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Developing students' rhetorical and genre awareness in first-year writing classrooms

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Developing Students' Rhetorical and Genre Awareness in First-Year Writing Classrooms

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Dedication

To mom and dad - you're my role models.

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

For decades, Writing Programs Administrator (WPA) have been trying to find ways to develop students' rhetorical and genre awareness in First-Year Writing (FYW) classrooms. This study is supported by WPA outcomes (2014) and is conducted at James Madison University. The author taught *Rhetorical Reading and Writing* Fall 2021 where she conducted two pilot studies: "Critical Reflections and Self-Efficacy: Transferring Rhetorical Awareness Successfully in First-Year Writing Classroom" and "A Tweet is a Genre?": Developing Students' Genre Awareness through the Genre-Translation Project". The author of the study was able to see striking results as she did a pre-assessment in the beginning of the semester to understand students' prior knowledge with rhetorical and genre awareness. The results showed that students had a natural understanding of rhetorical elements; however, for a FYW classroom. By employing interventions such as critical reflection and self-efficacy in the first study and by teaching genre translation in the second study, the author then used a post-assessment to compare the results. The results were striking as students now were able to identify genres, analyze rhetorically, and translate genres. This study will help scholars, teachers, and students in the field of FYW as it offers teaching interventions, assessments, and striking results.

Thesis Reflection

In recent decades, scholars have increasingly advocated for First-Year Writing (FYW) courses to focus on developing students' rhetorical awareness. As an international graduate student in the School of Writing, Rhetoric & Technical Communication at James Madison University, I had the chance to expand my knowledge of FYW and rhetorical awareness in class discussions, faculty meetings, and research. As a part of my GTA, I then taught WRTC 103: *Rhetorical Reading and Writing* for two semesters. This experience gave me first-hand experience in teaching FYW with rhetorical elements in focus. Furthermore, as I was thinking of my capstone project, I thought that conducting two studies while I was teaching was a great opportunity for me as I could research more about what has been done in the field of FYW, find new ways to incorporate rhetorical elements while teaching FYW, and finally write about it.

This study[1] is divided into two articles: "Critical Reflections and Self-Efficacy: Transferring Rhetorical Awareness Successfully in First-Year Writing Classroom" and "A Tweet is a Genre?": Developing Students' Genre Awareness through the Genre-Translation Project". Both articles are written with the intention to publish in *Composition Studies* and *Pedagogy*.

The first article examines students' prior knowledge of rhetorical elements and then discusses critical reflection and self-efficacy techniques as interventions designed to successfully transfer prior knowledge. Twenty-two freshmen students from James

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[1] This study was approved by the following IRB #22-2845.

Madison University took part in this study. To find out students' prior knowledge of rhetorical awareness, I used a mixed-method approach as I assessed students' pre-and post-assessment and the survey from the first day of class. I relied on a survey with qualitative questions and the pre-and post-assessment for the quantitative data. The results from using self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection as interventions to successfully transfer prior rhetorical knowledge were striking. I will submit the first manuscript to *Composition Studies* by the end of April. I have reached out to them beforehand to understand whether they would be interested in this research and the answer was positive. *Composition Studies* asks for articles not to be longer than 7,500 words and the manuscript has 7,065.

The second article focuses on the students' attitudes toward the use of genre awareness in learning to write and students' final genre-translation project in which they were asked to "flip" a genre to another by changing one or more rhetorical elements, such as purpose, audience, or context. In order to find answers to those problems, I carefully designed a genre-based module with genre-based tasks where students spent six weeks learning different rhetorical elements, doing minor assignments such as freewriting and adapting their writing to different situations, and lastly "translating" one genre to another. I also distributed a survey on the first day of class in order to connect and code each students' answers individually from the genre-translation project. The results from the genre-translation project revealed notable parallels between their answers in the survey in the beginning of the semester and their final genre-translation project. This project helped 22 students from JMU understand that genre is linked to rhetorical situations and that the choice of genre is one a writer should carefully decide using a variety of factors and

develop their writing in general. This study is also approved by IRB #22-2845. I will submit this manuscript to *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*. I also reached out to them before deciding where to publish and they are interested in the topic I researched. This journal accepts articles with no more than 10,000 words and the manuscript has 6,311 words. They ask for either MLA or Chicago citations but as I said earlier I will revise the citations after submitting the thesis to the Graduate School with APA citations.

Both of these manuscripts are related closely to each other. I conducted the research in Fall 2021 as I was teaching the class WRTC 103: Rhetorical Reading and Writing. As I started teaching this class, I had some ideas on what to focus on; however, both of these manuscripts changed drastically once I got the results from the surveys and pre-assessment. Without the survey and the pre-assessment, I wouldn't be able to find out students' prior knowledge of rhetorical elements. In the first week, I encountered writers in this class with preconceived ideas about rhetoric and what it means to persuade someone. Students had a natural understanding of rhetorical elements, including genre; however, for an FYW class, it is needed for students to have more than a natural understanding of rhetorical elements.

The results from both studies will help scholars in the field of teaching writing as it gives them ideas such as implementing critical reflection and self-efficacy techniques to successfully transfer prior knowledge and "translating" genres from one to another to understand that genre translation shows how to write for different situations, audiences, and context.

Article 1:

Critical Reflections and Self-Efficacy: Transferring Rhetorical Awareness Successfully in

First-Year Writing Classroom

Arta Sejdiu

Spring 2022

Abstract

While longitudinal research within the field of First-Year Writing (FYW) and rhetoric has contributed to the field's understanding of transfer knowledge in FYW Classrooms, there has been less attention given to empirical research on prior knowledge and how we, as teachers, help students to become rhetorically aware. This paper is a pilot study that reports findings from gathering data from 22 students that I was teaching as an international graduate student and graduate teaching assistant in Fall 2021 at James Madison University and examines how students access and make use of prior knowledge on rhetorical awareness. Findings reveal that students have a natural understanding of rhetorical elements, yet that knowledge is often implicit rather than explicit; hence, FYW is a space where the implicit knowledge students have is made explicit through our learning improvement project. As a part of this project is the pre-and post-assessment that is used to differentiate between students' knowledge in the beginning of the semester and in the end. To develop students' rhetorical awareness I used self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection as an intervention. This is not to say that every students' rhetorical awareness developed once they practiced critical reflection or held generative beliefs about their writing; however, the results from the pre-assessment were significantly better than the pre-assessment. This study helps scholars, researchers, and new teachers such as me in the field by suggesting that both self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection be used as interventions in FYW so students develop their rhetorical awareness.

Keywords: *rhetoric, rhetorical awareness, FYW, self-efficacy techniques, critical reflection*

Introduction

        "What is rhetoric?" a student asked me when I was presenting the course syllabus on my first day teaching our First-Year Writing (FYW) class here at James Madison University (JMU), called "Rhetorical Reading and Writing". "Rhetoric has more than one definition", I replied back. "Does it mean that we have to read and write a lot for this class?", another student asked. These questions led me to believe that my students didn't have explicit knowledge of rhetoric, thus; I decided to make this my capstone project.

        I began asking simple questions to activate their implicit, natural understanding of rhetorical elements in their daily lives. "What makes you write?", "Do you think about your readers when you write?", "What caused you to write a text?", I asked. Their first ideas were related only to academic papers or presentations they did while in high school. "Did you receive a message today, Samantha?", I asked my student. "Yes, I did". "A text has a purpose, someone texted you because of a reason, right?". I continued talking about the audience, context, and the genre of the text. Finally, I mentioned how every conversation they have is a rhetorical situation as each of their conversations has a purpose, audience, context, and genre. "Even the conversations I have with my friends?", asked Zach.[2] "Yes, even those", I replied back.

