciplinary community.

## CATEGORY 2: EVALUATIVE COMMENTS OF CRITICAL REVIEWS

Given that book reviews are essentially evaluative and persuasive, the second category of analysis regards the students' personal comments in their reviews to examine the structural pattern of evaluation, focus of evaluation, evaluative strategies, amount of appraisal, and politeness devices when expressing praise and criticism. When these aspects are examined in their reviews, their writing practices show both similarities and differences. We discuss similarities first. Taken together, the first similarity between Anglo-American and Brazilian students was noticed in the use of a *structural pattern of evaluation*. Both groups of students expressed an evaluation in the three moves, as mentioned earlier, and tended to offer praise for global features of the book/article: content generalizations; contributions; and recommendations (Moves 1 and 3). Criticisms were addressed mainly to specific content and textual features (Move 2) (see Table 2). These findings may evince two things: students' knowledge and their understanding of the purpose for writing book reviews, and the way conventional reviews should be written in response to class assignments.

As shown in Table 2, only 42.8% of Brazilian students provided global evaluation (positive) in Move 1 and 85% evaluated content and textual features by expressing praise and criticism in Moves 2 and 3. One hundred percent of American students expressed praise and criticism in all three Moves. The major-

**Table 2. Frequency of pattern of evaluation**

<b>Moves/focus</b>	<b>Brazilian students</b>		<b>American students</b>	
	<b>Frequency=14</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Frequency=8</b>	<b>%</b>
I—global features	6	43	8	100
II—content and textual features	12	85	8	100
III—global features	12	85	8	100

ity of students (20) presented a structural pattern of evaluation that fulfilled the purpose of genre: praising global features and criticizing specific aspects. This pattern seems to contribute to the dual purpose of book reviews, as Hyland (2000, p. 48) claims: “to provide an overview of the text for readers while raising particular problematic aspects for the field.” Thus, for students who praised beyond the introduction, this pattern may reveal both their concern with conveying an assessment of reviewed work and carrying affective meanings.

The second similarity concerns *a preferred method of evaluation* in their texts. Half of the Brazilian students (seven, 50%) and three-quarters of the Anglo-American students (six, 75%) preferred to mix content reporting with expressions of appraisal of specific issues rather than devoting separate paragraphs for praise and criticism, especially when evaluating Move 2. Maybe, this preference may be due to the need to interact with the audience while reporting the content in the texts.

The third similarity regards the *focus of evaluation* in the reviews (what aspects or issues were evaluated). Students addressed their positive comments mainly on practical and theoretical aspects of the book or contributions of the book to the field in their Introductions. Most of the signs of positive evaluation in Move 2 are addressed to particular aspects of theories that ground the reviewed book/article. Thus, most of occurrences (22) of praising comments in Brazilian students’ reviews emphasize the validity, reliability, and seriousness of research being reported in the article. Anglo-American students’ reviews (12 occurrences, despite only eight students in the study) focus their comments on application of theories and data analyses. These occurrences reveal students’ concerns with both content and methodological aspects of the research in an attempt to fulfill the purpose of the genre and to show their understanding and appreciation of particular issues of the book for the teacher.

Move 3 in the reviews are signaled by a concluding expression such as *em suma* (in sum), *concluindo* (concluding), *finalmente* (finally) in Portuguese, and *overall*, *in short*, *a final word*, *all in all*, and *the essays in this volume* in English. Reviewers tended to offer positive comments on the book/ article’s contributions to the disciplines, or to recommend the book/article to readers, especially



**Table 3. Frequency of occurrences of expression of praise/criticism**

Participants	Praise Criticism			
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Students=22				
Brazilian=14	61	31.28	53	75.71
American=8	134	68.71	17	24.28
Total	195	99.99	70	99.99

students and professionals, followed by a statement justifying the praise comment. The praise expressions in the conclusions are evidence of how students offer “a stronger endorsement” of the texts being evaluated, and create “a socially appropriate solidarity framework” (Hyland, 2000, p. 54).

These results confirm *the amount of appraisal* in graduate students’ reviews (Table 3). We perceived that Brazilian and American students taken together tend to praise (195 occurrences) rather than criticizing (70 occurrences). By expressing appraisal, students, as novice genre writers, display an awareness of genre conventions and the need to negotiate personal judgments in their texts.

