

An Archaeology of Academic Writing(s): Using History to Understand the Present and Future of Academic Writing

Julia MOLINARI

University of Nottingham, UK

julia.molinari@nottingham.ac.uk

In this presentation, I reflect on what it means for writing(s) to be 'academic' in the 21st century. This is a question born of recent discussions in the literature relating to regenring (English 2011), including the extent to which multimodal discourses can be considered 'academic'; to creativity (Besley and Peters 2013); to peripheral genres (Bennett 2014); and to risk-taking in the 'contact zone' (Thesen and Cooper, 2013). Within this context, reference will be made to my own experience of re-designing Nottingham University's EAP (English for Academic Purposes) curriculum to reflect current academic social practices. I will draw on the work of Bazerman (1998) - who has highlighted how academic genres have been shaped by the knowledge perspectives they embody - in order to reflect on what knowledge perspectives are shaping the genres we currently engage with and what knowledge perspectives could shape or be shaping emerging (peripheral?) genres. For example, what or who determines the length and focus of an academic article, or the grammar of a reflective essay, and why? I adopt a historiographic approach to knowledge (referring mainly to Foucault, Kuhn, and Fayerabend) in order to suggest that our understanding of what makes a text 'academic' also depends on an awareness of its history, specifically the history of the knowledge(s) and social values that have shaped higher education. Such a historical approach may allow both researchers and practitioners to view academic writing through a different lens, a lens that highlights the contingency and changing nature of academic genres.

References

- Bazerman, C. (1988) *Shaping Written Knowledge: the Genre and Activity of the Experimental Article in Science*. The University of Wisconsin Press: Wisconsin
- Bennett, K. (2014) *The Semiperiphery of Academic Writing: Discourses, Communities and Practices*. Palgrave MacMillan: London

Besley, T. and Peters, M. (Eds.) (2013) *Re-imagining the Creative University for the 21st Century*. Sense Publishers: Rotterdam

English, F. (2011) *Student Writing and Genre: Reconfiguring Academic Knowledge*. Continuum Press: London

Feyerabend, P. (1975) *Against Method*. Verso: London

Foucault, M. (1969) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Routledge: London

Kuhn, T. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago

Thesen, L. and Cooper, L. (Eds.) (2013) *Risk in Academic Writing: Postgraduate Students, their Teachers and the Making of Knowledge*. Multilingual Matters: Bristol

Biodata

Julia Molinari teaches EAP (English for Academic Purposes) at Master's level and is doing a PhD on academic writing at the University of Nottingham in the UK. In 2011, as part of a small team, she re-designed Nottingham's EAP curriculum to re-orient its predominantly skills-based approach to language towards the more social practice approach of developing academic literacies. Her PhD is interdisciplinary, is supervised by the School of Education and the Department of Philosophy, and aims to contribute to the theoretical foundations of current academic writing practices by exploring the assumptions underlying the way writing is understood in the Academy.