        These conversations suggested that I would need to help students transfer the prior knowledge of rhetorical awareness. Transfer is not so much an instructional and learning technique as it is a way of thinking, perceiving, and processing information.

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[2] All names are pseudonyms.

Beaufort (2008) defined transfer as "knowledge being applied in new ways, in new situations, or in old locations within different contexts"(p.217), while Nowacek (2011) echoed that theories of transfer "assume that an individual is moving among fundamentally different situations and seeking to identify some similarity"(p.19).

As an international graduate teaching assistant in the U.S, with teaching experience in Europe, I entered teaching at JMU into an ongoing assessment project related to rhetorical awareness, which uses a pre-assessment at the beginning of the semester to assess students' prior knowledge of rhetorical awareness and then a post-assessment to differentiate the results. As I carefully designed a sequenced unit on rhetorical awareness, I got IRB approval to measure the efficacy of two specific teaching interventions: critical reflections and self-efficacy techniques, which were meant to aid the transfer of rhetorical awareness.

Since my class had only 22 students, this pilot study aimed at answering how much rhetorical awareness did these students have prior to FYW and whether interventions such as critical reflection and self-efficacy techniques helped them develop their rhetorical awareness. The survey and the pre-assessment suggested early in the semester that students lack explicit knowledge; however, I was interested to find out how to recall students' prior knowledge and transfer rhetorical awareness by using the two aforementioned interventions.

The two interventions used aimed to enhance students' prior knowledge of rhetorical awareness. Critical reflection referred to a deeper level of learning – a level that allows the student to apply learning to practice (Jenson, 2011). Whenever my students were able to practice reflection, they were more rhetorically aware; thus

reflection in this study stands as a method to transfer prior knowledge effectively in FYW as it creates a fluid, rather than disconnected, educational approach.

As reflection showed great results, I used self-efficacy techniques, such as conferences, and positive feedback, to praise students' work, thus boosting their self-esteem. Self-efficacy refers to individuals' perceptions of their ability to produce certain types of texts (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). For example, when students received positive feedback, it showed them that they are competent and able to continue to learn, thus it strengthened students' self-efficacy (Pajares & Valiante, 2006). My students who were self-efficacious perceived themselves as being capable of thinking of their prior experience on rhetorical awareness and how to incorporate that knowledge in a new task, for example analyzing rhetorically an op-ed.

The preliminary findings of this pilot study show that students have an implicit understanding of rhetorical awareness and to develop that knowledge, the teacher should prompt students with questions, assignments, and prompts, to successfully transfer what was learned before.

Before getting into the analysis and discussion of the results, I will first review scholarships related to teaching FYW and different interventions and then present the research methods.

Literature Review

Rhetorical awareness has become a generally accepted learning outcome for FYW (WPA, 2014). However, there is a lack of current empirical research conducted on self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection as interventions to effectively transfer students'

prior knowledge of rhetorical awareness. This literature review will review existing literature on FYW, transfer, rhetorical awareness, and the two interventions: self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection.

First-Year Writing (FYW)

First-year writing is a space, a movement, and an experience (Downs, 2013), in which students might reconsider writing apart from previous schooling and work (Grant-Davie, 1997; Roemer, Schultz, and Durst, 1999; Aull, 2015). However, a lot of times students need to "unlearn" the wrong writing habits that they learned in high school where they too often learn a general model of academic writing (Adler-Kassner, 2012). For example, students commonly practiced five-paragraph essays in high school but that genre has limited usefulness in college and beyond. FYW classes rely on analytical reading and writing skills for student success, so an appropriate, selective transfer of prior knowledge of rhetorical awareness is needed for students to be successful in FYW.

Transfering Rhetorical Awareness in FYW

Transfer involves having students think of their prior writing and how they make use of that prior knowledge when faced with a new task. Haskell (2001) defined transfer as "how previous learning influences current and future learning, and how past or current learning is applied or adapted to similar or novel situations:". He further offered a taxonomy for transfer, with six levels of transfer (nonspecific, application, context, near, far, and displacement or creative) and fourteen interrelated kinds of transfer (content-to-content, procedural-to-procedural, declarative -to- procedural, procedural-to-declarative, strategic, conditional, theoretical, general, or nonspecific, literal, vertical, lateral, reverse,

proportional, and relational). Building on that, Perkins and Salomon (1992) focused on transfer on near and far transfer. As the textbook we used in the classroom explained, students do not immediately "transfer" what they study in their major classes ("near" transfer), and they do not always use the skills learned from classes outside of them ("far" transfer) (Schick and Miller, 2021). Additionally, respected scholars examined whether freshmen students are transferring knowledge and skills from high school, specifically in rhetorical situations (Beaufort, 1999; Carter, 2007; Wardle, 2007; Nowacek, 2011; Adler-Kassner, Majewski & Koshnick 2012).

My students had problems understanding rhetorical awareness specifically as they did little or no rhetorical analyzing in high school, let alone rhetorical situations. Bitzer (1968) defined the rhetorical situation as "the context in which the speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse" even if students are not aware that they work within a rhetorical situation, studies show that they are addressing rhetorical needs, even if unconsciously (Roozen, 2015, Adler-Kassner and Wardle, 2015). For example, students unconsciously thought of a genre or any other rhetorical element, but they did not learn it anywhere. Scholars such as Yancey, Robertson and Taczak (2014), Applebee and Langer (2009), (2011), and Tawalbeh (2013), examined the effect of previous knowledge and its effect on current writing, especially on genre (Miller, 1984). For example, Yancey et al.'s study (2014) found that students actively make use of their prior knowledge and practice in three ways: adding new concepts to their base knowledge, integrating prior knowledge with a mix of new knowledge to a new task, and creating new knowledge whenever their old knowledge fails.

Interventions: Self-Efficacy Techniques and Critical Reflection

Self-efficacy is a person's particular set of beliefs that determines how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977). To put it in more simple terms, self-efficacy techniques are used to increase a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation. In fact, self-efficacy as a theory was coined by Albert Bandura (1977) and then also developed by McCathy, Mier, and Rinderer (1985). These scholars found out that students who held more positive beliefs about their own abilities produced better writing. They say that if the students who had low self-efficacy held those beliefs because of their past learning experiences, then "one important step in improving writing would be to strengthen an individual's self-efficacy expectation about their writing ability" (466). Once my students believed in their own abilities that they can produce quality writing – their analytical reading and writing seemed to improve.

To enhance students' self-efficacy I used different techniques. For example, I used critical reflection in the form of freewriting in order to increase their self-confidence in analytical reading and writing. Scholars such as Sommers, Driscoll, Beaufort, Taczak, Jenson, and Yancey, among others, have addressed the importance of developing reflection within FYW classrooms as it is seen as a mode of inquiry and supports students' transfer from one assignment to the other. Older studies also show that students need to recognize that they have control over many of the factors leading to desired outcomes, in this case, their analytical reading and writing (Schön, 1980; Kolb, 1984; Higgins, Flower and Petraglia, 1992; Kitchenham, 2008; Irvin, 2004). Furthermore, Jenson (2011) added that the notion of reflection and its importance to learning has been

recognized and discussed for decades; thus, is critical for the students' analytic development.

As the literature on transfer in FYW shows, students think of their knowledge and how to transfer that knowledge; however it takes time for students to immediately transfer knowledge from one class to another as they're not used to combining skills from other classes. Likewise, existing scholarship on critical reflection and self-efficacy shows that by having student conferences often, praising their work, and giving students time to reflect and recall their prior knowledge, the results of their analytical reading or writing skills will develop. This study adds to both bodies of work by discussing and analyzing students' pre-and post-assessment results by employing both critical reflection and self-efficacy techniques. Since I have situated both FYW and rhetorical awareness with the two interventions I used, I now will discuss my methods.