Table 3 shows that Anglo-American reviews praised more (134 occurrences, 68.71%) than Brazilian ones (61 occurrences, 31.28%). These data reveal that American students are more aware of being polite, and they demonstrated it in their texts. For them, writers should be polite and overall positive but not afraid to offer constructive criticism. However, by analyzing criticism occurrences, Brazilian students were more negatively critical in their evaluative comments (75.71%) than American ones, who expressed negative comments only in 24.28% of statements. These findings were compared and no correlation between most Brazilian written reviews and their responses on politeness devices in the survey (Q10) was found. Thus eight Brazilian students who recognized the use of politeness devices when evaluating the text also made negative comments with no concern with saving the author’s face or showing solidarity. On the other hand, the remaining students (6) who did not answer the Q10 or just commented on formal linguistic aspects wrote texts that seemed to be neutral descriptions of aims, organization, content, and a brief and global evaluation at the end. For these students, academic reviews written for grades seem to be only a way to show content knowledge.

With respect to the use of *evaluative strategies* in the reviews in order to persuade the disciplinary community to accept the reviewers’ personal viewpoints, the most preferred ones by Brazilian and Anglo-American students were *personal attributions* (for praise), *praise-criticisms pairs*, *hedging* (for mitigating criticism), *metadiscursive statements*, and *straight negative criticisms*. Personal attributions occurred 28% in Brazilian reviews and 50.8% in American reviews, and

this relates to the author's individual judgments to introduce praise by showing how the reviewer is aligned with the author's thoughts. In general, the statements signaling praise were introduced by first person personal pronouns in English or by a verb in the first person in Portuguese that suggests the reviewer's involvement and commitment to an idea and encouraging its acceptance by the readers. Examples of personal attributions in the reviews may be seen in the use of verbs *gostei* (liked) and *recomendo* (recommend), in which the first person is marked in the verbal forms in Portuguese and the use of personal pronouns *I* or *me* followed by a mental verb like *think*, *believe*, or *find* in English reviews, signaling the reviewer's personal interest, engagement, besides bringing "the writer into his text as a thinker" (Crismore, 1989, p. 85).

The second most frequent evaluative strategy used by both groups (B=18.6% and A=12.1%) regards *praise-criticism pairs* (Hyland, 2000), which are equivalent to "matching relation of contrast" (Hoey, 1983, 2001). This strategy is realized by means of a positive evaluative expression or statement followed by a negative evaluation. Here, expression of praise is syntactically subordinated to a criticism, introduced by conjunctions such as *but*, *however*, *although*, *despite*, and *in spite of* in English, and their equivalents *mas*, *entretanto*, *no entanto*, and *embora* in Portuguese that signal a change in the plane of evaluation is to be expected, from positive to negative or vice-versa. Reviewers employ such devices as a way of mitigating his/her negative opinion of aspects that are not significantly important in the book/article.

*Hedging* is another strategy used by both groups of students (B=9.33%, A=25.8%), in the reviews to mitigate criticism, especially when evaluating book content. Even American students who had no experience with review writing showed awareness of softening criticism through the use of hedges. Such strategy is introduced by a modal or epistemic verb as a device to justify the problem raised in the review. By mitigating, they were invoking a wider audience to share the understandings and views, and to be accepted as members of the community. The use of this strategy was coherent to their answers to Q10 about the importance of being polite in the reviews. All American students were unanimous in acknowledging that reviewers should be polite and respectful, even when they have to point out problematic issues in the reviewed book. Swales (1990) states that the appropriateness of using hedges depends on the norms of a particular discourse community and the context of writing. Perhaps this may justify the fact that Brazilian students' reviews displayed few instances of hedges, thus differing substantially from Anglo-American students' reviews. Their texts may have been influenced by the context of writing in the university setting, whose instruction on hedging as a strategy to decrease the writer's responsibility and to project politeness had not been highlighted.

The students' use of *metadiscoursal statements* (B=5.33%, A=5.17%) helps to predict positive and negative evaluation. Their function is to organize reviewers' discourse, in addition to show how they soften criticism by rhetorically announcing their presence in the text. According to Hyland (2000), "because metadiscourse draws attention to the intentions and activities of the writer, it serves in these texts to refocus the reader on the act of evaluating, rather than the evaluation itself" (p. 58). Lexical items such as *weaknesses*, *shortcoming*, *problems* and *drawbacks* signaled a negative evaluative comment and *strength*, *highlights*, and *merit* introduced positive comments in the students' reviews.

The most remarkable difference between Brazilian and Anglo-American students is related to strategies expressing criticism (only B=24%). Brazilian learners' reviews presented 18 occurrences of "straight negative criticism," a device that is not present in English reviews. This strategy consists of introducing a criticism without toning down or softening his/her evaluation in the reviews. Typical instances of straight criticism in Brazilian reviews are, especially, the author's lack of knowledge of the article topic and the lack of theoretical framework to make the research consistent. More importantly, these criticisms are always supported by evidence, which means that an evaluative comment is followed by a clause or stretch of text functioning as "basis" for the evaluation (Hoey, 1983, 2001), justifying, therefore, the reviewer's claims and his/her position assumed in the text. *Basis* means an expression of evidence that supports the reviewer's viewpoint and is usually introduced by *due to*, *for this reason*, *because* (in English), *porque*, *dado que*, and *pois* (in Portuguese), especially when the comment conveys a negative evaluation. Most Brazilian students' reviews (78.8%, 11 texts) provided basis for their evaluative statements against 21.6% (3 texts) which did not. In justifying their claims, the writers are adopting a position of authority based on knowledge learned in the course and representing themselves as qualified persons to speak for the disciplinary community.