Methods

The objective of this pilot study[3] was to determine, via the use of a pre-and post-assessment alongside specific teaching techniques, what kinds of interventions might aid the successful transfer of prior implicit knowledge of rhetorical awareness in FYW. This research was guided by the following questions:

1. How much rhetorical awareness did students have prior to FYW?

2. Do interventions such as self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection help students develop rhetorical awareness?

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[3] IRB #22-2845.

For this pilot study, I used a mixed-method approach as I believed is strength in utilizing both qualitative and quantitative research. Scholars highlight that the mixed-method approach is an appropriate research methodology (Creswell, 2017) as the writers "collect and analyze data, integrate the findings, and draw inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study" (Tashakkori & Creswell, p.4, 2007).

Data Collection

To answer these questions, I utilized a survey at the beginning of the semester, examined students' pre-and post-assessment projects that are a part of the departments' ongoing learning assessment project, read and listened to students' reflections, and meet with students through conferences or praised their work to increase students' self-efficacy.

The survey consisted of five questions, from which I analyzed only two of them as the others were supposed to know the students better:

1. To what extent do you think of genre and audience, as two rhetorical elements, when you write?

2. Do you believe that if you choose the genre you want to write in, your analytical reading and writing skills will improve?

These questions were the ones that made me aware of students' issues with rhetorical elements, specifically with audience awareness, thus I analyze them in the results section. I decided to use a survey in order to reflect early on what my students' prior knowledge is and what interventions or techniques to use in order to transfer the knowledge they have

effectively, different from the pre-assessment where I would see the results but not know the reason why.

Secondly, I assessed my students' knowledge through the pre-and then post-assessment. This assessment is part of an ongoing learning improvement project in the program of WRTC at JMU that was designed by the FYW faculty committee and Dr. Caroline Prendergast (2022).

Data Analysis: Coding

I graded my students' pre-assessment with 0, 1, 2, and 3. All of the rhetorical elements, such as purpose, audience, author and publication, context, and genre, are pivotal when students analyze rhetorically. For the students to get 3 out of 3 on purpose, their description should be accurate and specific, for example, it will indicate multiple purposes. On the other hand, for students to get 3 out of 3 on genre, they had to provide surface-level details, for example as a newspaper op-ed, or scholarly journal article. When it comes to author and publication, students' responses should expand upon the author, the publisher, or both; for example, they should describe the reputation of the publisher. In addition, in the audience description, students should get 3 out of 3 if they indicate multiple possible audiences, if possible. Last but not least, context description is also very important. For the students to get 3 out of 3 they have to mention the date the text was published, cultural or historical context, and an indication of the context's worthiness.

I graded the post-assessment the same way by the end of the semester. Initially, students had to read a newspaper opinion article from a national newspaper and a

scientific journal. To evaluate how and why students filled the rhetorical table, then I draw on their prior knowledge, and lastly self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection as an intervention to help students develop their rhetorical awareness. The pre-and post-assessment table was the same for both pre-and post-assessment. It was divided between purpose, genre, author and publication, audience, and context. For the purpose, I specifically asked:

- What do you imagine motivated the author to write this?

- What do you think the author wants to accomplish?

- What do you think the writer wants readers to do?

Regarding genre, I asked:

- What category (or "genre") of writing is this?

- How would you describe its features (such as style, format, and structure)?

For author and publication, I asked:

- What does the article reveal about the author(s)?

- What does the article reveal about the publication/publisher?

Regarding the audience, I asked:

- Who is the intended audience?

And finally, about context, I asked about the historical, political, and/or cultural background for this article and whether there is anything significant about the timing of this article.

Such that I could learn more about how students' implicit knowledge of rhetorical awareness could be better activated in first-year writing classes to achieve positive transfer, I made use of a survey meant to gather students' prior knowledge and experience

with analytical reading and writing, the pre-and post-assessments mentioned above and employed interventions such as critical reflection and self-efficacy techniques. Critical reflection was used as an intervention for students to recall their natural understanding of rhetorical elements and then I employed self-efficacy techniques such as conferences and feedback, to boost students' beliefs about their own work.

To analyze this data, I have been careful in analyzing the answers and reflections as both can have limitations, remembering Wardle's (2007) perspective that students are not always able to consciously understand and articulate the knowledge and skills that they transfer.

The following sections discuss findings that address the overarching research questions from this study.

Results and Discussion

> It may be hard for students to see writing as rhetorical and contextualized in a school setting. Perhaps for most people, the rhetorical nature of writing becomes most obvious when they engage in authentic language tasks, such as those required by the practice of a profession.
>
> —Winsor, Writing Like an Engineer: A Rhetorical Education

Question 1. How much rhetorical awareness did students have prior to FYW?

Each semester, I encounter writers in my first-year college composition course with preconceived ideas about rhetoric and what it means to persuade someone. When I asked my students this term about who they write their papers for, the majority of them answered that their teacher was the main intended audience. The concept of the audience

was my students' weak point as they struggled to understand the multiple audiences and that limits their understanding of the audience by not including their classmates during peer review or a writing center consultant as a potential, secondary audience. Their limited knowledge about writing the paper to the teacher is either learned in educational settings, at home or is culturally emphasized (DeRosa, 2008).

To go back to the first research question then, I examined data between students' pre-and post-assessment (Table 1.) and the survey distributed in the first class.
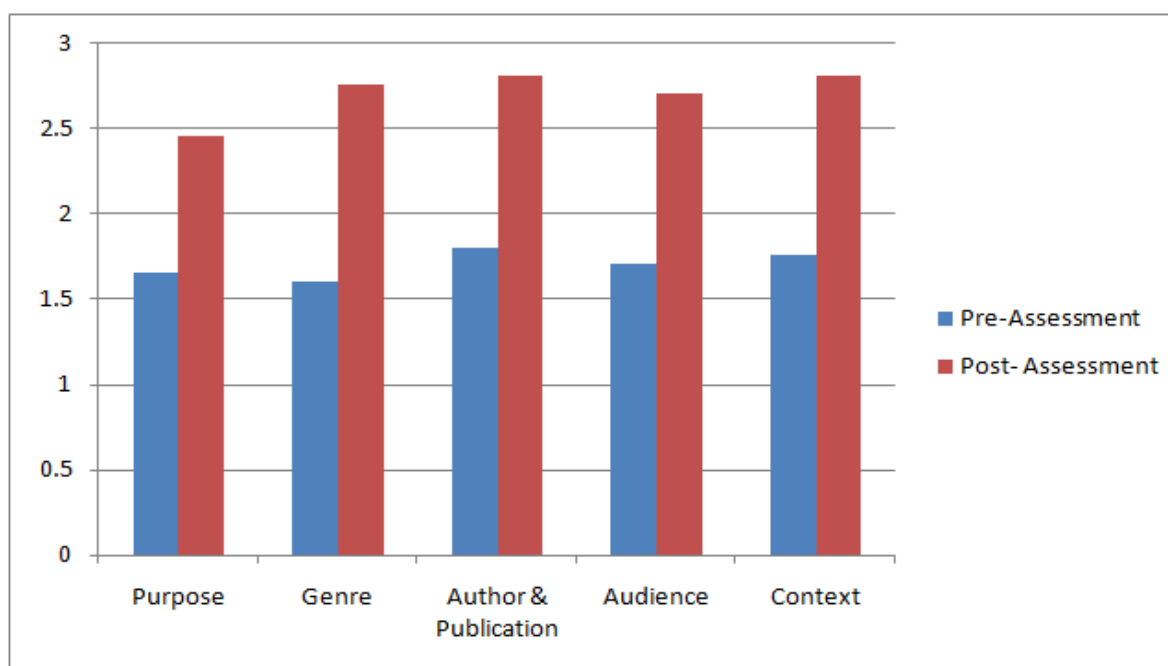

Table 1. The Results from the Pre-Assessment and the Post-Assessment

The results from the survey showed that students somewhat have a natural understanding and knowledge of rhetoric and its elements because the teacher is clearly one of the audiences; however, this shows that students have an undeveloped understanding of rhetoric that should be developed in FYW.

The results from the pre-and post-assessment differentiate students' rhetorical awareness. The results suggest that in the pre-assessment, the average of the purpose was 1.65/3, of the genre 1.6/3, author and publication 1.8/3, and context 1.75/3. The final results from the pre-assessment show significantly better results. We observe that the average of purpose is increased to 2.45, of the genre to 2.75, author and publication to 2.8, the audience to 2.7, and finally context to 2.8. Even though the results are satisfactory, we see that there are limitations of this study as none of the rhetorical elements was raised to 3.0 (the maximum). These results reinforce my previous statement that students come to college with a natural understanding of rhetoric; however, that's not enough for an FYW classroom since it is expected for students to develop their analytical reading and writing skills.

While purpose is the most basic element in rhetoric, as it shows whether students understood why the author wrote the text, it still was troublesome for my students. Here's an example of an answer on the genre in the pre-assessment:

It's a text that has references and the references support the author's ideas. Thus, this should be a persuasive paper.

References do support the author's argument; however, references don't indicate the genre that which the text is written. Accordingly, this shows my students' prior knowledge led

them to these answers; however, it's difficult to confidently say where that knowledge came from.

that my students applied principles that they knew from their high school inappropriately in the context of the pre-assessment; hence, applying principles of writing in one context inappropriately in another context.

In part, this discussion answers my first question that students face difficulties when they are about to transfer prior knowledge; thus, they sometimes are right for some part of the answer, but not the whole. Scholars such as Anson (2015), Yancey, Robertson, and Tazcek (2014) have clarified more about what prior experience means. They reinforced that students make use of prior knowledge and practice in the context of the understanding of transfer: as a dynamic activity through which students, like all composers, actively make use of prior knowledge as they respond to new writing tasks. Beaufort (2008) also discussed prior knowledge in FYW. For instance, she gave the example that what worked for a history writing essay is wrongly applied in writing in the first-year composition class. Furthermore, she states that writing is a generic skill that, once learned, becomes a "one size fits all" intellectual grab. This perception in turn leads to the misappropriation of transferring what has been learned in high school to college. Students thus come to believe that writing skills are "general" and what worked in contexts in high schools applies in the same way in contexts in college (p.11). Since there is no such thing as a "general skill" for writing, many rhetorics echoed the idea that there is a need to conceptualize writing in another way, such as by identifying common knowledge domains within which writers must develop context-specific knowledge (Bazerman, 2015; Carter, 1990; Smagorinsky and Smith, 1992). I agree that context-

specific knowledge needs emphasizing as only 3 of my students got a 3 out of 3 answers in their purpose description.

Here's another answer on the audience from the pre-assessment:

> I believe this article was written for students in college to allow them to understand that they have to dedicate themselves and engage with their professors for a positive outcome.

The article has several audiences starting from college students, college professors, parents who have children in college, curricula professionals, high schoolers who are about to decide on their careers, and so on. The student, however, partially answered one of the intended audiences but lacked to find other's audiences and partially mixed purpose with the audience. To explain now how these students got better results within the semester, I first used critical reflection as I believed that they have some unconscious knowledge of rhetorical awareness and then used self-efficacy techniques as an intervention to help them understand rhetorical elements better in our conferences or feedback. Both self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection will be discussed in the third question further.

Since now we have positioned that students have a natural understanding of rhetorical elements, I conducted a follow-up discussion to deepen my understanding of students' prior knowledge of rhetorical awareness. I asked my students what they consider good writing, linking to one of the rhetorical elements: genre. Among many answers, some students mentioned "grammar", and "five-paragraph essay". Then, I asked them about categories of genres, for instance, I asked about the difference between a newspaper article and an op-ed. My students didn't have a difficult time comparing the

two, which reinforces the first statement that students lack some knowledge and flexibility when it comes to rhetoric and its elements, but, when prompted they can, sometimes, find the right answer.

Another activity I did in the classroom was for students to reflect upon their pre-assessment and their answers after two weeks after they finished it. Based on that reflection, the majority of my students reported that they did little or no rhetorical analysis while in high school. Such problems can hinder students' transfer as they are inappropriately applying principles of writing learned in high school in college. For example, what worked for a high school English class, according to Julie, as she followed only one outline of an essay in high school, would not work in FYW. Michael, on the other hand, adds:

> The writing that was constructed by the education in high school was too restrictive to the bounds of the chosen content, which is often not as closely related to the student themselves. This is why for me I don't always understand the reason to analyze rhetorically, for example why a piece of text was written or who is the audience as we never did that.

On the other hand, Daniela, who said that she loved reading and writing as her mom was an English teacher, said:

> I didn't find the pre-assessment to be very difficult as I was always interested in rhetoric and its elements. However, for my analysis in this class, I was trying to shift my "five-paragraph essay" into another genre and then I saw how difficult it is to transfer appropriately what I learned for a "five-paragraph essay" into another genre.

Here we see an example of far and near transfer. For Daniela, she needed a little time to understand rhetorical elements correctly, and then it was easy for her to transfer what she learned in high school to college. Whereas Micheal, doesn't relate rhetorical elements to the content he learned in high school; thus will not transfer that knowledge.

To deepen my understanding of why students did not easily transfer rhetorical knowledge learned in high school, I asked them in our in-class discussions first who they consider a scholar and second how they make use of rhetoric in regard to scholarly reading and writing. The majority of my students said that a scholar is a professor, a researcher, or a teacher. None of my students said that a scholar can also be a student in college, which suggests that students don't think of their texts and communication as scholarly.

To get students to think of their prior knowledge of rhetorical elements I used a simple conversation example. In each conversation there's someone talking, thus the author; the reason why they are talking, thus the purpose; background information, thus the context; and so forth. Moreover, I started talking about the five-paragraph essays and text messages – both genres that students are familiar with already. Our discussion showed that if you ask a student about a genre they're familiar with, they will most probably associate it with a prior experience they had, for example, the five-paragraph essay. However, if you challenge them with a new task, for example, the genre of the op-ed, they will struggle to find out the genre.

Careful analysis of the data that I gathered and what other scholars say reveals that students typically do not expect to apply what they learned before, in this case, high school, to other contexts, in our case, FYW (Bergmann and Zapernick, 2007; Driscoll,

2011), and when they try to transfer new skills from one course to another, they often face roadblocks (Nowacek, 2011). This discussion then answers the first question as students had a natural understanding of rhetoric which isn't enough for FYW and they struggled to learn a new task, for example analyzing an op-ed, as they weren't challenged with the same task before.

Thus, these repetitive patterns of having some knowledge of rhetoric, although now enough for FYW, suggest that for students to recall their natural understanding of prior or inert knowledge of rhetorical elements, the teacher should prompt them with questions, discussions, and so on.

Question 2. Do interventions such as self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection help students develop their rhetorical awareness?

The strong repetitiveness of students' lack of explicit knowledge of rhetorical awareness made me use critical reflection as I believed that students have some unconscious, natural knowledge of rhetorical awareness.

First, using critical reflection was a way for students to assess their own deep knowledge, the way they perceived new information in FYW, how they analyzed rhetorically, and lastly their actions – how can they transfer this knowledge.