As "straight criticism" is not an integral feature of academic reviews, Brazilian students seem to signal that their purpose is to show their knowledge of the topic learned about research methods for the teacher. This assumption is confirmed by their responses to questions 4 and 6 in the survey (see Appendix) in that eight Brazilian students (57.1%) commented that their purpose for writing reviews was to show their understanding of articles they had read for the course, and six (42.8%) reported that their purpose was to persuade readers to read the review. Their responses suggest that both the purpose in doing the task and having an audience in mind may have enormously influenced their strategy to express straight criticism. In addition, when talking about the degree of politeness in the writing of book reviews, 50% of them commented that reviewers should be polite in spite of pointing out shortcomings.

The students who expressed straight negative criticism (BS 5, 9, 11, 13) revealed that academic reviews, even when written for the teacher, besides content knowledge must also show their critical skills. For those who intermingled praising and criticism (BS 1, 2, 3, 6, 12, and 14), their work showed much more consciousness of the genre's social purpose, even when responding to a class assignment. This difference may indicate that although they acknowledge that academic reviews are typifications of actions, there is still a lack of ability and awareness of highlighting important aspects of the article in their texts. The answers given to the survey questions, when compared to their writing practices, appear to reveal that they struggle between fulfilling genre expectations and showing their linguistic knowledge and expertise for the teacher. In adopting a critique position in their texts, they show their learned and accumulated knowledge of the specific subject matter for the teacher, but forget that reviews, even written for class should not constitute a threat for authors' reputation in their disciplinary community.

Although most of the students acknowledged that evaluation is a central aspect of the reviews writing, when responding to a class assignment, they seemed to figure out that the most important thing is to show content knowledge on specific topics for their primary audience, the teacher. Their concern in demonstrating summarizing skills rather than critical skills is evidence of students' trouble in transforming knowledge in their texts. For these students, reviews are not only a discursive space in which they can summarize content, but also a site in which they may interact with readers by showing their existing knowledge on the topic and by sharing their positions and affective meanings to a specific audience interested in them.

The differences between Brazilian and Anglo-American students can also be attributed to the contexts of learning. Both groups of students reported that they have learned to write reviews through systematic instruction in the classroom and by reading and analyzing reviews in journals. As the classroom context was not examined in this study, maybe other factors may be at play here: lack of opportunities for writing reviews addressed to a real audience; the pedagogical orientation for students to work throughout the assignment; materials provided; and previous experiences. An ethnographic and longitudinal study might reveal which factor(s) most strongly influenced the writing practices of these students.

## CONCLUSION

Due to the nature of this investigation, the results cannot be generalized to other students and classrooms. By comparing the writing practices between

Brazilian and Anglo-American students, I did not intend to show cross-cultural differences but rather the students' preferred rhetorical strategies and linguistics choices in their texts. In this respect, the study suggests that, in general, most students appropriated basic features of how to structure and evaluate their texts to accomplish the genre purpose for classroom, in spite of the fact that some students have few experiences with review writing. The results also revealed that the students' responses in the survey did not always correlate with their writing practices, meaning that they may have demonstrated an awareness of genre conventions theoretically, but did not know how to transform their knowledge into effective practice.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study was to show how students write critical responses for the classroom. By providing students with enough opportunities to develop their writing skills, they can gradually change from knowledge-telling students to knowledge-transforming, mature writers. Writing instruction in university contexts should also endow graduate students with the knowledge about how they may represent themselves so as to convey their judgments, opinions and commitments and establish a disciplinary voice in their texts. Through practice in varied tasks, they may gain communicative competence. Such knowledge may help students to develop awareness that reviews as genres are one of the forms in which writers may negotiate meanings, share views with readers, and construct knowledge.

Finally, this study opens doors for further research that examines how graduate students in different university contexts get initiated into disciplinary communities by investigating not only formal and rhetorical knowledge, but also processes and procedural knowledge used when writing critically. I believe that such studies may illuminate our understanding of how students elaborate and shape their texts as responses to the socio-cognitive needs of the communities they are engaged in and how academic writing tasks can facilitate students' development of writing genres to communicate effectively in dynamic and situated interactions.

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