The first activity was to reflect upon their own pre-assessment for 10 minutes and then as a class we would fill the rhetorical elements together by explaining and describing each element in detail. Reflecting upon their work was a successful method for students to think of their prior knowledge of rhetorical awareness and how they make use of it.

After we successfully completed the analysis in class, we discussed why they might not have answered in the same way in the pre-assessment. It turned out that most of my students heard and practiced on some scale rhetorical awareness, but not in the same way. Thus, another controversial issue has been whether students know how to process what they can transfer from the past context to a new one. Many respected scholars also did similar studies in this field. For example, Beaufort's book *College Writing and Beyond* (2008) highlighted that transferring skills from one social context to another is a major issue as yet given too little attention in conceptions of writing curricula. For instance, let's look at one of the students' reflections on their own assessment:

> I didn't believe I was rhetorically aware either during conversations or writing.
> During the reflections I practiced the reversed outline method and then boom, I
> actually did well this time. What also helped with the rhetorical awareness was
> that I analyzed more in-depth into actually why it (the article) was written instead
> of just brushing over the topic of the paper as I did in the first analysis. Also, once
> I had the chance to reflect upon the pre-assessment, I did a better job as we
> discussed in the classroom.

This example clarifies that students' prior knowledge is very important for students. On the other hand, another student reflected that:

> In my pre-assessment, I was having a difficult time answering questions about
> genre, context, and audience, so my answers were very broad, and I used terms
> that I was familiar with growing up. I always had difficulty understanding genres,
> I don't think of it as small categories like horror, comedy, etc. Now I realize that
> genre can be a grocery list, a tweet, or a podcast.

These reflections show that reflection is a primary mode to recall their awareness of rhetoric. My own view is that applying principles of rhetoric in a new context, in our case, the pre-assessment is a complex cognitive and social activity, and especially for freshmen students, it can be very hard to tackle; however, through reflection, most of the students transferred their prior knowledge effectively.

Second, self-efficacy techniques turned out to be another method to transfer prior knowledge successfully. Self-efficacy has been discussed since 1985 by respected scholars. "I was never good at rhetoric", said one of my students in the first class", "It's not that I hate analyzing rhetorically, but I also don't love it", said the other. "Why?", I asked. Most of my students told me that they rarely produced good writing (with rhetorical elements in mind) as they were not allowed to write or research what they wanted to, but instead a cliche topic. In the survey that I distributed in the first class, I asked my students whether I should choose the genre or context that they will work on or they should do it. The majority of the students answered that they wanted to choose the genre they want to work on. Once my students started researching on a topic they were interested in, their beliefs in their ability to succeed were enormous. With that being said, self-efficacy techniques such as giving positive feedback and conferences, in order for students to do the work that successful transfer requires, they first have to hold developmentally generative beliefs about their ability to do that work and to accomplish their goals. With that in mind, I also let my students choose the genre they want to work on, in order to increase their self-efficacy.

To sum it up, both critical reflection and self-efficacy techniques as interventions improved my students' rhetorical awareness and their everyday writing and reading

analytical skills. Thus, to answer my third question, when students exercised reflection and self-efficacy techniques, their results in the post-assessment were significantly better. This is not to say that every student developed once they practiced critical reflection or held generative beliefs about their rhetorical awareness; however, compared to the results from the pre-and post-assessment, the results of reflection showed to help students achieve better results.

Conclusion

This empirical research study provided critical insight by providing both quantitative and qualitative results that identify students' prior knowledge of rhetorical awareness in our institution's First-Year Writing classroom. I analyzed rhetorical elements such as purpose, genre, audience, author and publication, and context from the survey and the pre-assessment in order to determine what prior knowledge did students have on rhetorical awareness prior to FYW class. The findings from that pre-assessment and the survey showed that students have a natural understanding of rhetorical elements but not an explicit one which is needed for FYW and beyond.

As I noticed these results, I decided to do an intervention in the form of critical reflection, and I used self-efficacy techniques for students to get an explicit awareness of rhetorical elements and possibly transfer this knowledge to other classes. As students were able to reflect upon their prior knowledge, but now including more elements that they're learning, their analytical writing and reading improved significantly. Self-efficacy techniques, on the other hand, were used as a way to boost students' self-confidence in both reading and writing analytically.

Furthermore, after a semester of teaching rhetorical elements and analytical reading and writing, conducting critical reflections and self-efficacy techniques, I assigned a post-assessment to answer my last research question of whether self-efficacy techniques and critical reflection helped students develop their rhetorical awareness. The findings from the post-assessment suggest that students' rhetorical awareness improved drastically. This is not to say that every student in the FYW classroom did a better job after the critical reflection and self-efficacy techniques; however, the results show satisfactory outcomes.

This study does have several limitations worth noting. For example, even though I assigned and graded different writing assignments during the classroom, I did not collect the data from their writing to see if they primarily developed as writers. While assessing whether students' writing process developed as they understood rhetoric and rhetorical elements wasn't the point of this study, it would have been helpful to also have the data from their writing assignments. That way, it would be easier to conclude that critical reflection and self-efficacy techniques also help students develop their writing process, instead of their analytical reading and writing skills. Another limitation is that my study included 22 students from one FYW. Despite the fact that I analyzed the rhetorical awareness of 22, it would have been helpful if I conducted the same study with every FYW in our institutions. However, the time allocation that I had allowed me to analyze and include only the students from my own FYW.

Regardless of limitations, this study shows that for the 22 students involved in this study, this FYW designed course helped them develop their natural understanding of rhetorical awareness and analytical reading and writing skills by using self-efficacy

techniques and critical reflections as interventions. The results of this study also help

fellow teachers of FYW and scholars in the field of composition studies to consider using

the pre- and post-assessment, self-efficacy techniques, and critical reflections in their

FYW classrooms.

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Article 2:

"A Tweet is a Genre?": Developing Students' Genre Awareness through the Genre-

Translation Project

Arta Sejdiu

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Abstract

Using ground theory, this study examines the impact of genre awareness as a focus in teaching FYW and its effect on students' attitudes towards a genre-translation project. The genre-translation project asked students to first choose a new audience that would benefit from learning about the purpose of the original text, and then choose a genre that can be best reached to this new audience. Although this project is commonly used in FYW, this study shows students' attitudes and the process they go through to implement their "translation". Findings reveal that in the beginning of the semester, the majority of the students were not able to identify many genres, except those that they were familiar with, eg. scholarly articles. However, after six weeks of intensive instruction in genre awareness, students in this pilot study comprehended genres and successfully translated a text from one genre to another, having in mind audience, context, purpose, and genre. The necessity and usefulness of learning genre awareness in FYW was predominantly valued among students. This study examined how explicit instruction in genre awareness is necessary in FYW.

Keywords: *genre awareness, genre-translation project, first-year writing (FYW), ground theory*

Introduction

For many decades, rhetorical awareness in general and genre awareness specifically have been an important part of writing instruction in FYW. Numerous teachers are focusing on teaching rhetorical elements in these classes as students need to be more aware of reading and writing as communicative approaches. Similarly, scholars such as Street (1995), Johns (1997, 2002), and Hyland (2003, 2004, 2007) said that students need genre-based classrooms in order to achieve social purposes in different contexts as genre awareness has gained prominence in writing instruction. In the fifteen-week writing course, my students (*n = 22*) engaged in carefully designed genre-based tasks, where they learned what genre stands for, how to differentiate genres, and more. Their main assignment was the genre-translation project.

Swales (1990) defined genre as "a distinctive category of discourse of any type" (p.33) that served as a "response by speakers or writers to the demands of a social context" (Johns, 2002, p.3). Ever since Miller (1984) proposed that genres function as "typified rhetorical actions" (p. 163) and evolve based on writers' and readers' needs, scholars have considered both how genres help to create, reproduce, and revise the systems in which they are used (Bazerman, 2013, pp. 54-55) and how awareness of these functions can support writing development. Building on these scholars' work, this study focuses on genre-based projects such as genre-translation to achieve better results of genre-awareness in FYW.

Achieving genre-awareness through the genre-translation is a fun way of developing genres as it can be approached in many different ways. The first part of the title says: "A tweet is a genre?" as the students in my class had no prior experience in

writing in non-academic genres, as in tweets. As a first-time teacher in the U.S, a graduate teaching assistant at JMU, with a lot of experience in teaching in Europe, I was amazed to see how much students learned from this assignment.

Furthermore, my students showed a general disdain for reading and writing analytically in general. I decided to find out why they do so by distributing a questionnaire in the first week of class in order to understand their feelings about their understanding of genre. As we started reading and analyzing different articles, speeches, podcasts, on purpose, author, context, audience, and genre, students were able to observe and practice different rhetorical elements and depict genres. The results from the genre-translation project revealed notable parallels between their answers in the survey in the beginning of the semester and their final genre-translation project.

At the start of the semester, students demonstrated a kind of simple, native genre fluency, meaning they could identify and write familiar genres. However, they lacked a more sophisticated understanding of genre that would allow them to explain the concept of genre or identify and write unfamiliar genres. These assignments helped students understand that genre is linked to rhetorical situations, and that the choice of genre is one a writer should carefully decide using a variety of factors and develop their writing in general. These minor and major assignments also helped students understand that the choice of genre depends on the appropriate choice of audience, message (purpose), and context – all pivotal factors in rhetorical situations. The results of the genre-translation showed that once students understood such factors, they were able to determine the rhetorical situation and how genre and audience connect within each situation; thus, leading to a successful genre translation project. Using Driscoll's et al. (2002) terms

"nuanced" and "simplistic" genre awareness, this article also describes students' learning of genres throughout the semester while I show their reflection and the progress they made in completing the genre-translation project.

In conclusion, the purpose of this study is to show that students got familiarized with non-academic genres (eg. emails, letters, podcasts, infographics) and academic genres (eg. articles, editorials, research) while they were able to translate genres, eg. from an op-ed to a poem. This study helps other scholars in the field who are interested to develop genre-awareness within their FYW by implementing a genre-translation project.

Literature Review

Existing Scholarship on Genre-Awareness and FYW

The mapping of the existing research on teaching genre awareness is comprehensive and offers a lay of the land as scholars write on genre-based FYW. The debate over the unambiguous teaching of genres has received extensive treatment whether we should or not explicitly teach genres; thus, genre development cannot be taught in isolation from its contexts. Respective scholars echoed that genre awareness is pivotal in FYW (eg. Freedman, 1994a, 1994b; Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei, 1998; Bhatia, 1993; Cnagarjah, 2002; Cheng, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Flowerdew, 2002; Hyland, 2003, 2004, 2007; Hyon, 2001; Johns, 1997; Johns, 2002, 2008; Martin and Rose, 2008; Pasquarelli, 2006; Tardy, 2009; Moore, 2012, Schick and Miller, 2021). Thus, the concept of teaching genres allows writing teachers to look beyond the content, linguistic forms and processes of writing, so that they can assist students in their attempts to communicate with the reader.

Defining Genre

Hyland (2007) defined genre as "how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situations, pointing to the fact that texts are most successful when they employ conventions that other members of the community find familiar and convincing."Additionally, he says that genres are sometimes difficult to recognize as students should be able to draw on their repeated experiences with texts they read. That is why I use Driscoll's et al (2020) terms to show that students are not able to differentiate genres. Hyland (2007) highlighted that this happens because "writing is a practice based on expectations" (p.544), meaning that if students didn't think of non-academic genre in their prior writing, then they would have difficulties when introduced to these non-academic genres (Driscoll et al., 2020). Finally, being able to realize that a genre is a recipe, a joke, or a love letter, a lesson plan, or a teacher's feedback and, if needed, respond to it or even construct a similar one, will develop students' genre awareness (Carter, 2007; Hyland, 2007; Yayli, 2011).

Besides genre-awareness, this class in the study promoted the following:

- *Rhetorical knowledge:* Students reflected on whether and how their own target audience(s), purposes, source genre, and rhetorical situations shaped their translated text (Beaufort, 2007).

- *Reflective writing:* Students enlighted and investigated their metacognitive awareness, engaged with their prior knowledge, and prepared to adapt writing

knowledge to future writing contexts (Salomon & Perkins, 1989; Yancey, 1998; Allan & Driscoll, 2014).

In a discussion of genre, it's also pivotal to address the large matter of audience, as without having an intended audience in mind, students have trouble deciding the genre they want to write in. VanKoteen's (2016) study showed how considerations of the audience shaped students' actions, thus, once students have audience knowledge and genre awareness, it would influence both the writing process and the final product (Ransdell and Levy, 1994). So, the goal of genre-based FYW classrooms is not only the development of the awareness of genres, i.e., learning more genres, but also the development of the awareness of genre, i.e., the progress of being aware of rhetorical elements that motivate the known genres.

Genre-Translation

Developing students' genre-awareness through the genre-translation project is common in FYW; however, students are used to genre as a static notion of a classificatory system of forms rather than genre as a rhetorical means to achieve a purpose; thus; it's an assignment that once students know how to do it, they will understand genres clearly. As Bazerman (2013) noted, acquiring facility with particular genres helps one to establish and develop a writerly identity and guides writers in making effective choices (p. 116). Because of that, students' genre awareness can be either nuanced or simplistic (Driscoll et al. 2020). The discussion of nuanced genre awareness and simplistic genre awareness was discussed by other respected scholars as well (eg. Granville and Dison, 2005; Lindenman, 2015; Nowacek, 2011; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011;

Tardy, 2009). They said that students see genre more as a product rather than as means of actually doing work. One of the reasons that this can happen is that there is a lack of sophisticated awareness of genre, for example seeing genre as a form rather than a function.

Even though there is popularity of genre awareness studies, research on how students analyze and produce genres in writing classrooms is still not depicted in the literature (see Cheng, 2006). Moreover, there's a lack of research done on how genre-based framework actually improves students' writing performances (see, Johns, 1995; Swales, Barks, Ostermann, & Simpson, 2001; Swales & Luebs, 2002; Yakhontova, 2001). The genre-translation project assigned in this class is also referred to as "flip" the genre in the field of composition.

Thus, this study examines whether genre-based FYW classrooms will enable students to produce better understanding of genres through the genre-translation project.

Study Design

This study aimed to document the development of genre awareness for 22 freshmen students at James Madison University using a sequenced unit: the survey distributed in the first day of class, two minor assignments: reflection in the form of free writing and adapting students' writing process, and lastly the major assignment, the genre-translation project. Data, thus, included the following: survey responses, including answers from students' opinions before the semester started; students' written responses to two minor in-class prompts (raninging in length from 500 to 700 words); and students' genre translation projects along with reflections.

This study[4] examines ways to enhance students' writing skills by teaching the genre translation project. This research is guided by the following questions:

1. How can we improve students' understanding toward the use of genre awareness in learning to write?

2. To what extent can students "translate" a genre from one to another, with respect to audience awareness and higher-level order features after their exposure to genre awareness?

After data collection was completed, I used a grounded theory approach to code the data from the survey I distributed in the first class and to analyze the data from the genre-translation project. Originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, the grounded theory approach is a useful research method as it aims to generate theories from data gathering and analyzing. Creswell (2003) defined ground theory as the "researcher attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the view of participants in a study (p.14); thus, as it looks inherently flexible – it is also a complex methodology (Chun Tie, Birks and Francis, 2019)

Moreover, as Sharan B. Merriam (2002) explained, in a grounded theory approach to qualitative research, "the investigator as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis assumes an inductive stance and strives to derive meaning from the data. The end result of this type of qualitative study is a theory that emerges from, or is 'grounded' in, the data" (29).

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[4] The study was exempted by the Institutional Review Board at James Madison University where I conducted the research under #22-2845.

The survey on the first day of class was pivotal for me to understand to the extent to which students started the course with some genre awareness. Through the survey, I sought to find answers for the following questions:

Table 2. The Survey Questions
1. What are the genres you feel familiar to write in?   2. Identify the following genres (I showed short paragraphs of a research paper, an op-ed, a poem, a fiction, a grocery list, a tweet, a newspaper article).   3. What elements would you need to know of the aforementioned genres in order to replicate the genre successfully?

By the end of week four, I assigned students two minor assignments. Assignment 1: Adapt your Writing Process (Table 1) is from the textbook *So What?* (Schick and Miller, 2021) as we used this textbook for our class. This assignment is supposed to make students think and discuss different genres and their audiences. For example, if you're writing a resume and a research paper, what's the difference in their purpose, audience, structure, and context? By doing this in-class assignment, students could begin to differentiate between genres and other rhetorical elements.

Table 3. Adapt Your Writing Process
For this exercise, consider how you would customize your writing process for different situations. For example: a resume for your dream job, an in-class essay exam, a group research assignment, and a science lab report. How would these situations differentiate your writing? Compare your answers with your classmates.

From: Schick and Laura (2021) So What?

The other assignment I used was in-class free writing. Freewriting helped students to put their ideas onto paper without thinking of later-order matters such as grammar.

Lastly, the main project, the genre-translation project, asked students to choose a text, either one they're familiar with or not. The following prompt was given to the students:

- If you were to communicate the same ideas in the text in a different genre, what genre would you choose? You can think about your "translation" purpose by first choosing a new audience that would benefit from learning about the ideas of the original text. Then, choose a genre that can best reach this new audience.

After students "translated" the genre, I asked them to write a reflective argumentative paper. This paper is for students to make a case for how their translation reaches their intended audience effectively. I offered the following prompts:

- Why did you choose the new genre: who is your target audience and how will they benefit from it?

- What opportunities did this genre provide you with? How did you capitalize on these?

To begin the inductive process of analyzing, I read and reread my students' answers from the survey with an eye toward any insights that would be discerned about students' lack of genre awareness.

I tried to find out what didn't work for them until now that they don't have genre awareness by getting to know their prior experience in writing genres by distributing the survey, teaching for six weeks a genre-based classroom including assigning two minor assignments, and in the end, I assigned the major genre-translation project to understand if the teaching assignments I used help students develop their genre-awareness. The results will be discussed in the next section.

Results and Discussion:
The genre-translation project and the on-going writing experience

The concept of genre is pivotal in academic writing. Students write every day – text messages to friends, comments on social media congratulating someone on their new position, tweets on Twitter, grocery list, sending emails, literature reviews for their classes, thesis for their undergraduate program, and so on. Yet, students face difficulties when they're asked to identify a specific genre, be it academic or non-academic.

Question 1: How can we improve students' understanding toward the use of genre awareness in learning to write?

This section began with students' opening survey responses, as students indicated that they were familiar with genres such as "Fiction," "Non-fiction,""Academic". These

are genres, and some of them even fall under the subgenre family, suggesting that students have a limited concept of genre as students indicated that they're the only genres they have written in while in high school. However, two of my students said "horror movie", "thriller movie", as part of writing genres. I assumed that their answers were confused by movie genres, i.e, they don't have that much experience in writing as both horror and thriller are genres of novels. The next question was to identify genres that I listed in the survey. I included many genres from love letters, Facebook statuses, tweets, to narratives, literature reviews, op-ed articles. I distributed this survey in class as I wanted to see if they have any questions. It was pretty simple for my students to know what a research paper looks like and identify it – the same with fiction or nonfiction. However, it was more difficult for them to first understand that a status or a tweet is a genre. These answers suggest that students have limited concepts of genre.

The third question asked them about the elements they need to know in order to find out the genre they're trying to write. Students had a natural understanding of the elements of a resume or a love letter; however, they needed more time to process the difference between an op-ed and a research paper. This suggests that students struggle on identifying writing genres to a nuance with which they understand genre as tied to specific intended audience, context, purpose, and their own deep understanding of genre.

Driscoll et al. (2020) used the term "nuanced genre awareness" when students "have an understanding of how genre's conventions help to achieve the texts' purpose and meet audience expectation"(p. 80), and simplistic genre awareness "as a focus of conventions (e.g., the five-paragraph essay)" (p.80). The student's answer suggests that students take FYW with the idea that they will keep writing five-paragraph essays, focus

on lower-order matters such as structure and grammar rather than higher-order matters such as audience, context, and genre.

Because of such answers, I assigned an in-class minor assignment: Adapt Your Writing. Before doing so, I wanted to clarify what genres are, so as a class we had a discussion to come up with a definition that we can easily understand. "It's very hard to pin genre down for a definition," said William. "Okay, let's break it down, shall we?"."Is genre a written text?". Some of them nodded with confusion while some said no. "So, genre is a form of writing, right? Yet, it's not a written text itself," I explained. "Who determines genre?" and "How do we know that that form of writing is genre?", I continued talking as I was making a bullet point list on the whiteboard. "Ah-ha," they nodded happily. "It's the audience," they said. For my students, it was difficult to come up with a genre definition as they didn't practice writing across different genres before. We came up with a definition to remember throughout these six weeks until their genre translation project was due: Genre is a form of writing determined by the audience's needs. In addition, Nesi and Gardner (2012) said that genres are abstractions - so they are not the written texts themselves, but conventional ways of doing this, realized through the written texts (p.24). For example, we write an email, usually in a formal format, to deliver information in a way that it helps the audience (the person we're sending the email to) why we wrote the email. Thus, as a class, we understood that for us to know what genre to use, we first need to establish what information is important to our audience.

After we had a clear understanding of the genre, we continued with the adaptation of your writing assignment. I asked students to customize their writing for different situations. As some students were contrasting the structures of a resume with an in-class

essay exam, or a group research project with a science lab report, I asked students different questions, such as: "How much time do you need to research before writing any of the genres you're contrasting?". This assignment together with the survey answers my first research question as students have a simplistic understanding of genres. However, the teacher should prompt them with activities, such as adapting your writing, in order for them to have a nuanced understanding of genres.

Another minor assignment that helped students understand genre is free writing. I used freewriting considerably at the beginning of the semester as it was a tool for students to put their ideas on their final project in the paper, without thinking of lower-order matters. This assignment asked students to freely write in a form of writing that they are good at. For example, some of them wrote short stories, emails, or even texting. After 10 minutes, they got together with a partner to discuss the content, its organization, its language, and so on. This activity would help students in their writing process and genre awareness as they would determine the purpose, audience, and context of that specific text. Such activity showed that a genre-based approach enabled learners to better texture their writing and to achieve communicative goals.

Question 2: To what extent can students "translate" a genre from one to another, with respect to audience awareness and higher-order features after their exposure to genre awareness?

After six weeks of classes discussing, reading, analyzing, and completing assignments on genre awareness, students had to start working on their major assignment:

the genre-translation project. First of all, students had to choose a source genre they wanted to examine and then translate. Since we've been discussing both non-academic genres as emails, letters, podcasts, infographics, and academic genres as articles, research articles, or scientific papers, I asked students to choose a source genre that they believe can be translated with the same meaning to another genre.

The findings (see Table 3) show that the majority of the students *(n=18)* chose a source genre, i.e research paper, poem, book chapter, essay, or a narrative. I was able to determine if that genre was familiar to them based on the survey they did in the beginning of the semester. I coded each students' data individually, meaning that their answers from the survey are now connected to their chosen source genre and the genre they're translating it into.

This shows that in the beginning of the semester, students still had "simplistic genre awareness"(Driskoll et al. 's term) and used genres that can also fall under one genre family. However, some students *(n=4)* choose a genre they were not familiar with, eg. op-ed article, motivational speech, and podcast. These four students didn't identify those genres in the beginning of the semester in the survey. This suggests that students went from a natural, simplistic understanding of genre to a nuanced genre-awareness within six weeks of classes, meaning that they only needed to be prompted with minor assignments to develop their genre-awareness. This is not to say that only these four students did so, as the other students (n=18) had reasons why they chose a genre they were familiar with since the beginning of the semester.

Table 4. Results of Genre-Translation and Argumentative Comments (Source Genre)

	Source Genre	Students	Students' reflections on their decision of the genre
"Simplistic genre awareness"(Drisk oll et al. 2020 term)	Research Paper	10	"The poem itself showed the world context and personal experience of an African American female's life. Creating a translation for this poem was more than just an education lesson, it was an impactful experience." "I decided to translate a podcast into an article as I got to use my own voice and perspectives more"
	Poem	2	
	Book chapter	2	
	Essay	2	
	Narrative	2	
"Nuanced genre awareness" (Driskoll et al. 2020 term)	Op-ed article	1	
	Motivational Speech (2)	2	
	Podcast (1)	1	
Total	22 students		

The results show that four students challenged their perception of genre since the beginning of the semester. Consequently, they had to translate those genres into other ones, while thinking of another intended audience, purpose, and context (see Table 4).

Table 5. Results of the Genre-Translation Project and Argumentative Comments
(Translated Genre)

	Translated Genre	Students	Students' reflections on their decision of the genre
"Simplistic genre awareness"(Driskoll et al. 2020 term)	Research Paper	4	"My main reason for translating an informative article to another article, by changing the audience, was that it now applies to most teenagers rather than using academic terms".
"Nuanced genre awareness" (Driskoll et al. 2020 term)	Poem	2	"In my translation, I reworked the rhetorical appeals, vocabulary tone, sentence structure, and syntax, to effectively reach my audience" "This infographic was extremely helpful to students and provided all the criteria to understand a famous speech that would have taken several minutes to read, and now it takes 2 minutes to summarize it" "I use pathos as a way to derive emotions
	Podcast	3	
	Narrative	1	
	Motivational Speech	2	
	Infographic	4	
	Instagram Carousels	2	

	Persuasive article	1	while writing the poem" "Choosing to turn it into a persuasive piece allowed me to really push my point to its extent. It gave me the opportunity to expand the original text a bit and dive deeper into how incredible the album is, which also is more beneficial to my audience, because it gives them a chance to be more persuaded than if they just read the review".
	Speech	1	
Total	22 students		

The findings of Table 2 show that students developed a more nuanced understanding of genres as they "translated" into less familiar source genres before, for example from a scholarly article into a poem, from a speech into an infographic, from a book chapter into a poem, from a song to a persuasive article, and so on. These results suggest that within four weeks students made progress from novice writers into experts as they included key elements like audience awareness and correlated improvement in writing performance across six weeks. Yet, there were four students that decided to still translate from a "simplistic genre" to another "simplistic genre". Four of the ten students who had chosen to translate a research paper as a source genre to another genre decided to still translate into a research paper. However, they changed the audience in the translated genre. One of the students mentioned that once he read a research paper that he barely understood as the language was very academic. When his professor explained it, it

was way easier to understand, but he didn't have the vocabulary to understand the research article. Hence, he decided to translate in the same genre, but using plain English so the audience is not only people in the academia but also students like himself.

What I found very compelling was the ability to translate from a poem into a narrative in the form of an autoethnography. This student was unfamiliar with the genre of narratives in the survey. She decided to translate the poem "To Sleep" from John Keats. She also managed to change the title into "Slipping Away". Keats' poem along the lines:

"O soft embalmer of the still midnight,

Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,

Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from the light,

Enshaded in forgetful divine."

She wanted to translate this poem because the poem was written a long time ago and Keats doesn't use standard English; hence, it's harder for people to understand it. Moreover, she changes the context, from Keats' suffering from insomnia into a teenager who is struggling in their freshmen year. She translates:

After finishing up my face routine and brushing my teeth, I walk quietly back to my room. The click of the light switch as I shut off the light feels almost synchronized with my mind: the moment darkness falls over the world, my mind becomes hostile.

This example suggested that the way that knowledge about writing is tied to genre knowledge. What I'm trying to convey is that when the students produce good writing after learning about genres, there is a higher chance that they have "nuanced" genre

awareness. Driskell et al. (2020) also said that for students to have genre awareness they should have writing knowledge itself.

After their genre-translation project, students had to write a reflective argumentative paper. The comments are shown in both Table 3 and 4 as they discuss their decision to translate from one genre to another. In the same vein, when students explained the audience, context, purpose, and genre, I noticed that the majority of the students responded that before this they never thought of the audience. In my experience, this can be because a lot of students think of their teacher as their main audience. However, this project enabled them to think outside of the box and customize their text to a specific audience. Their reflections suggest that students had to first research the audience and purpose of the original text in order to "translate" the same purpose with a different audience to another genre.

This study shows that a genre-based FYW helped students develop their genre awareness. As students completed minor assignments such as adapting their writing, freewriting, defining genre, and lastly translating another genre to another, they developed their understanding of genre from a natural understanding to a nuanced understanding of genres, which answers my second research question.

Conclusion

The problem posed at the beginning of this study was how can teachers of FYW apply a genre-based classroom in order to develop students' genre awareness? To answer this question, I assigned a genre-translation project together with other minor assignments such as adapting writing, free writing, in order to develop students' natural understanding of genres.

The field of Composition Studies has firmly established that students do arrive in FYW with some genre awareness, yet that awareness is too often implicit or students fail to activate that awareness in their own writing projects. Scholars have shown that students need explicit instruction in genre awareness. My work with my students shows that the use of genre translation projects (sometimes referred to as genre "flipping" assignments) is a potentially powerful intervention to teach explicit genre awareness. Finally, the genre-translation project proved to be an intervention for students to understand better how genres work and how we can "translate" them, having in mind audience, purpose, and context.

While I am not claiming that the genre awareness students gained from this FYW class was necessarily different from what they might have learned in another FYW class, the profound shifts in genre awareness that students experienced in this class were striking.

In conclusion, by teaching a genre-based classroom students get to know in-depth rhetorical elements such as genre and audience. On the other hand, by using the genre-translation project students got to develop their natural understanding of genres to a nuanced understanding. Such kinds of studies may contribute to the deepening understanding of how to teach a genre-based classroom and what assignments, minor or major, to use in order to improve students' long-term genre-awareness.

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Thesis Conclusion

Writing these two manuscripts gave me first-hand experience on FYW and ways to teach FYW: interventions, techniques, genre-based modules, in order for students to leave the class with more confidence than they entered.

While I hope that I publish both manuscripts, I also came to realize that I learned a lot during this process. Researching what other scholars are writing and working with a group of very smart students last semester gave me more insights in the field of writing studies and rhetoric.

While I don't claim that the methodology I used to teach *Rhetorical Reading and Writing* will work for every teacher of FYW, I still believe that if we as teachers see such issues since the first day of class as I noticed in mine, there are different techniques to achieve the goals and objectives of your class.

Lastly, the results from both these manuscripts are new to me as a teacher but also a scholar. I hope to extend my knowledge on FYW, genre, and rhetorical awareness further in my PhD studies sometime in the next few years.